

The Problem of Seth's Origin:  
A Case Study of the Trance-Possession Mediumship of Jane Roberts  
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**Abstract**

Jane Roberts channeled the purported discarnate entity called "Seth" from 1963 through 1984. The purposes of this paper are to (a) discuss the question of whether the *content* of a mediumistic communication can aid in determining the *source* of that communication, (b) address a gap in the literature by presenting an outer history of the trance-possession mediumship of Jane Roberts, and (c) examine eight explanations for Seth's origin in light of the published evidence of the case, including fraud, cryptomnesia, hypnotic self-suggestion, incipient schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder, high creativity, psi functioning, basic source Aspect, and energy personality essence. Either Seth is or is not a production of Jane Roberts' psyche. In either case, we are led to the possibility that human personality may have a greater reality and greater awareness than is generally supposed.

*Keywords:* case study, mediums, mediumship, possession, trance, survival of consciousness, discarnate communication, content analysis.

### **The Problem of Seth's Origin: A Case Study of the Trance-Possession Mediumship of Jane Roberts**

On December 8, 1963 an entity that called himself Seth emerged under the auspices of a ouija board to take possession of the body of a woman named Jane Roberts of Elmira, New York with the expressed purpose of dictating information about the nature of reality beyond the five senses in a trance-possession mediumship that lasted for 21 years. The mediumship of Jane Roberts is termed a "trance mediumship" because it occurred in a "sleep-like state" with characteristic dissociation, amnesia, and excursion of the ego (Sher, 1981, p. 108) in contrast to "mental mediumship" that "occurs in a conscious and focused waking state" (Buhrman, 1997, p. 13). The phenomenon is termed "possession" because "*possession* is a more developed form of motor automatism in which the automatist's own personality does for a time altogether disappear, while there is a more or less complete *substitution* of personality;. . . speech being given by a spirit through the entranced organism" (Myers, 1903/1961, p. 345).

Who or what is Seth and what is the origin of the Seth material? The purposes of this paper are to (a) discuss the "content/source" problem in modern mediumship research; that is, whether the content of mediumistic communications can be used to determine the source of those communications -- whether normally, abnormally, or paranormally conceived, (b) address a gap in the parapsychological literature by presenting an outer history of Jane Roberts' trance-possession mediumship, and (c) critically examine several explanations for Seth's origin, including fraud, cryptomnesia, hypnosis, schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder, high creativity, psi functioning, basic source Aspect, and energy personality essence against evidence presented in the published record of the case. One aim of providing a case study and critical analysis of a specific medium is to increase awareness of the trance-possession mediumship of Jane Roberts. A second aim is to serve as a thought experiment for investigators looking into explanations for the sources of information in mediumship and other similar phenomena.

#### **The Content/Source Problem in Mediumship Research**

Kelly (2010) observed that mediumship "is the only phenomenon directly relevant to the survival problem that can be produced and observed under conditions of experimental control" (p. 248). Jane Roberts died on September 5, 1984 and Robert (Rob) Butts, her husband who transcribed verbatim all Seth trance sessions, died on May 26, 2008. What happens when the medium and her scribe are deceased and no longer available to be interviewed or studied in the usual scientific way that permits control, manipulation, and measurement in either a laboratory or field setting? What significance can a mediumship continue to have after the medium is deceased in terms of its bearing on controversial issues in psychical research, in furthering understanding of the dynamic nature of human personality, or in addressing the brain/consciousness problem and the survival of consciousness hypothesis? Because Jane Roberts and her scribe are deceased, it is not possible to *experimentally* test any of the eight explanations about Seth's origin that are examined in the paper except through rational analysis or thought experiment. How else might the problem of Seth's origin be approached if it is to meet with any real success? Can an analysis of the content of Jane Roberts' mediumistic communications (the Seth material) provide evidence for the existence or nature of its claimed source (Seth)?

**Myers' problem.** The project of inferring Seth's discarnate status or independent and separate existence from his medium, Jane Roberts, by a content analysis of the information contained in the published record of the mediumship is problematical for at least two reasons. First, F. H. W. Myers (1889, 1892a, 1893), a founding member of the British Society for Psychical Research, long ago recognized that even if a discarnate personality external to the medium's own *is* the source of the material, that material must first be communicated through subconscious levels of the medium's psyche. The conditions and manifestations of the communications would be limited by the capacity of the medium (e.g., medium's vocabulary) and colored by the medium's personal subconscious. Mediums are personalities and they must interpret the information they receive. There are no pure channels through which mediumistic information magically flows, in those terms. This makes it difficult to distinguish between material whose origin is within the medium yet outside her (his) normal waking consciousness, and material whose origin is a source external to the medium's own psyche.

Second, alternative explanations for the origin of mediumistic communications can always be conceived. Even corroborated evidential information received from persons recently deceased and unknown to the medium giving facts connected to their identity which are afterwards found to be correct in the complete absence of any sensory feedback (termed anomalous information reception) would not of itself provide necessary and sufficient proof of identity of its source. Myers (1893) points out the problem:

I have said that a message containing only facts normally known to the automatist must not, on the strength of its mere assertions, be regarded as proceeding from any mind but his own. This seems evident; but the converse proposition is not equally indisputable. We must not take for granted that a message which *does* contain facts not normally known to the automatist must therefore come from some mind other than his own. . . . Parallel with the possibilities of reception of such knowledge from the influence of other embodied or disembodied minds lies the possibility of its own clairvoyant perception, or active absorption, of some kind, of facts lying indefinitely beyond its supraliminal purview (pp. 42-43).

The analysis of mediumistic communications judged on the basis of its content alone has not been able to reliably differentiate between hypotheses of survival of consciousness and alternative parapsychological interpretations, such as survival psi, super-ESP, or psychic reservoir explanations -- even under so-called "ideal" experimental conditions (Beischel, 2007/2008, pp. 62-63). The parapsychological research community has found it exceedingly difficult to identify what conditions must be fulfilled in order for a mediumistic communication to indicate *prima facie* the influence of a discarnate mind (Braude, 2003; Fontana, 2005; Gauld, 1983). With regard to the dead, we have no independent knowledge of their condition.

**The problem of Seth's origin.** Judgments concerning the credibility of the Seth material cannot be separated from the question of its origin since constant reference is made to it throughout the material itself. Source cannot be divorced from content, practically speaking, since establishing proof of identity of the communicator is important in assessing the evidential character of the communication (Stevenson, 1978, pp. 326-327). In the present context of the Seth material, establishing proof of Seth's identity is important for determining (a) whether or not the communications will be valued and judged to be credible, (b) whether or not the communications have come from its attributed source, and (c) whether or not the communicator is believed to

exist. On the other hand, the content of the Seth material arguably can and should stand on its merits, regardless of its source.

In the absence of an opportunity to study both Jane and Seth under conditions of experimental control, how does one establish proof of Seth's identity or ascertain the validity of his communications? The problem is made more difficult by the two-fold fact that (a) the content of the published record does not provide sufficient veridical extrasensory information to prove Seth's discarnate character and (b) Jane Roberts' contact is with an entity that does not belong to physical reality. In the absence of veridical extrasensory information and objective confirmation of the communicator's identity, how does one decide whether or not the Seth material represents a genuine communication from a discarnate entity? Before this question can be adequately addressed, however, the conclusion that "the content of information cannot provide evidence for its source" (personal communication, J. Beischel, September 18, 2010) needs to be qualified and the conditions that set limits or constraints on the conclusion identified.

**Messages by motor automatism.** In his classic study of motor automatism, Myers' (1893) categorized the conceivable origin of written and other messages that professed to come from survival personalities into four classes "judging by their definite contents alone" (p. 41): (a) messages that come from the channel's own mind and whose content is supplied from ordinary memory or more extensive subliminal memory (pp. 41-43); (b) messages whose content is derived telepathically from the minds of other living persons who are either conscious or unconscious of transmitting the information (pp. 43-70); (c) messages whose content emanate from some "unembodied intelligence of unknown type" conventionally known as "guides" or "guardians" (pp. 70-106); and (d) messages whose content is ostensibly derived in a more or less direct manner from the mind of the discarnate personality from whom the communication does actually claim to come (pp. 106-128). While the mere assertion that written or spoken messages comes from a discarnate personality is no proof and one cannot accept communicators at their face value, the content of a communication can provide the heuristic basis for arranging messages into a taxonomy of conceivable origins with some success.

**Phenomenology of mediumship.** Myers' problem remains of determining the difference between information that originated solely from within the medium and information that originated from an outside source that is "coterminous and continuous" -- to use William James' terminology -- with what is "within." (1902/1936, p. 499). Theoretically, a medium might be trained to introspectively tell the difference between her experience channeling information from one source and an other. This is the goal of contemporary process-oriented mediumship research designed to isolate the phenomenological processes underlying mediums' experiences during different kinds of discarnate communications. According to Rock, Beischel, & Schwartz (2008),

A detailed understanding of these processes may, in turn, assist researchers with regards to determining the *source* [emphasis added] of the purportedly non-local, non-sensory information mediums receive. That is to say, the phenomenological elements underpinning discarnate communication readings might include the medium's sense of whether the discarnate is imaginal (i.e., a projection of the medium's mental set) or exosomatic (i.e., independent of the medium's mind-body complex), and whether or not discarnate communication is experienced as arising by the same mechanisms as does telepathic communication for the living (Rock, Beischel, & Schwartz, p. 189).

Further developments in such triple-blind, process-focused mediumship research has the potential of identifying what phenomenological conditions must be fulfilled in order for a phenomena to indicate *prima facie* the influence of a discarnate mind and to sufficiently advance understanding of the mechanics of experience underlying discarnate communications to solve Myers' problem.

### **The Analogy Approach**

In order to advance understanding of the content/source problem in mediumship research in a creative and productive way, the use of an analogy approach is recommended. The aim is to avoid stereotyped and functionally fixed thinking that can frame the content/source problem in a narrow and limited manner and block conceptual understanding of the problem space and perception of potential problem solutions. In the present context, the use of an analogy approach means looking at non-parapsychological content/source problems that have similar abstract, underlying meaning (structural features), but different superficial content and specific details (surface features). It means using the solution to similar, more familiar problems to help solve less familiar, more difficult ones (Gentner, Holyoak, & Kokinov, 2001). That is, can the study of more familiar analogical situations outside the field of mediumistic research (such as historical studies and literary analysis) show how rational analysis of documentary content to determine a communication's source be productively applied to case studies of deceased mediums such as Jane Roberts?

For example, Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, Henry Murray, and Robert White have constructed logically coherent and consistent psychobiographies of historically significant individuals by studying prototypical scenes in the life of the subject and by using "salience markers" to identify significant patterns of life events (Elms, 1993; Schultz, 2005). Forensic analysis of the informational content of a crime scene has aided investigators in determining the identity of perpetrators. If the content of a communication is intelligible and reasonable, it suggests that that the source of the communication is both intelligent and rational. A communication expressed in written or spoken English implies that the communicator knows something about the surface structure and deep structure of the language. These examples illustrate some of the ways the rational analysis of informational content have aided in a characterization of its source.

**Historical studies.** Historians analyzing a document do attempt to determine its author by examining its content (M. Menke, personal communication, October 26, 2010). For example, historians know that the speech given by Secretary of State Marshall at Harvard's commencement in 1947 at which Marshall announced what became the Marshall Plan was actually written by George Kennan. Historical scholars have attempted to determine who wrote what parts of the Old and New Testament on the basis of their study of Biblical texts. Historians of ancient Greece have gone back and forth on the existence of a single "Homer" as author of Iliad and Odyssey on the basis of their study of the content of these literary documents.

An example of the way that content analysis of a communication has allowed historians to determine the fraudulent nature of its source occurred in the late 1980's when an individual claimed to have discovered Hitler's diaries in a sealed case at the bottom of an Austrian lake. The diary "find" followed only a few years after the publication of an authoritative edition of

Propaganda Minister Goebbels' diaries. The language and themes were very similar in both diaries. Historians know of Goebbels that he meant to use his diaries to project a desirable image to posterity. Historians also know that Hitler wrote almost nothing in his own hand; he dictated everything to a corps of secretaries. The Hitler diaries contained very little personal information but did contain phrases and vocabulary probably not used before 1945 and not by an autodidact like Hitler. Eventually the fraud was discovered and then confirmed by forensic analysis of the volumes.

**Literary analysis.** In the area of literary analysis, there are two situations where content has successfully been used as an aid in determining its source (B. Stull, personal communication, October 26, 2010). One situation is where one has previous material by a known author and can link the new, anonymous material to the material whose author is known. An example of this situation would be if one has discovered an anonymous manuscript in an attic and the manuscript seems to be in the style of John Steinbeck. It is then possible to read the anonymous manuscript in light of known Steinbeck texts, and determine that the anonymous manuscript is a Steinbeck, or at least that it is plausibly a Steinbeck.

A second situation where content has successfully been used as an aid in determining its source is where one does not have previous material by a known author, but can date material based on context and develop a series of categorizable themes, images, or metaphors that organize the narratives and then assign them to an anonymous author "X." An example of this situation would be documentary source work in Biblical studies. For instance, scholars saw that the Gospel of John was substantially different than the other Gospels, which came to be known as the "synoptic" Gospels. Ultimately, it was determined that the source of the synoptic Gospels was "Q," which predates the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John did not draw on Q at all. The Gospel of Mark is seen to be the oldest of the Gospels, and thus closer to Q.

### **A Documentary Approach to the Case of Jane Roberts**

One would approach the case of Jane Roberts in a similar manner. By analyzing the content and style of the dictation of the Seth material and then comparing it to the abilities, knowledge, and milieu of both the person "speaking" the text (Jane Roberts) and the person taking the dictation (Robert Butts), the investigator would try to establish whether or not it is likely that the channel and her scribe might have written the Seth material themselves. One would establish Seth's "voice" as a kind of origin such that Roberts' and Butts' usual, ordinary waking utterances would be comparable in some way. Seth's dictated material would be compared with Jane's written books to see if they are the same author. This would permit investigators to exclude Jane Roberts and Robert Butts as authors of the Seth material and rule out the likelihood of fraud. Alternatively, the investigator might look at Jane Roberts's reports of her experiences during a Seth trance and compare its phenomenology with reports of her experience in non-Seth states of consciousness, as is done in contemporary process-oriented parapsychological research that compares mental mediums' experiences during ostensible communication with discarnates and during psychic reading control conditions (e.g., Rock, Beischel, & Cott, 2008/2009; Rock & Beischel, 2008).

The investigator would then search for any other non-transcendent source of the Seth material. If no one but Seth could know this information, not Jane and not her husband, then is the information available in any scientific, philosophic, and psychological published documents or is it "made up"? That is, does the material contain facts not available to anyone else and not plagiarized? This would rule out the likelihood of cryptomnesia. Jane Roberts' fluent, mediumistic rendering of the world view of William James as recorded and transcribed, would be compared stylistically to the original writings of William James. It would be difficult to verify Jane Roberts', Robert Butts, or Seth's alleged reincarnational lives because the written record does not appear to provide evidential data in sufficient detail to check against existing historical records and public documents.

In order to use the content of the Seth material to argue a possible transcendent source, the investigator would need to make certain that the material contains information that could not be known or surmised by someone else. That is, the source is the only one privy to that information. Of course, to prove that Seth was really providing these communications, one would need to believe in the possibility that personality and identity are not dependent upon physical form. This requires an openness of mind and "an attitude of humility in relation to the present state of scientific knowledge" that not all investigators find easy to adopt (Kelly et al., 2007, pp. xxiii-xxviii). As Jon Klimo (1987) in his classic study of channeling observes: "The scientist who stays open to the possible reality of channeling runs into this problem by holding what McClenon (1984) calls "beliefs. . . that violate some of the [current] metaphysical foundations of science" (p. 206). Otherwise, investigators would limit themselves to a determination that the source of the material remains unidentified.

**Truth-testing the content of the communications.** Truth testing the content of Seth's communications will not allow investigators to determine conclusively the source of the information or its discarnate nature. Even if the Seth material does represent the subliminal activity of Jane Roberts' psyche alone, however, it does not follow that such messages have no interest or novelty for the psychologist. Since so many of humanity's brilliant and most practical theories have been attributed as coming from subconscious sources, it is reasonable to suppose that the Seth material may contain empirically verifiable propositions that could advance present understanding of the nature of human personality and the characteristics of consciousness (Klimo, 1987, pp. 147-167, 303-319). "Whatever the origin, it is evident that this process of channeling has the capability of making important contributions to our knowledge and experience" (Hastings, 1991, p. 25).

Potentially verifiable/falsifiable predictions are presented throughout the Seth material that can be evaluated by appropriate truth-tests. For instance, is telepathy the underlying basis for all language comprehension? Do dream locations continue to exist even while awake (i.e., possess object constancy)? Can "inaudible" sound be used to manipulate physical matter (e.g., convey mass and weight)? Does dividing a long sleep-wake cycle into two or three sleep cycles of lesser duration produce positive mental and physical health outcomes that conform to Seth's stated predictions? To what degree do the multiple and diverse "practice elements" presented in the Seth material provide practical, therapeutic, psychological benefit for those who perform them? Does Seth's explanation of the mechanics of telepathy advance understanding of how telepathy operates and how it may be developed? How might electromagnetic energy (EE) units and



consciousness units (CU) that are the hypothesized building blocks of physical matter be brought within the range of scientific instruments? How can the multidimensional gateways that Seth calls "Coordination Points," which are predicted to evoke electromagnetic anomalies, duration in time, puckering of space, and emotional intensities in people be detected? Are there distinguishing marks by which false, doctored documents of early Christendom can be identified? Do caves exist in the Pyrenees and in certain areas of Spain, Australia, and Africa that contain false ends behind which might be found remnants of an ancient civilization?

A *correspondence* truth-test of Seth's predictions would involve (a) compiling a systematic synopsis of the various fact-claims contained in the Seth material on topics connected with well-established academic disciplines, (b) identifying those propositions susceptible to qualitative or quantitative study, and (c) conducting appropriate descriptive, correlational, and experimental research to determine the truth-value of the various fact claims. A *coherence* truth-test involves conducting a content analysis of the Seth material to identify those propositions that are either in concordance or inconsistent with recognized facts in established academic disciplines. A *pragmatic* truth-test involves assessing the consequences that the Seth material has produced in promoting individual personality development and human transformative capacities. If the outcomes of descriptive, correlational, and experimental studies can be predicted based on hypotheses derived from Jane's mediumistic communications with Seth, then it would provide evidence suggestive of clairvoyance on the part of Jane Roberts, even if it does not prove Seth's discarnate status.

Regardless of Seth's discarnate status, the outer history of the trance-possession mediumship of Jane Roberts and the Seth Material raise important questions about the nature of subconscious perception, memory, cognition, affect, and motivation. Either Seth is or is not a production of Jane Roberts' psyche. In either case, we are led to the possibility that human personality may have a greater reality and greater awareness than is generally supposed.

### **Outer History of the Mediumship of Jane Roberts**

From December 1963 through August 1984, Jane Roberts (1929-1984) of Elmira, New York channeled a purported discarnate entity that called himself Seth by a method called "automatic speech" or "voice communication" while in a self-induced trance state of consciousness. Seth, who always claimed a separate and independent status from Jane Roberts, communicated initially through a ouija board on December 8, 1963 (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 21-25). By the 8th session on December 15, 1963, Jane received answers to questions mentally before the board spelled them out and began dictating the words sounded within her. By the 14th session, a deepening of Jane's voice and darkening of her eyes were observed during dictation, and at the 26th session on February 28, 1964 the Ouija board was laid aside and Jane spoke for Seth for the first time before a witness (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 195-202). From then on, Seth spoke through Jane Roberts at scheduled days and times (usually twice a week on Monday and Wednesday around 9:00 p.m., and otherwise spontaneously with Jane's permission). Seth continued to speak through Jane until August 30th, 1984 six days before her death of rheumatoid arthritis at the age of 55 on Wednesday, September 5, 1984 at 2:08 a.m. after being bed-ridden at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira, NY for a year and nine months (Roberts, 1997a, pp. viii, 368-371).

Robert (Rob) Butts, Jane Roberts' husband, transcribed all Seth sessions verbatim as they occurred and supplemented the written record with notes that provide a psychosocial context for the entire 21-year history of Jane Roberts' trance-possession mediumship. A visual record of Seth speaking through Jane Roberts and a filmed interview of Jane and Robert Butts provide additional evidential material (Butts, 1986). In 1970, *The Seth Material* was published and Jane Roberts went on a radio and television tour of seven cities to publicize the Seth material and Seth spoke on television in Boston, all of which introduced the Seth phenomenon to the wider public for the first time. The early Seth sessions from February 1964 through November 1969 were witnessed by many individuals, including: editor Tam Mossman (Prentice Hall), hypnotist George N. Estabrooks (Oswego State University College), psychologist Eugene Bernard (North Carolina University), physicist Norman Friedman, publisher Frederic Fell (New York), psychiatrist John O. Beahrs (New York), and associate editor Raymond Van Over (Parapsychology Foundation). Eyewitness reports by individuals who attended Jane Roberts' "ESP" class from 1972-1979 (Watkins, 1980, 1981) and a biography of the life of Jane Roberts (Watkins, 2001) supplement the published record. Original verbatim transcripts of all Seth sessions are available for public inspection in the Sterling Memorial Archives at Yale University and offer a good outer history of the case.

**Behavioral record.** What would a witness observe if he (she) attended a typical Seth session? Jane could perform a variety of motor movements while in a Seth-trance, such as smoking a cigarette, drinking wine, and striding across the room while speaking steadily for hours in long and complex narratives, without having any memory of what was said afterwards. When Jane Roberts "clicks out" into Seth, physical alterations are observed in her facial features, gestures, volume and accent of voice, word inflection, and a marked dilation of eye pupils. The following description is provided by Rob Butts of the characteristic changes that occurred in Jane's behavior when she was in trance and speaking for Seth.

Usually Jane goes in and out of trance with remarkable speed. Her eyes aren't closed during sessions, except for relatively brief periods -- but they can be barely open, say, or half-open, or wide open and much darker than usual. She sits for sessions in her Kennedy rocker, but on occasion she gets up and moves about. She smokes in trance and sips a little wine, beer, or coffee. Sometimes, when her trance has been very deep, it takes her a few minutes 'to really come out of it,' as she puts it. . . . Jane's voice in trance can be almost conversational in tone, volume, and pace, but is subject to a wide range of these qualities. Usually it is somewhat deeper and stronger than her 'own' voice. Once in a while her 'Seth voice' is very loud indeed, much more powerful, with definite masculine overtones. . . . There are two more effects that Jane always manifests while she is in trance. One is a more angular quality in her mannerisms. The other is a rearrangement of her facial muscles; a tautness, resulting, I believe, from an infusion of energy -- or of consciousness. . . . Her transformation as Seth is original, absorbing to watch and participate in. Regardless of degree, Seth is uniquely and kindly present. I am listening to, and exchanging dialogue with, another personality (Roberts, 1972, pp. 1-2).

Seth as Jane looked directly at anyone to whom he was speaking, laughed and joked, expressed affection for others, and displayed wit and intelligence. The Seth personality demonstrated a responsiveness in his dealings with others that suggested his being affected by his relationship to those present. Jane states:

(Seth's) effect upon others is immediate. Apparently he has considerable 'presence.' He reacts to others, and relates much better than I do to people from various walks of life. . . though, he has made it plain that the characteristics by which we know him are only a portion of his personality . . . Seth is not static; he does not just methodologically deliver the Material as if we were recorders. He responds to questions, so that to some extent the questions put to him must, at times, cause him to change the particular way he discusses a particular subject (Roberts, 1970, pp. 269, 275).

Even the family cat (Willy) sensed Seth's presence, at times reacting with strange behaviors that ceased as he grew more familiar with Seth's presence (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 89-90).

**Jane, Rob and Seth.** Seth stated that he, Jane, and Rob formed a threesome that together provided the necessary synergy for the communications to occur. In the 27th session on February 19, 1964, Seth explains:

One reason for the success of our communications is the peculiar abilities present in you both and the interaction between them, and the use that you allow me to make of them. Ruburt's [Seth's entity name for Jane] intellect had to be of high quality. His conscious and unconscious mind had to be acquainted with certain ideas to begin with, in order for the complexity of this material to come through. . . . As I have said, the human being is more than the sum of its parts, and you two together are more than just the two of you, and you together provide the needed power for these communications to take place (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 204-205).

This is one reason why the Seth material that is channeled through Jane Roberts will be transmitted through no other medium after Jane is deceased. In the 454th and 510th sessions on December 7, 1968 and January 19, 1970, Seth put the matter this way:

I am a teacher and I have this work. It must come only from one source. . . . There is always the difficulty in maintaining the integrity of the material and keeping it free of distortion. . . . I have worked very hard to help Ruburt [*Jane*] condition himself to provide for the material's integrity and cut down on distortions (*Smile:*) I would be appalled at going through that all over again. . . . While my communications will come exclusively through Ruburt at all times, to protect the integrity of the material, I will invite the reader to become aware of me as a personality, so that he may then realize that communication from other realities is possible, and that he himself is therefore open to perception that is not physical (Roberts, 2002, pp. 188, 443).

**Psychological insight.** Seth made use of information acquired by Jane Roberts in her waking state and he was able to express knowledge of what was in her subconscious memories. Personal data about Jane and Rob and their relationship with one another is presented and discussed by Seth with honesty and candor in the seven-volume set of *The Personal Sessions* (Roberts, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a). *The Personal Sessions* contain "deleted" Seth material not included in regular Seth sessions because of its private and highly sensitive nature and to avoid any possible embarrassment to the individuals involved. Reaching into the minds of strangers present and improvising on themes intimately related to them, the Jane version of Seth could demonstrate penetrating psychological insight that pinpointed an individual's character, abilities, and liabilities, identify subconscious conflicts, and uncover therapeutic issues that fit the emotional needs of the personality in this life (or a previous one) as only the most accomplished psychodynamically-trained psychologist could. Numerous examples of Seth's

psychologically-oriented messages that served therapeutic ends can be found throughout the *Personal Sessions*.

**Psi functioning.** Change's in Jane's mirror image, glowing hands, and the emergence of a new set of fingers in the 11th session (1997b, pp. 52-57), an apparition of Seth in the 68th session (Roberts, 1997c, pp. 208-223), an out-of-body episode in the 339th session (Roberts, 2000, pp. 20-22), and table-tipping in the 374th and 381st sessions (Roberts, 2000, pp. 136-140, 144-152) are a sample of the phenomena associated with physical mediumship exhibited during some Seth sessions witnessed by independent observers.

Seth as Jane also demonstrated telepathic ability, as when he answered each of a witness's questions in turn as he formed them in his mind (Roberts, 1970, p. 52). In an informal series of 84 telepathy "envelope tests" that began in the 179th session on August 18, 1965 and ended in the 319th session on February 13, 1967 good results were obtained (Roberts, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). In these informal experiments, without telling Jane beforehand, her husband would place an item or drawing of an item between two pieces of heavy Bristol board, then seal them in another double envelope so there was no possibility of seeing through paper, and then handed the target data to Jane during a Seth session to see how much, if any, of the contents Seth could describe. Test results were immediately analyzed and commented upon by Seth at the conclusion of each test. Results disclosed that Seth and Jane were drawing upon a couple of levels of awareness at once when giving responses during the envelope tests. Seth's analyses and commentaries divulge a great deal about the associative processes involved in anomalous information reception, the indiscriminate fashion in which impressions may be received, bleedthroughs that can occur between series of tests, and the influence of emotional charges of the target data on information reception.

A series of more formal clairvoyance tests, held twice weekly, ran for one year that were conducted by Dr. Instream (*pseudonym* for Dr. George N. Estabrook, professor of psychology at Oswego State University College) on Monday and Wednesday nights at 10:00 p.m. The 76 clairvoyance tests with Dr. Instream ran from the 189th session on September 20, 1965 to the 272nd session on June 29, 1966. The clairvoyance impressions given by Seth are documented in the written record (Roberts, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b). Jane Roberts wrote to Dr. Instream on July 10, 1966 canceling the series of experiments because she had received no correspondence from him since January of that year and no feedback from him regarding the outcomes of any of the tests. Seth offered some clarification about the matter almost two years later in the 420th session on July 1, 1968:

Our results with him [Dr. Instream] were good as far as the tests were concerned, through there was considerable distortion simply because Ruburt's [*Jane's*] abilities had not been sufficiently developed. There were direct hits, in other words, but these results could not be mathematically appraised in terms of the odds against them; and this was what Dr. Instream was looking for. Robert and Jane operated in a vacuum, since he did not tell them anything regarding the tests, negative or favorable. No academic psychologist, including Dr. Instream, will give you a statement to the effect that I am a survival personality. Dr. Instream will give a statement I believe, as to Robert and Jane's character, the quality of the Seth material, and the fact that no fraud of any kind is involved (Roberts, 2000, pp. 331-332).

## The Seth Material

Seth dictated 10 books through Jane Roberts on topics ranging from art to zoology (Roberts, 1972, 1974, 1977a, 1979a, 1979d, 1981a, 1986a, 1986b, 1995, 1997a). Each of Seth's books was dictated in its final form and published as it was received, with no paragraphs added or deleted, and with the punctuation, the underlining of certain words, and the use of quotation marks indicated by Seth (Roberts, 1972, pp. xxiii-xxiv). Seth is not a "control" as the word is generally used in mediumship research; that is, "a spirit or entity that acts as the primary intermediary between the medium and other discarnates who wish to communicate to the living through the medium" (Guiley, 1991, p. 118). Unlike conventional messages communicated by mediums with deceased loved ones, Seth's material does not deal with ostensible communications with the dead. Instead, the Seth material presents information covering a range of scientific, philosophic, and psychological topics in addition to practical, therapeutic, and psychological advice to its readers. Seth as Jane identified the most distinguishing and valuable contribution of the Seth material:

The basic firm groundwork of the material, and its primary contribution lies in the concept that consciousness itself indeed creates matter, that consciousness is not imprisoned by matter but forms it, and that consciousness is not limited or bound by time or space; time and space in your terms being necessary distortions, or adopted conditions, forming a strata for physical existence (Roberts, 1997c, p. 312).

**Seth's literary creations.** A brief overview of the content of Seth's first six books provides the reader who is unfamiliar with the Seth material an introduction to the kinds of information that was dictated through Jane during a Seth session. Seth's first book, *Seth Speaks: The Eternal Validity of the Soul* (Roberts, 1972) presents his system of philosophy and metaphysics. "My message to the reader: basically, you are no more of a physical personality than I am, and in telling you of my reality I tell you of your own" (Roberts, 2000, pp. 442-443). Seth's second book, *The Nature of Personal Reality* (Roberts, 1974) presents his system of psychology and ethical teachings. "Seth's main idea is that we create our personal reality through our conscious beliefs about ourselves, others and the world. . . and provides excellent exercises to show each person how to apply these theories to any life situation" (Roberts, 1974, p. xii). Seth's third and fourth book, *The "Unknown" Reality: Vols. 1 and 2* (Roberts, 1977a, 1979a) describe in more detail the nature of the hidden dimensions, unconscious sources, and deeper realities of ordinary living and presents numerous practice elements "meant to expand the private reality of each reader. . . . who is determined to understand the unknown elements of the self and its greater world" (Roberts, 1977a, p. 23). Seth's fifth book, *The Nature of the Psyche: Its Human Expression* (Roberts, 1979d), addresses the role of dreams in human evolution, human sexuality as it relates to the private and collective psyche, and the birth of language. Seth's sixth book, *The Individual and the Nature of Mass Events* (1981a), describes the psychical mechanisms by which individuals' beliefs and expectations coalesce to create the species' collective experience of the great sweeping emotional, religious, biological, political philosophical, scientific, social, and cultural events of our times.

In addition to his literary creations, Seth dictated material on art technique, religion, spiritual teachings, philosophy, psychology, and health diagnosis and treatment (see, for example, the

364th and 388th sessions on September 13 and December 20, 1967 for Peggy Pitre who had multiple sclerosis, reported in Roberts, 2000, pp. 125-129, 137, 158-161). The nine-volume set of *The Early Sessions* (Roberts, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2002) consists of the first 510 Seth "sessions" describing Seth's initial emergence through a Ouija board, the presentation of extensive conceptual material providing theoretical background for material dictated in subsequent Seth books, and a psychohistory of Jane Roberts' subsequent growth as a trance-possession medium speaking for Seth. *The Early Sessions* cover the six-year period from November 20, 1963 through January 19, 1970 just before Seth began dictation of his first book *Seth Speaks* in the 511th session on January 21, 1970.

**Jane's own creative output.** Outside of Seth-trance states, Jane Roberts showed a developing capacity on her own for enhanced creative inspiration. Jane produced a body of work separate from the Seth books that was inspired by her experiences as a channel for Seth and by other psychological and psychical events in her life (Roberts, 1966, 1970, 1973, 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1977b, 1978, 1979b, 1979c, 1981b, 1982, 1984, 1986c, 2006b). Her growth as a medium helped her discover "many other levels of awareness, each distinct and bringing its own kind of perception and experience" (Roberts, 1975, p. v). One of these developments was the reception of psychical material from what she called "The Library" (Roberts, 1976).

I found myself with a 'psychic library' -- a library room with books, table and chair that was transposed sometimes over the wall of the living room; a library of books that were models for physical ones; books that were to be transcribed at this level of consciousness and formed into new creative versions of themselves. . . . Whole portions of *Psychic Politics* came from the library as complete copy, only I usually saw my double reading from the book and the words she read were then transferred to my mind (Roberts, 1977, p. 5).

Jane produced three books from this inner psychic realm: (a) *The After-Death Journal of An American Philosopher* (Roberts, 1978) that purportedly presents the psychical world view and postmortem thoughts of William James, (b) *The World View of Paul Cézanne: A Psychic Interpretation* (Roberts, 1977b) and (c) *The World View of Rembrandt* (Roberts, 2006b) in which she ostensibly comes in contact, not with Cézanne and Rembrandt personally, but with Cézanne's and Rembrandt's understanding of the meaning of art, its greater implications and technique. Jane explains the Library material that she received on William James in the following way:

I explain the entire affair to myself as follows: the James reality still exists. It can be tuned in to. Because we're the kind of creatures that we are, when this happens the information *comes alive* through us, mixes with the contents of our minds and interacts with them so that a new reality is formed, a new creative synthesis. In other words, when our kind of consciousness 'tunes in' to the still-present consciousness of someone like James (who is dead in our terms), the combination automatically clicks together, forming a real personality combining the separate set of traits -- a viable transpersonality that stands for what we are and what the other reality is. The personality I sense as James is a construct, I believe; unconsciously formed as an automatic process when my consciousness tunes in to his reality -- and it stands for or represents whatever James's reality 'really is' now (Roberts, 1978b, pp. 16-17).

Jane's own books that she produced in these *alternate* non-Seth trance states of consciousness are objectively different by comparison in manner of production, mode of thought, tone, and train of

ideas from those books dictated by Seth (Roberts, 1977b, pp. 2-9; 1978, pp. 1-5,12-20). The term "alternate" is used here instead of the more commonly used term *altered* because neither Jane nor Seth considers her consciousness to be changed or distorted during Seth trances or during her own periods of creative inspiration. Consciousness is simply switched to a different channel of awareness and focused in a different direction of inner psychological reality, rather than altered per se (Rock & Krippner, 2007; Zinberg, 1977).

### **The Medium's Phenomenology**

**Speaking for Seth.** The phenomenological elements that underlie Jane Roberts' lived experience of speaking for Seth and her understanding of the mediumship process as she experiences it during a Seth trance is clearly articulated in her own words and on her own terms throughout the entire published public record. When Jane spoke for Seth she reports experiencing it as "an accelerated state characterized by a feeling of inexhaustible energy, emotional wholeness, and subjective freedom" in which Jane Roberts is aware of two streams of consciousness -- Seth's and her own (Roberts, 1979a, p. 16). Jane's inward experiences frequently parallel whatever information her Seth trance personality is orally expressing but without entering her normal waking consciousness or forming part of her short-term or long-term memory. Often Jane had no idea of what material would be dealt with in a session before it began. Jane describes the state of her awareness while speaking for Seth in the following way:

I seemed to 'click out' when Seth spoke, yet a tremendous sense of energy rushed through me as he did so (Roberts, 1970, p. 37). . . . I am seldom so "blacked out" as to feel as if I were sleeping. Usually I know what is going on, although I may almost instantaneously forget what has happened. On occasion Seth and I can take turns talking so that I can go in and out of trance in seconds. Sometimes it seems I merge with Seth, feeling his emotions and reactions completely, rather than my own. In this case, the Jane-self is far in the background, dozing but dimly conscious. Other times, though less seldom, I am in the foreground and Seth advises me as to what to say (Roberts, 1970, p. 77)... My own conscious thoughts recede, along with my consciousness of my surroundings. There is nothing compulsive about this, however. At any time it is possible for me to return to normal consciousness. No invasion is involved (Roberts, 1966, p. 34).

**Speaking for Seth II.** In addition to Seth, Jane channeled an entity that she termed the "Seth II" entity, which initially emerged in the 407th session on April 24, 1968. Seth II places Seth in the same relationship to himself as Seth stands in relation to Jane Roberts. Detailed material on the circumstances involving the personality Seth II is presented in the 406th to 412 sessions from April 22, 1968 through May 27, 1968. The difference between the Seth and Seth II personalities was made apparent to witnesses on several occasions, including, the 419th Seth session on June 26th 1968 (Roberts, 2000, pp. 326-329) and in ESP class sessions on May 28, 1968 and October 14, 1969 (Roberts, 2008a, pp. 53-59, 198-210). Jane Roberts' experience of communications with Seth II is phenomenologically different from her experience channeling information received from Seth and included what she termed "a pyramid effect" described in the 407th to 414th session (Roberts, 2000, pp. 265-303, 326-329; 2002, pp. 6-10, 44-47, 112-122, 241-244, 329-331, 351-352). Comparing the two trance states, Jane observes:

When we have a usual Seth session, I sort of feel Seth take over, though I don't like that term. With this [Seth II] personality I go somewhere, out of myself, and seem to make

contact with it in some nowhere, leaving my body empty. I don't know how I get there, wherever it is, or how I get back (Roberts, 1970, p. 228).

**Speaking for discarnates.** The 390th and 391st sessions on January 8-13, 1968 were the first séances in which Jane tried deliberately to contact a survival personality (termed discarnate) for someone else, as a medium would ordinarily do for interested observers or relatives (Roberts, 2000, pp. 165-173). The Blanche Price and Billie Kramerick episodes are called séances because they were given by Jane herself rather than Seth. Spontaneous séances with discarnates also occurred, including communications with a Sarah Wellington who died in England in 1748 at the age of 17 (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 64-68), a Malba Bronson who died in South Dakota in 1946 at the age of 46 (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 103-105, 127-130), a nameless spokesperson for a "group" of discarnates (Roberts, 1998a, pp. 167-168, 173), and Father Trainor who was a priest friend of Jane's when she was growing up in a Catholic orphanage as a child (Roberts, 1998a, pp. 261-262).

Jane's experience of communicating with Seth shared five of seven "comprehensive constituent themes" identified by contemporary mediumship research as common to the way most mental mediums experience communication with discarnates. Shared elements include: (a) the functioning of multiple modalities, (b) visual and (c) auditory mental images, (d) alterations of affect, and (e) empathy (Rock, Beischel, and Schwartz, 2008, pp. 185-186, 187). Jane Roberts does not report "feeling the discarnate's ailments or cause of death" or "smelling fragrances associated with the discarnate prior to his or her bodily death" when channeling Seth, although she has reported this phenomenology on various occasions when communicating with discarnates during séances. Jane reports the mediumistic processes used during communications with discarnates are *experienced as subjectively different* from those mediumistic processes occurring during communications with Seth. Judging by her experience of the difference between channeling discarnates and channeling Seth, Jane concluded: "I do think that Seth is part of another entity, and that he is something quite different from, say, a friend who has 'survived' death (Roberts, 1970, p. 272).

**Speaking for herself.** Jane is able to introspectively differentiate between processes used during the production of her own books and those processes used during the production of Seth's books. Comparing her awareness of the creative process involved in writing her own poetry and in dictating Seth's first book, for example, Jane remarked:

If both are coming from the same unconscious, then why the subjective differences in my feelings? These differences were obvious from the first. When I'm caught up in inspiration, writing a poem, then I'm 'turned on,' excited, filled with a sense of urgency, and discovery. Just before this happens, however, an idea comes out of nowhere, it seems. It is 'given.' It simply appears, and from it new creative connections spring. . . I'm alert, yet open and receptive -- suspended in a strange psychic elasticity between poised attention and passivity. . . . The highly personal involvement, the work and play involved in helping the idea 'out,' all make the poem mine. . . . I am not connected in this way with Seth's book [*Seth Speaks*], and had no awareness of the creative processes involved. I went into trance as I do for our regular sessions. Seth dictated the book through me, speaking through my lips. The creative work was so distant from me, that in this respect I could not call the product my own. I've found that only my own writing gives me the



particular kind of creative satisfaction that I need, however -- the conscious involvement with unconscious material, the 'excitement of the chase. . . . I can only state my own feelings and emphasize that Seth's book [*Seth Speaks*], and the whole six thousand-page manuscript of Seth Material, doesn't take care of my own creative expression or responsibility. If both came from the same unconscious source, it seems that there would be no slack (Roberts, 1972, pp. xvi-xvii).

### Historical Precedents

Arthur Hastings, former president of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology and professor at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (Menlo Park, CA) identifies several examples of exceptional channeling that, in their underlying structural features bear some resemblance to the mediumship of Jane Roberts (Hastings, 1991, pp. 11-25). Historical parallels to the Jane Roberts' case of mediumship include Edgar Cayce, Pearl Curran, Srinivasa Ramanujan, Rosemary Brown, Luiz Gasparetto, Alice A. Bailey, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and Helen Schucman (Hastings, 1991, pp. 11-25). One noteworthy precedent to the Seth material in terms of literary creation is the Patience Worth case of 1913-1938 (Braude, 2000; Litvag, 1972; Prince, 1929; Yost, 1925). Over a period of 25 years, "Patience Worth," a purported spirit-entity who claimed to have lived in 17th Century Doreshire, England, "dictated" mostly with a ouija board through Pearl Curran (a St. Louis, Missouri, housewife who had only an eighth grade education) several novels, including *The Sorry Tale: A Story of the Time of Christ* (Worth, 1917), *Hope True-Blood* (Worth, 1918), and *The Pot Upon the Wheel* (Worth, 1921) that were published and received critical acclaim (Yost, 1925). Patience Worth exhibited knowledge of a large number of archaic and unusual words and their exact and long-ago obsolete meanings that Pearl Curran could not have possibly derived from her education, her parents, or her husband. The material was of such great volume and included such a wide readership that the *Patience Worth Magazine* was begun in 1918 to handle the staggering output of aphorisms, poetry, and novels. Dr. Walter Franklin Prince (1929) wrote the classic study investigating the case of Patience Worth and concluded:

Either our concept of what we call the subconscious mind must be radically altered so as to include potencies of which we hitherto have had no knowledge, or else some cause operating through, but not originating in, the subconscious of Mrs. Curran must be acknowledged (p. 8).

### The Problem of Seth's Origin

**Seth on Seth.** If the worth of ideas are to be judged by tracing their origin, then what is the source of the Seth material? Who or what is Seth? One way to begin answering this question is to let Seth speak for himself on the matter.

You may call me whatever you choose. I call myself Seth. It fits the me of me, the personality more clearly approximating the whole self I am, or am trying to be (Roberts, 1970, p. 17). I have been conscious before your earth was formed (Roberts, 1972, p. 6). In your dreams you have been where I am (Roberts, 1970, p. 2). My communications come through Ruburt's [Seth's entity name for Jane Roberts] subconscious. But as a fish swims through water, as the fish is not the water, I am not Ruburt's subconscious. Ruburt assembles me or allows me to assemble myself in a way that will be recognizable to you,

but regardless of this, I exist in an independent manner (Roberts, 1970, p. 54). What I am is difficult to explain because of the limits set not only by your own knowledge but by the method of our communication (Roberts, 1966, pp. 221-222). You cannot understand what I am unless you understand the nature of personality and the characteristics of consciousness (Roberts, 1972, p. 4). I am simply an energy essence personality, no longer materialized in physical form. Personality and identity are not dependent upon physical form. It is only because you think they are that you find this sort of performance so strange (Roberts, 1970, pp. 210-211). You are presently focused entirely within physical reality, wondering perhaps what else if anything there may be outside. I am outside, returning momentarily to a dimension that I know and loved (Roberts, 1972, pp. 10-11). My mission is to remind you of the incredible power within your own being, and to encourage you to recognize and use it (Roberts, 1974, p. 152). If I succeed in convincing you of my reality as a separate personality, I will have done exceedingly well (Roberts, 1970, p. 54). I speak, myself, for those portions of your being that already understand. My voice rises from the strata of the psyche in which you also have your existence. Listen, therefore, to your own knowing (Roberts, 1977, p. 24).

The challenge for psychology is to explain how Jane Roberts of Elmira, New York, could suddenly possess and exhibit an ability to compose scientific, philosophic, psychological, and ethical material of a very high order of sophistication and intellectual rigor with no previous study or instruction, in sudden full-blown fashion, with the same facility and power from start to finish. Here we have a mass of writings consisting of complex, discursive, internally consistent, and highly rational narratives, much of it produced in an animated, light trance state of consciousness (with characteristic dissociation, amnesia, and *excursus* of the ego) in which nothing can be discovered regarding the history, education, or environment of Jane Roberts that suggests any solution to the problem of how she acquired such knowledge or ability.

**Jane on Seth.** A basic attitude that beliefs and theories should always remain modifiable in response to new empirical facts guided Jane's and Rob's approach to the problem of Seth's origin throughout its 21-year history. After carefully observing the Seth personality for over a year and judging on the basis of his qualities of character, Jane concluded that Seth and his material was trustworthy.

I used to watch Seth like a hawk, particularly during the first year or so, but he always behaved intelligently, with dignity and humor. As soon as I began to judge him by his actions and his effect on us, I dropped this habit. He has won my trust. He has given us excellent, psychologically sound advice, but he has never tried to give us orders (Roberts, 1970, pp. 56-57).

Transpersonal psychologist Arthur Hastings (1991), an authority on channeling, made the following observation about the qualities of character that Jane Roberts displayed as she faced the problem of understanding Seth's origin:

Jane explored many possible explanations for the nature of Seth. She did not believe he was a secondary personality or part of the subconscious, nor did she want to refer to him as a spirit. She speculated that he might be a personification of the superconscious part of her self, a kind of psychological structure that enabled her to tune into revelational knowledge. She also allowed that he might have an independent existence as another entity... Her honesty in facing this puzzle indicates both integrity and intelligence (p. 73).

According to Psychiatrist John O. Beahrs, who witnessed several Seth-trance sessions, Jane Roberts was never satisfied with facile explanations of who or what Seth was.

Psychiatrically, the Seth phenomenon poses issues. . . . After dictating as Seth, Roberts has partial to total amnesia for the content of the Seth sessions, although she can often partially recall the autohypnosis. Is she then a multiple personality, in whom the splitting enhances health instead of impairing it? Or is she truly a spokeswoman for a Spirit guide extending beyond her body in both space and time? She herself is not fully satisfied with either point of view (Beahrs, 1982, p. 171).

How then is the Seth phenomenon to be interpreted and understood in a logically coherent and consistent way that adequately (*adequatio*) takes into account the empirical facts, behavioral observations, and qualitative descriptions provided by the outer history of the case? Eight possible explanations for Seth's origin and the Seth material are examined in light of the published public record: fraud, cryptomnesia, hypnosis, schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder, high creativity, psi functioning, basic source Aspect, and energy personality essence.

### **Theory of Supraconscious Causation**

**Fraud and trickery.** Historically, the allegation of fraud and imposture has been commonly applied to purported manifestations of mental and physical mediumship (see, for example, Houdini, 1924; Pigeon, 1891; Rinn, 1950). Is Jane Roberts open to the same charge? Under this hypothesis, individuals of otherwise good reputation -- Jane Roberts, her husband, the Prentice-Hall publishing company and its agents, and myriad other witnesses -- are accused, either explicitly or by implication, of being in collusion with each other, lying as to the sessions themselves, or deliberately faking the records.

It is highly improbable that fraud or trickery could have been perpetuated successfully over 21 years without some disclaimer occurring on the part of the many witnesses who observed Jane speaking for Seth. Given the quality of the Seth material, and with so much to lose if fraud of any kind were involved, why would a person throw upon another intelligence the credit for her own work—especially an entity that initially emerged from a ouija board? Jane could easily have announced that they were her own writings. She would not only get the praise, but she and her husband would also escape a great deal of social criticism and satire, prying eyes and questioning by the curious, and requests for help from others that comes with being a channel for "Seth-the-discarnate." Why didn't she?

When our sessions first began, I thought of publishing the material as my own, so that it could be accepted for its value, without introducing questions about its source. This did not seem just, however, because the way the Seth Material is produced is part of the message and reinforces it (Roberts, 1972, p. xx).

Witnesses, experts, and Jane Roberts herself have provided comments in the published record limiting fraud as an explanation in this case (Roberts, 1970). Physicist Norman Friedman (1994), who studied the common elements among David Bohm's physics, the perennial philosophy, and the Seth material, concluded:

If Seth is a deception by Roberts, it is a remarkable one, for it would require a grasp of science and philosophy that would be extremely unusual considering her background as a poet and novelist. On the other hand, if the Seth material originated at some unknown

level of Roberts' unconscious mind, then that level must be a repository of knowledge far beyond our normal awareness (p. 17).

**Cryptomnesia.** Is it possible that the Seth material originated not at some unknown level of Jane Roberts' unconscious mind but from some known physical source such as textbooks, television programs, the Internet, or some encyclopedia long ago read but now forgotten? Under the hypothesis of cryptomnesia (termed source amnesia), the information communicated in the Seth material was unknowingly acquired by Jane Roberts from some physical information resource in one state of consciousness (the waking state) and retrieved in another state of consciousness (Seth-trance), with the information itself made available in trance (i.e., the content), while its original waking state source is blocked from awareness (i.e., its context) (Cooper, 1966; Dijksterhuis, Aarts, & Smith, 2005; Evans, 1988; Evans and Thorne, 1966). Subconscious memory processes would then fill in gaps of missing information with goal-directed believed-in imaginings to form a coherent and meaningful narrative which would then be spoken by Jane in the dramatized persona of Seth.

Although cryptomnesia may appear to be an irrefutable hypothesis (i.e., one can never prove that it did not occur and, like the fraud, there is always the hypothetical possibility that it *could* have occurred), it is actually one of the most difficult hypothesis to either confirm or disconfirm. Given the staggering amount of information now available to people through the Internet and other media sources, how does one determine what information Jane Roberts had or had not acquired in a lifetime? How does one show the actual steps in the occurrence of how the cryptomnesic information was obtained? Even if one can establish that the information exists somewhere, how does one demonstrate that Jane Roberts *also* had access to it?

The whole basis of the attempt to account for the Seth material on the basis of cryptomnesia is the assumed ability of Jane Roberts to remember with almost unerring accuracy vast quantities of material somehow acquired, but consciously forgotten. The task of assimilating subconsciously all of the knowledge expressed in the Seth material would require an extraordinarily rich and prolonged environment of exposure to such topics, which would have left its traces discoverable in Jane's education and environment. Jane Roberts and those who knew her certainly would know the fact if such contact with a favoring environment has ever occurred, or if she possessed and exhibited such cryptomnesic skills, and they emphatically say "no" (Watkins, 2001).

### **Theory of Subconscious Causation**

If the Seth material is not a product of fraud or cryptomnesia, then perhaps Seth is a subconscious phenomenon that originates solely and directly from subliminal regions of Jane Roberts' own psyche. Jane gives her own reasons for her conviction that the Seth material does not originate with her subconscious, as the word is conventionally understood.

For one thing, we can discover no satisfactions or needs that are being satisfied in the sessions that are not satisfied in my daily life. For another thing, it seems that even the subconscious would grow tired of having sessions twice a week at specified times, sessions that last two or more hours. The subconscious does not usually work in such a well-ordered, disciplined fashion, even when conditioning is taken into consideration (Roberts, 1966, p. 39).

If Seth is purely a subconscious production, then the "cognitive unconscious" somehow is not only intelligent and intentional, but also discriminating, rational, moral, and aware, and displays a richness of expression and a reservoir of knowledge that is normally accessible only through prolonged conscious study. Jane Roberts put the matter this way:

Looked at merely as an example of unconscious production,. . . Seth's book [*Seth Speaks*] clearly shows that organization, discrimination, and reasoning are certainly not qualities of the conscious mind alone, and demonstrates the range and activity of which the inner self is capable. I do not believe that I could get the equivalent of Seth's book on my own. The best I could do would be to hit certain high points, perhaps in isolated poems and essays, and they would lack the overall unity, continuity, and organization that Seth has here provided automatically (Roberts, 1972, p. xvii).

Seth demonstrated clairvoyant and telepathic abilities so the subconscious would also possess paranormal capacities of which the conscious mind is unaware. Seth as Jane displayed creativity and vitality, versatility of expression and philosophic depth, piercing wit and sense of humor, and an ability to carry on complex mental operations (e.g., concept formation, knowledge representation, deductive and inductive reasoning, problem solving, decision making, creativity, language production and comprehension). If Seth is solely a product of Jane Roberts' subconscious mind, then conceptualizations of what is termed the "New Unconscious" (see, for example, Hassin, Uleman, & Bargh, 2005) must be extended and broadened to include a capacity for communications "of an ethical and spiritual nature" that "are specific and organized, purposeful, and directed toward an audience," which are delivered in a manner that is "effortless, immediate, and spontaneous, with no apparent conscious construction" by "skills demonstrated that come from outside the conscious mind of the person. . .at the level of exceptional human capabilities" (Hastings, 1991, p. 25).

**Hypnotic self-suggestion.** Hypnotic phenomena have obvious relevance for advancing understanding of Seth's origin. Hypnotic suggestion has been shown to bring to light completely different personalities within the primary egoic personality, each with its own train of memories, habits and character traits (Kelly et al., 2007, pp. 313-314, 316n12, 339). Myers (1903/1961), for example, cites a long series of experimental inquiries begun by Pierre Janet and Edmund Gurney in England

into what the human mind, in states of somnambulism or the like, could furnish of written messages, apart from the main stream of consciousness.... What is here of prime importance is the indubitable fact that fresh personalities can be artificially and temporarily created, which will write down matter quite alien from the first personality's character, and even matter which the first personality never knew... If these writings are shown to the primary personality, he [*sic*] will absolutely repudiate their authority—alleging not only that they had no recollection of writing them, but also that they contain allusions to facts which he never knew... It is noticeable, moreover, that these manufactured personalities sometimes cling obstinately to their fictitious names and refuse to admit that they are in reality only aspects or portions of the automatist himself (pp. 277-278).

According to the hypothesis of hypnotic suggestion, Seth was artificially "brought to birth" through self-hypnosis, created out of the intent, wishes, and expectations of Jane Roberts who

endowed the Seth personality-fragment with creativity and free will through self-suggestion. The self-suggested Seth portion of Jane's personality gives the impression of being a separate and independent personality simply because it presents itself as coming from outside her usual, normal waking stream of consciousness.

Seth himself states in no uncertain terms that he "was not artificially 'brought to birth' through hypnosis. There was no artificial tampering of personality characteristics here" (Roberts, 1970, p. 211). Jane Roberts was aware that the use of hypnosis had been used in the past by the parapsychological research community to initiate and stabilize a medium's trance state and to call forth so-called "control personalities." She stated that "this didn't happen in my case. The whole thing was spontaneous. Although I know how to use self-hypnosis now, having studied it in the past several years, I've never used it for a session" (Roberts, 1970, p. 211).

**Incipient schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder.** According to the incipient schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder hypothesis, Seth represents a psychologically repressed and dissociated part of Jane Roberts' personality that organized itself into a coherent personality (Seth) which takes possession of another part of her personality (Jane Roberts). On this view, given a natural ability to dissociate elements of her own personality, an alternate personality (Seth) is formed from emotionally selected elements of Jane Roberts' subconscious, bestowed with melodramatic ability, an infallible memory, and powers of perception that are a special case of what F. W. H. Myers termed subliminal consciousness (Myers, 1892a). The result is a multiple personality with mediumship abilities (LeShan, 1976, p. 195).

If Seth is a secondary personality, then Jane Roberts may be expected to display symptoms reflecting mental instability. Yet here we have a phenomenon that departs from established characteristics of schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder in a number of ways. First, to all appearances, and judging by her ability to meet crises and tests of life, Jane Roberts is splendidly integrated and shows none of the usual signs accompanying personality disintegration. Second, here is a mass of writings, containing hundreds or thousands of words on all kinds of subjects, showing no trace of pathological tendencies. Nor does Jane Roberts' own creative writing contain obsessive (fixed) or compulsive (insistent) ideas of a morbid nature. Third, Seth as Jane displays no trace of abnormal tendencies or coercion, no evidence of excessive emotionalism or superiority complex, no smugness or sarcasm, no hatred or prejudices, no vulgarity or tantrums, no compulsive ideation or obsessive acting out. Unlike most dissociated personalities, Seth is morally sound. Fourth, unlike ordinary split-personalities, Seth is not a replacement personality that takes over Jane Roberts at times of fatigue, mental excitement, or prostration. The Seth personality does not manifest itself in reaction to stress and no precipitatory cause such as shock, strain, or marital strife precedes his appearance. Fifth, Seth has made no demands or impositions upon either Jane or her husband. Jane Roberts possesses self-consciousness at all times during the scheduled trance-sessions. There is no invasion in Seth's relationship with Jane. She does not feel controlled by someone else. Her consent is necessary at all times and she can terminate Seth sessions whenever she chooses. Sixth, Seth as Jane displays a memory that is not the memory of a young woman.

In response to the idea that trance possession by a discarnate personality could, or has, led to a development toward mental or emotional instability, or to any danger of hysteria, schizophrenia,

insanity, or withdrawal into dissociation (Stevenson, 1978, pp. 327-328), Seth offered the following remarks:

I do (feel obligated) to go into the matter of mental and emotional stability and any dangers to such stability that might be involved here. As far as Ruburt [*Jane*] is concerned, there is no such danger. . . .None of the communications from me have been in any way conducive to a development toward mental or emotional instability. . . . I feel to a great degree responsible for you, and for any results coming from your communications with me. If anything, the personal advice I have given you both should add to your mental and emotional balance, and result in a stronger relationship with the outside world. . . . I do depend upon Ruburt's willingness to dissociate. There is no doubt that at times he is unaware of his surroundings during a session. It is a phenomenon in which he gives his consent, and he could, at any time and in a split second, return his conscious attention upon the physical environment. There is no danger, and I will repeat this: There is no danger of dissociation grabbing a hold of him like some black vague and furry monster, carrying him away to the netherlands of hysteria, schizophrenia, or insanity. . . . I have consistently advised contacts with the world at large, and I have advised you both to use your abilities to meet outside challenges. Withdrawal into dissociation as a hiding place from the world could, of course, have dire consequences. Certain personalities could, and have, fallen here, but with you, with Ruburt, this is not the case (Roberts, 1997b, pp. 213-214).

Interestingly, in the Seth phenomenon we have the curious case of an alleged secondary personality talking about the nature of secondary personality and explaining its dynamics in particular cases (see, for example, Roberts, 1970, pp. 210-211; 1974, pp. 122-134, 154-157; 1979a, pp. 711-712; 1998b, pp. 111-113; 1999b, pp. 125-127, 133-135).

Based on Jane's own years of experience communicating with Seth and Rob's knowledge of Jane's past and his familiarity with her personality, both Jane and Rob were convinced by the standards of comparison that Seth was not a part of Jane Roberts' personality. Jane states:

I don't believe he [Seth] is part of my subconscious, as that term is used by psychologists, or a secondary personality (Roberts, 1970, p. 269). . . . The personality is not mine. Seth's dry, sardonic humor shown from my eyes. The muscles of my face rearranged themselves into different patterns. My normal feminine features were replaced by his (Roberts, 1970, p. 3). . . . I am a fairly intelligent human being, and a good conversationalist, but by no stretch of the imagination could I speak consciously, without pause or backtracking or confusion, for hours at a time on any of the subjects covered in the Seth sessions. . . .On several occasions I have spoken in a deep masculine-like voice, much unlike my own, and with astonishing volume (Roberts, 1966, p. 35). . . . We found ourselves dealing with a personality who was of superior intelligence, a personality with a distinctive humor, one who always displayed outstanding psychological insight and knowledge that was certainly beyond our own conscious abilities (Roberts, 1966, p. 18).

The impression that Seth is not a part of Jane's personality is also one obtained by individuals who have witnessed Jane speaking for Seth. After an evening of general conversation with Seth, for instance, Dr. Eugene Barnard, professor of psychology at North Carolina State College, who witnessed the 303rd session on November 26, 1966 (Roberts, 1999c, pp. 177-188) concluded:

The best summary description I can give you of that evening is that it was for me a delightful conversation with a personality or intelligence or what have you, whose wit, intellect, and reservoir of knowledge far exceeded my own... In any case in which a psychologist of the Western scientific tradition would understand the phrase, I do not believe that Jane Roberts and Seth are the same person, or the same personality, or different facets of the same personality (Roberts, 1970, p. 101).

### Theory of Superconscious Causation

**High creativity.** Instabilities in the threshold of consciousness that may reflect personality disintegration in more mild and controlled forms are acknowledged characteristics of genius and creative inspiration (Kelly et al., 2007, chap. 7; Myers, 1889, 1892b). F. W. H. Myers (1903/1961) characterized genius as

a power of utilizing a wider range than other men [*sic*] can utilize of faculties in some degree innate in all. It is a power of appropriating the results of subliminal mentation to subserve the supraliminal stream of thought. An "inspiration of Genius" will be in truth a *subliminal uprush*, an emergence into the current of ideas which the man is consciously manipulating of other ideas which he has not consciously originated, but which have shaped themselves beyond his will, in profounder regions of his being (p. 74).

Are we seeing in Jane Roberts this same kind of exaggeration of unconscious creative activity—a hypertrophy of genius? As Socrates had his Daemon and Jeanne D'Arc her Voices, does Jane Roberts have her Seth? Jane Roberts considers this possibility when she states:

It may be that the Seth personality is the psychological personification of that supraconscious extension of my normal self. If so, how independent would he be? The question cannot be answered easily. Certainly he wouldn't be present within my personality structure as I know it. I don't believe, for example, that his presence would be disclosed by any psychological testing of my own personality. The inherent relationship would snap into focus during a session, however, when the superconscious identity would take over (Roberts, 1970, p. 269)

On this view, Jane Roberts demonstrates in her Seth-trance states the capacity to perceive reality in a completely new way and bring into physical existence something that did not exist before. An extra-rational dimension is introduced into the world of everyday experience that carries usual associative thinking beyond the boundaries of previous learning and accomplishment. New channels of awareness and areas of expression are opened up that were not before noticed or previously believed possible. As Jane put it:

Above all, I am sure that Seth is my channel to revelational knowledge, and by this I mean knowledge that is revealed to the intuitive portions of the self rather than discovered by the reasoning faculties. Such revelational information is available to each of us, I believe, to some degree. From it springs the aspirations and achievements of our race. I think that revelational knowledge comes first in the form of intuitions, dreams, hunches, and experiences such as mine, and that the intellect then uses the information provided. Both are important (Roberts, 1970, p. 268). . . . I am not saying that Seth is *just* a psychological structure allowing me to tune into revelational knowledge, nor denying that he has an independent existence. I do think that some kind of blending must take place in sessions between his personality and mine, and that this 'psychological bridge'



*itself* is a legitimate structure that must take place in any such communication. Seth is at his end, I am at mine (Roberts, 1970, p. 272).

Seth describes the function and composition of the psychological bridge that operates in the Jane Roberts case and in other forms of mediumistic communications in the 241st Session on March 14, 1966 (Roberts, 1999b, pp. 14-16).

While "hypertropy of genius," "supraconscious extension of self," and "channel to revelational knowledge" may sound quite esoteric, they refer to highly practical experiences and behaviors, and in certain terms we are dealing with the very nature of creativity itself (Grosso, 2010). Like other natural events, such exceptional human capabilities can be studied by quantitative and qualitative methods (Braud & Anderson, 1998; Murphy, 1992; Pekala & Cardena, 2000). One of the key assumptions of transpersonal psychology is that men and women have natural, biologically pertinent impulses toward transcendent states of consciousness (Sutich, 1973). The Seth material and corresponding psychical development of Jane Roberts dramatically illustrates that such an impulse exists and that its object is not illusory. Seth put the matter this way:

Jane Roberts's experience to some extent hints at the multidimensional nature of the human psyche and gives clues as to the abilities that lie within each individual. These are part of your racial heritage. They give notice of psychic bridges connecting the known and 'unknown' realities in which you dwell (Roberts, 1979a, pp. 22-23).

**Psi functioning.** A great mass of the "facts" dictated by Seth are totally outside of Jane Roberts' knowledge -- in detail, if not in kind -- indicating that she had some unusual means of acquiring information in her trance state that she did not possess in her waking state. One provocative example of this facet of Jane Roberts' mediumship occurred in the 449th and 450th sessions of November 18-20, 1968. Jane found herself dictating different and difficult mathematical material from "another source" in response to questions sent to her by a friend from an acquaintance working on his doctorate in physics (Roberts, 2002, pp. 150-173). Given the telepathic and clairvoyant abilities demonstrated by Jane's Seth trance personality might not the information expressed in the Seth material be gained clairvoyantly or telepathically with no intervention of any discarnate entity other than the embodied Jane Roberts?

Given the known characteristics of how telepathy operates in laboratory and field settings, telepathy from the living does not appear to play a role in supplying the content of the Seth material. F. W. H. Myers (1903/1961) observed: "All our evidence has tended to show that the telepathic power itself is a variable thing; that it shows itself in flashes, for the most part spontaneously, and seldom persists through a series of deliberate experiments" (p. 302). This variability definitely shows itself in Jane Roberts' performance on the 84 telepathic envelop tests and 76 Instream clairvoyant tests conducted between 1965 and 1967. Jane's performance in producing the Seth material over its 21-year history, however, does not reflect this uncertain kind of ability. For here we have a mass of dictated material that could be laid aside sometimes for weeks and even months at a time and then resumed without difficulty or review, with no period of fumbling and with no reduction in average quality, never with a contradiction or inconsistency, never out of character, rarely with revision, and in final form with even the punctuation indicated.

If telepathy from the living is an unlike explanation for the Seth material, then a hypothesis of clairvoyance (remote viewing) may be proposed. In one version of this hypothesis, Jane in a Seth-trance is able to enter a psychical region where miscellaneous information of all kinds is readily available; where there is omnipresent time so that everything that has happened, whether at a distance or close at hand, whether long ago or recently, can be seen or heard and described. This kind of clairvoyance has been termed the "psychic reservoir hypothesis" (Fontana, 2005). The "Library" material that Jane Roberts received on the world views of James, Cézanne, and Rembrandt could be interpreted as a result of remote viewing some cosmic store of information. The Library appears to be a psychic structure that bears resemblance to what is termed the "Akashic Records" -- an impersonal psychic reservoir of knowledge that stores all information since the beginning of time to which people have access during certain alternate states of consciousness (Blavatsky, 1939; Laszlo, 2009). Alternatively, what psychiatrist C. G. Jung termed the "collective unconscious" -- the psychically stored collective memory of the species from which all individuals may draw and to which all individuals contribute -- may also be interpreted as a possible source of Library material (Jung, 1917/1953, chaps. 5 and 7).

Seth's own explanation of the Library material that Jane Roberts received on William James suggests that something else quite different may be psychically involved.

Ruburt [Jane] picked up the world view of a man known dead. He was not directly in communication with William James. He was aware, however, of the universe through William James's world view. Period. As you might dial a program on a television set, Ruburt tuned in to the view of reality now held in the mind of William James. . . . Each person has such a world view, whether living or dead in your terms, and that 'living picture' exists despite time and space. It can be perceived by others. Each world view exists at its own particular 'frequency,' and can only be tuned in to by those who are more or less within the same frequency. . . . It is quite possible to tune in to the world view of any person, living or dead in your terms. The world view of any individual, even not yet born from your standpoint, exists nevertheless. Ruburt's experience simply serves as an example of what is possible (Roberts, 1979a, pp. 430-431).

Seth's concept of "world views" offers a theoretical framework that considerably widens how communications from discarnate personalities can be considered (Stevenson, 1978, pp. 323-327). Jane Roberts' world view material obtained from the "Library" are not communications from James, Cézanne, or Rembrandt in the conventionally understood manner of mediums and discarnate spirits, but an example of one consciousness (Jane's) taking the stance of another (James, Cézanne, Rembrandt) and viewing reality from that standpoint (Roberts, 1978, 15). Jane states:

Each of us forms a psychic world view, composed of our own ideas, feelings, and beliefs, as we encounter our private corner of reality. This view exists on a personal basis, a bank from which the entire race can draw (Roberts, 1977b, p. 4)

The "Super-Psi" hypothesis proposes that under certain yet undefined conditions telepathy, precognition, and clairvoyance may combine to form a super-ESP that retrieves information from anyone at anytime in anyplace (Gauld, 1961). Like the fraud and cryptomnesia hypotheses, the Super-Psi hypothesis may appear to be irrefutable (i.e., one can never prove that it did not occur and there is always the hypothetical possibility that it *could* have occurred). Super-ESP is actually the most difficult psi functioning hypotheses to either confirm or disconfirm.

Explanations of this kind of anomalous information reception have never been proven in either an experimental or field setting (Stevenson, 1977). It is like postulating omniscience and considering that an explanation. Seth himself never claimed omniscience and, in fact, said there are aspects of multidimensional reality that are unknown even to him.

**Basic source Aspect.** Jane Roberts' understanding of who or what Seth is and her explanation of the mechanics of experience underlying her trance-possession mediumship are presented in her theory of human personality called Aspect psychology (Roberts, 1975, 1976). Aspect psychology describes how Jane Roberts integrates her mediumship experience into a dynamic, meaningful understanding of the world, herself, and other people. According to Aspect psychology, human personality is a multiplex system of identity consisting of many different selves that exist simultaneously at different levels of consciousness in multiple dimensions of reality accessible to the primary egoic personality through different channels of awareness. Roberts' theory of multiplex selfhood resembles F. W. H. Myers' (1903/1961) theory of human personality, except human personality operates within the context of a multidimensional reality. One set of personality elements that operate as powerful centers of organized energy within the psyche are termed "basic source Aspects" and resemble Jungian archetypes (Roberts, 1975, chap. 11). Although basic source Aspects have a primary existence outside of and separate from the four-dimensional space/time reality of the egoic personality, they act as components within the psyche. Basic source Aspects characteristically communicate to the primary personality as an "inner voice" or as some other dramatized personification in symbolic form as it expresses itself through the personal subconscious levels of the personality. Its own greater reality would exist in far different terms, however. According to Jane Roberts (1975),

You could say that the [primary] focus personality activates its own components, senses the Aspects within its own psyche, and isolates them, bringing them alive to itself through personification. . . . Each of these basic Aspects would be personified according to the ideas of the focus personality, in line with the dimensional level being contacted. . . . These prime Aspects have their own reality outside of us, while acting here as components in the psyche. . . . guiding indirectly rather than directly. . . . [acting] as guides or teachers at unconscious levels and in the dream states (pp. 134-135, 137).

According to Jane Roberts, Seth—her trance personality—would be considered a basic source Aspect. The fact that Seth reveals himself as a component in the psyche of Jane Roberts does not necessarily mean, however, that it is the subconscious or so-called "unconscious" in which he has his origin. Jane Roberts explains:

Seth would be Seth as patterned through Jane, for example; not Jane's version of Seth, necessarily, but the Jane version of Seth. . . . As a basic source Aspect, Seth represents a multidimensional consciousness reflected through my experience; a deep part of the structure of my psyche, but also a definite personification of a multi-world or multi-reality consciousness that may well be beyond our present ideas of personhood (Roberts, 1975, p. 128, 132).

When communication occurs, the primary personality is able to perceive its own reality from different perspectives and expand its usual abilities when it joins in this affiliation on a conscious basis. Basic source Aspects functionally provide alternate models of experience and behavior for every human personality. En masse, they provide an infinite bank of potential abilities and capacities from which the species can collectively draw (Roberts, 1976, p. 279).

**Energy personality essence.** Seth is not oblivious to the concerns of investigators who want to understand the nature of his reality or his origin. In an excerpt from the 83rd session on August 31, 1964, Seth provides the following statement regarding what he is and what he is not:

I also want to add that I am not a control, as mediums speak of having a control. I am not as I believe I have mentioned a secondary or split personality of Ruburt's. For example, I am not a conglomeration of male tendencies that have collected themselves into a subsidiary personality that struggles for recognition or release. I am certainly not a conglomeration of vaguely-defined creative aspects of Ruburt's personality that struggle for release. Ruburt's own array of writings, published and unpublished, should testify that he need no added creative outlet. We operate on a cooperative basis, and will continue to do so. . . . I am an energy personality essence, since that is what I am. There is no invasion of Ruburt's mind or subconscious on my part. He allows me to communicate. My name for him is Ruburt, which happens to be a male name simply because the name is the closest translation, in your terms, for the name of the whole self or entity, of which he is now a self-conscious part. There is no danger of either so-called (in quotes) "unhealthy or evil or demon, or uncontrolled spirits," (end of quote), finding access to the door in the subconscious which Ruburt has opened. Such demons, as a rule when they seem to suddenly burst forth, have long been hiding in the personal subconscious, and are indeed unfortunate creations of a psychotic mind. There are none of these in Ruburt's subconscious mind. . . . It will be shown that personalities continue to exist after physical death, and then it will not seem so strange that those such as myself can communicate. . . . I am not some creepy spirit, to wiggle my ears at the first suggestion for applause, for parties or for your pleasure. . . . I am not a spirit in those sentimental terms spoken by some well-meaning but poorly balanced mentalities. I am an energy personality essence (Roberts, 1997c, pp. 326-327).

From Jane Roberts' first-person perspective, she believes that "his term 'energy essence personality' seems as close to the answer as anyone can get" (Roberts, 1970, p. 269). There is something inconsistent in the notion that a personality can be so sane on all subjects, intellectual and rational in all his expositions, yet be dominated by one delusion -- and that regarding his identity and past history.

### **Conclusion**

Some may consider the Seth material suspect because of its channeled nature and production in so-called "altered" states of consciousness. The psychical origin of the Seth material does not automatically invalidate its claims, however. Channeled sources of information such as Jane Roberts' Seth material represent a form of genuine transpersonal experience and knowledge (Hastings, 1991; Klimo, 1987). The Seth personality ostensibly rises from dimensions of psychological activity beyond the ego of Jane Roberts, and draws its energy and power to act from unconscious sources that are arguably transpersonal in nature. The Seth material and the derivative theories and writings of Jane Roberts can and should be assessed on their own merits, irrespective of their source, within the context of other such theories and research that are relevant to its premises. The validity of the Seth phenomenon is to be evaluated by (a) scrutinizing the action and content of the phenomenon, (b) relating the mediumship of Jane Roberts to other mediumistic communications and experiences, and (c) conducting a comprehensive analysis of how the Seth material can be understood within theoretical

frameworks constructed to explain sources of information in trance mediumship and other similar phenomena.

The published record of Jane Robert's trance-possession mediumship suggests that fraud and cryptomnesia are highly improbable explanations. The duration of the phenomena, the intelligibility and rationality of its content, and the phenomenological processes underlying Jane Roberts' communication with Seth all argue against the hypothesis that Seth is a production of incipient schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder. To emphasize and expect fraud and trickery, cryptomnesia, or psychopathology in cases of mediumship is to raise what is essentially a misleading, though culturally expectable, response to an uncanny encounter (Braude, 1988; Hughes, 1992; Richeport, 1992). Hypnotic self-suggestion may account for the production of the Seth-trance, but would not by itself account for the content of the Seth material. High creativity and psi functioning provide plausible explanations for the quality of the content of Seth's communications, but do not satisfactorily account for all aspects of the phenomenon considered in toto. A more adequate (*adequatio*) account would have to include Jane Roberts' understanding and judgment of her own experience and Seth's explanation of himself.

F. S. C. Schiller (1918) once observed: "Nothing is more likely to impede investigation than premature acceptance of 'explanations'" (p. 402). It is through following the facts presented in the published record and remaining open to all avenues of fruitful speculation and intuitive possibilities that the problem of Seth's origin will most likely be solved. As one psychiatrist put it:

Roberts' Seth books are all readily available for anyone to study and attempt to explain and the Seth phenomenon and its content are in the domain of world experience -- but far beyond explanation. I am inclined to take a cautious position approaching expansive phenomena of this type, merely wanting to emphasize that we can and should no longer wish them away. As with psychiatric systems, any world view may have its own limits of relevance. Ours is now being challenged (Behrs, 1982, p. 172).

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