

CONCERNING THE PROFOUND UNITY OF PARANORMAL PHENOMENA

Pierre Guérin

This is a welcome return to the pages of *FSR* by Dr. Guérin, Maître de Recherche au Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. (Principal Research Officer in the French National Centre for Scientific Research.) Translation from the French by Gordon Creighton

THOSE scientists who are deeply attached to the idea of credibility, and who have tried to prove experimentally the reality of PSI phenomena, have gradually abandoned their attempts at experimentation with mediums, miracle-workers, and other exceptional paragnostes (all too frequently accused of fraud), and now confine their experimenting to Mr. Everyman, whose paranormal aptitudes are in general far less developed and almost unknown to or disregarded by, the subject himself. (Who, on that account, has no reasons for making it a point of honour to preserve his own prestige at all costs in case of failure, and so makes no attempt to cheat.) Consequently his individual performances — generally limited to divination, and more rarely to psychokinesis (throwing dice, etc.) — usually are but little better than what one might expect from the laws of chance, so that they can only be assessed after a long series of tests by means of statistical analysis of the results obtained.

For the past forty years, so-called “serious” parapsychology has in essence been confined to this (plus the more recent experimentation with animals) without, one might add, the proffering of any clear physical model throughout all this period of time such as might account for the phenomena observed (which seem indeed in reality to imply something that goes beyond our common or garden notions of space and time, and without any opponent of the reality of those phenomena having been willing to admit himself in error).

In fact, whatever the probative value of the above-mentioned statistical results (which value, so far as I am concerned, is sufficient) those results cannot be acceptable to the impenitent scientist who swears only by the ordinary concepts of classical physics as taught at the present time. For, according to these ordinary concepts, a simple act of “telepathy” without the support of propagation by electromagnetic wave, is just as impossible as a coffee pot flying about in a haunted house, as a miracle at Lourdes, or as any action whatsoever on objects at a distance or on material phenomena solely through the agency of the “power” of the mind.¹

It is true that there has been a recent attempt,

due to the theoretical physicist O. Costa de Beauregard, and the first of its kind and foreshadowing a new revolution in physics such as might lead to a fundamental revision of our concepts of space and time and maybe serve as a basis for explanatory models for PSI phenomena. Should such be the case, parapsychology, from being purely “judicial” as it

has been up till now (the gathering of the facts, and proofs of their reality) would at last become an entire separate science, based upon confrontation between physical models and the observations. However, matters have not yet got that far, and the forward-looking views of Costa de Beauregard and his other advanced theoretical physicist colleagues do not yet constitute recognized and established scientific facts. Consequently their views are still foreign to the current preoccupations of most of the members of the scientific community, of whom very few in any case are possessed of the training in mathematics and physics that are necessary if one is to be up to the task of assimilating those views.

All the above-mentioned reasons work to bring it about that, quite contrarily to what, all too often, the non-scientists believe, parapsychology has scarcely won any advances in respectability in traditional scientific circles over the past two decades, despite the forward positions taken up by the majority of its scientific defenders in connexion with those individuals who claim to be able to achieve the most “extraordinary” paranormal feats.

It is my view therefore that nothing will be lost — even if we want to do the job seriously — by stepping out of the phony “reasonable” and “reassuring” framework in which laboratory parapsychology has tried to stay hitherto, and by studying certain features displayed by the paranormal in those of its manifestations that are alleged to be most contrary to common and everyday reason. To put it more precisely, I consider that we ought to investigate the question of whether (as seems at first sight to be the case) these alleged manifestations present themselves in the form of a disparate hotchpotch of facts or narratives devoid of any link or whether, on the contrary, these facts or these narratives turn out under analysis to present a certain number of common characteristics or *constants*, as they are called, such as would provide evidence of the profound unity of everything that is related, be it closely or be it distantly, to the paranormal.

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What then shall we classify under the paranormal, and, more particularly, under the “preposterously” paranormal? Without indulging in “black humour,” we can make a start by consulting the publications of the Union Rationaliste (Rationalist Union)* — and in particular the series of books known as *Les Cahiers Rationalistes* — with a view to drawing up a list

which, if not exhaustive, will at any rate be full of "accursed" phenomena that no rational, scientifically inclined man can pronounce to be anything but physically impossible, and consequently illusory. We will catalogue them as follows:

1. Miracles performed, during their lifetime, by the Saints — commencing with those attributed to Christ in the Gospels;²
2. Miracles associated with certain geographical sites such as Lourdes (and which are frequently attributed to the intervention of such and such a Saint, which brings us back to Category 1);
3. Paranormal physiological actions (healings by the laying on of hands, etc.) performed by laymen;
4. Paranormal physical actions (levitations, psychokinetic effects, etc.) performed by laymen;
5. The so-called phenomena of possession and of haunting;
6. Communications with the Dead;
7. Communications with the Extraterrestrials — not to mention the sheer physical miracle represented by the "flying saucer" itself, since, from the descriptions which have been given of it, it defies the laws of inertia and even seems to be able to appear and disappear on the spot!

In compiling this list, I refrain from pronouncing any personal opinion as to the reality of the phenomena named (at any rate at this stage in the discussion), and even less do I voice an opinion as to validity of the interpretations of such phenomena as are generally given by those who believe in them. I simply cite the phenomena, that is all. It now remains for us to investigate and see whether these phenomena might possibly possess common features, judging from the descriptions which have been given of them.

At first sight one might be tempted, already at the outset, to make a fundamental distinction between physical and physiological phenomena (levitations of persons, displacements of objects, healings, etc.) and the receptions of "messages" emanating from various Entities (spiritual or physical, living or dead). However such a distinction does not in fact seem to me to be justified. For, almost always, the very gifted individuals who heal, produce levitations, and act in a more general fashion by means of PSI effects on living or inert matter, are scarcely aware of possessing more paranormal gifts than the average run of people, and they say that they receive their "powers" from a more or less invisible transcendent Entity, who speaks and acts through them. Such was the case with Christ, whose powers were conferred by his Father. It is also the case with Uri Geller³, who claims that his powers do not belong to him himself, though he admits that he is incapable of saying from precisely Whom he has them (but among those around him we hear it asserted that it is from the Extraterrestrials!). And, again, such is also the case with very many healers, among whom I shall cite the famous Alalouf† (I received these details from Aimé Michel, who had already made a protracted study of the healer Alalouf). It can sometimes happen that the feeling of being "operated"

by an invisible Entity (or of serving as a mediator with It) is not experienced so clearly by the subject. Nevertheless it is a constant feature that the latter perceives that his own will plays precisely no part whatsoever in triggering off the phenomena. This is especially true of the Saints who have levitated, just as much as it is of those who have been possessed or have been agents in the phenomena of haunting.

If we now direct our attention to those persons who are given to the reception of "messages," we are able to note that, generally speaking, these individuals possess other paranormal gifts, of varying degrees of development, or are capable of acquiring such. This fact is well known in the cases of mediums, and I will add (for my own experience in the domain of Ufology permits me to assert this) that it is also generally true of those who are "contactees" of Extraterrestrials — that is to say, of individuals who claim to have approached a landed UFO, and to have received a message from the occupants of that UFO. Here again we are faced with the problem of Entities of a more or less transcendental nature (alleged Dead or alleged Extraterrestrials) who make contact with human individuals claiming paranormal gifts.

The first common feature to be noted in all these alleged phenomena is thus, so it seems to me, the determining role played in the affair by this or that Entity or Power from the Beyond or from Outer Space, and not belonging to our world, and manifesting itself to us indirectly, through the individual apparently endowed with powers.

Having arrived at this point, one will perhaps be tempted, if one is a Christian, to draw a distinction between the miraculous acts attributed to God or to His Saints, who are always orientated towards Good, and the acts of the Devil (particularly the cases of diabolical possession) which are grinning, grotesque, and mendacious. Such, at any rate, is the official doctrine of the Church on this point. I am sorry however to have to refute, or at the very least, to sweeten up this distinction very considerably. To begin with, how are we going to classify those cases which nobody, even in the Church, would dream of attributing to either God or the Devil? For example, the cases of haunting where there is no question of a need for exorcism? But these cases are in fact the majority, both in our day, and no doubt in past times too. Then again, as regards the grotesque aspect (traditionally attributed to Satan) I would be glad if someone could tell me how absurd and uncontrolled levitation on the part of a little nun, who cannot help it and is absolutely flummoxed and gets a dressing-down from her Mother Superior, is in any way exempt from being grotesque?† For a manifestation of this sort, which seems to be one of the possible consequences of the mystical state and consequently could scarcely be attributed to the Devil is — let us admit it — particularly ridiculous and has nothing specifically edifying about it...Moreover, the invariable policy of the Church has always been to refuse to give any publicity to happenings of this sort.

The real fact of the matter is that *the grotesque*

appears as an extremely widespread feature in all paranormal phenomena, and it is here that we have the second common characteristic that links all these phenomena. We find the grotesque in the levitating Saint and also in the modern-day miracle worker who, from a distance, bends spoons and keys in people's homes (why put on such a circus act as this, when there could be so many more deserving and worthy miracles were one genuinely seeking to convince...?). Again we encounter the grotesque in the "haunted house" where the coffee-pots fly around, where raps and thumps are heard, and where a young girl undergoing the crisis of puberty, completely unaware of the role she is playing (pardon me: the role that an Entity is making her play) in the triggering-off of these phenomena, will cease to cause them once she has become a woman, without there having been any need to drive out the Devil. And finally, the grotesque is to be seen in the pompous nonsense purveyed to mediums by the Dead, and to the flying saucer "contactees" by the alleged Extraterrestrials...

One would not, to be sure, want to describe a miraculous healing as *grotesque*. Nevertheless, while the healing in itself is a very beautiful thing, it must be admitted that the concomitant features in such cases involve factors likely to annoy and irritate an open-minded person who is seeking to observe and to comprehend, making use of his Reason. And this observation plunges us into the very heart of the problem of all this disparate paranormal phenomena. For here lies the third feature that they all possess in common. *They display a fundamental aversion to consenting to any direct verifications at the moment of their occurrence.* We can establish their results easily enough, sometimes we can observe them as they are being enacted, but in general we cannot reduce them to any sort of control.

In his book on cases of hauntings, Gendarmerie Commandant Tizané reports that objects take flight at the precise moment when they are not being watched, and it is just the same with the projectiles (stones, gravel) which arrive from nowhere and which fall from the ceiling in a room with all its entrances closed: we see them falling (when they have already started their downward movement), but we never see them start. This "tricky" and unco-operative nature of the phenomenon is precisely the same as we encounter with the UFOs. And it crops up again, in another form, in the individuals who are endowed with paranormal powers, *all* of whom simply detest the application of any kind of control to them. Moreover their powers quite frequently vanish when an attempt is made to verify them — this of course to the great joy of the "rationalists," who obviously use it as an argument against the reality of the said paranormal powers. We are informed by very many miracle-workers and mediums that this is in fact *intentional*. Quite recently, to quote another case, a well-known composer who has discovered that he has the gift of automatic writing, and has communicated in this fashion with a young hotel lift-operator who died a few years ago, was told the following by the lift-operator:

"These verifications that you want to make regarding my past life are untimely, we don't like them, we are opposed to them. Furthermore they are of no importance and in any case would never convince the sceptics.⁵ Be content to trust in us..."

"But you have already lied to me on such an such an occasion," replied our medium, hungry for certitudes. I have no doubt he has had to remain hungry!

Many of the "messages" left behind by the "Extraterrestrials" say more or less the same thing. Sometimes it even happens that the "contactee" states that the occupants of the UFO have forbidden him to divulge the message and that, despite all his efforts, sometimes quite moving, he is unable to transgress this order, as though he were a plaything controlled by hypnotic suggestion. Let us add moreover that a further element of confusion is also introduced by the fact that, when transmitted through different eyewitnesses, these "messages" emanating allegedly from "Extraterrestrials" generally turn out to be mutually contradictory even when they do not run counter to our best established knowledge in matters of such things as Astronomy and Ufology. Obviously all this contributes to the sowing of confusion, and acts in the same way as a refusal to permit any kind of verification.

But without question it is Jesus Christ himself to whom we are indebted for the finest illustration of this type of refusal so shocking to every scientific mind. Alluding to the cohort of poorly educated or illiterate individuals who constituted his retinue and his public, did not Jesus declare on one occasion,⁶ "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." That is to say, as we would put it in modern terminology; thanks for having hidden all these things from the learned and the proud, and for having revealed them to the humble and ignorant. Yes, indeed! For having hidden it from the learned! It couldn't have been put more plainly. And the same policy is still being pursued in our own times, in a fashion that is scarcely any different. Hasn't Uri Geller just objected to any sort of controls during his latest visit to Paris? As it so happens, certain of these controls had not been proposed by unbelieving "rationalists," but by scientists well acquainted with the reality of PSI phenomena. Let us repeat it again to ourselves once and for all time: the scientist, the proud man, these are not to probe too deeply into such matters. We have already been told as much two thousand years ago...

* * * * *

And so, it seems, the situation still remains. And we can now sum up what we have said above: namely that, beneath diverse forms, one same, single paranormal phenomenon executes incursions from time to time into this physical world which we hold to be rational, while always carefully refraining from leaving behind any absolutely indisputable direct proofs of its reality. Consequently we are unable to form any judgement as to its reality except through

an individual study of the best eyewitness accounts and a careful comparison of them (so long as they are independent of one another and not influenced the one by another). Such a comparison brings to light these concordances and similarities which I have set forth above, and is an argument in favour of the reality, and, above all, of the single and undivided nature of the phenomenon, but still without telling us what it is, nor Who it is, that manipulates us through it.

God, the Devil, the Dead, the Extraterrestrials, etc., etc., all these are but the successive names given by the Entities – or the Entity – responsible for the phenomenon.

Unless of course it be we ourselves who have given these names...For why might we not equally well evoke the manifestation of some "Collective Unconscious" endowed in these circumstances with powers over matter? Or again it might be something entirely different, something that we are incapable even of imagining in the present state of our scientific and philosophical preoccupations. In my view we are not at present capable of furnishing an answer...My own personal inclination would be in favour of an intervention into the affairs of men from outside, but in support of such a thesis I can only furnish presumptive evidence, and not proofs.

Such a conclusion may appear to be depressing. However I do not think it is entirely negative, for we are less taken in by the lie, with its thousand facets, and by its mocking sneers, when we refuse to fall for it (a course likely to deepen our stupidity by inducing in us belief in a whole series of successive and contradictory "revelations") and when we leave behind us the data-collecting stage and enter the stage of comparative study and synthesis, and indeed even of physical interpretations if our science succeeds in overcoming the obstacles on its path.

February 1, 1975.

Accompanying letter, to the Editor of FSR, with comments, from Aimé Michel

"Dr. Guérin gave me the enclosed text of a paper which he delivered on February 1, 1975, at a Symposium on Parapsychology held in Paris. He asked me to correct it where necessary and to send it to you for publication in FSR should you so desire.

"Personally, I find the paper thoroughly well thought out, and most interesting. It is an original insight which Guérin has given us into those aspects that Ufology and Parapsychology have in common, and it is an introduction into a new world of thought that is already beginning to be familiar to us all."

A.M.

Notes

1. The dialectic employed by the scientists consists generally in making sweeping statements to the effect that paranormal manifestations are ascribable to the credulity of the observers or of these experimenters, and even to dishonesty too on their part. This belief by the scientists is in fact dictated by the deep inward conviction that these things are physically "impossible," which a few of the "rationalists" are honest enough to admit.

2. The historical reality of Christ is rejected by certain of the "rationalists," but not by all of them. For that reality is, fundamentally speaking, only "embarrassing" for them so far as its paranormal context is concerned. In other words, suppress the miracles described in the Gospels – as Renan did – and then Christ becomes "plausible"...
3. I am not pronouncing an opinion here in favour of the reality of all Geller's alleged powers, but only of those (ESP) which were tested at Stanford University.
4. Whether Geller does or does not possess real psychokinetic powers, it remains a fact that an epidemic of twisted spoons is raging in all the countries that he visits and it seems that in one case at least – in Germany – the good faith of the victims who claim to have been provided in this fashion with unusable spoons and forks has been verified as the result of an investigation conducted by the Police.
5. And, what is worse, it is true!
6. *Matthew Ch. 11, v. 25.* – Translation of the Jerusalem Bible. (For my English rendering I have used the Authorized King James Version. G.C.)

Notes inserted in the Guérin article by Aimé Michel

- * The *Union Rationaliste* is a sort of French club whose members reject and refute everything that is "contrary to Reason." Their definition of "Reason" is in reality "good common sense," and they reject everything that is paranormal.
- † Alalouf is a French faith healer of Greek origin, very celebrated in France.
- + Like Santa Teresa de Avila, Marie Madeleine de Pazzi, etc. (Cf. my book *Le Mysticisme, L'Homme Interieur et L'Ineffable*, published by Editions Culture-Art-Loisirs, 114, Champs-Élysées, 75391 Paris.)

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