

host of different sociological and personal factors including worldview and religious concerns, led individual scientists to take up the question of life on other planets. These scientists preferred empirical data, but "did not hesitate to use theory in the absence of observation to further their argument." (p. 548) Even when data were available, scientists read them in a number of different ways (suggesting once again that data are theory-laden). Often, the optimism or pessimism of a particular scientist helped to shape how such data were interpreted.

Presumably, those who are experts about the particular fields studied in such detail by Dick could contest some of his claims, and living participants might have even sharper criticism to make about his assessment of their views and actions. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that *The Biological Universe* is a landmark achievement both as a brilliant historical treatment of the search for ET life and as an examination of how this search at the limits of science sheds light on the plurality of cultures within science.

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Philosophical Interactions With Parapsychology: The Major Writings of H. H. Price on Parapsychology and Survival, edited by Frank B. Dilley.

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. 294 + xix pp. \$59.95, cloth. ISBN 0-312-12607-7.

H. H. Price (1899-1984) was succeeded in the Chair of Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford by A. J. Ayer. In a tribute to his predecessor, Ayer (1960) says that Price "addressed himself always to difficult and important questions, and... treated them with the open-mindedness and the fertility of invention... characteristic of him" (Ayer, p. 3). Price, Ayer continues, was

inclined to think that the world is a much stranger place than we ordinarily take it to be, so that even the most fanciful theories about it may...contain an element of truth.... But... the theories are subjected to a very rigorous scrutiny...Whatever the subject of his investigation, his treatment of it is thoroughly systematic. With his manifest enjoyment of philosophy, there goes a belief in its seriousness and importance. (Ayer, p. 3-4)

In the present volume Price refers to a book by C. J. Ducasse, and says that it "is an important and very interesting book" (p. 270), which is a good description of Frank B. Dilley's excellent new collection of Price's writings on psychical research. Dr. Dilley teaches philosophy at the University of Delaware. His interest in the philosophical study of the paranormal is of long standing and has resulted in numerous articles and presentations in the field. With this an-

thology of Price's writings, he has given us a book that will be welcomed by parapsychologists and philosophers, and ought to be read by many others, as well. Dilley says in his Introduction that "philosophers interested in psychical research and parapsychologists interested in philosophical approaches have needed a collection such as this" (p. x). I agree.

The useful introduction raises questions germane to understanding Price, and facilitates both our grasp of the issues he discusses and our sense of why he discusses them and how he approaches them. It concludes with a brief but orienting account of five key ideas to be encountered in the writings that follow: the psychic ether; Price's conception of persistent mental images; the collective or common unconscious; analysis of the self into spirit, mind, and body; and personal survival of bodily death. Unfortunately, Dilley's point that "it is never quite clear just how exactly these ideas relate to each other" (p. xiii) seems well taken.

The earliest piece Dilley includes is from 1937 and deals with precognition and C. D. Broad's intriguing hypothesis of two-dimensional time; the latest is titled "C. J. Ducasse on the Problem of Survival," and is one of a number of essays in honor of Ducasse that were published in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research* in 1970. It is fair to say, as Dilley does, that the book includes "most of the major long pieces and a few of the important shorter ones" (p. ix) that Price wrote on parapsychological topics — an area in which, Price says elsewhere, he was interested "for almost as long as I can remember" (Price, 1972, p. v).

Altogether, the Price material reprinted here comprises 10 lectures or articles, two contributions to symposia, and five book reviews. They are divided between the book's two main parts, "Writings on Parapsychology" and "Writings on Survival." (Perhaps "Writings on Paranormal Cognition" would have been a better title for Part I.) With one exception, Dilley says, "the pieces... included in this volume are presented in their entirety" (p. ix).

Broadly, the topics Price examines are paranormal, or supernormal, cognition (ESP); psychokinesis (PK); the nature and role of symbolism in ESP; conflict between science and religion; hauntings and apparitions; and personal survival of death. (Is it likely, and what would it be like?) In the course of Price's explorations, we find certain recurrent themes, such as there being a strong possibility that ESP occurs in everyone all the time and that the proper question, therefore, may be not why it occurs, if only sporadically, but rather why it manifests so rarely. In this connection Price reminds us that in the system of Leibniz, from which "we may gather useful hints" (p. 56) for constructing a conceptual framework for paranormal cognition, "every monad has clairvoyant and telepathic powers... always, as part of its essential nature" (p. 56). And he adds:

We must not be too proud... to take what hints we can from the theories of speculative metaphysicians. They may turn out to have... empirical application... especially when

we consider that seamier side of Nature which Psychological Research gives us a glimpse of. (p. 56)

The book's three-page bibliography serves well, though I would have included the whole of Price's lambent *Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* rather than just two of its chapters. (Indeed, since I think *Essays* is no longer in print, I wish that an excerpt could have been included in the present work.) And whereas the bibliography says that Price's review of LeShan's *Toward a General Theory of the Paranormal* appeared in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research*, it actually appeared in the *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*.

Inexplicably, there is no name index or subject index. There is a one-page "Index of Discussions", but it is not very usable. The typos in the book are distractingly numerous.

Chapter 4 ("Mind Over Mind and Mind Over Matter"), which dates from 1949, though it is sometimes unclear, is to my mind the most ingenious and original chapter, at least in Part I. In it, Price attempts to provide a unified theory of telepathy and PK in terms of the nature of ideas. All that telepathy and PK *seem* to have in common, he says, is that they are both supernormal, a term he only vaguely defines as "things which *ought* not to happen if our ordinary scientific assumptions about the world are correct" (p. 62). But in fact, if Price is right, telepathy, of whose occurrence he is "sure" (p. 69), and PK, the evidence for which he thinks is appreciable, are "two different manifestations of the same thing" (p. 62).¹

Price's unified theory rests on two assumptions. The first is that human personality is to be divided not into just mind and body, but into mind, body, and spirit, in which mind "is the subject matter of psychical research" (p. 64) and spirit is "the fundamental 'I,' the pure ego" (p. 63), with which psychical research is not concerned. But although psychical research is concerned with mind, we must, in attempting to make sense of the supernormal — and this is Price's second assumption — take "the ultimate elements of the mental world" (p. 65) to be not minds but *ideas*, to which Price's attributes surprising characteristics. (In an earlier chapter he speculates that telepathy may be a relation between ideas, rather than one between minds.)

If we take ideas as mentally ultimate, "we can then build up [out of them] the various grades of psychical entity... from not very purposive ghosts and Freudian complexes... to the complete and healthily integrated individual

¹Because Price argues in this chapter from 1949 that there is a very close relationship between telepathy and PK, I was surprised to find him suggesting in a 1949 review of Rhine's *Reach of the Mind* (see Chapter 5) that the connection between ESP and PK is much less close than some (*e.g.*, Rhine himself) have thought. Relevant to understanding the seeming discrepancy, I would think, is the fact that "ESP" includes clairvoyance as well as telepathy, and Price, at the end of Chapter 4, says that although "telepathy and PK are two manifestations of the same thing" (p. 76), his hypothesis "will not account for clairvoyance.... Clairvoyance is something radically different" (p. 76). He sees telepathy and PK as ways in which ideas operate, but clairvoyance as "a way in which ideas are acquired" (p. 76).

human mind" (p. 65). Riskily, Price decides not to define the term *idea*: "I shall assume that its meaning is sufficiently well understood" (p. 65). (At one point he seemingly invites us to speak of thoughts and images instead of ideas.)

Ideas do depend for their creation on minds, Price holds, but it is his audacious supposition that once created, ideas do not depend on minds for their continued existence. What's more, ideas are causally efficacious, competitive, and the possessors of needs, urges, and inherent tendencies. And in other chapters they acquire "telepathic charges" (p. 176) and varying degrees of "telepathic affinity" (p. 33) with one another. In Price's unified theory, two of the tendencies inherent in ideas become crucially important for an understanding of telepathy and PK. For one of an idea's tendencies is "to materialize itself in a physical form, which is the explanation of PK" (p. 70), and another is "to emerge into consciousness — into *any* consciousness, no matter whose — and that is the explanation of telepathy" (p. 70). Although such claims that those properties of ideas *explain* PK and telepathy seem excessive, I find Price's focus on ideas instead of minds and his theorizing about their role in *psi* exciting and in need of reexamination by parapsychologists.

Telepathy, Price thinks, shows "that there is a common unconscious, that at the unconscious level there is no sharp distinction between one mind and another" (p. 68). If there is a distinction "between the personal unconscious and a 'deeper' impersonal unconscious" (p. 68), it is one of degree. In Chapter 4 he views telepathy basically in terms of an idea's being originated by one person, getting into the unconscious, and emerging thence into the consciousness of another person. But that culminating moment in the telepathic process when an idea breaks into consciousness can occur only if the idea succeeds in overcoming "some barrier or... repressive mechanism" (p. 7) that tends to keep it out of consciousness. For Price this marks "the *threshold* of consciousness" (p. 68), and to get into my consciousness, he writes, an idea originated by someone else must "cross my threshold and compete with all the other ideas there which were trying to do the same" (p. 69). Because of the threshold, telepathy is rare. Were it not for the threshold's presence we would be having telepathic experiences constantly, and "we literally could not bear [to do so].... If the threshold were not there, we should all be mad.... We should no longer be persons" (p. 69-70).

Is the idea that crosses the threshold into *B*'s consciousness numerically the same as the idea that *A* originates? That it is, is indeed an impression that Price gives, and the notion of its being the very same idea that gets from one conscious mind to another causes Dilley understandable difficulty. He writes that in Chapter 4 Price "seems to present telepathy... [as the activity] of a *single* image moving from one mind into another" (p. xvi), to present "the image as travelling from one censor to another, knocking at various doors until it finds one which will open and thus allow the image to reach consciousness in another mind" (p. xvi). True, but nonetheless I don't think Price *can* mean that the idea that I originated at time *t* and the idea of which you are now conscious at a

later time t' are numerically the same, even if they are synonymous. (Price, by the way, is silent about the average temporal distance in telepathy between an idea's being originated by A at t and its emergence into B 's consciousness at t' . But one may infer from what he says that t' is always later than t , sometimes — depending on how many doors an idea has to knock at — considerably later. Curiously, this seems to imply that for Price in Chapter 4, telepathy is always retrocognitive. (I don't mean to rule out, of course, the possibility that at either t or t' A and B both are conscious of "the same" idea. But if they are, could that count as telepathy, according to Price's analysis?)

From various things Price says in the book, Dilley infers that the theory he "really meant to endorse" (p. xvi) is one that entails that in telepathic cognition involving A and B , for example, B 's image was not identical with A 's, but was copied from it — that "in telepathic cognition... two minds do not possess the *same* image (p. xvi). Here, I think Dilley is on the right track. (His inference pertains also to Price's views on the unconscious, where I won't follow it.) If only because, in a case of telepathy, A 's idea may be transformed before emerging subsequently into B 's consciousness, it seems most likely that for Price — what gets into B 's consciousness is never numerically identical with A 's original idea. But with regard to Dilley's inference, I shall add the following caveat. It is plain that *what emerges into my consciousness* (in a telepathic interaction between us) need not be a *copy* of your original idea. Perhaps the latter was a "distinct 'message'" (p. 70) that was able to cross the threshold into my consciousness only in severely distorted form, or only as the pervasive "feeling of gloom or of elation" (p. 70) that Price says may be all that gets across, if the original idea or message fails to make it. In a telepathic transaction between A and B , evidently, the idea of which B is conscious, though presumably a causal descendant of the idea that A originated, may well not be a copy of it, though Dilley plausibly suggests that a copy of it may exist in B 's unconscious.

"PK," Price writes, "is ideo-motor operation occurring apart from the nervous system and muscles, instead of by means of them" (p. 67). We have seen that according to him, what an idea's inherent tendency to break into consciousness is to an explanation of telepathy, so its tendency to manifest in physical form is to an explanation of PK. Civilized man's physical environment, he says, including "houses, factories, streets, buses, machines of all kinds" (p. 66), largely consists of ideas or thoughts that have materialized themselves in normal fashion, that is by means of nervous systems and muscles; yet if PK is a fact, it must be the case that "sometimes an idea succeeds in materializing itself in a physical object... without making use of anybody's brain or muscles" (p. 66). A drive toward materialization, if really inherent in ideas, is what makes thought very dangerous, Price observes. From what he has said about ideas it follows that

what anybody thinks has some tendency to come about... even when the thought is no

longer in anybody's consciousness. If it does not [come about], that is because there are other contrary thoughts... opposed to it. Ideas are dangerous things because they have a tendency, however slight, to come true. (p. 67)

The assumption that ideas have a tendency to become materialized, Price tells us, is made by believers in primitive magic, which perhaps "has a little grain of sense in it after all" (p. 67); and prayer, he continues, which "I suspect... does work sometimes" (p. 67), "seems to be based on a similar assumption" (p. 67).

Price attempts to explain the tendencies that he suggests hold the answer to telepathy and PK: why is there a need on the part of ideas to materialize or to emerge into consciousness? His reflections lead to a tentative conclusion that both needs are probably "effects or derivatives of something more fundamental" (p. 74), which he identifies as a "fundamental tendency ideas have... to *express* themselves" (p. 74). He acknowledges that his account "is far from clear" (p. 74), but if he is right, the tendencies ideas have to get materialized and break into consciousness derive from this basic impulse toward self-expression, and therefore "both telepathy and PK are manifestations of one fundamental property which all ideas have, their need or urge to express themselves by any means available" (p. 75). Mentioning mental imagery, words, gestures, dreams, hallucination, and material embodiment, he notes that an idea may express itself in many forms. But he offers no definition of *express*:

I suspect the notion of expressing is one of the fundamental undefinables of all the psychological sciences.... But I think we are all sufficiently familiar with the notion that works of art express something in the mind of the artist, and that a man's words... express his state of mind. (p. 74)

Not discussed by Price is *why* ideas inherently need to express themselves. He would explain telepathy and PK in terms of this basic impulse, but he leaves it unexplained.

"Mind Over Mind and Mind Over Matter" is a fascinating chapter. Of the theory Price proposes there he says that it "is certainly... very queer... on the face of it, though perhaps no queerer than the phenomena to be explained" (p. 75). There is much in the chapter that seems bizarre. It describes ideas that endure with no support from the minds that create them; that are causally potent and possess inherent needs, urges, or tendencies; that compete with one another in a sort of struggle to break into consciousness or to become materially embodied; that fundamentally pursue self-expression; and that operate so as to bring about telepathy and PK.

The chapter's descriptions may conjure up a picture in which mental functioning is determined by the need-driven activities of ideas that have become quasi-living entities serving the cause of explanation in the mental realm — as, say, genes serve it in biology. In this book Price rightly and repeatedly states

that if we aspire to make sense of the paranormal, we mustn't be afraid of talking nonsense, and however striking and stimulating its theory of ideas is, it may well be that Chapter 4 is one occasion on which Price does talk nonsense. Not that there is no truth in what Price says here; indeed, I suspect there is a good deal. We seem no closer now to an understanding of telepathy and PK than when the ideas of this chapter first appeared nearly half a century ago. But the notion that we should seek an explanation through a study of the properties of ideas may contain that element of truth Ayer refers to, though presumably ideas are better viewed less anthropomorphically than Price depicts them in this chapter. And there seems to be nothing nonsensical about his conception of ideas as "dangerous things because they have a tendency... to come true" (p. 67). "It is said that hard words break no bones," as he puts it, "but perhaps they sometimes may, if there are hard thoughts behind them" (p. 67).

In the five chapters that comprise Part II, Price makes an extraordinary contribution to an understanding of the problem of survival of death. He writes informatively about trance mediumship and the difficulty of explaining the phenomena of mediumship generally without recourse to survival. He contends that although the evidence is not conclusive, there is a real risk that any given person will survive and urges compassionately that we do what we can about it. He portrays afterlife experience vividly though in terms that should foster in few readers any desire to survive. He examines illuminatingly the ramified question of whether those who survived death would be embodied. And finally, he comments on two works by C. J. Ducasse that discuss the survival problem. In a reference to out-of-body experiences, Price makes a very interesting suggestion: If OBEs "were much more common than they actually are.... I think that the survival hypothesis would in fact be accepted by almost everyone" (p. 289). Whether this acceptance would be *justified*, he says, "is a difficult question" (p. 289), and in one shape or another the question to what extent belief in survival is justified occupies Price through much of Part II.

With regard to such phenomena of mediumship as are often cited as evidence for survival, Price is respectful of the super-ESP hypothesis, which would explain the alleged evidence in terms of ESP among the living, but holds that in some cases the rival survival hypothesis offers a simpler explanation of the source of a medium's information. Yet because "we do not know what the limits of this-worldly ESP are" (p. 216), he doubts that there are any cases where the super-ESP hypothesis — Price sometimes calls it the This-World-ESP hypothesis — can be absolutely excluded. He observes, though, that "the more you deflate the Survival Hypothesis, the more you have to inflate the powers of the human unconscious" (p. 234) and that "if you want to be skeptical about survival, you have to be unskeptical about... ESP. Indeed... you have to be more than unskeptical. You have to be almost credulous" (p. 212). Moreover, Price states that — and why — he thinks the problem of determining the limits of *psi* "is not necessarily insoluble" (p. 217), and he offers

what is, as far as I know, a novel solution (though probably an impractical one). But for the present, he concludes,

we cannot... reach a decision between the This-World-ESP hypothesis and the survival hypothesis; or rather between the hypothesis that This-World ESP accounts for all the phenomena and the hypothesis that it accounts for some of them but not all, and that the remainder can only be accounted for by supposing that there are discarnate personalities. (p. 217)

Although we have no proof of survival, the inconclusive evidence we do have for it suffices, Price states, "to give the survival hypothesis an appreciable probability" (p. 217), one that makes it reasonable to believe that "it is by no means out of the question that the survival hypothesis might be true" (p. 217). Given the available evidence, he judges, "it would not be so very surprising" (p. 217) if it ~~is~~ true. To those who find the idea of survival repellent, as Price himself does ("at least sometimes" [p. 218]), he offers advice. He writes:

To such people... I should say "Do not be absolutely sure that your personal existence will come to an end when you die. There is an appreciable risk that it may continue, and it will be reasonable for you to pay some attention to that risk, much as you may dislike doing so." (p. 218)

And he goes on to explain why questions of both moral obligation and prudence arise if we are faced with the risk or possibility of surviving.

Whether believing in survival increases the risk that one will survive is not discussed by Price directly, though there are clues in the book to how he might respond. And in an arresting passage in another work, he entertains the possibility "that a very firm disbelief in survival would prevent the surviving personality from having any post-mortem experiences at all.... He would never know that he had survived" (Price, 1972, p. 107). Yet is it clear that he *would* have survived, given a complete absence of postmortem experiences?

We can form an idea of the "next world," Price believes, and the kind of experiences that disembodied minds might have. The next world, he suggests, might be a kind of dream-world, imagy but not imaginary, "a world of mental images" (p. 240), and here he invokes "the Hindu conception of *Kama Loka* (literally 'the world of desire')" (p. 240). At death we can take with us only "our memories and desires, and the power of constructing out of them an image world to suit us" (p. 255). Memories would supply "the 'stuff' or 'material' of such a world" (p. 253), desires the "form." "Memory," Price writes, "would provide the pigments, and desire would paint the picture" (p. 253).

A world of mental images, he says, would be subjective, *i.e.*, "dependent for its existence upon mental processes" (p. 252), but not necessarily private. It might "be the joint-product of a group of telepathically-interacting minds and public to all of them.... Likely... there would... be many next worlds, a

different one for each group of like-minded personalities" (p. 252). (But Dille is right to complain that when Price "discusses survival he says nothing specific about how telepathy occurs in the next world [p. xix].) To the objection that memories, desires, and mental images are not possible without a living brain Price's somewhat cavalier rejoinder is that this objection depends on an empirical hypothesis, not a necessary truth, and that whatever evidence we have for survival is evidence against that hypothesis. But is not the evidence *for* that hypothesis so overwhelming as to leave in great doubt any interpretation of the putative evidence for survival that entails that the hypothesis is false?

At any rate, Price believes that after death, if survival is a fact, the part played in our present life by sense-perception may be played instead by mental imagery. This belief leads him to muse as follows:

People sometimes ask what is... "the point" of our present life in this world.... Perhaps this question is not... utterly senseless.... The point of life in this present world, we might say, is to provide us with a stock of memories out of which an image world may be constructed when we are dead. (p. 266)

But surely Price's musing invites reflection on the possible point, evolutionary or other, of a "next life" in which we don't *do* anything, but merely dream. What *that* point could be is mind-boggling. If at times it is hard to avoid viewing the very idea of survival as preposterous, it may be still harder to conceive of a more ludicrous — perhaps pathetic — anticlimax to living than a post-mortem state of "dreaming *in perpetuum*" (p. 246). Not, of course, that survival is necessarily immortal, or *eternal* life. Maybe memories will in time fade away, and "some people tell us... that all desires... wear themselves out in time" (p. 261), Price notes. And without memories and desires, dreaming will cease. "Perhaps," he states, "there is some comfort in the thought" (p. 261).

Price's conception of the next world as a kind of dream-world, sometimes nightmarish in character, that is built out of mental images rests largely on the assumption that what survives is "an immaterial entity" (p. 267). "I do not see," Price says, "why disembodiment need involve the destruction of personal identity" (p. 245). But in Chapter 13 he distinguishes "two different ways of conceiving of the Next World" (p. 263): (1) the conception that after death one's immaterial soul, whose essential attributes are consciousness, thought, memory, *etc.*, "continues to exist in a disembodied state" (p. 264), and (2) what he calls the "embodied" conception of survival, according to which "after death one must have... an etheric body or an astral body" (p. 263) because "personality cannot exist at all without a body of some kind" (p. 263).

Whereas (1) entails "the dream-like image-world" (p. 261) that he first describes, Price supposes that (2) implies that the next world is "composed of the same sort of 'higher' matter" (p. 265) as the astral body, which "would have sense organs of some kind... by [whose] means... we should be aware of our

after-death environment" (p. 265). He thinks, however, that it may be possible to reconcile these seemingly contrasting accounts, which perhaps "are not quite so different as they look" (p. 268). He describes ways in which they agree. Would the two lines of thought, he wonders, meet in the middle if pushed far enough? Possibly there are

realities in the universe... intermediate between the physical and the psychological realms as...ordinarily conceived. The contents of the other world, if there is one, may be in this intermediate position, more material than ordinary dream-images, more... dream-like than ordinary material objects; like material objects in possessing spatial properties... and some degree at any rate of permanence; like mental images in... obey[ing]... the laws of psychology rather than the laws of physics. (p. 269)

It seems to me that Price moves in the course of time from having a strong inclination to see the "disembodied" conception as the more plausible (on the assumption that survival is a fact) to where he is much more receptive than before to the "embodied" conception. In the latest writing that Dilley includes, the one from 1970, Price, following Antony Flew, observes that "an essential characteristic of a person [is] that he is capable of 'meeting' other persons and of 'being met' by them" (p. 290) and he asks how such a meeting would "be possible unless both parties were in *some* way embodied" (p. 290). He concludes that if we conceive of life after death "as a *social* state (as nearly all believers in survival do), I think we must pay some attention to the idea of post-mortem embodiment" (p. 290). In a later writing not included here, moreover, he endorses considerations that "suggest that *personal* existence, in anything like the form [in which we] know it now, requires that one should be in some way embodied" (Price, 1972, p. 112), though he does add that an image-body would likely suffice.

The doctrine of recycled psyches, or reincarnation, is one conception of survival about which Price has very little to say. It arises in his examination of Ducasse's views, and he lauds Ducasse's discussion of reincarnation as "excellent" (p. 284). But it is Price's opinion "that in our present state of ignorance, discussions of reincarnation are premature" (p. 284). That was his opinion in 1952, and when he briefly mentions reincarnation in the 1970 paper, he notes that the "theory has been very widely held" (p. 288), but gives no indication that his opinion has changed. If writing today, would he still think it premature to discuss reincarnation? My guess is that he would not.

Philosophical Interactions With Parapsychology is a book that I strongly recommend, one that should be widely read and meditated on. In it, readers will find rich insights and rare wisdom, startling suggestions, and brilliant ideas. Professor Dilley has earned our gratitude for his conception of the book and for all the labor of compilation.

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