

The Contribution of Apparitions to the Evidence for Survival¹

IAN STEVENSON²

INTRODUCTION

This paper is avowedly polemical. I shall review sympathetically the evidence that favors interpreting some veridical apparitions as providing evidence for survival after death and compare this interpretation with those that account for them in terms of extrasensory perception on the part of the percipient or percipients. I feel justified in attempting this because among parapsychologists generally in recent years, the Whig interpretation of apparitions has prevailed, and it is fitting to have the Tory position kept visible. I do not think that my bias, frankly stated, needs to prevent other persons from reaching different conclusions. For the most part I shall be using published reports of cases, which others can examine as easily as I can. And I shall be naming advocates of views opposed to mine so that readers who disagree with me can easily find expositions of the problem more congenial than this one. I shall not present a significant body of new data, although I shall allude to a recent analysis (conducted at the University of Virginia) of cases in *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, 1886) and also refer to some reports of apparitions related to cases of the reincarnation type.

I must first discuss authenticity. The great majority of experiences that might be regarded as apparitional are not veridical; they are nonveridical and often, although by no means always, psychopathological. Parapsychologists are only concerned with those that convey information not normally available to the percipient. Of these, few receive the kind of thorough investigation essential for a judgment about authenticity. I estimate that in the

¹ This paper is based on a contribution to a symposium on apparitions held at the Twenty-Third Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association, Reykjavik, Iceland, August 13-16, 1980.—*Ed.*

² Thanks are due for the support of my research to the James S. McDonnell Foundation, the Bernstein Brothers Foundation, and the John E. Fetzer Foundation. Kathleen Furey and Emily Williams Cook contributed helpful assistance in the analysis of cases from *Phantasms of the Living*. Laura Dale and Emily Williams Cook made suggestions for the improvement of this paper.

publications of the Society for Psychical Research and the American Society for Psychical Research, including the two semiofficial books by founders of the SPR (Gurney et al., 1886; Myers, 1903), not more than 2,500 cases have been reported in the detail that I think we require for judgments about authenticity. This is a small amount of material, and it may seem even less significant when we remember that these cases nearly all came to the attention of investigators when the percipients or other persons concerned learned about the research and volunteered information about their experiences. Moreover, many of the cases were old when first investigated. And since apparitions of dead persons may be better remembered than those of living ones (H. Sidgwick and Committee, 1894) the cases that have been adequately investigated with regard to authenticity may not be fully representative of all apparitional experiences. On the other hand, more recent surveys of properly sampled populations have not been accompanied by studies of the authenticity of individual reported cases.

It can be said that, in general, advocates of the two main paranormal interpretations of apparitions draw on the same limited case material. So far as I can tell from examining the various reports, the cases adduced as evidence for survival are cut from the same cloth as those adduced as evidence for extrasensory perception (without discarnate agency) on the part of the percipient. This may not be quite correct with regard to collectively perceived apparitions, which provide an important difficulty for persons who do not favor interpreting any of the cases as affording evidence for survival. At the same time, collective apparitions are vulnerable to the suggestion that other persons present with the primary percipient (at the time he or she sees the apparition) may pliantly endorse the percipient's report by saying that they also saw the same thing, or something like it, when they did not. (I shall return to this point later.) In other respects, however, I think the partisans of both sides in this controversy are dealing with the same types of cases, and neither group can discard the favorite cases of its opponents without explaining why it retains other cases that are no different in quality from those it rejects.

I think it will be helpful to restrict my discussion to cases of *visual* apparitions. Experiences of other sensory modalities have much interest, but they usually do not include enough detail to permit a clear identification of the agent; and this means that questions of veridicality rarely enter into experiences that are not primarily or exclusively visual.

I shall next mention the principal previous protagonists in this debate and describe in summary form the different interpretations of apparitional experiences that they have preferred.

THE TWO MAIN INTERPRETATIONS OF VERIDICAL APPARITIONS

The modern study of apparitions begins with the work of Gurney and his colleagues (1886). In this great work Gurney, the senior author, offered an interpretation of apparitions. He believed that telepathy between percipient and agent, combined with inference, best accounts for all the details that we need to consider. When, for example, an apparition is seen wearing clothes that the percipient knows the agent often wore, but in which the agent is not clothed at the time of the apparition, these perceived clothes *must* derive from elements in the percipient's mind. On the other hand, the statistically significant coincidence of apparitional experiences with crises in the lives of agents (Broad, 1962; H. Sidgwick and Committee, 1894) obliges us to suppose some contribution from them. (This would not necessarily mean a contribution *by* the agents, since, in Gurney's view, the percipients could obtain their correct information by their own psychical capacities.) A contribution from the agents is suggested even more clearly in details of their appearance or of their circumstances which figure in the apparition, but of which the percipients had no normal knowledge. Numerous examples of such details exist. In one case, the percipient saw her brother drowned when his foot became entangled in a ship's towline (E. M. Sidgwick, 1891-92, pp. 32-35); in two other cases the percipient saw the agent with a beard, which he had grown since the percipient had last seen him and of which the percipient had been completely ignorant (Gurney, 1888-89, pp. 412-415; H. Sidgwick and Committee, 1894, p. 379). A similar detail figured in a case that I studied in Nigeria in 1978. The percipient was startled to see the apparition of his younger brother in his (the percipient's) room wearing only a kind of towel draped around his middle; he later learned that his brother, in another city, had undergone an emergency surgical operation at about the time of the apparitional experience and had worn such a towel-like garment during the operation.

Nevertheless, Gurney thought that telepathy between the living agent and the percipient adequately accounted for all the details seeming to come from the agent's side, as well as for those more obviously added by the percipient. He explained the occasional temporal delays between the time of the agent's crisis (for example, death) and the percipient's experience as due to impedances in the percipient's mind, which sometimes only allowed an "arrived" communication to work its way into consciousness slowly. Gurney accounted for collectively perceived apparitions by supposing that the primary percipient, to whom the agent was known, communicated the experience telepathically to other persons present.

They thus developed hallucinations by contagion, so to speak, from the first percipient.

In the volumes that were mainly Gurney's work (Gurney et al., 1886), Myers contributed a separate "Note on a Suggested Mode of Psychical Interaction" (Vol. 2, pp. 277-316) in which he called attention to certain facts and cases for which he thought Gurney's theory could not adequately account. Myers seemed particularly dissatisfied with Gurney's interpretation of collectively perceived apparitions. The failure—except in rare and often poorly authenticated instances—of psychopathological hallucinations to spread among other persons (unless induced by normally communicated suggestions) indicates that in paranormal apparitions the agents' crises, usually of death-threatening magnitude, play a part in the generation of the experiences; and this implies some activity, not necessarily conscious, on the part of the agents. For Myers, the persons perceived were more than mere sources of information; they were agents in the full sense of that term. Myers speculated that in at least some cases the agents were, in some sense, present at the physical site of the apparition. They created at that site "phantasmogenetic" effects that enabled one or more persons to have an apparitional experience to which the percipients themselves would variously contribute. The different experiences of two or more persons present at the time an apparition was seen were due, in Myers' opinion, to their different sensitivities to the telepathic capacity of the agent and to the different contributions of their minds to the perception. In some cases an apparitional figure is perceived by only one among several persons present in the same location. The perceiver does not recognize the appearing person; but when he describes this person to others present, one of them recognizes the figure. It would appear that the agent had intended to come to the person who knew him, but could only be perceived by another, more sensitive person. Myers' theory can readily account for such cases, but Gurney's much less well.

LATER INVESTIGATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF APPARITIONS

Subsequent investigators and commentators have favored (with variations) one or the other of the interpretations offered by Gurney and Myers. Perhaps the most notable of these are Hart (1959; Hart and collaborators, 1956; Hart and Hart, 1932-33), Murphy (1945a, 1945b, 1945c), Rhine (1957a, 1957b, 1981), and Tyrrell (1953). Tyrrell modified Gurney's theory by attributing a greater role than Gurney had to the agent in the final production of an apparition. Murphy (1945b) and Rhine (1957a, 1981) both emphasized the capacity of percipients to produce veridical apparitional experiences without help from agents. The occurrence of experi-

ences apparently generated by the percipient alone without any obvious contribution from the agent made them regard the role of the agent as probably unimportant, even in those cases in which there seemed to be evidence that the agent had contributed information used by the percipient. Hart, on the other hand, believed that some apparitions could be best regarded as types of "etheric objects" in which the surviving personalities of deceased persons could be embodied. In a recent review of the interpretations of apparitions, Gauld (1977) adopted a neutral stance, but one that does not permit readers to set aside the survival hypothesis easily.

To complete this brief survey of scientific studies of veridical apparitions, it is necessary to mention the collections published by E. M. Sidgwick (1923), MacKenzie (1971), and Green and McCreery (1975). These authors did not engage in controversy over interpretation. MacKenzie and Green and McCreery, however, by eliciting and investigating reports of recent cases, have shown that apparitions still occur to ordinary (and sane) persons, and we should not suppose from most modern parapsychologists' neglect of apparitions that they occur less often now than they did in the 19th century. Palmer (1979) found that 7.5% of 622 persons responding to a survey questionnaire in a small city of the United States (Charlottesville, Virginia) claimed to have had at least one (visual) apparitional experience. These experiences were not investigated, so we cannot say what proportion of them were veridical. It is worth noting, however, that approximately 10% of the apparitions reported (of all sensory modalities) were said to have given the percipient first news of an unexpected accident or death, and about one in eight of the apparitions were said to have been collectively perceived. These features seem to justify an expectation that, if the Charlottesville cases had been investigated, they might have yielded experiences similar to those described in (usually) much older reports. This seems important, because in what follows I shall indicate types of cases that, in my opinion, favor the survival hypothesis; and if we could, through careful investigation of modern cases, find more examples of these types, we might increase the strength of the evidence from apparitional experiences that points toward survival.

TYPES OF EVIDENCE FAVORING THE SURVIVAL HYPOTHESIS

Relative Motivation on the Parts of the Percipient and the Agent

Rhine (1957b) concluded from her analysis of hallucinatory cases that they "showed the percipient often if not always *producing his*

experience according to his own interpretation of what the agent might do. The agent's actual intent and purpose seemed not at all to be determinative . . ." (p. 206). It is worth remarking that Rhine's cases were uninvestigated and the information she examined derived exclusively from her informants, who were nearly always the percipients. When one examines investigated cases in which testimony from agents or from informants for their situations is included, one finds more evidence of an "agent effect," as I did in an analysis of telepathic impressions (Stevenson, 1970, pp. 25–26); percipients in this series took action based on their impressions significantly more often when the agents were thinking of the percipient than when they were not. Apart from this, in a rejoinder to Rhine, Hart (1958a) pointed out that motivation cannot be assessed only by reports of the agents' *conscious* states; we must also consider their situations and the likelihood that those similarly placed would, at some level of their being, have a strong motive to communicate to other persons. Although Hart did not cite him, Gibson (1944) had already made such an analysis of cases of death coincidence in *Phantasms of the Living*. He concluded that "at the conscious level motivation of the percipient is usually weak" and "motivation of the agent is strong in most of the cases examined" (p. 104). Gibson formed his conclusion both from the critical physical situation of the agent and from the *content* of the whole apparitional experience, which indicated that "a large number of these incidents are teleological in character, the general purpose being to inform the percipient that the presumed agent is dying or dead" (p. 104).

Having become impressed by the high incidence of violent death among the previous personalities in cases of the reincarnation type found in eight different cultures (Stevenson, 1974a, 1980), I thought that if this was a valid observation we might expect to find a similar high incidence of violent death among agents in veridical apparitional experiences. Accordingly I analyzed the apparitional cases in *Phantasms of the Living* with regard to this feature. A total of 314 cases provided sufficient information about the mode of death of the agent and its suddenness; among these, 28% occurred violently and another 24.8%, although natural, occurred suddenly. (Deaths were judged to be "sudden" if they occurred less than 24 hours after the persons physically close to the agents had thought them well or, if ill, in no immediate danger of dying. In the absence of specific information about the duration of the illness, the deaths were judged to be sudden if firsthand informants for the cases described them as such, or if the deaths were due to a condition that was likely, in the 19th century, to be swiftly fatal.) In the 19th

century violent deaths were likely also to be sudden,³ so that altogether 52.8% of all the deaths in the series fell into the category of sudden. I suggest that the feature of suddenness increases motivation on the part of the agents to communicate the desperate situations in which they find themselves to persons they think likely to be interested. Persons who die more slowly have adequate time in which to communicate normally with those from whom they wish to take leave before dying; they also (usually) have the help they need from other persons, again normally obtained.

We may find additional evidence of motivation on the part of discarnate personalities from post-mortem cases, defined (by Gurney and later writers) as occurring more than 12 hours after the agent's death. (These are distinguished from the death coincidence cases occurring within 12 hours before and 12 hours after the death of the agent.) Murphy (1945c) thought that most communicated identifying details about a deceased person's life might derive from mere fragments of memories that persisted somehow, but to which we could not attribute the essence of a personality, which, for Murphy, meant showing some *purpose* or at least engaging in some *activity*. He therefore attached importance to appearances occurring "long after death," preferably perceived collectively. The Chaffin Will case ("Case of the Will of James L. Chaffin," 1926) belongs to this type, although it is not a collective case. (The percipient gained his paranormal information in a dream, but we may overlook that because of the difficulty often found in saying whether a percipient was asleep or awake; moreover, in at least one case an apparitional experience began when the percipient seemed to be asleep and continued after he awoke [Myers, 1903, Vol. 1, pp. 433–434]). In the Chaffin Will case, a farmer wrote a will in which he left all his property to one son and excluded his wife and other children. Later, he wrote another (holograph) will dividing his property equally among his children; but he died without telling anyone about this second will, and the earlier one was probated. About four years after the farmer's death, one of his sons who had been excluded by the probated will began to dream that his father appeared to him and showed him how to find the second

³ Violence and suddenness should be distinguished as features in a death. In the late 20th century a death may occur some time after the infliction of serious injuries, and such a death would be counted violent, but not sudden. But in the 19th century (in which the cases in *Phantasms of the Living* occurred), medical care was not so effective as it later became, nor was it so widely deployed and accessible. Therefore, serious injuries were likely to lead to death rapidly, and this means that, in most cases, violent death was also sudden.

will. The directions communicated in the dream led to the discovery of the later will and the court accepted it as legitimately superseding the earlier one.

In the Chaffin Will case the percipient benefited from the discovery of the second, revised will, and Zorab (1962) argued that he had ample motive, and probably also sufficient clairvoyance, to have discovered the second will without our needing to suppose any activity on the part of the deceased testator. According to Zorab, the appearance of the repentant farmer in the son's dreams was only a dramatization of the son's clairvoyantly acquired information.

A similar objection might be raised against attributing discarnate agency in the case of the post-mortem apparition of the poet Dante. After Dante's death his son saw his father beckoning to him and then guiding him to a place where Dante had hidden the final cantos of the *Divine Comedy*. According to Boccaccio's (1900) account of this case, Dante's son had no conscious awareness that his father had written these last cantos, much less any knowledge of where he had hidden them. Nevertheless, Dante's son did have a strong motive to acquire and publish as much of his father's work as possible.

The same objection might be raised against the Conley case (Myers, 1892, pp. 200–205), in which the agent's daughter became aware paranormally of money that her father (the agent) had hidden in his clothes, which had been discarded after his death.

There are, however, other cases that seem less amenable to this criticism because in them one cannot discern in the percipient a motive for communication that seems as strong as the apparent motive of the agent (Myers, 1889–90, pp. 29–30; Perovsky-Petrovo-Solovovo, 1930). Gurney (1888–89, pp. 422–426) reported a case of this type. The agent was a man whose widow had just died in the house where his apparition was seen. But the percipient was a lodger who had just moved into the house; she knew neither the agent (who had died almost three years earlier) nor his widow (who died the day after the percipient arrived at the house). Thus in this case the agent was perceived long after his death by someone who had never known him; his appearance at the time of his wife's death makes sense, however, if the agent is conceived as having come to help his wife through the transition of death. On the other hand, we cannot see what motive the percipient would have had for constructing an apparitional experience concerning people she had never even met and had barely heard about. This case, which combines the features of being both a post-mortem apparition and one in which the percipient had no connection with the agent,

does not stand alone,⁴ but it will suffice as an example of this type of case.

Collective Apparitions

Collectively perceived apparitions are less common than those seen by a single percipient. The majority of apparitions occur to a percipient who is alone. Myers pointed out that "this fact accords well with our view that the subsidence of ordinary stimuli facilitates the development of the telepathic impression" (Gurney et al., 1886, Vol. 2, p. 278). When two or more persons are together they are, more often than not, eating, talking, or participating in some other joint activity that engages their attention. Myers also mentioned that when two or more persons are present at the time an apparition is perceived, in two-thirds of such cases two or more persons perceive it. The later Census of Hallucinations (H. Sidgwick and Committee, 1894) showed a somewhat lower, but still significant proportion of collective cases.⁵ Among 283 cases of visual experiences in which the main percipient had a waking companion, the companion shared the experience in 95 cases—that is, in about one-third of them. Using a somewhat more restricted definition of "being present,"⁶ Hart and his collaborators (1956) found that among "46 cases of the present study in which more than one person was in a position to be a percipient, 26, or 56 per cent, were reported as collective" (p. 205). It is important to appreciate how frequent collective apparitions are among all apparitions; if we overlook this we shall be liable to underestimate their importance and the need to include them in any satisfactory theory.⁷

I have already mentioned that Gurney explained collective apparitions as due to the primary percipient's imposing the experience by means of telepathy on the other persons present. Some critics may say that the primary percipient may have induced quasi-hallucinatory experiences in bystanders by verbal statements

⁴ Other post-mortem cases in which the percipients had no previous knowledge of the agents were reported by Gurney (1887) and Johnson (1896–97).

⁵ The data from *Phantasms* and the Census of Hallucinations are not completely independent. A few *Phantasms* cases were included in the Census figures. Nevertheless, I think it permissible to treat them as separate series of cases.

⁶ Hart stipulated that, in addition to being awake, the companion(s) must have been "so situated that they would have perceived the apparition if it had been a physically embodied person" (Hart and collaborators, 1956, p. 204).

⁷ Apart from sources already cited in this paragraph, readers will find a useful summary of many collective cases that had been investigated and published up to about 1931 in Hart and Hart (1932–33).

about his or her own experience; but the evidence strongly suggests that, at least in many cases, the second or other percipients saw the apparition at the same time as the primary percipient and before the primary percipient had said anything about the experience.

Gurney's theory of "telepathic infection" (to summarize it crudely) does not account for why persons who know each other rather well (as the members of a collectively perceiving group usually do) are not reported to have experienced extrasensory perception together before the occasion of the apparition. Why, we may ask, do all these persons *suddenly* acquire telepathic powers? (We may also properly ask the same question about the primary percipients, since in many cases they have never had any prior telepathic experiences.) The answer that the "force" of the paranormal communication affecting the primary percipients endows them with an extra power to communicate telepathically with the persons around them seems to me inadequate. I think the facts are better understood if we attribute collective apparitions to an impulse from the agents. When they are in a physically dangerous condition—dying or likely to die—their motivation to communicate with others would be increased and thereby also their ability to do so paranormally. Agents would then "reach" telepathically the members of a group according to the members' differing sensitivities. These features could explain why some members of a group perceive the apparition and others do not; it could also explain those rare cases (mentioned earlier) in which the person to whom the agent appears to have come does not see the apparition, but another person, a mere bystander, does.⁸

Collective apparitions pose yet another difficulty for the telepathic hypothesis. This is, as Tyrrell (1953) pointed out, that in collective apparitions the several percipients seem to observe the same apparitional figure "each appropriately according to his position and distance from the figure" (p. 72). The telepathic hypothesis must account not only for multiple perception in collective cases, but also for a *correlation* between the different observers' perceptions of the apparition.

Similarities between Apparitions of the Living and Apparitions of the Dead

Hart and his collaborators (1956) made a notable advance in the study of apparitions by comparing the features of apparitions of

⁸ For examples of bystander cases, see Gurney et al. (1886, Vol. 2, pp. 61, 162–164, 256) and Rhine (1957a, p. 39).

living persons with those of apparitions of deceased ones. They were able to show that in all of 23 features compared, no significant difference occurred between apparitions of the dead and apparitions of the living. Particularly significant was the high frequency in both groups of the apparitions being seen by persons the agent had loved. No fewer than 78% of apparitions of the dead were perceived by a percipient to whom the agent had had strong emotional ties, such as a husband, wife, or fiancé; and among apparitions of the living the percentage of such appearances rose even higher, to 92%.⁹

Hart also analyzed apparitions of the living with regard to whether they could be viewed as being animated by a directing consciousness or only as mere automatons temporarily split off from the principal self. Hart did not deny that some apparitions, such as those of *Doppelgänger* experiences, could be regarded as marionette-like and lacking in purpose or consciousness. He was able to show, however, that in 82% of the apparitions of the living that he analyzed the agents had manifested some evidence of purpose: either they remembered, at least partly, the experience of being seen as an apparition by someone else or (before the experience) they had been directing their attention to the percipient, sometimes with the idea of "going to" him or her. (Some agents showed both types of evidence of purpose.)¹⁰ Hart concluded that since apparitions of the living are phenomenologically similar to apparitions of the dead, and since they show, at least in most cases, evidence of purposiveness, we should attribute similar qual-

⁹ Some defects in these figures may result from less adequate verification of cases in which percipient and agent are acquaintances instead of friends. Percipients may hesitate to approach acquaintances for verification, although they would feel free to ask friends or relatives. I do not think, however, that this difficulty can account for the marked preponderance of cases in which agent and percipient had some personal relationship with each other, usually a strong attachment. The low proportion of "stranger" and "acquaintance" cases is not changed if we consider only cases with coincidence between the agent's death and percipient's experience; it is easier to verify a death than many other less serious events. Gibson (1944, p. 86) found that among 313 cases of death coincidence (in the *Phantasms* collection) there was evidence of emotional attachment between percipient and agent in 85%.

¹⁰ For an example of an experimental apparition of a living person of which the agent afterward preserved a memory, see the account of Ossowiecki's experiment in Borzymowski (1965). The Wilmot case (E. M. Sidgwick, 1891–92, pp. 41–46) is an example of an apparition of a living person in which the agent herself preserved a distinct memory of perceiving her husband (in a ship at sea) at the time he had his experience of seeing her. The case is thus a reciprocal one. It is also collective since the percipient's cabin-mate (who was awake) perceived the agent at the same time as her husband (in a dream) did. Hart and Hart (1932–33) summarized reports of 13 cases in which a living agent had made a deliberate attempt to manifest paranormally to a percipient.

ities, particularly consciousness and purposiveness, to the agents in at least some apparitions of the dead. But this did not commit Hart to denying the role of the percipient in modifying the experience, and to allow for this he proposed the concept of the *persona*, which he regarded as a blended product of the activity of the surviving personality (the agent) and the living percipient's idea of that personality, which would be derived mostly from the percipient's memories of the agent when the agent had been alive (Hart, 1958b, 1959). (Hart's *persona* theory is a conceptual descendant of Myers' "phantasmogenetic efficacy.")

Reciprocal Apparitions

The term *reciprocal apparitions* is sometimes used for those experiences in which the apparition is that of a living person who afterward remembers seeing the percipient at the place where the latter saw the apparition.¹¹ Such cases present for the telepathy hypothesis one of the difficulties posed for it by collective apparitions; we may indeed consider them a type of collective apparition, although one in which the physical bodies of the two percipients are located in different places. We could attribute reciprocal cases solely to activity on the part of the percipients of the apparition. But this means that we must suppose that these first percipients somehow stimulated the agents—the persons seen at a distance from their physical bodies—so that they also seemed to become percipients. We then must either credit the agents with also having paranormal experiences or say that they were deluded about having these. A delusion seems excluded in those cases in which the agent recalls details of the place where the apparition was seen, such as the furniture of the room or unusual clothes worn by persons present. (It is understood here that the agent could not have learned such details normally or inferred them.) If we admit evidence of paranormal processes in the experience of the agent and yet insist on attributing the combined experience to the first percipient, we have to account for the agent's suddenly developing paranormal powers (on a telepathic signal from the percipient) just at the time when the percipient sees the apparition. The agent often has a strong desire or intention to "go to" the percipient at the time of the apparition; if we accept the living agent's claim to activity

¹¹ Experimental apparitions—at least those known to me—are reciprocal. In addition, reciprocal cases may occur in which the agent has not consciously intended to appear to the percipient. The Wilmot case is an example; for other examples, see Gurney et al. (1886, Vol. 2, pp. 162–164) and Funk (1907, pp. 179–184).

(and often initiative) in the combined experience, we cannot easily deny the possibility of a similar role in at least some cases in which the agent has died.

Quasi-physical Features of Apparitions

The features of apparitions that do not conform to the usual behavior of physical objects are well known: they may appear and disappear without "coming and going" like ordinary persons or objects; they may pass through solid walls and closed, locked doors; and they may move about by gliding instead of walking. Yet apparitions (or at least some of them) also behave in certain respects like ordinary persons and objects. Here I am not thinking of their opacity, since this might be a feature of a telepathically induced hallucination. But other quasi-physical features of apparitions are not so easy to explain on a telepathic hypothesis. For example, apparitions may be reflected in mirrors. Even more important is their frequent adaptive reaction to the physical situation in which they occur and to the people present; they may approach or recede from persons present and walk around physical obstructions. They may themselves sometimes be walked around, a feature that implies a certain stability in the apparition as well as in its localization in relation to space-occupying objects. They may also gesture to draw the percipient's attention to, say, the site of a wound on the agent's body.¹² And finally, as mentioned earlier, in collective experiences they are seen from different positions with perceptions corresponding to the different locations of the percipients. These features suggest to me, rather strongly I must say, that some directing personality animates the perceived apparition. The comparison sometimes made between apparitional figures and the images on a moving picture or television screen seems to break down when we consider these features. We know that the figures represented on such a screen are not "really there" where they seem to be, and it may seem easy to say that apparitional figures are also not where they seem to be. And yet images on a screen do not adapt to their viewers, whereas apparitional figures sometimes do.

Apparitions in Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation

In a large number of cases of the reincarnation type, the informants report that a member of the subject's family (usually the

¹² For an example of an apparition that drew the percipient's attention to a wound on the agent's body, see Gurney (1888–89, pp. 412–415).

mother) dreamed (before or during the mother's pregnancy with the subject) about the person whose life the subject later claimed to remember. Cases with this feature occur particularly often in Turkey, Burma, and among the Tlingit and other tribes of north-west North America (Stevenson, 1966, 1980, in press). The occurrence of such "announcing dreams"¹³ prepares the family concerned to believe that the child born later is the reincarnation of the deceased person appearing in the dream; and this naturally makes it more difficult to give a paranormal explanation to the statements and recognitions related to the previous life that informants have attributed to the child. Yet I do not think that such a dream necessarily vitiates all the evidence of remembering the deceased person's life that the subject may later present. If I say that I think some of these children provide evidence of a kind that we cannot readily explain by supposing the parents have imposed on the child the role of the deceased person who appeared in a dream, I wish thereby to refer readers to detailed case reports in which alone they can find the data that would justify my assertion (Stevenson, 1974b, 1980, in press).

In Burma and Thailand, the subjects often say that they remember experiences occurring between the time of death in the previous life and birth in the present life. They also sometimes claim to remember "sending" an announcing dream to the parents to whom they wish to be reborn. And on rare occasions, they claim to remember having manifested, while discarnate, as an apparition perceived by the subject's mother. In three cases in Thailand and Burma (Stevenson, in press), the subject claimed to remember appearing, while discarnate, to the woman of whom he was to become the child. In two of these cases the appearance occurred while the percipient was awake; in the third it occurred when she was asleep and dreaming. I could obtain independent corroboration for the occurrence of only one of these manifestations, but the other two subjects said that when they were young children their mothers had confirmed having had the apparition (or dream) experience the subjects remembered. In these cases, therefore, we have claims of living persons to have remembered appearing in dreams or as waking apparitions to their mothers in the form of the deceased persons whose lives they remembered. These few cases need support from additional examples of the type, and I think that we can find these. If we can, they will fill a gap between apparitions

¹³ Occasionally announcing dreams are so vivid that the percipient wakes up expecting to see the appearer beside the bed. For an example, see my report of the dream experienced by the mother of William George, Jr., just before she gave birth to him (Stevenson, 1974b, p. 232).

tions of the dying and those of the living. They are, phenomenologically, appearances of dead persons to living ones that are remembered later by subjects who recall verifiable details of the lives of these dead persons. A satisfactory number of such cases—I shall not attempt to say what that number should be—would surely provide additional evidence supporting a belief that apparitions of the dead are animated by purposeful personalities who have survived physical death.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I shall have succeeded in my task for this paper if I have shown the merits of the data and the types of cases that offer support for interpreting at least some apparitions as providing evidence for survival after death. It happens that the cases tending to support the survival hypothesis—such as collective apparitions, post-mortem apparitions with evidence of purpose, and reciprocal cases—all occur less often than the simpler types of case that lend themselves more easily to the interpretation of telepathy between living persons. These exceptional cases are, nevertheless, sufficiently numerous and (some of them) sufficiently well authenticated so that the proponent of the telepathic hypothesis of apparitions is obliged either to ignore them altogether or to account for them by what appear to me to be improbable secondary explanations.

Parapsychologists, like other scientists, prefer to work with a small number of categories, and they have a tendency to search for a single explanation that will account for all cases of a particular type. It seems to me safer, and heuristically more valuable, to preserve two or more categories for cases that otherwise resemble each other. Some poltergeists may derive from living agents, others from deceased ones (Stevenson, 1972). Similarly, some apparitional experiences seem to be exclusively the work of percipients, whereas others may arise (at least partly) from the activity of deceased or dying persons who may be regarded as in some sense "present" where they are seen. My view of these cases allows us also to conceive of a range of intermediate types in which agent and percipient may contribute different proportions to the percipient's experience.

REFERENCES

- BOCCACCIO, G. *Life of Dante*. (Translated by G. R. Carpenter.) New York: The Grolier Club, 1900. (First published in 1354–55.)
BORZYMOWSKI, A. Experiments with Ossowiecki. *International Journal of Parapsychology*, 1965, 7, 259–280.

- BROAD, C. D. *Lectures on Psychical Research*. New York: Humanities Press, 1962.
- Case of the will of James L. Chaffin. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1926, 36, 517-524.
- FUNK, I. K. *The Psychic Riddle*. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1907.
- GAULD, A. Discarnate survival. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), *Handbook of Parapsychology*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977.
- GIBSON, E. P. An examination of motivation as found in selected cases from *Phantasms of the Living*. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1944, 38, 83-105.
- GREEN, C., AND MCCREERY, C. *Apparitions*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975.
- GURNEY, E. Cases received by the Literary Committee. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1887, 3, 92-94.
- GURNEY, E. On apparitions occurring soon after death. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1888-89, 5, 403-485.
- GURNEY, E., MYERS, F. W. H., AND PODMORE, F. *Phantasms of the Living*. (2 vols.) London: Trübner, 1886.
- HART, H. Do apparitions of the dead imply any intention on the part of the agent? A rejoinder to Louisa E. Rhine. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1958, 22, 59-63. (a)
- HART, H. To what extent can the issues with regard to survival be reconciled? *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1958, 39, 314-323. (b)
- HART, H. *The Enigma of Survival: The Case For and Against an After Life*. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C Thomas, 1959.
- HART, H., AND COLLABORATORS. Six theories about apparitions. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1956, 50, 153-239.
- HART, H., AND HART, E. Visions and apparitions collectively and reciprocally perceived. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1932-33, 41, 205-249.
- JOHNSON, A. A case of information supernormally acquired. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1896-97, 12, 116-126.
- MACKENZIE, A. *Apparitions and Ghosts: A Modern Study*. London: Arthur Barker, 1971.
- MURPHY, G. An outline of survival evidence. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1945, 39, 2-34. (a)
- MURPHY, G. Difficulties confronting the survival hypothesis. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1945, 39, 67-94. (b)

- MURPHY, G. Field theory and survival. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1945, 39, 181-209. (c)
- MYERS, F. W. H. On recognised apparitions occurring more than a year after death. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1889-90, 6, 13-65.
- MYERS, F. W. H. On indications of continued terrene knowledge on the part of phantasms of the dead. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1892, 8, 170-252.
- MYERS, F. W. H. *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*. (2 vols.) London: Longmans, Green, 1903.
- PALMER, J. A community mail survey of psychic experiences. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1979, 73, 221-251.
- PEROVSKY-PETROVO-SOLOVOVO, M. A phantasm of the dead conveying information unknown to the percipient. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1930, 26, 95-98.
- RHINE, L. E. Hallucinatory psi experiences. II. The initiative of the percipient in hallucinations of the living, the dying, and the dead. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1957, 21, 13-46. (a)
- RHINE, L. E. Hallucinatory psi experiences. III. The intention of the agent and the dramatizing tendency of the percipient. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1957, 21, 186-226. (b)
- RHINE, L. E. *The Invisible Picture: A Study of Psychic Experiences*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1981.
- SIDGWICK, E. M. On the evidence for clairvoyance. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1891-92, 7, 30-99.
- SIDGWICK, E. M. Phantasms of the living. . . . *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1923, 33, 23-429.
- SIDGWICK, H., AND COMMITTEE. Report on the census of hallucinations. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1894, 10, 25-422.
- STEVENSON, I. Cultural patterns in cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit Indians of Southeastern Alaska. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1966, 60, 229-243.
- STEVENSON, I. *Telepathic Impressions: A Review and Report of Thirty-five New Cases*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970.
- STEVENSON, I. Are poltergeists living or are they dead? *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1972, 66, 233-252.
- STEVENSON, I. Some questions related to cases of the reincarnation type. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1974, 68, 395-416. (a)

- STEVENSON, I. *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. (2nd rev. ed.) Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974. (b)
- STEVENSON, I. *Cases of the Reincarnation Type. Vol. III. Twelve Cases in Lebanon and Turkey*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980.
- STEVENSON, I. *Cases of the Reincarnation Type. Vol. IV. Twelve cases in Thailand and Burma*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, in press.
- TYRRELL, G. N. M. *Apparitions*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1953. (First published by the Society for Psychical Research in 1942.)
- ZORAB, G. Cases of the Chaffin Will type and the problem of survival. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1962, 41, 407-417.

Division of Parapsychology
Box 152, Medical Center
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22908