

other worlds...

journeys in

new age

spirituality

A Free ebook by abracad

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Foreword

This compilation summarises the progress made so far along personal journeys in spirituality, philosophy and the paranormal. It is offered in the format of an ebook in order to take advantage of the extraordinary power of the Internet as a communications medium.

The fifteen chapters (journeys) within address fundamental questions such why we are we here and where we may be going. Whilst it is impossible to offer definitive answers to any of these issues some tentative suggestions are raised.

The reader is advised to accept nothing presented here as hard fact. Instead it is hoped that these accounts of my journeys may inspire others to embark upon their own voyages of discovery.

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1 The Nature of Reality

one man's view

Let me start by saying that not only is the true nature of reality unknown but it is also unknowable, hence the second part of the title. What follows are some ideas on the subject intended more to stimulate thought than to provide absolute truths. When Rene Descartes (1596-1650) declared, "I think, therefore I am", he stated the limit of our knowledge. All that we think we know is dependent on the reliability of our mind, and that can easily deceive us; how often have you woken remembering a dream and thought how real it seemed at the time! We're therefore faced with two alternatives, we can either give up all attempts to understand the universe and our place within it, or we can attempt to build a philosophy based on what's most likely to be correct. Throughout the ages, countless scientists, philosophers, priests and others have chosen the latter path.

During the seventeenth century Isaac Newton (1642-1727) developed his laws of mechanics which were to overshadow scientific and philosophical thinking for over two hundred years. Newton saw the universe as a large machine working deterministically i.e. with cause preceding effect. The universe consisted of an enormous number of elementary particles interacting with each other by means of collisions and unseen forces such as gravity. The whole thing could be compared to billiard balls in motion, given accurate enough information about their condition at any one time it would be theoretically possible to predict precisely where they would be at any point in the future. This was an extremely depressing view, for not only did it deny man's capacity for choice (i.e. freedom of the will) it also did away with the need for God, apart perhaps from setting the whole thing in motion.

So, is the universe nothing but a load of balls? No, not according to the twentieth century ideas of relativity and quantum physics. According to these rather complex theories the underlying nature of reality is very different to that which we perceive through our senses. For example space and time are not the separate entities we may imagine, but are inextricably linked in a four-dimensional space-time continuum. The universe is composed of particles that can sometimes behave like waves, or waves that sometimes act like particles, depending on how we observe it. The idea of completely predicting the future from a perfect knowledge of the present is no longer even theoretically possible, since it is impossible to determine both the position and the velocity of an object simultaneously; the more accurately we know the position, the less accurately we can know the velocity, and vice versa. More than this, however, the elementary building blocks of the universe seem to have an inherent unpredictability (or randomness?). The predictability we observe in our world is the statistical sum of the chaotic behaviour of billions of contributing parts.

Where does man fit into these theories? According to the Newtonian view, life is no more than an accidental side effect of a mechanistic universe, it developed from a certain combination of the elements coming together and exhibiting certain properties, just as how a poker player will eventually get dealt a perfect hand out of the millions of possible alternatives. Consciousness and free will are mere illusions and our slightest actions are completely defined by the deterministic behaviour of the elementary particles that form our brains. We would be no more than (sophisticated) robots. The ideas of this century give a slightly more optimistic outlook. While they don't confirm the existence of a distinct soul, they do provide a framework in which such an entity could operate. Instead of being completely random, the behaviour of elementary particles could be influenced by something outside the realm of physical time-space, that something could be our spirits or the will of God. The effects would still appear random, because our measurements can only take place in the four dimensions our bodies inhabit.

There is a third view, known as idealism, which considers the universe to be the creation of the mind, i.e. an illusion. According to this view nothing exists outside the mind of its creator. Whilst we can't eliminate this possibility, I would consider it unlikely due to the complexity and

consistency of the reality that I appear to experience. In addition, if I created my universe, why would it contain unpleasantness?

Throughout history man has felt the need to search for a meaning or purpose to his existence through science, religion or mysticism. The materialist argument is that this search is a desperate attempt by man to avoid facing the reality of his insignificance and mortality, however if man were a mere automaton he would neither be aware of such things, nor able to care about them. Who amongst us can deny that we appear to possess the gift of free will? If this is the case then we have something (the mind) acting as a cause without itself being caused. While not invalidating the collective works of science, this would certainly restrict their application to the physical realm; or to put it another way, would imply the existence of some reality beyond that of matter and energy. This is the classic philosophical position of Dualism and was the theme of the 1875 book "The Unseen Universe or Physical Speculations on a Future State" by Balfour Stewart and Peter Guthrie Tait. This work attempted to reconcile the seeming incompatibility between the materialistic science of the day and the ideas of religion and spirituality.

A few, more open-minded, contemporary scientists are prepared to admit the possibility of there being a reality beyond that which is accessible to their methods and instruments - eg:

- E & E Vasilescu claim to have found a link between telepathy and a particular radio wave (UK Society for Psychical Research journal Oct 1996). The duo claim to have produced remarkably high results (88% using zener cards) when using a radio wave amplifier set to 46.20m. Results did not diminish with distance, nor with shielding.
- The BBC carried a report, "Life after death?", in June 2002 in which scientists Ronald Pearson and Michael Roll claim to have found "firm proof that life after death really does exist". Pearson's work reintroduces the concept of the 'ether' and contradicts parts of Einstein's theory of relativity. Roll said "We are putting forward the secular case that we all possess a soul and are immediately reunited with our loved ones who have gone before us".
- The UK Daily Mail carried a report, "The Afterlife Experiment", on Dec 20 2003, which describes how a team of researchers led by Dr Sam Parnia at London's Hammersmith Hospital are conducting a scientific investigation into near death experiences. The team are hoping to address the question of whether there is life after death.

Given the impossibility of absolute certainty about the universe, which theory is most likely to be correct? Obviously this must be a matter of personal opinion, but I believe the evidence overwhelmingly supports a dualistic universe, i.e. one that consists of more than physical matter and energy. Indeed the very process of being able to consider the question and form an opinion confirms this view, which we all appear to assume anyway. In any case the dualistic approach is potentially the least damaging in the case of error. If the universe turns out to be purely materialistic our destiny would be fixed regardless; however the logical conclusion of assuming an unalterable fate would be to cease making an effort, if wrong we would have lost unlimited opportunity.

2 The Nature of Man

There are two main, contrasting views on the nature of man.

Materialism asserts that we are no more than the product of a physical universe; mere automata created by that great cosmic accident, the big bang. We have no soul, spirit or will; all that we do is deterministic reaction to the inputs received through the five senses and processed by that supercomputer called the brain. The illusion of consciousness is no more than the product of millions of years of evolution. There is no God, neither life nor death and nothing we see, feel or do is of any significance whatsoever.

Dualism suggests that man has a dual nature - a physical body combined with some spirit or will, capable of transcending physical laws of cause and effect. We are more than just a set of fundamental particles and cannot be described by Newtonian or quantum mechanics or any other scientific flavour of the month. All we do, every act of will, is significant; changing forever what would otherwise have been.

Most people adopt the dualistic position without even considering any alternative. We go through life seeking that elusive state called happiness in a variety of ways but invariably in the belief that we are at least partially in control of our destiny.

If we accept that we are something more than matter and energy, and that something is spirit, then which is the more consistent? - that the spirit miraculously appears from nowhere some time before birth and mysteriously vanishes at death; or that the spirit's existence is as infinite as quarks and leptons and only its association with our body is temporal?

For all the great advances of science in adding to man's collective knowledge of the universe we have made little progress in understanding that within us which is able to understand.

I believe that all existence occurs within a multi-dimensional universe, of which the four dimensions of space and time are but a fragment.

Life is a transient bond between a unique spirit and some physical vehicle or body, i.e. between entities within the spiritual dimension(s) and the physical dimensions (of space-time). This bond is formed at that point after conception when it is determined that a new life will arise. The strength and nature of the bond varies with the form of organism; being strongest in man and weakest in plant life (where the action of the spirit world may take millions of years to develop ingenious mutations).

The strength of this bond also varies over time, and is indicated by state of mind. Most times the mind is on autopilot, running familiar programs and ticking over with minimum effort. The mind works harder in times of exaltation, crisis or when learning a new skill (program). During sleep the mind retreats into its own realm, keeping physical monitoring to a bare minimum.

The spirit exerts its influence over the physical body (i.e. what we perceive as free-will) by means of quantum effects occurring within the brain. Most quantum events are truly random, the sum total of vast numbers of such events giving rise to the mainly deterministic world we experience. Occasionally the spirit intervenes and tips the balance slightly in its desired direction. This is action of the will.

All observable life originates from living parentage, which raises the question of where the first life came from. Materialism asserts that it sprang from a fortuitous set of circumstances, the right atoms just happened to meet at the right temperature and pressure etc. Maybe that's just statistically possible given the vastness and age of the universe, but in living organisms the fundamental particles don't simply function individually - their behaviour is determined by the needs of the whole body e.g. they begin to seek survival, reproduction, heredity etc. A living

organism is more than the sum of its parts. Life is of a different order of complexity to the non-living. Similar distinct jumps exist between plant, (non-human) animal and man.

Human character is largely predetermined at birth, and reflects the nature of that unique spirit or soul allied to the physical body. Attempts have been made to categorize personality but individuals may not be pigeon-holed, each having many traits in infinitely variable degree. Similarly the "luck" enjoyed by an individual, as well as any special talent or "gift" (i.e. its karma), is more related to the spirit than the body.

The existence of life on planet earth is of finite duration. It has not always been there and will eventually be there no longer as the planet becomes uninhabitable through the misuse of its resources or of man's technological capabilities or when the sun finally burns itself out. It's likely that human life will die with the planet unless the privileged few develop the ability to migrate elsewhere. This phenomenon called life must be considered as finite, just one phase in the evolutionary journey of the universe, and the growth of the spirit.

3 On Being

What follows is an attempt to make sense of the unknowable. It is presented not as knowledge, but as a basis for contemplation and discussion; it is inevitably incomplete and will be added to and amended as the author sees fit.

There are three possible models for the nature of reality. The materialistic model suggests that all that exists is composed of matter and energy behaving deterministically according to known or unknown physical laws; I refer to this as world one. The idealistic model suggests that everything is the product of some form of mind; without mind there is no existence, this I shall call world two. The dualistic model suggests that there are both material and mental-spiritual aspects to existence. The physical universe exists and behaves more or less deterministically according to scientific principles, but there also exists a mental-spiritual universe just as real as the outer reality perceived by the senses; world three.

Absolute knowledge is limited to what is perceived through the fragility of consciousness; therefore we can never be absolutely certain which of these three possibilities correctly describes existence. However world three may be considered a preferable model on the basis of being least potentially damaging in the case of error. Erroneous belief in the other models has the consequence of lost opportunity.

World one deems life to be no more than a curious side effect of matter in motion; we have no control over our destiny and hence have no motivation to strive for the summit of our potential. World two similarly gives little significance to the power of the will since all that exists is but an imagining of one or more minds; why then seek achievement in the physical realm? However world three suggests that we are spiritual-physical beings existing for a finite period in a physical framework. We **do** have the power to change our own reality and should therefore seek to use it to the best of our ability.

The superiority of world three over world one is suggested by: i) The existence of emotions; love, hate, fear, anger as well as our own fear of mortality - hence the huge importance given to religious and/or spiritual belief; the existence of such emotions appears out of place in a mechanical-physical kind of existence. ii) Our own innate surety of the freedom of our will and our inner sense of what is right tells us that we possess the power to choose; no such choice could exist in a deterministic framework. iii) The self-organising, self-perpetuating complexity of the living world.

The superiority of world three over world two is suggested by the consistency of our observations. If all that exists is but a great dream it appears likely that certain inconsistencies would emerge, yet our perception of reality is consistent with that of all others we communicate with.

What follows is based on the assumption that the nature of reality is dualistic, consisting of both spiritual and physical aspects. Spirit is eternal and unbounded. The *raison d'être* of spirit is its continuing evolution as it journeys relentlessly toward the unattainable goal of absolute perfection. From its thirst for experience, spirit created the physical universe as a medium in which all manner of scenarios could take place. From this point of view, as creator and supreme ultimate infinite; spirit, in its entirety, may be viewed as synonymous with "God".

Contemporary scientific thought and evidence support the idea that the physical universe, as represented by the laws of physics is finite. The universe appears to contain singularities ("black holes") in which the laws no longer hold. It (i.e. space and time) also appears to have originated from a singularity; the archetypal "big bang". This mirrors the religious concept of creation.

First came the creation of the physical universe ("big bang"), then the formation of identifiable entities such as galaxies, stars and planets. Some of these evolved into a form that was able to sustain life. Finally came the development of life - the culmination of spirit's efforts to experience

material existence. Plant-life, and single-celled organisms represent early attempts of spirit to become incarnate followed by the higher animals and ultimately, on planet Earth, man.

Given the vastness of our universe the odds against Earth being the only planet capable of sustaining life are phenomenal. It appears near certain that life exists on other planets, somewhere, so why should incarnation be limited to planet earth. Incarnation may take place anywhere in the vastness of time and space that spirit deems appropriate.

Even unnatural methods of creating or restoring life (eg "test tube" babies, cloning and cryogenics) can be reconciled with the existence of an immortal and superior spirit. Every act of the will is an act of spirit, every discovery of science is an uncovering of that which was already designed and created by spirit. Hence a life form artificially created or sustained exists by grace of spirit and contains its own soul individuated from the spirit as a whole. Of course, with the freedom of will and mind that allows us to experiment comes the responsibility for the physical realm that our continued existence depends upon.

Spirit may be viewed as a whole from which unique souls (i.e. individual spirits) may temporarily become distinct, for example, during the process of physical incarnation. During incarnation the soul remains part of the whole but is able to experience consciousness of its own existence. Every act of will is an act of spirit. The physical is always and inevitably subordinate to the spiritual. Following death the soul is absorbed back into the whole world of spirit, although possibly retaining a degree of individuality. The possible loss of distinctness, or "self" is probably the most frightening prospect of mortality.

The concept of karma states that we carry as baggage the sum total of our good and bad deeds, and such a balance is continued from one incarnation to the next. Rather than being judged on the goodness or badness of each incarnation we are "judged" on lessons yet to be learned and the circumstances and personality of a particular lifetime may be taken to reflect these. Physical incarnation should be viewed as an opportunity for the soul to develop and gain experience, however, that is not to say the concepts of right and wrong do not exist. Good and evil are two extremes of the same scale. Few acts can be considered entirely good or evil, especially when judged against the backdrop of the insignificance of a single lifetime; however lives of selfless devotion to others (e.g. Mother Theresa) and those of, for example, serial killers illustrate that this existence is not always blandly neutral.

Sin and goodness have no meaning in a purely scientific doctrine; we are merely matter and energy in motion and no more responsible for our actions than a feather blowing in the wind. Most religions assert that we have some freedom of the will and are somehow judged on how we use it, however the degree of freedom, and of forgiveness varies from religion to religion and on interpretation to interpretation. Human free will may be likened to the freedom of a dog on a lead, we are able to make some choices, but the constraints of our physical existence and external circumstances ensure that freedom is limited.

In the animal kingdom where survival is paramount, supremacy is gained by destroying one's rivals - the survival of the fittest. As a "civilized" species such simplicity no longer applies; we have devised laws to ensure the species as a whole prospers, by protecting the weak and allowing specialization and individuality to flourish. We are not God, but we ARE gods of this life, this world, this existence. In my contemplation of such questions I am struck by the interdependence, indeed, the oneness of all that exists. We cannot exist as individuals without other individuals; as a species without other species; as a planet without the cosmos, and yet we seem to willing to compromise the whole. It is not for nothing that we speak of mother nature and mother earth; it is nature that created us and sustains us.

Daily the human race pollutes the environment and destroys the rainforests and other natural resources in the name of progress. We abuse our fellow creatures in the name of "science" or sport. Nuclear testing, cloning and the genetic engineering of food and other products put one in

mind of a child playing with a box of matches. If we continue to mess with things we don't understand I fear we will suffer more than burned fingers. What is this thing called progress? It appears that many among us are merely accelerating towards their (and indeed our) own destruction.

In my opinion God does not judge in order to punish or reward, but to ascertain which lessons remain to be learned. Many aspects of this existence may appear unfair, illogical or unfathomable; it is not for us to know the mind of God, merely to do the best with the set of tools and circumstances that have been handed to us. One lifetime is no more than a single step on an infinite journey.

All religions are attempts to reach a single truth. Different religions can, and should, co-exist with individuals finding the way forward that most suits them. Even monotheism and polytheism can be reconciled successfully as with the co-existence of Buddhism and Shinto in Japan. A single God may have many facets, or many Gods may share a common origin or goal. Sadly, in practice, some religions like Christianity have become fragmented, as a mirror being smashed on the ground. Such differences serve only to make conventional religion appear irrelevant to everyday life.

4 Free Will: Fact or Fallacy?

This short paper examines the fundamental, but essential, question of whether free will exists.

Free will may be defined as an individual (human or other living entity) having the capacity to determine its own actions and to some degree destiny, i.e. within the limits of external circumstance.

Determinism results from the absolute rule of cause and effect. In the Newtonian clockwork universe, every precise detail of the future is already determined to an infinitesimal degree of accuracy, and has been so since the start of time. There is no scope for straying from the cosmic script.

Determinism is intuitively reasonable. I push an object, it moves in the direction of my force. The universe, including ourselves, consists of matter and energy in motion behaving according to eternal all-encompassing laws. Thus every tiny detail of the universe's, and our, is already fixed and has been so since the beginning of existence.

This begs the question of whether existence has a finite beginning, and if so what "caused" or preceded it? But if something caused it, then that something pre-existed existence and so what might be labelled the "big bang" was not in fact the beginning at all.

The currently preferred scientific explanation for the underlying nature of what we perceive as the universe is the quantum theory. This theory, well supported by experimental evidence, postulates that rather than being deterministic (as the universe appears to our senses) at the sub-atomic level the universe contains inherent indeterminacy / randomness, in that it is not possible to predict precisely the behaviour of a given particle, only to calculate probabilities. The apparent determinism we perceive is due to the large numbers of such sub-atomic events which form our concept of reality. The toss of a coin is unpredictable, the toss of a million coins will result in around half a million heads, half a million tails.

It is as though quantum theory acts as an inviolable veil limiting the degree to which the universe may be understood.

Both determinism and the indeterminacy of quantum theory suggest a world without free will. In the former case everything is predetermined, thus there is no room for an entity such as the will acting as a cause without itself being caused. In the latter, even without deterministic predictability, micro-events are subject to probabilistic laws rather than a supernatural will. Even though we cannot predict the toss of a single coin, we CAN predict the toss of a million coins will result in around half a million heads, half a million tails.

Max Planck, a founder of quantum theory and a firm believer in determinism, conceded "...we have our most direct and intimate source of knowledge, which is the human consciousness telling us that in the last resort our thought and volition are not subject to ... causal order", [quoted in New Pathways in Science; Sir Arthur Eddington MA, DSc, LLD, FRS; pub Cambridge University Press 1935].

The existence of free will requires the actions of individuals be consciously and intelligently determined, at least some of the time, rather than being the inevitable product the past or due to chance subatomic events. This requires some entity (the will) being able to act as a cause, without its action being caused by anything else.

If free will exists it is highly suggestive of the existence of some non-physical entity ("spirit") from which that will emanates. The question of whether some higher non-physical entity ("God") might exist is not discussed here. If free will does not exist then the entire future of the universe has already been fixed and life and experience are meaningless.

An alternative, if somewhat bizarre, explanation postulates the existence of an infinite number parallel universes. At each moment an infinite number of possible futures exist, each spawning its own universe, which in turn holds an infinite number of possible futures. And so on and so forth.

It may be that without conscious effort to apply the will we tend to drift through life deterministically, reacting instinctively to external stimuli. Such a view encourages constant review and exercise of the will in trivial ways to strengthen its capacity in order that we might maximize our potential.

On the one hand scientific knowledge and common sense suggest a deterministic universe, unfolding in accordance with prescriptive natural laws. On the other hand experience (of having control of our actions), observation and common sense suggest the existence of free will.

Just about every modern society has independently developed laws. Societies seek to maintain order through the threat of punishment for those that violate these laws. How can an individual be justifiably punished for behaviour that was completely beyond their volition?

Numerous independently developed religions contain moral codes that if obeyed lead to eternal joy, but if flouted result in eternal damnation. How, morally, can a fate based upon moral conduct, depend on actions over which we have no control?

How much energy and resources are devoted to pursuits, such as art, literature etc., which are unrelated to the survival and evolution of the species? If we have no choice, why should deterministic fate humour such distractions?

Why should the corporate world devote so much time, effort and money on advertising and marketing if its intended audience has no choice in how to spend its hard earned pennies?

Almost every aspect of our very existence is built upon the assumption of the reality of free will.

How often do we encounter situations in which we have a choice; whether to order fish or chicken, whether to watch channel 1 or channel 2, whether to go jogging or have a lie in etc. And at various times we face life-changing choices, whether to move job, marry, move home etc. How certain we are that we do have the power to determine our destiny. And yet once the choice is made how can we really be sure that we could have chosen differently. An almighty paradox.

By what mechanism might free will operate? For free will to exist there needs to be a means by which the will may act as a cause upon physical reality. It seems quantum physics may offer a clue as to the nature of this mystical interface.

Physicist Henry Margenau [quoted by Sir John Eccles in *Mindwaves: thoughts on intelligence, identity and consciousness*. Ed. Blakemore & Greenfield; pub Blackwell 1987] states that the components of the brain 'are small enough to be governed by probabilistic quantum laws' and are 'always poised for a multitude of possible changes, each with a definite probability'.

Professor Sir Roger Penrose FRS has postulated that microtubules, found within brain neurons, are subject to quantum effects and that these quantum effects may be propagated to the neuron and macro level. See the website of Professor Stuart Hameroff MD of the University of Arizona, who has worked with Penrose on developing this theory, for further detail.

The blurb for the forthcoming Quantum Mind 2003 Conference on Consciousness, Quantum Physics and the Brain to be hosted by the University of Arizona states, "recent experimental evidence suggests quantum nonlocality occurring in conscious and subconscious brain function, and functional quantum processes in molecular biology are becoming more and more apparent."

If free will exists it is highly likely that it originates from something beyond the materialistic realm which exhibits no properties capable of supporting an entity such as will. Should this non-physical entity ("spirit") exist, it is unlikely to be affected by a physical event such as death. We may therefore infer that our essence (i.e. will, consciousness) is infinite, and therefore that our earthly experience is of little significance.

If, however, there is no free will, it follows that we are mere automata acting out a pre-prepared script. Sorrow and elation are mere illusions; inevitable, and thus meaningless. Death is similarly inconsequential since there is ultimately no such thing as life.

Both the existence of free will and its absence imply the relative insignificance of this incarnation. A single human lifetime is but 0.00000005 times the estimated age of the universe, if the age of the universe is represented by one day, a human life lasts a mere 0.0004 seconds. The most significant members of today's world will be mere historical footnotes in 1,000 years and shall most likely be forgotten in 10,000. Though we should seek to fully exploit our life, and whilst we can hope for continued existence, we may take heart that our earthly problems and failings are ultimately of no importance whatsoever.

5 The Paradox of Time

To our everyday perception as physically incarnate beings time appears as a unidirectional, uniformly flowing quantity over which we have no control. There is however a considerable body of evidence to suggest that the true nature of time might be very different.

The rate of passage of time whilst engaged in an enjoyable activity seems very different to when waiting for a bus on a cold and rainy night. Although its measure on a chronometer would appear exactly the same.

Einstein challenged the intuitive notion of the constancy of time with his theories of relativity. Instead, time is seen as part of a four-dimensional space-time continuum. One of the consequences of relativity is the concept of time dilation, or the passage of time depending upon the motion of the observer. The usual example is that of an astronaut embarking on a journey at near the speed of light. Upon returning to earth he would find that much more time has passed there than would have been observed by him. Effectively, he would have travelled into the future.

There are numerous accounts of individuals glimpsing the future.

In 1974 an explosion at a chemical plant in Flixborough, northern England, which killed 28 people, was seen in advance by housewife Lesley Castleton. Whilst watching Saturday morning television she saw the programme interrupted by a newsflash giving details of the explosion which was said to have occurred shortly before. She told friends about what she had seen. Later on the evening news the report said the explosion had occurred at 4:30pm. At first Mrs Castleton thought the reporters had made a mistake but realised something strange had occurred when reading in the Sunday papers that the explosion had indeed occurred at 1630. Mrs Brennan's friends confirmed that she had told them of the accident in advance of it happening.

The Bible Code, discovered by mathematician Eliyahu Rips, is a hidden code in the Torah, the first 5 books of the Bible. The Bible Code, described by author Michael Drosnin, has been shown to have predicted events such as the death of Princess Diana, the September 11 US terror attacks, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin with odds of millions to one against chance. Indeed the death of Rabin was predicted by Drosnin a year ahead of its happening.

As a child I used to do a weekly line on my father's football pools coupon. One Saturday I felt especially confident that I was going to win, and kept telling my father this. I actually won a small dividend. The odds against doing so were something in excess of 50 to 1. I had never felt so confident of success in a game of chance before, or since.

My grandmother passed away in July 2002, my father in October 2003. In September 2003 I had a dream of my father driving my grandmother somewhere in his car, as he often did so many times in the past. I told my wife of my dream. At the time I was aware that my father was unwell, but had no idea of the seriousness of his condition. The dream could simply have been a memory of happier times, or was it a premonition of what was to follow?

An interesting implication of quantum physics, the scientifically accepted description of events at the micro-atomic level, was dubbed spooky action at a distance by Einstein. This concerns pairs of so-called entangled particles. Making an observation on one particle, which defines one of its properties, instantaneously defines the same property for its partner, no matter how far away it is (NB the property is **UNDEFINED** until the observation is made. The significance of observation is another important consequence of quantum theory). Effectively, what happens to one particle has had an instantaneous effect the other, defying Einstein's law of the speed of light as a limit. The effect has been confirmed experimentally.

Psychologist Carl Jung coined the term synchronicity to describe those meaningful coincidences which seem to occur more often than would be expected by chance alone. Jung suggested this was an indication of some kind of hidden connection between seemingly unrelated things.

Theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, has proposed a concept called imaginary time to attempt to overcome the singularities (breaking down of physical laws) at the start, and possible end, of the physical universe. In *A Brief History of Time* Hawking says, "[the existence of singularities] might suggest that the so-called imaginary time is really the real time, and that what we call real time is just a figment of our imaginations."

Some leading scientists believe that time travel is possible, at least in theory. Kip Thorne of the California Institute of Technology believes that wormholes or Einstein-Rosen Bridges could provide a means of time travel. These form where space-time curves sufficiently to provide connect two distant points in the continuum. Princeton physicist J. Richard Gott suggested time travel may be possible by means of cosmic strings. Thinner than an atom, they extend the entire length of the universe. A spaceship in the vicinity of two strings close enough together, or a single string close enough to a black hole could be transported due to the warping of space-time (Howstuffworks "How Time Travel Will Work" <http://science.howstuffworks.com/time-travel.htm>).

It appears that inhabitants of the so-called spirit realm or afterlife exist in a kind of timelessness. In *Life After Death*, an examination of near death experiences, Ian Wilson states "There are many similar examples indicating an 'all-knowledge' time-and-space transcending facility to whatever 'thought'-self is reached during the near-death experience. It is as if this 'self' exists at a level of our being ... which can and does transcend time and space".

I often attend my local spiritualist church. In April 1999, on a visit home after working overseas for just over a year, I attended a service. I'd been to the church around twenty or so times previously and one of the regulars recognised me and we chatted for a while. Near the end of the demonstration of clairvoyance the medium came to me and, as best I remember, she said things were going well for me at the moment (that was true) and she said her guide mentioned a "good woman". She asked if I was married, in fact I had married 2 months before.

The medium also mentioned a baby girl, she said she saw pink ribbons. First of all she said maybe not this year, but then I told her my wife and I were expecting a baby in September. Five months later my wife gave birth to a lovely baby girl. She also said she saw someone folding origami, I was living and working in Japan and my wife is Japanese (and can do origami)!! In all the previous times I'd been to that church I'd had messages on about 40% of my visits but none have been as accurate as that.

I graduated from a master's degree in September 2001 and received several job offers, one of which I was instinctively drawn to. I accepted this offer, rejecting three others, believing it was right for me. About a week before I was due to start the job I attended the spiritualist church where I was given the message that I was "barking up the wrong tree". I had no idea what the medium was talking about, as at this time, I believed my future was rosy.

The following day I went to view some rental accommodation in the locality of my chosen job, only to be informed that the property had already been taken. I assumed this was the meaning of the medium's message. The following week I started my chosen job, only to find it wasn't at all for me. I lasted just four days before quitting, each day growing more and more depressed and overwhelmed by feelings of despair. I had indeed been barking up the wrong tree.

Helmut Schmidt conducted experiments which found that the results from a random number generator could be influenced by subjects willing a desired result **AFTER** the data had been collected. This effect is known as retrospective psychokinesis, or retro-pk.

Lawrence LeShan suggests, in *The Medium, The Mystic and the Physicist* that the division of time into past, present and future is an illusion and that everything occurs in an eternal now.

The evidence for precognition may be initially disturbing as it implies a Newtonesque, deterministic universe in which "living" beings are mere automata acting out an inescapable pre-ordained script with our precious free-will consigned to the rubbish bin. I believe that ultimate reality is much more complex than that.

The uniform flow of time may indeed be an illusion. Perhaps all of time, like all of space, really does exist all around us and all at once. The passage of time may be a mere illusion to help us make sense of our entrapment within physical clothes. Those who have returned home, ie to Spirit, may indeed be able to adopt a higher viewpoint, to see both future and past. But furthermore they, and we, may be able to alter them.

6 The Nature of God

The term God is usually taken to mean the supreme, ultimate, omnipotent, omniscient force which transcends the entire universe. The major religions further assign the quality of absolute goodness to God. This raises a paradox - if God is both all powerful and all good why is there evil in the universe in the form of pain, suffering, war and injustice? The existence of such things suggests that God either has insufficient power to prevent them, or that rather than being all good He is but a neutral observer of His creation.

Alternatively, earthly existence and all events contained within, however tragic and momentous they might seem from our current perspective, have minimal significance against the boundless backdrop of all reality. Each incarnation is but a small step along the path of spiritual evolution. God may be likened to a teacher. He does not want us to suffer, but he does want us to learn, and each obstacle faced is a lesson to be mastered. Man was granted limited freedom of the will that he may experience triumph and disaster and maybe learn from these things.

The idea of God was first recognized when early man appealed to unknown superior forces over matters of survival such as the success of the day's hunt, or the fertility of the land. The first gods were closely linked to natural phenomena such as the rising of the sun or the changing of the seasons. It is remarkable that different religions that developed independently have so much in common. God, and religion, were subsequently hijacked by the establishment as a means of keeping control and order through the promise of heaven for the obedient and the threat of hell for the rebellious. The will of man rather than that of God continues to dominate much organized religion.

Beliefs about God may be divided into four broad categories. Theism is a belief in God based on faith or revelation, it forms the basis of much religion and mysticism and typically views God as a personal and benevolent entity continually intervening in the universe to safeguard the welfare of His creation. Deism is a belief in God deduced from a process of logical reasoning, the deist God has typically left the universe to its own devices following creation. Atheism is a positive rejection of the existence of God. Agnosticism is the belief that knowledge about the existence or nature of God is inevitably beyond human reach, and that speculation on such matters is meaningless.

The sceptic may reject revealed knowledge, but if the mind is non-physical then why should it not have access to knowledge by non-physical means; and if it is assumed that God is more than physical why shouldn't awareness of Him occur in a similar way. The philosopher Rousseau said "The more I strive to prove the infinite Being of God the less do I understand it. But I feel that He is. That is enough for me". Shakespeare expressed it more simply in the words of Hamlet "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

The French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-62) devised the argument in favour of belief in God (or originally Roman Catholicism) known as Pascal's wager. Essentially this states we cannot ever know for sure about the existence of God but believing in Him is something like an insurance policy. If we believe and we're wrong, we'll end up dead anyway, just like the unbelievers; but if we don't believe and it turns out that there is a God then we may be denied the prize of eternal life - therefore it's safer to believe.

One of the areas of agreement between science, mysticism and religion is the belief in a finite beginning to the physical universe known variously as the "big bang" or creation. In a universe operating largely on the principle of cause and effect it seems reasonable that there would have been some initial cause, a role commonly attributed to God.

The argument from design seeks evidence for God in the hypothesis that the degree of order in the universe suggests it is the product of intelligent design, and hence an intelligent designer. Fundamental physical constants are precisely the right values required to keep the whole thing

ticking over. Of course it could be argued that the fact that we're here at all means that this must be the case, but that makes it no less amazing that we are here.

The idea of God certainly exists in the minds of men, giving weight to the view that He exists in reality; there is rarely smoke without fire. Vast amounts of resources and human effort have been expended in the building of elaborate churches and temples dedicated to the worship and glory of God. Many millions throughout the world engage in worship as members of organized religion while millions more offer silent prayer. Can a mere fairy tale continue to have such profound influence?

If there is a purpose to all existence, then that purpose must have been provided by some intelligence which we may as well call God. The alternative to there being a purpose is that mankind is no more than a speck of dust blowing helplessly in the cosmic winds for all eternity.

The concept of God has always provided explanation for the unexplainable, initially for phenomena such as night and day, the motion of the stars, eclipses etc. As man's knowledge grew the role of God changed, prompting the materialists to cynically describe a "God of the gaps", i.e. a mere filler of the holes in contemporary science. However twentieth century science has provided more questions than answers, theories of relativity and quantum mechanics reveal that the deeper we look the more mysterious reality becomes. At sub-atomic level determinism breaks down leaving some things as not only unknown, but unknowable.

The truly great scientists have always recognized some greater reality beyond the reach of their theories. Towards the end of his life Sir Isaac Newton likened himself to "a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me". Albert Einstein said "To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their primitive forms - this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness". Physicist Stephen Hawking believes that if we find a unified physical theory we would then turn to the question of why we and the universe exist. He writes, "If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason - for then we would know the mind of God".

The Christian religion plays a major role in the British constitution and way of life. There is hardly a town or village without a church or other place of worship. The Church of England, one of our wealthiest institutions, is traditionally led by the reigning monarch. Its senior officials sit in the House of Lords and may participate in the legislative process. Religious study remains a compulsory subject within state schools. In British courts of law oaths are sworn on the Bible in God's name.

With seeming arrogance the Bible proclaims that man alone was created in the image of God, but doesn't man possess a tiny spark of divinity in the freedom of his will? By exercising his will man can alter ever so slightly what would otherwise have been; but as man's power is limited, so God's is limitless. If nothing else the concept of God as a symbol of the absolute and infinite can only assist man to place his own finite existence in perspective against the whole of reality.

In time of life threatening crisis even the most cold-hearted and hardheaded may appeal, in hope more than belief, to an unseen super-force. Even the most materialistic atheist had better hope there is some form of God, for with no God there is neither purpose nor meaning, and without these he is nothing.

7 Occult Wisdom

Traditional Occult wisdom takes the form of systems of symbols. The study of these symbols for their own sake will not yield greater understanding; instead they should be used as tools to aid the individual in a personal exploration of the nature of reality. The Qabalah (tree of life) is a diagram summarizing the fundamental forces of the universe and their relationship to each other. The Tarot is another ancient symbolic representation of esoteric truths (the evolution of life and its relationship to the universe). The Tarot can also relate to the 22 paths between the spheres of the Qabalah. A more familiar, but no less legitimate form of occult symbolism is found in Astrology.

The Qabalah

Malkuth the kingdom, sphere ten, represents the physical reality of solids, liquids and gasses, the physical body, matter, energy, space and time. Its colours are citrine, olive, russet and black.

Yesod the foundation, sphere nine, is concerned with subconscious feelings, dreams and automatic (uncontrolled) instincts associated with life. Its colour is violet and its planet, the Moon.

Hod, glory, is sphere eight. It represents intellect, reason, logic, science and mathematics, clean-cut precision and blacks and whites with no in-betweens. Its colour is orange and its planet, Mercury.

Netzach, victory, is the seventh sphere. It symbolizes feeling, emotion, the non-quantifiable, opinions (rather than facts), the arts and infinite shades of grey. Green is its colour and Venus its planet.

Tiphereth, beauty, is sphere six. It is concerned with balance, moderation, realism, liberalism, the route to the appreciation of a power greater than man and open-mindedness. Its colour is rose-pink flecked with gold and its planet is the Sun.

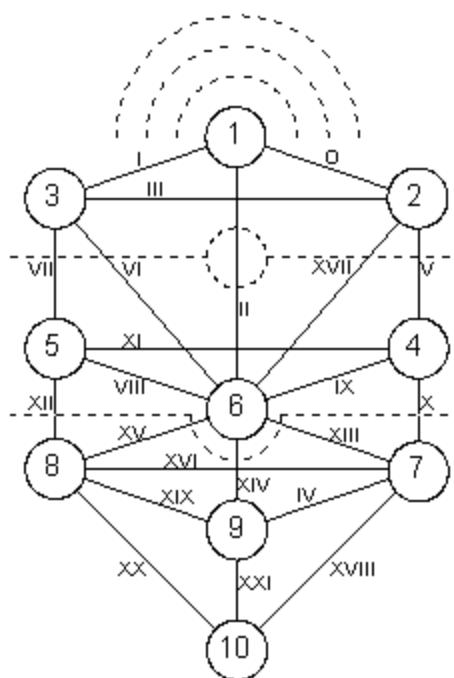
Geburah, strength, severity is the fifth sphere. Its realm is destruction and violence which is often right (e.g. the punishment of evil) but must be applied with reason or it can lead to senseless destruction and unjustified violence (e.g. the atom bomb, crime etc.). This sphere is essential for reform and progress; its colour is red and its planet, Mars.

Chesed, mercy, is sphere four. Its concern is giving without receiving, protectiveness, generosity and parent or grandparent-like qualities. In excess this sphere will bring loss of independence and determination. Its colour is blue and its planet is Jupiter.

The extremes of Geburah and Chesed are balanced by Tiphereth.

Binah, understanding, is sphere three. It is the form that is energized by, receives and understands the wisdom of Chokmah. Crimson, black and brown are its colours and Saturn, its planet.

Chokmah, wisdom is the second sphere. It is the energizing force and basic wisdom given shape by Binah. Its colours are blue and grey.



Kether, the crown, is the first sphere. It represents God, absolute perfection, the infinite, supreme ultimate. Its colour is pure brilliance.

At the head of Kether is Ain (nothingness), Ain Soph (limitlessness) and Ain Soph Aur (limitless light). Between Kether and Tiphereth lies Daath, the hidden sephira. It represents the bridge over the abyss separating divinity from the not quite divine.

The Elements

The four elements of earth, air, water and fire give a four-point analysis of the universe. Earth is associated the practical, restraint, sensation etc. Air is associated with communication, mental-activity, thought etc. Water is associated with emotion, feeling etc. Fire is associated with energy, assertiveness, intuition etc.

The Tarot

Magus (I); symbolizes control of ones own destiny (free-will), though this can never be fully achieved it should be aimed for as far as possible (i.e. mind).

High Priestess (II); nature in her esoteric aspect. The eternal mysteries from the face of which the uninitiated cannot lift the veil. Occult science personified, the gate of the occult sanctuary, the doorway between ignorance and understanding (i.e. spirit).

Empress (III); universal fertility, reproduction, continuous evolution, bringer and sustainer of life (i.e. soul).

Emperor (IV); domination of the physical world, kingship, government, leadership, temporal power. This can be achieved in varying degrees and is a matter of individual choice as to whether this is pursued (i.e. will).

Hierophant (V); spiritual rule, traditional religious teaching available to all, the organized church and all it entails.

The Lovers (VI); the choice between virtue and vice, we all possess a certain amount of free-will and it's up to the individual to use it wisely.

Chariot (VII); victory in the lower plane, the king in his triumph, partly along the road to perfection.

Adjustment (VIII); balance, divine justice, in nature everything moves towards equilibrium.

Hermit (IX); exploration of outer world, seeker, student.

Wheel of Fortune (X); life's ups and downs, the cyclical nature of the cosmos, luck and chance.

Lust (XI); spiritual force and courage, the image of the sacred science when justly applied, the victory of mind over matter.

Hanged Man (XII); voluntary sacrifice, the trading of earthly pleasure for greater heights.

Death (XIII); death of old self, universal transforming principle, the end of one phase is the beginning of another.

Art (XIV); the flowing of the past into the future via the present, a never-ending flow.

Devil (XV); the use of powers for evil purposes, there can be no progress without error, where there is imperfection there can be improvement.

The Tower (XVI); punishment for doing evil, "be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap", release from the trivial elements of earth-life.

The Star (XVII); the promise of a new and brighter dawn.

The Moon (XVIII); symbolizes three-way composition of the soul - emotional, mental and spiritual; everything in our transitory world is but a resemblance, the spirit travels through several planes on its evolutionary journey.

The Sun (XIX); the dawn after the darkness of the soul's descent into matter.

The Aeon (XX); the day of judgment which may come at any time for anyone, eventually all actions will be accounted for.

The Universe (XXI); the ecstatic state of the soul when it has become fully conscious of its divine origin.

The Fool (0); the mystic, dreamer and beholder of visions. He knows that this world and its wisdom are insignificant compared to the greater reality.

Astrology

For centuries man has believed there to be a link between the movements of heavenly bodies and the day-to-day events of his earthly existence, "as above, so below". The work of Prof. M. Gauquelin has produced impressive evidence showing that the position's of the planets at a person's birth has an influence on their future aptitudes. The Swiss psychologist C.G. Jung made frequent reference to astrology. At the very least the twelve astrological signs provide a succinct description of the human psyche.

Aries: impulsive, quick-tempered, enterprising, courageous, objective, urgent; Mars; fire.

Taurus: money-minded, dependable, obstinate, strong, productive, enduring; Venus; earth.

Gemini: versatile, changeable, shallow, quick-witted; Mercury; air.

Cancer: sympathetic, touchy, moody, defensive, sensitive; Moon; water.

Leo: patronising, generous, snobbish, high-spirited, powerful, impressive; Sun; fire.

Virgo: helpful, modest, perfectionist, analytical, critical; Mercury; earth.

Libra: co-operative, lazy, diplomatic, indecisive, related, harmonious; Venus; air.

Scorpio: brave, determined, vengeful, jealous, penetrating, intense; Mars/Pluto; water.

Sagittarius: open-minded, careless, enthusiastic, boastful, extensive, free; Jupiter; fire.

Capricorn: mean, materialistic, organized, cautious, rational, prudent; Saturn; earth.

Aquarius: rebellious, eccentric, friendly, freedom-loving, detached; Saturn/Uranus; air.

Pisces: sloppy, kind, impractical, imaginative, vague, impressionable; Jupiter/Neptune; water.

It is a gross over-simplification to treat the signs of the zodiac as mere pigeon holes, indeed, we all contain a little of each of the signs in a unique mix of individuality.

The seven planets symbolize universal principles.

Sun: self-integration.

Moon: rhythms, instinctive response, reflection.

Mercury: communication, mental and nervous co-ordination.

Venus: unity, sympathy, evaluation, feeling.

Mars: activity, enterprise, self-assertion, energy.

Jupiter: expansion, material growth, understanding.

Saturn: formative, restriction, discipline, rigidity.

8 Good, Evil and the Law

The concepts of Good and Evil are much quoted, especially in current discussions over the apparent decline of morality, but do they have any meaning? Can actions or individuals be classified as Good, Evil or neutral?

In the Christian faith the origins of Evil go back to the original sin, where Eve succumbed to temptation to eat the forbidden fruit. From then on man had the capacity for both Good and Evil and the power to choose between the two.

The question of Good and Evil only arises if we have freedom of the will (i.e. the ability to determine our own destiny), otherwise our actions and judgments are beyond our control. Since God has seen fit to grant us free will, why shouldn't we be guided by Crowley's edict of "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law" (although his milder devotees add "but harm none"). But if we have free will and the ability to manipulate physical reality, this does suggest the existence of God, the ultimate manipulator. And if there's a God, isn't he likely to want us to choose Good over Evil?

Goodness means more than merely being Law-abiding. In the simplest terms a Good act is one resulting in a net contribution to the universe e.g. an act of charity or self-sacrifice. Likewise an Evil act is one which takes something, or violates the rights of others. There are complications; doing something for the benefit of others often brings reward (e.g. an entertainer may bring pleasure to millions but can be well paid for doing so) but does that detract from its Goodness? Is it still Evil to take the liberty or life of a convicted criminal according to the Laws of society, or to kill in self defence, or for your country in time of war?

The purpose of life on earth may be considered as threefold. Firstly to gain maximum satisfaction during this finite existence, secondly to achieve significance by maximizing our impact on the universe through positive use of the will in a constructive manner and lastly to learn and grow through the light of experience. Every action leaves a slight but permanent mark on the universe, changing forever that which would otherwise have occurred. Similarly, every experience leaves a slight but permanent mark on the man, giving rise to traces of influence in all his future actions.

The concept of Karma suggests that every soul has an account kept of all the Good and Evil deeds it performs during its earthly existence. Over the course of time this account must balance, although this may take many incarnations. According to this view both the rich and powerful and the poor and weak are either settling debts of the past, or will suffer reversed fortunes in the future. Such ideas are at odds with the view that the purpose of existence is to edge ever closer to perfection, which implies that over time the constructive acts must outweigh the destructive ones.

The natural state of affairs, as found in the natural world, is NO Law; in human terms - anarchy. Nature is certainly cruel, as witnessed by any television wildlife programme, but it is ultimately successful in cultivating an ever more sophisticated and durable collection of life forms.

If there were no Laws in society we could do as we pleased and take what we wanted so long as we were strong enough to turn desire into action. Such a system of survival of the fittest is the key to Darwin's theory of Natural Selection and works well enough in the animal Kingdom.

So the strongest and cleverest would control the fruits of the world; but would they gain satisfaction from their power knowing that a cleverer or stronger man may come along at any time to dispossess them? And what of the defeated? Would they be motivated to work within a system inherently stacked against them? Probably no more than they had to. Progress would be hugely retarded. Therefore as man began to develop the concepts of society and cooperation in the name of progress and the common Good, a code of conduct, ie "Law", became necessary to curtail his unique capacity for sin.

A starting point in any attempt to define the role of Law is with the concept of utilitarianism, i.e. that it should promote the greatest Good for the greatest number. Law should seek to satisfy objectives such as protecting individual freedom, protecting the planet and environment, promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unnecessary suffering.

The actual method of Law making depends on the kind of society under consideration. In the case of governance by hereditary monarchy or unelected dictatorship the power is concentrated in the hands of an individual. In such cases Law exists to protect the privileged position of the ruler and its lackeys but is usually accompanied by the principle of noblesse oblige to deter revolution.

In the preferable case of democracy the Law reflects the wishes of the majority. Political parties decide policies and publish manifestos, the public debates them and votes for the one it considers most attractive and the proposals contained within begin the process toward becoming Law. The boundary of Law is not static; it is in a constant state of flux. If one disagrees with the Law and one can argue one's case successfully one can cause the Law to change. Neither is there any absolute definition of what should / should not constitute the Law. That is why there are many political parties and many shades of opinion within each.

Each individual carries its own concept of morality. The collective will of individuals in a given group (society) at a given time forms a consensus from which, in a democracy, the Law is derived.

The existence of Laws protecting an individual's right to enjoy the rewards of his efforts has contributed enormously to man's progress. Such is the justification for Laws protecting the person and property of individuals and the reason why our Laws have become more sophisticated as we have supposedly become more civilized. But do man's Laws mark the boundary of Evil? In some cases, e.g. murder, violence or theft they do; but what about libel, or pub licensing regulations?

Given that Laws do serve a utilitarian purpose in discouraging Evil, what powers of retribution should the Law have against offenders? To be effective society must have in its armoury measures which at least equal the crimes committed. For instance as a deterrent to murder the death penalty should, in the most extreme cases, be available; but as a maximum rather than a mandatory punishment.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind ... You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Jesus Christ

"Love is the Law, love under will." Aleister Crowley

9 The Christian Path

There is much animosity between the official Christian churches and the so-called New Age movement with church officials making wild allegations about those holding alternative beliefs and the New Agers frequently rubbishing the Christian faith. Such conflicts may be more a battle for the money of the seekers rather than for the truth. Surely the same God is worshipped with equal sincerity under many different names.

Jesus was, at the very least, a remarkable man. There exist numerous accounts of his miracles and resurrection, and his teachings have survived for two millennia and continue to influence two billion people (one third of the earth's population) as the world's largest religion. Such a significant philosophy is worthy of contemplation and debate.

The essence of Christianity suggests that this earthly existence is merely temporary; a preparation, or trial, for a much greater reality yet to come, i.e. the Kingdom of God. God is seen as a caring father who wants his children to live according to His Will, but will forgive those who stray so long as they recognize and try to correct their error or sin.

This does not mean there shall be no judgment. *Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth* (1). Jesus told of the signs that would precede the close of the age: *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places ... And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray* (2). Of course these happenings can be recognized throughout human history, and many false prophets have worn the clothes of priesthood.

When asked for the great commandment Jesus replied: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. and You shall love your neighbour as yourself* (3). So Jesus asks that we are open towards God and live in harmony with our fellow man; a message of mutual tolerance and respect that could only benefit the troubled world of today.

But who, or what is God? Very few claim to have direct experience of Him, but we can speculate. The image of God as a white-haired old man sitting in the sky might be a little far-fetched but perhaps there is some supreme, omniscient, omnipotent power behind the world we experience? The concept of the universe having had some initial cause is somehow more satisfying than it just being there by chance. And what Creator wouldn't care about the progress of His achievement or want it to succeed?

If we accept the simple premise that we have free will (i.e. the ability to decide our own actions) we exceed the limitations of scientific explanation. We ourselves are able to act as a first cause, to impose our will on physical reality i.e. we possess a 'spark of divinity'. *God created man in his own image* (4). If we, of infinitesimal significance compared to the observable universe, have this power isn't it possible that there is something called God out there with far greater power?

Critics claim the Bible contradicts itself, making it all things to all men. The Old Testament says: *Your eye shall not pity; it shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot* (5), while later Jesus says: *Judge not, that you be not judged* (6). But of course these are two sides of the same coin. As the Qabalah balances Geburah (strength, severity) with Chesed (mercy), so man must learn to balance justice with forgiveness. We must accept the faults in others for none is perfect; but there must also be laws, and penalties for those who break them.

As with the symbols of the occult, the Bible does not provide instant enlightenment, it does prepare the seeker for certain landmarks which may be encountered on a personal journey

through life. We are expected to use our powers of judgment to evaluate what we may find along the way.

A being from another planet observing a church service such as the Holy Communion would be hard pushed to distinguish it from a ceremony of ritual magick. Both seek to contact some unseen higher force. Both use carefully chosen words, weapons and robes charged with the symbolism of many centuries. What right has the follower of one path to mock those of the other?

Prayer is a central feature of the Christian faith, this is the act of seeking oneness with God, thanking him for his gifts, asking forgiveness for the errors and sins of the past and requesting guidance for the future. But what is this if not a meditation by another name?

The true meaning of Christianity has become detached from the churches organized in its name. How often is the sixth commandment broken in the name of religion? How many of the church-going classes twist the message of Christ to suit their own purposes? *Beware of practising your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven* (7). How many in the church are true believers and not just on board for an easy ride? Of course there are genuine churchmen, but the dog-collar does not maketh the wearer.

Bible references: 1 Matthew 13 40-42; 2 Matthew 24 7-11; 3 Matthew 22 37-39; 4 Genesis 1 27; 5 Deuteronomy 19 21; 6 Matthew 7 1; 7 Matthew 6 1.

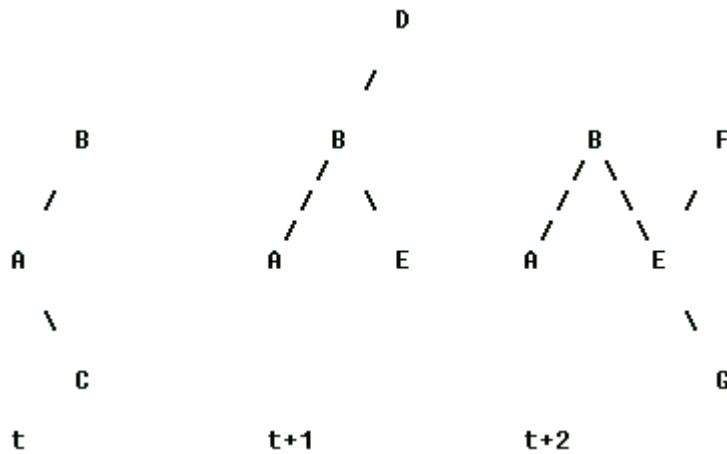
10 Science and the Paranormal

Human knowledge is limited to "I think, therefore I am". Beyond this, knowledge must consist of what is most likely to be true. However certain something may seem there is always the possibility that it's an illusion. Indeed, quantum theory (in particular the uncertainty principle) seems to confirm that human knowledge must always be imperfect. This means that not only is our present scientific knowledge incomplete, but also that we are incapable of ever fully understanding the universe.

At the end of the nineteenth century the outlook provided by science was pessimistic to say the least. The universe was seen as a huge machine operating in a totally predictable way. Theoretically, if we could have absolute information about the state of the universe at any one time we could work out its precise future. This left no room at all for free will. Our fate was predetermined down to the last detail, and it was hard to find a useful role for God. Not only this, but the universe was also slowly but inevitably winding down towards the unavoidable 'heat death'.

The twentieth century changed all this. First of all Einstein cast doubt on the laws of classical mechanics which supposedly governed the clockwork universe, and on the nature of time and space. Quantum physics went even further in revolutionizing scientific and philosophical thinking by challenging the fundamental principle of cause preceding effect, and assigning as much importance to the observer as to his observations. Quantum theory gave a much more optimistic view of things and opened up many possibilities. Below is a model of the unfolding future.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF NATURE



At time t, the situation A has two potential futures, B and C, at time t+1 only one of the alternatives must be selected, in this case B. Likewise, at time t+2, one of the alternatives D and E must be selected. In reality there are likely to be an infinite number of alternatives (potential futures) at any one time, and the time slices are probably infinitesimally small.

Nature appears approximately deterministic because we observe the "average" effect of large numbers of sub-atomic events, which on closer examination aren't very deterministic, e.g. we can't predict the outcome of a single throw of a dice, but we can say that in a large amount of throws each number will come up about 1/6 of the time. This is the kind of approximate determinism we observe in everyday life. It seems that the larger the scale (i.e. the larger the number of subatomic events) the closer we get to perfect determinism, and the smaller the scale

the closer we get to "chaos". Note that determinism, i.e. cause preceding effect, only has meaning in systems involving time.

It's possible that there is no such thing as an elementary or fundamental particle, because however far we analyse nature it always seems possible to reduce it further, e.g. we identified molecules, then atoms, then we split the atom etc. etc., but however far we go we can never feel we've reached the end.

There are several reasons to suppose that life is more than just a specially complex arrangement of physical matter brought about by chance. Firstly, the main aim of all living things is the survival of the species. A purely physical entity wouldn't or couldn't "care" about such matters. Secondly is the impression that most of us have of possessing freedom of the will, this isn't something that any physical explanation could account for. Thirdly, throughout his history, man has felt the need to recognize the existence of supernatural forces through belief in religion and other mysterious phenomena. The materialistic view would be that man is simply trying to reassure himself that physical death isn't the absolute ending of his existence. However, this raises the question of why a physical entity (man) would fear death or anything else? Just suppose there was just one grain of truth in all the supernatural beliefs that have arisen over the centuries, this would open up infinite possibilities outside the realm of modern science.

We must ask ourselves which is more likely, that life is no more than a special case of physical matter, brought about by pure chance and differing from other physical phenomena only in order of complexity?, or that life contains something more than just a complicated configuration of fundamental particles, something that, for want of a better expression we shall call the 'mind'? After considering the arguments I tend to believe the latter.

The physical universe of everyday reality consists of the four dimensions of space-time. These four dimensions contain matter and energy. Now, since the mind doesn't conform to the laws governing the behaviour of matter and energy through space-time, isn't it possible that mind belongs to a different dimension? Why shouldn't the universe consist of infinite dimensions? In this model, life would be an interaction between the dimension(s) of the mind and the dimensions of space-time. The interaction would begin at some point before birth and end at physical death. Remember that interaction between the dimensions of space and time occurs constantly according to special relativity. Could this mind-dimension be the mystic's astral plane?

Let's assume that life is the result of an interaction between the dimension(s) of mind and the dimensions of space-time (as space-time itself results from an interaction between space and time). There could be dimensions other than space, time and mind; but since we don't experience them it is pointless to speculate about them. In this model physics deals with events happening purely in space-time, clairvoyance is a case of a cause in space time producing an effect in the mind (dimension), psychokinesis would be a cause in the mind producing an effect in space-time and telepathy is an event contained within the mind dimension. Ghosts, hauntings and psychometry (reading an objects history by handling it) may be explained by the places of the hauntings, or the objects, acting as a symbol to the mind dimension which then recalls memories of what has been associated with that place or object. At death the mind continues to exist in its realm as the body remains in the physical plane.

According to this model, it would be possible to predict the future to some degree of accuracy given complete knowledge of present conditions and enough calculating power to work it out. Now suppose all the knowledge and power of the entire mind dimension were available to us, this may explain the mechanism of precognition.

The effect of mind interacting with the physical universe is to influence the average position of the subatomic micro-events, this in turn influences events in the everyday macro-world. This is how freewill operates. Most of the time the mind operates "automatically", it requires certain mental effort to exercise freedom of the will in order to change physical reality. This model implies that

the future is more or less predetermined, but subject to slight but permanent changes caused by effort of the will.

All forms of life have certain power over their environment. Animals have more power than plants and man is the most powerful animal (intellectually). But it's arrogant to assume there is nothing more powerful than man in the entire universe. There are probably many entities which are superior to man, the most powerful of all is God, who is immortal and has complete knowledge, power and intelligence.

The multi-dimensional model doesn't invalidate the work of science through the centuries, this work continues to provide a useful description of events within the physical universe, however it does limit science to the physical realm, in a similar way to which the rules of special relativity are limited to objects in a state of uniform motion. Hopefully this multidimensional model allows the possibility of reality existing beyond the bounds of the physical world.

11 The Paranormal: Fact or Fiction?

a discussion

By "paranormal" I refer to those events and abilities that defy explanation by the currently accepted laws of science. Phenomena falling under this heading include:

Clairvoyance - knowledge of events distant in time and/or space obtained by means other than the physical senses.

Telepathy - the direct transmission of information from one mind to another without the intervention of any physical medium.

Psychokinesis (pk) - action-at-a-distance of mind upon inert matter.

Precognition / divination / premonition - the prediction of future events to a greater degree of accuracy than could be achieved by the use of conventional knowledge.

Spiritualism - communication with disembodied spirits of the dead.

Reincarnation - the concept that a spirit or soul undergoes numerous earthly incarnations.

In this article I aim to show that such phenomena are not incompatible with current scientific knowledge and to examine some of the evidence in support of their existence. A key argument in any debate on the existence or nature of the paranormal is the consideration of whether the universe is materialistic or dualistic in nature. A materialistic universe would consist solely of matter and energy; all phenomena within would be functions of these components. In contrast, a dualistic universe contains something other than matter and energy; e.g. mind or spirit.

Science is concerned with the understanding of the material universe; its tools and methods are well suited to the probing of the physical world. If the universe were truly materialistic it would, in theory, be possible to fully explain its every facet in terms of science. However the non-physical component of a dualistic universe will never be fully accessible to the methods of physical science, and indeed would offer only a partial glimpse to its nature as a result of its interactions with the physical.

I would suggest that the four-dimensional universe of space-time is but a fraction of all reality, co-existing alongside other realms including those of soul or spirit. Life is an ephemeral union between a distinct soul and a physical body; the ongoing struggle of the spiritual to establish and maintain an influence upon the physical.

The classical theories that had governed scientific understanding from the days of Newton were based on the concept of determinism, (i.e. the future is completely determined by the past and present). This all changed with the acceptance of quantum theory in the early 20th Century.

Quantum theory suggests that the fundamental components of the universe sometimes behave as particles and sometimes as waves depending on the mode of observation. The act of observation inevitable alters that which is being measured. Bohr suggested the principle of "complementarity" which states that certain pairs of variables (e.g. position & momentum, time & energy) cannot both be accurately known simultaneously, since the process of measuring one disturbs the value of the other. The equations of quantum theory no longer predict the outcome of experiments, only the probabilities of different possible outcomes.

The new situation may be summarized as, "You can't predict the future. You can only state the odds." [1] Of course at the observable level reality is still deterministic for all practical purposes, due to the vast number of probabilistic micro-events which form even the smallest observation.

This probabilistic behaviour is clearly illustrated by the "two-slit interference" experiment. A beam of light is directed at a screen with two slits very close together. Unsurprisingly, the light exhibits the typical interference pattern on the surface behind the screen, as predicted by wave theory. However, if we can arrange to release the light just one photon at a time "we find that half the particles appear at the upper slit and half at the lower one, but we find also that there is no way to predict for a particular particle which slit it will choose. ... The behaviour is intrinsically unpredictable." [1].

Roger Penrose in his essay "Minds, Machines and Mathematics" [2] states that "It seems to be the case that single quantum events can be responsible for the triggering of nerve impulses".

Sir John Eccles, in his essay "Brain and Mind, Two or One" [2] quotes quantum physicist Henry Margenau in support of his position of dualist-interactionism. Margenau states that the components of the brain "are small enough to be governed by probabilistic quantum laws" and are "always poised for a multitude of possible changes, each with a definite probability". Further, Margenau believes that such changes may be influenced by the mind, which "may be regarded as a field in the accepted sense of the term. But it is a nonmaterial field... And so far as present evidence goes it is not an energy field in any physical sense, nor is it required to contain energy in order to account for all known phenomena in which mind interacts with brain."

Sir Arthur Eddington [3] considered the logical conclusions of quantum theory to be that "The future is never entirely determined by the past, nor is it ever entirely detached", and "it is no longer necessary to suppose that human actions are completely predetermined". Eddington further conjectured that the "conscious unit" does in fact differ from an inorganic system in having a much higher indeterminacy of behaviour - simply because of the unitary nature of that which it represents, namely the ego".

I would further suggest that when not subject to external influence quantum events are statistically neutral, however the action of a non-physical intelligence upon these events (typically within the brain of a living organism) would be sufficient to influence them to the degree required to manifest as the free will of that organism.

Experimental evidence to date supports the validity of quantum theory. "Exceedingly delicate atomic experiments have confirmed the existence of subtle quantum effects to an astonishing degree of accuracy. No known experiment has contradicted the predictions of quantum mechanics in the last 50 years..... (Quantum theory) correctly describes the world to a level of precision and detail unprecedented in science" [4].

The so-called Copenhagen interpretation of the theory put forward by Bohr suggests "it is meaningless to ask what an electron 'really' is." Further, "uncertainty and fuzziness are intrinsic to the quantum world and not merely the result of our incomplete perception of it" [4]. Of course the 'quantum world' is the whole world. The Copenhagen view remains the orthodox interpretation of quantum theory and the Aspect experiment of 1982 "seemed to contradict once and for all Einstein's belief that God does not play dice with the universe" [4].

The classical approach had made objectivity the dominant partner in the objective-subjective relationship, mental or spiritual events were a mere function of physical reality. This situation has been reversed by quantum theory, while not denying the existence of an independent objective reality; the nature of such a reality is shaped by those entities that perceive it. Quantum theory suggests an inter-connectedness or wholeness to the universe reminiscent of the teachings of mysticism.

Quantum theory in itself does not postulate the existence of soul or spirit; it does however provide a mechanism in which non-physical entities such as spirit (or indeed God) could exert their Will upon the physical universe, by slightly shifting the probability distribution associated with

individual quantum events. It is, I believe, somehow more plausible and satisfying to consider the self-organizing complexity of the observed world as resulting from the action of some intelligence, rather than a freak occurrence emerging from a multitude of chaos.

The sheer volume of reports of paranormal phenomena provides strong evidence for the existence of a reality beyond the material realm. Descriptions of hauntings, poltergeist activity, premonitions, spontaneous telepathy, spirit healing, out-of-body experiences etc. would fill many volumes. Of course coincidence, hallucination or deception may explain many of these cases, but it would take just one genuine case to show the existence of a non-physical reality.

Interesting as they are, spontaneous paranormal events can never provide the rigorous proof required (except perhaps to those who experience them) to become recognized as fact. There have, however, been numerous scientific parapsychological studies which have yielded statistically significant evidence for the ability of the mind to receive information or produce physical action by nonphysical means. I would refer the reader to the article "An Assessment of the Evidence for Psychic Functioning" by Professor Jessica Utts, Division of Statistics, University of California, Davis which states: "Using the standards applied to any other area of science, it is concluded that psychic functioning has been well established. The statistical results of the studies examined are far beyond what is expected by chance. Arguments that these results could be due to methodological flaws in the experiments are soundly refuted."

The document "Frequently Asked Questions about Parapsychology" (ed. Dean Radin, Dec 1995, <http://www.psiresearch.org/para1.html>) states that "ESP exists, precognition exists, telepathy exists, and PK exists. ESP is statistically robust, meaning it can be reliably demonstrated through repeated trials" where the definition of existence is "that the presently available, cumulative statistical database for experiments studying X, provides strong, scientifically credible evidence for repeatable, anomalous, X-like effects." This document was produced by a group of scientists and scholars from the disciplines of physics, psychology, philosophy, statistics, mathematics, computer science, chemistry, anthropology, and history, hardly a group prone to the excesses of imagination.

The overwhelming argument supporting the existence of some nonphysical spirit is the impression that we all have of our own personal free will. This can result neither from the now discredited determinism, nor the fundamental randomness of pure quantum theory. It is explainable only by the conscious and intentional intervention of some nonphysical entity external to the system that it influences.

Even Max Planck, a firm believer in determinism, conceded "...we have our most direct and intimate source of knowledge, which is the human consciousness telling us that in the last resort our thought and volition are not subject to this causal order", quoted in [3].

Now, if we accept the existence of some nonphysical spiritual realm it is a logical assumption that the phenomena within are subject to the laws of this realm (as physical phenomena obey the physical laws). In this model a living being, having both body and spirit, has a foothold in both realms.

The mind-to-mind communication of telepathy could occur solely across the spiritual realm without need for physical media.

The clairvoyant seeing-at-a-distance would involve some part of the spirit realm reaching out across time and space.

PK, or mind-over-matter, occurs constantly as each spirit "drives" its allocated body, it does not require too great a leap in imagination to extend the effect to inert matter.

Spiritualism requires only that the spiritual part of the living be able to communicate with other parts of the spiritual realm.

If a soul is capable of making the journey of earthly incarnation on one occasion, then it is capable of repeating this journey as required by reincarnation.

The model does present a problem with foreseeing the future, since freedom of the will combined with a fundamentally indeterministic nature means that the future is not predetermined and does not exist until it arrives. However a limited form of precognition may be possible by using clairvoyance to gain a better picture of present conditions, and hence the ability to make predictions with a greater than usual degree of accuracy. PK may also be used to make the predictions more likely to occur i.e. the self-fulfilling prophecy.

During earthly existence the spiritual or so-called psychic abilities possessed by all can be obscured by the day-to-day needs of physical survival. Such abilities appear to be stronger in some individuals than in others. It is also possible for all to develop their abilities to some degree by appropriate mind training techniques.

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12 The Nature of 'psi'

The term 'psi' (psychic ability or psychic functioning) has been adopted to describe the range of seemingly anomalous effects which seem to arise from man's interaction with the external universe. Such effects include clairvoyance (information about remote objects / events obtained by non- physical means); telepathy (communication between one mind and another without any form of physical transmission); precognition (predicting the outcome of future events to a greater degree of accuracy than would be expected given the currently available information) and psychokinesis (pk, mind having a direct and measurable influence on physical reality).

Clairvoyance, telepathy and precognition are often termed extra-sensory perception (ESP) and may be likened to a weak and unreliable sixth sense, e.g. a success rate of 27% opposed to a chance level of 25% over a large number of trials in a psi experiment would be considered a success. In contrast to ESP in which the subject appears receptive to non-physical information, pk involves the mind of the subject 'reaching out' to influence the external world.

One of the strangest forms of psi is the phenomenon known as retro-pk, in which subjects appear to be able to use pk to reach back in time and influence the outcome of already completed experiments. Considerable research has been done in this field by Helmut Schmidt, with experiments consisting of a subject attempting influence sets of pre- recorded randomly or pseudo-randomly generated data (truly random data arises from a process such as radioactive decay, pseudo-random data is generated from a suitable algorithm initiated by an arbitrarily chosen 'seed'). Schmidt has obtained statistically significant results in such experiments [1] with such results casting doubt upon the very nature of time.

Throughout history there have been accounts of unexplainable phenomena - apparitions, poltergeist activity, premonitions etc. Science turned its attention toward such phenomena in the late 19th Century when eminent scientists of the day began to investigate the claims of the increasingly popular subject of spiritualism. The British Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1882 and continues to investigate anomalous phenomena to this day.

Why has mankind felt the need to invent 'supernatural' theories of creation and the universe? The sceptic may suggest it preferable to facing the inevitability of eventual oblivion - but that begs the question of what within us is able to dread the concept of our ultimate insignificance.

The 'science' of parapsychology effectively began with the work of J B Rhine at Duke University in the 1930's. Rhine sought to investigate ESP under laboratory conditions by means of card guessing experiments.

A survey of more than 1,100 college professors in the United States found that 55% of natural scientists, 66% of social scientists (excluding psychologists), and 77% of academics in the arts, humanities, and education believed that ESP is either an established fact or a likely possibility. (Wagner & Monnet, 1979), quoted in [2].

A collective analysis by statistician Jessica Utts and Nobel Laureate Brian Josephson of a range of 'remote viewing' experiments (including those conducted by the U.S. government) 'argues strongly for the phenomena being real and not artifactual'. Analysis of forced-choice experiments (e.g. card guessing) revealed a consistent 27% success rate opposed to 25% by chance (Honorton & Ferrari and US government); 'If chance alone were the explanation for these results, it would be truly remarkable to achieve a 27% success rate over thousands of trials, and it would be even more remarkable to see identical results in the government work' [3].

The document "Frequently Asked Questions about Parapsychology" (ed. Dean Radin, Dec 1995, <http://www.psiresearch.org/para1.html>) states that "ESP exists, precognition exists, telepathy exists, and PK exists. ESP is statistically robust, meaning it can be reliably demonstrated through repeated trials' where the definition of existence is 'that the presently available, cumulative

statistical database for experiments studying X, provides strong, scientifically credible evidence for repeatable, anomalous, X-like effects." This document was produced by a group of scientists and scholars from the disciplines of physics, psychology, philosophy, statistics, mathematics, computer science, chemistry, anthropology, and history, hardly a group prone to the excesses of imagination.

Traditionally it has been thought that psi is more acute in those individuals seeking to satisfy some positive and selfless purpose, the 'spiritual ideal'. This is the central tenet of religion. 'First find deep within self that purpose, that ideal to which ye would attain. Make that ideal one with thy purpose in Him.' [4]

It has been demonstrated that psi can operate just as effectively in a negative direction as it does in the positive, i.e. some subjects consistently score significantly below chance. The direction of scoring has been found to be correlated with the subjects attitude to psi and has been called the 'sheep-goat' effect (sheep are believers in the possibility of psi, goats are hostile to the idea) [5]. Assuming that negative and positive psi are equally likely, the implications for large-scale multi-subject experiments would be for the mean outcome of the experiment to be close to the value predicted by chance; however the range, or deviation, of scores should be greater than chance.

Psi appears to vary greatly among individuals. Just as some are gifted at sport, art, writing or academic discipline so there have been some remarkable psi subjects while in most of us, for most of the time, psychic abilities are sadly non-existent. To name but a few - the Victorian medium D D Home exhibited incredible physical phenomena before audiences consisting of the most notable scientific figures of the day; the Russian woman Nina Kulagina was able to consistently demonstrate macro-pk (moving small objects by power of thought) under controlled conditions; Uri Geller sprang to prominence in the early 1970s with his ability to bend spoons and other metal objects by lightly stroking them, later confirming his abilities under laboratory conditions [5]. Geller also has the ability to reproduce unseen drawings at a distance.

Psi appears to be more prominent in subjects experiencing altered states of consciousness e.g. relaxation, meditation, hypnosis, dreams or the effects of drugs. These effects are confirmed by a number of successful experiments using the Ganzfeld method, which seeks to provide a monotony of input to the senses. The subject's body is cushioned while s/he is fed 'white noise' through headphones and a soft red light is filtered through halved ping-pong balls covering the eyes [2]. It would appear that when the senses are switched from their usual preoccupation with the external world, and toward the inner world, they are more able to perceive subtle psi influences.

Paradoxically, it has been found [2] that extroverts (i.e. those whose attentions are mainly directed outwards) tend to be better psi subjects. It may be that extroverts also reach deeper within, as well as beyond themselves. It is possible that psi may be a perfectly natural talent that has been hidden by the artificial constraints imposed by modern society with its emphasis on objective reality. Note how flocks of birds or shoals of fish are able to change direction instantaneously, or stories of domestic animals which appear to possess heightened sensitivity or a sixth sense.

A major criticism by sceptics is that psi effects tend not to be replicable on demand. The researcher Charles Tart pointed out "there is an important experimenter effect in all psi research; some people have the 'magic touch' and regularly get results, others don't and we have little idea as to why' quoted on [RetroPsychoKinesis Project Home Page, <http://www.fourmilab.ch/rpkp/proposal.html>]. It has been suggested that the positive results obtained by some could be due to their working methods; it is at least as valid to suggest that a psi experiment is influenced by the whole environment in which it is conducted (including the experimenter).

Can psi be trained or developed by practise? If psi is considered as a natural but undeveloped faculty then it should respond to favourable conditions (e.g. meditation, Ganzfeld), and also to exercise - i.e. consciously trying to use it to transmit thoughts between oneself and a willing partner, prediction of winning horses, lottery numbers etc. Books on developing one's psychic abilities are plentiful, and at least one organization offers to train remote viewing ability in students (at a cost), however the degree to which psi can successfully be enhanced by exercise is an area for further research.

The scientific theories of Newton and Darwin implied a mechanistic, or clockwork, universe in which the current state of the world was determined entirely by its preceding state and so on ad infinitum. The Marquis de Laplace suggested that a powerful enough intelligence given complete knowledge of the universe at any one time would be able to predict its entire future in the minutest detail. This philosophy of determinism left no room for soul, spirit or God, and left man a mere automata. Mind and consciousness were but side effects of the physical body and free-will no more than illusion.

The reign of determinism was finally overthrown by the emergence of relativity and quantum theory in the early twentieth century. Although the deterministic or classical theories were remarkably successful at describing the workings of the universe (accurately enough to put a man on the moon), they were found not to hold at speeds approaching the velocity of light and at the very small (sub-atomic) level. Quantum theory suggests that the fundamental components of the universe sometimes behave as particles and sometimes as waves depending on the mode of observation. The act of observation inevitably alters that which is being measured. The equations of quantum theory no longer predict the outcome of experiments, only the probabilities of different possible outcomes. The new situation could be summarized as "You can't predict the future. You can only state the odds" [6].

While quantum theory is more optimistic than the rigidity of determinism, it still suggests that the universe is governed by chance rather the actions of Will. Despite its success at describing the universe where classical theories fail (Quantum theory 'correctly describes the world to a level of precision and detail unprecedented in science' [7]) many scientists, unhappy at its inherent randomness, still felt it to be an incomplete theory and that certain 'hidden variables' existed behind the apparent randomness exhibited at the quantum level. This view prompted Einstein's famous assertion that "God does not play dice".

Max Planck, a founder of quantum theory and a firm believer in determinism, conceded '...we have our most direct and intimate source of knowledge, which is the human consciousness telling us that in the last resort our thought and volition are not subject to ... causal order', quoted in [8]. Once we admit to the existence of a distinct thought or volition not subject to physical law psi becomes a distinct possibility.

Physicist Henry Margenau (quoted by Sir John Eccles in [9]) states that the components of the brain 'are small enough to be governed by probabilistic quantum laws' and are 'always poised for a multitude of possible changes, each with a definite probability'. Margenau believes that such changes may be influenced by the mind, which 'may be regarded as a field in the accepted sense of the term. But it is a non-material field... And so far as present evidence goes it is not an energy field in any physical sense, nor is it required to contain energy in order to account for all known phenomena in which mind interacts with brain.' It is plausible that this thing called 'mind' could lay beyond the probabilistic quantum effects observed at the limits of physical science.

Traditional Mysticism describes existence as occurring in a number of 'worlds' or "planes" (typically four or seven) of which the physical plane is the lowest and densest. In this model higher planes cause effects to occur on the lower planes, therefore the physical or earth plane is considered as the plane of effects. Could the higher worlds of the occultist be the elusive hidden variables of physics as well as the home of the spirit or soul that drives the body throughout this life?

Modern science is also in accord with the Mystical philosophy of the holistic or inter-connected nature of all things. Even Newtonian physics described fields (gravity) connecting every particle with every other, however this concept has been greatly strengthened with the principle of non-locality arising from quantum theory in which a change made to one particle may instantaneously affect another particle elsewhere. Thus it is impossible to consider any individual entity in isolation from the whole.

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13 After Life?

The question of what happens after death has always fascinated man. Many theories have been developed through religion and philosophy, some of which are discussed below together with my own ideas on the subject.

The movement known as Spiritualism originated in the nineteenth century. The Spiritualist philosophy holds that upon death, the spirit of the deceased passes from the Earth plane to a spirit plane. The living may contact these departed spirits by employing the services of a medium i.e. someone with the gift of communicating with this other world. Generally the medium makes use of clairvoyance and clairaudience to see and hear the spirits, describing their observations to the enquirer. The medium describes the spirit as they would have been, giving details from the spirit to be confirmed by the enquirer for the purpose of providing evidence of survival.

Spiritualism caught the interest of eminent scientists Sir William Crookes (1832-1919) and Sir Oliver Lodge (1851-1940), and author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) creator of Sherlock Holmes, among others. Today there is a network of Spiritualist Churches throughout Britain, with the "headquarters" of the movement, the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB), occupying grand premises in Belgrave Square, Central London. In addition to offering individual consultations the SAGB also hold regular demonstrations of clairvoyance, where an invited medium speaks to members of the audience in turn bringing messages from spirit. The descriptions and messages given by the medium are more often than not recognized by their recipients. Whether this represents proof of an existence beyond the grave is a matter for personal opinion, but it can be quite impressive. Of course such results could be attributable to telepathy, psychology, guesswork or gullibility. For the interested or curious I would thoroughly recommend attending one of these demonstrations, which are open to non-members and held in a friendly, informal atmosphere.

Near Death Experiences (NDEs) are the various recollections of people who have come close to death, or actually "died" for a short while. The surprising thing about NDEs is that many of them share the same features e.g. the impression of floating above, and observing, the physical body below including the attempts to restore life; the feeling of travelling down a tunnel towards the light; meeting with dead relatives and friends and a feeling of peace and well-being often with the preference to stay rather than returning to the earthly body. Many people who have experienced NDEs are able to describe details that they couldn't possibly have been physically aware of, e.g. the resuscitation efforts or events in distant locations. What is the significance, if any, of NDEs? Do they confirm the soul's survival of physical death, giving clues to the nature of the afterlife? Or are they merely hallucinations brought about by physical weakness e.g. a lack of oxygen reaching the brain?, and if so why are they often so similar? The large number of similar experiences, many reported by people who haven't previously known of NDEs, indicate they are more than hallucinations which would tend to vary widely from case to case. Descriptions of events of which the observer could have no physical knowledge add further weight to the theory of a distinct spirit, as do the Out-of-Body experiences of advanced esoterics. However, since nobody has crossed the threshold of reassurance and returned we are still, and will remain, ignorant of the true nature of any afterlife.

Tales of ghosts and hauntings abound in both fact and fiction. For such things to occur requires not only a spirit which may exist independently of a body but also one that is capable of affecting physical matter. Not all ghosts come from beyond the grave; poltergeist activity (i.e. the violent movement of physical objects) is thought to be associated with living individuals, usually hyperactive teenagers. Certain places are said to be haunted, often those with a violent or tragic history; their ghosts could be visitations from spirit or, more likely, emotional residues picked up by the sensitive. Whether ghosts exist outside the minds of their observers remains debatable.

The idea of reincarnation states that each spirit lives many earthly lives in different bodies either indefinitely, or until it becomes sufficiently developed to move on to the next plane of existence.

Remarkable cases have been reported of people having detailed knowledge of past lives that have subsequently been verified as correct. Such accounts are often, but not always, given under hypnosis. The memories of past lives given by children carry more weight than those from adults, who may consciously or unconsciously be giving details that they have obtained during their current lifetime. Further clues to a previous existence may come from recurring dreams on a theme which has no relevance to the present existence.

Life on earth is either a random accident of a deterministic nature or a bonding of an immortal spirit with a physical body. Either way it is of limited significance, being at best a single step along an infinite journey. If we accept that the mind/spirit/soul is distinct from the physical body, as is suggested by our seeming freedom of will, then there is no reason to suppose that it ceases to exist at death. Scientific explanations of the observable universe are based on the principle of transformation between different forms of matter and energy. Rarely, if ever, is anything created from or destroyed to nothing. It is therefore unlikely that our spirit miraculously appears at birth and vanishes at death.

In questioning existence beyond death we should also consider the nature of existence before birth. If we believe the spirit remains after death then it more than likely existed before birth. What brings about the alliance of spirit with body? In the case of human beings life is created through an act of will (of spirits in incarnation), i.e. that of sexual union. The joining of a spirit with the newly formed body would occur some time between conception and birth. This view of a physical-spiritual partnership raises the question of whether all forms of life possess spirits. I believe they almost certainly do, with the potential of the spirit to exercise its will being determined by the type and complexity of the organism it occupies, and the complexity being determined by the degree to which an individual spirit has become differentiated from what is the generic spirit realm. Single-celled organisms and plant life provide evidence of the evolutionary steps towards producing more advanced creatures through which the spirits may achieve a more sophisticated earthly incarnation.

It is for the sceptic to define what it is within me that causes me to reach these opinions, or in them that fuels their scepticism? Is it merely the deterministic motion of the atoms in our brains? Could a random swirling of matter have really built the self-organizing complexity that we observe within the short life of this planet? Or could there be some deeper, hidden, non-physical driving force?

Following my father Ron's recent passing I was struck with doubt and despair. Desperately seeking reassurance that he continues in some form my contemplation and searching produced what follows:

Observation/Rationale

- Mind is a distinct entity, not just a product of the physical being. This is suggested by our free will, emotion and non-survival motivations such as art appreciation.
- The non-physicality of mind is suggested by the mind's desire to believe there is something more than mere matter and energy, most strongly evidenced by the power of religious faith. A purely physical being would be untroubled by its purely physical nature. A psycho-physical one would be driven to prove it was more than atoms and molecules.
- If mind is non-physical and exists independently of the physical body it cannot be destroyed when the body ceases to function. It is natural for entities to be transformed from one state to another, but not for things to appear from nothing nor be completely destroyed. Thus mind, soul, spirit, consciousness... survives physical death, in some form.

Evidence

- We each of us act unquestioningly as though there is some lasting purpose to our existence. If our mortality coincided with the finiteness of our very being we should not strive for satisfaction and significance in the way that we do.
- Thousands upon thousands of individual accounts suggest those that pass continue to exist and are able to touch those that remain. Just one account need be true for survival to be fact, every single account must be false if it is fallacious.
- In addition to individual experiences certain individuals, known as mediums, are able to provide evidence of the survival of individuals as distinct entities. I have been attending demonstrations of clairvoyance for a number of years and have personally witnessed numerous displays of mediumship that have far surpassed what could have been achieved by guesswork.
- I have also been given numerous personal messages by mediums unknown to me the accuracy of which were in considerable excess of what might have been obtained by physical means.
- The Church of England Majority Report of 1937, subsequently suppressed by the Church, found evidence that spiritualistic mediums could indeed communicate with departed spirits.

*Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.*

Anon

14 Spiritualism Today

Spiritualism is the belief that human consciousness (or spirit) survives physical death and is able to communicate with those remaining on the earth-plane, usually via a go-between called a Medium. Mediums are able to relay messages from Spirit providing reassurance that loved ones continue to exist and offering guidance on earthly affairs.

In 1937 a Church of England Committee was appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to investigate Spiritualism. The resulting Majority Report was signed by seven members of the Committee, including the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Dean of St Paul's, the Nolloth Professor of the Christian Religion at Oxford, a Harley Street Psychologist and a Barrister-at-Law. It found that certain outstanding psychic experiences of individuals, including certain experiences with mediums, make a strong *prima facie* case for survival and for the possibility of spirit communications while philosophical, ethical and religious considerations may be held to weigh heavily on the same side. The report was subsequently suppressed by the Church.

Many Christian Spiritualist Churches exist throughout the UK; here I present a brief description of just one, my local church that I have been attending intermittently over the past two years; initially out of curiosity, but more recently from a growing strength of faith. This church holds regular Sunday evening services, weekly healing meetings, evenings of clairvoyance as well as other events eg Psychic Fayres.

It appears that the spiritual development of an individual may take place in two ways, the path of healing and that of clairvoyance or mediumship. Although some seem to be born with gifts in this direction it is said that all possess some degree of psychic ability which may be developed by sitting in a "circle" for the purpose of mind-training and visualization under the guidance of an experienced Medium.

A typical Sunday evening service proceeds as follows:

- A welcome from the chairman followed by an opening hymn
- A period of quiet reflection and an opening prayer from the guest Medium
- The Lord's Prayer is sung
- The Healing Intercession, in which a prayer is said and names are read from the healing book, the congregation are asked to repeat aloud the names, the Healing Hymn is sung
- There is a reading on a spiritual topic, usually from a member of the congregation
- A free-will offering hymn is sung, during which a collection is taken; a prayer is then said for the offerings
- The Medium is invited to give an address, a talk on some aspect of spirituality; sometimes the address is channeled from the Medium's Spirit Guide
- Another hymn, and then the Medium presents a demonstration of clairvoyance in which he/she passes messages from Spirit to the congregation to establish proof of survival
- The vesper is sung, then there is a closing prayer from the medium; a few notices usually follow and members of the congregation are invited to stay for tea and biscuits

I am struck by the inclusiveness of spiritualist prayers; mention is always made of the animal kingdom and those of all faiths who are in need. I am also greatly impressed by the sincerity of the members of this church.

I now give some descriptions of clairvoyant demonstrations that I have witnessed at the church. No apology is made for poor writing style as these records are presented as they were made. Descriptions are included simply as being those records that I took the trouble to make at the time and are representative of all my experiences.

Clairvoyant Evening, November 1997

Woman in her 30's, with an older man. The Medium told her he had a woman with her - grandmother, that she had been busy with her hands, then said this woman had passed when things were difficult on earth plane - the man with her strongly agreed, in spirit she viewed things differently and was able to forgive and forget. Gave a name, John, which was recognized as an uncle and also that he needed healing thoughts sent out to him. Then said the grandmother had her baby with her in spirit and told her that she'd had a miscarriage (medium was very positive about this - telling rather than asking), which was correct. Said that she would soon hear a young voice and find things being moved around the house - again the man with her recognized this. Said someone was slamming doors around her - in fact was her children. Told her she had had chance to live abroad but hadn't come off but that she would spend a number of years living and working abroad.

P, one of the church regulars, and a healer (who sits with his hands palms up), came to him after he placed the name Margaret. The Medium told him that he had an Indian guide with him and also that he'd become a healer after receiving healing himself - correct. Gave two names and a dog which were recognized, also told him he had trouble with his knees, correct again. Gave smell of fresh baked bread and a woman - recognized as a baker's that had fascinated him as a boy. Spirit guide showed himself sitting in a taxi - medium interpreted as meaning this man would always have transport when needed. Also gave 2 dates not recognized but which man would take away and check.

An elderly man - the Medium told him he'd been feeling poorly recently. Gave him a name and someone who'd served in the RN during W.W.II - both recognized A date was given that wasn't recognized Then said had a son who was "distant" who would soon be getting in touch - the distant son was recognized as one of the man's 6 sons.

A man around 40 - the Medium told him he was sensitive - man agreed, also that he'd had a number of experiences - yes again - this man had sat in a development circle. Gave an army link not immediately recognized then the name of David, a relative who'd been in the army. Before that he said someone who'd passed in uniform - not recognized Told him he'd had problems with an ankle - correct.

Woman in her 50's - the Medium said she had talents but was reluctant to use them. Said she had a nun with her - she'd been told this before. She was a medium who often told people things - she agreed. A woman with her who looked exactly like her - she placed as grandmother. Told her she would soon be holding a baby - didn't know, but she had been told this before. Then said she never stopped eating chocolate - she never ate chocolate, then pointed at her mother who it applied to. Gave them 2 names, which were taken and identified problems with a wrist that was true.

At this point came through with a man who'd drowned - gave a name Peter Flavell - the Medium asked just the row he'd been working with then asked anybody. This man had been out on a fishing boat and not returned. Nobody recognized, even after saying that he'd worked as a milkman. Asked people to pray for this man.

Woman behind me - the Medium told her she looked relaxed but hadn't always been so. Said quite general stuff about she had one more decision to make then things would sort selves out. Also warned her to be wary of someone who may be trying to do her out of some money.

Myself. The Medium told me I'd had spiritual experiences, I replied no experiences but I was very interested. He quoted the experience of "someone walking over your grave" which I do get and had had a few times in past few weeks. Gave me a man who was upset at losing an Alsatian dog - I said I couldn't place but more remotely can think of someone I once knew. Then asked if I'd been having trouble with a watch like problems with the battery - No (BUT afterwards I remembered a temperamental bedside clock, and also problems with camera battery). Then said had I been working with wood - or someone around me - No again. Said he could see a black poodle with me - had to say I couldn't place this again. Left me with name of Tom - an uncle, which I placed.

Woman in her 40's with her family. The Medium gave her someone with a "broken finger" - her son, and also that he liked football and got angry if he couldn't play - correct again.

One of the regulars and his wife. The Medium said he had an Indian in a turban with him. Gave a name in life, Don, that was recognized then said he'd just retired, didn't know what to do with himself and was a little withdrawn and needed drawing out more. Man took this as accurate. Then gave someone who, because of problems had needed to spend some time away from home (prison?) this was recognized, told woman that he would settle but still had more to learn. Gave someone interested in watching stars - her daughter - and also that she liked to write things down - correct. Told woman that she'd come a long way with spiritual development but that she had to choose between healing and psychic development. Said she'd been healing someone with a bad back - didn't recognize this but said she may have been sending out thoughts.

Wife of one of the church organisers. The Medium told her she'd been poorly recently and that she "thought her time was up" recognized - but that she had more to do. Said they'd been away together recently - not recognized That she had a sister of mercy with her - both recognized this - that she was always with her and when her time came to pass she would lead her by the hand.

Then asked who hadn't had a message - an old man had his hand raised by his family. The Medium gave name of Agnes bit this was recognized by the woman next to him. Said she'd been called Gert - woman said this was her daughter. Gave a man with a pot belly - a stern and well-spoken man who'd been very strict in life - woman seemed to recognize this - man said he'd had love but didn't always show it. Woman used to visit a house alive with spirits where floorboards creaked - woman recognized and also said they used to drop things. Medium gave her 2 sisters who lived there that she didn't recognize and fact that she was always getting blamed as a girl - which she was.

Finally came to old man - the Medium gave name he recognized and told him he didn't find it so easy to talk to people any more - agreed, also that he sometimes had experience of feeling himself leaving his body he agreed. Medium said this was actually happening. And that he saw shadows in the corner of his eye and that these would take on shape and form. Man agreed.

Sunday Service, October 1997

In her address the medium told of how she used to belong to the Salvation Army but used to see spirit during their services. She had an argument with her husband over wanting to work for spirit. His grandmother used to be a trance medium and he felt that if she was to follow then his grandmother would have come back and told them, while cleaning the bath a woman appeared and said she was Caroline Annie Hislip(?) her husbands grandmother, she showed her a cameo brooch and said it was to be found in a certain tin in her husbands garden shed. She told her husband who confirmed she had given the right name - he then retrieved the brooch from the tin.

"In spirit we are only a whisper away" Spirit told her to provide a "smokers bench" for the garden of a hospice for those who needed to spend time outside (due to stress etc.) to sit on - she was told to put this inscription together with the praying hands. She continued about being like a tree that we do not become so big or self important that we block out the light for others but rather be there to provide shelter when needed.

Clairvoyance: the medium asked if there were any present who'd never had a message. She then spent the session talking to those people.

A man, she told him that he'd been down recently, almost as low as can be. There had been a passing quite recently, which he confirmed, and also that he had been having problems at work, again he confirmed. She said Christmas would not be as bad as he feared - he said he hoped not. She said he felt alone in his darkest moments, and told him that he was never alone.

A woman. Someone young around her she was concerned about, mentioned an eating disorder, which was confirmed. She went on to advise about helping with the mind rather than the emotions. Gave the woman a man (grandfather?), name of Arthur in military uniform. The woman recognized this.

A woman. Have moved or had change round recently - woman said yes - both. Told her not to look backwards. Told her she was going to get the curtains she'd been after which was recognized

A man - told him he wasn't afraid of animals, which he said was true. Something about a black and white collie dog - he said maybe when he was a child. Also told him that he liked things made of wood. It turned out that he worked with wood.

A woman - told her she loved nature, outdoors and little animals such as rabbits and squirrels.

A little girl. Told her she wasn't afraid of spirit and that she believed in fairies, gave her a white bunny rabbit that had died, girl took this (hesitantly?) also said someone had a musical keyboard, her father had, told her to practise on it and not worry about looking silly because she would one day be a natural musician. Also told her to continue with writing because she would one day write very good poetry.

An evening of clairvoyance, September 1997

There were 34 people in the audience including the two who run the church and the medium's wife and daughter. Among the other 30 were 2 children.

The medium began with a prayer giving thanks for the life of Mother Teresa, who he called Sister Teresa. He punctuated his demonstration with a number of jokes. The medium is a jovial cockney and seemed to develop a good rapport with his audience. I suppose that during the period of around an hour he spoke to about 15 people (i.e. 50% of the audience) including myself.

My message was that this year had been a time of change and that there was change ahead from the end of this year and into next year, this is certainly true as I've quit my job and retrained in TEFL teaching and am due to take up an appointment in Japan in Jan 98. He said that the changes were occurring on 2 levels, spiritual and material, and that a "sister of mercy" was standing by my side. He gave me the name William or Bill (?) and two grandmothers; I told him one grandmother was living. Also a man with a garden full of chrysanthemums, again whom I couldn't place, though my granddad liked gardening.

Many of his messages were fairly brief and general, like you are going through a time of reflection or are looking to the future and have decisions to make. He seemed to dot about the audience from side to side and moved up to stand by the person he was addressing. The most remarkable

"hit" was to a woman (a regular I think) at the back - he quoted the name Arthur which she took and then gave Fred and Bert - he then said there's a brown and white dog about so high just walked in at which point the woman broke down and had to be comforted by her companion (daughter?)

At one point he asked if anyone could take the name Green - one of the regulars who is also involved with the running of the church took it - the medium said he saw British Legion links and the word anniversary and he was asking the man to remember old memories linking to W.W.I and II. Another time he asked if there were any London links - a lot of people including myself said yes - one woman said she wasn't from London but her grandfather was - the medium described the man as being short e.g. 5ft1 (rare) and a true cockney, which the woman took, he then went on to say he was wearing an old tweed suit, cap, muffler and waistcoat - which the woman didn't recognize - he gave her 2 surnames I think Harrison and Williams which she also didn't recognize

He said to one woman she was sending out healing thoughts for someone, which she took. She was with her mother and he spent some time with the two of them telling the daughter that she would get the chance to go on a short holiday at the end of October, which she should do. He gave a few visual links to the pair they didn't take e.g. someone stealing washing from a line and a postman falling from his bike scattering letters everywhere. He also said they had family scattered all around the Kent area.

He told another woman that she was very spiritual, which she took - she had a priest by her side, he gave this woman a military connection - a man who passed on the Somme in the royal engineers, he wore a blue and white armband. He gave a message to the 2 who run the church - the name Rose was given which D took as her mother, he told K that he would soon be giving out a lot of healing energy and saw him leading a meeting of healing. K said that they were thinking of starting a healing circle.

He told one man that he would have soon have decisions to make and that there was someone in spirit who looked very much like him and asked him to check back in the old photo albums. He came to a youngish girl at the front and told her that she was thinking of two possibilities for the future neither of which people would expect from a girl like herself - she agreed with this - he said that at the moment she couldn't see how they could happen but by March she would be in a position to make a choice. He finished by coming to a young boy at the front and simply said that he was a real character and had great ability and that as life unfolded he would be very successful.

15 Life, Death and Spirit

We are Spirit. We are of Spirit. We are Spirit given body and made physical for the purpose of experiential growth.

There is no good and no evil. There is merely experience.

Spirit is eternal, has always existed, and will always exist. And the totality of Spirit is what is known variously as the Father, God or Great Spirit.

From Spirit emanated the physical universe. Spirit as a whole individuates and incarnates into the physical universe for the purpose of experiential growth.

All physical being is of spirit. All life of individuated spirit. But the greater the sophistication, the greater the individuation.

Sometimes we are elated, or shrink in horror, at the behaviour of Spirit in physical clothes. Spirit may exhibit remarkable selflessness or unspeakable cruelty, but against the backdrop of eternity it is ultimately of infinitesimal significance. All that counts is what we experience, or fail to experience.

Life is school. It consists of a series of lessons, some of which we learn, others we fail to grasp. What we fail to grasp in one incarnation we return to try again. Christianity tells of the man **BORN** blind, about whom it is asked did **HE** sin or his father that he suffer such fate. It tells repeatedly of chance upon chance upon chance, the prodigal son, turn the other cheek, etc etc etc.

Buddhism says life is learning, spiritualism that it is experience. It is actually both.

Upon earth we have the right to seek justice, but justice and no more. Where we are wronged we should feel sorrow for that undeveloped part of Spirit that has turned upon itself.

The abundance of evidence in support of the existence of ESP (extra-sensory perception) and PK (psychokinesis) is also evidence for survival since it implies the existence of a soul or spirit distinct from (and not subject to the laws which govern) the physical body. There is no reason why such a distinct entity would be extinguished when the physical body ceases to function.

Spirit individuates in order to experiment, to play and experience different roles. Ultimately Spirit is reintegrated into the whole, but individuated entities continue to exist beyond a single earthly incarnation. This is witnessed by spiritualistic mediumship.

Some are granted, or work to develop, a heightened awareness of their true essence, Spirit. These "mediums" serve to comfort, to reassure, to inspire and to motivate incarnate Spirit to aspire to ever-greater heights. All true mediums provide piece upon piece of evidence that there **IS** something more than this sometimes wretched existence. Any audience with a medium, perhaps at a spiritualist church, will confirm that the medium can access knowledge beyond which is physically possible. The Church of England commissioned Majority Report of 1937 confirmed this.

Mediums also carry the gift of healing, or rather the ability to act as channels which deliver healing from Spirit, to promote the philosophy that to help one's fellow beings is to help oneself. We may all be healers, in different ways. It is for us to find the channels in which we may best aid our brethren who journey alongside us.

Death is the only certainty of life. No Spirit may incarnate for much more than a mere hundred earthly years. A mere speck upon the canvas of eternity. It matters not. Those that "die" (the term "pass" is preferred) go home. It is us that continue upon this plane that are away, journeying.

We grieve for them that pass because we miss their presence, or we cannot be sure of their fate. But our experience tells us that nothing can spring from nothing, nor can anything vanish without trace. Things change from one form to another, like ice to water to steam. In life we have free will, the ability, within limits, to influence our destiny. Science encounters limits which its deterministic equations cannot penetrate. We **ARE** more than matter and energy. And that which is more cannot vanish, but is released to return to its natural state, ie pure Spirit.

Religion represents various attempts to make sense of the mystery of life, death and Spirit. All religions which have gained mass recognition carry the same degree of worth. There is no monopoly on truth. Each may follow the path that suits them best. The destination is the same.

Do not condemn established religion. But be wary of those who hijack its essential message. Seek the path which best suits the individual, but know that it is not the only road forward.

So what is the purpose of this life, this existence? We are born to suffer, but also to enjoy. Life is like a wave or roller coaster, with troughs and peaks. The peaks provide the sugar on the medicine; the difficulties teach the lessons we need to grow as individuals and for Spirit to grow as a whole.

We have free will, but like a dog whose leash is tied to a pole. We incarnate to experience certain things and whilst we may, to some extent, choose how and under what circumstances these experiences are received, we cannot cheat destiny. Mediums are sometimes able to deliver apparently prophetic messages. This does not negate free will, nor does it imply everything is predetermined. Spirit are able to view the physical landscape from a higher vantage point than their earthbound brethren and are thus able to forecast with a greater degree of accuracy. But no prediction from Spirit (or elsewhere) is cast in stone.

Everything we do is significant, because it forever changes what would otherwise have been. But, paradoxically, everything is insignificant too. If this world is all there is then we are mere automata without meaning. If this world isn't all there is, then it is of infinitesimal importance in the great scheme. Ultimately the only significance in this existence is the experiential growth of the soul.

Seek pleasure and satisfaction. So long as none is harmed it is your right. But seek also to give, in whatever way you can. And in all you do seek experiential growth. Seek what is Good, what is Positive - embrace it. Deny what is negative - reject it.

All for one and one for all cried the three musketeers in their unrealised wisdom. For we are not individuals. But we are all of one, whole, entity, which is Spirit. To help others, in whatever way we can, we help ourselves. But to damage others, we damage ourselves.

The principle of service to others has dual benefit. In helping others we also help ourselves, since individuals are merely different facets of the one, whole Spirit. And in applying selflessness we make a leap forward in knowledge with our recognition of the oneness of all. The case of healing has the additional benefit of providing evidence of the reality of Spirit.

And so we seek satisfaction, happiness, joy. And so we suffer the pain, sorrow, despair that inevitably punctuates it. And so we learn that material "success" is meaningless, but lasting achievement, doing good for the benefit of others, making a positive contribution, treading paths previously untrodden. That is what matters.