



The Edgar Cayce Primer

Herbert B. Puryear



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AN INTRODUCTION TO EDGAR CAYCE

Here for the first time is a popularly written book presenting a simplified approach to the issues and philosophy underpinning the Edgar Cayce readings in the psychic area. DR. HERBERT B. PURYEAR, an acknowledged authority on Cayce's work, is Director of Research Services for the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Dr. Puryear is author of *Reflections on the Path, Sex and the Spiritual Path*, and coauthor of *Meditations and the Mind of Man*. He is also author of the A.R.E. membership lesson series *Covenant*, upon which much of *The Edgar Cayce Primer* is based. Several years ago, Dr. Puryear hosted a nationally televised, twenty-six part series, *Who Is Man?*, an extensive inquiry into parapsychological research.

A trained clinical psychologist. Dr. Puryear received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina and his B.A. from Stanford University.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many books are the product of intensive research and writing over a period of months. However, this book is the result of much cumulative experience over several decades. For this reason I wish to use this opportunity to acknowledge some of the special contributions others have made to my life, enabling me to write this particular kind of book.

The Edgar Cayce story was introduced to me in 1951. This opened the door for a marvelous new direction in my life—the opportunity to study the Edgar Cayce readings. For this I continue to be grateful.

I first visited Virginia Beach in 1953. Here I met Mae Gimbert St. Clair and Gladys Davison Turner, members of the Association for Research and Enlightenment staff, who through the years and in very special ways made the Edgar Cayce readings available and understandable for me. At that time I also met Hugh Lynn Cayce, who became and has continued to be a great source of inspiration and motivation. It was he who enabled me in 1969 to move into this area of study, making it a life work.

For my understanding of the Bible I owe much to my high school pastor, J. Ralph Grant. For introducing and encouraging me in the scientific study of parapsychology I am grateful to J. B. Rhine of Duke University. For my appreciation of the comparative study of religions I am thankful for the work of Freidrich Spiegelberg of Stanford University.

My opportunities to become a psychologist were especially enhanced by Leland Winder of Stanford University, Earl Baughman and Grant Dahlstrom of the University of North Carolina, and Kenneth Kramer of Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas. Their help and encouragement were vital to my professional development.

In its first incarnation the present book was a series of monthly lessons for members of the Association for Research and Enlightenment. Cheryl Salerno was very helpful as the editor of this series, and I was much encouraged in the project by the favorable response to these essays by many A.R.E. members. Richard Boyle did the illustrations.

Richard I. Abrams saw the potential for these lessons becoming a book and being given wide distribution. He outlined the book, rewrote the chapters for easier readability, and arranged for its publication with Bantam. I am deeply appreciative of his faith, encouragement, and competent diligence in this project.

Dr. Harold J. Reilly is the source of much of my understanding of the care of the physical body, including the “coin word,” C.A.R.E., which is the theme of one of the chapters.

The actual writing of the book was made possible and enhanced by the office support of my associates, Dee Shambaugh Sloan and Marilyn Peterson, and by the excellent typing of Ruth Braun.

And I am very appreciative of the gracious response to our manuscript by Bantam Editor Grace Bechtold.

Herbert Bruce Puryear
Virginia Beach, Virginia
November 24, 1981

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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PREFACE

My grandfather, Edgar Cayce, who lived in Virginia Beach, Virginia, conducted a life work which led to his being called America's greatest mystic.

While he was in a sleep-like state, he could see into the future and into the past; he could describe ongoing distant events as they were happening; and he could astound doctors with his vision of the human body. His readings, or spoken words while in this state, were carefully transcribed. Subsequently he has undoubtedly become the most documented psychic who ever lived. The accuracy of his readings and predictions is truly astounding.

The A.R.E., which he founded in 1931 to study and disseminate this information, continues this day as a membership organization, investigating ways of applying my grandfather's insights.

Having only an eighth-grade education, Edgar Cayce was, by the standards of the world, a plain and simple man. He was as surprised as others by his extraordinary abilities. Deeply religious, he struggled throughout his life to be of aid to those who came to him seeking help. He refused to use his talents for other than helpful purposes. There was a very special quality about this man that attracted and continues to attract people to the story of his life and work, and to the rich and far-reaching information he gave.

Despite the many books written about Edgar Cayce, there has long been a need for an effective and simplified introduction to the philosophy and psychology presented by the readings. In fulfillment of this need, I believe that Dr. Herbert Bruce Puryear has made a major contribution to the literature surrounding the Edgar Cayce phenomena.

Charles Thomas Cayce

President, A.R.E.

8 September 1981

Virginia Beach, Virginia

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to serve a special function to the seeker. Millions have become familiar with the Edgar Cayce story and have read about his life through one of the biographies such as *There Is A River* by Thomas Sugrue or *Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping Prophet* by Jean Stearn. Stirred by the philosophy of the readings, they don't know what step to take next.

The present book should be of special help to those who would like to take that next step by obtaining an in-depth view of the psychology and philosophy of the readings, presented in a context that will help the reader integrate this information with his own religious background, scientific perspective, and personal life.

Alfred North Whitehead, the great English philosopher and educator, defined philosophy as "the endeavor to formulate a system of general ideas which shall be consistent, coherent and complete, in terms of which every aspect of our experience can be interpreted." We hope the reader will utilize the information in this book, applying Whitehead's standard.

In addition to its philosophical premises, this book contains a *model*, a conceptual picture of the nature of man, which we hope will serve as a framework, facilitating an evaluation of all of mankind's experiences: religious, psychical, mystical, pathological, altered states, and everyday consciousness. The purpose of this model is to help us organize and integrate what we already know and to lead us to new and creative insights and further testable hypotheses.

There are several principles frequently reiterated throughout these chapters. A summary of these may help the reader in a study of this information:

1. The first premise of the Edgar Cayce readings is the *oneness of all force*. This force is Life, Light, and Love. It is God, and God is both Law and Love.
2. We, all of us, are spiritual beings, children of God, with a continuity of life from before the beginning to beyond the end of time. This continuity as it relates to the earth plane introduces concepts of reincarnation, karma, and grace.
3. That which the readings saw as most important in our lives is proper motivation and establishing a criterion for our purposes—what the readings call an ideal. The ideal may serve both to quicken the proper motivation and provide a standard by which to evaluate our decisions.
4. These readings say that we are in a three-dimensional consciousness and we can learn by working with three-dimensional concepts. They speak not only of the triune God, but also of the triune nature of man. In every consideration we need to examine the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. The spirit is the life, mind is the builder, and the physical is the result. There is a special stress on the mind as the creative part of ourselves. That upon which we dwell in the mind we become.
5. This information always insists that all questions can be answered if we listen to the Spirit within. We must learn to trust that Spirit for information, guidance, and healing. This is accomplished primarily by practicing the silence in meditation.
6. It is necessary that we put self aside. There is an aspect of us all, the lower self, the primary problem of which is the spirit of rebellion. One day everyone of us must relinquish this self-oriented spirit.
7. This is a philosophy of work, of application, and of service. Edgar Cayce encouraged a

to apply what they knew, assuring that when they did, the next step would be given.

A study and application of the principles of these readings will lead you to a whole new life full of hope and promise for yourself, for your loved ones, and for your relationship to all of mankind. As a form of the story of the Gospel, this information, in its truth, richness, depth, beauty, applicability, and accessibility is *good news* indeed.

PART ONE

THE SETTING

Chapter One

SOURCES OF PSYCHIC INFORMATION

The life of Edgar Cayce is one of the most compelling in the history of mankind. It is a story of self-examination, seeking, and selfless service. For more than forty years, Edgar Cayce conducted work that has been referred to as giving readings. A reading was a discourse given by Cayce while he was lying down, his eyes closed, in an altered state of consciousness. Almost always delivered in his own normal voice, the discourses were recorded stenographically by Gladys Davis Turner and typed immediately. More than fourteen thousand of these readings are now preserved and available for study. They cover such a wide range of subject matter that they are indexed under more than ten thousand major subject headings. They are to be found in the library of the A.R.E. in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Most of the readings were given for individuals and, therefore, deal with specific personal questions concerning various aspects of physical, mental, spiritual, vocational, and interpersonal life. Some of these readings, however, were complete discourses on topics such as meditation, Bible interpretation, and world affairs. It was not necessary for the person obtaining the reading to be present: Mr. Cayce was able to describe individuals and diagnose their physical condition with surprising accuracy, even though they might have been hundreds of miles away. Because of these readings, thousands of people were helped, often in ways which transformed their lives. In their entirety, the readings provide specific procedures which are currently helpful in treating many major illnesses. And now, decades after Cayce's death, his readings continue to inspire, educate, and amaze those who research them.

This briefly was Edgar Cayce's work. If we take his psychic readings and their accompanying documentation seriously, they will revolutionize our ordinary notions about our sources of information, or how we come by knowledge.

How Can We Know?

The question, “How can we know?” is one of the most fundamental concerns of all mankind. Every choice we make is influenced by assumptions we have accepted. Every day we make decisions affecting our health, our business affairs, our relationships with our families and others, our mental and our spiritual attitudes.

What are the sources of information upon which we base our decisions? In his search for knowledge, man has turned to many authorities: to a great mind, such as Aristotle’s; to divine inspiration, such as the Bible; to personal experience and the physical senses; to reason and to the findings of scientific research.

For thousands of years, and especially since the renaissance, our civilization has been deeply influenced by philosophies which maintain that all knowledge originates in the *outer* world and is mediated by the physical senses. Scientific knowledge is based on this assumption. In contrast, Edgar Cayce, who was really only one exceptional individual among hundreds who have travelled the mystical path, presented solid evidence that information of every kind may be obtained entirely from within.

The Edgar Cayce story raises numerous questions about the inner world as a source of information. How does psychic ability relate to us? What are the pitfalls of turning within? What was the source of the information Edgar Cayce gave? What are the steps we should take in evaluating other sources?

How Does Psychic Ability Relate to Us?

Let us examine for the moment the word “psychic” which was chosen by the readings to describe this work. Acknowledging that this word could be misconstrued by some, the readings always qualified the definition by stating that “psychic is *of the soul*.” Thus the word “psychic” when referred to in the readings, connotes more than just psychic ability. Since we are all “souls,” psychic ability, an attribute of the soul, is therefore a potential for everyone.

If we are souls with the capacity for psychic awareness that is not limited by time or space, we can conclude, that by attuning ourselves, as souls, to our inner Source, we will find answers to all of our questions, and solutions to what we call problems.

In the words of the psalmist, “... ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High.” (Psalm 82:6) As children of God, we are spiritual beings. Therefore, when Edgar Cayce speaks of his work as being “psychic” and “of the soul,” he is referring to this essential spiritual relationship which we have with the divine.

What Are the Difficulties and Pitfalls of Turning Within?

Even though sensitives such as Edgar Cayce seem to be able to tap a Universal source of knowledge, we may find that we are unable to do the same. When we turn within, we often discover instead that we are faced with an array of voices, feelings, impulses, and experiences.

What is the problem? Experientially, we discover that the very process through which we seek contact with the highest, may also reveal to us the less worthy side of ourselves: envy, greed, possessiveness—aspects of our “lower” self. Discerning the nature of the inner experience has therefore, been problematic for thousands of years.

Some, who become dismayed by the complexity of this inner world, may oversimplify matters by concluding that information received from within is either from God or the devil. We, as seekers, must be extremely careful to avoid such simplistic evaluations.

What Was the Source that Cayce Tapped?

The Edgar Cayce readings are especially helpful in achieving an understanding of the complexity of the inner life. They clarify matters by dividing the inner world into three basic states of consciousness. Although the levels of consciousness are perhaps innumerable, the readings deal mainly with the conscious, the subconscious, and the superconscious.

This threefold view of the dimensions of consciousness can be illustrated with a cone-shaped diagram.



The opening of the cone represents the superconscious, or the access to the Divine, if you will—man's spiritual promise as a soul with unlimited awareness. This level of consciousness, according to the readings, was Edgar Cayce's source of psychic information. The point of the cone represents the physical consciousness which is limited in awareness by the here-and-now requirements of the physical body and its senses. The subconscious, which is evident especially in our dreams and spontaneous urgings, acts as a filter or mediator between the infinite potential of the superconscious and the finite limitations of the waking conscious.

The concept of the subconscious as a dynamic process *between* normal physical consciousness and the super-conscious potential is the key to a fuller understanding of the array of inner experiences available to us. As a mediator, the subconscious may either enhance or distort man's access to the divine within. Information coming from the superconscious filters through the thought forms and desire patterns of the subconscious. Therefore, it may be accurate or inaccurate, helpful or harmful, pure or distorted.

Based on the above threefold model, an individual may be said to be psychic to the degree that he is able to put aside the distracting input from the conscious and subconscious in preference to input from the superconscious, which may put him in touch with all worthwhile information. For a channel to be consistently accurate and helpful, then, one must be able to tap the superconscious on a regular basis. And this Edgar Cayce did with remarkable frequency and consistency.

The ability to establish and maintain a helpful input from the superconscious is dependent upon many factors. It is affected by the general physical health and the degree of momentary attunement to the physical body of the channel. It involves the thoughts, emotions, and desires of the channel. It depends on the channel's deep-seated conception of the source he intends to tap. And it is influenced by the purposes, motivations, and ideals of the channel.

Considering such a model of consciousness and the complex role of the subconscious as the mediator between our conscious mind and the Divine, we can begin to understand and properly appreciate the problem of obtaining information from psychic sources.

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