

The New Epoch In Psychical Research

by GERALD HEARD

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH has reached a crisis. It has never been a subject whose course ran smooth. The crisis today, however, is the greatest it has faced. But not the worst; on the contrary, it is a crisis full of hope. This research, if it surmounts its problem today, will go ahead as never before — as we never thought possible before.

For the chief problem in this research and that which has held it up has been not so much the collection of new facts and getting scientists to notice them but rather that the facts would not fit into any theory. They could not honestly be put into any frame which would make sense of them. When you cannot make a theory, after a little while fresh facts and still more facts only confuse; and finally any further advance becomes impossible. We too often forget science owes as much to a good theory as to the facts which fill it. Water is good, but it is no good unless you can get a vessel to hold it. The fundamental trouble with psychical research is, then, not so much the facts but what the mischief they mean. It is quite true they make chopped straw of the older anthropomorphism. So the official scientists have simply refused to look at the facts, and the official spiritualists hand-pick them over to stub them into their frame and picture of things.

Today, however, the physicists tell us that if we are to be scientific we must get rid not merely of anthropomorphism — imagining the universe to be a “magnified nonnatural man” — but also of that picture’s successor, mechanomorphism, the fancy that the universe is a magnified nonnatural machine. We have to conceive the Universe as somehow “mental,” more truthfully to be thought of as alive than dead.

Now this new step taken by the physicists helps remarkably the psychical researcher. For

now we can see that the real hitch in advance here has been due just to this fact: that we had mistakenly divided up the whole into two isolated parts — mind and matter — the outer, dead world which was real and our separate, onlooking consciousness which alone was alive but also somehow not really “real.”

II

TO UNDERSTAND what overcoming that mistake will mean for psychical research and how it will help forward discovery, we must first trace in outline how that mistaken separation was allowed to arise. The nineteenth century made such great progress in explaining the universe on mechanistic principles that scientific specialists and public alike leaped to the conclusion that everything real must really be mechanical. Hence, those who dared still to study the mind scientifically thought they could do so with academic approval only if they conceded that mind had of course no influence on matter.

But what about mind influencing the body? Was not the body matter? Most psychologists yielded that point too. The mind had only an indirect influence on the body — and, as physiology and biochemistry advanced, it seemed that the mechanists would no longer allow even that. The mind only imagined that it controlled, even indirectly, the body. The truth was that chemical changes in the body made the mind fancy it was guiding, while all the time it was really being driven.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that students of the mind were ashamed of finding facts which told against this theory, such facts would not keep away. Researchers in psychology had honestly tried — tried indeed, until honesty itself began to show the strain — to confine their attention to mental phenomena, to prove that the mind was only a shadowy

thing incapable of affecting matter, so that of course physical phenomena did not even deserve investigation.

The facts of hypnosis refused, however, to confirm the concordat between the psychologist and the mechanist. Here in this awkward corner the settlement ran: psychologists shall discover only that the mind can affect function but never organ. That meant that hypnosis can cause changes of behavior but never changes of and in tissue. This frontier, hypnosis — or suggestion — refused to respect. A blister could be raised on the skin, and an ulcer cured, simply by suggestion. The mind, then, could alter the body.

Further, research into telepathy and clairvoyance showed that the mind — though it commonly uses the sense organs it has built up — need not always do so. This fact, when the evidence can no longer be resisted, is generally held to be explained away and mechanism somehow to be preserved by saying that it is simply one mind influencing another, and so our picture of the “real” world as nothing but a machine is unaffected. Experiments, however, in “eyeless sight,” the paroptic sense — the latest of which were reported to the international conference held by the British Optical Association last October — show that this is not so. No sense seems to depend more on its organ than does sight. Yet here we must recognize that the organ can be dispensed with and the subject sees. The mind, then, uses the body — it is not the body which “projects” the mind.

It is therefore clear that researchers can no longer go on talking of mind and body as two separate things. That many scientists conceded. They thought, however, that the story would end with the body swallowing the mind. Instead the mind has established its autonomy. Are we then going to end, instead, with mind being all that matters — complete “idealism”? That again is too simple and indeed commonplace a conclusion. The dawning truth is far more remarkable. Today it is clear that we are faced with a unity, the mind-body, and that neither side can be cleared out in the name of the other. To put it crudely, mind is a form of body, and, equally, body is a type of mind. Once that principle is conceded and understood, it is then that we get real advance — but not until then.

III

NO DIFFICULTY has been graver in psychological research than the sporadicity of phenomena. That, however, though it is the way this difficulty is usually described, is to underrate it. The truth is that happenings and faculties which showed themselves unmistakably in unprepared and friendly circumstances put up a sorry show before highly critical attention and under exacting tests. Dr. Rhine has already thrown some light on this — rare faculties are easily upset. That is very important. The countersuggestion: “You can’t do it; I know you can’t; if you do you must have cheated” — that sublime negative faith can make the subject incapable.

But we can make a further addition to this knowledge. Now that we realize that mind and body are two sides of one thing, we see why sporadicity and spontaneity have marked all paranormal phenomena. The subject himself has always been ignorant about them. They simply took place through him, not by him. Therefore he was of course incapable of knowing how or even when they would emerge. Sometimes he was faintly aware something was boding — gathering under the threshold — but when it would break over, still less how to assist it in its struggle out the subject could seldom if ever say.

That word *threshold*, however, may make some people remark that, as we have so long known about the limen, why have we not derived access to these powers if they really exist? The truth is that discovery served little purpose because the two men who did so much to familiarize the public with it were both all too certain what they would find there and how they would make it prove their prejudices. To F. W. H. Myers it was to be a sky pilot, to Freud a sink. The one was determined it should tell him about an anthropomorphic heaven, and the other that it should regurgitate sure and certain proof of man’s animality.

What, however, had been found was not a message but a motor, not a revelation but a dynamo. It is clear then that it is not enough merely to soothe a “sensitive” in the hope that he will be able to yield measurable results under smooth but stringent conditions. We cannot hope for results unless the sensitive knows how to generate to a maximum his latent powers:

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conversely we can hope that, when so learned, against it not even the negative faith of those academics who "know what can happen and know *that* can't happen" will prevail.

Up till now, we have in our modern civilization been, in this matter of psychical research, in the same state as civilization was economically six thousand years ago. It was wholly dependent on natural outcrops, on wild growths, on lucky finds. It was at the food-gathering stage, which precedes the food-cultivation epoch. Today we have had no method of training and canalizing those natural gushers—the mediums. Hence, most give out before they have been investigated, and the others, finding the work profitable but the faculty precarious, resort almost as often as possible to some degree of pretense. To blame the medium or to burke the fact, either of the easy courses is debarred to the true scientist. What we have to realize is that such faculties are not only misapprehended by those who still possess them but are also now rare.

As Dr. Bateson, the geneticist, pointed out, the three intensive centuries of destruction of all who showed any paranormal powers, under the charge of witchcraft, left the eighteenth century depleted of mediums, and the supply began to be restored only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A further fact which helps investigation is the discovery that such faculties function through using a focus of consciousness other than that through which our material civilization has been built up during the last three hundred years. Those who possess what has been called integral thought are not necessarily fools. Indeed their particular apprehensions, which we call intuitions of value, are essential to a balanced and sane society. However, as such apprehenders are as weak in the analytical faculty as they are strong in the integral, they appear of poor intelligence and, as we have had till now no method for training this type of mind, they remain ignorant not merely of our materialistic outlook but also of the nature of their own faculty.

IV

WE HAVE then, first, to select our sensitives and, next, to teach them their own tech-

nique. It is little use trying to make a musical prodigy a satisfactory accountant. But how teach?

It is here our new humility comes to our aid. As we have confessed that mind and body cannot be kept apart and that mind and body are

two parts of one thing, so we are now free to learn of other methods used by more open-minded researchers. Today we can carry out a technique of mind-body training through which and only through which the mind can have at its com-

mand and in full force its entire powers. We are at last facing the fact that here the East can teach us. Already research has shown that controlling of breathing can bring about very curious states of mind-body control. Physiological research into the bodily condition after such exercises has seemed to show, however, that no remarkable change has taken place in the blood. Is the method no more than a self-soothing trick?

It is here that the latest physico-physiological research into the electric field of the body and brain is a vital element, and we now know further that it is this field which is affected by advanced breathing exercises. Autopsies have shown in more than one case that those who have accidentally killed themselves through too rapid experimentation with such exercises have died not of syncope but through an acute meningitis, the spinal fluid being found in acute disturbance, though no germ infection was present. This would seem to show that the field of the body had been too abruptly disturbed, the fundamental energy of the mind-body too rapidly switched over or run through, with the habitual "resistances" removed; and so the "lines" had been "fused."

The constant and equal interaction of mind and body is also confirmed by the increasing importance which medical research has to attach to general resistance. The germ theory of disease still stands as a most fruitful half-truth. It is, however, a truth nearly worked out. Its other side is in the discovery of how virulent a germ infection the body can overcome if you can rouse its full resistance. The virus of the common cold, the pneumococci, and many other ordinary and serious infections can be resisted by change of mood. We now



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know why. The confident temper acts directly on the suprarenals, and they release a secretion without which the white blood cells cannot tackle invading micro-organisms.

It is not, however, enough to say, "I will not catch cold." You must feel the impossibility. There lies the secret of all the higher resistances. It is creating in the mind-body a sense of positive, dynamic well-being. The deeper that goes, the profounder the resistance. The trouble with us is that, owing to our mind-body ignorance, we can have only a very superficial control over this latent energy.

Gorer has described that among the Mol fishermen of the west coast of Africa there is a technique of breath control which permitted a man under his observation to lie on the floor of a deep pool for three quarters of an hour. Absolute relaxation, "plastic catalepsy," would permit of such muscle slackening that hardly any lactic acid would form, and so very little oxygen be required. The Mol fishermen are not a race with only an aptitude in this direction. They are also carefully trained to this method. It is not pretended that anyone could do it by a sudden impulse of "faith." The same extension of mind control over body by mind-body exercises appears to have been shown in London last September when a Kashmiri twice walked along a fire trench in his bare feet, the heat being shown by a thermocouple to be over eight hundred degrees Fahrenheit and the feet being examined by a doctor to guarantee that they were not calloused or specially treated. The case has awakened controversy. The fact remains that two others who were untrained and who took only a step or two had to leap off to escape serious burning.

V

IT SEEMS then that here we have an extension of a field outside the body — an insulation possible only if the threshold of consciousness has been shifted far back beyond the customary limen into those layers at which the control of heartbeat, etc. is directed and whence it is possible — if not wise — to release stores of energy usually insulated from the control of the objective mind. In short, the only theory which fits the facts is the theory of a field of which the conscious mind and the body are two poles. The linkage of these two is the subconscious; here mind and body meet; and,

using this subconscious as a fulcrum, body and mind, instead (as is common with us) of pulling against one another, can be made to co-operate with each other.

Again it is worth remarking that this sudden access of strength need not necessarily be for the good. The present balance of mind and body, though uneasy, is a balance. The deranged energy of the lunatic, the frantic nerve storm of the epileptic are disagreeable examples of mind and body co-operating in the release of an energy for which no adequate canalization has been provided. As Roger Bacon nearly blew his head off with his first brew of gunpowder, so with our first releases of full mind-body energy we shall probably blow some of our wits to pieces. No real power is ever safe. What we can realize is that the subconscious can now be approached through psychophysical exercises and that thus the mind can have extranormal power over the body and the body can release and empower the mind so that it can exercise mental powers which today are so rare and freakish that almost all who have not witnessed them deny them.

The phenomena themselves are, however, merely soundings which show the new coast which we are approaching. The new conception of the universe, as neither personal nor material but in a measure mental, is exactly the basic conception which psychical research requires today and in which its finds can be fitted. Our minds, we see, are like telescopes. During the anthropomorphic stage we were using one aperture. Then the apparatus changed, and we saw another universe — and unwisely concluded that the earlier observations were not only misdescribed but hallucinatory. Now, once again the mind's aperture is changing, and we are seeing yet another — a third — universe.

But that is not all. What is even more important is that we are beginning to understand ourselves, are beginning to see that, as the aperture is changed, so new facts can be seen. This step is revolutionary because it means that we now realize that we must and can deliberately change the mind's aperture. By self-training we can add a completely new and unsuspected instrument to our apparatus of discovery — the mind-body, consciously and deliberately manipulated to apprehend a new focus of reality. That is why we are about to enter a new epoch in psychical research.

Can Capitalism Keep the Peace?

A Debate

I—Yes, if We Pay the Price

by EUSTACE SELIGMAN

ADVOCATES of socialism contend that war is caused by capitalism and that the only cure for war is the abolition of capitalism. They advance three arguments in support of this view.

Firstly it is argued that we have always had wars under capitalism and that, therefore, they are inevitable under capitalism. This view confuses coincidence with cause and effect. Wars existed before capitalism existed; therefore, as a matter of obvious logic, war is not a function of capitalism.

The second argument to support the view that war is inevitable under capitalism is that capitalism is inevitably decaying because of its increasing inability to consume what it produces; it temporarily averts the inevitable end only by selling goods abroad and investing abroad; selling goods abroad and investing abroad requires colonies; and obtaining and maintaining colonies requires war.

Each of these statements is incorrect:

Capitalism is not decaying but is expanding; the depression through which we have been passing does not mark the end of capitalism; recovery is already here.

It is not true that business crises are due to the inability of capitalism to consume what it produces. It is impossible here to go into the details of this problem in economic theory, but the following quotation from Professor Sumner H. Slichter's recent book, entitled *Towards Stability*, is illuminating:

The "popular" theory of depressions is the underconsumption theory. The theory takes several forms, some of them so extravagant as to be grotesque. A moderate and widely accepted form is as follows: During boom periods profits increase faster than other forms of income. Profits go largely to the well-to-do, who invest them rather than spend them for

consumers' goods. As a result, the producing power of industry grows faster than consumers' incomes, producers are unable to find a market for their output at prices which cover its cost, and the boom is transformed into depression. Few economists accept this theory and yet whenever the man in the street attempts to account for depressions, he invariably ends up with an underconsumption theory. . . . The underconsumption theories simply reverse cause and effect — it is the drop in business spending which produces the inadequacy of consumer incomes; not the inadequacy of consumer incomes which produces the drop in business spending.

Even if the underconsumption theory were correct, it does not follow that capitalism cannot consume what it produces; it would be entirely possible, if it were in fact socially desirable, through governmental action to discourage thrift and decrease savings.

The third argument to support the view that war is inevitable under capitalism is that capitalistic states are run solely in the interest of capitalists and that capitalists make wars because it is to their advantage.

These statements are likewise untrue.

Capitalistic states are not run in the interest of the capitalists solely; in democracies, such as the United States, the interests of capitalists are being continually ignored, as capitalists well know to their sorrow.

Furthermore, successful wars are not to the advantage of capitalists alone, but if they are advantageous at all it is the entire country that benefits. And, when wars bring economic advantages to the victorious country, the advantages are equally great irrespective of whether the country is capitalist or socialist; and the economic incentive to war is consequently equal under the two types of state.

Japan's claim for colonial expansion is based in part upon the fact that her population is disproportionately great compared to the size