

## Life after Death

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### *The profusion of answers given by the churches*

More than half a century ago, Professor Hans Driesch, regarded today as the 'patriarch of parapsychology', referred in his lectures to the question of survival as the most important issue facing mankind. In making this statement he was motivated by the following thought: What can be the meaning of an earthly existence lasting a few decades if death signifies the cessation of the human personality? Indications suggesting that this was not so led him to make repeated attempts within the then young science of parapsychology to investigate this question, which is of concern to everyone.

We would expect the churches to be in a position to make definite statements on this subject, for death and the afterlife belong to the sphere of ideological conceptions and are thus the natural concern of religious enquiry. If, however, we look at the attitudes of the various Christian churches to this question, we very soon discover contradictions, there often being no single clear doctrine within one and the same group.

In reply to the question put by a mourning widow as to the actual present whereabouts of her deceased husband, a protestant clergyman said the following in all sincerity: "Well, you see, our great theologian Karl Barth says that the human being does not live on after death, but that he will be created anew from his 'blueprint' which is with God, rather as if we were to rebuild a house that had been burned down on the basis of its building plans. We receive quite a different reply from the theology of Ernst Benz (Marburg), who regards the personality as continuing to live after death; that is, a man's nature remains unchanged, and it is merely his physical body that is left behind in the realm of dense matter.

Quite different again is the view represented by the theologians Paul Althaus and Dorothee Sölle, who equate the physical end with the absolute cessation of human individuality; man neither survives death nor will he be newly created as suggested by Barth. Examine these versions and decide freely which of them suits you best, setting your mind at rest and offering you a framework for your faith."

I do not believe that such a statement can provide any sense of security. It is quite clear that not all these theories can be correct at the same time. Surely there must be some way of finding truth in the field of belief other than by relying on a mere appraisal of alternative theoretical possibilities based on feeling?

In earlier times such fundamental contradictions can hardly have been a problem, for people simply believed whatever their priest had to say on such matters. But times have changed: people are now

emancipated in religious issues and no longer accept contradictory statements unquestioningly. The proffered answers no longer suffice. As questions are asked and the contradiction arising from statements by theologians become apparent, the questions become more pointed. But they either remain unanswered or else reference is made to unfathomable mysteries. This state of affairs undermines the credibility of the churches and is one reason why the loyalty of the faithful leaves much to be desired.

### *What is life?*

Before taking a systematic look at reports of experiences relating to 'life after death' we should briefly clarify what we mean by 'life'. Many misunderstandings that bedevil discussions could never arise in the first place if those concerned knew precisely what they were talking about and what they understood by a particular concept. Often the conceptual formulation a person uses betrays the fact that he has no clear idea of the meaning of certain terms. Discussions based on such premises cannot end well, for it is obviously impossible to obtain clear results from unclear foundations.

Life as a concept can be looked at from two aspects, the biological and the mental. From a biological standpoint we can define a living organism as having the following characteristics: an autonomic metabolism (nutrition, excretion, respiration), the capacity to detect stimuli and to respond to them in a meaningful, goal-directed way, and capacities of growth, reproduction and hereditary transmission. It is especially in times marked by a materialistic ethos that 'life' is simply equated with these characteristics. It should therefore come as no surprise that modern theologians who are sympathetic to dialectical materialism come to the conclusion that death means the absolute end, for the visible disintegration of the physical body at death, which puts an end to the biological processes in such an obvious, not to say unpleasant and unaesthetic way, makes a strong impression upon them.

The Austrian anatomist Joseph von Hyrtl (who died in 1894) used the following analogy to show the inadequacy of a supposition based only on direct observation: "Were the embryo in the womb endowed with self-consciousness and knew in advance what would happen to it in the process of birth, it would have to regard this process as one of absolute destruction. For its protective sheaths are thereby rent to shreds, the amniotic fluid – its vital element – runs out, the umbilical cord which sustains it is broken and the embryo has then, bereft of all means of life, to undergo an asphyxiating plunge into a choking



constriction. There can be no doubt that were the embryo to take heed of the naked facts, it could not possibly expect to survive its birth. But it is unaware that other organs, designed for living in another world, are already present in it: lungs to breathe air and eyes to see a world of form and colour. Above all it is unaware that this moment of apparently hopeless destruction, the act of birth, is in reality the door into a new life. We have, therefore, no right to judge death, which also appears to rob us of all life, merely from a biological perspective."

Let us now turn to the mental characteristics of life, which are, as far as man is concerned, clearly more important than biological ones. In fact, these mental characteristics define what we mean by life in the present context.

Professor Schiebeler, a member of the Geistige Loge Zürich and a contemporary parapsychologist whose qualifications include the gift of an all-embracing vision\*, expresses it thus: "Mental life consists of the ego-consciousness, of thinking and the capacity to act in accordance with thought-out resolutions of our will. It further includes the capacity to gather experience by means of the sense organs, to learn thereby and to garner memories and use them freely by applying the processes of logical thinking and by calling forth the emotions. Finally it comprises the emotions themselves, and among these joy plays a particularly important part."

We are justified in speaking of survival of death if we are able to perceive these components of mental life, not with our physical bodies but by means of another kind of body, composed of finer substance and inaccessible to the physical sense organs.

#### *The legitimacy of inferred evidence*

It is admittedly not yet possible to provide proof in the mathematical sense for the survival of death. We can, however, make use of another type of argument which is recognized and used as a matter of course in almost all other spheres of life and knowledge. This is the method of arguing from inferences and their logical relationships.

It is easy to overlook the extensive role played by arguments from inferences in our way of thinking. The following example, however, makes their significance clear:

The central concept made use of by the classical or exact sciences, is that of force. But since force cannot in itself be directly described by these sciences, what they actually do is describe the conceptual relationships of parameters which are regarded, by inference, as the effects of forces. Thus, for example, the acceleration of a mass leads us to regard it as the effect of a force, whereby we infer the existence of the force. The fundamental law of mechanical dynamics

merely describes one possible effect of the force, namely the acceleration of a mass, and thus represents nothing more than a logical relationship of parameters relating to the mass.

We can therefore say that anyone who refuses to take arguments which support the survival of death seriously because they are based on inferences, is using his powers of reasoning in an inadequate, limited, unclear and illogical way.

The fact that it is precisely and solely the question of survival that meets with such lack of understanding, even by highly intelligent persons, can only be explained by ideological prejudice. It is in fact tragicomic or grotesque sometimes to listen to the arguments put forward by 'scientifically educated' people, wanting at all costs to avoid having to break through their own ideological barriers. They remain unaware of the fact that they are victims of a short-sighted view of reality. They act like the man who returns home late from the public house and looks for his lost wallet under the street lamp, forgetting that the world extends beyond the area which happens to be lit up. Just as that man's thinking has become disordered by an excess of alcohol, so are these people distracted by their excessive attachment to all that is in the widest sense material.

#### *Statements by eminent men*

Let us turn from these important theoretical considerations to our examples, to see what the various experience-groups have to offer. Naturally we can give no more than one or two examples from each group in the present article, but each of these represents an almost inconceivable number of actual cases. The interested reader will find additional cases in the relevant literature, and he may also reflect on his own experiences.

Our first set of examples consists of statements on the subject of death by eminent men of different epochs:

*Socrates* (470-399 B.C.):

There cannot be the slightest question of the soul being destroyed when it is separated from the body. On the contrary, it then enters that kingdom which is akin to its nature; it lives on in truth and in eternity.

*Aristotle* (384-322 B.C.):

Belief in the immortality of the soul has prevailed amongst human beings from the earliest times.

*Giordano Bruno* (1548-1600):

In an infinite universe, death is an impossibility; that which we call death is a birth into a new life.

Let us briefly call to mind at this point, Giordano Bruno, that intrepid fighter for truth. As a Dominican monk he found himself in opposition to an intolerant and dogmatic Church through his ideas, including reincarnation, and had to suffer death by burning at the hands of the Inquisition. (We may be happy that such things belong to the past. Religious freedom means the responsibility of each person to apply his reason in evaluating religious ideas and so find his way to a stable faith.)

\*Schiebeler does not limit the causation of paranormal phenomena exclusively to the sphere of the psyche of living persons (as does Professor Bender, Freiburg, for instance), but regards the existence of a world of finer substance (the hereafter) as constituting an important explanatory principle.



*Immanuel Kant* (1724-1804):

The immortality of the soul and the existence of God are postulates of pure practical reason.

*C.G. Jung* (1875-1961):

Personal survival of death is an innermost certainty for me. Humanity believed in a life after death long before the Christian era.

*Wernher von Braun* (1912-1976):

Nature knows no destruction. It is thus logical that this principle should also apply to the human soul.

This list of similar statements by men whose thinking we cannot ignore could be extended at will. The concept of life in all the above cases relates to the mental attributes defined earlier.

### *Life outside the physical body*

We will continue to make use of this definition in moving on to the next group of examples: those dealing with cases which show that the human being can also live outside his physical body and return to it after a certain time. It will shortly become clear why it is important not to restrict our investigations to post-mortem conditions only, but to include cases which in principle suggest the possibility of extra-corporeal life. The well-known Swiss researcher into death, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, tells us about a young girl who was assaulted in the woods by a psychopath. The child later told her parents that she suddenly found herself outside her body as it was violated by the unknown man. We may regard it as a dispensation of the spiritual world that the girl was unaffected by the traumatic experience in that she took part in it merely as a disinterested observer, having to allow things to happen to her.

The German psychologist Wiesenhütter, who took part in the Russian campaign, has told of his experiences in Stalingrad. He came across a badly wounded comrade who, after a short period of sleep, had become bewildered and withdrawn for days. The soldier afterwards described how he had gazed in full consciousness into another, happy world, and was able to hold conversations with deceased friends. During this experience he had felt no pain and seemed to be living in a healthy body. The return to his own mangled physical body had been such a shock for him that he remained incapacitated for that period of time.

We know of reports from people who have undergone operations, and who while under anaesthetic felt themselves to hover freely in space, able to observe the whole operation in full consciousness. Their other sense organs were working as 'normal', and this afterwards enabled them to repeat certain remarks or jokes made by the doctors in the course of their work. It is interesting that having left their bodies they were able not only to survey the operating theatre but also to see and hear the details of occurrences connected with their operations, taking place in neighbouring rooms.

Quite a number of them spoke of a *silver band* connecting their conscious self, which was hover-

ing freely in the room, with their physical body lying on the operating table.

This 'silver cord', to which we will return later, is also mentioned by people who tell of their out-of-the-body experiences as *drug addicts*. They too speak of their body resting on a couch while their conscious self hovers in the room with a sense of freedom and well-being.

Most convincing of all, however, are personal experiences, and here I should like to mention an incident from my own youth. After a long holiday in Austria during which I had felt particularly close to my playmate Gottfried, who was the same age as myself, he appeared by my side one evening shortly after I had gone to bed. Full of joy but nevertheless surprised I stood up and touched his pullover several times with my hands to assure myself that it was really him. The bedroom, whose curtains had not yet been drawn, was sufficiently illuminated from outside to enable me to look into my friend's eyes clearly and consciously. "Gottfried, how did you get here? . . . Wait, I want to tell my mother at once", I said and quickly fetched her. But there was no longer any sign of Gottfried, who must surely have been asleep at his home at that time. It was doubtless our close friendship that had caused him to go on this 'astral journey'. Examples of such out-of-the-body phenomena present a wide range of density, from a fine substance imperceptible to the physical sense organs to complete solidity, as in the case of Gottfried. The processes underlying such manifestations are inexplicable to us today, for in dealing with physical laws we can determine only those peripheral (i.e. experimental) conditions which can be set up in physical systems. They are relatively simple to define and may be repeated without difficulty. In dealing with non-material (spiritual) laws, however, it would be necessary to determine peripheral conditions of like kind in addition to the physical conditions. Such non-material peripheral conditions can, indeed, be defined in the form of necessary prerequisites, but they cannot as yet be checked and repeated in the same way as the peripheral conditions for material laws. This is without doubt the main difficulty in investigating laws of a spiritual kind, that is to say laws operating in the transcendent realm. However, as the following section shows, in recent times efforts have been made to tackle these difficulties.

### *Experiences of the clinically dead*

Our next group of examples are those of so-called re-animated or clinically dead persons, whose stories appear at the end of Dr. Raymond Moody's best-seller »Life After Life«. These cases have attained world-wide publicity. Moody has investigated hundreds of cases of patients who were regarded as dead on the basis of an encephalogram (brain-wave reading), but who could, thanks to the techniques of modern medicine, be brought back to life.

A number of these patients were able to describe experiences they had had in another world during



the brief period of time when they were regarded as dead. I assume that most readers of this journal are familiar with Moody's work, which has been featured in every major daily paper, not to mention the illustrated magazines. I will therefore restrict myself to providing a brief interpretation of those characteristics common to all such accounts. At first a dark tunnel, valley or tube is spoken of, through which the person concerned is pushed or pulled, accompanied by a humming, buzzing or even banging noise, to find himself in a light-filled world. The new arrival feels well, and is welcomed by deceased friends and relatives as if he had been expected. In the forefront there appears a 'being of light', whom we would simply call a guardian spirit, and this spirit takes his protégé under his wing and discusses important stages of his life with him. During this examination, the events of his life become clearly visible and audible to them both, rather like a cinemascope film. There is no point in saying: "No, it was not like that . . . things happened quite differently", for the actual events are to be seen quite clearly. It is sometimes a painful experience for the person, whom we may well call an examinee, to relive past situations. At times he is overcome by remorse for having acted thus and not otherwise, or simply for having neglected to do something. For we often incur blame not through deeds but by neglecting the good we should have done. This examination is made bearable, however, because of the solicitude shown to the examinee by his accompanying guardian angel. You will notice that I have placed the matter-of-fact statements of the quasi-deceased into a context drawn from the teachings given to us over the years in the Geistige Loge Zürich. Whereas for the 'world' Moody's descriptions represent something totally new, for us they are a happy confirmation of the messages we have received from the Beyond.

This argument should not surprise us, of course; there is only one truth, and the various statements must therefore be in basic agreement concerning their mutual theme, irrespective of their origin. It is of no surprise to us either that some of these clinically dead subjects refer to the silver cord we mentioned earlier. This cord, which is described as emerging from their finer body, is mentioned particularly in connection with the sudden return through the dark tunnel. It is by means of this cord that they are pulled back when the experience ends, and they once more take possession of their physical body before they wake up as human beings.

#### *Deathbed scenes*

There must be many theologians who would have had neither the ability nor the courage to interpret verse 6 in Chapter 12 of Ecclesiastes until they had come across some of these recent factual accounts. This passage would present no problem at all if the contact with the divine world to which we are receptive were generally accepted: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the time of

trouble comes and the years draw near when you will say: 'I see no purpose in them' . . . Remember Him before the silver cord is snapped . . ." This clearly refers to the thread of life mentioned earlier.

Let us now take a closer look at the threshold of death by turning to our next group of examples. These deal with deathbed scenes which the great literary figures of all times have described for us so movingly. Let us, for example, recall the death of the old Senator's wife in Thomas Mann's novel »Buddenbrooks«, or Selma Lagerlöf's »Coachman of Death«. I find the final scenes of Tolstoy's »Death of Ivan Ilich« singularly gripping. This book was written in 1886 when the now 'official' information from Moody was not available, yet Tolstoy writes of the same dark tunnel or hole mentioned by Moody: "Suddenly some mysterious force hit him [the dying man] in the chest, in his side, making his breathing still more difficult. He pressed forward into the hole, at the end of which something was shining. He felt like someone in a train: one imagines that one is travelling forwards while actually moving backwards, until one suddenly becomes aware of the true direction." From where could Tolstoy have obtained his knowledge of a field which at that time lay outside the bounds of scientific research? This passage serves to indicate that important knowledge can be conveyed through inspiration to a person prepared to receive it. The fact that information obtained by this means is often far ahead of scientific research in no way invalidates it – indeed the reverse is true.

In general, however, information obtained by inspiration or through mediumship is considered far less reliable than that acquired by scientific methods. This results from an excessive attachment to matter and to materialistic values, which leads people into false ways of thinking.

Fritz Happich, director of a nursing home at Troysa, tells of a particularly moving case, first published in 1934 and commented upon by our spirit teacher Joseph during the committee meeting of September 1976. Happich writes: "Käthe was one of the worst cases in our clinic. She had been a total imbecile from birth and had never learnt to speak a word. She would stare fixedly at a point for hours on end, and would then spend further hours in convulsive movement. She gulped her food down, was incontinent night and day, and used to utter sounds like an animal before falling asleep. For 20 years these were the only signs of life to be observed in her. During the whole of this time she was never for a second seen to participate in the life going on around her. Then came the time when she had to have a leg amputated. She became very frail. One morning I was called by one of our doctors, a man known as a scientist and a practical psychiatrist: 'Come quickly, Käthe is dying!'. When we entered the room in which she lay, we could hardly believe our eyes and ears. Käthe, a total imbecile from birth who had never spoken a word, was singing her own swan song. Mostly she sang 'Where doth the soul find its



home, where doth it find peace? Peace, peace, heavenly peace!' She sang for a full half hour. Her face, which had always been that of an imbecile, was spiritualized and transfigured. Then she passed quietly away. There were tears in my eyes, and in those of the nurse and the doctor, who kept repeating: 'Medically this is a complete mystery. If need be I could prove by an autopsy that Käthe's cerebral cortex was totally destroyed and that anatomically her capacity to think had ceased.'"

Our spirit teacher Joseph tells us that in such cases body and soul are living out a karmic pattern. The individual spirit is unable to take possession of its body and is condemned to watch as other spirit beings afflict it, take possession of it and even destroy it. This experience is a great humiliation for the individual spirit, which remains linked to the sick body throughout its earthly life by means of the silver cord. This karmic pattern can, by God's grace, be annulled at the hour of death. The individual spirit is then able to take possession of its body in a manner akin to a materialization, and can praise its Creator in words or song. The physical body remains incapable of functioning, but spiritual forces help the spirit about to pass over to manifest in this way. To be able to leave the Earth like this is a good sign, indicating that Karma has been surmounted so that the journey of progress can continue.

We turn next to a particularly convincing case in which a dying person sees the spirit of someone whose death could not have been known to him. It is taken from Tenhaeff's book »Kontakte mit dem Jenseits?« (Contacts with the Hereafter?), and it tells of two brothers who died of scarlet fever within 24 hours of each other in places 24 miles apart. Four year old David, who was the second to die, stood up in his bed about an hour before his passing and pointed to the foot of the bed. He told his parents that he saw his little brother Harry, who had come to fetch him, standing there. Their parents had deliberately kept Harry's death secret from David in order not to hinder his chances of recovery. This example also shows us how spontaneous mediumship can manifest at death: The physical sense organs are still in action but are soon to be replaced by those of the spiritual body. The result is then like the to-and-fro motion of a pendulum, or like the flickering of a candle, the physical body being alternately under the control of the individual spirit and deserted by it as the transition to the new life becomes imminent.

Anyone who has witnessed many deaths will confirm that the process often involves a struggle. Just as entry into earthly life through birth can be a troublesome and even painful process, so is it the case with birth into the life of the hereafter, which we label by the much misunderstood word 'death'. In her narrative, which is well worth reading, the English nurse Joy Snell describes the events accompanying this struggle as they appear to the spiritual eye. Her mediumship enabled her to observe how deceased friends or relatives approach the bed of the dying per-

son, help to free him from his body and cut the 'silver cord', which is extendable and pulsates in a peculiar way, and finally guide him away from the scene of his earthly life. Anyone who reads reports about deceased persons may well be struck by a certain inconsistency. It is known from accounts of the passing of sick people that they usually feel unwell and tired in the hereafter and continue to show signs of their transition for some time. From Moody's patients, however, and even more clearly in the case of the soldier in Stalingrad, we hear how well and happy and contented they feel during their time in the hereafter. So well indeed, that they look upon their earthly body as a prison to which they are reluctant to return. How are we to understand this apparent contradiction? It is explained by the fact that in the former category there is no longer any question of returning to the physical body, and we know from our spirit teacher Joseph that in such cases the soul absorbs the odic forces of the body. If this body is in poor health then the effect on the deceased person is oppressive. The situation is different in a temporary exteriorisation, when these odic forces remain in the physical body and the temporarily liberated spirit can enjoy his new condition unhindered.

Whether death is 'temporary' or 'final' is then seen to depend upon the condition of the silver cord linking the two bodies. In the first case the cord remains intact, in the second case the link is broken. We have, however, derived a fundamental principle from these reports, namely that the ego is capable of living outside the physical body. Continuity of life is maintained after death, the only change being in the type of body with which we perceive and experience our life. Are we not reminded of St. Paul's letter to the Romans 14, 8: "If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether therefore we live or die, we belong to the Lord."?

For people of a less materialistic era or for members of so-called primitive cultures who regard their deceased ancestors as being as real as themselves, this knowledge is largely self-evident. It took Professor Hans Bender, product of a post-war age intent upon earthly matters, to declare post-mortal life to be a 'new principle'. Although this notion no longer holds good when seen from a higher viewpoint for it is objectively false, Bender links it with the scholastic principle known as Occam's razor. This principle states that, when investigating a fact, no new basic causes or principles should be introduced unless absolutely necessary. Since Bender now regards the psyche of a living person, which certainly has astonishing capacities, as providing a sufficient explanation for paranormal phenomena, he dismisses the possibility of post-mortal life as an explanatory principle and so sells reality short. This scholastic principle (whose fundamental correctness is, of course, open to question), has been wrongly made to form the main pillar of a one-sided animistic argument. The argument is hardly tenable, as is practically proven in its application to mediumship.



*How the hereafter impinges upon our material world*

We can confirm what has been said up to now by investigating our next group of examples. In doing so, we take our leave of the threshold of death and look into cases in which the hereafter impinges upon our material world. What could be better than to present an example from our own records? It is a description by a lady, known to me personally, from the Canton of Zürich. After the events described below she came to me seeking help and an explanation. This lady has had extra-sensory experiences from her earliest youth, and the following story is by no means an isolated instance. Perhaps it is as well to add that the lady concerned is mentally healthy in every respect and has no wish to make her experiences public. In fact her mediumship is almost unknown to those around her.

This is what she told me: "I lost my dear husband in August 1976. For many years he had worked on our family smallholding. We have two daughters both of whom are married. One lives abroad and the other has recently moved with her husband into the paternal home. Two weeks after my husband's death I suddenly found myself fully awake just before three in the morning, very unusually for me. I went to the kitchen, got a drink for myself and returned to the bedroom, but was quite unable to go to sleep again. Then, shortly before five, my whole body began to vibrate. I sat up in bed and observed how after about five or ten minutes of this vibration, a peculiar glow began to spread out before me, and my deceased husband gradually became visible emerging out of a kind of mist, the outline of his body remaining a little blurred. He came towards me, bent over me and with a sad voice said 'O Mother'. I tried to grasp his hand, but though at first it was clearly visible, it faded away. I was very upset by the apparition and could not understand why my husband was so unhappy. During the next few months this strange phenomenon was repeated on about ten occasions, and each time the same thing happened. I woke up at the same time and after about two hours the familiar preparatory vibration set in and lasted a good five minutes before my deceased husband became visible. On the second occasion his outline was so sharply defined that I really could not believe that he was dead. He was dressed in a simple white garment. Sitting down on the bed close to me he told me with a note of resignation about the difficulties in store for me. Problems would arise in connection with the inheritance, and our daughter abroad would be the cause of a lengthy disagreement. During his third nocturnal visit I asked him to come into the living-room, where we were able to talk for about five minutes. The subject was the same distressing one, of which there had been no sign in reality up to that time. During this talk I asked him: 'Can you help me to find your bunch of keys?' I should add that my husband had held various offices in local government and always

carried a key to the safe, the loss of which was inconvenient to the council staff. 'Don't worry about that' were his last words before he seemed to dissolve into thin air. A few days later, again following the familiar nightly vibrations, I heard someone open the door of the house, enter the corridor and open the bedroom door - my husband then came into the room. He went up to the drawer in which he had usually kept his keys, opened it and put the missing bunch inside in a manner clearly audible to me. I got out of bed, went up to him, thanked him and embraced him - but only briefly, for after a few seconds I was standing alone in the darkness of that early morning. He had dissolved in my arms and the temporary illumination had gone with him. On another occasion I saw how he entered the room directly through the wall, at first appearing only in a faint outline, but rapidly solidifying to such an extent that it was as though a living person stood before me. I could touch him, but our conversation, which was only brief on each occasion, was always about the same sad events which were supposedly going to take place shortly."

"And so it transpired. Some three months after my husband's death the arguments about the inheritance began; my daughter behaved in a way that was hardly recognizable."

"In February 1977, six months after his death, my husband appeared once more. It was for the time being his last appearance. He wore a shepherd's garb with a large hat and a long scarf around his neck. He removed the scarf and put it on the table. He carried a long walking stick in his hand. I took the scarf in my hands and noticed its smell, which was musty as if it had come from a damp cave. His appearance gave me the feeling that he was about to set off on a long journey, and it was no surprise to me when he said: 'You must now deal with your problems yourself, I shall hardly ever be able to visit you now.' A second later he had dissolved into thin air, together with the scarf. The following year was overshadowed by the affair of the inheritance, and there was no sign of my husband until his final visit, at the beginning of 1978. On this occasion he was accompanied by his brother, who had died in 1969, and by another man whom I did not know. This other man seemed to be almost transparent and sat on the bed without taking any part in the conversation, while my husband, who was completely visible, went up to the window, opened it and cried out in agitation: 'This land belongs to my family!' (It would be too much here to go into the arguments which had arisen and which account for this exclamation.) My brother-in-law, whose appearance was also that of a normal human being, sat on the chair. As I had recently read a number of reports from deceased persons received through mediumship in the Geistige Loge Zürich, I asked him if he could confirm their correctness. He replied definitely and without hesitation: 'Yes, it is so; what you have read is true!' All three then disappeared, and I put on the light and closed the window my husband had left open."



A similar visit from the 'other side' is reported by Dr. Kübler-Ross. It concerns the materialization of a former patient of hers who had long been dead and buried. A certain Mrs Schwarz appeared in Dr. Kübler-Ross's office in a completely human form to thank her and to encourage her in her work with the dying! In order to test the reality of the apparition, Dr. Kübler-Ross insisted that Mrs Schwarz should write a brief note and sign it. This note is now in the possession of a priest who had worked with Mrs Schwarz and who was able to confirm the genuineness of the handwriting. These events occurred in 1969, shortly before the publication of the book »Interviews with the Dying«.

From this case we see both the value of the help we can give to the dying and the need to continue to give this help after they have passed into their new existence. We know from mediumistic messages from the deceased that this help is valuable when they are confronting their earthly lives in the purification stage, when they are entrusted with new tasks and finally when, with careful guidance, they are prepared for a new earthly life. Intercessory prayer is of particular importance to all newcomers to the other side; we have been told that it reaches them like a bright, warm ray. Thomas Mann may have felt this valuable link intuitively when he wrote: "The bonds of love are not broken by death."

I am reminded of a report by a deceased person which was received mediumistically many years ago in our Community. The deceased had been a miserly man quite lacking in spiritual knowledge, and he found himself in an inhospitable world, at first not realizing that he had died. The landscape was characterized by leafless, dried-up trees and bushes and the vault of sky above him was in a state of constant twilight. He met other 'human beings' and the disagreeable atmosphere made him realize that they had the same materialistic attitude as himself. It is these meetings in fact that first made him aware of his weaknesses, of his true nature. It is clear that he experienced within himself a spiritual law by virtue of which like attracts like; this means that he had to dwell in the sphere appropriate to his way of thinking. The beginnings of self-knowledge raised his consciousness to a higher level. When he started to ask God for forgiveness, the first signs of green appeared around him and the sky which had been so cheerless began to clear. The narrator did not neglect to mention that prayers of intercession from a friend still on Earth had reached him, and had given him encouragement and help while he was undergoing this change of attitude.

We can see from this example how important it is to gain spiritual knowledge concerning human survival after death.

Let us recall what was said at the outset regarding the unsatisfactory situation in the churches, where alternative mental models are offered in place of knowledge. Under such conditions a believer cannot be expected to remain linked in prayer to a dear de-

parted one. The sadness of the deceased when those they have left behind regard them as no longer existing is familiar to all those who have taken a serious interest in this question.

#### *Experiences occurring through mediumship*

We return now to our final group of examples: those dealing with the experiences of mediums. By a medium we understand a person who is able, as a result of a particular gift, to act as a mediator between the rarified world of the hereafter and our grossly material earthly world. Mediumship can be regarded as a gift similar to the gift of an artist or mathematician. It is, in itself, of neutral value. The key to its value is found in the medium himself (or herself) since he or she has the power to decide whether to use his (or her) mediumship for good or for evil ends.

We know of the existence of many spheres in the Beyond, whose inhabitants range from the denizens of the depths to the angels of light, and so we need hardly mention that the only kind of mediumship to be advocated is that which brings humanity closer to God and to Christ. We can complete our account of the subject by mentioning the manifold ways in which mediumship makes its appearance: these include automatic writing, inspirational mediumship and trance mediumship both partial and full. Full trance mediums are able to act as the purest channels, unclouded by their own ideas and judgements, for communicating with a deceased personality.

It is possible for mediumship to manifest involuntarily, as in the case of the deceased husband who appeared to his widow in materialized form. It can also be consciously promoted, within limits, to facilitate communication with the Beyond in order to gain knowledge, as is recommended to the Corinthians by St. Paul in his first letter to them, Chapters 12 and 14.

I have for many years been acquainted with the English musical medium Rosemary Brown and in turning to this final group of examples I should like to start with some of her experiences.

Mrs Brown, a simple, friendly English housewife in her fifties, receives new compositions from deceased composers by hearing and seeing these musicians in full consciousness. To illustrate this I should like to quote the following story. The almost unknown composer Viktor Ullmann, a pupil of Arnold Schönberg, composed his opera »The Emperor of Atlantis« during his incarceration in Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1943. Ullmann was then taken to Auschwitz, where he died before completing the work. But let us hear the story in Rosemary Brown's own words: "One day I received a visit from the BBC conductor Kerry Woodward. During our conversation a man appeared to my spiritual vision and introduced himself as Viktor Ullmann. He showed me a stack of papers (they were in fact registration forms whose backs had been used), on which his unfinished opera had been written. After his death the score had been smuggled out of the camp



and was now in possession of a certain Dr. Adler in London, who was known to my present visitor, Kerry Woodward. Ullmann asked me to request the latter to obtain the score, and he would then dictate to me the necessary changes and additions to complete the work as he wanted it."

The facts given by Ullmann proved to be correct and the relevant information was dictated to her during four afternoons. And yet she had only had an amateur's education in music and had never seen the score. It was left to Kerry Woodward to integrate this information into the relevant parts of the score and so to complete the opera, which has since been performed on many occasions. The case of Ullmann can readily be explained if the spiritualistic hypothesis of a continuing life after death is accepted. This would mean that the deceased composer continues to work on his score in the other, rarified world and then finds an opportunity of communicating with the material world by means of a medium. He does not want the score of his opera to lie somewhere gathering dust: he wishes to have it performed. These facts agree in principle with what we know of the 'human' stage in the Beyond from numerous other reliable messages. During a programme on Swiss television concerning Rosemary Brown in which I took part together with Professor Bender, I asked him to interpret this case from his chosen standpoint of animism (a theory based exclusively on the psyche of living persons). He refused to offer an explanation, although an interpretation on animistic lines could have been produced at the drop of a hat. It would, however, be so artificial and 'lifeless', and involve so many special formulations, that it would for this reason alone offend against the Paracelsian formula 'simplex sigillum veri' (the simple bears the stamp of truth) and would sound incredible.

We may complete our selection from this group with three further examples from parapsychological literature. William Stead, a journalist who went down with the Titanic in 1912, began immediately afterwards to communicate by automatic writing with his daughter Estelle, who lived in London. He gave her a description of everything that took place 'on the other side'. He told of confused spirits who had not realized that they had died, and who were hurrying around looking for their belongings. It should be mentioned that most of the other people on that maiden voyage came from wealthy circles and were thus unduly attached to their material treasures. Stead, who was familiar with the laws of the spirit world and of post-mortal life, had been able to give these unfortunates 'first aid' by explaining to them what had happened. He went on to describe how, during their initial period in the other world, all those who were involved in this shocking collective event were taken to a wonderful sphere for recuperation. He called this the 'blue island', and went on to explain how they all had to leave it after a certain period of spiritual recovery. Each one had then to go to that sphere allotted to him on the basis of the life

he had lived. Stead's report has been published with a preface by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes), a friend of Stead's and a fellow Spiritualist, who thereby testified to the genuineness of the scripts. Our next example is also from England.

Lord Dowding, who was largely responsible for winning the Battle of Britain in World War II, states in a number of works that his success was due in no small measure to his being able, through a medium, to contact German pilots who had been shot down. Lord Dowding records in detail his conversations with these pilots, and we see from his books that he had access to important facts which were kept secret. I am not concerned with evaluating these communications, and mention them only because they provide a link in a long chain of evidence supportive of our argument, and too weighty to be dismissed.

Our final case, for the details of which I have to thank a lecture by our member Dr. Schnabel of Mannheim, provides us with a piece of vital information. It concerns Roland de Jouvenel, a boy who died in 1946 at the age of 16, having been brought up as a strict Catholic. He succeeded in communicating with his mother by means of automatic writing only one month after his death, and he went on to give her an abundance of material describing the other world. What is particularly striking is that he makes statements which conflict with the teaching of 'his' Catholic church, but which agree fully with what we have received from the Beyond through reliable mediumistic communications. For a specific example of this let us examine a message from Roland to his mother, received on December 7th 1946: "Doubts assail you again, for I make use of your language and sometimes mention things which are also to be found on Earth. But you must know that life follows life, one weaving into another; they arrange themselves like the beads of a rosary. I was, ere the world was born." In the German edition published by the Catholic-oriented Walter Verlag (Olten, Switzerland and Freiburg, Germany), the two sentences of interest to us are missing: that is, "Life follows life" and "I was, ere the world was born". These sentences hint at the pre-existence of the soul and the repetitive nature of earthly life, that is to say *reincarnation*, and they have been omitted because they contradict Catholic teaching. Representatives of the Church have used this simple method at least as far back as the 4th century, even involving texts included in the Bible. Censorship of this kind was also practised on texts obtained mediumistically, as is stated by Ernst Benz, one-time theologian and professor of church history. He writes in his standard work »Visions«: "The determining factor [in ecclesiastical censorship] was less an interest in gaining knowledge about the phenomenon itself than a need to protect canon law and church doctrine from new revelations which could present a threat to existing dogmas and institutions." A courageous statement by this former Marburg schol-



ar, whom the present writer would like to thank for his participation over many years in a study group composed of members of the church and spiritualists.

The case of Roland de Jouvenel is instructive for two reasons. In the first place we are given evidence for Roland's continuing existence, in line with our other collected evidence. But we are also shown that teachings can be obtained from the other world which, after careful checking (including confirmation of the identity of the communicator) promise to overcome the contradictions arising from a Christianity split up into a hundred factions.

What comes to mind is the image of a great river, split up at its estuary into many branching channels of muddy water. Is there no way to the source, a way of truth and clarity which is also explicitly offered in the Bible? As I speak of this source, I recall the many lectures on the afterlife we have received through mediumship in the Geistige Loge Zürich during several decades. Here we have been given answers to basic questions concerning the meaning and purpose of human life and the nature of soul and spirit. The Biblical account of the Redemption is freed from its isolation as a historical event and is illuminated by a constant stream of revelations from divine messengers; in this way it becomes a living reality. (Cf. John 14, 15-18 and John 16, 12-14.)

Anyone who begins to explore trance communications soon realizes that they show the afterlife to be central to self-knowledge.

This article, which is aimed particularly at newcomers to the field, places such communications within a wider context of evidence pointing to the reality of an afterlife.

Throughout the world parapsychological and esoteric societies are concerning themselves with the various spiritual phenomena occurring at the boundary between life and death. They take a particular interest in trying to understand the causes, including the technical aspects. The case is different in the Geistige Loge Zürich, for whom the actual existence of the world of finer substance is no longer a subject of debate. As a result all our efforts can be directed in a unique way towards maintaining our link with a world which is known to be real and inhabited; by this means we can receive true Christian teaching directly from the spirit world, a teaching whose loftiest goal is to guide human beings back to their origin, back to God. Each of us can increase our knowledge by approaching this source, and thus find our way to a real faith. It is pointed out by many deceased people during their initial examination in the Beyond that they were given no chance of believing anything other than what was offered by the churches. Many must have used this argument in the hope of exonerating themselves. May I hope that you, dear reader, having patiently borne with me up to this point, will no longer have to resort to this excuse when the time comes . . .

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