

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On the Reality of Other Worlds

Editor: Rodriguez's proposal (Rodriguez, 2007) for discriminating and testing three levels of reality for ostensibly independently existing alternate realities experienced by some users of DMT is fascinating, as I have thought about similar issues for some time.

Rodriguez postulates three theories about such ostensible alternate realities (OARs). One is that they are purely subjective, constructed from the psychological and physiological specifics of an individual experiencer, and so would show great variation from experiencer to experiencer.

The second theory would expect more similarity across experiencers, but this would result from their psychological and physiological commonalities. This as an interesting way of redefining Jung's concept of *archetypal realities*: we have certain deep structures in common, and, when the right psychological or physiological stimuli activate these structures, we have similar experiences.

The third OAR would show great commonality from experiencer to experiencer because the OAR is postulated to exist in some real form independent of the qualities of any particular human experiencer. Evidence toward such reality could be obtained by comparing the reports of various individuals who had experienced them (Tart, 1987) and seeing if they showed significant commonalities that could not be attributed to common psychological and cultural backgrounds or experiment-induced (artifactual) sets and biases. Rodriguez takes this approach further by proposing that the inhabitants of the OAR reached by DMT users be asked to factor a large number into its primes, a task the DMT users would not be consciously capable of, but these presumably advanced aliens in the OAR would.

I became especially interested in the question of testing the reality of OARs in a study of the mutual hypnosis technique I devised (Tart, 1967, 1969). Here Person One hypnotizes Person Two, Person Two, from her hypnotic state, then hypnotizes Person One, then Person One, from his hypnotic state deepens the hypnotic state of Person Two, etc. A specific subjective "reality" is created by the suggestions that each overtly gives the other. In the study I reported, though, the hypnotist/subjects eventually became somewhat frightened about their mutual experience for, as they reviewed it at later times, they felt that they had both experienced fine details of the environment that suggestions in the transcript of the session could not seem to account for. This raised the troubling issue for them of having been in a "real" place, or telepathically interacting.

A fascinating OAR case was reported by Robert Monroe, a businessman with no prior metaphysical interests who began spontaneously having out-of-body experiences (OBEs) (Monroe, 1971; 1985; 1994). One way he developed to induce OBEs seemed to reliably lead to a particular OAR. It showed the same major environmental characteristics each of the times he went there. It was largely earth-like, but clearly not Earth.

If I had ever developed a cadre of trained OBE co-researchers, and I could be sure they had never heard of Monroe's descriptions, I would have loved to instruct them in this particular technique and then compare their reports.

Another thread that could be followed up involves lucid dreams, dreams where you find yourself fully, sensorily in a world you dub a dream, but in which your consciousness feels like it is functioning quite like your waking consciousness. If you knew for a fact right now, for instance, that you were dreaming, but your mind feels normal, that is pretty much what a lucid dream feels like (Tart, 1979, 1983). A number of lucid dreamers have reported telling the characters they met in their lucid dreams that they were not real, but just a product of the dreamer's mind. A frequent result has been the dream characters telling the dreamers they were quite mistaken!

There was an interest in experimentally testing the ostensible independent reality of lucid dream characters in the lucid dream investigation community back in the 80s, although I have not followed that literature. The idea was to give a lucid dream character a mental problem to solve, while you, the lucid dreamer, did not (consciously) think about it, and see if the lucid dream character's answer was correct. This strikes me as a useful, but perhaps weaker version of Rodriguez's proposal to ask an alternate reality character to factor a large number.

One other old but major research effort needs to be mentioned, the *cross-correspondence* studies of possible postmortem survival. A real environment where the souls of the deceased reside would certainly be an OAR. Mediums claim to communicate with the dead by some kind of telepathic process. Sometimes verifiable, specific facts about the earthly life of the ostensible surviving spirit are communicated this way. But, since we have enormous amounts of evidence for telepathy among the living, perhaps this apparent evidence of postmortem survival is really a matter of unconscious impersonation of the deceased by the medium, combined with subconscious use of telepathy or clairvoyance by the medium to add verisimilitude.

The cross-correspondences were a series of communications through several mediums not in normal contact with each other. The communications were supposedly initiated and organized by the surviving "souls" of several then-deceased psychical researchers who intended to provide evidence for survival to the living. What they communicated they would do was give separate mediums various detailed bits of messages, usually involving allusions to classical literature, with such messages not making much sense on their own, but making excellent sense when put together.

The outcome? Those few researchers who were well educated in the classics themselves all agreed that you had to be a classical scholar to begin to evaluate the cross-correspondences. I have read some of the material and do not have the slightest idea whether it is brilliant evidence of survival or it is a lot of nonsensical babbling that you can project whatever you want to believe into. But I am not a classical scholar. A good overview of the cross-correspondences can be found in Braude (Braude, 2003).

Of course all these possibilities are more complex to investigate than they appear on the surface because of the possibility of subconscious mentation (Kelly, 2007), including non-conscious use of psi ability to produce veridical correspondences. While these factors make things more complicated, they do not make research impossible.

Bringing it back together, I think the idea of independently existing alternate realities is worth thinking about, even if some or all of them are Jungian archetypes, rather than truly independent realities, and I hope these remarks can serve as useful leads for thought and research for those interested.

CHARLES T. TART

Institute of Transpersonal Psychology
 ctart@itp.edu or ctart@ucdavis.edu

References

- Braude, S. (2003). *Immortal Remains: The Evidence for Life After Death*. Lanham MD: Roman & Littlefield.
- Kelly, E., Kelly, Emily, Crabtree, A., Gauld, A., Grosso, M., & Greyson, B. (2007). *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Monroe, R. A. (1971). *Journeys Out of the Body*. Garden City: Anchor Books.
- Monroe, R. A. (1994). *Ultimate Journey*. New York: Doubleday.
- Monroe, R. S. (1985). *Far journeys*. New York: Doubleday.
- Rodriguez, M. (2007). A methodology for studying various interpretations of the N,N-dimethyltryptamine-induced alternate reality. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 21(1), 67–84.
- Tart, C. (1967). Psychedelic experiences associated with a novel hypnotic procedure, mutual hypnosis. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 10, 65–78.
- Tart, C. (1969). (Reprinting) Psychedelic experiences associated with a novel hypnotic procedure, mutual hypnosis. In C. Tart (Ed.), *Altered States of Consciousness: A Book of Readings* (pp. 291–308). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tart, C. (1979). From spontaneous event to lucidity: A review of attempts to consciously control nocturnal dreaming. In B. Wolman, M. Ullman, & W. Webb (Eds.), *Handbook of Dreams: Research, Theories and Applications* (pp. 226–268). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Tart, C. (1983). Lucid dreaming. *Dictionary of Psychology* (p. 361). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Tart, C. (1987). On the scientific study of other worlds. In D. Weiner & R. Nelson (Eds.), *Research in Parapsychology 1986* (p. 145). Metuchenn, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.

Historical Examples of the Use of Newspapers as ESP Targets

Editor: Graff's (2007) study is the most recent example of the use of newspapers as ESP targets. May I bring to the attention of readers of the *JSE* a few forgotten observations from the old mesmeric and psychical research literature?

Spencer T. Hall (1843), editor of *The Phreno-Magnet*, reported on an account sent to him by an anonymous correspondent regarding a servant girl who had been mesmerized: "Mesmeric sleep having been produced . . . she could no more see than a blind man A newspaper had been put into her hands wrongside upwards, she immediately turned it the right way, and being asked what it was she looked, if you will allow the expression, for her eyes were fast closed, and said what paper it was, and read a little of it" (p. 120). Other examples of clairvoyant reading of newspapers can be found in the mesmeric literature (e.g., Deleuze, 1837, p. 173; Lee, 1866, p. 158).

Other instances of the use of newspaper as ESP targets can be found in the context of Spiritualism. William Crookes reported the following:

A lady was writing automatically by means of the planchette . . . The planchette, as it always does, insisted that, although it was moved by the hand and arm of the lady, the intelligence was that of an invisible being who was playing on her brain as on a musical instrument, and thus moving her muscles. I therefore said to this intelligence, "Can you see the contents of this room?" "Yes," wrote the planchette. "Can you see to read this newspaper?" said I, putting my finger on a copy of the *Times*, which was on a table behind me, but without looking at it. "Yes" was the reply of the planchette. "Well," I said, "if you can see that, write the word which is now covered by my finger, and I will believe you." The planchette commenced to move. Slowly and with great difficulty, the word "however" was written. I turned round and saw that the word "however" was covered by the tip of my finger. I had purposely avoided looking at the newspaper when I tried this experiment, and it was impossible for the lady, had she tried, to have seen any of the printed words, for she was sitting at one table, and the paper was on another table behind, my body intervening (Crookes, 1874, p. 96).

Perhaps the most systematic work using newspapers in the old literature was that conducted by English psychical researcher Charles Drayton Thomas. Thomas, who authored several books (e.g., 1922, 1928) and articles (e.g., 1921, 1925), became particularly known for his investigations of medium Gladys Osborne Leonard, through which he believed both his father and sister communicated with him. In his book *Some New Evidence for Human Survival*, Thomas (1922) discussed tests in which both books and newspapers were used as targets for communications coming through Mrs. Leonard's spirit control Fedra. The book tests consisted on communications indicating the location of a nearby book, which were followed with more specific information about the page and location on the page where specific names or phrases were to be found.

Such tests, with many successes, received some attention in the literature, some of which included the problem of assessing chance coincidences (On the Element of Chance in Book-Tests, 1923; Sidgwick, 1921).

Most of the newspaper tests reported by Thomas were about information appearing in the next day's edition of the London *Times* (Thomas, 1921, 1922, 1925). The majority were about names and about meaningful words. Thomas indicated in his report the total number of statements and how many were correct, wrong, or inconclusive. While some of the information may have been available at the offices of the newspaper at the time of the séance, on some occasions, it was not set in type and the final location of the information in the newspaper was not known.

A simple example was one message received on December 19, 1919, which was written down and verified with the paper the next day:

Having been directed to the first page and "rather more than one-third down column three," I was asked to look to the left where, almost in a line with that spot, would appear my name and a little above it that of my wife.

On examining that part of the *Times* next day . . . , I saw our names within one inch of each other, my wife's in column one, and my own name, *Charles*, in column two. Both are to the left of the spot named as guiding mark, but two inches below half-way down, which is somewhat lower than indicated. My wife's name is represented in the paper by *Clare*, which is what I habitually call her . . . "Clare" appears just a fraction higher than "Charles," and this agrees with the test description (Thomas, 1922, pp. 120–121).

In addition, Thomas was concerned with assessing chance coincidence in the newspaper tests. As he wrote in a paper:

It is an easy matter to take a number of such tests seriatim and discover how far they will apply to issues of *The Times* for other dates than those for which originally given I have done this with the above fifty-three tests, looking for each one in six issues of *The Times* selected at random. . . . In no instance did this six-fold chance yield as many successes from one paper as did the original verification Since two of the fifty-three tests described in this paper were misplaced we get a total of fifty-one successes. Examining *The Times* of other dates for correspondences which would result from chance only twenty-seven are found, and this notwithstanding the fact that no less than six papers were searched for each item. If the total for the six papers be divided by six the result shows a fraction under thirteen as the average secured by chance, against the fifty-one obtained by my communicator. It is therefore clear that coincidence does not explain the facts (Thomas, 1921, pp. 103).

While the earlier work was not impressive in terms of evidence, Thomas's was of better quality. More than a historical curiosity, Thomas's work provides us with suggestions to empirically assess chance coincidence in the use of newspaper materials as targets.

CARLOS S. ALVARADO
University of Virginia Health System
Charlottesville, VA
email: csa3m@virginia.edu

References

- Crookes, W. (1874). *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. London: J. Burns.
- Deleuze, J. P. F. (1837). *Practical Instruction in Animal Magnetism*. Providence: B. Cranston.
- Graff, D. E. (2007). Explorations in precognitive dreaming. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 21, 707–722.
- Hall, S. T. (1843). Clairvoyance at Nottingham. *Phreno-Magnet, and Mirror of Nature*, 1, 120–121.
- Lee, E. (1966). *Animal Magnetism and Magnetic Lucid Somnambulism*. London: Longman, Green.
- On the element of chance in book-tests. (1923). *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 33, 606–620.
- Sidgwick, Mrs. H. [E.M.]. (1921). An examination of book-tests obtained in sittings with Mrs. Leonard. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 31, 214–400.
- Thomas, C. D. (1921). Newspaper tests. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 20, 89–107.
- Thomas, C. D. (1922). *Some New Evidence for Human Survival*. London: W. Collins & Son.
- Thomas, C. D. (1925). A recent newspaper test. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 22, 18–23.
- Thomas, C. D. (1928). *Life Beyond Death with Evidence*. London: W. Collins.