

THE GHOSTS AND THE GOSSAMER

by

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THERE IS an old story regarding a noted scientist who met a ghost—not a departed human spirit but an honest-to-goodness old-fashioned wraith, weird and unworldly. The scientist had no immediate explanation of the apparition. It was something quite beyond his experience. He peered at it and remarked quite casually, "Very interesting. I am not afraid. If this ghost really exists it is no more than another scientific fact."

Such a materialistic attitude of mind may (or may not) give its owner courage and faith so that he can contemplate the supernatural, the unknown, or even what Addison described as "the wrecks of matter, and the crash of worlds," with equanimity—but it has no value as an approach to reality. It is, unfortunately, the attitude of the vast majority of civilised humans today.

Now I have always realised that in writing these articles I stick my neck out and invite the axe of ruthless criticism, and it may well be that the day will come—if it has not already arrived—when my creative head will fall away from the body or substance of these articles, so that you will look in vain for my name in the *FLYING SAUCER REVIEW*. But before that happens I hope I shall have cleared up any misunderstanding in the minds of my readers as to where I stand: it may be that it is at the foot of the guillotine, but your Editor has never tied my hands, and I assure you that I am not blindfolded. All that I shall ask, before the axe falls, is a few sentences to make my position clear to my friends. Forestalling my probable fate, I give you one such explanation, as I begin this article.

In our last issue, in a brilliantly-written and vitally interesting letter, Mr. C. G. Smith of Gravesend suggested that I may be wrong in stating that the beings who are coming to us from

other dimensions (or "outer space," if you prefer it that way) are "baffled in their attempts to communicate with us." I am very sorry if my word usage created some confusion of thought. I fully agree with Mr. Smith that "the ordering of events, the growth of perception, the contribution by various men towards enlightenment, are subtle, and often not perceived," and that there are many in the world who receive "messages," being clairvoyant. In short, that so far as guidance of the human race is concerned—guidance received consciously by persons of high spiritual discernment, and often unconsciously by poets, preachers, authors and others—there is (as there always has been) free communication between spiritual beings and ourselves.

As Mr. Smith puts it, "All over the world communication is in progress all the time, for many of man's 'instincts' and 'impulses' have no logical explanation."

Mr. Smith's words at once reminded me of Faraday, who confessed that on many occasions, when he had some abstruse and seemingly insoluble problem that worried him, he would send it down into his subconsciousness before sleep, and would awake to find the problem efficiently solved. But all such instances, and all guidance given to mankind from the Eternal, is *one-way communication*. When I have spoken of spiritual beings being baffled in their attempts to establish communication I have referred to communication in its fuller sense—two-way communication. The faults and inhibitions are our own, as humans still enmeshed in matter. We misread the messages given us. We neglect to follow the guiding impulses. We cannot reply adequately—and this particularly applies to our clumsy responses to the beings who control the UFOs—because, as Tennyson puts it, we are infants "crying in the

night, and with no language but a cry."

So far as clear two-way communication is concerned, the higher spiritual intelligences are baffled in their attempts to establish it.

I have said that the materialistic attitude of the scientist in that story—and this has nothing to do with belief or disbelief in ghosts—is the attitude towards the miraculous, the supernatural and the unknown shared by the vast majority of humans today, in our science-obsessed world. They believe (and the belief is fostered by all materialistic scientists) that anything which may appear to be miraculous (not in conformity with natural laws as we know them) is capable of some scientific explanation if only we had more data, statistics, experience of it.

Pure Assumption

This is of course pure assumption. It is the attitude of mind of any primitive savage, living in a community of humans whose skins are entirely black, who hears rumours of the existence of a white man. The savage has never seen one, cannot believe that any human could possibly exist who does not have a black skin. A white skin is therefore a miracle. But note that our hypothetical savage is a scientific savage, with the attitude of a materialistic scientist—he is no superstitious fool, for he argues from the general to the particular, and explains the exception by the laws and terms of the Rule.

He says, "If I met a man apparently white it might seem a miracle, but the truth would be that he was really black, and if I knew more about him his blackness would be a scientific fact." Pure assumption—*similar to that of the materialistic scientist who believes that any phenomenon, however incongruous it might seem and even contradictory of his materialistic theories, MUST conform to his theories if he knew more about it.*

Carlyle, in his first chapter on "Natural Supernaturalism" in *Sartor Resartus*, looks at the scientific fact and discovers that it is itself supernatural. In taking this attitude—directly opposed to that of the materialistic scientist in our story—he is in alignment with Spencer's opening chapters on the "ultimate uncaused" in that writer's *First Principles*.

"Ghosts," wrote Carlyle, "there are nigh a thousand million walking the earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen from it, ere thy watch ticks once. O, Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts!"

If Nature abhors a vacuum, then materialistic science *abominates* a mystery. How can anything possibly exist which science cannot, sooner or later (probably sooner) "explain"? But we need not apply the materialistic attitude of our scientist in the story to supernatural phenomena only, to recognise its utter worthlessness as a means of approaching reality. Let our cocksure materialist be confronted with a new-born infant. What he does not know about it will eventually be explained as "scientific fact." Suggest that there is a mysterious something—spirit, personality, something eternal, immaterial—and he firmly believes that if it exists it can be nothing more than "scientific fact." So with any of Shakespeare's sonnets, or any of Bach's compositions. "Spirit? Personality? Character? If such things exist we shall eventually analyse them all—are we not making enormous strides in psychological fields?—and it will all be explained as scientific and factual."

Shape

What is the shape of a man? Many humans have been born without arms or legs, who have had human qualities of the highest order. It may be that the shape of a human spirit—if it has any shape—is that which we have come to associate with the UFOs. Or if we are compelled to give it a shape, its form may be similar to that of a spider—a central body with out-reaching arms, or appendages, seeking experience-contacts. "Similar to" a spider's shape, perhaps—but if we seek an ultimate definition, then the human spirit can only be shapeless, as it is indeed timeless and spaceless.

I have created the term "Spiderism"—in one of my earlier articles—because I firmly believe that men are more like spiders than they are like any other creatures. Spiderism is, of course, the attitude of mind that now dominates materialistic science. It can only interpret phenomena in terms of its own earth-environment. It reaches out to distant stars and examines them, *not as they are "now," but as they existed millions of years ago*—and it is very sure that the "natural laws"—gravitational, biological, meteorological, and all the rest of them—which we have formulated to "explain" the phenomena of our own world MUST apply to all the billions of suns in billions of galaxies in the Cosmos. Yet we are spiders, in our own corner of a shed in some back-yard of the Universe, judging the entire conditions of the Cosmos in terms of Spiderism.

Try to tell a spider that UNO exists and it will translate all that you say into terms of catching flies. Materialistic science is compelled to con-

sider the probability of life on Mars, or any of the other planets, *in terms of life on this earth*. "If there is oxygen—if there is water"—as though a spider were saying to a human trying to communicate with it: "If you have spinnerets I shall believe in your existence—how can any spider, even as big as you say you are, exist without spinnerets?"

Spiders

All symbolisms must fail in our attempts to describe the Cosmos, because we are spiders, perhaps more insignificant than spiders, in our dark earth-shed. They fail most disastrously when we try to reduce the Cosmos to terms of "scientific fact." They have most chance of success; in their approaches to reality, if they are what we humans term "fantastic," "unscientific" or even "ridiculous." Yet what we call "scientific facts" (data comprising the assemblage of "what we know" as humans) *are themselves as miraculous and mysterious as any of those phenomena which we call "supernatural."* The spider itself (unique among animals, and one of the only two creatures which builds a trap, the other being the larva of the caddis *Hydropsyche*) is a living miracle. It breaks every law of biological science. Other creatures build nests, dams, all kinds of structures: only the spider and the caddis larva build traps. But it has a more fantastic and incredible way of building. It builds its own body in ways which contradict all our scientific knowledge of metabolism. It can live without food for long periods, then suddenly gorge itself. The physical fitness of a spider is something that bludgeons a materialist into gibbering insanity in all his attempts to "explain" it.

There are 40,000 known species of spiders—compared with 6,000 species of mites, only 2,000 harvest-men, and only 800 false scorpions. Yet this amazing success in its so-called "evolutionary development" has never been shared or imitated by any other animal. Flight has been achieved by other creatures, but all the spinners of silk are *Arthropoda**, and we look in vain either within or without the phylum for other examples of development leading to parallel or convergent evolution of the type.

Of all symbols available to us, in our attempt to construct a non-Euclidean geometry, there is none more appropriate than the web of a spider. Tennyson's words are peculiarly applicable:

Star to star vibrates light: may soul to soul
Strike thro' a finer element of her own?

* Invertebrate animals having jointed legs, including insects, arachnids, crustaceans, etc.

The dominating principle of all life is relationship. In man relationship assumes tremendous, sometimes horrific significance. He is a spider in the sense that each human being begins to send out filaments of relationship from the moment of birth—even as baby spiders, after being carried around by their mother, will climb to the top of a grass-stalk and release fine threads of gossamer which float away with the wind, and which, as the little creatures seize the favourable moment, carry the tiny argonauts far away from their homes in sky-reaching adventures.

But all symbolisms fail in their finer applications, and so we find every human being borne into this world constructing a relationship-web of its own which extends far beyond its limited environment (as in the spider's case)—a web which reaches out to enmesh the distant stars.

This relationship-web (with all its points, angles and curves) provides our non-Euclidean geometry. Its only possible symbol is the web of a spider, but we must conceive it as a web which is not merely unilateral, for it runs away in all directions—the word "directions" having no spatial significance, and meaning no more than "connective approaches and receptions." As the symbolism develops—the only possible one, to build an all-dimensional geometry—the human mind is quickly befogged and rendered inadequate as an instrument of comprehension.

All is One

For each human "spider," spinning its own relationship-web within the Cosmos, is in no fixed position. Relationship is the dominating factor, but it operates in motion. Complicating the symbolism, but in so doing approaching more and more closely to absolute reality, is the fact that *all the millions of webs spun by human spiders from birth to death are entangled with each other.* Filaments run from peasants to presidents, from humans to animals, to multitudinous inanimate objects, to past events and future events. Slowly, inevitably, the relationship filaments are added to, in every human being's contact with matter, from birth to what we call "death." No thought, no word, no act, of any human is isolated.

Throughout the Cosmos the filaments interlace and interlace, and the spinners of them are in ceaseless motion. The motions of the spinners are timeless and spaceless. *No human personality is "contained" within its physical body or conditioned by it when once it realises its spiritual independence.* To suggest that a man is merely an assemblage of the material of seven bars of soap, the carbon of 9,000 lead pencils, the mag-

nesium of a dose of salts, the phosphorous of 2,200 match-heads, the lime of a can of white-wash, a pinch of potassium, a cupful of sugar, the iron of a two-inch nail, and enough sulphur to cleanse a dog of fleas, mixed with ten gallons of water; and that the ingenious assemblage of such ingredients and a few others constitutes his personality (and is not merely the physical machine which he uses, repairs and finally discards) is to ignore human values, human potentialities and human history. *And if he is not contained within his body he is certainly not localised by it*, as countless facts in such fields as telepathy, extra-sensory perception and parapsychology generally combine to prove.

Man's extra-sensory powers are, of course, undeveloped. He has concentrated on his *physical* world and on the development of his *physical* senses to the detriment of his spaceless-timeless powers: those which make him most truly man. But even now, in their sleep existences and in imaginative conceptions, millions of people live timelessly and spacelessly, using a spiritual geometry which supersedes our everyday Euclidean one.

Absolute Truth

Truth is always conditioned by viewpoint. If one person only, concerned in any incident, gives his version of the truth it must necessarily be prejudiced and partial. If all persons concerned with the incident give their versions, then the consensus of viewpoints must necessarily approximate more closely to the truth. Yet materialistic scientists are content to base their assumptions, guesses and theories on *materialistic* experiences of the Cosmos, or of Cosmic phenomena. *Even as the testimonies of thousands of people who have seen UFOs are ignored by the conventional scientists, so they ignore the testimonies of millions of people in all the world religions regarding the existence of God, and their experiences in supernatural fields.*

We need Euclidean geometry while we remain imperfect, undeveloped humans. It is no fixed system: all its points, lines and angles change, merge, vanish and reappear from moment to moment. Such changes and distortions are inseparable from the system—they make it *what it is*. But there is a geometry of the spirit, based upon a fixed Viewpoint (as Euclidean geometry pretends to be, but is not). It is a geometry in which each human soul has its viewpoint—one which continually moves yet remains for ever fixed in its relation to God, Whose Eternal Viewpoint comprises, in infinite wisdom and compassion, all the points, lines, angles and curves

of His creatures' experiences.

To embrace as many human viewpoints as possible, seeking that spirit of compassion which animated the Divine Christ when He moved among men (and which still animates Him as He moves among the fear-dominated millions in all civilised countries today, healing the sick in mind and body), is to approach more closely to the All-comprehensive Viewpoint of God.

"Beware of Impatience"

Three inter-related quotations come to my mind. The first is from C. G. Smith's letter—wisely headed "Beware of Impatience"—already mentioned:

Truly all men journey together towards enlightenment each using the equipment which he is provided with. Yet men are not alone, in conflict with a mighty and hostile Universe: their goal is a harmony with all things in that Universe.

The second is from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*:

God is like a skilful Geometrician, who, when more easily and with one stroke of his Compass he might describe or divide a right line, had yet rather do this in a circle or longer way, according to the constituted and fore-laid principles of his Art.

Words which may seem meaningless or inexplicable to those of this generation who lack reverence and restraint, and who seek short cuts to knowledge and happiness, preferring the crude straight lines of the material to the gentle curves of the spiritual and eternal.

My final quotation is from Browning's *Abt Vogler*:

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the
ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not
made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who
art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart
that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What
was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence
implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil,
so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the
heaven, a perfect round.