

## SOME REMARKS ON PRECOGNITION

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"Sort of like having built-in radar - you see things before you see them. The outlines of coming events."

Truman Capote,  
In Cold Blood, p.73

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I intend, from a philosophical point of view, to discuss the concept of precognition.

I begin, by means of an ostensive definition, to explain what precognition is. The ostensive part consists of two case-studies taken from the female paragnost Ms. Eva Hellström's case-books.

I then give a short presentation of Ms. Hellström and her remarkable "dream diary".

After that, I touch upon the question whether precognition can be considered a form of knowledge and a form of perception.

Finally, I go, in more detail, into some of the repudiations put forward against the possibility of precognition.

A summary concludes the paper.

## CASES

Two actual cases of precognition provide the grounds for an ostensive definition of the notion of precognition with which I commence my study. In a comment to the above mentioned cases, an explanation is given as to the meaning of the term - ostensive definition.

The precognition cases are of so-called sporadic type and I omit completely the type that is found in laboratory testing through statistical means. I believe, however, that everything I say about

sporadic precognition bears consequence to statistically found precognition.

### Case 1

#### Background

Eva Hellström, a young wife, married to Bo Hellström, Doctor of Technology and Professor of Hydraulics at the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden, remained at home together with her four children while her husband, due to his career, made long and numerous journeys to all continents of the world. Years later, when the children were grown, Eva accompanied her husband on several of his trips.

#### From the diary

On January 24, 1953, Ms. Eva Hellström wrote the following.

I sat mending at my sewing-machine. Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, I had a vision of myself walking down a street in Cairo. I feel convinced that Bo and I will be going there soon. Bo says absolutely no. He is to begin lecturing on the ninth of February and the lectures are scheduled to continue for six weeks. By that time, he says, it will be too hot (in Cairo). He has no intentions of going.

#### Affirmation

This entry into the diary of Eva Hellström is verified by Greta Norrlin and Britta Warbert.

#### Comments

The precognition took place in daytime while Eva was completely awake but seemingly in a rather relaxed mood. She was eager to note in her diary that this experience was unusual. Firstly, it did not occur in a semi-conscious state as did her previous precognitions and, secondly, it was not in color but in black and white. One of the outstanding features of her alleged precognitions otherwise had been that they, in contrast to her ordinary dreams, were in bright colors. A third and striking difference was that Eva had the vision as a participator and not, as otherwise usually was the case, as an observer. She did not see herself, her own body, walking a Cairo street, but she experienced being there walking along and looking around.

The vision was combined with a strong feeling of conviction that

it soon would happen. Her husband had said that no such journey would take place. None had been planned and there was at that time no reason for believing that one would take place.

On February 3, 1955, Eva accompanied her husband on a flight to Ethiopia. The reason for this journey being that Bo had received an invitation from the Ethiopian Government and although the request came unexpectedly it was not surprising. Prof. Hellström was a well-known scientist and consultant for firms and governments. When assistance in his field was needed, his name was likely for consideration.

At the end of February, on their return journey to Sweden, the Hellströms in fact landed in Cairo and spent a few days in the city. The journey to Africa took place at a time equally inconvenient as the time of her dream - at least from the university point of view concerning lectures and seminars.

Eva, at the time of her precognition, was convinced that her experience would be realized soon. Her husband could not persuade her to think otherwise. Often, it seems to be difficult for a paragnost to be more specific about the time elapse from the presumed precognition to the verification in reality.

For the sake of analysis, that the reader may wish to make, I want to add one more point.

Cairo was not an obligatory stop-station for flights between Europe and middle Africa. On their way to Ethiopia the Hellströms flew from Rome directly to Khartoum. In his autobiography, "Pa jakt efter vita kol" ("Chasing white coal"), Bo Hellström describes this flight in the following words:

"The journey first went with SAS to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and during the flight we experienced a happy surprise: we could sleep in made beds. .... We went to bed in Rome at 10 PM and were awakened with breakfast in bed the next morning at 9 o'clock, one hour before arrival in Khartoum."

## Case 2

### Background

Eva and Bo Hellström lived in London from 1927 to 1934. Eva became quite accustomed to the English language and the British way of life. She enjoyed the cultural attractions of London and was a frequent visitor of the theater.

In the years following their stay in London, the Hellströms returned often to England on trips of business or pleasure.

From the diary

On the 12th of November, 1961, Eva wrote the following. (This case has previously - without comments or analysis - been reported in the Journal for Psychical Research, Vol.41, No.711, March 1962, pp. 252-254.)

I was having an afternoon nap. I had been asleep but was aroused. What caused me to awaken was the "sight" of a large ballroom where a crowd of teenagers was dancing. The atmosphere was very gay. The girls wore brightly colored dresses. I remember very well quite a lot of turquoise and cerise. Above the youngsters' heads I seemed to see something colored, either some kind of hats or headdresses or balloons or colored lanterns. I could not tell what it was. Last Thursday it was decided that today, November 12th, we should go to London. Perhaps this scene will happen in some form during the trip. I have just now, before leaving, told Bo about my experience.

Affirmation

Bo Hellström has with his signature verified the above entry in the diary.

From the diary (continued)

November 24, 1961: On the plane to London, Bo and I discussed which play we should see there. A stewardess gave us the Sunday Times and we looked through the advertisements. Bo preferred a musical comedy. I found one about which the Sunday Times said: "Best acted and danced musical in London". The name of the play was Bye Bye, Birdie and it was playing at Her Majesty's Theatre.

On Tuesday we were invited out for dinner at Scott's by a friend, Mr. V. Jansa, who had traveled together with us to London. After our meal we went to Her Majesty's to see the play. In the first act - about half way through, I pushed Bo's arm and whispered: "Look, here is the ballroom scene with the youngsters".

The whole play was about teenagers. In this particular scene a lot of young girls, in brightly colored dresses, and some boys were dancing and jumping about. The two lead-girls were dressed in cerise. Several others as well. The background on one occasion was turquoise. Some of the dresses were also turquoise. There was something above their heads which I did not quite see or remember.

After the first act Bo left - he did not feel too well - but Mr. Jansa and I stayed on. During the intermission I told him about my vision. When we returned to the hotel, I made him come with me into the bedroom, where Bo was in bed. I unlocked my

suitcase, took out my diary and read the account to them both. They agreed that the scene had been quite in accordance with my account.

#### Affirmation

Bo Hellström and Victor Jansa have with their signatures verified that the above statement is correct in every detail. The advertisement from the Sunday Times with the quoted sentence supports her statements.

#### From the diary (continued)

The day after, I went to the theater to see if there were any pictures outside which would show what it was that I had seen above their heads. There were, however, only pictures of the single actors, no scenes. There was a matinée on in half an hour, so I went in to see the first act again and find out what was troubling me. Two of the girls were wearing a sort of cap with big cerise colored woolen tufts at the top, which showed above the heads of the crowd. Two other girls had rods with tufts of long paper streamers in red and white at the top, which they were waving above their heads. It was such a lively and gay scene and it was extremely full of bright colors.

#### Comments

This dream or vision took place in daytime but in contrast to case 1 in a way that was customary for Eva: in connection with a rest. She had her precognition when she was slumbering away and it even caused her to awaken. The dream was in colors which play an important role in this precognition. She also sensed a strong feeling of conviction: she would live the dream.

She took her usual measures when she had, as she felt, a precognitive dream: she wrote it down in her diary and had the entry signed by someone else.

The alleged precognition took place four days after. She had the feeling it would be realized in the prospected journey to London.

For further analysis I want to insert three more points.

A This is the only dream among the over two hundred she has taken down that concerns a ballroom scene with dancing youth. As an answer to my direct question Eva said that to her recollection she had never before and never since had a similar dream or vision.

B Bo Hellström was not a specially keen theater visitor. He sometimes accompanied his wife to the theater. He almost never went to the movies. In an interview she said that she was the one who

on this occasion wished to make a theater visit and that she had in mind a "serious" play (as Shakespeare). Her husband wanted to come along only if it were something "light".

C Dr. Jansa's testimony is from a witness psychological point of view very weak. He learned of the dream only after the physical event had taken place. In the theater he only got Eva's assertion that she experienced the ballroom scene before. In the hotel, in a suggestive atmosphere created by Eva, she, not he, read from her diary. It is very likely, but cannot be proved, that she during or after the reading made comments so the written description still better fit the theater scene. He could not for certain know when the diary's words ended and the oral comments began.

#### Comments on both cases

I have now taken up two precognition cases from the diary of Ms. Eva Hellström. They will illustrate what the meaning of precognition is in an ostensive way. I will explain what I mean by that.

Ostensive definitions are crude ones and do not in a verbal manner clarify what the meaning of the definiendum is. One who has something explained ostensively has to form his own opinion or concept of the defined object.

Now, ostensive definitions are very common and they are the basic way of giving clarifications or definitions. We all have learned to speak our mother tongue through ostensively defining the objects or events around us. When we were children and walked through the park with our parents they stopped at a plant, pointed and said "flower". When this was repeated a certain amount of times we understood that an object of this shape was called a flower. If a four legged animal ran across the path in front of us our parents pointed and said "cat", "dog" or "squirrel" and we could eventually grasp the differences among these animals ourselves - we had to form our own conceptions.

Hence, in the same manner, I have now ostensively defined "precognition". The reader must himself form his concept of the item in question. This enables him to agree or disagree with what I am saying in the rest of the paper.

I have not given a verbal explanation of "precognition". Just as our parents did not verbally explain "cat" and "dog". They could not have done it in an other way. We did not command a language which enabled us to understand an explanation in words.

The ostensive definition can be false in the meaning that what one person defines as a precognition will not be accepted by another person. It may very well be so that some readers will reject my examples as being illustrations of precognitions. Analogically one parent in the park could have pointed to an animal and said: "Look,

a squirrel!" while the other parent could have responded: "No, it's a chip monk!". This is a disagreement about the notion. Such discrepancies are often encountered when one deals with ostensive definitions.

Finally, there are certain elements necessary to constitute a precognition. I wish to point them out.

Firstly, we have a person who in one way or another "images" something (a dream, a hallucination, a fantasy, etc.). This "imagination" is a mental act which is not a direct perception of events surrounding the person.

The "imagination" may or may not be accompanied by a feeling of conviction that the "imagination" will in the future materialize in one way or another. This feeling plays an important role in most of Eva Hellström's reported cases.

Secondly, we have a physical event of some kind that may be described as the realization of the "imagination". Many perplexing questions may arise as how to confirm that the physical event really corresponds to the imaginary event.

Thirdly, in order to call the imaginary event a precognition it must in time happen before the corresponding physical event takes place.

The time span between the dream and the verifying (physical) event is of interest. Obviously it is not possible to wait any amount of time for a dream to come true. Eva's precognition cases come true from within a couple of days to a couple of years. The two cases taken up here illustrate this.

Some of these problems will be analysed further on in this paper.

#### Eva Hellström and her diary

Eva Hellström was born in September, 1898. Her mother, a concert singer, died in 1908. Her father, a Doctor of Geology, Mineralogy, and Petrography, and also a member of the Swedish parliament representing the Social Democrats, tended to his home and his six children with help of three maids.

Eva married Bo Hellström when she was 19 years old and had four children. Outside the duties at home (raising four children with a husband often out traveling far from home could be very strainous) her greatest interests were music and parapsychology. She founded SSPR (The Swedish Society for Psychical Research) in 1947 and is at present its Honorary Secretary.

In 1949 she began to note in her diary dreams and visions that she thought had a precognitive significance. Her last documented case is from 1964 and all together there are 239 cases. She usually kept a diary on her journeys and it is mostly in connection with

travels that she has reported paranormal experiences.

It is very important that the entries of paranormal character in her diary have been verified by persons at hand (very often her husband) by signing their names to what she had written. In the two cases presented I have, under the heading "Affirmation", taken up the signatures and other material confirming these cases.

The confirmation of the alleged precognitive experiences she has done herself. It has been done in the way that she has had the feeling that this is something that is going to happen, it is going to happen within a certain period and at a certain circumstance. She has then at particular occasions suddenly seen or felt that this is it, "this is the dream I had, so it was a precognition as I thought".

To a great extent, it is possible for us to examine every precognition case by comparing the alleged precognitive vision with the corresponding facts Eva has reported. For the verification of the precognition she has collected signed statements, photographs, letters, paper clippings, etc..

There is no doubt that problems arise in identifying a dream as corresponding to the physical event later on. Some details correspond; some do not. How strong a demand should there be that all details fit? Take case 1 as an example. How should "soon" be interpreted and what importance should be placed on Eva's feeling that she "soon" would be in Cairo. This problem of accuracy is not at issue here.

Of course, what she has written in the diary are very short notes. She did not (and no one could demand it) describe in detail everything she saw in her dream, as for instance the dancing youngsters. She took up what she found most striking and important: that there were several youngsters of both sexes dancing and that the colors were strikingly vivid. This is also what she saw four days later. There is no doubt that she at once felt, when she saw the scene at the theater, that it was the same as in her dream. This feeling of recognition in the two discussed cases is unattainable for scientific examination.

More problems generally arise when an evaluation is done subjectively by the paragnost alone, than when it is done by an appointed researcher. This is something we must bear in sporadic cases. It is virtually only in laboratory testing of precognition that we can beforehand decide when an alleged precognition is supposed to be considered a "hit".

The 239 cases are not all examples suggestive of precognition. Many of them involve alleged telepathy and some of them presumed clairvoyance. How many belong to each category is difficult to say. One must first, to the fullest degree possible, establish which cases may be called genuine paranormal. After a thoroughful



investigation of the entire material more definite suggestions will be made of the statistics of the cases. I am in the process of analysing all the material.

### Precognition as knowledge and perception

The questions whether precognition is a form of knowledge and whether it is a form of precognition are briefly touched upon.

Knowledge is an asset that may express itself and that may be used in many different ways. I do not intend to discuss knowledge or cognition here. For the purposes of this article it is enough to presume that we all have a fairly well established common sense understanding of this notion. Although there are philosophers of the sceptical school who deny that there is something we could call cognition, I here postulate as a psychological fact that we do remember things and that we therefore have knowledge. In remembering, recalling, recollecting, recognizing and similar acts we produce, in a mental way, something that stands in relationship to past events. This kind of cognition can be called postcognition or retrocognition.

Can we also recall future events? Certainly not. The words recall, remember, etc. cannot be applied to what will happen in the future, but from this does not follow that we are not able to have cognition of future events. We do not remember the future but we precognize it.

Cognition can be true or false. A statement of a fact as (1) In Amsterdam there is a museum dedicated to Rembrandt., can be correct or incorrect. In the same way a recollection as (2) Yesterday I ate filled mignon., can be true or false depending on the fact what kind of dish I had yesterday. These sentences we call theoretical.

In exactly the same manner a sentence about the future can be theoretical. In this respect there is no difference between postcognition and precognition.

There are two procedures of deciding the truth-value of a theoretical sentence: the empirical one and the analytic.

To empirically establish the truth-value we confront the content of the sentence in question with reality. Sentences like (3) I will soon be walking the streets of Cairo., and (4) I will during my forthcoming journey to London experience a scene where young people, dressed colorfully, are performing a vivid dance., are of this category. (3) and (4) just as well (1) and (2) can empirically be proclaimed true or false.

An example of an analytic sentence is the following: (5) A bachelor is a married person.

You cannot by examining a bachelor find if he is married or not. It is quite enough to know the meaning of the word "bachelor" to

decide if (5) is true or false.

Precognitions are never of the analytic type.

In establishing the truth-value of an empirical sentence one has to go to the reality using the ordinary senses. In establishing the truth-value of an analytic sentence one does not have to leave the verbal situation and in this sense one could here talk about a non-sensory knowledge. In this case it is not a question of perception.

In epistemology it has been established as a general law that empirical investigation is sensory (requires the use of the senses) for observing facts and that analytical investigation is nonsensory (you need not use senses for fact observing). Now, precognition is clearly empirical but is it sensory?

Well, this question is indeed difficult to answer. The term ESP (extra sensory perception) implies that precognition is a perception; however, one not using the ordinary perceptors as the eyes, the ears, etc., but other perceptors. What these can be has so far not been satisfactorily clarified. It is highly doubtful that we have unknown perceptors; and, if we do not, then precognition cannot be a case of ESP, since then there is no such thing as ESP. This does not mean that there is no precognition, telepathy, etc.. It only means that ESP is a term that diverts us from proper thinking and hence a term that ought to be replaced with a more appropriate one.

#### Theoretical sentences

	analytical	empirical
ordinary	none	In Amsterdam there is a Rembrandt museum
sensory	extra	I will be in Cairo in the near future
nonsensory	A bachelor is unmarried	none

Eva Hellström has had many experiences we call precognition, two of them are recounted in this paper. These experiences are factual. How they should be explained is the issue at stake. They do not have to be conceived as perceptions although she describes them as visions. Hallucinations can also be said to be visions but are

not perceptions in the ordinary sense of the word. Hallucinations are often visions of unreal things and not perceptions of outer stimuli.

Summerizing this section, we then state that precognition is a form of knowledge that we in one way or another obtain, maybe, but not very likely, through unknown perceptors.

I will not be able to tell what precognition really is, but I think I will be able to enlighten the query by examining three ways of repudiating precognition.

### Three repudiations of precognition

The three repudiations of precognition I take up here have been called by Professor C.D. Broad: the epistemological, the causal, and the fatalistic.

#### The epistemological repudiation

To say that a person P at time  $t_1$  precognizes the event E is to say that E at  $t_1$  has the relation R to P. Formally we can write this in the following manner:

$$(6) \quad R ( P_{t_1} , E_{t_1} )$$

A factual example of (6) would be: On November 12, 1961, Eva Hellström experienced a scene that she would see on November 25, the same year. Now, R can only hold when  $P_{t_1}$  and  $E_{t_1}$  both exist. E does not exist at  $t_1$  but at  $t_2$ . This means that  $E_{t_1}$  does not exist. (6) is therefore nonsense and precognition is an impossibility.

This criticism does not hold. Two different things have been confused. One must distinguish between E and the precognition of E. It is true that  $E_{t_1}$  does not exist, and  $E_{t_2}$  will occur later, but what exists is the precognition of  $E_{t_2}$ .

Psychologically there is no contradiction in saying that a person experiences something that does not exist. Hallucinating is such a state of mind.

There is another way of showing the absurdity of the epistemological repudiation. Suppose that R in (6) means memory (memorizing) instead of precognition (precognizing). Then, if the repudiation of precognition were correct, one could not remember anything. I have already shown the logical mistake in the repudiation. Furthermore one can empirically prove the possibility

of remembering things.

The causal repudiation

Let us describe memory thus:

$$(7) \quad R ( P_{t_2} , E_{t_1} )$$

This could be interpreted as follows. A person P remembers at a certain time the past event E. Let then R be a relation consisting of a series of events from  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ . The series contains, among other events, P's perception of E at  $t_1$ . We then here have a series of events, one event causing another (see formula 9 below), from the physical happening at  $t_1$  to the mental act at  $t_2$ .

Analogically, perception can be formulated:

$$(8) \quad R ( P_{t_1} , E_{t_2} )$$

This could again be a formulation of Eva Hellström's precognition. R is a series of events starting at  $t_2$  and ending at  $t_1$ . Here we meet a difficulty. The precognition that occurs at  $t_1$  precedes in time the precognized event at  $t_2$ .

Now, according to the law of causality, the cause in time precedes its effect. In the precognition it seems to be the other way around.

The repudiation then goes as follows. E causes P, but comes in time after P. That is an absurdity. It is impossible that E causes P, which means that there is nothing we can call precognition.

If the relation is not a precognition, what is it then? Several different answers are possible. I will in this section mention two of them and the whole of the next section is devoted to a third way of answering the question.

One can deny that there is a relation between P and E. This means that R is nonexistent. Instead, the occurrences of P and E are entirely independent. It is just pure coincidence that they resemble or remind one of each other and it only looks like there was a connection.

One can also say that the relation is of a more logical kind. It is a reasoning at  $t_1$  that makes one believe that E will occur at  $t_2$ . If this reasoning is meditated it is called a forecast, a prognose or the like. It is quite clear that these are not precognitions. When you watch the weather report on TV you are not listening to precognitions.

On the other hand, if the reasoning is unconscious it may be confused with or mistaken for a precognition. The unconscious

reasoning could be called intuition or something the like.

Common to both these interpretations of R is that they exclude precognition.

But if precognition is existent as a relation of a non-prognostic or nonintuitive kind, as described above, then we are obliged to consider what sort of relation R is. We have at least four means of explaining R.

(a) R is a causal relation and the effect may in time precede the cause. Take the case of sending a letter from Holland to Sweden, this means that there is nothing surprising in that, on very rare occasions, the letter arrives in Sweden before it is mailed in Holland. This kind of reasoning is not unfamiliar when it comes to micro-cosmos, especially elementary particle theory. You have here the assumption that there are no causal, only statistical laws. As far as I understand it is not advisable to apply these statistical laws in macro-cosmos. The letter to Sweden will always be mailed in Holland before it arrives at its destination.

In this sense, precognition and causality do not combine.

(b) We can also say that R is of a teleological kind. Now, it is difficult to grasp what a teleological relation is. Aristotle (and to some extent also earlier Plato, and later, for instance, Thomas Aquinas) meant that everything in the universe is governed by teleological relations. An acorn strives to become an oak. Everything strives after fulfillment. The final magnet is Nous or God toward which the whole universe is directed.

I do not see how such an explanation can be applied in the case of precognition. What does it mean that Eva Hellström's vision of dancing youngsters strived after to be like the dancers at Her Majesty's Theatre? By using the teleological explanation we have really said nothing more than - she had a precognition.

To me the teleological explanation is not an explanation, just a way of rephrasing something inconceivable.

(c) We can say that R is a normal causal relation. That means that it is P that is the cause and that E is the effect. This explanation is logical and conceivable but very complicated. Let us examine the precognition example two. Eva Hellström has a vision of a ballroom scene. She is also convinced that it is a precognition: She will see this ballroom during her already decided upon journey to London. She now, in one way or another (we do not need to go into the question how), influences her husband to go to the theatre. She also has him to decide on Bye bye, Birdie. The paper they are consulting clearly states that this play contains dancing. It is likely that she will see her ballroom scene in this musical. This means that she by her behavior steers things so they will happen in a way that her vision will be fulfilled. This is all

probable, maybe even likely.

But, a further analysis leads us into trouble. Colors play an important role in the vision. They usually do so in her precognitions. Two colors dominate her vision: turquoise and cerise. These colors are also significant in the theatre scene. Two of the lead-girls and several others are dressed in cerise. Some other dresses are in turquoise and, on one occasion, which perhaps especially corresponds to the vision, the whole background is turquoise.

Could Eva Hellström in one way or another have influenced the dressing of the actors. If they had changed their dresses for this particular performance at which Eva was present, then the theory still holds. This was not the case. The dresses were designed and sewn long before Eva had her vision.

Can she have influenced the designers, directors and so on when the decision of the colors of the dresses were made? In our theory it is possible. But this means that she "knew" about this ballroom long before she had her vision.

In this theory Eva influenced people. What about material? Did she make the colors change? Very unlikely. But what about a precognition of the following kind.

P has a vision and conviction that a certain pendulum is going to fall from its place on the wall. A storm comes, rocks the house and the pendulum falls. The storm is the cause of the fall of the pendulum, but is then P the cause of the storm?

It is easy to see what an extremely difficult theory this is to uphold. Different paragnosts cause all sorts of happenings and activities in the world. But the world does not seem to be that chaotic.

To explain precognition in terms of PK is possible but it is a highly improbable theory.

The causality theory can be elaborated on in another way. I will take up that in the next section.

(d) Finally, we can in sporadic cases try to explain precognition in terms of other psi-factors as clairvoyance and telepathy.

We may say that the vision of the streets of Cairo and the vision of the ballroom in London were clairvoyance or that someone at these places telepathically sent these visions to Eva. But we cannot explain her feelings of being at these places as clairvoyance or telepathy.

Other psi-factors as clairvoyance and telepathy take care of details, they never explain the entire issue of precognition.

### The fatalistic repudiation

The fatalistic repudiation is based on the assumption that man has

a free will. If man has a free will or not, is one of the big questions in Philosophy and one which has been debated for more than two thousand years. The assumption seems basically founded on psychological grounds. When Eva and her husband wished to go to the theater in London they had a choice among several plays. They had the feeling that they could choose to go to Her Majesty's, or if they had preferred, they could have gone to the Old Vic or to the Globe.

Eva Hellström (P) had at time  $t_1$  a vision of a dance that would take place at  $t_3$  when she was in London. The event in Sweden we call  $E_1$ , and the event in London (seeing the dance) we call  $E_3$ . A necessary condition for  $E_3$  at  $t_3$  to happen is that Bo Hellström at  $t_2$  prefers to go and see a musical and that he had his wife choose Her Majesty's. This happens on the plane from Sweden to England and we call it event  $E_2$ .

The fatalistic argument now runs as follows. Since  $E_1$  is a precognition, i.e.  $E_3$  occurs, then  $E_3$  must have been predestinated at  $t_1$ . But since  $E_3$  depends on the choice at  $t_2$ , then also  $E_2$  must have been predestinated at  $t_1$ . This means that Bo at  $t_2$  did not have a free choice, even though he thought so.

We can illustrate this in the following formula:

$$(9) \quad E_1 \rightarrow E_2 \rightarrow E_3$$

where  $\rightarrow$  means causes.

This is a universal formula. Every event is caused by an earlier event.

From this we can draw the conclusion: Precognition exists if, and only if, fatalism is the case.

Now, according to our first assumption in this section, fatalism is not the case. Hence, there is no precognition.

We may of course instead accept fatalism as reality. Then there is no problem with precognition. Our case can be illustrated as shown in formula (10):

$$(10) \quad \begin{aligned} & E_{1,1} \rightarrow E_{2,1} \rightarrow E_{1,3} \\ & E_{1,2} \rightarrow E_{2,2} \rightarrow E_{3,2} \end{aligned}$$

The events represented by  $E_{,1}$  are for example these:

$E_{1,1}$  - a decision is made to play Bye bye, Birdie

$E_{2,1}$  - decisions are made about scenes and costumes

$E_{3,1}$  - Bye bye, Birdie is played at Her Majesty's

This chain of events could have been made much more elaborate, but that does not change our line of reasoning. The  $E_{,2}$  events

can be interpreted like this:

E1,2 - decision to go to London

E2,2 - precognition of E3,1

E3,2 - confirmation of alleged precognition

This means that E3,1 and t3 does not stand in a causal connection with E2,2 at t2 and the precognition does not have to be explained.

There is also another and more complicated way of seeing this, and this is the more elaborated way of causality that I in the preceding section promised to take up.

There could be a third series of events, that we are not aware of, causing the precognition. Formula (11) illustrates this:

$$(11) \quad E1,3 \rightarrow E2,3 \rightarrow E3,3 \begin{array}{l} \nearrow E3,1 \\ \searrow E2,2 \end{array}$$

E2,3 causes E2,2 and E3,3. In its turn E3,3 causes E3,1. Again the precognition at t2 has no direct causal connection with E3,1 at t3. In this case we have no difficulties in "explaining" precognition but it does not help us to understand precognition cases since ex definitione we are dealing with causality chains that are hidden for us. It is a matter of taste if we call this a fatalistic precognition or not. It is entirely a philosophical problem and I will not consider it here.

The conclusion of this section is that precognition from a fatalistic point of view is both fully understandable and explicable.

#### SUMMARY

In this paper I have discussed some aspects of precognition. I have not tried to give an explicative or stipulative definition of precognition, but I have as a starting point given the notion an ostensive definition and thereby used two cases from the diary of the Swedish paragnost Ms. Eva Hellström.

Then, I shortly cast some light on the question whether precognition can be considered a form of knowledge and come to the conclusion that it has to be taken as such if it will be of any use for parapsychologists. On the other hand, whether precognition is supposed to be a form of perception can be disputed.

Finally, I take up three ways of repudiating precognition: the epistemological, the causal, and the fatalistic.

I come to the conclusion that the epistemological repudiation does not hold. On the other hand, the causal one seems to bear effects as to the notion of precognition. However, if natural laws,



which are the standpoint of modern science, only are the utmost consequences of statistical laws, then precognition is both psychologically conceivable and logically compatible. But, and this has to be stressed, in that case precognition as an occurrent factor in real life, is extremely unlikely. This means that most, but not every single one, of the cases that today are ostensibly defined as precognition have to be explained otherwise.

If we, as in the traditional natural sciences, accept causation as the driving factor, then precognition can be the case in two different ways.

Pro primo, precognition may be mistaken for special cases of psychokinesis. It is the precognitive event that causes the event that verifies the precognition.

Pro secundo, precognition may be the case in a world where every event is predestinized. This means that the hypothesis of man's free will has to be refuted. On the other hand, however, this is entirely outside the purpose of this paper to show so, the fatalistic world, at least on its macro-level with working psychic minds, is very improbable.

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