

A LONG, COOL LOOK AT ALIEN INTELLIGENCE

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Part IV — Possible significance of Parapsychology

IT WILL BE USEFUL to begin by recalling the conclusions, published in 1871, of the London Dialectical Society, whose investigations constituted, in fact, the first scientific recognition given to metaphysics. The committee held some 50 seances in 1869, and subsequently arrived at the following conclusions:—

1. Sounds of various kinds, appearing to come from the furniture, floor and walls of the room, and often producing vibrations which could be felt, appeared to occur without being caused by muscular or mechanical actions;

2. Movements of heavy bodies occurred without mechanical force or any muscular action by the persons present, and often without any contact or relation to anyone;

3. These sounds and movements often occurred in the way and at the time desired by the sitters; by means of a simple code of signals, they gave answers to questions and dictated alphabetically coherent messages;

4. The replies and messages obtained in this way were, for the most part, of a trivial nature; but they sometimes revealed facts which were known to only one of the sitters;

5. The phenomena required arbitrary conditions; it was noted above all that the presence of certain people seemed to be necessary to their production, while others hindered it, but this did not seem to depend on the belief or scepticism of the persons in question with regard to the phenomena;

6. Nevertheless, the production of phenomena was not made certain by the presence or absence of any particular person.

The Committee of the London Dialectical Society was unanimous about the facts mentioned in this report, but various other matters, such as alleged apparitions of hands and faces, the spontaneous playing of musical instruments, the apparent invulnerability of some persons to injury by red-hot coals, apports of various objects into closed spaces, and alleged predictions of future events, were only accepted by some members of the committee.

After another one hundred years, during which psychical research has increased to an enormous extent, it is rather deflating to have to admit that little real progress has been made. Books on psychical research are published in substantial numbers, but they are largely devoted either to

summoning the faithful—the rallying cry being that where there has been several thousand years of spiritualist smoke there must be some metaphysical fire—or else they are attempts to debunk the whole of parapsychology by pointing to the admittedly numerous cases of blatant fraud. The Society for Psychical Research was itself founded in 1882 to “examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis.” Even today, it is impossible to improve upon this as a definition of what psychical research tries to do. As for what the paranormal is, there are six basic possibilities:

1. **The Sceptical Interpretation**, which plainly states that it is all fraud and fallacy, or as Dr. J. B. Priestley puts it, “that the whole thing is a lot of bosh.” This negative attitude is not, of course, Dr. Priestley’s own view; in fact, he regards this attitude as stupid bigotry and dangerously unscientific. Nevertheless, there is a large and vocal group of orthodox scientists which adheres to precisely this view.

2. **The Theory of Natural Anomalies, or Theory of Primordial Irrationality**. This postulates that the paranormal occurs, but is completely without significance. It is the occasional ‘sport,’ the statistical fluke, the ‘exception which proves the rule.’ Paranormal events are inherently unpredictable and inherently unrepeatable.

3. **Scientific Monism**. This suggests that paranormal phenomena are genuine, but belong to an order of physical occurrences beyond the scope of present-day science. With further advances in science, the paranormal will eventually become normal, as the ‘laws’ recognised by science become more representative of Nature as she is, instead of as scientists think she ought to be. This theory provides justification for serious scientific investigation of alleged phenomena and moreover, has the merit that, in course of time, *something* will be proven, whether it is popular or not.

4. **The Theory of Substantial Dualism**, which asserts that paranormal events do occur, but that they belong to an order of mental events which cannot be explained by physical science, since they lie completely outside the space-time continuum and the laws of causation with which science is concerned.

5. **The Synchronicity Theory of C. J. Jung**. This

is the most difficult theory to follow; it supposes that paranormal events are not based on the causal principle that holds for ordinary physical events, but neither are they based upon any kind of para-mechanical mind-matter interaction. Paranormal events, according to Jung, are events connected by an a-causal principle.

6. The Supernatural Interpretation. Paranormal phenomena are caused or mediated by disembodied intelligences—spirits, ghosts, or what-have-you. They are frankly supernatural and therefore beyond both reason and explanation.

It is only a personal opinion, but of the six possible theories of paranormal phenomena, only two seem worthy of serious consideration; Scientific Monism and Substantial Dualism. The second of these, although it involves a difficulty which has puzzled philosophers for centuries—namely, how to explain the interaction of physical and non-physical entities—has the advantage that it is obviously suited to deal with one special peculiarity of most paranormal phenomena which is frequently overlooked: that is, they are almost always connected in some way with a human person. Scientific Monism, on the other hand, has the advantage that it can be backed up by the entire armoury of organised science.

Fortunately, it is not necessary for us to solve these fundamental problems behind parapsychological and paranormal phenomena in general, in order to be able to appreciate some of the processes which seem to be involved in the phenomena as most commonly reported. There are two parapsychological phenomena, namely, prosopopesis and ideoplasty, which, no matter how erroneous may be their underlying theory, are such valuable concepts that it would be difficult to get a working idea of parapsychology without them.

Prosopopesis is a word derived from the Greek *prosopon*, a theatrical costume or stage character. It is used to denote any sudden change, whether induced or spontaneous, in an individual's personality. Sometimes people take leave of their usual personality and assume one that is utterly different. Their memory may be lost, and their character completely changed; they may assume a new name, and hold new ideas. The new personality may remember the old one, but speak of it as if it were a stranger or even an antagonist. The change from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde, or vice versa, may be an ephemeral matter of minutes, or it may be a quasi-stable state lasting for years. Despite the name-derivation, it is no question of play-acting by the conscious mind, but is a genuine change in the personality. It is a phenomenon that has been known for thousands of years, and one which has been intensively studied from the beginning of this century. The name by which the phenomenon was known in the past was, of course, *possession*. It must not be confused in any way with schizophrenia, which although the name suggests a splitting of the personality, involves only a splitting away of the

emotions from the rational sentiments, which, together with hallucinatory tendencies, leads to grotesque personality changes, but not a new personality.

The two main forms of prosopopesis are Spontaneous Prosopopesis and Induced Prosopopesis.

Spontaneous Prosopopesis is usually of hysterical origin, and may be thought of as mental illness which is usually curable.

Induced Prosopopesis is the result of a suggestion, usually made in the hypnotic state, and taking the form given by the hypnotist. But it can also be the result of auto-suggestion, or of something read or heard.

In spontaneous prosopopesis, the alternative personalities which manifest themselves in the same physical individual are constant in their characteristics and may persist for many years without noticeable change. Some trance personalities, or so-called 'spirit-controls' are of this nature. Hypnotically-induced personalities are by contrast ephemeral and highly variable, and come and go or alter at the command of the hypnotist.

Paranormal phenomena are associated with both spontaneous and induced prosopopesis.

Ideoplasty. The personalities which manifest themselves as seemingly-new psychological individuals in prosopopesis all arise from a central idea, which has either been implanted by suggestion on the part of a hypnotist, or introjected as an act of auto-suggestion. The term ideoplasty was coined by Durand de Gros, about 1860, to denote the implantation of ideas in minds made receptive by hypnosis. Later, Ochorowicz used the word to mean 'the physiological realisation of an idea.' Ideoplasty has for centuries been thought to occur during gestation. Count Prozor published an account in 1922, illustrated with photographs, of a cat whose kittens were marked with a date and some stars which were printed on a sack on which the mother had lain. The markings were formed by groups of black hairs on a white background. A far older example appears in Genesis 30, 37-42. "And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut trees and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flock by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the cattle were feeble, he put *them*

not in: so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger were Jacob's."

A more recent medical example is the following: A 23-year-old woman was two months pregnant when she was badly frightened by her two-year-old son nearly cutting off his left thumb, the member hanging by only a shred. She was without anyone to assist her and dressed the injury as best she could. Her mind constantly dwelt on the accident and in due time she gave birth to a boy who had his left thumb hanging to his hand by a pedicle of flesh. This was published in 1910 in the Journal of the Tennessee State Medical Association. Many similar cases could be quoted.

The foregoing all relate to an idea manifesting as a bodily change in the same person, or animal. The stigmata of the Saints are precisely similar. But the concept of ideoplasty goes further, and proposes that where there is no physiological mechanism to materialise the implanted idea, or where this mechanism is inhibited from working, then the idea will strive to manifest itself parapsychically. Thus, the levitation of objects beyond a medium's reach, or the apportionation of objects from other rooms, are supposed to take place by some form of action-at-a-distance. The notion is both too crude and too far-fetched to win any scientific support without a great deal of observational evidence, but something of the kind may occur.

Parapsychology and flying saucers

There are many ways in which the concepts of prosopopesis and ideoplasty are related to the subject of flying saucers. For a start, prosopopesis, particularly in the form of rapidly alternating personalities such as have been studied by many psychoanalysts, clearly has a bearing on some so-called 'contactee' experiences. Moreover I have myself studied one case of alleged "messages from alien intelligence" which were being parapsychically impressed on a tape-receiver, and which turned out to be recordings made by the contactee himself in a somnambulistic state.

But there is one very interesting application of these notions. Charles Bowen pointed out to me some time ago that there are many instances where observers report seeing an object, supposed to be a space-craft, swoop down as if to land, and in so doing pass behind a hill or wood at some distance. Within a minute or less, and before the observers have had time to approach the supposed landing site, figures are seen to be approaching. They are rather stereotyped, usually dwarfs or giants, and often described as hairy. Usually there is no encounter, although occasionally an exchange of signals is reported, and then the visitants turn back towards their ship. Almost immediately after they disappear from view, the ship (presumed to be at some appreciable distance) is seen to take off. As Mr. Bowen has remarked, this odd cycle of events has been reported too many times to be casually dismissed.

My suggestion is that some of these reported landings are genuine; but they are the routine sample-collecting trips of robot probes, essentially similar to the craft which we are planning to send to Mars in the next few years. But the craft which visit Earth are the creations of vastly superior beings, whose science embraces a good deal of what is still parascience to us. Suppose that, in addition to radars which can listen out for our emanations and send back false signals to confuse our tracking stations, they have equipment (mechanical or biological) which can track our thoughts? The landing vehicle receives from a nearby group of humans some confused thoughts and emotions ("A flying saucer . . . FEAR . . . perhaps they are giants, or hairy monsters . . ."). No sooner received than the reflected thought image is on its way. The human observers are met by just the kind of alien creature they feared to meet. As soon as the craft has finished its job (collection of soil-samples need take a few minutes only), the "fear barrier" is withdrawn. A reason for believing that some such mechanism could be used is the fact that at seances, even at those under conditions of good scientific control, the observed phenomena (or seemingly-observed phenomena) are so often those which the sitters expected.

Another obvious application of these parapsychological principles is to the notion of an 'elite' in our midst, demi-gods of normal human descent, or perhaps infiltration by the beings of an extra-terrestrial race. The usual reaction to these ideas, at least on the part of orthodox psychologists, is that they are schizophrenic. Certainly, it is a common schizophrenic symptom to believe that one is constantly in the presence of beings who are visible to oneself alone, and who sometimes command one's every action. In olden times these were thought of as demon familiars from the infernal regions; nowadays they are the pilots of flying saucers. But what of the people who claim extraordinary out-of-the-body experiences, or 'possession' by the minds of extraterrestrial beings? Ideoplasty and prosopopesis here explain how a central compelling idea, that of a race of supermen who will save mankind from his own homicidal stupidity, can produce subsidiary or alternative personalities with the expected characteristics. But where does the central idea come from? Is it picked up from others in the course of our work-a-day lives, or are we all, as many believe, in contact with each other at the subliminal level? And if there is universal unconscious telepathy between men, then why not between man and other intelligences?

Perhaps the Russians are right, and their attempts to develop telepathy as a cheap and effective means of communication between Earth and Moon are more realistic than efforts like Project Ozma. It could be that many of the strange mental disturbances which we put down to madness, genius, hysterical dissociation, or plain drunkenness, are the early stirrings of ideoplastic concepts induced by cosmic telepathy.