Human Personality and the Question of its Survival of Bodily Death

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THE QUESTION of the possibility of a human personality surviving the death of the body with which it has been associated in earthly life is partly empirical and partly 'philosophical', in one sense of that term. It is empirical in the sense that, if it can be clearly formulated and shown to be an intelligible question, the only relevant way to attempt to answer it is by appeal to specific observable facts. In that respect it may be compared with the question: Does a bit of copper survive being dissolved in nitric acid? The relevant observable facts are some of those investigated by psychical researchers, and in particular certain phenomena of trance-mediumship. The question is 'philosophical' in that the phrase 'survival of bodily death by a human person' is by no means clear and unambiguous. Its ambiguities need to be noted, and the various alternatives which it covers need to be distinguished and clearly formulated. This is work for a person of philosophic interests and training. But it is idle for him to work in a vacuum, if he is to accomplish anything worth doing. He needs a background of knowledge of at least the facts of abnormal psychology and of the phenomena studied by psychical researchers, and he must carry out his analysis in the light of such knowledge. In this Epilogue I shall be concerned almost wholly with the task of clearing up the question and its implications.

If we are to understand what would be meant by, or involved in, the survival of a human personality, we must first be clear as to what we mean by a human person. I shall therefore begin by considering that question.
Let us use the name 'human being' (short for 'man or woman') to denote creatures like ourselves as we are in this life, i.e. beings with a certain characteristic kind of living physical organism, each of whom speaks of himself as 'I' and is addressed or referred to by other such beings as 'You', 'Jack', 'Mr Jones', and so on.

Now, apart from and prior to all theory, it is a known fact that a human being is a psychophysical unit, having two mutually irreducible but most intimately interrelated aspects, viz. the bodily and the mental. In respect of the former he is a physical object, i.e. something of which it is significant to say that he weighs so much, is so tall, takes in and puts out so much energy in a given period, and so on. In respect of the latter he is a psychical subject, i.e. something of which it is significant to say that he is capable of having experiences of various kinds, e.g. pleasant or painful sensations, visual or auditory perceptions, etc., and that he is capable of being aware of himself as doing so and as having done so; and, moreover, something of which it is true to say that he does from time to time have such and such experiences and that he is from time to time aware of himself as doing so and as having done so. In respect of the former we speak of a human being as 'having a body'; he himself refers to this as 'my body'; and others refer to it as 'your body' or 'his body' or 'Mr Jones's body'. In respect of the latter we speak of a human being as 'having a mind'; he himself speaks of 'my mind'; and others speak of 'your mind' or 'his mind' or 'Mr Jones's mind'.

It is important to remember that this is quite a unique use of the possessive case, and that all other uses are probably derived from it. For there is always a temptation to treat such expressions as on all fours with 'Mr Jones's hat' and 'Mr Jones's nose'. If we do so, we may be led to make inferences which are certainly unjustified and may well be false or even absurd. We might be led, e.g., to take for granted that Mr Jones is something distinct from his mind and from his body and from the combination of the two; so that he might lose his body or his mind or both, as he might lose his hat or his nose or both, and still exist.

Since a human being is something which has both a physical and a psychical aspect, we can and should consider the question of the identity of a single human being, or the diversity of two human beings, under each of these two headings. Undoubtedly physical and psychical identity generally go together, and so do physical and psychical diversity. But it is prima facie conceivable that physical identity might be accompanied by psychical diversity, and it is prima facie conceivable that physical diversity might be accompanied by psychical identity.

The first of these two alternatives is not merely a theoretical possibility, but a recognized though rather uncommon actuality. There are certainly cases where one and the same human body is associated in alternation with two or more distinct personalities, and there are cases in which it is alleged with some plausibility that two personalities are associated simultaneously with one and the same human body. As to the second of these two alternatives, any of the millions of human beings who accept the doctrine of reincarnation is committed to some form of the view that one and the same personality is associated in
course of time now with one and now with another of a sequence of different human bodies. I do not know of any case in which it is alleged that two or more co-existing human bodies, e.g. that of a certain London banker and that of a certain contemporary Congolese chief, were associated either successively or simultaneously with one and the same human personality. One could conceive perhaps, in the abstract, that whenever the London banker goes to sleep the Congolese chieftain wakes up, exhibiting the characteristic personal traits of the banker and remembering what the banker had experienced and witnessed while awake, and vice versa. It would be a wearing existence for both parties, and scarcely consistent with efficiency either in banking or in chieftainship; and I doubt if one really can conceive the alleged possibility in concrete detail.

In ordinary cases of alternating personality there is no suggestion that any of the personalities which alternate with each other in association with a certain one human body ever has been or ever will be associated with any other human body. But, in cases where a medium is ostensibly possessed for a time by the spirit of a certain deceased human being, the personality associated with the medium's body during the period in question claims to be identical with that which was formerly associated with the body of that human being. In some such cases there is certainly evidence which seems prima facie strongly to support that claim, though there are perhaps none in which the evidence is coercive.

Again, it is conceivable that there might be cases of ostensible possession in which the personality temporarily associated with the medium's body should claim that it would in course of time be associated with the body of a certain human being to be born at a certain future date to certain parents in a certain place. I believe that there are a few such cases. If the statements made were specific enough, it would in principle be possible to verify or refute them. And, if they should be verified, that would tend prima facie to support the claim, though again the evidence for it would never be coercive. I know of no cases which approach to fulfilling these conditions, but I am here considering only various conceivable alternatives.

Let us begin, then, with the physical identity of a single human being, i.e. the conditions under which we should agree that we are concerned with one and the same living human body. We must distinguish between what is commonly understood, or at any rate tacitly presupposed, in saying that a certain human body existing here and now is identical with a certain human body existing there and then, and a criterion for deciding whether this is or is not the case. A 'criterion' for human bodily identity may be defined as a characteristic, whose presence or absence can easily be detected, and with regard to which there is extremely strong empirical evidence that its presence is always associated with the presence of all that is commonly understood or tacitly presupposed in asserting such identity, whilst its absence is always associated with the absence of some essential element in the latter complex of properties.

A criterion for so-and-so may be no part of what is commonly understood or tacitly presupposed in
asserting the presence of so-and-so. Thus, e.g., an extremely satisfactory criterion of human bodily identity and of human bodily diversity has been found to be the identity or the diversity, respectively, of the pattern in thumb prints. But it is fairly safe to say that this is no part of what most people even nowadays do (or anyone before about 1890 did) commonly understand or tacitly presuppose when speaking of the identity of a certain human body in one set of circumstances with a certain human body in another set of circumstances.

There are fairly satisfactory criteria for the identity of a human being, in its bodily aspect, from its birth to its death; for the diversity of two human bodies; and for the distinction between a living human body and a dead one. That being assumed, we may now consider human beings in their psychical aspect, i.e. as persons.

I will begin by summarizing the essential facts about all the persons whom we have ordinary commonsense grounds for believing to exist. Each such person is something which combines in the most intimate way the following three features:

(1) It has an actual stream of experience of a certain special kind, though there may be numerous and longish gaps in this. Such a stream includes, besides first-order experiences (such as feeling a twinge of toothache, hearing a clock ticking, etc.), a running accompaniment of second-order and sometimes even of third-order experiences (e.g. feeling afraid on seeing a runaway horse, feeling ashamed of feeling afraid, feeling that it is rather silly to feel ashamed of feeling afraid, and so on). It includes ostensible rememberings, some purporting to be recollections of certain of one's own past experiences, and others purporting to be recollections of physical objects, states of affairs, or incidents as perceived by oneself in the past. Some of these ostensible rememberings may be partly or wholly delusive, but most of them may be presumed to be in the main veridical. It includes experiences of making, initiating, carrying out, modifying, laying aside and taking up again, various plans, which have their place in a wider scheme of life. It includes, therefore, experiences of long-range expectation, which may be either categorical or merely conditional; and long-range emotions, prospective and retrospective. These may be either reflexive, such as remorse for one's own ostensibly remembered misdeeds, or anxiously toned anticipation of what one is about to experience in a forthcoming interview with one's headmaster; or they may be non-reflexive, such as anxious anticipation of the outcome of an operation to be undergone by a friend. Lastly, unless I am altogether exceptional, they include a continual accompaniment, during one's waking hours, of sotto voce 'talking to oneself'. Much of this takes the form of auditory imagery, rather than of whispered speech audible only to oneself. But I think that an essential factor in it is the actual occurrence of the relevant incipient movements in one's vocal organs
or the muscles controlling them, and one's simultaneous awareness of these by actual sensation.

I shall describe any such stream of experience as 'personal'. There may well be streams of experience which lack some of these features and are below the personal level. It seems reasonable to suppose that the mental life of one of the higher mammals, such as a horse or a cow, would not include, e.g., experiences of long-range ostensible remembering or long-range expectation, and therefore would not include any of the emotions which presuppose such cognitive states. Let us describe such a stream of experience as 'animal'. It is hardly profitable to try to imagine the stream of experience which may accompany the life of a creature below the mammalian level, such as an oyster. It may be presumed to lack a great deal of what is characteristic of the mental life of a horse or a cow. The absence of highly specialized organs for perceiving various features of external things and states of affairs and events must involve a profound impoverishment in perceptual experience. One may fairly suppose, too, that such a creature as an oyster would lack even that power to recollect its immediate past and to anticipate its immediate future, which we can hardly avoid ascribing to a horse or a cow. Such a stream of experience might be described as 'biotic'.

Now a human being is not only a person. He is also a mammalian animal and a living organism. His personal stream of experience is grounded in his animal stream of experience, and the latter in turn is grounded in his biotic stream of experience; though the lower levels in this hierarchy may well be subtly modified by the higher ones. Moreover, there are periods in the life of a human being (e.g. when he is playing in a football match and actively engaged in running, tackling, etc., or when he is fighting hand-to-hand for his life) when the stream of experience associated with his body is almost confined to the animal and the biotic levels. And there may be periods (e.g. when he is in a state of coma or of dreamless sleep) when, if there be any stream of experience associated with his body, this is confined to the biotic level.

(2) So far I have been considering the mental or subjective aspect of a human being under what I will call 'the occurrent heading', i.e. in regard to the nature of the stream of actual experiences which constitute the mental life of such a being. I turn now to what I will call 'the dispositional heading'. The vast bulk of a person's memories, knowledge, beliefs, and skills exists at any moment only as dispositions to have such and such experiences or to perform such and such actions in such and such circumstances. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, of his desires, emotions, schemes, and ideals. Some of these dispositions are innate and common to human nature, others are peculiar to himself and have been acquired during his lifetime. They are organized in a special way, which is characteristic of himself and depends
jointly on his innate constitution and on the training which he has received, the particular
course of his experience, and so on, but which is a determinate form of the generic type of
organization characteristic of human nature.

During any short period of his waking life only a few of these dispositions are manifesting
themselves in actual experiences or actions. No doubt many more of them are in a state of
incipient activity, which manifests itself in a felt readiness or a felt disinclination to act or to
think in certain ways, and in such general characteristics of consciousness as selective
attention, cheerfulness, or depression. Then, again, those which are in action on any given
occasion are then manifesting themselves in that one of the many alternative possible ways
which the circumstances of the moment call forth. During the numerous gaps in a personal
stream of experience the only sense in which it is certain that a person exists is as the
bearer of the potentialities summed up in such an organized set of dispositions.

(3) Every person, whom we have ordinary everyday reasons for believing to exist, is an
embodied person. (i) There is one and only one body which manifests its existence and its
internal states and processes to any one person in the following peculiar way, viz. by a fairly
stable background of bodily feeling with occasional outstanding localized aches, tickles,
feelings of strain, of nausea, and so on. Let us call this the 'organically felt body'.

(ii) Let us ignore alleged cases of telekinesis. Then the following statement is true. The only
events in the physical world which can be directly initiated or modified or inhibited by a
person's experiences of volition, of putting forth and keeping up an effort, and so on, are
certain events in certain parts of a certain one living body. There is good scientific evidence for
saying that these physical events are in fact electrical changes in the brain of that body.
These, and their immediate sequels in the motor nerves, are neither intended by volition nor
represented by sensation in the stream of experience of the person in question. But the overt
movements of the limbs, the articulate utterance of sounds, and so forth, which do in fact
generally result from such changes in the brain, have been willed by the person in question
and are certainly represented by organic sensations in his stream of experience. Let us
speak of this body as the 'directly influencible body'.

(iii) Let us ignore alleged cases of clairvoyance. Then the following statement is true. The only
way in which a human person can become aware of any body or of any physical event or
state of affairs is this. Appropriate sensations must occur in his stream of experience. In
order for this to happen certain physical events must take place in the brain of a certain one
body. That will in general happen only if the appropriate sensory nerve-endings of that body
(whether extraceptive or proprioceptive) have been stimulated by a physical process of the appropriate kind, initiated from without or from within that body. Let us call this the 'directly influencing body'.

(iv) The mere occurrence, in a person's stream of experience, of visual, tactual, auditory, and other sensations, initiated in the way just described, is by no means enough to constitute the experience of perceiving an external body or physical event or state of affairs. Many other conditions must also be fulfilled. But, when they are fulfilled and an ostensible perception (whether veridical or delusive) does occur in a person's stream of experience, its object is perceived as from a centre located within a certain one body. In visual perception or quasi-perception, e.g., it is perceived in a certain perspective, at a certain distance, and in a certain direction relative to that body. Let us call this the 'perceptually central body'.

We may sum this up as follows, remembering that our statements are subject to the exclusion of alleged cases of telekinesis and of clairvoyance. Corresponding to any one personal stream of experience, and to the set of organized dispositions of which it is a manifestation, there is one and only one organically felt body, one and only one directly influencible body, one and only one directly influencing body, and one and only one perceptually central body.

Having listed these facts severally, we must now notice a most important additional fact, which is so familiar that it is liable to escape explicit mention. This is the fact that all these four descriptions apply, in all normal cases, to what is, by all ordinary physical criteria, one and the same body. It is one and the same body which alone manifests itself in a given person's experience by organic sensations; which alone can be directly influenced by his volitions, emotions, etc.; which alone can directly influence his stream of experience by initiating or modifying sensations in it; and which alone is the common centre about which the objects of all his ostensible perceptions are ranged.

So far as I can see, this fact is completely contingent. There is prima facie no purely logical absurdity in supposing that the organically felt body, the directly influencible body, the directly influencing body, and the perceptually central body, associated with a given personal stream of experience, should all be different bodies. A person might, e.g., get his organic and other sensations only through the stimulation of a certain human body in Cambridge; be able to speak and write only by directly influencing the brain of a certain human body in Stockholm; and perceive everything that he does perceive only as from a centre located in a certain human body in New York.
But, whatever the logical possibilities may be, and whatever occasional exceptions may occur, there is no doubt about what holds in ordinary human life. Corresponding to any personal stream of experience and to its dispositional background, for the existence of which we have ordinary everyday evidence, there is one and only one body which is at once its organically felt, its directly influenceable, its directly influencing, and its perceptually central body. Moreover, each such body has the familiar appearance and behaviour of a living human body, and has the anatomical structure and physiological properties associated with a living human organism. It should be noted that there is no logical absurdity in supposing a personal stream of experience, with its dispositional basis, to be incorporated in a non-human body, e.g. that of a cat or a parrot. Finally, every living human body has at least one personal stream of experience and corresponding set of organized dispositions associated with it in the four ways described above. We commonly take for granted that it has only one, but that assumption is known to break down in cases of multiple personality. It should be noted that there would be no logical absurdity in supposing that there might be living organisms in human form, e.g. zombies or vampires, which incorporate no personal stream of experience and no associated set of organized dispositions. They might be expected to betray this defect, as zombies and vampires are alleged to do, by peculiarities in their observable behaviour, suggesting strongly that they are 'not all there'.

I have now stated what I take to be the essential features of an ordinary human person in this life. In order profitably to discuss the question whether it is possible that such a person should survive the death of his body, it is important first to consider the continuity, and the occasional breaches of continuity, within the stream of experience associated with a single human body during its lifetime. For the death and dissolution of a human body is a far more profound change than any that happens to it during its life; and it seems prima facie reasonable to suppose that it would involve either a complete cessation of the associated stream of experience, or, if not, an even more radical breach in its continuity than any that occurs during the life of the body.

I will begin by considering the normal alternation of sleep and waking, and will then pass to the abnormal (but not paranormal) phenomena of multiple personality uncomplicated by claims to mediumship. In considering the alternation of sleep and waking I shall at first exclude the experience of dreaming, and confine my attention to the case of a person who, on awaking, does not ostensibly remember any particular dream or even that he has been dreaming. We will consider first the evidence available to such a person himself of the occurrence of a gap within his stream of experience, and of his identity with the person to whom the earlier segment of experience belonged.

What is the evidence which a person A has, on awaking from an apparently dreamless sleep, that there
has been a gap in his personal stream of experience, stretching back from the moment of waking to a certain moment in the past? Plainly an essential factor in it is a certain kind of combination of the presence and the absence of ostensible rememberings. On the one hand, ostensible rememberings either arise spontaneously or can be evoked voluntarily, which purport to be of experiences had or of things and events and states of affairs perceived up to and including a certain moment in the past. On the other hand, no ostensible rememberings either arise spontaneously or can be evoked voluntarily, which purport to be of experiences had or of things, events, or states of affairs perceived between them and the moment of waking.

Other important indicia available to a person in regard to himself are the following. (i) The surroundings which he perceives on awaking may seem to him familiar in all their main outlines, but certain details in them may have changed in exactly the way in which he knows from experience that they would be likely to have changed in a certain period of time (e.g. a candle may have burned down to a certain extent, the hands of his watch may have shifted by so much, and so on).

(ii) A very important indicium, available only to the person himself, is the basic familiarity of the massive background of bodily feeling, by which his body manifests itself to him in his personal stream of experience. Against this there may be a characteristic change in detail, e.g., the change from going to sleep feeling replete and waking up feeling hungry.

The importance of these two indicia will be seen, if we consider the following imaginary case. Imagine a human being going to sleep in familiar surroundings and expecting to awake in the same surroundings; and suppose that his body were gently moved during sleep into wholly strange ones. Imagine, further, that without his knowledge a certain drug were to be administered to him, which will operate during sleep so as to alter profoundly the whole background of organic sensation. Even if, on waking, there were plenty of ostensible rememberings, purporting to be of experiences had and of things and events perceived before the beginning of the period, it seems likely that the person who had just awoken would be extremely puzzled and confused as to his identity with, or diversity from, the person who had fallen asleep.

Let us now consider the evidence which a human being B can have as to the continuity or the discontinuity of the personal stream of experience associated with another human being A during a certain period. If we ignore for the present the possibility of telepathy and of clairvoyance, such evidence must consist entirely of external physical signs, circumstantial or narrative, noted and interpreted (wittingly or unwittingly) by B. And these must go back ultimately to causal ancestors in the overt behaviour, positive or negative, of A's body.

It is a circumstantial indicium for B that there has been a gap in A's stream of personal experience during a certain period, if he observes or is credibly informed that A's body did not make the normal responses to sensory stimuli, that its eyes were shut, that it was lying prone and breathing heavily, and so on. It is a
narrative indicium for B, pointing in the same direction, if A afterwards tells him that, so far as he can remember, he was having no experiences during the period. These two kinds of indicia often point in the same direction, but sometimes they may conflict. A may tell B afterwards that he remembers having had certain dreams during the period. Or he may tell B afterwards that he remembers that he was continuously having experiences, of such and such kinds, during the period; but that he was stricken with temporary paralysis and aphasia, and so was unable to give any of the wonted external signs of consciousness.

So far I have deliberately excluded the experience of dreaming. I have dealt with this fairly fully in Chapter VI, and I may refer the reader to what I have said there. All that I need add here is this. Dream-experiences are important for our purpose in two quite different ways. In the first place they throw light on what is at present our main topic, viz. the limits of normal personal identity, continuity, and discontinuity. They form a convenient stepping-stone to cases of multiple personality, to which I propose to turn. Secondly, they show that a human being has within him the mechanism and the materials for producing an extremely elaborate, and often fairly coherent and sustained, sequence of hallucinatory quasi-perceptions, as of an environment of things and persons in which he is living and acting and suffering, although at the time he is not having the externally initiated sensations which are the basis of normal waking perception. This is relevant to the question of the possibility of survival. Since ordinary human beings can do this here and now, it is conceivable that, if a human person could and did survive the death of his present body, he might carry with him the mechanism and the materials for producing such internally coherent phantasmagoria, without needing external stimulation. If so, he might continue, even though disembodied, to live as it were in a kind of dream-world not so very unlike the world which he actually inhabited when embodied.

Deferring such speculations for the present, let us now consider the phenomenon of multiple personality uncomplicated with claims to mediumship. Such cases are prima facie of two kinds, viz. where one personality merely alternates with another in the same human being, and where one claims to co-exist with the other. We will begin with the former.

Let us suppose that two personalities, P1 and P2 alternate in the same human being A. Under what I have called the 'occurrent heading', this means that there are two personal streams of experience, S1 and S2 associated with A's body in the ways already described. There are gaps in the stream S1, as judged by the personality P1, and as narrated by him to other human beings when he is in control of the body and able to use its speech-organs. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, of the stream S2 and the personality P2. But the gaps in either stream are occupied by segments of the other, and each segment influences and is influenced by the contemporary behaviour and circumstances of the body in the normal ways. So, to an external observer, A does not appear to have alternating periods of consciousness and unconsciousness, except of course for the normal alternations of sleep and waking.
That which comes under what I have called the 'dispositional heading', i.e. the persistent set of organized traces and dispositions which underlies the personal stream of experience, changes sharply and characteristically whenever a segment of S2 intervenes between two segments of S1, and changes back again as sharply and characteristically whenever a segment of S1 intervenes between two segments of S2. The circumstantial indicia, e.g. handwriting, expressions of emotional reaction towards the same things and persons, range of acquired knowledge and skill displayed, and so on, change sharply when one personality alternates with the other. And these changes agree with the narrative indicia, coming from A's lips or pen, and reporting an interruption in one personal stream of experience and a reinstatement of the other.

Sometimes an interval may elapse between the ending of a segment of one such stream and the beginning of a segment of the other. This interval may appear as a gap in the stream of personal experience both to P1 and to P2, and during it A's body may show the normal indicia of suspended consciousness, e.g. of being asleep or in a swoon.

There is an obvious *prima facie* analogy between alternations of personality in the waking state and alternations between waking and dreaming experiences in normal human beings. But the unlikenesses are at least as noteworthy as the likenesses. (i) Generally each alternating personality professes and evinces complete ignorance of the experiences of the other. In some cases, however, one of them (and only one) claims to be (or to be able at will to become) aware in some peculiar way of the experiences of the other. But, even so, that one never speaks of those experiences as 'mine', but always as 'his' or 'hers'. On the other hand, any dream-experience which a person is aware of having had is always referred to by him as 'mine'.

(ii) In cases of alternating personality the experiences had by either personality, on successive occasions when it is in control of the body, link up with each other. across the gaps during which the other personality was in control, as a normal person's waking experiences on successive days do, and as his dream-experiences on successive nights do not.

(iii) Lastly, the body is active and in receipt of the normal sensory stimuli from its surroundings when either of the two alternating personalities is in control and the other in abeyance.

It remains to say something about alleged cases of a plurality of co-existing personalities in a single human being. At the first move these resemble cases of merely alternating personality, such as I have just described. But now one of the alternating personalities (say P1), when in control of A's body and therefore able to make statements in speech or in writing, claims to have persisted and to have had its own continuous personal stream of experience S1 even during those periods when the other personality P2 was in control of the body. P1 claims, e.g., to have been still getting the usual sensations through the
stimulation of the body even when P2 was in control of it; though he and P2 may attend to very different selections from this common stock of sensory material, may put very different interpretations upon it, and may feel very different emotions towards what they both simultaneously perceive. Moreover, P1 claims to be directly aware (or to be able to be so whenever he cares to take the trouble) of the thoughts, desires, and emotions which P2 has when in control of the body. On the other hand, P2 makes no corresponding claims. When he is in control and able to communicate by speech or by writing, he reports, with regard to the periods when P1 is in control, that they are for him just complete blanks in his personal stream of experience. In fact, he knows nothing of P1's existence, experiences, actions, or character except by hearsay or by inference.

There is one significant fact to be noted here. Sometimes P2 claims that, in moments of relaxation or distraction, there occasionally well up in his personal stream of experience isolated images, which present themselves to him as referring to this or that specific past experience, or to this or that past state of affairs as it would have appeared to sight or to hearing, but do not present themselves as referring to any past experience of his or to any past state of affairs which he has witnessed. It is alleged that these curious experiences, which P2 occasionally has, often correspond very strikingly to certain past experiences which P1 in fact had, or to certain states of affairs which P1 in fact witnessed, when in control of the body. If this be a correct account of such images, they cannot correctly be called ostensible memory-images in P2. For a memory-image is essentially autobiographical in its reference. On the other hand, they resemble 'ostensible memory-images in being retro-referent. We might therefore describe them as 'non-autobiographical ostensible retro-cognitions'.

This will be a convenient point at which to consider in rather more detail the part played by memory in personal identity itself, and in the awareness by a person at a certain moment of his identity with a certain person who existed at certain earlier periods.

We must begin by noting certain purely linguistic facts about the ordinary usage of the word 'memory' and associated words such as 'remember', 'recollect', etc. (1) If a person says 'I remember so-and-so', he may mean (i) that he is now in an actual state of remembering so-and-so. But he may mean only (ii) that he has a persistent capacity, acquired in the past, either to initiate such a state in himself at will or to get into such a state whenever he is suitably stimulated. We may call these respectively (i) the occurrent, and (ii) the dispositional, senses of 'memory'. Obviously 'memory', in the dispositional sense, presupposes 'memory' in the occurrent sense, and any ambiguities in the latter will affect the former.

(2) The phrase 'actual state of remembering' may be used to describe two very different kinds of state, though in practice one of them may often accompany the other. It may be used to denote (i) an experience of being aware retrospectively, and without inference by oneself or information from others, of some past
experience had by oneself; or of some past external event or state of affairs which has been witnessed by oneself; or of some other person or some thing as he, she, or it was on one or more occasions in the past when witnessed by oneself. But it may also be used to denote an application of some kind of knowledge or skill acquired by oneself in the past. (Examples would be if a person were to say that he is now 'remembering' or 'calling to mind' the German for 'cherry', the first line of Paradise Lost, how to solve an equation of the second degree, the conjugation of τίθημι, and so on.) We may call these respectively (i) experiences of recollecting, and (ii) states of applying acquired knowledge or skill.

(3) When 'remembering so-and-so' is used to mean having an experience of recollecting so-and-so, it is used with the implication, or at least the very strong suggestion, that the experience is veridical. It would sound very odd to say: 'Smith is now remembering the sinking feeling that he had when about to interview his headmaster last Tuesday, but in point of fact he had no sinking feeling at the time.' And it would sound equally odd to say: 'Jones is now remembering the Master of X, as he looked when he fell into the river, but as a matter of fact the Master never fell into the river in his life.' One would be inclined to say that, if Smith did not have that feeling at the time in question, he cannot properly be said to be 'remembering' it now; and that, if the Master of X never fell into the river, Jones cannot properly be said to be 'remembering' the Master having done so.

It is, however, an important fact that there are experiences which, at the time when they occur, are indistinguishable to the experient from genuine experiences of recollecting so-and-so. If we are concerned with them merely in their phenomenological or psychological aspect, without regard to their veridicality or delusiveness, we tend to speak of them as 'experiences of recollecting so-and-so'. If, on the other hand, we explicitly consider them also in their epistemological aspect, and know or strongly suspect them to be delusive, we feel it inappropriate and misleading to apply that name to them.

We can avoid these linguistic ambiguities by introducing the technical term 'ostensible recollecting' for any experience, whether it be veridical or delusive, which has the purely phenomenological features of an experience of recollecting. We can then distinguish ostensible recollectings which are veridical and those which are delusive; and we can speak of 'a veridical ostensible recollecting of so-and-so', and of 'a delusive ostensible recollecting as of so-and-so'. What we have to bear in mind is that, when it is said without qualification that A is 'remembering' so-and-so, there is a very strong suggestion that A's experience of ostensibly recollecting is veridical, and that this suggestion may be completely misleading.

(4) It is part of the meaning of words like 'remembering' that they are sui-referential besides being retro-referential. To say that A is 'recollecting' so-and-so implies ex vi termini that so-and-so was either a past experience had by A himself, or was an event or state of affairs or person or thing perceived by A himself in the past. Again, to say that A is 'remembering' so-and-so (e.g. Euclid's proof that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal), in the sense of applying acquired knowledge or skill, implies ex vi termini...
that the set of organized dispositions, in which that knowledge or skill resides, was acquired or organized or both by A himself through something that he experienced or did or suffered in the past.

All this is a matter of linguistic usage. But that usage is no doubt bound up with the tacit unquestioned taking for granted of certain basic limiting principles which concern matters of non-linguistic fact. These may be formulated as follows: (i) The only past events that a person can ever be directly aware of (as distinct from becoming aware of them by inference, or by hearing and understanding the reports of others, or by perceiving and interpreting permanent records made by himself or by others) are either (a) his own past experiences, or (b) external events which he himself has perceived. (ii) A person can become directly aware at any moment (subject to the same explanations as above) of other persons and of things, as they were in the past, only in so far as he himself perceived them at the past time in question as being in the state in question. (iii) The only way in which a person can now be in possession of an organized set of dispositions to perceive or think or feel or behave in certain ways under certain circumstances, is either (a) through inheritance from his parents, or (b) through the influence of what he himself has done or suffered or experienced in the past.

The first two of the above principles may be more briefly, if less accurately, summarized as follows: The only kind of direct retrocognition which a person can experience is recollection, i.e. a mode of retro-cognition, the objects of which are confined to one's own past experiences and to external events, things, and persons, as perceived in the past by oneself.

Now it is important to notice that there is no logical necessity in these principles. It is not impossible, in the sense of self-evidently absurd, to suppose that a person might now be directly aware of a past event which was not one of his own past experiences and which had not been perceived by him when it happened. Nor is it impossible, in that sense, to suppose that a person might now be directly aware of some other person or of some thing, as it was in the past, though he had not perceived it or indeed been in a position to do so at the past time in question. There is, in fact, a certain amount of quite decent prima facie evidence for the occurrence, in a few peculiarly gifted persons, of what I will call 'states of direct but not ostensibly recollective retro-cognition'. When such a person is presented by the experimenter with a certain thing (e.g. a ring, a fragment of pottery, and so on), which the subject has never seen or handled before, and about the history of which neither he nor the experimenter has any normal information, he may become ostensibly aware of certain highly specific incidents in which it seems to him that the thing was involved in the past. And subsequent enquiry may establish that the subject's statements as to such incidents are correct. Such experiences are not ostensibly recollective, for it does not seem to the subject that they refer to events or states of affairs which he himself has experienced or witnessed, either in his present life or in a former life in a different human body. (For examples the reader may be referred to a paper by G. Pagenstecher, entitled 'Past Events Seership', in Vol. 16 of the Proceedings of the American SPR.)
The following points should here be noted about ostensible recollecting of things, of other persons, and of external events and states of affairs. (a) In having such an experience one automatically takes for granted that one must have perceived at some time in the past an object such as one is now ostensibly recollecting. But one may have no present recollection of having done so. (b) In perceiving another person or an external thing or state of affairs one may have a characteristic kind of experience which we describe by saying that the object now perceived "looks familiar", or "sounds familiar", or "feels familiar", and so on. In such cases one tends to take for granted that one must have perceived that object before, though one may have no ostensible recollection as of having done so. It is well known that such automatic prima facie 'takings for granted' may be quite misleading. There is sometimes overwhelming evidence for concluding that the person in question never did perceive such an object as he is now ostensibly recollecting, or that he never before perceived the object which he is now perceiving with a feeling of familiarity.

Let us now consider the bearing which the above remarks on 'memory' have on the question of 'memory' as a constituent in, or a criterion of, personal identity. (i) To say that everything that a person ever remembers is either an experience had by himself or something witnessed by himself is either tautologically true or materially false, according to the interpretation which one puts on the word 'remember'. If one uses it to mean what is meant by 'ostensibly and veridically recollect', the statement is a tautology. If one uses it to mean what is meant by 'ostensibly recollect, whether veridically or delusively', the statement is no longer tautological, but it is materially false. For there are certainly experiences of ostensibly recollecting, which are indistinguishable phenomenologically from veridical recollecting and lead the experient to precisely the same kind of 'taking for granted', but are delusive. What the person ostensibly recollects either never happened or never existed, or, if it did, it happened to or was witnessed by some other person. An example would be George IV's ostensible recollections, in his declining years, as of having fought in the Battle of Waterloo.

(ii) Consider next the statement that only that which a person recollects belongs to his own personal stream of consciousness. To begin with, this needs to be made more specific in respect of time. It is certain that at any given moment a person is actually recollecting only a very small selection from what he has experienced and what he has perceived. That selection varies very greatly from one moment to another, even within a short period of his life, according to his shifting interest and attention. Then, again, in the latter part of one's life one may never recollect many incidents in the earlier part of it which one may often have recollected when they were fairly recent. On the other hand, it is not unusual for very old people to have extremely vivid and detailed (and often veridical) recollections of scenes and experiences in their early life, and no recollections at all of experiences quite recently had or objects quite recently perceived.

In view of all this, the only form of the above statement which seems worth discussing is the following: Only that which a person recollects at some time or other belongs to his own personal stream of experience. But
are we prepared to reject all that would be cut out by this principle? For my own part, I feel fairly confident that I must have had experiences and witnessed incidents which I did not recollect even immediately afterwards; which I have never recollected since; and which I am most unlikely ever to recollect in future, save possibly if I were to be hypnotized or psycho-analysed, which most likely I never shall be.

In this connexion I think it is relevant to mention the following kind of combination of recollecting and failing to recollect, which I have often noticed in myself and which is no doubt common in others too. At $t_2$ I may recollect, either spontaneously or by making a special effort, that I had, immediately after awaking at $t_1$, a clear and detailed recollection as of a dream which I had had immediately before awaking then. But I may not be able, either at $t_2$ or on any subsequent occasion, to recollect the details of that dream. Moreover, I may at $t_2$ and possibly on subsequent occasions recollect that I tried, very soon after awaking at $t_1$, to repeat my detailed recollecting of the dream, and found that I could not do so. The occurrence of such second-order recollecting at any time is enough, even when one finds oneself quite unable to repeat the relevant first-order recollecting, to provide one with a prima facie case for believing that one did in fact have an experience of a fairly detailed and determinate kind at a certain time, though one can no longer recollect it in any detail.

It should be added that sometimes the following sequence of experiences may be had. At some time after $t_2$ (the latest moment at which one had tried in vain to recollect the details of the dream, but had recollected that one had recollected those details immediately after awaking at $t_1$) something may call up in one, by association, images which seem to one to bear on the forgotten dream. And at that stage, either spontaneously or by making a special effort, one may get a fairly detailed ostensible recollection of it. (I have often had this kind of experience myself, and it is not likely that I am singular in that respect.)

Now one's knowledge of the fact that this has happened in some cases has an obvious bearing on one's attitude towards those in which it has not happened. It tends to strengthen the conviction that, even in the latter cases, the mere occurrence of the second-order ostensible recollections (in the absence of any corresponding first-order ones) is prima facie evidence for one's having had in the remoter past a dream, which was in fact fairly detailed and determinate, but which one can no longer recollect in any detail.

In the above discussion I have been taking dreams as a striking example. But all that I have been saying of them would apply, mutatis mutandis, to cases where one ostensibly recollects having once upon a time had a clear and detailed ostensible recollection as of a certain waking experience in the then recent past, but is no longer able to get any detailed ostensible recollection as of that waking experience itself.

(iii) So far I have been considering 'memory' in its occurrent sense, and under that head I have been concerned rather with experiences of ostensible recollecting than with states of applying acquired
knowledge or skill. I turn now to 'memory' in its dispositional sense, covering both the power to recollect such and such past experiences and such and such objects perceived in the past, and the power to think, talk, and act at present in certain ways which have been acquired in the past.

(a) It might seem plausible to say that only those experiences which a person could recollect belong to his personal stream of consciousness; and that all such experiences do so, even if there should be some of them which he never actually recollects. But there are ambiguities in both parts of this assertion.

In the first place, how much is supposed to be covered by 'could'? If we take it to mean no more than 'would, if he were to try and were to be supplied with normal reminders', we cut out many experiences which we should certainly wish to include in a person's stream of personal consciousness. If, on the other hand, we begin to extend the meaning of 'could' beyond this, it is hard to know where to stop. Is it to include what he would recollect if and only if he were treated by a skilled hypnotist or psycho-analyst? Or if and only if he were miraculously stimulated by God at the Day of Judgement? If we understand 'could' in so wide a sense as this, the proposition under discussion may exclude nothing that we should wish to retain, but it will be of no use as a criterion for what does or does not belong to a person's stream of consciousness.

Then, again, the question whether 'recollect' is understood to mean ostensibly and veridically recollect, or ostensibly recollect whether veridically or not, arises to bedevil the second clause in the statement under discussion. On the former interpretation that clause is true but tautological; on the latter it is informative but false.

(b) It is plain that the power to apply a certain skill, which we have good reason to believe can exist only after it has been gradually acquired, is an important element in, or criterion for, personal identity. Suppose that, during certain periods in the course of a certain human being's waking life he were to show the ability to understand and talk French, but no capacity to understand or to talk German; and suppose that during other periods, intermediate between the former, he showed the opposite combination of capacity and incapacity. That would be a strong indication (though not, of course, conclusive evidence) that two personalities alternated in control of that human being's body.

The fact is that, in the case of ordinary human beings in this life, there are many criteria for personal identity; and that ostensible recollecting is only one of them, though certainly a very important one. These various criteria usually support each other, but occasionally they may conflict.

We may illustrate this (a) in the case of an individual A judging about himself, without consulting others; and (b) that of an individual B judging about A without explicitly considering himself. Both these cases are, of course, artificial abstractions. Nearly everyone in this life is in constant social intercourse with many
others, and is continually 'exchanging notes' with them.

(a) Suppose that A has regularly kept a diary for many years, and that he now reads it through. He will generally find all that is recorded to be more or less in character with his present personality, as he knows it, after allowing for a normal secular change with increasing age, and for normal occasional variations, such as temporary illnesses, falling in or out of love, and so on. Most of the recorded incidents will seem familiar; and, in regard to many, the reading of the record will call up more or less vivid and detailed ostensible recollections. He may well find, however, that some of the entries in his diary are altogether inconsistent with certain vivid and detailed present ostensible recollections, as of what he was experiencing and witnessing at the date in question.

This will not be likely to worry him. For his own experience, and what he has heard and read, will have convinced him that ostensible recollecting, though in the main trustworthy, as tested in various ways, is occasionally delusive in detail and even in outline. But suppose he were to find certain sets of entries in his diary, interspersed among the rest, with regard to which the actions described and the feelings recorded seemed to him quite 'out of character' and evoked no ostensible recollections whatever. Then he would be inclined to use some such linguistically paradoxical expression as: 'I suppose I must have had those experiences, or done those acts, or witnessed those events, but I cannot have been myself at the time.' Suppose, further, that he were to notice that, whilst all the other entries (among which these peculiar ones were interspersed) were in his own familiar handwriting, all the entries in question were in a different and unfamiliar handwriting, the same in all of them. He would then begin to consider very seriously the possibility that those entries all describe the experiences had, the objects perceived, and so on, by a certain person quite literally other than himself. Now it might be that he could confidently rule out the possibility that any other human being could from time to time have abstracted the diary from his writing-table and written those entries in it without his knowledge or consent. In that case he would almost be forced to the conclusion that the body which he generally controls is at intervals controlled by a person other than himself.

(b) For any human being B the identity and continuity of another human being A, in its bodily aspect, is a strong prima facie indication of A's identity and continuity in his or her personal aspect. But there may be such strong counter-indications in particular cases that B is forced to conclude that A's body is controlled at certain periods by one and at intervening periods by another, of two distinct personalities PA and PA', whose respective streams of personal experience have even less in common than the waking life and the dream life of a single embodied person. As I have said, the evidence available to B for such a conclusion may be both narrative and circumstantial. And the positive and negative facts about A's 'behaviour' (in the widest sense), which B can observe, may point in the same direction as the statements which A from time to time makes in speech or writing to B as to what is in principle private and unobservable by others.
I have now said as much as seems needful about the personalities of ordinary human beings, as revealed to themselves in self-observation and to their neighbours in speech, gesture, and action; about the gaps which regularly occur within a single personal stream of experience during sleep, and the dream-experiences which often occur within such gaps; about the rare but well attested cases, where two or more personal streams of experience are associated with one and the same human body, and the gaps in each are occupied by segments of the other; and about the part played by 'memory' (in the various senses of that ambiguous word which I have distinguished) as a factor in, or a criterion for, personal identity. I pass now to discuss, in the light of all this, the question of the possibility of a human personality surviving, in some sense or other, the death and destruction of the physical body with which it has been associated.

Before entering on this question it is necessary to distinguish the following alternatives. If a human personality could conceivably survive the death of the physical body with which it has been associated, it might be thought of as persisting either (1) without any body, or (2) in association with a body of some kind or other. The second of these alternatives divides into the following two sub-alternatives, viz. (i) that the body with which that personality is now associated is of a peculiar non-physical kind, or (ii) that it is just another ordinary physical body, human or animal, on earth or on some other planet. We may describe alternatives (1) and (2) respectively as 'unembodied' and 'embodied' survival; and we may describe the two sub-alternatives (i) and (ii) under alternative (2) respectively as 'survival with a non-physical body' and 'reincarnation'. It should be noted that reincarnation would not necessarily exclude temporary survival with a non-physical body or in an unembodied state. For suppose that there were an interval between the death of the human being A1 and the conception of A2, who is the next later incarnation of the personality which was associated with A1's body. Then that personality must have persisted during the interval in some state other than that of physical embodiment.

As regards unembodied survival, I would make the following remarks. The few Western philosophers in modern times who have troubled to discuss the question of survival seem generally to have taken for granted that the survival of a human personality would be equivalent to its persistence without any kind of physical organism. Some of them have proceeded to argue that the attempt to conceive a personal stream of experience, without a body as organ and centre of perception and action and as the source of a persistent background of bodily feeling, is an attempt to suppose something self-contradictory in principle or inconceivable when one comes down to detail. They have concluded that it is simply meaningless to talk of a human personality surviving the death of its body. Their opponents in this matter have striven to show that the supposition of a personal stream of experience, in the absence of any kind of associated organism, is self-consistent in principle and conceivable in detail. They have concluded that it is possible, at any rate in the sense of conceivable without inconsistency, that a human personality should survive the death of the body with which it has been associated.
Now I have two comments to make on this. One concerns both parties, and the other concerns the second group of them.

(a) Of all the hundreds of millions of human beings, in every age and clime, who have believed (or have talked or acted as if they believed) in human survival, hardly any have believed in unembodied survival. Hindus and Buddhists, e.g., believe in reincarnation in an ordinary human or animal body or occasionally in the non-physical body of some non-human rational being, such as a god or a demon. Christians (if they know their own business, which is not too common nowadays) believe in some kind of (unembodied?) persistence up to the General Resurrection, and in survival thereafter with a peculiar kind of supernatural body (St Paul's πνευματικόν σώμα) correlated in some intimate and unique way with the animal body, (ψυχικόν σώμα) which has died and rotted away. Nor are such views confined to babes and sucklings. Spinoza, e.g., certainly believed in human immortality; and he cannot possibly have believed, on his general principles, in the existence of a mind without some kind of correlated bodily organism. Leibniz said explicitly that, if per impossible a surviving mind were to be without an organism, it would be 'a deserter from the general order'. It seems to me rather futile for a modern philosopher to discuss the possibility of human survival on an assumption which would have been unhesitatingly rejected by almost everyone, lay or learned, who has ever claimed seriously to believe in it.

(b) Suppose it could be shown that it is not inconceivable, either in principle or in detail, that there should be a personal stream of experience not associated with any kind of bodily organism. That would by no means be equivalent to showing that it is not inconceivable that the personality of a human being should survive, in an unembodied state, the death of his physical body. For such survival would require that a certain one such unembodied personal stream of experience stands to a certain one embodied personal stream of experience, associated with a human body now dead, in those peculiar and intimate relations which must hold if both are to count as successive segments of the stream of experience of one and the same person. Is it conceivable that the requisite continuity and similarity should hold between two successive strands of personal experience so radically different in nature as those two would seem prima facie to be? Granted that there might conceivably be unembodied persons, and that there certainly have been embodied persons who have died, it might still be quite inconceivable or overwhelmingly improbable that any of the former should be personally identical with any of the latter.

Speaking for myself, I find it more and more difficult, the more I try to go into concrete detail, to conceive of a person so unlike the only ones that I know anything about, and from whom my whole notion of personality is necessarily derived, as an unembodied person would inevitably be. He would have to perceive foreign things and events (if he did so at all) in some kind of clairvoyant way, without using special sense-organs, such as eyes and ears, and experiencing special sensations through their being stimulated from without. He would have to act upon foreign things and persons (if he did so at all) in some kind of telekinetic way,
without using limbs and without the characteristic feelings of stress, strain, etc., that come from the skin, the joints, and the muscles, when we use our limbs. He would have to communicate with other persons (if he did so at all) in some kind of telepathic way, without using vocal organs and emitting articulate sounds; and his conversations with himself (if he had any) would have to be conducted purely in imagery, without any help from incipient movements in the vocal organs and the sensations to which they give rise in persons like ourselves.

All this is 'conceivable', so long as one keeps it in the abstract; but, when I try to think 'what it would be like' in concrete detail, I find that I have no clear and definite ideas. That incapacity of mine, even if it should be shared by most others, does not of course set any limit to what may in fact exist and happen in nature. But it does set a very definite limit to profitable speculation on these matters. And, if I cannot clearly conceive what it would be like to be an unembodied person, I find it almost incredible that the experiences of such a person (if such there could be) could be sufficiently continuous with those had in his lifetime by any deceased human being as to constitute together the experiences of one and the same person.

Passing next to survival with some kind of non-physical body, I would refer the reader to what I have said in Chapter IX (pp. 230-8) under the heading of Extra-subjective Theories of collective and reciprocal hallucinations, and to the discussion in Chapter XIV (pp. 342-8) under the heading Some alleged Observations by Swedenborg. I will content myself here with adding the following remarks:

(a) I think it is fair to say that some of those ostensible communicators through mediums who have given the most impressive prima facie evidence for their identity with certain deceased human persons, and who have displayed intelligence, good sense, and culture in their ostensible communications, have asserted explicitly that they have bodies and that they perceive by means of sense-organs, though they claim also to have other means of cognizing objects and events and of influencing things and persons. (I would cite Drayton Thomas's ostensible communicators and their statements as an example.) I think it is also fair to say that I know of no ostensible communicators who have denied, whether explicitly or by implication, that they have bodies. Now it is of course possible to accept as veridical that part of the ostensible communications which points to the identity of the ostensible communicator with a certain deceased person, and to reject, as delusion on his part or as fantasy on the part of the medium, everything which asserts or implies that the ostensible communicator has a body of some kind and perceives by some kind of sense-organs. But I must say that that would strike me as a pretty high-handed and arbitrary way of dealing with evidence.

(b) Suppose it were possible to accept at anything like their face value any of the very numerous accounts of the production of 'ectoplasm' from the bodies of entranced mediums, and its formation into temporary
'materializations' as of this or that human form. Then that would, I think, strengthen the case for survival with some kind of non-physical body, if there be a case for any kind of survival. But I can attach very little weight to this line of argument. Physical mediumship in general, and that which is concerned with ostensible materialization in particular, reeks with and stinks of fraud. Some 'ectoplasm' is known to have been butter-muslin; much more of it may most reasonably be suspected of being composed of that or of some other equally homely material; and I know of no case where the evidence is good enough to build upon. But one ought, perhaps, to bear in mind the possibility that there may be 'one halfpenny-worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack'.

(c) If survival be conceivable, then I cannot but think that the least implausible form of the hypothesis would be that, at any rate immediately after death and for some indefinite period later, the surviving personality is embodied in some kind of non-physical body, which was during life associated in some intimate way with the physical body. If so, I should think it quite likely that many surviving personalities would - as Swedenborg alleges that they do - at first, and for some considerable time afterwards, confuse this non-physical body with their former physical one, and fail to realize that they have died.

Passing finally to the alternative of reincarnation, I will make the following remarks:

(a) If one takes the world as a whole, belief in reincarnation is and has been perhaps the most widespread form of the belief in survival. It has not, however, been common in recent times in Western Europe, either among plain men or among philosophers or among those interested in psychical research. The most that can be said on the other side is that one very distinguished philosopher, McTaggart[1], argued for it on metaphysical grounds in the early part of the twentieth century; and that among those interested in psychical research (other than Theosophists, who have acquired their doctrines from India) the doctrine has been taken much more seriously in France than in England*.

* ISS note: It is likely that Broad was referring to the whole of Britain.

(b) Such empirical evidence as has been adduced in favour of the view that the personalities of certain deceased human beings have been reincarnated in the bodies of certain other human beings, born after the death of the former, has recently been reviewed and critically discussed in two papers by Dr lan Stevenson in the Journal of the American SPR, Vol. LIV, Nos. 2 and 3, entitled 'Evidence for Survival from claimed Memories of former Incarnations'. I would refer the reader to those two papers, and to the books and articles quoted in them. The evidence, even if it could be accepted at its face value, is far from coercive in any of these cases; but I think that it may fairly be said to be strongly suggestive of reincarnation in a few of the best of them.
(c) Such evidence as has been offered is always of the following kind. A certain member (generally a young child) of family X, residing at place Y, begins repeatedly to allege that he or she has lived on earth before as such and such a member of another family U at another place W, and has died there fairly recently under such and such circumstances. The young person in question (it is alleged) offers detailed accounts of the situation, external appearance, and internal arrangements of the house in which he or she claims to have lived and died; gives the names of various friends and relatives in the former life; describes certain outstanding incidents witnessed or taken part in during that life; and so on. On being last taken to the distant town in question, which neither the subject nor the present relatives have ever visited, the child in question (it is alleged) leads the way to the house without prompting, recognizes the former relatives, and so on, and then sometimes has further ostensible recollections which prove to be veridical. In some cases (it is claimed) certain circumstances about the house as a whole or one of the rooms have been changed. The subject at once recognizes this, and states that they were such and such when he or she used to live there; and these statements are found to be correct.

It is plain that evidence of this kind is open to many serious *prima facie* objections, and it may be doubted whether it would be prudent to accept any existing case at its face value. But, leaving that aside, it is of great interest to compare and contrast such cases with those in which an entranced medium is from time to time ostensibly possessed by a certain personality which claims to be identical with that of a certain deceased human being. Plainly the tests available for the veridicality or otherwise of such claims are *in principle* the same in both cases, though detailed procedures applicable in cases of the one kind may be inapplicable in those of the other.

(d) The principles taken for granted by those who would be inclined to regard evidence of the kind which I have been describing (provided it could stand up to criticism) as favourably relevant to the hypothesis of reincarnation, are the following. It is assumed that a present ostensible recollection by a person, as of a certain experience had or as of certain things, incidents, etc., witnessed, is *prima facie* evidence that, if such an experience was had and if such things, etc., were witnessed, then it must have been *that very same person* who had the experience or witnessed the scenes. Again, it is assumed that, if a person, on now perceiving certain things, persons, scenes, etc., feels them to be familiar, that is *prima facie* evidence that *that very same person* has perceived those same objects in the past. Now, by hypothesis, the ostensible recollections have proved to be *veridical*, in the sense that (whether or not they be *genuine recollections*) they agree with relevant facts about the past, of which the subject can have had no normal source of information. And, by hypothesis, the subject, in *his or her present body*, did not have and could not have had the experiences or witnessed the objects ostensibly recollected now, and has not previously perceived the objects which he or she now perceives with a feeling of familiarity. From these principles, and from these alleged facts, positive and negative, it is argued that the subject's present experiences are *genuine veridical recollections*, and therefore that the personality which is now associated with the subject's present body must have pre-existing and have been associated with a certain other human body which lived
and died at an assignable place and time.

(e) If we would compare mediumistic phenomena with alleged cases of reincarnation, we might say that reincarnation would be a kind of lifelong 'possession' of the body of a living human being by the personality of one now dead, and that mediumistic possession would be a kind of transitory and occasional 'reincarnation' of the personality of a deceased human being in the body of the medium. The analogy cannot, of course, be pressed beyond a certain point. For the word 'possession' implies that the human being who is said to be 'possessed' has a permanent independent personality of his own, which is temporarily ousted or repressed by a foreign personality. The word 'reincarnation' has no such implications. The human being in whom the personality of a certain deceased individual is said to be 'reincarnated' is not supposed to have a personality of his own other than that which has been reincarnated in his body. Nevertheless, the analogy is not altogether futile; one could imagine, e.g., an intermediate case, where a human being evinced multiple personality, and where one (and not the other) of the two personalities claimed and appeared prima facie to be identical with that of a certain deceased human being. (Cf., e.g., the Roff-Vennum Case, discussed in Myers's *Human Personality*, Vol. 1, pp. 360-8.)

(f) Even if there were cases where the evidence could stand up to reasonable criticism, and where it very strongly supported the hypothesis of reincarnation, it would be quite unjustifiable to jump from this to the conclusion that all or most human personalities are reincarnated sooner or later after the death of the bodies with which they have been associated. There is, plainly, not the faintest empirical evidence to suggest that reincarnation, if it happens at all, is anything but an extremely rare and exceptional occurrence. I say this, whilst fully realizing that there might be many cases where the relevant evidence has existed but was never recorded or followed up, and many cases where there would be no possibility of testing the statements which might be evidential if they could be verified.

(g) I will conclude my discussion of this topic with the following remark. I certainly cannot go so far as Hume, who said (in his *Essay on the Immortality of the Soul*): 'The Metempsychosis is ... the only system of this kind, that philosophy can hearken to.' But I do think that the doctrine of reincarnation, as at any rate one conceivable form of human survival, is of sufficient theoretical interest and prima facie plausibility to deserve considerably more attention from psychical researchers, and from philosophers who concern themselves with the nature and destiny of human beings, than it has hitherto received.

Having now discussed in some detail the various alternative possibilities as to the embodiment or non-embodiment of a surviving human personality, if any such there should be, I pass finally to the main question: 'Is survival possible, and, if so, in what sense or senses?'

It seems to me that a necessary, though by no means a sufficient, condition for survival is that the whole or
some considerable part of the **dispositional basis** of a human being's personality should persist, and should retain at least the main outlines of its characteristic type of organization, for some time after the disintegration of his brain and nervous system. The crux of the question is whether this is not merely conceivable, in the sense of involving no purely logical absurdity (whether explicit or implicit), but is also factually possible, i.e. not irreconcilable with any empirical facts or laws for which the evidence seems to be overwhelming.

To ascribe a disposition to anything is in itself merely to state a conditional proposition of a certain kind about it. In its vaguest form the statement is that, *if* this thing were at any moment to be in circumstances of a certain kind C, *then* an event of a certain kind E would happen in a certain kind of intimate relation R to it. In its ideally most definite form it would assert or imply a formula, connecting each alternative possible form of C with a certain one determinate specification of E and of R. This ideal is often reached in physics, but seldom or never in the case of biological or psychological dispositions.

But, whether the conditional proposition asserted be vague or definite, we do unhesitatingly take for granted that there must be, at the back of any such purely conditional fact, a **categorical** fact of a certain kind, viz. one about the more or less persistent **structure** of the thing in question, or about some more or less persistent **recurrent process** going on within it.

Now it is easy to imagine a persistent minute structure in a human being considered as a **physical object**. It is also easy to imagine recurrent processes, e.g. rhythmic chemical changes, changes of electric potential, etc., going on in the minute parts of a human being considered as a **physical object**. But it is very difficult to attach any clear meaning to phrases about persistent **purely mental** structure, or to the notion of **purely mental** processes, other than trains of experience of various kinds, with which each of us is familiar through having had them, noticed them, and remembered them. So it is not at all clear what, if anything, would be meant by ascribing to a human being, considered as a **psychical subject**, either a persistent purely mental structure or recurrent non-introspectable mental processes. Thus, it is almost inevitable that we should take for granted that the dispositional basis of a human being's personality resides wholly in the minute structure of his **brain and nervous system** and in recurrent **physical processes** that go on within it.

Not only is that supposition (unlike talk about 'mental structure' and 'non-introspectable mental processes') intelligible and readily imaginable in detail. It is also in line with the view which we take without hesitation and with conspicuous success about the dispositional properties of purely physical objects, e.g. magnets, chemical compounds, etc. Moreover, it seems **prima facie** to be borne out by what we know of the profound changes of personality, as evidenced in speech and behaviour, following on disease in the brain or injuries to it, on the administration of certain drugs, on the disturbance of the balance of certain internal secretions, and so on.

Now, on this assumption, it seems plain that it is impossible for the dispositional basis of a man's
personality to exist in the absence of his brain and nervous system; and therefore impossible for it to persist after the death and disintegration of his body.

Unless we are willing to drop the principle that every conditional fact about a thing must be grounded on a categorical fact about its persistent minute structure or recurrent internal processes, there seems to be only one view of human nature compatible with the possibility of the post mortem persistence of the whole, or any part, of the dispositional basis of a human being's personality. We must assume some variant of the Platonic-Cartesian view of human beings. This is the doctrine that every human being is some kind of intimate compound of two constituents, one being his ordinary everyday body, and the other something of a very different kind, not open to ordinary observation. Let us call the other constituent in this supposed compound a 'psi-component'. It would be necessary to suppose that the psi-component of a human being carries some part at least of the organized dispositional basis of his personality, and that during his life it is modified specifically and more or less permanently by the experiences which he has, the training which he receives, his habitual practical and emotional reactions towards himself and others, and so on.

Now there are at least two features in the traditional form of the Platonic-Cartesian doctrine which need not be accepted and which we should be wise to reject. (i) We need not assume that a psi-component by itself would be a person, or that it would by itself be associated with a stream of experience even at the animal or the biotic level, such as that enjoyed by a cat or by an oyster. It might well be that personality, and even the lowliest form of actual experience, requires the association of a psi-component with an appropriate living organism. The known facts about the intimate dependence of a human being's personality on his body and its states would seem strongly to favour that form of the doctrine.

(ii) We need not assume that a psi-component would be unextended and unlocated, and have none of the properties of a physical existent. If we gratuitously assume this, we shall at once be in trouble on two fronts. (a) How could it then be supposed to have minute structure or to be the seat of recurrent internal processes, which is what is needed if it is to carry traces and dispositions? (b) How could it be conceived to be united with a particular living body to constitute an ordinary human being? If we are to postulate a 'ghost-in-the-machine' - and that seems to me to be a conditio sine qua non for the barest possibility of the survival of human personality - then we must ascribe to it some of the quasi-physical properties of the traditional ghost. A mere unextended and unlocated Cartesian 'thinking substance' would be useless and embarrassing for our purpose; something more like primitive animism than refined Cartesianism is what we need. (In this connexion I would refer the reader back to the discussion of Animism in Chapter XIV, pp. 338-41.)

Nowadays we have plenty of experience concerning physical existents which are extended and in a sense localized, which have persistent structure and are the seat of rhythmic modulations, which are not in any
sense ordinary bodies, but which are closely associated with a body of a certain kind in a certain state. One example would be the electromagnetic field associated with a conductor carrying an electric current. Or consider, as another example, the sense in which the performance of an orchestral piece, which has been broadcast from a wireless station, exists in the form of modulations in the transmitting beam, in places where and at times when there is no suitably tuned receiver to pick it up and transform it into a pattern of sounds. Perhaps to think of what may persist of a human being after the death of his body as something which has experiences and is even a person is as if one should naively imagine that the wireless transmission of an orchestral piece exists, in a region where there is no suitably tuned receiver, in the form of unheard sounds or at any rate in the form of actual sound waves in the air. And perhaps to think that nothing carrying the dispositional basis of a man's personality could exist after the death of his body is as if one should imagine that nothing corresponding to the performance of an orchestral piece at a wireless station could exist anywhere in space after the station which broadcast it had been destroyed.

Any analogy to what, if it be a fact, must be unique, is bound to be imperfect, and to disclose its defects if developed in detail. But I think that the analogies which I have indicated suffice for the following purpose. They show that we can conceive a form of dualism, not inconsistent with the known facts of physics, physiology, and psychology, which would make it not impossible for the dispositional basis of a human personality to persist after the death of the human being who had possessed that personality.

Let us grant, then, that it is neither logically inconsistent nor factually impossible that the dispositional basis of a man's personality (or at any rate some part of it) might continue to exist and to be organized on its former characteristic pattern, for a time at least after the death of his body, without being associated with any other physical organism. The next question is whether there is any evidence (and, if so, what) for or against that possibility being realized.

The persistence of such a dispositional basis would presuppose, of course, that ordinary human beings have the dualistic constitution, which I have indicated, in this life. Now I think it is fair to say that, apart from some of the phenomena investigated by psychical researchers, there is nothing whatever to support or even to suggest that view of human beings, and a great deal which seems prima facie to make against it. If, like most contemporary Western philosophers and scientists, I were completely ignorant of, or blandly indifferent to, those phenomena, I should, like them, leave the matter there. But I do not share their ignorance, and I am not content to emulate the ostrich. So I pass on to the next point.

As to the bearing of the phenomena studied by psychical researchers upon this question, I would make the following remarks:

(1) To establish the capacity for telepathy, clairvoyance, or precognition in certain human beings, or even in all of them, would not lend any direct support to this dualistic view of human nature. At most it would show
that the orthodox scientific account of the range and the causal conditions of human cognition of particular things, events, and states of affairs, needs to be amplified and in some respects radically modified. Since the orthodox scientific account of these matters is associated with a monistic view of the constitution of human beings, any radical modification in the former might involve rejecting the latter. But it is not obvious that it must do so. And, on the other hand, it is quite certain that to postulate a dualistic view of the constitution of man does not by itself provide any explanation for such paranormal feats of cognition. Except on the principle of omne ignotum pro magnifico, it is, e.g., no less odd on the hypothesis of animistic dualism than on that of materialistic monism, that certain persons should sometimes have detailed and correct cognition of future events and states of affairs which they could not possibly have inferred or guessed. At most the dualistic hypothesis might furnish a basis, which the monistic one fails to provide, for further theories explanatory of such paranormal phenomena.

(2) So-called 'out-of-the-body experiences' would appear prima facie to be favourably relevant to the dualistic hypothesis. Such experiences become important for the present purpose, only in so far as the subject's reported observations can be shown to be correct in matters of detail concerning which he could have had no normal knowledge or probable opinion, and where the details could have been perceived normally only by a human being occupying the position which the subject seemed to himself to be occupying at the time. Their importance is increased if, at the time in question, an apparition of the subject is 'seen' by one or more persons physically present in the place where the subject seems to himself to be present 'in the astral body'.

I would refer the reader to the discussion of such cases in Chapters VI and IX. Here I will only say that, if such experiences stood by themselves, it might be wiser to interpret them in ways that do not presuppose dualism; though that might involve stretching the notions of telepathy and clairvoyance far beyond the limits within which there is any independent evidence for them.

(3) From the nature of the case, much the strongest support for the dualistic hypothesis comes from those phenomena which seem positively to require for their explanation the persistence, after the death of a human being, of something which carries traces of his experiences, habits, and skills during life, organized in the way that was characteristic of him when alive. The phenomena in question are of at least two kinds, viz. cases of haunting, and certain kinds of mediumistic communication. The latter are the more important, being more numerous, more detailed, and better attested. I agree with Professor Hornell Hart ('Six Theories about Apparitions', SPR Proceedings, Vol. L) in thinking that it is essential to consider the facts under headings (2) and (3) in close connexion with each other. For the two together give a much stronger support to the dualistic hypothesis than the sum of the supports given by each separately.

(4) If there be any cases in which there is satisfactory empirical evidence strongly suggestive of
reincarnation, they would be favourably relevant to the dualistic hypothesis. For suppose that there were evidence which strongly suggests that a certain man B is a reincarnation of a certain other man A. The most plausible account would be the following. A was a compound of a certain psi-component and a certain human body. When A died the psi-component, which had been combined with his body, persisted in an unembodied state. When B was conceived, this same psi-component entered into combination with the embryo which afterwards developed into B's body. There would then be a unique correlation between B's personality and A's, by way of the common psi-component. For this is the dispositional basis of both personalities, and the modulations imposed on its fundamental theme by A's experiences, training, etc., may enter into the innate mental equipment of B. But there is no reason whatever why B should, under normal conditions, recollect any of A's experiences. Nor is there any reason why there should be even as much continuity between B's personality and A's as there is between the several personalities which alternate with each other in a single human being in certain pathological cases.

It may be remarked here that, with certain subjects under hypnosis, a skilled operator can by suitable suggestions evoke highly dramatic and detailed ostensible recollections, purporting to refer to one or more previous lives. (The best examples known to me are to be found in a book entitled De hypnotiska hallucinationerna, by the distinguished contemporary Swedish psychiatrist, Dr John Bjorkhem.) But, unless such ostensible recollections can be tested (which, from the nature of the case, is seldom possible), and shown to be veridical and not explicable by knowledge acquired normally, they provide no evidence for reincarnation.

Let us now take the persistence of the dispositional basis as an hypothesis, which admittedly has extremely little to recommend it in the light of all the known relevant normal facts, but derives an appreciable probability from such paranormal facts as I have enumerated above. We can then raise the following question: What are the alternative possibilities, as to the kind and degree of consciousness which might occur in connexion with the psi-component of a deceased human being, during a period of dissociation from any living physical body?

In order to discuss this question it will be convenient to introduce the following terminology. I will describe a psi-component as 'discarnate', if and when it is no longer associated in the normal way with the brain and nervous system of a living human body. This is meant to cover the two alternative possibilities (i) that it is wholly unembodied, and (ii) that it is associated with some kind of non-physical analogue of a human body, in a way somewhat analogous to that in which it was formerly associated with an ordinary human body. These two alternatives may be described respectively as (i) 'unembodied', and (ii) 'non-physically embodied', discarnation.

If I may 'stick my neck out', I would say that I find it useful to picture a psi-component as a kind of highly complex and persistent vortex in the old-fashioned ether; associated (as a kind of 'field') with a living brain
and nervous system and with events and processes in the latter; having imposed on it, by those events and processes, certain characteristic and more or less persistent ‘modulations’; and capable of persisting (at any rate for a longer or shorter period) after the destruction of the brain and nervous system, as a vortex on the surface of a pond may persist after the dropping of a stone into the water. The notion of a psi-component does not of course presuppose this, or any other, concrete specification. But I find it convenient to have one, and this is the one that I use.

We can now turn to our question. There seem to me to be at least the following four alternative possibilities:

(1) The discarnate psi-component might persist without any experiences being associated with it, unless or until it should again become incarnated (occasionally or for a whole lifetime) in a physical organism, human or non-human.

(2) Either isolated experiences, or even a stream of more or less continuous experience, might occur in association with a discarnate psi-component; but the several experiences might not be of such a nature, and the unity of the stream of experience might not be of such a kind and degree, that we could talk of personality. The consciousness might not reach the level of that of a rabbit or even that of an oyster.

(3) There might be a unified stream of experience associated with a discarnate psi-component, and this might have some, but not all, the features of the experience of a full-blown personality. We might think of it by analogy with what we can remember of our own state when dreaming more or less coherently. Such a stream of experience, in order to be of the personal kind, would have to contain states of ostensible recollecting, and some or all of these might be veridical. But it might be that all of them were recollections of post mortem experiences, and that there were no states of ostensibly remembering any experience had by the human being in question before his death. In that case the post mortem discarnate personality would be as diverse from the ante mortem embodied one as are the alternating personalities of a human being suffering from dissociation.

On the other hand, it is conceivable that such a dream-like personal stream of experience might contain veridical ostensible recollections of certain ante mortem experiences, just as our dreams often contain such recollections of some of our earlier waking experiences. In that case it would be as legitimate to identify the post mortem discarnate personality with the ante mortem embodied one as it is to identify the dream personality and the waking personality of an ordinary human being.

(4) Finally, there might be a personal stream of experience associated with a discarnate psi-component, which was as continuous and as highly unified as that of a normal human being in his waking life. Here again there would be two possibilities:
(i) The ostensible recollections, contained in this personal stream of experience, might all refer to post mortem experiences; or (ii) some of them might refer to ante mortem experiences, and all or most of these recollections might be veridical. In either case there would be a full-blown personality connected with the discarnate psi-component. In the former case this would be completely dissociated from the personality of the deceased human being in whom the psi-component had formerly been embodied. In the latter case there would be the following two alternative possibilities. (a) The personality associated with the discarnate psi-component might remember the ante mortem experiences had by the deceased human being in question, only as a human being in his waking state remembers isolated fragments of his dreams. (b) The discarnate personality might remember such ante mortem experiences, just as a human being in one of his later waking states remembers experiences had by him in his earlier waking states. In that case, and in that alone, we could say that the personality of the deceased human being had survived the death of his body, in the full sense in which one's waking personality is reinstated after each period of normal sleep.

We may sum all this up as follows. When a human being dies, at least the following alternatives (besides the obvious one that death is altogether the end of him) seem prima facie to be possible. (1) Mere persistence of the dispositional basis of his personality, without any accompanying experiences. (2) Such persistence accompanied by consciousness only at the infra-personal level. (3) Such persistence accompanied by a quasi-personal dream-like stream of experience, which may either (a) be completely discontinuous with the ante mortem experiences of the deceased, or (b) have that kind and degree of continuity with them which a man's dreams have with his earlier waking experiences. (4) Such persistence accompanied by a full-blown personal stream of experience. This might either (a) be completely discontinuous with the ante mortem experiences of the deceased; or (b) be connected with them only in the way in which one's later waking experiences are connected with one's earlier dream experiences; or (c) be connected with them in the way in which successive segments of one's waking experience, separated by gaps of sleep, are connected with each other.

Let us next consider the respective probabilities of these various alternatives, when viewed only in relation to admitted facts outside the region of psychical research.

The first thing to bear in mind is that the notion of a psi-component is, by definition, the notion of something which carries the structural basis of that system of organized dispositions (cognitive, conative, and emotional) which is absolutely essential to anything sufficiently complex and stable and self-coherent to be counted as a personality. Now such dispositions will give rise to actual experiences if and only if they be appropriately stimulated from time to time; and the determinate form of experience or action to which a given disposition will give rise on any occasion will depend on the determinate form of the stimulus which it then receives. Moreover, a person can hardly be said to be living (as distinct from merely vegetating) unless he be continually learning, i.e. unless his experiences and his reactions to them affect the dispositional
basis of his personality and modify it in detail, if not in its fundamental organization. Finally, it is an essential part of our notion of a person that he or she should have intentions and form plans, which can be realized (if at all) only in co-operation or in conflict with other persons, and by help of, or against the resistance of, independent surrounding things, with their characteristic properties and laws.

These elementary reflexions have an important bearing on the antecedent probabilities of the various alternatives under discussion. If we suppose that a discarnate psi-component is wholly unembodied, then much the most likely alternative (excluding for the present purpose complete extinction) would be mere persistence without any kind of associated experiences. For we know that, when sensory stimuli acting on a man's body from without are reduced to a minimum, he tends to fall asleep. And we know that, when in addition sensory stimuli from within his body are reduced to a minimum, his sleep tends to be dreamless. Now a wholly unembodied discarnate psi-component would presumably be completely free from both kinds of sensory stimulus. Yet ordinary human beings, who are, on the present hypothesis, compounds of a psi-component with a living human body, do, in spite of that, have frequent periods of sleep which is to all appearance dreamless. The inference is obvious.

The least likely alternative, from the point of view which we are at present taking, would seem to be that the discarnate psi-component should be associated with a full-blown personal stream of experience connected with that of the deceased in the way in which successive segments of his waking experience, separated by gaps of sleep, were interconnected with each other. For we know that certain variations, which occur within the body and its immediate environment during the lifetime of a human being, are accompanied by profound breaches in the continuity of his consciousness, e.g. falling asleep, swooning, delirium, madness, alternating personality, etc. Now the change involved in the death and dissolution of the body, with which a psi-component has been united, must surely be more radical than any that happens during its incarnation. So it might reasonably be expected to involve at least as radical a breach in the continuity of consciousness as any that has been observed during the lifetime of a human being.

At this point the following question may be raised. As we know, some human beings have a plurality of personalities, which alternate with each other. In the case of such a human being we may ask ourselves the questions: If any of these personalities survive the death of their common body, how many of them do so? And, if not all do so, which ones do?

This leads me to the following general reflexion. The single personality of even the most normal human being is notoriously much less stable and comprehensive than it may seem to others or even to himself. The dispositional basis of it does not include by any means all of the dispositions inherited or acquired in his lifetime by that human being. It consists rather of a predominant selection from that whole, much more highly organized than the rest, and organized in a certain characteristic way. It might be compared to a
single crystal, surrounded by a mass of saturated solution, from which it has crystallized and in which it floats. The total dispositional basis of a human being with two personalities, which alternate with each other, might be compared to a saturated solution which has a tendency to crystallize out, sometimes at one and sometimes at another of two centres, and in two different crystalline forms.

Suppose now that the dispositions of a human being are grounded in the structure and rhythmic processes of a psi-component united with his body. And suppose that this psi-component persists after his death and carries with it the structural and the rhythmic basis of those dispositions. It seems not unreasonable to think that the psi-component, which had been united with the body of even the most stable and normal human being, would be liable, after its union with that body had been completely broken, to undergo a sudden or a gradual change of internal structure or rhythm, a disintegration or a reintegration on different lines.

Such considerations seem to me to reinforce those already put forward for holding that straightforward survival of the personality of a deceased human being is antecedently the least likely of all the alternatives under discussion.

Let us look back here for a moment to some of the characteristic features, enumerated above, of the personal stream of experience of an ordinary human being in this life, in order to see whether it is antecedently probable that they should persist, after the death of the body, in association with the discarnate psi-component. Such a personal stream of experience has, as we have seen, the following characteristic features among others. (i) It contains a core of bodily feeling, due to processes constantly going on within the body. This generally changes but slowly in the course of one's life, and is plainly a most important factor in one's consciousness of self-identity. (ii) Objects other than the body are perceived as from the body as centre, and as oriented in various directions and at various distances about it. (iii) It contains experiences of making, carrying out, modifying, dropping, and resuming various plans of action; and this involves initiating, controlling, and inhibiting movements of the limbs, and feeling the resistance and reactions of foreign bodies. (iv) In particular, it contains experiences of speaking and writing, of listening to the talk of others, engaging in conversation with them, reading their writings, and so on. An extremely important part of any embodied human personality is highly organized dispositions to have such experiences and to initiate and control such bodily movements.

Now, in the first place, it is not very easy to believe that a set of organized dispositions, so intimately connected in origin and in exercise with the physical body and its functions, can be located in something other than the body and only temporarily connected with it.

Let us, however, waive that difficulty. Let us suppose that a discarnate psi-component does carry with it specific modifications of structure or rhythm answering to such dispositions. Let us suppose, in the first
place, that it persists in a *wholly unembodied state*. Then it is plainly impossible that those dispositions should be manifesting themselves in *actual* speaking, writing, listening, etc. It is also plainly impossible that there should be at such times experiences of *actually* perceiving from a bodily centre; or of *actually* carrying out intentions by initiating and controlling bodily movements, of actually feeling the resistance and reactions of foreign objects, and so on. Nor is it possible at such times that there should be a core of organic sensation *actually* arising from the body and its internal states and processes.

At most we might admit the following possibilities. It would not be inconceivable that there should be a stream of *delusive quasi*-perceptual experiences, as of speaking, listening, reading, writing, doing and suffering, such as we have in our dreams. And it is not inconceivable that there might be some kind of imaginal replica of the core of organic sensation which one used to get in one's lifetime from processes within one's body. It seems very unlikely that such a dream-like life of imagery and hallucinatory *quasi*-perception would have as much continuity with the *ante mortem* personal stream of experience of the deceased as our dreams often have with our earlier waking experiences. For, when dreaming, one still has a body, and the same body as when awake; and one is still receiving actual organic sensations from processes within it, and still receiving occasional mild stimuli to one's sense-organs from without.

So much for what seems antecedently probable on the supposition that a psi-component can persist in a *discarnate but wholly unembodied state*. If, on the other hand, we allowed that a psi-component might persist in a *state of non-physical embodiment*, it would be easier to grant that it might have a stream of personal experience associated with it, and that this might be continuous with the deceased person's *ante mortem* stream of experience. For the 'astral body' might be supposed to play much the same part in the way of supplying actual organic sensation, actual *quasi*-sensory perception of external things, and so on, as did the physical body during its lifetime. And, if the 'astral body' is supposed to have been somehow 'interfused with' the physical body, during the lifetime of the latter, it might be plausible to think that the *post mortem* stream of experience and the *ante mortem* one would be fairly continuous with each other.

I have now said as much as seems necessary about the antecedent probabilities of the various alternatives, when considered *without* reference to the relevant phenomena studied by psychical researchers. Let us now introduce these into the background of our picture, and see what differences, if any, they make.

(1) I think that the fact that some human beings are capable of telepathic or clairvoyant cognition tends to weaken the otherwise strong probability that a discarnate and wholly unembodied psi-component would merely persist without having any kind of experience associated with it. The appropriate stimuli for calling forth *normal* experiences in a human being are no doubt certain events in his brain and nervous system, initiated physically from within or from without his body. Such stimuli presumably could not act upon an unembodied psi-component. But suppose we assume, for the sake of argument, a dualistic account of
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ordinary human beings; and that we accept, as we must, that they sometimes have telepathic or clairvoyant experiences. Then it would seem plausible to suggest that such experiences may be evoked by some kind of direct stimulation of an incarnate psi-component by the action of other psi-components, whether incarnate, discarnate but non-physically embodied, or wholly unembodied. On that supposition, this kind of action would not be mediated by the body even in the case of a physically embodied psi-component; and so there would be no obvious reason why it should not continue to operate on a psi-component which was discarnate and wholly unembodied. It might even operate much more freely under such conditions, since embodiment in general and physical embodiment in particular might tend to counteract it.

(2) Most of the few well attested cases of haunting suggest no more than the persistence and the localization of something which carries traces of a small and superficial, but for some reason obsessive, fragment of the experiences had by a deceased human being within a certain limited region of space.

(3) Many mediumistic communications, which take the dramatic form of messages from the surviving spirit of a deceased human being, imparted to and reported by the medium's 'control', plainly do not warrant us in taking that aspect of them literally. Often they require no more radical assumption than telepathic cognition, on the medium's part, of facts known (consciously or unconsciously) to the sitter or to other living human beings connected with him.

In this connexion it is essential to bear in mind the well attested occurrence, even with mediums of undoubted honesty who have shown ample evidence of paranormal gifts, of the following two kinds of phenomena. (i) Pseudo-communications in the dramatic form of messages from a certain deceased person, who is known to have never in fact existed, but to have been deliberately suggested to the entranced medium by the sitter for experimental purposes. A famous example is the fictitious 'Bessie Beales', deliberately conjured up by Professor Stanley Hall in sittings with Mrs Piper in 1909 (see SPR Proceedings, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 177-8). (ii) Ostensible communications, in correct dramatic form, purporting to come from a certain person, whom the sitter believes at the time to be dead, but who was (as is discovered later) alive and pursuing his normal avocations when the sitting took place. As an example I would mention the Gordon Davis case (SPR Proceedings, Vol. XXXV, pp. 560-89). Here, in some sittings held by Dr Soal in 1922 with the medium Mrs Blanche Cooper, a former schoolfellow of his called Gordon Davis, whom Dr Soal at the time believed to have been killed in the First World War, not only ostensibly communicated, but ostensibly possessed the medium, speaking through her lips with the 'direct voice'. Afterwards, in 1925, Dr Soal ascertained that Mr Davis had survived the war, was living in London, and at the time of the sittings in question was engaged on his business as an estate-agent in Southend-on-Sea.

(4) Notwithstanding such cases as these, I think it very unpalatable to claim that all well attested cases of ostensible possession of a medium by the spirit of a certain deceased human being can be explained by
telepathy from persons still alive in the flesh and dramatization on the part of the entranced medium. I am thinking now of cases where the medium speaks with a voice and behaves with mannerisms which are recognizably reminiscent of the alleged communicator, although she never met him during his lifetime and has never heard or seen any reproduction of his voice or his gestures. (There are also cases in which it is alleged that a medium produces automatic script, purporting to be written under the control of the spirit of a certain deceased human being, and undoubtedly in his characteristic handwriting, although she has never seen, either in original or in reproduction, any specimens of his manuscript. I do not know whether any such cases are well attested; but, if any such there be, they fall under the same category as the direct voice cases, some of which certainly appear to be so.)

Now it seems to me that any attempt to explain these phenomena by reference to telepathy among the living stretches the word 'telepathy' till it becomes almost meaningless, and uses that name to cover something for which there is no independent evidence and which bears hardly any analogy to the phenomena which the word was introduced to denote. Prima facie the cases in question are strong evidence for the persistence, after a man's death, of something which carries traces of his experiences, habits, and skills, and which becomes temporarily united during the séance with the entranced medium's organism.

But they are also prima facie evidence for something more specific, and surely very surprising indeed. For they seem to suggest that dispositions to certain highly specific kinds of overt bodily behaviour, e.g. speaking in a certain characteristic tone of voice, writing in a certain characteristic hand, making certain characteristic gestures, etc., are carried by the psi-component when it ceases to be incarnate, and are ready to manifest themselves whenever it is again temporarily united with a suitable living human body. And so strong do these dispositions remain that, when thus temporarily activated, they overcome the corresponding dispositions of the entranced medium to speak, write, and gesticulate in her own habitual ways.

(5) Nevertheless, it seems to me that most of the well attested mediumistic phenomena which are commonly cited as evidence for the survival of a deceased human being's personality, do not suffice to support so strong a conclusion. They fit as well or better into the following weaker hypothesis. Suppose that the psi-component of the late Mr Jones persists, and that it carries some at least of the dispositional basis of his ante mortem personality, including organized traces left by his experiences, his acquired skills, his habits, etc. Suppose, further, that a medium is a human being in whom the psi-component is somewhat loosely combined with the body, or in whom at any rate the combination does not prevent the body having a residual attraction for other psi-components. (We might compare a medium, in this respect, to an unsaturated organic compound, such as acetylene.) When the medium is in trance we may suppose that the persisting psi-component of some deceased human being, e.g. the late Mr Jones, unites with the
medium's brain and nervous system to form the basis of a temporary personality. This might be expected to have some of the memories and traits of the deceased person, together with some of those of the medium's own normal personality or of her own habitual 'control'. But, unless the persistent psi-component has a personal stream of experience associated with it during the periods when it is not combined with the body of a medium, no evidence would be supplied at any sitting of new experiences being had, of new plans being formed and initiated, or of any post mortem development of the ante mortem personality.

Now it seems to me that the vast majority of even the best mediumistic communications combine these negative with these positive features. That is not true, I think, of quite all of them. Some few do seem prima facie to suggest the persistence of something which forms plans after death and takes measures to fulfil them between sittings. (The best of the cross-correspondence cases obviously fall under this heading. A useful collection of relevant instances has been published by Mrs Richmond in a little book entitled Evidence of Purpose.)

Of course, if the dispositional basis of a man's personality should persist after his death, there is no reason why it should have the same fate in all cases. In some cases one, and in others another, of the various alternatives which I have discussed, might be realized. It seems reasonable to think that the state of development of the personality at the time of death, and the circumstances under which death takes place, might be relevant factors in determining which alternative would be realized. Obviously there might be many other highly relevant factors, which our ignorance prevents us from envisaging.

Again, it would be rash to assume that those psi-components of the deceased, for the persistence of which we have some prima facie evidence, are a fair selection of those which in fact persist. The nature or the circumstances, or both, of the very few which have manifested their continued existence, whether in haunting or through mediums, may well be highly exceptional. Plainly, in the case of the vast majority of those who have died, one or another of the following alternatives must have been fulfilled. Either they never had psi-components; or their psi-components have ceased to exist; or they have been reincarnated, either on earth or elsewhere, in human or animal bodies; or else they have lacked opportunity to communicate, or have failed (whether through lack of desire or of energy or of capacity) to make use of such opportunities as were available. For, if anything in this department is certain, it is that the vast majority of dead men have told no tales, and, so far as we are concerned, have vanished without trace.

In conclusion, I would say that I am inclined to think that those who have speculated on these topics have often made one or more of the following positive or negative mistakes:

(1) They have tended to ignore the discontinuities and abnormalities which are known to be frequent in the personalities even of normal human beings, and which are present to extremes in pathological cases.
(2) In dealing with traces and dispositions they have too often confined their attention to very crude and old-fashioned physical analogies. I suspect that they sometimes tend to think of the dispositional basis of a personality by the old analogy of a ball of wax, on which experiences make traces, as a seal might leave impressions. It is plain that this analogy must be inadequate and positively misleading, even on a purely anatomical and physiological view of the facts of memory, of association, of heredity, of personal identity, etc. A fortiori it must be hopelessly cramping to anyone who is trying to envisage a basis of dispositions which might persist after the death of a man's body.

(3) They have tended to take an 'all-or-none' view of the question of survival, and to assume that either no one survives or that everyone does so, and does so in precisely the same sense. Now I agree that there are very strong reasons for thinking that no one survives in any sense; since there are strong reasons against accepting the dualist view of human beings, which is a necessary condition for the possibility of any kind of survival. But suppose we think that these reasons are not conclusive, and that some of the phenomena studied by psychical researchers are good prima facie grounds for an animistic view of human beings. Then it is obviously possible that the psi-components of only some human beings persist after the death of their bodies. And, as regards those that do, some may realize one and some another of the various possible alternatives which I have distinguished and discussed above.

(4) Those who have been inclined to accept the doctrine of human survival have nearly always taken a far too anthropocentric view of the situation. If the constitution of human beings be animistic, it is surely incredible that this should not also be true at least of the other higher mammals. And, if that be granted, it is hard to see where to draw a line within the animal kingdom. Now, if not only human beings but also monkeys, cats, and cows be compounds of a physical organism with a psi-component, I cannot think of any good reason for holding that it is only in the case of human beings that the psi-component ever persists after the death of the physical organism. If one finds that conclusion incredible, that may be a good reason for rejecting dualism in the case of human beings. But, before doing so on that ground, it would be as well to ask oneself whether one has any better reason than anthropocentric parochialism for finding the conclusion as to non-human animals incredible.

(5) Lastly, those who are convinced of human survival are much inclined to ascribe, quite thoughtlessly and mechanically, to discarnate human persons all kinds of semi-miraculous cognitive and active powers, not possessed by them when physically embodied. There seems to me to be no good reason a priori for any such assumption. Ceasing to be embodied might involve a setting free of powers which were inhibited by physical embodiment; it might equally involve an inhibition of powers which were formerly freely exercised. Obviously both these possibilities might be fulfilled. The proof of this, as of other puddings, is entirely in the eating.
Once we get outside the narrow sphere marked out by these tacit and illegitimate assumptions, we can envisage a number of interesting and fantastic possibilities. Suppose, e.g., that we think of a psi-component as analogous to a persistent vortex in the ether, carrying modulations imposed on it by experiences had by the person with whose physical body it was formerly associated as a kind of 'field'. Then we can conceive the possibility of partial coalescence, partial mutual annulment or reinforcement, interference, etc., between the psi-components of several deceased human beings, in conjunction perhaps with non-human psychic flotsam and jetsam which may exist around us.

There are reported mediumistic phenomena, and pathological mental cases not ostensibly involving mediumship, which would suggest that some of these disturbing possibilities may sometimes be realized. It is worth remembering (though there is nothing that we can do about it) that the world as it really is may easily be a far nastier place than it would be if scientific materialism were the whole truth and nothing but the truth about it.

To conclude, the position as I see it is this. In the known relevant normal and abnormal facts there is nothing to suggest, and much to counter-suggest, the possibility of any kind of persistence of the psychical aspect of a human being after the death of his body. On the other hand, there are many quite well attested paranormal phenomena which strongly suggest such persistence, and a few which strongly suggest the full-blown survival of a human personality. Most people manage to turn a blind eye to one or the other of these two relevant sets of data, but it is part of the business of a professional philosopher to try to envisage steadily both of them together. The result is naturally a state of hesitation and scepticism (in the correct, as opposed to the popular, sense of that word). I think I may say that for my part I should be slightly more annoyed than surprised if I should find myself in some sense persisting immediately after the death of my present body. One can only wait and see, or alternately (which is no less likely) wait and not see.


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