

Fifty years ago

Here is the story of a unique radio broadcast in which three distinguished men take part in a round table discussion of—

Science and Survival

by Sydney Omarr

IN Los Angeles on Saturday, January 30, 1954, Dave Showalter, Director of Public Affairs for radio station KNX, presented a round table discussion of psychic phenomena by three outstanding individuals.

He first introduced to the radio audience Mr. Aldous Huxley, one of America's foremost authors and philosophers. His works include *Brave New World*, *Point Counter Point*, *The Art of Seeing*, *Chrome Yellow*, *Aim And Essence*, and other books. His most recent article in the January 11, 1954, issue of LIFE Magazine opens up a new realm of thought, for in it Mr. Huxley tells of his experiments, both past and present, in the fields of extrasensory perception in particular and so-called psychic



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phenomena in general.

The second guest on the program was Dr. Gustaf Stromberg, an astronomer of international renown, a member of the scientific research staff of Mt. Wilson Observatory from 1917 to 1946, and a pioneer in another field—that of compiling scientific data pointing to the survival of memory and consciousness after bodily death. Many of his findings are contained in two books, *The Soul Of The Universe* and *The Searchers*.

The third guest on the discussion panel was Mr. James Crenshaw, Dean of Los Angeles court reporters, a member of *The Herald Express* staff and a news man of more than 30 years experience. Mr. Crenshaw is the author of *Telephone Between*



The panelists prepare for their discussion of psychic phenomena over radio station KNK in Los Angeles. Left to right are James Crenshaw, Dave Showalter (standing), Aldous Huxley and Dr. Gustaf Stromberg.

of Plato's originally. The idea is that our brain, a machine by which we think, is an instrument by which we also make contact with a cosmic ocean of consciousness. It is a receiving set which is tuned to certain activities in the universal mind."

Mr. Showalter interrupted at this point to ask, "Mr. Huxley, how do you feel about this statement that Dr. Stromberg has just made?"

Mr. Huxley replied, "I'm in substantial agreement with it. I feel very strongly that mind is not completely explicable in

terms of physical phenomena, as the currently fashionable hypothesis supposes. I am quite convinced, as was Jung for example, if anybody chooses to read that very valuable book of Jung's, *Modern Man In Search Of A Soul*, they will see it has made very clear that we regard mind as something independent, as a real substantial existence. And this conception after all is being held by a number of very eminent modern philosophers. Take William James, who expresses himself in phrases very like those which Dr. Stromberg has just used.

Worlds which is regarded as a standard book on psychic phenomena.

Mr. Showalter, after introducing the members of the panel, said, "Gentlemen, let's begin if you will by explaining or defining the terminology which has to do with ESP, Psi and PK. Precognition is generally another term that is used; they are all classed under the general heading of parapsychology—that which goes along with or beside psychology. We ought to pause at this point to make a sharp distinction between abnormal psychology and parapsychology. Abnormal psychology was introduced in the good old days before madness or insanity. Whereas parapsychology represents, to my mind, an enormous field of mental activity in which we all participate to some extent, at least potentially, and in which certain people participate much more than others and which has nothing to do with abnormal psychology. On the contrary, it has been found that people in asylums have less psi abilities than sane people outside. This is a very important point to stress. It has nothing to do with being cracked or nuts.

"Mr. Huxley, would you define psi for us?" Mr. Showalter asked.

"The importance of this symbol, psi, is that it carries no emotional overtones," Mr. Huxley replied. "You can use the word psi without your blood pressure rising, as it would if you use phrases like telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis. It is very important in any kind of scientific discussion to have words that have no emotional tinge, that

don't arouse automatic prejudices. Psi is the name given to all these unusual faculties. One of them, for instance, is telepathy—the direct communication of one mind with another mind. Another is clairvoyance—which is where the mind is aware of events in the external world without making use of its sense organs. Precognition is when a mind becomes aware of an event that has not yet happened. Finally we come to psychokinesis which may be defined as the effect of a mind upon matter outside its own body and out of contact with its body. It is direct influence of mind over matter. That I think sums up the general meaning of psi.

"Psi was chosen as the Greek letter most applicable because it is associated with the sound of psychology, with psychic research and things like that," Mr. Huxley concluded.

Mr. Showalter addressed Dr. Stromberg. "I wonder if you'd just state your particular interest in this problem, Sir?"

"Well, of course, my interest ordinarily has been in astronomy and physics and allied phenomena, that is, natural science," Dr. Stromberg said. "But I was interested in philosophy as a young man and in later years I have been studying different aspects of psychical research; not making experiments myself but following the general investigations which are going on. And I have come to the conclusion that in the human brain we have an order which makes it possible for us to contact certain activities in the world-soul which is, after all, an idea

Mr. James was convinced that the mind does not produce thought but is the instrument of thought. It is the valve, so to speak, through which what he calls a continual macrocosmic consciousness enters the individual life.

"The French philosopher, Bergson, says exactly the same thing. He regarded mind as being potentially omniscient, aware of everything everywhere; and the brain being, so to speak, the reducing valve which made this universal mind available for individuals on the surface of the planet, which made it possible for us to survive as biological creatures on this planet. This goes back, of course, to very ancient times and we have had the same idea in religion, after all, in that phrase of St. Paul, 'God in whom we live and move and have our being.' This is just another expression of this basic conception which I personally regard as true."

Mr. Showalter now spoke to James Crenshaw, "Let's get onto the reportorial side here. You're in a sense, a lay person aren't you, Jim?"

"Yes, certainly," Mr. Crenshaw answered. "I am an observer. I am essentially a reporter in all of these matters, perhaps an interpreter to a certain extent. My interest in what we now call psi, psychical research, is that of an observer. However, I am certainly interested in the scientific aspect and, of course, am entirely in agreement, from my own observation, with what both Dr. Stromberg and Mr. Huxley have said.

"It is very interesting to me that these, rather what we call philosophical ideas which are considered a little bit vague to some people, are being backed up now by not only scientific proof but scientific experiment. In Dr. Stromberg's case, for instance, he has done a remarkable job correlating in his book, *The Soul Of The Universe*, a large amount of data which tends to support what he has just said. It tends to support, explicitly, immortality. In other words, he has brought together a great deal of laboratory evidence introduced by other people, of course, but which he cites in his book, to show that there is an immaterial structure back of everything; an immaterial structure back of every cell, for instance, and that there is evidence that shows that when the cell is gone, what we call dead, the immaterial structure must survive.

"I wish that Dr. Stromberg would tell us a little bit about some of the Yale University experiments and other data which show that this is so. He has recited them at length in his book."

Dr. Stromberg now spoke, "The idea behind this immaterial structure, or as I prefer to call it, living field, is that the structure and the functions of a cell, a nervous system, a brain, are due not to the collected molecules of cells and their arrangement in space and in time but to an electrical field with definite properties, structural as well as functional properties. This idea was advanced not many years ago; anyway I worked on it. And then some years later at the medical school of Yale University they

started to study, experimentally, the electrical field, to see if there were any around certain organisms. For instance, they took a tadpole and with a very sensitive electrical instrument they explored the electrical field in the surrounding water—the water surrounding the living animal. The effect was most remarkable when the animal was undergoing metamorphosis. That is why they took a tadpole although, they could have taken any other animal in which the activities were rather high. They found that the structure of the future animal was already in existence before it had acquired a material substratum. So that the form of the animal was given before the pattern wherein the molecules have become incorporated in the electrical time structure.

"The matter which was the soul in the solution, so to say, clicked into place and after that had gone on for a certain time a new kind of animal, that is an animal with a different trait than was existent before, had gradually come into place. That's how it goes with an animal and we have every reason to believe that that is how all living things acquire their complex structure."

Mr. Showalter said, "In other words, Dr. Stromberg, the immaterial structure comes first."

"Exactly," Dr. Stromberg replied.

"And also remains after the material structure is long since gone?" Mr. Showalter asked.

"Well, the immaterial structure has an autonomous field which is independent of

matter," Dr. Stromberg continued. "Matter in the form of molecules of a particular structure is incorporated in this pre-existent immaterial field. And in that way it acquires its remarkable and unique structure. In a sense it is rather like the idea of Plato's, it exists before the corporeal object, like a projection in advance of an idea."

"The idea of archetypes, I believe he called it," Mr. Showalter interposed.

"Yes," continued Dr. Stromberg, "archetypes is all right. Or you may call it *telarche*."

Mr. Showalter suggested, "For just a moment here let's get this down into the area of brass tacks. Why should we be investigating a field like this? How does this affect me as an individual?"

Mr. Aldous Huxley answered, "I would say it affects us all as individuals inasmuch as it gives us a conception of the nature of man. Let us ask, what is man? This is a very difficult question.

"In the past, of course, the answer was that man is a body, a soul or psyche, and a spirit. This is the basic Christian conception—the body, the psyche and what St. Paul calls the *pneuma*, the spirit, and this is the conception which you will find in virtually all the great religious conceptions of the world.

"In modern times, on the contrary, there has been a tendency to divide man into only two stories, that is to say, a body and a psyche, and to divide the psyche from bodily activities. This denies the freedom of the will, denies any degree of autonomy

you personally are concerned, what have you come to believe?"

"My own belief is that human beings are not completely isolated individuals," Mr. Huxley answered. "My belief, for example, is that the Freudian analysis of the human being as a conscious self with a subconscious consisting of repressed desires and conditioned reflexes and so on, and a body, is not a sufficient analysis. I am inclined to think that C. G. Jung's analysis of the human mind is much nearer the truth. Incidentally, it was the conception of the subconscious which such earlier workers as Morton Prince and F. W. H. Myers held. Actually, I think that Freud's conception of the subconscious was a retrogression. It was a limitation of the older conception which was forming in the later years of the 19th century.

"Jung has done an important work in pointing out that beyond the personal subconscious there lies what he calls the collective subconscious and I would say that beyond that again there lies what, in the language of religion, is called the world of pure spirit. Through the collective subconscious, through the world of pure spirit, I would say that all individuals are connected with one another. This is the fact that makes possible such phenomena as telepathy and clairvoyance."

When Mr. Huxley finished speaking, Mr. Showalter asked, "Dr. Stromberg, does the human consciousness extend into another world, after death?"

"We can say that it always has a world-

wide extension. It covers the whole universe," Dr. Stromberg replied. "I and the universe are one, in a sense. I am part of the whole. There isn't a single event in the universe which is isolated. They are all connected. This causes a chain of not only physical events but mental events as well. So when a man has an idea it is possible that there is an interference between his brain action and another man's brain action. In that way we might possibly explain clairvoyance and telepathy—by a kind of interference between the mental activities in different minds."

"Is this something outside of physical structure?" asked Mr. Showalter.

Dr. Stromberg said, "It is something outside of physical structure. Physical structure is simply the observable electromagnetic field which is a reflex of mental activities, but it is by no means identical with it. Therefore the end of physical structure does not mean the end of memory."

Mr. James Crenshaw now said, "In my own observation and experience I have come to the conclusion that there very definitely is existence after death, that there is existence in another world and furthermore that it's a very real world.

"Dr. Stromberg has spoken of his immaterial structures which can exist apart from material. I go even further and say that those immaterial structures take on a nature of the physical in a different dimension. We can understand that in these days of television, radio and so forth, where we deal in different frequencies. We turn our

to the human mind. And, really, it seems to me, makes complete nonsense of all our actual experience.

"Now what Dr. Stromberg has been talking about is new scientific evidence which seems to support the idea that man, and life in general, is not solely a product of material forces—physical forces; that there are other forces at work and, as I understand him, that these autonomous fields which he has been talking about can be in direct contact with the mental aspect of the universe. Isn't that your conception, Dr. Stromberg?" Mr. Huxley asked.

"Of course originally an effort was made to understand how a complex structure like a brain structure or a nerve system or a cell or any living structure acquired its characteristics of structure and function," Dr. Stromberg explained.

"Take a special case which may interest all of us—how does the human brain acquire its remarkable structure—with billions of neurons all connected into a unified system. There isn't a single loose end in the pattern. Every neuron is connected with other neurons and this may be regarded as an indication that the brain is a unified system. That's one thing. Another thing is that this autonomous field which gives the brain its particular structure is also the foundation for mental activities, so that if I think, or if I make a logical deduction, or if I remember something, all those mental activities are due fundamentally to activities in an immaterial electrical field which can be investigated by ordinary physical methods."

Mr. Showalter addressed Mr. Huxley again, "Out of this whole thing, as far as

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dial, we get a picture of a program from New York. We turn the dial again and we get a picture from somewhere else or a different program. They are co-existent in the same atmosphere.

"Now, suppose we had a world that was actually made up of these different frequencies and our own structures were made up of those frequencies, perhaps if we were made up of frequencies of the nature of television waves, to use a very broad analogy, we wouldn't be able to see each other. You would be made up of the physical frequencies; I would be made up of the television frequencies. We wouldn't see each other but we would both certainly be co-existing and we would be perfectly real. This is what we are finding out, in effect, by observation and by communication from this so-called other world.

"As the old philosophers said, and the Greeks said it, the Egyptians said it, that which is above is like that which is below.

"We have those structures there and therefore our own personality and our own form or replica of it goes on in the so-called next world. I think that the physical aspect of the next world is one of the most difficult things for people to understand. They can't seem to grasp the idea that the next world is something more than just pure mind. All of the communications from all over the world, down through history, indicate that there is a very real world with certain physical aspects. It is a world of progression in which there is supposed to be a continual gravitation and progression to-

ward the Soul of the Universe, which Dr. Stromberg has described. Whether it achieves a state where there is a formlessness eventually is yet another thing. We do know from these communications that the next world is very real and very substantial."

When Mr. Crenshaw finished speaking Mr. Showalter turned to Mr. Huxley to ask if he had anything upon which he would like to comment.

Mr. Huxley said, "I think my comment on Mr. Crenshaw's remarks would be that maybe we can have a world that is completely substantial and yet mental. I wouldn't necessarily think that it has any kind of physical structure. I mean, for example, the investigations of hallucinations. These things, for the experience, are very often more real than the world which we generally call real.

"I don't say that his conception of a succession of frequencies which may be ultimately physical in origin may not be correct. I mean, there is a great problem there. For example, in Hindu psychology there is this conception of what may be called occult physics; that we are all surrounded by layers of what is ultimately material although of a much subtler kind. You can either interpret it in those terms, or it seems to me, you can just as satisfactorily, as far as I'm concerned, interpret it in term of purely mental phenomena which for the experience are just as real; as physical ones."

"This is a mental world too," Mr.

Showalter said.

"This is a mental world," Mr. Huxley agreed. "But it has some kind of a physical substratum. Evidently they are correlated. I leave this matter open. It seems to be a very difficult problem to decide."

Dr. Stromberg spoke, "There is one thing that I want to call attention to. In modern physics matter has lost its substance, when we analyze matter and say what is matter, we describe it and say wave function, to use a technical term. It's a mathematical concept, it says something about energy, the properties, how much energy can come out of it, how we can modify it and make it work; but when we came down to the particle we don't know what matter really is. In respect to what it is we have to refer to something else.

"And the only thing I can imagine which is behind matter, which is more fundamental than matter, is mind. Mind is probably at the bottom of everything. This is an old idea of Descartes', *cogito, ergo sum*, that means *I think, therefore I am*. For him the process of thought, the process of consciousness was the primary thing. He was entirely certain that everything else was, more or less, of an hypothesis but that I am; that I am a thinking being is the primary thing which nobody can really doubt."

"I think it was Sir Arthur Eddington, great British physicist and astronomer, who said matter has practically been reduced to a mental concept anyway and to extend the idea of matter being layers of mental

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concept is no more difficult than trying to decide what it is on this level," Mr. Showalter said.

The time allotted for the broadcast had now run out and the interesting round table discussion on psychic phenomena, by Mr. Aldous Huxley, Dr. Gustaf Stromberg, Mr. James Crenshaw and Dave Showalter was brought to an end. ✕