A Philosophical Critique of Empirical Arguments for Postmortem Survival

Michael Sudduth

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Postmortem Survival

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For Mary…With loving gratitude for your inspiration and the beautiful beginning of our journey together

"Daddy, I have the hardest question ever: what is death?"
– Aidan Michael Sudduth

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Series Editors' Preface

The philosophy of religion has experienced a welcome revitalization over the last 50 years or so and is now thriving. Our hope with the Palgrave Frontiers in Philosophy of Religion series is to contribute to the continued vitality of the philosophy of religion by producing works that truly break new ground in the field.

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Yujin Nagasawa
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Preface and Acknowledgments

While I have been interested in the nature of human persons and the prospects for their survival of death since I was a young boy, the present book originates from research and reflection during the past 11 years. During this time, I have focused on what are commonly called "empirical arguments" for survival of death – arguments based on data collected from ostensibly paranormal phenomena: out-of-body and near-death experiences, apparitions, mediumship, and alleged past life memories and related phenomena suggestive of reincarnation. While I have published several articles on the topic since 2009, the present book represents a more robust and systematic engagement with core issues in the empirical survival debate.

I am deeply indebted to the earlier work of philosophers C.D. Broad and H.H. Price, each of whom emphasized important points in the logic of empirical arguments for survival, as well as explored alternative explanations of the relevant data, including intriguing alternate survival hypotheses (of a sort) that fall short of positing personal survival or the survival of the self or our present personality. I remain deeply appreciative of John Hick's *Death and Eternal Life* (1976, 1994), which introduced me to the work of Broad and Price on this topic during the late 1990s. During the past seven years, the period of my most focused research on the topic, I have drawn much inspiration and insight from Stephen Braude's *Immortal Remains* (2003) and Alan Gauld's *Mediumship and Survival* (1982), which I regard as the two most important works on survival since Broad's famous *Lectures on Psychical Research* (1962).

Finally, like many of the well-known philosophers who have written on this topic (e.g. William James, Broad, Price, C.J. Ducasse, John Hick, and Stephen Braude) my own reflectively developed views have been informed not only by a range of important philosophical considerations but also by first-hand experiences and investigations of some of the phenomena under discussion. For example, I have had the somewhat unique opportunity of observing and experimenting with professed mediums over the course of several years. Some have been intimate friends, and this has provided a context for observing and documenting the phenomenon on many different occasions, sometimes with regularity. The regular and intimate first-hand acquaintance with mediumship helps sort through the various explanatory candidates with both a critical and sympathetic attitude, though it does not necessarily clear the path toward a definitive conclusion. Like William James and Carl Jung, I find the phenomena psychologically intriguing and at least evidentially provocative, though at present I am not persuaded that

mediumship (or other paranormal phenomena) provides anything close to compelling evidence for the postmortem survival of the personality. Ultimately, I find myself in basic agreement with the nineteenth-century logician and mathematician Augustus De Morgan, himself no stranger to sittings with mediums in his day, who said "the physical explanations which I have seen are easy, but miserably insufficient: the spiritualist hypothesis is sufficient, but ponderously difficult." If all else fails here, I hope at least to have brought some clarity to why the spiritualist/survival hypothesis is "ponderously difficult."

While most of the material in this book appears here for the first time, I would like to acknowledge *the Journal of Scientific Exploration*, as parts of Chapters 9 and 10 are reprinted from my earlier papers "A Critical Response to David Lund's Argument for Postmortem Survival," *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 27 (2): 277–316, and "Super-Psi and the Survivalist Interpretation of Mediumship," *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 23 (2): 167–93, published by the Society for Scientific Exploration, available at http://www.scientificex-ploration.org.

I have greatly benefited from comments provided by many helpful interlocutors on chapters of the present book or for otherwise discussing its content with me. Among them, I would like to acknowledge Alan Gauld, Erlendur Haraldsson, Bill Hasker, Autumn Jerumbo, Stephen Law, David Lund, Michael Prescott, Elliott Sober, Richard Swinburne, Jim Tucker, and Dean Zimmerman. I'm also grateful to Loyd Auerbach for substantive discussions with me concerning parapsychology and for allowing me to participate in a number of case investigations into ostensibly paranormal phenomena during the past several years. Thanks also go to Miles Andrews and Spencer Horne for proofreading and assisting me with the final production of the bibliography and the laborious process of crosschecking textual citations.

I have particularly deep gratitude to Stephen Braude, with whom I've discussed the topic of postmortem survival for over ten years now. He has commented on the current and earlier chapter drafts of the present manuscript, as well as my other publications on survival. While I have enjoyed the support of many philosophers and empirical researchers on survival, Steve has been my most frequent discussion partner on the topic and a source of consistent encouragement to complete the present work.

I've also enjoyed writing large portions of the book at various cafés and restaurants around the California Bay Area (and elsewhere), whose proprietors and servers have been a great support to me during the long process of writing this book: Broad Street Café (Windsor, Connecticut), Big Basin Café (Saratoga, California), White Raven (Felton, California), Britannia Arms (Capitola, California), and Mr. Toots (Capitola, California). In particular, I offer my thanks and deep gratitude to servers Courtney Eachus, Therese Cunningham, James Oldham, and Caitlin Richardson at Britannia Arms for

keeping me adequately "fueled" for work on my book and encouraging me toward the finishing line. And special thanks go to Brianna Alapisco and Ellie Frey at Mr. Toots for many cups of Earl Grey and Chamomile tea with steamed milk and, more importantly, for their kindness and generosity.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow residents at Jikoji Zen Center for supporting the very challenging completion of this work. With a bow to Andy Acker, Jana Drakka, John Flood, Joe Hall, Cliff Isberg, Marco Quarta, Yingzhao Liu, and Jonathan Zrake.

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Introduction: The Classical Empirical Survival Debate

This book is a philosophical exploration of postmortem survival. In the broad sense, "postmortem survival" refers to the continued existence of the self or some significant aspect of our mental life or psychology after biological death. More precisely stated, this book is a philosophical examination of certain arguments that have been proposed in favor of postmortem survival during the past century, what the twentieth-century Cambridge philosopher C.D. Broad called "empirical arguments for survival" (1960: 514–51). These arguments aim to infer survival from various ostensible features of the empirical world, the publicly observable world known through sense experience.

Historically, different grounds have been proposed for accepting postmortem survival. Within the Western and Eastern religious traditions of the world, afterlife beliefs are typically based on the teachings of a tradition's sacred texts, which also situate belief in survival within a broader theological narrative or landscape of spiritual practice that confers on survival beliefs their more ultimate significance or value. By contrast, Western philosophers have proposed various philosophical arguments both for and against survival, and of personal survival in particular – that is, the survival of one's self and hence whatever it is that constitutes one's identity as an individual person. One frequently encountered philosophical argument for survival aims to show that survival follows from the conceptual analysis of various introspectively accessible facts about the nature of consciousness or our mental life; for example, that facts of consciousness entail that the self is (or has) a soul, an immaterial substance with the capacity to persist after the death of our bodies.

However, in addition to religious and philosophical grounds for belief in survival, some philosophers, religious thinkers, and scientists have appealed to distinctly *empirical* considerations as evidence for or against survival. Here survival is treated as an empirically testable hypothesis, a hypothesis that, like all broadly scientific hypotheses, may be tested against the facts of

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experience, which can in principle confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. This distinctly "empirical approach" to survival has led many to conclude that our empirical knowledge of the world either definitively rules out or at least renders highly improbable the postmortem survival of the self or consciousness. By contrast, empirical survivalists have argued that there are observational data, which may be uncovered and analyzed through empirical methods, that provide evidence, perhaps very good evidence, in favor of postmortem survival. Empirical arguments for survival aim to show this and, if the evidence is strong enough, to rationally justify belief in survival of death.

In the present book, I develop a philosophical critique of the empirical case for survival, specifically "personal survival" – that is, the survival of the self or our individual consciousness.[1] More specifically, I wish to offer a critique of a particular set of closely related empirical arguments for survival which extend back at least as far as the nineteenth century with the rise of the Spiritualist movement in America and the founding of the British and American societies of psychical research, though some of the phenomena on which these arguments are based have a considerably older pedigree. The arguments in question draw on data from ostensibly paranormal phenomena, which have been the focus of a distinguished tradition of empirical inquiry into postmortem survival represented by a number of prominent Anglo-American philosophers, including William James, Henry Sidgwick, C.D. Broad, H.H. Price, C.J. Ducasse, Antony Flew, H.D. Lewis, and John Hick. I argue that these "classical" empirical arguments for survival are inadequate in a number of crucial respects. Consequently, I will argue that *the classical arguments are unsuccessful at showing that there is good evidence for survival and thereby providing a robust justification for belief in survival*.

The present chapter provides an introductory survey of the classical empirical survival debate and the core methodological and conceptual features of my contribution to this debate, together with the specific critique I will propose in subsequent chapters. §1.1 offers a brief and general account of the kinds of data on which the classical arguments as based, whereas in §1.2 I discuss the structural features of the classical arguments. In §1.3 I explain how deficiencies in the existing literature motivate my "analytic" approach and methodology. In §1.4 I state the plan, central thesis, and argument of the book, with a concise overview of the content of the subsequent chapters.

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[1] With reference to my central thesis and critique of empirical survival arguments, subsequent references to "survival" should be understood to refer to personal survival, unless otherwise noted.

1.1   Psychical phenomena as ostensible evidence for survival

Classical empirical arguments for survival are based on a range of experiential reports that involve phenomena of an unusual, anomalous, or ostensibly paranormal nature, as well as a range of independently verifiable empirical facts concerning the content of these reports. Among the relevant data are the following kinds of general facts:

(f1)   There are some living persons who exhibit skills, personality traits, and/or physical traits similar or identical to those exhibited by some particular and identifiable formerly living person.

(f2)   There are some living persons who claim to remember having lived a past life and are able to provide detailed descriptions of their ostensible former life (e.g. their identity, names of friends and family, and specific events that took place in their life), where such detailed descriptions correspond to those of the life of an actual formerly living person.

(f3)   There are some living persons who exhibit intimate and detailed knowledge about the life of a particular and identifiable deceased person, and the information is such that the deceased person would be ideally situated to possess this information in the form of autobiographical memories.

(f4)   There are some living persons who claim to receive (verifiable) information from some particular and sometimes identifiable deceased person, where the information concerns the antemortem life of the deceased or postmortem facts about events in the life of the deceased person's family or friends.

(f5)   There are some living persons who claim to have experienced the world from outside their body, and they provide accurate descriptions of events in or features of the world ostensibly experienced while outside the body and from which they were sensorily isolated.

The above facts are associated with three kinds of broader phenomena: the closely related out-of-body and near-death experiences, mediumistic communications, and cases of the reincarnation type. In *out-of-body experiences* (*OBEs*), (f5) is the central datum. Some OBEs occur in the context of a perceived or actual medical crisis, such as cardiac arrest, in which case they are a special case of what are called *near-death experiences* (*NDEs*). Additional features of the latter are sometimes (f3) and (f4), when for example the NDEr claims to have experienced deceased family members or friends who allegedly have conveyed information (about themselves or others) not previously known by the NDEr. In some forms of *mediumistic communications* – trance mediumship, as it is called – we find both (f1) and (f3) and also sometimes (f4). In other cases of mediumship, we find just (f3) and (f4). In what are commonly called *cases of the reincarnation type*, we find (f2) and (f3),

but in many cases also (f1). Following the long-standing tradition associated with the societies of psychical research, I will refer to these three kinds of phenomena as "psychical" phenomena.[2]

The literature from psychical research (or "parapsychology" as it is also called) provides an impressive amount of data collected by scientists and researchers in their investigation of these phenomena since the latter part of the nineteenth century, as well as important theorizing about their nature and potential relevance to the question of postmortem survival. Some of the significant overviews of the data, collectedly considered, are worth noting. In the earlier literature, E.R. Dodds (1934) and Gardner Murphy (1945a, 1945b) critically explored the salient features of some of the above phenomena, but they did not reach a verdict favorable to the survival hypothesis, even when the cumulative force of the data is considered. By contrast, G.N.M. Tyrrell (1961) and Hornell Hart (1959) each came to a favorable verdict on survival in their overviews of psychical phenomena. Alan Gauld (1982) presented a theoretically rich treatment of the data, especially the data from mediumistic communications, concluding that some strands of data are better explained by survival than by alternative hypotheses, though he regarded the case for survival as being far from compelling. Building on the seminal work of early psychical researcher Frederic Myers, Edward and Emily Kelly, et al. (2007) provide the most recent, thorough, and nuanced analysis of the data of psychical research and its favorable implications for survival.

Most pertinent to the present study, though, are the *philosophical* evaluations of the data and their implications for survival. William James and James Hylsop were prominent among the early philosophers to write on the subject. James was not convinced that the data favored survival, but he did think that the stronger data from mediumship at least suggested the medium's possession of "supernormal" powers, namely psychic functioning in living persons in the form of telepathy and clairvoyance (James 1890, 1909b).[3] By contrast, Hyslop concluded that the evidence for survival

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[2] Many survivalists have also appealed to apparitions of the dead as another type of psychical phenomenon that is suggestive of survival. Here living persons have an experience in which it seems that some deceased person is present, where this ostensible perception involves one or more sense modalities, typically in the form of a visual or quasi-visual experience (Green and McCreery 1975; Hart 1956; Roll 1982: 150–70, 2005: 143–52). These kinds of experiences are relevant to survival only if they involve (f3) or (f4), as some documented cases apparently do. However, apparitions and haunting phenomena seem to me to provide the weakest evidence for survival, so I exclude these phenomena from the present study, as well as other paranormal phenomena sometimes thought to provide evidence for survival.

[3] To be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters, "telepathy" here refers to direct mind-to-mind interaction, while "clairvoyance" refers to a mental response to a sensorily remote physical state of affairs, often in the form of a thought or mental image representing the state of affairs at the location.

was "conclusive," with the evidence from mediumship being the strongest (Hyslop 1919: 57–66). H.H. Price at the University of Oxford, C.D. Broad at Cambridge University, and C.J. Ducasse at Brown University were the most distinguished philosophers to write on psychical data and survival from roughly 1930 to 1970. Although Ducasse (1961) reached a highly favorable conclusion about the collective force of the data, Price (1995a) reached a more modest conclusion that the data provided *some* evidence for personal survival. Broad (1962) concluded that some data from mediumship and claims to past-life memories were strongly suggestive of the survival of some aspect of the human personality, but not necessarily the self or full-blown personality. Among contemporary philosophers, Stephen Braude (2003) provides the most conceptually sophisticated and empirically informed evaluation of the data, concluding that at least some of the data slightly favors personal survival over the most formidable explanatory competitors.

Philosophers of religion during the second-half of the twentieth century have been more sympathetic toward the data of psychical research than mainstream philosophy, though their evaluations of the data as evidence for survival have greatly varied. Philosophers of religion favorable toward the case for survival from psychical data have tended to favor the data of mediumistic communications and data suggestive of reincarnation, though during the past 20 years, there has been an increased tendency to favor data collected from NDEs as proving a justification for belief in survival (Cherry 1986, Habermas and Moreland 2004, Potts 2002). H.D. Lewis (1978) thought that the data of psychical research was evidentially provocative and worthy of further exploration by philosophers of religion. John Hick (1990, 1994), who was strongly influenced by Broad's reflections, thought that some of the data at least favored the persistence of some aspect of the human personality. While Peter Geach (1969) and Richard Swinburne (1986) have argued against the data as evidence for survival, Paul and Linda Badham (1982) concluded that psychical phenomena significantly weaken materialist objections to survival, and NDEs provide some evidence for survival. More strongly, David Ray Griffin (1997) has argued that the data from various psychical phenomena present a very strong cumulative case for personal survival.

1.2   The classical empirical arguments for survival

Psychical phenomena provide empirical data, but the collection and statement of the data comprise only the first stage of the larger inquiry. If the data are to be regarded as *evidence*, perhaps strong evidence, for survival, this requires that the data, severally or jointly, provide us with a reason to suppose that the survival hypothesis is true. To show this latter point requires an *argument* for or *inference* to survival from the relevant data. I designate these arguments in their traditional formulation(s) "classical empirical arguments" for survival.

There are two preliminary points that should be made about the general character of the classical arguments. First, empirical survivalists do not maintain that the relevant data logically entail the survival hypothesis. Hence, the classical arguments are not regarded as conclusively establishing survival in the form of logical proofs or demonstrations. They are regarded rather as probabilistic or broadly inductive arguments. They aim to confer some probability on the survival hypothesis, though empirical survivalists disagree about the degree of probability so conferred. "Probability" here refers to evidential or epistemic probability: the probability one proposition has given some other proposition(s).[4] The former is often called a hypothesis; the latter evidence. For example, we can speak of the probability of the hypothesis that Jack committed the robbery given the evidence that his fingerprints were found on the safe, given that he had a particular motive, and given that he was seen at the location about the time of the robbery. Since there are different theories of epistemic probability, I will in subsequent chapters say more about probabilistic reasoning and inductive criteria.

Second, the classical arguments are *explanatory arguments*. The arguments aim to infer survival or show that the relevant data evidentially support the survival hypothesis, on the grounds that the survival hypothesis *explains* these facts, or more specifically, provides the best explanation of the data. This means that a widely shared assumption by advocates and many critics of the classical arguments is that explanatory power has evidential cash value. So if some hypothesis explains some observational datum or range of data, this explanatory power is evidence for the truth of the hypothesis. This has been the dominant way in which the arguments have been construed among prominent parapsychologists (Hart 1959; Gauld 1982; Stevenson 1977; Tyrrell 1961) and philosophers (Almeder 1992; Braude 2003; Broad 1960, 1962; Ducasse 1961; Griffin 1997; Lund 2009). The explanatory survival argument may be schematically represented as follows:

(1) There is some body of empirical facts F.
(2) The hypothesis of personal survival S explains F.
(3) No other hypothesis C explains F as well as S does.

Therefore:

(4) S is the best explanation of F

Therefore:

(5) F is evidence for S.

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[4] "Epistemic probability" should be distinguished from "factual probability" (including "physical" and "statistical" probability) that is a function of objective features of the physical world (e.g. its laws and structure). For example, the factual probability of drawing a black ball from a sealed box containing nine black balls and one white ball is .9 (almost certain), whereas its epistemic probability will vary depending on the evidence one has about the color and number of the balls in the box.

With respect to premise (1), F might = {f1, f2, f3, f4, f5}, or perhaps just some subset, for example {f1, f2, f3}.[5] In the first case, the explanatory argument would be a cumulative case argument. In the second case, it would be a limited scope argument for survival based *solely* on the salient data of a particular kind of psychical phenomenon. Whatever the relevant domain of data, according to premise (2) the survival hypothesis *explains* these data. In "modest" versions of the explanatory argument (MEA), the "explaining relation" means only that the survival hypothesis leads us to expect the data (commonly designated predictive power or, more loosely, data accommodation). The data simply are allegedly what we would expect if survival were true, so the survival hypothesis renders the data unsurprising (Gauld 1982: 73–5, 77, 110). Accordingly, premise (3) claims that alternative hypotheses do not lead us to expect the data, or at least they do not lead us to expect the data as well as the hypothesis of personal survival. There is, however, a "strengthened" form of the explanatory argument (SEA) in which explanatory virtue includes more than predictive power – for example, the alleged virtues of simplicity and independent support.

The importance of premise (3) is apparent since the majority of literature favorable to the survival hypothesis is heavily slanted in the direction of implementing debunking strategies for potential explanatory competitors. Counter-explanations must be "ruled out." The two most prominent counter-explanations are (i) naturalistic counter-explanations that propose physical and/or psychological causes, mechanisms, or processes (e.g. malobservation, hallucinations, fraud, chance coincidence, and perhaps more unusual causes such as extreme dissociation and savantism) and (ii) ostensibly paranormal processes that involve exotic modes of cognition and causal influence among living agents in the form of extrasensory perception (e.g. telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and retrocognition) and psychokinesis (direct causal influence over physical objects). Gauld (1982) and Braude (2003) have provided the most thorough engagement with this explanatory competitor.[6] Of course, (i) and (ii) might operate in tandem, as appeals to living-agent psychic functioning are sometimes supplemented with psychological explanations – for example, by proposing that telepathy or clairvoyance is guided by the subject's (conscious or unconscious) needs or interests and is possibly linked to psychodynamics associated with phenomena in abnormal

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[5] I take F to be a "basic" data set, a helpful introduction to the relevant kinds of data, as well as for illustrating the general features of the explanatory argument. In Chapter 3 through Chapter 5 I will provide a more thorough account of the salient strands of evidence.

[6] See also Almeder (1992: 27–42, 174–83, 267–9) and Lund (2009: 112–8, 135, 167–70).

psychology. A third explanatory competitor would be (iii) a hypothesis of attenuated survival that postulates only some persisting part or aspect of the psychology of a person insufficient for personal survival (Broad 1960, 1962).

How shall we understand (5)? Very modestly, some would say, for the conclusion only states that F provides us with *some* evidence that survival is true. As Ian Stevenson (1977: 325) and other survivalists put the matter, F is "suggestive" of survival. *How* suggestive it is would depend on how strongly S leads us to expect the data and/or how poorly the competitors fare in this regard. We might also speak of F as evidence for S in the sense that F raises the probability of S: what is often called incremental or relative confirmation. Whatever degree of credibility one might assign to S before considering F, once F is introduced, S has more credibility than it did before. However, the argument also has a contrastive implication. Since it compares the explanatory power of competing hypotheses and aims to convert explanatory power into a measure of evidential support, the argument implies that F favors/confirms S over C; that is, F provides better reason to suppose that S is true than that C is true. But again, such a claim is very modest, as it is compatible with F not being a very strong reason for *accepting* S.

Many survivalists, however, especially those partial to SEA, have wanted to affirm a stronger conclusion, a conclusion that involves a judgment about the favorable net plausibility of the survival hypothesis. On their view, the evidence does not merely raise the probability or survival, nor simply render survival more plausible/probable than alternative hypotheses. The data are supposed to render the survival hypothesis more probable than not (Griffin 1997; Lund 2009; Paterson 1995), or maybe even highly probable (Almeder 1992), and so provide a strong reason to accept survival. The difficulties involved in assessing the net plausibility/probability of hypotheses will be an important theme in this study. At present, it is worth noting that to argue that some hypothesis is *overall* probable requires what we might call "extra" plausibility factors – that is, considerations of plausibility other than the plausibility conferred by predictive power – how well the hypothesis leads us to expect the data. Here empirical survivalists tend to appeal to the alleged simplicity of the survival hypothesis, its fit with background knowledge, and its having independent support. These are either packaged as additional explanatory virtues or – in Bayesian models of probability – as determinants of what is called "prior probability" – roughly stated, the credentials a hypothesis has independent of whatever evidence is being adduced in its favor.

According to the Bayesian approach to probability, the net plausibility of a hypothesis is a function of its prior probability and how well it leads us to expect the evidence (relative to rival hypotheses or explanatory competitors).

Important skeptical analyses of survival arguments have assumed this Bayesian framework (Broad 1960; Dodds 1934), as have many prominent survivalist defenses of the classical arguments (Ducasse 1961; Griffin 1997; Lund 2009; Paterson 1995). With respect to the latter, survivalists typically argue that the prior probability of survival is ½ (as probable as not) or at least that its prior is not too low.

So SEA may be expressed as a more Bayesian-style explanatory argument (BEA), which takes explanatory power to be a function of how well a hypothesis leads us to expect the data (over against competitors) and rolls extra plausibility factors into prior probabilities. We can schematically and informally represent a generic version of the BEA as follows:

(1) There is some body of empirical facts F.
(2) The hypothesis of personal survival S explains F.
(3) No other hypothesis C explains F as well as S does.

Therefore:

(4a) S is the best explanation of F.
(4b) S does not have a low prior probability.

Therefore, it is probable to degree N that:

(5) S

The (approximate) value of "N" depends on how (approximate) values are assigned to the degree to S's explanatory power (4a) and S's prior probability (4b); this is no simple matter as we will eventually see, but most survivalists take N to indicate a threshold value such that N > ½, and so S would be at least more probable than not.

Although skeptics have often challenged premise (1) of the explanatory arguments on the grounds that the data collected from psychical phenomena are unreliable, the bulk of the literature that is critical of the classical arguments has targeted premises (3) and (4b). The challenge to (4b) is what I will call the "prior probability" or PP-challenge, and the challenge to (3) is what I will call the "counter-explanation" or CE-challenge. Whereas the CE-challenge applies to MEA, SEA, and BEA, the PP-challenge applies to only BEA since only the Bayesian-style argument is concerned with prior probabilities. This provides an important contextual explanation for the prevalence and extensiveness in pro-survival literature of attempts to rule out counter-explanations or defend the survival hypothesis against objections that purport to show that the survival hypothesis has a low prior probability.

With respect to the PP-challenge, skeptics have often argued that (4b) is false because of the (conceptual or empirical) connection between the human person and our present bodies, a connection that is arguably at

least compromised if survival is disembodied existence (as seems implied by OBEs/NDEs and mediumistic communications) or even re-embodiment (as with reincarnation). For example, it is often argued that the alleged dependence of consciousness on a functioning brain significantly reduces the prior probability of survival, at least if survival is supposed to entail the postmortem persistence of consciousness in the absence of a body or functioning brain (Dodds 1934: 153–6; Edwards 1997b; Murphy 1945b). As for the CE-challenge, it has long been acknowledged in the literature that the appeal to living-agent psychic functioning (supplemented with psychodynamic considerations and material drawn from abnormal psychology) presents the most formidable alternative explanation of the relevant data (Braude 1997, 2003; Chari 1962c; Dodds 1934; Eisenbud 1992; Murphy 1945b). However, it should also be acknowledged that alternative hypotheses of attenuated survival, which posit the persistence of something less than the person or full-blown personality, are relevant alternatives to the hypothesis of personal survival and may provide at least equally good explanations of the data.

1.3   Deficiencies in the existing literature

With respect to the psychical phenomena sketched above, H.D. Lewis wrote this:

> I myself find much of the evidence impressive, and I am even more impressed by the fact that very clearsighted [*sic*] investigators with the highest philosophical competence like C.D. Broad and H.H. Price have thought it worth taking very seriously, the latter being fully convinced of its adequacy to establish at least some form of survival. (Lewis 1978: 151)

On two general points, I agree with Lewis and the other philosophers who have been sympathetic, if not favorable, toward the case for survival from psychical phenomena. First, the data collected from psychical research should be taken seriously, or at any rate, more seriously than mainstream philosophy has taken the data. James, Ducasse, Broad, and Price were philosophers of high intellectual caliber whose interest in psychical phenomena was well justified on philosophical grounds and well informed by their acquaintance with the empirical data. Second, I agree that the data of psychical research provide what can reasonably be construed as evidence for survival. So let me make some preliminary observations on what I regard as substantial deficiencies in the existing literature and outline the sort of critique I will develop in subsequent chapters.

Let me begin, though, with a certain clearing of the ground by stating what I will *not* be doing in the subsequent chapters. My critique does not involve presenting an argument against the hypothesis of personal survival,

either on conceptual or empirical grounds. In other words, I will not be arguing that belief in personal survival is false. I will also not be challenging the reliability or credibility of the data on which the classical arguments are based. As a philosopher, empirical facts are not my central interest, although – in accordance with Broad and the other eminent philosophers who have written on the topic – my own acquaintance with the relevant empirical research and first-hand experience of psychical phenomena over many years has persuaded me that we have reasonably well-established phenomena for which it is entirely appropriate to seek and propose explanations (Broad 1960: 514–15). I aim to offer a *philosophical* critique of classical empirical arguments for survival, so my focus is conceptual, not factual. As such, it is specifically directed toward some fundamental issues in the logic of survival arguments rather than trying to harness conceptual considerations against the truth of the survival hypothesis.

I agree with Broad that one of the tasks of a philosopher who reflects on empirical arguments for survival is to bring greater clarity to fundamental concepts involved in these arguments, and these include criteria employed to assess the evidential force of the relevant data (Broad 1960: 515) and the concept of survival itself (Broad 1962: 387). This is my general aim – to engage in a critical exploration of criteria of evidence assessment applied to the data of psychical research as ostensible (good) evidence for survival. A collateral feature of such an inquiry will be uncovering various presuppositions, often of a covert nature, that are operative in empirical arguments for survival. Sadly, the more empirically minded researchers often mask these assumptions with their accumulation of and emphasis on the data provided by case studies. As will be apparent in the course of my exploration, I think the major weaknesses in the literature are conceptual not empirical in nature. To provide the background that motivates my thesis/argument, two of the main deficiencies in the literature, which I propose to remedy, should be discussed.

1.3.1   Deficiencies in evidence assessment

The first substantial flaw in the bulk of existing literature, especially since the 1960s, concerns just how poorly criteria of evidence assessment are handled, if such criteria are explicitly acknowledged at all. Empirical survivalists, including some with a philosophical background, are simply far too sanguine about the evidential force of the data because of what I would characterize as a fairly superficial treatment of criteria of inductive reasoning used to assess the weight of evidence. Consequently, there is a corresponding lack of logical rigor in how the empirical argument for survival is presented. It is unfortunate that some survivalists overtly or tacitly eschew the requisite theoretical or philosophical dimension to evidence assessment (Fontana 2005: 9, Osis and Haraldsson 1997: xvii). While one does find occasional use of technical terminology (e.g. "explanation," "probability," "simplicity,"

and "falsifiability"), these are wielded in a way that betrays an inadequate grasp of the concepts. So we encounter a use of specialist language inserted into woefully underdeveloped arguments whose logical structure is at best unclear. As a result, we are poorly equipped to judge the force of the data, discern the salient issues, or assess the force of counter-explanations of the data.

Two illustrations of this tendency toward sloppy logic are worth noting since I will address them in detail in subsequent chapters. First, survivalists often appeal to falsifiability to reinforce the survival hypothesis and debunk more exotic counter-explanations, such as the appeal to extrasensory perception in living persons, but these discussions exhibit deep misunderstandings about falsifiability and the role it plays in explanatory arguments (Almeder 1992: 49, 56, 228; Carter 2012: 65–6, 273–6; Fontana 2005: 110–11). Second, there is a widespread tendency in the recent literature to pile up an impressive assortment of data and focus nearly exclusively on the alleged defects of explanatory competitors in accounting for all the data, as if this somehow redounds to the credit of the survival hypothesis (Carter 2012; Fontana 2005; Lund 2009). But of course, this strategy is misguided. To show that proposed counter-explanations are unsuccessful is not to show that the survival hypothesis *is* successful in securing the needed explanatory virtues or additional plausibility factors, much less that the survival hypothesis avoids the problems attributed to counter-explanations. As Gauld has rightly noted, "a theory cannot be adequately established just by undermining its only apparent rival. Its own pros and cons must, so far as possible, be independently scrutinized" (1982: 138). More forcefully stated, survivalists have fallen victim to what philosopher of science Elliott Sober calls "lazy testing":

> The lazy way to test a hypothesis H is to focus on one of its possible competitors H_0, claim that the data refute H_0, and then declare that H is the only hypothesis left standing. This is an attractive strategy if you are fond of the hypothesis H but are unable to say what testable predictions H makes. (Sober 2008: 353)

In the light of these widespread deficiencies in the literature, this book will emphasize the technical formulation of the survival hypothesis and the classical arguments, which in turn will require drawing a number of important conceptual distinctions. I will pay particular attention to (i) the specific content of the hypothesis of personal survival and "nearby" explanatory competitors (especially exotic ones), (ii) the nature of explanation and how explanatory power depends on a particular logical relationship between the data and the content of the hypotheses, and – in connection with BEA – (iii) the determinants of the prior probability of a hypothesis, as well as why this kind of epistemic credential should be distinguished from epistemic

credentials allegedly conferred on a hypothesis by way of its explanatory power. Finally, of great importance to BEA, I will examine in considerable detail (iv) how prior probabilities and explanatory considerations jointly operate to yield certain conditional posterior probabilities – that is, certain judgments about the (overall) probability of the survival hypothesis given the relevant data and background knowledge.

One of the unique features of my particular approach is that I explicate informal concepts (e.g. evidential support, reasonable belief, and explanation) by way of formal concepts supplied by formal epistemology. Of central importance here is confirmation theory, which concerns the logic by which scientific or, more broadly speaking, empirical hypotheses are confirmed or disconfirmed by empirical data (Hawthorne 2011; Fitelson 2007, 2011; Sober 2008; Achinstein 2001; Dawid and Mortera 2008). Confirmation theories aim to provide measures for determining which among competing hypotheses best accounts for the evidence or when evidence favors or supports one hypothesis over another. Probability functions are typically invoked to provide such measures. As one illustration of this, confirmation theories often formalize the informal idea of "fit between a hypothesis and evidence" in terms of how probable some evidence e would be if the hypothesis h were true, formally represented as $Pr(e \mid h)$ – the probability of e given h. Even in cases in which actual values cannot be assigned for $Pr(e \mid h)$, certain comparative statements can in principle be made. We may be quite in the dark about the numerical value of $Pr(e \mid h)$, but we might nonetheless be in a position justifiably to state that some strand of evidence is more to be expected given one hypothesis than another: that $Pr(e \mid h_1) > Pr(e \mid h_2)$ – the probability of e given h_1 is greater than the probability of e given h_2. And we might take this as a necessary and/or sufficient condition for e evidentially favoring or confirming h_1 over h_2.

Survivalist explanatory arguments can be formalized using such techniques. So in addition to formulating these arguments as they are usually presented by using informal concepts such as "explanation" and "evidence," I will propose reconstructions of the traditional explanatory arguments by using the formal techniques of confirmation theory. More specifically, I will consider the arguments reformulated in terms of two prominent theories of confirmation: Bayesianism and Likelihoodism. In addition to the classical arguments naturally lending themselves to formalization in this way, one of the virtues of this approach is that it demands a degree of conceptual clarity that will facilitate identifying crucial assumptions that are otherwise masked by the vagueness or ambiguity that characterizes informal concepts.

My methodological deployment of formal methods reflects my own background in analytic philosophy of religion, in which formal methods have become widespread in discussing various perennial topics in the philosophy of religion (Chandler and Harrison 2012). There have been, for example,

highly influential attempts to develop traditional arguments for God's existence, which use probability measures supplied by confirmation theory. Richard Swinburne's cumulative case argument utilizing Bayes' theorem is a well-known illustration of this (Swinburne 2004), as is Robin Collins's more recent use of the "the Likelihood Principle" in his formulation of the argument for God's existence from the fine-tuning of the universe (Collins 2009). Critics of these theistic arguments have also made substantial use of confirmation theory to challenge the cogency of these arguments (Dawes 2009; Oppy 2006; Sobel 2004; Sober 2008). Similarly, contemporary debates concerning the problem of evil are now commonly cast in the language of confirmation theory (Howard-Snyder 1996; Otte 2000, 2012; Plantinga and Tooley 2008). Methodologically, my interest is to do for the empirical survival arguments what Anglo-American philosophers of religion have done since the 1970s with respect to perennial topics and arguments in the philosophy of religion.

1.3.2   Three important conceptual issues

There are three important conceptual issues related to evidence assessment that will emerge given this approach, and they will play a prominent role in my argument. The first two involve important conceptual distinctions, and the third is a concept in confirmation theory that will be central to my subsequent critique.

First, Sober has recently drawn attention to statistician Richard Royall's distinction between two kinds of questions concerning evidence: (i) *what does the (present) evidence say?* And (ii) *what hypothesis should we accept?* (Sober 2008: 3–4). To answer question (i), we need to consider the extent to which, if at all, our present evidence favors, supports, or confirms a particular hypothesis. Since we often do this by comparing or contrasting a particular hypothesis with some alternative hypothesis, we try to decide which of at least two hypotheses the evidence more strongly favors. Now to answer question (ii), it is sensible to suppose that we need to answer question (i), for what the evidence on hand says should be factored into our judgments about what hypothesis we should accept if we are rational. However, answering question (ii) involves a judgment about the *net* plausibility or *overall* credentials of a hypothesis, and this it turns out depends on more than what the present evidence says. As suggested above, in Bayesian confirmation theory, these additional plausibility factors, which might include criteria such as simplicity and fit with background knowledge, are determinants of the prior probability of a hypothesis, formally $Pr(h \mid k)$ – the probability of h conditioned solely on background knowledge.

In assessing empirical evidence allegedly suggestive of survival, it will be important to distinguish, as often is not done in the survival literature, the evidential question and the rational-acceptance question. After all, it may turn out that while we are justified in claiming that some body of

evidence favors the survival hypothesis, specifically over some competing hypothesis, all things considered – once the prior probability of the survival hypothesis has been factored into the equation – we may not be justified in concluding that we should accept the survival hypothesis. My suspicion is that MEA aims to address question (i) above, while SEA aims to address question (ii). The failure to properly distinguish between question (i) and question (ii) may therefore explain why survivalists have sometimes conflated MEA and SEA.

Second, with respect to any evidence e and some hypothesis h, we will need to distinguish between weak and strong confirmation, or what is often distinguished as incremental vs. absolute confirmation. Weak or incremental confirmation involves evidence simply *raising* the probability of a hypothesis. This is one understanding of what it means for e to be evidence for h, though there are different accounts of how this should be measured. By contrast, strong or absolute confirmation involves evidence conferring a substantial probability on the hypothesis, raising the probability of h above some threshold value N, where N typically is ½, meaning that h is more probable than not. More precisely, what is at issue here is the "posterior probability" of some hypothesis h given evidence e and background knowledge k, whether $Pr(h \mid e \mathbin{\&} k) > \frac{1}{2}$, whether the probability of h conditioned on e and k is greater than ½ – that is, more probable than not. The connection with the prior distinction above is plausibly this: It seems natural to suppose that rational acceptance requires a posterior probability greater than ½, and so rational acceptance requires strong confirmation.

Third, a crucial probability in Bayesian and Likelihoodist confirmation theory is the probability of the evidence e given the hypothesis h, formally expressed as $Pr(e \mid h)$ or – if we include background knowledge k – $Pr(e \mid h \mathbin{\&} k)$. Following R.A. Fisher (1922), the technical designation for such a probability is *Likelihood*. It is important not to confuse the Likelihood of a hypothesis, $Pr(e \mid h \mathbin{\&} k)$, with the probability of the hypothesis given the evidence and background knowledge, $Pr(h \mid e \mathbin{\&} k)$ – that is, the posterior probability of the hypothesis.[7] In explanatory arguments, the "predictive power", as it is called, of the hypothesis expresses its Likelihood, for predictive power refers to the ability of a hypothesis to lead us to expect some observational feature(s) of the world. For this reason, although both MEA and SEA are explanatory arguments, it turns out that they each depend on the survival

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[7] Throughout the book, "the Likelihood of the survival hypothesis" will refer to the probability of the evidence given the hypothesis, whereas "the probability of the survival hypothesis" will refer to the probability of the hypothesis given the evidence (and background knowledge). In the present chapter, I adopt the convention of spelling "Likelihood" with a capital "L" to help habituate the reader to this distinction.

hypothesis having a determinable Likelihood, specifically a determinable Likelihood that is superior to the Likelihood of competing hypotheses.

To elaborate a bit more, Likelihoods flesh out the empirical content of a hypothesis. To the extent that the survival hypothesis is an empirical hypothesis, it should have implications for how the world should or should not look. It should have observational consequences, in a way roughly analogous to how the hypotheses *the universe is expanding*, *Harry robbed Wells Fargo Bank*, or *Bill is having a heart attack* have observational consequences. This is what permits a hypothesis to be empirically testable, something that empirical survivalists wish to claim on behalf of the survival hypothesis. Likelihoods represent these observational consequences and thereby provide a basis for testing a hypothesis. So if we let S = the hypothesis of personal survival, F = the relevant evidence (sketched in §1.1), and C = the nearest competing hypothesis, then MEA and SEA each depends on our being justified in supposing that $Pr(F \mid S) > Pr(F \mid C)$ – the probability of the evidence F given the survival hypothesis S is greater than the probability of the (same) evidence F given the nearest competing hypothesis C. In this way, "$Pr(F \mid S) > Pr(F \mid C)$" formally explicates a key feature of the informal idea that *S better explains F than does C*.

1.3.3   Deficiencies in the formulation of the survival hypothesis

The second deficiency in the literature concerns how the survival hypothesis itself is formulated and consequently related to the evidence. H.H. Price once said, "I would suggest that those who incline to the Survivalist hypothesis should spend less of their time collecting evidence for it, and should rather turn their attention for the present to the clarification of the hypothesis itself" (1995c: 25). And Ducasse keenly noted the relevance of Price's point to the empirical case for survival: "so long as one does not know just what is meant by the phrase 'the personality's survival after death,' one cannot tell what kinds of observable facts would or would not constitute evidence of such survival" (1957: 30). Price and Ducasse were correct, and it is one of the unfortunate features of much of the contemporary literature that other theorists have presented the empirical case for survival without paying much attention to the content of the survival hypothesis itself.

The matter is of considerable importance since the explanatory arguments all depend on there being a determinable Likelihood for the survival hypothesis, but this strongly depends on the actual content of the survival hypothesis. Most of the literature on survival since the 1960s, and much of the literature before then, operates with a very simple survival hypothesis: for example, the postmortem persistence of "a non-physical subject of conscious states" (Lund 2009: 62, 83), "a mind, center of consciousness, or a soul" (Carter 2012: 65), "the human personality" or "I-thinker" (Hart 1959: 223, 263), or perhaps with a bit more specificity, "a personal stream of consciousness with its memories of past earthly life" (Hyslop

1919: 53). However, as Antony Flew rightly noted (1973: 126), it is dubious to suppose that such simple survival hypotheses have any observational consequences. A simple survival hypothesis predicts nothing; it has no well-defined or determinable Likelihood. Consequently, I will in my analysis of the survival hypothesis draw an important distinction between simple survival hypotheses (with zero predictive salience or an indeterminable Likelihood) and more robust survival hypotheses with varying degrees of observational consequences. Only the latter can in principle be tested over against the features of the actual world, specifically the facts adduced in support of survival. Therefore, explanatory survival arguments, in their informal and formalized incarnations, depend on a robust survival hypothesis.

1.4   The plan and argument of this book

As indicated in the earlier part of the present chapter, my objective in this book is to provide a critique of the classical empirical arguments for survival. I will argue that *the classical empirical arguments are unsuccessful at showing that there is good evidence for personal survival*. Since there are different "classical arguments" and "good evidence" can be understood in different ways, one of my auxiliary objectives is to explore the more precise ways in which the classical arguments are evidentially deficient. The general thesis can nonetheless be made more precise here by noting what I aim to show with respect to the inadequacy of each of the three types of classical arguments:

(1) *Bayesian* survival arguments are unsuccessful since we are not justified in concluding (given Bayesian constraints) that the survival hypothesis is more probable than not.
(2) *Likelihood* survival arguments are unsuccessful since (a) we are not justified in concluding that the survival hypothesis has a superior Likelihood to its nearest competitor, a robust appeal to psychic functioning in living persons and (b) the unjustified status of survival-auxiliaries prevents genuinely testing the survival hypothesis against rival hypotheses, the context-dependent function of Likelihoodism.
(3) *Explanatory* arguments are unsuccessful since we are not justified in concluding that the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the total evidence.

Now while I agree that the traditional prior probability and counter-explanation objections pose serious challenges to the classical arguments, I will argue that what I call the "problem of auxiliary assumptions" (PoA) is the more fundamental problem for these arguments and poses the most formidable challenge to them. One of the important implications of PoA vis-à-vis the traditional objections is that it permits a more potent formulation of the

traditional challenges, formulations that are resistant to refutation by traditional survivalist rejoinders.

1.4.1   The problem of auxiliary assumptions

PoA is, so I shall argue, the inevitable consequence of the "auxiliary assumption requirement" (AAR), a primary idea in this book. According to AAR, the survival hypothesis has no well-defined Likelihood unless it is supplemented with various auxiliary assumptions. The requirement is based on the Duhem-Quine thesis (so named after Pierre Duhem and Willard Van Orman Quine) that hypotheses are typically tested in bundles or sets because single hypotheses rarely have (non-trivial) observational consequences. Since Likelihoods formally express the informal idea of predictive power, this implies that Likelihoods have well-defined (positive or negative) values only when one or more auxiliary assumptions "a" have been introduced. So while $Pr(e \mid h)$ will not have a well-defined value, $Pr(e \mid h \,\&\, a)$ will, either because h & a jointly entails e (or its negation) or makes probable e (or its negation) (Sober 2008: 144). Moreover, the strength of a hypothesis h's Likelihood will depend on the specific auxiliaries one enlists for h. With background knowledge, k, factored in, the relevant Likelihoods will look like, for example, $Pr(e \mid h_1 \,\&\, a \,\&\, k) > Pr(e \mid h_2 \,\&\, a' \,\&\, k)$, which states that the probability of the evidence e is greater given "hypothesis h_1, auxiliaries a, and background knowledge k" than it is given "hypothesis h_2, auxiliaries a' (h_2's auxiliaries), and background knowledge k."

Consequently, the survival hypothesis will have a well-defined Likelihood only if auxiliary assumptions are introduced, and the strength of the Likelihood of the survival hypothesis will depend on the specific assumptions we introduce. In other words, the *simple* supposition of the survival of the self, the mind, or individual consciousness will not lead us to expect F, where F = members of the set {f1, f2, f3, f4, f5}, nor will it allow us to say whether the survival hypothesis renders these facts more probable than some rival hypothesis. As explained above, Likelihoods are essential to both Likelihood and Bayesian arguments, and they are equally essential to explanatory arguments in which the explanatory relation is taken to include at least predictive power (broadly understood). Therefore, what classical survival arguments require is a *robust* survival hypothesis S_R – a survival hypothesis plus auxiliaries – and more specifically one that produces a favorable Likelihood. Survivalists who wield Likelihood survival arguments will want to claim, for example, that f3 and f4 jointly favor or confirm the survival hypothesis over particular counter-explanations. Where S_R = the survival hypothesis S plus the relevant auxiliaries A and where C_R = the nearest explanatory competitor C and its relevant auxiliaries A', we can express this formally as $Pr(f3 \,\&\, f4 \mid S_R \,\&\, K) > Pr(f3 \,\&\, f4 \mid C_R \,\&\, K)$.

However, I contend, and it is the heart of my argument, that in the case of the survival hypothesis AAR leads to a series of problems that ultimately

undermine the classical survival arguments in all their forms. I will show that the kinds of assumptions required by the classical arguments are *epistemically challenged*: they are either not independently testable or they otherwise fail to carry the appropriate sort of epistemic credentials. While this creates a general problem for the procedure of confirming and disconfirming hypotheses, I argue that it generates two kinds of logical "blowback" that surgically impact and defeat the classical arguments at their most crucial points.

First, there is prior probability blowback since AAR defeats what the survivalist needs to maintain about the prior probability of the survival hypothesis in connection with Bayesian-style survival arguments. AAR has as a consequence either the substantial lowering of the prior probability of the survival hypothesis or preventing the survivalist from arguing that the survival hypothesis has a higher prior probability than rival hypotheses. Relatedly, AAR also undercuts traditional survivalist defenses of the prior probability of the survival hypothesis. These traditional defenses are typically blind to AAR, at least with reference to the survival hypothesis. Consequently, they focus on the prior probability of a simple survival hypothesis (survival *sans* auxiliaries), which further engenders an unfair comparison with the prior probability of rival hypotheses taken in their robust forms.

Second, there is Likelihood blowback since AAR defeats the claim that there is no rival hypothesis such that the relevant evidence is more probable given the survival hypothesis than given the rival hypothesis. Since hypothesis robustness is required for well-defined Likelihoods, rival hypotheses must be considered in their robust forms, not simple forms. The failure to consider the survival hypothesis and its rival hypotheses in their robust forms is a habitual and widespread problem in the pro-survival literature, especially when the predictive power of the survival hypothesis is compared with the predictive power of various counter-explanations. Of particular interest in the subsequent chapters will be a particular exotic counter-explanation of the data, the appeal to living-agent psychic functioning in the form of extrasensory perception and psychokinesis. Many survivalists and skeptics have regarded this "living-agent psi" (LAP) hypothesis as the most formidable counter-explanation of the relevant evidence. I will argue that there is at least one robust version of this hypothesis, call it LAP_R, such that we are *not* justified to claim that $Pr(F \mid S_R \& K) > Pr(F \mid LAP_R \& K)$, because the evidence F is at least just as probable given LAP_R as given the robust survival hypothesis S_R. This defeats both the modest explanatory argument (MEA) and its formalization as a Likelihood argument since each of these arguments depends on the claim that the survival hypothesis has a superior Likelihood.

Of course, the Bayesian minded survivalist rejoinder is easily anticipated. What is crucial to Bayesian survival arguments, if the survival hypothesis is

to have a favorable posterior probability (greater than ½), is that there be no rival hypothesis *with significant prior probability* that leads us to expect the evidence as well as the survival hypothesis does. So a Bayesian survivalist can (and many do) argue that while S_R and LAP_R may have comparable or equal Likelihoods, nonetheless $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \ll Pr(S_R \mid K)$; that is, the prior probability of LAP_R is much less than the prior probability of S_R. Therefore, the Bayesian survival argument is insulated from defeat. The response exploits a commonplace in Bayesianism: if $Pr(e \mid h_1 \ \& \ k) = Pr(e \mid h_2 \ \& \ k)$, then $Pr(h_1 \mid e \ \& \ k) > Pr(h_2 \mid e \ \& \ k)$ just if $Pr(h_1 \mid k) > Pr(h_2 \mid k)$; that is, if h_1 and h_2 have equal Likelihoods, then h_1 will have a greater posterior probability than h_2 just if h_1 has greater prior probability than h_2.

This survivalist counter-argument appears in many forms in the relevant literature, most prominently as the objection that LAP_R, to accommodate the total range of evidence, requires living-agent psychic functioning of a type or degree for which there is no independent evidence, so-called *super-psi*, which has become something of a sophisticated survivalist obscenity used to cut down this allegedly implausible counter-explanation, or to at least shame its sympathizers and advocates into retreat (Almeder 1992; Carter 2012; Fontana 2005; Lund 2009). However, I will argue that AAR gives this long-standing exotic counter-explanation new life, specifically in connection with defeating the Bayesian survival argument, whose last line of defense against encroaching Likelihoods of rival hypotheses is to seek refuge in the territory of prior probability. PoA shows how this maneuver is self-defeating for survival arguments and thereby prevents the survivalist from defeating the argument for supposing that LAP_R is a rival hypothesis with significant prior probability that leads us to expect the data as well as does the survival hypothesis. One of the interesting consequences of AAR and the corresponding PoA is that they show how LAP_R can pose a formidable challenge to the survival hypothesis, even if, as survivalists wish to claim, LAP_R is *not* a particularly good explanation of the relevant evidence. In this way, AAR facilitates a modification of the traditional explanatory competitor challenge that is not vulnerable to traditional survivalist rejoinders.

1.4.2   Overview of chapters

The subsequent chapters move rather naturally from those focused on elaborating the survival hypothesis and the alleged evidence for it from various kinds of ostensibly paranormal phenomena (Chapter 2 through Chapter 5) to the presentation and critical analysis of the classical arguments (Chapter 6 through Chapter 11). My own contributions to the debate appear in the analysis of traditional explanatory arguments and a proposal for the formalization of the arguments (Chapter 6), my preliminary critical analysis of Bayesian arguments (Chapters 7 and Chapter 8), the systematic development of the problem of auxiliary assumptions (Chapter 9), and the

application of PoA to the debate between survivalists and skeptics in connection with the traditional objections (Chapter 10 and Chapter 11).

In **Chapter 2**, I consider a range of different conceivable hypotheses of personal survival. Since psychological criteria (e.g. memories and personality characteristics) play a central role in survival arguments as identity indicators, I carefully examine the psychological aspects of personal survival, with an emphasis on conceivable personal survival hypotheses that differ with respect to the degree of continuity they posit between our antemortem and postmortem psychology. In **Chapter 3** through **Chapter 5**, I explain the relevant features of three kinds of psychical phenomena from which data allegedly suggestive of survival have been collected: the closely related out-of-body and near-death experiences, mediumistic communications, and cases of the reincarnation type.[8] In each of these chapters, I provide reviews of prominent case studies and investigations, and I conclude each chapter with a summary of the salient strands of evidence drawn from the cases examined.

In **Chapter 6**, I explore two paradigmatic forms of survival argument construed as explanatory arguments, specifically as inferences to the best explanation. Based on an examination of the work of several prominent empirical survivalists, including Richard Hodgson (1855–1905), James Hyslop (1854–1920), Ian Stevenson (1918–2007), and Robert Almeder (1939–present), I distinguish between "modest" explanatory arguments (MEA) and "strengthened" explanatory arguments (SEA). According to the former, explanatory salience is parsed solely in terms of the extent to which a hypothesis leads us to expect the relevant data (what is called predictive power). According to the latter, the survival inference is mediated by predictive power together with additional plausibility factors (e.g. independent support, simplicity, and fit with background knowledge) interpreted as explanatory virtues. In the latter part of the chapter, I propose the formalization of these explanatory arguments as Likelihood arguments. I conclude, though, that Likelihoodism better accommodates MEA but that the formalization of SEA requires a different confirmation theory, what I unpack and analyze in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 under the rubric of Bayesian survival arguments.

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[8] Unlike other philosophical works on survival (Almeder 1992; Braude 2003; Griffin 1997; Lund 2009; Paterson 1995), I exclude apparitions of the dead and haunting phenomena, as well as other kinds of phenomena often alleged to be evidence for survival. I have opted to restrict my attention to phenomena that I think provide the best evidence of survival. In my view, apparitions and hauntings provide the weakest kind of evidence for survival, in part because most documented cases lack strong veridical features, which makes them particularly vulnerable to various non-survival counter-explanations. Apparitions co-occurring with some OBEs/NDEs are plausibly exceptions to this, but I will consider this phenomenon.

In **Chapter 7**, I focus on two foundational Bayesian analyses of the empirical arguments, the first from Cambridge philosopher C.D. Broad (1887–1971) and the second from Oxford-educated classical scholar E.R. Dodds (1893–1979). I pay particular attention to why each of these critics concluded that the case for survival was defective. Their arguments highlight important features of Bayesian confirmation theory, specifically how Likelihoods and prior probabilities jointly determine posterior probabilities, which I consider by formalizing each of their analyses. We also see more specifically how Bayesian survival arguments may be challenged in different ways. Dodds and Broad each argue that the empirical argument fails since the survival hypothesis is not the best explanation of the data, though they each propose different rival hypotheses as the nearest explanatory competitor that lowers the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis. Moreover, since Broad's analysis assigns a neutral prior probability to survival, his argument is particularly interesting since it shows how the inference to survival *could* be defeated even if the survival hypothesis is not judged, as Dodds held, to be antecedently improbable.

In **Chapter 8**, I consider two Bayesian survivalist defenses of the empirical case for survival, each of which is designed as a response to the Broadian-Doddsian critique. I first explore the work of philosopher Curt Ducasse (1881–1969), who argued that the hypothesis of personal survival has a favorable posterior probability. He came to this conclusion on the basis of arguments that purported to show that the survival hypothesis has a neutral prior probability (i.e. is neither antecedently probable nor improbable) and that it constitutes the best explanation of the total set of relevant data, especially the data collected from mediumship. In the second half of the chapter, I examine contemporary philosopher R.W.K. Paterson's Bayesian defense of classical empirical arguments. Paterson presents a cumulative case argument in which the different strands of evidence for survival (from different kinds of ostensible paranormal phenomena) each incrementally raise an initially low prior probability of the survival hypothesis, so that when each new piece of alleged evidence for survival is considered, the older evidence is included in the background knowledge. The purported net effect of this is to gradually raise the prior probability of survival so that it reaches ½ and the remaining empirical evidence then increases this probability so that survival is more probable than not. With respect to both Ducasse and Paterson, I propose a formalization of their arguments that shows why their arguments fail to establish that the hypothesis of personal survival is more probable than not.

While AAR and the corresponding PoA is introduced in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, in **Chapter 9** I systematically develop both AAR and PoA. I specify a range of auxiliary assumptions required for arguments for survival from each of the three kinds of ostensibly paranormal phenomena, most of which concern the nature of consciousness if it should survive death.

Here I argue that these assumptions are not independently testable, nor is it plausible to suppose that epistemic merit might be conferred on them in some other manner. It is particularly important to this discussion that the survivalist must select from among a wide range of auxiliaries (consistent with the survival hypothesis), which tell different stories about the afterlife and survivors, many of which have very different predictive consequences once we join them to the simple supposition of survival. The inability to determine which set of auxiliaries is the correct one in effect entails that we really do not know how the world should look if survival is true, which of course undermines the widespread empirical survivalist belief that survival is an empirically testable hypothesis.

In **Chapter 10**, I apply PoA to the traditional counter-explanation challenge and explore how the appeal to living-agent psi (LAP) poses a potential challenge to the classical arguments. I draw on contemporary philosopher Stephen Braude's motivated-psi hypothesis to argue that there is a robust version of the LAP-hypothesis, which generates a competing Likelihood that undermines the survivalist contention that there is no rival hypothesis that leads us to expect the data as well as does the survival hypothesis. In **Chapter 11**, I provide a defense of the argument in Chapter 10 by considering long-standing and widespread survivalist rejoinders. I draw on AAR and PoA to deconstruct the survivalist criticisms of the robust LAP-hypothesis, or what they disparagingly call *super-psi*, and I show why the survivalist critique is self-defeating. The second half of the chapter is devoted to a summary of my complete argument against Bayesian, Likelihood, and explanatory arguments for survival. In this way, I summarize my case for supposing the classical empirical arguments for survival do not succeed in showing that there is good evidence for survival, however provocative the arguments may be otherwise.

2
Exploring the Hypothesis of Personal Survival

In the exploration of alleged evidence for survival, we are immediately confronted with a fundamental conceptual issue. What is the meaning of the survival hypothesis? What exactly is being affirmed (and denied) by this hypothesis? The generic idea of survival or life after death may be understood in different ways. Survivalists – those who believe in life after death – have taken different views concerning what exactly survives death, the manner in which it survives, and the general nature of postmortem existence and the afterlife. Moreover, the range of survival hypotheses is widened even further if we consider, in addition to the actual positions of survivalists, the mere theoretical possibilities or conceivable survival hypotheses at this juncture. As prominent philosophers such as C.J. Ducasse (1951: 484–502; 1961: 121–31) and C.D. Broad (1962: 387–430) have discussed in their seminal explorations of survival, there are many ways to conceive of postmortem survival. So while we might speak rather generically about "the survival hypothesis," there is actually a range of such hypotheses.

In the present chapter, I explore diverse conceptions of life after death. Since the remaining part of the book will be occupied with evaluating arguments for personal survival, my focus here will be on different models of personal survival. By "personal" survival, I mean the survival of the self or individual person. This is often contrasted with non-personal conceptions of survival, where what is postulated to survive death is some aspect or part of the psychology of individual persons, but that would be insufficient to constitute the survival of the self. In other words, some property deemed essential to our personhood or individual identity might not survive death, even if aspects of our individual psychology survive. A "model" of survival is a set of statements about survival and the afterlife that provides a response to at least some of the fundamental questions in the philosophy of postmortem survival. For example, what survives death? Does survival involve embodied or disembodied existence? What kind of world is the afterlife? Could survivors communicate with the living? Hence, a model of survival fills out and develops the content of the supposition of survival with varying

degrees of detail. It thereby transforms a simple survival hypothesis into a more robust survival hypothesis.

The exploration of theoretically possible or conceivable hypotheses of survival will prove particularly important given the main objective of the present work. As C.J. Ducasse once observed:

> so long as one does not know just what one means by the phrase "the personality's survival after death," one cannot tell what kinds of observable facts would or would not constitute evidence of such survival … The variety of possibilities concerning "the human personality's survival after death" will, it is hoped, have made evident how imperative is the need to state which particular one of those possibilities is that whose reality one is seeking to test. (Ducasse 1957: 30, 35)

I agree with Ducasse here, so in this chapter I lay a conceptual foundation for the project to be undertaken in subsequent chapters. I focus on two features of models of survival that are of particular importance to the larger project. First, I examine the thesis of *psychological survival*, the view that our present psychology partly or completely survives bodily death. By "our present psychology," I mean roughly our personal stream of experience, the first-person perspective and its associated memories, beliefs, desires, interests, and intentions. Those who believe in personal survival usually affirm some version of the psychological survival thesis, even though they may differ on other points, such as whether psychological survival requires embodiment of some sort. Second, I distinguish between weaker and stronger conceptions of psychological survival based on the degree of psychological continuity posited between antemortem and postmortem existence. While the focus of the present chapter is personal survival, alternate conceptions of survival will be discussed in subsequent chapters, especially since they provide potential rival explanations of data allegedly suggestive of personal survival.

2.1 Personal survival: core conceptual issues

The majority of Western philosophers and religious thinkers who have affirmed life after death have meant by this that the human person, the individual self, or soul will persist after biological death. Some Eastern religious traditions, such as the bhakti traditions of India, share this view or at least something approximating it. Belief in survival is belief in *personal* survival: the persistence after biological death of whatever is essential to being a person and, more specifically, whatever it is that constitutes a person's being the particular person he or she is. As Brooke Noel Moore succinctly stated, "in a case of personal survival, what survives the death of Mr. Jones' body is Mr. Jones himself; or, in the language of philosophers,

what survives the death of Mr. Jones' body is an individual who is numerically identical with Mr. Jones" (Moore 1981: 9). So personal survival means *I* – this individual self – will survive death.

2.1.1   Personal identity: soul survival vs. embodied survival

To speak of personal survival, of course, entails that whatever properties are essential to persons in general will survive death. So personal survival entails the postmortem persistence of a center of self-awareness, or a first-person perspective, with powers of perception/knowledge and intentional causal agency, as these are essential properties of human persons. But what am *I* as this particular person? One of the important questions in the philosophy of mind concerns criteria of personal identity. What is it that makes someone the *individual* person he or she is at any given time? And what condition(s) is (are) necessary and sufficient for a person to persist through time? Survivalists have taken different views here, so they have not surprisingly taken different views concerning what survives death if persons survive death.[1]

Survivalists in the substance dualist tradition maintain that the self is identical with a "soul," where "soul" refers to an immaterial substance that is distinct from the body and is the bearer of various mental properties (e.g. thoughts, desires, intentions, and memories).[2] We are essentially soul-beings, though presently embodied as a contingent fact. However, substance dualists disagree on a number of important issues.[3] Cartesian substance dualists affirm that the soul lacks *all* physical properties, including that it has a position in space, that it is simple (without any parts), and that it could exist independently of the body with which it is presently associated. The more recent trend has been to soften this stronger form of substance dualism in a few ways. First, while souls may lack many or most of the physical properties characteristic of ordinary matter (e.g. mass and charge), they may nonetheless have spatial location or other physical properties and so not be wholly immaterial substances (Zimmerman and Van Inwagen 2007: 23–8). Second, while souls may be distinct from brains, they may depend on brains for some or all of their functioning, perhaps even for their coming into and/ or remaining in existence (Hasker 1999: 188–97, 232–5; Swinburne 1986: 176–7, 298–301, 310). Finally, a substance dualist might even jettison the

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[1] For a discussion of the different views here, to be sketched below, see Baker (2005: 366–91).

[2] The term "substance" here means a persisting object whose properties may change over time, not some kind of "stuff." I will assume, therefore, that there is no incoherence in supposing that there are immaterial substances, though of course it remains a separate question whether immaterial *persons* is either coherent or conceivable.

[3] See Baker and Goetz (2011: 11–14), Göcke (2012), Goetz (2005: 54–6), Hasker (1999: 147–203), Zimmerman (2011: 168–76).

soul idea and speak rather of 'persons' as basic and regard them as psychological substances that have material qualities and not as essentially immaterial entities (Lowe 2012: 48–71).

On most substance dualist views, then, to say "I will survive death" is to say "a soul that is I will survive death." This survivalist view is often developed as the postmortem persistence of the soul in the absence of the body, typically designated "disembodied survival." Some survivalists maintain that disembodied survival is only a temporary mode of survival, eventually to be followed by subsequent re-embodiment, and so disembodied survival is properly an intermediate state between death and eventual re-embodiment.[4] Others regard disembodied survival as the final postmortem state. Of course, if the soul is not wholly immaterial, disembodied survival would be survival without a conventional body, but it would not be a completely immaterial existence. Furthermore, it is important not to conflate the survival of a disembodied soul and the survival of disembodied *consciousness*. Souls might survive death but lack conscious episodes in the absence of a functioning brain or some neural substrate of sufficient complexity. A lightbulb does not depend for its existence on electrical current, but its functioning – giving illumination – does. Likewise, souls may exist without a body but not function unless there is an appropriate physical substrate (Swinburne 1986: 176–7, 298–9, 310; Taliaferro 2001: 67). Alternatively, we might suppose that while souls might function in the absence of a body, the functioning would be limited in various ways in the absence of a body. So on these versions of substance dualism, the survival of consciousness (or its optimal functioning) would require that souls eventually be re-embodied. Finally, the postmortem persistence of souls may not be an intrinsic property of the soul but may depend on extrinsic conditions that facilitate the soul's re-embodiment. Western religious philosophers, for example, hold that God can sustain disembodied souls in existence and bring about their re-embodiment. So substance dualism, rather than implying a single account of survival, is compatible with a number of different survival hypotheses.

While disembodied survival has been widely discussed in Western philosophical literature, C.D. Broad once noted that of the vast number of people who have believed in survival, hardly any of them has believed in disembodied survival (Broad 1962: 408). Perhaps Broad overstated the point, but the spirit of the observation is correct. Survivalists in the Western religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have historically at least *emphasized* survival in the form of bodily resurrection from the dead. Roughly stated, resurrection involves the survival of the self as a psychophysical entity resulting from God reanimating, reconstituting, or replicating our

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[4] On the intermediate state in the Western and Eastern traditions, see Cooper (2000: 81–93, 159–69), Davis (1993: 87–109), Neumaier-Dargyay (1997), Rambachan (1997).

present bodies at some point after death.[5] In the Eastern religious traditions, reincarnation or rebirth (called *samsara*) replaces the Western resurrection model as an alternate conception of embodied survival. Of course, the Eastern concept of *samsara* is understood differently across the very diverse Indian religious and philosophical traditions. A widely shared view, at least in Jainism and the bhakti traditions of India, is that an individual soul survives death in an embodied form in some sphere of existence, though not necessarily on earth, and perhaps not even in a human form.[6] In other cases – for example, among Buddhists who retain a literal understanding of rebirth – rebirth is limited to some dispositional mental aspect of the human person and so is not personal survival.

As already noted, the substance dualist view permits the idea that souls could become re-embodied in some manner after death, but it does not require such re-embodiment. However, a significant number of survivalists who believe in embodied survival reject substance dualism. On their view, human persons are essentially material beings, not souls, and so survival *requires* embodiment (Baker 1995, 2001; Corcoran 2006b; Van Inwagen 1978, 1995, 1997). Hence, "I will survive death" entails "my present body, or some body appropriately related to my present body, will persist after death." For some survivalists, the appropriate relation is bodily continuity, either spatiotemporal continuity of a functioning body or the spatiotemporal continuity of various metabolic processes and life-sustaining organisms of the body. Of course, it is difficult to see how this kind of continuity can be preserved given the eventual dissolution of the body, as this creates a temporal gap that disrupts bodily continuity. So other survivalists propose instead that there be a particular kind of causal relation between the earlier and subsequent bodies, or they allow that persons may cease to exist and come back into existence at some later time (Corcoran 2001, 2006: 127–33; Zimmerman 1999).

2.1.2   Psychological survival

An important common ground among those who affirm personal survival is what I will refer to as the *psychological* conception of survival. On this view, survival entails the postmortem persistence or continuation of our present stream of experience, together with many (if not most) of the memories, beliefs, desires, purposes, interests, skills, and other personality traits that characterized our antemortem existence. This conception of survival directly follows from the view, adopted by many survivalists, that our identity is at least partly constituted by mental content, specifically memories.

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[5] See Bynum (1995), Coward (1997: 11–65), Davis (1993: 43–61, 85–146), Hick (1994: 278–96), Moreman (2008: 35–96), Segal (2004).

[6] See Hick (1994: 297–396), Moreman (2008: 97–137), O'Flaherty (1980), Rambachan (1997), Sharma (1995: 199–210).

On this view, psychological continuity is necessary, and perhaps sufficient, for the persistence of persons. But for reasons to be considered below, the psychological conception of survival does not require an acceptance of the psychological criterion of personal identity. It is also the common view of survivalists who hold to either a soul or bodily criterion of personal identity.

In his classic work on survival, Ducasse (1961) opened his discussion by citing W.R. Matthews on the psychological nature of personal survival:

> the center of consciousness which was in existence before death does not cease to be in existence after death and that the experience of this center after death has the same kind of continuity with its experience before death as that of a man who sleeps for a while and wakes again. (Matthews 1940: 15)

More recently, R.W.K. Paterson wrote:

> for those who hope that a loved one has survived death, the content of their hope is that the *mind* of the loved one has survived, that his patience and good humour, his diverse interests, and his distinctive personal capacities are still functioning, and of course that he still remembers those who are dear to him and the experiences they have shared.… [T]hey hope that a certain *stream of experiences* continues to flow and that a certain *pattern of responses* continues to be evinced. (1995: 35)

Each of these statements illustrates the thesis of psychological survival, in fact strong forms of it since they suggest a very high degree of psychological continuity between our present and postmortem personalities. Philosophers have variously described this as the survival of the "stream of consciousness or personality" or "personal identity" (Hyslop 1919: 9), "full-blown personality" (Broad 1962: 420–1), the "human personality" or "conscious individual life" (Ducasse 1961: vi, 11), and "the conscious character and (in principle) memory-bearing self" (Hick 1994: 302).

The psychological conception of survival is importantly related to the central topic of the book. As we will see in subsequent chapters, empirical arguments for survival involve apparent evidence that the distinctive psychology of particular individuals has persisted, even though their (original) body no longer exists. So the cogency of these arguments will depend, among other things, on the general plausibility of identifying surviving persons on the basis of a particular psychological profile. As Stephen Braude has noted, when people explore possible evidence for survival of death, they "look for evidence that someone's distinctive personality continues to manifest, even though that person's body may no longer exist" (Braude 2003: 1). The "distinctive personality" refers not only to persisting thoughts

and feelings, connected with one's present stream of experience, but also to the retention of one's memories and personality traits, including "idiosyncratic preferences, attachments, antipathies, concerns, and interests" (Braude 2003: 1).

Psychological facts that provide *evidence* for a person's identity should be distinguished from the claim that psychological facts *constitute* our identity. It is customary in philosophy of mind, as well as in the literature on survival, to distinguish between epistemological and metaphysical questions that concern personal identity.[7] The first concerns how we know, identify, or recognize persons as the persons they are, whereas the second concerns what makes a person the person he or she is. We can and often do rely on psychological features of persons to identify them, even if their identity is constituted by non-psychological facts such as sameness of soul or bodily continuity. I will subsequently argue that the metaphysical axis of the problem of personal identity is secondary in importance to the epistemological axis when it comes to empirical survival arguments. While survival arguments are compatible with a broad range of positions with respect to what constitutes our identity, they are less permissive with respect to how ostensible postmortem persons might be *known* to be identical to some formerly living person, requiring – as I will subsequently show – a fairly strong thesis of psychological survival.

2.1.3   Religious and philosophical considerations

Most of the religious traditions of the world contain an eschatological narrative of some sort – that is, some view of the final destiny of the world and human persons, as well as an account of the state of persons immediately after death. The psychological conception of survival has been an important part of many of these narratives.

In the Western traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the psychological conception of survival is closely connected to the idea of an afterlife where God rewards or punishes people according to their former earthly deeds. Sacred texts in these traditions, and their corresponding theologies, affirm the continuation of the individual consciousness of persons, usually with much of its distinctive mental life in the way of memories and character traits (Collins 1957: 131–6; Cooper 2000: 83, 124–7, 162). Moreover, the Western religious traditions typically emphasize that human persons are a mind-body unity, and this is reflected in the shared conviction of these traditions that psychological survival is ultimately an embodied mode of surviving consciousness, even if individual consciousness temporarily persists in a disembodied state immediately after death.

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[7] See Braude (2005, 2003: 3–9, 292–8), Gauld (1982: 8–9, 30–1), Paterson (1995: 21–3, 45–6).

In the Eastern Vedic-Hindu traditions, the psychological conception of survival constellates around the teaching of the cycle of death and rebirth, according to which a future embodied life follows our present individual life in accordance with the deeds and dispositions of our present life. This typically involves positing a future existence in which distinctive features of our individual psychology persist in subsequent incarnations. While non-dual Hindu traditions posit an eventual dissolution of individual psychology upon attaining liberation from *samsara* into the ultimate state, in many of the devotional theistic traditions – such as Vaishnavism – liberation from *samsara* involves the persistence of individual, conscious souls in a realm of existence governed by communion with God through love and worship (Goswami 2012; Tapasyananda 2003: 70–6, 173–8, 182–5, 193–8, 325–8). While Buddhist traditions do not affirm an enduring individual self or soul, rebirth – where taken literally – is understood to involve a continuation of the dispositional basis or mental patterns of individual personalities. So even here we can speak, at least loosely, of the postmortem persistence of psychological facts, such as character and memory, originally associated with a particular person, even if there is no persisting individual person.[8]

While we might suppose that the eschatological narratives of religious traditions are a source for the psychological conception of survival, arguably accounts of the afterlife found in the sacred texts of religious traditions simply *presuppose* psychological survival because this way of thinking about survival is rooted in widespread and cross-cultural intuitions about human nature and personal identity. Indeed, there is reason to suppose that religious accounts of the afterlife reflect evolving conceptions of the self within distinct historical and cultural contexts (Segal 2004: 697–731). So while the psychological conception of survival is essential to the eschatology of many religious traditions, it may be more sensible to suppose that religious traditions have actually been informed by pre-existing or co-existing, independent conceptions of the self, even if the idea of an afterlife is religiously motivated.

There is, of course, a central conceptual consideration that plausibly explains the widespread appeal of psychological survival, at least in the very minimal sense of a persisting individual conscious life or stream of experience characterized by various psychological properties. As a "human

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[8] In classical Buddhist accounts of rebirth, a person's exhibiting mental patterns characteristic of a formerly living person depends on a *causal relation* between the earlier and later collections of mental patterns, and it is not because there is some substance or entity that transmigrates from one body to another. There is causal continuity, but no continuity of self or soul, even as a substrate of mental patterns. See McDermott (1980), Perrett (1987). This reflects the Buddhist view that, in their present existence, persons are what Gowans calls "process-selves," a series of causally efficacious mental and physical states, not substance-selves (Gowans 2003: 104–16).

person," the self has properties *characteristic* of human persons, some of which may even be essential properties – that is, properties such that a person could not cease to have them without ceasing to be a human person. At least some characteristic human properties are psychological in nature – for example, consciousness, self-awareness, reflective thought, deliberation, intentional agency, and having a first-person perspective. So if one believes that human persons survive death, it will be natural to suppose that survivors retain properties characteristic of or essential to human persons. So it will be natural to suppose that survivors are self-aware centers of mental life, have interests and purposes, possess powers of intentional action, and so forth.

It might be, of course, that there is a postmortem persistence of the general psychological properties of human persons, but the individual postmortem psychology of persons might differ, perhaps greatly, from their antemortem psychology. Introducing considerations relevant to the individual identity of survivors would therefore augment an otherwise minimalist conception of psychological survival. This would also be important for models of personal survival since personal survival requires that a postmortem person be numerically identical to some formerly living person, not merely that a survivor be some postmortem human person or other. Survivalists typically introduce some particular criterion of personal identity to explicate the idea of personal survival, but there are three considerations that plausibly reinforce and strengthen the idea of psychological survival.

First, as noted above, many people assume that their identity is constituted by or essentially tied to their psychological life – the "psychological criterion" of identity, as it is called, historically associated with John Locke. On this view, important aspects of personality, such as memory and perhaps the set of one's particular personality traits and skills, constitute a person's identity at a given time, and the persistence of a person through time depends on a high degree of continuity in their psychological life between earlier and later times. So, for example, the man "Elvis" on August 4, 1970 is the same person as the man "Elvis" at some later time (e.g. January 16, 1976) just if "Elvis" at the later time has a suitably robust shared psychology with Elvis on August 4, 1970 (e.g. some of the same memories, beliefs, desires, purposes, and so forth). It is of course a debated issue as to how to formulate this criterion in a way that is consistent with our intuition that persons remain the same even with substantial changes in their psychology, but the point here is that if some psychological criterion of personal identity is adopted, the postmortem survival of a person just *means* psychological survival of some significant sort.

Second, we might suppose that some psychological criterion, though not sufficient for personal identity, is at least necessary to it. Perhaps personal identity depends on there being a particular body in existence, and a person's identity through time depends on bodily continuity. Psychological

and bodily criteria might be severally necessary and jointly sufficient for identity. In fact, if we thought that mental states depend on a functioning brain or physical substrate of some sort, the importance of psychological criteria for identity would naturally lead us to some bodily criterion of identity as an essential part of the portrait of personal identity. So not surprisingly, some who hold to the psychological criterion of identity also hold that survival must be an embodied form of existence.

Third, some survivalists who reject the psychological criterion of identity (as either necessary or sufficient for identity) accept the "soul criterion" of personal identity, as it is called (Goetz 2005: 33–60; Lewis 1982; Swinburne 1986: 145–73). As noted above, many survivalists identify the self with the soul, an immaterial or quasi-immaterial substance that is the bearer of mental properties. My identity at any particular time is constituted by there being a particular soul in existence, and I persist through time as long as this particular soul persists. On this view, consciousness is considered a function of the soul, and our various mental states (e.g. perceiving a stop sign, feeling the prick of a needle, remembering a road trip to Sedona, Arizona) are properties of the soul. These psychological properties may be occurrent, for example, when I am aware that there is a tree in front of me or when I actually remember trying to sneak up to Elvis Presley's room at the Hilton Hotel in March 1975. But at any given time, most of our individual psychology is not occurrent but held in a dispositional manner and triggered under the appropriate circumstances. So the soul would also have various psychological dispositions – for example, dispositions to sense, feel, form purposes, and think or remember. It would therefore be natural to suppose that surviving souls retain distinctive features of their antemortem psychology, at least as dispositions – for example, the disposition to recall a past event, entertain a deeply held belief, or respond to a situation joyfully or angrily. Perhaps souls must be re-embodied to exhibit conscious episodes or for these episodes to be strongly continuous with their antemortem psychology. Nonetheless, belief that the self is a soul does prima facie imply that, if souls survive death, they would possess a disposition for conscious states of the same or similar kind as the soul in its antemortem state.[9]

2.2   A strong personal survival hypothesis

Psychological survival is degreed in nature; that is, in principle, a survivor could retain more or less of her distinctive antemortem psychology. For

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[9]   I say prima facie here because there remains the question whether the experience of death, like trauma, alters important features of one's psychology, if one should survive death. And even if a postmortem soul retains its antemortem dispositions, death may impede the triggering of the disposition in different ways.

example, a survivor might retain most of her antemortem memories or maybe very few of them. Perhaps the interests and beliefs of survivors remain largely continuous with the interests and beliefs they had in their antemortem state, or perhaps these radically change. Accordingly, we can conceive of various hypotheses of psychological survival that occupy a position on a fairly broad continuum, with strong and weak conceptions occupying opposite ends of the continuum. I explore this beginning first with a strong personal survival hypothesis, which is partly based on the strong conception of psychological survival.

2.2.1   The strong psychological survival hypothesis

I noted above that if human persons survive death, then there must be at some future time – for purely conceptual reasons – a persisting center of self-awareness with powers of perception/knowledge and intentional causal agency, for these are essential properties of human persons. So personal survival entails generic psychological survival – that is, the persistence of psychological properties essential to human personhood. However, believers in personal survival typically adopt what we might call a *strong conception* of psychological survival. This postulates the survival of persons with most of their antemortem individual psychology intact – for example, most of their memories, interests, purposes, and character traits. As suggested by the Matthews quote above, on this view, the relationship between the ante-mortem and postmortem psychology of a survivor would be analogous to the relationship between a living person's psychology before and after having slept. We awake from sleep with most of our prior memories, beliefs, desires, skills, and character traits in place. We experience substantial psychological continuity despite a temporary breach in the otherwise mostly seamless nature of our experience. Similarly, on the strong conception of psychological survival, our postmortem psychology would be strongly continuous with our antemortem psychology.

Broad's classic discussion of conceivable forms of survival includes an account of the strong conception of psychological survival, specifically with reference to the memory feature of our individual psychology (Broad 1962: 421).[10] For Broad, personal survival requires the persistence of the dispositional basis of the personality associated with a personal stream of experience. By "personal stream of experience," Broad meant simply a first-person perspective, with its repertoire of ongoing mental material and processes (e.g. sensations, perceptions, beliefs, desires, intentions, and recollections or memories). However, at any given time, the bulk of mental material is not occurrent but instead possessed in the form of dispositions. For example,

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[10] For Broad's full discussion of conceivable forms of survival, to be further discussed below, see Broad (1962: 387–430).

I may not presently be recalling a past intimate moment with my partner, but I have a disposition to recall it, either voluntarily (by turning my mind to it) or spontaneously (for instance, upon hearing a particular song on the radio). Broad regards the persistence of the dispositional aspect of the human person as the "basis" of the personality since it alone secures deep continuity amidst the many gaps in the stream of personal experience (e.g. gaps created by alternations between sleeping and waking).

On Broad's view, the strong conception of psychological survival requires a personal stream of experience that persists after the death of the body but where the stream of experience exhibits the same degree of robustness, continuity, and unification as the experiences of living persons who awaken after a period of sleep. For Broad, this involved two conditions. First, the ostensible recollections in the stream of experience would include recollections of both experiences after death and experiences from the antemortem life of the person, where the recollections are all or mostly veridical or truth-oriented (as opposed to delusory) in nature. Second, the antemortem experiences would be recalled very much as a person in his waking state recalls experiences from an earlier waking state, with the same quantitative robustness and qualitative vividness. The second condition is necessary because the first condition allows that antemortem experiences might be remembered in much the same way that a person in his waking state recalls isolated fragments of his dreams. Since the recollection is not seamlessly woven into a highly unified experience, it would be a deviation from the otherwise seamless nature of our present experience.

Broad restricts his attention to the autobiographical memory component of the individual personality – that is, the system of recollections of past events in one's individual life, where this involves "episodic memory" (knowledge of specific past facts or events in one's personal history) and "semantic memory" (knowledge of general facts of the world), as they are called. But Broad's insights can be extended to our wider individual psychology. When we speak of the "personality," we refer to, in addition to autobiographical memory, patterns of non-memorial mental states in the form of specific emotions, beliefs, desires, interests/purposes, intentions, and motivations, together with various capacities and skills, including those of a cognitive, linguistic, and artistic nature. These are important determinants of behavior.

I will refer to this wider psychology of the individual person as a *psychological profile*:

> (Def.1) A psychological profile ψ = df. a system of autobiographical memories (ψ_{am}), capacities and skills (ψ_{cs}), and various non-memorial mental states (ψ_{nm}) associated with some personal stream of experience, and where ψ_{am}, ψ_{cs}, and ψ_{nm} are dispositional and occurrent features of the stream of experience.

With respect to ψ, we can distinguish between its synchronic and diachronic properties. The former are its properties at any particular time t, and these will include occurrent and dispositional aspects of ψ at t. By contrast, when we consider the properties of ψ through time, we are looking at its diachronic features. Although ψ is a dynamic and evolving system, it will exhibit greater or lesser degrees of integrity or stability over time, including the amount of ψ's content that persists through time. This is the issue of psychological continuity. Building on Broad's insights, we can formulate the following statement of the conditions of *strong psychological continuity*.

> (c1) A person P's psychological profile ψ is strongly continuous during some temporal segment $t_1, \ldots, t_n$ just if ψ has continuity to degree N through $t_1, \ldots, t_n$, where N $\approx$ the degree of continuity that the ψ of some properly functioning living person would exhibit between alternating periods of sleep and waking.[11]

We can then simply state a hypothesis of strong psychological survival as follows:

> S_S: There is some survivor P whose postmortem psychological profile pm-ψ is strongly continuous with P's antemortem psychological profile am-ψ.

2.2.2   The interactionist survival hypothesis

The strong conception of psychological survival concerns a person's individual psychological profile, but, as noted earlier, human persons are beings whose essential properties include intentional causal agency and perceiving/knowing. So personal survival entails that – as part of the personal stream of experience – survivors will have perceptual experience or knowledge, as well as some domain of causal influence. Moreover, if, as some philosophers have maintained, human persons are essentially social beings, survivors would need to act as agents and perceivers specifically in relation to other persons. The afterlife would need to be an environment in which social interaction takes place. Here we may ask two related questions. Would survivors be able to interact with other deceased persons in the afterlife? Would survivors be able to interact with persons still living on earth? The latter question is especially salient given the focus of the present book, for some empirical arguments for survival presuppose that survivors communicate with the living.

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[11]   I say that N "$\approx$" (approximates) the degree of continuity between sleep and waking since strong psychological continuity has somewhat fuzzy boundaries. Psychological continuity of a degree slightly less than what is exhibited between normal periods of sleeping and waking would also be appropriately designated as strong continuity.

We can work our way toward an exploration of the second question by beginning with the first. If we conceive of survival in purely physical terms, as embodied existence, the issues of causal agency and perception do not present any initial difficulty. The afterlife world would either be this world or some other physical world with the same or similar physical laws relevant to causal agency and perception as properties of embodied beings. We might suppose, though, that disembodied causal agency and perception presents some significant conceptual difficulties. Can we really conceive of disembodied persons interacting with an environment or other persons? Building on suggestions by Ducasse (1951: 486–7), H.H. Price provided perhaps the most well-known account of this in the 1950s (Price 1995d) in his exploration of the intelligibility of disembodied survival, specifically with the goal of showing that we could conceive of the afterlife as a communal, interactive world, even if survivors are disembodied persons.

First, we can conceive of the "Next World" (as Price calls the afterlife) as analogous to the dreamworld of our present experience. It could be an image world constructed out of the contents of our individual (or possibly collective) minds. It would be a quasi-physical world in which imaging replaces sense perception and thereby provides a broad range of surrogate visual, olfactory, tactile, and auditory experiences. Just as our waking-state experiences provide material out of which the dreamworld is constructed, so our antemortem memories would provide the images out of which the Next World is constructed. Also, just as our desires and feelings shape the events of the dreamworld, they would inform the narrative of the afterlife.

Second, according to Price, we can conceive of survivors who exist in a world of images and experiencing themselves as embodied, even if they are in fact disembodied. In the dreamworld, we *perceive* ourselves to have a body, and this, along with the spatial relations between objects in such a world, makes the dreamworld seem physical. Similarly, we can conceive of the Next World as one in which an individual utilizes images of his own body acquired before death to perceive himself as embodied. Furthermore, we could experience other persons in a similar modality, even if they are disembodied. Price suggests that disembodied persons could communicate with each other by way of *telepathic apparitions*. These would be image-representations of one's body telepathically transmitted to the mind of another person. So the image-world model of the afterlife appears to render intelligible the idea of a communal afterlife of disembodied persons.

Price focused on the intelligibility of communications between disembodied survivors. But what about a different kind of interactionist thesis, namely one that posits interactions between the deceased and living persons? A number of philosophers have touched on this (Lewis 1973: 150–3; Lund 2009: 210–11; Moore 1981: 60–1), and they have usually followed Price's model as something of a guide at this juncture.

First, just as in Price's model, survivors have knowledge of and causally interact with the afterlife environment and its occupants, if survivors were to interact with living persons, specifically in the interests of communicating messages to them, then necessarily survivors would need to perceive or have knowledge of the empirical world and persons in it, as well as exercise causal influence over the empirical world and its occupants. I will refer to this as *the interactionist hypothesis*.

> S_I: There is some survivor P who possesses knowledge of states of the empirical world before and after P's death, and where P causally interacts with the empirical world after death.[12]

I think it is important to note that S_S and S_I are independent hypotheses. First, S_I does not entail S_S. To be sure, S_I does arguably entail a minimal domain of psychological continuity. For example, interacting with the world would seem to presuppose continuity in semantic memory, which involves our generalized conceptual and factual knowledge of the world, and possibly some degree of procedural memory, which is the basis of our skills. Nonetheless, survivors may recall very little about their individual antemortem experiences, exhibit few or none of their antemortem skills or character traits, but still have the capacity to perceive the empirical world and causally interact with it. Of course, if survivors relay messages about their survival and their former earthly existence, then they must retain at least a modest stock of their antemortem memories, desires, and purposes. For example, survivors would have memories of loved ones and their lives with loved ones, the desire to interact with loved ones, and various purposes or intentions conducive to communication – for example, to inform loved ones about the afterlife, address unfinished business, or console them. Similarly, S_S does not entail S_I, for it is coherent to suppose that a person might have strong psychological continuity with her antemortem existence but not be capable of interacting with the empirical world or human minds.

Price's model offers guidance in a second way. It informs us, at least in a very general way, of the kind of powers we must attribute to survivors if the interactionist hypothesis is true. If disembodied persons can telepathically generate apparitions of themselves as a vehicle or instrument for communication with other disembodied persons, we can easily conceive of the same process being utilized to mediate communications between survivors and living persons. This might look very much like the phenomena involved in apparitions of the dead and mediumistic communications. In fact, several

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[12] Causal interaction with the empirical world includes (and might be restricted to) survivors having causal influence over the minds of living persons, in contrast to causal influence over physical objects.

prominent philosophers have noted that if survivors are disembodied persons, then the ability of survivors to communicate with the living would depend on their possessing psychic abilities such as telepathic receptivity and influence (to facilitate communication between persons), clairvoyance (to facilitate knowledge of the world), or psychokinesis (if they causally interact with physical objects in the empirical world).[13] Hence, the interactionist hypothesis requires that survivors have fairly extraordinary means of knowing and causally interacting with the physical world.

2.3   Conceptions of attenuated personal survival

I will take the conjunction of S_S and S_I to constitute a hypothesis of *strong personal survival*. Such a position, though, occupies only one position on the continuum of conceivable survival hypotheses. We can conceive of survival scenarios in which a subject of conscious states with perceptual and causal powers survives death but with an individual psychology less than strongly continuous with its antemortem existence, perhaps even weakly continuous with it. After all, while we can conceive of postmortem consciousness resembling the consciousness of a person who awakens after a period of sleep, we can also conceive of postmortem consciousness standing in relation to antemortem consciousness as a person's dream consciousness stands in relation to her waking-state consciousness, where there is, for example, diminished continuity of autobiographical memory. Or maybe survivors will have a more pervasive loss of antemortem memories that closely resembles amnesia cases in our present experience. In other words, it is conceivable that survivors will not bear a significant psychological resemblance to their antemortem selves. This gives rise to various possible hypotheses of *attenuated* personal survival that weaken the degree of psychological continuity between the antemortem and postmortem psychological profile.[14] However, before exploring models of attenuated personal survival, their relevance is worth noting.

2.3.1   The relevance of attenuated personal survival

First, there may be empirical reasons for supposing that even if consciousness survives the death of the body, it cannot do so with a psychology that is strongly continuous with our present psychology associated as it is with

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[13] See §9.2.3 for discussion on this and its significance for empirical survival arguments.

[14] Those who adopt a psychological criterion of personal identity may be inclined to think that at least some versions of what I call "attenuated personal survival" are not forms of personal survival at all, especially if the changes to our psychology are both significant and sudden. By contrast, "soul" and "bodily" criteria of identity will be more permissive for the range of psychological changes consistent with personal survival (e.g., Lewis 1973: 91–2). See below in text.

bodily existence, at least not without a new physical substrate. A strong conception of psychological survival may simply be less empirically plausible than attenuated conceptions. And this will be relevant to our subsequent evaluation of empirical survival arguments. In the absence of this distinction, empirical considerations might lead us prematurely to reject the idea of personal survival altogether if we suppose that personal survival requires a strong degree of psychological continuity, but which cannot occur without a body or functioning brain. The important question, of course, is whether hypotheses of attenuated survival can make at least as much sense of the evidence as a hypothesis of strong personal survival.

Second, while changes in our individual psychology need not dissolve our identity, even if the changes are significant, we can conceive of significant and substantial changes to our present psychology that would dissolve psychological continuity to such a degree that it would be reasonable to doubt whether *I*, this individual self, has survived death. We can acknowledge a range of *qualitative* changes in a person, including their individual psychology, where it seems sensible to suppose that the person remains *numerically* the same. Moreover, there may be a range of significant qualitative changes in numerically the same person even if our personal identity is constituted by psychological criteria such as sameness of memories and personality traits. The reader is probably very different today in mind than she was at age ten, but she is numerically the same person. However, the psychological changes that an adult has experienced since being ten years old have taken place gradually over a long period of time. Were these changes to take place suddenly, or were they to be accompanied with little or no recollection of past events, we might sensibly doubt whether the same person had persisted. So there might be a threshold value for the degree or kind of psychological change that personal identity can tolerate. If the value is exceeded, personal identity is dissolved. Something might *persist*, but it might be more plausible to interpret extreme changes of this sort as involving the emergence of a new person rather than the survival of a former person.

Third, and most significantly, even if radical changes to our individual psychology were consistent with our *being* the same person, it might nonetheless undermine our ability to *know* that some person is identical to another. This is particularly acute in cases where we can rely on only psychological criteria to identify a person. Suppose that Uncle Jerry's plane has crashed but his body has not been found. The credibility of a letter, text message, or email from a person who identifies himself as Uncle Jerry would depend on the author of the message exhibiting knowledge of things that Uncle Jerry would be in a special position to know: his recalling things we would expect Jerry to know about his own life and family or exhibiting vocabulary and turns of phrase characteristic of Uncle Jerry and which persons other than Jerry are not likely to know. As we will see in Chapter 3, most empirical arguments for survival depend heavily on our ability to identify persons by purely psychological criteria.

2.3.2 Exploring forms of attenuated personal survival

Given the independence of S_S and S_I, two forms of attenuated personal survival have already been suggested. First, a model of survival might consist of the conjunction of S_S and the negation of S_I. In other words, there might be strong psychological continuity, but survivors might have no ability to interact with the empirical world because their perceptual powers do not extend to our world, or while they can perceive events in our world, they are unable to causally interact with it. Second, the conjunction of S_I and the negation of S_S is another conceivable general model of personal survival. But consider that since the content of S_S involves a psychological *profile*, which includes at least three generic features of our individual psychology – that is, (ψ_{am}), (ψ_{cs}), (ψ_{nm}), – there are actually several kinds of adjustments that can be made to S_S to produce different hypotheses of attenuated personal survival. This is worth developing a bit.

First, consider autobiographical memory (ψ_{am}), specifically the episodic component that concerns recollection of specific events or persons in one's life. We might suppose that, though the stream of postmortem experience includes ostensible acts of recollection, some of which would be veridical, the recollections might resemble the recollections that a dreamer has of events from his waking state. So the postmortem personality would be as identical to the antemortem personality as our dream personality is to our waking personality. While there might be some veridical recollections of what the person has experienced after death, as well as what he experienced during his life prior to death, facts might also be mixed with a significant amount of fiction supplied by one's surviving imaginative powers. While the overall narrative might have important symbolic value, veridical recollections of one's antemortem life might be the exception, not the rule.[15] But we can conceive of survival models in which there is even greater discontinuity with respect to episodic memory. As Broad suggested, ostensible recollections might be of only those events that have taken place after death. This would make the persisting postmortem stream of experience as different from the original antemortem personality as alter personalities are in some cases of dissociative identity disorder where the host personality does not recall the experiences of alters, or one alter is unable to recall the experiences of another alter.[16]

Loss of memory as a feature of postmortem consciousness can be spelled out with greater specificity. If postmortem amnesia with respect to one's

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[15] Again, here I consider only episodic autobiographical memory. These kinds of memories might be significantly diminished, even if subjects had a large number of veridical procedural and semantic memories. See below for further discussion on these distinctions.

[16] On the nature of multiplicity in cases of dissociative identity disorder, especially alter personalities as distinct centers of self-awareness and memories, see Braude (1995: 66–92).

antemortem existence is modeled on the phenomenon of amnesia in the present life, we can conceive of the loss of memory in the afterlife being highly selective or very general. Perhaps certain phases of life are not recalled, while others are recalled. Or maybe the loss of memory is more extensive, covering all the episodes from one's antemortem existence. Of course, postmortem amnesia, however extensive, might be only a temporary condition in the afterlife, in which case postmortem consciousness would approximate the dynamics of amnesia in cases of dissociative fugue in which subjects have a reversible, temporary loss of memory. Alternatively, antemortem memories in the afterlife might progressively and irreversibly diminish with time, similar to irreversible cognitive degeneration in Alzheimer's cases.

I have been focusing on episodic autobiographical memory, but we can also conceive of afterlife scenarios in which other kinds of memory are diminished or completely lacking. For example, there might be a loss of "procedural" ("how to") memory. This would adversely affect the exercise of antemortem abilities and skills (ψ_{cs}). Survivors might remember events from their antemortem existence, but they may have lost some of the implicit learning that was the basis of their various motor, linguistic, intellectual, artistic, or musical skills. Postmortem persons might lose their ability to identify family and friends by their names, communicate in particular languages, be poetic, read musical scores, solve complex quadratic equations, or be humorous. If postmortem communications depend on semantic and procedural memories, attenuation at this juncture would place significant constraints on the interactionist survival hypothesis, perhaps undermining it altogether. This too would limit, if not prevent, efficacious interactions with the world of the living. So there is an interesting potential connection between diminution of aspects of memory (and by extension diminution of ψ_{cs}) and S_I, with the former potentially weakening or eliminating the latter.

We might also suppose that postmortem psychological profiles have strong continuity with respect to ψ_{am} and ψ_{cs} and, but not with respect to, the range of various non-memorial mental states (ψ_{nm}). Perhaps beliefs, interests, and desires change in the afterlife, and consequently, postmortem intentions and purposes are very different from those of the person's antemortem state. One of the significant implications of this is that, even if postmortem persons retained antemortem capacities and skills, these might not be exercised on account of survivors having interests and purposes very different from those of their antemortem state. Does a surviving musician retain his prior interest in music, a poet his prior interest in poetry, a mathematician his prior interest in mathematics, a gardener his prior interest in gardening? This question is significant since changes in beliefs and interests are likely to affect the content of postmortem communications, which might result in features of postmortem communication uncharacteristic of the antemortem personality. Most importantly, one specific interest that

might have changed in the postmortem state is a prior interest to communicate with the living should one survive death. So it is highly plausible to suppose that changes to ψ_{nm}, if significant enough, would either undermine S_I or have a profound impact on what we would expect in the way of the content of postmortem communications.

Conceivable changes in interests and desires raise the broader issue of changes that might take place in a person's emotional life. Emotions are an important behavior-influencing constituent of personality – for example, anger, anxiety, grief, fear, hope, joy, worry, serenity, courage, trust, guilt, and shame. It is conceivable that survivors lose antemortem characteristics such as anxiety, rage, fear, or worry. Or maybe personalities characterized by positive emotions lose this emotional orientation in the afterlife. Perhaps the emotional dysregulation and neurotic characteristics of borderline personality types drop off after death. Alternatively, perhaps death actually generates neurotic tendencies in some surviving personalities where none previously existed. The main point here is that we can easily conceive of many kinds of significant postmortem changes in our emotional life, and these in turn would contribute to behavioral patterns very different from those exhibited in the person's antemortem state.

When we look at ψ_{am}, ψ_{cs}, ψ_{nm} as basic features of a psychological profile, it is clear that there are as many conceivable hypotheses of attenuated personal survival as there are conceivable adjustments to each of these basic features of a psychological profile. In the interest of simplicity at this stage, I will consider two such hypotheses, each of which covers a range of attenuation.

First, we have a hypothesis of weak psychological survival:

S_W: There is some survivor P whose postmortem psychological profile pm-ψ is weakly continuous with P's antemortem psychological profile am-ψ.

We can explicate weak psychological continuity as follows:

(c2) A person P's psychological profile ψ is *weakly continuous* during some temporal segment $t_1, \ldots, t_n$ just if ψ has continuity to degree N' during $t_1, \ldots, t_n$, where N' $\ll$ N.

There are a number of specific ways that the psychological continuity exhibited by ψ would be N', a degree much less than N. The most significant would be where ψ_{am} is much lower than it is with N. I take the value range here to be paradigmatically represented by the distortions and loss of memory characteristic of many alters in cases of dissociative identity disorder, dissociative fugue, subjects of dementia (such as in Alzheimer's cases), and the relation that the (non-lucid) dream-ego stands to our waking-state consciousness. In

many of these cases, we also find substantial changes with respect to ψ_{cs} and ψ_{nm}. Subjects of dementia lose prior skills, and alter personalities are often individuated by clusters of idiosyncratic beliefs, interests, and skills. The (non-lucid) dream-ego also differs from the waking-state ego in terms of its fairly substantial shift in beliefs, autobiographical memories, and abilities and skills.

In between weak and strong psychological survival, we can locate a moderate psychological survival hypothesis:

S_M: There is some survivor P whose postmortem psychological profile pm-ψ is moderately continuous with P's antemortem psychological profile am-ψ.

This moderate continuity may be explicated as the range between S_W and S_S:

(c3) A person P's psychological profile ψ is moderately continuous during some period of time $t_1, \ldots, t_n$ just if ψ has continuity to degree N'' during $t_1, \ldots, t_n$, where $N'' > N'$ but $N'' < N$.

Moderate psychological continuity would theoretically cover all values indexing continuities between weak and strong. It seems sensible to suppose that there is an upper and lower domain here, though it is not entirely clear how the domains should be partitioned. Plausibly on the lower end (in the direction of weak psychological continuity), ψ_{am} might be more unified and continuous than is exhibited in the kinds of cases indicated above, but it might still fall short of the substantial continuity between alternating periods of waking and sleeping. One's pm-ψ_{am} might stand in relation to one's am-ψ_{am} as waking-state consciousness stands in relation to dream consciousness. The recollection of dreamworld experiences in our waking state is typically more (qualitatively and quantitatively) robust than recollections of our waking state while we are dreaming. Our beliefs and skills are also quite varied, though of course we retain many of them that characterize our waking state.

2.4 Concluding remarks

In the present chapter, I have provided an overview of some of the core features of the hypothesis of personal survival, as well as delineated a variety of survival hypotheses that results from filling out these core features in different ways. I have focused on primarily the distinctly *psychological* dimension of survival hypotheses, namely the psychological profile of postmortem consciousness, drawing attention in particular to the distinction between conceivable differences in the degree of psychological continuity between antemortem and postmortem existence. I divided these into weak,

moderate, and strong psychological continuity hypotheses, though admittedly this is a rough characterization of a fairly rich and complex territory. In addition, I briefly touched on the *modality* of survival, as survival hypotheses differ with respect to whether they postulate an embodied or disembodied mode of survival. Finally, I discussed a third core feature of survival models, namely the social/environmental parameters of the afterlife. According to the interactionist survival hypothesis, the social/environmental parameters of the afterlife are open, as survivors have epistemic access to the empirical world after death and have the ability to communicate with the living, the latter implying some degree of causal efficacy over other minds or the empirical world.

Different combinations of the core features of survival hypotheses yield a range of different prima facie conceivable models of personal survival, roughly more robust versions of a simple hypothesis of survival. Here are some examples:

Mod-1: strong psychological survival + embodied survival
        + interactionism
Mod-2: strong psychological survival + disembodied survival
        + interactionism
Mod-3: moderate psychological survival + embodied survival
        + interactionism
Mod-4: moderate psychological survival + disembodied survival
        + interactionism
Mod-5: weak psychological survival + embodied survival + interactionism
Mod-6: weak psychological survival + disembodied survival
        + interactionism

The above models are all interactionist survival models, but we could formulate additional models that reproduce the patterns in the above models for the first two core features but deny the third, namely interactionism. Also, two other theoretical possibilities should be noted here. It is at least conceivable that not all survivors share the same degree of psychological profile continuity, modality of survival, or afterlife social/environmental parameters. So, for any of the models envisioned here, we can say that the model may be true for all or only some survivors and perhaps only for a limited period of time. Furthermore, it is also conceivable that some or all who survive death experience phases of postmortem existence in which the degree of their psychological continuity, modality of survival, and/or environmental constraints in the afterlife change with time. The implications of these extended models will be considered in the subsequent chapters. So there are dozens of ways to develop a robust survival hypothesis. This will prove particularly significant in the discussion in later chapters.

Finally, as preparatory to our subsequent exploration, it should also be acknowledged that there are important conceptual issues that bear on whether some of the survival models above are indeed conceivable models of *personal* survival. For example, for those who are inclined toward a psychological criterion of personal identity, Mod-5 and Mod-6 would likely not be regarded as conceivable models of personal survival, and perhaps Mod-3 and Mod-4 are at least problematic in this respect. Also, if personal identity depends on bodily criteria, then Mod-2, Mod-4, and Mod-6 would not be conceivable models of personal survival. Of course, in the exploration of alleged empirical evidence for survival, we should be prepared to acknowledge that the data might constitute evidence for survival only in some highly attenuated sense that falls short of personal survival. Showing that there is a good evidence for survival of some sort, even if arguments purporting to show that there is good evidence for personal survival are unsuccessful, would still be highly significant.

3
Out-of-Body and Near-Death Experiences

In the present chapter, I begin a three-chapter exploration of phenomena allegedly suggestive of survival and that provide data on which classical empirical arguments for survival are based. In these chapters, I focus primarily on strands of data that empirical survivalists claim *support* or *are favorable toward* the survival hypothesis. In sorting through explanatory alternatives in the latter half of the book, it will be necessary to introduce other strands of data that arguably render the survival hypothesis less plausible. After some general observations on the empirical approach to survival and how it contrasts with philosophical and religious grounds for survival beliefs, I examine out-of-body experiences (OBEs) and near-death experiences (NDEs). While OBEs and NDEs are distinct in several respects, they are closely related, especially if, as I will do, we limit the consideration of NDEs to those with an OBE component.

Generally speaking, OBEs and NDEs are relevant to survival because they involve data that *seem* to show the ontological autonomy of consciousness – that is, the ability of consciousness to exist independent of the body and free from its limitations. The crucial question, as we will subsequently explore, is whether the experience of seeming to be "outside" of one's body (a first-person experiential report) can be taken as evidence for consciousness *actually* being outside one's body or as otherwise being independent of the body. For this reason, the more salient cases are those with apparently non-fortuitous veridical features – for example, in which an OBEr is able to provide accurate descriptions of locations or events taking place remote from their body, or places or events from which they were otherwise sensorily isolated but which they claim to have perceived during their OBE. NDEs are particularly relevant at this juncture since some NDEs appear to take place when we would not expect brain processes to support mentation, or at least not enhanced mentation, much less veridical perceptions.

3.1   The empirical approach to survival

A crucial philosophical question that arises with respect to the hypothesis of survival concerns the epistemic evaluation of the hypothesis. By "epistemic" evaluation I mean the evaluation of hypotheses or beliefs as rational, justified, or warranted. These are terms of positive epistemic appraisal. When applied to hypotheses, beliefs, or acts of believing, they indicate that we are in a strong position with respect to the goal of believing what is true and not believing what is false. An epistemically rational, justified, or warranted belief might be false – positive epistemic status does not guarantee truth – but the belief is held in a way that is *conducive* to its being true, for example, because there is good evidence for its truth or the belief is based on grounds that are indicative of the truth of the belief.

3.1.1   Philosophical and religious grounds for belief in survival

Survivalists have often claimed that certain philosophical considerations offer proof or evidence for survival.[1] Metaphysical arguments frequently aim to show that survival follows from the conceptual analysis of various introspectively accessible facts about the nature of consciousness or the self, perhaps together with certain a priori truths. For example, having established the existence of the soul on the basis of the nature of mental phenomena, it has been further argued that the soul is an indivisible or simple substance and that such substances are not subject to dissolution. Hence, the exploration of mentality leads us to postulate a substance whose very nature ensures its persistence after biological death. Not all philosophical arguments are metaphysical in nature, though. There have also been various ethical and pragmatic arguments proposed. Kant, for instance, tried to show that immortality is a precondition for the possibility of moral perfection, which is the desideratum of moral law but which cannot be accomplished within any finite temporal framework.

While adherents of the various religious traditions of the world have often utilized philosophical reasoning to offer support for their belief in survival, they have also strongly relied on the teachings of sacred texts, which in some religious traditions are regarded as forms of divine revelation and thus fully authoritative, offering the strongest kind of justification for belief in

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[1] For a concise overview of such arguments, see Paterson (1995: 103–30). Among prominent early twentieth-century philosophers, McTaggart discusses metaphysical arguments for/against immortality (McTaggart 1916), whereas Broad considers ethical arguments (Broad 1960: 481–513). Philosophical arguments for the *truth* of survival should be distinguished from philosophical arguments that aim to establish a more modest conclusion, namely the *conceivability*, *intelligibility*, or *possibility* (in some relevant sense) of survival. Much of the philosophical literature since the 1950s has been pre-occupied with this. See Flew (1987b), Lewis (1978), Price (1995d).

survival. We need only think of the prominence of the doctrine of bodily resurrection in the New Testament (for Christianity) and the Qur'an (for Islam), two major sources of Western eschatology.[2] Jewish apocalyptic literature, such as I Enoch and II Enoch, provides detailed accounts of the intermediate state of souls between death and final resurrection, an important development within Western religious eschatology. Similarly, the journey of the soul immediately after death is taught in key Zoroastrian texts, including the Vishtasp Yast, Bundahishn, and Arda Viraf.[3] For the various Hindu spiritual traditions, the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Puranas are important sources for the doctrine of rebirth and final release, while the Bardo Thos Grol Chen Mo is an important source for Tibetan Buddhist views of the intermediate state between death and rebirth.

An interesting feature of religious grounds for belief in survival is that those grounds often presuppose an original experiential basis for belief in survival, for the sacred texts often convey their ideas about the afterlife in the form of narratives describing what people (e.g. prophets, sages, and seers) have directly experienced. In some cases, these experiences involve publicly observable unusual or miraculous events: for example, the medium who conjures up the deceased prophet Samuel for King Saul in I Samuel 28 of the Hebrew Bible, or the resurrection of Christ in the gospel narratives of the New Testament. In other instances, the experiences involve visions, dreams, or altered states of consciousness that are private in nature: for example, the sage Arda Viraf's journey into hell in Arda Viraf, the Jewish Patriarch Enoch's journey into the afterlife in I and II Enoch, or Saint Paul's temporary glimpse of the afterlife referenced in the New Testament (II Corinthians 12:2–4). While the traditions usually view the latter kinds of experiences as instances of divine revelation, they are experiences nonetheless. The textual teachings can be true only if some people have had veridical afterlife experiences, the reports of which are subsequently propagated through the narratives of sacred texts. Hence, the sacred texts of the religious traditions actually presuppose an *empirical* approach to survival.

3.1.2 Characterizing the empirical approach to survival

On the empirical approach to survival, most broadly stated, observational data can in principle provide evidence *for* or *against* the hypothesis of survival. So we can in principle arrive at rational judgments about the possibility, plausibility, or probability of survival based on features of the empirical world that may be discovered and analyzed by using the kinds of

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[2] On the scriptural sources for Christian eschatology, see Cooper (2000). On the sources of Islamic eschatology, see Smith and Haddad (2002).

[3] For the textual and conceptual dimensions to Zoroastrian eschatology, see Ara (2008, ch. 10), Pavry (1926), and Zaehner (1961, ch. 15).

methods employed in the investigation of the world and as paradigmatically represented by the empirical sciences.

Bertrand Russell assumed the empirical approach to survival when he said that the question of an afterlife "belong[s], at least in theory, to special sciences, and are capable, at least in theory, of being decided by empirical evidence" (Russell 1914: 17). A.J. Ayer acknowledged empirical conditions under which we could conclude that a formerly living person had been re-embodied: "I think it would be open to us to admit the logical possibility of reincarnation merely by laying down the rule that if a person who is physically identified as living at a later time does have the ostensible memories and character of a person who is physically identified as living at an earlier time, they are to be counted as one person and not two" (1963: 127).

C.D. Broad affirmed that the question of postmortem survival is partly a philosophical question and partly an empirical one. "It is empirical," wrote Broad, "in the sense that, if it can be clearly formulated and shown to be an intelligible question, the only relevant way to attempt to answer it is by appeal to specific observable facts." (1962: 387). More recently, R.W.K. Paterson has said that the question of survival is "an intellectual composite problem, made up of both philosophical and empirical elements. ... [T]he truth or falsehood of the proposition that people survive their bodily deaths is pre-eminently a matter of empirical fact, one way or the other" (Paterson 1995: 4). Of course, Russell was convinced that the evidence was decidedly against survival. Broad was sympathetic toward survival, but not the survival of the personality as such. Paterson thinks the empirical evidence is in favor of personal survival.

I will use the phrase "empirical survivalist" to refer to someone who both believes in survival and believes that there is empirical evidence that is at least suggestive of survival. Empirical survivalists may differ with regard to the features of the world that they count as evidence for survival, as well as how they assess the weight or force of the evidence. They typically view the empirical evidence as conferring some positive epistemic status on belief in survival – for example, rendering belief in survival rational, justified, or warranted. Moreover, while empirical survivalists may hold that the only evidence for survival is empirical in nature, they may also accept that there are philosophical or religious considerations that support survival. Finally, empirical survivalists may differ on what precisely is supposed to survive death and whether it will do so in an embodied or disembodied state. Hence, empirical survivalists may take the evidence for survival to support any one of the many survival hypotheses discussed in Chapter 2.

While many who accept the empirical approach to survival believe in survival, not all do. Like William James and C.D. Broad, a person might accept the empirical approach but believe that there is insufficient empirical evidence to believe in survival or its negation. In the absence of other grounds for belief in survival, such a person would be agnostic about

survival. Alternatively, a person might believe that human persons do *not* survive death, because she thinks that the weight of the empirical evidence is against survival. For instance, a large number of scientists and philosophers maintain that survival is logically incompatible with some currently known empirical fact(s): for example, facts of neuroscience that allegedly indicate that consciousness is produced by and is dependent on the brain (Edwards 1997b; Lamont 1990; Hales 2001a, 2001b).

3.1.3 Empirical data that might confirm survival

So what kinds of empirical facts might count in favor of personal survival? There have been recent suggestions among some contemporary philosophers of mind as to how advances in neuroscience might eventually assist with fairly precise experiments that would permit empirically testing the hypothesis that human persons are or have souls, roughly an immaterial substance presently associated with the body (Baker and Goetz 2011: 13–9). Such tests would involve trying to detect the existence of souls in much the same way that we detect other unobservable entities, by the entity's observable effects – for example, in generating certain patterns of neural events. This might provide evidence for the survival of the self after the dissolution of the body.

There are, however, two prima facie limitations to such strategies for providing evidence for personal survival. First, like philosophical arguments that purport to prove substance dualism, empirical evidence for substance dualism would at best be evidence only against physicalist theories of mind and the human person. While this would *remove* a common objection to personal survival (based on physicalist premises), it would not in itself provide evidence *for* personal survival. As explained in Chapter 2, the truth of substance dualism is compatible with the dependence of the soul on the body. So we would need additional reasons for supposing that the nature of the soul, whose existence has been confirmed in this scenario, is such as to ensure the soul's independence of the body and thus continued existence after the dissolution of the body.[4]

Second, the above strategy would, if successful, at best provide reasons for supposing that human persons are not identical with their bodies and that some non-bodily *aspect* of the human person will survive death. Theoretically, of course, it is still possible that this non-bodily surviving part of the person would not be conscious, at least not in the absence of a body of some sort or some equivalent of a neural substrate. As we saw in Chapter 2,

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[4] One possibility here is that empirical facts could establish the existence of souls and that conceptual arguments would establish that souls are the kind of substance whose ontological constitution guarantees the soul's continuation after death. Assuming the cogency of such arguments, which is itself a matter of debate, there would remain the second problem noted below (in text).

some substance dualists affirm the existence of souls but deny that souls will exhibit conscious episodes in the absence of a functioning brain. Moreover, some philosophers – notably C.D. Broad and H.H. Price – have proposed the possibility that what survives death is only the dispositional basis of the personality, fragments of our current individual psychology that fall short of constituting personal survival. So it seems that an empirical argument for personal survival would need to provide evidence for the postmortem continuation of our individual or personal stream of *consciousness*, together with its distinctive and idiosyncratic characteristics.

Given the importance of psychological criteria in identifying persons, one kind of evidence for personal survival would be empirical phenomena that suggest the present existence of the psychological profile of some formerly living person. Ayer suggested one form of this above, namely that "if a person who is physically identified as living at a later time does have the ostensible memories and character of a person who is physically identified as living at an earlier time, they are to be counted as one person and not two" (1963: 127). This would be a case of reincarnation. Of course, if we accept what Ayer says here, then it is also plausible to suppose that evidence that someone has survived bodily might come in the form of other phenomena that otherwise suggest the persistence of their memories and character. For instance, some physically identifiable person, A, might have large quantities of detailed and intimate knowledge of the life of some formerly living person, B; I mean a body of knowledge that B would be in a privileged position to possess. Unlike Ayer's example, A might not possess this knowledge in the form of memories but rather in the form of information that has come to A by way of ostensible postmortem mental communications from B, where B is either now disembodied or possesses a body not visible to us but is nonetheless capable of interacting with our world. Person A might even at times express through her own persona many of the idiosyncratic personality characteristics and skills of person B, perhaps at times when A is feeling "overshadowed," "directly controlled," or even "possessed" by B. This would be equivalent to phenomena associated with mental and trance mediumship, as well as with spirit possession. A natural extension of this would be ostensible communications from the deceased that are mediated by some temporary and apparently objective image or form that resembles the physical appearance of the formerly living person: what are known as apparitions or ghosts.

While accounts of phenomena of these sort are found in the literature of diverse cultures and religious traditions throughout history, their systematic exploration began with the founding of the British Society of Psychical Research in 1882 and the American branch in 1885.[5] Scientists, philosophers,

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[5] For an account of the founders of psychical research and their work, see Gauld (1968).

and psychologists associated with these societies and their many descendent organizations have focused on seemingly unusual or anomalous empirical facts taken by many survivalists to be evidence for personal survival. The salient phenomena may be divided into two broad categories.

1. There are primary phenomena of the sort noted above, which seem to provide evidence that the consciousness or psychological profile of some formerly living persons has *in fact* survived death. The phenomena here include communications ostensibly originating from deceased persons and relayed through living agents known as "mediums," as well as claims of living persons to having "past life memories" and exhibiting additional mental and physical characteristics of some formerly living person.
2. There are secondary phenomena that seem to provide evidence that consciousness, or our psychological profile, is not dependent on the body-brain, and so it is *capable* of surviving bodily death. The phenomena here are the closely related OBEs and NDEs. The primary phenomena above presuppose that the connection between psychological profile and embodiment is not too rigid; indeed, it is fairly loose. So these secondary phenomena would provide a kind of indirect evidence for personal survival by at least softening the connection between consciousness and our present embodied state.

I begin with an examination of the secondary phenomena, leaving the exploration of the primary phenomena to Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

3.2   Out-of-body experiences

As already indicated, the out-of-body experience (OBE) is a widely reported and cross-cultural phenomenon, acknowledged in the sacred texts of diverse religious traditions (Shushan 2009; Zaleski 1987). Although they were a focus of scientific exploration in the early years of the societies of psychical research, they have in recent years come under more rigorous forms of scientific analysis (Krippner 1996; Alvarado 1989, 2000). In an OBE, a living person has a deliberately induced or spontaneous experience in which it seems to the person that she is temporarily outside the body, though in some cases in possession of what is called a secondary or astral body. The person seems to be feeling, perceiving, thinking, and acting while outside their physical body. The sense of being separated from the body is grounded in the OBE subject's apparent perceptual experience of the world or some other sphere of existence from a vantage point where their physical body is not located. It may seem to them that they are hovering over their physical body or have moved to some other location remote from their physical body.

3.2.1   The relevance of OBEs to survival

The potential relevance of OBEs to the question of survival is twofold. First, the phenomenon here may provide evidence against materialist or physicalist views of the human person that either equate, reduce, or causally trace mental phenomena to brain states. OBEs thereby potentially refute one of the major objections to postmortem survival. Second, a number of survival researchers and philosophers take it that these experiences provide empirical evidence that consciousness is not entirely dependent on the body, and it is therefore at least *capable* of existing outside the body. This obviously makes plausible the supposition that consciousness can survive the death of the body.

As David Ray Griffin has noted,

> OBEs … while not providing direct evidence of life after death as such, do provide strong evidence that the self can exist, feel, perceive, think, decide and even sometimes (to a more or less limited extent) influence other actualities while apart from its physical body. OBEs thereby provide strong evidence against the primary assumption behind the rejection of belief in life after death. (1997: 266)

So the central issue of debate concerning OBEs is whether the consciousness of OBErs *is* genuinely outside or independent of their body during such experiences (the "extrasomatic" interpretation, as it is called, of the phenomenon) or whether the experiences may be accounted for without supposing this (the "intrasomatic" interpretation, as it is called). To this end, the critical exploration of OBEs has focused on both their phenomenology and methods designed to confirm that some OBEs involve non-fortuitous veridical perceptual experiences. Earlier researchers such as Hart (1954, 1956), Robert Crookall (1961), and Green (1968) provided important details on the phenomenology and typology of out-of-body experiences, as well as documented the veridical nature of many OBEs. However, the more important data come from subsequent experimental studies designed to test veridical perceptions during OBEs under control conditions. Charles Tart (1968), for instance, tested the veridical nature of OBEs by conducting experiments to test, under controlled conditions, the ability of OBErs to acquire information about the physical environment during their alleged OBEs. Karlis Osis and Donna McCormick (1980) tested for veridical perceptions during OBEs and correlations between such perceptions and measurable changes in the physical environment at the location of the target about which the OBE allegedly acquired information. The Tart and Osis/McCormick experiments will be discussed below.

3.2.2   The Martha Johnson case

The more prominent early philosophers who addressed OBEs (Broad 1962: 167–89; Ducasse 1961: 160–4) analyzed the anecdotal evidence of OBEs

reported in the early literature (Johnson 1953; Muldoon 1936; Muldoon and Carrington 1929, 1951), including reports submitted to *the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* from its inception in 1884, and relevant accounts included in *Phantasms of the Living* (1886) – the vast two-volume opus of apparitional reports compiled by early investigators and researchers Edmund Gurney, Frank Podmore, and Frederic Myers.

One of the more interesting cases from the earlier literature, cited by subsequent philosophers (Braude 2003: 261–3; Griffin 1997: 225–7; Lund 2009: 132–5) is worth describing. It involves two salient features. First, there is an apparent acquisition of information by the OBEr during the time of the OBE of events taking place remote from the location of her physical body. Second, another person allegedly perceives the OBEr in apparitional form at the remote location during the time of the subject's OBE, making this a case of a "reciprocal apparition," as it is called.

Miss Martha Johnson informed the American Society for Psychical Research in May 1957 of an OBE that took place in January of the same year. In the early morning of January 27, Miss Johnson had an ostensible dream experience in which she traveled out of her body to her mother's home in northern Minnesota, 926 miles from her home in Plains, Illinois. Miss Johnson experienced entering her mother's home after traveling through "a great blackness." She strikes a particular posture, leaning against a dish cupboard with folded arms. She notices that her mother is engaged in an activity with her (the mother's) hands, bending over something white. Her mother seems eventually to notice her. Thereupon she exited the room. She woke up at 2:10am. Miss Johnson's mother wrote to her daughter the following day to report seeing her apparition in her home in Minnesota at 1:10am her time, 2:10am Illinois time. The mother described her daughter as appearing next to a cupboard, in the position corresponding to Miss Johnson's experience of herself, and with her hairstyle and blouse as they were when she went to bed that evening. The manner of her noticing her daughter's standing before her also corresponded to what Miss Johnson had reported in her experience. Miss Johnson's mother also noted that at the time of her daughter's appearance, she was bending over an ironing board and pressing out steam.

There are, of course, many documented examples of this kind of experience in the aforementioned body of literature, where the OBEr reports having observed events at the location that he or she seemed to visit, or reports observing features of the environment but where the events or environmental features are independently corroborated by one or more persons at the location. These cases of apparently non-fortuitous veridical perceptions in OBEs are significant since they seem to show that such experiences are not imaginary but are reality-oriented experiences that involve an exotic means of knowledge acquisition and – most relevant to survival – might indicate the capacity of consciousness to exist independently of the body.

3.2.3   Experiments designed to confirm veridical OBEs

Broad lamented the fact that there was very little in the way of reliably documented experimental cases of OBEs in his day. However, since Broad's time there have been some laboratory-based experimental OBE studies to test apparent veridical perceptions, where controlled conditions arguably have significantly reduced the plausibility of supposing that OBErs acquired their information through normal means.

Charles Tart (1968) revealed the results of several experimental tests, conducted between 1967 and 1968, on subjects who claimed they were able to voluntarily induce OBEs or regularly have them in a spontaneous manner. To test veridical perceptions during OBEs, Tart had placed a five-digit number out of view, but which the subjects might be able to see during an OBE since their perspective of the environment would not be limited to their bodily location. Although the first subject could not identify the five-digit number (after nine runs), a second experimental subject, Ms. Z, claimed to see the number and was able to provide the correct sequence on the fourth night of tests. Ms. Z was hooked up to an electroencephalogram (EEG) for continuous recording of brain waves throughout the night, a miniature strain gauge was used to monitor rapid eye movements, and electrodes were also used on the subject's body to measure skin resistance. Ms. Z had OBEs each night, but only upon waking during the fourth night was she able to identify the target, the number sequence 25132, which she shouted out immediately upon waking. Despite being told in advance that the number would be propped upright against the wall on the shelf near the ceiling, Ms. Z correctly noted that it was lying flat on the shelf. Tart calculated the odds of a correct chance guess to be 1 in 100,000.[6]

There have also been experiments designed to detect the co-occurrence of veridical perceptions during an alleged OBE and physical effects or anomalies in the environment where an OBEr claims to have visited and about which she seems to have acquired information. Osis and McCormick (1980) discuss their experiments with psychic Alex Tanous, who claimed to have the ability to induce OBEs deliberately. Osis and McCormick confirmed changes in the physical environment measured by a strain gauge in a shielded enclosure at the specific location and time that Tanous claimed to

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[6] Two additional salient points. First, Ms. Z provided reports on other evenings that might suggest that her experiences during sleep involved extra-sensory perception. Second, Tart's experiment has been subject to criticism for not having tight enough experimental protocols to sufficiently obviate possible fraud or a natural explanation for Ms. Z's correctly identifying the target. Since the present study explores the cogency of survival arguments *given the relevant data*, I am assuming – for the sake of my own focus – the reliability of the data. Philosophers Almeder and Moore have briefly commented on the evidential force of Tart's experiments, with Almeder having the more optimistic appraisal (Almeder 1992: 167; Moore 1981: 157).

have visited during his OBE. The optical image targets were normally visible only from in front of a viewing window, but Tanous, who was isolated from the targets, correctly identified the targets at the location in 114 of 197 trial runs, so 114 hits and 83 misses. Curiously, Osis and McCormick also documented a positive correlation between the accuracy of Tanous's descriptions of the targets and the strain gauge readings: strain gauge activation levels significantly increased when Tanous had hits as opposed to misses.[7]

3.3   Near-death experiences: general features

A particularly important species of OBE takes place when the subject is undergoing physical stress, illness, trauma, or some medical crisis such as cardiac arrest. These make up a prominent subset of the near-death experience (NDE), which has been a topic of increased cross-disciplinary interest since Raymond Moody's *Life after Life*, published in 1975. Moody had documented over 100 cases of persons suffering illness, trauma, or a medical crisis who reported experiences of seeming to be separated from their body, entering a tunnel, having feelings of peace or joy, encountering a being of light and/or deceased relatives, and having a life review. Cardiologist Michael Sabom (1982, 1998) discussed the results of his own investigations into several dozen NDE cases. Among these was the famous Pam Reynolds case (to be discussed below), in which a surgery patient under rigorous medical observation was alleged to have had an NDE that involved veridical perceptions of her local environment while fully anesthetized and enhanced mentation while her brain was non-functional. Osis and Haraldsson (1997), Bruce Greyson (2009), and Kenneth Ring (2006) have collected important data from various NDE studies, as well as provided further analyses of the phenomenology of NDEs and possible explanatory models for the phenomenon.

Not all NDEs have OBEs as a component, but NDEs with OBE components are highly significant since they often involve claimed perceptual experiences that the experient's physical condition would seemingly have prevented, not only perceptions that the experient's bodily location would have prevented, as in standard OBEs. In some cases, it is alleged that brain functioning at the time of the experience could not support any conscious episodes. In many other cases, it appears that the experient's brain functioning at the time of

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[7] Almeder, Braude, and Lund have each discussed the Osis and McCormick experiments, though coming to very different conclusions. Almeder (1992: 167–8, 180–1, 185–94) and Lund (2009: 122–3) regard the data as evidence for the hypothesis that Tanous's mind or consciousness was literally present at the location and so his consciousness was physically separable from his body. Braude (2003: 250–6) argues that the data support only the more modest claim that Tanous exhibited psychic functioning in the form of clairvoyance and psychokinesis.

the incident could at best support only greatly diminished forms of cognition, but the experient reports experience with full or enhanced cognition (Kelly et al. 2007: 386–87; Van Lommel 2010: 115, 160–4). For example, some persons resuscitated after cardiac arrest or who have undergone invasive medical procedures report having had vivid experiences during the event, including the experience of leaving their body, entering other realms of existence, meeting deceased relatives, and having a review of their life.[8] Hence, NDEs with an OBE component address a weakness in traditional OBEs as evidence for survival, which Ducasse had pointed out (1961: 164), namely that at best they establish only a non-conventional or paranormal means of knowledge acquisition but which is nonetheless consistent with consciousness being dependent on a functioning brain.

While any consciousness during a period when the brain is not functioning would be surprising, and enhanced cognition all the more so, David Ray Griffin explains that the most relevant feature of NDEs with the OBE feature is the *veridical* component of some of these experiences (1997: 243–51). Some subjects report perceptions, which apparently occur during the OBE phase of an NDE, that correspond to actual empirical facts, subsequently corroborated by witnesses. In some of these cases, subjects provide verified reports of objects in particular locations, often out of physical view, but as if the subjects were at those locations viewing them from a perspective remote from their body (Ring 2006: 55–71; Sabom 1982). Ring (2006: 73–95) has discussed verified reports by subjects who were blind at the time of their NDE. In other cases, subjects report observing resuscitation efforts; medical procedures being conducted on their bodies; and conversations between medical personnel, family, or friends, where these are recounted with detail.[9] These are particularly significant since the NDE subject's verifiable descriptions of events taking place at a definite time could help pin down the time of the NDE. Such "time anchors" would be the only way to sufficiently establish that the NDE subject was exhibiting complex mental states at times when this is not to be expected (Kelly et al. 2007: 417–21). This would potentially take us a step further than ordinary OBEs in securing evidence for the ontological autonomy of consciousness and for supposing that mental states will persist after death, if we have evidence that consciousness persists in the absence of a functioning brain as its ostensible somatic substrate.

As with OBEs in general, veridical perceptions during an OBE phase of an NDE are especially significant. First, they suggest a non-conventional means of knowledge acquisition that might in turn support the extrasomatic

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[8] Important recent sources include Fenwick (2012), Moody (1976), Parnia (2006, 2013), Ring (2006), Sabom (1998), Holden et al. (2009), and Van Lommel (2010).

[9] See Holden (2009), Kelly et al. (2007: 387–94), Moody (1988), Sabom (1982: 83–111, 1998: 184–91), and Van Lommel (2010: 19–26).

interpretation of the experiences. Second, an NDErs who acquires information about an event taking place at a certain time provides a potential time marker for when the NDE occurred, which might correlate with a period of time when brain functioning could not support consciousness, much less enhanced mentation. Holden (2009) provides a summary of data concerning veridical perceptions during NDEs across multiple studies. Medical doctors Pim van Lommel (2010), Sam Parnia (2006, 2013), and Peter Fenwick (2012) have drawn attention to veridical perceptions during NDEs, but they have also noted the importance of cases of apparent enhanced mentation during NDEs at times when current brain science would seem to forbid it. Hence, even unverifiable or "'otherworldly" experiences could be evidentially relevant if we have reason to suppose that persons should not be capable of having such experiences at the time in question. Cook [Kelly], Greyson, and Stevenson (1998) discuss enhanced mentation, the apparent seeing of one's body from a different position in space, and paranormal cognition as convergent evidence in support of a hypothesis of survival.

3.4   Some widely discussed NDE cases

While there are various reports of NDEs that involve apparently veridical perceptual experiences, the details of three of the more widely discussed cases are worth noting, especially since empirical survivalists regularly appeal to these as the better cases. And since they are paradigmatic for veridical OBEs during NDEs, their evidential features account for what we would find in other evidentially salient cases.

3.4.1   The "man with the dentures" case

Pim van Lommel and his colleagues reported an interesting NDE case that took place in in a hospital in the Netherlands in 1979 (Van Lommel et al. 2001). The case, which has generated considerable commentary subsequent to the original 2001 publication in *the Lancet*, is based on the testimony of the lead nurse at a coronary care unit who was involved in the resuscitation efforts of a 44-year-old comatose man later identified by the name Beekhuizen. In the days following his resuscitation, Beekhuizen disclosed to the lead nurse many accurate details of the events that had taken place during the resuscitation procedure, which he claimed to have seen during an OBE. The case takes its name from its central evidential feature: Beekhuizen identifying the lead nurse as the person who had removed his dentures at the beginning of resuscitation efforts while he was apparently comatose and unable to have acquired this information through any normal means. Van Lommel (2010: 20–1) includes a brief account of the case as an illustration of veridical perceptions during an OBE-NDE, but the significant

published articles are Van Lommel et al. (2001), Rudolf Smit (2008), and Titas Rivas (2008).[10]

In his narrative of the events that took place, the nurse, whom Smit (2008) refers to as T.G., describes the resuscitation efforts immediately after the patient, Beekhuizen, arrived at the coronary care unit with no heartbeat, blood pressure, or breathing.

> After admission to the coronary care unit, he receives artificial respiration with a balloon and a mask as well as heart massage and defibrillation. When I want to change the respiration method, when I want to intubate the patient, the patient turns out to have dentures in his mouth. Before intubating him, I remove the upper set of dentures and put it on the crash cart. Meanwhile we continue extensive resuscitation. After approximately ninety minutes, the patient has sufficient heart rhythm and blood pressure, but he's still ventilated and intubated, and he remains comatose. (Van Lommel 2010: 20)

Nurse T.G. described the efforts to resuscitate Beekhuizen, which included manual and machine-assisted heart massage, as well as five episodes of defibrillation. T.G. emphasized repeated attempts throughout the procedure to test for vital signs, including checking for pupillary reflexes, but there was no sign of life. At several points, the resuscitation crew almost gave up efforts to revive Beekhuizen, as the efforts seemed fruitless. However, they persisted, and after 60 to 90 minutes, a heart rhythm was detected and blood pressure gradually returned. Beekhuizen was then sent to intensive care unit (ICU), where he remained for several days. T.G. did not encounter Beekhuizen again for eight days, as T.G. took a five-day leave immediately after the night of the resuscitation, and upon returning to duty, he was stationed in a different department for three days.

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[10] The story as it appears in the original Van Lommel co-authored *Lancet* article was based on two source documents. The first was an article by Vincent Meijers (one of the co-authors of the 2001 *Lancet* paper) written in August 1991, which contained a brief reference to the dentures incident. The second was a 12-page transcript that contained an interview with the lead nurse, conducted in February 1994 by Ap Addink, an NDE interview specialist. Rudolph Smit subsequently published a more detailed exploration and analysis of this case after examining the original documents and in the light of interviews he and Titus Rivas conducted with the lead nurse in 2008. Rivas subsequently published, in *Terugkeer*, the transcript of his in-person interview with the lead nurse (Rivas 2008). Gerald Woerlee later provided an English translation of Rivas's Dutch article, which was authorized with corrections by Smit and Rivas. My account draws on Van Lommel (2010), Smit (2008), and Rivas (2008).

In Van Lommel (2010), T.G. is reported as describing his initial encounter with the conscious and now partially recovered Beekhuizen as follows:

> After more than a week in coma the patient returns to the coronary care unit, and I see him when I distribute the medication. As soon as he sees me he says: "Oh, yes, but you, you know where my dentures are." I'm flabbergasted. Then he tells me, "Yes, you were there when they brought me into the hospital, and you took the dentures out of my mouth and put them on that cart; it had all these bottles on it, and there was a sliding drawer underneath, and you put my teeth there." I was all the more amazed because I remembered this happening when the man was in a deep coma and undergoing resuscitation. After further questioning, it turned out that the patient had seen himself lying in bed and that he had watched from above how nursing staff and doctors had been busy resuscitating him. He was able to give an accurate and detailed description of the small room where he had been resuscitated and of the appearance of those present. (2010: 21)

Smit (2008: 55–6) gives many of the details of Beekhuizen's apparently veridical perceptions in addition to T.G.'s removal and placement of the dentures on the medical cart. Beekhuizen was said to have accurately described several of the features of the cart on which he saw his dentures placed, noting that the cart rattled and had a sliding plate on which the dentures were placed. Furthermore, Beekhuizen correctly described his room as having a small niche with a wash basin to the right of his bed, the location of a mirror, the cart to the left of his bed, and a narrow metal cabinet with equipment in one of the corners of the room. He also described aspects of the resuscitation procedure, including a description of the nurses and the procedures they used for resuscitation, such as manually massaging the heart and sitting on top of his body.

So this case presents us with testimony to a comatose man's apparent veridical perceptions during an alleged OBE. There were veridical perceptions of at least five distinct events connected with an at least hour-long resuscitation procedure: nurse T.G. sitting on his body, another nurse massaging his heart, T.G.'s removal of the man's dentures and where they were placed, and Beekhuizen's awareness of the medical crew's reluctance to continue resuscitation efforts. There were also at least a dozen accurate descriptions of the room in which the resuscitation effort was carried out and of the appearance of the medical staff, though Beekhuizen exhibited no indications of consciousness during the procedure.[11]

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[11] There are other documented details of this case in the sources that need to be considered for a full evaluation of the case as alleged evidence for the extrasomatic OBE hypothesis. For example, Beekhuizen claimed to have experienced intense physical pain during the resuscitation procedure, connected with the resuscitation

3.4.2   The Pam Reynolds case

One of the most widely discussed cases in the literature, and regarded by many survivalists as the most compelling NDE on record, is the case of Pam Reynolds discussed by cardiologist Michael Sabom (1998). In 1991 Dr. Robert Spetzler (director of the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona) performed a seven-hour surgical procedure, known as hypothermic cardiac arrest, in order to remove a life-threatening brain aneurysm from a 35-year-old woman, Pam Reynolds.[12] In addition to cooling Reynolds's body temperature to 60°F and draining the blood from her head, the procedure involved stopping her heart and her breathing and involved a flattening of her brain waves as measured by an electroencephalogram (EEG). The absence of blood flow to the brain, a flat EEG, and the absence of brain-stem responses are important clinical criteria for brain death. As Sabom pointed out, the case is significant because unlike most NDEs Reynolds's NDE occurred in a context where her vital signs were under rigorous and documented medical observation.

Like many NDEs, Reynolds's NDE has both a mundane and an extra-mundane or otherworldly phase. In the mundane phase, Pam reported an OBE with a highly lucid perceptual experience of events that took place during her surgery, though she was under general anesthesia, her eyes were taped shut, and speakers had been inserted into her ears to deliver 95 dB clicks to monitor her brainstem auditory evoked potentials. Under these conditions, Reynolds reported the following experience:

> The next thing I recall was the sound: It was a natural D. As I listened to the sound, I felt it was pulling me out of the top of my head. The further out of my body I got, the more clear the tone became. I had the impression it was like a road, a frequency that you go on. ... I remember seeing several things in the operating room when I was looking down. It was the most aware that I think that I have ever been in my entire life. ... I was metaphorically sitting on Dr. Spetzler's shoulder. It was not like normal vision. It was brighter and more focused and clearer than normal vision. ... There was so much in the operating room that I didn't recognize, and so many people.

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techniques, but this seems to have been at the time when T.G. claimed Beekhuizen exhibited neither consciousness nor *any* vital signs. This, together with more recent medical evidence for "minimal consciousness" in some comatose patients (who do not report OBEs) introduces the possibility that Beekhuizen acquired at least some of his knowledge through entirely normal means.

[12] "Pam Reynolds" was a pseudonym for Pam Reynolds Lowery, an American singer-songwriter. While the 1991 surgical procedure on her was successful, Lowery subsequently died of heart failure in 2010.

I thought the way they had my head shaved was very peculiar. I expected them to take all of the hair, but they did not. ...

The saw thing that I hated the sound of looked like an electric tooth-brush and it had a dent in it, a groove at the top where the saw appeared to go into the handle, but it didn't. ... And the saw had interchangeable blades, too, but these blades were in what looked like a socket wrench case. ... I heard the saw crank up. I didn't see them use it on my head, but I think I heard it being used on something. It was humming at a relatively high pitch and then all of a sudden it went Brrrrrrrrr! like that. ...

Someone said something about my veins and arteries being very small. I believe it was a female voice and that it was Dr. Murray, but I'm not sure. She was the cardiologist. I remember thinking that I should have told her about that. ... I remember the heart-lung machine. I didn't like the respir-ator. ... I remember a lot of tools and instruments that I did not readily recognize. (Sabom 1998: 41–2)

While Reynolds claims to have had a very vivid OBE in which she observed many details in the operating room from a position above her body, her OBE had four important veridical features: (i) the accurate description of an operating room conversation concerning Reynolds's veins and arteries (in her right groin) being too small, which precipitated a switch to Reynolds's left femoral artery and vein, (ii) the bone saw being cranked up and used on "something," (iii) the way her head had been shaved, and (iv) a partially accurate description of the bone saw.[13] (i) and (ii) were based on ostensible auditory experiences, whereas (iii) and (iv) were based on ostensible visual experiences. All four reports were independently corroborated. However, as Sabom noted regarding (iv), while Reynolds accurately described the bone saw as looking like an electric toothbrush with interchangeable blades, the alleged groove at the top of the saw was actually an overhanging edge, which "looked somewhat like a groove" but it was not where Reynolds said it was located (Sabom 1998: 187).

In the extra-mundane or otherworldly phase of her experience, which seems to have immediately followed her operating room OBE, Reynolds reported some widely reported NDE features, namely her going into a tunnel vortex where she encountered various deceased relatives, including her grandmother, uncle, and great-great aunt.

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[13] As is clear from the quote above, Reynolds made reference to other items in the operating room. Although these items were in fact in the room, her reports concerning them are generally not considered evidentially significant since the equipment she described (e.g. heart-lung machine and respirator) would necessarily be present in the procedure. The reference to the bone saw is important only because she provided a more specific description.

> At some point very early in the tunnel vortex, I became aware of my grandmother calling me. But I didn't hear her call me with my ears. ... It was a clearer hearing than with my ears. I trust that sense more than I trust my own ears.

> The feeling was that she wanted me to come to her, so I continued with no fear down the shaft. It's a dark shaft that I went through, and at the very end there was this very little tiny pinpoint of light that kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger. ...

> I noticed that as I began to discern different figures in the light – and they were all covered with light, they *were* light, and had light permeating all around them – they began to form shapes I could recognize and understand. I could see that one of them was my grandmother. I don't know if it was reality or projection, but I would know my grandmother, the sound of her, anytime, anywhere.

> Everyone I saw, looking back on it, fit perfectly into my understanding of what that person looked like at their best during their lives.

> I recognized a lot of people. My uncle Gene was there. So was my great-great-Aunt Maggie, who was really a cousin. On Papa's side of the family, my grandfather was there. ... They were specifically taking care of me, looking after me. (Sabom 1998: 44)

From here, Reynolds describes the concluding phrase of her NDE, in which her deceased relatives inform her that she could not go any further but must return to her body. Her uncle returns her to the tunnel, at the end of which she sees her body and has the unpleasant experience of returning to her body, which she described as jumping into a pool of ice water (Sabom 1998: 46).

  If we use the veridical features of Reynolds's experience as time-markers for her narrative, her NDE began around 8:45am, about two hours before the phase of the operation at which time the blood was drained from her head and the EEG registered no brain activity.[14] There is consensus about this, and so there is also consensus that the veridical features of Reynolds's NDE took place prior to the 30-minute cessation of brain function (as indicated by the flat EEG) during the procedure, though while she was anesthetized and apparently sensorily isolated (Kelly, Greyson, and Kelly 2007: 392–4). The two points of debate concern, first, proposed explanations for her apparent veridical perceptions at the outset of the NDE and, second, when her NDE actually ended. Or, more specifically, with reference to the second, the dispute concerns whether Reynolds's OBE persisted during the short

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[14] Sabom provided a timeline in his original account (1998: 39–47), which Keith Augustine has graphically represented for ease of analysis (Augustine 2008: 20).

standstill phase of the operation while she was brain dead. This is significant because even though the second phase of her NDE, being otherworldly, contained no verifiable reports, it would be highly relevant if Reynolds had such an otherworldly experience (or any experiences at all for that matter) at a time when her brain was non-functional. Reynolds described her experience from beginning to end as a coherent and continuous narrative, apparently ending upon her regaining consciousness shortly after returning to her body. This has led some survivalists to suppose that her experience must have continued *through* the 30-minute "standstill" period.[15]

3.4.3   NDEs involving apparitions of the dead

The preceding two cases are illustrations of enhanced cognition and apparent veridical perceptions during an NDE in which the subject's physiological state has seriously impaired or rendered non-functional their normal cognitive processes.[16] Another interesting feature of many NDEs is, as the Pam Reynolds case illustrates, the NDErs who meets a deceased family member or friend during the NDE. Of course, apparitions of the dead have been widely reported outside the context of NDEs, and as such, they have been a focus of empirical inquiry since the founding of the British and American societies of psychical research. We might suppose that there is something evidentially significant about NDErs experiencing apparitions of the dead, especially since encounters with the deceased during an NDE are considerably more common than encounters with apparitions of living persons. For example, Greyson notes that of the 665 NDEs on record in 2010 at the Division of Perceptual Studies at University of Virginia, Medical School, 21% included a purported encounter with a deceased person, whereas only 4% reported encountering persons still living (Greyson 2010: 161; cf. Kelly 2001: 245). However, the more evidentially significant cases would arguably be the subset of such NDEs in which the NDEr encounters a deceased person whose death was previously unknown or whose identity was previously unknown to the NDEr.

As an illustration of the first, Morse and Perry (1990: 114–5) report the NDE of a woman who encounters an old neighbor friend during an NDE induced by life-threatening bleeding after giving birth. While the medical crew is working on the woman, she has an NDE in which she encounters a neighbor friend from a town where she had previously lived. The man tells her to "go back," at which point she experienced an unpleasant return

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[15] Van Lommel, for example, writes: "The rest of her NDE, which included an extremely lucid consciousness, the recognition of and communication with deceased relatives, and an encounter with the light, took place during a time when induced hypothermia and anoxia (no oxygen due to lack of blood) had rendered her brain completely non-functional" (2010: 175).

[16] For other cases with these features, see Cook [Kelly], Greyson, and Stevenson 1998.

to her body. Three weeks later, the woman's husband informs her that her neighbor friend had died in an accident the day their daughter was born. The case is also an illustration of a recently deceased person's appearing in an NDE, which of course often prevents the NDEr from knowing of the death in advance of the NDE.

In other cases, though, the NDEr encounters a person to whom he or she is related, but this is unknown at the time, though subsequently discovered. Van Lommel (2004) reports a particular cardiac arrest survivor who experienced an NDE during which he encountered his deceased grandmother and a man he did not recognize but who lovingly looked upon him. Ten years after the NDE, the NDEr's mother, while on her deathbed, confessed to her son that he had been born as the result of an extra-marital affair. She disclosed to him that his father was a Jewish man who had been deported and subsequently killed in World War II. She showed him the picture of his biological father, and he immediately recognized him as the man he had encountered in his NDE ten years earlier.

Morse and Perry (1990: 53) provide an example with features of each of the two cases above. A seven-year-old boy who is dying of leukemia informs his mother of his NDE, described as a journey into heaven in a beam of light. There the boy encounters a man whom he does not recognize but who introduces himself as the former high school boyfriend of the boy's mother. The man discloses that he had lost his ability to walk as the result of an automobile accident, but he has now regained his ability to walk. The boy's mother had never told her son about this man, and she was able to confirm through friends that her former boyfriend had died the day of her son's NDE.

These three NDE reports overlap with the broader phenomenon of "death-bed visions," as they are called, in which dying persons experience apparitions of the dead, ostensibly for the purpose of assisting the dying person with the transition into the afterlife (Osis and Haraldsson 1997). The cases are most intriguing when the dying experience apparitions of persons they are sure are alive but unknown to them are actually dead. One of the widely mentioned cases comes from Sir William Barrett. Barrett's wife, a physician, delivered a baby to a woman who died shortly after giving birth. Just before dying, she had a vision of her deceased father welcoming her to the afterlife. While we might expect a dying person to hallucinate the appearance of a family member whom they know is dead, in this case, Doris, much to her surprise, also sees her sister Vida. Vida had died three weeks prior but this information was intentionally kept from Doris because of her poor health, so she did not know Vida had died (Barrett 1926: 14).

3.5   Summary description of the salient data

I have so far described important aspects of eight OBE cases, five of which involved OBEs during an NDE. While there are many intriguing features

of these experiences, I have emphasized the salient evidential features of these cases, features widely taken as relevant to the question of survival, if not favorable to that hypothesis (Cook [Kelly], Greyson, and Stevenson 1998; Kelly, Greyson, and Stevenson 2000). It will be helpful at this stage to precisely and systematically outline the essential strands of data or evidence extracted from these cases, and which are present in many similar cases. Following a common technique in analytic philosophy, I will describe the relevant data in formulaic structures that make use of some technical notation commonly used in branches of formal logic and epistemology, of which I made some limited use near the end of Chapter 2. A clear statement of the data is a precondition for an effective analysis of whether or to what extent these data provide evidence for the hypothesis of personal survival.

3.5.1 Descriptions of the OBE data

Each of the eight cases that I have referenced and described involves a generic OBE, the generalized datum of which I will understand as

> e1: There are some living persons P who at time t seem to experience this world W (or some other world W´) at a location different from where their physical body is located in W at t.[17]

In the interest of having a concise and handy form of reference in what follows, I will refer to the experience described in e1 as a subject's being in an O-state (of consciousness). While the *claim* to have been in an O-state is an empirical datum, I will dispense with formulating the relevant evidential datum here as subject's claiming to be in an O-state. I will speak rather of the subject's *experience* itself, of the person's actually *being* in an O-state. While the subject's experience is not an observational datum, it is directly accessible upon introspection by the subject herself. Moreover, I think we have compelling reasons for thinking that most OBErs are sincere in their first-person reports. So I think we can rely on the testimony of OBErs as providing accurate first-person reports about how they are experiencing the world, whether or not things actually *are* the way they seem to be to the subject. This is why both empirical survivalists and skeptics alike accept that OBErs are indeed having experiences the phenomenological features of which are as characterized above.

The other common feature of all eight cases is that each involves veridical perceptual experiences while the persons are in the O-state. I think this aspect of the cases should be divided into two distinct streams of data. The

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[17] By "this world" I mean the empirical and (in principle) publicly accessible world, and "some other world" refers to any world spatially separate from this world.

first is a complex observational datum that concerns the verified testimonial claims of a subset of OBErs.

> e2: There are some living persons who (a) have been in an O-state at some time t_1, (b) provide at some later time t_2 information about states of affairs that obtained in the world at or around t_1, and where (c) the information is independently verified.

While e2 states that the OBEr makes verified claims about events that took place at/around t_1 – that is, the time of the OBE – it does not entail that the OBEr acquired this information at t_1, even if t_1 is the time at which the OBE occurred. It is important to distinguish *person P acquires information about some state of affairs at time t* and *at time t person P acquires information about some state of affairs*. The temporal indexical in the latter statement refers to the time at which information about the world was acquired. In the first statement, the temporal indexical refers to the time of the state of affairs about which the person has acquired information. Relatedly, e2 is compatible with supposing that the OBEr did not acquire the information from any of the perceptual experiences involved in the O-state. For example, it would be compatible with e2 to suppose that the information was fortuitously acquired or derived from a source other than the person's perceptual experiences during the O-state. But we also have cases where the information is based on the perceptual experiences of the O-state and therefore acquired during the O-state:

> e3: There are some living persons who (a) have been in an O-state at some time t, (b) acquire information at t about some state of affairs at/about time t, and where (c) the acquisition of the information is at least partially based on or derived from the content of the O-state.

It is important to emphasize that e3 does not entail the extrasomatic interpretation of OBEs, which of course would be a highly prejudicial way of describing the evidence. But e3 commits us only to the idea that the OBEr's information is based on the O-state, yet the O-state might itself be a subjective construction of some sort. This might result in any correspondence between the actual world and the content of OBEr's O-state being merely fortuitous, as is the case when there are positive correlations between empirical facts and our dream world experiences. Also, e3 is logically compatible with supposing that the O-state is a case of psychic functioning – for instance, in the form of clairvoyance. In this case, there would be a (nonconventional) causal link between the world and the OBEr's experience. This would prevent an accidental correlation between the OBEr's mental state and the world, but it would not require an extrasomatic interpretation of the experience.

Furthermore, the Osis and McCormick experiments with Alex Tanous, and possibly the reciprocal OBE in the Mary Johnson case, indicate a composite observational datum of the following sort.

e4: There is some observable physical anomaly γ at location λ at time t, where (a) λ is part of the veridical perceptual content of some person's O-state at t and/or (b) λ is a space in which the person, during an O-state, intentionally wished to bring about an observable event.

Like e2, e4 indicates that some person's O-state is veridical. However, e4 adds to this the further empirical datum of an observable physical occurrence at a particular time and place, which is positively correlated with the time and content of an O-state, as well as possibly the OBEr's intentions during the O-state.

3.5.2   Descriptions of NDE-specific data

OBEs occurring during NDEs present us with two additional significant strands of data. The first is the inclusion within some O-states of veridical apparitions of family members or friends, especially when the O-state involves states of affairs in some afterlife world W' different from W, the publicly accessible empirical world. To capture the composite of relevant facts here, I propose this:

e5: There are some living persons P and previously living, now deceased, persons D, such that (a) P have experienced an apparition of D during an O-state at some time t_1, (b) P and D are related as family or friends, (c) P provides information about D at time t_2, where P did not possess the information prior to t_1, and (d) the information is independently verified.

As we can see, e5 consists of various introspective and observational data. (e5-a) is an introspectively accessible phenomenological fact.[18] (e5-c) involves the fact of the OBEr's testimony (not the truth of its content), which is an empirical datum, with the verifiable stipulation that OBEr did not possess the information to which she testifies prior to the O-state. (e5-b) is an empirically verifiable statement, and (e5-d) concerns the fact of the empirical verification of the claims that make up the content of the OBEr's testimony.

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[18] I assume here that the "deceased" status of the apparition is simply read off the phenomenological features of the experience (perhaps together with background knowledge), either as something "claimed" by the apparition, that the OBEr infers from the experience of W' *as* an afterlife world, or because the OBEr recognizes the apparition as a deceased family member or friend.

Finally, characteristic of many NDEs with an OBE component, we have the datum that the person is in a physiological state, such as cardiac arrest, that has impaired their cognitive functioning. This provides a highly significant contextual feature for the O-state. The relevant datum here is actually a composite of three data: the person's being in an O-state, the person's being in some physiological state, and the person's cognition being impaired (to some degree). It is only the person's physiological state and absence of any behavior indicative of conscious life that is *observed* in these situations. We are relying on the NDEr's *testimony* for the O-state datum, and we are relying on a *theoretically based inference*, arguably a well-established one, that links the subject's physiological state and cognitive impairment. So the evidentially relevant datum is a composite of different facts resting on different modalities of knowledge.

To capture all the relevant features in the most simple manner, first let φ = some cognition-impairing physiological state, and let T = a time period $\{t_1, \ldots, t_n\}$ starting with t_1 – the initial phase of φ that induces the NDE and ending with t_n – with the full restoration of vital processes and consciousness. It is important to introduce intervals of T. First, the O-state occurs during some interval(s) of T and is not necessarily concurrent with $t_1, \ldots, t_n$. Second, since φ is a dynamic or changing state, intervals of T may also be demarcated by different degrees of cognitive impairment. There will be at least one interval of T during which cognitive impairment is maximal, namely φ_{max}, and one where it is minimal, namely φ_{min}. Third, intervals of T are significant since it allows the description of the datum to temporally relate the O-state and the state of maximal cognitive impairment. I propose, then, to describe the relevant datum in the following technical manner:

> e6: There are some living persons P such that (a) P are in some dynamic cognition-impairing physiological state φ during time period T, (b) there is some interval T_i of T during which φ is φ_{max}, and (c) there is some interval T_j of T during which P_i is in an O-state, where P_i's O-state during T_j includes veridical perceptions and/or enhanced mentation of states of affairs in this world W or some other world W'.

A crucial theoretical issue is whether T_i and T_j overlap, and this in turn will depend on how exactly φ_{max} is described. If φ_{max} is described as the cessation of all brain functioning, then to claim that T_i and T_j overlap will entail that consciousness exists without a functioning brain. This is a controversial claim, and it cannot be inferred from the raw data themselves. Alternatively, it might be that φ_{max} involves a substantial reduction in the "cognitive load," so φ_{max} would include, for example, the processing of basic sensory stimuli. So we might have reduced cognitive capacities, but not the absence of consciousness. Perhaps in cases like these, we might want

to say that $T_i \approx T_j$. Since everything depends on how φ_{max} is described, e6 underdetermines this particular theoretical issue.

I think this neutrality is warranted, especially given the strongest paradigmatic cases discussed above: the man with the dentures and the Pam Reynolds case. First, in the Reynolds case, as even some hardcore survivalists note, Reynolds's veridical perceptions (if used as time-markers) did not take place during φ_{max}, if φ_{max} is taken to refer to the 30-minute period of "standstill" when the blood had been drained from Reynolds's brain and her EEG was flat. Some survivalists *conjecture* that the non-veridical part of her NDE overlapped with φ_{max}, but the sole basis for this conjecture is an extrapolation from Reynolds's testimony to the continuous nature of her NDE, which ended at the point of her resuscitation. But the precision required to relate the relevant temporal intervals of φ_{max} and the O-state cannot be simply read off or validly inferred from the phenomenological features of the experience. So there is no compelling reason to suppose that the Pam Reynolds case is an example of the interval of the O-state overlapping with the interval of φ_{max}. In the case of the man with the dentures, we need to say the same thing if we suppose that φ_{max} involved a cessation of brain function. However we describe φ_{max} in this case, the subject reported an intense sensation of pain during his O-state, ostensibly caused by the heart massage resuscitation procedure, which the subject claimed to visually perceive at those points in his O-state. So in this case, the O-state at least overlapped with an interval in which the subject's cognitive impairment did not prevent the processing of sensory stimuli.

It can of course plausibly be argued that in each of these cases, the O-state overlapped with an interval of T where $\varphi < \varphi_{max}$. As formulated, e6 does not rule this out. Although Reynolds was under anesthesia and otherwise sensorily isolated, it is difficult to compellingly rule out the possibility that she had minimal awareness during anesthesia and that there was sensory leakage despite the speakers in her ears. And, as just noted above, in the case of the man with dentures, the content of his O-state included bodily sensations mediated by his nervous system. Nonetheless, these are theoretical issues. They involve the interpretation or explanation of the evidence. My concern here is with how the evidence is described, and at this juncture, we must be highly conservative to avoid stacking the deck. Subsequent chapters will address the theoretical issue of whether personal survival provides the best explanation of e1–e6. First, though, we must consider further strands of data from phenomena different from what we have explored in this chapter.

4
Mediumistic Communications

While out-of-body experiences (OBEs) and near-death experiences (NDEs) seem to provide data that support an account of consciousness that is amiable to the prospects of survival, more salient phenomena suggestive of survival would come in the form of indications that the consciousness of some persons who have *actually* died has persisted after their death. Phenomena associated with mediumship are one such class of potential evidence, for data collected from mediumship, if accepted at face value, suggest the continued existence of a person *after* biological death, sometimes long after death. In the prior chapter, I explained the importance of psychological criteria in identifying persons and therefore the importance of empirical phenomena that can be construed as offering evidence for the present existence of the psychological profile of some formerly living person. Many survivalists claim that mediumship provides evidence of this sort. In this chapter, I will look at prominent forms of mediumship – what survivalists regard as their evidentially significant features – and survey some of the more widely discussed cases. As in the prior chapter, I will conclude with an analytical description of the salient data drawn from these cases.

4.1   Mediumship: types and general features

In mediumistic communications, a living agent (called a "medium") claims to be in communication with some deceased person (called a "communicator"). The term "sitting" (more popularly, "séance") customarily designates the event at which a medium relays information to living persons ostensibly originating from some deceased person. As we will see, the kinds of cases most evidentially relevant to the question of survival have three essential characteristics: (i) the medium is able to provide copious and highly specific details about the life of the deceased that may be independently verified, (ii) she is able to provide this information by way of a lifelike and convincing "impersonation" of the deceased, and (iii) normal (and perhaps natural but exotic) means of acquiring the information about the deceased have been

sufficiently ruled out. As introductory background to the cases that I will discuss below, some initial clarification on the types and general features of mediumship will prove helpful.

4.1.1 Basic types of mediumship

Survival researchers and parapsychologists typically distinguish three types of mediumship: mental, trance, and physical, though a particular medium may demonstrate more than one form of mediumship (Braude 2003: 31–5, 53–5; Gauld 1982: 17–31; Rock 2013: 7–11).

In "mental mediumship," the medium claims to receive information from the deceased in the form of thoughts or (auditory, visual, and/or tactile) images, including in the case of visual images experiences in which it seems to the medium that the communicator is spatially located in the environment, with particular quasi-sensory features or apparent physical characteristics, including physical gestures, posture, and clothing. Given that the ostensible communicator is disembodied (or at least lacks a conventional physical body), there is consensus that if these experiences involve genuine interactions between the deceased and a living agent, the communication would require telepathy and/or clairvoyance.

In the broad sense, mental mediumship includes cases in which the medium's personality is overshadowed to varying degrees or displaced by the communicator. In these cases of "trance mediumship," the medium operates with an altered state of consciousness, which may range from milder forms of psychological dissociation to a full-blown trance state in which a spirit communicator takes full executive control of the medium's body and communicates verbally using the medium's voice or by writing messages, what is usually called "automatic writing" (Gauld 1982: 29–30). It is common in trance mediumship for there to be one or more spirit communicators who regularly manifest through a medium and facilitate contact with other ostensibly deceased persons, thereby acting as a kind of afterlife intermediary or switchboard operator. Habitual communicators of this sort are called "controls," and the corresponding form of trance is called "control trance" (Tyrrell 1961: 165).

Mental and trance mediumship should be distinguished from "physical mediumship," though in some cases both are found together. In the latter, there are physical phenomena of various sorts: knocks and raps in tables and walls, movement or levitation of objects, lights and luminous apparitions, apports, and materializations. Some of these physical phenomena are vehicles for conveying intelligent and sometimes veridical messages that ostensibly originate from spirits. For example, where knocks and raps correspond to letters of the alphabet, messages are conveyed by particular sequences of raps. Here the phenomena overlap with the veridicality of mental/trance mediumistic communications. In other cases, though, the phenomena themselves do not convey any intelligible message but occur as part of a context

in which other phenomena convey such messages – for example, the statements of the medium during a trance state or messages conveyed through automatic writing, the Ouija board, or knocks and raps. The mediumship of D.D. Home (Adare 1976) and Eusapia Palladino (Carrington 1909) are widely considered the best demonstrations of physical mediumship in its heyday during the Spiritualist movement in the nineteenth century.

Like all mediumship, it is important to acknowledge that natural explanations such as fraud and malobservation must be sufficiently ruled out before a case can be made that the phenomena associated with physical mediumship provide evidence for survival. Fontana (2005: 230–351) argues that this can indeed be done, and he provides an overview of the physical mediumship of Home, Palladino, and more recent mediums as alleged evidence for survival. On the other hand, Braude (1997: 59–155), who focuses on Home and Palladino, proposes physical mediumship as evidence for an important alternative to discarnate spirits that influence physical objects, namely large-scale psychic functioning in living persons in the form of psychokinesis (i.e. direct causal influence over physical objects).

4.1.2   An "ideal case" of mediumship

Theoretically, it is easy to see how mental and trance mediumship could provide prima facie evidence for survival, as well as evidence that is at least stronger than what OBEs and NDEs provide. Consider what we might call an "ideal case" of mediumship.

First, suppose some medium exhibits knowledge of the sorts of things that some deceased person seems ideally situated to possess – for example, sufficiently detailed, intimate, and quantitatively robust knowledge about the life of the formerly living person. Suppose the medium identifies the deceased by name, with no prompting from any of the sitters. The medium is able to identify some of the sitters by name (including nicknames coined by the deceased during his life) and her relation to the deceased. The ostensible deceased person identifies sitters present in this manner, the information has not been previously suggested to the medium and is not information that would have been available to the medium, and the sitters have in fact been introduced under pseudonyms. Furthermore, allegedly speaking on behalf of the deceased, the medium conveys information to the sitters (who knew the deceased) about personal experiences they each had with the deceased, provides a description of the places where events or conversations with the deceased took place, what meal was eaten on the deceased's 31st birthday, the name of a high school teacher who suspended the deceased during his senior year in high school for putting a wad of chewed gum on her seat, and so forth. The flow of information is very consistent and takes place over multiple sittings.

Second, suppose the medium is a trance medium. While conveying messages to the sitters, the medium exhibits various skills and personality

features characteristic of the deceased person, including unique vocabulary, particular manner of speaking, and idiosyncratic gestures.[1] The deceased, let us suppose, was found of certain expressions such as "taking care of business," "in a manner of speaking, yes," and "I'll have to apply myself assiduously to this one." The medium freely uses such expressions at points in conversation where friends and family would expect the deceased to use them. Being a Sufi scholar, the deceased was fond of quoting Rumi and other Sufis in Arabic. The medium does so several times during sittings, and she also exhibits an advanced knowledge of Sufism. The deceased often puts his left hand to his left temple area on his head when pondering a difficult question. Like the deceased, the medium does this at points – for example, when stating, "I'll have to apply myself assiduously to this one." The deceased's dry sense of humor also comes through at various points in the sitting.

Third, suppose that, in addition to the above, the communicator says he has observed family members and friends going about their daily business on various occasions since his death. The medium provides accurate and highly specific information about several incidents. She indicates that the deceased's father (present at the sitting), while switching framed pictures on the wall in his living room two weeks prior, dropped a glass frame with a picture of the deceased. The glass in the frame shattered, and the father cut his index finger while picking up the pieces and was quite annoyed that there were no bandages in the kitchen drawer next to the sink, where first-aid supplies were stored. The medium provides several examples of this kind, and in each case the information is accurate and conveyed without any prompting on the part of the sitters.

The satisfaction of these criteria, especially the first two, would at least be prima facie indications that important features of the psychological profile of some formerly living person (i.e. their knowledge, interests, purposes, and behavioral characteristics) have persisted after death. In fact, it seems plausible to suppose that if there were a case of this sort, it would provide very strong evidence for survival. So we can at least frame an ideal conception of mediumship in which the medium not only appears consistently to know what the deceased person would be in a privileged position to know (the veridical features of mediumship) but also exhibits this knowledge through a convincing lifelike impersonation of the deceased. What we want to know, of course, is whether any *actual* case is an instance of the hypothetical ideal case, or at least comes sufficiently close to it.

According to many empirical survivalists, the answer to this question is "yes." They hold that there have been actual cases of mediumship that satisfy the above criteria, or at least represent a sufficiently close approximation.

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[1] See Braude (2003: 53, 91, 305), Broad (1962: 259–60, 349–83), Ducasse (1961: 177–82, 200–3), Griffin (1997: 154), and Price (1995a, 1995b).

Moreover, these demonstrations of mediumship have been observed and documented by researchers who used various kinds of experimental controls, which some survivalists argue at least sufficiently rule out the possibility of fraud or any other ordinary means by which the medium could have acquired her information about the life of the deceased. The founders and early members of the Society of Psychical Research (SPR) in England and the American branch in the United States (ASPR) devoted considerable attention to the critical examination of mediumship, providing copious amounts of data collected from sittings with particularly impressive late nineteenth- and early to mid twentieth-century mediums, such as Mrs. Leonora Piper, Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard, Mrs. Warren Elliott, and Mrs. Willett.[2]

William James (1886, 1890, 1909), Richard Hodgson (1892, 1897–98), Eleanor Sidgwick (1915), Sir Oliver Lodge (1920), and James Hyslop (1901, 1910, 1919) may be credited with foundational work on mediumship. They each provided copious details of hundreds of sittings (many of which they personally attended), tested different experimental control conditions, and compared the respective merits of the survival hypothesis and various alternative explanations of the data. James (1890, 1909), Jung (1977b), McDougal (1967), Myers (1903), and Sidgwick (1915) may be credited with exploring the psychological aspects of trance mediumship, specifically the nature of dissociative states and their relation to mediumistic communicators as potential secondary personalities of the medium. Hyslop (1919), Saltmarsh (1929), and J. Thomas (1937) each explored the quantitative testing of claims made by mediums, a procedure subsequently refined by Stevenson (1968), to ensure that the veridical features of mediumship could not be the product of chance coincidence.

More recently, there has been a renewed interest in mediumship among parapsychologists who are interested in implementing more rigorous experimental controls with contemporary mediums (Beischel 2007, 2013; E.W. Kelly 2010, 2011; Rock 2013). In the parapsychological literature, Fontana (2005: 91–351) provides the most comprehensive current overview of the history of mediumship through the 1990s, and Gauld (1982) provides a theoretically rich, critical evaluation of the relevant data as evidence for survival. Beischel and Schwartz (2007), Robertson and Roy (2001), Roy and Robertson (2001, 2004), and Schwartz (2002a, 2002b, 2003) have discussed current methods for testing mediums under more rigorous experimental controls, such as double and triple blind conditions, as well as the results of such experimental work. Edward and Emily Kelly et al. (2007), E.W. Kelly (2010), and Adam Rock (2013) have provided the most recent thorough

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[2] For an overview of the early investigation and theoretical analysis of mediumship, see Gauld (1968, 1982), Fontana (2005: 115–351), C.D. Thomas (1935), Tyrrell (1961), and Saltmarsh (1938).

overviews of the experimental data and conceptual issues involved in the assessment of mediumistic communications.[3]

4.2   The mediumship of Mrs. Leonora Piper

One of the most impressive trance mediums investigated by members of the SPR and ASPR was Boston medium Mrs. Leonora Piper (1857–1950). It is fair to say that Mrs. Piper's mediumship is considered something of the "gold standard" in mediumship among both parapsychologists and philosophers. As Hornell Hart noted, "The evidence obtained with her is credited with having been responsible for the conversion of Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. Richard Hodgson, and Professor James Hyslop, and many other outstanding intellectuals, to belief in survival and in communication with the dead" (Hart 1959: 53). Even William James, though he was not converted to belief in survival by Mrs. Piper's mediumship, wrote to Frederic Myers: "My later knowledge of her sittings and personal acquaintance with her has led me absolutely to reject the latter explanation [of lucky coincidence], and to believe that she has supernormal powers" (James 1890: 652). Sage (2007) provides an overview of the evolution of Mrs. Piper's mediumship, and Gauld (1968: 251–74, 1982: 32–44) provides a critical examination of the main features of her mediumship.

4.2.1   Background to Mrs. Leonora Piper

Impressed by his experimental sittings with Mrs. Piper, William James recommended Richard Hodgson to explore Mrs. Piper's mediumship, and Hodgson became her principal investigator beginning in 1887 up until his death in 1905. Hodgson employed a variety of protocols to eliminate the possibility of fraud or unconscious sleuthing of information. For example, sitters were usually introduced anonymously or under pseudonyms (sometimes after the beginning of Mrs. Piper's trance state), detectives were employed to shadow Mrs. Piper for a number of weeks, and eventually Hodgson took Mrs. Piper out of Boston to England in 1889, to a socially unfamiliar environment, where further precautions were taken to shield her from natural means of acquiring the kind of information she exhibited in sittings.[4]

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[3] A number of prominent philosophers have found mediumship worthy of serious exploration because of its implications for the philosophy of mind and illuminating the prospects for survival. Early contributions on mediumship by philosophers include James (1886, 1890, 1909), Hyslop (1910, 1919), Broad (1962: 253–383), Price (1995a, 1995b), and Ducasse (1961: 175–90). More recent philosophers who have written on mediumship include Almeder (1992: 203–54), Braude (2003: 31–100), Griffin (1997: 41–55, 150–83), Hick (1994: 129–46), Paterson (1995: 161–76), and Lund (2009: 181–203).

[4] For lengthy and detailed accounts and analyses of data collected from hundreds of sittings with Mrs. Piper, see Hodgson (1892, 1898), James (1886, 1890, 1909), Hyslop (1901, 1910), Sidgwick (1915), and Oliver Lodge (1920: 190–342).

Mrs. Piper's mediumship is impressive for several reasons. She often consistently exhibited a large amount of detailed knowledge of the public and private life of particular deceased persons, the names of their friends and family members, and details of intimate conversations between them. In addition, she conveyed the information in a manner indicative of the personality of the deceased, exhibiting the skill of identifying friends and family members of the deceased who are present at a sitting, using nicknames favored by the deceased, and manifesting idiosyncratic features of the vocabulary and speech patterns of the deceased. On many occasions, she exhibited highly specific knowledge of events in the lives of friends and family of the deceased but which had taken place after the person had died, thereby suggesting that the deceased observes friends and family members at times away from the sittings. Finally, she exhibited these impressive demonstrations of mediumship under critical examination by investigators and researchers from different fields of academic specialization for over 20 years, roughly from 1886 to 1911.

Parapsychologists who have discussed Mrs. Piper's mediumship have usually noted one or both of following as among her more impressive demonstrations of mediumship (Gauld 1982; Hart 1959; R.C. Johnson 1953; Rogo 1986). Both are taken from Dr. Hodgson's well-known "A Further Record of Observations of Certain Phenomena of Trance," published in t*he Journal for the Society of Psychical Research* in 1898. Philosophers Almeder (1992), Braude (2003), Ducasse (1961), and Lund (2009) discuss the first: the George Pellew sittings. I provide illustrations of the veridical features of various G.P. sittings, as well as more general patterns that cover a large number of sittings with this communicator. However, it is difficult to convey in summary fashion the degree of accuracy and frequency of "hits" in many of the sittings with Mrs. Piper, as well as the flow of conversation in sittings, unless one carefully examines larger portions of the transcripts and corresponding analyses of the sittings. Therefore, for the second case, the Kakie Sutton sittings, I provide a lengthy selection from the transcript of the first sitting, together with some summary observations. Philosophers Braude (2003) and Griffin (1997) have discussed the Kakie sittings. While the Pellew and Sutton sittings are among Mrs. Piper's more impressive displays of mediumship, it should be noted that they also illustrate several of the interesting features more generally characteristic of her mediumship.

4.2.2   The George Pellew sittings

On March 22, 1892 a personality claiming to be a recently deceased man named George Pellew manifested at a sitting with Mrs. Piper (Hodgson 1898: 295–335; Sage 2007: 76–110).[5] Pellew, who came from a well-known

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[5] "Pellew" was pseudonymously called "Pelham" or just "G.P." in the literature.

Washington family, was a long-time resident of the Boston area but spent the last three years of life in New York. After initially studying law, Pellew developed deep literary and philosophical interests. He also had an interest in psychical research and anonymously attended a sitting with Mrs. Piper on March 7, 1888. He and Hodgson were personally acquainted, and Hodgson had an acknowledged respect for Pellew's intelligence and insight. Although Hodgson did not believe in survival at the time, he allegedly persuaded Pellew of its conceivability. Pellew said that should he die before Hodgson and find himself "still existing," he would "make things lively" in the effort to prove the fact of his survival (Hodgson 1898: 295). And so the stage was set for something of a revelation when Pellew unexpectedly died in February 1892 at age 32. Several weeks later, a communicator appeared at a sitting with Mrs. Piper and declared himself to be the late Pellew, the beginning of a series of communications that stretched over four years (1892–97) that would ultimately persuade Hodgson to accept the survival hypothesis.

When the Pellew communicator (hereinafter G.P.) first manifested in March 1892, Hodgson and Mr. John Hart, one of G.P.'s close friends, were present. The communications came through Dr. Phinuit, a long-time control personality of Mrs. Piper who purported to have been a French doctor while alive on earth. Through Phinuit as an intermediary, G.P. announced himself by his full name and correctly named several of Pellew's friends by their first names and surnames, including "the Howards," and "John Hart." [6] At this sitting, Mr. Hart was wearing some studs that G.P.'s father had sent to him after G.P.'s death as a remembrance of G.P. After handing them to Mrs. Piper under the Phinuit control, G.P. conveyed that the studs were his; he saw his mother remove the pair of studs from his body after his death and give them to his father, who then sent them to Mr. Hart (1898: 297). Although Mr. Hart previously knew that the studs had been taken from G.P.'s body, he learned subsequent to the sitting that G.P.'s mother was the one who removed them from the body, as the G.P. communicator accurately stated.

G.P. also asked Mr. Hart to convey a message to Katharine Howard, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Howard, with whom Pellew lived for three years: "Tell her, she'll know. I will solve the problems, Katharine" (1898: 297). The following day Mr. Hart shared the content of the sitting with Mr. Howard. Mr. Howard indicated that when Pellew had last stayed with them, he spoke to their then 15-year-old daughter at length about subjects such as time, God, and eternity. Pellew told Katharine that he was unimpressed with existing theories on these topics but that "he would solve the problems, and

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[6] "Jim and Mary Howard" were pseudonyms for Thomas and Lilla Perry, with whom Pellew boarded for three years. "John Hart" was a pseudonym for Hodgson's friend John Heard. Following the published report, I retain the pseudonyms in the main text. But see note 8 for more on Pellew and the Perrys.

let her know" (1898: 298). At a subsequent sitting, on November 28, 1892 – this time with Katharine present – G.P. asked her about her violin playing while emphasizing how horrible her playing was, which corresponded to the living Pellew's expressed annoyance at her practicing when she was a young girl (1898: 316).

The G.P. communicator's accuracy in identifying sitters is particularly interesting. G.P. regularly disclosed the names of many of his personal friends (Hodgson 1898: 295–335, 413–41). There were at least 150 sitters introduced at sittings in which G.P. appeared as the communicator. Of the 150 sitters, only 30 had known G.P. during his life. The G.P. communicator was able to identify each of them, and there was not a single false identification (1898: 327–8).[7] Although he had initial difficulty identifying one person, this was a female acquaintance who was much older at the time of the sitting than when the living Pellew last saw her as a young girl nine years prior (1898: 324–5).

As the demonstrations from the first siting above show, G.P. disclosed many intimate details of Pellew's associations with his friends throughout his life (1898: 305–7, 413–8). Here is a further example: in a sitting on March 30, 1892, the G.P. communicator, unprompted, identified one of the sitters present as a certain Mr. Vance and immediately inquired about Mr. Vance's son. Mr. Vance asked G.P. to say from where he knew his son, and G.P. correctly replied "In studies, in college" (1898: 300). G.P. then provided a correct description of the sitter's summer home that the living Pellew had visited: "Country. Peculiar house, trees around, porch that projects at the front. ... Vine at the side. Porch at the front, and swing on the other side" (1898: 457–8). Although there are hundreds of instances of this sort documented in the G.P. communications, Hodgson regards the most persuasive of G.P.'s disclosures to be of such a confidential nature and concerning "incidents of a private nature relating to other persons living" as to be inappropriate for publication, even though pseudonyms were used for parties concerned; but the relevant sitters, being knowledgeable of the personal facts, found the revelations compelling evidence of Pellew's survival (1989: 290; cf. 299, 321–2, 329).[8]

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[7] This is perhaps the most frequently cited feature of Mrs. Piper's G.P. sittings by philosophers. See Almeder (1992: 216), Braude (2003: 59), Ducasse (1961: 181), Griffin (1997: 54), Lund (2009: 185), Moore (1981: 84), and Paterson (1995: 162).

[8] Munves (1997) indicates the potentially scandalous nature of some of G.P.'s revelations, specifically concerning "Mrs. Mary Howard" (AKA Lilla Perry). Pellew seems to have had a deep romantic attraction to and possible relationship with Lilla Perry, despite his close friendship with her husband Tom Perry (aka Mr. Jim Howard). Letters and poetry exchanged between Pellew and Lilla Perry, which Munves cites, show that Mrs. Perry reciprocated this affection. This naturally lends itself to the

Another curious feature of the G.P. sittings, with which Hodgson experimented, was the communicator's ability to accurately report events that had taken place since the death of Pellew or that were taking place elsewhere around the time of a particular sitting (1898: 335). I noted above G.P.'s claim to have seen his mother remove a pair of studs from his body after his death. In another sitting, G.P. correctly reported that on a particular day his father took a picture of G.P. to a photographer to have it copied and that on another occasion his father took a book of poems to the printer to be copied (1898: 304, 414). In a sitting on December 5, 1892, G.P. reported that he had seen his friend Jim Howard visit a man named Fenton and engage in a conversation about G.P. In the same sitting, G.P. said that Jim Howard was reading at the time of the sitting. These reports were both correct (1898: 319, 422–3).[9]

Finally, the range of modes by which G.P. communicated to sitters is worth noting. In early sittings, Mrs. Piper's control personality, Dr. Phinuit acted as an intermediary. However, on the April 11, 1892 sitting, G.P. claimed to be directly speaking through Mrs. Piper by controlling her voice (1898: 300), which he continued to do on other occasions, sometimes with Dr. Phinuit stepping in after a time as an intermediary. After the emergence of the G.P. communicator in March 1892, the phenomenon of "automatic writing" figures more prominently in Mrs. Piper's mediumship. Here communications are conveyed in written form, with the communicator taking control of Mrs. Piper's hand to write out messages, often while Phinuit is simultaneously the control and apparently unaware of what is being written with Mrs. Piper's hand (1898: 287–8, 291–5). Many of G.P.'s communications were delivered through automatic writing.

4.2.3   The Kakie Sutton sittings

The second case is taken from a sitting that the Reverend and Mrs. Sutton had with Mrs. Piper on December 8, 1893, six weeks after the death of their

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conjecture that some of "the incidents of a private nature" to which Hodgson refers here and elsewhere concerned an illicit affair between Pellew and Lilla Perry. Hodgson was clearly aware of what Munves describes as "Pellew's peccadillos," as Hodgson omitted (in his 1898 publication) portions of the December 22, 1892 sitting in which G.P. references his involvement with a certain "professional lady" (1898: 321). Alan Gauld brought this to my attention in personal correspondence, January 31, 2014 and December 14–15, 2014.

  [9] In some cases G.P. *incorrectly* reported on some alleged current or recent event that involved friends or family, which he claimed to have observed. As Hodgson pointed out, these errors are interesting because in some cases G.P. was incorrect about the particular time and date of an event but correctly described the event (Hodgson 1898: 304–307, 335). In other cases, while G.P. was factually incorrect in what he described, his descriptions corresponded to the intentions or plans of the persons involved. See Hodgson (1898: 315).

daughter Katherine, nicknamed Kakie (Hodgson 1898: 386–90, 484–94). Hodgson arranged two sittings, one for December 8 and the second for December 21, in Arlington Heights, Massachusetts. Mrs. Howard, a skilled and frequently used note taker, documented both sittings and provided supplementary notes in the report that she prepared for Hodgson. Following a common practice implemented by psychical researchers, the Suttons were introduced under pseudonyms to lower the chances that Mrs. Piper's knowledge about their family might have been derived from publicly accessible information. On these occasions, Mrs. Piper's control personality was Dr. Phinuit. I first provide a lengthy selection from the first sitting, and I then highlight some of its important features.[10]

> Mrs. Howard held Mrs. Piper's hands. She became immediately entranced under the control of Dr. Phinuit. After a brief communication to Mrs. Howard I took Mrs. Piper's hands and Phinuit said: This is a lovely lady, – she has done much good, – has helped so many poor souls. A little child is coming to you. This is the dearest lady I have met for a long time – the most light I have seen while in Mrs. Piper's body. He reaches out his hands as to a child, and says coaxingly: Come here, dear. Don't be afraid. Come, darling, here is your mother. He describes the child and her "lovely curls." Where is papa? Want papa. *[He takes from the table a silver medal.]* I want this – want to bite it. *[She used to bite it.*] [Reaches for a string of buttons.]* Quick! I want to put them in my mouth. *[The buttons also. To bite the buttons was forbidden. He exactly imitated her arch manner.*]* I will get her to talk to you in a minute. Who is Frank in the body? *[We do not know.] [My uncle Frank had died a few years before. We were much attached. Possibly Phinuit was confused and my uncle was trying to communicate.*]* A lady is here who passed out of the body with tumour in the bowels. *[My friend, Mrs. C., died of ovarian tumour.*]* She has the child – she is bringing her to me. *[He takes some keys.]* These bring her to me – these and the buttons. Now she will speak to me. Who is Dodo? *[Her name for her brother George.]* Speak to me quickly. I want you to call Dodo. Tell Dodo I am happy. Cry for me no more. *[Puts hand to throat.]* No sore throat any more. *[She had pain and distress of the throat and tongue.*]* Papa, speak to me. Can not you see me? I am not dead, I am living. I am happy with Grandma. *[My mother had been dead many years.*]* Phinuit says: Here are two more. One, two, three here, – one older and one younger than Kakie. *[Correct.*]* That is a boy, the one that came first. *[Both were boys.*]*
>
> The lady has a friend, Elizabeth, – Lizzie. Mary wants to send love to Elizabeth. *[This last is not intelligible to us.]*

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[10]   In the following lengthy excerpt, comments in italics and square brackets were notes taken by Mrs. Howard (who was present at the sitting), in some cases with commentary from the Suttons. The initials "R.H." indicate Hodgson's personal comment. "*" indicates notes added in 1897.

The little one calls the lady, Auntie. *[Not her aunt.*]* I wish you could see these children. Phinuit turns to Mr. Sutton and says: You do a great deal of good in the body. *[To me.]* He is a dear man! Was this little one's tongue very dry? She keeps showing me her tongue. *[Her tongue was paralysed, and she suffered much with it to the end.]* Her name is Katherine. *[Correct.*]* She calls herself Kakie. She passed out last. *[Correct.*]* Tell Dodo Kakie is in a spiritual body. Where is horsey? *[I gave him a little horse.]* Big horsey, not this little one. *[Probably refers to a toy cart-horse she used to like.]* Dear Papa, take me wide. *[To ride.]* Do you miss your Kakie? Do you see Kakie? The pretty white flowers you put on me, I have here. I took their little souls out and kept them with me. Phinuit describes lilies of the valley, which were the flowers we placed in her casket.

Papa, want to go wide horsey. *[She plead this all through her illness.]* Every day I go to see horsey. I like that horsey. I go to ride. I am with you every day...*[I asked if she remembered anything after she was brought down stairs.]* I was so hot, my head was so hot. *[Correct.*]* *[I asked if she knew who was caring for her, if it was any comfort to her to have us with her.]* Oh, yes, – oh, yes. *[I asked if she suffered in dying.]* I saw the light and followed it to this pretty lady. You will love me always? You will let me come to you at home. I will come to you every day, and I will put my hand on you, when you go to sleep. Do not cry for me, – that makes me sad. Eleanor. I want Eleanor. *[Her little sister. She called her much during her last illness.*]* I want my buttons. Row, Row, – my song, – sing it now. I sing with you. *[We sing, and a soft child voice sings with us.]*

> Lightly row, lightly row,
> O'er the merry waves we go,
> Smoothly glide, smoothly glide
> With the ebbing tide.
> [Phinuit hushes us, and Kakie finishes alone.]
> Let the winds and waters be
> Mingled with our melody,
> Sing and float, sing and float,
> In our little boat.

Papa sing. I hear your voice, but it is so heavy. *[Papa and Kakie sing. Phinuit exclaims: See her little curls fly!]* *[Her curls were not long enough to fly at death, six weeks before.*]* Kakie sings: Bye, bye, ba bye, bye, bye, O baby bye. Sing that with me, papa. *[Papa and Kakie sing. These two songs were the ones she used to sing.]* *[She sang slight snatches of others in life – not at the sitting.*]* Where is Dinah? I want Dinah. *[Dinah was an old black rag-doll, not with us.]* I want Bagie *[her name for her sister Margaret.]* I want Bagie to bring me my Dinah. I want to go to Bagie. I want Bagie. I see Bagie all the time. Tell

Dodo when you see him that I love him. Dear Dodo. He used to march with me. – he put me way up. *[Correct.*]* Dodo did sing to me. That was a horrid body. I have a pretty body now. Tell Grandma I love her. I want her to know I live. Grandma does know it, Marmie – Great–grandma, Marmie. *[We called her Great Grandmother Marmie but she always called her Grammie. Both Grandmother and Great Grandmother were then living.*]*

Here is Hattie. Speak to her. I am so happy. *[Button string broke – Phinuit is distressed. We gather them up and propose to re-string them.]* Hattie says that is a pretty picture there. *[Hattie was the name of a dear friend who died several years ago. She was very fond of my copy of the Sistine Madonna, and in her last illness asked to have it hung over her bed, where it remained till after she passed away. This did not occur to me when Phinuit gave her words, nor for some weeks after the sitting.]*

I want the tic-tic. Take the buttons and give me the pretty tic-tic. Open the tic-tic. Mamma, do you love me so? Don't cry for me. I want to see the mooley-cow, – where is the mooley-cow? *[R.H.: Did she so call it? A: Yes.*]* Take me to see the mooley-cow. *[She used to be taken almost daily to see the cow.]* Phinuit says: I cannot quite hear what it is she calls the tic-tic. She calls it "the clock," and holds it to her ear. *[That was what she called it.]* I want you to talk to me before I go away from this pretty place.

Phinuit asks: What was the matter with her tongue? She shows it to me. All well now. She has the most beautiful, great, dark violet eyes. *[Correct.*]* She is very full of life – very independent, but very sweet in disposition. She is very fond of Bagie and Dodo, and so very glad to see you.

Here is Eddie – little thing passed out quite small – she knows him. *[Correct.*]*

Phinuit tries to get a new name – Louie – Louie – Alonzo. He is here with Kakie and he is a dear fellow. He says: Don't think it wrong to call me back, – I am so glad to come. Did not you dream about him after he passed away? Some time ago? A few years since? *[Not that he remembers.]* Here is a little one Kakie calls your brother. Alonzo, Kakie wants you to speak to her uncle Alonzo. *[Mr. Sutton had a brother Alonzo, also Eddie, who died young, and his mother lost a still-born child.] [Boy.*]* Mr. Sutton asked: Can he hear and speak in that life? *[He was a mute.]* He can hear. We talk by thought here. *[Phinuit, for Alonzo.]* How strange your voice is! I went up, up, up, and came into the light. I suffered a great deal more than you realised, and was depressed. I will take the best care of your little ones. *[He had dreaded death, thinking of it as going down into the dark.*]*

Phinuit tries to give the full name – says it has two t's, ends in ton – tries to pronounce it Csutton. Mr. Sutton said the middle initial in his name was C. "That is it," cried Phinuit. Alonzo C. Sutton. He is very happy.

He can look back and see you and your work. Adeline – little Addie – he remembers her. *[His sister's baby at the time of his death.*]*

[Kakie again.] I will be with you when you do not see me. I want you to tell Eleanor *[her little sister.*].* I send her my love, and my love to Bagie. I don't forget Bagie. Do not worry for us, we are so happy. Where is Grandma Sutton? I want her to know that I love her and come round her, and sing "Bye, bye," when I am in heaven. I am so happy with all these little girls. What was the pretty white thing, with the pretty flowers hanging over it, that you put in the little mound? *[The little casket of our dead, new born baby.]* Phinuit says: Three little mounds, but only their bodies there; their spirits are happy here.

Phinuit says the lady who has Kakie wants to speak to me. He tries to give her name – Mary – where is the school? C___ – who is Mary C___? *[That is the name of the lady.]* *[The surname correctly given but omitted at request of sitters. – R.H.]* She wants you to always remember that your brothers and I are always with those children. *[I had one brother only, but Mr. Sutton may have been meant, or both.*]* I will be with them as you would wish me to be. *[I asked about her death.]* The thread connected me with the body for a time, till at last I passed up and saw the body. Phinuit says: A___ in the body, daughter to Mary? Mary says so, and sends her love. A great change in her life since she passed out. She is pleased – it was not right that A___should be so much alone. *[Name and statement correct.*]*

There will be more harmony by-and-bye. She likes him very well. *[This to my question if she likes him.]* A___ will understand him better later on. There is opportunity for him to grow spiritually. They will be happy together.

[Kakie again.] I will put my hand on papa's head when he goes to sleep. Want the babee. *[Her characteristic pronunciation.*]* Phinuit takes the doll and says: She wants it to cuddle up to her, so. She wants to sing to it, Bye baby, bye bye. God knew best, so do not worry. The little book. Kakie wants the little book. *[She liked a linen picture book.*]* The séance continued with extended and (in the first case) veridical messages from two more communicators. The séance ended as follows. We thought the sitting over, and Mr. Sutton had gone across the room, when Kakie's voice piped up. Want papa – want papa. Dear papa. *[Phinuit pats his face.]* Do you love me, papa? Want babee. Sings, Bye, bye – papa, sing – mama sing. Cuddles doll up in neck and sings. *[An exact imitation marvellously animated and real.*]* (Hodgson 1898: 485–9)

In this excerpt, there are at least 34 veridical claims made about Kakie's life and family, and at least a dozen manifestations of speech and behavior true to the personality of Kakie. Mrs. Piper, via Dr. Phinuit, makes very few

claims that are incorrect, though of course many of them are not verifiable, because they concern the subjective state of the Kakie communicator (e.g. her feelings and intentions). Some of the more prominent veridical and behavioral features of the sitting should be noted.

First, consider some of the veridical features. Phinuit identifies the girl not only by an accurate though fairly general description of her appearance shortly before death but also by her actual name, "Katherine," and nickname, "Kakie." Her condition before death is accurately described. Like the G.P. communicator, the Kakie communicator provides names of many family members and friends. For example, Kakie names her sister Eleanor and Grandmother Marmie. She even knows the nicknames for her brother George (Dodo), sister Margaret (Bagie), and favorite rag-doll (Dinah). Five deceased friends and family members are mentioned by name. Phinuit conveys Kakie's love for riding horses and some of her interests and daily routines when alive. He conveys postmortem knowledge of the type of flowers laid on her casket (Hodgson 1898: 484–94). Dr. Phinuit also provides details concerning Kakie's fatal ailment and physical condition shortly before death.

Second, Dr. Phinuit's ability, as a control personality, to mimic behavioral patterns characteristic of Kakie is arguably as impressive as the string of veridical claims. Immediately after an unprompted identification of a deceased young girl with curls, Dr. Phinuit imitates the young girl in speech and gestures. She is asking for "papa" and reaching for a silver metal and buttons placed on the table (items of significance to Kakie), and characteristic of Kakie, he begins to bite them. Phinuit also speaks in a way that is characteristic of Kakie, using her particular pronunciation of words and turns of phrase: "babee," "mooley-cow," "take me *wide* (for ride)" the "horsey," and initiates in a childlike voice the singing of a song Kakie used to sing with her father. As in many of Mrs. Piper's sittings, the medium exhibits behavioral features indicative of the deceased that include the skill of recognizing familiar persons or objects presented at the sitting.

Many of the items noted above, in fact most of them, are highly specific. They are also given in significant quantity, not overridden by a significant amount of inaccurate information, and communicated by way of a "persona" that resembles the deceased in multiple highly specific ways, including speech patterns and skills of recognition. For these reasons, many survivalists regard it as an evidentially strong example of mediumship.

4.3   Proxy sittings and the cross-correspondences

Despite the apparent force of the above demonstrations of mediumship, survivalists have often emphasized "proxy sittings" and the "cross-correspondences" as further demonstrations of mediumship but which exhibit special features that more effectively "rule out" (i.e. eliminate or render

less plausible) certain alternative non-survival explanations of mediumistic data. More precisely stated, the data produced in proxy sittings and cross-correspondences appear to resist natural and (non-survival) paranormal explanations, and to this extent, they appear to present us with superior mediumistic evidence for survival.

4.3.1   Proxy sittings and their relevance

As exemplified in the Mrs. Piper cases above, in the typical sitting at least some of the people attending desire to communicate with a deceased friend or loved one. However, in proxy sittings the person who wishes to communicate with a deceased relative or friend is not physically present, but someone else is there as a stand-in or third party on behalf of someone else related to the communicator. Since the proxy sitter will know little or possibly nothing about the deceased or the person on whose behalf they are sitting, researchers designed such sittings to produce data ostensibly more resistant to explanations that posit some source of the medium's knowledge other than the persisting consciousness of the deceased.

First, proxy sittings were believed to at least rule out normal explanations of the data according to which the medium's veridical reports were (consciously or unconsciously) collected by subtly deriving them from a sitter's verbal responses, facial expressions, or muscular movements (in which the medium and sitters have joined hands). In the typical sitting, the sitter already has lots of information about the deceased, which allows the sitter to verify the claims made by the medium. In that case, though, the sitter might unwittingly disclose her knowledge during the sitting through verbal responses or subtle perceptual cues that are picked up by the medium, which the medium then consciously or unconsciously uses to generate "hits" (i.e. correct claims) about the deceased (Roe and Roxburgh 2013). If the proxy does not know about the deceased or the person on whose behalf they are sitting, they would not be able to provide such cues.

Second, once we have ruled out various normal processes by which the medium might have acquired her knowledge of the deceased, we have the difficulty of ruling out exotic cognitive processes, the central one being living-agent "psychic functioning" (or "psi" for short) on the part of the medium: for example, telepathy (direct mind-to-mind interaction) or clairvoyance (direct awareness of physical states from which the subject is sensorily isolated). Mediumistic claims have evidential weight only if they can be verified, but they can be verified only if the information is accessible, either through the testimony of living persons who possess this information as items of personal knowledge or through publicly accessible documents. In either case, a medium could in principle acquire the relevant information about the deceased from some source other than the persisting consciousness of the deceased, through telepathic interaction with the minds of living persons or through clairvoyance that accesses the information in

other sources, such as journals. Proxy sittings, as initially conceived, were thought to help rule out the possibility that the medium's physical proximity to the sitter might facilitate the medium's (unconscious) mining of information about the deceased through telepathy with sitters who were in possession of this information (Allison 1934; E.W. Kelly 2010; C.D. Thomas 1932–3, 1935; Walker 1927, 1929, 1935).

4.3.2   Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard: the Bobbie Newlove case

Many researchers regard British medium Gladys Osborne Leonard (1882–1968) as impressive a medium as Mrs. Piper. Some of the evidence for this is found in Smith (1964), who provided a thorough and detailed overview of Mrs. Leonard's career as a medium, and in Broad (1962: 261–86), who gave a detailed philosophical analysis of the phenomenology of Mrs. Leonard's mediumship. Mrs. Leonard is especially remembered for her proxy sitting demonstrations, investigated and documented by Nea Walker (1927, 1929, 1935) and Drayton Thomas (1932–3, 1935, 1938–9), which E.W. Kelly (2010) recently surveyed.[11]

In what is now known as the "Bobbie Newlove case" we have what many researchers consider to be one of the most impressive displays of mediumship in general, not just veridical proxy sittings. Psychical researcher Drayton Thomas, who was the chief investigator, published the first report (C.D. Thomas 1935).[12] The case covers 11 proxy sittings that Thomas arranged with Mrs. Leonard between November 4, 1932, and June 2, 1933, in which the communicator, identified as the recently deceased boy Bobbie Newlove, provided a large number of accurate details about his life and the circumstances of his death. Thomas arranged the sittings after receiving a letter in September 1932 from Mr. Hatch, who lived in Nelson, Lancashire, a town about 200 miles from Thomas. Hatch informed Thomas of the death of his ten-year-old grandson, Bobbie Newlove, who had lived with Hatch, his wife, and stepdaughter during the boy's whole life. Being proxy sittings, neither Newlove's family nor his friends were present at these sittings, though Thomas subsequently consulted them to confirm Mrs. Leonard's claims. Although Thomas antecedently knew some minimal facts about Newlove from Mr. Hatch's letter, the mediumistic claims exceeded Thomas's prior knowledge in quantity and quality.

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[11] Mrs. Leonard is also known for what are commonly called "book tests." In these mediumistic demonstrations, communicators were able to identify books (associated with the deceased) in remote locations, provide details of the content on particular pages, and describe the physical location of the book. If interpreted as evidence for survival, the demonstrations entail that some persons surviving death have epistemic access to features of our world at times after their death.

[12] More recently, Fontana (2005: 197–218) provides a lengthy outline of the salient features of the case, and E.W. Kelly (2010) provides a more abbreviated summary.

In the first sitting, Thomas requested on behalf of Bobbie's family that Mrs. Leonard – via her control personality, named Feda – try to make contact with a young boy whom Thomas intentionally misstated as having died a *few weeks* earlier. Feda produced 13 statements about Bobbie, eight of which Bobbie's family reported as definitely correct. These included a description of Bobbie's hometown and symptoms related to his unmentioned cause of death by diphtheria (i.e. swollen glands and a throat problem), as well as a correction of the time of his passing as *several months* prior. In the third sitting (December 2, 1932), Feda correctly stated that Bobbie's nose had been hurt shortly before his death and referred to an event nine weeks before his death that involved "the pipes." She also correctly described one of Bobbie's unusual costumes and a path with broken stiles he frequented near a church and old dilapidated barn, as well as the location to which the path led. In subsequent sittings, Feda provided accurate descriptions of Bobbie's character and correctly referred to several events in Bobbie's personal life in the weeks prior to his death – for example, having his teeth inspected, his mother holding a special event on a Saturday, and his visiting a place called "Catelnow" (the village Catelow was the last place that Bobbie visited the day he became ill).

Arguably the most intriguing details of the sittings emerged in the eighth through tenth sittings (March 24 through May 19, 1933), which focused on Feda's claims about circumstances nine weeks before Bobbie's death that weakened his system and so predisposed him to contracting diphtheria, the official cause of his death. Reference had already been made in earlier sittings to "the pipes," and in the latter sittings this reference was more deeply explored. Feda disclosed that nine weeks before his death, Bobbie picked up a condition from "the pipes" at a particular location, a district beginning with the letter "H," where there was a brook or inland of water, swampy condition, near cattle and stables. Although Feda's descriptions of the location were not precise enough to lead to it, the apparent location was subsequently discovered, and the mystery of "the pipes" was solved when Thomas read from Bobbie's diary at a meeting with the family after the final sitting. Thomas discovered an entry in which Bobbie indicted that he had joined a gang (secret society) whose meet up location was called the Heights. Thomas went with the family to the location and found the landmarks and features of the environment that Feda had described. They were also able to confirm that children played in the area and had broken a particular pipe through which spring water had flowed. The pipe was inspected, and subsequently another pipe was discovered that was positioned just slightly above ground level (hence the plural "pipes"). At Thomas's request, the local medical officer of health took samples from the spring water for testing. The results showed that, although the water from the springs themselves was safe to drink, the pools of standing water

were liable to contamination and that the consumption of the water might result in serious infection.[13]

In Thomas's classification scheme, the documented mediumistic claims in the 11 sittings were placed in one of six categories that measured their degree of confirmation: (definitely) right, good, fair, doubtful, poor, and (definitely) wrong. The simple division of mediumistic claims into "correct" or "incorrect" was not plausible, owing to the subjective and less than specific nature of some of the claims. Of the 141 total claims made over 11 sittings (33 of which were about "the pipes"), Thomas classified 121 as positive (meaning they were right, good, or fair) and 20 as negative (meaning doubtful, poor, or wrong). The verification was based on the testimony of family and friends, as well as Thomas's personal visits to locations mentioned in the sittings. Of course, even on a very conservative classification of the claims, which counts only the "right" answers as hits and the rest as misses, it turns out that approximately 64% (90/141) of Mrs. Leonard's claims about Newlove count as hits, and these consisted of a large number of highly specific claims, the verification of which required uncovering information in some cases (e.g. surrounding "the pipes") not initially known by Newlove's family.

4.3.3   The cross-correspondences

It is now generally believed among parapsychologists (including many survivalists) that proxy sittings are less effective at ruling out living-agent psi explanations of the data than they are at ruling out normal explanations (E.W. Kelly 2010: 256–7). Some parapsychologists have therefore argued that another kind of demonstration of mediumship is potentially significant for favoring survival over alternatives, including living-agent psi. This has led parapsychologists to explore whether there are mediumistic communications that a deceased person would have a greater motivation to produce than would living persons. The "cross-correspondence" phenomenon is sometimes proposed as providing such a demonstration of mediumship. Here multiple mediums, unknown to each other, receive and document separate communications allegedly from the same deceased person. Although the content of the messages is individually without significance or a coherent meaning, they jointly form an intelligible message in some way related to the deceased – for example, a topic that was of interest to the deceased while alive.[14] In other words, the significance or meaning of the messages only

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[13] For a helpful summary of this aspect of the Newlove case, see Fontana (2005: 214–5).

[14] For detailed explanations and evaluations of the cross-correspondence phenomenon, see Fontana (2005: 175–89), Gauld (1982: 77–89), Saltmarsh (1938), J. Thomas (1937), and Tyrrell (1961). In the philosophical literature, see Braude (2003: 95–9), Ducasse (1961: 186–90), Griffin (1997: 161–5), Lund (2009: 199–203), and Paterson (1995: 169–71).

emerges once the individual messages are gathered together and collectively read, something like a mediumistic crossword puzzle.

The "cross-correspondences" refers to a very large body writings sent to the SPR by five different mediums for a period of 31 years, beginning in 1901. The mediums were Mrs. Verrall (wife of classical scholar A.W. Verrall), Mrs. Verrall's daughter Helen (later the wife of W.H. Salter), Mrs. "Willett," Mrs. "Holland," and Mrs. Piper (the only "professional" medium of the five).[15] Since all the ostensible communications from the deceased were in scripts (written form), the mediums have been designated automatists. The messages began in 1901 (and continued for 31 years), the year that psychical researcher and literary scholar Frederic Myers died. This is important since many of the scripts have the deceased Myers as their purported author. The other two communicators claimed to be the deceased Edmund Gurney and Henry Sidgwick, two other well-known psychical researchers. The purported identity of the communicators is significant since the cross-correspondences were allegedly designed by the communicators themselves to provide a special kind of evidence for survival that could discriminate between the survival hypothesis and various competing hypotheses, one of their chief interests while alive. The subject matter of the cross-correspondences involved various literary references, often obscure classical references in Latin and Greek. Although these references would be unfamiliar to most people, the alleged communicators would have been well acquainted with them.

Why should this form of mediumship provide evidence for survival immune to counter-explanations? It should for two related reasons. First, the messages seem to suggest conscious design and therefore a presently existing purposive intelligent source (Gauld 1982: 74–7; Griffin 1997: 161–5). Second, the motivation for this kind of communication appears more plausibly attributed to a single deceased person rather than to any one or more living persons (E.W. Kelly 2010: 250). The point seems to be at least provocative since the alleged communicators (Myers, Gurney, and Sidgwick) arguably would have had an overriding interest in producing evidence that would be better explained by survival than by the alternatives, an interest they each shared in their antemortem existence.

It is not possible adequately to convey all the different features of the cross-correspondences in the present context, and many of the cases are difficult to summarize in any condensed fashion. Hence, I will provide a single example that lends itself to a relatively straightforward summary but that also illustrates the central feature of many of the other cases. The "Roden Noel" case involves only two of the five mediums – Mrs. Holland

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[15] Mrs. "Holland" was a pseudonym for Mrs. Flemming – that is, Rudyard Kipling's sister – and Mrs. "Willett" was a pseudonym for Mrs. Winifred Coombe-Tennant.

in India and Mrs. Verrall in England – and the communicator purports to be Henry Sidgwick, who conveys material related to the poet Roden Noel (Johnson 1908; cf. E.W. Kelly 2010: 251–5). The evidence derives from four incidents of automatic writing between March 7 and March 28, 1906.

   (i) March 7, 1906: During automatic writing, Mrs. Verrall (in England) wrote a poem that begins with the line "Tintagel and the sea that moaned in pain." She then sent the poem to researcher Alice Johnson at the SPR, where the document was stored for subsequent analysis.
  (ii) March 11, 1906: Mrs. Holland (in India) wrote a message allegedly from Henry Sidgwick in which he requested that Mrs. Verrall ask her husband about the significance of the date May 26, 1894.
 (iii) March 14, 1906: Mrs. Holland wrote the following words: eighteen, fifteen, four, five, fourteen, fifteen, five, and twelve. The communicator further requests that eight words from the Book of Revelations 13:18 be consulted.
 (iv) March 28, 1906: Mrs. Holland wrote the words "Roden Noel," Cornwall," "Patterson" and "Do you remember the velvet jacket?"

After all of the scripts had been sent to the SPR, Alice Johnson carefully examined them and discovered the following. Poet Roden Noel, who was explicitly mentioned in Mrs. Holland's March 28 scripts, was the author of the poem Tintagel, which is reproduced in Mrs. Verrall's March 7 script. The date – that is, May 26, 1894 – mentioned in Mrs. Holland's March 11 script was the date of poet Roden Noel's death. Most perplexing is the apparent code in the March 14 scripts by Mrs. Holland. The biblical reference Revelations 13:18 is simple enough: "for it is the number of a man." Mrs. Johnson took this to be the key to deciphering the code suggested by the number sequence. "R" is the 18th letter of the alphabet, "O" the fifteenth, "D" the fourth – the number sequence spells out "Roden Noel." Although Noel's name appears in the March 28 scripts, the other material from Mrs. Holland's March 28 scripts are significant: Noel frequently wrote about "Cornwall" in his poems, "A.J. Patterson" was a friend of Noel's, and Noel frequently wore a "velvet jacket." Mrs. Holland allegedly had no acquaintance with these matters, but Sidgwick was well acquainted with them not merely because of his literary interests but because Noel and Patterson were his friends.

   The "Roden Noel" case is, of course, a fairly simple illustration of the cross-correspondences, but it illustrates how apparently obscure scripts collectively exhibit information and a shared theme that is related in some way to the life and interests of the alleged communicator but with which the automatist herself was allegedly unacquainted. Other cross-correspondences exhibit more complex variations of this sort, involving more than two mediums and a more complex set of literary references (Saltmarsh 1938).

4.4   Drop-in communicators

When communicators manifest at sittings, they are often known by the sitters, someone on behalf of whom a sitter is present, or known to the medium herself. But in what are commonly designated "drop-in" cases, a communicator manifests that is unrelated or unknown to persons involved in the sitting. Although drop-in cases are described in some of the early literature, since the 1960s several prominent parapsychologists have placed considerable weight on this kind of mediumistic phenomenon. Their reason for this is simple: drop-in communicators seem to render less plausible some of the otherwise more promising non-survival explanations of mediumistic data (Braude 2003: 31–52; Gauld 1971, 1983: 58–73; Stevenson 1970; and Haraldsson and Stevenson 1975). In the better cases, drop-ins produce verifiable information, which allows their identity to be determined. If sitters and medium have no prior knowledge of the communicator, it is not possible for the communicator to be (consciously or unconsciously) constructed from their prior knowledge. Moreover, it is argued that in such cases the more plausible motive for initiating the communication would rest with the communicator as an actual deceased person who is seeking assistance from living persons rather than with the medium or sitters to whom the communicator was previously unknown.

4.4.1   A drop-in communicator in Iceland

One of the widely discussed veridical drop-in cases involves the communicator Runolfur Runolfsson, nicknamed Runki, a case associated with the famous Iceland trance medium Hafsteinn Bjornsson (1914–77). Runki initially manifested at a sitting in the autumn of 1937. After the mystery surrounding the communicator was resolved by 1940, Runki became Hafsteinn's control personality to the time of the medium's death in 1977. Since a central theme in the series of sittings surrounding the case involves Runki's search for his missing leg, the case is often referred to as "Runki's Leg." Elinborg Larusdottir (1946) originally reported the case, and Haraldsson and Stevenson (1975) later published a critical review of the case as reported by Larusdottir, which incorporated also the results of their own investigation of the case in 1971–72. Gauld (1982: 58–73), who conducted his own lengthy investigation into drop-in communicators (Gauld 1971), critically discussed the case, as have philosophers Braude (2003: 43–51), Lund (2009: 197–9), and Moore (1981: 115–20).[16]

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[16] Lund considers the evidence in this case to be strong evidence for survival, whereas Moore considers it weak evidence. Braude occupies a middle ground, carefully noting the ways in which some important features of the case favor survival, while others favor non-survival explanations. While Griffin (1997: 166–7) discusses Bjornsson's mediumship, he discusses a different drop-in case.

The case of "Runki's Leg" begins in autumn of 1937, when a communicator appeared at a Hafsteinn Bjornsson sitting in the home of E.H. Kvaran in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, where a circle of sitters had been meeting with Hafsteinn once to twice a week. At this sitting, a communicator manifested who said, "I am looking for my leg. I want to have my leg," which the communicator said was "in the sea" (Haraldsson and Stevenson 1975: 37). One of the more frustrating aspects of the case manifested at this time. The communicator referred to himself by obviously fictitious though common Icelander names (Jon Jonsson and Madur Mannsson) and belligerently dismissed requests to provide his actual name. The communicator kept appearing at sittings held at Kvaran's home for the next year and then into the autumn of 1938 after the sittings had moved to a new location, the home of Lilja Kristjansdottir. Throughout this period, the communicator repeated the same request concerning his missing leg, but he still refused to disclose his name.

An important shift occurred in January 1939, when new sitters named Niels Carlsson and Ludvik Gudmundsson joined the mediumship circle. Ludvik was a fish merchant and owner of a fish-processing factory in the village of Sandgerdi, about 36 miles from Reykjavik, though he and his wife also owned a home in Reykjavik. After joining the circle, the communicator welcomed Ludvik and said that his leg was in Ludvik's home in Sandgerdi, not in the sea as he had initially said. During this period, the communicator's behavior was noticeably different from that of the medium Hafsteinn. The communicator's attitude during Hafsteinn's trances was brusque and rude, and, contrary to Hafsteinn's character, he repeatedly demanded coffee, alcohol, and snuff.

Ludvik and Niels eventually gave the communicator an ultimatum: he must disclose his long withheld identity or they would not assist him in recovering his leg. At this point, the communicator disappeared and did not manifest until around late winter or early spring of 1939, at which time he made an abrupt appearance and disclosed both his identity and various details surrounding his life and death, which included his full name, age, place of residence at the time of his death, some of the details of conversations with friends on the night of his death, and the circumstances of his death, the last of which involved falling asleep near the sea and being carried away by the tide after an alcohol-induced sleep (Haraldsson and Stevenson, 1975: 37–9).

Among the statements provided by the communicator were the following:

> Well, it is best for me to tell you who I am. My name is Runolfur Runolfsson and I was 52 years old when I died. I lived with my wife at Kolga or Klappakot, near Sandgerdi. I was on a journey from Keflavik in the latter part of the day and I was drunk. I stopped at the house of Sveinbjorn

Thordarson in Sandgerdi and accepted some refreshments there. When I wanted to go, the weather was so bad that they did not wish me to leave unless accompanied by someone else. I became angry and said I would not go at all if I could not go alone. My house was only about 15 minutes' walk away. So I left by myself, but I was wet and tired. I walked over the kambinn and reached the rock known as Flankastadaklettur which has almost disappeared now. There I sat down, took my bottle [of alcoholic spirits], and drank some more. Then I fell asleep. The tide came in and carried me away. This happened in October, 1879. I was not found until January, 1880. I was carried in by the tide, but then dogs and ravens came and tore me into pieces. The remnants [of my body] were found and buried in Utskalar graveyard. But then the thigh bone was missing. It was carried out again to sea, but was later washed up again at Sandgerdi. There it was passed around and now it is in Ludvik's house. (Larusdottir 1946: 203–4)

4.4.2   The verification of Runki's claims

Upon inquiry with Runki as to where they might find information to confirm his testimony, Runki directed Ludvik and Niels to a church book at the Utskalar Church, which did in fact substantiate several of Runki's claims, including his name, date of death, and age. Nothing, however, was mentioned in the document about a missing leg or other details that Runki provided. Ludvik was already aware of bones in his home, some of which he had previously discovered and disposed of shortly after moving into the home, as well as local reports that his home was haunted. After Runki's disclosure, Ludvik inquired with elderly men of the town who testified that a femur that had been passed around years prior. In 1940 the femur was discovered with the assistance of a former occupant of the home who knew the carpenter who placed the femur in a specific location in the home. Thereafter, a special burial ceremony was held at Utskalar to return Runki's presumed femur back to him. Runki expressed gratitude for the ceremony in subsequent sittings, and he provided details of the event to confirm that he was present in spirit at the ceremony. Thereafter, Runki became Hafsteinn's control.

   Although Runki's presumed femur was laid to rest in 1940, nearly 60 years after his death, the case was far from over. In researching the case several years later, Larusdottir (1946) discovered additional documentation at Ukskalar that confirmed several of Runki's other claims: the location of his home at Klopp in 1849, his residence with a woman at Flankastadaklettur in 1859 (close to the rock Runki mentioned in his communication), and his later (final) residence at Klappakot before his death. No further references to Runki were found in church records after 1880. What was most notable, though, was the discovery of the Utskalar clergyman's record book, which made reference to Runki (by his full name), indicated his death on

October 16, 1879, while living at Klappakot, that he died as the result of an accident in which his body was carried out to sea during a storm, that later his dismembered body washed ashore, and that his body was laid to rest on January 8, 1880 (Haraldsson and Stevenson 1975: 42).

In 1969 Rev. Jon Thorarensen drew attention to a second written record concerning Runki's death. Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen, who had composed the parish records at Utskalar (upon which the sitters relied to confirm some of Runki's claims), had also composed a diary-style document *Anals of Sudurnes*, which was published in 1953. This document contained some of the information found in the church records and excluded others (such as Runki's surname), but it contained additional details that Runki disclosed in his 1939 communication – for example, that he had been drinking alcohol the night of his death. Although published in 1953, the *Anals* existed in manuscript form in the National Library in Reykjavik at the time of the disclosure sitting in 1939, in a building next to the National Archives where the Utsklara church records were also housed at the time.

In their investigation of the case in the early 1970s, Haraldsson and Stevenson (1975) interviewed the medium Hafsteinn, the author of the original report Larusdottir, two friends of Hafsteinn, former tenants of Ludvik's home (where the femur was discovered), six sitters from the Hafsteinn sittings in which Runki communicated, and Runki's grandson and granddaughter. The facts uncovered in Larusdottir's report (1946) were thereby confirmed with a broader and more systematic investigation, which according to Haraldsson and Stevenson rendered natural explanations of the case improbable.

4.4.3   Observations on the Runki drop-in

There are of course various curious features of this case. First, there are many veridical elements in the case that we might suppose would be the sort of thing that Runki would know if he had survived death. Haraldsson and Stevenson list 20 claims made by Runki, 18 of which were confirmed through written documents or human testimony through interviews, leaving only two that could not be verified. Related, the portrait that Runki sketches of himself was verified only by consulting multiple sources, as well as the eventual discovery of the femur in Ludvik's home. It certainly looks as if there was no single source (other than the surviving Runki himself) that *could* have contained all the relevant details provided by Runki and that were subsequently verified. And of course, we might plausibly suppose that Hafsteinn's behavior during trance better fit Runki than Hafsteinn, given the information available about Runki. Finally, we might further suppose that the motivation for Runki's appearance in the sitting is more plausibly attributed to Runki's interests than to those of the medium or sitters. Haraldsson and Stevenson therefore observe that survival is the simplest explanation for the data as a whole (Haraldsson and Stevenson 1975: 57).

However, we should not be left with the impression that the relevant features of the case are all prima facie suggestive of survival. Other aspects of the case seem not to neatly fit the survival hypothesis. First, the communicator's statement in January 1939 of the location of the femur in Ludvik's house contradicted his initial statement in 1937 that the femur was in the sea. Why was there this initial confusion in 1937 given Runki's subsequently high degree of lucidity in 1939? Second, he never disclosed his actual identity until late winter or spring of 1939, nearly a year and a half after first dropping in. Why was he reluctant to be forthright about his identity, especially since doing so would presumably facilitate the recovery of his femur, his only stated reason for communicating? Furthermore, if Runki knew that his femur was in Ludvik's house, why did Runki not guide him and the other sitters to more efficiently locate it by telling them where precisely it was? Finally, Runki stated he was 52 years old *when* he died. This corresponded to the Utskalar clergyman's statement. However, church records indicate that Runki was born December 25, 1828, which would have made him 51 years old at the time of his actual death in October 1879. While the clergyman's statement can plausibly be interpreted as indicating Runki's age at the time of the burial of his remains (in January 1880), this is not plausible for Runki's testimony. As Braude explains (2003: 48), this is precisely the kind of mistake we would expect if the Runki communicator were constructed by living persons relying on source documents that make it easy to suppose that Runki's age was 52 at the time of death.[17]

As we will see in subsequent chapters, these kinds of facts become especially troublesome when we try to construct the argument for survival. Suppose, as survivalists often do, that the veridical elements of the case are what we would expect if Runki had survived death. In this case, the other data seem contrary to what we might expect given the hypothesis of Runki's survival. As a result, various auxiliary hypotheses must be introduced to explain why these other facts do not run counter to our expectations and effectively disconfirm the survival hypothesis. The difficulties this potentially creates for the argument for survival will be critically examined in later chapters.

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[17] There are other aspects of the case that raise some prima facie suspicions. For example, in Haraldsson's 1970s interview with Hafsteinn, Hafsteinn originally told Haraldsson that he had never visited the National Archives (where crucial documents were located in 1939), but after being informed later that his signature was discovered in the guest book there (dated November 1939), he claimed to have forgotten his visit. While Haraldsson and Stevenson conclude that this was an honest lapse of memory, it points to a particularly vulnerable point concerning the status of the evidence in the case, namely the possibility that Hafsteinn knew about Runki at the time of the disclosure sitting in late winter or early spring 1939 and relied on this information in (consciously or unconsciously) creating the Runki communicator.

4.5   Rev. David Kennedy's narrative

Paterson (1995: 165–6) cites Rev. David Kennedy's highly intriguing though generally neglected documented narrative of a large number of ostensible communications from his deceased wife Ann, beginning shortly after her death and lasting for sixth months (Kennedy 1973). The alleged communications came through a dozen different mediums, including Mr. Albert Best, Mrs. Lexie Findlater, and Mrs. Ena Twigg – British mediums of some notoriety in the 1960s and 1970s. The communications, which began 15 days after Ann Kennedy's death, took place during scheduled sittings and various impromptu phone conversations with mediums, generally initiated by the medium. True to his prior investigation of psychical phenomena and interest in acquiring the highest quality evidence for survival, Kennedy carefully preserved the transcriptions of sittings, often with a tape recorder so that no details would be forgotten or facts misrepresented, and he noted important contextual factors that apparently rule out non-survival explanations of the medium's ability to provide accurate information.

Rev. Kennedy noted several veridical elements in the first ostensible communication from Ann Kennedy that took place during a sitting with Mrs. Findlater, who had no previous acquaintance with or knowledge of Mrs. Kennedy or his wife Ann. During the sitting, Mrs. Findlater disclosed that Kennedy had lost his wife two weeks prior and that she and several of Kennedy's other relatives (whom she accurately described) were present (Kennedy 1973: 33). Findlater claimed that Ann died with a blue oblong object in her hand. Kennedy initially thought this was incorrect, as he had no recollection of seeing such object in his wife's hand when he arrived at the hospital shortly after her death; but a week later, upon returning to the hospital to collect Ann's belongings, he discovered among her personal possessions a blue oblong container of talcum powder. Hospital officials said Ann was clutching it when she died of cardiac arrest (1973: 34–5). Kennedy was also impressed that Findlater correctly stated that Ann had received a 2 ½ inch stick of perfume the days preceding her death (1973: 34, 36). Findlater also correctly stated that Ann frequently hummed songs but never sang the lyrics.

An interesting feature of Kennedy's narrative is that many of the ostensible communications from Ann were relayed to Kennedy over the phone, in calls initiated by the medium, who claimed that Ann wanted a particular message delivered to her husband, sometimes with great urgency. The evidentially significant aspect of many of these communications was that the medium demonstrated knowledge of what Kennedy was either in the process of doing at the time of the phone call or had been doing earlier, sometimes within minutes of the call. And in some of these conversations, the medium also demonstrated knowledge of the personal belongings of Rev. Kennedy and the location of objects in Kennedy's house, facts with

which Ann would have been intimately familiar but which the medium would not have naturally known. Here are five examples.

(i) On February 16, 1970, Mr. Best called Rev. Kennedy and told him that Ann had been "beside" Kennedy earlier when he had taken out a new embroidered table cover and was speaking about a new wine. Kennedy remarks, "An hour earlier I had decided to put an embroidered table-cover on the dining table, which I did. I had just opened a bottle of a new type of wine which I had never sampled before" (1973: 38).

(ii) On March 15, 1970, Mrs. Findlater, who was 40 miles away from Rev. Kennedy, telephoned and informed him that Ann had impressed her to call him at that very moment and to tell him, "Get out now and use the old notes" (1973: 45). Rev. Kennedy had fallen asleep and would have been late for his evening church service had he not been awakened by the telephone call at that moment. Kennedy notes that the timing of the call corresponded to the usual time that his wife would wake him from a nap in preparation for his evening service.

(iii) On March 18, 1970, Best phoned Kennedy and said that Ann had just been watching her husband doing laundry and that he had put too much soap in the wash, resulting in an overflow of suds. Best was able to describe the yellow pullover that was in the washbasin, as well Kennedy's possession of another pullover with egg stains on it (1973: 45–6). Apparently referring to the incident of March 15, "Ann" told her husband, "For heaven's sake get an alarm clock, and don't sleep in again at the end of the week" (1973: 45).

(iv) On another occasion in mid June, Albert Best telephoned Kennedy and provided him with information that "Ann" said that she was with her husband ten minutes prior and knew that he was reading about a particular person, namely Rev. Drayton Thomas, at the time (1973: 105). This was correct.

(v) On June 16, 1970, Best called Rev. Kennedy and conveyed a message from Ann concerning the whereabouts of clean clerical collars, which Kennedy was looking for at the time of the phone call. Best was able to state precisely and correctly the location of three clean collars in the house – bottom drawer of chest of drawers on the bottom right-hand side underneath some shirts. He also correctly stated that Kennedy was going to be giving a memorial service for a specific woman later that evening, the details for which, Kennedy noted, were private and had not been advertised in the papers (1973: 105–6).

These ostensible communications from Ann that disclosed current, private affairs in the life of Rev. Kennedy were not restricted to Kennedy's phone conversations with Best but were also a common feature of sittings with the widely recognized medium. For example, on June 19, 1970, when Kennedy

took a friend to see Mr. Best, communications from "Ann" disclosed that her husband had earlier had a headache, and she allegedly laughingly said "It serves you right!" (1973: 114). Kennedy awoke that morning with a headache after drinking too much alcohol the night before, and Kennedy explains that the remark "serves you right" and laughter was true to her character. In the same sitting, Best said that Ann was with Kennedy earlier in the day when he withdrew £45 from his bank account (1973: 115). This was correct. In another sitting, while Best was in a trance, Best communicated a message from "Ann" that the lights on Kennedy's car needed to be replaced, that the problem with the light was dangerous (1973: 125–6, cf. 159). After the sitting, Kennedy discovered that his near-side lamp was out and the wire behind the light assembly was defective, becoming hot after the lights were on for only a few minutes.

4.6   Summary description of the salient data

The cases above exhibit a range of salient facts that many survivalists take to be evidence for personal survival. I divide the data into three categories: data that concerns (1) the *veridicality* of communications, (2) the *modality* of the communications, and if we are to include the data from physical mediumship, we should add (3) *auxiliary physical phenomena* accompanying (1) and in some cases (2).

The most frequently encountered piece of evidence encountered in the literature is the core veridical evidence for the following two statements:

e7: There are some mediums M who (i) make true statements about the life of some deceased person(s) D, (ii) M's statements are objective and specific statements about D, and (iii) M's statements have been independently confirmed.[18]

e8: There are some mediums M who (i) make true statements about the life of some deceased person(s) D, (ii) M's statements are specific statements about the interpersonal and private life of D, and (iii) M's statements have been independently confirmed.

Here are some clarifications. Clause (ii) under (e7) – "objective and specific facts" will be observationally confirmable facts that contain detail rather than being highly general. Specificity and objectivity of course have fuzzy boundaries and are also degreed properties, but the basic idea should be

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[18]   I begin the numbering of the evidence statements for mediumship with e7 since the analytical description of evidence in §4.6 is a continuation of similar descriptions that I started in §3.5 with five evidence statements for OBEs and NDEs. Since I ended with e6 in §3.5 and I wish to number consecutively the strands of evidence, I begin here with e7. I will follow this pattern in subsequent chapters.

clear enough. "Walter attended his father's funeral at the Old Cemetery in Windsor, Connecticut at the end of July 1978" qualifies as objective and specific, whereas "Walter was happy years ago when he attended a dining event with a friend" does not. Clause (ii) under (e7) – "interpersonal, private life" means facts about D's relationship or experiences with some other person(s), and where the facts are such that very few people would be in a position to know them.

An important issue, not specified in e7 or e8, concerns the quantity of veridical claims provided in particular sittings or across some run of sittings with a particular medium/communicator pair. Survivalists usually emphasize sittings that produce a large number of "hits" (correct answers) and a small number of "misses" (incorrect answers), but of course even mediums as impressive as Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Leonard had shoddy days or periods in which they produced precious little in the way of veridical claims. One reason for acknowledging the importance of quantitative analyses of mediumistic claims is that it can in principle help rule out appeals to chance coincidence to explain the data of mediumship. As partially illustrated above, the rate of "hits" will vary from medium to medium, from communicator to communicator, and even from sitting to sitting. The Bobbie Newlove proxy sittings are a good example of this, as the percentages of hits for individual sittings ranged from around 40% to around 85%, with correct claims for the series of 11 sittings as a whole ≈ 64% (90/141).[19]

It is difficult to capture in general descriptions or in a summary manner the quantitative aspects of the data since cases exhibit a wide range of results at this juncture. On some occasions, the better mediums may provide a very high percentage of hits (like 85%, as the Bobbie Newlove sittings demonstrates), while on other occasions even the best mediums may produce hits at a rate to be expected by chance. In this way, the percentage range for veridical claims is what we might call "broadly permissive." This is one reason why it is important to examine individual cases. Nonetheless, there is still an important generalization to be made regarding the evidence. As I am thinking of it, a broadly permissive range of veridicality has a large segment with values that are apparently anomalous if the results were due to chance, meaning more specifically that hits in the sittings (individually and collectively considered) often appear to be higher or much higher than chance. So I will understand a broadly permissive veridicality range to be a

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[19] As stated in §4.3.2, Drayton Thomas had a six-fold classification scheme for assessing the degree of confirmation in these sittings. In it, ≈ 64% is based on 90 correct, which may be contrasted with ≈ 5% incorrect (7/141). For the 141 claims, his complete ranking results in 121/141 claims being positive/favorable (90 correct, ten good, and 21 fair) and 20/141 being negative/unfavorable (eight doubtful, five poor, and seven incorrect). On this ranking, veridically favorable claims ≈ 85.5% and veridically unfavorable claims ≈ 14.5%.

range of veridical mediumistic claims apparently conducive to above chance results, and in some cases significantly above chance. With this in mind, we can approximate an important quantitative feature of the evidence by adding the following as salient evidence:

e9: There are some mediums M whose veridical claims about the life of some deceased person(s) D (including D's interpersonal, private life) *in a particular sitting* contain Nth percentage of objective and specific veridical statements about D, where N is a value within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

e10: There are some mediums M whose veridical claims about the life of some deceased person(s) D (including D's interpersonal, private life) *over some range of sittings* contain Nth percentage of objective and specific veridical statements about D, where N is a value within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

Another interesting feature of the evidence that we have surveyed concerns the relationship between the medium's veridical statements and non-mediumistic sources that possess this information. In the Runki case, for example, the total set of claims involves specific claims found in separate sources. We can formulate the evidence here as follows:

e11: There are some mediums M such that (i) M make true, specific, and objective statements about the life of some deceased person(s) D, (ii) M's claims are independently confirmed, and (iii) the confirmation of M's claims depends on multiple sources (since no single course contained all the relevant information).

We have also seen an interest among some survivalists in the datum exemplified in proxy sittings that veridical mediumistic claims are often made when no sitter present possesses the information about the deceased that the medium discloses.

e12: There are some mediums M such that (i) M make true statements at time t_1 about the life of some deceased person(s) D, (ii) M's statements are objective and specific statements about the life of D (and may include interpersonal, private facts), (iii) no sitter present at time t_1 knows whether M's statements are true, and (iv) M's statements are independently confirmed at some later time t_2.

We also have an evidential feature unique to drop-in communicators.

e13: There are mediums M such that (i) M make true statements at time t_1 about the life of some deceased person(s) D, (ii) M's statements are

objective and specific (and may include interpersonal, private facts), (iii) D is unknown to the medium or sitters at time t_1, and (iv) M's statements are independently confirmed at some later time t_2.

The evidence unique to cross-correspondences may be stated as follows:

e14: There are two or more mediums who independently make claims purporting to originate from some deceased person, and the claims of the mediums *jointly but not severally* express a message or shared theme related to the life or interests of the deceased person.

Another fairly common occurrence in mental mediumship, and illustrated in several of the cases above, is the medium making correct claims about events or facts in the life of family and friends of the deceased but the events or facts in question have taken place *after* the death of the formerly living person.[20]

e15: There are some mediums who (i) make true statements about events or facts concerning family or friends of some deceased person(s) D, where the events or facts have taken place after the death of D, and (ii) the medium's statements have been independently confirmed.

The modality of mediumistic communications that is most salient to survival concerns the medium's exhibiting a secondary personality that resembles that of the deceased.

e16: There are some mediums who convey statements about the life of some formerly living person(s) through a "secondary persona" or "altered state of consciousness," which exhibits some of the mannerisms, behavior, or verbal skills characteristic of the formerly living person.[21]

Whereas e16 concerns a secondary persona that communicates verbally through the medium, I have also drawn attention to so-called automatic writing, which may take place while the medium is overshadowed to some

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[20] H.F. Saltmarsh analyzed 142 sittings with medium Mrs. Warren Elliott and found that postmortem statements were just as frequent as antemortem statements. They were also slightly more accurate than antemortem statements, 74% to 66.3%. See Saltmarsh (1929: 91–2) and Broad (1962: 317–20).

[21] I have intentionally formulated e16 in such a way that the medium's exhibiting a secondary personality that resembles the deceased is an evidentially salient datum, whether or not the content of the communications at the time is veridical. The conjunction of e7 and e13 entails the stronger complex datum of veridical mediumistic claims made by way of a trance persona.

degree by a secondary persona. So another strand of evidence related to the modality of mediumistic communications is this:

> e17: There are some mediums who convey through written form independently verified statements about the life of some formerly living person(s) D that contain Nth percentage of objective and specific true statements about D, where N is a value within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

Finally, we come to auxiliary physical phenomena characteristic of physical mediumship. I will regard such phenomena as having evidential value only if they are situated in the context of veridical communications. Hence I propose the following formulation:

> e18: In the presence of a medium, there are observable physical phenomena of an apparently paranormal sort, which either (i) directly convey some portion of independently confirmed mediumistic statements or (ii) accompany independently confirmed mediumistic statements conveyed through other means at the sitting.

5
Cases of the Reincarnation Type

A third line of ostensible evidence for life after death derives from data apparently suggestive of *reincarnation*, the re-embodiment on earth of some formerly living person. The data consist of living persons claiming alleged past-life memories as a particular formerly living person (hereinafter "previous personality"), describing with varying levels of detail alleged facts about the public and personal life of the previous personality, exhibiting behavioral patterns characteristic of the previous personality, and in some cases exhibiting birthmarks associated with the previous personality. Although there has been considerable anecdotal evidence of these phenomena across cultures and time, the systematic empirical investigation and analysis of these phenomena may be traced principally to the work of the late Ian Stevenson beginning in 1960, whose research program continues to this day among an increasing number of researchers dedicated to the exploration of what Stevenson designated "cases of the reincarnation type" (hereinafter CORTs).

The present chapter outlines some of the general features of CORTs and their evidential relevance to the question of personal survival. As in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, I will also outline some case studies that have been widely discussed in the literature, especially in the philosophical literature. The discussion of actual case investigations provides a context for a more detailed account of the evidentially salient features of CORTs. True to the structure of the prior two chapters, I conclude the chapter with a list of statements that summarize in analytical fashion the salient strands of data. In Chapter 6 through Chapter 8, I will explore proposed inferences from these data to the hypothesis of personal survival.

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[1] Ian Stevenson founded the Division of Perceptual Studies (formerly the Division of Personality Studies) at the University of Virginia in 1967, as a research unit in the Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences.

5.1 Cases of the reincarnation type: general features

In CORTs a living person, often a child, claims to have lived a past life, has purported memories of the previous life, and frequently exhibits the personality and sometimes physical characteristics of the previous personality with whom she has identified herself. Like the data from mediumship, an important aspect of the evidence for reincarnation involves the apparent present existence of the psychological profile of some previously existing person. The apparent possession of knowledge that would be characteristic of the former personality's autobiographical knowledge is – together with other personality traits – essential as ostensible evidence for the persistence of such a psychological profile. As in mediumship, claims about the life of some previous personality will count as evidence for survival only if such claims are independently confirmed or verified. Similarly, a person who exhibits certain behavior or personality characteristics, as well as having certain physical features, will be evidentially relevant only if there is a confirmation that these match the profile of some identifiable previous personality.

Sahay (1927) provided an early detailed examination of CORTs in India, but the late Ian Stevenson – the American pioneer of reincarnation research – wrote extensively and prolifically on both the methodology of reincarnation research and the results of his investigations of a large number of CORTs from different parts of the world, including India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Italy, Japan, Turkey, Lebanon, Greece, France, Canada, and the United States. He documented these cases most comprehensively in his four-volume *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*, with individual volumes spanning the years 1975 through 1983, with many of his themes appearing in a variety of other works (Stevenson 1960, 1974, 2001, 2003). Stevenson's research and investigations focused primarily on cases of children, usually between the ages of two and five, with apparent spontaneous recollections of past lives. Although skeptics have subjected Stevenson's work to criticism (Angel 1994; Chari 1962a, 1962b, 1962c; Edwards 2002), his work continues today as an important part of the research program in the Division of Perceptual Studies (DOPS) at the University of Virginia, School of Medicine, including researchers Jim Tucker, Bruce Greyson, Edward Kelly, Emily Williams Kelly, and Carlos Alvarado.[1] Jurgen Keil (University of Tasmania), Erlender Haraldsson (University of Iceland), Antonia Mills (University of Northern British Columbia), and Satwant Pasricha (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences at Bangalore, India) are also important representatives of Stevenson's 40-year legacy.[2]

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[2] For an overview of Stevenson's work, see Matlock (2011) and Tucker (2005: 17–29, 2008a).

Much of the contemporary research into CORTs involves a further exploration of one or more of three evidentially salient features of CORTs identified by Stevenson: informational patterns, behavioral patterns, and physical patterns (Stevenson 1974: 385–6). This is reflected, for example, in the work of Pasricha (1990) and Tucker (2005, 2013). Whereas Stevenson developed tables to categorize the facts of the cases relevant to these patterns, CORTs research today is heavily dependent on the use of computer technology to track and analyze features of the cases. Tucker has explained that at DOPS, CORTs are registered by the filling out of a form that documents the relevant facts of a case, interview notes, and relevant photographic or video evidence, and the information is subsequently coded for input into a database that includes 200 variables (Tucker 2005: 27–9). The database allows researchers to search particular features of cases and easily see general patterns across many cases. In 2005, 1,100 of the then 2,500 registered cases had been encoded (Tucker 2005: 29). As of November 2014, 2,030 cases have been encoded.[3]

5.1.1 Core evidential features of CORTs

The most widely discussed feature of CORTs is what Stevenson called "informational patterns." This refers to what the current personality appears to know about the life of the previous personality, specifically some living person's knowing what some formerly living person would be in an optimal or privileged position to know. It is important to stress that the better cases involve not only someone's knowing a lot about the life of the former personality, but ideally having knowledge that includes highly specific facts and intimate details. However, in CORTs a living person with this knowledge claims to *remember* having lived a past life as some particular formerly living person. The knowledge about events, people, or incidents in the life of the deceased is owned as part of the subject's own past experience in the form of ostensible memories. It is autobiographical knowledge. In this way, it differs from the veridical claims that occur in the context of mediumistic communications.

Alleged past-life memories may arise in three different contexts. Psychics and mediums often claim to know something about a person's past life. Mediums sometimes claim to acquire this knowledge through the testimony of communicators who claim to have such knowledge. Furthermore, since the 1970s there has been an increased interest in alleged past-life memories being induced through a process of hypnotic "past-life regression."[4] Third,

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[3] Correspondence with Tucker, November 11, 2014.

[4] For discussion of alleged past-life memories triggered through hypnosis (what is called "hypnotic past-life regression") as evidence for reincarnation, see Braude (2003:190–8), Gauld (1982: 165–6), Moore (1981: 192–9), and Wambach (1978, 1979).

there are cases of non-hypnotized persons having spontaneous apparent recollections of past lives. Of central interest in this chapter is a subset of such cases that were central to Stevenson's work, namely cases in which the subjects are young children who provide evidence of having such memories usually between ages two and five.

As with mediumistic claims, claims to past-life memories are evidentially relevant only if they can be confirmed – for example, only if it can be confirmed by information found in the appropriate sources (e.g. written or visual documentation and/or interviews with reliable living persons) that the previous personality actually lived and the events the current personality claims to have occurred actually occurred. Arguably the strongest kind of confirmation involves qualified researchers or investigators who document the subject's claims about a previous personality in advance of anyone's attempting to identify or find out about the alleged previous personality: what is called "early-bird" testimony (Braude 2003: 182). In addition to Stevenson's documented early-bird cases (Stevenson 1974: 67–91, 274–320); Haraldsson (1991, 2000b); Haraldsson and Samararatne (1999); Mills, Haraldsson, and Keil (1994); and Keil and Tucker (2005) have provided important data on cases that involve early-bird testimony, of which there are now at least 35 documented in the DOPS database, which currently contains about 2,030 cases with confirmed veridical elements.[5] It is worth noting that while early-bird cases presently make up only a very small percentage of the total number of documented cases, they are just as robust as the other cases with respect to the number of verified claims about the previous personality.[6]

The second important feature of CORTs is "behavioral patterns," namely the subject exhibiting behaviors, personality traits, and skills of the previous personality, sometimes even before the subject reports any past-life memories. Behaviors often relate to a child's expressed preference for particular kinds of clothing, food, or drink (including intoxicants) favored by the previous personality. We also find children engaged in unusual play that reflects the vocation of the previous personality, or in some cases the manner of their death (Stevenson 2000b). There are also explicit aversions or phobias, especially to places or objects associated with the death of the previous personality. The emotional responses of children to family members/

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[5] Jim Tucker reported the current figure of 35 early-bird cases out of the 2,030 coded and entered in the DOPS database (Correspondence with Tucker, November 11, 2014). See also Tucker (2005: 95–6) and Keil and Tucker (2005), at which time early-bird cases were 33 in number.

[6] Citing Schouten and Stevenson (1998), Keil and Tucker specify that in early-bird cases the average number of statements made by the subject is 25 ½, whereas in other cases it is 18 ½, and the average percentage of correct statements in early-bird cases is 76.7% and 78.4% in other cases (Keil and Tucker 2005: 100).

friends of the previous personality often correspond to the nature of the relationship between the previous personality and these family members/ friends. There is frequently a demonstration of the skill of perceptual recognition: of places, objects, and persons known to the previous personality. For example, a child is able to pick out friends and family members (by name) who are either present or in photographs. In some cases, there is also an exhibition of various specific musical, linguistic, and artistic skills characteristic of the former personality. In many cases, not only does behavior resemble that of the former personality but it would be uncharacteristic of persons who live in the child's cultural or immediate social context. In the more recent literature, Mills, Haraldsson, and Keil (1994); Stevenson and Keil (2005); and Tucker (2005: 114–40) have examined different aspects to behavioral patterns. Highly relevant to this, Haraldsson has critically examined the broader psychological dynamics of children with past-life memories (Haraldsson 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003).

Finally, Stevenson also drew attention to "physical patterns" – that is, the presence in some CORTs of congenital birthmarks or defects that correspond to features of the previous personality – for example, markings that match wounds on the previous personality or marks intentionally placed on the body of the dying or deceased previous personality (what are called "experimental birthmarks"). In some cases, the correlations are highly fairly specific. To illustrate, Stevenson documented 18 cases in which the subject had two birthmarks that corresponded to entry and exit bullet wounds and where the previous personality died as the result of a gunshot wound (2000a: 656). Curiously, in 14 of these cases, one birthmark was noticeably larger than the other, corresponding to smaller entry wounds and larger exit wounds sustained by gunshots. Stevenson initially documented 225 cases that involved physical features similar to the previous personality (Stevenson 1997), but subsequent research has given further attention to it (Haraldsson 2000a, 2000b; Pasricha 1998; Pasricha, Keil, Tucker, and Stevenson 2005; Tucker and Keil 2013).

5.1.2 An ideal reincarnation case

In §4.1.2, I provided an ideal case of mediumship that demonstrates why mediumship could in principle provide data suggestive of personal survival. A guiding assumption there was that psychological continuity provides evidence for personal identity. If the psychological profile of some person P1 corresponds to degree N to the psychological profile of person P2, then we have evidence to degree N that P1 and P2 are the same person. The corollary of this for personal survival is that if the psychological profile of some current person P1 corresponds to degree N to the psychological profile of some formerly living person P2, then we have evidence to degree N that the present person P1 is the previous person P2 who has persisted, despite the death of P2's physical body. In CORTs, we are confronted with an apparent

correspondence of varying degrees between the psychological profile of a currently existing bodily person and some formerly living person. The informational and behavioral patterns track this feature of CORTs, and the core of this psychological continuity concerns ostensible memories of a past life.

A.J. Ayer, not himself a survivalist, seems to have felt the force of memorial continuity for judgments of personal identity. In his discussion of personal identity (Ayer 1956: ch. 5), Ayer noted that in cases in which a currently existing person made certain verified claims about the life of a formerly living person, we might on pragmatic grounds wish to extend our usage of "being the same person" and regard the current person as the same person as the previous personality. Suppose, Ayer noted, that a person were to claim to be Julius Caesar, had ostensible memories of Julius Caesar's life that matched previously known facts about Caesar's life, and previously unknown facts about Caesar's life were discovered that matched the claims of the person. In this kind of situation, Ayer suggests that we might find it "useful" to regard the current personality as the same person as Caesar, even if it should violate our antecedent intuitions about the nature of personhood.[7]

Let me, then, propose a hypothetical ideal case that is (strongly) suggestive of reincarnation. The case involves a boy named John Oliver who is born on November 23, 1971, in San Francisco, California. Shortly after turning three years of age, John began to draw pictures of a walk path to a meadow. In the meadow, some large barns, a river at the edge of the meadow, and a bridge across the river in the distance are depicted. In some of the pictures, John includes significant snowfall; in others, the trees have bright orange and red leaves. The seasonal variations are indicative of a New England environment. His artwork demonstrates a highly developed talent for drawing. A month after his fourth birthday, while his father is watching a Dirty Harry action movie (starring Clint Eastwood as inspector Callahan), the boy hears the name "Callahan" and tells his father, "Daddy, That's me. I am Callahan. I used to shoot guns. But I shot my head, and I died." From this time for a few months, the boy regularly speaks about himself as Mr. Callahan, shooting himself, and "coming to life again." He also begins to describe details of the house in which he lived: a two-story white federal style home, transom window in the attic looking out to the street, three bedrooms upstairs, a big fireplace in the kitchen area with a hole in the bricks next to it for cooking bread (i.e. a beehive oven), and a cubby area for storing wood beneath the

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[7] Almeder (1992: 60–1) employs Ayer's discussion in the interest of showing that the satisfaction of psychological criteria would be sufficient for the truth of the belief that "the man before you is Julius Caesar reincarnated." However, Ayer's view is more modest. He makes it clear that the extension of "being the same person" in reincarnation cases does not amount to a scientific explanation of the facts, just a "re-description" of the facts in a way that someone may judge useful.

beehive oven. There's a hallway leading from the small entryway to the house, flanked by a staircase on one side and two windows on the other. He even begins to produce drawings of the home's interior and exterior, including in his drawings of the exterior a row of large trees on the south side of the house, a small little house next to the trees, and another small house on the north side property.

In late April 1975, three different parapsychologists interview the boy on three distinct occasions over the course of a month. They each document through video recordings the boy's claims and make copies of his drawings, as well as have his parents complete a psychological profile questionnaire. An additional interview is conducted by a person randomly selected by a research assistant to one of the parapsychologists and whose identity is unknown by all the parapsychologists. The person's only task is to document the boy's claims, place them in a sealed envelope and deliver them to the parapsychological research center, where they are placed in a locked vault. During the initial interview with one of the two parapsychologists, the boy recalls more details about his life – for example, giving the name "Cat" as the name of his wife, claiming he drew pictures in his previous life, attending a congregational church down the street by a river and a diner, owning two cats (one named "Eli", short for Eliakim), and recalling that his neighbor's name was Steven. As to his own name, he only knew he was "Mr. Callahan," but he thought that his first name might have been Harald. He said that his house was on a street called "Palisades." Furthermore, John's parents claim they have never been to New England and had always lived in California, and their personal records substantiate this claim.

On the basis of the data they collect, in June 1975 the researchers begin an exploration of possible locations in New England that might provide a confirmation of the boy's claims. After a month of investigation, the researchers narrow down their search to a street named "Palisado Avenue" in Windsor, Connecticut, a close match to the street that the boy named "Palisades." A preliminary investigation that uses maps reveals many of the prominent landmarks to which the boy referred. After an in-person visit to Windsor in late July 1975, researchers find a house on Palisado Avenue that corresponds to the boy's description with a high level of accuracy: a federal style home built in 1817 by Eliakim Olcott. The house's exterior matches John's physical description, and other details of the property are found to correspond to details disclosed in the boy's drawings. The researchers next discover the most important match. After searching records on the history of the house, they learn that a woman by the name of Catherine Callahan owned the home up until 1971, the year John Oliver was born. A search of obituaries reveals that her husband Steven Callahan died on December 2, 1970. The researchers conduct an interview with the current owner of the home, which allows them to confirm the details the boy provided of the home's interior. Most of what the boy said was correct, and the only

descriptions that did not fit the current interior of the house were confirmed through photographs to have been accurate descriptions of the home in the late 1960s. Moreover, the current owner testifies that Mr. Callahan was an artist who drew and painted nature scenes, and scenes of old homes. He committed suicide by gunshot in the front parlor of the home after a period of deep depression in December 1970, a little over 11 months before John Oliver was born. The next-door neighbor, whose name was Jeremy (not Steven as the boy said), confirmed the current owner's claims. Jeremy had lived in the small house on the north side of the Olcott house since 1967. He knew Mr. Callahan pretty well and so was able to provide a number of additional facts about his interactions with him. He also claimed that Mr. Callahan owned three cats, confirmed that one of was named Eli (which Callahan named after the builder of the house), and he always referred to his wife Catherine as "Cat," which Jeremy said nicely fits Mr. Callahan's love of cats. All of the interviews conducted were video recorded.

In early October 1975, researchers bring John Oliver and his parents to Windsor for an on-location interview with him. As the boy walks through the house, he provides further details about various events in the home, but many of these could not be subsequently verified. However, the boy makes one striking claim about a location in the attic where he had stuffed newspaper shortly before his death. The boy led researchers to the location and portions of the local paper (dated November 23, 1970) were found precisely where the boy said they would be found. After walking outside, John recognizes his neighbor Jeremy, though he initially refers to him as Steve. During a 30-minute conversation with Jeremy, John discloses some details of a few of their conversations and shared activities. For example, the boy asked if Jeremy remembered the time they were smashing hornets in the attic and trying to fill holes around the attic window to keep those "nasty things" out. Jeremy confirmed the incident. The boy was also able to pick out Mr. Callahan and his wife in photographs supplied by Jeremy and another neighbor. During their inspection of photographs of Mr. Callahan, researchers noticed that he had a significant mole on the left side of his face, and John Oliver had a significant dark discoloration in exactly the same area of his face.

In this hypothetical case, the boy makes 22 claims about his past life that are documented by researchers before any attempt is made to locate the previous personality. All but three of the claims prove correct. His drawings are also found to match very closely the home and local environment of the previous personality. During his visit to Windsor, the boy makes an additional 19 claims, ten of which are correct and the rest unverified. The boy's artistic ability, the subject matter of his drawings, and his love of cats also fit the previous personality. Researchers later consult two art professors who confirm that the boy's drawings are quite advanced for a three- or four-year-old. The boy's weakest performance concerned personal

names. Although he had his wife's nick name correct and the name of one of his cats, he was incorrect about his own first name and the name of his neighbor, but it is perhaps significant that the name he gave for his neighbor (whom he referred to as Steve) turned out to be the first name of the previous personality. The boy also had one interesting physical feature of the previous personality, a dark pigmentation on his face in the same place that Mr. Callahan had a prominent mole.

The hypothetical John Oliver case is an example of an ideal reincarnation case. It contains each of Stevenson's informational, behavioral, and physical patterns, the first two of which concern the subject's psychological profile. With respect to the first, half of the subject's claims are early-bird statements, documented in a way to optimize reliability – for example, by using multiple interviews and researchers, including a neutral interviewer (whose identity was unknown to the researchers). Most of the early-bird testimony was correct, including the previous personality's last name and the nickname Mr. Callahan had for his wife. The boy's claims are reinforced and augmented by his drawings, which provide further information about details of the house and property of the previous personality. The boy makes 41 total explicit claims: 29 are confirmed, three are false, and nine are unverified. The boy also demonstrates several important recognitions on location. The boy also illustrates some important personality and behavioral traits (including skills) that correspond to the previous personality. I think we can say that if an actual case were of this sort, we would have good evidence for the present existence of the psychological profile of a formerly existing person, and to that extent, we would have evidence for the personal survival of the previous personality. But how closely do actual cases resemble or approximate this ideal case? In §5.2 and §5.3, I will outline four allegedly strong cases, the first of which is an older case, and the remaining three are newer cases.

5.2   The Bishen Chand case

In the 1920s, a young boy named Bishen Chand Kapoor from Bareilly, India claimed to have lived a previous life in the town of Pilibhit, India, as Laxmi Narain, a man who died in 1918. Bishen Chand provided a large number of details about the life of Laxmi Narain and also exhibited behavior that was characteristic of Laxmi. The case is interesting for two reasons. First, many of Bishen Chand's claims count as early-bird testimony since an investigator documented the claims before attempts were made to confirm the existence of the previous personality and the claims made about his life. Second, two different researchers investigated the case over almost a 50-year period. K.K.N. Sahay initially investigated the case in the 1920s (Sahay 1927), and Ian Stevenson reinvestigated the case on several occasions in the 1960s and early 1970s (Stevenson 1975: 176–205). These facts contribute to the

prima facie force of the data in the case as suggestive of reincarnation, as acknowledged also in some of the philosophical literature (Almeder 1992: 5–8, Braude 2003: 183–90).

5.2.1   Background to the Bishen Chand case

Bishen Chand was born in Bareilly, India, on February 7, 1921, the third of three children – one older brother and one older sister – born to B. Ram Ghulam Kapoor and Kunti Devi. When about ten months old and just beginning to speak, Bishen began to utter the word *pilvit* or *pilivit*, which sounded strikingly like "Pilibhit," the name of a large town located about 50 kilometers from Bareilly. Shortly thereafter, when Bishen was about a year and a half, he began to inquire about the town of Pilibhit, asking, for example, when his father would take him there. When he was three years old, he began to speak of his previous life in the town of Pilibhit. He provided many details about the life of the person subsequently identified as Laxmi Narain. Around the age of four, Bishen and his father passed through Pilibhit by train, on the way back to Bareilly from a wedding party in a town near Pilibhit. Bishen was distraught when his father refused to take him off the train in Pilibhit. When Bishen was about five and half years old, about 18 months after the train ride, attorney K.K.N. Sahay heard about Bishen Chand's claims. Sahay, who was already investigating the past-life memory claims of his own son, Jagdish Chandra, conducted a thorough investigation of Bishen Chand's claims. Sahay visited Bishen Chand and his family in 1926 and recorded many of his claims about his alleged past life. Sahay and Bishen's father went together with Bishen to Pilibhit on August 1, 1926, to verify Bishen's claims. While there, Bishen identified various places and people associated with Laxmi Narain during Laxmi's life.

The Bishen Chand case was studied and reinvestigated by Ian Stevenson between 1964 and 1974. In 1964 Stevenson had two interviews with Bishen Chand's older brother (Bipan Chand) and his sister-in-law (Shyam Rani). Also in 1964 Professor P. Pal interviewed Bishen Chand's father (B. Ram Ghulam) in Bareilly. Pal was able to confirm and supplement information published earlier by Sahay. In 1969, Stevenson met with and interviewed Bishen Chand at length at his home in Bareilly. Stevenson had two other interviews with Bishen in 1971 and 1974. As a result of his personal investigation, Stevenson confirmed the information and conclusions reached by Sahay nearly four decades earlier.[8]

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[8] Stevenson further noted that it was improbable that Bishen Chand's family had any contact with Laxmi Narain's family, even though Laxmi Narain's uncle lived in Bareilly and his mother visited at times prior to Bishen Chand's initial claims. He also argued that it was equally improbable that the relevant family members of either family were engaged in a hoax or fraud. See Stevenson (1975: 179–80).

5.2.2 Bishen Chand's claims

Based on the results of Sahay's initial investigation, and Stevenson's own reinvestigation in the 1960s, Stevenson documented 56 evidentially salient data: 48 claims and eight perceptual recognitions by Bishen Chand. Of those claims, 21 were early-bird testimony written down by Sahay prior to confirmation on August 1, 1926. The remaining 27 claims consisted of 26 claims made during or within a few weeks of Sahay's August 1, 1926, visit to Pilibhit with Bishen Chand and his father and a single claim made to Stevenson in his 1969 interview with Bishen Chand.

First, the early-bird claims consisted of the following:

I. Claims about Laxmi's Narain's life: (1) His "uncle" was Har Narain. (2) He lived in Pilibhit, (3) was of the Kayastha caste, (4) lived in Mohalla Ganj, and (5) was unmarried. (6) His father was a wealthy landowner, (7) and gave him silk clothes. (8) He studied up to the sixth class in the government school, (9) his school was near a river, and (10) he knew Urdu, Hindi, and English.

II. Claims about Laxmi's house: (11) His house had two stories, and (12) had separate compartments for men and women. (13) There was a shrine room in his house.

III. Claims about Laxmi's behavior: (14) He used to watch and listen to nautch [dancing] girls, (15) drink wine, and (16) eat rohu fish.

IV. Claims about Laxmi's neighbor: (17) He had a neighbor named Sunder Lal. (18) His neighbor's house had a green gate. (19) Sunder Lal owned a gun and (20) a sword. (21) He had dancing parties in the courtyard of his house.

Of these 21 early-bird claims, 14 were verified, five were unverified [items (5), (7), (19)–(21)], and two were incorrect [items (1) and (4)].[9] With respect to item (1), it is worth noting that although "Har Narain" was not Laxmi Narain's uncle's name, it was actually Laxmi Narain's father's name. Although Stevenson notes the custom of young Indian children referring to male parental figures as "uncle," he nonetheless counts this claim as incorrect (Stevenson 1975: 185, no. 20).

Second, there were 26 documented claims made by Bishen Chand during his visit to Pilibhit or shortly thereafter. These were as follows:

V. Self-Referential Claims: (22) His name was Laxmi Narain. (23) His sixth grade English teacher was fat and had a beard. (24) His bed was an

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[9] Stevenson (1975: 186–95) provides a table of the total 56 claims and recognitions, noting all verifications and sources of verification. My numbering of the items of evidence does not follow Stevenson's numbering.

elegant one with a heavy covering and four pillows. (25) He once threw away some of his mother's pickles. (26) He worked for a time with Oudh Railway. (27) He won a lawsuit against some relatives. (28) He took a job in Shahjahanpur. (29) He died in Shahjahanpur. (30) Before he died, he was under the care of an Ayurvedic physician of Shahjahanpur named Hanumant Vaidya. (31) He was 20 years old when he died.

VI. Interpersonal Claims: (32) He sent rice and oranges to his aunt. (33) He competed in kite flying with neighbor Sunder Lal. (34) He had a mistress named Padma. (35) He used to drink wine with Padma out of the same glass. (36) He shot and killed a man coming out of Padma's house. (37) After the murder, he hid out in a garden, and (38) his mother sent him food when he was hiding. (39) He established a Muslim watch dealership business in Pilibhit. (40) His uncle Har Prasad had a green house, and (41) Har had a mistress named Hero. (42) His father died before he died. (43) A large crowd gathered at his father's funeral. (44) His servant was called Maikua, who (45) was of the Kahar caste. (46) Maikua was dark and short, and (47) he was a cook.[10]

Of the above 26 claims, 21 were verified, four were unverified, and one was incorrect. As with the early-bird claims, while some of the above claims are general in nature, others are highly specific. The context in which the comments were made is also significant. For example, item (25) arose after Laxmi Narain's mother, with a very specific incident in mind, asked Bishen Chand if he threw away her pickle. Bishen Chand's note only affirmed that he did, but he added it was because they had worms in them (Stevenson 1975: 184). In some cases, questioners deliberately tried to test Bishen Chand's knowledge of Laxmi Narain. For example, Bishen was asked about the "bamboo charpoy" [simple bed] upon which he slept with no bedding, but he replied with a corrective: "You never saw my bed. I had a good bed with an ornamental plank towards the head side and had a qalin [thick cover] on [it,] and [I] kept two pillows under the head and two under my feet" (Stevenson 1975: 185).

5.2.3 Bishen Chand's behavior and skills

As with many CORTs, in addition to verified claims about a previous personality, which the subject takes to be recollections of his own past life, Bishen Chand exhibited behavior and skills characteristic of the previous personality (Stevenson 1975: 195–205).

First, with respect to his behavior, Bishen Chand expressed (1) preference for Laxmi's mother over his own, (2) disapproval or rejection of

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[10] The 48th claim was made by Bishen Chand in a 1969 interview with Ian Stevenson in which Bishen stated that he was drunk at the time he murdered a man outside Padma's house. The claim was unverified.

relatives with whom Laxmi was involved in a lawsuit, (3) disdain for the rather humble conditions of his own father's household (Laxmi Narain's family was wealthy), and (4) he wept when he saw the deteriorated condition of Laxmi's house in Pilibhit. Some of Bishen Chand's strongly expressed desires for food and drink also corresponded to those of Laxmi Narain. For example, although the members of Bishen's family were vegetarians and did not drink alcohol, consistent with Laxmi and his family, (5) Bishen began requesting wine and alcohol at age five or six. Also, (6) Bishen liked rohu fish, which was a favorite of Laxmi. (7) Bishen demonstrated a strong fascination with and attraction toward Padma (Laxmi's mistress) and her daughter, both in his youth and later in life. Stevenson also lists Bishen's (8) quick temper, (9) desire for expensive clothes, (10) interest in music, and (11) interest in kites as indicative of the personality of Laxmi.

Several of Bishen's behavioral characteristics would seem to presuppose skills indicative of Laxmi. For example, Bishen's musical interests were associated with (12) his apparent skill at playing the drums, a skill Laxmi had acquired during his lifetime. Bishen also exhibited linguistic skills consistent with Laxmi. According to Bishen's brother, (13) Bishen Chand as a child could read Urdu words, and he often used Urdu words to refer to objects and places instead of the Hindi words he had been taught. Perhaps most significant was (14) Bishen's exhibition of the skill of perceptual recognition of eight items, persons, important buildings, and the location of objects. For example, he was able to recognize Laxmi Narain's old home and where the staircase once was, though the home was in ruins. Bishen was also able to identify Laxmi and his father in a photograph, the former school that Laxmi attended and one of his former classmates, as well as the location of his sixth grade classroom. Perhaps most interestingly, Bishen knew of the room where treasure had been buried, which was found as the result of his pointing it out.

So – in summary – in the Bishen Chand case, the subject made 48 documented statements of his previous life as Laxmi Narain. Of these, 35 were verified (40% of which were early-bird), ten unverified, and no more than three incorrect. There were also eight ostensive recognitions of persons, objects, places, or objects in specific locations. Finally, there were at least 14 behaviors/skills indicative of the personality of Laxmi Narain.[11]

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[11] As with the assessment of veridical mediumistic claims, all cataloging of verified claims in CORTs should be mindful of the possibility of the file-drawer phenomenon, namely the exclusion (and hence suppression) of claims that were incorrect or unverified. This can result in an overestimation of the degree of veridicality exhibited in a case. In my critical evaluation in subsequent chapters, I will account for this possibility.

5.3   Three recent cases

The Bishen Chand case, though strong in certain respects, arguably falls short of being ideal in a couple of respects. First, and most significantly, because of the age of the case, contemporary Western researchers had to rely largely on the methodology and testimony of Sahay's original investigation and report. Attempting to confirm facts that allegedly took place 40 years prior is subject to various complications. Second, one feature found in a significant number of CORTs but not a feature of the Bishen Chand case is the presence of congenital birthmarks or defects that correspond to features of the previous personality, matching wounds on the previous personality or marks intentionally placed on the body of the dying or deceased previous personality. Cases that exemplify informational, behavioral, and physical patterns come closer to an ideal case. In this section, I discuss three recent CORTs – one that involves early-bird testimony, another that involves birthmarks, and a final one that combines both early-bird testimony and birthmarks.

5.3.1   The Kemal Atasoy case

Keil and Tucker (2005) documented the case of Kemal Atasoy, a six-year-old boy in Turkey who claimed to have lived a previous life about 50 years earlier in Istanbul. Jurgen Keil began investigating the case in April 1997, at which time he documented the boy's claims before any attempt had been made to confirm the existence of the previous personality or any of the other details the boy provided about his alleged previous life. At their first meeting, the boy confidently and clearly claimed that his family name was Karakas, that he had been an Armenian Christian, and that during his life he was rich and lived in a three-story house in Istanbul for part of the year, a house located on the water where boats were tied up and with a church behind his house. He further added that people referred to him by the name Fistik, that his wife and children had Greek first names, and that he often carried a large leather bag. Most curiously, he said that he had been shot and killed and that his wife was involved in the murder. He also claimed that his youngest son died as a rally car driver (Keil and Tucker 2005: 93).

Keil notes that the boy's parents and relatives had no known connection with any "Karakas" family, nor were any friends or relatives living in Istanbul, which was located about 500 kilometers from their home in the southern province of Hatay, Turkey. The boy's father had taken two business trips there a few years before Keil's interview, but he did not attempt to acquire any information that might confirm his son's claims. As Keil and Tucker note, when Keil "started his investigation, there was no indication that a person as described by KA [Kemal Atasoy] had ever existed" (Keil and Tucker 2005: 93).

Keil's attempt to confirm the boy's claims revolved around one specific claim: the boy's claim that in his previous life in the home in Istanbul, his

neighbor was a woman named Aysegul, well known as a dealer in artwork and – as it happens – for also becoming entangled in difficulties with the authorities. A lawsuit facilitated her fleeing Turkey, not to be heard from again. Although Aysegul's name and legal proceedings became a matter of public knowledge (in all probability before Kemal was old enough to speak), Kemal only mentioned that Aysegul was his neighbor. But the information was enough to lead Keil in April 1997 to Aysegul's former house in the Cengelkoy area of Istanbul. Next to her home, he found a vacant three-story house that fit the more detailed description Kemal had earlier provided.

The intriguing part of the case, however, was Keil's initial inability to find any evidence of Armenians living in the Cengelkoy area in the recent past, much less as occupants of the house in question. In fact, an official with the Armenian Church in Istanbul said that no Armenians had lived in the area, and church records showed no evidence that an Armenian had ever lived in the house that Kemal had described. Nonetheless, Keil continued his investigation, and he eventually met an elderly man from Cengelkoy who was familiar with the older history of the area. The man testified that an Armenian had indeed lived in the house. In October 1998 Keil interviewed a local historian, Mr. Toran Togar, who became the central informant for the case. Mr. Togar was able to confirm that a man with the family name Karakas had indeed lived in the house, apparently the sole Armenian in Cengelkoy at the time. Also, his family dealt in leather goods, and Mr. Karakas often carried a large leather bag. His wife, whose maiden name was Yordan, came from a Greek Orthodox family, and they had three children. It was widely known at the time that his wife's family disapproved of the marriage, which apparently captured public attention since a wedding between an Armenian Christian man and a Greek Orthodox woman was unusual. After Mr. Karakas's death in 1940 or 1941, there were rumors that his wife was involved in his death.

In subsequent investigations, Keil discovered that 40 years prior, there were a few hundred Greek Orthodox families living in Cengelkoy. Since a fire in 1957 had destroyed many vital records, marriage and funeral records for the Karakas family were not available. However, Keil was able to acquire important testimonial evidence concerning the Karakas and Yordan families. One local man testified that his mother had mentioned the Yordan family, and some elderly men testified that the home became known as the Yordan's house because it remained in the Yordan family for about 15 years after the death of Mr. Karakas, although neither his wife nor his children remained there. Keil was also able to confirm the existence of a Greek Orthodox Church behind the house. Keil had a closure interview with Kemal in 1999, by which time his alleged recollections of his past life were diminishing. Keil could not find evidence that Kemal or his family had any natural connection to the Karakas or Yordan families.

Keil and Tucker (2005: 95–6) summarize the claims and their confirmation as follows, beginning with Kemal's statements that corresponded to the life of Mr. Karakas:

(1) He lived and died in Istanbul.
(2) His house is next to Aysegul's house.
(3) His house was large.
(4) His house had three stories.
(5) His house was at the water's edge.
(6) Boats were tied up at the house.
(7) A church was at the back of the house.
(8) His family name was Karakas.
(9) He was an Armenian.
(10) He was a Christian
(11) He was married.
(12) He had children.
(13) He was rich.
(14) He often carried a substantial leather bag.
(15) He lived in the house during only part of the year.

Here are the statements from KA that were partially confirmed:

(16) His wife and children had Greek first names. Their actual names are not known, but Karakas's wife came from a Greek Orthodox family.
(17) He was called Fistik. No direct confirmation could be obtained, but since Armenians use this term to refer to a "nice man," this would be consistent with the previous personality. This term is not known in the non-Armenian population in Turkey, and Keil initially assumed that it was a name.
(18) His wife had something to do with the previous personality's death. This assumption was also confirmed as talk in the neighborhood by Mr. Togar, the historian.

Here are KA's unverified or doubtful statements:

(19) KA said that he was shot with a pistol but did not immediately die. There was no confirmation of this. KA had a birthmark on his chest that was visible for several years, and he said that it corresponded to the wound caused by the bullet from the pistol. KA's parents had not noticed the mark until after KA, at the age of about three, started to talk about it. The birthmark was no longer visible when Keil met him. Birthmarks or birth defects that corresponded to wounds on the previous personality have been noted in 35% of cases of children who claim to remember previous lives (Stevenson, 2001), so while the shooting is unverified, KA's birthmark was consistent with his claim and with those in other cases.

(20) He knew Aysegul. Initially, it appeared that Karakas could not have written records of past-life claims known her. When he died, Aysegul was probably only between five and ten years old. Later, however, Keil learned that Aysegul lived in the house next to Karakas as a child and that Karakas may have known her. Thus, the statement was not directly verified, but it is consistent with the history that is available.

(21) He got married in Bodrum. Mr. Togar remembered a wedding procession (when Karakas got married) in Istanbul. If there was a connection with Bodrum, Keil was not able to find out about it or whether there is a Greek Orthodox community there.

(22) His youngest son died as a rally car driver. No available information on the Karakas family supports this, and based on the timeline that Mr. Togar gave, Karakas's son was presumably too young to have been a rally car driver at the time of his father's death.

The Kemal case exhibits several features that are commonly encountered in CORTs. First, Kemal exhibited a high percentage of veridical claims (≈ 70% fully confirmed and about ≈ 82% partially confirmed), many of which were highly specific claims. Second, Kemal began making these claims around the age of two-and-half years. The median age for CORTs is around 32 months. His subsequent loss of memories around age six also fits the dominant pattern in CORTs. However, Keil and Tucker note a couple of features of the case that are a bit unusual. The previous personality lived nearly 50 years before Kemal was born, which is a considerable gap between lives, the median time for which (in documented CORTs) is about 16 months. Second, the median distance between the present and previous personality in CORTs is 14 kilometers, whereas in this case the distance was about 500 kilometers. Third, while the prior two points contributed to the difficulty of confirming Kemal's claims, we should be sympathetic to Tucker's claim: "The work that Dr. Keil had to perform to find out if such a person ever existed demonstrates that Kemal could not have come across the details of the man's life by accident" (Tucker 2005: xii). Finally, it is worth noting that, though it is not a central feature of this case, Kemal did have an apparent birthmark that corresponded to a gunshot wound.

5.3.2 The Purnima Ekanayake case

One feature found in a significant number of CORTs is the presence of prominent congenital birthmarks or defects that correspond to physical features of the previous personality, matching wounds or marks intentionally placed on the body of the dying or deceased previous personality. Although Stevenson originally documented 225 such cases in the 1990s, subsequent research has documented and critically evaluated a broader

range of cases. Although the Kemal case illustrates a recent example, there are more striking cases. Haraldsson (2000a) provides an account of one such case: his investigation of a nine-year-old girl in Sri Lanka named Purnima Ekanayake who had been speaking of a previous life since she was three years old. In addition to veridical claims about a previous personality, Purnima had very prominent birthmarks on her chest that corresponded to areas of the body that suffered massive trauma in the fatal accident that killed the alleged previous personality. Haraldsson's data was collected from five visits to Sri Lanka from September 1996 to March 1999, during which time he conducted extensive interviews with Purnima and her family.

The case began in 1990 when Purnima, around age three, commented to her mother, "People who drive over people in the street are bad persons" and inquired what her mother thought about people who did such things (Haraldsson 2000a: 18). When her mother was distraught by a traffic accident near their home, Purnima consoled her by saying that she had come to her after such an accident. Purnima elaborated on her experience of dying in an accident with a large vehicle, shortly after which she found herself floating in semi-darkness for a few days, but she was nonetheless able to view the funeral and people mourning for her. She then saw a light and ended up with her current parents in their home in the town of Bakamuna. She also said that her family in her past life made incense, specifically producing Ambiga and Geta Pichcha, and around the home, she often mimicked the making of incense. It was apparent to her parents that their daughter must have been a man in her previous life since she also indicated that she had been married to a sister-in-law named Kusumi.

Purnima's parents became interested in their daughter's claims when she turned four. After Purnima viewed a television program about a famous Buddhist temple in Kelaniya, about 145 miles away from their residence in Bakamuna, she claimed that she recognized the temple. In January 1993 Purnima's father (a principal at a school in Bakamuna) enlisted the help of W.G. Sumaniri, a newly appointed teacher in Bakamuna who spent weekends in Kelaniya. He asked Sumaniri to inquire across the Kelaniya River about businesses producing Ambiga and Gita Pichcha incense and any fatal accidents that involved a big vehicle and an incense dealer selling incense on a bicycle – some of the claims Purnima had made about her previous life. Sumaniri eventually discovered three family-operated incense makers in the area. Only one of them, owned by L.A. Wijisiri, produced Ambiga and Geta Pichcha incense. Sumaniri also learned that Wijisiri's brother-in-law, a man by the name of Jinadasa Perera, had died in September 1985, two years before the birth of Purnima. While bringing incense to the marketplace on his bicycle, he was struck by a bus and immediately killed.

Although Sumaniri's visit with Mr. Wijisiri was brief, within a couple of weeks he, his brother-in-law, Purnima, and her parents visited Mr. Wijisiri

and his family. Purnima was said to have immediately picked out her brother-in-law, and during her visit, she provided a number of details about Jinadasa's life and the incense-making business. In his investigation in 1999, Haraldsson cataloged 20 claims about her previous personality that Purnima's parents attributed to her before her visit with the family of the previous personality. These included the name of Jinadasa's mother, having two younger brothers, being married to a sister-in-law named Kusumi, later having two wives, the family owning a car and two vans, and his having studied only up to the 5th grade (Haraldsson 2000a: 17). These claims were all correct. Of the 20 total claims, 14 were correct, three incorrect, and three indeterminate. However, in addition to knowing details about the life of the deceased, Purnima exhibited detailed knowledge about the making of incense, items of knowledge that Purnima's family did not have but which the deceased would have possessed (Haraldsson 2000a: 21).

We might suppose that the Bishen Chand and Kemal Atasoy cases are more impressive in terms of their veridicality, but what makes this case impressive is the combination of informational and physical patterns. Purnima was born with a cluster of prominent birthmarks on her lower chest. Although her parents were aware of her birthmarks, their significance was apparent to them only after meeting Jinadasa's family. During the visit, Purnima said that the tires of the bus that had killed her ran over her chest, and she pointed to the area of the birthmark on her chest. At the time, one of Jinadasa's family members corroborated that Jinadasa had been injured on his left side, in the area of Purnima's birthmarks. Jinadasa's brother, Chandradasa, who had viewed his brother's body in the mortuary was able to confirm this. Haraldsson managed to acquire a copy of the postmortem report by the medical examiner. The report provides a description and an accompanying sketch of the injuries, which included massive trauma to the left side of Jinadasa's body – several broken ribs on his left side, a ruptured spleen, a ruptured liver, and punctured lungs – injuries that resulted in his immediate death. Haraldsson also notes an external "grazed abrasion 23" x 10" running obliquely from the right shoulder across the chest to the (left) lower abdomen" (Haraldsson 2000a: 21). The documented injuries closely match Purnima's unusual birthmarks.

5.3.3   The Chatura Karunaratne case

As Haraldsson concedes, the case of Purnima is far from being ideal. Since the case does not involve early-bird testimony, the veridical features of the case have an important weakness. However, in another investigation, Haraldsson documented a case that involved both early-bird testimony and birthmarks: the case of Chatura Karunaratne. In this case, the subject is a boy named Chatura Buddika Karunaratne, born on April 20, 1989 in a rural area in the Kurunagala district of Sri Lanka. He was born with significant

birthmarks; at age three, he claimed to recall details of a past life in the town of Narammala; and he indicated that his birthmarks were associated with his mode of death in a previous life. The case belongs to the small number of early-bird cases in which the subject's statements were documented before locating a previous personality whose life corresponded to the boy's statements, also known as a "solved case."

The early-bird statements were given in three interviews, two of which were published before the previous personality was identified. On June 7, 1992, journalist M.D. Banda published a report in the national newspaper *Diuaina*. His report was based on his interview with Chatura at the boy's home. A second report, based on an interview conducted by Banda and fellow journalist Nandasena Suriyarachchi, was published in the *Diuaina* on June 14, 1992. In between the first and second published reports, on June 12, Haraldsson's co-worker Tissa Jayawardane interviewed Chatura's mother.

Over the course of the three interviews, there were 33 statements made. Of them, 16 turned out to be correct, 15 incorrect, and two indeterminate. However, while his percentage of total correct claims ≈ 48.5%, which may not appear so impressive, this is the average from three separate interviews.[12] It is noteworthy that the percentage of Chatura's veridical claims is highest in his initial interview with Banda (71%), but thereafter deceases to 52% in the interview with Nandasena, and finally 47% in the interview with Jayawardane.[13] Moreover, nine of the 33 claims may be regarded as core claims since they appear in each of the interviews: (1) in his previous life, Chatura lived in a village near Narammala, (2) close by there was a thatched hut, (3) in the hut there was a small store, (4) near the house there was a lake, (5) tortoises lived in the lake, (6) he had been going through the forest in a truck, (7) a group of people had fired at him, (8) he was hit in the neck, and (9) his family had a Landmaster tractor. Each of the nine statements, except (7) and (9), were eventually found to correspond to facts in the life of the previous personality. In fact, the publication of the story facilitated locating a previous personality whose life fit Chatura's claims. A retired farmer and mason in a rural area near Narammala read the June 7 article in the *Diuaina* and was convinced that Chatura's statements were referring to his son M.P. Dayananda, a soldier who died from injuries sustained in a bomb blast on April 18, 1986, about three years prior to the day Chatura was born on April 20, 1989.

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[12] Like most Sri Lankan cases, Chatura failed to get family names correct. This accounted for five of his 15 incorrect claims. Also, true to Sri Lankan cases, claims based on visual rather than verbal memory were more accurate.

[13] Haraldsson conjectures that the decreasing accuracy of the subject's claims may have been the result of the subject giving forced answers under the increasing pressure to provide further information. See Haraldsson 2000b: 90.

Haraldsson explains:

> Dayananda's family had lived 12km away by road from Narammala in a house with a tiled roof. Close by there had been a hut with a shop which he owned and where his son used to sell groceries until he joined the army. Near their house was a small lake with tortoises living in it. All this corresponded to what Chatura had been saying. (Haraldsson 2000b: 83)

Chatura had two birthmarks near his ear, each about a centimeter in diameter and with darker pigmentation than the surrounding skin. One was located on the lower part of the jawbone, and the other on his neck/throat region, below his jaw. A third birthmark, also darker than the surrounding skin, was located inside his upper arm. From the beginning, Chatura associated these birthmarks with his previous life, claiming that he had been shot and pointed to the birthmarks near the neck and ear to corroborate his being shot in two places. A search for Dayananda's autopsy report was unsuccessful, in all probability since no such report was made since the death took place in a military engagement during a state of emergency. However, despite the sparse information in the military report, based on the testimony of family who viewed his partially covered body in the hospital and at the funeral, where injured parts of the his body around the head and neck were covered, it is plausible that Dayananda sustained injuries to regions of the body at least very close to the areas where Chatura's birthmarks were located (Haraldsson 2000b: 89).

5.4   CORTs and possession phenomena

The above cases have all involved children with alleged past-life memories and accompanying auxiliary features. Of course, as dramatically represented in the 1975 cult classic film, *the Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (based on Max Ehrlich's 1973 novel by the same title), some who claim past-life memories are adults. While many of these cases involve ostensible past-life memories that arise in the context of hypnotic regression, some are spontaneous. Some brief illustrations of adult CORTs will more completely fill out the phenomena surveyed in this chapter.

There is another more theoretically significant reason for offering comments on adult CORTs. Some of the cases nicely illustrate the fuzzy boundary between CORTs and phenomena characteristic of *spirit possession*. As I will explore in a later chapter, this is highly relevant to the survival debate. Some have argued that, at least prima facie, possession cases are more readily explained by naturalistic hypotheses than by survival, as, for example, a species of dissociative phenomena in which (unconscious) motivations and other psychodynamics play a determining role. In fact, we might even suppose that motivational dynamics work together with psychic

functioning to produce possession phenomena in which "invading spirits" exhibit knowledge that cannot be easily attributed to usual or normal cognitive processes. Such a consideration would also bear on trance mediumship, which may plausibly be interpreted as cases of possession since in trance mediumship a medium's ordinary personality is temporarily displaced by a different personality that can exercise executive control of her body. And in the case of spirit controls, the same alter or secondary personality repeatedly or regularly appears. So if CORTs and cases of trance mediumship significantly resemble possession cases and the latter lend themselves more directly to non-survival explanations, we might suppose that this will pose something of a challenge to survival interpretations of the former.

At all events, despite many observational resemblances to CORTs, we should acknowledge at the outset certain factors that appear, at least on the face of it, to distinguish possession cases from CORTs (Braude 2003: 180–1; Gauld 1982: 147–62). First, in CORTs there appears to be greater unification between or blending of the previous and current personality, as illustrated in the strong psychological identification that the current personality forms with the previous personality, something that is absent in possession cases (Braude 2003: 180). Second, subjects tend to be older in possession cases than they are in CORTs: in possession cases, they tend to be either teens or adults. Given the normal development of a sense of identity that begins in teenage years, this might explain the previous fact, as the nascent and more malleable sense of self in children would predispose them to identifying with a previous personality. Third, in possession cases the previous personality is typically someone who died after the current personality was born. Finally, unlike CORTs, possession cases involve a displacement of the host personality that is sporadic, not merely temporary, and often voluntary. Here of course, we see another potentially significant similarity between possession and trance mediumship.

These comparisons and contrasts are best illustrated by examining actual cases. I present two here, the first from the 1980s and the second from the 1970s. In each case, an adult person awakens from a period of unconsciousness and immediately claims to be some previous personality, and the subject exhibits knowledge and behavior characteristic of the former personality, including either enhanced or new linguistic abilities consistent with the previous personality.

5.4.1   The Sumitra-Shiva case

In the 1980s Ian Stevenson and his colleagues investigated a case that involved a 17-year-old married woman, Sumitra Singh, who awakened from a period of unconsciousness claiming to be a formerly living woman named Shiva and exhibiting new behaviors and knowledge subsequently discovered to correspond to an actual previous personality by the name of Shiva (Stevenson, Pasricha, and McLean-Rice 1989). Some recent philosophers interested in

reincarnation and possession regard it as an especially important case since it contains considerable detail that illuminates the prima facie force of proposed survival explanations (Almeder 1992: 143–50), but it also provides material that lends plausibility to alternative non-survival explanations (Braude 2003: 197–206). Sumitra, an uneducated woman from a low caste in the village of Sharifpura, in the Farrukhabad district of the State of Uttar Pradesh, India, had experienced periods of unconsciousness and trance at age 16, shortly after the birth of her son. During these periods alternate personalities would manifest, sometimes claiming to be divine in nature (a Hindu goddess) and in other cases more earthly personalities. During a trance at age 17 in July 1985, Sumitra predicted that she would die in three days. Three days later, on July 19, 1985, Sumitra lost consciousness for at least five minutes. Witnesses claimed that her pulse and respiration had stopped and her face was pale.

Although Sumitra appeared dead to witnesses, after about five minutes she revived. Upon awakening she seemed unable to recognize her family, including her husband and child, and she was unfamiliar with her immediate environment. When she began to speak a couple of days later, she claimed that her name was Shiva, had lived in the village of Dibiyapur (about 100 kilometers southeast of Sharifpura), and provided various details about her life, including that she had been murdered by her in-laws. Although Sumitra's family was unaware of anyone named Shiva, the story of Sumitra's apparent possession spread to neighboring villages, including Dibiyapur, where Ram Siya Tripathi, the father of a deceased girl Shiva Diwedi, was visiting. After hearing the rumor that a young girl in Sharifpura claimed to be his deceased daughter, he had the girl's claims independently verified, and then he visited her in October 1985. Witnesses claimed that she immediately and spontaneously recognized her father, calling him "Papa," and that she claimed that she was his daughter Shiva. During the next several days, the Shiva persona recognized at least 13 of Shiva Diwedi's family members and friends, as well as provided detailed information about Shiva's life.

Ian Stevenson and colleagues, including fellow reincarnation researcher Satwant Pasricha, conducted a two-year investigation of the case, beginning a few weeks after the families of Sumitra had met and the story appeared in an October 1985 edition of the newspaper *Indian Express*. Between October 1985 and October 1987 the Stevenson investigation conducted interviews with 24 family and friends of Sumitra and Shiva, as well as another 29 persons knowledgeable about the relevant communities. On the basis of these interviews, Stevenson and his colleagues identified a range of correct statements made by the Shiva persona that were not matters of public knowledge in any of the respective towns. These included the Shiva persona's knowledge of

> a particular yellow sari that Shiva had owned, a watch that had belonged to Shiva and the box [in Ram Siya's home]…in which it was kept, the respective order of birth of Shiva's maternal uncles (although one who

was younger actually looked older than one of the older uncles), one of Shiva's nicknames familiarly used in the home, … the names of two educational institutions where Shiva had studied, … the pet names of Shiva's two children, … the names of two friends of Shiva who happened to have the same name, and the names of Shiva's two brothers, two of her sisters, two of her maternal uncles, a maternal aunt (by marriage), and a nephew. (Stevenson, Pasricha, and McLean-Rice 1989: 91)

The Shiva persona's recognitions were in some cases in the context of attempts to test her knowledge through deception or misleading evidence. For instance, her father asked her to pick her mother Ram Rani out of a crowd of women gathered outside, but the Shiva persona correctly observed that her mother was not in the group, though she immediately identified her when she encountered her after returning indoors. The Shiva persona also recognized 15 members of Shiva's family in photographs, in some cases supplying additional information about the persons she identified. She also recognized herself in a picture of Shiva at a young age.

However, as in many CORTs, it is the combination of veridical claims of a private nature and behaviors characteristic of the previous personality that together make cases more compelling than they might otherwise be. When Sumitra awoke from her apparent death in July 1985, her behavior as Shiva was significantly different than Sumitra's behavioral characteristics. Many of these differences were prominent since Sumitra was from a lower caste of uneducated villagers, whereas Shiva Diwedi came from a Brahmin caste, her father was a college lecturer, and she had earned a bachelor's degree. Among the striking behavioral changes was Sumitra's enhanced literacy: the Shiva persona was able to read and write Hindi fluently, whereas Sumitra – consistent with her lack of education – had never demonstrated such fluency.

5.4.2   The Uttara-Sharada case

Stevenson and Pasricha (1979, 1980) present another important case, this one involving an unmarried woman in Nagpur, India, named Uttara Huddar, who in 1974, at age 32, underwent a radical transformation of personality in which her normal personality was seemingly replaced by an altogether different recurring personality named Sharada. The Sharada persona appeared to be from a different time and place – that is, a Bengali woman from the early nineteenth century – and she claimed that she had "fainted" (i.e. died) at age 22 of a cobra bite on her toe. She then "awoke" to find herself in Uttara's body in Nagpur, India, 500 miles away from Bengal, India. She did not recognize Uttara's family or friends, nor could she understand them when they spoke to her in Marathi, Hindi, or English. The Sharada persona would take control of Uttara for days or weeks at a time. As in CORTs, Uttara exhibited informational and behavioral patterns indicative of a woman from the region and time period to which the alleged previous personality

Sharada claimed she belonged. Most impressively, though, this case illustrates apparent responsive xenoglossy: a subject suddenly conversing in an unlearned language, in this case fluently doing so.

The Sharada persona provided verifiable information about her life as a Bengali woman who lived in a time period between the 1810s and 1830s. The time period was pinned down in part because she provided names of 19 family members, including her father Brajesh Chattopadhaya, grandfather Ramnath Chatttopadhaya, and her husband Vishwanath Mukhopadhaya. Her claims about the relations of these men and the date of her father's death were confirmed by using multiple sources (e.g. genealogies and deeds). Neither Sharada's name nor any other female names could be confirmed, since the custom at the time was for records to list only the names of males. However, a contemporary descendent of Sharada's family claimed in an interview that she had heard that a woman in the family died of a snakebite during the time that his great grandmother lived, which would have corresponded to the time that Sharada allegedly lived. The Sharada persona also provided confirmed details of the history, geography, and names of locations in Bengal, including some that were obscure (e.g. a temple in an isolated village). In at least one instance, she offered a corrective to misinformation: she correctly claimed that the temple in Bansberia had 13 towers, not 11, as was misleadingly depicted in a photograph shown her.

Under the control of Sharada, Uttara's behavior was altered and became characteristic of a married Bengali woman from the early nineteenth century. For example, her hairstyle (being loose instead of in a bun), diet (lots of rice and sweets), dress (wearing a sari with no undergarments), practice of worship (of Durga), intimate knowledge of Bengali customs, and lack of knowledge of any post-industrialization technological inventions (e.g. gas stoves, electricity, tape recorders, telephones, and wrist watches) were all characteristic of an early nineteenth-century Bengali woman.

The most interesting behavioral feature of the case, though, concerns Uttara's exhibition of linguistic skills that we would expect of Sharada as a Bengali woman but not of Uttara given her apparently marginal exposure to the Bengali language (Gauld 1982: 160–1). Philosophers who have critically examined this case regard Uttara's sudden manifestation of fluency in the Bengali language as the most compelling feature of the case (Braude 2003: 103–4, 113–32; Griffin 1997: 178; Lund 2009: 157). When Sharada manifested, she did not use Uttara's native Marathi language and, given her inability to understand those who spoke it, apparently showed no knowledge of it. True to her claimed identity, Sharada spoke fluent Bengali, a language Uttara denied knowing. Sharada's competence in Bengali was tested in conversations with different educated native speakers of Bengali who testified to her fluency and competence in the language.

The classification of the Uttara-Sharada case is somewhat challenging since it has features of both CORTs and possession cases. For our purposes,

though, it will suffice simply to have considered such a case that illustrates the fuzzy boundary between what counts as a reincarnation case and what counts as a possession case. As in CORTs, the current personality was born after the death of the alleged previous personality. However, unlike CORTs but true to possession cases, Sharada more closely resembles the secondary personalities of trance mediums, taking control of and displacing Uttara's own personality at intermittent times. And of course, mediums sometimes also exhibit xenoglossy. Perhaps most relevant is how the details of a case such as this open up the explanatory territory in a way that may prove useful for addressing cases that appear on the face of it favorable toward survivalist interpretations. Braude, for example, provides a detailed psychological and philosophical exploration of the Sharada case, using it as an important example of cases in which our explanatory proposals must deeply consider possible, if not plausible, (unconscious) motivations that subjects may have to exhibit the phenomenon under exploration (Braude 2003: 101–32). This is a point to which I will return in subsequent chapters.

5.5 Summary description of the salient data

We can now summarize in analytical fashion the salient data from CORTs. Although we can cut the data pie in many ways, I distill the mass of data from the cases into 12 pieces of evidence. The bulk of the descriptions of the strands of data concern Stevenson's "informational patterns" and various contextual matters pertinent to these patterns: e19 and e20 concern the basic veridical features of CORTs, whereas e21 and e22 incorporate quantitative aspects of such features; e23 and e24 concern the sources of confirmation for veridical claims, paying particular attention to sets of claims that depend for their confirmation on multiple sources; e25 concerns early-bird testimony; e26 through e28 concern behavioral and physical patterns; e29 and e30 distinguish between children and adults as the subjects of whom the informational, behavioral, and physical patterns are true in the prior strands of evidence; and e31 covers a unique feature of possession phenomena that I discussed in §5.4.

As in mediumship, the first line of evidence drawn from CORTs concerns the veridical nature of the claims that subjects make about some formerly living person. However, unlike in mediumship, in CORTs the content of the subject's statements about a previous personality are reported as autobiographical memories.[14] I will also restrict the veridical data to spontaneously

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[14] There is of course an analog of sorts to this in trance mediumship. Communicators make veridical claims about deceased persons as if the content of the claims is autobiographical. When communicators temporarily displace the personality of the medium, the phenomenon resembles CORTs but even more closely possession phenomena.

arisen past-life recollections, not those induced through hypnotic regression:

> e19: There are some living persons who (i) make specific and objective true statements about the life of some deceased person and (ii) claim to experience the content of their statements as spontaneous autobiographical memories, and (iii) their statements have been independently confirmed.

> e20: There are some living persons who (i) make specific and objective true statements about the interpersonal, private life of life of some deceased person and (ii) claim to experience the content of their statements as spontaneous autobiographical memories, and (iii) their statements have been independently confirmed.

Also, as in mediumship, another feature of the data is the percentage of veridical claims (over the total number) made by the subject, what I have called the degree of veridicality index. Following the pattern in mediumship, I employ a degree of veridicality index *N*, which refers to some value in a broadly permissive veridicality range, and this range includes values higher than expected by chance:

> e21: There are some living persons whose veridical and spontaneous autobiographical memorial claims about the life of some deceased person (including the deceased person's interpersonal, private life) *in a particular interview* contain Nth percentage of objective and specific veridical statements about the deceased, where N is a value within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

> e22: There are some living persons whose veridical and spontaneous autobiographical memorial claims about the life of some deceased person (including the deceased person's interpersonal, private life) *over some range of interviews* contain Nth percentage of objective and specific veridical statements about D, where N is a value within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

Also, as in mediumship, there are relevant contextual factors that need to be introduced as salient data. First, in many CORTs the confirmation of the subject's claims depends on multiple independent sources since no single source contained all the information:

> e23: There are some living persons P such that (i) P make specific and objective true statements about the life of some deceased person (including interpersonal, private facts), (ii) P claim to experience the content of their

statements as spontaneous autobiographical memories, (iii) P's claims are independently confirmed, and (iv) the confirmation of P's claims depends on multiple sources (since no single course contained all the relevant information).

As a special case of e23, we should note:

e24: The multiple-source confirmation (indicated by e23) obtains for some living person's veridical and spontaneous autobiographical memorial statements about the life of some deceased person, where the statements are within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

Another important contextual datum is what I have referred to as early-bird testimony:

e25: There are some living persons P whose veridical and spontaneous autobiographical memorial statements about the life of some deceased person (including the interpersonal, private life of the deceased) are such that P's statements are (i) within a broadly permissive veridicality range, (ii) documented as claims of P at time t_1, and (iii) confirmed at some later time t_2 by sources unknown at time t_1.

Here e19 through e25 concern the main informational features of CORTs. But we have seen that CORTs also have behavioral and physical features. Being true to the actual case data, I will formulate the descriptions of the evidence here in such a way that the behavioral and physical patterns are in subjects who claim to have past-life memories and who have made verified claims about their past life that fall within the broadly permissive veridicality range (introduced in §4.6 and noted above):

e26: There are some living persons who (i) claim to spontaneously remember having lived a past life as some previous personality, (ii) make verified claims about the previous personality that are within a broadly permissive veridicality range, and (iii) exhibit some significant behavior(s) (including linguistic, artistic, and intellectual skills) individually or jointly characteristic of the previous personality.

To account for the physical patterns, I propose the following formulation:

e27: There are some living persons who (i) claim to spontaneously remember having lived a past life as some previous personality, (ii) make verified claims about the previous personality within a broadly permissive veridicality range, and (iii) who have at least one congenital birthmark that corresponds in location, size, and shape to (fatal) injuries

sustained by the previous personality or marks placed on the body of the previous personality after death.

And, of course, there will be cases that involve both e26 and e27:

e28: There are some living persons who (i) claim to spontaneously remember having lived a past life as some previous personality, (ii) make verified claims about the previous personality within a broadly permissive veridicality range, (iii) exhibit some significant behavior(s) (including linguistic, artistic, and intellectual skills) individually or jointly characteristic of the previous personality, and (iv) who have at least one congenital birthmark that corresponds in location, size, and shape to (fatal) injuries sustained by the previous personality or marks placed on the body of the previous personality after death.

It will also be important to discriminate between data e18 through e26 in which the living persons are children and in which the living persons are adults. So we must add this:

e29: There are some living persons as the subjects in e19, e20, e21, … e28 who are children, typically between the ages of three and six years old.

e30: There are some living persons as the subjects in e19, e20, e21, … e28 who are adults.

Finally, in the light of the discussion in §5.4, we should note the data found in cases in which living persons suddenly manifest new behaviors and skills associated with claims to be a previous personality:

e31: There are some living adult persons who at intermittent time periods T (i) claim to be some previous personality, (ii) make verified claims about the previous personality within a broadly permissive veridicality range, and (iii) exhibit some significant behavior(s) (including linguistic, artistic, and intellectual skills) individually or jointly characteristic of the previous personality, and (iv) there are time periods prior to and/or outside of T when the subject does not claim to be the previous personality and does not exhibit the behavioral patterns characteristic of the previous personality.[15]

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[15] Since the phenomena described in (i), (ii), and (iii) are understood to be *intermittent*, times "outside of T" in clause (iv) refers to time periods after the initial manifestation of some previous personality, when the subject's original or normal personality temporarily returns as the dominant personality.

6

Classical Explanatory Arguments for Survival

In Chapter 3 through Chapter 5 I have surveyed the phenomena of out-of-body and near-death experiences, mediumship, and cases of the reincarnation type (CORTs). Now that I have delineated the relevant data from these phenomena, I begin the exploration of arguments that have been proposed for supposing that these data severally or jointly provide reasons, perhaps good reasons, to suppose that the survival hypothesis is true. *Classical empirical arguments* for survival are attempts to show that the relevant data constitute evidence favorable toward the hypothesis of survival, and so they make a contribution to the justification of belief in survival. As traditionally formulated, the arguments are explanatory arguments. By explanatory I mean that the arguments at least incorporate reasons for supposing that the survival hypothesis *explains* the relevant data and does so in a way superior to all available competing explanations. This chapter outlines and explores the formal structure of two kinds of such arguments.

After exploring some different but closely related explanatory arguments in §6.1 through §6.3, I propose a *formalization* of these arguments, specifically a restatement of the arguments by using concepts and principles central to confirmation theory: the study of the logic that governs the confirmation (evidential support) and disconfirmation (evidential refutation) of empirical hypotheses. Theories of confirmation propose measures for evaluating how well different hypotheses fit or account for our data or evidence. In contemporary confirmation theory, probability functions typically provide such measures. So "fit" between hypothesis and evidence (describing features of the world) is explained or explicated in terms of how likely the evidence would be if the hypothesis were true.[1] As I will argue, this is a very useful way to formalize the alleged "explanatory power" of the survival hypothesis since survivalists take explanatory power to at least include the survival

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[1] For an overview of confirmation theories, see Hawthorne (2011). For the link between confirmation theory and inference to best explanation, see Iranzo (2007).

hypothesis leading us to expect the relevant evidence in a way superior to alternative hypotheses.

6.1   Some early survival arguments based on mediumship

The earliest attempts to argue for survival on the basis of psychical phenomena originate in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In accordance with the interests of the newly founded British and American societies of psychical research at the time, the arguments are based primarily on data from mediumship and apparitional experiences. The early arguments laid the foundation for subsequent formulations of the case for survival and provide important insight into the structural features of prominent approaches to such arguments to the present day. Most generally stated, these arguments attempt to show that the relevant data are (good) evidence for personal survival because *survival explains the data better than some range of available alternative hypotheses*. So classical arguments involve an important explanatory inference, and they further assume that explanatory virtue converts to evidential cash value, though opinions vary on the strength of this evidential value and how it should be assessed.

The generic structure of these arguments may be stated as follows:

(i)   There is observational evidence e.

(ii)   Hypothesis h_1 explains e.

(iii)   No other available hypothesis h_2 explains e at least as well as h_1 explains e.

Therefore:

(iv) h_1 is the best available explanation of e.

Therefore:

(v)   e is evidence for h_1.[2]

This is the generic template for the commonly encountered "explanatory argument" for survival found in authors of the latter part of the nineteenth century to current day. The argument combines an inference to best explanation (steps (i) through (iv)) and an evidential inference or argument (steps (iv) to (v)).

There are, of course, some important details in need of elaboration. For example, what criterion (or criteria) must a hypothesis satisfy to explain data or be the best explanation of the data? As will be illustrated below,

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[2]   The inference from (iv) to (v) assumes that explanatory merit converts to evidential cash value. I will explore this in connection with Likelihood and Bayesian confirmation theories beginning at the end of this chapter and into the chapters that follow.

different answers to this question generate different kinds of explanatory arguments. The basic distinction will be between those arguments in which the explanatory relation is solely a matter of the hypothesis leading us to expect the data (technically called "predictive power") and those in which features in addition to predictive power are required. Although, admittedly, survivalists are often not sufficiently clear about this distinction, they often appeal to simplicity, independent support, and fit with background knowledge as additional explanatory virtues. Also, how do we assess the force or strength of evidence in the conclusion (v)? If the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data, what should we say about how strongly the data support the hypothesis of survival? The latter question is particularly important since survivalists often wish to claim that the empirical evidence for survival is strong enough to justify accepting the survival hypothesis. So explanatory survival arguments, as typically deployed, need in some way to convert explanatory merit into evidential merit, ideally enough of the latter to rationally justify belief in survival (or at least make a suitable contribution to this).

6.1.1   Richard Hodgson's basic explanatory argument

In Chapter 4, I drew from Hodgson (1898) in my discussion of Mrs. Piper's mediumship. In the same report, Hodgson provides a detailed argument for personal survival based on the data of mediumship, specifically the data from Mrs. Piper's mediumship that Hodgson considers in the report (1898: 357–406). The argument is a further development of the arguments that Hodgson presented in his earlier report (Hodgson 1892). According to Hodgson, the case for survival from mediumship is an explanatory argument. Hodgson treats personal survival, or – as he speaks of it – the existence of "spirits of disembodied beings" as a *hypothesis* that allegedly *explains* the data of mediumship, and it thereby provides "indications" that the Spirit hypothesis is true (1898: 370–406). The "Spirit hypothesis" postulates the postmortem persistence of the individual consciousness of a formerly living person.

   In Hodgson's view, *the Spirit hypothesis explains mediumistic data since it leads us to expect the relevant data*. This principle occupies an important place in Hodgson's overall argument. If communicators are who they say they are, the facts surrounding mediumistic communications are what we should expect them to be (1898: 361–7). Since this will factor prominently in subsequent discussion, I will refer to this prominent and widely adopted understanding of the explanatory relation as "predictive power" broadly understood. In this sense, predictive power is concerned with only the logical relation between evidence and hypothesis/theory according to which a hypothesis or theory leads us to expect our evidence. How and when the evidence was collected in relation to the development of the theory is not relevant here. So in order for a hypothesis to have predictive power, it does not require that we are led to expect novel data (i.e. new data not yet known

to exist). It might do this, but doing so is not required, as Hodgson's account makes clear.[3]

However, Hodgson does not argue that the data are evidence for survival merely because the Spirit hypothesis explains the data via predictive power. He is aware that there are other hypotheses that purport to explain the data at least as well as the Spirit hypothesis, and he concedes that some of these alternative hypotheses explain important strands of data just as well as the Spirit hypothesis does (1898: 371–4). His argument, more carefully stated, is that the Spirit hypothesis is the best or "most probable" explanation of the data taken in their entirety in that the Spirit hypothesis leads us to expect some features of the data better than alternatives (1898: 290–1, 360–1). So Hodgson develops the case for survival from mediumship as an inference to the best explanation. As such, the argument does not purport to prove or demonstrate that survival is true; it purports only to show that the relevant data evidentially *favor* the survival hypothesis over nearby competitors.

With respect to the kinds of data that the Spirit hypothesis is invoked to explain, Hodgson considers a subset of the total dataset described in §4.6: the basic veridical features of communications (e7, e8, and e15), the broadly permissive degree of their veridicality (e9 and e10), information communicated through trance or secondary personalities of the medium resembling the deceased (e16), and veridical communications through automatic writing (e17). Wanting to be as true to Hodgson as possible, I will refer to this subset as Richard Hodgson's basic evidence-set, or simply E_{HB}. As Hodgson explains, these data contain "strong characteristics of personal identity" of the deceased exhibited in the medium's knowledge, as well as the "fullness and completeness of the many of the personalities" manifested in Mrs. Piper's trance state, resulting in a "marvelous simulation of the deceased, accompanied not only by their specific memories, but by the presentation of each character in its unity, showing a clear self-consciousness, a working intelligence of its own" (Hodgson 1898: 369).

Hodgson (1892: 6–7) considers another range of data, the first of which concerns Mrs. Piper's ability to provide a large number of veridical claims about a large number of deceased persons and their family and friends. While he thought it significant that Mrs. Piper provided quantitatively robust claims for particular communicators or in particular sittings, he was more impressed with the magnitude of this quantitative robustness – that is, Mrs. Piper's ability to reproduce it over many different sittings and with many different

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[3] Some philosophers of science restrict the phrase "predictive power" to situations in which a hypothesis has novel predictive consequences (literal *pre*diction), and they reserve the term "accommodation" to cover situations in which a hypothesis leads us to expect previously discovered and currently known data. "Accomodation" is concerned with only the logical relations between theory and evidence, whereas "predictivism" is also concerned with how and when the evidence was collected in relation to the development of a theory. See Douglas and Magnus (2013), Lipton (2004), and Hitchcock and Sober (2004).

communicators. Moreover, the claims were also qualitatively robust, being highly specific and often of an intimate and private nature (1898: 290).

e32: There are some mediums who make independently verified claims about the life of multiple deceased persons, and their claims about each deceased person is quantitatively and qualitatively robust and falls within a broadly permissive veridicality range.

Later, Hodgson further refined the scope of salient data from Mrs. Piper's mediumship to include the following:

e33: Communicators who claim to be persons known to have been suffering from debilitating physical conditions or mental disturbances near and at the time of their death often make confused or incorrect claims about their antemortem earthly life, but the sitters frequently have clear recollections of the facts in question (1898: 375–6, cf. 404).

e34: Communicators often exhibit confusion in communications taking place shortly after their death but exhibit decreasing confusion with successive sittings over time (1898: 377–8).

e35: Communicators who claim to be persons who died as children often have minimal recollections of events in their childhood and they do not exhibit childlike qualities when they communicate many years after their death (1898: 383–4).

e36: Some communicators, speaking through the same medium, are highly accurate when they give surnames of family and friends, but many others are not (1898: 390).

e37: Some communicators simultaneously recognize sitters whose physical appearance they were acquainted with, but they do not initially recognize sitters whose physical appearance has significantly changed but whose identity is known by other sitters (1898: 390).

I will refer to the conjunction of e32 through e37 as Hodgson's expanded evidence-set, E_{HE}. Hodgson's argument from mediumship may then be stated as follows:

(RH1) There are observational data E_{HB} & E_{HE}
(RH2) S explains E_{HB} & E_{HE}.
(RH3) No other available hypothesis C explains E_{HB} & E_{HE} at least as well as
       S explains E_{HB} & E_{HE}.

Therefore:

(RH4) S is the best explanation of E_{HB} & E_{HE}.

Therefore:

(RH5) E_{HB} & E_{HE} are evidence for S.

6.1.2   Hodgson's argument explored further

The crux of Hodgson's argument is (RH2) and (RH3). I noted above that Hodgson argues at length that the data included under E_{HB} & E_{HE} are exactly what we should expect given the Spirit hypothesis (1898: 361–7). Hodgson even uses this as leverage against certain objections to the predictive power of the Spirit hypothesis. For example, one objection is that some communicators fail to answer questions put to them about their former earthly lives, or they make inconsistent, fragmentary, and even outright false claims about their antemortem life. Hodgson responds:

> It will be obvious, I think, upon such considerations as these, and similar ones, that the confusion and failure which we find in Mrs. Piper's trance communications are so far from being what we should *not* expect, that they are exactly what we *should* expect, if the alleged spirits are communicating. (Hodgson 1898: 367)

What are Hodgson's grounds for claiming this? In many cases, the communicators claim to be persons who while alive suffered from "prolonged bodily weakness or extreme mental disturbance" (1898: 377). Hodgson argues that it would be natural to expect such persons to have at least initial difficulty in coherently or clearly communicating with the living. Moreover, since death itself should be viewed as a trauma that would induce, at least initially, lapses of memory and diminished cognitive capacities, we should expect other communicators also to exhibit confusions of various sorts in their early communications and increasing clarity in subsequent sittings, which of course is what the data shows.

In subsequent chapters, I will look more critically at Hodgson's explicit dependence on various assumptions to generate expectations as to what communications should look like if the Spirit hypothesis is true. At present, the focus is a general account of Hodgson's logic and hence a low-level elaboration of his grounds for asserting premises (RH2) and (RH3). Now just as Hodgson is convinced that the Spirit hypothesis leads us to expect data that fit the actual facts, his argument equally depends on (RH3) and hence on showing that alternative hypotheses do not lead us to expect E_{HB} & E_{HE}. Here Hodgson considers two general kinds of alternative explanations: naturalistic hypotheses that appeal to either chance coincidence or (conscious or unconscious) fraud and the supernormal hypothesis that posits psychic functioning in the form of telepathy between the living persons.

First, Hodgson argues that the Spirit hypothesis better explains E_{HB} than do naturalistic hypotheses, of which he names two: the hypothesis of chance coincidence and the hypothesis of fraud. Both are rejected for similar reasons, namely that some important data do not fit either hypothesis. He dismisses chance coincidence fairly readily since the results obtained in Mrs. Piper's mediumship are quantitatively and qualitatively not what we would expect given accidental or coincidental correspondences. Fraud

is similarly rejected. As Hodgson explains, while "there is hardly any single fact about a single person" that the medium could not have acquired through fraudulent means, the fraud hypothesis is an inadequate explanation in the case of Mrs. Piper's mediumship because of the "large number of facts communicated concerning a large number of sitters," together with the protocols implemented for shielding Mrs. Piper from knowing the identity of sitters (1892: 6–7). Hence, while acknowledging the possibility that many of Mrs. Piper's veridical claims about the deceased might have been acquired prior to or during sittings (i.e. though prior inquiry, fishing, and inferences from physical cues from the sitters), he concluded, "there is nevertheless a large residuum to be attributed to some supernormal faculty" (Hodgson 1892: 9).

> My own conclusion was that—after allowing the widest possible margin for information obtainable under the circumstances by ordinary means, for chance coincidence and remarkable guessing, aided by clues given consciously and unconsciously by the sitters, and helped out by supposed hyperaesthesia on the part of Mrs. Piper,—there remains a large residuum of knowledge displayed in her trance state, which could not be accounted for except on the hypothesis that she had some supernormal power. (Hodgson 1898: 285)

While initially arguing that Mrs. Piper's claims supported a hypothesis of supernormal knowledge over normal knowledge (1892), Hodgson later found grounds for discriminating between supernormal processes that involved discarnate spirits (the Spirit hypothesis) and supernormal processes that involved psychic functioning among living persons. For Hodgson, the latter took the form of "thought transference" or a hypothesis of telepathy between living persons, principally between the medium who made claims about the deceased and the sitters who knew the relevant facts about the deceased (Hodgson 1892). For much of E_{HB}, as well as e30, Hodgson maintained that appeals to telepathy between medium and sitters could explain the data (1892: 9–28, 56–8, 1898: 358–9, 370–4). However, Hodgson argued that some of the data favored the Spirit hypothesis over telepathy with the living. While conceding that ostensible communications would exhibit a fragmentary character given either the Spirit hypothesis or the telepathy hypothesis, Hodgson argued that they would not be fragmentary in the same way (1898: 367, 370). He held that if communications are originating from the deceased (as opposed to the living), successes and failures in communications should point to an origin outside the psychology of living agents (1898: 391–6). The discriminating facts turn out to be facts such as e32 through e37.

For example, Hodgson discusses an important sitting in which the Pellew communicator failed to initially recognize a sitter with whom George Pellew was well acquainted in life (Hodgson 1898: 324–5). At this sitting on January

6, 1897, the daughter of Miss Warner was present. George Pellew knew Miss Warner and her daughter, but the Pellew communicator was only able to recognize Miss Warner's daughter with some difficulty and only after some prompting in the sitting the following day. Hodgson argues that this initial non-recognition was exactly what we would expect if the communicator were Pellew. The last time that Pellew saw Miss Warner's daughter, she was much younger and her physical appearance had changed in the intervening years, and the communicator himself attributed his difficulty in recognizing her to her face looking different. By contrast, Hodgson argues that if the Pellew communicator were a mere secondary personality of the medium who acquired information through telepathy with the sitters, we would expect the Pellew communicator to have initially recognized Miss Warner's daughter since she and the other sitters knew her identity and relationship with the living Pellew.

Hodgson summarized the matter in this way:

> The persistent failures of many communicators under varying conditions; the first failures of other communicators who soon develop into clearness in communicating, and whose first attempts apparently can be made much clearer by the assistance of persons professing to be experienced communicators; the special bewilderment, soon to disappear, of communicators shortly after death and apparently in consequence of it; the character of the specific mental automatisms manifest in the communications; the clearness of remembrance in little children recently deceased as contrasted with the forgetfulness of childish things shown by communicators who died when children many years before,—all present a definite relation to the personalities alleged to be communicating, and are exactly what we should expect if they are actually communicating under the conditions of Mrs. Piper's trance manifestations. The results fit the claim. On the other hand these are not the results which we should expect on the hypothesis of telepathy with the living. (1898: 391–2).

So given that the Spirit hypothesis leads us to expect data not expected on the competing hypothesis of living-agent telepathy, Hodgson maintained that the Spirit hypothesis is the more probable explanation of the data as a whole or taken collectively. However, it is worth noting that Hodgson qualified his conclusion in two ways. First, while he was convinced that the Spirit hypothesis is true, the specific considerations that he adduced to establish this only "point" to it, but they are in need of further exploration and independent confirmation (1898: 390–3). Second, he acknowledged that the hypothesis of telepathy could account for the apparently recalcitrant data involved in e32 through e37, but only by having to adopt "additional arbitrary suppositions" (1898: 393). His dismissal of this maneuver suggests a stronger kind of explanatory argument, which I will consider below.

6.1.3   James Hyslop's contribution to the explanatory argument

There are two ways in which Hodgson's argument is paradigmatic and reflects a widely adopted form of survival argument in the time period. First, the relevant data are considered evidence for survival because survival allegedly explains the data – hence the arguments are explanatory in nature – and by this it is understood that the survival hypothesis leads us to expect the observational data. Second, the case for survival depends on ruling out alternative explanations by showing that they do not explain the data (as a whole) as well as does the survival hypothesis. William James, James Hyslop, Oliver Lodge, and Drayton Thomas each construed the survival argument in this way.[4]

Hyslop may be taken as illustrative, both of the explanatory features of Hodgson's argument and as extending Hodgson's model. He argued that the inference to the "spiritistic hypothesis" – Hyslop's name for the survival hypothesis – depends on the satisfaction of two conditions, one positive and one negative: "The exclusion of a given interpretation is negative evidence; the applicability of the hypothesis to the facts is positive evidence" (1919: 57). To further elaborate, the positive condition involves showing that the facts "fit" the survival hypotheses, by which Hyslop meant what I have called predictive power, namely that the facts fit or correspond to what the survival hypothesis leads us to expect (1919: 51, 330). For Hyslop, since the spiritistic hypothesis posits the existence and survival of the stream of individual consciousness or personality (1919: 9), the survival argument requires proving "the survival of personal identity; that is, of a personal steam of consciousness with its memories of past earthly life" (1919: 53). So Hyslop emphasized the importance of showing that mediums possess knowledge characteristic of the deceased, which could therefore serve as a means of establishing the continued personal identity of the deceased (1919: 66). And here Hyslop argued that private and trivial details are particularly important since the knowledge of such facts is what we would expect if communicators were who they claim to be (1910: 164–72, 1919: 64–5, 67, 247, 332; cf. Lodge 1920: 179–181). Moreover, the ability of a medium to convey a large number of such facts is even stronger evidence of identity since the larger the number of such facts, the less probable it is that the total set of facts should apply to anyone but the deceased (1918: 112).

Whereas the positive condition involves showing that the facts fit the survival hypothesis, the negative condition involves eliminating alternative explanations by showing that they do *not* fit the facts because in Hyslop's view, conclusive evidence for any hypothesis entails that the salient facts cannot otherwise be rationally explained (1919: 328, 352). This is what Hyslop argued with reference to alternative hypotheses that proposed to explain the data of

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[4] See Hyslop (1910: 10–4, 1919: 51, 57–64, 300, 332, 374); James (1909/1960: 117–20); Lodge (1920: 179–80, 181, 240–5); C.D. Thomas (1928).

mediumship. Neither fraud, unconscious impersonation of the deceased by fictional secondary personalities of the medium, telepathy with the living, nor a combination of the first two lead us to expect the data as whole (1910: 117–44, 1919: 57–67). Like many other researchers, Hyslop especially targeted the appeal to telepathy since some researchers appealed to it to explain how the medium acquires knowledge about the deceased when normal processes of knowledge acquisition have been ruled out (1919: 72–81). While acknowledging that telepathy is a possible explanation, Hyslop argued that telepathy between the medium and the sitters would not lead us to expect that the medium would have knowledge about the deceased concerning facts in the subconscious of the sitters or altogether unknown to any sitter present, because in Hyslop's view, there is no scientific basis for extending telepathy beyond thoughts consciously entertained by persons, and furthermore there is no evidence that telepathy could select material from distant minds. In fact, Hyslop held that telepathy would have to involve powers of infinite selection and impersonation in order to explain crucial parts of the data. However, since there is no evidence for telepathy of this sort, we cannot treat it as a serious explanatory contender (1919: 77, 80).

This particular criticism of the living-agent telepathy hypothesis represents a significant refinement of the kind of argument that Hodgson made, as Hyslop was imposing explanatory criteria in addition to predictive power. While acknowledging that a telepathy hypothesis that posits unlimited powers of thought transference would account for the medium's knowledge of the deceased, he ruled out this explanatory candidate on the grounds that telepathy of *that* "stupendous" sort lacks independent scientific support (1919: 80). Hyslop, like Oliver Lodge, sometimes also appealed to the simplicity of the spiritistic hypothesis as a virtue not possessed (to the same degree) by counter-explanations in terms of telepathy with the living (1910: 14, 1919: 80; cf. Lodge 1920: 326–7). As will be apparent in my subsequent discussion, appeals to independent support and simplicity play a prominent role in subsequent survivalist literature.[5]

6.2   Ian Stevenson's explanatory reincarnation argument

So in the early literature, we find a "modest explanatory argument" (MEA) for survival that is concerned solely with whether and how well contrasting

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[5] Hodgson appeared to have understood the need to posit something more than predictive power. He dismissed appeals to telepathy of an extraordinary hitherto undemonstrated sort that would require supplementation with "arbitrary suppositions" (1898: 393). By contrast, he maintained that his own assumptions were justified. So Hodgson suggested the need for additional criteria in order to evaluate the assumptions built into the case for survival or for some alternative hypothesis. In subsequent chapters, I will critically examine the reliance on assumptions as a crucial aspect of survival arguments.

hypotheses lead us to expect the relevant data (predictive power). We also find a "strengthened explanatory argument" (SEA) that includes appeals to independent support and simplicity as extra explanatory virtues. The subsequent body of survival literature through the middle part of the twentieth century to the present day further develops these earlier explanatory considerations, often in connection with other kinds of paranormal phenomena. One such example is Ian Stevenson's application of explanatory reasoning to the strands of data from cases of the reincarnation type (CORTs) summarized in §5.5.[6]

6.2.1   Reincarnation: inference to the best explanation

Unlike the arguments from mediumship, which suggest discarnate or disembodied survival, Stevenson's survival argument is specifically an argument for the hypothesis of reincarnation, which Stevenson took to posit the persistence of an individual's mind in association with a new body at some time after their death (1977a: 305). Stevenson argued that this hypothesis explains, in a unified manner, a broad range of evidence that covers the informational, behavioral, and physical patterns summarized in §5.5 (1974: 382–6, 1977a). As in the approach to the data of mediumship by Hodgson and Hyslop, Stevenson construed the argument for reincarnation as an inference to the best explanation. Therefore Stevenson's argument depends on two crucial claims. First, the reincarnation hypothesis explains the relevant data. Second, no other competing hypothesis explains the data in at least some of the cases as well as does the reincarnation hypothesis.

First, Stevenson was explicit that the explanatory relation requires that hypotheses have predictive power over the relevant data – that is, lead us to expect the data. So the reincarnation hypothesis (and its competitors) explains the data to the extent that it has predictive power over the data. This applies to each of the three patterns in CORTs. For example, Stevenson wrote: "If rebirth does occur, then we would expect information about a previous life to present as memories and ought to be surprised if it presented otherwise" (1974: 350). Concerning physical patterns, Stevenson wrote:

> It may be said that if reincarnation has value as an explanatory theory, it should be possible to make predictions based on it. With this I entirely agree, but allowance must be made for the length of time that will be required to confirm most predictions that the theory may stimulate.
>
> A few predictions have been made on assumption of reincarnation. The most notable of these have been predictions that birthmarks already existing would be found at a certain place on the body of a person if he was examined, and predictions that an unborn baby would have birthmarks corresponding to scars (or other marks) on the body of a living person who had not yet died and who had just died. (Stevenson 1977a: 333)

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[6] The reader may wish to review §5.5 before reading §6.2.1.

Second, there are, according to Stevenson, other hypotheses that purport to explain the data. Reincarnation can be the best explanation of the data only if alternative explanations are inadequate. So Stevenson critically examined alternative explanations, the primary ones being fraud, cryptomnesia, and extrasensory perception together with personation (Stevenson 1974: 331–73). He acknowledged that these alternative hypotheses are plausible explanations for some of the data in CORTs and that in some cases, they are even more plausible than the reincarnation hypothesis. The problem is that there is recalcitrant evidence – that is, evidence in some cases that allegedly does not fit the alternative hypotheses, or at least not as well as they fit the reincarnation hypothesis. So while the reincarnation hypothesis is not proposed as the best explanation for all the cases, Stevenson proposed it as the best explanation for some of the cases.

6.2.2   Ruling out alternative hypotheses

Stevenson argued that the fraud hypothesis is an inadequate explanation for the majority of cases (1977a: 331–3). In cases of fraud, we would expect there to be motive and opportunity for engaging in a reincarnation hoax, but there appears to be neither motive nor opportunity in many CORTs. Furthermore, given the large amounts of information that some children have of the previous personality, much of which is of a private or intimate nature, fraud in such cases would require fairly elaborate efforts that involve the families of the current personality and the previous personality, presumably making discovery of fraud much easier. Finally, given the striking behavioral patterns in many CORTs, including recognitions of persons related to the previous personality, children would need to be thoroughly coached and have persuasive acting abilities. The facts of most actual cases do not fit this scenario.

Cryptomnesia is a memory-oriented cognitive malfunction in which a person has had previous exposure to information, forgets the experience and information, but later recalls the information without being aware of the source or circumstances under which it was acquired. If cryptomnesia explains the informational patterns in a particular case, then there would be direct or indirect contact between the child and information source(s). So the hypothesis is a plausible one, Stevenson maintained, when the immediate family of the child knew most of the facts about the previous personality or when the child exhibits only a minimal amount of information about the previous personality. But in many CORTs the child is isolated from the sources that possess the relevant information about the previous personality, typically because they are separated by substantial physical distance and have no other means of communication. But also, the appeal to cryptomnesia would not explain the behavioral or physical patterns in CORTs. So Stevenson concluded that the cryptomnesia hypothesis could not explain crucial data in many CORTs (1974: 333–42).

With respect to the hypothesis of extrasensory perception (ESP), Stevenson acknowledged that telepathy and/or clairvoyance could in principle explain living persons having knowledge of the lives of deceased persons, especially when it is highly improbable that subjects have acquired their information through any normal means. And here Stevenson argues that ESP would have at least one advantage over appeals to cryptomesia, namely that we would not need to posit any physical contact between the child and persons/sources that contain the relevant information about the deceased. So we have a situation here that is prima facie similar to what is encountered with explanatory candidates for mediumship: the ability of unusual modes of cognition to account for the veridical features of the data. Stevenson also allowed that the ESP hypothesis could be enlarged to permit the child to recognize friends and family of the previous personality in the present. Furthermore, Stevenson conceded that in CORTs generally, there is probably some person who knows both families and could thereby serve as a telepathic link between the child and the previous personality, if this were required. Stevenson preferred this latter idea of a third-party ESP link between the child and the previous personality to having to postulate "extrasensory perception of a very extensive and extraordinary kind" (1974: 345). However, as with mediumship, the question is whether positing living-agent psi within these charitable parameters would cover all the relevant data. Stevenson said no:

> No amount of extrasensory perception alone will account for *all* the features of many of the cases. I refer to the important behavioral features and the elements of personation which occur in most of them. We have to consider here much more than the mere mobilization of information somehow acquired. The subject attributes this information to a personality with which he identifies himself. (1974: 343)

Since Stevenson thought that ESP could account for only the informational patterns in CORTs, this hypothesis must be expanded to account for at least some of the behavioral patterns of a living person who attributes information to a previous personality with which he has identified himself. So Stevenson plausibly suggested that ESP be combined with personation: the activity of integrating information acquired through ESP into a psychological profile with which one identifies oneself. However, Stevenson argued that even "extrasensory perception plus personation does not seem to me to account adequately for *all* the facts of the richer cases" (1974: 373).

As Stevenson saw matters, the exotic ESP plus personation hypothesis faces an initial difficulty in that it is unclear why one deceased person as opposed to another would be selected as the target, especially since there is

no discernable motive in either the children or their parents for the children to identify with the previous personality. But a greater alleged problem is that in some cases, a child has information, which if acquired through ESP, would require psychically tapping multiple persons or sources; and furthermore, the information would need to be integrated into a coherent narrative with the identity of the deceased as the unifying factor. We would also need to account for psychically acquired information being experienced as memories in the form of distinct images as the previous personality. Furthermore, since children in CORTs give no discernable evidence of psychic abilities outside the context of information about previous personality, their psychic abilities do not fit with paradigmatic cases of ESP. Finally, neither the behavioral nor physical features of CORTs seem explicable in terms of the purported hypothesis. Stevenson concluded that the main difficulty is "the restriction of the extrasensory perceptions to information about one target person and the organization of the information into a pattern characteristic of that one particular person" (1974: 371).

6.2.3   The argument schematized

In §5.5, I summarized the stands of data from CORTs in 12 statements, labeled e19–e31. For simplicity of formulation, I will designate the conjunction of e19–31 as E_{CORT}, the reincarnation hypothesis as R, and any proposed explanatory competitor as C. Stevenson's argument may then be represented as follows:

(IS1) There are observational data E_{CORT}.
(IS2) The hypothesis of reincarnation R explains E_{CORT}.
(IS3) No other hypothesis C explains E_{CORT} at least as well as R explains E_{CORT}.

Therefore:

(IS4) R is the best explanation of E_{CORT}.

Therefore:

(IS5) E_{CORT} is evidence for R.

With respect to this argument, a few points are worth highlighting.

First, as noted above, the explaining relation is parsed in terms of what a hypothesis leads us to expect, so (IS2) may be restated as "R leads us to expect E_{CORT}," and (IS3) may be restated as "no other hypothesis C leads us to expect E_{CORT} at least as well as R does." As such, the argument is a version of MEA. Jim Tucker, Stevenson's contemporary successor, illustrates this approach as well. When Tucker compares and contrasts the reincarnation hypothesis and proposed alternative explanations (including ESP), he does so solely in terms of how well each fits the facts or leads us to expect the

data (Tucker 2005: 30–51).[7] We can, of course, broaden the idea of explanatory power so that it includes explanatory virtues in addition to predictive power, and arguably Stevenson himself suggested doing this in places.[8] So it would not be difficult, as we will see below, to transform this kind of argument into what I have called a "strengthened explanatory argument" (SEA).

Second, with respect to (IS5), Stevenson did not say that E_{CORT} constitutes *strong* evidence for R (by virtue of R's explanatory power over E_{CORT}). He did not say, therefore, that E_{CORT} renders R highly probable or even more probable than its negation. The idea is rather that E_{CORT} is "suggestive" of reincarnation. As Stevenson noted, "Neither any single case nor all of the investigated cases together offer anything like a proof of reincarnation. They provide instead a body of evidence that is suggestive of reincarnation that appears to be accumulating in amount and quality" (1977a: 325). Stevenson's objective was modest. He confined himself to showing that there are some data for which the reincarnation hypothesis is the *more probable* interpretation. "Science advances," wrote Stevenson, "though the development of probabilities making one interpretation more likely than another" (1977a: 325). But would reincarnation, as allegedly the more probable interpretation, make it reasonable to believe in the reincarnation hypothesis? When speaking of evidence for survival as a whole (including data from other kinds of psychical phenomena), Stevenson was clear that the answer to this question is yes.

> Those who appreciate the quantitative features of science may expect me to state how probable it is that human personality survives physical death. I would not presume – or wish – to attach a figure to this probability. Instead, I prefer only to record my conviction that the evidence of

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[7] Tucker discusses the super-psi hypothesis, a version of the extrasensory perception hypothesis but which holds that "individuals through ESP or psi, as it is also called, can essentially know anything that is possible to know" (Tucker 2005: 44). In addition to arguing that the super-psi hypothesis would not lead us to expect the behavioral and physical patterns in CORTs, Tucker argues that the hypothesis is unfalsifiable since no test could be devised to disprove it (2005: 45). I take this to be a special case of the criticism of the hypothesis's predictive power. If, as Tucker says, the super-psi hypothesis posits virtual omniscience in persons, then plausibly it would lead us to expect anything that a person might know. But the idea of predictive power, as will be further explored in subsequent chapters, must not be trivially satisfied. If a hypothesis leads us to expect observational data, it must also lead us not to expect other kinds of observational data. For a discussion on falsification in connection with the survival hypothesis and the rival living-agent psi hypothesis, see §9.5.

[8] For example, Stevenson suggested the importance of independent support or fit with background knowledge for hypotheses (1974: 344, 371).

human survival after death is strong enough to permit a belief in survival on the basis of the evidence. (1977b: 167–8)

His conclusion here arguably applies to what he is willing to entertain as an evidential assessment of the reincarnation hypothesis itself, despite the modest claims he makes on its behalf (1977a: 325).

6.3   Cumulative case explanatory approaches

The discussion in §6.1 and §6.2 focused on two important features of explanatory arguments for survival: the alleged success of the survival hypothesis in explaining the relevant data and the alleged failure of alternative hypotheses to provide an at least equally good explanation of these data – both essential to the central claim that the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data. In the "modest" formulation of the explanatory argument (MEA), the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data just because it has greater predictive power than alternative hypotheses. In the "strengthened" form of the explanatory argument (SEA), the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data in part because of its predictive power and in part because it exhibits other explanatory virtues (e.g. simplicity and independent support) in a way superior to competing hypotheses.

6.3.1   The cumulative force of the evidence

In the preceding sections of this chapter, I considered survival arguments based on strands of data from particular kinds of psychical phenomena, first from mediumistic phenomena and second from CORTs. In either case, survival arguments may be cumulative in the sense that they are based on larger quantities of cases that exhibit the salient features of evidence described in the final sections of the past three chapters, and the case for survival may be stronger in this way than it would be otherwise. Psychical researchers from Hodgson to Stevenson have commonly acknowledged this way in which the evidence (whether from OBEs/NDEs, mediumship, or CORTs) may have cumulative weight. We saw this in Hodgson's assessment of Mrs. Piper's mediumship. He was impressed, not simply with the results of particular sittings with the Pellew communicator, but with the cumulative force of multiple sittings with the communicator and also with the cumulative force of Mrs. Piper's sittings with multiple communicators. Similarly, William James acknowledged that non-survival explanations, such as the appeal to telepathy among the living, are more plausible when particular claims and sittings are in view, but they become less plausible as the data-set is widened to include data from many different sittings over longer periods of time (James 1909).

The importance of cumulative data is a natural consequence of the widely acknowledged principle of total evidence in inductive logic, which states

that our probabilistic inferences should consider as much of the relevant evidence as possible. This being the case, the evaluation of different hypotheses proposed to explain psychical phenomena should consider as much of the data as possible drawn from different though similar phenomena. So there is another way in which empirical arguments for survival may be cumulative, an approach utilized by most subsequent philosophers and many parapsychologists who have been writing on the topic since the 1960s. We might suppose that the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis is greater for a range of data that includes the salient strands of data from different *kinds* of psychical phenomena – for example, by letting the total relevant data-set include the data from mediumship (e7–e18) and the data from CORTs (e19–e31). In much the same way that we might suppose, as Stevenson did, that the survival hypothesis explains in a unified way the seemingly diverse informational, behavioral, and physical patterns in CORTs, the survival hypothesis might explain, in a way superior to alternative hypotheses, the diverse phenomena included under OBEs/NDEs, mediumship, and CORTs. In arguments of this sort – that combine the data from diverse psychical phenomena – it may be that the argument for survival has greater evidential force than it would were it based on only one type of psychical phenomenon.

Hornell Hart (1959) illustrated this approach in his argument for survival based on the data drawn from mediumship and apparitional experiences. Hart maintained that the evidence from these two kinds of psychical phenomena provides the strongest support for the survival hypothesis, specifically because of its explanatory power over the entire range of data. Hart of course acknowledged that the evidence provided by apparitional experiences alone is "highly persuasive," so much so that the case for survival based on apparitional experiences alone would be strong (1959: 261). However, Hart argued that considering the evidence as a whole provides an even stronger argument, specifically one in which "the probability of survival is powerfully supported" (1959: 262).

> But when apparitional evidence is studied in relation to the best mediumistic evidences, the result is to produce a highly consistent and reinforcing demonstration of the reality of life beyond death. … The cumulative evidence becomes highly persuasive. The mediumistic and apparitional experiences confirm one another, and the evidence must be considered as a whole." (1959: 261–2)

6.3.2   Robert Almeder's cumulative case argument

Philosopher Robert Almeder provides a more recent example of a cumulative case version of SEA. Almeder considers data drawn from CORTs, possession, out-of-body experiences, mediumship, and apparitional experiences.

He argues that the data from these phenomena collectively provide very strong evidence for survival:

> But the force of the case for personal survival rests on the whole body of evidence viewed collectively as a *set* of arguments. Each argument from each category of research discussed and examined in these past pages is like a thread that, of itself, may well be incapable of carrying the full weight of the belief in some form of personal survival. ... The *multiplicity* of the arguments provides the extraordinary evidence required for conviction. (1992: 255–6)

A few features of Almeder's argument are worth noting, especially since they are paradigmatic of much of the empirical survival literature during the past 50 years.

First, there is the basic structure of the argument. Almeder's strategy is to show that for crucial strands of data from each of these phenomena, survival explains the data and proposed alternative explanations fail to provide an equally plausible or better explanation of the data (1992: 26–53, 117–29, 150–2, 174–94, 223–37). According to Almeder, the most challenging features of the data for alternative non-survival hypotheses are the quantitatively and qualitatively robust veridical claims and the behavioral patterns and skills, characteristic of some formerly living person. For each case, survival should be viewed as the best explanation of the data since it best explains these features of the data. However, since the degree of explanatory power varies when the data are considered individually, each of the phenomena he considers does not necessarily produce the same degree of warrant for belief in survival. For example, while the data from mediumship provides strong evidence for survival, he argues that it is not strong enough "to carry full-blooded conviction" unless more recent cases similar to Mrs. Piper should be discovered (1992: 249). By contrast, the evidence from OBEs/NDEs warrants mind-body dualism (over alternative explanations) and justifies belief in some form of personal survival (1992: 194, 198). But it is reincarnation evidence that is the strongest in Almeder's view, so strong that it makes it unreasonable not to believe in reincarnation (1992: 62). Consequently, the cumulative force of the total evidence provides "extraordinary evidence" for survival.

Second, with perhaps greater clarity than many of his survivalist predecessors, Almeder emphasizes the predictive power of the survival hypothesis, which he regards as a sine qua non of its explanatory and testable nature. As Almeder explains, the predictive power of the survival hypothesis means that this hypothesis should lead us to expect the world to be a certain way. "If," writes Almeder, "an hypothesis is to count as [a] potential explanation for physical phenomena it must have some test implications by way of providing deductively specific predictions of sensory experience expected if the hypothesis is true or if it is false" (1996: 504). Almeder provides a number of examples

that ostensibly illustrate how the survival hypothesis is successful here. For example, he insists that since personal identity and memorial continuity are essentially connected, we know what would count as a sufficient condition of someone's being reincarnated, namely that the person would have many of the memories and skills of the previous personality, as well as identify himself with or as the previous personality (1992: 60–2, 83–6):[9]

> it would be sufficient for the truth of the belief that the man beside you is Julius Caesar reincarnated if that man had all the memories that one would normally expect of Julius Caesar, and if he had some veri-fied memories that appealed to facts that were not in any way items of public information. ...Thus, the knowledge that reincarnation occurs is simply the product of the best available explanation for the existence of such memory claims as indicated above. Until somebody comes up with the appropriate alternative explanation, the evidence for reincarnation appears quite strong. (Almeder 1992: 60, 62)

Almeder also emphasizes, as an implication of predictive power, that empir-ical hypotheses should be falsifiable – roughly, that there should be empir-ically possible states of affairs we would *not* expect if the hypothesis in question were true (1992: 56). He argues that the survival hypothesis also satisfies this condition (1992: 49, 56, 228); indeed, it allegedly "admits of conclusive verification and falsification" (1992: 269). By contrast, the most potent counter-explanation of the relevant data, the super-psi hypothesis, cannot be falsified and therefore allegedly fails to be a genuine explanatory hypothesis (1992: 52–3, 120, 1996: 500–5).

   Third, Almeder places considerable emphasis on explanatory virtues in addition to predictive power (and its correlated power to falsify hypotheses), specifically *independent support*, which seems required to avoid falling into the explanatory vice of adopting ad hoc hypotheses. This comes out most clearly in Almeder's critique of the appeal to psychic functioning among living persons to account for the relevant data. Almeder argues that the only kind of living-agent psychic functioning that could possibly account for all the rele-vant data would be so-called super-psi, which Almeder describes as "psychic powers that are beyond the typical, that is, those of a kind and/or magnitude speculated to exist but not yet scientifically, because their limits are unknown" (1992: 44). Almeder argues that an extension of psi as ordinarily conceived to

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   [9] At times, Almeder says that memorial continuity *constitutes* personal identity (1996: 497–8) or otherwise suggests this (1992: 60, 83), though elsewhere he suggests simply that verified claims to recall past lives count as *evidence* for identifying or picking out persons (1992: 89). While the second point would follow from the first, the converse is not true, because we can consistently reject the idea that our personal identity *consists* of memorial continuity, even if claims suggestive of memorial continuity can be used to pick out persons whose identity is otherwise constituted.

super-psi is not warranted, since there is no independent evidence for such a kind or degree of psi, but therefore, it is not a legitimate explanatory hypothesis. Almeder argues that any appeal to super-psi as a legitimate explanatory hypothesis would require "some empirical evidence that super-psi in fact exists" (1992: 52), but there is no such evidence for super-psi in Almeder's view (1992: 52–3, 118–20, 125, 1996: 506). He suggests that in the absence of independent support, the adoption of the super-psi hypothesis would be arbitrary or ad hoc (1992: 125, 226, 1996: 507).

6.4 Formalizing explanatory arguments

As indicated above, MEA provides a very modest – some might even say "minimal" – kind of evidential support for the survival hypothesis. It tells us that the relevant data *favor* the survival hypothesis over known explanatory competitors by virtue of personal survival being the best explanation of the relevant data from among a narrow range of alternative hypotheses. According to MEA, a hypothesis h_1 receives confirmation or support from observational evidence e by virtue of h_1's explanatory power over e and where h_1's explanatory power over e consists in h_1's predictive power – h_1's better leading us to expect e than does some limited range of known alternatives h_2, h_3, h_4, and so on. Alternatively stated, the data are less surprising given the survival hypothesis than any of the competitors (severally or jointly considered), and this evidentially favors the survival hypothesis over competing hypotheses.

6.4.1 Likelihood formulations of MEA and SEA

The idea of explanatory power central to MEA can be formally expressed by what is called a *Likelihood* in confirmation theory. A Likelihood is a formal expression of the probability of some observational datum given a hypothesis, Pr(e | h). Likelihoods may be compared, as when one hypothesis h_1 makes some observational datum more probable than does some other hypothesis h_2: formally, $Pr(e | h_1) > Pr(e | h_2)$, which means the probability of e (observational evidence) is greater given h_1 than it is given h_2.[10] In contemporary confirmation theory, Likelihoods formally express a fit between a hypothesis and the observational evidence that is relevant for assessing whether the evidence supports the hypothesis. As Hawthorne notes, "when the evidence is more likely according to one hypothesis than according to another hypothesis, that should redound to the credit of

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[10] As explained in §1.3.2, the Likelihood of some hypothesis h should be distinguished from the probability of h. The latter refers to the probability of h given the evidence, whereas the Likelihood of h refers to the probability *of the evidence, observations, data*, etc. given the hypothesis. If h has a high Likelihood given evidence e, this refers to the value of Pr(e | h). If h has a high probability relative to the evidence, this refers to the value of Pr(h | e), what is called the "posterior probability" of h. A high Likelihood does not entail a high posterior probability.

the former hypothesis and the discredit of the latter" (Hawthorne 2011: 333). Although there are different ways to assess how this credit should be measured, one proposal that links Likelihoods to evidential support is the "law of likelihood":

> (LL) Observational evidence e supports hypothesis h_1 more than it supports hypothesis h_2 if and only if $Pr(e \mid h_1) > Pr(e \mid h_2)$, and the degree to which e supports h_1 over h_2 is measured by the Likelihood ratio $Pr(e \mid h_1)/Pr(e \mid h_2)$.[11]

(LL) tells us when evidence e supports or favors one hypothesis h_1 over another h_2, and so it can be used to justify inferences about data favoring the survival hypothesis over competing hypotheses. But since (LL) also provides a measure for assessing the degree to which e supports or favors h_1 over h_2, we can also distinguish lesser and greater degrees of evidential confirmation. It might be that the probability of e is *much greater* given h_1 than it is given h_2: $Pr(e \mid h_1) \gg Pr(e \mid h_2)$. In this situation, we can say that e would strongly support or confirm h_1 over h_2. This might happen, for example, when we know that $Pr(e \mid h_1) \approx 1$ and $Pr(e \mid h_2) \approx 0$ – that is, when the probability of the evidence given h_1 approximates maximal (or certain) and the probability of e given h_2 approximates zero. The Likelihood ratio in the latter clause of (LL) enables us to determine here that $Pr(e \mid h_1) \gg Pr(e \mid h_2)$.

Using this nomenclature and these formalized expressions of evidential support, we can use (LL) to formalize a cumulative case version of MEA. Let S = the hypothesis of personal survival, C = the nearest competing hypothesis, E_{OB} = e1–e6 (in Chapter 3), E_{MED} = e7–e18 (in Chapter 4), and E_{CORT} = e19–e31 (in Chapter 5). If an empirical survivalist could show that the probability of these data given survival is very high but very low or tiny given the nearest competitor, then the following argument could be made:

(1) $Pr(E_{CORT} \& E_{MED} \& E_{OB} \mid C) \approx 0$
(2) $Pr(E_{CORT} \& E_{MED} \& E_{OB} \mid S) \approx 1$

Therefore:

(3) $Pr(E_{CORT} \& E_{MED} \& E_{OB} \mid S) \gg Pr(E_{CORT} \& E_{MED} \& E_{OB} \mid C)$.

Therefore:

(4) $E_{CORT} \& E_{MED} \& E_{OB}$ very strongly support S over C.

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[11] Since there are counter-examples to (LL) giving a necessary condition for evidential support, it can be less strongly formulated with superior Likelihood being a sufficient condition for evidential support. Also, (LL) differs from the closely associated "Likelihood Principle," which is only concerned with the first clause of (LL), conditions of favoring, not the second clause that covers the degree to which e supports h1 over h2.

This is one plausible interpretation of the kind of argument many survival-ists have made or otherwise suggested when proposing MEA, although as part of the formalization procedure, the concept of explanation/prediction has been replaced by Likelihoods that express comparative probabilities of the evidence given the rival hypotheses. Of course, the survivalist need not argue that the probability of the data given the survival hypothesis is very high (≈ 1) or even that the probability of the data given the nearest competitor is very low or tiny (≈ 0), only that – whatever the value assigned to the Likelihood of the nearest competitor – the Likelihood of the survival hypothesis is greater. This could be argued in several ways. For example, it might be argued that while C leads us to expect many of the data under E_{CORT} & E_{MED} & E_{OB}, S leads us to expect *more* of these data. Alternatively, while C might lead us to expect many or most of the data under E_{CORT} & E_{MED} & E_{OB} taken individually or severally, S might lead us to expect their joint occurrence. The survivalist needs only to argue that for whatever value N is assigned to the Likelihood of C, the Likelihood of S is greater. Hence:

(1′) $Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid C) = N$
(2′) $Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid S) > N$

Therefore:

(3′) $Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid S) > Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid C)$

Therefore:

(4′) E_{CORT} & E_{MED} & E_{OB} support S over C.[12]

So MEA could be formalized to show that the conjunction of E_{CORT} & E_{MED} & E_{OB} weakly or strongly favors survival over some competing hypothesis. And while I have formulated the argument as a cumulative case argument from the data collected from three kinds of physical phenomena, the argument can in principle be made also from evidence-sets associated with only a particular psychical phenomenon, as illustrated earlier with Stevenson's argument from reincarnation, and the Hodgson and Hyslop arguments from mediumship.

As explained above, SEA proposes a stronger explanatory survival argument than MEA does since it bulks up explanatory virtues, for example, by introducing fit with background knowledge, simplicity, and/or independent support as additional explanatory virtues. Although the argument based on (LL) preserved only the explanatory virtue of predictive power via the

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[12] Of course, we might not be able to assign any approximate value N to $Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid C)$, but it still might be clear that $Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid S) > Pr(E_{CORT}$ & E_{MED} & $E_{OB} \mid C)$. So the argument can be restated without the first two premises.

appropriate Likelihoods, we can to some degree accommodate SEA within a modified Likelihood framework. For example, Robin Collins has made use of a *restricted* version of the "Likelihood Principle," which states that, for any two non-ad hoc hypotheses h_1 and h_2, observational evidence e supports h_1 over h_2 if $Pr(e \mid h_1) > Pr(e \mid h_2)$.[13] Robins stipulates that a sufficient condition for a hypothesis being non-ad hoc is that there is independent support for the hypothesis or alternatively that the hypothesis has been widely advocated prior to the allegedly confirming evidence. Furthermore, one might suppose that appeals to simplicity can be rolled into the restricted principle as a mode of a priori independent support for the truth of the hypothesis. So if we imbed extra non-predictive explanatory virtues in the Likelihood framework via independent support as a filter for hypotheses, we could at least partially accommodate the criteria in SEA.

6.4.2   Evidential favoring vs. net plausibility

What is the *epistemic* significance of MEA and SEA in their informal and formal versions? In other words, how do MEA and SEA bear on the assessment of belief in survival as justified or rational?

Empirical survivalists wish to argue that at least some of the relevant data constitute evidence for survival. Furthermore they maintain that the best available evidence is strong enough to at least make a significant contribution to the rational acceptance of the survival hypothesis. Many wish to claim that the evidence makes the survival hypothesis overall plausible, and plausible enough for rational acceptance. We saw earlier that while Stevenson argued that the evidence (at least collectively considered) made it *rationally permissible* to accept survival, others – such as Hyslop and Almeder – have made a significantly stronger claim, namely that the evidence is compelling enough to make belief in survival *rationally obligatory*. Several prominent philosophers who have been favorable toward the empirical case for survival have taken the view that the evidence collectively considered renders the survival hypothesis more probable than its negation: it is more probable that survival is true than that it is false. In fact, the rational acceptance of the survival hypothesis is often linked to the data providing a degree of evidential support that confers on the survival hypothesis some significant degree of probability (Almeder 1992; Ducasse 1961; Griffin 1997; Lund 2009; Paterson 1995).

Since the term "probability" has been introduced here and will factor largely in subsequent discussion, some preliminary clarifications are necessary. The "probability" in view is the probability that some belief or

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[13] Collins applies the restricted Likelihood Principle to the fine-tuning of the universe to show that the facts of fine-tuning favor the hypothesis of an intelligent designer over purely random processes. See Collins (2009: 206).

statement is true relative to some body of evidence (in the form of other beliefs or statements). For example, we can speak of the probability that Jack committed the robbery given that his fingerprints were found on the safe, he had a particular motive, and he was seen at the location about the time of the robbery. This kind of probability, usually called "epistemic probability," should be distinguished from "factual probability" (including "physical" and "statistical" probability), which is a function of objective features of the physical world (e.g. its laws and structure). For example, the factual probability of drawing a black ball from a sealed box containing nine black balls and one white ball is .9 (almost certain), whereas its epistemic probability will vary depending on the knowledge or evidence one has about the color and number of the balls in the box.[14]

In sifting through the relations between MEA/SEA and stances toward the survival hypothesis, it is important first to distinguish two kinds of questions we might ask about hypotheses in general and the survival hypothesis in particular. We might ask, *do the data favor the survival hypothesis over a proposed competing hypothesis?* Alternatively, we might ask, *should we accept the survival hypothesis?* It would appear that these questions have not always been adequately distinguished in the literature. As a consequence, survivalists sometimes lean on MEA to provide an affirmative answer to the second question. But this would be a mistake. MEA tells us only that the data are evidence for survival, specifically that the evidence (weakly or strongly) favors survival over some competing hypothesis. MEA does not tell us how plausible or probable the survival hypothesis is, and it is insufficient therefore to tell us whether we would be rational to accept the survival hypothesis, at least when such a judgment presupposes a favorable probability assignment.[15]

The point can be illustrated with many mundane examples. It is clear that there are countless scenarios in which hypothesis h_1 has a higher Likelihood than h_2 but in which h_1 is not overall probable or rationally acceptable. For example, suppose I draw an ace of spades from a deck of cards. The hypothesis that a very powerful demon intended that I pick this card has

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[14] While "Likelihoods" are normative, in the sense that they reflect the degree of belief that one ought to have, they also involve factual probabilities. Given that (N) the deck from which I draw a card is a normal deck, the probability that (S) the card is a spade = 13/52. Hence, $Pr(S \mid N)$ has a well-defined value, 13/52, but this is based on physical facts about the composition of the deck and process of selection. See Sober (2008: 40–1).

[15] In subsequent chapters, I will elaborate on this: we might suppose that if a hypothesis possessed a sufficiently rich array of explanatory virtues (as suggested by SEA), then this would make it reasonable (in the sense of epistemically permissible) to accept the hypothesis, even if we could not provide a favorable probability assignment.

a higher Likelihood than the hypothesis that my selection of the card was random because the former hypothesis makes the selection of the card very probable, actually maximally probable, and the latter makes it very improbable. All that follows is that the evidence favors the demon hypothesis over the competitor, but the demon hypothesis is not probable, nor would it be rational to believe it on the basis of the evidence alone. The moral of the story is that Likelihoods alone do not justify the acceptance of hypotheses, even though they do tell us which hypothesis the evidence favors. And arguably, even the restricted version of the Likelihood Principle would need substantial bulking up to justify attributing to a hypothesis any significant probability of being true.

Whether we should accept some hypothesis and be rational in doing so depends on the *net* plausibility of the hypothesis, how plausible it is all things considered. Once we forge a tight link between the rational acceptance of a hypothesis and it having a favorable probability, whether it would be reasonable to accept the survival hypothesis depends on its *posterior probability*, which is the conditional probability of the survival hypothesis on all the relevant evidence and background knowledge. Where the relevant evidence is E_{OB}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT}, this would be formally represented as $Pr(S \mid (E_{OB} \& E_{MED} \& E_{CORT}) \& K)$, where K refers to background knowledge. Many empirical survivalists have wanted to argue here that this conditional probability is at least greater than ½; that is, the survival hypothesis is more probable than not. This is often considered a threshold probability for rational belief. However, there is no straightforward inference from a hypothesis having a high Likelihood to it having a high posterior probability. Indeed, even if $Pr(E_{OB} \& E_{MED} \& E_{CORT} \mid S) \gg Pr(E_{OB} \& E_{MED} \& E_{CORT} \mid C)$, it would not follow that $Pr(S \mid (E_{OB} \& E_{MED} \& E_{CORT}) \& K) > Pr(C \mid (E_{OB} \& E_{MED} \& E_{CORT}) \& K)$, much less that the $Pr(S \mid (E_{OB} \& E_{MED} \& E_{CORT}) \& K) > ½$.[16]

Given the widespread survivalist interest in showing that the survival hypothesis is rationally justified, typically because it allegedly has a favorable posterior probability, we see a plausible motivation for SEA. SEA bulks up the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis by adding explanatory virtues (in addition to predictive power) that are relevant to assessments of net plausibility because the extent to which a hypothesis is simple, fits with our background knowledge, and has independent support is relevant to its net plausibility. And this I would suggest is why many survivalists have held

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[16] As will be explored in Chapter 7, when the matter of *prior probability* is introduced (roughly, the plausibility/probability of the hypothesis independent of support it receives from the data it is adduced to explain), we have various ways of moving from Likelihoods to judgments of posterior probability. According to the Bayesian theory of confirmation, if two hypotheses have equal prior probability, the hypothesis with the greater Likelihood will have the greater posterior probability.

that if the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data, we are rational to accept it.[17] However, the effort to formalize SEA poses something of a challenge because the restricted version of the Likelihood Principle (alluded to above) only partially accommodates the criteria in SEA. So if we wish to formalize an explanatory survival argument along the lines of SEA that can more adequately handle conclusions concerning the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis, then we will need to draw on the resources of a different confirmation theory.

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[17] This is not unique to survivalist arguments. There is a more general philosophical debate about whether favorable likelihoods plus extra plausibility factors should both be rolled into explanatory merit. This in turn is related to the question of whether the best explanation is a hypothesis we ought to *accept*. If the best explanation commands acceptance, then there must be more to explanatory merit than favorable likelihoods. Of course, we might suppose, as some have, that the best explanation is simply a heuristic procedure that guides inquiry rather than an epistemic rule that is truth directed. See Iranzo (2007) for a discussion of all these issues, especially in connection with the epistemic accounts of inference to best explanation found in Psillos (2004) and Niiniluoto (2004).

7
Bayesian Explanatory Arguments

The exploration in Chapter 6 focused on the explanatory nature of classical empirical arguments for survival. While I was mainly interested in outlining the structure of such arguments, and suggesting how they might be formalized as likelihood arguments, I concluded that explanatory arguments pose something of a challenge to the widespread survivalist interest in drawing conclusions about the plausibility or probability of the survival hypothesis. If the empirical case for survival is based solely on the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis and if the only determinant of explanatory power is how well the survival hypothesis leads us to expect the relevant data in contrast to alternative hypotheses, then at best we are in a position to conclude only that our evidence confirms or favors the survival hypothesis over some competing hypothesis. However, this does not justify conclusions about the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis, nor therefore does it sufficiently inform us whether we should accept the survival hypothesis. So the "modest explanatory argument" (MEA), and its formalization as a likelihood argument, justifies only a rather modest conclusion concerning the evidence for survival.

From this vantage point, the "strengthened explanatory argument" (SEA) is the more interesting explanatory argument. Since it builds *extra* plausibility factors (in addition to likelihoods) into explanatory power, it provides a more reasonable basis for justifying claims about the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis. I concluded, though, that SEA needs development within a framework that allows us to assess the relative weight of various plausibility factors and the specific contribution they make, together with likelihoods, to judgments of overall probability. Confirmation theory utilizes formalization techniques for this, and *Bayesianism* seems to provide the appropriate, if not ideal, sort of confirmation measures.

In Bayesian approaches to confirmation, extra plausibility factors are rolled into what are called "prior probabilities," formally $Pr(h \mid k)$ – the

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probability of h given relevant background knowledge k.[1] Factors that determine $\Pr(h \mid k)$ include the simplicity of the hypothesis, its compatibility with relevant background knowledge, and the degree of independent support that it enjoys. Priors then combine with likelihoods to produce assessments of net plausibility.[2] From a Bayesian perspective, the net plausibility of a hypothesis is represented by its posterior probability, $\Pr(h \mid e \,\&\, k)$ – the probability of hypothesis h given evidence e and background knowledge k. According to Bayes' theorem (to be discussed below), likelihoods and priors combine in a particular way to determine the value of this conditional probability, whether, for example, it is greater or less than ½, meaning that the hypothesis is more probable than not. If survival arguments can be cogently constructed within this framework, it would take the case for survival considerably further than the arguments explored in Chapter 6.

Survivalists and skeptics alike have understood the significance of Bayesian probability for survival arguments. Beginning with C.D. Broad (1919) many of the prominent philosophers who have critically explored the empirical case for survival have construed the argument as explanatory and Bayesian in structure. This includes Broad's contemporary Curt Ducasse, and several more recent philosophers who have written on the topic (Griffin 1997; Lund 2009; Paterson 1995). They have attempted to reach a verdict on the plausibility of the survival hypothesis by considering both its explanatory merits (i.e. its predictive power or likelihood) and its prior probability. In Chapter 8, I will examine Bayesian-style arguments for personal survival, but in this chapter, I consider two early Bayesian analyses of the empirical

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[1] On a subjective interpretation of Bayesian confirmation, priors are simply descriptions of one's initial degree of belief. On this view, there are no rational constraints on prior probabilities. Bayes' theorem then provides rules for rationally updating this initial degree of belief, upward or downward depending on whether evidence confirms or disconfirms the hypothesis. For the purposes of the present discussion, I am adopting what is called the "objective Bayesian" interpretation of priors, which emphasizes rational constraints on prior probabilities. To anticipate the subsequent discussion, the subjective Bayesian approach to prior probabilities is a liability for survivalists, especially given that most survivalists wish to make objective claims about the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis.

[2] Bayesianism and Likelihoodism are the two prominent approaches to confirmation theory. For Likelihoodism, the law of likelihood (discussed in §6.4) provides the relevant confirmation measure. As illustrated in Chapter 6, the law of likelihood establishes only *contrastive* confirmation, showing us when (and the extent to which) evidence favors one hypothesis over another hypothesis. Since considerations of prior probability are excluded, there is no attempt to render a verdict on the net plausibility of a hypothesis. But in Bayesianism, confirmation measures are *non-contrastive* and priors are used to assist in verdicts on the net plausibility of hypotheses. Bayesianism is in some respects Likelihoodism with priors. Hence, while Bayesian and Likelihood approaches are distinct, they are importantly related.

argument for survival but that reach an unfavorable verdict. The discussion defines and clarifies some of the foundational elements in the logic of Bayesian survival arguments, as well as identifies some of the conceptual challenges that face the survival hypothesis.

7.1   C.D. Broad's analysis of the empirical survival argument

C.D. Broad's work on survival is worthy of detailed consideration. His work on survival is undoubtedly one of the most conceptually sophisticated explorations of both the survival hypothesis and the logic of empirical survival arguments. Not surprisingly, his work and that of C.J. Ducasse were foundational to the discussion as it was carried forward in subsequent years. Broad may be credited with two important contributions to the logic of survival arguments. First, he produced a foundational analysis of the prior probability of the survival hypothesis (Broad 1919). Second, he developed a detailed Bayesian evaluation of the empirical case for survival, in which he analysed the weight of the prior probability and explanatory power of the survival hypothesis relative to alternative hypotheses invoked to account for the data (Broad 1960: 514–51, cf. 1962: 387–430).[3]

> The [empirical] argument [for survival] will be of the usual inverse-inductive type. Now, in such arguments we always have to consider the following points. (i) The antecedent probabilities of the various alternative hypotheses. And (ii) the completeness with which the various alternative hypotheses explain the special facts under consideration. If the antecedent probability of h_1 be very much less than that of h_2, then, even though h_1 explains the special facts better than h_2, it may be more prudent to try to make some modification of h_2, rather than to put much faith in h_1. (Broad 1960: 515)

Arguments of the "inverse-inductive type" are Bayesian arguments.[4] As Broad states, these arguments draw conclusions about the "final probability" of a hypothesis by considering its antecedent probability and explanatory power (Broad 1919: 561, 1960: 515). "Antecedent probability" is another term for "prior probability," which according to Broad refers to the probability that a "hypothesis has relative to all known facts that seem to be relevant *other than* the special set of facts which it is put forward to explain" (Broad 1919: 561). Formally expressed, this is Pr(h | k), where h = the hypothesis and

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[3] Broad's 1960 edition of *The Mind and Its Place in Nature* was originally published in 1925, with successive editions up to 1960. Broad's views on survival are found in this volume and his later *Lectures on Psychical Research*, first published in 1962.

[4] See Fienberg (2006) for a discussion on the replacement of the phrase "inverse inductive" and "inverse probability" with "Bayesian probability."

k = relevant background knowledge (i.e. what we take ourselves to know or justifiably believe prior to or independent of the evidence under consideration). Although Broad does not elaborate with any detail on the nature of "explanatory power," he linked it to likelihoods in a way that is consistent with Bayesianism (1960: 548–9). On the Bayesian approach to confirmation, the completeness with which a hypothesis h explains the facts depends on two issues: (i) how well h leads us to expect the facts under examination – that is, the likelihood formally expressed as Pr(e | h & k) – and (ii) how expected these facts are whether or not h is true – that is, the prior probability of the evidence, formally expressed as Pr(e | k).

7.1.1   Bayesian confirmation and Broad's argument

The focal point of Bayesian confirmation is Bayes' theorem, which tells us *how* precisely the prior probability and explanatory power of h combine to yield h's posterior probability:

$$\Pr(h \mid e \ \& \ k) = \frac{\Pr(e \mid h \ \& \ k) \times \Pr(h \mid k)}{\Pr(e \mid k)}$$

The theorem, which follows from the axioms of the mathematical calculus of probability, says we may correctly determine the posterior probability of a hypothesis h (expressed on the left side of the equation) by multiplying h's likelihood and h's prior probability and then dividing the product by the prior probability of the evidence. On the right side of the equation, then, we are interested in three numbers. Beginning with the numerator, first there is Pr(e | h & k) – the likelihood of h – and second there is Pr(h | k) – the prior probability of the hypothesis. Third, in the denominator there is Pr(e | k) – the prior probability of the evidence – that is, how probable the evidence is whether or not h is true. Since the explanatory power of a hypothesis is the likelihood ratio Pr(e | h & k)/Pr(e | k), Bayes' theorem tells us that the explanatory power of a hypothesis will increase as Pr(e | h & k) increases or as Pr(e | k) decreases. So h's explanatory power may be great either because Pr(e | h & k) is high (i.e. the hypothesis renders the evidence very probable), or because Pr(e | k) is low (i.e. the evidence is otherwise very improbable). Conversely, h's explanatory power decreases as Pr(e | h & k) decreases or Pr(e | k) increases. Hence, h may fail to have great explanatory power either because h fails to render the evidence probable – that is, Pr(e | h & k) is very low – or because the evidence is very probable whether or not h is true – that is, Pr(e | k) is very high.

In Broad's assessment of the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis, he considered the prior probability and explanatory power of both the survival hypothesis and the proposed alternative hypotheses. According to Broad, there are four main explanatory candidates for the empirical evidence that

the survival hypothesis purports to explain: (S) the hypothesis of personal survival, (T) extensive telepathy among living persons, (I) non-human spirits that impersonate deceased living persons, and (P) the persistence of a "psychic factor" – roughly speaking, the persistence of the dispositional basis of the mind or personality (a form of radically attenuated survival). As noted in the previous chapter, the search for the best explanation of the evidence requires "ruling out" alternatives, but Bayes' theorem tells us why alternative hypotheses are significant and what questions we need to ask about them. They are highly relevant when it comes to assessing the explanatory power of hypotheses since they are related to Pr(e | k) – the prior probability of the evidence.

The Pr(e | k), which appears as the denominator in Bayes' theorem, is actually the sum of two probabilities, each of which is the product of a likelihood/prior pair:

$$\text{Pr}(e \mid k) = [\text{Pr}(e \mid h \ \& \ k) \ x \ \text{Pr}(h \mid k)] + [\text{Pr}(e \mid \sim h \ \& \ k) \ x \ \text{Pr}(\sim h \mid k)]$$

This tells us that to determine the prior probability of the evidence, we need to consider the prior and likelihood of h *and its negation (~h)*. In each case, the likelihood/prior pair for h and ~h must be multiplied and their products summed. Now the first conjunct on the right-hand side of the "=" sign is just the top line of Bayes' theorem. So what is crucial is the second conjunct on the right-hand side of the equation, namely Pr(e | ~h & k) and Pr(~h | k), specifically whether the probability here is large or small in relation to the first conjunct. It follows from Bayes' theorem that the larger the value of the second conjunct, the smaller the posterior probability of h; and the smaller the value of the second conjunct, the larger the posterior probability of h. Since the second conjunct will be very large if both terms are large, and smaller to the extent that the terms are smaller, the likelihood and prior probability of ~h are highly significant to the posterior probability of h.

Enter alternative hypotheses. They are highly relevant in connection with the second conjunct since ~h is a "catchall" term in the equation that gets unpacked in terms of the range of alternative hypothesis that exclude h. So to figure out Pr(e | ~h & k), the probability of the evidence on the condition that h is false, we need to ask, how many alternative hypotheses (that exclude h) lead us to expect the evidence? And furthermore, what is the prior probability of each of these hypotheses? More precisely stated, the second conjunct can be rewritten to express the sum of the prior probabilities of all alternative hypotheses, each of which is multiplied by its corresponding likelihood.[5] So the consideration of alternative hypotheses is a very important part of determining posterior probabilities.

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[5] Suppose there are two alternative hypotheses to h, h1, and h2. In this case, the second conjunct Pr(e | ~h & k) x Pr(~h | k) will be expressed as [Pr(e | h1 & k) x Pr(h1 | k)] + [Pr(e | h2 & k) x Pr(h2 | k)].

While Broad considered widely appealed to alternative hypotheses, his own psychic factor hypothesis (hereinafter P) is worth briefly commenting on since he presents it as the nearest explanatory competitor to personal survival, and it is the hypothesis that he favored among the four candidates. Broad proposed, as an empirically possible theory of mind, that the mind is a compound of two factors, a bodily factor and a psychic factor, which jointly but not severally have the properties of the mind (1960: 535–7).[6] The psychic factor is not conscious, but it is instead the dispositional basis of the personality, which when united with a body results in a stream of conscious life with memories, feelings, perceptions, intentions, and so on. So in this way, the mind would be analogous to salt, which is a compound of two substances, sodium and chlorine. Just as the distinctive properties of salt arise only with the compound of sodium and chlorine, so the distinctive properties of "mind" arise only when the bodily factor is joined to the psychic factor. Broad contrasted his compound theory with the "instrumental theory," a substance dualist model that posits the mind as a substance essentially independent of the body but involved in two-way interaction with it, receiving information from it and acting upon it.

With respect to Broad's reliance on Bayesian confirmation, one of his preliminary points should be noted because it bears on the calculation of the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis. As indicated in the above quote, Broad argued that if the prior probability of hypothesis h_1 is very much less than the prior of the hypothesis h_2, even if h_1 explains the specific facts better than h_2, it may be more prudent to modify h_2 than to accept h_1. The weight here placed on prior probability is an important implication of Bayes' theorem. First, from a Bayesian point of view, the likelihood of h may be very high, but h will have a low posterior probability if h has a very low prior probability. It will have a low posterior probability because low prior probabilities drive down posterior probabilities. Second, even if the likelihood of h_1 is higher than h_2, the posterior probability of h_2 can be higher than h_1 if h_2 has a considerably higher prior probability. For example, the hypothesis that a supremely powerful demon intended that I draw the ace of spades (which I in fact drew) from the deck has a likelihood ≈ 1 (approximately 1 or certain), whereas the hypothesis that the card was randomly chosen from a fair deck has a likelihood $N \ll 1$ (much less than 1), specifically .019. But the probability of the demon hypothesis given the evidence is nonetheless very low, and this stems from its independent or ceteris paribus implausibility. By contrast, the probability of the hypothesis that the draw was random from a fair deck is overall very probable, even though its likelihood is very low. This stems from the independent

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[6] "Psychic" here is being used in the psychological sense, as the adjectival form of psyche, not as a term referring to extrasensory perception.

plausibility of the hypothesis. The assumption at work in Broad's discussion, to which I will return in Chapter 8 and Chapter 11, is that extremely low priors can outweigh high likelihoods and thus play an overriding role in the calculation of posterior probabilities.

7.1.2   The prior probability of survival and competing hypotheses

So Broad's analysis of the empirical argument for survival may be broken into two main parts: first, a consideration of the prior probability of the four hypotheses (S, T, I, and P) and, second, their respective likelihoods. With respect to Pr(h | k), Broad, like other philosophers, broke down prior probability into the intrinsic probability of h, which depends upon the structure of the proposition itself (including its simplicity), and the probability of h relative to all known (contingent) facts, other than those that h is adduced to explain. Broad was clear that we have no grounds for ascribing a very high antecedent probability to (S) the survival hypothesis, (T) the hypothesis of an extensive telepathy among the living, or (I) the hypothesis of non-human spirits impersonating the deceased (1960: 517). Nonetheless certain comparative judgments could be made.

First, Broad acknowledged that S might have a greater intrinsic probability than either T or I has since S seems to be the more simple of the three explanatory candidates. Hypotheses T and I involve additional assumptions that lack independent support and would, if adopted, enlarge our ontological inventory of substances and their properties (1960: 516–7). We have, for example, no independent evidence that the kinds of non-human minds required by hypothesis I actually exist, much less that they would have the requisite telepathic powers that must be attributed to them to account for their postulated interactions with human persons. While hypothesis T postulates minds whose existence is already known, it appears, according to Broad, to ascribe to them a degree or kind of telepathic power for which there is no independent evidence. By contrast, the survival hypothesis posits the continuation of minds already known to exist and presumably telepathic powers (as their means of communication) of the sort that Broad held were already known to exist in human persons. However, the matter is more complicated. As Broad subsequently noted, while hypothesis S posits a continuation of persons independently known to exist, it nonetheless posits a mode of their existence, as discarnate spirits, for which there is no independent evidence (1960: 546). Moreover, when we theoretically consider ideal cases of cross-correspondences (as mediumistic evidence for survival) this would require attributing to discarnate spirits telepathic powers that approximate what must be attributed to living persons according to hypothesis T. But in that case, hypothesis T, inasmuch as it attributes such powers to persons whose existence is antecedently known, has greater intrinsic probability than hypothesis S (1960: 546).

Second, with respect to background knowledge of contingent fact, Broad held that the relevant facts should be those about which there is consensus, even between persons who advocate rival metaphysical systems (1960: 520). So "k" should include our knowledge of the empirical world as it presents itself to common sense. And here Broad argued that when all the relevant issues are considered, we discover no positive reasons for or against the survival hypothesis (1960: 532). So the $\Pr(S \mid K) = \Pr(\sim S \mid K)$[7] – that is, survival – is neither probable nor improbable relative to our background knowledge, which may also be expressed by saying that $\Pr(S \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$. He did recognize, of course, that certain *theories* of mind are unfavorable toward survival. For example, epiphenomenalism holds that mental phenomena are unilaterally dependent on the body and have no causal efficacy. This view is unfavorable to survival. However, Broad held that epiphenomenalism provides only one *interpretation* of the empirical facts. Other theories more favorable to survival equally fit these facts: for example, Broad's preferred compound theory explained above.

Moreover, while Broad maintained that hypothesis T does not have a high antecedent probability, he also argued that, like the survival hypothesis, it is not antecedently implausible. Here Broad drew attention to three important facts. He held that there was substantial evidence for telepathic interaction between the unconscious of different minds, and Broad acknowledged that this evidence was not limited to contexts that involve phenomena allegedly suggestive of survival. He also took it that the unconscious is responsive to problems that persons consciously entertain and that it is willing to provide evidence for what the conscious mind wants to believe. Broad maintained that hypothesis T fits these psychodynamics exemplified outside the context of evidence for survival. Otherwise stated, the assumptions that hypothesis T requires (as an explanatory hypothesis) are independently supported. In this way, the appeal to extensive telepathy among the living relevantly fits with background knowledge, even if it is not directly supported by it (1960: 544–5).

Third, Broad considered his psychic factor/compound theory as the middle position between the hypothesis of personal survival and the living-agent telepathy hypothesis. He argued that while the compound theory was more complex than the rival epiphenomenal view of consciousness, it fits all the facts as well as does epiphenomenalism. Most significantly, though,

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[7] Whereas lowercase letters are used in general formulae to make generic references (to hypotheses h, evidence e, or background knowledge k), uppercase letters designate specific substitution instances. So I switch here to uppercase letters to indicate that I am referring to the survival hypothesis S (and its negation ~S), and also to specific information as background knowledge K. Similarly, below I use "E" to refer to the actual evidence adduced in favor of survival, as a substitution instance of generic references to evidence designated by "e."

he argued that the compound theory fits the correlational data concerning mental and physical states better than the instrumental theory of consciousness. Given that Broad linked the survival hypothesis to the instrumental theory of mind, Broad maintained that the psychic-factor hypothesis held a slight advantage in antecedent probability over the survival hypothesis (1960: 533–5).

So to sum up, Broad argued that $Pr(S \mid K) = Pr(\sim S \mid K)$; that is, the survival hypothesis is neither antecedently probable nor antecedently improbable. When it comes to contrasting the priors of the various explanatory competitors, Broad assigned the I-hypothesis the lowest prior probability and claimed that $Pr(S \mid K) > Pr(I \mid K)$, and similarly the priors of T and P are greater than the prior of I. With respect to the T-hypothesis, Broad argued that while initially it appears that $Pr(S \mid K) > Pr(T \mid K)$, in fact $Pr(S \mid K) < Pr(T \mid K)$, owing to the former requiring a slightly larger and hence more complex ontological inventory.[8] With respect to his preferred psychic-factor hypothesis P, Broad argued that P had an antecedent probability greater than hypothesis I and (at least) slightly greater than hypothesis S.[9] Broad was a little less clear with respect to the comparative priors of hypotheses P and T. He said each is theoretically possible and introduces the same level of conceptual complexity (1960: 546–7). Nonetheless, T would require positing a degree/kind of power for which, in Broad's view, there is no independent support, and Broad certainly seems to have thought that the psychic-factor hypothesis was not as entangled in similar difficulties that drive down antecedent probability, which explains why Broad favored P over T, even in cases in which they each equally explained the data (1962: 427–30). As we will see below, though, it is P's alleged superior explanatory power that led Broad to favor P over T as the most plausible of the three hypotheses.

7.1.3   The comparative likelihoods of the explanatory competitors

In Broad (1960), Broad focused mainly on the data of mediumship (only briefly mentioning reincarnation data), although in Broad (1962), he expanded the scope of the data to include also the data from haunting phenomena and ostensible past life memories (1962: 425–30). The argument

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[8] Arguably, relative to background knowledge of *contingent fact*, $Pr(S \mid K) = Pr(T \mid K)$, but since the intrinsic probability of T is slightly greater than S (because the former is more ontologically conservative), the antecedent probability of T is (at least slightly) greater than S.

[9] If the survival hypothesis is essentially linked with the instrumental theory of mind (as Broad seems to think), then clearly $Pr(P \mid K) > Pr(S \mid K)$, for Broad held that the instrumental theory is "difficult to reconcile with the normal facts," whereas the compound theory "is compatible with all the normal facts" (1960: 549–50). So while P and S may have the same intrinsic probability, P fits better with background knowledge of contingent fact than S. Cf. Broad (1962: 415–25).

then takes on a more distinctly cumulative nature (similar to Ducasse 1961, as we will see below). Where E refers to the relevant survival-evidence under consideration, the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis depends on the value assigned to $Pr(E \mid S \& K)/Pr(E \mid K)$. This value will be high if $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ is very high or if $Pr(E \mid K)$ is very low. The $Pr(E \mid K)$ will be very low just if $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$ x $Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$ is very low, and this will be the case just if the respective priors and likelihoods of hypotheses T and P (the two main contenders) are very low relative to S. However, given that hypotheses T and P each have a *slight* advantage over S in terms of prior probability, the crucial issue will turn on the comparative likelihoods of S, T, and P.[10] Here Broad concluded that P holds the likelihood advantage over S and T.

First, we can fairly easily dispense with "haunting phenomena" since on Broad's view, there is nothing in even the best cases that suggests anything "more than the persistence and the localization of something which carries traces of a small and superficial, but for some reason obsessive, fragment of the experiences had by a deceased human being within a certain limited region of space" (1962: 425–6). While both S and P would lead us to expect data that is indicative of personality in such cases, the clear implication is that S would lead us to expect a manifestation of *more* features of personality than what is found in the best cases, whereas given P we would have no such expectations. For this reason, the totality of evidence associated with the best instances of haunting phenomena (as Broad understood the data) is more to be expected given P than S, and arguably more to be expected given T than S. Second, according to Broad, mediumship provides the most interesting and important data, which ultimately allows us to discriminate between the S, T, and P hypotheses.

With respect to the T-hypothesis, Broad maintained that while telepathy among the living would account for much of the data associated with mediumistic communications, especially their veridical features, it could not plausibly account for *all* the relevant data associated with trance mediumship. Most importantly, it would not lead us to expect the mode in which such information is exhibited, namely through lifelike personalities that resemble the deceased. The T-hypothesis could explain such a phenomenon only if we substantially altered it to what is in effect a new "bulked up" or robust telepathy hypothesis T_R, which involves a model of telepathy for which there is apparently no independent evidence and no relevant analog in our experience (1962: 427). As a consequence, T_R would have a

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[10] Broad does not precisely quantify the slight advantage in prior probability, so it might be negligible. In fact, his argument that favors the P-hypothesis might be successful even if the priors are explicitly equalized. Below I will propose that his argument *is* successful if the priors of S, T, and P are equal to each other, regardless of their actual values.

considerably lower antecedent probability than T. So while T_R might have a very high likelihood, this would be purchased at the cost of a substantial lowering of T_R's prior probability, which would neutralize the effect of the high likelihood on the posterior probability of T_R. Recall Broad's earlier point that we should prefer hypotheses with higher antecedent probabilities to those with higher likelihoods. Recalcitrant data are more tolerable than very low antecedent probabilities.

Furthermore, the T-hypothesis is weakened further since it allegedly leads us to expect features of mediumship that we do not find. First, Broad argued that if the medium's knowledge of the deceased is derived simply from telepathic rapport with the sitters, we should expect mediumistic communications to be at least as concerned with a person's living friends as with deceased persons. But this is not the case (1960: 547). Broad held that this only slightly weakened the T-hypothesis, since it is not implausible to suppose that the motivation and expectation of the medium and sitter to contact the deceased (not the living) might play a selection role. Second, Broad drew attention to one of Hodgson's important claims about patterns in mediumship, namely that the same communicator provides accurate information to multiple sitters. That is to say, the communicators are effective (or not) regardless of which sitters are present. Broad agreed with Hodgson that this is not what we would expect given the T-hypothesis: after all, if the quantity and quality of information about the deceased depends on telepathic interactions between medium and sitters, we would expect that certain *sitters* would get lots of accurate information from most communicators, not that certain *communicators* would provide lots of accurate information to most sitters (1960: 549).[11]

Broad argued that these problems do not infect the P-hypothesis. Postulating the persistence of a psychic factor could explain the *majority* of the data from mediumship, at least as well as the S-hypothesis (1960: 539, 1962: 426–8). The P-hypothesis entails the persistence of something that would contain within it the information associated with the experiences of a formerly conscious agent. This would account for the veridical features of mediumship. Moreover, on the P-hypothesis, the psychic factor might persist for a time after death and temporarily unite with the mind of the medium. The result would be a temporary "mindkin" – the emergence of a mind with the same psychic factor as the formerly living person, which we

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[11] As I will discuss in Chapter 10 and Chapter 11, the reasoning here depends on a number of arguably unsubstantiated assumptions about how psi operates, including whether it is passive or active (i.e. involving telepathic invasion from another's thoughts), and whether it requires some degree of rapport between the agents or is otherwise guided by psychodynamic factors. I thank Stephen Braude for raising this crucial point with respect to Broad's treatment of the telepathy hypothesis.

might plausibly expect to have memories and traits of the deceased, together with some of the medium's own personality characteristics. This mindkin idea is significant because it entails that on the P-hypothesis, we should expect impersonation data as we find it in trance mediumship. We should also expect that the veridical features and impersonation data would be less than fully true to the original personality since it would be integrated with the medium's personality. Also, since the medium's knowledge of the deceased would derive from the psychic factor of the deceased (not telepathy with the living), which has temporarily joined itself to the medium, we should expect communicators to be concerned largely with the deceased not with the living. Finally, given the compound theory, we should not expect the quantity or quality of mediumistic communications to be linked with particular sitters or the medium-sitter pairing. So the P-hypothesis better accounts for important strands of data than does the T-hypothesis.

As in his argument concerning the superior likelihood of P over T, Broad also drew attention to evidence that would discriminate between P and S. S posits the persistence of a personal stream of consciousness with moderate to strong psychological continuity with its earlier antemortem state, in which case we should expect some of the evidence to exhibit the robust features of personality it actually does exhibit.[12] Broad thought the most significant data at this juncture would be data suggesting the continuation of a *mind* at times when no sittings were taking place. Since Broad understood a mind in this context to entail a center of conscious experience, including intentions or purposes, the salient kind of evidence would be evidence of communicators having a mental life independent of the sittings in which they appear. As Broad saw it, if P were correct, we would expect mediumistic communications to contain little information about the postmortem experiences of the formerly living person because there is no independent mind there to have such experiences or form various postmortem purposes. As Broad said, "It seems to me that we should have grounds for postulating the *survival* of a *mind*, and not the mere persistence of a psychic factor, if and only if the communications showed traces of an intention which persisted between the experiments and deliberately modified and controlled each in the light of those which had preceded it" (1960: 542). While Broad was willing to concede that such evidence is more than conceivable, he held that at present, there was no such evidence available. While the "cross-correspondence" phenomenon (discussed in §4.3.3) could in principle provide this, Broad argued that no actual case

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[12] Recall the discussion on Broad concerning his views on conceivable degrees of psychological survival in §2.2.1 and §2.3.2. While some of the evidence is compatible with highly attenuated survival hypotheses, some of it prima facie requires a stronger degree of psychological continuity.

adequately approximated the ideal (1960: 543). Even where communicators provide alleged information about the afterlife, their accounts correspond to what we would expect given the narrow parameters of Spiritualist beliefs (1960: 540).

With respect to then emerging data of alleged past-life memories, since Broad held that the phenomenon was analogous to mediumship, only being a more permanent form of possession, we can extrapolate the relevance of a psychic factor, which would join to a fetus or newly emerging organism in much the same way that it would be postulated to join a living medium (1962: 412–13). And this is what Broad explicitly noted: the data are "much more plausible when stated in terms of a persistent psychic factor, which is not a mind, than it is when stated in terms of a persistent mind which animates successively a series of organisms" (1960: 551).

7.2   Conclusions from Broad's analysis

The first thing to see is that where E is the relevant range of evidence and K the relevant background knowledge, the posterior probability of the P-hypothesis is, on Broad's view, greater than the posterior probability of the S-hypothesis:

PoP: $\Pr(P \mid E \,\&\, K) > \Pr(S \mid E \,\&\, K)$.

Given Bayes' theorem, this result follows straight forwardly from Broad's claims that:

(1) $\Pr(E \mid P \,\&\, K) > \Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$ [P's superior likelihood]

And

(2) $\Pr(P \mid K) > \Pr(S \mid K)$ [P's superior prior probability]

Since the posterior probability of a hypothesis is a function of its explanatory power and prior probability, if hypothesis h_1 has greater explanatory power and greater prior probability than h_2, then h_1 has a greater posterior probability than h_2. However, PoP would also follow if we adjusted (2) by equalizing the priors of P and S because it follows from Bayes' theorem that if the priors of two hypotheses are equal, then the hypothesis that has the superior likelihood will be the hypothesis with the greater posterior probability.

If $\Pr(h_1 \mid k) = \Pr(h_2 \mid k)$, then $\Pr(h_1 \mid e \,\&\, k) > \Pr(h_2 \mid e \,\&\, k)$ if and only if $\Pr(e \mid h_1 \,\&\, k) > \Pr(e \mid h_2 \,\&\, k)$.

The intuitive force of this implication of Bayes' theorem should be apparent in any number of scenarios. If before considering the evidence at the scene of a bank robbery, it is equally probable that John or Mark robbed the bank, then it will be more probable that Mark committed robbery given the evidence at the scene of the robbery if and only if the evidence is more probable if Mark robbed the bank than if John robbed the bank. Hence, if before considering any of the evidence for survival, the S-hypothesis and the P-hypothesis are equally probable, then the probability of the P-hypothesis will be greater when the evidence is considered if and only if the evidence is more to be expected given the P-hypothesis than the S-hypothesis. Hence, even if

2*. Pr(P | K) = Pr(S | K) [equalized prior probability]

PoP may be derived using Bayes' theorem if (1) is true.

One important point here is that Broad had conceded that for a relevant subset E* of E, it might be the case that Pr(E* | P & K) = Pr(E* | S & K) or even that Pr(E* | P & K) < Pr(E* | S & K). However, Broad (rightly) assumed the principle of total evidence, which means that the relevant range of evidence needs to be the broadest range of evidence bearing on the hypotheses in question. As explained above, Broad thought that it was highly significant that many instances of mediumship did not provide data which would be expected if the source of the communications were the full surviving personality of the formerly living person, but the fragmentary and often confused nature of the communications is what we would expect given the P-hypothesis.

Second, granting that the P-hypothesis has a greater conditional probability on the evidence than does S, might it not still be the case that the S-hypothesis has a probability greater than .5 or ½ and so be more probable than not? After all, Pr(P | E & K) > Pr(S | E & K) is compatible with the Pr(S | E & K) exceeding the threshold value of ½. The possibility that Pr(S | E & K) > ½, even if Pr(P | E & K) > Pr(S | E & K), might even be regarded as plausible since Broad conceded that the Pr(S | K) = .5. All that would be required here would be for E to raise this initial probability. In other words, if we assign .5 to the prior of S, all we need to determine is whether Pr(S | E & K) > Pr(S | K).

It follows from Bayes' theorem that Pr(h | e & k) > Pr(h | k) if and only if Pr(e | h & k) > Pr(e | k). As indicated above in connection with the discussion on Pr(e | k), the prior probability of the evidence depends on how probable the evidence would be if the hypothesis were false. So with the appropriate substitution (in boldface), we have Pr(h | e & k) > Pr(h | k) if and only if Pr(e | h & k) > **Pr(e | ~h & k).** As already noted, the value of Pr(e | ~h & k) x Pr(~h | k) depends on the likelihoods and priors of alternative hypotheses. The lower these values, the lower the value of Pr(e | ~h & k), and a low value for Pr(e | ~h & k) relative to Pr(e | h & k) redounds to

the credit of the posterior probability of h. So with reference to survival, the relevant question is whether the evidence is more likely to occur if survival is true than if any of the alternative hypotheses (with at least equal priors) is true. But given the likelihood that Broad assigned to P (relative to S), the answer is no. In Broad's view, it is *not* the case that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$, because the evidence (in its totality) is actually more to expected given the P-hypothesis. P is a hypothesis with at least as much prior probability as S, but since $Pr(E \mid P \& K) > Pr(E \mid S \& K)$, it is *not* the case that $Pr(S \mid E \& K) > Pr(S \mid K)$. So the survival hypothesis is not more probable than not.[13]

The discussion should also make it clear why Broad also thought that the $Pr(P \mid E \& K) > Pr(T \mid E \& K)$. "E" includes particular and important data (as explained above) that are not to be expected given T but are to be expected given P. Or, more modestly, there are data *more* to be expected given P than T. Given this, and given that there are no data to be expected given T that are not to be expected given P, P has the superior likelihood over the evidence as a whole. So even if the priors of P and T are equal, the posterior probability of P will be greater than T. Second, there are also data – for example, the dramatic personation data – that would be expected only by adopting a "bulked up" adjusted telepathy hypothesis T_R whose prior probability is considerably lower than T. Now it is a further consequence of Bayes' theorem that if two hypotheses h_1 and h_2 have equal likelihoods, the hypothesis with the greater prior probability will have the greater posterior probability. So it will be crucial that if adjustments to a hypothesis are made to cover otherwise recalcitrant data, the adjustments must not come at the cost of driving down the prior probability below the prior probability of the nearest explanatory competitor.

Broad's Bayesian analysis of the empirical case for survival illuminates a few important conceptual issues. First, if the prior probability of the survival hypothesis and its competitors are equal or approximately so, everything rides on the respective explanatory power of the competing hypotheses, specifically the comparative likelihoods assigned to them. Second, even if the prior probability of the survival hypothesis is generously assigned a value of ½ (neither probable nor improbable), the evidence will fail to raise the probability above this threshold value if the totality of the evidence is at least equally to be expected given some rival hypothesis. Third, the central plank of Broad's argument is his contention that the P-hypothesis, as a rival

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[13] Broad's argument succeeds even given the weaker claim that the evidence is just as probable on the P-hypothesis as on the S-hypothesis because it will still *not* be the case that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$. If the priors and likelihoods of S and P are same, then Bayes' theorem tells us that the posterior probability of S will not be greater than ½ and so *not* more probable than not. This is the argument proposed by E.R. Dodds and examined in §7.3.

to the survival hypothesis, has a likelihood that is greater than the likelihood of the survival hypothesis. More specifically, it is Broad's claims that there is an essential datum more to be expected given the P-hypothesis than the S-hypothesis, and there are no essential data we would not expect given the P-hypothesis.

Finally, Broad's critique of the empirical case for survival illuminates at least two kinds of Bayesian explanatory arguments for survival (BEA). If E = the relevant evidence, S = the hypothesis of personal survival, and K = relevant background knowledge, then a *strongly optimistic* (SO) Bayesian survivalist could try to argue that:

(S1) Pr(S | K) = ½ [neutral prior probability for S]
(S2) Pr(E | S & K) ≈ 1 [high likelihood for S]
(S3) Pr(E | ~S & K) ≈ 0 [low likelihood for ~S]

Therefore:

(S4) Pr(S | E & K) = very high [S is very probable]

If the survival hypothesis is antecedently neither probable nor improbable, the evidence is very much to be expected if the survival hypothesis is true, and the evidence is very much not to be expected if the survival hypothesis is false, then the survival hypothesis is very probable given our evidence and background knowledge. The S-hypothesis has a very high posterior probability. If high posterior probabilities are sufficient for rational acceptance, then it would be rational to accept the S-hypothesis (and perhaps irrational not to accept it). If Broad's reasoning is cogent, then (S2) and (S3) are false, and therefore we lose our reasons for supposing that (S4) is true.

By contrast, a *moderately optimistic* (MO) Bayesian survivalist could argue:

(S5) Pr(S | K) = ½ [neutral prior probability for S]
(S6) Pr(E | S & K) > Pr(E | ~S & K) [higher likelihood for S than for ~S]

Therefore:

(S7) Pr(S | E & K) > ½ [S is more probable than not]

If the survival hypothesis is antecedently neither probable nor improbable but the evidence is more to be expected if the survival hypothesis is true than if it is false, then the survival hypothesis is more probable than not given our evidence and background knowledge. The S-hypothesis is more probable than not. If high posterior probabilities are sufficient for rational acceptance, then it would be rational to accept the S-hypothesis (and perhaps irrational not to accept it). Broad argues that (S6) is false and therefore we lose our reasons for supposing that (S7) is true.

7.3   E.R. Dodds's critique of the empirical argument for survival

In Dodds's evaluation of the case for survival (1934), he focused exclusively on the data from mediumship. Like Broad, Dodds regarded the data from mediumship as the strongest available evidence for survival, but he also shared Broad's skepticism about the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis relative to the evidence. Whereas Broad made his case based solely on considerations drawn from the relevant likelihoods, Dodds thought the survival hypothesis was at a disadvantage with respect to its prior probability and likelihood (at least with reference to one explanatory competitor). So Dodds concluded that the survival hypothesis was an antecedently improbable hypothesis that failed to provide the best explanation of the data.

Like Broad, Dodds compared the survival hypothesis to counter-explanations in terms of (P) the psychic factor, (T) telepathy among the living, and (I) the agency of impersonating non-human spirits. However, Dodds rejected Broad's P-hypothesis on explanatory grounds. In the better cases of mediumship, he argued, communicators frequently exhibit knowledge of events that have taken place on earth in the lives of family and friends since their death and at times other than when the sitting is taking place. This is not to be expected given Broad's P-hypothesis, since on that hypothesis, there is no surviving mind existing independently of the sitting and capable of acquiring knowledge of events taking place outside the time of the sitting (Dodds 1934: 155). So the P-hypothesis would have to be supplemented with the T-hypothesis, but if the latter can cover *all* the relevant data, the P-hypothesis is superfluous. Dodds attempted to show that the T-hypothesis succeeded in this respect. More precisely, on Dodds's view, the T-hypothesis (at least suitably modified) is the most antecedently probable hypothesis that adequately explains the largest range of the relevant data.

7.3.1   Antecedent probability, likelihoods, and discriminative evidence

With respect to antecedent probability, Dodds and Broad were in agreement that there were no positive grounds that made the survival hypothesis antecedently probable. However, unlike Broad, Dodds argued that, although survival is not logically or empirically impossible, there were facts that made it antecedently *improbable* (1934: 151–2). First, Dodds thought that the absence of evidence for survival was significant. Although he conceded that Broad was correct that the absence of evidence for survival does not constitute evidence against the survival hypothesis per se, Dodds explained that this is true of only a survival hypothesis that does not assume that the deceased are willing and able to communicate with the living. However, the empirical case for survival depends on Spiritualist assumptions that the dead in fact *do* have this interest and ability, and they do often exercise

it. In the light of this, he argued, we should expect the world to exhibit more perspicuous evidence of survival. Second, he appealed to the apparent dependence of consciousness on a functioning brain, as suggested, for example, by the strong correlation between aging and the degeneration of cognitive functioning (1934: 153–4). Dodds took it that this fact, while not logically incompatible with survival, did count against survival. So on Dodds's view, $Pr(S \mid K) < \frac{1}{2}$, and therefore Dodds rejected the premise that $Pr(S \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$, found in both MO-BEA and SO-BEA.

With respect to the antecedent probability of rival hypotheses, Dodds believed that the T-hypothesis held the advantage since there was in his view conclusive independent evidence for telepathy and substantial evidence for clairvoyance, and – as Broad maintained – this evidence for ESP was not restricted to situations allegedly suggestive of survival (1934: 156–9). So unlike the S-hypothesis and I-hypothesis, the T-hypothesis does not involve postulating beings or powers not antecedently known to exist or for which there is significant contrary evidence. So $Pr(T \mid K) > Pr(S \mid K)$, and $Pr(T \mid K) > Pr(I \mid K)$. "This being so," Dodds said, "an elementary canon of scientific method requires me to give the preference to the telepathic theory, provided that it adequately covers the phenomena to be explained" (1934: 156). In other words, the crucial question concerns the likelihood of the T-hypothesis. As explained in §7.4.1, Bayes' theorem tells us that if the prior probability of a hypothesis h_1 is greater than the prior probability of h_2, the posterior probability of h_1 will be greater than the posterior probability of h_2 even if their likelihoods are equal. So "adequately" covering the evidence would not necessarily require that the T-hypothesis have a greater likelihood than the S-hypothesis. Dodds understood this point, for he concluded, "I must grant that the telepathic hypothesis covers the evidence as well on the whole as any other; and since it is the minimum hypothesis which does so, it commands my provisional acceptance. Until this conclusion is upset, I must regard survival as unproved" (1934: 170).

To more precisely state Dodds's argument, let E = the conjunction of E_{MED} (e7-e18 in §4.6) and Hodgson's expanded set E_{HE} (in §6.1.1). By "unproved" we should understand Dodds as minimally claiming that the survivalist has failed to show that $Pr(S \mid E \ \& \ K) > \frac{1}{2}$. After all, on Dodds's view, there are overriding reasons for supposing that $Pr(S \mid K) < \frac{1}{2}$ (the S-hypothesis has a low antecedent probability) and $Pr(E \mid T \ \& \ K) = Pr(E \mid S \ \& \ K)$; that is, the total evidence is no more expected given the S-hypothesis than given the T-hypothesis (i.e. the T-hypothesis and S-hypothesis have equal likelihoods). It follows from the latter point that premise (S6) in the MO-BEA is false, and so we cannot accept the conclusion of MO-BEA that the survival hypothesis is more probable than not. A fortiori, we cannot reasonably accept both (S2) and (S3) of SO-BEA, and so we cannot conclude that the survival hypothesis is highly probable.

As we saw in Chapter 6, psychical researchers from the beginning tried to navigate the thorny territory of likelihoods, and so they placed considerable weight on locating evidence that was more to be expected given one proposed hypothesis than the main alternative. They were looking for what we might call "discriminative evidence" – evidence that would help discriminate between the various explanatory competitors by favoring one over the others. Of course, the challenge this presents is apparent given that some strands of evidence may discriminatively favor one hypothesis, while other strands discriminatively favor a different hypothesis. So the problematic aspect of discriminative evidence really concerns, ceteris paribus, judgments about the evidence as a whole because this requires some sort of (quantitative and/or qualitative) weighting of different strands of discriminative evidence.[14] Dodds's treatment is instructive at this juncture.

7.3.2 Discriminative evidence apparently favoring the survival hypothesis

When we look into the details of Dodds's argument, the core of his argument comes down to a defense of the T-hypothesis against the survivalist charge that it does not cover some crucial strands of data as well as does the survival hypothesis. Survivalists typically claimed that the T-hypothesis had a lower likelihood than the survival hypothesis in relation to four data: (i) communicators claim to be deceased persons, (ii) trance mediums convey accurate information about the deceased through a convincing lifelike personation of the deceased, (iii) the quantity and quality of the material conveyed varies with the communicators and not the sitters, and (iv) there is evidence of intentional design in the data associated with the cross-correspondences. Survivalists contended that (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) are not what we would expect given the T-hypothesis, but they are precisely what we would expect given the S-hypothesis. Therefore, either $\Pr(E \mid S \& K) > \Pr(E \mid T \& K)$ or – more strongly – $\Pr(E \mid S \& K) \gg \Pr(E \mid T \& K)$.

Now Dodds's main goal was to show that the total evidence (from mediumship) is at least no more surprising if survival is true than if it is false. That

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[14] A weighting procedure would require that we partition the total evidence set into three strands: strands of evidence equally expected between T and S, strands more to be expected given T than S (hence strands favoring T), and strands more to be expected given S than T (hence strands favoring S). If the weighting were merely quantitative, we should need to determine only whether more of the total evidence discriminatively favored either S or T. If not, their likelihoods would be equal. The issue is more complicated if we suppose that a mere quantitative analysis is insufficient. After all, there may be significant qualitative considerations when comparing discriminative evidence. Some strands of discriminative evidence may be more important than are others. And one determinant here might be the extent of modifications one must make to an alternative hypothesis for *it* to accommodate the same prima facie discriminative evidence.

is, Pr(E | ~S & K) is at least equal to Pr(E | S & K) since there is at least one competing hypothesis (with a comparable if not superior prior probability) that renders the evidence at least as probable as does the survival hypothesis. But he was aware that this could not be done simply by arguing that Pr(E | S & K) = Pr(E | T & K). His treatment of standard survivalist objections to the T-hypothesis illuminates his more subtle "back door" approach to dismantling the survivalist argument.

In response to the argument from (i) and (ii), Dodds argued that the T-hypothesis must be appropriately supplemented with assumptions supported by general psychology concerning motivational dynamics, the structure and processes of the unconscious, and dissociative phenomena (1934: 157, 161–2). In other words, the survivalist makes a mistake in the assessment of likelihood by treating the T-hypothesis as something of a stripped down appeal to living-agent telepathy. Dodds suggested that this is a mistake since the larger psychological territory in which telepathy and clairvoyance operate must inform our theorizing about mediumistic phenomena, especially since the broader psychological territory provides analogs for our conjectures concerning the psychology of mediumship. Outside the context of survival debate, for example, there are cases of extreme psychological dissociation resulting in autonomous secondary personalities akin to the trance personalities of mediums. There is also evidence that the dramatizing powers of the human mind, by no means limited to full-blown alter personalities, are shaped by "wish fulfillment," or more broadly speaking motivational dynamics in which conscious or unconscious needs or interests play a decisive role (1934: 157). In other words, Dodds argued that, given our background knowledge, we may suppose that the medium's unconscious mind "dramatizes" in accordance with a strong though perhaps unconscious interest or need to produce the appearance of survival in the context of the sitting and the corresponding interests of the medium and sitters. Consequently, it is not the simple hypothesis of telepathy that must be considered but rather a *robust* telepathy hypothesis – a telepathy hypothesis supplemented with added assumptions. So Dodds explicitly develops the robust telepathy hypothesis T_R suggested but dismissed earlier by Broad.

Now according to (iii), the quantity and quality of information given in mediumship "varied not with changes of sitter but with changes of communicator – which is contrary to what we should expect on the telepathic hypothesis" (1934: 165). Dodds responded that only a few communicators plausibly illustrate this pattern, so (iii) is an unwarranted generalization. Moreover, the generalization is questionable since "most sitters always evoke the same communicator, and most communicators always manifest themselves in response to the appeal of the same sitter or group of closely associated sitters" (1934: 166). Drayton Thomas tried to defend Hodgson's thesis by showing that in proxy experiments in which Thomas was the only sitter present results varied considerably over sittings that involved

24 different communicators. However, Dodds noted that Thomas did not know the majority of facts disclosed by the medium in these sittings, so if telepathy were the source, it would have to have been telepathy with the relatives of the various communicators. But then we cannot easily attribute variations in the quantity and quality of information to changes in the communicators themselves. As Dodds said, "when the communicator changes, the possible telepathic sources of relevant information change too, and variations in the veridicality of the communications can be equally well ascribed to the variation of either factor" (1934: 166). Finally, Dodds thought we were unwarranted to specify anything about conditions favorable to efficacious telepathic interaction, but (iii) required that we know this.

In response to (iv), Dodds argued that the patterns of coherence found within cross-correspondences do not entail design (1934: 167–8). Furthermore, as Broad had earlier observed, even if we were forced to concede that the data of the cross-correspondences entail design, we cannot ipso facto suppose that the design is due to the conscious intentions of the deceased who have survived death. We might, for example, attribute the phenomena to the unconscious mind of one of the living automatists. For example, it is widely known that Mrs. Verrall, so central to the cross-correspondence phenomena, had the classical education and other background knowledge that would be required of any plausible source of the data. Dodds argued that we are simply not warranted to reject the supposition that Mrs. Verrall was the origin of the more impressive cross-correspondences.

7.3.3 "Bulking up" hypotheses and antecedent probabilities

So Dodds's strategy for defeating the survivalist contention that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid T \& K)$ was in a certain sense to accept this verdict with reference to (i), (ii), and (iv) but to argue that the likelihood was misleading in the larger context of the argument for survival. $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid T \& K)$ is compatible with $Pr(E \mid T_R \& K) > Pr(E \mid S \& K)$, where T_R = a robust telepathy hypothesis that conjoins the appeal to telepathy with a few psychodynamic assumptions postulated to obtain in the mediumistic setting. This "bulking up" of the telepathy hypothesis (by adding assumptions) affects the likelihoods since even if hypothesis h_1 does not lead us to expect some evidence e, or h_2 better leads us to expect e, $h_1 + \alpha$ (some further assumption) might very well lead us to expect e and $h_1 + \alpha$ might better lead us to expect e than does h_2 – a point I will explore in detail in Chapter 9. Of course, as Dodds also acknowledged, T_R must also include an assumption that telepathy and/or clairvoyance is of a very extensive sort (more extensive than many psychical researchers were willing to grant), allowing the medium to access the contents of the unconscious, the minds of persons not present at a sitting, and persons altogether unknown to the medium (1934: 160–1). So Dodds was explicit that the only kind of telepathy hypothesis that will have

the same likelihood as the S-hypothesis is a bulked-up or robust telepathy hypothesis T_R.

Now, as the subsequent survivalist literature makes clear (to be discussed beginning in Chapter 8), Dodds's "bulking up" procedure to equalize likelihoods raises a suspicion among survivalists that his critique of the S-hypothesis involves something of a logical sleight of hand. Might we not grant Dodds's claim that the T_R-hypothesis leads us to expect the data at least as well as the S-hypothesis but to contend that this equalizing of likelihoods has been purchased at the cost of considerable complexity and dependence on assumptions for which there is no independent support? If so, it would appear that Dodds may have achieved something of a hollow victory. The antecedent probability of the T_R-hypothesis is plausibly going to be lower, perhaps substantially lower, than the antecedent probability of the original T-hypothesis. Since one of the claimed virtues of Dodds's original appeal to telepathy was its alleged superior antecedent probability, substituting the T_R-hypothesis for the T-hypothesis may result in no appreciable prior probability advantage over the S-hypothesis. Is not the kind of combined extensive telepathy and highly refined dramatizing powers of the medium's mind that are required by Dodds's argument no less fantastic than the supposition of personal survival itself? The survivalist objection turns the Bayesian tables on the advocate of the telepathic hypothesis by arguing that while the antecedent probability of the T-hypothesis may be high, the antecedent probability of the T_R-hypothesis is much lower than T-hypothesis and much lower even than the S-hypothesis.

To a certain extent, Dodds anticipated this kind of objection, and his argument at this juncture is in my view the most significant contribution that he makes to the entire empirical survival debate. As a preliminary, the survivalist objection might be a premature popping of the celebratory cork. Consider Dodds's direct response to having allegedly to postulate a very extensive and highly refined psychic functioning. Dodds argued that such an expansion or enlargement of the scope or potency of psychic functioning was not altogether lacking in independent support, contrary to survivalist protestations (1934: 160–1). So this particular bulking up of the telepathy hypothesis amounts to more than an addition of a "bare hypothesis" (1934: 161). Furthermore, with respect to bulking up the telepathy hypothesis by adding the psychological assumptions discussed above, Dodds thought, as already noted, that such assumptions received indirect support from sufficiently analogous phenomena from general psychology outside the context of mediumistic phenomena, or at least he thought that these assumptions were not improbable given such background knowledge. So they cannot be considered ad hoc in nature.

Also, Dodds was willing to bulk up the telepathy hypothesis with further psychological assumptions to cover more fine-grained descriptions of the data. It would appear that in addition to having to postulate very extensive

psychic functioning, the telepathy hypothesis requires postulating that this extensive telepathy operates in a hitherto apparently unexemplified manner, with the medium's unconscious mind selecting from the unconscious mind of some agent(s) just those pieces of information required for the building up of the lifelike trance persona (1934: 163). Here Dodds claimed that it is not necessary to suppose that the subconscious mind of the medium operates in this manner, rummaging through the mind of some assumed agent(s) to acquire just the right information. Dodds proposed a different conjecture. He suggested that the material integrated in a trance persona enters or arises in the medium's unconscious in a very natural or spontaneous manner when rapport is established between the medium and some assumed agent(s). What determines the assimilation of the content in the medium's mind is "the relative emotive force of the agent's various complexes, or by the fact that the material belongs to an associative complex some elements of which are already in the medium's mind" (1934: 163).[15] The idea here is that in the agent's mind there is already present an ordering or clustering of information with rich emotional charge relevant to the themes invoked by the mediumistic sitting.

Dodds further explained:

> I am free to imagine, in the first place, that the particular complex of feelings and images which underlies a particular trance personality attracts to itself only such elements of the newly acquired material as have some associative relevance to its existing content; and secondly, that the "control" who sits in the gateway of trance…operates on occasion, like the Freudian "censor", to prevent the emergence of irrelevant or disturbing matter which might interrupt the illusion and break the continuity of the medium's dream. (Dodds 1934: 163)

Now concerning the assumptions involved in this more elaborate psychological model invoked to account for details of the trance persona, Dodds acknowledged that they are conjectures or guesses (1934: 163). While they are consistent with a depth psychological model, he wrote: "I claim no more for them than that they cover the observed facts as well as any other hypothesis, and better in one important respect than the hypothesis of [spirit] possession [of the medium]. The degree of relevance and continuity to be observed in most trance communications is, to say the least, extremely limited" (1934: 163). It is clear that Dodds's interest was merely to propose assumptions consistent with what he took to be relevant background

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[15] By "complexes" Dodds means, in the language of Freudian and Jungian depth psychology, clusters of feeling-toned associations around a common theme, which shape unconscious motivations behind behavior.

knowledge but that result in the T_R-hypothesis having a likelihood equal to the S-hypothesis.

However, at this juncture, Dodds's most important insight comes not from what he said about the justification of the assumptions involved in the T_R-hypothesis but from what he observed concerning the S-hypothesis, and his observation bears crucially on the comparative evaluation of the T_R-hypothesis and the S-hypothesis. In response to the survivalist objection that that the S-hypothesis is more simple than the T_R-hypothesis (and therefore has a greater antecedent probability), Dodds showed that the apparent simplicity of the S-hypothesis dissolves upon closer scrutiny because this hypothesis, if it is to generate any well-defined likelihoods (or have predictive power), will – like the appeal to living-agent telepathy – require the adoption of various auxiliary assumptions. Dodds lists the following such assumptions:

(1) that many, if not all, human personalities survive bodily death;
(2) that they retain an accurate memory of many details in their past lives;
(3) that they have a detailed awareness of many physical events that occurred among the living since their death;
(4) that they have in some cases access to the unspoken thoughts of the living;
(5) that they can at times communicate with the living, either by direct use of the organism of a medium or by telepathically influencing the medium's unconscious mind;
(6) that the unspoken wish of a living mind is in some cases sufficient to initiate this relationship between a particular deceased person and a particular medium. (1934: 169–70)

Dodds regarded these as the "minimum" assumptions that will "cover" the data, meaning that they will generate well-defined likelihoods, and these assumptions are not derivable from the notion of personal survival itself. For example, if persons survive death, Dodds claimed, there is no positive probability that they will remember the details of their antemortem life. In other words, where M = remembering the details of one's antemortem existence, $Pr(M \mid S) \leq Pr(\sim M \mid S)$, and presumably $Pr(A_n \mid S) \leq Pr(\sim A_n \mid S)$ for each assumption A_n conjoined to S. So the assumptions are independent of the S-hypothesis, but without them the S-hypothesis does not lead us to expect the relevant data, even most generally described. Consequently, Dodds said the survival hypothesis was "hydraheaded," in effect "not one hypothesis at all, but a series of hypotheses" (1934: 170).

And here we see another way in which the survivalist argument is problematic, though Dodds did not exploit the point with sufficient clarity. There is no well-defined likelihood such that we can even speak of the $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ being greater than, less than, or equal to the likelihood of some other hypothesis. Just as the telepathy hypothesis has no well-defined likelihood

vis-à-vis the relevant evidence independent of additional assumptions, which generate a robust telepathy hypothesis, the same is true of the survival hypothesis. So Dodds's most interesting insight is the more subtle one in his discussion: the survival hypothesis has a well-defined likelihood only if it is a *robust* survival hypothesis, S_R. The simple supposition of a surviving mind, personality, or self must be supplemented with a range of additional assumptions of the sort that Dodds identified. And this supplementation, as I will argue in subsequent chapters, places the survivalist in a particularly difficult position. The difficulty is not merely that the required added assumptions will drive down the prior probability of the survival hypothesis, though this is true enough. The more formidable challenge is that it will be necessary for the survivalist to locate an appropriate epistemic principle that sanctions his reliance on a healthy stock of assumptions, without which the survival hypothesis has no predictive value and remains empirically untestable, while at the same time not sanctioning a similar borrowing of assumptions that result in robust explanatory competitors that equally "cover" the data.

7.4   The skeptical Bayesian evaluation of the survival hypothesis

Broad and Dodds provide two early critical evaluations of the explanatory argument for survival construed as a Bayesian argument. As we have seen, unlike MEA of Chapter 6, "Bayesian explanatory arguments" (BEA) conclude with judgments regarding the net plausibility or posterior probability of the survival hypothesis based on a joint consideration of likelihoods and prior probability. While SEA of Chapter 6 highlighted the importance of introducing extra plausibility factors, BEA permits these factors to be more carefully measured as determinants of prior probability, which is then combined with likelihoods via Bayes' theorem to yield precise judgments of posterior probability, concluding either that the survival hypothesis is very probable (SO-BEA) or simply more probable than not (MO-BEA).

Broad and Dodds provide an important context for exploring the logical architecture of BEA, and they equally provide two important illustrations of the skeptical engagement with the survival hypothesis and BEA. They each rejected the conclusion of MO-BEA, and a fortiori, they rejected the conclusion of SO-BEA. Their reason for not assigning a favorable posterior probability to the survival hypothesis derives from their rejection of at least one of the essential premises in BEA. While Broad was willing to accept the first premise of both MO-BEA and SO-BEA that assigned a neutral prior probability to the survival hypothesis, Dodds was not so inclined. But both Broad and Dodds agreed that the survival hypothesis did not enjoy a favorable likelihood, since there was at least one alternative hypothesis (with at least as much prior probability) that led us to expect the total evidence at least

as well the survival hypothesis. Of course, Broad and Dodds disagreed on which hypothesis counts as the best candidate for the nearest competitor, Broad preferring (P) the psychic factor hypothesis and Dodds favoring (T) the living-agent telepathy hypothesis (of course, suitably modified as T_R). But their skepticism converges on BEA depending on at least one premise that is rationally unacceptable.

7.4.1   BEA defeated by likelihood parity

As explained throughout the chapter, the problem identified by Broad and Dodds for the survivalist argument can best be appreciated when we equalize the prior probabilities of the competitors. In that case, the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis depends solely on its explanatory power, given by the ratio Pr(E | S & K)/Pr(E | K). And Pr(E | K) – the prior probability of the evidence – is highly significant because as the Pr(E | K) increases, the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis decreases. So how probable is the evidence, whether or not the survival hypothesis is true? Pr(E | K) depends on Pr(E | ~S & K) x Pr(~S | K), where this in turn equals the sum of the prior probabilities of all competing hypotheses multiplied by their individual likelihoods. If the prior of S and the competitors are equalized, we need only consider the likelihood of S and the competitors. Thus, it is no small matter if there is some competing hypothesis that confers the same probability on the evidence, because in that case (assuming equalized priors), it will be impossible for the posterior probability of the S-hypothesis to be greater than ½.

To unpack what we might call the "likelihood parity argument," return to Bayes' theorem, this time stated with the appropriate "survival hypothesis" substitutions of the general formula. Where S = the survival hypothesis, E = the total evidence set, and K = the relevant background knowledge, we get:

$$\Pr\left(S \mid E \ \& \ K\right) = \frac{\Pr\left(E \mid S \ \& \ K\right) \times \Pr\left(S \mid K\right)}{\Pr\left(E \mid K\right)}$$

As already explained, Pr(E | K) is the sum of two probabilities, each of which is the product of a likelihood-prior pair. So the denominator becomes:

Pr(E | S & K) x Pr(S | K) + Pr(E | ~S & K) x Pr(~S | K)

Now if we suppose that S is neither antecedently probable nor improbable (i.e. neutralize S's prior), this translates into the assignment of the value .5 (or ½) for the prior of S and ~S. So if we insert this value for the priors in the equation, we get: [Pr(E | S & K) x .5] + [Pr(E | ~S & K) x .5]. Now suppose we equalize the likelihoods in the right and left conjuncts, say by arbitrarily

assigning the value of .8 to them: Pr(E | K) = (.8 x .5) + (.8 x .5), which = .40 + .40, which = .80. We can then fill out each part of Bayes' theorem with appropriate values:

$$\Pr(S \mid E \,\&\, K) = \frac{.8 \times .5 \,(=.40)}{.80}$$

And so:

$$\Pr(S \mid E \,\&\, K) = \tfrac{1}{2}$$

The import of the exercise in assigning numerical values is simply to illustrate how priors and likelihoods interface to generate a posterior probability in Bayes' theorem. It illustrates that if Pr(S | K) = Pr(~S | K) (equalized priors) and Pr(E | S & K) = Pr(E | ~S & K) (equalized likelihoods), then the posterior probability of S is ½, and so S is not more probable than not. But does Pr(E | S & K) = Pr(E | ~S & K)? As already indicated, ~S is a catchall for all alternative hypotheses (incompatible with S), and so Pr(E | ~S & K) x Pr(~S | K) = the sum of the priors of all alternative hypotheses multiplied by their corresponding likelihoods. Now Broad and Dodds each noted three alternative explanations of the evidence: P, I, and T. The crucial point is that at least one of these alternatives, on their view, has a prior and likelihood at least equal to S. This automatically sets an *upper limit* on the posterior probability of S, regardless of the prior probability and likelihoods of the other alternatives. For as long as just *one* alternative hypothesis has a prior and likelihood equal to the survival hypothesis, the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis cannot be higher than ½. Hence, it is crucial to a favorable posterior probability for the survival hypothesis that there be no alternative hypothesis with a prior and likelihood equal to the prior and likelihood of the survival hypothesis. This explains the survivalist strategy of trying to "rule out" explanatory competitors by showing that their priors or likelihoods (or both) are lower than the prior and likelihood of the survival hypothesis. It is a concession to the intuitions behind Bayes' theorem. If the priors and likelihoods of the survival hypothesis and one alternative hypothesis are equalized, BEA fails.

Of course, Broad argued that the P-hypothesis had a superior likelihood to the survival hypothesis (and an equal prior) and Dodds argued that the T-hypothesis had a superior prior to the survival hypothesis (and an equal likelihood). If either of their points is correct, then the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis will be lower (perhaps significantly lower) than ½. What the parity argument shows is that even if their respective claims about likelihoods and priors are exaggerated, BEA may still be in trouble, in its modest form (MO-BEA) and especially in its strong form (SO-BEA). In

fact, the above analysis makes it clear just what a tall order it is to argue that the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis is very high. *All* alternative hypotheses would have to have very low priors and likelihoods relative to the survival hypothesis.

7.4.2 Dodds's analysis and the restatement of BEA

In the light of the issues raised by the parity considerations above, the "bulking up" of hypotheses noted by Dodds is extremely significant, and this will factor largely in subsequent chapters. Here I note only what I have already said constitutes Dodds's most significant insight: likelihoods such as $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid T \& K)$ are misleading because neither S nor T as such generate well-defined likelihoods. Technically, it follows from Dodds's analysis that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) \approx 0$, and hence premise (S2) in SO-BEA is false. It also follows that premise (S6) in MO-BEA is false. The only reason why survivalists might think otherwise is that they have unwittingly assumed a robust survival hypothesis.

Dodds's analysis then suggests the need to reformulate both versions of BEA with "bulking up" taken into account. Where S_R = simple supposition of survival S + auxiliary assumptions A, we might reformulate SO-BEA as:

(S8) $Pr(S_R \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$ [neutral prior probability for S_R]
(S9) $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) \approx 1$ [high likelihood for S_R]
(S10) $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K) \approx 0$ [low likelihood for ${\sim}S_R$]

Therefore:

(S11) $Pr(S \mid E \& K)$ = very high [S is very probable]

And MO-BEA might be stated as:

(S12) $Pr(S_R \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$ [neutral prior probability for S_R]
(S13) $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) > Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ [higher likelihood for S_R than for ${\sim}S_R$]

Therefore:

(S14) $Pr(S \mid E \& K) > \frac{1}{2}$ [S is more probable than not]

With respect to (S10) and (S13), likelihoods that involve the catchall ${\sim}S_R$ will require considering alternative hypotheses in forms robust enough to generate well-defined likelihoods, and consequently, we will need to consider the prior probabilities of alternative hypotheses in their robust forms. I will subsequently explore the process and extent of "bulking up" hypotheses, which Dodds lightly touched on, and consider the extent to which they pose a fundamental challenge to empirical arguments for survival in their diverse forms.

8

Bayesian Defenses of the Survival Hypothesis

In the prior chapter, I explored two foundational Bayesian analyses of the empirical case for survival based largely on the data of mediumship. Broad and Dodds each argued that the posterior probability of the hypothesis of personal survival relative to this evidence is not greater than ½. In this chapter, I consider Bayesian defenses of the case for survival, especially Bayesian maneuvers designed to answer the skeptical concerns introduced in the prior chapter. After a detailed examination of C.J. Ducasse's foundational study, I consider a recent cumulative case survival argument presented by R.W.K. Paterson. These survivalist arguments highlight the significance of two "traditional challenges": (i) the contention that the prior probability of the survival hypothesis is low (what I will call "the prior probability challenge"), and (ii) there is some rival hypothesis that leads us to expect the evidence at least as well as the survival hypothesis (what is called the "counter-explanation challenge"). However, I argue that the traditional debate, focused as it has been on (i) and (ii), has been blind to a more fundamental conceptual issue in the logic of survival arguments, namely the reliance on *auxiliary assumptions* to generate well-defined likelihoods. Consequently, survivalists have tended to mask rather than engage the more fundamental problems that face empirical arguments for survival. I provide a preliminary exploration of this issue here, and I develop it and its implications for the traditional challenges more fully in the remaining chapters.

8.1   Curt Ducasse's Bayesian argument for survival

Like Broad, Ducasse thought that the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis depended on both the antecedent probability of the survival hypothesis and its explanatory efficacy. His argument is Bayesian, although unlike Broad he came to a conclusion favorable to survival. Initially, Ducasse adopted a somewhat reserved stance on personal survival, concluding only that "there is strong *prima facie* evidence that in some instances *something* survives, which appears to be some part or some set of capacities of the mind

whose body has died," a conclusion compatible with Broad's (Ducasse 1951: 483). Ten years later, however, Ducasse adjusted his opinion and concluded that the empirical evidence actually favored *personal* survival (Ducasse 1961: 199–203). He claimed to have reached the same verdict that Sidgwick, Lodge, Hyslop, and Hodgson had reached earlier, namely "the balance of the evidence so far obtained is on the side of the reality of survival and, in the best cases, of survival not merely of memories of the life on earth, but of survival of the most significant capacities of the human mind, and of continuing exercise of them" (1961: 203).

8.1.1   Ducasse's argument for survival

Ducasse's strategy was first to argue for the theoretical and empirical possibility of survival (1961: 28–35, 59–62), reinforced by an extended discussion on issues in the philosophy of mind (1961: 63–118), and then inquire "whether there are any empirical facts at all that would establish the reality of survival or, failing this, would show it to be more probable than not" (1961: 132). His engagement with the latter question heavily depended on a comparative analysis of the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis and a few rival hypotheses, only one of which he thought was a serious contender. His moderately optimistic Bayesian argument, which critically engages Dodds's earlier critique, concludes that the hypothesis of personal survival has a positive probability, being at least more probable than not (1961: 185, 200, 203).

With respect to the antecedent probability of the survival hypothesis, Ducasse came to the same conclusion as did Broad: Survival is neither antecedently probable nor improbable. Hence, $Pr(S \mid K) = Pr(\sim S \mid K)$. While there are no facts independent of the data of psychical research that establish a positive probability for the survival of the mind, the supposition is not internally contradictory (so it is theoretically possible) or inconsistent with any known empirical fact (so it is empirically possible), nor did he find any consideration that otherwise rendered the survival hypothesis improbable (1961: 193, 303). The issue, thus, comes down to whether there is evidence E that will raise this probability, whether $Pr(S \mid E \& K) > Pr(S \mid K)$. As we have seen, this depends on the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis, specifically whether $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid K)$ – that is, whether the relevant evidence is more to be expected if the survival hypothesis is true than if it is false. The relevant evidence, for Ducasse, consisted of data drawn from apparitions and haunting phenomena, out-of-body experiences, ostensible past-life memories, and – most importantly – mediumship, especially the phenomenon of the cross-correspondences, which Ducasse regarded as providing the strongest evidence for survival (1961: 186).

In arguing in favor of the survival hypothesis, Ducasse aimed to "rule out" the small number of rival hypotheses typically proposed to account at least as equally well for the evidence. He ruled out naturalist hypotheses,

which appeal either to fraud or coincidence (especially in connection with mediumship), on the grounds that they either had an extremely low likelihood or – to properly account for the evidence – would have an incredibly low prior probability (1961: 178–9, 192). He considered the nearest explanatory competitor to be the appeal to living-agent psychic functioning, though of a fairly extensive sort suitably amplified with a psychological thesis concerning subconscious processes that produce the secondary personalities of the trance medium (1961: 179, 191). This is essentially Dodds's T_R-hypothesis, but Ducasse more explicitly included a broader repertoire of living-agent psychic functioning in order to account for as much of the data as possible: telepathy, retrocognitive clairvoyance, and clairvoyance of current states of affairs. For this reason, the "telepathic" hypothesis is more accurately labeled a "living-agent psi" hypothesis – "psi" being an inclusive shorthand term for all forms of psychic functioning among living persons. I henceforth refer to this as the LAP-hypothesis.

Of course, for Dodds and Ducasse the relevant LAP-hypothesis is a *robust* LAP-hypothesis (LAP_R). I say "robust" here since LAP_R involves an appeal to LAP supplemented with various assumptions that "bulk up" the simple appeal to living-agent psychic functioning. First, there are assumptions about the extensive and refined nature of psi. LAP_R postulates a "*virtually unlimited range* of telepathy," which is capable of accessing "the minds of any persons who possess the recondite items of information communicated, no matter where those persons happen to be at the time" (1961: 196).[1] Ducasse also maintained that LAP_R entails, in some cases, the psychic retrieval of information from multiple sources and thus, in his view, a need for the medium's unconscious mind to select relevant bits of information from these sources and rapidly integrate them (1961: 198–9). Finally, there are the requisite assortment of psychological assumptions concerning the motivations and unconscious mind of the medium that would be required to explain the personation data.

Although Ducasse ultimately concluded that LAP_R is an inadequate or implausible explanation of the data, he did acknowledge a few facts favorable to it. First, in agreement with Broad and Dodds, Ducasse accepted the reality of living-agent psi – both telepathy and clairvoyance – for which he thought there was significant evidence in mediumship and in other contexts not allegedly suggestive of survival (1961: 194). Second, he also held that dissociative trance is conducive to psi functioning, so we should expect the joint occurrence of trance phenomena and the presentation of material acquired through the exercise of telepathy and/or clairvoyance (1961: 184,

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[1] In Chapter 10 and Chapter 11, I will argue that to adequately account for the relevant evidence, it is *not* necessary that a robust living-agent psi hypothesis posit psi of "virtually unlimited range," as Ducasse and other survivalists have maintained.

194). Third, the mediumistic data in need of explanation include the appearance of fictitious and still living persons as the controls and communicators of mediums, and these too have strongly veridical features (1961: 182–4). Prima facie this favors the LAP-hypothesis (and the LAP$_R$-hypothesis) since it is more expected if mediums are tapping the unconscious minds of living persons in the construction of trance personalities, as opposed merely to being vehicles of communication of actually deceased persons.

Despite these apparent facts in favor of the LAP$_R$-hypothesis, Ducasse argued that the LAP$_R$-hypothesis is inferior to the survival hypothesis (hereinafter, the S-hypothesis or S). The complaint against LAP$_R$ does not concern its likelihood; after all, the whole point of amplifying the LAP-hypothesis, bulking it up into the LAP$_R$-hypothesis, is that doing so allows it to cover the relevant data, specifically the (quantitatively and qualitatively robust) content of the medium's veridical claims and the mode in which this information is presented by way of convincing personations of the deceased. Initially, of course, these are facts that create difficulties for a *simple* telepathy or psi hypothesis because such hypotheses do not have a high likelihood in relation to crucial strands of data encountered in mediumship. It does not lead us to expect personation or arguably the quantity and quality of the medium's veridical claims. The LAP$_R$-hypothesis is not saddled with this liability. It would seem that Ducasse was willing to accept that at the very least Pr(E | S & K) ≈ Pr(E | LAP$_R$ & K); that is, the LAP$_R$-hypothesis and the survival hypothesis have approximately equal likelihoods.

Ducasse's complaint concerns the consequences of bulking up the LAP-hypothesis in the way required for it to cover the relevant data. In Ducasse's view, the LAP$_R$-hypothesis purchases the capacity to account for or explain the data only by having to adopt supplementary assumptions for which there is no independent support and which actually appear ad hoc in nature (1961: 196, 198). For instance, in addition to postulating a highly refined unconscious psychic sleuthing, selection, and integration of the appropriate information from multiple sources, Ducasse wrote, "the degree of telepathic rapport [between the medium and agent] which Prof. Dodds' reply postulates vastly exceeds any that is independently known to occur" (1961: 198). Again, critically commenting on Dodds's robust telepathy hypothesis, Ducasse favorably quotes William Henry Salter's dismissal of such theories: "It is possible to frame a theory which will explain each of them [features of cross-correspondences], more or less, by telepathy, but is it not necessary in doing so to invent *ad hoc* a species of telepathy for which there is otherwise practically no evidence?" (1961: 196).

Now Ducasse does not say exactly *why* a lack of independent support and ad hoc-ness should be a liability or how precisely it undermines the LAP$_R$-hypothesis as an explanation of the data, only that it is something of an explanatory vice and that the survival hypothesis is not subject to the same difficulties (1961: 196). However, since supplementation with

auxiliary assumptions arguably enhances the hypothesis's predictive power (and so its likelihood), from a Bayesian point of view the problem, should there actually be one, is plausibly that "bulking up" the simple appeal to telepathy with a variety of supplementary assumptions lowers the *prior probability* of the explanatory competitor. This is significant since it will affect the comparative posterior probabilities of S and LAP_R and more specifically whether S is more probable than not. So I propose that we parse "Ducasse's complaint" as the claim that the prior probability of LAP_R is low, or more specifically that this prior probability is lower or much lower than the prior probability of S.

First, consider the matter of comparative posterior probabilities. It follows from Bayes' theorem that if two hypotheses h_1 and h_2 equally lead us to expect the evidence (i.e. h_1 and h_2 have equal likelihoods), then the posterior probability of h_1 will be greater than h_2 just if h_1 has greater prior probability. So if we take Ducasse's observations to entail a low prior probability for LAP_R, specifically with the consequence that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) < Pr(S \mid K)$ *or* $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \ll Pr(S \mid K)$, then – even though LAP_R confers an equally high probability on the evidence as does S – it will follow that $Pr(S \mid E \& K) > Pr(LAP_R \mid E \& K)$ *or* $Pr(S \mid E \& K) \gg Pr(LAP_R \mid E \& K)$. In other words, the probability of the S-hypothesis, on the relevant evidence and background knowledge, is greater than the probability of the LAP_R-hypothesis on the same evidence and background knowledge.

Second, Ducasse's argument for a favorable posterior probability for S, S being at least more than ½, strongly depends on the explanatory power of S being very high. As explained in Chapter 7, from a Bayesian perspective the explanatory power of a hypothesis is given by the ratio of its likelihood over the prior probability of the evidence, so the explanatory power of S would be expressed as $Pr(E \mid S \& K)/Pr(E \mid K)$. So the explanatory power of S depends not only on the evidence being very probable if S is true – $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ being high – but also on the evidence being otherwise improbable – $Pr(E \mid K)$ being low. Now *$Pr(E \mid K)$ will be low just if there are no rival hypotheses with significant prior probability that lead us to expect the evidence (as well as does S).* And this was Ducasse's position. On his view, naturalistic hypotheses (fraud or coincidence) either have a very low prior probability or have very low likelihoods. So they do not significantly increase $Pr(E \mid K)$. He seems to have thought something similar concerning Broad's "psychic factor" hypothesis, to which he gives little consideration. The simple telepathy hypothesis, though it has a high prior probability, does not lead us to expect important pieces of evidence. So we are left with LAP_R as the remaining rival hypothesis. Although it has a high likelihood, indeed one potentially equal to S, if its prior probability is very low, then it will not significantly boost $Pr(E \mid K)$. So there appears to be no rival hypothesis with both a significant prior probability and that leads us to expect the evidence at least as well as the

survival hypothesis. This is a crucial contention in favor of the explanatory power of S.

8.1.2 Formalizing Ducasse's argument

I propose the following as a formalization of Ducasse's argument for survival.

(D1) $Pr(S \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$
(D2) $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K) > Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$

Therefore:

(D3) $Pr(S \mid E \,\&\, K) > \frac{1}{2}$

(D1) asserts that the survival hypothesis has a prior probability of ½ (i.e. neither antecedently probable nor improbable), and (D2) asserts that the evidence is more probable if the survival hypothesis is true than if it is false. (D3) follows. As long as the prior of S is ½, the posterior probability of S will be greater than ½ if the likelihood of S is greater than the likelihood of ~S. However, we have also seen that Ducasse claimed:

(D4) $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$ = high (where "high" = some value N such that $.7 \leq N \leq .9$)

This is significant for two reasons. First, $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$ will have some (approximate) value, and this value might be marginally to fairly high (as non-survivalists typically contend), say greater than .5 (or ½), in which case S having a high likelihood will be essential to the justification of (D2). If the value of $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$ is, as Ducasse suggested, somewhere between .7 and .9, then the posterior probability of S will be greater than ½ as long as the $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$ is less than .7. Second, if the value of $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$ is *significantly* less than the value for $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$, then the posterior probability of S will be much greater than ½ because the posterior probability of S will increase as the value of $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$ decreases in relation to the value $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$.

To illustrate, consider the results of actual assignments of value to $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$ and $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$. Assume that the priors are set at .5 (or ½) and that the likelihood of S is some value N such that $.7 \leq N \leq .9$ (i.e. N is some number equal to or greater than .7 and equal to or less than .9). This is a numerical expression of the idea that if the survival is true, then the evidence is probable (and possibly very probable). Now suppose we assign a "low" value to the likelihood of ~S, some value N such that $.2 \leq N \leq .49$, a numerical way of representing the idea that if the survival hypothesis is false, the evidence is improbable (or possibly very improbable). Given the specified range of values, the posterior probability of survival will range from .59 (lower end) to .82 (higher end). The lower-end posterior probability

is obtained when the likelihood of S is set at the minimum value (.7) and the likelihood of ~S is set at the maximum value of the lower range (.49). The higher-end posterior probability is obtained when the likelihood of S is set at the maximum value (.9) and the likelihood of ~S is set at the minimum value of the lower range (.2). Where the likelihoods are each set at their respective maximum values (.49 and .9), the posterior probability of S will be .65, still significantly more probable than not.[2]

8.1.3   Criteria for evidence of postmortem survival

Ducasse did not provide a formalization of his argument, and so the argument above is offered as an interpretation of his more informal presentation. Nonetheless, there is one aspect to Ducasse's more informal presentation that is worth examining in the light of the formalized argument and that reinforces the suggested formalized interpretation. Ducasse relied heavily on an analogy between hypothetical mundane cases of physical survival and postmortem survival. The analogy is designed to show how facts indicative of the persistence of the psychological profile of persons justify claims to survival. This naturally translates into a justification for likelihoods, as certain facts are taken to be what we would expect if the person in question survived death because we assume that their psychological profile would survive and manifest in certain ways.

In examining "what would prove, or make positively probable, that survival is a fact" (1961: 199), Ducasse adduced evidential criteria we would sensibly use to determine that someone had survived a plane crash.

> Let us suppose that a friend of ours, John Doe, was a passenger on the transatlantic plane which some months ago the newspapers reported crashed shortly after leaving Shannon without having radioed that it was in trouble. Since no survivors were reported to have been found, we would naturally assume that John Doe had died with the rest. (1961: 200)

Ducasse went on to propose three situations in which we would acquire evidence that would convince us that John Doe had survived the crash.

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[2] It might be that ~S has a marginally positive likelihood, say .6. In this case, if the likelihood of S is .9, the posterior probability of S will be .6, and if the likelihood of S is .7, S's posterior probability will drop to .54, but it is still more probable than not, though only marginally so. If ~S has a high likelihood, say .8, and S's likelihood was .9, S's posterior probability will be .53, marginally more probable than not. This illustrates how the posterior probability of S becomes only marginally favorable as the values assigned to $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \,\&\, K)$ and $Pr(E \mid S \,\&\, K)$ become closer. When their values are the same, the posterior probability of S is exactly ½ – that is, survival is *as* probable as not.

(1) We encounter a man on the street we recognize as John, he recognizes us, he has John Doe's voice and mannerisms, and he is conversant about things that John Doe would have known, including information of a highly personal matter familiar to each of us.

(2) Instead of physically encountering a man on the streets who resembles John Doe, we receive a phone call from a man who sounds like John Doe and who freely exhibits the kind of first-person perspective knowledge that would be characteristic of John Doe including private matters familiar to each of us.

(3) We receive a phone call from someone who informs us that John Doe survived the crash and he wants us to know about his survival, but for some reason, John Doe cannot come to the phone. We're told that John Doe is in need of money and wants us to deposit money into his bank account. To acquire assurance that John Doe is indeed alive, we request through the intermediary information of a sort freely disclosed in scenarios (1) and (2). The intermediary provides us with the names of John Doe's friends and various personal matters with which John Doe would be familiar, and we discern in the intermediary's responses some of the peculiar features of John Doe's thoughts and phraseology.

Ducasse argued that in cases (1) and (2), we would take ourselves to have sufficient evidence to believe that John Doe had physically survived death. He further argued that in case (3), we would be convinced of John Doe's survival if we had robust evidence – that is, if we had no conclusive proof that John Doe had not survived death. What I am calling "robust evidence" captures Ducasse's claim that the evidence would need to be detailed in content, abundant in quantity, and diverse in quality. Ducasse argued essentially that we can imagine cases such as (3) arising where we would be confident on the basis of the evidence that John Doe had survived death.

Ducasse's argument here concerning the case of mundane survival depends on Bayesian considerations. First, the argument depends on the supposition that we have no sufficient reason to suppose that John Doe's death has any initial positive probability, so (as in the case for postmortem survival) the supposition of John Doe's survival is not antecedently improbable. Second, the facts in the case are allegedly best accounted for by supposing that John Doe has survived death. We assume in such a case that if the communications are (ultimately) originating from John Doe, we would expect the content and mode of communication to bear a strong resemblance to the psychological profile of the man known as John Doe. Hence, we should expect recognitions of family and friends, knowledge of events from John Doe's life (even very trivial ones), and expressions of interests or purposes known to be characteristic of John Doe, and we would expect this evidence to be conveyed with turns of phrase and vocabulary characteristic of John Doe.

Curiously, Ducasse did not provide one important relevant analog in his discussion at this juncture, namely the "ruling out" of alternative hypotheses that would purport to explain the data in the John Doe case but without supposing that John Doe had survived death. His discussion is focused solely on the prior probability of John Doe's survival and the extent to which the data are what we would expect if John Doe had indeed survived death. But of course, as was clear in his discussion of postmortem survival, the explanatory power of a hypothesis depends in part on how probable the evidence would be if the hypothesis were not true, and here is where the respective merits of rival hypotheses must be considered. I will consider this below in §8.2.

At present, though, note Ducasse's application of the case of mundane survival to postmortem survival. He contended that the evidence for survival from mediumship duplicates the essential features of the evidence we could have that would convince us that John Doe survived the plane crash.

> This parallelism between the two situations [mediumship and plane-crash scenario (3)] entails that if reason rather than either religious or materialistic faith is to decide, then our answer to the question whether the evidence we have does or does not establish survival (or at least a positive probability of it) must, in the matter of survival after death, be based on the very same considerations as in the matter of survival after the crash of the plane. That is, our answer will have to be based similarly on the *quantity* of evidence we get over the mediumistic "telephone;" on the *quality* of that evidence; and on the *diversity* of kinds of it we get. (1961: 203)

Utilizing this analogy, Ducasse concluded that "the balance of the evidence" favored personal survival, and by this he meant that survival is more probable than not given the evidence, especially since no rival explanation is nearly as plausible as the survival hypothesis (cf. 1961: 199). The argument, as we have seen, rests on two crucial claims. The first, codified in premise (D1) of Ducasse's argument, is that the prior probability of survival is ½. The second, codified in premise (D2) of Ducasse's argument, is that the likelihood of the survival hypothesis is greater (and potentially much greater) than the likelihood of its negation; that is, the evidence is far more to be expected if survival is true than if survival is false. And as noted in §8.1.3, the case for (D2), and its more specified form assisted by (D4), rests in part on the analogy drawn from criteria at work in judgments that concern antemortem survival.

8.2 Critical observations on Ducasse's argument

As it turns out, skeptics have challenged both of the premises – (D1) and (D2) – in Ducasse's argument. In fact, as I will discuss below and in the subsequent chapters, the philosophical literature on the empirical arguments for survival since the time of Ducasse has largely consisted of an ongoing debate

concerning the rational acceptability of these premises, codified in two traditional challenges. The "prior probability" challenge maintains that the survival hypothesis has an unfavorable prior probability, perhaps somewhere close to zero, and so Ducasse was incorrect in claiming that $Pr(S \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$. The "counter-explanation" challenge contends that there is at least one rival hypothesis (with at least comparable prior probability) that leads us to expect the relevant data at least as equally well as the hypothesis of survival. Consequently, Ducasse was incorrect that survival is the best explanation of the data, and moreover, this defeats the claim that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$. Since I will eventually propose a revision of these traditional objections, I will have more to say about them in the remaining chapters. Here I take the first step in this direction by exploring a particular problem in formulations of survival arguments up to the time of Ducasse. Dodds suggested the problem, but it has gone largely ignored in the majority of subsequent literature. Ducasse's presentation provides an optimal context in which to explore it.

8.2.1   The auxiliary assumption requirement

As a first approximation, the problem with Ducasse's analysis and argument is that he did not adequately justify the claim that the survival hypothesis has a favorable likelihood, so we are not justified to affirm (D2), or at any rate, Ducasse has not shown that we are so justified. The problem is not that the survival hypothesis has an *un*favorable likelihood. The problem is that it has *no* well-defined likelihood (favorable or unfavorable) until it is supplemented with an array of *auxiliary assumptions*. Now, Ducasse did not acknowledge this auxiliary assumption requirement, and consequently, he did not anticipate how such a requirement compromises and potentially defeats his overall argument for survival.

As explored in §7.3.3, Dodds (1934) had noted that the survival hypothesis (proposed to explain mediumistic data) is not a single hypothesis but a whole series of hypotheses. Dodds identified six assumptions required by the survival argument from mediumship, including the assumption that postmortem survivors would possess the ability to communicate with the living, retain a large stock of memories of their antemortem existence, telepathically access information in the minds of the living, and be able to acquire knowledge of events taking place on earth since their death. Dodds rightly noted that if the survival hypothesis is "bulked up" in this manner, it is not – contrary to widespread survivalist claims – simpler than the appeal to telepathy, which of course he acknowledged must also be supplemented with its own array of auxiliary assumptions. In this way, the survival hypothesis does not have the advantage widely claimed on its behalf by survivalists. Dodds did not explain with adequate clarity why the argument for survival *requires* such assumptions. Moreover, he did not explain with adequate clarity the implications of reliance on auxiliary assumptions for Bayesian-style survival arguments.

Although I will explore the auxiliary assumption requirement and its implications in greater detail in Chapter 9, some preliminary remarks are in order here in connection with Duccase and building on Dodds's earlier observations. Most generally stated, the auxiliary assumption requirement derives from a general constraint on hypotheses offered as explanations for data or observational evidence. According to the Duhem-Quine thesis (Duhem 1954; Quine 1953; Sober 2008: 144), single hypotheses rarely have predictive consequences. Hypotheses can only be tested via their predictive consequences by considering hypotheses in bundles or sets. (As in earlier chapters, I use "prediction" here in the broad sense, inclusive of accommodation, according to which a hypothesis predicts just if it leads us to expect our data, not necessarily novel data.) This is true in the sciences and also in more mundane instances of explanatory reasoning. It is a core or central hypothesis together with added assumptions that leads us to expect the world to have certain features (and not others) or for there to be one kind of evidence (and not other sorts of evidence).

Consider one mundane illustration based on an episode of the 1970s American detective television series *Columbo.* The hypothesis *Mr. Brimmer murdered Mrs. Kennicut at his home* by itself yields little, if anything, in the way of predictions. Unless the hypothesis is supplemented with the relevant kinds of assumptions, it will not lead us to expect the evidence: for example, that the victim was murdered between the hours of 5pm and 8pm, that she had a severe bruise and cut of a unique sort on the left side of her face, and that her body, when found in a nearby park, was missing a single contact lens subsequently found in the trunk of Mr. Brimmer's car. Only when certain facts about Mr. Brimmer are assumed will there be predictive consequences: for example, that Mr. Brimmer owned a particular vehicle, was seen near his home between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. on the date in question, is left-handed and wears a uniquely shaped diamond ring on his left hand that fits the contours of Mrs. Kennicut's facial cut, and that the victim had information about Mr. Brimmer that could financially ruin him. These facts provide motive and opportunity, as well as lead us to expect the victim's injuries from a backhand blow. Only when we introduce additional assumptions can detective Columbo plausibly conjecture that if Mr. Brimmer struck Mrs. Kennicut with a backhanded blow, then we would expect to find a cut of the sort that was found on the left side of Mrs. Kennicut's face, or if Mr. Brimmer murdered Mrs. Kennicut (in the manner suggested), then we would expect to find her missing contact lens somewhere between the scene of the crime and the disposal of the body.[3]

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[3] The illustration in the paragraph is intended to show only that auxiliary assumptions are involved in explanatory reasoning. In §8.4.2, and more systematically in Chapter 9, I argue that the auxiliaries required by the survival hypothesis *differ* in important ways from those adopted in more mundane contexts.

The auxiliary assumption requirement operative in this mundane case also applies to Ducasse's reasoning. In fact, it will apply to the arguments of *all* survivalists who wish to claim that the supposition of personal survival actually accounts for or explains observational evidence. Since prediction (in the broad sense) is essential to this, the explanatory efficacy of survival depends on enlisting various auxiliary assumptions of the sort that Dodds identified. We are not justified in claims about what the evidence for survival should look like simply by proposing the hypothesis that persons survive death. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many different conceivable models of personal survival. As I will explore in Chapter 9, only some of these models would lead us to expect there to be any empirical evidence for survival, and only a very small subset of *these* models would lead us to expect evidence of the sort encountered in psychical research. We must make, at the minimum, additional assumptions about survivors having the interest, intention, and power to communicate with the living, their retaining substantial knowledge of their antemortem existence, and their having a certain degree of epistemic access to the minds of living persons and states of affairs in the empirical world that occur after their death.

Since likelihoods codify predictive consequences, we can rephrase the Duhem-Quine thesis in terms of likelihoods: Having a well-defined likelihood – for example, of the form $Pr(e \mid h_1 \& k) > Pr(e \mid h_2 \& k)$ – typically requires that auxiliary assumptions be introduced. So, where a indicates some relevant assumption, likelihoods technically look more like $Pr(e \mid h_1 \& a \& k) > Pr(e \mid h_2 \& a \& k)$.[4] Alternatively, we can speak of theories or *robust* hypotheses, hypotheses supplemented with the appropriate auxiliaries. In this case, the relevant "survival likelihood" will not be $Pr(E \mid S \& K) > Pr(E \mid C \& K)$, where C = some competing hypothesis or set of competitors, but rather $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) > Pr(E \mid C_R \& K)$, where S_R signifies a robust survival hypothesis and C_R signifies some robust competitor(s).[5] However, it follows that (D1) in Ducasse's argument is misleading. What is relevant is the prior of S_R, not the prior of S. The case for survival, as Ducasse presented it, depends on whether $Pr(S_R \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$, not whether $Pr(S \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$.

Now, sadly, these issues are masked by Ducasse's presentation. In his case for survival, he devotes his first tier of argument to defending the antecedent probability of survival, and here Ducasse was concerned solely with the antecedent probability of a *simple* survival hypothesis – survival of an individual mind or consciousness – which, as he saw, survived the scourge of various philosophies of mind that entailed the dependence of mind or consciousness on a functioning brain. In the second stage of his argument,

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[4] For reasons to be explored in Chapter 9, I treat "*a*" as separate from "k."

[5] $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ refers to the probability of E given the sum of the likelihoods of all robust competitors, which will in turn be multiplied by their priors $Pr({\sim}S_R \mid K)$.

Ducasse focused on the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis in relation to various competitors. Here, however, Ducasse focused on the inadequacy of explanatory competitors and merely assumed (but did not show) that the survival hypothesis has a favorable likelihood. Arguably Ducasse simply *assumed* a robust conception of survival, which embedded the assumptions to which Dodds drew attention, so he took it as self-evident that the survival hypothesis had the desired predictive consequences. However, if this robust conception is employed to yield the desired likelihood, namely premise (D2), it should be employed in connection with premise (D1). In this way, Ducasse's presentation evades showing that we can be simultaneously justified in (D1) and (D2). Indeed, it is fair to say that the strategy of argument (unwittingly) masks the problematic implications of the auxiliary assumption requirement. Below and in Chapter 9, I will show that this is a fairly ubiquitous problem in the subsequent literature favorable to survival. Defenses of the prior probability of the survival hypothesis routinely assume a simple survival hypothesis, and defenses of the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis assume a robust conception of survival. But this is the logical or conceptual equivalent to a magician's card trick.

8.2.2   Ducasse's analogical argument from antemortem survival

The auxiliary assumption requirement also plays a role in Ducasse's analogical argument from justified claims concerning antemortem survival. More precisely, the reason *why* we are inclined to rule in favor of survival in antemortem cases of the sort Ducasse outlined is in part because we rely on various supplementary assumptions doing their logical work in the background, so to speak. What we take as evidence for antemortem survival crucially depends on what we assume about factors relevant to survival in the cases in question, for this is what informs our judgments about what the evidence for survival should look like in such cases.

Suppose we return to Ducasse's scenario (3) above. Why are we inclined to rule favorably on the antemortem survival of the person in the scenario as described? Largely because of assumptions we make in such cases. First, we should not underestimate the force of our antecedent knowledge that people have in fact survived plane crashes. This contributes to a favorable prior probability that John Doe has survived a particular plane crash, which would be more or less probable relative to how the details of Doe's crash compare statistically to crashes with known survivors. But second, knowing that people have survived plane crashes means we have knowledge concerning what we might expect to observe as evidence for survival in such cases.

The list of specific assumptions would, of course, vary depending on how the details of the scenario are spelled out, but here are some illustrations of the kinds of assumptions that would plausibly be operative. And the thing to see here is that the assumptions permit us to be justified in various

conditional claims, the consequent of which is directly or indirectly related to the evidence and so serves to justify likelihood claims.

a. If a person survives a plane crash, we are positing the survival of their body. Given that bodies have spatial location, the hypothesis that John Doe survived the plane crash yields the prediction that John Doe is located somewhere on earth (typically within certain narrow parameters, at least for the period of time shortly after the crash). Hence, we would be justified in supposing that *if John Doe survived the plane crash, then his body would be spatially located somewhere on earth*. This is significant since it also yields the prediction that any ostensible evidence of Doe's survival would originate from a particular region of physical space.

b. Based on our background knowledge of former survivors, we already know that among survivors of plane crashes, the majority have (directly or indirectly) contacted family members or friends to let them know they are alive or to request assistance of some sort. Hence, this background knowledge provides an empirical basis for supposing that *if John Doe survived the plane cash, then he would probably seek to communicate this information to family and friends*.

c. Depending on the location and specifics of the crash, as well as background knowledge about other plane-crash survivors, we could be justified in supposing that *if John Doe survived the plane crash, then we would probably receive communications from him during a relatively specific period of time*.

d. Regarding the communications, we assume a limited and very specific range of media through which John Doe would initiate communication with family or friends and which are likely to be successful: phone, email, letters, or another human person as a messenger. Hence, we antecedently know that *if John Doe survived the plane crash and had the intention and power to communicate his survival to family and friends, then he would do so effectively by means of a special range of media that fall within very narrow parameters*.

e. We assume that plane crashes are likely to produce varying degrees of trauma in survivors that affect memory and character, so we would expect communications to exhibit varying degrees of inconsistency and incoherence. *If John Doe survived the plane crash and successfully communicated with friends or family, then the content of the communications would be a mixture of detailed accuracy and significant inaccuracy.*

So our assessment of what counts as evidence for John Doe's survival of a plane crash depends on a variety of assumptions that we are willing to entertain about the scenario. And a crucial question at this juncture is whether there are any epistemic constraints on what we can justifiably assume. Recall that in Ducasse's criticism of appeals to robust telepathy, he had argued

that such hypotheses are in effect "ruled out" since they involve appeals to a kind or degree of telepathy for which there is no independent support. This suggests that there are epistemic constraints that govern the justified reliance on auxiliaries. It then becomes highly pertinent whether the force of our intuitions in the plane-crash-survivor case derives in part from our being justified in the requisite assumptions, but where a similar justification does not obtain with respect to the auxiliaries required in the inference to postmortem survival. This is ultimately the direction toward which the inquiry should move, but as the following more contemporary survival arguments demonstrate, the point has not been adequately acknowledged much less engaged in the pro-survival literature.

8.3   R.W.K. Paterson's cumulative case Bayesian argument

Whatever its faults, Ducasse's Bayesian argument is something of a *locus classicus* for empirical survivalists, foundational in many respects for subsequent formulations of the empirical case for survival. Among contemporary philosophers who have relied on Bayesian measures, Paterson (1995), Griffin (1997), and Lund (2009) have each argued that the evidence for survival *taken collectively* renders the survival hypothesis more probable than not.[6] This kind of argument is worth exploring since it is plausible to suppose that cumulative case arguments might overcome some of the challenges that face earlier formulations with their more or less exclusive focus on mediumship. After all, later Bayesian arguments include the data from CORTs and NDEs. And this might be thought relevantly to affect matters of both prior probability and likelihoods. Ducasse had noted how the telepathy hypothesis is strained by certain facts, which are more easily accounted for by the supposition of survival. The expansion of the range of relevant evidence might reinforce Ducasse's suspicion, or it might disclose facts that tip the evidential scales in favor of non-survival alternatives. And while we must return to the problem of auxiliary hypotheses, we should do so with reference to arguments that present the most robust body of evidence for which an account should be given.

8.3.1   Paterson's argument for survival

R.W.K. Paterson (1995) evaluated the case for personal survival based on three kinds of considerations: reasons provided by the philosophy of mind, various philosophical and theological arguments for immortality, and the data of psychical research. Paterson's verdict is that the total evidence is

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[6] Although here I focus on Paterson's argument, elsewhere (Sudduth 2013a) I have critically assessed Lund's argument, and Braude (2003) has discussed Griffin's argument.

not coercive and so compatible with the rational rejection of the survival hypothesis. Nevertheless, the evidence renders personal survival probable as a conclusion: "This conclusion is that on the whole, but quite clearly, the facts point in the direction of personal survival of bodily death. ... [I]t has, I think, been shown to be overall distinctly probable" (1995: 190). Paterson understands this to mean "there exists a clear balance of probability in favor of the belief that persons can in some sense survive their physical death" (1995: 191). Formally expressed, he argues that $Pr(S \mid E \& K) > Pr(\sim S \mid E \& K)$, where E = all the relevant evidence drawn from a priori philosophical considerations and the a posteriori considerations of psychical research.

However, unlike Ducasse, Paterson repeatedly notes that, prior to a consideration of any of the empirical evidence (and philosophical arguments for immortality), the hypothesis of personal survival is antecedently *improbable*. By this he means that it has a "great degree of antecedent improbability" (1995: 160, cf. 129, 187, 189). Formally, $Pr(S \mid K_0) \ll \frac{1}{2}$, where K_0 indicates all background knowledge prior to the consideration of any evidence for survival. While Paterson argues marginally in favor of a non-Cartesian dualistic understanding of the mind-body relation, he is clear that this does not dispose of materialist theories of mind but only weakens them and thereby reduces the initial antecedent improbability of survival. Moreover, Paterson contends that various philosophical and theological arguments for immortality further reduce the antecedent improbability of survival (1995: 130, 189). So when it comes to the assessment of the force of the empirical evidence for survival, the antecedent improbability of survival has been significantly reduced from the initial epistemic situation, specifically such that $Pr(S \mid K_1) < Pr(S \mid K_0)$, where K_1 = background knowledge amplified by various a priori philosophical considerations. The question, then, is whether the empirical evidence can raise the probability of S enough so that $Pr(S \mid E \& K) > \frac{1}{2}$, where K = the total background knowledge.

Paterson considers evidence from four kinds of psychical phenomena: near-death/out-of-body experiences (E_{OBE}), apparitional experiences (E_{AE}), mediumship (E_{MED}), and cases of the reincarnation type (E_{CORT}). With respect to E_{OBE}, Paterson argues that while E_{OBE} increases the probability of survival, by itself it is an insufficient ground for belief in survival (1995: 149). Similarly, E_{AE} raises the probability of survival, so much so that, were it not for the antecedent improbability of survival, E_{AE} would make it rationally permissible to believe in survival. While E_{CORT} makes a positive contribution to the probability of survival, Paterson favors E_{MED}, which "[furnishes] on the whole by far the most persuasive single type of evidence in favor of personal survival of bodily death" (1995: 174). He claims that, were it not for the initial improbability of survival, mediumship alone would provide "enough good evidence to render belief in a life after death on balance somewhat more probable than not" (1995: 175). However, even when we deduct the initial improbability of survival, E_{MED} makes a substantial contribution

to the probability of survival. The four strands of evidence cumulatively render the survival hypothesis more probable than not.

8.3.2   Formalizing Paterson's argument

Paterson's argument is significant for two reasons. First, unlike both Broad and Ducasse, he assumes an unfavorable prior probability for survival, at least as the initial probability. Second, he purports to show how this initial improbability may be substantially overcome and outweighed by a cumulative case argument drawn from a broad range of psychical data. Now Paterson does not rigorously develop such an argument, but there is at least one fairly natural way to do so that emphasizes its Bayesian and cumulative structure.

We can rely on Bayes' theorem to specify the idea of incremental confirmation or when evidence *raises* the probability of a hypothesis. Evidence e may be said to raise the probability of hypothesis h just if $Pr(h \mid e \& k) > Pr(h \mid k)$. Paterson's strategy can be interpreted as attempting to show that for each E_n, where $n = E_{PA}$ (a priori evidence from philosophical arguments), E_{OBE} (evidence from NDEs/OBEs), E_{AE} (evidence from apparitional experiences), E_{MED} (evidence from mediumship), and E_{CORT} (evidence from reincarnation), $Pr(S \mid E_n \& K) > Pr(S \mid K)$. The main argument may be simply stated as follows:

(1) $Pr(S \mid E_{PA} \& K_o) > Pr(S \mid K_o)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_o) \ll \frac{1}{2}$ $[Pr(S \mid K_0) = .125]$
(2) $Pr(S \mid E_{OBE} \& K_1) > Pr(S \mid K_1)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_1) > Pr(S \mid K_o)$. $[Pr(S \mid K_1) = .225]$
(3) $Pr(S \mid E_{AE} \& K_2) > Pr(S \mid K_2)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_2) > Pr(S \mid K_1)$ $[Pr(S \mid K_2) = .325]$
(4) $Pr(S \mid E_{MED} \& K_3) > Pr(S \mid K_3)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_3) \approx \frac{1}{2}$ $[Pr(S \mid K_3) = .450]$
(5) $Pr(S \mid E_{CORT} \& K_4) > Pr(S \mid K_4)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_4) = \frac{1}{2}$ $[Pr(S \mid K_4) = \frac{1}{2}]$

Therefore:

(6) $Pr(S \mid E_{CORT} \& K_4) > \frac{1}{2}$

In this argument, "K" is modified in each successive premise to reflect the inclusion of phenomena taken as evidence in the previous step. In (1), K_o = background knowledge prior to the consideration of any ostensible evidence for survival. The assumed value of K is much less than ½. On the far right side of each premise, I arbitrarily assign .125 in brackets to give a numerical value to this initially very low prior probability, which will then be incrementally increased at each level. Premise (1) claims that E_{PA} (a priori survival argumentation) raises this probability. I assume a very conservative increase of the probability of S based on E_{PA}. Therefore, in (2) K_1 (which = $E_{PA} + K_0$) is only said to be greater than $Pr(S \mid K_o)$, not *much* greater than $Pr(S \mid K_o)$. Premise (2) claims that E_{OBE} (the evidence of apparitional experiences) raises *this* probability, namely raises $Pr(S \mid K_1)$. Therefore, in premise (3), K_2 (which = $E_{OBE} + K_1$) is taken to be greater than $Pr(S \mid K_1)$, but premise (3) claims that

E_{AE} increases this probability, namely increases $Pr(S \mid K_2)$. Premise (4) reflects this increase in probability since K_3 (which = $E_{AE} + K_2$) is said to be greater than $Pr(S \mid K_2)$, which I suppose – in following Paterson's suggestion – would modestly approximate ½ at this stage in the successive series of increases in probability. Premise (4) of course claims that E_{MED} increases this probability. K_4 reflects this increase in probability. Since $Pr(S \mid K_3) \approx$ ½, it is natural to suppose with a conservative increase in probability that $Pr(S \mid K_4)$ = ½. Finally, the conclusion (6) follows from (5). If $Pr(S \mid K_4)$ = ½, then clearly if $Pr(S \mid E_{CORT} \& K_4) > Pr(S \mid K_4)$, then $Pr(S \mid E_{CORT} \& K_4) >$ ½.

8.3.3   The explanatory power of the survival hypothesis

Whether the suggested cumulative case argument is cogent will depend on whether we are justified in asserting (1) through (5). And this depends on whether, for each E_n, $Pr(E_n \mid S \& K) > Pr(E_n \mid K)$; after all, we saw earlier that according to Bayes' theorem $Pr(h \mid e \& k) > Pr(h \mid k)$ if and only if $Pr(e \mid h \& k) > Pr(e \mid k)$. That is to say, evidence will increase the probability of the survival hypothesis (from any assumed prior probability) if and only if the evidence is more to be expected if the survival hypothesis is true than otherwise. So for each E_n, it must be shown that $Pr(E_n \mid S \& K) > Pr(E_n \mid \sim S \& K)$. The smaller $Pr(E_n \mid \sim S \& K)$ relative to $Pr(E_n \mid S \& K)$, the smaller $Pr(E_n \mid K)$; and the smaller $Pr(E_n \mid K)$, the greater the explanatory power of S and so the greater the posterior probability of S on the evidence. Moreover, since $Pr(E_n \mid \sim S \& K)$ is the sum of the likelihoods of all rival hypotheses, it will be essential to consider the extent to which rival hypotheses (with significant prior probability) lead us to expect E_n.[7]

Paterson attempts to show success for the survival hypothesis at this juncture in two ways. First, for some evidence E_n, S allegedly leads us to expect E_n and rival hypotheses do not lead us to expect E_n (or do not lead us to expect E_n as well as does S). Second, for some evidence E_n, while rival hypotheses may lead us to expect E_n as well as S, the rival hypothesis is independently implausible and so has a comparatively low prior probability. The strategy is the one we have already encountered in Ducasse: showing that there is no rival hypothesis with significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence as well as does the survival hypothesis.

Consider Paterson's treatment of the evidence from near-death experiences. Paterson argues, first, in negative fashion that rival naturalistic hypotheses, most of which regard NDEs as some species of subjective hallucination, simply cannot account for the evidence, because they do not lead us to expect essential features of the NDE evidence (for example, e2 and e6 in §3.5), or they lead us to expect phenomena incompatible with

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[7] The "parenthetical" prior probability qualification is important. Recall that for any hypothesis h, evidence e, and background knowledge k, $Pr(e \mid k)$ will be low just if the value of $Pr(e \mid h \& k) \times Pr(h \mid k)$ is high relative to $Pr(e \mid \sim h \& k) \times Pr(\sim h \mid k)$.

NDEs (1995: 142–5). For example, brain hypoxia (low levels of oxygen to the brain) leads us to expect experiences in which subjects have diminished or compromised cognitive functioning (e.g. confused thinking, loss of concentration, and memory loss), but NDErs report experiences that exhibit enhanced cognition – that is, the very opposite. By contrast, hypercarbia (high levels of carbon dioxide to the brain) leads us to expect some of the phenomenology of NDEs (e.g. bodily detachment, blissful feelings, bright lights, and memory retrieval), but it also leads us to expect experiences with a very different and arguably incompatible phenomenology, namely "brightly coloured geometrical figures and complex patterns, animation of fantasized objects such as musical notes floating by, mental compulsion to solve mathematical puzzles or enigmas, polyopic vision" (1995: 145). And of course, neither of these naturalistic hypotheses would lead us to expect veridical perceptions during some NDEs. So naturalistic hypotheses have very low likelihoods, and this drives down Pr(E | ~S & K).

But in addition to the negative argument designed to drive down the likelihoods of rival hypotheses (and thus decrease the likelihood of the catchall ~S), Paterson suggests that there is positive evidence that confirms the S-hypothesis. This is in the form of evidence that we would expect if NDEs were to involve the actual separation of consciousness from the body, what is called the objectivist or extrasomatic interpretation of NDEs implied by the S-hypothesis. (1995: 145–9). First, whereas the hypothesis that NDEs are merely subjective hallucinations does not lead us to expect veridical perceptions, the objectivist interpretation of such experiences does lead us to expect veridical perceptions. Second, Paterson takes it that the quantity, quality, and diversity of witnesses to NDEs confirms the S-hypothesis, presumably because objective experiences would lead us to expect witnesses of such kinds. Furthermore, we would expect a convergence with respect to core or detailed features of NDEs, and this is what the data bear out. Finally, if the S-hypothesis is true, then we would expect consciousness to persist even in the absence of a functioning brain. Hence, it would not be surprising if revived subjects reported having experiences at times during which their electroencephalogram (EEG) recorded no brain activity or their having enhanced cognition at times when their EEG reported minimal brain activity. In other words, the S-hypothesis (inasmuch as it entails an objectivist interpretation of NDEs) has a high likelihood vis-à-vis these important features of NDEs.

With respect to the evidence from mediumship, Paterson is impressed with the quantity and quality of veridical claims found in the better cases of mediumship, especially those derived from proxy sittings, cross-correspondences, and drop-in communicators. Paterson quickly dismisses all naturalistic explanations (including fraud and coincidence) of such evidence, and he moves on to ruling out paranormal explanations in terms of living-agent psi. Paterson acknowledges independent support for psi functioning among

the living (even in mediumistic contexts), and so he accepts that extrasensory perception (whether telepathy or clairvoyance) might explain *some* of the evidence (1995: 52). However, like Ducasse before him, Paterson argues that appeals to psi functioning are ultimately unsuccessful at posing a challenge to the survival hypothesis. In its simple form, the LAP-hypothesis would not lead us to expect much of the evidence (and so has a low likelihood), and in its robust form as LAP_R, it has a very low prior probability, even though it leads us to expect the evidence.

> No doubt some degree of telepathic interaction between the minds of the medium and her sitters may often occur. However, some of the cases we have examined (and very many similar cases) would seem to render direct medium-sitter telepathy improbable, quite apart from the swiftness and accuracy of the information produced, which far exceeds anything known in cases of telepathy between living minds....And to this 'super-ESP' we should need to add a capacity on the part of the medium to impersonate dramatically and convincingly ... the qualities of character, styles of locution, and general demeanor of someone she has never met and of whom she has no normal knowledge. (1995: 174)

In connection with cases of the reincarnation type, Paterson writes:

> The knowledge and skill displayed [in such cases] might in theory have been acquired by ESP [extrasensory perception], either retrocognitively from the past behavior and characteristics of the deceased individual or by recent or current telepathy from the memories retained by that individual's surviving relatives and friends. But once again I have to point out that there is no independent evidence for the occurrence of ESP of this level on such a scale with regard to propositional knowledge, nor with regard to the acquisition of skills on any level on any scale. The "super-ESP" hypothesis must be judged a non-starter. (1995: 182)

The explanatory power of the survival hypothesis vis-à-vis any evidence set $E_1, ... , E_n$ will depend on $[Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid {\sim}S \mathbin{\&} K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)]$ being (ideally significantly) lower than $[Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid S \mathbin{\&} K) \times Pr(S \mid K)]$. If we adopt a *simple* psi hypothesis to account for any evidence set $E_1, ... , E_n$, then value of the $[Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid {\sim}S \mathbin{\&} K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)]$ will be driven downward because $Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid {\sim}S \mathbin{\&} K)$ will be pushed downward. If we adopt a *robust* psi hypothesis, then $[Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid {\sim}S \mathbin{\&} K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)]$ will be driven downward because $Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$ will be significantly reduced. Of course, recall that ~S is a catchall for all rival hypotheses. So $Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid {\sim}S \mathbin{\&} K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$ is just the value of the sum of the likelihoods of rival hypotheses multiplied by their respective prior probabilities. So Paterson in effect tries to argue that for each competing naturalist or paranormal hypothesis, C_n, either $Pr(E_1, ... , E_n \mid$

C_n & K) is very low or $Pr(C_n \mid K)$ is very low, or both, and so $Pr(E_1, \ldots, E_n \mid \sim S$ & K) x $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ is low relative to $Pr(E_1, \ldots, E_n \mid S$ & K) x $Pr(S \mid K)$.

8.4   Analysis of Paterson's cumulative case argument

Like Ducasse's strategy, Paterson's strategy is sound *in principle*. However, there are reasons for a healthy dose of skepticism concerning the argument's cogency.

8.4.1   The justification of survival likelihoods

First, a preliminary problem in Paterson's argument concerns the kind of survival hypothesis for which Paterson thinks he has shown that there is a favorable posterior probability. On the one hand, he claims to be arguing for a hypothesis of personal survival, and this is how I have interpreted him above (1995: 46–57, 148, 158, 160, 172–4, 189–90). On the other hand, elsewhere he more modestly states his conclusion: "when all the relevant conceptual issues have been clarified and all the relevant empirical facts have been gathered in and appropriately weighed, there exists a clear balance of probability in favor of the belief that persons can in some sense survive their physical death" (1995: 191). The latter version of his conclusion seems particularly calibrated to account for his subsequent observation (in his final chapter) that conclusions about the nature of postmortem existence are "bound to be significantly less probable than our original conclusion that *something* of us survives death" (1995: 192). Recalling the discussions in Chapter 2 and Chapter 7, this modest conclusion is compatible with the postmortem persistence of a person who is not the same person as the one who died, or perhaps not a person at all.

Now regardless of how we interpret Paterson's survival hypothesis, his affirmation of a favorable likelihood for the S-hypothesis is subject to the same kind of criticism that I raised in connection with Ducasse's survival argument. With reference to each evidence set $E_1, \ldots, E_n$, it is unclear why the S-hypothesis should lead us to expect $E_1, \ldots, E_n$, even if this requires only that the evidence be less surprising given survival than given rival hypotheses. Generating well-defined likelihoods at each stage of the cumulative argument will require auxiliary assumptions.

Suppose that the survival hypothesis is a modest one, namely that merely something of us persists after death. It is considerably difficult to see why such a modest hypothesis would lead us to expect any of the evidence under examination. The problem, to be further explored in subsequent chapters, is that it will be very easy to retrofit any observation to the hypothesis and very difficult to generate any genuine prediction, which by definition must exclude some empirically possible states of affairs. For example, if the "something" that survives excludes memories, then arguably we would not expect veridical claims about formerly living persons. If memories are included

under the hypothesis, then arguably we would expect veridical claims about the lives of formerly living persons that originated from their ostensibly surviving minds. If we don't know the content of the survival hypothesis, we simply do not know what evidence for survival (as opposed to evidence against survival) will look like. It also follows that we would not be able to discriminate between personal survival and a (more or less) attenuated survival hypothesis.

Now suppose that we construe the argument as one for personal survival. Why should the persistence of persons after death lead us to expect the evidence under consideration? The potential problem is particularly acute with reference to the specific kinds of evidence under consideration – for example, the detailed data of mediumistic communications and CORTs. But it is also problematic when the matter is stated in very general terms. Why should postmortem survival lead us to expect *any* appearance of survival in the world? Since the appearance of personal survival would depend on there being evidence of the postmortem persistence of the psychological profile of some formerly living person, there would need to be a (direct or indirect) manifestation of this psychological profile in our world subsequent to the death of the formerly living person. There are lots of ways in which this *could* happen, and of course, the evidence of psychical research illustrates some of these possibilities. However, many of these possibilities will depend on attributing to deceased persons the power and interests to communicate with the living and will depend on survivors retaining enough knowledge (and skills) to allow us to identify ostensible communications as originating from the persons in question. It has been part of my emerging criticism of survival arguments that we are largely ignorant about whether the conditions required for the appearance of survival in our world actually obtain. To that extent, it is doubtful that Paterson can justify the relevant likelihoods needed for the survival argument.

8.4.2 Auxiliary assumptions about postmortem consciousness

Interestingly enough, unlike many authors, Paterson actually considers various conceivable afterlife scenarios, ranging from survivors with greatly enhanced intellectual powers, to the survival of a fairly well intact, properly functioning mind (continuous with our present psychology), to something considerably less than a functioning mind (including Broad's non-personal psychic factor) that is significantly discontinuous with our present psychology (1995: 191–2). Paterson notes that at this juncture, "we are very much in the sphere of speculation," and any survival hypothesis that involves more robust conceptions of survival will have a lower probability because such hypotheses are more complex (1995: 192). Both points are correct. But this is why our being justified in likelihoods concerning survival is highly problematic at best and, even if purchased, plausibly come at the cost of significantly lowering the prior probability of the survival hypothesis.

However, despite admitting the conjectural nature of assumptions about the afterlife and postmortem consciousness, Paterson acknowledges his reliance on certain requisite assumptions at this juncture, assumptions he claims are the "least conjectural" options in the conceptual space. He adopts the view that "the safest course is to assume that minds which function in a certain way when embodied will probably continue to function in a broadly similar way when they are disembodied, naturally making due allowance for the huge consequences which must be inseparable from the fact of disembodiment itself" (1995: 192). On this basis, Paterson assumes that if persons survive death, they are likely to have (i) a capacity for psi functioning, possibly enhanced in the state of disembodiment; (ii) various emotions, feelings, and moods; (iii) a large stock of memories of their antemortem existence; (iv) antemortem memories that are mixed with various degrees of imagination; (v) a capacity to form rational judgments; (vi) expressed preferences for their experience; (vii) private mental life; and (viii) various intentional states (1995: 193–8).

Elsewhere, Paterson embeds assumptions in the survival hypothesis. For example, consider Paterson's comments concerning failures in mediumistic communications:

> It is therefore by no means far-fetched to suppose that a disembodied spirit, if such there be, should often find himself unable to provide smoothly and promptly the kind of information we expect from him, since we may readily suppose that such a spirit would probably have to enter into an unusual mental state for the very purpose of communicating via a medium, who after all is herself in a state of deep or mild dissociation throughout most of her sitting. (1995: 173)

These many assumptions are far from unproblematic.

First, we might very well grant Paterson's general principle that patterns and processes of antemortem cognitive functioning will probably continue into the afterlife, but this is insufficient to underwrite several of his more specific claims about what we should expect of postmortem persons. The problem here is that Paterson is unjustifiably narrow in his conception of antemortem cognitive functioning. In this domain, we not only find the kinds of cognitive processes that Paterson notes but also – as Broad explained (see §2.3) – dream-world experiences, a range of dissociative phenomena (including extreme dissociative pathology such as dissociative identity disorder), and various forms of amnesia. Since some of these forms of cognitive functioning are produced by trauma, they are highly salient to conjectures about what consciousness might be like after the experience of physical death. Moreover, Paterson himself acknowledges the possibility of (radical) alterations to consciousness in the afterlife (1995: 53–7, 191–2).

Furthermore, even if we grant Paterson the cognitive processes that he identifies, they do not underwrite the kinds of more specific assumptions that would be required for relevant survival likelihoods. For example, while memory might continue, it remains an open question whether these memories would include antemortem memories, much less antemortem memories of a fairly extensive sort. And while we might grant that it is not "far-fetched" to suppose that survivors would experience difficulty providing consistent information, even if they retained substantial ante-mortem memories, this is far from conferring on the supposition any positive probability. As we saw in §2.3, there are many different suppositions we might make at this juncture. Many of these are not far-fetched but they are nonetheless incompatible with each other. The cognitive powers of survivors might include psi functioning (and maybe for only *some* survivors), but we have no more reason to suppose that these powers will be enhanced in the afterlife as opposed to diminished. So it is very difficult to say whether we are entitled to attribute to survivors the degree or kind of psi that would be required for complex interactions and communications with multiple living persons. Of course, even if survivors retained substantial antemortem memories and had the ability to communicate with the living, it would be greatly conjectural to expect continuing interests or purposes to communicate, much less to frame even a general conception of the manner and content of such communications. So despite Paterson's claim to have identified the "least conjectural" auxiliaries, I think his discussion does not, at least in this respect, advance beyond Ducasse's argument. Paterson does not alleviate the concern that we are not justified in affirming survival likelihoods.

8.4.3   Bayesian implications

As already indicated in connection with Ducasse, the dependence on auxiliary assumptions has important implications for the Bayesian survival argument. These implications may be stated here with a bit more refinement in the context of Paterson's argument.

The "ruling out" of rival hypotheses – the negative tier of the survival argument – is central to survival arguments, and we have seen in some detail the specific role this maneuver plays in underwriting Bayesian inferences. Moreover, both Ducasse and Paterson consider the appeal to living-agent psi (supplemented in the appropriate ways) as the nearest explanatory competitor – that is, the rival hypothesis that competes most closely with the survival hypothesis. As we have seen, the ruling out strategy involves arguing that the hypothesis of living-agent psi either has a very low likelihood or a very low prior probability. However, Paterson's argument further illustrates why survivalists have overestimated the success of this negative tier of the survival argument.

First, as is clear from the LAP$_R$-hypothesis, it is relatively easy to modify a hypothesis with a low likelihood so that it has a high likelihood. Just add assumptions. Whereas the simple appeal to telepathy or clairvoyance – that is, the LAP-hypothesis – has a low likelihood, when this hypothesis is supplemented with various assumptions, it ends up with a high likelihood, arguably equal to what survivalists wish to claim on behalf of the S-hypothesis. However, the survivalist complaint at this juncture is that the high likelihood is purchased at the cost of significant reduction of prior probability, so the apparent "gain" is washed out by a kind of epistemic blowback. And so the survival inference remains intact. It is correct, as Paterson himself noted, that the modification of a hypothesis by addition results in diminished prior probability because simplicity is a determinant of prior probability: the more complex a theory is, the less (intrinsically) probable it is. Moreover, as Ducasse and Paterson both note, there is no independent support for the auxiliary assumptions that must be introduced to boost the likelihood of appeals to living-agent psi. Hence, the LAP$_R$-hypothesis appears ad hoc, "bulked up" with assumptions designed to rescue the simpler LAP-hypothesis from explanatory inadequacy.

However, the survivalist is in a particularly poor position to raise this objection because the same objection would appear to apply *mutatis mutandis* to the survival hypothesis. A simple survival hypothesis does not lead us to expect the relevant evidence, even when the evidence is described in the most general way. Like the LAP-hypothesis, the S-hypothesis must be modified into a robust survival hypothesis, S$_R$, in order for it to have any predictive consequences. This "bulking up" will necessarily lower the prior probability of the hypothesis since it introduces added complexity. More important, if the auxiliaries relied on by survivalists are not independently supported, then we will have to judge the S$_R$-hypothesis as being inadequate in precisely the same way that the survivalist judges the LAP$_R$-hypothesis to be inadequate. Each will have a low prior probability and the alleged advantage held by the survival hypothesis will dissolve.

Applied specifically to Paterson's argument, the epistemic/explanatory fallout neutralizes the cumulative case argument in at least two ways.

(I)   The relevant hypothesis is not the S-hypothesis, which yields no well-defined likelihood, but the S$_R$-hypothesis (robust survival). So we must consider $\Pr(S_R \mid K)$, not $\Pr(S \mid K)$. Necessarily, $\Pr(S_R \mid K) \ll \Pr(S \mid K)$, and so the relevant issue is whether $\Pr(S_R \mid K)$ approaches ½ before the last strand of evidence is considered. And at all events, Paterson does not show that it does because the survival hypothesis that is initially improbable, an improbability that the evidence is supposed to overcome, is a simple survival hypothesis. I do not think Paterson has done nearly enough to show that the addition of auxiliaries (discussed at the end of his book) is justified. So even if there is an incremental

confirmation at each stage, as new evidence is introduced, we are not justified in concluding that the case for survival achieves a favorable posterior probability – that is, > ½.

(II) Incremental confirmation (by which the probability of S would be raised) depends on, for each evidence E_n, $\Pr(E_n \mid S \& K) > \Pr(E_n \mid {\sim}S \& K)$. Evidence will increase the probability of the survival hypothesis (from any assumed prior probability) if and only if the evidence in question is more to be expected if the survival hypothesis is true than if it is false. Of course, what we must really say here is that incremental confirmation depends on $\Pr(E_n \mid S_R \& K) > \Pr(E_n \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ because we must consider the hypotheses in their robust forms. Since $\Pr(E_n \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ is the sum of the likelihoods of all robustly formulated rival hypotheses, it will be essential that $\Pr(E_n \mid {\sim} S_R \& K)$ be smaller relative to $\Pr(E_n \mid S_R \& K)$. The significance posed by the LAP_R-hypothesis is that it threatens to close this gap between $\Pr(E_n \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ and $\Pr(E_n \mid S_R \& K)$.

The survivalist strategy, exemplified by Ducasse and Paterson (and other survivalists as we shall subsequently see), is to mitigate this gap closure by switching the discussion to the alleged inferior prior probability of the LAP_R-hypothesis. But the validity of this maneuver depends on a more thorough reckoning with the extent and justification of the auxiliary assumptions implicated in the positive tier of the survivalist argument – the contention that the world is in certain respects the way we would expect it to be if the survival hypothesis were true.

9
The Problem of Auxiliary Assumptions

Empirical arguments for survival purport to justify the claim that there is evidence that supports the hypothesis of survival. In Chapter 3 through Chapter 5, I surveyed some of the widely discussed forms of such evidence: evidence from out-of-body and near-death experiences (E_{OBE}), mediumistic communications (E_{MED}), and cases of the reincarnation type (E_{CORT}). As explored in Chapter 6 through Chapter 8, the claim that these data (severally or collectively) provide evidence, possibly very strong evidence, for survival is based at least in part on the claim that these data are what we would expect if the survival hypothesis is true, and they are either less expected or not to be expected at all if survival is not true. As explained in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, the latter clause depends on there not being some rival hypothesis that leads us to expect the data as well as does the survival hypothesis. So "likelihoods" are a crucial feature of empirical survival arguments, and it is essential that likelihoods be well-defined, permitting contrastive judgments such as $\Pr(e \mid h_1 \& k) > \Pr(e \mid h_2 \& k)$, which formally expresses the more informal idea that evidence e is more to be expected given hypothesis h_1 than given hypothesis h_2.

In the course of the prior three chapters, I have increasingly drawn attention to an important though typically unacknowledged, or at least unexplored, feature of empirical survival arguments, namely their dependence on auxiliary assumptions. I have argued that well-defined likelihoods require that hypotheses be supplemented with the appropriate auxiliary assumptions. This "auxiliary assumption requirement" (hereinafter AAR) entails that the hypothesis of personal survival will not lead us to expect the relevant evidence (more or less than any competing hypothesis) unless it is supplemented with various assumptions, assumptions mainly concerning the nature of the afterlife and postmortem consciousness. I have also considered, at least in a preliminary way, AAR's implications for the main issues associated with Bayesian analyses of survival arguments – assessing the prior probability and likelihood of the survival hypothesis. In the present chapter, I more thoroughly explore AAR and the challenge it

poses to empirical survival arguments. After uncovering and clarifying the kinds of assumptions on which survival arguments depend, I provide an initial exploration of what I will call the "problem of auxiliaries" (PoA), to be further developed in the remaining chapters.

9.1   Survival scenarios and likelihoods

As indicated in the prior chapters, a simple hypothesis of personal survival, one that just postulates a surviving individual soul, person, mind, or consciousness, generates no well-defined likelihood, because it has no consequences for what we should expect to find in the way of observational evidence or features of the empirical world. Antony Flew correctly made this observation with respect to postulating "spirits" to account for the data of psychical research:

> until and unless the concept "spirit" is made a great deal more specific than it is at present, the spirit account cannot serve as a scientific hypothesis. To use it as such we should have to be able to deduce from it definite and testable consequences. We should need to be able to say that, if it were correct, such and such tests would yield such and such results. We cannot, because with the spirits anything goes; nothing is definitely predictable. Or, to put it less misleadingly, the concept of spirit is hopelessly indeterminate. (1973: 126)

Flew's point would apply equally to alternative versions of the survival hypothesis that replace "spirit" with "a personal stream of consciousness with its memories of past earthly life" (Hyslop 1919: 53), "the continuation of conscious life" (Ducasse 1961: 11), or the postmortem persistence of a "non-physical subject of conscious states" (Lund 2009: 62, 83). Similarly, suppose that "personal survival" just means "the theory that some significant part of the human personality continues to exist after the death of the physical body" (Becker 1993: 2). This fares no better than the other simple formulations. While it predicts the persistence of some significant part of the personality, it does not by itself lead us to expect *evidence* of this, because the theory of survival as described is (logically and probabilistically) compatible with there being no evidence of the continuation of any part of the personality, significant or otherwise. A fortiori, a simple survival hypothesis does not lead us to expect the kinds of evidence covered in Chapter 3 through Chapter 5.

   The point can be easily demonstrated. As explored in Chapter 2, there are various conceivable or possible "survival scenarios." Many of them would not lead us to expect the kinds of evidence discussed in prior chapters. Consider the following seven such scenarios.

SS_1: Some persons survive death (as discarnate souls), but in the absence of a functioning brain, they do not exhibit any mental states or exert causal influence on our world.

SS_2: Some persons survive death as conscious beings, but their postmortem psychological profile has minimal memorial or character continuity with their antemortem psychological profile.

SS_3: Some persons survive death as conscious beings and both desire and intend to communicate, but they lack the ability to communicate.

SS_4: Some persons survive death as conscious beings and possess the ability to communicate, but they lack the desire and/or intention to communicate.

SS_5: Some persons survive death as conscious beings, but they lack the ability, desire, and intention to communicate.

SS_6: Only non-differentiated consciousness persists after the death of a living person.

SS_7: Only the dispositional basis of some formerly living person persists after death.

In the language of Chapter 2, SS_2 is a form of attenuated survival, SS_3 through SS_5 each involve postmortem constraints that defeat the interactionist thesis discussed in Chapter 2, and SS_6 and SS_7 are forms of non-personal survival. Of course, these are only *some* from among the broader range of survival scenarios canvassed in Chapter 2. There are, obviously, variations on these scenarios. For example, SS_1 through SS_5 claim only that some persons survive death, but we might suppose that all persons survive death. Also, perhaps specific survival scenarios are indexed to different *individual* survivors, so that there would be a distribution of varying powers, desires, intentions, degrees of knowledge and memory, and so on over the range of various survivors. So perhaps SS_2 is true for some people, SS_4 is true for other people, and so on.

   I highlight these particular survival scenarios because (i) they are compatible with survival (and five of them are compatible with personal survival), but (ii) they yield likelihoods unfavorable to the argument for survival. If we supplemented a simple hypothesis of personal survival with any of the scenarios SS_1 through SS_5, then the resultant survival theory would not lead us to expect any or most of the evidence covered under E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT}. In fact, in some of the scenarios, the likelihood of the survival hypothesis would be zero. For example, if survivors did not have the ability to communicate with the living, the probability of the relevant evidence from mediumship would be zero: $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \& SS_3 \& K) = 0$. This is a well-defined likelihood, but it is strongly unfavorable to the case for survival from mediumship. More generally, if we were to adopt SS_3, SS_4, or SS_5, then

we should not expect survivors to communicate with the living. If we were to adopt S_2, then we should not expect communications to contain indications of strong or even moderate psychological continuity with any formerly living person. Since much of E_{MED} involves such evidence, we would have to say that $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \& SS_2 \& K) =$ very low. And similarly, for much of E_{CORT}, we should have to say $Pr(E_{CORT} \mid S \& SS_2 \& K) =$ very low. This also underscores that it is not merely the evidence under a very specific description that would not be expected. The above survival scenarios do not lead us to expect the evidence even as more generally described.

The problem here is one broadly encountered in hypothesis testing, and it is particularly acute when it comes to what we might call "exotic" hypotheses. For example, consider SETI – the (scientifically based) search for extra-terrestrial intelligence. While the simple hypothesis that *intelligent extra-terrestrial life exists somewhere in our galaxy* has empirical consequences, it does not by itself tell us whether the existence of such beings would be presently detectable to us and if so what form the evidence would take. These issues depend on adopting a robust set of assumptions, but very different kinds of assumptions are possible at this juncture, each with different predictive consequences. For example, we might assume that extra-terrestrial (ET) civilizations never develop the capability of interstellar travel or that they simply find it unimportant, impractical, or undesirable. In this case, we would not expect to find any physical or trace evidence of their existence elsewhere in the galaxy. Of course, their existence might nonetheless be remotely detectable as the result of (intentional or accidental) information originating from their planet or beacons located elsewhere. But again, whether we should expect this and what it should look like (the medium and content of communications) depends on the precise assumptions we select. We might suppose that technological civilizations are very short-lived, which prevents them from generating radio or other technologically based detectable messages, and so we should not expect to detect any such message. Or perhaps the scale or distance between civilizations prevents communication between them. Alternatively, even if we assume that ET would develop the requisite technology to communicate, and also a strong interest in doing so, assumptions about how they would communicate would be crucial to informing us in a very general way about what the evidence should look like (e.g. radio transmissions vs. neutrino signals and continuous signals vs. beacons). Most generally stated, the predictive consequences of there being some intelligent ET civilization depends in part on what we assume about the behavior, life, and technology of such civilizations. In the absence of this, we cannot say whether we should be able to detect their existence, what the evidence of their existence should look like, and hence whether the absence of evidence at this stage is in fact evidence of their absence.[1]

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[1] For SETI arguments, see Davies (2010), Shuch (2011), and Webb (2002).

In the context of the empirical survival debate, the problem here can be simply stated: a simple survival hypothesis does not discriminate between survival scenarios that would lead us to expect the evidence and those that do not lead us to expect the evidence (or more radically that confer a probability of zero on the evidence). There are no predictive consequences for a survival hypothesis that might fall into the logical space of any of the scenarios above. Merely postulating "survival of the self" or "survival of consciousness" does not tell us enough to determine how the empirical world should look. So a simple survival hypothesis has no well-defined likelihood.

9.2   Auxiliary assumptions in arguments from mediumship

The survival hypotheses sketched above confer low or zero probabilities on the data because they are more robust than the simple supposition of survival. This is crucial. Recall the Duhem-Quine thesis (mentioned in §8.2.1): hypotheses must be tested in bundles (central hypothesis and auxiliaries) because single hypotheses rarely have (deductive or probabilistic) predictive consequences. As we saw in §8.2.1, postulating that *Mr. Brimmer murdered Mrs. Kennicut at his home* leads me to expect the relevant data only if I assume further statements about Mr. Brimmer and the murder. Predictive derivations depend on incorporating auxiliary assumptions. Hence, we can test hypotheses (against their predictive consequences) only by embedding them in sets of statements that jointly have predictive consequences. Call this "hypothesis robustness." SS_1 through SS_7 each generate hypothesis robustness, but they result in predictive consequences that do not fit the observational evidence. So the survivalist must locate assumptions that generate hypothesis robustness and result in predictive consequences that *fit* the observational evidence. Such a hypothesis must minimally discriminate between survival scenarios that lead us to expect the salient data and those that do not. This implies a robust survival hypothesis with auxiliaries *incompatible* with the survival scenarios above. In the case of mediumship, the robust survival hypothesis should have a high likelihood vis-à-vis E_{MED}. What is needed are survival-friendly auxiliaries A_S such that $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \, \& \, A_S \, \& \, K)$ = high, or at least > $Pr(E_{MED} \mid C \, \& \, A_C \, \& \, K)$, where A_C = auxiliaries utilized by a competing hypothesis C.

9.2.1   Survivalist assumptions embedded in predictive claims

As noted beginning in §6.1.1, specifically in connection with the discussion of Hodgson's explanatory survival argument, when presenting the argument for survival, survivalists often make (broadly) predictive claims – that is, claims to the effect that some piece of evidence is what *we would expect* if the survival hypothesis were true. Since predictive claims carry the "signature" of auxiliary statements, they provide the best insight into the

kinds of auxiliary assumptions on which survivalists have at least implicitly relied.

Hodgson was one of the earliest writers to parse the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis (at least partly) in terms of the hypothesis's predictive power, which for Hodgson meant that the evidence collected from mediumship is exactly what we would expect to find if communicators are indeed the surviving spirits of the deceased persons they claim to be. Hodgson invoked this to account not only for Mrs. Piper's "hits" but also for her "misses." With reference to the G.P. communicator's correct claims, Hodgson wrote, the "G.P. communicator has shown the remembrances and the continued interest that we should expect to find in the independent intelligence of the real persisting G.P." (1898: 331). Again, "Out of a large number of sitters who went as strangers to Mrs. Piper, the communicating G.P. has picked out the friends of G.P. living, precisely as the G.P. living might have been expected to do" (1898: 330). But Mrs. Piper's "misses" are also what we would expect, for if at the time of death persons are mentally or physically debilitated, "the confusion and failure which we find in Mrs. Piper's trance communications are so far from being what we should *not* expect, that they are exactly what we *should* expect, if the alleged spirits are communicating" (Hodgson 1898: 367).

The general assumption behind Hodgson's analysis of Mrs. Piper's mediumship is the thesis of strong psychological continuity. This is evident from his emphasis on mediumistic claims about the deceased that are highly specific, often including trivial details but details that we would expect the formerly living person to know. But as the above reminds us, it is also evidence according to Hodgson's emphasis on how diminished cognitive capacities at the time of death are likely to persist into the initial phases of an afterlife. It would be fair to say that the assumption of strong psychological continuity is ubiquitous in the general literature. In considering the data of mediumship as evidence for personal survival, Gauld wrote:

> We would need evidence of intelligence, of personality characteristics, of goals, purposes and affections, and of a stream of memory, that are *largely* or *recognizably continuous* with those once possessed by a certain formerly incarnate human being. (1982: 8, emphasis mine)

Lund, though writing on apparitions of the dead, conveys a similar commitment to strong psychological continuity, which is presupposed elsewhere in his arguments (see §10.2). In arguing for the superior explanatory power of the survival hypothesis, Lund writes: "Then too, the motives and purposes exhibited in post-mortem apparitions typically are those the apparent, but not the perceiver or other living beings, would be expected to have" (Lund 2009: 152). The widespread assumption is that there are certain phenomena that are the sort of phenomena we would expect if some formerly living

person were still living. Hence, the occurrence of such phenomena is evidence that the person has survived death.

9.2.2   Minimal required assumptions

If the survival hypothesis is to lead us to expect the range of data included under E_{MED}, the following kinds of assumptions will be necessary:

> A1: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would be conscious in a discarnate state, where "discarnate state" refers to a state of existence without a physical body.

> A2: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would retain many of the detailed and highly specific memories of their antemortem existence.

> A3: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would retain many or most of the personality traits and skills that characterized P in his antemortem existence, or at least some significant traits/skills idiosyncratically linked to P in his antemortem existence.[2]

> A4: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would possess knowledge of events taking place in our world after their death or the states of mind of living persons.

> A5: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would possess the desire and intention to communicate with the living.

> A6: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would possess the ability to communicate with the living.

A1 affirms that some survivors would be conscious in the absence of a physical body, thereby ruling out survival scenario SS_1 above. The next two assumptions concern what consciousness would be like for at least some deceased persons. A2 concerns the degree of autobiographical memories the deceased would have, thereby ruling out survival scenario S_2. A3 concerns continuity of other features of a person's psychological profile, and thus it also rules out S_2. A4 concerns survivors having persisting, though perhaps intermittent, knowledge of states of affairs in the world of living persons, thereby ruling out survival scenario SS_3. Inasmuch as the ability to communicate with the living depends on survivors knowing what is happening in the world of the subjects with whom they communicate, A4 is essential to successful communications. Moreover, just as A1 is not entailed by merely positing surviving persons or selves, neither A2 nor A4 is entailed by positing the persistence of consciousness in a discarnate state. These are independent conditions. Furthermore, A4 tells us what some deceased

persons would want to do, and A6 tells us that they would be able to efficaciously bring about their purposes. A5 rules out survival scenario S_4, and A5 rules out survival scenario SS_3. A5 and A6 jointly rule out survival scenario S_5. To generalize, A1–A6 are auxiliary assumptions that severally and jointly *rule out* survival scenarios that prevent a simple survival hypothesis from having confirmatory predictive consequences, and they jointly lead us to expect evidence of postmortem communications with content suggestive of the identity of the communicator.

9.2.3   Additional auxiliary assumptions

However, further assumptions are required. For example, philosophers and parapsychologists have generally acknowledged that, inasmuch as survivors are discarnate persons, a survivor's epistemic access to the world would need to be a potent form of extrasensory perception (e.g. telepathy and clairvoyance) and a survivor's causal influence over the world would need to be a potent form of telepathy (to influence other minds) or psychokinesis (to influence physical properties of the world).[3] Since discarnate persons are *ex hypothesi* without physical bodies, their modes of knowing and causal interaction would have to be direct or wholly unmediated by a body or cognitive system associated with a body. So for any discarnate survivor, A4 and A6 will logically entail a more specific assumption about the cognitive and causal powers of the deceased, namely:

> A7: There are some living persons P such that, if P were to survive death, P would exhibit efficacious psychic functioning in the form of extrasensory perception (clairvoyance and telepathy) and (possibly) psychokinesis.

In §4.6, I focused exclusively on data from mediumship that are prima facie suggestive of survival (E_{MED}), but in connection with Hodgson's analysis of Mrs. Piper's mediumship (§6.1.1), we saw that the relevant range of data is considerably broader than E_{MED} in §4.6. In addition to Mrs. Piper's quantitatively and qualitatively robust veridical claims and convincing personations of the deceased, her communicators and controls also exhibited confusion and inaccuracies, and she made outright false statements about the deceased on different occasions, as well as failed to provide convincing personations.

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[2] The "survivors" in A3 might be regarded as a subset of the larger group of communicating survivors because if the data of mediumship extends to non-trance mental mediumship, the data might not include indications that the communicator is continuous with his antemortem life in the manner specified in A3.

[3] Survivalists and skeptics have both acknowledged this requirement. See Braude (2003: 20–2); Broad (1962: 409); Flew (1953: 69); Gauld (1982: 139, 145, 159, 231–2, 236, 241, 248–50); Lund (2009: 78–82, 142, 151–2); Penelhum (1970: 30–6, 39–43); and Price (1995d: 246–7).

Hodgson's "expanded" data set (e32 through e37 in §6.1.1) entails two important generalized data:

e38: Communicators and controls in trance mediumship often exhibit confusion in their answers to questions, as well as provide inaccurate and false statements about the deceased.

e39: Communicators and controls in trance mediumship often lack various cognitive, linguistic, and other skills that characterized the formerly living person they claim to be.

The total evidence requirement for inductive reasoning implies that we must include all relevant evidence, and so data such as e38 and e39 must be included within the total evidence set, especially since, prima facie, these data at least complicate the inference to survival. Clearly, an auxiliary such as A2 is required for the medium's veridical claims to count as evidence for survival, but then arguably e38 is something of an anomaly. Similarly, A3 is essential for personation data to count as evidence for survival, but then e39 is something of an anomaly. On the one hand, we must adopt a broad assumption of moderate to strong psychological continuity to account for much of E_{MED}, but then this must be qualified to account for the rather significant failures of communicators and controls to manifest moderate to strong psychological continuity on other occasions. So some further assumption is needed to bring the survival hypothesis into an optimal fit with the total relevant evidence.

Survivalists have proposed a few different added assumptions at this juncture. Hodgson of course had conjectured that the mental condition of a person at death plausibly continues into the afterlife, at least initially, in which case "the confusion and failure which we find in Mrs. Piper's trance communications are…exactly what we should expect, if the alleged spirits are communicating" (1898: 367). Hodgson had also conjectured that regardless of the condition at death, we should expect difficulty in initial communications since death itself would present a challenge to spirits. In his examination of Mrs. Piper's mediumship, Sage nicely summarized Hodgson's position on how death is conjectured to affect postmortem consciousness.

Besides, there is always more or less incoherence in the communications made very shortly after death, even when the communicator has kept his full mental faculties up to his last moments. But if the communicator were really what he says he is, we should expect this, for three reasons – the violent shock of disincarnation must trouble the mind, the arrival in an entirely new environment, where he must at first be unable to distinguish much, should trouble him still more; and lastly, these first attempts at communication may be impeded by his want of skill in using the strange organism [of the medium]." (Sage 2007: 68–9)

This suggests the following auxiliary assumption:

> $A8_A$: There are some living persons P such that if P were to survive death, P's cognitive and causal powers would be attenuated for at least some initial postmortem period $t_1, \dots, t_n$.

$A8_A$ would lead us to expect (given the earlier auxiliaries) that some communicators would exhibit less than moderate to strong psychological continuity with their antemortem psychological profile in their initial communications with the living (where these occur proximate to their death). But there are other possibilities here. Hornell Hart (1959: 86–8, 106), for example, drew particular attention to Drayton Thomas's contention that the source of the problem was in *the communicator*. However, rather than deriving from the effects of death on consciousness, the ostensible "failures" in communication derive from the effects of attempted communication with the living. On Thomas's view, during communication with living persons, discarnate survivors experience diminished causal power and a temporary weakening of cognition, including memory (Hart 1959: 87–8, 106; cf. Braude 2003: 66). On this view, the operative assumption would be:

> $A8_B$: There are some living persons P such that if P were to survive death and communicate with the living at postmortem time $t_1, \dots, t_n$, P's cognitive and causal powers would become attenuated during $t_1, \dots, t_n$.

Unlike $A8_A$, $A8_B$ has the advantage that it would cover mediumistic failures with communicators who have been deceased for a long period of time. Alternatively, we might suppose that the locus of the "problem" is not in the communicator but in *the medium* (Braude 2003: 54–5, 66–7). In mental mediumship, we might suppose that information originating from the deceased has been filtered, interpreted, or otherwise altered by the medium's own mind by the time it reaches her consciousness, especially if the information were to pass through or be influenced by the medium's unconscious mind. In trance mediumship, the communicators may be "virtual survivors": a joint product of information originating from the actual deceased person and the medium's own unconscious construction. This would also be useful for explaining the obviously fictitious controls exhibited even by superior mediums such as Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Leonard. Hart's "persona theory," invoked to account for fictitious communicators and inaccurate claims about the deceased, is an illustration of this (Hart 1959: 189–205). As Hart argued, permitting a substantial contribution by the (subconscious) mind of the medium helps explain many of the otherwise recalcitrant data in a way consistent with the survival hypothesis.

> $A8_C$: There are some living persons M such that if M were to receive information from some discarnate person P_i at time $t_1, \dots, t_n$, the information

would be subject to a cognitive process in which filtering, interpretation, and reconstruction by the medium's own mind lowers the accuracy and reliability of the content of the communications.

A fourth possibility concerns the *method* of communication. For example, perhaps direct control of the medium's body is a more reliable method of communication than telepathic interaction, or vice-versa.

A8$_D$: There are some living persons P such that if P were to survive death and communicate with the living, certain modes of communication would produce more accurate and reliable information than others.

So it looks like there are at least four auxiliary assumptions that would severally prima facie account for mediumistic "failures," and arguably, A8$_C$ covers the largest range of otherwise recalcitrant data and the appearance of fictitious controls. In the interest of maximal charity, I will take the relevant auxiliary here to be the disjunction of each of these possibilities.

A8: either A8$_A$ or A8$_B$ or A8$_C$ or A8$_D$.

9.2.4   A robust survival hypothesis with a favorable likelihood

I will refer to the conjunction of A1–A8 as A$_S$ and the conjunction of the simple hypothesis of survival S and A$_S$ as a robust survival hypothesis. However, unlike conjoining S and S$_1$, S$_2$, and so on, it is a robust survival hypothesis that is *favorable* to the likelihood of survival. More specifically, we can say that the simple survival hypothesis S and A$_S$ together prevent the survival hypothesis from having a likelihood of zero vis-à-vis the relevant evidence. Moreover, I think we can also say that this robust survival hypothesis leads us to expect much of the evidence under E$_{MED}$, as well as E$_{MED}$ supplemented with e38 and e39, at least where some of this evidence is more *generally* described.

G1: There will be features of the empirical world suggestive of postmortem communications that originate from some formerly living persons.

G2: The content of the communications will include specific and detailed information about the antemortem life of some particular deceased person (as implied by e7, e8, e9, e10, and e11).

G3: The content of the communications will include information about postmortem happenings in the life of friends and family members of the deceased.

G4: The content of the communications will have indications of the beliefs, purposes, and personality traits of the deceased (as implied by e7, e8, e9, e10, e11, e15, and e16)

G5: The content of the communications will not be fully accurate or consistent (as implied by e31, e32, e33, e34, e35, e36, and e37 and summarized by e38 and e39).

Some parapsychologists are willing to go further and argue that *if* we grant the previous auxiliaries, specifically strong psychological continuity, we may also plausibly expect some of the general features of the "cross-correspondences" (e12 and e14) and "drop-in" communicators (e13), the salient evidential features of which were discussed in §4.6. Gauld, for instance, wrote the following:

There have been, however, some people who, when alive, exhibited an intense, even a passionate interest in the problem of survival itself, and the methods by which it may be investigated. We might expect that if such persons in some form survive the dissolution of their bodies, they will make some special, ingenious, and above all planned, attempt to prove this fact to those still on earth. (1982: 77)

With respect to drop-in phenomena, Gauld said:

If communication between the living and the dead is possible, and can be carried on through the agency of mediums, we should expect to meet "drop-in" communicators, for there must be many recently deceased persons who earnestly desire to send messages of comfort, reassurance and advice to their bereaved relations. Had there been *no records at all* of verified "drop-in" communicators, the survivalist position would necessarily have been seriously weakened. (1982: 73).

So we can add:

G6: Communications through mediums will manifest in ways that correspond to some of the general features of the cross-correspondences.

G7: Communications through mediums will manifest in ways that correspond to some of the general features of the phenomenon of drop-in communicators.

Now, where G = the conjunction of G1–G7, I think we would be justified to claim that $Pr(G \mid S \& A_S \& K)$ = very high, perhaps close to 1. Moreover, given that G1–G7 provide more general descriptions of much of the evidence under E_{MED}, it seems plausible to suppose that $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \& A_S \& K)$ would be fairly high or at least not marginal or low, even if $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \& A_S \& K) < Pr(G \mid S \& A_S \& K)$. The central point, though, is that the likelihood of the survival hypothesis cannot be high (in relation to E_{MED}) unless we supplement the hypothesis with the auxiliaries above.

9.3   Auxiliary assumptions in other survival evidence

Arguments for survival from cases of the reincarnation type and out-of-body/near-death experiences also depend on auxiliaries. While some of these overlap with the auxiliaries already considered in connection with mediumship, the data included under E_{CORT} and E_{OBE} require an expansion of the auxiliary set. This is particularly important for cumulative case approaches to survival because they will need a larger set of auxiliaries to accommodate a broader range of data.

9.3.1   The reincarnation hypothesis and auxiliaries

The first thing to note is that some of the auxiliaries discussed above will not be required for arguments for personal survival from E_{CORT}. The phenomena under discussion relate to ostensible evidence for survival that derives from patterns exhibited solely in embodied persons, none of which involve ostensible communications with the living that originate from discarnate persons. So we can safely dispense with A5 and A6. Also, with one potentially significant exception to be noted below, there is no need to postulate A4, since none of the data requires attributing to survivors any knowledge of this world acquired during a period of discarnate existence. Consequently, we can dispense also with A7, as there will be no need to postulate survivors using psychic functioning to access and interact with the world of living persons. We can even dispense with A1 since E_{CORT} does not presuppose any period of conscious discarnate existence for reincarnated persons.[4]

The relevant auxiliaries that carry over to CORTs would be A2 and A3. Without these auxiliaries, the survival hypothesis would have a very low likelihood vis-à-vis E_{CORT}. When we look back at E_{CORT} (in §5.5), the salient data include qualitatively robust veridical claims (e18, e19, e22, and e24) and quantitatively robust veridical claims (e20, e21, and e23). These strands of data, together with data relating to the behavior of subjects (e25 and e30), will – if taken as evidence of survival – require auxiliaries that posit moderate to strong psychological continuity with respect to memory, personality traits, and in some cases skills.

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[4] The referenced "exception" derives from the increasingly documented cases of child reincarnation subjects who testify to having had conscious existence during the intermediate state, the state between death and reincarnation (Ohkado and Akira 2014; Tucker 2005: 164–84; Sharma and Tucker 2004). If we included data from these cases, we would need to postulate A1 and in some cases also A4 and A7 since some of these subjects testify to acquired knowledge of the empirical world during an intermediate state of conscious existence. As noted in connection with A9 below (in text), some explanations of experimental birthmarks entail A4 and A7.

Becker illustrates this commitment:

> Taken together, the display – of memories that correspond to those we should expect if the deceased were still living; of habits, preferences, and skills, linguistic and physical; and of birthmarks like those of the deceased – makes up a stronger case for the identification of the mind of the subject with the mind of the deceased than for any of the so-called Super-ESP hypotheses proposed in the literature. (Becker, 1993: 33)

Almeder has also assumed a fairly robust conception of psychological continuity as essential to the argument for personal survival. This is most perspicuous in his argument for reincarnation. Here he emphasizes psychological continuity since it is essentially connected to the desideratum of a hypothesis's predictive power. If we know what constitutes personal identity over time (or what at least provides essential criteria for identifying persons), then we know in advance what would count as evidence for reincarnation. For Almeder, the relevant criteria are psychological in nature. More specifically, he takes the view that we have a sufficient justification for identifying person A as person B just if A's psychological profile strongly resembles person B's psychological profile.[5] Hence, if some presently living person A has a psychological profile that strongly resembles the psychological profile of some formerly living person B, we are justified to regard A as the reincarnation of B and hence to believe that person B has survived death.

> [W]e all pretty much know that [*sic*] what we would take as a necessary and sufficient condition for somebody being the reincarnation of Julius Caesar. Such a person would need to not only claim to remember having lived as Julius Caesar, but also that person would need to have many of the memories we would expect of Julius Caesar, some confirmed memories that only Julius Caesar could have, and a limited number

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[5] A minor wrinkle in Almeder's discussion (in several publications) needs ironing out, as he appears to conflate the metaphysical question of identity (what *constitutes* our identity) and the epistemological question of identity (what provides *evidence* of identity). Cf. Almeder (1992: 83–9). Obviously, if our being a particular psychological package constitutes our identity, then evidence of our various psychological states (e.g. memory and purposes) will provide evidence of our identity. However, psychological criteria may be invoked to identify persons, even if their identity is not constituted by psychological properties. On a Cartesian dualist view, which Almeder endorses, one may take identity to be constituted by the sameness of *soul*, the evidence for which is located in psychological criteria. Also, if sameness of psychological profile (at some level) constitutes our identity, then arguably a simple survival hypothesis will have built into it many, if not all, of the psychological features of the auxiliaries A2 and A3. But this view of personal identity is widely rejected within philosophy, and Almeder provides no defense of it that cannot be reduced to reliance on psychological properties as epistemological criteria of identity.

of other mental states or dispositions having to do with one's sense of humor, temperament, or non-verbal skills possessed by the previous personality. ... So, there is a *prima facie* plausibility to the reincarnation hypothesis as an explanation of the data in the richer cases because the content of the richer cases is precisely what we would expect or predict if we thought there was any evidence at all that would confirm the hypothesis of reincarnation. (1996: 497–8)

Here Almeder assumes a hypothesis, not of personal survival in general, but of reincarnation in particular, and more specifically a reincarnation hypothesis according to which a formerly existing *person* is re-embodied on earth. Call this reincarnation hypothesis R. Almeder wants to claim that $Pr(E_{CORT} \mid R \& K)$ = very high. But of course, it will therefore be necessary to suppose that persons are reborn with *significant* psychological continuity with the psychological profile of their previous existence. While Almeder appears to think this is given analytically in the simple supposition that the same *person* is being reborn, this is doubtful for reasons discussed in Chapter 2. First, there are good reasons to reject psychological criteria for personal identity, even from a substance dualist viewpoint. Second, even if we accepted the idea that persons were constituted by a particular psychological package, Almeder employs a highly specific version of this, which necessarily carries less intuitive force. So R's high likelihood depends on conjoining the supposition of personal survival with auxiliaries A2 and A3.

However, it is implausible to suppose that $Pr(E_{CORT} \mid R \& A2 \& A3 \& K)$ is high, since some of the evidence under E_{CORT} is not probable given background knowledge supplemented only with A2 and A3. For example, strong psychological continuity does not lead us to expect anything about the age at which or circumstances under which past life memories would be recalled or forgotten (e29, e30, and e31). More significantly, though, the physical patterns (e27 and e28) are not probable given strong psychological continuity, and yet considerable weight is placed on these features in more recent literature. As Jim Tucker makes clear (2005: 67–85), we must make further assumptions to account for physical patterns. First, with respect to birthmarks that correspond to the fatal injury (or mode of death) for the previous personality, we must make the very general assumption that consciousness can produce significant bodily effects. We must also make a more specific assumption:

A9: Consciousness has a tendency to produce bodily effects that reproduce physical markings associated with traumatic events or fatal injuries.[6]

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[6] Tucker (2005: 81) makes the more modest claim that the auxiliary assumptions related to birthmarks are "possible." However, the relevant evidence will not be expected unless the auxiliary is more strongly formulated.

Second, with respect to experiment birthmarks, we must minimally assume either that the disembodied consciousness of the person clairvoyantly acquires knowledge of the marking of their body or there is telepathic report between some living person and the surviving of consciousness of the deceased (Tucker 2005: 81). So here we will be committed to the earlier assumptions that involve disembodied consciousness and psychic functioning in survivors: A1, A4, and A7. So as the various strands of evidence included under E_{CORT} are more deeply explored, it becomes apparent that more auxiliaries are required than what first appears to be the case.

It is worth further noting that the auxiliaries mentioned above do not severally or jointly lead us to expect that a surviving consciousness will be reincarnated. There is a conceptual and hence explanatory gap between a generic survival hypothesis and the more specific hypothesis of personal reincarnation. The survivalist will be entangled in further auxiliaries if he tries to bridge this gap and account for the fact that there is ostensible survival evidence *of this sort*. By taking the relevant hypothesis to be a reincarnation hypothesis, Almeder (and other survivalists) avoid having to identify auxiliaries that will lead us to expect surviving consciousness to become re-embodied and therefore for survival evidence to take the form of E_{CORT}. Hence, Almeder simply asks, if *reincarnation* were true, what would the evidence look like? That is to say, If persons survived death as re-embodied humans on earth, what would the evidence for this look like? Almeder's question is a relevant one, of course, but there is a higher-level evidential question here that a richer explanatory framework would need to address, namely, if human persons survive death, would we expect any of them to be reincarnated? Almeder's question is confined to exploring what the evidence for survival should look like *if* survival took a particular form (as reincarnation). The higher-level question asks us to consider more generally what we should expect the world to look like if individual consciousness were to survive death. Since the form of survival determines the kind of evidence that we would find, a theoretically rich account of survival should produce likelihoods informative about there being evidence of survival of a certain type. If we know that it is probable that the surviving consciousness of some people will be re-embodied on earth, then conjectures about what *that* would look like take on a deeper evidential relevance.[7]

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[7] A similar strategy is found in many arguments from the data of mediumship. Survivalists such Hodgson often ask questions such as, "If a certain deceased person were speaking through a particular medium, what would the evidence look like?" I do not intend to say that posing such a question is illegitimate, indeed it is important, but it *potentially* masks a larger number of assumptions about survival as such. Since arguments conditioned by such background assumptions are only as plausible as the assumptions on which the reasoning ultimately depends, many survival arguments are formulated in a way that masks rather than engages the crucial issues.

9.3.2   Auxiliaries embedded in OBEs and NDEs as evidence for survival

I discussed the evidence drawn from out-of-body and near-death experiences in Chapter 3, and the salient strands of evidence E_{OBE} were summarized in §3.5. I argued there that in addition to the core out-of-body phenomenology (e1) – what I designated "O-states of consciousness" – in some OBEs/NDEs subjects have apparently veridical perceptions of the empirical world (e2, e3, and e4), ostensible causal interaction with the empirical world (e4), encounter deceased persons in the form of apparitions (e5), and in some cases e1 through e5 take place during a cognition-impairing physiological state of the subject (e6). This is at best *indirect* evidence for survival in that in most of the cases the subjects have continuing brain functioning (and so do not meet a necessary criterion of clinical death). However, survivalists who wish to enlist OBEs/NDEs as evidence for survival propose an extrasomatic interpretation of such experiences. On this view, one's individual consciousness or mind exists (for some time) independently of or outside of the body. Obviously, if this interpretation is correct, materialist and epiphenomenalist views of the body-mind relation are false. In this way, E_{OBE} might weaken objections to the survival hypothesis and thereby boost its prior probability. So we should ask specifically about the predictive consequences of the extrasomatic hypothesis that is entailed by the survival hypothesis.

   I think it is fair to say that the extrasomatic hypothesis leads us to expect e6 without adding any additional assumptions. However, the rest of the evidence is not what we would expect unless we added the appropriate auxiliary assumptions. If O-states of consciousness involve veridical perceptions or causal interaction with the world, then they require psychic functioning. For instance, if subjects have perceptions of the physical environment during O-states and thereby perceive states of affairs proximate or remote to the subject's body, then these perceptions require clairvoyance because they would be unmediated by somatically-based processes of sense perception. So e2, e3, and e4 require psychic functioning in OBErs/NDErs. Also, if subjects have encounters with formerly living friends or family members (e5), then we must postulate telepathic interaction between two discarnate persons, something akin to H.H. Price's telepathically induced apparitions (discussed in §2.2.2). Furthermore, if subjects exert causal influence over the world (e4), then we must also attribute psychokinetic powers to at least some OBErs/NDErs. So the extrasomatic interpretation of OBEs/NDEs requires the adoption of A7. Survival arguments based on E_{OBE} cannot have a high likelihood unless we assume A7.

   I have only claimed that A7 would be *necessary* for the survival hypothesis to have a high likelihood vis-à-vis E_{OBE}. The mere supposition of consciousness existing independently of the body does not obviously lead

us to expect O-states, much less O-states that involve continued perceptions of the physical world. Price had pointed out that discarnate persons might perceive themselves as having bodies, and so we can conceive of survival scenarios in which survivors were not aware that they had died, a model of survival dramatically portrayed in M. Night Shyamalan's 1999 film, *The Sixth Sense* (Price 1995d: 244). While we might suppose that A7 would make continuing perceptions of the physical world unsurprising, the structural features of the prototypical NDE are not thereby to be expected. For example, there is no obvious reason why consciousness, if it should "separate" from the body, should perceive the empirical world, much less perceive it from a particular distance alleviated above the body, experience journeying through a tunnel toward a light, experience a life review, and so forth.

We can of course find auxiliaries that would render these phenomena less surprising than they would be if we were merely to postulate disembodied consciousness endowed with potent psychic functioning. For example, there is empirical support for the transformative nature of NDEs; that is, a significant percentage of subjects who have such experiences undergo moral and spiritual development as the result of the experience. Arguably it is the transcendental or otherworldly features of the experience that facilitate this – for example, encountering deceased family or friends, divine beings, or a life review. We might therefore adopt the following as an auxiliary.

A10: There are some living persons P such that P's moral and spiritual development is facilitated by O-state transcendental experiences.

Of course, there are also anomalies. Most persons do not have such experiences, or at least do not recall having them, and we might find this at least initially surprising. Moreover, among the persons who have such experiences, it is arguably surprising that more do not report veridical perceptions. Also, given that subjects report enhanced cognition during NDEs, it is initially surprising that subjects with veridical perceptions do not have more knowledge than they are able to report. The situation is somewhat similar to mediumistic communications and CORTs. On the one hand, survivalists place considerable emphasis on the veridical features of the cases, which allegedly cry out for explanation. On the other hand, subjects are ignorant of matters about which we would expect them to have knowledge. Presumably, similar auxiliaries as those appealed to account for recalcitrant evidence in mediumship and CORTs could be invoked here. This underscores an important point. At least some of the auxiliaries required by the argument for survival are required to account for observational evidence that is not to be expected given the predictive consequences of other auxiliary hypotheses.

9.4   The epistemic status of survivalist auxiliary assumptions

We now come to a crucial question concerning auxiliary assumptions: must they have some positive epistemic status? Must they be rationally acceptable or justified? If so, is there a specific criterion or constraint required for auxiliaries to be credentialed in this way. Consider that it is notoriously easy to locate some assumption or other that, when conjoined with a core hypothesis, produces a robust hypothesis or theory that leads us to expect the evidence (confirmation) or leads us to expect something incompatible with what we observe (disconfirmation). The hypothesis that *there is an elderly male invisible gardener who resides on my property* has no empirical consequences. It will, however, if I supplement it with the auxiliary assumption that *invisible elderly male gardeners attract blonde women to within 14 feet of themselves at the rate of three to five per week* or *invisible elderly male gardeners cause toilets in their proximity to backup once a week*. Here we have observational consequences that will either fit the actual data or not. But of course, there is something suspicious here. We might understandably be suspicious of this as a case in which the core hypothesis is confirmed if the corresponding prediction bears out or disconfirmed if the corresponding prediction fails to bear out.

The question is highly salient in the case for survival because if there are epistemic constraints on auxiliary assumptions or criteria they must satisfy, we will need to inquire whether the auxiliaries we have introduced are successful in this regard. Now there is little doubt that survivalists who have been conscious of their dependence on auxiliary assumptions have maintained that this dependence has been most reasonable. Recall that Hodgson posed the question, "what then are we justified in expecting if discarnate spirits do indeed return to communicate through Mrs. Piper's trance in the ways described?" (Hodgson 1898: 361). So he at least thought the issue was important, and of course, Hodgson thought his assumptions were entirely reasonable. Was he correct, though?

9.4.1   Hypothesis testing and auxiliary assumptions

A helpful way of approaching epistemic requirements for auxiliary assumptions is to consider the broader context of hypothesis testing. What is rightfully demanded of auxiliary assumptions if we intend to test a hypothesis, specifically to test one hypothesis against another? Consider Elliott Sober's definition of hypothesis testability:

> Hypothesis H_1 can now be tested against hypothesis H_2 if and only if there exist true auxiliary assumptions A and an observation statement O such that (i) $Pr(O \mid H_1 \& A) \neq Pr(O \mid H_2 \& A)$, (ii) we now are justified in believing A, and (iii) the justification we now have for believing A does not depend on believing that H_1 is true or that H_2 is true and also does not depend on believing that O is true (or that it is false). (2008: 152)

Sober's definition of testability stipulates important epistemic constraints on auxiliaries. Given Sober's definition, to test any hypothesis h_1 against another hypothesis h_2, we must enlist some auxiliary assumption(s) α that meet certain requirements. This is just the Duhemian-Quinean point that theories rarely have predictive consequences unless they contain auxiliary assumptions. Sober states three conditions, though, for auxiliaries. First, the conjunction of h_1 and α should not result in a likelihood that is equal to the likelihood of the conjunction of the rival hypothesis h_2 and background knowledge k, as this would prevent testing h_1 *against* h_2. Second, α must be true, and we should be justified in believing α. Finally, and this is crucial, the justification for believing α should not depend on our believing any of the other statements involved in testing h_1 against h_2. In this way, the auxiliaries are independently justified.

To illustrate the importance of independent justification for auxiliaries, consider the process whereby we would *disconfirm* a hypothesis by observational evidence that is contrary to what we would expect if the hypothesis were true. Since the prediction e is a consequence of the conjunction of hypothesis h and auxiliary α, what do we conclude when there is a failed prediction – that is, when we observe something incompatible with e? Now if $Pr(e \mid h \& \alpha) = 1$ (i.e. h and α together entail e), the observation of ~e logically entails that it cannot be the case that both h and α. This is just an instance of the valid argument form *modus tollens*. But unless there is independent reason to accept α, it would be difficult to determine which of the two statements, h or α (or both), is the culprit. Similarly, we would also like to determine the epistemic culprit in cases where $Pr(e \mid h \& \alpha) =$ high (i.e. h and α together render e probable).[8] Does the failed prediction count against h, α, or both? Which statement(s) should carry the burden of epistemic culpability?

Suppose that I adopt the hypothesis that Mr. Phinuit, a Frenchman, robbed the Bank of America in New York City. If we treat evidence collected at a bank robbery as evidence that Mr. Phinuit robbed the bank, this depends on establishing a connection between the evidence and Mr. Phinuit's being the robber. Auxiliary assumptions are enlisted to make this connection – for example, statements about Mr. Phinuit's physical traits (e.g. fingerprint pattern, height and weight, facial features, speech patterns and accent), the make/model of his vehicle, and his whereabouts at the time of the robbery. It would be natural to expect that if the robber spoke during the robbery, witnesses would report that the robber spoke with a French accent. Suppose,

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[8] There is no probabilistic version of *modus tollens*. If $Pr(e \mid h \& \alpha) =$ high, observing ~e (or observing something that implies ~e), does not render "h & α" improbable. Nonetheless, we still allow that the failed prediction would (to some degree) count against "h & α," and so we should like to determine the epistemic culprit in this case as well.

though, that the witnesses all report that the robber spoke with a thick Bronx accent. Does this count against the hypothesis that Mr. Phinuit robbed the bank? It is not clear because our expectation that the robber would speak with a French accent is based not merely on the hypothesis that Mr. Phinuit robbed the bank but on the additional assumption that, being French, Mr. Phinuit would speak with a distinguishable French accent. But in this case, the failed prediction (i.e. the robber would speak with a French accent) might be evidence that Mr. Phinuit is not the robber *or* that Mr. Phinuit, though a Frenchman, does not (always) speak with a French accent. In other words, the auxiliary assumption may be what needs to be rejected or modified in some way, not the hypothesis concerning who actually robbed the bank.

If we had no way to test the auxiliary assumption about Mr. Phinuit's accent, it would be difficult to decide what the hypothesis that Mr. Phinuit robbed the bank would lead us to expect *with respect to the accent the robber reportedly used.* How do we know whether it is surprising or not that the robber spoke with a Bronx accent, given the supposition that Mr. Phinuit is the robber? However, now suppose that we had a way to test the auxiliary hypothesis about Mr. Phinuit's accent. Perhaps further investigation turns up evidence that Mr. Phinuit, though he normally speaks with a French accent, has the ability to speak convincingly with a Bronx accent. Suppose that video documentation is uncovered that shows Mr. Phinuit in an acting gig two years earlier in which he played a New Yorker and displayed an impressive Bronx accent. Here we acquire evidence that the auxiliary assumption is false, or at any rate it is in need of modification. Our ability to test the auxiliary assumption concerning Mr. Phinuit's accent enables us to determine that the hypothesis that Mr. Phinuit robbed the bank is at least consistent with evidence that otherwise seems quite surprising. Furthermore, while we might have simply modified the assumption about Mr. Phinuit's accent, the ability to do so on the basis of independent evidence helps avoid ad hoc adjustments to a theory merely to retrofit data that are otherwise not to be expected.

9.4.2   The justification of survivalist auxiliary assumptions

The crucial question, then, is whether the auxiliary assumptions A1–A10 are independently justified. Some philosophers might wish to argue that we have evidence *against* some of these auxiliaries, even if we do not have evidence against survival as such. For example, one might object to A1 on the grounds that consciousness is dependent on a functioning brain. Or we might suppose that even if consciousness were to persist after death in a discarnate state, it would be substantially discontinuous with our antemortem consciousness. We might not remember much of our antemortem life. Our purposes might be different. We might not have any epistemic access to postmortem events taking place on earth, much less causally interact with the world or with living persons. Hence, even if the self were to survive death, it would

not be capable of a rich conscious life, at least not in the absence of a body or some appropriate physical substratum. However, the force of this objection depends on the assumption that survivors would not have bodies of any sort. And this is just not clear. While it would be circular to rely on the testimony of communicators, it is at least worth noting that many of them claim to have bodies of some sort (Hart 1959: 224–6), and survivalists, as well as skeptics, have taken note of the possibility that communicators are embodied in some sense (Bradley 1964: 212–4; Griffin 1997: 152).

The problem facing the survivalist is not that there is evidence that the requisite survival-friendly auxiliaries are false. The problem is that we have no way to adequately determine that they are true; that is, we have no way to determine this independent of the hypothesis of survival and the data adduced as evidence of survival. Likewise, we have no way to determine that survival-friendly auxiliaries (such as those introduced in §9.1) that lead to different predictive consequences are false. Hence, the empirical survivalist cannot ensure that he has hit upon the right set of auxiliaries. Of the many conceivable forms of survival (discussed in Chapter 2 and noted in §9.1), empirical survival arguments depend on the truth being found in a very narrow range of what turns out to be a fairly large conceptual space.[9]

But suppose we look more closely at the problem of having an independent justification for survival-friendly auxiliaries, specifically those required by the classical empirical survival arguments. Above I stated these auxiliaries in the subjunctive mood, as subjunctive conditionals, specifically as conditional statements that state what *would* happen (or probably happen) if such-and-such *were* true, wherein the antecedent is entertained as a hypothetical situation, not a contrary to fact condition (what is called a "counterfactual").

To understand the difficulty with our being independently justified in accepting survivalist auxiliaries, consider first the justification we have for many kinds of similar subjunctive conditional statements. I can say with relative ease what would happen to a glass jar if I dropped it from my second-story window onto a concrete driveway. After all, there is independent evidence that jars of "this sort" break when impacting surfaces "like this" after being dropped from a distance "like this." The hypothetical

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[9] Sober raises the same criticism with respect to design arguments for God's existence: "The problem with the hypothesis of intelligent design is not that it makes inaccurate predictions but that it doesn't predict much of anything. ... From the point of view of Duhem's thesis, the problem with the design hypothesis is that we have no independent knowledge of the goals and abilities that the designer of organisms would have if such a being existed" (2008: 158). Similarly, my contention is that we have no independent knowledge of what consciousness would be like if it should survive death, e.g. what knowledge, goals, and abilities survivors would have if such beings existed.

situation closely resembles others that have actually taken place. But even in the absence of this, if I understand the properties of the glass jar and the concrete, I can deduce that the jar will shatter on impact against a concrete surface if the glass jar falls at a certain velocity. Our justifiably believing what would happen to the jar under the specified conditions is based on background knowledge, including various empirically testable claims about the properties of the objects in question.

But suppose that we take an example that is a bit closer to home. Survivalist auxiliaries involve claims about what human persons would know, desire, intend, and do in some hypothetical situation, namely in a postmortem state. We are often justified in believing what living persons would (probably) do under certain "hypothetical" circumstances. We may believe that *if John saw a person drop a $20 bill, then he would (probably) take it*, or *if Mary visited Oxford during the summer, then she would (probably) tell me about the Bodleian library*. To the extent that statements such as these are justified, it is because we already know about the character or behavioral patterns of John and Mary, and we also know enough about the hypothetical situation to relate it in the appropriate way to the character or behavioral patterns of Mary and John. Maybe we have independent evidence that Mary likes libraries and tells friends about the details of her trips. Perhaps I have watched John pick up money that people drop and pocket it himself. So we can extrapolate what to expect of them under hypothetical situations, especially if they closely resemble actual past circumstances. Otherwise stated, what I independently know (or can test) about Mary and John, and what I independently know (or can test) about features of various hypothetical situations, gives me good independent reason to believe something about what they would or would not do in a range of hypothetical situations.

But are we in a similar position with respect to subjunctive conditionals that state what living persons would remember, know, desire, intend, and efficaciously execute if they were to survive death? Here it would seem that we do not have access to the right stock of background information against which our conjectures could be empirically tested. We know a lot about living persons, and we can extrapolate much about what they would probably know, desire, intend, and be able to efficaciously execute in a fairly diverse range of hypothetical situations, but this is because we are assuming that they are *living* persons in situations that, while hypothetical, are known to bear enough resemblance to actual life situations for us to have the appropriate background knowledge or procedures for empirical testability.

9.4.3   The justification of exotic subjunctive conditionals

To see the difficulty here with greater clarity, consider our epistemic situation vis-à-vis an exotic non-survival hypothesis designed to explain the mysterious disappearance of massive amounts of sugar from a sugar factory in Santa Rosa, Texas. We could postulate the covert operation of invisible

time travelers from earth's distant future to explain this datum. The datum would be unsurprising given this hypothesis only if we embedded it in a certain story supplied by various auxiliary assumptions: (i) humans have powerful cravings for sugar, (ii) there is an abundance of sugar in the world today, (iii) sugar will become increasingly scarce in our distant evolutionary future, (iv) environmental conditions in our distant evolutionary future will make the mining of natural resources for fructose impractical, and (v) new advancements in technology will make it possible for future humans to travel to earlier time periods in human history when sugar was produced in abundance and transport limited amounts of sugar back to the future.

The time traveler theory is implausible in part because we are unjustified in accepting some of the auxiliaries. One of these clearly relates to the physical (and some would say logical) possibility of time travel. More subtly, though, the time traveler theory makes a crucial *unstated* assumption, namely that the human species will retain its current degree of craving for sugar into our distant evolutionary future. However, the kinds of desires and intentions that humans form in the distant future will be based on their actual needs and interests at that distant stage in their biological evolution. This is neither observable nor subject to reasonable extrapolation from anything we presently observe. Our biological and psychological needs are shaped in the long term by many unpredictable environmental and technological changes. This cannot be predicted, with any accuracy, over millions of years into the future. Our evolutionary descendants are just as likely to have developed a powerful aversion to sugar – for example, if it leads to health problems that threaten the survival of the species.

The time traveler theory illustrates how difficult it is to know or justifiably believe what human persons would know, desire, intend, or have the capacity to efficaciously execute in highly exotic hypothetical situations. The reason for this is that we cannot assume that conventional aspects of ordinary life at present would obtain in these exotic situations. Not only do we lack the relevant kinds of background knowledge, but testing procedures elude us. In a similar way, empirical survival arguments require that we adopt assumptions about what living persons would know, desire, intend, and have the capacity to efficaciously execute in a highly exotic hypothetical situation: the persistence of consciousness after the death of the body. That consciousness would be personal, retain much of the knowledge, desires, and intentions that characterized its antemortem identity and phase of existence, be endowed with extremely potent powers of psychic functioning for efficaciously communicating with the living, and yet also be incredibly inept at either remembering basic facts concerning its antemortem existence or communicating such information to living persons – all of these assumptions are little more than conjectures at this stage, conjectures that are neither justified nor testable.

We can now see more clearly why Ducasse's airplane-crash-survivor analogy (discussed in §8.1.3; 8.2.2) is a weak analogy. Ducasse intends the analogy to show the kind of evidence that would suffice to prove or establish some positive probability in favor of survival (Ducasse 1961: 200). However, our assessment of the evidence for John Doe's survival depends on the kinds of auxiliaries contained in (a) through (e). Our favorable conclusion about Doe's survival does not float free of the fact that auxiliaries in this case are empirically testable, and indeed many of them are already independently supported by our background empirical knowledge. If the auxiliaries lacked this quality, we could not sensibly take the evidence that Ducasse cited as evidence for John Doe's survival. It is only because we have an independent justification for the relevant auxiliaries that we can say what kinds of evidence we would expect to find if John Doe survived the plane crash. Independent of the details of John Doe's plane crash and the supposition of his survival, we have good reasons to suppose that there are plane-crash survivors, the majority of them have an interest to communicate, many have the ability to do so, and we can say in advance the kinds of media they would need to use to do so, and so on.

Now, when it comes to the hypothesis of postmortem survival, we are simply not in a similar epistemic situation. That we can have evidence that someone has survived a plane crash depends crucially, not just on the quality and quantity of information deriving from the plane-crash scenario, but also on what we *already* take ourselves to know. We know about plane-crash survivors. We can formulate predictions here because we have a stock of independently justified assumptions that tell us what we should expect to find in the way of evidence if our hypothesis is true. The cogency of Ducasse's case for survival from mediumship crucially depends on ignoring a highly salient difference between plane-crash survivors and postmortem survivors, and this difference fundamentally concerns the independent plausibility, justification, or testability of the required auxiliary assumptions on which we as a matter of course must rely.

9.4.4 Fit with background knowledge

But is it not at least the case that the required survival-friendly auxiliaries at least *fit* our background knowledge of persons, so that the assumptions are not arbitrary or ad hoc?[10] By "fit" with background knowledge, I mean two things. First, the auxiliaries are not incompatible with what we know about human cognition. Second, there are relevant analogs in our experience of the kind of psychological continuity posited in the case for survival, so we can tell a conceivable or plausible story about what might happen after death. A survivalist might argue that these two considerations at least

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[10] I thank Michael Prescott for raising this potential objection to my argument.

show that the required auxiliaries are at least weakly justified and hence not without epistemic merit. I think it is important to concede this point. However, there is not much mileage to be had in this possible survivalist rejoinder.

First, return to the idea of what I have called a "survival-friendly" auxiliary. This is an auxiliary statement compatible with survival, which when conjoined with survival makes predictions about the evidence. As we have seen in Chapter 2 and also in §9.1, there are many kinds of survival-friendly auxiliaries. Only a small subset will have predictive consequences in the ballpark of E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT}. The majority of survival-friendly auxiliaries would not lead us to expect this evidence at all. And yet, of this majority of survival-friendly auxiliaries we must say exactly what the survivalist has said about the sort needed by survival arguments: they fit with our background knowledge in precisely the same ways as A1–A10 are alleged to fit with our background knowledge.

Suppose that we return to the discussion of models of attenuated personal survival that we covered in Chapter 2. The models of survival discussed there are conceivable because they are constructed, as Broad explicitly noted, on the basis of the known cognitive situations of living persons. Consider, for example, dream consciousness, dementia, dissociative identity disorder, and psychogenic amnesia. The first of these is a universal and regular human experience that illustrates a serious disruption in what we would otherwise characterize as the strong psychological continuity of our waking state. Our psychological profile in the dream state does not have strong psychological continuity with our waking-state psychological profile. Of course, pathologies affecting memory and personality are striking examples of the dissolution of strong psychological continuity in the waking state. To a lesser extent, borderline personality dynamics, the range of non-pathological forms of dissociation and strong shifts in mood and behavior also suggest a broader exhibition of multiplicity in our personalities.

Since many disruptions of strong psychological continuity are associated with trauma, a number of parapsychologists have actually argued that if consciousness should survive death, plausibly construed as a traumatic event, it is actually more likely that consciousness will *not* substantially resemble the continuity of our ordinary waking-state experiences (Tart 1990: 143–51; Tyrrell 1961: 362–71; cf. Ducasse 1951: 481–9), and several prominent philosophers have argued this would be a natural consequence of disembodiment (Broad, 1962: 409, 423; Geach 1969: 22; Strawson, 1959: 116; Williams 1973: 70–3). Moreover, as noted earlier, even philosophers favorable to the case for survival acknowledge the genuine possibility that consciousness will be radically altered by death (Lund 2009: 83–6; Paterson 1995: 191–211). However, I wish to make only a fairly modest claim here. If our ordinary waking-state consciousness provides reasons for supposing that our postmortem psychological profile will be strongly continuous

with our antemortem psychological profile, other examples of cognitive functioning provide equal reasons for supposing that our postmortem psychological profile will *not* be strongly continuous with our antemortem psychological profile. These paradigmatic cases of human cognition lend support to some of the scenarios envisioned in §9.1, but these scenarios prevent the survival hypothesis from having a high likelihood vis-à-vis E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT} (in fact, in some cases, they drive the likelihoods toward zero).

There is no doubt that the survivalist's preferred auxiliaries fit with our background knowledge in the sense specified. However, the more relevant point is that there are many other survival-friendly auxiliaries that equally fit with our background knowledge but that have predictive consequences that are unfavorable to the case for survival. This is because our background knowledge provides us with many different paradigmatic cognitive situations. Some of these illustrate strong psychological continuity, and some illustrate the attenuation of psychological continuity to varying degrees. So naturally, we can find the appropriate "fit" between our background knowledge and many different conceivable models of personal survival. There will always be some subset of our background knowledge that will accommodate a particular survival story. All of this, however, only reinforces the need for independent testability and support because without these, the choice of auxiliaries appears to be based solely on the consideration of what is needed to boost the likelihood of the survival hypothesis rather than on what we have independent reason to believe is true.

9.5   Testability and falsifiability

The upshot of the argument here is that a significant problem raised by AAR in the context of the survival hypothesis is that it renders the survival hypothesis untestable. Parapsychologists and survivalists have nonetheless expressed an optimistic attitude toward the testability of the survival hypothesis, maintaining that it has genuine empirical consequences that permit its verification or falsification. A brief engagement with two of the more widely advertised illustrations of this will suffice to show why this common contention is unwarranted.

9.5.1   Gertrude Schmeidler's "testable" survival hypothesis

In the 1970s, parapsychologist Gertrude Schmeidler emphasized prediction as a crucial aspect of future survival research, and she also proposed a way of formulating a survival hypothesis open to such testability (Schmeidler 1977). Other parapsychologists, such as Bill Roll, subsequently appropriated several of Schmeidler's insights to further develop an allegedly "testable" survival hypothesis (Roll 2006: 167–70).

Schmeidler wrote:

> Suppose we try to test a hypothesis that makes three assumptions: (1) that there is survival of consciousness after bodily death; (2) that there is some continuity of personality, so that soon after death a surviving entity is recognizably similar to what the living person had been; and (3) that communication from the surviving entity is possible through a medium and in other ways. (1977: 5)

Schmeidler thought that we could rely on information collected from persons in their antemortem state as a basis for formulating predictions about which living persons should be expected to communicate (and which not) in their postmortem state, as well as the conditions under which postmortem communications from such people should be expected (and under which not).

First, if prior to death person A has said that he has no intention under any circumstance to communicate with those still living after his death, then this provides the basis for a testable hypothesis: we should not expect any communications from A under any circumstances. She adds a second point: "This immediately leads to a specific, testable subhypothesis. If mediums attempt to establish communication with the dead, evidence for such communications will be stronger for those who said while alive that they would want to communicate than for those who had said they would not" (1977: 5). Finally, if prior to death another person B has said that he has an intention to communicate with those still living under only particular conditions, then this leads to another prediction: if person B survives death, then we should expect ostensible communications from B under the specific circumstances and not others. As Schmeidler says, "The specific prediction would be that attempts to make contact with such persons after their death would shift between success and failure according to whether or not the conditions which had been stated were present" (1977: 5).

Schmeidler's suggestion is interesting but nonetheless problematic. One rather clear problem is that Schmeidler's suggestion conceals rather than subjects to scrutiny highly questionable assumptions on which the efficacy of the suggested testing procedure depends. Schmeidler's project will not work unless we make some crucial assumptions about what consciousness would be like if it were to survive death. If person A informs us that he has no intention to communicate with the living under any circumstances after his death, predicting that we should not find communications ostensibly originating from this person depends on a strong assumption of continuity of conscious attitudes after death. But why should we suppose this independent of the cases allegedly suggestive of personal survival? Why not assume that the majority of survivors, having survived death, would be profoundly affected by their death and therefore differently motivated

in the postmortem existence? Perhaps antemortem attitudes about what I would do *if* I survived death are very different from the purposes I would actually have if I *did* survive death. After all, people change their purposes after relatively less extreme experiences in the course of their antemortem existence, sometimes over the course of a week. Of course, the point here is not that we have good reason to suppose that any survivor would change his or her purposes concerning communicating with the living, only that we do not know what would be the case with survivors.

The same holds with respect to Schmeidler's claim that we should find more communications ostensibly originating from persons who expressed this interest while alive. Again, why is this? The operative assumption of substantial continuity of purposes and interests is highly questionable and itself needs independent support. The interest I express about communicating with the living after my death is an interest I now express as a person situated in a mundane though perhaps very exciting earthly existence. This feature of my present psychology, contextualized as it is, may or may not persist if I survive death. It is only by a subtle projection of our current psychology into the afterlife that we suppose we can know *now* what it will be like for us *then*. But there is next to nothing in the way of empirical support for supposing that our postmortem consciousness is more likely to resemble the continuity exhibited in our waking state than the discontinuity exhibited between our waking and dream states, between alters in cases of dissociative identity disorder, or between the switching episodes of borderline personality types, and so on. Carefully exploring Schmeidler's proposal, then, at best forces the problem of auxiliary assumptions to the surface. It does not resolve the problem for the empirical survivalist.

9.5.2   Almeder on the falsifiability of the survival hypothesis

Almeder has repeatedly argued that the survival hypothesis *is* both verifiable and falsifiable because it makes definite predictions. "Reincarnation," he wrote "is indeed an experimental hypothesis that admits of conclusive verification and falsification." (Almeder 1992: 269). Speaking of the Bishen Chand case, a famous case many survivalists emphasize as strongly suggestive of reincarnation, Almeder asserts that the reincarnation hypothesis is falsifiable and explains why it is falsifiable.

> [W]e know what it would take to verify or to falsify the belief in reincarnation…actual evidence of fraud or hoax in cases like Bishen Chand will falsify the survival hypothesis.…If we follow this procedure in earnest, and if after a long time no new cases similar to the Bishen Chand case occur, then we might be justified in thinking that there must be something fraudulent or amiss with the cases examined thus far. So, in a very clear sense the hypothesis is testable because [it is] quite falsifiable. (1992: 56–7)

Almeder also argues that the discarnate survival hypothesis is falsifiable.

> The survivalist … is willing to state what would constitute evidence falsifying the survivalist hypothesis. To be more specific, if we should find that Mrs. Piper had (contrary to the evidence offered in the case) an intimate or well-established relationship with George Pellew before he died, then the case could be set aside for the same reason [William] James set aside the evidence from the Hodgson communications. Similarly, we *might* reject the survivalist interpretation of the G.P. material if we suddenly found somebody who could successfully impersonate someone they had never seen or heard. Finally, if we could determine that in fact all of G.P.'s former friends had a strong desire or need to believe that they were communicating with the postmortem personality of George Pellew, then we would also have good reason to question the survivalist interpretation. (1992: 228)

There seems to be some confusion in Almeder's argument concerning the logic of falsification. Falsifying a hypothesis (in the strict Popperian sense) requires that there be some observation-statement that is logically incompatible with the hypothesis. For example, the observational datum "there is a white crow on the fence" is logically incompatible with the statement "all crows are black." Similarly, the statement "George Pellew has survived death" can be falsified only by observational evidence that entails that "George Pellew did not survive death." However, none of the three hypothetical scenarios that Almeder presents involve reasons that entail that George Pellew has not survived death. Learning that Mrs. Piper was a close friend of Pellew's is not such a reason. Learning that someone can successfully impersonate someone they have never seen or heard is not such a reason. Learning that Pellew's friends have a need to believe that Pellew has survived death is certainly not such a reason. Similarly, falsifying the statement "Bishen Chand is the reincarnation of Laxmi Narain" requires evidence that entails that "Bishen Chand is not the reincarnation of Laxmi Narain." But discovering that fraud was involved in the Bishen Chand case is not such a reason, any more than learning that a person is paranoid about being stalked entails that no one is actually following the person.

Almeder is correct, of course, that if the hypothetical facts he raises were actual, then we would have reasons for rejecting the survivalist interpretation of the data. But losing our reasons for supposing that survival is true does not entail acquiring reasons for supposing that survival is false. Each of the reasons Almeder introduces would, at the most, result in our losing whatever reasons we had for supposing that the person in question had survived death, but they would not give us reason to think that George Pellew or Laxmi Narain did not survive death. Even if we learned that Mrs. Piper could impersonate people she had never met, at the most this would entail

that her trance mediumship does not provide good evidence for survival, as we would appear to have overriding reasons for a different interpretation of her communicators. But this does not give us a reason to suppose that Pellew did not survive death. In the case of Bishen Chand, the discovery of fraud would entail that the data are not reliable indications of Bishen Chand's being the reincarnation of Laxmi Narain. But lacking evidence for believing that Bishen Chand is the reincarnation of Laxmi Narain is not the same thing as acquiring evidence that he is not Laxmi Narain.

So Almeder provides no good reason to suppose that the survival hypothesis is itself falsifiable in any sense approximating the falsifiability of scientific hypotheses. It is no test of a hypothesis that adopting unjustified auxiliaries produces observational consequences, just as it is no defense of a hypothesis to insulate it from refutation by adopting auxiliary assumptions that help accommodate the evidence but for which we have no independent support.

9.6   Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I argued that (i) the hypothesis of personal survival has a well-defined likelihood vis-à-vis E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT} only if the simple postulation of the survival of the self or individual consciousness is supplemented with a range of auxiliary assumptions (inclusive of at least A1–A10) and that (ii) most, if not all, of the requisite auxiliaries are not independently testable or otherwise epistemically justified. Although the epistemic blowback from (ii) will be more deeply explored in the subsequent chapter, here we can note at least two of the more transparent difficulties that contribute to what I will call the "problem of auxiliaries" (PoA).

First, I noted above the liability that (ii) entails for the procedure of hypothesis testing. In the absence of independent support for auxiliaries, we cannot say whether failed predictions count against the survival hypothesis or one or more of the auxiliaries. And if we cannot say what would count against the survival hypothesis, we are not in a very strong position to say what observations count in favor of it. And this is a fundamental challenge. The range of survival-friendly auxiliaries that lead us to expect the relevant evidence occupy a very narrow range on a larger continuum of prima facie equally plausible survival-friendly auxiliaries. There is no currently available plausible means of justifiably selecting the auxiliaries needed for the survival argument over alternatives with very different predictive consequences. Consequently, we are unable to say what the world should look like if survival is true.

Second, given the auxiliary assumption requirement, the Bayesian argument for survival will look very different from how it is typically presented. The survival hypothesis will have minimal, if not zero, explanatory power, unless it is supplemented with auxiliaries. However, supplementing the

simple supposition of survival with auxiliaries necessarily lowers the prior probability of the survival hypothesis/theory. Specifically, adding content to the survival hypothesis necessarily lowers the simplicity of the hypothesis, and this in turn lowers what Broad called the "intrinsic" probability of the hypothesis. Otherwise stated, a robust survival hypothesis is less simple than the generic supposition of survival, and therefore, it will have a lower prior probability. Furthermore, if we suppose that adopting auxiliaries that are not independently supported carries something of an epistemic risk, which in turn adversely affects prior probability, the prior probability of the survival hypothesis will be lower still. At all events, what is clear is that survivalists who have defended the prior probability of the survival hypothesis against skeptical objections based on the alleged data of cognitive neuroscience and arguments of philosophy of mind have not done nearly enough to defend the prior probability of the survival hypothesis, which requires directly engaging the survival-friendly auxiliaries required by the argument for survival.

10
Exotic Counter-Explanations

In Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, we saw that in Bayesian arguments for survival, the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis, Pr(S | E & K), depends on the prior probability of the survival hypothesis, Pr(S | K), and the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis, Pr(E | S & K)/Pr(E | K).[1] Since the explanatory power of any hypothesis h is formally expressed as the fraction of h's likelihood over the prior probability of the evidence e, the explanatory power of h will be very great to the extent that h's likelihood is high and e's prior probability is low. In other words, the explanatory power of a hypothesis will be very great to the extent that the hypothesis leads us to expect the evidence and the evidence is otherwise improbable. And the evidence will be otherwise improbable just if there is no rival hypothesis with significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence at least as well as does the survival hypothesis.

The Bayesian approach to empirical arguments for survival helps us understand the significance of the two tiers of the traditional empirical debate concerning survival. Skeptics have typically challenged empirical arguments for survival on at least one of two grounds. They have argued that Pr(S | K) = very low (the prior probability or PP-challenge) or they have argued that there is at least one rival hypothesis or explanatory competitor C such that (E | C & K) = high (the counter-explanation CE-challenge), and as a result, Pr(E | ~S & K) = high – that is, high relative to Pr(E | S & K).[2] Given Bayes' theorem, these are two appropriate strategies for lowering the posterior probability of the S-hypothesis. The PP-challenge aims to drive

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[1] In the interest of simplicity, I refer here to the "survival hypothesis" (S) and temporarily disregard the distinction between simple (S_S) and robust (S_R) formulations of S. I will reintroduce this distinction in the later part of the chapter when it becomes necessary.

[2] The CE-challenge may be more modestly stated, namely the claim that Pr(E | C & K) = Pr(E | S & K), which as we have seen may also neutralize deriving a favorable posterior probability for S.

down the posterior probability of S by assigning a very low prior probability to S, whereas the CE-challenge aims to drive down the posterior probability of S by assigning a significant or high value to the prior probability of the evidence E and hence a low value to the explanatory power of S. Empirical survivalists have responded largely with defensive strategies aimed at (1) showing that skeptics have not provided sufficient reason for supposing that S has a very low prior probability or (2) arguing that rival hypotheses proposed by skeptics either do not lead us to expect the evidence as well as does S or they have comparable likelihoods, but only at the cost of substantial reduction of their prior probability.

In this chapter, I critically explore (2) of survivalist counter-strategies in the light of the argumentation of the previous chapters. (2) concerns the widely implemented counter-strategy of "ruling out" alternative explanations of the evidence. In Bayesian language, (2) concerns $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K)$ (the *likelihood* of $\sim S$), and $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ (the *prior probability* of the catchall $\sim S$), specifically showing that one (or both) of these values is (or are) small relative to $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ and $Pr(S \mid K)$. Recall that the posterior probability of S will be great just if the value of $Pr(E \mid S \& K) \times Pr(S \mid K)$ is large relative to the value of $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K) \times Pr(\sim S \mid K)$. The smaller the gap between the two values, the lower the posterior probability of S. Since the catchall $\sim S$ is a surrogate for all rival hypotheses, the survivalist counter-strategy against proposed alternative explanations of the evidence in principle aims to show that *none of the proposed counter-explanations is a hypothesis with significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence as well as does the survival hypothesis*. This claim is essential to Bayesian survival arguments and so demands careful exploration.

As noted in earlier chapters, it is widely held among survivalists that the appeal to living-agent psi or extrasensory perception (ESP) is, at least in its more robust forms (often called "super-ESP" or "super-psi"), the most formidable or nearest explanatory competitor. So in exploring the challenge that counter-explanations pose to the survival hypothesis, I will specifically focus on this proposed counter-explanation, though much of what I have to say will be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to rival hypotheses of other sorts. As seen in previous chapters, quite a few parapsychologists and survival searchers have held that the contemporary empirical survival debate, at least on its explanatory tier, has been stuck in an apparently unresolvable dilemma between the survival hypothesis and the living-agent psi hypothesis (hereinafter, the LAP-hypothesis). In fact, it would be fair to say that this is a perennial problem in the empirical survival debate. However, unlike previous treatments of this issue in the relevant literature, I intend to show in this chapter and the next how the auxiliary assumption requirement (AAR) illuminates this debate.

Based on my critical analysis of Ducasse and Paterson, the reader is likely to have already anticipated the general direction in which the argument is

headed. So I should say at the outset that I do not think that survivalists have done an adequate job at ruling out counter-explanations in terms of the LAP-hypothesis. In fact, I agree with E.R. Dodds, Gardner Murphy, Jule Eisenbud, and Stephen Braude that the LAP-hypothesis presents a *formidable* challenge to the survival hypothesis. However, in my view, this is not because the LAP-hypothesis (in either its simple or robust forms) is a particularly good explanation of the evidence but largely because it has the potential to unmask why the survival hypothesis is not a better explanation. I think the chief virtue of the LAP-hypothesis is heuristic. By skillfully engaging it and survivalist criticisms of it, we can better understand the limits and deficiencies of the survival hypothesis. I explore this here with the aid of earlier conclusions drawn in connection with AAR. This will help elaborate on and further develop the problem of auxiliaries (PoA) first broached in the previous chapter.

10.1   Counter-explanations: general considerations

To determine the value of $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \ \& \ K) \times Pr(\ {\sim}S \mid K)$, we have to consider all counter-explanations or alternative hypotheses that are incompatible with the S-hypothesis, specifically multiplying each of their likelihoods by each of their priors. As noted in the previous two chapters, this determines $Pr(E \mid K)$, the denominator in Bayes' theorem. The greater the value of $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \ \& \ K) \times Pr(\ {\sim}S \mid K)$, the greater the value of $Pr(E \mid K)$; consequently, the lower the explanatory power of S; and as a further consequence, the lower S's posterior probability.

10.1.1   Ordinary and exotic naturalistic hypotheses

Beginning in Chapter 6, I provided some general discussion on various alternative non-survival explanations of the evidence as these have been referenced in the arguments discussed. First, there are various naturalistic counter-explanations of a very ordinary sort – for example, appeals to malobservation, hallucination, fraud/hoax, chance coincidence, or cryptomnesia, what Braude has referred to as the "Usual Suspects" (Braude 2003: 10–1, 25–6).[3] We have also seen what Braude calls "Unusual Suspects." Some of these are naturalistic counter-explanations of an exotic sort, which propose explanations drawn from abnormal psychology, including extreme dissociative phenomena (e.g. dissociative identity disorder) and unusual cognitive processes and skills (e.g. savantism). But there are unusual suspects of an even more exotic sort: hypotheses that posit paranormal processes such as extrasensory perception, what I have called living-agent psi hypotheses.

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[3] For survival-friendly discussion of the usual suspects, see Almeder (1993: 27–42, 174–83, 267–9); Gauld (1982: 11–15); Lund (2009: 112–18, 135, 167–70).

Finally, there are alternatives to personal survival that are arguably forms of survival, only radically attenuated since they postulate the survival of only an aspect of our present psychology, not enough for personal survival (e.g. Broad's psychic factor hypothesis).

With respect to the first set of ordinary naturalistic counter-explanations (C_{ON}), while they sufficiently explain some or perhaps many instances of apparently paranormal phenomena, philosophers as diverse as Broad, Flew, Price, and more recently Griffin, Lund, and Braude have compellingly argued that these explanations are highly inadequate with reference to the bulk of the data on which survival arguments are actually based. Roughly stated, while these competing hypotheses are such that $\Pr(C_{ON} \mid K)$ = *not* low, there will always be a (possibly large) subset of qualitatively and quantitatively robust evidence E^* such that $\Pr(E^* \mid C_{ON} \& K)$ = very low. The main elements here turn out to be the range of veridical features of the evidence. Since extremely low likelihoods wash out the initial advantage conferred by priors that are not too low, the usual suspects fail to provide a rival explanation with a significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence. Consequently, we are faced with having to explore more exotic kinds of counter-explanations, of either a naturalistic or paranormal nature.

There are also exotic naturalistic hypotheses (C_{EN}). We have seen that one important subset of evidence under E_{MED} and E_{CORT} concerns personation phenomena, including the sudden manifestation of new personalities, often equipped not only with their own personality traits but linguistic, artistic, and intellectual skills (including impressive displays of memory) otherwise not manifested. What are called "alter personalities" (replete with their own distinguishable repertoire of personality traits, behavioral patterns, and skills) manifest under deliberately induced hypnosis, as well as in spontaneously occurring dissociative phenomena – for example, in dissociative identity disorder (Beahrs 1982: 34–8, 79–110; Bliss 1986; Braude 1995; Putnam 1989). Savants also exhibit incredible cognitive abilities, including prodigious memory – for example, Kim Peek (the original "Rain Man") – and the rapid development and demonstration of various artistic and linguistic skills (Treffert 2006, 2010, 2014).

Now since we have independent evidence for the existence of these phenomena from abnormal psychology, hypotheses appealing to them will have prior probabilities that are not low, and they will arguably have high likelihoods for *some* of the evidence, especially when the evidence is described in very general ways. But C_{EN}-hypotheses would seem to have low likelihoods vis-à-vis much of the evidence, even if it turns out that $\Pr(E^* \mid C_{EN} \& K)$ = high, where E^* is some significant subset of the total evidence. After all, though "alters" provide examples of the sudden manifestation of new personalities, often exhibiting impressively different skills from the host personality, they do not typically impersonate deceased persons, much less exhibit personations with impressive veridical claims (Braude 1995:

236–7).[4] Moreover, to be explained below, the better demonstrations of knowledge among documented savants would be strained to account for the kind of knowledge exhibited in the better cases of mediumship and of the reincarnation type.

Not surprisingly, survivalists have argued that these counter-explanations, C_{ON} and C_{EN}, have low likelihoods relative to the *total* evidence, whereas the survival hypothesis, S, has a very high likelihood relative to the same evidence. Survivalists can further argue that the likelihood of S is so much greater than the likelihoods of C_{ON} and C_{EN} that, even if the prior probabilities of C_{ON} and C_{EN} separately (and thus jointly) are higher than the prior probability of S, S will still have a favorable posterior probability. Just to illustrate, suppose that we make the following numerical assignments:

Survival hypothesis, S: $Pr(E \mid S \& K) = .9$, $Pr(S \mid K) = .2$

Exotic naturalistic hypotheses, C_{EN}: $Pr(E \mid C_{EN} \& K) = .3$, $Pr(C_{EN} \mid K) = .4$

Ordinary naturalistic hypotheses, C_{ON}: $Pr(E \mid (C_{ON} \& K) = .1$, $Pr(C_{ON} \mid K) = .4$.

In this case, the posterior probability of S will still be (marginally) greater than ½ (.53). The gap between $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ x $Pr(S \mid K)$ and $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K)$ x $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ will be small, but it will still slightly favor S.[5] This gap can be increased either by increasing the prior probability of S or by further lowering the likelihoods of the competitors. For example, if we retain the likelihoods above but raise the prior probability of S to .3, then the posterior probability of S is .65.[6]

One final explanatory option would be to postulate the survival of some *aspect* of the person, but one that is insufficient to constitute the survival of the individual self or person. Call these radically attenuated survival competitors, C_{AS}. As explained in §2.2.1, some Eastern religious accounts of survival understood rebirth in this manner. Broad's "psychic factor" also falls into this category, as does H.H. Price's "place memories" hypothesis,

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[4] The alters of some DIDs do claim to be deceased persons. Colin Ross (2011) reported that 14.9% of a group of 303 Canadian DID patients reported possession by a deceased person. See also Ross, Schroeder, and Ness (2013). Spiegel reported a case of a DID patient (also a defendant in a criminal case) who acquired the identity of a friend who had committed suicide and encouraged him to murder his girlfriend (Spiegel, personal correspondence, August 24, 2012).

[5] If C_{ON} and C_{EN} are the only two competitors, then $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K)$ x $Pr(\sim S \mid K) = [Pr(E \mid C_{EN} \& K)$ x $Pr(C_{EN} \mid K)] + [Pr(C_{ON} \mid K)$ x $Pr(E \mid (C_{ON} \& K)]$.

[6] A constraint of Bayes' theorem is that the sum of $Pr(S \mid K)$ and $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ must equal 1, and so $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ will be the sum of the prior probabilities of the competitors. Therefore, if we raise the prior probability of S (to .3), the priors of the two competitors will have to be lowered (to a sum of .7), so that the sum of all priors = 1. Note that the sum of the likelihoods of each of the hypotheses need *not* equal 1.

which postulates the localized persistence of mental content – images, thoughts, emotions – independent of the minds to which they originally belonged. An apparent advantage of C_{AS} hypotheses is that they have high likelihoods vis-à-vis important strands of evidence, certainly higher than C_{ON}-hypotheses. But this advantage is potentially washed out by their arguably low to very low prior probabilities. While Broad's psychic factor hypothesis may avoid some of the issues that drive the prior probability of Price's place-memory hypothesis toward zero, it will not have, as Dodds and Ducasse rightly pointed out, a high likelihood vis-à-vis *some* important strands of evidence for which the survival hypothesis has a high likelihood and at least an equal prior probability. So $Pr(C_{AS} \mid K)$ = very low and $Pr(E \mid C_{AS}$ & K) = low, even if $Pr(E^* \mid C_{AS}$ & K) = high.

10.1.2   The living-agent psi hypothesis: the nearest competitor

So – from the survivalist point of view – C_{ON}, C_{EN}, and C_{AS} are not hypotheses with significant prior probabilities *and* high likelihoods (vis-à-vis the total evidence set for E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, or E_{CORT}). Consequently, $Pr(E \mid S$ & K) x $Pr(S \mid K)$ will be larger than $Pr(E \mid \sim S$ & K) x $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$, and so S will have a favorable posterior probability. What is needed to lower the posterior probability of S is a rival hypothesis that fares better than C_{ON}, C_{EN}, and C_{AS}. This brings us to another exotic counter-explanation, one that posits *living-agent psychic functioning* (LAP), typically some form of extrasensory perception – for example, telepathy or clairvoyance. In the earlier literature between the 1930s and 1960s, LAP figures prominently in Dodds (1934), Tyrrell (1961), Murphy (1945b), Hart (1959), and Ducasse (1961). Since the majority of parapsychologists and empirical survivalists consider the LAP-hypothesis to be the closest competitor to the survival hypothesis, the force of the LAP-hypothesis has been a central question in the majority of parapsychological and philosophical literature since the 1960s.[7]

The LAP-hypothesis has at least one clear advantage over C_{ON}, C_{EN}, and C_{AS}. At least in a *general way*, it better handles likelihoods related to the veridical features of the evidence. This improvement is significant since the bulk of the relevant evidence under E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT} involves veridical features, and the other counter-explanations fare poorly as explanations of this feature of the evidence.

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[7] Dodds (1934), Murphy (1945b), Eisenbud (1992), and Braude (1997, 2003) develop and defend the explanatory force of the LAP-hypothesis. In Anglo-American philosophy of religion, Lewis (1978), Swinburne (1986), and Hick (1994) have each appealed to it as a plausible explanation of the data from mediumship and reincarnation cases. Price (1995a, 1995b), Gauld (1982), Paterson (1995), and Griffin (1997) sympathetically consider it and agree that it is the most formidable counter-explanation of the data. On the current state of the survival vs. living-agent psi debate, see Braude (2003:10–30) and E.F. Kelly (2007: 595–8).

First, LAP is clearly superior to C_{ON}-hypotheses, as these hypotheses do not produce high likelihoods for the core veridical features of E_{OBE} (e2, e3, and e5), E_{MED} (e7, e8, e12, e11, e13, and e15), and E_{CORT} (e19, e20, e23, and e25). The objective and highly specific nature of the core veridical claims is not what we would expect given chance coincidence, especially when the core claims are described with sensitivity to the contexts in which they are made, including efforts to obviate fraud/hoax. Finally, survivalists will plausibly argue that, with context-details specified, the quantitative features of E_{MED} (e9, e10, and e17) and E_{CORT} (e21, e22, and e24) are especially improbable given C_{ON}, whether C_{ON} takes the form of chance coincidence or fraud/hoax hypotheses.

Second, suppose that we consider C_{EN}-hypotheses. It would appear very difficult to account for the entire range of veridical features of the evidence through postulating mechanisms or processes involved in syndromes such as savantism. The information that subjects possess in many cases (at least for E_{MED} and E_{CORT}) could not be accounted for solely through prodigious natural abilities or skills characteristic of savants, at least as far as contemporary science understands such abilities. While savants demonstrate prodigious and detailed knowledge of conceptual and contingent truths, this would be insufficient to account for the veridical dimension of the evidence in E_{MED} and E_{CORT}. While rapid calendar and mathematical calculations could play a role in the presentation of biographical material of formerly living persons, this would cover only a small fraction of the claims found in better cases of mediumship and cases of the reincarnation type (CORTs). Highly refined mnemonic abilities are more salient, of course, as they could in principle account for many veridical claims found in mediumship and CORTs, but only if the subjects had been exposed to the relevant information through ordinary means. Since this is implausible given the specific context and background of many cases of mediumship and CORTs, even rare cognitive skills exemplified outside the context of mediumship and CORTs appear insufficient as actual explanations of the relevant evidence.

To underscore the latter point above, savants who had read multiple books on the life of Elvis Presley and who watched interviews with Elvis and Elvis's family members, would certainly be able to demonstrate an impressive amount of knowledge of Elvis's public and private life. Such a person could in the abstract approximate or even duplicate the veridical features of mediumship and CORTs. If they could produce convincing personations of the deceased, then I see no reason why they could not give a convincing demonstration of trance mediumship. However, the classical mediums, even if we were to grant them highly refined mnemonic skills, do not sufficiently resemble savants of this order, nor were the contexts in which they practiced their mediumship optimized for the normal acquisition of all the relevant information. Most important, while savants with skills of personating the deceased (about whom they have extensive knowledge) are possible in the abstract, I have yet to encounter one in the relevant literature. What is true

of mediumship here will also be true of CORTs, which would appear even less susceptible to such explanations given the young age of child subjects.

A general point is worth noting here. An important motivation for supposing that the above hypotheses render the veridical features of the evidence improbable is the assumption of "conventional" modes of epistemic access to the world – that is, modes of knowing grounded in sense perception, testimony, intuition, and discursive or inferential processes as modules of our cognitive establishment. So $Pr(E \mid \sim S \ \& \ K)$ is low given that (i) the range of hypotheses subsumed under $\sim S$ presuppose only conventional modes of epistemic access to the world, and (ii) the nature of the veridical claims and the context in which they are made make it improbable that subjects relied on these conventional modes of knowing to acquire the relevant information. I will return to this below in §10.2.1.

Not surprisingly, therefore, C_{AS} fares better than either C_{ON} or C_{EN} since it posits the actual persistence of aspects of the personality – for example, the dispositional basis of the personality – which would certainly account for many of the veridical features of the evidence. Moreover, I think Broad was correct that his psychic factor hypothesis would also account for data related to mediumistic failures (generalized in e38 and e39) since it involves the assimilation by a current personality of aspects of the psychology of some formerly living person. The challenge, as Dodds noted, was that the postulated mechanism or process does not lead us to expect that mediums will make veridical claims about events that have taken place in the life of family and friends of the deceased after his/her passing, and yet this is a prominent feature of mediumistic data. So, if naturalistic explanations have been ruled out, we would have to suppose that subjects acquired such knowledge through extrasensory perception, in which case we might as well attempt to account for all the veridical features of the cases in precisely the same way.

Attributing psychic functioning to the medium could in principle account for her body of knowledge of past facts about the life of the deceased and also her knowledge events that have taken place in the life of family and friends of the deceased after his death. At all events, LAP renders considerably less surprising the fact that the medium has the knowledge she does. The claims made by OBErs/NDErs, mediums, and ostensible reincarnation subjects have evidential weight only if they can be independently verified, but in that case, if the truth is "out there" (in the minds of other persons or documented in some manner), the central question is one of the available modes of accessing it. If we entertain LAP as a possibility, we entertain the possibility of modes of epistemic access to the relevant facts wider than conventional modes of knowing.[8] For example, we would have to allow the

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[8] For general discussion as this bears on survival evidence, see Braude (2003: 10–23, 47–52, 79–95); Broad (1962); Dodds (1934: 155–70); Griffin (1997: 151–68, 197–208, 251–68); Hick (1994: 129–46); Lewis: (1978: 90–1, 150–1); and Murphy (1945b: 76–82).

possibility of direct causal interaction between the mind of the medium and some other living person who possesses the relevant knowledge (telepathy), and also direct causal interaction between the mind of the medium and states of affairs in the world (clairvoyance). These modes of knowing will be equally relevant for OBErs/NDErs and subjects in CORTs. In fact, we may also find that a broadening of the psi repertoire has explanatory value over other features of the evidence. For this reason, LAP in its broadest sense will include direct knowledge of past states of affairs (retrocognition) and future states of affairs (precognition), as well as direct causal influence over the physical world (psychokinesis, or PK).

10.1.3   Ostensible evidence for living-agent psi

To get a clearer sense of how the LAP-hypothesis poses a challenge to the S-hypothesis, we should review some of the more prominent data that many parapsychologists (including many survivalists) regard as evidence for LAP. This is particularly important since most empirical survivalists, though they think the S-hypothesis is superior to the LAP-hypothesis, accept the reality of LAP, typically based on experimental and spontaneous-case evidence.[9] Much of the data are associated with qualitative and quantitative experimental research typically conducted in laboratory settings, as represented for example in ganzfeld, remote viewing, and random number generator experiments which have tested for telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis.

The data collected from forced-choice tests[10] (e.g. card-guessing and random number generator experiments) indicate a statistically significant "above chance" selection of fixed and limited targets by experimental subjects, as well as positive correlations between the intentions of experimental subjects to alter various kinds of output from random number generators (RNGs) in particular ways and actual changes in their output (Braude 2002: 64–101). If such data are evidence for LAP, they at least provide evidence that some people are capable of acquiring knowledge of simple images on cards (through telepathy and/or clairvoyance) and exerting direct causal influence on physical systems. While these effects may seem weak, the data from some RNG experiments may suggest a very potent and refined psi, ranging from living agents having direct causal influence over

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[9] See Almeder (1992, 1996a: 502); Braude (1997, 2002); Ducasse (1961: 132–52); Hart (1959); Fontana (2005: 16–22, 468–9); Gauld (1982); Griffin (1997: 10–5, 41–95); Lund (2009: 207, 213–4); and Stevenson (1974: 343–73).

[10] In "forced-choice" experiments, subjects must make a selection from among a small number of known candidate targets (say, one of five cards), whereas in "free-response" experiments (below in text) subjects are asked to describe targets without being given any potential candidates (say, by simply describing the imagery they experienced during a dream state or while in the ganzfeld).

the past (retroactive PK) to their successfully using multiple psi processes that combine PK and highly refined precognition (Braude 2002: 68–78). Since precognition itself raises the specter of the future affecting the past (to account for some person at present time knowing what will happen in the future), it may be necessary to postulate a very powerful clockwise ESP and PK, one that involves psychic access to highly detailed information and influences on large-scale events (Braude 1997: 233–53). Moreover, the experimental data also provide very good evidence that PK success is independent of task complexity. PK appears capable of influencing target systems of varying types and complexities (including the complexity of the experimental design), and it is efficacious even when subjects are blind to the target and details of the RNG mechanism, as well as when subjects do not even know that they are involved in a PK experiment (Kennedy 1978; Stanford 1977: 338–42, 370–4).

Free-response experiments seem to provide more direct evidence for LAP of broader scope, potency, and refinement. In the dream laboratory at Maimonides Medical Center, a decade-long run of experiments tested subjects for telepathy and clairvoyance during their dream states (Ullman and Krippner 2002; Sherwood and Roe 2003). In these experiments, many subjects scored significant "hits," providing descriptions of their dream content that corresponded thematically and often in specific details to randomly selected pictorial targets, typically in the form of paintings or art prints. Telepathy-specific experiments involved agents, sometimes at a great distance from the subject, who focused on the target and attempted to "send" the image to the subject during the rapid eye movement (REM) phase of sleep. The results suggest that in altered states of consciousness, detailed imagery in a narrative format mediates telepathic or clairvoyant interactions. In ganzfeld experiments, subjects achieved significant hits with static and dynamic targets (ranging from pictures to movies) during a waking but sensory restricted state (Honorton 1985; Bem and Honorton 1994). In the STARGATE remote viewing program, subjects in normal states of consciousness have produced accurate and sometimes detailed verbal descriptions and drawings of large outdoor targets at a great distance (including large and small buildings, underground facilities, and natural settings), with and without any ostensible sender (May 1996; Targ 1996; Puthoff 1996). Where our conception of LAP draws on data from free-response experiments, LAP entails the telepathic, clairvoyant, and perhaps even precognitive acquisition of information that corresponds to complex and dynamic targets, and it is often mediated by detailed mental imagery.

While many parapsychologists wish to limit claims about LAP to what has been ostensibly established in the above kinds of experimental contexts, Braude (1997) has provided a provocative case for including spontaneous-case data. Some stronger advocates of the survival hypothesis have agreed (Almeder, 1992: 44–53, 227; Lund, 2009: 131, 207, 212). The spontaneous-case

data are significant in that they both reinforce the general conclusions drawn from experimental research and directly extend our conception of the potency and refinement of LAP. Many such cases provide ostensible demonstrations of a wide range of large-scale PK effects, including knocks and raps, apports, levitations, and materializations. Not only do we find these in the older physical mediumship of D.D. Home and Eusapia Palladino (Braude 1997), but we also find similar phenomena in modern cases of "recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis" (Roll 2004) and modern controlled sitter-group situations, such as those conducted by Kenneth Batcheldor (Batcheldor 1966, 1984) and Iris Owen's "Philip Group" (Owen and Sparrow, 1976).[11] These sitter-group experiments are significant since they not only provide evidence for large-scale PK effects, but they do so in a way that intentionally replicates the traditional Spiritualist séance.

It is sometimes argued that we cannot justify appeals to the physical phenomena associated with D.D. Home and Eusapia Palladino as evidence for LAP since Home and Palladino claimed to be communicating with discarnate spirits who might have been responsible for the phenomena. However, there are important similarities between phenomena associated with older physical mediumship and more recently documented physical phenomena in modern recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis, and sitter-group situations strongly suggest that human agents are, individually or jointly, causing physical phenomena, even where there is ostensible contact with discarnate entities. For example, in the Bindelhof Group in the 1930s, Batcheldor's sitter-group experiments in the 1960s, and in the Philip Group in the 1970s, the ostensible discarnate spirits do not exhibit sufficient autonomy from the sitters themselves, as we would expect from some distinct center of self-consciousness (Pilkington 2006: 202–26). These "personalities" often end up relaying messages to sitters that correspond to the ideas or wishes of the sitter-group participants. In the Philip Group sittings, the participants intentionally created the "Philip" personality by collaborating in the production of a fictional biography prior to this alleged spirit being conjured by the group. Responses from "Philip" through knocks and raps were strong when questions posed to him had answers agreed upon in advance by the group, but weak or nonexistent otherwise.

As a final consideration, there is also ostensible evidence for LAP in data collected from mediumship, specifically data strongly suggestive of telepathic interaction between the medium and the minds of sitters.[12] This is

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[11] For a good summary of connections between physical mediumship, sitter-group experiments, and cases ostensibly involving recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis, see Roll (1982: 212–26).

[12] For a discussion of this in the more prominent literature, see Braude (2003: 60–1); Hodgson (1898: 304–7); Gauld (1982: 39–40); Murphy (1945b: 76–82); and Sidgwick (1915: 85, 297ff, 437–48).

particularly salient since it provides evidence that LAP is operative at least *to some extent* in survival contexts.

First, there are cases in which the medium's highly specific claims about the deceased are actually false but in which these incorrect claims correspond to incorrect beliefs held by the sitters (Myers 1889–90: 568–71, 581–3; Podmore 1975: 165–6). Since the claims in question concern highly specific matters about which the deceased is unlikely to have been mistaken, and it is not surprising that agents other than the deceased would have been mistaken, we have evidence that the correspondence between the medium's false claims and the sitter's false beliefs is the product of telepathic interaction between their minds (assuming that natural explanations have been ruled out). Moreover, we would naturally be led to suppose that mediums make wider use of LAP since there is no reason to believe that the medium's telepathic acquisition of information from the minds of the sitters would take place only on occasions in which the sitters entertained false beliefs about the deceased. So it seems reasonable to infer that at least some of the medium's veridical claims about the deceased should also be the product of telepathy with the sitters, especially when – as I will explore below – the communicators or controls of the medium are obviously fictitious characters.

Second, there are cases in which the content of mediumistic communications seems to correspond in a striking way to matters recently and randomly experienced or mentally entertained by the sitters. For example, in some sittings, the medium spontaneously introduces the name and other identifying details of a deceased person but the person happens to be related to a living person whom the sitter has only recently randomly encountered or who may have through chance coincidence been on the mind of the sitter (Salter 1922: 69–72). When the claims of mediums relate to fortuitous aspects of the sitter's very recent experiences, it seems that the medium is simply tapping into the sitter's recent memory to guide the narrative of the sitting rather than this being evidence that a deceased person has highly impeccable timing for showing up at a sitting with precisely this sort of information. More persuasive along these lines are cases in which obviously fictitious communicators or controls appear at séances, but their identities happen to correspond in some way to what sitters were thinking about prior to the séance (Sidgwick 1915: 85, 297ff, 437–48). Because of their highly specific or idiosyncratic nature, it seems implausible to suppose that these latter kinds of correlations would be merely fortuitous. In that case, though, we have prima facie evidence that the medium not only has telepathic interaction with sitters but sometimes presents or constructs ostensibly deceased personalities from telepathically derived information from the minds of the sitters. It seems unlikely that telepathy with sitters would operate only when the personalities entertained by sitters were clearly fictitious. It is plausible that on different occasions, the names and characteristics of the deceased

family members and friends would also enter into the medium's mind through telepathic interaction.

10.2   The challenge posed by LAP and survivalist objections

The considerations in §10.1.3 provide prima facie evidence for both LAP of an arguably potent and refined sort, especially if spontaneous-case data are included, and also for the operation of LAP specifically in contexts in which there is other evidence suggestive of survival. These considerations severally and jointly support the salience of the LAP-hypothesis as an explanatory competitor to the survival hypothesis.

However, I think it is important to be clear about *how* the LAP-hypothesis (as conceived thus far) presents a challenge to the survival hypothesis/argument. The traditional or at least common view takes it that LAP is proposed as a hypothesis that allegedly leads us to expect the veridical features of E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT}. In this way, it would present a rival likelihood, at least with reference to these features of the evidence. Thus, the argument would be that $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& K) \geq Pr(E_V \mid S \& K)$, where E_V refers to the veridical features of the evidence from E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, or E_{CORT}. While LAP outside the context of survival may be insufficient for showing this, evidence of its operation in mediumistic settings arguably provides some support for this. I would propose, though, that the LAP-hypothesis can be construed as operating more covertly to defeat empirical survival arguments. I want to consider this second, generally unacknowledged, possibility.

10.2.1   Identity-indicator assumptions challenged

Recall that the simple supposition of survival, S_S, supplemented with the appropriate survival-friendly auxiliaries, A_S (together with background knowledge K), jointly generates well-defined likelihoods. The requisite auxiliaries concerned, among other things, various assumptions about the nature of postmortem consciousness, which I partially summarized under the general assumption that if persons survived death, their postmortem psychological profile would be moderately to strongly continuous with their antemortem psychological profile.[13] Hence, we should expect the persistence of memories, personality traits, and purposes characteristic of their ante-mortem state. However, in addition to this metaphysical load carried by the survival argument, the arguments carry an epistemological load. As initially indicated in §2.1.2 and illustrated in Chapter 6 through Chapter 8, survival arguments depend on the general assumption that psychological criteria are reliable indicators of personal identity and, more specifically, that in

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[13] Moderate and strong psychological continuity were discussed in detail in §2.2.1

the relevant cases some particular living person exemplifies enough of the psychological profile of some formerly living person to justify identifying the current person (or an intelligence currently interacting with them) with some previously living, now deceased personality. Since LAP purports to offer an explanation of how persons know what they know, we can focus on this central feature of psychological profiles, which will include a person's general knowledge of the world but especially autobiographical knowledge. The latter is particularly significant since it more plausibly functions to locate the experiences of a particular subject and therefore serve as an indicator of identity.

A large portion of the alleged evidence for survival (from mediumship and CORTs) concerns a living person having knowledge that we would allegedly expect some former living person to have but allegedly not expect of others. The knowledge that the medium or a young child in CORTs exhibits is supposed to be the sort of thing that some formerly living person is optimally situated to own or possess. So, for example, Hodgson placed special emphasis on Mrs. Piper allegedly knowing the sort of things that G.P. (or G.P. and some intimate friend) would be in an ideal position to know. Similarly, Stevenson drew attention to Bishen Chand knowing things that Laxmi Narain (the previous personality) would have been in a privileged position to know. Now, in these cases, what survivalists have in view is not necessarily any *single* item of knowledge but a quantitatively and qualitatively robust body of knowledge. Presumably what makes the veridical features of mediumship and CORTs impressive is the narrative nature of the knowledge that subjects possess, including a certain level of detail, quantity, and configuration of information, enough to give the impression that there is a presently existing psychological profile that very much resembles the psychological profile of some formerly living person.

As Paterson (1995) and Braude (2005) each explain in some detail, we do in fact rely on psychological criteria as a general means of identifying persons, especially in the absence of bodily criteria. Furthermore, the application to survival is at least in principle fairly straightforward.

Gauld explains it as follows:

> If, after the decease of some friend, we encounter a personality-pattern, and especially a set of memory-dispositions, closely resembling his, we almost all tend, at least in our less reflective moods, to assume that, in some obscure manner, that *person* is still with us. And here the reasoning would seem to be in some primitive way statistical. Just as it is very improbable that we shall find two people whose physical organisms are almost identical, and exceedingly improbable that we shall come across two individuals with identical fingerprints; so it is very improbable that we shall encounter two persons with closely similar personality-patterns, and exceedingly improbable that we shall encounter two persons with

identical memory-patterns. When, therefore, the personality-pattern (including memory-dispositions) of a deceased friend reappears before us in some fullness, we are justified in supposing that that *person* is in some sense really present. (1968: 345).

I agree, of course, that we do effectively rely on psychological criteria for identifying persons, yet the matter is not as straightforward as Gauld's analogy suggests, especially when we encounter exotic situations sans bodily criteria. A person's fingerprints are unique physical properties of bodies, and I think we can also say this about each person's psychological profile or "personality-pattern" and "memory-dispositions" as Gauld calls them. However, as a means of identifying persons, psychological criteria are very much *unlike* fingerprints. Fingerprints are observable physical properties of bodies, and they have clearly defined structural features and parameters. So we can say with a high degree of warrant what constitutes a person's fingerprint pattern and, therefore, the extent to which another person's fingerprints resemble it. By contrast, personality-patterns and memory-dispositions, though introspectively accessible, are not publicly observable phenomena, nor do they have clear enough parameters for us to say what personality characteristics and items of knowledge would be necessary and sufficient for identifying persons.[14]

So psychological criteria for identifying persons are far from straightforward, but there is a more fundamental issue. Our reliance on psychological criteria is based on our intuitions about what sort of knowledge particular persons are in a privileged or optimal position to possess, and so *characteristic* of them, but this in turn depends heavily on just what we are prepared to grant with respect to how humans generally acquire knowledge. Our judgments about where the information is coming from in cases of mediumship or CORTs is conditioned largely by our pre-theoretical judgments about how we know the things that we know. And here I would say that the force of the survival inference, relying as it does on psychological criteria of identity, derives in part from presupposing conventional modes of knowledge acquisition. When survivalists claim, for instance, that Bishen Chand knows something *only* (loosely speaking) Laxmi Narain could know, the contention is not easily separable from the conviction that Bishen Chand could not have acquired this knowledge in ordinary ways. However, as Peter

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[14] Our knowledge of the psychological profiles of others is mediated by and limited to their behavior and claims, and the widespread phenomenon of convincing impersonation reminds us that defaulting to bodily criteria often proves essential. If simulacra of human persons existed and had fingerprint patterns that closely approximated or looked identical to the fingerprint patterns of their human counterparts, reliance on bodily criteria for identifying persons would be problematic in ways that it currently is not.

Geach has rightly noted, if we should encounter situations such as medium-istic communicators or CORTs, it might be more reasonable to revise our ordinary assumptions about how people know what they know instead of accepting survival (Geach 1969: 15, 25–6). In the face of such revisions, we would also need to qualify our reliance on psychological criteria for identi-fying persons.

Here is where LAP poses a potential challenge to the case for survival. It challenges conventional modes of knowing. More specifically, it intro-duces an expansion of how we might know, which in turn implies a corre-sponding expansion of the sort of things we might know, including the content of the minds of other persons. It thereby introduces the genuine possibility that Sophia might know the sort of things we would expect Jennifer to know and which, without the expansion of the borders of knowledge, we would not expect Sophia to know. This is clearly signifi-cant for our reliance on psychological criteria of identity. Moreover, if – as some parapsychologists maintain – psi has no clearly defined limits or parameters, the consequences are *highly* significant.[15] I would propose, therefore, that the challenge that LAP poses to the argument for survival (and this may motivate some of the early appeals to LAP) is that it relaxes or loosens epistemological constraints that lend support to our reliance on psychological criteria for identifying persons. This is at least one reason for agreeing with Gauld's often quoted statement, "if there were no evidence at all for ESP, the 'case for survival' could well be much stronger than it is" (Gauld 1982: 7). If my suggestion is approximately correct, then the LAP-hypothesis, by challenging ordinary conceptions of knowledge acquisition, should *reduce our confidence in psychological criteria as a way of identifying persons*, at least in the kinds of exotic situations under consider-ation, in which, for example, we are prevented from also relying on bodily criteria or bodily continuity.

So on the view that I am suggesting, the LAP-hypothesis is not a counter-explanation of the data in the sense that it leads us to expect the evidence (as well as or better than the S-hypothesis) and thereby contributes to showing that $\Pr(E \mid \sim S \ \& \ K)$ is not low. Rather, the contention is that LAP defeats the survivalist's reasons for supposing that $\Pr(E \mid \sim S \ \& \ K)$ is low because this at least partly depends on epistemic constraints linked to ordinary modes of knowledge acquisition. Recall that in the Bayesian-style survival argu-ment, the survivalist must show that $\Pr(E \mid \sim S \ \& \ K)$ is low relative to $\Pr(E \mid S \ \& \ K)$. To defeat this survivalist claim, it is not necessary to show that $\Pr(E \mid \sim S \ \& \ K)$ is *not* low (or is high). It suffices to present sufficient reasons for supposing that the survivalist has not provided adequate reasons for

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[15] For discussions on the nature (potency, magnitude, and refinement) of psi, see Braude (1997, 2003: 10–23); and Eisenbud (1992: 25–47, 149–85, 228–43).

supposing that $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K)$ *is* low.[16] More precisely stated, with reference to the veridical features of the relevant strands of evidence E_V, the survivalist has not provided adequate reasons for supposing that $Pr(E_V \mid \sim S \& K)$ is low.

A survivalist response to this line of argument can easily be anticipated. The empirical survivalist, if he accepts the reality of psi (as most do), can argue that he is not deploying psychological criteria for identifying persons based on constraints set by conventional epistemology. He emphatically does not limit modes of knowing in this manner. $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K)$ is low, he can argue, even if we include LAP as a mode of knowing. I will address this obvious rejoinder in §10.3.1 below. Here my only point concerns how the LAP-hypothesis can be deployed against survival arguments. As I will explain below, the suggested survivalist counter-strategy will be effective only if the survivalist can show that, like modes of knowing in conventional epistemology, LAP has limits that justify the contention that LAP would not lead us to expect the relevant veridical data, even most generally described.

10.2.2   Survivalist criticisms of the LAP-hypothesis

I have already noted that the majority of empirical survivalists accept the reality of LAP. As indicated in §9.2.3, survivalists must attribute psi to discarnate persons and likely also to mediums (at least to account for some of *their* communications with the deceased), so postmortem- or survival-psi is unavoidable. So the survivalist objection is more precisely to LAP as a purported *explanation* of the relevant evidence, at least when the evidence is collectively viewed.[17] That is to say, the survivalist wishes to argue that there is some significant range of evidence that is not to be expected given LAP, and therefore, LAP does not adequately account for the evidence as a whole. So $Pr(E_{MED} \mid LAP \& K)$ = low and/or $Pr(E_{CORT} \mid LAP \& K)$ = low. And this in turn drives down $Pr(E_{MED} \mid \sim S \& K)$ and/or $Pr(E_{CORT} \mid \sim S \& K)$. So, the argument goes, the survival hypothesis wins the likelihood debate.

The argument is worth unpacking. First, according to survivalists, the LAP-hypothesis does not lead us to expect some of the veridical features of the data. Of particular importance here are the following evidential items: E_{MED} (e11 and e13) and E_{CORT} (e23 and e24). These items all concern claims

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[16] The LAP-hypothesis would be an undercutting defeater for the statement *Pr(E $\mid \sim$S & K) is low*, not a rebutting defeater for this statement. A rebutting defeater is a reason to suppose that some statement p is false, whereas an undercutting defeater is a reason for supposing that the grounds offered in support of p fail to be sufficiently indicative of the truth of p. Hence, in this context, an undercutting defeater involves losing our reasons for supposing that *Pr(E $\mid \sim$S & K) is low* rather than acquiring reasons for supposing that it is false.

[17] The latter clause is necessary because, as indicated in the earlier discussion of Ducasse and Paterson, survivalists often accept that *some* of the evidence may be explained by an appeal to LAP. See Almeder (1992: 48–53, 230–3); Becker (1993: 32); Ducasse (1961: 195–9); Gauld (1982: 92, 102, 138, 140); Lund (2009: 171–7, 186–8, 191–203, 216–7); and Stevenson (1974: 372–3, 383).

(by mediums and subjects in CORTs) whose verification requires reliance on multiple sources. As the argument goes, if the subjects in these cases relied on telepathy and/or clairvoyance, they would have to have psychically mined information from multiple sources and apparently also integrated it into a coherent narrative. We saw this, for example, in the Bobbie Newlove case in Mrs. Leonard's mediumship (§4.3.2), in the Runki "drop-in" case (§4.4), and in the Uttara-Sharada case (§5.4.2). As Gauld says in connection with the mediumship of Mrs. Leonard, "we would on the ESP (or super-ESP) hypothesis have to postulate that Mrs. Leonard located (telepathically or clairvoyantly) two separate sources of information, tapped them, and collated and synthesized the results" (1982: 56).[18] Gauld later explains the problematic nature of this requirement, especially when it is contextualized to mediumistic personations of the deceased.

> Thus it is not so much to the quantity and detail of the material retailed by mediumistic communicators that we might look for indications of an overshadowing discarnate agent, as to the way in which the material is patterned and deployed. The question of the patterning and deployment of material in effect figured prominently among the issues with which, I suggested, the super-ESP hypothesis cannot adequately cope. ... The super-ESP hypothesis has difficulty over cases in which it must assume that the medium integrated into her personation of one communicator information obtained by ESP directed upon a number of different living or contemporary sources (which must furthermore be located). (1982: 139–40)

Gauld raised a similar criticism of LAP in connection with CORTs:

> in some cases the telepathically acquired information would have to have come from more than one source; and in a few cases the information concerned seems not just to have been acquired, but to have been *organized* in a pattern appropriate to the mind of the previous personality. (1982: 184).

Gauld speaks here of the ESP hypothesis and also the "super-ESP" hypothesis. I have noted the latter in earlier chapters as an amped-up version of the appeal to LAP – or what I have designated robust LAP, the LAP_R-hypothesis. I will return to the LAP_R-hypothesis in §10.3 and §10.4. Here simply note that, as explained in §6.1-§6.3, §7.1, and §7.3, one motivation for the

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[18] In Sudduth (2009), I argue that the survivalist (who relies on mediumistic data) will be committed to a similar requirement to account for some of the knowledge that discarnate persons exhibit in the context of mediumistic communications. Communicators often assume or convey knowledge of current states of affairs in the world (of the living) or of events that have taken place in the world (of the living) after their death, including what transpires in the course of mediumistic sittings.

LAP_R-hypothesis derives from the explanatory limits of the simple appeal to LAP, and this is essentially what Gauld observes here. His main points, modestly stated, are (i) if we are to account for the data of mediumship in terms of LAP, then we will have to suppose that it covers data psychically mined and integrated from multiple sources and (ii) this would have to be a super-ESP hypothesis. The "problem" is, at least in the first instance, that LAP as ostensibly evidenced outside the context of the cases under examination provides no clear evidence of ESP that involves task complexity, at least to the requisite degree. In the language of confirmation theory, Gauld's point is that, when E_{MED} and/or E_{CORT} involve mining and integrating information from multiple sources, the LAP-hypothesis will have a low likelihood since LAP (as paradigmatically represented outside the context of survival) would not lead us to expect this. A subsequent problem, central to Gauld's critique and to which we will return, concerns the alleged lack of independent support for the LAP_R-hypothesis.

Second, survivalists have argued that the LAP-hypothesis does not account for e16 under E_{MED} and e26 under E_{CORT}, which attribute to living persons "skills" possessed by the formerly living personality (Becker 1993: 32; Gauld 1982: 140, 184; Lund 2009: 176–7).

Chris Carter writes:

> …while ESP can explain the acquisition of knowledge, it cannot explain the acquisition of skills requiring a great deal of practice. That is, ESP can explain knowing *that* something is true, but cannot explain knowing *how* to do something. But we have seen two cases in which the subjects exhibited skills that they did not have the opportunity to learn: Bishen Chand apparently knew how to skillfully play the tablas without being taught, and Swarnlata knew how to perform complicated songs and dances, in a language neither she nor her parents spoke." (2012: 67–8, cf. 191, 219)

The sudden manifestation of linguistic skills is particularly significant. After discussing cases that exemplify this, Almeder writes:

> The argument for reincarnation becomes even stronger when we consider the cases involving xenoglossy. What is important about the Lydia Johnson case, the Gretchen case, and other similar cases in which the subjects show an ability to converse in a foreign language demonstrably not learned in this life is that the sceptic cannot begin to explain such an ability by appealing to ESP. Knowing *how* to do something (like knowing how to speak a foreign language) is quite different from knowing *that* something or other is so. Knowing that something or other happened in the past might be explainable in terms of ESP, but knowing how to speak a foreign language (or a different dialectic) is not. When we try to explain

the acquisition of such skills by appeal to clairvoyance or telepathy, we are distorting the nature of clairvoyance as it is presently understood. (Almeder 1992: 48, cf. 5–26)

Skills, together with knowledge and personality traits that we would expect of some formerly living person, contribute to an important feature of trance mediumship: the medium's delivery of information by way of convincing personations of the deceased (Carter 2012: 68; Lund 2009: 173–7). As Gauld explains, "the super-ESP hypothesis had problems with cases in which a medium's personation of a certain deceased person has been particularly lifelike and convincing, for there is an immense gap between accumulating factual knowledge about a certain deceased person and developing the skill of giving a realistic impersonation of him" (1982: 140). For example, it is one thing for the G.P. communicator to provide the names of close friends and quite another for this communicator to identify them when present at a sitting. The latter, of course, requires the skill of perceptual recognition, and this contributes to the impression that the spirit of G.P. is actually present at the sitting and communicating through Mrs. Piper. Similar considerations would apply to those CORTs in which children (or adults) manifest a sufficiently robust pattern of behavioral and personality characteristics of the deceased (Almeder 1992: 47).

Finally, there are two CORTs-specific objections. First, subjects not only make veridical claims but claim to experience this knowledge as autobiographical. The survivalist contention is that nothing in LAP would lead us to expect that the subject's knowledge of formerly living persons would be possessed as his/her own memorial knowledge and thus deeply linked to his/her own sense of personal identity (Almeder 1992: 44; Carter 2012: 67).

Tucker makes the point:

Even if one does accept the possibility of telepathy, clairvoyance, or super-psi, the ESP explanation…can only account for part of a case. It might explain how Abby was able to come up with her great-grandmother's name, but it would not explain why she thought she had been her great-grandmother. The sense of identification that is so strong in many of these cases is more than just paranormal knowledge; it represents a sense of having been another person. The knowledge that the children express about the previous lives comes from the vantage point of one individual, the previous personality. (2005: 45)

Speaking of the autobiographical nature of the subject's knowledge of the previous personality in CORTs, Lund writes:

Another feature of reincarnation experiences making them difficult to explain by appeal to ESP is that they are had by the subject as *memories*.

> For ESP-acquired information typically is not experienced as something remembered. Nor would one expect them to be if the ESP hypothesis were true; for it implies that reincarnation experiences are not really memories at all. Rather, they are informed by ESP and *disguised* as memories. (2009: 172)

Also in CORTs, subjects, especially children, exhibit no other evidence of ESP, so we must suppose that if they acquire their knowledge of formerly living persons via ESP, then this ESP has an uncharacteristically narrow domain of operation, which is arguably not what we would expect given paradigmatic cases of LAP outside the context of survival (Almeder 1992: 43–6; Carter 2012: 68; Gauld 1982: 184; Stevenson 1977b: 165; Tucker 2005: 45–6, 111).

Lund writes:

> One difficulty for the psi hypothesis is to explain why these children who supposedly use psi-acquired information to construct their "prior-life" memories hardly ever show, or have credited to them by their families, any psychic abilities independent of these memories. The evidence for the existence of psychic abilities indicates that they are *general* abilities, not likely to be exercised narrowly upon the life of a single deceased person. (2009: 171)

So according to the above criticisms, the LAP-hypothesis has two closely connected explanatory defects. Either it does not lead us to expect what we actually observe, or it leads us to expect something incompatible with what we actually observe.

10.2.3   Bayesian and likelihood implications of the survivalist critique

We can now consider the implications of the above critique for Bayesian and Likelihood versions of the survival argument. First, with respect to the various veridical strands of evidence E_V associated with E_{MED} and E_{CORT}, the survivalist criticisms above should be taken as making the following (argued) objections:

(O1) $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& K) = low$

Second, with respect to the modality of the veridical features of evidence associated with E_{MED} and E_{CORT}, which involves personation with embedded skills, the survivalist claims:

(O2) $Pr(E_M \mid LAP \& K) = low$

Since the strands of evidence subsumed under E_V and E_M constitute about four-fifths of the total evidence for both E_{MED} and E_{CORT}, from (O1) and (O2), it plausibly follows that:

(O3) $\Pr(E_{MED} \mid LAP \& K) = low$

and

(O4) $\Pr(E_{CORT} \mid LAP \& K) = low$

Now consider the implications of the above claims in the light of Bayes' theorem. Given that the LAP-hypothesis is the nearest competitor to the survival hypothesis, the other rival hypotheses will score even lower in their likelihoods, some of them with *much* lower likelihoods. Hence, assuming that the survival hypothesis has a well-defined likelihood, the survivalist can (and Bayesians wish to) argue:

(O5) $\Pr(E_{MED} \mid {\sim}S \& K) = low$ (relative to $\Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \& K)$)

and

(O6) $\Pr(E_{CORT} \mid {\sim}S \& K) = low$ (relative to $\Pr(E_{CORT} \mid S \& K)$)

Assuming that $\Pr(S \mid K) \geq \Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$, the survivalist can successfully argue that the survival hypothesis has a favorable posterior probability.

A Likelihood argument based on the above simply amounts to revising (O3) and (O4) to the contrastive probabilities,

(O7) $\Pr(E_{MED} \mid S \& K) > \Pr(E_{MED} \mid LAP \& K)$

and

(O8) $\Pr(E_{CORT} \mid S \& K) > \Pr(E_{CORT} \mid LAP \& K)$,

from which it follows that E_{MED} favors the survival hypothesis over the LAP-hypothesis and E_{CORT} favors the survival hypothesis over the LAP-hypothesis.

10.3   Evaluation of the survivalist critique of the LAP-hypothesis

By way of response, the first thing to note is that these survivalist criticisms assume that the LAP-hypothesis is being proposed as a rival explanation of the relevant data – that is, that LAP is supposed to render the relevant evidence, or at least E_V, probable to some degree. However, as argued above, it is not necessary to construe LAP in this manner. We can construe it, not as a hypothesis allegedly leading us to *expect* the data, but rather as a hypothesis that introduces considerations that should *rationally reduce our confidence* in supposing that $\Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& K)$ is low and thereby lower our confidence in $\Pr(E_V \mid {\sim}S \& K)$ being low. Of course, if an advocate of the LAP-hypothesis could show that $\Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& K)$ is *high*, he could try to defeat the Bayesian survival argument by showing that $\Pr(E_V \mid {\sim}S \& K)$ is not low relative to $\Pr(E_V$

| S & K). I will come to the prospects for this move in §10.4. But, strictly speaking, this is not necessary to defeat the Bayesian argument because this argument depends on the survivalist being justified in assigning a low value to $Pr(E_V \mid \sim S \& K)$, and the upshot of my previous argument in §10.2.1 was that the survivalist's justification for this claim is weak.

10.3.1   Auxiliary assumptions concerning psi

More to the point, the critic of survival arguments who is partial to LAP can rightly challenge each of the above statements (O1 through O8) on the grounds that we are not justified in affirming any of their likelihoods concerning LAP since we are not justified in accepting the auxiliary assumptions on which these likelihoods depend. It should be clear that without relying on further assumptions about psi, LAP likelihoods would simply be inscrutable, much like survival likelihoods in the absence of the right survival-friendly auxiliaries. Just like a simple survival hypothesis, a simple LAP-hypothesis generates little in the way of empirical consequences. The crucial question will then be whether the survivalist is justified in psi-assumptions A_P that have as a consequence that $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& A_P \& K) = low$.

What gets included under A_P? In each case above, survivalists rely on generalizations from assumed properties of paradigmatic cases of psi. In the paradigmatic cases of psi, survivalists allege that psi does not enable people to acquire skills, produce convincing personations (of people they have never met), acquire knowledge of the content of other minds in the form of memorial knowledge, or acquire and integrate copious quantities of information (characteristic of better cases of mediumship and CORTs), much less integrate such from multiple sources, nor is psi restricted to a single target. Now let us suppose that these are indeed properties of paradigmatic cases of psi. It must also be the case that these cases are *representative* of psi functioning. Unless we can generalize from these paradigmatic cases, we cannot say *what* they would lead us to expect (or what they would lead us not to expect), in which case the survivalist could not justifiably claim that psi explanations of mediumship and CORTs involve consequences that deviate from what we would expect. But this is what justifies assigning low likelihoods to the LAP-hypothesis.

I am largely skeptical of much of what must be granted here, largely because I think our "knowledge" of psi is better characterized as the point at which our understanding comes to an end. There is no reason to suppose that if psi of great potency and/or refinement operates in the world that its effects would be observationally different from, and thus potentially stand out from, events caused in ordinary ways, a point well-argued by Braude (2003: 12–16). So it is unclear what paradigmatic cases of super-psi would even look like, whether they would look any different from what survivalists regard as paradigmatic cases of psi, or whether they would look any different from what is encountered in mediumship and CORTs. And this reinforces

suspicions about generalizations that would impose any (non-logical) limits on psi. To be sure, as indicated in §10.1.3, there are in some cases reasons for thinking of some phenomenon that if it is psi-generated, the psi would have to be powerful or refined, and the evidence for this is strengthened if we include spontaneous-case data. In other cases, though, the evidence for the existence of psi is simply ambiguous with respect to how refined and/or potent the postulated psi would have to be to produce the observational datum. Of course, one implication of this is that we are not in a position to rule out, on the basis of paradigmatic cases of psi, psi that is refined, potent, or large-scale enough to account for the survival data.

Braude says:

> At our present, impoverished, level of understanding, large-scale or refined psychic phenomena are no more incredible or puzzling than more modest phenomena. For example, in the case of PK [psychokinesis], since we have no idea how agents affect remote physical systems, we have no grounds for assuming that PK affects are inherently limited in scope or refinement. Despite the theoretical posturing of some parapsychologists, we don't understand how even the smallest PK violates or circumvents the usual constraints influencing other physical systems. So we're in no position to set limits in advance on how far those apparent violations may go. In fact, not only might we have to entertain the possibility of extensive psi, we might have to entertain the possibility of *unlimited* psi (at least in principle). (2003: 16)

10.3.2 Return of the problem of auxiliary assumptions

The upshot of this is that while survivalists may adopt various assumptions A_p concerning psi that result $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& A_p \& K)$ being low, either survivalists are not justified in adopting A_p or – owing to our level of ignorance about psi – the advocate of LAP may be no less reasonable in adopting a different set of auxiliaries A_p' but which result in $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& A_p' \& K)$ being high. So here again we see just how much rides on the matter of auxiliary assumptions, and survivalist claims open themselves up to fairly obvious parity counter-arguments.

Let me offer two final considerations. First, suppose for the sake of argument that we grant the auxiliaries A_P and the corresponding modified likelihood $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& A_p \& K)$ = low, and so on with the other likelihoods above (in §10.2.3). It does not automatically follow that this likelihood is *lower than* $Pr(E_V \mid S \& K)$. So the survivalist still needs to make a case for a favorable likelihood for the survival hypothesis. Now of course, in accordance with the argument of Chapter 9, we know that we can generate a high likelihood for the survival hypothesis by conjoining a simple survival hypothesis S_S and the right sort of auxiliaries A_S such that $Pr(E_V \mid S_S \& A_S \& K)$ = high. It will then be the case that $Pr(E_V \mid$

S_S & A_S & K) >> Pr(E_V | LAP & A_P & K). However, the point just noted above shows just how fragile this kind of reasoning is, for unless the justification for adopting A_P rules out an equal justification for adopting a different set of psi-friendly auxiliaries A_P' that boost the likelihood of the LAP-hypothesis, the survival critic can plausibly argue that Pr(E_V | LAP & $A_{P'}$ & K) ≥ Pr(E_V | S_S & A_S & K).

Second, I have been referring mainly to likelihoods that involve E_V, but we also need to consider E_M, which embraces personation of the deceased, including various intellectual, artistic, and linguistic skills. But the skeptic who is partial to the LAP-hypothesis need not take the view that skills are acquired from psi functioning, and in fact most advocates of the LAP-hypothesis do not do so. They insist, more sensibly, on a broadening of the content of the LAP-hypothesis so that it includes a psychological tier that can account for the interesting psychological features of the evidence, especially personation. The survivalists quoted above seem not to take seriously enough the implications of psi being deeply connected to the larger landscape of our psychology. Had they taken this more seriously, they would have had to consider how latent abilities and (conscious and unconscious) motivations may play a powerful role in guiding when and how psi manifests. Such a LAP-hypothesis would represent a dialectical movement beyond merely undermining survivalist arguments for supposing that Pr(E_V | LAP & K) = low. It would potentially challenge the survival hypothesis by constituting a rival hypothesis that leads us to *expect* the salient data at least as well as does the survival hypothesis.

10.4   Stephen Braude's robust LAP-hypothesis

The classical sources on the survival hypothesis vs. the LAP-hypothesis make it clear that to account for the broader range of the salient evidence, specifically personations that involve the manifestation of skills, the LAP-hypothesis must be combined with a psychological hypothesis of some sort (Ducasse 1962: 191–2; Hart 1959: 139–51; Lund 2009: 173–7, 187–8; Stevenson 1974: 343, 372–3). This "two-pronged explanation," as Hart referred to it, will be a robust hypothesis. However, unlike the *implicit* robust LAP-hypothesis adopted by the survivalists above, this will be a robust hypothesis conducive to a favorable likelihood for the living-agent psi hypothesis. As earlier, I designate this hypothesis LAP_R. It consists of (i) a psi hypothesis whose auxiliary assumptions permit powerful and refined psi, sufficient to allow the occurrence of the salient evidence, and (ii) a psychological hypothesis that would (together with the appropriate auxiliaries) lead us to expect that psi functioning (of the sort subsumed under (i)) would produce phenomena that give the *appearance* of personal survival.

10.4.1   General contours of Braude's argument

Stephen Braude's work on survival provides the most empirically informed and philosophically sophisticated attempt at producing a LAP$_R$-hypothesis that satisfies conditions (i) and (ii) above, where this occupies a prominent place in his larger evaluation of the case for survival. On Braude's view, the cumulative weight of the evidence provides a "reasonable basis" for belief in postmortem survival (Braude 2003: xi, 306). The strongest evidence, in Braude's view, comes from the better cases of mediumship and CORTs (and closely related "possession" cases). The better cases of mediumship involve "consistency of mediumistic achievement" (concerning the quantity and quality of material), including personation, especially involving "multiple sources of obscure information" (2003: 91–5). The best CORTs involve significant early-bird testimony and personations that embed personality traits and skills of the previous personality (2003: 186–7, 217–8).

Despite concluding that some of the evidence slightly favors the survival hypothesis (to be further discussed in Chapter 11), Braude argues that appeals to living-agent psi are more formidable than survivalists typically acknowledge and require treatment with a degree of psychological depth that is typically missing in the literature (Braude 2003: 13, 23–9). As Braude says, "super-psi explanations must do more than indicate *how* psi among the living might create the appearance of postmortem survival. They must also indicate *why*. They must posit a plausible underlying motivation for simulating survival" (2003: 213). Thus, like earlier prominent writers (e.g. Eisenbud, 1992; Jung, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1977d; Murphy 1954b), Braude adopts a robust psychological model, what he refers to as a "motivated-psi hypothesis," which "posits the operation of psychic abilities in the service of some agent's genuine or perceived needs and interests" (2003: 13, cf. 23–9). While the psi component provides an alternative story about *how* someone other than the deceased could be the source of information that we would otherwise expect as the autobiographical knowledge of the deceased, the motivational or psychodynamic component explains *why* living agents would psychically mine or acquire such information, as well as why this information would appear *as if* originating from the persisting consciousness of the formerly living person. In this way, the hypothesis allegedly leads us to expect the *appearance* of survival, even if survival is not true, to the extent that such an appearance furthers some overriding or powerful (conscious or unconscious) interest or need of some living person(s). Here there are three prominent issues, each of which Braude addresses: the psychodynamic or motivational factors (2003: 23–9, 109–14, 203–7, 213–6), dissociative phenomena and personation (2003: 101–32, 216–22), and the extent of psi functioning (2003: 10–23, 79–95).

10.4.2 Motivational considerations

Since a motivated-psi hypothesis appeals to some living-agent's (conscious or unconscious) psychological needs or interests, the fairly widespread human interest in personal survival becomes explanatorily relevant for why the data should take the form of "survival evidence." Consider medium-ship scenarios. Sitters typically have a powerful and conscious interest in communicating with their deceased loved ones. There is also little doubt that mediumistic phenomena often meet their fundamental need for assurance that a loved one is still alive, for them to still connect with the person in some way, to bring closure to unresolved issues, and to have assurance that their own life will not terminate with death. The appearance of survival thus satisfies very important and widespread human needs. Nor need we assume that it is only the needs of sitters that are met by the appearance of survival. Many mediums have an overriding interest in offering comfort and guidance to sitters, and the appearance of the survival of a loved one does just this. Such motivations would also lead us to expect the content of much ostensible spirit communication, from communicators providing evidence of their identity to relaying messages intended to comfort family and friends (Gauld 1982: 77). Mediums may of course be motivated in a variety of ways to (unconsciously) simulate survival. While some motivations may be altruistic in nature, others may be more egocentric in nature (e.g. the need for personal recognition, notoriety, control, or material acquisition). Finally, it will also not be surprising that mediumistic communicators exhibit a strong psychological resemblance to the formerly living person, since this is plausibly how the living would envision their own survival.

Similar motivations plausibly apply to CORTs, although of course in cases that involve children it will not be plausible to attribute the motives to the child subject. As in the case of mediumship, we must be alert to whose interests or needs the appearance of survival, or specifically reincarnation, would serve. And here two possibilities immediately present themselves: the parents of the child and the parents of the previous personality. A significant number of CORTs involve alleged previous personalities who were killed suddenly or who committed suicide. In these cases, family members and friends cope with particular forms of grief not only associated with the sudden disappearance of a loved one but also associated with persisting regrets, guilt, or anger over unresolved interpersonal issues – precisely the kind of psychodynamics that would be alleviated by the opportunity to make things right, which reincarnation would provide. Also, when previous personalities belonged to a higher caste, it is reasonable to ask whether the desire for increased social or financial status is a motivating factor in living persons identifying themselves with a former personality. Other motivations could include relieving parental or family responsibility, guilt, or anxiety over children born with physical or mental abnormalities or who

develop negative character traits, both of which easily lend themselves to karmic interpretations in Eastern cultures.

Now, determining plausible motivations behind human action is notoriously challenging, especially since there may be many that are unconscious. We should expect it to be more so in cases of survival. However difficult it may be to "pin down" (or conclusively rule out) the actual motivation, though, presumably what is more difficult is supposing that none of the ones that strike us as prima facie plausible are not the actual ones. We often feel strongly, and rightfully so, that the truth of the matter is to be found *somewhere* among a limited number of candidate explanations that antecedently best fit the situation. This is our pre-analytical view of matters. Similarly, in survival cases, it would be unreasonable to demand that we conclusively pin down a particular actual motivation. It would be sufficient to appeal to motivated psi just if we had a limited set of plausible candidate motivations such that if any one of them *were* actual, we would expect the appearance of survival, or perhaps something more specific in the way of the evidence.[19] This would be highly relevant to an issue of considerable importance to Bayesian survival arguments, namely the question of how probable the evidence would be if the survival hypothesis were not true – that is, Pr(E | ~S & K). So considering the *range* of motivations that, if actual, would direct psi to produce the mere appearance of survival could drive down the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis.

10.4.3 Aspects of dissociative phenomena

While motivation would be crucial to explaining why psi produces effects in the form of an appearance of survival, accounting for the trance personalities of the medium is also significant since, as we have seen, personation (including the display of personality traits and skills) is a powerful expression of the apparent evidence for survival. Of course, while some trance personations provide very lifelike presentations of the deceased, others are obviously fictitious, even in the opinion of survivalists. The latter fact suggests that, whatever else may be happening, trance mediumship bears a striking resemblance to other kinds of dissociative phenomena, the more extreme manifestations of which involve full-blown secondary or alter personalities as dissociated aspects of the person: what is called dissociative identity disorder. It is at least tempting to suppose that *all* trance personalities should be so explained and that CORTs involve a closely related species of the same. It would not follow, of course, that trance mediumship or possession phenomena are pathological in nature. Not all forms of dissociation

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[19] By "plausible" I mean that the candidate motivations (or broader psychodynamics) are independently plausible (since such motivations are known to operate elsewhere in human experience) and contextually plausible (since the candidate motivations fit the details of the survival case in question).

are pathological. However, it would mean that trance mediumship is a form of a broader psychological phenomenon or range of phenomena and may plausibly be explained without an appeal to survival.[20]

There are three aspects of dissociative phenomena that merit attention here. First, in more extreme forms of dissociation – for example, hypnotic trance and dissociative identity disorder (DID) – the alteration in consciousness produces full-blown "entities" or "personalities" as ostensibly separate beings but who are clearly fictitious in nature and generated from the subject's own mind. Also, as noted in §10.1.1, DID "alters" in some cases claim to be deceased persons. The fictitious nature of many controls and communicators has been widely acknowledged, even in connection with the more impressive mediums. Often cited examples here include Mrs. Leonard's "Feda" control and several of Mrs. Piper's controls, including her more successful "Dr. Phinuit," (Gauld, 1982: 32–44, 114–8, 219; Braude 2003: 33–5, 56; Hart 1959: 125–38). The reasons for regarding controls as fictitious are well advertised and explored in the literature, even among survivalists, most of whom share the opinion that many of the trance personalities were fictitious (Sidgwick 1915).

One illustration should suffice, which Braude also addresses (2003: 56–7). "Dr. Phinuit," allegedly a French medical doctor, knew very little French, possessed minimal knowledge of medicine (though he claimed to be a French doctor), no evidence of his existence was found in French medical records, and he was unable to provide any factual information by which his existence could otherwise be confirmed. Furthermore, his name bears an obvious resemblance to the Irish control "Finney" of the medium Dr. Cocke who facilitated the emergence of Mrs. Piper's mediumistic abilities. In other cases, while the trance personalities were not fictitious per se, they were of persons who were still alive at the time of the sitting, though they claimed they were deceased (Hart 1959: 133–5). And, as noted in §10.1.3, there are also cases in which communicators of well-known personalities emerge in sittings but they correspond to persons a particular sitter had read or been thinking about close to the time of the sitting.

Now these controls are logically compatible with survival. The spirits may exist, and yet we may suppose that dissociative states and correlated dramatizing powers of the medium facilitate communication with the dead. Hence, Hart (1959) devoted considerable space to exploring how trance personalities are the joint product of the deceased and the dramatizing powers of the

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[20] See Braude (1995: 218–40) for a thorough discussion of the similarities and differences between trance mediumship and dissociative identity disorder. Current research suggests important parallels between dissociative identity disorder (DID) and pathological trance disorder (PTD) but underscores that not all possession phenomena are pathological. See Spiegel et al. (2011).

medium, a conjecture that while not implausible at face value is certainly more complex than supposing that they are all merely dissociated aspects of the medium's own mind.[21]

Second, we have good evidence that dissociative states are psi conducive, so needs that are served by the appearance of survival might be best met as the result of dissociative states (Zingrone and Alvarado 1994; Ross 2011). This would lead us to expect an appearance of survival correlated with dissociative phenomena. Now if dissociative states are psi conducive, or otherwise linked with efficacious psi functioning, we would arguably expect fictitious controls and communicators to deliver impressive amounts of information over long periods of time. If the conscious or unconscious needs of the medium (or sitters) are best satisfied by an appearance of survival, then – given the psi-conducive nature of dissociated states – the manifestation of veridical information about deceased persons during dissociated states would not be surprising. And this is precisely what we find – for example, with Mrs. Piper's Phinuit, who on various occasions provided a wealth of veridical claims despite the fact that he was obviously a fictitious control.

However, another relevant aspect of dissociative phenomena is that they provide illustrations outside the context of survival of the sudden manifestation of novel skills without prior learning or practice.[22] Survivalists often argue that LAP cannot account for the skills displayed in the better cases of mediumship – for example, the speaking of a new language, artistic or musical abilities, and refined literary skills. Similar arguments are made in connection with CORTs. One reason is an alleged limit on LAP: it can generate only knowledge-*that* (propositional knowledge) not knowledge-*how* (practical knowledge). A second reason is the skills manifested in trance mediumship are skills that require practice for their development, so it is allegedly surprising that trance mediums suddenly manifest personality traits and skills other than their own. But dissociative phenomena are commonly linked to the sudden manifestation of novel cognitive and behavioral patterns, including unusual and impressive linguistic, artistic, and musical skills (Putnam 1989; Ross 1997). In cases of dissociative identity disorder, alter personalities manifest, in addition to radically different

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[21] It is important to note that otherwise successful controls testify to the genuine nature of fictitious communicators or controls. This fact clearly diminishes the credibility of these trance personalities who might otherwise have credibility as actual discarnate persons. Furthermore, the fact that controls who are obviously fictitious (e.g. Dr. Phinuit) and those who are more plausibly discarnate persons (e.g. G.P.) equally vouch for the reality of "fakes" (e.g. G.P.) further diminishes the credibility of the latter.

[22] This topic figures prominently throughout Braude (2003), but see especially chapters 4 and 5 in his book.

personality traits, skills not previously manifested in the person and which typically require learning and practice before their initial manifestation. Again, we need not suppose that trance mediums acquire such skills through LAP. There is no good reason to believe that linguistic skills exhibited by mediums have been *transferred* or *acquired*, only that novel skills are suddenly *manifested* without any obvious antecedents. But this is not surprising in the light of the data from abnormal psychology, as illustrated in hypnotic trance, DID, and savantism, as well as with gifted or natural impersonators.

A motivated-psi hypothesis that incorporates our knowledge of dissociative phenomena, then, generates a more serious challenge to the survival hypothesis than the prima facie challenge noted earlier with respect to a simple LAP-hypothesis. First, a motivated-psi hypothesis attempts to explain the data of trance mediumship in terms of dissociation, which in turn facilitates psychic functioning, as well as the manifestation of latent and impressive skills (Braude, 2003: 101–32). Thus, we should expect the joint occurrence of E_V and E_M, and this is what we do find. These data of mediumship are not surprising given a psychologically robust LAP-hypothesis – one that is sensitive to motivational and dissociative psychodynamics, as well as acknowledges their relationship to the sudden manifestation of latent abilities and skills.

10.4.4   Potency and refinement of psi

Now, given the psychological assumptions outlined above, we can say that *if* psi were powerful and refined enough in its operation (and accordingly extensive in its effects) – exceeding some crucial threshold value – we would expect there to be an *appearance* of personal survival in the world, even if the survival hypothesis were false. We would also expect the generalized descriptions of the evidence G1–G5 in §9.2.4, and so the data of E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT} would not be surprising *but* for the hypothesis of survival. So the combination of the psychological claims and a sufficiently robust form of psi would result in a likelihood favorable to the LAP_R-hypothesis. But is psi this powerful?

In the abstract, we can, of course, imagine different degrees of telepathy and clairvoyance, and we can also postulate psi that achieves *this* result or *that* result. (Something similar can be said if we think that a different *kind* of psi would be required.) The idea of a threshold value can, therefore, be given an abstract parsing as that degree of psi, N, which if it were actual would permit the acquisition of the knowledge exhibited in the paradigmatic cases and under the circumstances specified in the cases. For instance, N would entail the ability to acquire by telepathy the contents of multiple minds located in diverse places in the world or by clairvoyance to acquire information from multiple sources located in any part of the world. So, abstractly speaking, the threshold value N is simply whatever degree of psi could do

what would need to be done for the living person to acquire the knowledge exhibited in the paradigmatic cases.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, survivalists and parapsychologists have used the term "super-psi" to designate this threshold value. The term is derived from Hart's phrase "Super-ESP" (1959: 139), which Hart used to designate extrasensory powers of a comprehensive nature that exceeded in potency and refinement psi as ostensibly evidenced or demonstrated in certain paradigmatic cases, typically confined to laboratory-based experiments (Almeder 1992: 44; Braude 2003: 11).[23] Braude expresses reservations about the terminology "super-psi" to designate the psi required to account for the veridical features of the data.[24] However, as Braude points out, it is neither obvious nor easily shown that the psi required to account for the relevant evidence must exceed the degree/kind of psi ostensibly exhibited in cases outside the lab. Spontaneous-case evidence, such as discussed in §10.1.3, present at least what we might consider "dandy psi," and as Braude observes, this should "weaken the argument that psychic functioning is unlikely to operate at a higher level still" (2003: 15). Also, in Braude's view, the phrase "super-psi" is inappropriately evaluative. There is no standardized scale for measuring psi, and we should reject prejudicial language that suggests at the outset that the required psi is antecedently absurd or implausible, which is what "super-psi" suggests.

In connection with the psychic mining and integration of information from multiple sources, we saw above that survivalists do not think that we have evidence that psi can successfully carry out task complexity of the magnitude assumed in the relevant contexts of both mediumship and reincarnation. Braude argues, though, that the objection assumes a particular mode of operation for psi, as "an organized collection of refined psychic tasks" (2003: 11). Here we have another example of an auxiliary assumption about the nature of psi, requiring that LAP operate in a way analogous to ordinary information processing, proceeding in a step-by-step manner, gathering and then organizing information. Survivalists often speak of psi

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[23] In some cases, the "super-psi hypothesis" is shorthand for a "theory postulating that psi in the living is adequate to account for any evidence for survival thus far adduced" (Dale and White 1977). However, as a mere abstract parsing, this is consistent with supposing that the degree of psi in view is just what is operational in experimental, semi-experimental, and spontaneous cases – and therefore not necessarily "stronger and different from what is known of psi in parapsychological research" (Alvarado and Martinez-Taboas 1983).

[24] Since the publication of Braude (2003), Braude has adopted my suggested neutral phrase "living-agent psi" as a replacement for the popular, deeply entrenched, but misleading terminology "super-psi." See Braude (2013) and Sudduth (2013b).

having to move from a "selection" stage to the "organization of information" or to gather and then "integrate the information," as if LAP operated like a librarian who is trying to reconstruct a physical card catalog after the cards had been scattered throughout a city by a hurricane and mixed together with tens of thousands of other pieces of paper.[25] But this view of psi and its relation to task complexity is at the very least underdetermined by the data presently at our disposal.[26] Moreover, we may adopt a contrasting assumption. In contrast to the multi-process hypothesis, we can adopt what is called the magic wand hypothesis, according to which "even the most extensive or refined psi requires nothing more than an efficacious wish or desire, as if the subject simply waved a magic wand to achieve a desired effect" (2003: 11).

As noted earlier, survivalists adopt a range of assumptions about psi, which result in a robust psi hypothesis with a low likelihood. Even the "task complexity" problem, which can allegedly be overcome only by postulating an unprecedented and astonishing kind of psi rests on a particular assumption about how psi operates. Here is the crucial point. Owing to our ignorance about the nature of psi, the assumptions used to generate a low likelihood for the LAP_R-hypothesis are not more obviously reasonable than those deployed in Braude's motivated-psi hypothesis. Even if, and this is far from clear, something more than dandy psi were needed, no theory at present forbids psi of *that* potency, magnitude, or refinement. The survivalist would no doubt like independent support for psi of this sort, but this demand is already entangled in a net of questionable assumptions: for example, that if there were such evidence, it would look very different from the evidence currently at our disposal.

10.5   Revising likelihoods for Braude's robust LAP-hypothesis

The upshot of Braude's robust psi hypothesis is that whereas the survivalist reliance on auxiliaries about survival (A_S) and psi (A_P) results in claims such as $Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& A_P \& K) = $ low or $Pr(E_V \mid S_S \& A_S \& K) > Pr(E_V \mid LAP \& A \& K)$, Braude's motivated-psi hypothesis presents us with a rival set of psychological and parapsychological assumptions A_P' that result in very different likelihoods.

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[25] See Lund (2009: 174, 199) and my detailed critique of Lund in Sudduth (2013a).

[26] Furthermore, the experimental evidence for LAP is at least suggestive that psi is actually immune to the obstacles that attend task complexity (Foster 1940; Kennedy 1980). Experimental subjects have successfully carried out ESP tasks that involve the integration of veridical information from multiple targets. For example, subjects have successfully carried out blind matching ESP tasks in which they have matched two unknown cards, as opposed to simply identifying a single unknown card (Kennedy 1995). So it is not true in general that we lack cases in which subjects have acquired and integrated information from multiple sources by way of ESP.

(B1) $\Pr(E_V \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) = \text{high}$
(B2) $\Pr(E_M \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) = \text{high}$

The idea, discussed above, that dissociative states are conducive to psi functioning, would (together with motivational assumptions) actually lead us to expect the joint occurrence of E_V and E_M.

(B3) $\Pr(E_V \& E_M \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) = \text{high}$

Consequently, we have a justification here for claiming that:

(B4) $\Pr(E_V \& E_M \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) \geq \Pr(E_V \& E_M \mid S_S \& A_S \& K)$

And arguably we have, on the basis of (B4), a justification for claiming:

(B5) $\Pr(E_{\text{MED}} \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) \geq \Pr(E_{\text{MED}} \mid S_S \& A_S \& K)$
(B6) $\Pr(E_{\text{CORT}} \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) \geq \Pr(E_{\text{CORT}} \mid S_S \& A_S \& K)$

To these, we can add, with reference to cumulative case arguments based on both E_{MED} and E_{CORT}, the following:

(B7) $\Pr(E_{\text{MED}} \& E_{\text{CORT}} \mid \text{LAP} \& A_P{}' \& K) \geq \Pr(E_{\text{MED}} \& E_{\text{CORT}} \mid S_S \& A_S \& K)$

(B5), (B6), and (B7) challenge the Bayesian case for survival since they are directly relevant to closing the gap between the two crucial probabilities in the denominator of Bayes' theorem, $\Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ and $\Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$, which determine the $\Pr(E \mid K)$ – that is, how likely the evidence is to occur if survival is not true. In the case of the evidence from mediumship, the survivalist needs $\Pr(E_{\text{MED}} \mid {\sim} S_R \& K)$ to be low relative to $\Pr(E_{\text{MED}} \mid S_R \& K)$, and in the case of reincarnation cases, the survivalist needs $\Pr(E_{\text{CORT}} \mid {\sim} S_R \& K)$ to be low relative to $\Pr(E_{\text{CORT}} \mid S_R \& K)$. The same holds true if the evidence is the joint evidence of E_{MED} and E_{CORT}. But (B5), (B6), and (B7) potentially defeat these claims by closing the gap between the two crucial probabilities. Whether this gap closure *actually* defeats the survival hypothesis having a favorable posterior probability will depend on the extent of the gap closure and also on the respective prior probabilities of the competing hypotheses.

This last point is important because survivalists have often been willing to concede that if psi is powerful enough, especially if it is unlimited in power or refinement, we should have to say that it covers the relevant evidence, perhaps as equally well as the survival hypothesis. At what cost, though? Survivalists contend that there is no free lunch here; boosting the likelihood of the LAP-hypothesis by bulking it up (as Braude does) into LAP_R

comes at the cost of independent implausibility. In Bayesian language, the likelihood of the LAP-hypothesis is increased at the cost of a substantial lowering of its prior probability. $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \ll Pr(LAP \mid K)$, in which case the defeating force of LAP_R's high likelihood against the survival hypothesis is plausibly neutralized by Bayesian blowback.

11

Conclusion: The Classical Arguments Defeated

In the previous three chapters, I have explored the problem of auxiliary assumptions (PoA) – difficulties for empirical survival arguments that originate from the auxiliary assumption requirement (AAR) – first broached in §7.3.2, further discussed in §8.2.1, and systematically developed throughout Chapter 9. In Chapter 8, I argued that AAR generates problems for Bayesian survival arguments by negatively impacting both the prior probability and the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis. In Chapter 10, I explored the latter in considerable detail by examining how the appeal to living-agent psi (LAP) poses a challenge to the ostensible explanatory power of the survival hypothesis. My argument drew heavily on the implications of AAR, as AAR significantly alters the landscape of the traditional counter-explanation or CE-challenge.

In this present and final chapter, I address a remaining issue from Chapter 10 and then, in the light of my earlier argumentation, provide a systematic account of PoA, which I show involves a defeater for empirical survival arguments in *all* the forms considered in earlier chapters. In this way, I aim to streamline the separate tiers of argument in support of my central thesis – *the classical arguments are unsuccessful at showing that there is good evidence for personal survival*. In support of this contention, I argue three points.

(1) Bayesian survival arguments are unsuccessful since we are not justified in concluding (given Bayesian constraints) that the survival hypothesis is more probable than not.
(2) Likelihood survival arguments are unsuccessful since (a) we are not justified in concluding that the survival hypothesis has a superior likelihood to its nearest competitor, the LAP_R-hypothesis and (b) the unjustified status of survival-auxiliaries prevents genuinely testing the survival hypothesis against rival hypotheses, the context-dependent function of Likelihoodism.

(3) Explanatory arguments are unsuccessful since we are not justified in concluding that the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the total evidence.

11.1   Robust psi hypotheses and lack of independent support

In earlier chapters, we have seen survivalists contrast the survival hypothesis with the so-called "super-psi hypothesis," widely regarded as the nearest explanatory competitor to the survival hypothesis. I have broadly characterized this hypothesis as an "amped up" or "bulked up" version of the appeal to living-agent psi – that is, the appeal to living-agent extrasensory perception (ESP) and/or psychokinesis (PK) supplemented with various assumptions (primarily of a psychological nature) to permit predictive consequences. As explained in Chapter 10, "super-psi" is an unfortunate term since it is as misleading as it is prejudicial. What is really at issue is a particular kind of robust psi hypothesis, a psi hypothesis supplemented with auxiliary assumptions that lead us to expect the relevant evidence. However, as seen in Chapter 10, the survivalist is *also* committed to a robust living-agent psi hypothesis because when the survivalist attempts to show that living-agent psi would not lead us to expect the relevant evidence, or predicts something incompatible with what we observe, he also operates on various assumptions about the nature and limits of psi. I argued that at best these survivalist psi assumptions are no more reasonable than the assumptions contained in the LAP_R-hypothesis – the robust living-agent psi hypothesis that has a favorable likelihood and thereby challenges the survival hypothesis.

In §10.3 and §10.4, I outlined Braude's robust psi hypothesis (LAP_R) and argued that it generates likelihoods at least equal to the robust survival hypothesis (S_R), and this has important implications for both Likelihood and Bayesian-style survival arguments. First, where E = either E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, or E_{CORT} (or all three), if $Pr(E \mid LAP_R \& K) \geq Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$, then – given the law of likelihood – E does not favor the survival hypothesis. Second, in Bayesian arguments, if $Pr(E \mid LAP_R \& K) \geq Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$, this boosts the value of $Pr(E \mid \sim S_R \& K)$ and so closes the otherwise large gap between $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$ and $Pr(E \mid \sim S_R \& K)$. This in turn reduces the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis, thereby lowering its posterior probability. The standard survivalist reply to this is to shift the discussion away from likelihoods and turn attention to certain alleged liabilities that the LAP_R-hypothesis is saddled with as a consequence of the bulking up procedure.

11.1.1   The problem of independent support

One of the most deeply entrenched and widespread objections to the LAP_R-hypothesis is that it involves an appeal to "super-psi": living-agent psi of

a degree or kind for which there is no independent evidence, especially evidence obtained in laboratory-based experimental research.[1]

For instance, Gauld writes:

> The central plank of the super-ESP hypothesis must be that ESP of the required degree (required that is to explain away the most striking mediumistic data) takes place; and whether we consider the literature of experimental or spontaneous ESP we come across little to suggest that it can. (1982: 129–30)

Almeder has been particularly vociferous on this issue, deploying the objection specifically in his response to Braude's contention that living-agent psi poses a serious challenge to survival arguments:

> it seems reasonable to point out that, before one can appeal legitimately to super-psi as an alternative way of explaining anything, one should have some empirical evidence that in fact super-psi exists. This evidence is not provided simply by noting that it is possible – logically possible – that super-psi exists. ... Jones could hardly be the robber of the Rabun Gap Bank if we have no good reason to think that Jones ever existed. ... [W]e need to have some independent empirical evidence (which is not to say, necessarily, laboratory evidence) for the existence of super-psi in other contexts before we can appeal to it as a way of explaining those features of our alleged cases of reincarnation that do not fit into established (confirmed) views about the limits of psi. (1992: 52–3, cf. 1996: 506)

More recently, philosopher David Lund has demanded that there be "independent empirical evidence" for the super-psi hypothesis if the appeal to it is to be more than an "interesting but unsupported conjecture" (2009: 172), but "because we have no independent empirical evidence that such super-psi actually exists, we are justified in rejecting an appeal to it as providing the best explanation of these [reincarnation] experiences" (2009: 177).

> The third, and apparently most serious, difficulty for the ESP hypothesis is its tendency, when extended to accommodate problematic cases, to become a highly implausible super-ESP hypothesis, postulating far more extensive psychic capacities than are independently evidenced to exist. ... A non-survivalist psi hypothesis appealing to telepathy from the living could explain such cases [of mediumship] but not without

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[1] Proponents of this objection include Almeder (1992: 42–53, 117–25); Carter (2012: 167, 218–21); Ducasse (1961: 196, 198–9); Fontana (2005: 103–12); Gauld (1983: 55–6, 129–38); Hart (1959); and Lund (2009: 123, 126, 144, 152, 172, 176–7, 184, 197).

postulating telepathic powers of a grand scale for which we have no inde-
pendence evidence. (2009: 123, 184)

It is important to properly contextualize this objection. It is not relevant
to Likelihood survival arguments, since such arguments are interested in
only assessing which of contrasting hypotheses the evidence favors, where
the confirmation measure is spelled out solely in terms of contrastive likeli-
hoods. Consequently, the objection will also not be relevant to explanatory
arguments in which the explanatory relation is parsed solely in terms of
likelihoods. By contrast, it *will* be relevant to explanatory arguments that
depend on independent support as an explanatory virtue (see §6.1.3 and
§6.3) or to Bayesian arguments in which independent support is a deter-
minant of prior probability.

Taking up the Bayesian argument, it will of course be relevant if the
bulking up of the LAP-hypothesis results in diminished prior probability.
Where the likelihood of two hypotheses is equal, the hypothesis with the
greater prior probability will have the greater posterior probability. Hence,
if the LAP_R-hypothesis and the S_R-hypothesis have the same likelihood, the
S_R-hypothesis will have a higher posterior probability than does the LAP_R-
hypothesis if the prior probability of the LAP_R-hypothesis is lower than the
prior probability of the S_R-hypothesis. From the Bayesian perspective, once
likelihoods are equalized (or closely approximated), everything rides on the
prior probabilities of the competing hypotheses. And this can be seen more
thoroughly if we return to a crucial point made at the end of Chapter 10
related to Bayes' theorem. If $Pr(E \mid LAP_R \& K) \geq Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$, this will bring
the values of $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$ and $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$ closer together, which in turn
reduces the explanatory power of S_R, thereby lowering the posterior prob-
ability of the survival hypothesis. However, the posterior probability of the
survival hypothesis will more specifically depend on the respective values
of likelihoods and *priors* – that is, $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) \times Pr(S_R \mid K)$ and $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \&
K) \times Pr({\sim}S_R \mid K)$. If $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) \times Pr(S_R \mid K)$ is high relative to $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$
$\times Pr({\sim}S_R \mid K)$, then the survival hypothesis will have a high posterior prob-
ability. Hence, as the values assigned to $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K)$ and $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$
become more equalized, the values assigned to the prior probability of the
survival hypothesis and its competitors become more important. So if the
survivalist can show that the $Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$ is very low, this will potentially
neutralize the negative impact of the LAP_R-hypothesis's high likelihood on
the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis. But what do we say
to the objection that the LAP_R-hypothesis has a very low prior probability
because there is no independent evidence that "super-psi" exists?

11.1.2   The agnostic counter-argument

First, as explored in Chapter 10, I take it that Braude (1997, 2002, 2003) has
provided good reasons for supposing that we have evidence at least for pretty

dandy psi, and it is far from clear that the psi required to counter survival explanations must be greater than this. Contrary to what Almeder claims, the LAP$_R$-hypothesis does *not* postulate unlimited psi, only the existence of psi of *sufficient* potency and refinement to accommodate the veridical features of the data. Dandy psi is evidence for this, even if it is not strong evidence for it, so it is implausible to suppose that the required psi is nothing more than a "logical possibility." Suppose that Jones has demonstrated his bank-heisting abilities by actually robbing Rabun Bank. Moreover, let us suppose that Rabun Bank has a security system that could not have been hacked or otherwise circumvented unless Jones had extraordinary bank-heisting abilities. If we knew *this*, it would be evidence for supposing that Jones (or another human person) could rob a bank with a stronger, more elaborate security system, even if we do not know the exact parameters of the superior security system. This is not postulating a mere "logical" possibility. Moreover, contrary to what Almeder suggests, the LAP$_R$-hypothesis is *not* saddled with the auxiliary assumption that skills are acquired by psi. It is only logically committed to psi accommodating the veridical features of the data and (perhaps) guiding the manifestation of latent abilities. The LAP$_R$-hypothesis of course includes a number of psychological assumptions, including that persons have needs and interests that the appearance of survival evidence would satisfy, psi is often motivationally directed, dissociation is capable of producing secondary personalities, latent abilities and skills may suddenly manifest, and dissociative states seem to facilitate psi functioning. These are all highly relevant auxiliary assumptions since they contribute to our expectations regarding the circumstances under which psi would manifest and the way in which it would manifest, especially in the form of phenomena that simulate evidence for survival. However, as argued in Chapter 10, there is evidence for these assumptions, so they also are not plausibly regarded as mere logical possibilities.

More important, though, the contention that we have no independent support for psi of the requisite magnitude or kind raises the thorny problem of just what "independent" evidence would be and look like at this juncture. I agree with Braude that we are in an epistemically subpar position here, especially if we intend to impose limits on what psi can do or if we intend to form rigid ideas about what it will look like when it manifests or is causally responsible for events. Almeder and Lund demand evidence for the required degree/kind of psi *outside* the cases suggestive of survival. However, it is reasonable to ask what this evidence would look like, and especially whether it would be distinguishable from cases allegedly suggestive of survival, or at least whether the survivalist would distinguish it from what *he* regards as paradigmatic cases of survival evidence. The point is not merely theoretical, for survivalists have demonstrated a tendency to re-interpret impressive ostensible displays of psi as evidence of survival regardless of the context in which they occur.

As an illustration of this point, consider the Philip Group experiments in the 1970s, which produced ostensible living-agent psychokinetic effects that resembled the phenomena of physical mediumship, complete with messages from a "deceased personality" named Philip (Owen and Sparrow 1976). Philip was a fictional person created by the group of experimenters, and his ostensible communications through raps and knocks corresponded to the details of the fictional biography created by members of the group. Yet Fontana (2005: 112), in responding to this as alleged evidence for large-scale or significant living-agent psi, gave the Philip Group phenomenon a survivalist interpretation by positing an earthbound spirit intent on fooling the group by masquerading as their fictional character Philip. But this survivalist interpretation of the Philip phenomenon amounts to little more than excluding it as a case of significant living-agent psi because it is *possible* to interpret it otherwise, oddly the same criticism Fontana and other survivalists raise against super-psi interpretations of the better cases of mediumship and CORTs. We should be suspicious of the survivalist demand to produce instances of psi outside the context of survival cases when the parameters of "survival cases" are determined by some possibly true hypothesis that leads us to expect the data. After all, there will always be some possibly true hypothesis that leads us to expect the data and that is consistent with denying that human persons have psi powers strong enough to produce the data under examination.

11.1.3   The parity counter-argument and self-defeat

However, there is a considerably more significant and devastating problem for the lack of independent support objection. It applies *mutatis mutandis* to the survival hypothesis itself and thus is a self-defeating argument.[2] First, as argued in §9.2 and §9.3, the survivalist is committed to at least a dozen auxiliary assumptions without which the survival hypothesis could not have a favorable likelihood, and yet most if not all of these auxiliaries lack independent support. Second, as argued in §10.2.2, the survivalist is also dependent on various assumptions about the nature and limits of psi in the dialectical maneuver to rule out appeals to living-agent psi that are proposed to counter survival explanations. Many of these assumptions also lack independent support, or at least they are no more reasonable than their negations. So it would be an epistemic double standard to suppose that

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[2] Quite independent of the issue of lack of independent support, the prior probability of both the living-agent psi hypothesis and survival hypothesis will be lower for these hypotheses in their robust forms than in their simple forms. Robust hypotheses have more content and so are less simple. Necessarily, robust hypotheses have less intrinsic probability than their simple counterparts. So it follows that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) < Pr(LAP \mid K)$ and also that $Pr(S_R \mid K) < Pr(S \mid K)$.

the LAP_R-hypothesis is challenged by lack of independent support but the survivalist can help himself to the lion's share without the survival hypothesis being similarly challenged. If lack of independent support drives down the prior probability of the LAP_R-hypothesis (or is otherwise an explanatory defect), it will also drive down the prior probability of the S_R-hypothesis (or constitute an explanatory defect for the survival hypothesis).

In fact, the difficulty of self-defeat at this juncture is particularly acute for the survivalist since one of the required survival-auxiliaries (identified in §9.2.3) maintains that discarnate persons would depend on psychic functioning for communicating and interacting with the living. More specifically, they would depend on clairvoyance and/or telepathy to know (i) that they are being contacted by the medium (or the medium's control), (ii) what sitters are saying or what is otherwise transpiring in the course of a sitting, (iii) what is or has been taking place since their death in the lives of family and friends, and (iv) what other discarnate persons are communicating to them. With respect to (ii), the processing of information must be rapid and fairly stable to ensure the interactive nature of the communications. Given that discarnate communications often involve the simultaneous occurrence of one or more of these features of mediumship, discarnate psi would also have to mine information from multiple sources and successfully integrate it to construct a realistic and dynamic representation of the world of living persons with which he or she is ostensibly interacting. Prima facie, the psi that can accomplish this is not less complex than living-agent psi mining and integrating information from multiple sources to generate a realistic representation of the afterlife. Also, if discarnate persons bring about physical effects, they must also exercise powers of psychokinesis, as powerful as would be required if the same effects were attributed to psychokinesis that originates from living persons. So not only is the survivalist committed in general to auxiliaries that are not independently testable; he is also committed to the very auxiliary assumption against which he raises the lack of independent support objection, namely "super-psi" (Gauld 1982: 236).

In an interesting way, the survivalist is actually committed to *two* robust psi hypotheses and thus to a *very* broad range of auxiliary assumptions. Some of these assumptions facilitate his arguing in favor of the survival hypothesis, whereas others facilitate his arguing against psi counter-explanations. He is committed to a robust *living-agent* psi hypothesis that is allegedly inferior to the survival hypothesis in its predictive consequences, and – to the extent that he argues for survival from E_{OBE} or E_{MED} – he is also committed to a robust *discarnate* psi hypothesis that permits the survival hypothesis to have predictive power. This is highly relevant in the present context because it implies that the survivalist is committed to *further* auxiliary assumptions – that is, auxiliaries in addition to the sum of auxiliaries for each of the two survivalist psi hypotheses just noted. As Gauld has aptly observed (1982:

145), the survivalist will have to make further assumptions that allow a level of efficacious discarnate psi (to account for survival evidence) that far exceeds the alleged limits of living-agent psi. This is yet a further illustration of how the simple supposition of persons surviving death has become increasingly complex the further we move into the specific features of the actual argument for this hypothesis.

Now curiously, while survivalists tend not to acknowledge the extent of their dependence on auxiliary assumptions, apparently the psi-requirements for discarnate communication has not escaped the notice of some survivalists: for example, Lund and Paterson.[3] Seeing the potentially devastating implication of this for the case for survival, they have tried to argue that living-agent psi would be more complex than discarnate psi.

> However, we should bear in mind as we compare its [super-psi's] plausibility with that of the survival hypothesis that the latter also assumes the existence of psychic powers, as such powers would be what the deceased employ in their efforts to communicate with the living and each other. The difference is that the super-psi hypothesis must posit the existence of psychic powers of greater strength and complexity. (Lund 2009: 142)

Lund's statement here is far from obvious, and in the light of the comments above, it actually seems implausible. But permit a further elaboration. Survivalists will emphasize the complexity involved in the medium's acquiring information about the deceased from multiple sources, whereas on the survival hypothesis, there is only a single source, the deceased, and thus only one psychic channel between the medium and the deceased. On the survival hypothesis, the causal chain involved in the *communication* of knowledge from the deceased to the living does seem less complex than what the LAP_R-hypothesis requires for the causal chain involved in the medium's *acquisition* of knowledge about the deceased. However, this is misleading inasmuch as it ignores how psi is implicated in the discarnate person's acquisition of knowledge of states of affairs in the world (e.g. what transpires during the sitting or elsewhere at other times in the lives of family and friends), as well as the potential complexity implied by discarnate psychokinesis to influence physical systems. The discarnate person must use extrasensory perception to acquire postmortem knowledge about different locations, different people whatever their location, and different events (sometimes concurrently), each of which is represented as a part of a coherent and temporally ordered narrative. On the LAP_R-hypothesis, the medium must do the same with reference to antemortem facts about the

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[3] See Carter (2012: 267–69, 274); Gauld (1982: 235); Griffin (1997: 266); and Lund (2009: 143, 202, 215).

deceased person's life. In each case, psi will have to be powerful enough to accomplish a seemingly equally impressive psychic feat, and whatever obstacles might exist for the efficacious exercise of such powers in the one case would plausibly exist in the other.

Furthermore, if we turn our attention to OBEs and NDEs, it seems all the more implausible to suppose that living-agent psi explanations of this evidence involve postulating a greater degree/kind of psi than is required on the extrasomatic interpretation. An ostensibly discarnate person acquiring knowledge of what is happening in the surgery room during a medical procedure, or otherwise perceiving some aspect of the physical world, must utilize clairvoyance (or possibly telepathy). But the differences between a temporarily discarnate person's clairvoyantly knowing some state of affairs would seem to involve the same psychic feat as some embodied person's clairvoyantly knowing such things. Survivalists may be inclined to suppose that disembodiment liberates psi functioning, so that it is more plausible to suppose that discarnate persons will exercise such potent psi than embodied persons, but of course, this is yet another conjecture for which there is no independent evidence. We have no reason to suppose that our psi functioning will be any more or less potent after death than it is now. And at all events, there is certainly no reason to suppose that embodied living-agent psi should be more potent than temporarily discarnate living-agent psi.

We can perhaps agree with Gauld that living-agent psi would be psi of "extraordinary complexity," but this appears no less true for psi exercised by deceased persons, as Gauld himself also concedes, for instance, when he notes, "many, perhaps most, forms of survival theory have also to postulate what is in effect super-ESP" (Gauld 1982: 250, cf. 232, 236, 248). Consequently, if the appeal to living-agent psi is unacceptable because it requires postulating a means of acquiring the relevant information for which we lack independent support, this applies *mutatis mutandis* to the survival hypothesis, which must also demand a mode of knowing for which we have no evidence. It is not even necessary to stipulate that discarnate psi is super-psi, only that it involves psychic feats for which we presently have little or no evidence. This certainly appears to be the case if we suppose that dandy psi is not evidence for the kind of psi functioning required of living persons to accommodate the evidence.[4]

11.1.4 Bayesian implications

The implications of this for Bayesian survival arguments are significant. The survivalist might argue that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \ll Pr(S_R \mid K)$ and that this neutralizes

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[4] See Sudduth (2009) in which I provide a detailed argument for the self-defeating nature of survival arguments that attempt to rule out super-psi counter-explanations on the grounds that such hypotheses lack independent support and are unfalsifiable.

the defeating force that any high (or equal) likelihood LAP_R might have. After all, if $Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$ is much lower than $Pr(S_R \mid K)$, then the posterior probability of S_R will be greater than the posterior probability of LAP_R and possibly greater than ½. For example, suppose the following assignments of values:

Robust S-Hypothesis	Robust LAP-Hypothesis	Robust Competitor
$Pr(S_R \mid K) = .5$	$Pr(LAP_R \mid K) = .25$	$Pr(C_R \mid K) = .25$
$Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) = .9$	$Pr(E \mid LAP_R \& K) = .9$	$Pr(E \mid C_R \& K) = .5$

Here values are assigned such that S_R and LAP_R have equally high likelihoods (.9), C_R (some other robust competitor) has a neutral likelihood (.5), but LAP_R and C_R have low priors (.25 each). The result from Bayes' theorem is that S_R is still *marginally* more probable than not (.56). Lowering the likelihood of C_R will further boost the posterior probability of S_R (e.g. lower the likelihood of C_R to .3 and the posterior of S_R rises to .6), and further lowering the prior of LAP_R will also raise the posterior probability of S_R. So the assignment of values to the prior probability of the competitors is significant. Consequently, we can understand how the survivalist's appeal to the lack of independent support for the LAP_R-hypothesis is significant to the overall case for survival. This logical maneuver can facilitate the survivalist's arguing that there is no rival hypothesis *with a significant prior probability* that leads us to expect the evidence as well as does the survival hypothesis.

This strategy of argument is sound in principle but in fact poorly executed by survivalists, and ultimately, I think it does not work. If the prior probability of LAP_R is low on account of LAP_R incorporating auxiliaries for which there is no independent support, then it will also follow that $Pr(S_R \mid K)$ is low, especially if S_R includes the same auxiliaries that allegedly drive down the prior probability of LAP_R. It seems implausible to suppose that lack of independent support will result in $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \ll Pr(S_R \mid K)$, since it would have to be a shared epistemic vice and negatively impact the priors of each robust hypothesis. As I suggested in connection with Ducasse's argument, to the extent that survivalists have been unconscious of the depth or extent of the survivalist commitment to auxiliary assumptions, the problem has gone unnoticed. The relevant literature (from Ducasse 1961 to Carter 2012) has systematically engaged in what amounts to a Bayesian sleight of hand. *When likelihoods are in question, the survivalist plays a robust survival hypothesis against a simple living-agent psi hypothesis and argues that $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) > Pr(E \mid LAP \& K)$. When priors are in question, the survivalist plays a simple survival hypothesis against a robust living-agent psi hypothesis and argues $Pr(S \mid K) > Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$.* This strategy is simply a logical sleight of hand that creates an illusion of explanatory success for the survival hypothesis.

Finally, we can run the same argument here if we turn our attention from independent support to the closely allied issue of the alleged *simplicity* of the survival hypothesis and its competitors. As explained above, it is doubtful that the survival hypothesis is simpler or less complex than the LAP_R-hypothesis, at least if we are conscious of the many facets of the alleged evidence for survival and what sort of survival theory would be required to accommodate the evidence in its totality. As I have argued (and as Dodds pointed out in the 1930s), the survival hypothesis appears to be a relatively simple hypothesis only because survivalists ignore the range of auxiliary assumptions that they must employ. Moreover, as Braude has rightly noted in response to Griffin's appeal to simplicity (Griffin 1997: 266), "we typically pay a price for theoretical simplicity—usually, theoretical complexity somewhere else" (Braude 2003: 301–2). I take my discussion of Lund above to illustrate this. Survivalists will appeal to the seeming simplicity of one causal chain required for the evidence while ignoring the complexity inherent in other causal chains that are just as essential to accounting for the evidence from the survivalist perspective. So if the complexity of the LAP_R-hypothesis drives down its prior probability, the same will be true for the S_R-hypothesis. The objection from alleged lack of independent support is self-defeating for the survivalist.

11.2 Bayesian survival arguments defeated

In Chapter 1, I claimed that my goal was to argue that the classical empirical arguments for survival are unsuccessful at showing that there is good evidence for the survival hypothesis. My argument in support of this contention has been based on implications of AAR, and I have argued in several ways that AAR generates problems for the classical arguments in their all their forms, which in turn suggests that the problem of auxiliaries (PoA) is the central problem in the empirical survival debate. To bring closure to the exploration, it will be helpful to highlight the key points of my critique with reference to the three kinds of classical empirical arguments I have discussed, beginning with Bayesian arguments.

Much of the second half of this book has focused on Bayesian-style survival arguments. The focus is certainly merited given the ubiquitous nature of this particular approach among advocates and critics of the survival hypothesis alike. Its popularity, at least among survivalists, is at least partially due to the interest among many empirical survivalists in reaching some favorable judgment on the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis. Since it provides measures for establishing this, Bayesianism is particularly well suited to the widespread survivalist interest in showing that the evidence for survival is good enough to render the survival hypothesis more probable than not, if not highly probable (as strongly optimistic survivalists such as Almeder maintain). While Bayesian assumptions are

typically operative in explanatory arguments, and expressed using informal concepts such as "explanation" and "evidence," one of my objectives has been to provide logically rigorous formulations of these arguments in the language of confirmation theory, a procedure that potentially illuminates ways in which these arguments may be problematic or defective but which might otherwise go undetected.

As we have seen beginning with the formal presentation of Bayes' theorem in §7.1.1, the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis S will be great to the extent that S's prior probability $Pr(S \mid K)$ is high, S's likelihood $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ is high, and the prior probability of the evidence $Pr(E \mid K)$ is low. Otherwise stated, the evidence stated in Chapter 3 through Chapter 5 (E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT}) will render the survival hypothesis probable to the extent that the survival hypothesis is an antecedently credible hypothesis that leads us to expect the evidence and to the extent that the evidence is otherwise improbable. As I have emphasized, the evidence will be otherwise improbable just if *there is no rival hypothesis with a significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence at least as well as does the survival hypothesis.*

In Chapter 7, I explored the skeptical estimate of the empirical case for survival based on the Bayesian analyses provided by Broad and Dodds, both of whom rejected the survivalist claim that the relevant evidence renders personal survival more probable than not, much less provides anything like a proof of survival. Their criticisms were directly related to $Pr(E \mid K)$, the denominator in Bayes' theorem, which tells us how probable the evidence would be whether or not the survival hypothesis is true. The lower $Pr(E \mid K)$, the higher the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis. So Broad and Dodds in effect aim to deflate the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis by arguing that $Pr(E \mid K)$ is *not* very low; that is, the data are *not* improbable but for the hypothesis of personal survival. They each attempt to do this by arguing that there is some rival hypothesis with significant prior probability that leads us to expect the relevant evidence. For Broad, the nearest explanatory competitor was the psychic factor hypothesis, whereas for Dodds, it was the appeal to living-agent psi. Since the type of counter-explanation that Dodds presented has proven to be the more popular and arguably resilient kind of counter-explanation of the data, I developed a particular version of it (the LAP_R-hypothesis) in some detail in Chapter 10.

I have referred on multiple occasions now to reasons for supposing that there *is* or *is not* some rival hypothesis with significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence at least as well as does the survival hypothesis. This needs to be clarified. As initially explained in §7.1.1, $Pr(E \mid K)$ depends on the values of two products: the *survival product* $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ x $Pr(S \mid K)$ and the *catchall product* $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$ x $Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$. If the survival product is large compared to the catchall product, then $Pr(E \mid K)$ will be low, and this will redound to the credit of the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis. If the catchall product is large compared to the survival product, then $Pr(E \mid$

K) will be high, and consequently, the posterior probability of S will be low. Hence, a crucial issue in the empirical survival debate when approached from a Bayesian perspective is determining how large or small the survival product is in relation to the catchall product. Survivalists will want to argue that survival product is large relative to the catchall product, whereas critics of the survival argument will wish to argue that the catchall product is large relative to the survival product. Consequently, Bayesian survival arguments can be defeated by showing either that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) \times Pr(S \mid K)$ is relatively low or that $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$ is relatively high.

The crucial point to see here with respect to the values that determine $Pr(E \mid K)$, and which was suggested above (in §11.1.4), is that what is most relevant is not whether these values are high or low but whether they are high or low *relative to each other*. It is here that we encounter what I consider one of the more serious failures of survivalist attempts to "rule out" counter-explanations. First, survivalists have tried to argue that specific rival hypotheses have either low likelihoods or low priors. To the extent that this has been carried out in a way that compares these likelihoods and priors with the likelihood and prior probability of the survival hypothesis, the failure to acknowledge auxiliaries and their impact on the survival hypothesis substantially weakens survivalist arguments. Second, Bayesian-minded survivalists have been poor Bayesians, as they have failed to show how the (comparative) values that they have assigned to the likelihoods and priors of specific rival hypotheses impact the value of $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$ and $Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$. Therefore, they do not show that the catchall product $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$ is much lower than the survival product $Pr(E \mid S \& K) \times Pr(S \mid K)$. So they fail to show that the survival hypothesis has a posterior probability greater than ½.[5]

11.2.1 Retrospective on Ducasse's survival argument

I have mounted my criticisms of Bayesian survival arguments largely on the grounds of AAR, which I maintain has important implications for the traditional prior probability (PP) and counter-explanation (CE) challenges. The pivotal points of my argument were stated in §8.2.1 and §8.4.3, and then reinforced by my defense of the LAP$_R$-hypothesis (in §10.4 and §10.5). Since I first raised doubts about the plausibility of Bayesian survival arguments in §8.2.1 in response to Ducasse's defense of such arguments, it will be helpful to return to my central criticism there in the light of AAR.

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[5] Here is one way in which the arguments of theistic philosophers in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy of religion exhibit greater conceptual sophistication than survivalist arguments in parapsychology and survival research. Theistic philosophers such as Swinburne have paid meticulous attention to these technical but significant aspects of Bayesian confirmation. See Chandler and Harrison (2012), Dawes (2009), and Swinburne (2003, 2004).

Recall the modest version of Ducasse's survival argument:

(D1) $\Pr(S \mid K) = \frac{1}{2}$
(D2) $\Pr(E \mid S \& K) > \Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$
So
(D3) $\Pr(S \mid E \& K) > \frac{1}{2}$

I deconstructed this argument on the basis of some general considerations deduced from AAR, though I had not yet provided a detailed account of the auxiliaries required for the survival hypothesis to have a well-defined likelihood.

First, AAR implies that we have no reason to accept (D2) unless "S" (the survival hypothesis) is supplemented with auxiliary assumptions. Without auxiliaries, the S-hypothesis generates no well-defined likelihood. So "S" in (D2) must be modified to a robust survival hypothesis S_R – survival plus auxiliaries. In Chapter 9, I made it clear just how extensive the auxiliaries would need to be. Second, once we make this modification to (D2), we must accordingly modify (D1), as we need to consider the prior probability of the hypothesis that ostensibly leads us to expect the evidence. So $\Pr(S_R \mid K)$ must replace $\Pr(S \mid K)$ in premise (D1), but since $\Pr(S_R \mid K)$ is either lower or much lower than $\Pr(S \mid K)$, the relevant prior will be less or much less than $\frac{1}{2}$. Third, if S is bulked up in (D2), then the rival hypotheses under the catchall ~S should be considered in *their* robust forms because otherwise, rival hypotheses will have no well-defined likelihood. Once this is done, given the LAP_R-hypothesis (at least as developed in Chapter 10), it is far from obvious that (D2) is true because the high likelihood of LAP_R will significantly raise the $\Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$ and therefore close the otherwise large gap between $\Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ and $\Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$.

The survivalist rejoinder here (from Ducasse to contemporary survivalists such as Almeder and Lund) is simply to argue or suggest that the LAP_R-hypothesis, on account of its alleged complexity and lack of independent support, has a very low prior probability. In the light of the argument in §11.1, the answer to this survivalist rejoinder is clear. The objection carries no force since the survivalist has to adopt a similarly (if not identically) complex hypothesis, the auxiliaries of which lack independent support, and at least one of which is the allegedly implausible auxiliary concerning the potency/refinement of psi contained in the LAP_R-hypothesis. The Bayesian survival argument does indeed depend on there being no rival hypothesis with a significant prior probability that leads us to expect the evidence as well as does the survival hypothesis. But "significant prior probability" must be understood comparatively – that is, relative to the prior probability of the survival hypothesis. However, what the survivalist needs to show is that the

prior probability of the LAP_R-hypothesis is low relative to the prior probability of *the robust survival hypothesis S_R*. I have conceded the often-repeated survivalist claim that, with respect to the simple supposition of survival (S), $Pr(S \mid K) > Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$, but this is beside the point; it is one of the several red-herrings found in survival literature. The S-hypothesis is explanatorily inert, carrying no predictive consequences and thus having no well-defined likelihood. It is $Pr(S_R \mid K)$ that is relevant, and we must ask how *its* value compares to $Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$.

11.2.2   Priors and the posterior probability of survival

Since Ducasse's arguments proceed blind to AAR, he does not provide any reasons for supposing that $Pr(S_R \mid K) > Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$. His argument is defective in this regard. However, if we compare the auxiliaries required by S_R to account for the evidence even most generally described (in §9.2 and §9.3) to the auxiliaries implicated in the LAP_R-hypothesis (in §10.4), it should be apparent that we have overriding reasons for supposing that, worst case scenario, $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \approx Pr(S_R \mid K)$, though my inclination is to suppose that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \geq Pr(S_R \mid K)$ is closer to the truth of the matter. And here are a few salient considerations.

First, the survival hypothesis (at least to account for E_{OBE} and E_{MED}) requires a commitment to a degree/kind of living-agent and discarnate psi that would, if survivalist claims about the limits of evidence for psi are correct, lack independent support, just as survivalists claim concerning the LAP_R-hypothesis. Second, to account for any of the strands of evidence, the survival hypothesis must enlist auxiliaries that are lacking independent support/testability, whereas (as reiterated above) at least some of the psychological auxiliaries required by the LAP_R-hypothesis are independently plausible, or at least no less plausible than the psi- and survival-auxiliaries adopted by the survivalist. Third, whereas the LAP_R-hypothesis arguably enlarges our ontological inventory with respect to the powers that it attributes to living persons, the S_R-hypothesis must posit a similar if not identical enlargement, which is further expanded by positing that psi is a property of substances of an exotic sort, namely discarnate persons or reincarnating souls. And none of this is yet to consider the alleged force of considerations from philosophy of mind and cognitive neuroscience that imply that consciousness or certain mental functions depend on a functioning brain.

The central point here is that, if we assume $Pr(S \mid K) = .5$, then when AAR is applied to the survival hypothesis and the relevant evidence, it entails that $Pr(S_R \mid K) \ll .5$. In this case, the posterior probability of survival *can* still be less than ½ even if rival hypotheses have likelihoods individually lower than the likelihood of the survival hypothesis and even if the prior probabilities of the rivals are only marginally higher than the survival hypothesis.

To illustrate, consider the posterior probability outcome for the survival hypothesis given the following numerical assignments:

S_R-Hypothesis	LAP_R-Hypothesis	Robust Competitor
$Pr(S_R | K) = .3$	$Pr(LAP_R | K) = .35$	$Pr(C_R | K) = .35$
$Pr(E | S_R \& K) = .9$	$Pr(E | LAP_R \& K) = .6{-}.9$	$Pr(E | C_R \& K) = .3$

Here I have specified a low prior probability for S_R, and only a slightly higher prior for each of the competitors taken individually. The robust competitor in the right-hand column, which we may suppose corresponds to naturalistic counter-explanations, has a very low likelihood. While S_R has a very high likelihood, I have specified a likelihood-range for LAP_R as the nearest competitor, ranging from LAP_R making the evidence probable (.6) to very probable (.9). The posterior probability of S_R will range from .39 to .46 (increasing as the likelihood of LAP_R decreases).[6] What these assignments illustrate is that the survival hypothesis may indeed have a high likelihood, even higher than the competitors, but it may still fail to have a posterior probability greater than ½. It is possible for the survival hypothesis to have a high likelihood and a higher prior probability than the competitors but still fail to be more probable than not. This confirms (and also explains) a point made by Broad (as quoted in §7.1): even if a hypothesis better explains the evidence than rival hypotheses, we should not accept it if it has a low prior probability.[7]

The basic challenge for the Bayesian survivalist is circumventing the low prior probability that results from enlisting the auxiliary assumptions needed to boost the likelihood of the survival hypothesis. This is the catch-22 for the survivalist. There are no (high) likelihoods without reliance on auxiliaries, and there is no superior prior probability (superior to the LAP_R-hypothesis) with reliance on them. The discussion here further exposes the widespread fallacy of trying to neutralize the "explanatory" force of the LAP_R-hypothesis by arguing that $Pr(LAP_R | K)$ = low. The relevant question is not whether the LAP_R-hypothesis has a low prior probability but whether the S_R-hypothesis has a *higher* prior probability. This seems doubtful, but it is cleverly masked by the survivalist focus on the untenable nature of super-psi hypotheses. In this way, AAR generates a more formidable PP-challenge.

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[6] Nonetheless, it might be that $Pr(S_R | E \& K) > Pr(LAP_R | E \& K)$, even if $Pr(S_R | E \& K) < ½$. For example, if $Pr(E | LAP_R \& K)$ is within the range of .6 and .77, then $Pr(S_R | E \& K) > Pr(LAP_R | E \& K)$, but still $Pr(S_R | E \& K) < ½$.

[7] The posterior probability of a hypothesis may fail to be greater than ½, even when it has a high likelihood and a prior probability higher than the competitors (individually considered). Raise the prior of S_R to .4 (retain its likelihood at .9), and lower the priors of the LAP_R-hypothesis and C_R to .3. If the likelihood of C_R is .3 and the likelihood of LAP_R is .9 (the same as S_R), then the posterior probability will be *exactly* ½, and so the survival hypothesis will be *as* probable as not

11.2.3   Retrospective on Paterson's survival argument

It is worth briefly commenting again on Paterson's cumulative case Bayesian argument since he offers a strategy for redeeming the survival hypothesis from an initially low prior probability. Recall that Paterson construed the survival argument as cumulative in the following manner. The survival argument is really a series of separate but interconnected arguments, each involving its own kind of evidence E_n, and where for each body of evidence E_n, Paterson argues $Pr(S \mid E_n \& K) > Pr(S \mid K)$; that is, E_n raises the probability of the survival hypothesis. The arguments are considered successively, with the prior probability at each stage being revised by including the premises (results) of the earlier argument.[8] I represented the argument schematically as follows:

(1) $Pr(S \mid E_{PA} \& K_0) > Pr(S \mid K_0)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_0) \ll \frac{1}{2}$ [$Pr(S \mid K_0) = .125$]

(2) $Pr(S \mid E_{OBE} \& K_1) > Pr(S \mid K_1)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_1) > Pr(S \mid K_0)$.   [$Pr(S \mid K_1) = .225$]

(3) $Pr(S \mid E_{AE} \& K_2) > Pr(S \mid K_2)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_2) > Pr(S \mid K_1)$ [$Pr(S \mid K_2) = .325$]

(4) $Pr(S \mid E_{MED} \& K_3) > Pr(S \mid K_3)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_3) \approx \frac{1}{2}$ [$Pr(S \mid K_3) = .450$]

(5) $Pr(S \mid E_{CORT} \& K_4) > Pr(S \mid K_4)$, where $Pr(S \mid K_4) = \frac{1}{2}$ [$Pr(S \mid K_4) = \frac{1}{2}$]

Therefore:

(6) $Pr(S \mid E_{CORT} \& K_4) > \frac{1}{2}$

The cumulative argument begins with philosophical arguments (E_{PA}) slightly raising the probability of survival, which is assumed to have a very low initial prior probability relative to background knowledge K_0, before *any* (a priori or empirical) evidence for survival is considered. In the second argument, from out-of-body/near-death experiences (E_{OBE}), K_1 represents an updated prior probability that is greater than $Pr(S \mid K_0)$ because it includes the premises from the first argument, which raised the probability of survival. The second argument contends that just as E_{PA} raised the probability of S to value $N > Pr(S \mid K_0)$, so E_{OBE} raises this updated probability N, which is expressed by $Pr(S \mid K_1)$. The same pattern is repeated until the prior probability of S has been raised to $\frac{1}{2}$. However, since there is remaining evidence to be considered, then when this new evidence is considered, if it raises the probability of S, then it will raise it above $\frac{1}{2}$. So the last strand of evidence renders the survival hypothesis more probable than not.

As with Ducasse, one of my criticisms of Paterson's argument is that it is blind to auxiliaries and thus (potentially) blind to just how low the prior probability of survival might be. Paterson's argument reminds us just

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[8] Griffin (1997: 263–8) presents a similar incremental cumulative case survival argument, and in philosophy of religion, Swinburne (2004: 17, 328) has adopted the same procedure for theistic arguments.

how subtle this issue can be. Each step in the cumulative case depends on Paterson's showing that for some E_n, $Pr(E_n \mid S \& K) > Pr(E_n \mid K)$; that is, the evidence in question is more to be expected if survival is true than if survival is false. But of course, this depends on what we are willing to entertain concerning rival hypotheses, specifically whether we think there is some rival hypothesis with a significant prior probability that would lead us to expect the evidence at least as well as the survival hypothesis. Paterson argued that there is not. Like many survivalists, he is willing to grant that a suitably robust psi hypothesis would lead us to expect the data (and thus produce a competitive likelihood). However, he regards such a hypothesis as a "super-psi" hypothesis and rules it out on the grounds that it lacks "independent support" (Paterson 1995: 174, 182).

In this manner, Paterson reproduces the standard-line dismissal of counter-explanations in terms of living-agent psi because such a hypothesis just seems so antecedently implausible. Were it not for the earlier argument, we might have some measure of sympathy for this maneuver. It is tempting. After all, as I have argued, it may very well be that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) = $ low, or at any rate $Pr(S \mid K) > Pr(LAP_R \mid K)$. Nonetheless, it might still be that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) = Pr(S_R \mid K)$ or, more modestly, that $Pr(LAP_R \mid K) \approx Pr(S_R \mid K)$. In other words, appeals to a robust living-agent psi hypothesis may be *no less plausible* than the robust survival alternative. This is why being blind to auxiliaries becomes problematic for survival arguments. It is not just that survivalists might assign a higher prior probability to survival than is warranted. It is that *they will be apt to miss how an allegedly "improbable" counter-explanation, such as the LAP_R-hypothesis, might subtly prevent the survival hypothesis from having a favorable posterior probability*, because whatever we might wish to say about such exotic counter-explanations, they apparently do lead us to expect the evidence (as a whole) at least as well as their survival counterparts and they possess a prior probability that may be low, but not low *relative to $Pr(S_R \mid K)$.*

Finally, blindness to auxiliaries has a direct bearing on Paterson's step-by-step cumulative case reasoning. In Chapter 9, I laid out a range of auxiliaries required by the survival hypothesis to account for three types of evidence – E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, and E_{CORT} – but I noted how different (though overlapping) auxiliaries are required for the different kinds of evidence. For the survival hypothesis to account for E_{OBE}, at least two auxiliaries would be required. To account for E_{MED}, at least eight different auxiliaries would be needed, and for E_{CORT}, at least three auxiliaries. This further undercuts Paterson's cumulative case argument. To argue for each strand of evidence E_n that it raises the probability of survival, he must show for each E_n that $Pr(E_n \mid S \& K) > Pr(E_n \mid K)$. However, to show this increase in probability, the survival hypothesis will have to be successively modified by the inclusion of *new* auxiliaries so that the survival hypothesis will lead us to expect a new type of evidence. For example, the argument from E_{OBE} will require one set of auxiliaries, but

the argument from E_{MED} will require new auxiliaries on top of the original ones, and so on for E_{CORT}. Paterson considers only how at each stage the prior probability of the survival hypothesis has been favorably updated to account for the inclusion of phenomena from the earlier argument, which he claims involves an increase in value, but this is plausibly neutralized by the decrease in value stemming from the successive bulking up of the survival hypothesis with auxiliaries that lack independent support.

11.2.4   The "general" Bayesian argument defeated

My analysis of Ducasse and Paterson also indicates why Bayesian survival arguments more generally construed will not work. On the Bayesian view, the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis S will be great to the extent that S's prior probability $Pr(S \mid K)$ is high, S's likelihood $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ is high, and the prior probability of the evidence $Pr(E \mid K)$ is low.[9] We can represent the satisfaction of these conditions in the following generic Bayesian survival argument, where E = any one or more of $\{E_{OBE}, E_{MED},$ and $E_{CORT}\}$.

Original Bayesian Argument	*Revised Bayesian Argument*
(1) $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K) = $ low	**(1′) $Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K) = $ low**
(2) **$Pr(E \mid S \& K) = $ high**	(2′) $Pr(E \mid S_R \& K) = $ high
(3) $Pr(S \mid K) \gg Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$	**(3′) $Pr(S_R \mid K) \gg Pr(E \mid {\sim}S_R \& K)$**
Therefore:	Therefore:
(4) $Pr(S \mid E \& K) = $ high	$Pr(S \mid E \& K) = $ high

The original argument on the left side is the kind of argument the Bayesian survivalist would be initially inclined to present. Premise (1) tells us that the catchall likelihood is low, meaning that rival hypotheses are not such as to render the evidence very probable. Premise (2) says that the survival likelihood is high, meaning that the survival hypothesis makes the evidence very probable. The conjunction of (1) and (2) entails that $Pr(E \mid S \& K) \gg Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K)$, and this contributes to lowering $Pr(E \mid K)$. Premise (3) tells us that the prior probability of survival is much greater than the catchall likelihood, meaning that it is much more probable that survival is true (relative to our background knowledge) than it is that we would find the evidence we do if survival were not true. The conclusion is that the posterior probability of the survival hypothesis is high, which entails that the survival hypothesis is (non-trivially) more probable than not.

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[9]   Recall Bayes' theorem: $Pr(S \mid E \& K) = Pr(E \mid S \& K) \times Pr(S \mid K)/Pr(E \mid K)$. According to the theorem, the value of $Pr(S \mid E \& K)$ – the posterior probability of S – increases as the values of $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ and $Pr(S \mid K)$ increase and as the value of $Pr(E \mid K)$ decreases. From the definition of conditional probability, we have $Pr(E \mid K) = Pr(E \mid S \& K) \times Pr(S \mid K) + Pr(E \mid {\sim}S \& K) \times Pr({\sim}S \mid K)$.

I have used boldface to identify the false (or at least unjustified) premises in each argument. My criticism of the original argument (on the left side above) is simple. Inasmuch as "S" refers to a simple survival hypothesis, either premise (2) is false or we simply have no reason to believe that it is true (since it is not a well-defined likelihood). Either way, we lose our grounds for accepting (4). The "revised" argument (on the right side) results from trying to "save" the original argument. Here we have to modify premise (2) of the original argument so that it is now (2′) and true. However, as a result of modifying premise (2), the other premises must be modified as well, which results in premises (1′) and (3′) being false. I have argued that $Pr(E \mid \sim S_R \& K)$ is not low, since LAP_R has a high likelihood. Furthermore, given that $Pr(E \mid \sim S_R \, K)$ is a high likelihood and a robust survival hypothesis has a low prior probability, premise (3′) is false. So again, we lose our reasons for accepting (4).

As suggested earlier, the dilemma for the Bayesian survivalist may also be explicated in terms of the denominator of Bayes' theorem:

$$Pr(E \mid K) = [Pr(E \mid S \& K) \times Pr(S \mid K)] + [Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K) \times Pr(\sim S \mid K)]$$

When we apply the auxiliary assumption requirement to the survival hypothesis and the evidence parameters of the survival argument, it is not possible for both terms in the left-side conjunct to have high values. If $Pr(S \mid K)$ has a high value (relative to $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$) this is only because "S" refers to the simple supposition of survival *sans* auxiliaries. In that case, though, $Pr(E \mid S \& K)$ will not have a high value; indeed, it will have *no* well-defined value. Remedying *this* problem requires adopting the robust survival hypothesis S_R, which does yield a relatively high likelihood for the evidence. But this results in a substantial lowering of prior probability: $Pr(S_R \mid K) < Pr(S \mid K)$. Moreover, I have emphasized one of the more important implications of this for the catchall $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ on the right-side conjunct, namely that even if certain rival hypotheses have low prior probabilities, we are not entitled to conclude that they are low relative to $Pr(S_R \mid K)$. The consequence of this for the catchall prior $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ is that it will not be lower than $Pr(S_R \mid K)$.

Beginning in Chapter 6, we have seen that the procedure of "ruling out" alternative hypotheses has been a staple of the classical arguments, and survivalists have devoted a considerable portion of the dialectical space to trying to refute counter-explanations. For the Bayesian, these refutations of counter-explanations amount to trying to show that $Pr(E \mid K)$ is low, either because $Pr(E \mid \sim S \& K)$ is relatively low or because $Pr(\sim S \mid K)$ is relatively low. I have argued that once the Bayesian survivalist settles on S_R, this agenda is undercut. The Bayesian survivalist needs to argue that there is no rival hypothesis with a significant prior probability (compared to the survival hypothesis) that leads us to expect the data at least as well as does the survival hypothesis. The auxiliary assumption requirement undercuts this, and it thereby defeats the survivalist's reasons for supposing that the survival hypothesis is more probable than not.

11.3 Likelihoodism and hypothesis testing revisited

Even if Bayesian arguments fail to show that the survival hypothesis has a favorable posterior probability might there not be good evidence for survival in a *weaker* sense, namely evidence that merely favors the survival hypothesis over rival hypotheses? In a sense, yes. I think there are particular items of evidence such that a suitably robust survival hypothesis renders the evidence more probable than does some range of various alternative hypotheses. Given the likelihood *principle*, we would be justified in these cases to claim that the evidence favors the survival hypothesis.[10] And furthermore, we could invoke the *law* of likelihood for the purposes of specifying the degree to which the evidence in such cases favors survival over the competitor.[11] Although I suggested this in §6.4.1 and §10.1.1, it is worth clarifying. Where S_R = a suitably robust personal survival hypothesis, C_R = a suitably robust rival hypothesis, I am prepared to accept that there is some evidence E and some rival hypotheses $C_{R1}, \ldots, C_{Rn}$ such that we can justifiably argue:

(1) $Pr(E \mid S_R) > Pr(E \mid C_{Rn})$	(1') $Pr(E \mid S_R) \gg Pr(E \mid C_{Rn})$.
Therefore:	Therefore:
(2) E favors S_R over C_{Rn}.	(2') E strongly favors S_R over C_{Rn}.

Now, these arguments are partially generic since they do not specify what E is, or what the rival hypothesis is. By "E" here I mean the total evidence under any one of E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, or E_{CORT}, or perhaps only a subset of these strands of evidence. Of course, just what instances of these arguments I would be willing to accept would depend on the *specific* fillers for "E" and "C_R." For example, I would agree that $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S_R) \gg Pr(E_{MED} \mid Fraud)$. In general, it seems that S_R will have a higher likelihood than any of the paradigmatic naturalistic "usual suspects," at least with respect to some significant range of the evidence under E_{MED} and E_{CORT}.

11.3.1 Likelihood arguments defeated

There are, nonetheless, some problems that need to be acknowledged here, and the problems outweigh whatever apparent benefit the favoring relation involved in the above arguments secures.

First, just as there will be some evidence E and rival hypothesis C_R such that E favors S_R over C_R, there will also be some rival hypotheses C_R' such

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[10] (LP) Observational evidence e supports hypothesis h1 more than it supports hypothesis h2 if and only if $Pr(e \mid h1) > Pr(e \mid h2)$.

[11] The law of likelihood was stated as this: (LL) Observational evidence e supports hypothesis h1 more than it supports hypothesis h2 if and only if $Pr(e \mid h1) > Pr(e \mid h2)$, and the degree to which e supports h_1 over h_2 is measured by the likelihood ratio $Pr(e \mid h1)/Pr(e \mid h2)$.

that $Pr(E \mid S_R) = Pr(E \mid C_R')$ or $Pr(E \mid S_R) < Pr(E \mid C_R')$. There are many exotic kinds of hypotheses that would equalize likelihoods. Suppose that we take one such example, favored by many traditional Christians: there is some demonic entity, with significant power and detailed knowledge of the lives of formerly living persons and who wishes to masquerade as deceased persons for the purpose of engaging in deception, to lead people away from God, the Protestant faith, Calvinism, or – a bit more specifically – the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This demon hypothesis (D), perhaps with a modification or two, is such that $Pr(E_{MED} \mid D) = $ high, and further $Pr(E_{MED} \mid D) = Pr(E_{MED} \mid S_R)$, and so neutralizes the potential of E_{MED} to confirm the survival hypothesis. Now even if it were plausible to eliminate such "absurd" hypotheses by some sort of candidate-hypothesis filter (e.g. as Robin Collins has proposed (§6.4.1)), there will still be many hypotheses with equal or greater likelihoods relative to the evidence and that pass through the filter.[12]

Second, as argued in some detail in connection with Bayesian survival arguments, there are good reasons to hold that the LAP_R-hypothesis renders the evidence as probable as the S_R-hypothesis. This is subject to an important caveat implied in my earlier analysis, namely that S_R may render *some* pieces of evidence more probable than does the LAP_R-hypothesis. One of Gauld's more important contributions to the survival debate has been his clearly identifying the strands of evidence that prima facie generate problems for LAP_R because they are less obviously predictive consequences of LAP_R (Gauld 1982: 139–40). But one need not go very far into the evidence before one realizes the limits of the apparent survivalist advantage here. Among other things, while S_R may render *some* pieces of evidence more probable than does LAP_R, the LAP_R-hypothesis will render *other* evidence more probable than does the S_R. As explained in Chapter 10, this has been particularly apparent in connection with the diverse data collected from mediumship. For these reasons, when we take the total evidence (subsumed under E_{OBE}, E_{MED}, or E_{CORT}), I think it will be very difficult for the survivalist to argue that $Pr(E_{MED} \mid S_R) > Pr(E_{MED} \mid LAP_R)$ or $(E_{CORT} \mid S_R) > Pr(E_{CORT} \mid LAP_R)$, and so on.

Most important, though, likelihoods quickly become epistemically trivial when they are removed from the larger framework for which they are optimized and from which they derive their significance. That framework is hypothesis testing. Recall that Likelihoodism involves favoring-measures

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[12] Robin Collins appeals to the *restricted* version of the Likelihood Principle, which states that for any two non-ad hoc hypotheses h1 and h2 observational evidence e supports h1 over h2 if $Pr(e \mid h1) > Pr(e \mid h2)$. Robins stipulates that a sufficient condition for a hypothesis being non-ad hoc is that there is independent support for the hypothesis, or alternatively that the hypothesis has been widely advocated prior to the allegedly confirming evidence.

that disregard the assignment of values to prior probabilities, posterior probabilities, and catchall likelihoods (the negation of a hypothesis) – three crucial features of Bayesianism.[13] The Likelihoodist is interested in bringing evidence to bear on the competition between rival hypotheses, h_1 and h_2, where each hypothesis has a well-defined likelihood in relation to the evidence. Likelihood confirmation-measures facilitate testing hypotheses against each other by their predictive consequences. When we can say just what two different hypotheses lead us to expect about the world, we are in a position to locate evidence that will favor one of the hypotheses over the other. However, as noted in connection with Sober's definition of hypothesis testing (in §9.4.1), testing one hypothesis against another requires auxiliaries for which we have independent support. Therefore, unless there is independent support for survival-auxiliaries, survival-likelihoods (even if favorable or high) will not express anything useful for the genuine testing of the survival hypothesis against rival hypotheses.

11.3.2 Theistic design arguments and survival arguments

This fundamental criticism of likelihood survival arguments is the same criticism Sober has developed against design arguments for God's existence. Sober argues that since we do not know the abilities and goals of the designer (should there happen to be one), we are not in a position to say what the world should look like if it has an intelligent designer, though of course it is very easy for an intelligent designer hypothesis to create post hoc accommodations to pretty much any evidence that is discovered (Sober 2008: 109–88, especially 141–7).

> As we have seen, auxiliary propositions can be invented about the putative designer's goals and abilities that insure that the likelihood of the intelligent-design hypothesis is very high, but it is equally true that auxiliary propositions can be invented that insure that the likelihood of the intelligent-design hypothesis is zero. What is needed is not the invention of auxiliary propositions (whether they help or hurt the design hypothesis) but the identification of auxiliary information that is independently supported. Paley did not provide this information, and the same is true of modern defenders of the design argument. (2008: 168)

Sober's comments here about the intelligent design hypothesis apply *mutatis mutandis* to the survival hypothesis. As we saw in Chapter 9, we can invent

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[13] As Sober notes, the Likelihoodist *can* accept the assignment of probabilities to hypotheses when values can legitimately be applied to prior probabilities (and even the catchall ~h), but only when such values have empirical support. See Sober (2008: 37).

auxiliary propositions about what consciousness would be like if it should survive death, including the goals and abilities of survivors, such that these assumptions ensure that the likelihood of the survival hypothesis is very high (§9.2 and §9.3), but it is equally true that auxiliary propositions can be invented that ensure that the likelihood of the survival hypothesis is zero (§9.1). What is needed is not the invention of auxiliary propositions (whether they help or hurt the survival hypothesis) but the identification of auxiliary information that is independently supported. Neither Hodgson nor Hyslop provided this information, and the same is true of modern defenders of the empirical arguments for survival, from Stevenson to Almeder.

Fundamentally, then, likelihood survival arguments are unsuccessful for two interrelated reasons. First, we have no way to evaluate statements of the form "$Pr(E_{MED} \mid S)$" or "$Pr(E_{CORT} \mid S)$," where S = the hypothesis of personal survival. The problem is not that we are unable to assign a point value to such statements (true as this might be); rather, we have no way to justifiably claim whether it is *greater* or *less* than $Pr(E_{MED} \mid LAP)$" or "$Pr(E_{CORT} \mid LAP)$." Second, this first-level problem is not overcome simply by generating well-defined likelihoods by adding auxiliary assumptions for which we have no independent support. What is required is evidence for what persons would be like if they should survive death, where this evidence is independent of the assumption that persons survive death. We currently lack this evidence, and so naturally we have no way of confidently selecting the "correct" set of auxiliaries. As a result, any "testing" of the survival hypothesis will at best amount to more or less sophisticated forms of showing how the survival hypothesis can merely accommodate evidence. The problem is that exactly the same move of successful post hoc accommodation is open to critics wielding various counter-explanations such as the appeal to living-agent psi.

11.3.3 Explanatory arguments defeated

As explained in earlier chapters, empirical arguments for survival are typically presented as explanatory arguments, in which the survival hypothesis is argued to be the best explanation of the total evidence. On the one hand, we have the modest explanatory argument (MEA), according to which explanatory salience is solely a matter of how well rival hypotheses lead us to expect the relevant data. On the other hand, we have the strengthened explanatory argument (SEA), according to which explanatory salience is a function of how well rival hypotheses lead us to expect the relevant evidence and the consideration of various extra plausibility factors, usually regarded as explanatory virtues in addition to predictive power. I have argued that, ultimately, explanatory arguments may be formalized as either Likelihood arguments (replacing MEA) or as Bayesian arguments (replacing SEA).

It should be clear that there is a fairly small set of recurring substantive issues that is encountered in connection with explanatory survival arguments

from Hodgson to Stevenson and that have simply reincarnated themselves in various ways in more recent authors such as Almeder, Braude, Gauld, and Lund. These issues essentially come down to the problematic nature of (a) determining the relevant kinds of explanatory virtues, (b) converting these virtues into some kind of substantial evidential cash value, (c) determining the collective net value of these virtues for the survival hypothesis and its competitors, and (d) weighing the hypotheses so evaluated against each other to determine which, if any, of the rival hypotheses has an explanatory edge, and if so, how much of an edge. So it should be clear that the problems encountered in the formalized explanatory arguments are not generated by the formalization procedure but rather originate from issues of deep conceptual complexity intrinsic to the nature of explanation and the evaluation of hypotheses as explanatory competitors. One of the motivations for going the unprecedented route of formalizing the explanatory arguments by using confirmation theory is to bring a deeper level of clarity to why (a) through (d) are problematic, as this has been largely masked by the survivalist's dependence on informal concepts in the traditional formulation of the classical arguments.

11.4   Concluding remarks

I have argued that the classical empirical arguments for survival in both their traditional informal and formalized versions lack cogency, a defect ultimately rooted in the problem of auxiliary assumptions. Bayesian arguments do not show that the survival hypothesis is more probable than not, and thus, they fail to show that there is "good evidence" for survival in this specific and widely endorsed sense. Likelihood arguments do not show that we have evidence that non-trivially favors survival over rival hypotheses and that would consequently play a role in the genuine testing of the survival hypothesis against its rivals. Since explanatory arguments depend on either Bayesian or Likelihood assumptions, they also fail, though the formalization of such arguments informs us of precisely *why* they fail. And this path leads right to the hydra-headed PoA: the problem of auxiliary assumptions.

I have shown how the auxiliary assumption requirement (AAR), when applied to the survival hypothesis, has important implications for the evaluation of likelihoods and prior probabilities. Hence, PoA is linked to the traditional prior probability (PP) and counter-explanation (CE) challenges. However, it implies in each case a reformulation of these traditional challenges in the light of AAR. From this vantage point, traditional survivalist rejoinders to the PP-challenge and CE-challenge are inadequate. Perhaps more significantly, they have masked the more fundamental problems that infect empirical survival arguments. To the extent that survivalists are unconscious of AAR and its bearing on the classical survival arguments,

they are ill-equipped to advance the empirical survival debate. Such an advance requires engaging PoA.

Now, to circumvent potential misunderstandings of my central claim and supporting arguments, I should, as a final word, briefly underscore what I have *not* taken myself to show in this critical exploration. First, I have not taken myself to show that belief in survival, even personal survival (including the robust sort of survival hypothesis required by the classical arguments), is epistemically unjustified. I also do not think this is an implication of anything I have argued. I have argued only that the *classical arguments* are inadequate to justify belief in personal survival. As indicated in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, there are different grounds for belief in personal survival. My arguments do not rule out these grounds as potential justifying grounds for beliefs about survival or their doing so in tandem with the empirical considerations discussed in this book. Basing belief in survival on multiple grounds (including religious grounds) may be successful in ways in which the more narrowly circumscribed parameters of the classical arguments in much of the history of psychical research has not been successful.

Second, since my arguments are neutral with respect to the principles that govern experiential justification, I have not shown that persons who have OBEs/NDEs, who seem to remember past lives, or who experience themselves communicating with the dead are not epistemically justified in the kinds of beliefs engendered by these *experiences*. In much the same way, we might suppose that the failure of arguments for God's existence based on data from religious experience does not entail that persons who have religious experience are unjustified in believing in God on the basis of their experience. There is a widely advertised distinction between discursive justification (especially of an explanatory nature) and first-person experiential justification, and this distinction may be wielded in ways that permit belief in survival to be experientially justified, even if it is inferentially unjustified, or at least not inferentially justified by the classical arguments. While I find this distinction between inferential and experiential justification plausible, my arguments are neutral at this juncture. So my arguments do not rule out direct or experiential grounds for belief in survival.

Third, nothing that I have argued entails that the data covered in Chapter 3 through Chapter 5 are not evidence for personal survival, only that the classical arguments do not show this, or at least do not show that these data constitute *good* evidence for survival. It seems fairly obvious that these data are, at least in a fairly strict sense of the term, evidence for survival, in much the same way that the fine-tuning of the universe is evidence for the existence of God. Even a skeptic can (and should) admit that the fine-tuning of the universe *raises* the probability of theism, at least to the extent that fine-tuning is a prediction borne out by the hypothesis of theism. In much the same way, the data in Chapter 3 through Chapter 5 (severally and jointly) raise the probability of any survival theory that has these data as

empirical consequences of the theory. Of course, this does not tell us *how much* the data raise the probability of personal survival much less the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis. Moreover, the same data will raise the probability of *any* theory that has these data as predictive consequences, including hypotheses that postulate psychodynamically guided powerful and refined psi or hypotheses that postulate demonic entities with intentions to deceive human persons and lead them away from the Presbyterian faith. So the survivalist should probably not pop the celebratory cork over this kind of incremental justification.

Finally, I have not shown, nor do I think, that there *cannot* be a good empirical argument for personal survival based on the kinds of data discussed in the preceding chapters, much less other kinds of observational data of an ordinary or extraordinary sort. I have targeted the classical arguments, in their traditional and revised formalized versions, and I argued that *these* arguments fail to accomplish what they purport to accomplish. But regarding the potential future success of these arguments, I think we must say what C.D. Broad said, with his characteristic wit, about the truth of the survival hypothesis itself: "one can only wait and see, or alternatively (which is no less likely) wait and not see" (1962: 430).

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