

ARTICLES

Arthur Oram
 First joined the Society for Psychological Research in 1946. He was Honorary Secretary, Vice-President, elected member of council (for 31 years), founder member of the Survival Committee and member of the Research Grants Committee. In 1998 he wrote 'The System in Which we Live' which sought to construct a model of reality which would encompass a wide range of psi phenomena without conflicting with the findings of any of the established sciences. Central to this endeavour, he believed, was the acceptance of the existence of minds as separate entities, existing "before and after the rather limited life of the brain and its body".

Studying the Evidence for Survival

- Arthur Oram -

SURVIVAL AFTER death, and a new life for those who are ready for it, in another world, have been referred to and to some extent described for thousands of years. In recent years we have had some fairly detailed descriptions of the life to come.

Either there is such a life or there is not. We shall each ascertain what is for us the answer when we die.

In the meantime every race and most cultural groups on earth include many individuals who, for varying reasons, are convinced that there is such a life after death, some who are convinced that there is no such life, and many others who feel unsure. Those who feel unsure include some who are interested in investigating the subject and seeking evidence.

The sort of evidence that people seek obviously depends on their personal backgrounds. Some will be convinced beyond question by a religious experience, others by a near-death experience. Some will have had just one or two psychic experiences, possibly following the death of a close relation, and the result for them could be unquestioning conviction. A few may have reached a similar conviction on the basis of an experience that others might regard as questionable, or of no importance, or even based on fraud.

In some way we have to cut through this rather complicated situation and we shall seek to do it mainly by referring to what might be regarded as scientific evidence. Very broadly that is the sort of evidence which can be convincing to experienced and unbiased scientists who are well aware of the problems arising in this field.

We should be absolutely clear that the true situation does not depend on our evidence. It is only our personal knowledge of it that may depend on our evidence. Science is itself an ongoing complex of models, knowledge, theory, methodology and so forth and there is a great deal in the science of to-day that would have been unthinkable fifty years ago. In the next fifty years the situation may well have changed far more, if only because there is more science being done in each decade. We therefore need to remind ourselves at every stage that some established scientific ideas will be overthrown or at least modified within our lifetime. The science of ten years hence could well be more far-reaching and it will be helpful if, for a start, we adopt the model presented in this book so that we have a view of the system in which we live that can accommodate evidence of survival when we have found it.

We start with a situation in which many people are convinced, mainly on the basis of approaches outside the present reach of the sciences, that there is a new life that follows death, that it is bigger and better and of greatly longer duration than our life on earth, that when you are in it it is real and solid, but that it is different and omits many aspects of our life on earth, particularly where they are dependent on our physical surroundings.

This chapter, in its four parts", is concerned with evidence for survival. But this book as a whole is concerned with a particular model of the system in which we live, a model that can accommodate a next life and a whole structure with many levels. Obviously there is a measure of something like circularity here in so far as we set out to formulate a structure that can accommodate survival before we discuss the evidence for survival. This, however, is only a procedure of convenience, forced on us by the difficulty of dealing with a many sided situation in a single sequence of chapters.

* The current article being Part 1 and [A Discussion of the Evidence for Survival](#) being Part 2.

Selected References

Fortunately, the literature that is readily available provides excellent coverage of many aspects of the survival problem. In Grattan-Guinness (1982)[1] we have a chapter on Survival after Death, Evidence and Issues, by Professor Ian Stevenson (pages 109-122) and in Wolman (1977) *Discarnate Survival* by Dr. Alan Gauld (pages 577-630).

[1] ed. *Psychical Research - A Guide to its History, Principles and Practices* (Wellingborough, Aquarian Press, 1982.)

I would also recommend the following books.

- Richard Broughton *Parapsychology* (1991)
- Ian Stevenson *Books on Reincarnation and Biology* published in 1997
- Alan Gauld *Mediumship and Survival* (1982)
- Paul Beard: *Survival of Death* (1961); *Living On* (1980); *Hidden Man* (1986); *The Barbanell Report* (1987); *Inner Eye, Listening Ear* (1992)
- Geraldine Cummins: *The Road to Immortality* (1932); *Swan on a Black Sea* (1965); *They Survive* (1946); *Travellers in Eternity* (1948)
- Chan (Spirit guide of Ivy Northage) *Journey Beyond* (1972)
- Robert Crookall *The Supreme Adventure* (1961)

This chapter presents comments on particular aspects of the problem, in some cases dealing with matters that are not dealt with in as much detail in some of the recommended sources and in others adding new ideas. What is written here is not intended to provide a full coverage of a subject as large as this.

Because, however, survival after death is such an important subject, for each of us as individuals, for the whole of humanity because of the influence it could well have on the way people live their lives, on the development of the sciences because of the implications of survival on the structure and position of science if survival becomes recognised as a fact, and for psychological research, this chapter is rather longer than the others in this book. This however fits in with the importance of survival in connection with the model, and of the model in understanding how survival fits in as part of the system in which we live.

We can start with brief comments on a few of the selected books. Any such selection is inevitably personal and many readers will find that their favourite books have not been included, but these comments may help those who have not previously read much in this field.

Parapsychology

Richard Broughton is a leading researcher, Director of Research at the Institute of Parapsychology in Durham, North Carolina and a past President of the Parapsychological Association which is the leading international professional association, based in the USA, for those involved in psychical research.

His book differs fundamentally from the others listed here in that in his chapter on *Life After Death?*, at pages 242 to 273, he remarks (p. 246) that research with mediums is virtually nonexistent to-day and he bases his approach in the main on out-of-the-body-experiences, near-death-experiences, and the work of Ian Stevenson and others on 'cases of the reincarnation type'.

The statement that research with mediums is virtually nonexistent to-day seems to be fair and reasonable. I have had 160 sittings with mediums in the 13 years since August 1984 and many more before 1984 but on a less formal basis, but I have not published any papers on that work and while for me it constitutes research, it cannot count on a wider basis without effective publication. As Broughton points out, research with mediums can be inefficient and difficult; I would not be doing it if I depended on obtaining material for publication. In this country we are, however, fortunate in still having some excellent mediums, but in the USA it has become fashionable for people who have the necessary sensitivity to train towards channelling rather than communication with a sitter's relatives and friends. Some who have taken that path have made money on a scale that could not be achieved through giving individual sittings.

Many of my discussions through mediums have been with communicators who were involved in psychical research during their recent lives, but they have produced little, if anything, that contributes in any substantial way to our knowledge of psi or survival. I have learned a great deal, but it is not material that is easy to pass on in detail.

Broughton's chapter on Survival is a substantial contribution to the subject and one that I strongly recommend.

Stevenson on Reincarnation and Biology

Ian Stevenson has written two important books on Reincarnation and Biology, published together in 1997[2]. The first, which he refers to as 'the monograph', is of 2268 pages in two volumes, the first volume dealing with birthmarks involving subjects who have memories of earlier lives and in the main of violent deaths, and the second volume dealing with birth defects coupled with similar memories and backgrounds. The second book, which is available as a paper-back at a modest price, presents a summary and discussion in 203 pages. The whole of this work seems to be immensely impressive. The significance of it appears to be overwhelming and the shorter book could be regarded as essential reading for anyone concerned with these aspects of physical evidence of mind-body interactions.

[2] *Reincarnation and Biology* (USA, Praeger) and *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect* (USA, Praeger).

The Road to Immortality

[Geraldine Cummins](#) was a famous medium who concentrated on automatic writing. Her book *The Road to Immortality* (Cummins 1932), consists mainly of transcripts of automatic writing which she produced, purporting to be communicated by [F. W. H. Myers](#). The material was received over three periods, 1924-1925, 1927 and 1931 (page 19). It claims to describe what happens at and after death, by the communicator who died in January 1901. Myers was one of the founder members of the SPR and in its early years he did a remarkable amount of pioneering work. He is inclined here and there to use poetic phrases where we may feel that we need a more analytical approach, but in spite of that the book is probably the best record we have of a set of descriptions of the HD* world. It can possibly be treated as our main guide as to what it is that we are seeking evidence about when we consider evidence of survival after death. It is fairly clear on a number of points related to the difficulties that arise in communicating between the HD and 4D** worlds.

* HD: Higher dimensional.
 ** 4D: Four-dimensional. The world of three dimensions of space and one of time.

The reasons for adopting this record as a serious guide to the problems it claims to deal with, are several. In the first place it seems to be reasonably consistent within itself. Secondly it appears to fit in well with the ideas and information that I have received from mediums and communicators, and with descriptions in what appear to be some of the best of the considerable number of other books that have been written on this subject. This could merely mean that they are all sharing the same traditional approaches, in which case they could all be wrong; that will have to be dealt with as soon as we find a way, but in the meantime it is helpful to find approaches that seem to agree one with the other.

Thirdly, these scripts seem to be potentially compatible with an extended physics and with the model presented here.

The scripts are not adopted because they are claimed to be from Myers. If they do come from him, then that is excellent, and they may well do so. Shortly after they were produced both Sir [Oliver Lodge](#) and Sir [Laurence Jones](#), who had known Myers, made public statements on their apparent authenticity on the grounds that they seemed to reflect the personality of Frederic Myers. The scripts are, however, adopted for reference here mainly because they appear to make a well structured set.

The original form of the book included a foreword by Sir Oliver Lodge and an explanatory introduction by E. B. Gibbes, some 20 pages that are not included in the abridged edition of 1984 and later. There were also some 60 pages at the end of the original edition, including two and a half pages of index, which have been omitted in the abridged edition. It is suggested that the abridged edition is adequate for a first reading and that the earlier edition can be referred to later, if required, possibly in the library of the SPR.

There is a problem relating to the sequel to this book, *Beyond Human Personality*[3] which apparently continues the Myers scripts with "essays written for the most part in 1933 and 1934" (p. 15). Some of these scripts claim that minds (to use the term used here, but not in this context in the scripts) live not merely with bodies on the Earth, but also on other planets and on or in the stars. Where they live on other planets they are said to do so in bodies that are not discernible to our instruments.

[3] London: Psychic Press, 1935.

At present I reject these claims and do so for the reasons set out in the paragraphs that follow. These arguments are included here as they may be of value in connection with the survival problem, but some readers may prefer to skip them and to go to the next section heading.

In the first place the reasonable approach described above seems to have broken down, at least to the extent that we must judge it in the light of our present knowledge. The references to fixed and variable stars seem to indicate that the communicator may have picked up a false trail (at pages 96 and 103-104). In the main we use the term "variable star" to refer to one that gives a cyclical variable radiation, possibly due to there being two bodies revolving about their common centre. In other words, it is not the star that is variable but the radiation that comes from it. Therefore it seems to be an irrelevant classification for the discussion in the book; it looks as if an impostor may have stepped in and taken over the control of the sitting.

Secondly, it seems to make good sense that a mind should serve a term of years with a body in the 4D world, because doing so provides opportunities to interact with physical factors. For instance, it provides an opportunity to swim in the sea and to develop the skills required to ride on large breakers. In the HD world that sort of challenge may not be available. It also provides the opportunity to develop civil, mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering and in all those ways to challenge an independent nature that will demolish our bridges if they are not designed effectively. That is another type of challenge that is probably not available in the HD world. It looks as if the 4D world may be the only location for interaction with stochastic situations; in other words, as if the 4D world is the home of probability distributions at the macroscopic level and the home of statistical concepts. This environment is wonderful for developing many types of skills. Therefore, on these grounds alone, and no doubt on many others, it seems to make sense for minds to come for a while to bodies in the 4D world.

However, for a mind to go to one of the planets in a form that is not discernible to our instruments does not make sense to me at present, with my limited knowledge. Our instruments are designed to deal with factors that arise in the 4D world. If those minds are on a planet to interact with the environment they find there, then as the environment is presumably of the 4D world they could reasonably be expected to interact with our instruments. If not, why are they there? What is the significance of being on a planet if one cannot interact with it?

It may be that the system in which we live is more complicated than our model admits, in that there could be different levels of 4D-like worlds that do not interact with each other in the ways with which we are familiar. It is stated in *Beyond Human Personality* that there are even "denser" regions than life on earth.

It may be that we need more basic information in the first place. Until we have it, it is suggested that we should be careful with that part of the book in question that deals with the planets and the stars; the rest of the book is apparently free from this type of criticism.

Swan On A Black Sea

Geraldine Cummins' book *Swan On A Black Sea* represents another set of scripts received through automatic writing, but of a rather different nature. In the Foreword by Professor [C. D. Broad](#) he wrote:

I believe that these automatic scripts are a very important addition to the vast mass of such material which *prima facie* suggests rather strongly that certain human beings have survived the death of their physical bodies and have been able to communicate with certain others who are still in the flesh.

The communicator was Mrs. Winifred Margaret Coombe Tennant who had herself been, under an assumed name (Mrs Willett), an active medium. She was the first woman to be a magistrate in Glamorganshire and the first woman to be appointed by the British government as a delegate to the League of Nations.

Much of the book is concerned with communication with her surviving sons. Many readers have found it to be impressive evidence for survival.

Journey Beyond

Ivy Northage has for many years been giving public lectures in trance and they are of an exceptional standard. The communicator is her guide Chan. The book titled *Journey Beyond* (47 pages) was originally published as *Journey Into Spirit* in 1972 and the second edition (1988) with the new title has been reprinted in 1993. It reproduces several of the earlier lectures by Chan. It is one of the more valuable texts I have found on the nature and problems of the next life.

It appears to have been prepared with great modesty, clarity and economy in the use of words, factors that are evident in all of the Chan-Northage lectures I have heard. I recommend it for anyone who wishes to widen his or her understanding of the next life.

Survival of Death

The book by Paul Beard, *Survival of Death*[4] contains a great deal of valuable information relating to mediums and their problems. It draws heavily on material from the *Proceedings* of the SPR and it is valuable to have statements relevant to a particular problem brought together for us in this way and reproduced for easy reference.

[4] London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966.

Paul Beard was for fifteen years the president of the College of Psychic Studies and he was close to the subject of mediumship during that time. Since then he has continued to keep in touch with this area of work. He does not write as a scientist but he does employ an analytical approach backed up with modesty and care. Above all he knows his subject.

Living On

In this book Paul Beard describes the next life in its various stages, as he sees it, based on communication through mediums over many years and, I would suspect, some more intimate communication that we might possibly refer to as inspiration or guidance from his closest communicators or guides. This is an important book and one that takes us rather further than *The Road to Immortality* and *Journey Beyond*.

The Barbanell Report

As I write this is probably the latest book available that consists almost entirely of transcripts from the tapes of a series of sittings. The medium is Mrs. Marie Therie and the sitter and editor of the book, Paul Beard. It does not depict normal progress of a deceased person, but that of one who is so determined to achieve his maximum possible speed of development that he makes it particularly hard work. However, from the point of view of the reader this has its value as the book covers a considerable span of experience, all of which apparently took place in some four or five years of our time. It also achieves considerable depth and subtlety. If anyone needs an answer to those critics who claim that messages received through mediums consist of trivialities, this book can take its place alongside many others, including *Swan on a Black Sea*.

Having read this book I read it again. For me this seemed to be a natural and necessary procedure with a book of this style, mainly because the words are all so simple that much of the importance of what is written tends to be missed at a first reading. At a second reading and at later references to particular points it is possible to ponder on the meaning and implications of individual statements. A few of them are rather striking. Obviously some readers will regret that there is no index, but I have felt that the book is sufficiently important to prepare my own index to it while reading it that second time.

Towards the end of the book, when Barbanell had shown his desire to move ahead at a greater speed than is usual, we reach a stage when he is, or soon will be, no longer in touch with Paul Beard. Ten years after the publication of this book, in 1997, Paul told me that Barbanell had come back and was communicating again. It looks as if he had been trying to move too fast. I guess it would be unwise to interpret this as a mistake, but it could be an indication that moving between the districts is quite a challenge.

The Barbanell Report will almost certainly be valued by those who wish to study such evidence as we have of the conditions of life in the HD part of our system, and having grasped its nature no serious student of the subject will be misled by the rather unusual type of life that is depicted. These favourable comments assume that the reader is willing to skip some passages that refer to theories and organisations that were of special interest to Beard and Barbanell on a personal basis.

Having introduced this very personal selection of books that deal either partly or wholly with survival after death, we can now consider, in Part II, some of the problems connected with communication.

Note:

The above article was originally titled "Part I Evidence for Survival". It was taken from Arthur Oram's "The System in Which We Live" (Purley: Talbot Books, 1998).

Related Articles

- [A Discussion on the Evidence for Survival](#) by Arthur Oram