

Chapter 3

Psychic Phenomena and the Mind–Body Problem: Historical Notes on a Neglected Conceptual Tradition

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Abstract Although there is a long tradition of philosophical and historical discussions of the mind–body problem, most of them make no mention of psychic phenomena as having implications for such an issue. This chapter is an overview of selected writings published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries literatures of mesmerism, spiritualism, and psychical research whose authors have discussed apparitions, telepathy, clairvoyance, out-of-body experiences, and other parapsychological phenomena as evidence for the existence of a principle separate from the body and responsible for consciousness. Some writers discussed here include individuals from different time periods. Among them are John Beloff, J.C. Colquhoun, Carl du Prel, Camille Flammarion, J.H. Jung-Stilling, Frederic W.H. Myers, and J.B. Rhine. Rather than defend the validity of their position, my purpose is to document the existence of an intellectual and conceptual tradition that has been neglected by philosophers and others in their discussions of the mind–body problem and aspects of its history.

“The paramount importance of psychical research lies in its demonstration of the fact that the physical plane is not the whole of Nature” English physicist William F. Barrett (1918, p. 179)

3.1 Introduction

In his book *Body and Mind*, the British psychologist William McDougall (1871–1938) referred to the “psychophysical-problem” as “the problem of the relation between body and mind” (McDougall 1911, p. vii). Echoing many before him,

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McDougall believed that “any answer to this question must have some bearing upon the fundamental doctrines of religion and upon our estimate of man’s position and destiny in the world” (p. vii). Indeed by the time McDougall was writing there was already a long history of speculations and writings about the mind and its various postulated relations to the body (Crane and Patterson 2000; MacDonald 2003; McDougall 1911; Wright and Potter 2000). This included, among others, ideas describing and conceptualizing the mind as an epiphenomenon or as a principle independent of bodily functions. The latter notion and the topic of interest of my chapter was what McDougall referred to in his book as the idea that “all, or some, of those manifestations of life and mind which distinguish the living man from the corpse and from inorganic bodies are due to the operation within him of something which is of a nature different from that of the body, an animating principle generally, but not necessarily or always, conceived as an immaterial and individual being or soul” (p. viii).

In this chapter, I will not attempt to identify the various solutions of mind–body relation proposed over time. Instead my purpose is to focus on a generally neglected intellectual tradition whose representatives defended the existence of a principle independent from the body based on the existence of so-called psychic, supernormal, or parapsychological phenomena such as apparitions, mediumship, clairvoyance, and telepathy. Furthermore, my focus will be on the nineteenth and twentieth-century writings.

3.2 Psychic Phenomena

Such phenomena came into the modern Western age through a variety of movements, among them mesmerism and spiritualism (Dingwall 1967–1968; Podmore 1902), not to mention many other beliefs and practices coming from the past (Goodrick-Clarke 2008; Watkins 2007). Many books presented accounts of psychic phenomena that challenged materialist views in which the mind (or the spirit or soul, depending on the formula of each author) could transcend the physical body and thus show its independence from the body. Examples are *The Night-Side of Nature* (Crowe 1848), *Le livre des esprits* (Kardec 1857), and *Die mystischen Erscheinungen der menschlichen Natur* (Perty 1861). These were early efforts that supplemented the existing dualistic philosophical speculations about the mind or the spirit.

Although occurrences referred to as psychic phenomena have been recorded from ancient times (Figuier 1860; Inglis 1992), more systematic studies have taken place in more modern eras. In addition to mesmerism (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and spiritualism (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), psychical research developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. In 1882, the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was founded in London with the purpose of presenting “an organised and systematic attempt to investigate that large group of debatable

phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical, and Spiritualistic” (Objects of the Society 1882, p. 3). While the SPR had several spiritualists as members who contributed to the development of the Society what made the organization different was that they also had many prominent academic members. This included Cambridge University scholars such as philosopher Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900) and classicist and poet Frederic W.H. Myers (1843–1901). Furthermore, other eminent individuals associated with the Society included physicists William Barrett (1844–1925) and Balfour Stewart (1828–1887), and politician Arthur Balfour (1848–1930), who later became prime minister. In later years, many eminent men became presidents of the SPR. Examples include American psychologist and philosopher William James (1842–1910), English chemist and physicist William Crookes (1832–1919), English physicist Oliver Lodge (1851–1940), French physiologist Charles Richet (1850–1935), and French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Together with the study of spontaneous telepathy, members of the SPR studied telepathy through experiments, and analyzed cases of haunted houses, mediums, and apparitions of deceased individuals (Gauld 1968). The Society also sponsored studies and discussions about dissociative phenomena and the subconscious mind (Alvarado 2002). But there were also studies coming from other countries, among them France and Germany (Brower 2010; Wolfram 2009).

Some of the individuals involved in these studies supported the notion that the mind was a principle separate from the body. One of the leaders of the SPR, the above-mentioned classical scholar Frederic W.H. Myers, saw their work as follows:

First ... we adopt the ancient belief ... that the world as a whole, spiritual and material together, has in some way a systematic unity; and on this we base the novel presumption that there should be a unity of method in the investigation of all fact. We hold therefore that the attitude, the habits of mind, the methods, by aid of which physical science has grown deep and wide, should be applied also to the spiritual world. We endeavour to approach the problems of that world by careful collection, scrutiny, testing, of particular facts; and we account no unexplained fact too trivial for our attention (Myers 1900, p. 117).

The issue was expressed in the work of William James, who considered psychical research a valid empirical approach for the study of the mind. As seen in James’ (1890, 1909) work with medium Leonora E. Piper (1857–1950), and in other work, James believed that empirical studies of psychic phenomena were important to understand consciousness. This led him to become involved with the work of the SPR, of which he was president in 1896 and with the founding and early investigations of the American Society for Psychical Research (Alvarado and Krippner 2010; Taylor 1996).

In his book *Human Immortality* James (1898) discussed “transmission” and “production” ideas to account for consciousness. This referred to the independence of the mind from the body and to epiphenomenalism, respectively. The first was the assumption that the mind manifested through the nervous system but was an independent principle, while the second was the idea that the mind was produced by the nervous system. As he wrote about these ideas and psychic phenomena:

A medium ... will show knowledge of his sitter’s private affairs which it seems impossible he should have acquired through sight or hearing, or inference therefrom. Or you will have an

apparition of some one who is now dying hundreds of miles away. On the production - theory one does not see from what sensations such odd bits of knowledge are produced. On the transmission-theory, they don't have to be 'produced,' – they exist ready-made in the transcendental world, and all that is needed is an abnormal lowering of the brain-threshold to let them through (James 1898, p. 26).

Following James, psychical researcher Hereward Carrington (1880–1958) stated that psychic phenomena “are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to explain and classify on the ‘production theory’” (Carrington 1905, p. 46).

But regardless of such ideas in this section I would like to focus on two aspects: First, the prevalent past skepticism about these ideas and second, recent trends in historical writings about psychological topics.

Although some individuals believed in the existence of psychic phenomena, and used such manifestations to promote belief in a spiritual nature in humankind, such interpretations were not shared by many, and certainly not by the majority of the scientific establishment. Readers of this chapter should be aware that this topic was as controversial in the past as it is in the present (Krippner and Friedman 2010). Many nineteenth-century writers explained claims for these phenomena using such conventional explanations as fraud, coincidences, hallucinations, illusions, suggestion, and a variety of psychophysiological processes related to hysteria and hypnosis (e.g., Carpenter 1877; Dendy 1841; Hall 1887; Janet 1889). There were many attempts to reduce the phenomena in terms of pathology, a topic explored by some in reference to mediumship (for overviews see Alvarado 2010; Alvarado et al. 2007; Le Maléfian 1999; Moreira-Almeida et al. 2005).

Regardless of such general skepticism, interested readers should realize that the topic we are discussing follows trends seen in the historiography of psychology and psychiatry. Starting with Ellenberger (1970), there have been several studies that have made a good case for the idea that psychic phenomena and their study have been a significant factor in the development of ideas about the mind. Concepts such as dissociation and the subconscious mind have been supported in the past by reference to such phenomena as the trances and automatisms of mediums (Binet 1892; Janet 1889; for historical studies see Alvarado 2010; Crabtree 1993; Gauld 1992; Plas 2000; Shamdasani 1993). Psychical research represented more than interest in the supernormal. Many of its researchers also touched on the question about the nature of the mind, its layers, and their separations (Alvarado 2002; Gauld 1992; Plas 2000). The authors of this recent work have changed previous outlooks of psychic phenomena and of movements such as psychical research. Instead of seeing these topics as mere superstitions, or as obstacles in the development of ideas about the mind, this new scholarship places psychical research and the like as catalysts and as important contributing factors to empirical studies that significantly affected the fields of psychology and psychiatry.

In the rest of this chapter, I will summarize some examples of the use of psychic phenomena from the past literatures of mesmerism, spiritualism, and parapsychology to defend the idea of an independent mind. I will consider topics such as ideas to explain apparitions of the living and out-of-body experiences, as well as past

discussions of telepathy and mediumship. My point is not to defend the separate existence of the mind from the body. Instead I hope to show the existence of a literature neglected in historical discussions of the mind–body problem linking psychic phenomena to the idea that the mind (and the spirit) is separate from the body. This literature is varied in terms of the arguments presented. Some ideas are derived from actual empirical work, while others are less empirically grounded. But in all cases they are based on observations of phenomena which interpretation has led the writers I will cite to believe that materialistic assumption are insufficient explanations.

3.3 Mesmerism and the Nonphysical Mind

Mesmerism was one of the first large-scale movements to bring psychic phenomena to the attention of the academic Western world. Starting in the eighteenth and further developing in the nineteenth century, mesmerism produced much literature related to psychic phenomena (for overviews see Crabtree 1993; Dingwall 1967–1968; Gauld 1992; Méheust 1999).

Named after Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) (1779/1980), who catalyzed these ideas in the eighteenth century, mesmerism was a movement based on the idea of a universal force called animal magnetism connected to the human body, and responsible for many manifestations, among them magnetic somnambulism (trance) and healing. Although there were many different conceptualizations of this force – a principle generally rejected by current students of hypnosis – most writers identified it with the nervous fluid or animal electricity believed by many to be behind the functioning of the nervous system (e.g., Charpignon 1848; Esdaile 1852).

Although animal magnetism was seen by many to be a physical principle, there were representatives of the mesmeric movement who defended the existence of nonphysical aspects of human beings. They supported their belief by pointing toward the phenomena showed by the mesmerized subjects which included instances of clairvoyance, knowing the thought of others, and medical diagnosis, among other manifestations.

For example, in his book *Instruction pratique sur le magnétisme animal* (1825), J.P.F. Deleuze (1753–1835), a well-known defender of animal magnetism, said that the phenomena of magnetic somnambulism “offer direct proof of the spirituality of the soul” (p. 99). He defined somnambulism as a state that seemed like sleep and in which the person could talk to the magnetizer. But when the person came back to their usual state they “did not keep any recollection of what had taken place” (p. 98). The belief in the spiritual nature of the condition was based on Deleuze’s interpretation of his observations. He saw somnambulism as showing the “distinction of two substances, the double existence of the interior man and of the exterior man in a single individual...” (p. 99).

Lawyer J.C. Colquhoun (1785–1854) argued in *Isis Revelata* (1844) that mesmeric phenomena such as acquisition of knowledge not previously known by the mesmerized individual supported the existence of the soul. In his view

in the phenomena manifested in the higher degrees of Animal Magnetism, we may find a complete practical refutation of all the material theories of the human mind, a most distinct, cogent, and impressive proof of the independent existence of the soul of man, and, consequently, the strongest philosophical grounds for presuming its immortality; since it has now been demonstrated beyond the possibility of rational doubt, that, in its manifestations, it is not necessarily chained down to any particular part of the sensible and mortal body; but that it is capable of exercising its various functions, in peculiar circumstances, without the assistance or cooperation of any of those material organs, by means of which it usually maintains a correspondence with the external world (Vol. 2, pp. 165–166).

Many others related animal magnetism to the soul (e.g., Ashburner 1867; Haddock 1851). Several argued that magnetism produced a state (magnetic somnambulism) that in turn liberated the faculties of the soul, usually obscured in normal life. For example, travelling magnetizer Charles Lafontaine (1803–1892) argued that when the body was rendered inert through the application of magnetic somnambulism the “life of the body is annihilated, the soul ... separates from the common life to live its own life. Its faculties, all immaterial, appear all the more brighter when the annihilation of matter is more complete” (Lafontaine 1852, p. 62). Sight without the body, Lafontaine believed, was possible because the soul was separated from the body.

Consistent with this, French physician L.J.J. Charpignon (1815–1886) stated in his book *Physiologie, médecine et métaphysique du magnétisme* (1848) that somnambulistic lucidity was “inherent to the nature of the soul” (p. 107).

Referring to the facts of mesmerism one author commented on the issue of survival of death. In fact, he seemed to suggest that the powers mesmerism allowed us to see were glimpses of a future spiritual life, assuming, in turn, a spiritual component in human beings during life: “Man is shown by these to be capable of increased sensitive power. *Cui bono* – to what end, if hereafter this increase of faculty become not permanent? Would it be consistent with the goodness of Providence to tantalise us by imperfect glimpses of that which we shall never be permitted to realise? Would wings be folded in the worm if they were not one day to enable it to fly? We cannot think so poorly of creative wisdom or of thrifty nature” (Townsend 1840, pp. 533–534).

German physician and author Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740–1817) was of the opinion that: “Animal magnetism undeniably proves that we have an inward man, a soul, which is constituted of the divine spark, the immortal spirit, possessing reason and will, and of a luminous body, which is inseparable from it” (Jung-Stilling 1834/1808, p. 227). Some, as did French magnetiser Jules Dupotet de Sennevoy (1796–1881), believed that the teachings of animal magnetism could bring man closer to God, a point he made in his book *Essai sur l'enseignement philosophique du magnétisme* (Dupotet de Sennevoy and Baron 1845). Such ideas were not scientific but were based on observations of phenomena that the mesmerists believed were unexplained by established knowledge.

3.4 Wandering Spirits and Souls

“The highest species of apparitions ...,” wrote Jung-Stilling (1834/1808, p. 73), “is, incontestibly, when a person still living can show himself in some distant place.” Apparitions of the living were frequently used to support the idea that the spirit, soul, or some conscious aspect of human beings was able to function out-of-the-body (for a discussion of selected aspects of this literature see Alvarado 2009). These were cases in which an apparition, usually a visual representation of an individual, was perceived by someone when the person was not physically present in the location.

Scottish-born known socialist and social reformer Robert Dale Owen (1801–1877) discussed these apparitions in his widely read book *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* (1860). In Owen’s view such apparitions showed that the

spiritual body ... may, during life, occasionally detach itself, to some extent or other and for a time, from the material flesh and blood which for a few years it pervades in intimate association; and if death be but the issuing forth of the spiritual body from its temporary associate; then, at the moment of its exit, it is that spirit body which through life may have been occasionally and partially detached from the natural body, and which at last is thus entirely and forever divorced from it, that passes into another state of existence (pp. 360–361).

In many of these cases the appearer was dying or passing through some sort of crisis such as illness or accident. The most systematic investigation of these cases was that done by SPR members, as seen in the first large-scale work of the Society, *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney et al. 1886; for earlier, and less well investigated cases see Harrison 1879). They collected hundreds of cases of “veridical” experiences. These were cases in which the perceiver learned that the person was having a crisis around the time of the experience, or obtained some information he or she did not have before such as a sense of location or what the appearer looked like at the time of the crisis. The researchers not only interviewed the person that had the experience, getting first hand accounts, but also other persons that could corroborate aspects of the experience or that could bear witness that they had heard the account of the apparitional experience before it was determined that it was “veridical.” An example of such an experience is the following:

In 1856 I was engaged on duty at a place called Roha, some 40 miles south of Bombay My sister and I were regular correspondents, and the post generally arrived about 6 a.m. It was on the 18th April of that year ... that I received a letter from my mother, stating that my sister was not feeling well, but hoped to write to me the next day At 2 o’clock my clerk was with me, reading some native documents that required my attention, and I was in no way thinking of my sister, when all of a sudden I was startled by seeing my sister (as it appeared) walk in front of me from one door of the tent to the other, dressed in her night-dress. The apparition had such an effect upon me that I felt persuaded that my sister had died at that time. I wrote at once to my father, stating what I had seen, and in due time I also heard from him that my sister had died at that time. (Gurney et al. 1886, Vol. 1, pp. 41–42).

While some SPR researchers – such as Edmund Gurney (1847–1888) and Frank Podmore (1856–1910) – argued that these apparitions represented the externalization

of a telepathically acquired message by the percipient (Gurney et al. 1886; Podmore 1894), others assumed the existence of a spirit capable of travelling beyond the body carrying consciousness. This assumption clearly assumed the independence of the thinking part of human beings from the workings of the physical body.

Many other later writers had similar ideas, but with some variants. This was the case of French engineer Gabriel Delanne (1857–1926) and Italian student of psychic phenomena Ernesto Bozzano (1862–1943). They presented many published cases arguing that they supported the idea that apparitions of the living were more than imagination because they were veridical (Bozzano 1937/1934; Delanne 1909).

Based on carefully investigated cases by SPR researchers, Myers (1903) speculated that different types of apparitions of the living, such as those that occurred spontaneously while the person was dying or was thinking of arriving to a place were manifestations of the spirit with different degrees of consciousness. He believed that the place where the person was seen was a modification of a “certain portion of space, not materially nor optically, but in such a manner that specially susceptible persons may perceive it” (Myers 1903, Vol. 1, pp. xix–xx). In his view death was a permanent “self-projection,” or “the one definite act which it seems as though a man might perform equally well before and after bodily death” (Myers 1903, Vol. 1, p. 297).

In more recent times out-of-body experiences have been discussed as phenomena suggesting that consciousness can function out of the physical body (e.g., Woodhouse 1994). Such idea has been supported with evidence of veridical experiences such as those in which information has been acquired while the person was out of their body, particularly information referring to distant events (Hart 1954). The topic has been studied in the laboratory using designs in which a person is asked to go while having an out-of-body experience to a particular place to perceive information placed there (Alvarado 1982). Although only a handful of studies have shown positive results, this area deserves further research.

Conceptualizing individuals as having a physiological (B system) and a mental life (M/L system) Tart (1979) referred to out-of-body experiences as “a temporary spatial/functional separation of the M/L system from the B system” (p. 195).

Another relevant line of study is investigations of near-death experiences. Several studies have shown the phenomenon has stable features (e.g., Ring 1979; for an overview see Zingrone and Alvarado 2009). Based on his study of this phenomena Dutch cardiologist Pim Van Lommel (2009) has speculated that consciousness is “stored in a non-local space as wave fields of information” (p. 183). In the United States psychiatrist Bruce Greyson referred to the implications of the experience when he stated that they challenge material reductionism “in asking how complex consciousness, including mentation, sensory perception, and memory, can occur under conditions in which current physiological models of mind deem it impossible. This conflict between a materialist model of brain–mind identity and the occurrence of NDEs under conditions of general anesthesia or cardiac arrest is profound and inescapable” (Greyson 2010, p. 43).

3.5 Telepathy and Clairvoyance as Spiritual Faculties

English writer Catherine Crowe (1790–1872) stated in *The Night-Side of Nature* (1848) that the acquisition of information such as clairvoyance had a spiritual component. Some states, she argued citing previous authors, suggested the functioning of spiritual faculties, or “perceptions which are not comprised within the functions of our bodily organs” (Vol. 1, p. 32). Referring to the acquisition of information in dreams, such as cases about dreams of the future, Crowe wrote that when the senses were in a passive state “the universal sense of the immortal spirit within, which sees, and hears, and knows, or rather, in one word, *perceives*, without organs, becomes more or less free to work unclogged” (Vol. 1, p. 98).

Many authors, such as English physician Joseph Haddock (1800–1861), explained psychic phenomena as part of the interaction of the physical and spiritual nature of human beings, but coming from the latter. Haddock (1851) conducted studies of clairvoyance with a woman he mesmerized, obtaining results that led him to consider the idea of a nonphysical mind. He wrote:

All those apparently miraculous powers, which we sometimes see, or hear of being displayed by good mesmeric subjects, are, in fact, but the result of the psyché, or animus, being so far set free from the bodily ultimate, as to enable the spiritual body to act nearly, if not quite, independently of the sensual organs, and by perception, and in light from an inner world; but the connection of the mind and body is yet sufficient, to enable the soul’s sight and feeling to be manifested to our physical senses, by and through the natural organization of a clairvoyant subject (Haddock 1851, p. 72).

Others, such as French educator Hippolyte-Léon Denizard Rivail (1804–1869), known as Allan Kardec (1857), summarized communications claimed to originate from discarnate spirits, and discussed what he referred to as the “emancipation of the soul.” This could take place, he wrote, in dreams and in other states. In his view second sight was an example of this emancipation, and took place mainly in “times of crises, calamities, great emotions, finally, all the causes that overexcite the mental ...” (p. 74). Kardec wrote that clairvoyance in magnetic and natural somnambulism had the same cause, both were a basic characteristic of the soul, “an inherent faculty to all the parts of the incorporeal self that is in us . . .” (p. 71).

In his study of psychic experiencers astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842–1925) concluded: “The soul, by its interior vision, may see *not only what is passing at a great distance*, but it may also know in advance *what is to happen in the future*. The future exists potentially, determined by causes which bring to pass successive events” (Flammarion 1900, p. 481). He asked, “because the soul acts at a distance by some power that belongs to it, are we authorized to conclude that it exists as something real, and that it is not the result of functions of the brain?” (p. 481). In his view: “These phenomena prove, I think, that the soul exists, and that it is endowed with faculties at present unknown. ...A thought can be transmitted to the mind of another. There are *mental transmissions, communications of thoughts, and psychic currents* between human souls” (p. 485).

Years later William MacDougall (1911) argued that telepathy was incompatible with mechanistic ideas. He believed, in the case of veridical automatic messages received by some mediums studied by the SPR, that physical ideas such as brain waves could not account for the coordinated nature of messages received by geographically separated individuals. McDougall did not specify further his objection to a physicalistic explanation of telepathy. But Myers referred to many cases of spontaneous telepathy that did not seem “diminished by any distance nor to be impeded by any obstacle whatsoever” (Gurney et al. 1886, Vol. 1, p. L). He saw telepathy as a spiritual faculty, an indication of a transcendental spiritual realm that worked in human beings subconsciously and that represented a faculty humans would employ in the other world (Myers 1903).

During the twentieth century, many others saw telepathy and clairvoyance as evidence of a nonphysical principle (e.g., Beloff 1990; Bozzano 1942; Pratt 1967). An important representative of this was the well-known American parapsychologist J.B. Rhine (1895–1980). In his book *The Reach of the Mind*, Rhine (1947) not only described his experimental work with ESP (and psychokinesis), but also argued that the results of that research showed the phenomena he studied was the result of a nonphysical principle separate from but interacting with the body. In his view ESP research showed that the “mind can escape physical boundaries under certain conditions Accordingly a distinct difference between mind and matter, a relative dualism, has been demonstrated . . .” (p. 205). He believed this because in his experiments ESP had not shown any relationship to such physical variables as distance and time, the latter being a reference to precognition. In fact Rhine (1954) referred to parapsychology as the science of nonphysical nature, a discipline concerned with phenomena “that fail to show regular relationships with time, space, mass, and other criteria of physicality” (p. 801). In his view the presence of such a nonphysical component in man validated aspects of religion and could be used to combat communism and materialism in general (Rhine 1953).

In addition to the belief that telepathy and clairvoyance indicated the existence of a spiritual component in human beings, some argued that such phenomena were spiritual faculties that belonged to life in a spiritual realm to be returned to after death (see also my previous reference to Townsend in the section about mesmerism). They showed but occasional glimpses in our earthly life. For example, in *The Philosophy of Mysticism* German philosopher Carl du Prel (1839–1899) stated that “in man himself there is a kernel, to which the laws of sensibility do not apply” (Du Prel 1889/1885, Vol. 2, p. 284) and which is suppressed in life but released at death. The manifestations in question suggested to him that “in human nature there lie already veiled indications of the next higher state of being . . .” (Vol. 2, p. 285). Similarly, Myers (1903) referred to the idea that “that portion of the personality which exercises these powers during our earthly existence does actually continue to exercise them after our bodily decay” (Vol. 1, p. 222).

3.6 Survival of Death and Mediumship

In a book about psychical research, Carrington (1908) wrote about the importance of the idea of survival of bodily death to combat materialism. In his words: “If it can be shown that consciousness can persist apart from brain activity and a nervous system, then materialism will have been overthrown and another interpretation of the universe rendered possible” (pp. 10–11). Many past (and some current) efforts of researchers in psychical research have been directed to empirical studies on the topic. Different from purely religious and philosophical speculations, psychical researchers have obtained empirical evidence for phenomena such as apparitions and mediumship that suggest to some that the mind or consciousness can function separate from the body during life and can continue after death (for an overview see Braude 2003).

In actuality the issue of survival of death has been central to psychical research from the beginnings of the discipline (Alvarado 2003). One of the main phenomena in this regard has been mediumship, or the idea that certain individuals can produce messages from the dead. The old psychical research literature, such as some studies of American medium Leonora E. Piper (1857–1950) presents examples of séance studies in which spirit survival has been taken seriously by psychical researchers known for their rigorous empirical approach to the topic (Hodgson 1898; Hyslop 1901; Lodge 1890).

An example of a positive evaluation of the results of sittings with Mrs. Piper and other mediums was offered by the above-mentioned English physicist Sir Oliver J. Lodge, F.R.S. in his book *The Survival of Man* (1920). Lodge wrote:

The first thing we learn, perhaps the only thing we clearly learn in the first instance, is continuity. There is no such sudden break in the conditions of existence as may have been anticipated; and no break at all in the continuous and conscious identity of genuine character and personality. Essential belongings, such as memory, culture, education, habits, character, and affection, – all these, and to a certain extent tastes and interests, – for better for worse are retained. Terrestrial accretions, such as worldly possessions, bodily pain and disabilities, these for the most part naturally drop away.

Meanwhile it would appear that knowledge is not suddenly advanced ... we are not suddenly flooded with new information, – nor do we at all change our identity; but powers and faculties are enlarged, and the scope of our outlook on the universe may be widened and deepened, if effort here has rendered the acquisition of such extra insight legitimate and possible.

On the other hand, there are doubtless some whom the removal of temporary accretion and accidents of existence will leave in a feeble and impoverished condition; for the things are gone in which they trusted, and they are left poor indeed ... (pp. 342–343)

Many studies with mediums believed to have provided evidence for survival of death appeared in the twentieth century. Some examples are mediums such as Gladys Osborne Leonard (1882–1968) (e.g., Radclyffe-Hall and Troubridge 1919) and studies of more recent mediums (Beischel and Schwartz 2007).

Many other lines of research have been conducted in which phenomena suggestive of survival of death were studied empirically. For example, among them are cases of children that claim to remember previous lives, and the study of apparitions of the dead (for a review see Braude 2003).

3.7 The Ensemble of Psychic Manifestations

In addition to the above, some students of psychic phenomena took a more comprehensive approach. They believed that a nonphysical view was supported by the whole mass of phenomena taken together, as opposed to analyses of single phenomena. As Crowe wrote: “The subjects I do intend to treat of are the various kinds of prophetic dreams, presentiments, second-sight, and apparitions; and, in short, all that class of phenomena, which appears to throw some light on our physical nature, and on the probable state of the soul after death” (Crowe 1848, Vol. 1, p. 22). Such phenomena indicated to her the existence of a “dweller in the temple,” or the idea that “we are immortal spirits, incorporated for a season in a material body” (Vol. 1, p. 32), which is capable of producing the above-mentioned phenomena when it is still in the body and when it is out of it.

Myers used a general approach to argue for the existence of a spirit and for survival of death (Du Prel 1889/1885; Myers 1903). Instead of focusing solely on specific phenomena they considered a wide range of manifestations to make their case. In doing this they did not limit their discussion to psychic phenomena such as telepathy, but considered other psychological manifestations as well, among them hypnosis, hallucinations, and dreams.

In fact, referring to Myers it has been stated that: “There is a continuous set of gradations between facts which everyone accepts and facts which might be called ‘paranormal’; and it is hard indeed to find a ‘logical halting-place’ anywhere along the line” (Gauld 1968, p. 277). William James praised Myers’ discussion of many phenomena, and his use of the idea of the subliminal mind, his version of the subconscious that was concerned with psychic and psychological phenomena, but also with spiritual and evolutive faculties. He wrote:

Myers wove such an extraordinarily detached and discontinuous series of phenomena together. Unconscious cerebration, dreams, hypnotism, hysteria, inspirations of genius, the willing game, planchette, crystal-gazing, hallucinatory voices, apparitions of the dying, medium-trances, demoniacal possession, clairvoyance, thoughts transference – even ghosts and other facts more doubtful – these things form a chaos at first sight most discouraging. No wonder that scientists can think of no other principle of unity among them than their common appeal to men’s perverse propensity to superstition. Yet Myers has actually made a system of them, stringing them continuously upon a perfectly legitimate objective hypothesis, verified in some cases and extended to others by analogy (James 1901, p. 18).

This general approach was also used by Ernesto Bozzano, who argued for the importance of “keeping constantly in mind all the data of the problem to be solved which in our case consist of innumerable varieties of metapsychic episodes inexplicable by any naturalistic hypothesis” (Bozzano, n.d., p. 261). In his view if psychic phenomena were studied as an ensemble they were “transformed into a cumulative and logically irresistible poof of the experimentally certified intervention of the spirits of the dead in supernormal manifestations” (p. 261). This involved the assumption that all the characteristics and modalities of manifestation of the phenomena pointed toward a spiritual agency.

Following Myers, Kelly et al. (2007) have recently argued that there are many mental and psychophysiological manifestations that cannot be reduced to neurological mechanisms. Among them they discussed veridical mediumship, out-of-body experiences, but also some of the phenomena of hypnosis, and processes such as memory. Once again, “normal” and “paranormal” phenomena were considered together to paint a canvas of the mind in terms of its lack of dependence on the body and its functions.

3.8 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have presented a short overview of past discussions of psychic phenomena to support the existence of the mind, the spirit, or some sort of non-physical principle in human beings. My review has obviously not covered all relevant aspects of the topic. For example, I have not covered writings and research on remote viewing, reincarnation cases, psychokinesis, or the effects of prayer or therapeutic intent at a distance. Furthermore, it must be remembered that dichotomies such as material and immaterial, and physical and nonphysical, are too simple particularly when we bring into consideration ideas from modern physics as discussed, for example, in relation to psychic phenomena (Radin 2006).

The ideas presented in this chapter are speculations to account for unexplained phenomena. As such they are not accepted by every student of the subject. Because these are matters that cannot be measured directly we are left with interpretations about nonphysicality, which lack relevant details about the nature of the process. That is, many of the ideas discussed are vague about the nature of the mind or the spirit beyond the statement that the phenomena do not seem explainable through conventional physical ways. Although this is problematic, and limits conceptual and research progress in this area, in reality it is not much different from many speculations in science. Many areas of science face the study of phenomena that are not understood and it is necessary to start from speculations based on what is observable, a process that also applies to materialistic ideas.

But regardless of these issues, the best efforts of psychical research need to be recognized as a serious and empirical effort to study the properties of the mind, and as a literature that presents facts that are not easily explained via conventional psychological, physical and physiological processes.

Although I believe there is acceptable evidence to support the existence of psychic phenomena beyond conventional explanations such as fraud, coincidence, and hallucination, it has not been my intention in this chapter to provide or discuss this evidence in detail. Instead I have presented an outline of a literature, and a set of arguments that deserve to be recognized as part of intellectual history and of the history of philosophy and psychology, fields relevant to the mind–body problem. Unfortunately, much of what I have mentioned is generally ignored by most of those who cover these topics, and particularly by the practitioners of disciplines related to the mind–body problem. This is unfortunate because the omission of this material

from the mainstream historical accounts of the mind–body problem creates an incomplete history of the subject.

The message discussed in this chapter has been expressed by others recently from the point of view of the existence and validity of the phenomena, which are conceived of as manifestations incapable of being explained by the materialistic paradigm (e.g., Kelly et al. 2007; Tart 2009). Charles T. Tart (2009) has reminded us about this in his book *The End of Materialism* in which he postulates that parapsychological phenomena show that physicalistic approaches cannot explain many important aspects of our nature. In his words: “The findings of scientific parapsychology force us to pragmatically accept that minds can do things ... that cannot be reduced to physical explanations, given current scientific knowledge or reasonable extensions of it” (p. 241). Others have presented strong defenses of the nonlocal nature of the mind on the basis of the existence of phenomena as such as ESP (e.g., Schwartz 2007).

These, and many other recent authors, have emphasized the existence of a nonphysical mind, continuing the intellectual tradition described in this chapter. English psychologist John Beloff (1920–2006) characterized this tradition as one which “exhibits mind as an efficacious factor in the real world, not just as an idle epiphenomenon, and thereby calls into question the physicalistic position” (Beloff 1994, p. 518).

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