

TELEPATHY AND SPIRITUALISM

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A MEETING of the Medico-Legal Society was held at the Medical Hall, East Melbourne, on the 16th November, 1935. The President, Mr. Fullagar, K.C., was in the chair, and Dr. John Adey delivered an address on "Telepathy and Spiritualism."

DR. ADEY said: Gentlemen, I make no apology for bringing this subject under your notice, for it was presented at a meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held at Wakefield in 1928, by the Professor of Medicine of Leeds.

I shall first discuss the subject of telepathy. By telepathy I mean the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of any of the recognized channels of sense. If one person can communicate with another without writing, speaking, or making signs, this would have the greatest bearing on our whole psychological system, and would be a matter for careful investigation. Of course, everyone will understand that it is not a matter of guesswork.

Is there any evidence that this really takes place? Everybody has had experience of cases where people appear to think of the same thing at the same time.

I have personal knowledge of a woman in Scotland who is able to keep in touch with her numerous children, who are scattered in various parts of the world. She was thus able to come to the financial assistance of her daughter without receiving any communication from the latter.

Before the days of wireless it was repeatedly reported that, by rumours in Indian bazaars, reliable information was transmitted long before it could be received by ordinary channels.

All of these cases must be discounted from the scientific point of view, for at once the objection is made, how many times have people had unfounded premonitions of evil to their relatives, and how many bazaar rumours have proved to be false?

Definite scientific experiments were performed by Upton Sinclair, the well-known American writer and novelist, in conjunction with his wife. Upton Sinclair drew designs on a piece of paper, enclosed each of them in an opaque envelope, and asked his wife to draw a similar design. The results of 290 drawings were as follows: 65, or 23%, were successful; 155, or 53%, were partially satisfactory; 70, or 24%, were failures. The percentage of successful results is far greater than can be accounted for by mere chance.

Objections to these experiments can be raised on the grounds that it is unsatisfactory for them to be performed by husband and wife, as they know from experience the sort of things that would be drawn, and it would be more satisfactory if the experiments were performed by independent people.

Experiments have been held in the University of Groningen, in Holland, to ascertain whether thought can be transferred from one person to another. For this purpose, the *thinkers* are in an upper room, and the *percipient* in a lower room. Between the two is a sheet of glass. In each room is a board marked with squares, each square indicated by a letter and a number. In order that there may be no collusion, the letters and numbers are drawn at random from a bag, and the people in the upper room think of the square drawn accordingly. The percipient in the lower room points out the square of which he is thinking, and the results noted. If the results depended on chance there should be 4 per cent. correct. After a series of experiments, the average result was 60 per cent. correct answers, thus showing that correct results were infinitely greater than could be ascribed to chance. Similar mathematical attempts have been made with cards.

Further experimentation has shown that emotions, or incidents which cause emotion, are probably much more easily transferred than numbers, names of objects, etc., but unfortunately emotional disturbances are not satisfactory objects for experimentation in a scientific laboratory. If telepathy is true the following questions require to be solved:

- (1) What sort of people can transmit thought and what sort of people are able to receive it?
- (2) What sort of impressions are most easily transmitted?
- (3) Does distance make any difference?
- (4) Can the transmission of thought be done at any time or only sometimes?

Coming now to the subject of spiritualism, the subject of telepathy has a very definite bearing on spiritualism.

It is well known that certain people have been credited, from time immemorial, with powers which cannot be accounted for by known physical laws. According to the story of the Witch of Endor, Saul consulted a medium who communicated with the dead Samuel, who gave most unpleasant information about the future; and from that time down to the present, people have attempted to communicate with departed spirits by means of mediums. The questions to be answered are:

- (1) Whether mediums have unusual powers which are not the property of the ordinary person?
- (2) Whether these powers are due to departed spirits?

The answers to these questions must be kept absolutely distinct and if Question 1 has been answered in the affirmative it does not necessarily follow that the medium's unusual powers are necessarily due to extra-terrestrial spirits.

The evidence in favour of the existence of people with abnormal powers is as follows:

- (1) Continual reports have been received stating that facts have been communicated by mediums which facts could not have been known in the ordinary way. Many of these facts can be accounted for if telepathy is established as a frequent mode of communication.
- (2) Many men of intellect and integrity as Conan Doyle, Sir William Crookes, Oliver Lodge, have believed that such facts can be communicated.

- (3) Gradually evidence has accumulated that unusual phenomena take place, as the moving of tables or other articles in the presence of mediums.

The evidence against it is:

- (1) It is quite against our vast body of scientific facts, accumulated by years of study and subject to mathematical laws.
- (2) The study of this subject has been pursued by cranks, hysterics, and mentally unbalanced people.
- (3) The information given to us by mediums is childish in the extreme; if departed spirits have gained immortality they have lost their intelligence.
- (4) Many mediums have been detected in gross imposture and are discredited. One attempt to get a finger print of a discarnate spirit turned out to be that of the great toe of the medium.

The whole subject has only recently been subjected to scientific investigation by trained minds, but there is a gradually increasing accumulation of reliable facts that the following phenomena occur:

- (1) Tables, chairs and similar objects are moved without external force.
- (2) Certain facts come to the knowledge of mediums, some of which can be explained by telepathy, in which case telepathy is extremely accurate and needs careful investigation, or else are inexplicable by any known reasons.

Experiments have recently been carried out in a laboratory in London specially built for the purpose. This laboratory is not attached to the University of London but is managed by a collection of private people. An Austrian named Rudi Schneider, a garage motor mechanic, aged 24, was examined in this place. After careful searching the medium was controlled by an electric circuit which would show if he moved his arms or feet. Everyone else in the room was similarly controlled. A stenographer was present

on the other side of a curtain and took notes of everything that was said or done at the time; this precaution was taken to ensure that there should be no falsification of memory. The sittings were held in a dull red light.

Ninety-nine people were present at different sittings, and no one except the medium was present at all the sittings. Among the audience were well-known psychologists, philosophers, barristers, conjurors, detectives and undergraduates of Oxford. During these experiments heavy curtains blew out, the temperature fell, baskets moved, bells were rung.

At experiments held at a later date infra red rays, and an automatic camera was used. These showed that on one occasion the medium freed an arm when the electric control was not used. This was not sufficient to account for all the phenomena observed, and it has long been known that if a medium is able to move he will do so.

Another striking instance of peculiar powers exhibited by a medium is reported of Mrs. Garrett. The airship R101 crashed in flames in France on Sunday, October 5, 1930. There were, of course, reports in the press on Monday, October 6. On October 7, Mrs. Garrett gave information to Mr. Price, of the beforementioned laboratory, of the crash of the R101. The messages were attributed to Flight-Lieut. Irwin, Captain of the R101, who perished in the accident.

The messages, which were long, I shall not give in full. I shall mention some of the details which make it difficult to believe that they were invented by the medium. Many technical details were mentioned, for instance: "Useful Lift, Gross Lift, Fuel Injection, Load Too Great for Long Flying, Same on S.L.8, Tell Eckner (S.L.8 = Schutte Lanz 8, a new German airship), Cruising Speed Bad, Ship Badly Swinging, Starboard Strakes Started." Nearly all the statements were technically correct, a few of the passages were obscure. A particularly interesting point was: "Almost scraped the roofs at Achy." Achy is a small village in France not shown on motoring or road maps, but it is

shown on the large scale railway map. Reports from Poix, about fourteen miles from Achy, stated that the airship was only 300 feet from the ground and their evidence had been discredited. These statements were all submitted to the Air Board and an official of the Air Board stated that the majority of them were technically correct, and some could be confirmed.

The inferences which may be drawn are:

- (1) An ordinary woman not connected with the Flying Corps, took immense trouble to work up technical details for no apparent object, and get possession of unpublished official documents not given to the papers.
- (2) That the information was derived by telepathy, by communication from some living person who was interested in dirigibles. If so, telepathy is worth investigating.
- (3) Information obtained from some quite unknown source, also worth investigating.

Some mediums have the faculty of materialization, that is an arm of ectoplasm, an unknown material, can come out of the nose, side or breast of the medium. Some emanations of these have a hand with fingers on the end. This hand and arm can be felt and grasped and melts under the fingers. It can be seen and photographed.

These statements are so contrary to our accepted ideas of physiology and anatomy that they need very considerable proof to substantiate them. Anyone who reads the literature on the subject will find that these statements are substantiated by people whose positions render them above suspicion. I might be asked whether I personally have had any experience of these matters. I can reply that I have been present at meetings with mediums, but the meetings were held in absolute darkness, the medium was not controlled properly and the meetings were quite useless for scientific investigation.

You will note that I have not suggested that discarnate

spirits have anything to do with this phenomena. It appears to be a frailty of the human mind to attribute everything mysterious to the action of the dead, the diabolical or the Deity. In my opinion, thorough investigation will show that many of these phenomena are actual facts and in time they will be able to be explained in accordance with the laws which govern all physical phenomena, but, at present, there appears to be a considerable realm of facts for which we are unable to offer any explanation, and whilst that realm remains unexplored our body of scientific knowledge remains incomplete.

(Lantern slides were shown to illustrate various points in the lecture.)