

# PROCEEDINGS

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### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

HAUNTING AND THE "PSYCHIC ETHER" HYPOTHESIS ;  
WITH SOME PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS ON THE  
PRESENT CONDITION AND POSSIBLE FUTURE OF  
PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

BY

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WHEN you did me the very great honour of inviting me to be your President, I am afraid I did not reflect sufficiently upon the obligations of the office. The long series of exceedingly distinguished men who have held this position before me have set a standard to which I cannot hope to attain. Moreover, though I have had the good fortune to be a member of the Society for several years, I must confess that my knowledge of Psychical Research has been derived almost entirely from reading, and hardly at all from personal investigation. Nor has my reading been very extensive. As a professional philosopher, I am naturally interested in a subject which seems likely to throw entirely new light upon the nature of human personality and its position in the Universe. (Indeed I believe it may do more: I believe that in time it may transform the whole intellectual outlook upon which our present civilisation is based.) But I cannot claim any wide or detailed knowledge of the results hitherto achieved. So if I venture to make some suggestions which have a bearing upon the future development of the subject, you must understand that I speak as an onlooker—an outsider if you like—and you must forgive the combination of ignorance and temerity which I shall probably display.

It seems to me that there are two main obstacles which are at present holding up the progress of our enquiry. They are quite different, and it may seem at first sight that there can be no connection between them. But if I am right, there *is* after all some connection, and the removal of the one will help to remove the other as well.

The first obstacle is this. We do not yet know of any method by which supernormal phenomena can be produced and repeated at will by anyone who is prepared to take the requisite trouble. We are still too much dependent upon the occurrence of "spontaneous cases". There was of course a time when we were almost wholly dependent on them. It was as if one could only study electrical phenomena by waiting for an occasional thunderstorm. Indeed it was worse. For the phenomena (for example telepathic phantasms) were very seldom, if ever, observed directly by the investigator himself. They were reported to him by other people, and it was necessary to establish the honesty and the accuracy of the reports. With regard to a great many supernormal phenomena—and those perhaps the most interesting ones—we are still precisely in that position. It is true that we *have* developed experimental methods for investigating Telepathy and Clairvoyance, and we know how to analyse the results by means of an elaborate statistical technique. The devising of these methods was a most important step forward. Nevertheless, they do not give us all we want. Broadly speaking, they enable us to detect the presence of "extra-sensory" powers in any given person, and to measure the degree in which they are present. But if our study is to become an experimental science in the full sense of that phrase, we must be able to *produce* the phenomena whenever we like; or if you prefer, we must be able to *ensure* that they will happen. It is not enough to be able to detect and measure them when they do happen. We must be able to arrange artificially a set of conditions, given which a specified sort of phenomenon (*e.g.* the clairvoyant reading of a sealed letter) is reasonably certain to occur. We can then proceed to vary these conditions one by one, and to introduce new ones, and notice the results. Moreover we must be able to *describe* these conditions fully and unambiguously; so that any other investigator, no matter who, can repeat the process whenever he likes and verify our results.

It would be still better if the investigator could produce in himself (not merely in the other persons whom he studies) the phenomena which he desires to investigate. We need to know from within, by personal and first-hand experience, what it is like to see an

apparition in a haunted house, or to have a clairvoyant vision of an event happening at a distance. If every trained psychologist—dare I add, every trained philosopher?—could have these experiences himself, whenever he liked, under known and repeatable conditions, we might be able to find out what sort of “seeing” or “vision” it is, and how much or how little analogy it has to the normal experiences which go under these names. At present we have to depend upon the testimony of persons who are no doubt honest and intelligent, but do not know what to look for, or how to describe it. Thus we have had to invent a number of technical terms—such as “Telepathy” and “Clairvoyance”—without any really clear notion of the meaning we intend to attach to them.

This ideal which I have sketched, the ideal of a genuinely experimental science, based upon a direct and first-hand experience of the phenomena, may well appear utterly unattainable. Certainly we are a very long way from it at present. But I do not think we should despair of achieving it, and I should like to suggest one or two lines of thought which may help us to find the way.

In the first place, we might appeal to the Physiologists and Biochemists. It is not at all inconceivable that some drug may be discovered which will give us what we want; it is well known that certain drugs, for example mescal, have the power of inducing sensory hallucinations. Indeed, the required drug may already have been discovered or artificially produced. If it has been, the fact might easily have escaped our notice. In the present state of extreme scientific specialisation, its discoverer would probably not even ask himself whether it might be useful to Psychical Researchers. (We must remember too that even to-day our subject is viewed with very considerable suspicion in scientific circles.) We have some reason to think that supernormal powers manifest themselves more easily when the normal functioning of the sense-organs is inhibited in some degree; and I should imagine—though of course I speak in complete ignorance—that quite a number of chemical agencies might have such an inhibiting effect.

Perhaps this suggestion has already been followed up, with no positive result. If so, I apologise for making it, and I will now make another which is on somewhat similar lines. Is it not possible that prolonged *fasting* may lead to, or at least facilitate, the manifestation of supernormal cognitive powers? I suppose that the effects of fasting have been carefully studied by physiologists; but have they ever been studied with this question in mind? It is surely significant that a number of religious traditions, Christian and non-Christian, lay great stress on the importance of fasting, and hint

very strongly that there is a close connection between fasting and "visions" of one sort or another. I need only refer you to the biographies of the Christian hermits and ascetics who flourished in fourth-century Egypt. Can we suppose that a practice which is so utterly repugnant to ordinary human nature would have been adopted so widely, and persisted in for so long, if it had not led to some pretty striking experiences? You may say that the experiences were "spiritual" rather than "psychic". But I think that the stories which have come down to us, for instance in the legend of St. Antony, suggest the contrary. When all necessary allowance has been made for hagiographical and theological enthusiasm, I think there is a residuum left which deserves our serious consideration. The Reformation did many disservices to mankind. Perhaps one of the greatest was this, that it made fasting unfashionable—not to say socially impossible—among the more scientifically minded peoples of Europe. Before leaving the subject I might mention the reports that members of the Everest expedition and other similar expeditions experienced occasional hallucinations. This might have been due to semi-starvation; but of course it might also have been due to reduced atmospheric pressure, and perhaps that is another possibility which is worth investigating. (The *physiological* effects of reduced atmosphere pressure have of course been pretty thoroughly studied already.)

Thirdly—though I am afraid this suggestion will shock some of you—I do not think that we should be too proud to take any hints we can get from the mystical and occult traditions of the Far East, particularly of India. I am not suggesting for a moment that we should accept their conclusions—unless and until we succeed in verifying them for ourselves. What I have in mind is their *methods*, the assemblage of physiological and psychological exercises which are roughly included under the name "Yoga", and the corresponding ones which are practised in China and Tibet.<sup>1</sup> Though some of these methods aim at inducing religious experiences of a mystical kind, there are others which profess to develop the "psychic powers" of the subject, including the powers of Telepathy and Clairvoyance; for it is assumed (not altogether unreasonably, I think) that these

<sup>1</sup> I think it is very much to be desired that a party of qualified Psychological Researchers should visit Tibet; for in that country the traditions which I have in mind remain in full force, almost untouched by Western influences. I know that the difficulties—financial, linguistic, and even political—would be enormous. But mountain-climbers and naturalists can manage to overcome them. New light on the human mind is far more worth having than a Giant Panda.

powers are present in every normal human being, though in a latent state. These methods may appear to us peculiar, or even repellent. Nevertheless, it is claimed that their effectiveness can be empirically verified by anyone who is prepared to take the requisite trouble. And I think that this is a claim which ought to be seriously investigated.

Before I leave this part of my subject, there is one other suggestion I have to make. It may appear naïve to the point of childishness. One has the impression—I do not know how far statistics support it—that supernormal experiences are relatively uncommon among highly educated persons. (There are of course striking exceptions : for instance Swedenborg and perhaps Socrates. But I think they are not numerous.) There is some reason for supposing that these experiences were more frequent in earlier and less civilised ages ; and that at this day they are more common among the less advanced peoples of the world than they are among ourselves. There is also some evidence that experiences of this sort are more likely to occur when intellectual processes are somewhat in abeyance : as in states of fatigue or illness or at the point of death. The appearances, then, do at least suggest that supernormal cognitive powers tend to be feeble or non-existent where the power of abstract thinking is great. Now there is a possible explanation for this, which it may be instructive to consider. The more abstract our thinking is, the more it has to be carried on by means of *words* ; or by means of other conventional symbols, for instance algebraic ones, which for our present purposes may be taken as a sort of words. But it is also possible to think by means of *images*. For highly abstract topics images are useless, but they serve well enough for relatively concrete ones ; and it is possible, and it may be relevant, that they are more closely connected with the emotional side of our nature.

Now almost the whole of our present higher education, in so far as it does not consist in imparting information, is designed to increase our capacity of *verbal* thinking (including under that head the manipulation of mathematical symbols.) And this is perfectly natural. For speaking broadly, this education has two main aims. If it is of the scientific sort, its aim is to produce scientists and scientific technicians. If it is of the humanistic sort, its aim is to produce administrators in a wide sense of the word. These are the two most important classes of persons in our present civilisation ; the scientists and technicians on the one hand, the administrators on the other. And it is obvious at a glance that neither of them could carry on their work for more than a few minutes by means of image-thinking alone. Thanks to the very advanced state of our scientific technique, and the unparalleled complexity of our social

organisation, we probably live in the most *word-ridden* age that the world has ever seen. Image-thinking, on the other hand, is systematically repressed in youth by our whole system of higher education, and by the whole weight of the "educated attitude" of those among whom the adult subsequently lives and moves. Not that it is eradicated altogether; it turns up again in moments of fatigue or disease or relaxed attention, in dreams, in the hypnagogic and hypnopompic experiences which are intermediate between sleeping and waking. It has only been more or less completely inhibited in the sane, waking, normal life of highly educated persons.

Now I want to suggest that this exclusive cultivation of verbal thinking may be adverse to the development of supernormal cognitive powers; that such powers manifest themselves more readily in persons whose thought is mainly conducted in images (persons of the "intuitive" rather than the "abstract" type<sup>1</sup>); and that this is the reason why such powers are relatively more common among uneducated persons, children, and primitive races; and moreover that it is the reason why they tend to emerge more easily in sleep and in states of relaxed attention or mild dissociation.

If I am right in this suggestion (which I admit is something of a shot in the dark) an important practical consequence follows. Investigators of supernormal phenomena ought to make a deliberate effort to cultivate their own powers of image-thinking. In this way they should increase their chances of obtaining first-hand supernormal experiences in their own persons. And of course they should encourage other people to do the same. But indeed the word "cultivate" perhaps gives a false and unduly disheartening impression. I think it is not really a case of *increasing* a power which one has in a feeble degree: but rather of attaining or recovering *conscious control* of a power which is already functioning abundantly. For it is plausible to suggest that image-thinking is going on in all of us all the time, but that in highly-educated persons it has got dissociated from the main stream of their daylight waking consciousness. (Cf. the suggestion that we are dreaming all day long as well as at night, but only notice it when we are asleep.) In fact, the intellectual and abstract-thinking man is something of a split personality, a little mad if you like: a conclusion which need not surprise us! As some philosopher has said, "nous vivons sur la

<sup>1</sup> The word "intuitive" is one which the professional philosopher dislikes, owing to the many different meanings which it has borne in the course of the history of Philosophy. But I think that in ordinary life and conversation it is sometimes applied to the image-thinking as opposed to the abstract-thinking type of person.

surface de notre être". The thing for us to do, then, is to re-associate our image-thinking with the main stream of our waking consciousness: to break down a barrier which cuts off a fully active faculty from our view, rather than to revive by toilsome exercise one which has become atrophied through long disuse. Not that even this removal of barriers is an easy task; but experience shows, I think, that it is a practicable one. And perhaps the other measures which I suggested may assist us in it. Perhaps that is the point of them, if they do have the efficacy which I tentatively attributed to them. We all know that the emergence of images into consciousness is facilitated by certain *physiological* states, such as fatigue. Perhaps the drug we are looking for is one which will induce the required physiological condition artificially; possibly abstinence from food may also favour the free emergence of images, and the breathing exercises and bodily postures of the Yogis may do the same. Perhaps this is also the point of the auto-hypnosis which occurs in crystal-gazing and similar practices. Its immediate effect may be to facilitate the emergence of images, and thus indirectly set free the subject's clairvoyant powers. I have of course been assuming throughout—and it is an old and a reasonable assumption—that supernormal cognitive powers are in fact possessed by everyone and even that they are active in everyone to some extent. I have been assuming, following F. W. H. Myers, that the difference between "sensitives" and the rest of us is just a difference in the normal position of the threshold of consciousness. If this is indeed the difference, it should not be beyond the wit of man to remove it by one means or another. That is the point of all the suggestions I have been making. If I am right, the obstacles are specially great in the case of highly-educated persons. But I see no reason why we should despair of overcoming them even there. And if once they were overcome, the way would be open for an enormous advance in the investigation of supernormal phenomena.

One more remark before I leave this part of my subject. It may well be that the supernormal powers function on some "deeper" level than the level of image-thinking. But even so, images might be their *proximate* manifestation; whereas their manifestation at the level of verbal thinking might be far less direct, and inhibited by all sorts of additional counter-forces. We may compare the fact that dreams (which are a kind of image-thinking) seem to be the proximate manifestation of our unconscious wishes; and that these wishes "get through" into ordinary waking life only occasionally and as it were furtively, in slips of the tongue, apparently accidental actions and the like.

So much then for the first main obstacle which obstructs the progress of Psychical Research at the present time: the lack of any reasonably certain method by which the phenomena may be obtained at will, and repeated, by anyone who takes the necessary trouble. I turn now to the other main obstacle which confronts us. It is equally serious, and even more obvious—indeed it is perfectly familiar to us all. Dare I suggest that it may become even too familiar? that one is in some danger (I speak for myself) of getting used to it and acquiescing in it, as in something permanent and inevitable?

The obstacle I refer to is this. We need, and have not got, a *comprehensive hypothesis* which will bind together all our phenomena, or as many of them as possible, in one unified intellectual scheme. We have now collected a very large mass of well-attested facts. Most people who have examined the evidence are now agreed that the occurrence of Telepathy, Clairvoyance and Haunting is pretty firmly established. We can say the same of the *cognitive* phenomena of Mediumship. I do not think we can say it of the *physical* phenomena at present; though here we must remember that in Poltergeist phenomena, the evidence for which is quite good and fairly abundant, we find something which is anyhow analogous to the alleged performances of "physical" or "telekinetic" mediums. Further, it seems to me that the evidence for Precognition is also fairly good. But here there is a special difficulty. Some investigators seem to think that Precognition is *logically impossible*, that the word stands for a self-contradictory concept. I do not myself take that view. But if they are right, of course no amount of evidence could establish the occurrence of Precognition, just as no amount of evidence could establish the existence of a square table which is also circular. Lastly, with regard to the "great question" of Survival we know that there are great differences of opinion among those who are best qualified to speak. But I think most of us will agree with Professor Broad that the phenomena which have been established greatly lessen the *antecedent improbability* of Survival, by showing that the embodied human mind has cognitive powers which to all appearances do not depend upon processes in its sense-organs and central nervous system. And I think most of us will also agree that such evidence as the Willett scripts provide at any rate confronts us with this dilemma: either discarnate minds exist and can communicate with the living, or else some incarnate human minds possess telepathic and clairvoyant faculties of a staggeringly extensive kind.

So much for the reasonably well-established facts. But as to the explanation of them, we remain almost as much in the dark as the



pioneers of our enquiry fifty years ago. We can see, as they did, that all these phenomena have their seat in the "subliminal" stratum of our personalities. But we can see very little more. We can form no conception, or hardly any, of the *modus operandi* of Telepathy and Clairvoyance. We have good reason to think that Mediumship has some very close connection with the phenomena of dissociated and alternating personality discussed by psychologists and psycho-therapists; but we cannot go much farther than that. Again, if discarnate minds exist, we cannot conceive what manner of existence they enjoy, without physical sense-organs, or physical organs of action such as incarnate minds possess. For the whole of mental life as we know it here is based upon two sorts of experience: the experience of sense-perception on the one hand, the experience of action on the other. And how could either of these occur in the absence of a body and a nervous system? I hazard the suggestion indeed that the real difficulty about the Survivalist Theory at present is not so much the lack of evidence—there is quite a lot of evidence which favours it—but rather the apparent unintelligibility of the theory itself. What I said about Precognition just now applies to Survival too. If the very notion of an unembodied mental life is self-contradictory (and some persons of the highest intelligence have thought so), then no amount of evidence, however great, will do anything whatever to support the Survivalist hypothesis; for it will not really be a hypothesis at all, but just a meaningless combination of words, which cannot even be called false. I do not myself believe that the notion of an unembodied mental life is self-contradictory, but I do think it is an extremely puzzling and difficult one.

If I may venture to speak as a professional philosopher for a moment, and offer as it were professional advice, I would suggest that those who incline to the Survivalist hypothesis should spend less of their time collecting evidence for it, and should rather turn their attention for the present to the clarification of the hypothesis itself. If they can succeed in shewing that it is an intelligible and self-consistent hypothesis, in short, that it is a hypothesis and not a meaningless combination of words (and I am inclined to think that they could), they could then return to the task of collecting evidence for it with the assurance that their labour would not be wasted.

I have now offered a very brief survey of the present condition of our subject (so far as an onlooker may); and I am afraid that in spite of all the excellent work which has been done, it is still a scene of twilight and confusion, so far as the *understanding* of the phenomena is concerned. Our situation is rather like that of Physics and

Chemistry in the sixteenth century, before it had yet occurred to people that the large-scale properties of bodies could be explained by the motions and configurations of their minute parts : or rather, before that suggestion had been taken seriously, and while it was as yet a mere metaphysical speculation, put forward by one or two singular men two thousand years before. Until this obstacle has been overcome, it is obvious that our subject cannot become a science in the full sense of that word. And it is also obvious that this obstacle *is*, after all, closely connected with the other one which we discussed previously. Until one has a fairly comprehensive theory, however inadequate, one cannot use the experimental method with much profit. For that method, as Kant said, is eventually a way of forcing Nature to answer our questions, and before we can employ it, we must have a reasonably clear idea of the questions which we wish to ask.

In this situation, I think that our only safety lies in boldness. In the collection of facts, one cannot be over-cautious. But in the invention of theories, especially in a field so peculiar as ours, where analogies drawn from the existing sciences are almost useless, a canny and sober circumspection would be the greatest mistake. If people accuse us of being speculative and even "metaphysical" we must refuse to be frightened. We must postulate unverifiable entities and processes if we cannot get on without them. The task of philosophical *deflation*, of removing unnecessary metaphysical entities, comes at the end of a science's progress, not at the beginning ; if such writers as Hume and Mach and the modern Logical Positivists had lived in the early seventeenth century, Physics would never have got itself started. In short, we must not be deterred by the fear of talking nonsense. If this maxim applies to the early stages of any science whatever, it applies with a quite special force to Psychological Research. The phenomena with which we are concerned are so peculiar, and so unlike those visible and tangible facts which ordinary language is designed to deal with, that the right theory of them is *bound* to seem nonsense when first propounded. If we are still frightened, we may take comfort from the history of Psychology in the last thirty years. The statements "Smith is two different people at the same time" or "Smith is one person on Thursday and another on Friday" are on the face of them sheer nonsense ; they contradict our ordinary rules for the use of the word "person". Yet nobody (except a few very old-fashioned philosophers) would now object to the conceptions of Dual and Alternating Personality, or deny that they have thrown great light on some of the most obscure phenomena of the human mind.

Moreover, in our search for a comprehensive hypothesis we must

not mind taking hints from quarters which are accounted scientifically disreputable. I am thinking again of the occult and mystical traditions of the Far East. It is well to remember that in India and the Buddhist countries men not necessarily inferior to Europeans in intelligence have been devoting themselves for very many centuries to the deepening and extension of human consciousness. In fact, in a rather unscientific way they have been practising a kind of Psychical Research for well over two thousand years. The theories which they have been led to frame may have got mixed up with all sorts of dubious theological and cosmological dogmas. Nevertheless they may give us some help in framing a more adequate and genuinely scientific theory for ourselves. We cannot afford to despise any useful suggestion, from whatever quarter it may come. I even think that the humble savage may have something to teach us. It is greatly to be wished that more Anthropologists should be trained in Psychical Research, and more Psychical Researchers in Anthropology. Even the most cursory reading of Anthropological literature is sufficient to shew that Anthropologists have collected a whole mass of material which falls within our province, though their scientific orthodoxy has usually led them to assume that it *must* somehow be explained away as fraud and delusion.

But it is time for me to leave these general considerations and try to practise what I preach. There is one fairly comprehensive hypothesis which has commended itself in various forms to a number of enquirers, and I shall devote the rest of this paper to the discussion of it. If it is tenable it enables us to connect together quite a wide range of supernormal phenomena. This is the hypothesis of a something intermediate between mind and matter as we ordinarily understand them: something which is in *some* sense material because it is extended in space (though not necessarily in Physical Space) and yet has some of the properties commonly attributed to minds. This something was called by Frederic Myers "the Metetherial". More recently Mr. C. A. Mace, in a very interesting address to this Society, has spoken of a "Psychic Ether". In the mystical literature of the Far East we meet the same thing under the name of *Akasa*, which again is usually translated "ether". Here I may mention a noteworthy point about these same Eastern traditions. In the *Sankhya* philosophy,<sup>1</sup> one of the six classical

<sup>1</sup> The word *Sankhya* appears to mean something like "enumeration". Cf. the dictum—I think it is the late Professor Alexander's—that the task of philosophy is "to make an inventory of all the main types of entity in the Universe".

Indian systems, we find a very sharp dualism between *Purusha* (self or knowing subject) on the one side, and *Prakriti* (usually translated "matter") on the other. At first sight this reminds us of the equally sharp dualism of Descartes between mind and matter. But on further examination we are astonished to find that the line is not drawn at all where Descartes drew it. Very much of what we are accustomed to call "mind" is in the Sankhya system regarded as material. Indeed *everything* that we call mental, except only pure awareness, falls on the material side; of course it has then to be added that there are other forms of matter besides those revealed to our ordinary senses. This idea, or something not unlike it, has not been wholly unknown in our own philosophical tradition. Some Western philosophers have rejected the familiar two-fold division of matter and mind, and have preferred the threefold division of matter, soul and spirit. Here "spirit" corresponds to the *Purusha* of the Sankhya system, while "matter" and "soul" together would correspond to *Prakriti*. At any rate in both cases we have something intermediate between spirit and ordinary visible or tangible matter; and whether we reserve the special name "soul" ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) for this something, or say that it is a "higher" sort of matter, does not make so very much difference.

However this may be, let us assume for the moment that there *is* such an intermediate something and let us follow Mr. Mace in calling it the "Psychic Ether". In the remainder of this paper I shall first try to make this elusive conception a little more definite; and I shall then try to show how it might be used for the explanation of certain supernormal phenomena, notably the phenomena of Haunting.

I want to start by returning to a topic which I have already touched on in quite a different connection, the topic of *mental images*. Philosophers and Psychologists have always supposed that mental images are "subjective": that is, that any given image is wholly dependent for its existence upon the mind, and perhaps also upon the brain, of the person who is aware of it, and moreover that it is private to that person. They have also usually supposed, though not quite always, that images are *evanescent* entities, which have no existence (not even a mind-dependent existence) either before or after the date at which we are aware of them; so that I cannot be aware of the same image to-day as I was aware of yesterday—an assumption which of course does not necessarily follow from the previous assumption of privacy and mind-dependence. Now what is the evidence for these two assumptions? I do not think

there is any conclusive evidence for either of them. The mere fact that images are commonly called "mental" is no evidence. The reason why we call them so is merely the fact that they are not apprehended by means of the ordinary physical sense-organs, such as the eye and the ear. They might well be mental in *this* sense without being on that account mind-dependent, or private, or evanescent. Perhaps it will be said that they are obviously "in" the mind which is aware of them. But this sort of argument, so familiar in the History of Philosophy, will now deceive nobody. It is either repeating in different words the very thing which has to be established—"in" may be just a *synonym* for "dependent on". Or else it is only saying that they are entities which we are directly and immediately aware of. Certainly we are, but nothing follows from this about their *nature*. Something which is "in" the mind in this latter sense might perfectly well also exist "out of" it.

I think then that we are entitled to deny these assumptions if we like. Let us make the experiment of doing so. We will indeed concede that every image is *originated* by a mental act—not necessarily a conscious one—and that this act has its physiological correlate. But we will suppose that, once it has come into being, the image has a tendency to *persist* in being; and that it is not dependent upon the mind for its continuance, as it was for its origination. The mind which originated it might be aware of it from time to time thereafter; it might be "summoned up into consciousness" occasionally, or pop up of its own accord. But conceivably its whole career from start to finish might be passed in the Unconscious. We will also suppose that it is not necessarily *private* to the mind of its original author, but is capable of presenting itself in suitable circumstances to other minds as well.

How should the persistence of an image be conceived? I should suppose that it is more analogous to the persistence of a *process* (e.g. a prolonged noise) than to the persistence of a *thing*, such as a brickbat. But I think this is a question of purely philosophical interest, which need not concern us here. For our purpose no great harm will be done if we speak of a persisting image as a kind of *thing*, even though this is not strictly accurate.

I wish now to take a further step. Let us suppose that images are not only persistent entities, but are endowed with *causal properties*. If you prefer to put it so, we will say that they are "dynamic" rather than "static" entities, endowed with a kind of "force" of their own. I am not referring only to what Psychologists call Ideo-motor Action, though that is part of what I mean; nor even

to what is called Association of Ideas,<sup>1</sup> though that again is part of what I mean. I am thinking primarily of Telepathy. I know this sounds absurd. Telepathy is commonly regarded as a relation between two minds or personalities. But is it not possible that the relation between the two *minds* is derivative, and that the primary and fundamental relation is one between two *mental contents*? Perhaps the primary fact is that one mental content is capable of modifying or even of generating another; and when the two contents happen to be contents of two different minds, we call the result Telepathy. Now images are one important sort of mental contents. Let us suppose then that every image is endowed with a kind of *telepathic charge*, enabling it to modify or even perhaps to generate other mental contents, which need not necessarily be contents in the mind of its original author. This charge might vary in all sorts of ways as between one image and another. It might also tend to decrease with lapse of time, and we might suppose that when it finally vanishes, the image itself ceases to exist. Thus some images might persist in being, and retain their causal properties, for a very long time; while others might fade away quite quickly, and some perhaps would hardly outlast the act by which they were first originated.

Now if it is legitimate to think of images in this way—as persistent and dynamic entities independent of the mind of their original author, and able to escape as it were from his control—we might be able to form some more definite notion of the Psychic Ether. It might be an *ether of images*. If it were, I think it would have the kind of properties which we require it to have. For an ether of images would be something intermediate between mind and matter as we *ordinarily* conceive of them; while if we were prepared to stretch these conceptions a good deal, then we could either call it mental or call it material, as we liked. I will now try to explain this.

We are all familiar with the hypothesis of a Collective or Common Unconscious. The suggestion is that although our conscious personalities are isolated, yet in the deeper levels of the Unconscious the distinction between *I* and *you* no longer exists. What does this suggestion really come to? No doubt we picture the Common Unconscious as a kind of continent, out of which our conscious personalities arise like isolated mountain peaks. But this is after all only a picture, useful as it may be. The unity of the Common

<sup>1</sup> Is it possible that Association by Resemblance might occur without unity of consciousness, so that an "idea" in my mind could be associatively linked, by resemblance, with an "idea" in yours? Or is this suggestion *too* nonsensical?

Unconscious cannot really be very like the spatial continuity of a continent. I think that the hypothesis of a Common Unconscious is to be regarded as a *causal* hypothesis. Suppose that a content in my unconscious could directly affect a content in yours, and *vice versa*, without any physical intermediary: for example, suppose that a suppressed wish in me could directly cause a dream in you, and conversely. Suppose that this happened with *every* content of my unconscious and every content of yours. If this were so, what sense would there be in speaking of the one unconscious as "yours" and the others as "mine"? Clearly there would be none. For the unity of *any* unconscious can only be defined in causal terms. It is a unity of law, or of interaction, since it cannot be a unity of space. Thus the hypothesis of a Common Unconscious is only another way of saying that at their deeper levels all personalities are in complete and continuous telepathic rapport. It is not an *explanation* of such rapport, as it is sometimes thought to be, but only another way of describing it. (There are further complications in this hypothesis, which I will mention but not discuss. This telepathic rapport might have different degrees of extensiveness, and perhaps different degrees of intensiveness as well. It might be that each person's unconscious interacted with everyone else's; or only with some other people's. Again, as between Smith and Mrs. Smith it might be complete—every content of the one might affect every content of the other all the time—whereas between Smith and Robinson it might be incomplete and intermittent. Further, it might be either unilateral or reciprocal. A's mind might affect B's, whereas B's mind did not affect A's, or not so much; or both might affect each other equally. When we take account of all these possibilities, we see that the structure of the Common Unconscious might be exceedingly complicated. Considered as a whole, it might have a very weak and washy sort of unity, whereas there might be a number of very strong and intimate unities within it. We could not then ask "Are personality A and personality B united or separate?" We should have to ask instead "How *much* of a unity is there between them?")

Now I can return to the Ether of Images. When I suggested that images might be dynamic entities as well as persistent ones, and that each was endowed with a telepathic charge, this was only a special and limited form of the hypothesis of a Common Unconscious: limited, because images are only one sort of mental contents. The Ether of Images could equally well be described as a certain level or range (perhaps rather a superficial one) within the Common Unconscious: that level or range of it at which images persist and interact

with each other more or less freely, no matter whose mind they began their career in. For the laws of their interaction, and the causal properties manifested in it, are *psychological* laws and properties, though they considerably transcend the perview of Orthodox Psychology, since Telepathy is included among them. I hope I have shewn, then, that the Ether of Images has mental properties; we could even say, with a certain stretching of language, that it actually is a certain level within a common unconscious *mind*.

It remains to shew that the Ether of Images has material properties as well; naturally they will not be the same properties as we ascribe to ordinary matter, but they might be somewhat like them. Here the fundamental point is that images are *spatial* entities. But they are spatial in a curious half-way-house kind of fashion, which disconcerts us at first because we seldom reflect on them (our ordinary tendency is to think by means of them rather than about them). I will consider visual images mainly, but what I have to say applies to tactual and kinæsthetic images too, and perhaps to the other sorts. An image, then, has *extension*; it has a shape, sometimes even a stereoscopic shape. But it does not necessarily have *location*. Of course the parts of a given image A are located in relation to other parts of that same image. One part is above another or to the left of another. This follows from the fact that A is an extended entity. Again the image A may happen to form part of an image-field (the image of a cat may form part of the image of a drawing-room): and in that case we can say that A is located in relation to the other members of the same image-field. But we cannot say that the image-field *as a whole* is located anywhere. It is spatial, in that it is extended and has spatial relations within it, but it forms as it were a spatial world of its own. Likewise if A is an isolated image, as it may be, we cannot say that A as a whole is anywhere, though we can say where every part is in relation to other parts. (We may either regard the isolated image as a particularly simple image-field; or we may regard the image-field as a particularly complex single image.) I think that similar considerations apply to size as well. If I have an image of a cat on a hearthrug, I can say that the hearthrug-like part of the image is *larger than* the cat-like part, and within the cat-like part the tail is *longer than* the left-hand ear. But I do not think it is even intelligible to ask how large the image as a whole is: (for example, is it larger or smaller than someone else's image of Mont Blanc?). What I have said about location obviously applies to motion too, and what I have said about size applies to changes of size. An image can move within its own image-field, and can change its size in relation



to other images in the same field. But it cannot intelligibly be said to move from one image-field to another, nor to have grown larger or smaller on the way. Or if we obstinately insist on saying that all image-fields *must* be "somewhere", *i.e.* that there is a single space within which all images whatever are located, then we shall have to say that an image can move from one place to another without passing through the intermediate places. But I think it is better to say, as I have, that different image-fields are not interrelated spatially at all, though each in itself is spatial; and that the unifying factor which unites them all into one single Ether of Images is not spatial but causal.

If this still does not satisfy you, I will make a further suggestion. Although there is nothing in the image-world which resembles the relation of distance in the physical world—since one image-field is neither near to nor far from another—yet there might be something which has a faint analogy to it. It might be that in the Ether of Images there are greater or lesser degrees of *telepathic affinity* as between one image and another; and there might be some degree of telepathic affinity, however slight, between every image and every other. And if such relations of affinity should happen to constitute an order having dimensions, we might then be able to say that there *is* an all-embracing image-space after all. But if so, it will be a different *kind* of space from the one which we find within any one image or any one image-field. It need not have three dimensions. And even if it had, there would be no detailed correspondence between it and the space of the Physical World. A's body and B's body might be very close to each other in Physical Space, and yet A's images and B's images might be very distant from each other in the image-world. For there might be very little telepathic affinity between A's images and B's, despite the relation of physical proximity between their respective bodies; conversely, there might be the most intimate telepathic rapport between A and B, though their bodies were a thousand miles apart.

I have now tried to show that an Ether of Images would have both mental and material properties. It is either a queer sort of mental world or a queer sort of material world, as we like, though neither the word "mental" nor the word "material" can be applied to it without a certain misfit and discomfort. Indeed all this talk of an Ether of Images, or of a Psychic Ether at all, may well seem like sheer nonsense when considered in cold blood. But as we saw earlier, this is only to be expected. Any theory of these difficult matters is bound to give our ordinary language-habits a pretty violent tweak. If it does not, we can be sure that there is something wrong with it.

I now want to illustrate the explanatory value of my hypothesis by applying it to the phenomena of Haunting<sup>1</sup>; perhaps it will have to be modified somewhat in the process, and will emerge at the end looking even queerer than it did at the beginning. We may divide the phenomena provisionally into two classes: haunting *without* physical effects, and haunting *with* physical effects. The second class would often be lumped together under the head of "poltergeist phenomena". But I think this is inadvisable, at any rate as a first step. For sometimes the physical effects have at any rate the *prima facie* appearance of being produced by a discarnate mind, whereas poltergeist phenomena proper seem to be produced "mediumistically" by the agency of an incarnate one. However, it is haunting *without* physical effects which I wish to consider here: that is, cases in which the haunting consists solely in the repeated occurrence of phantasms or apparitions in a certain locality, including the occurrence of phantasmal smells or noises or touches. And let us suppose, for the sake of definiteness, that the haunted locality is a certain room in a certain house.

Now it has often been suggested that such apparitions are due to some sort of localised trace or vestige or impress left in the matter of the room. These traces would be the quite automatic result of the emotions or other experiences of some person who formerly inhabited the room, much as finger-prints result automatically from our handling of a wine-glass or a poker. Thus on this view the apparition is not a *revenant*, as popular superstition supposes—not a deceased personality revisiting the scenes of its former experience nor yet an "earth-bound spirit" lingering on in them—but is something more like a photograph or a cinematograph picture. (The physical trace would correspond to the photographic negative; and it would be as it were "developed" when anyone with a suitable mind and nervous system enters the room.) This is what Signor Bozzano calls "the Psychometrical Theory" of Haunting. For in Psychometry too we seem to find that a material object retains traces of the past experiences of a person who was formerly in physical contact with it. Signor Bozzano himself holds that this Psychometrical Theory fits only some cases of haunting, indeed only a relatively small number, and that the majority must be explained by the activity of surviving and discarnate personalities, an activity which may either be of the automatic and somnambulistic sort, or of the conscious and intelligent sort. In this he may be right. But

<sup>1</sup> I should like here to express my great obligation to Signor Ernest Bozzano's book *Les Phénomènes de Hantise* (Alcan, Paris, 1929).

it seems a good methodological principle to push the Psychometrical Theory as far as ever it will go.

Now if we attempt to work out this theory in detail, I think we are driven to combine it with the Psychic Ether hypothesis. For these traces, or whatever they are, are not of course independently observable in the physical matter of the room, for instance in the walls or furniture. (Contrast the traces on a gramophone record. These *are* independently observable, *as well as* the sounds which they enable us to hear.) If they are indeed *physical* traces, they must consist in some more or less permanent mode of arrangement of the molecules or atoms or infra-atomic particles, of which the walls, furniture, etc., are composed. And in that case, it ought to be possible to verify their existence by the ordinary methods of Physical Science—by physical or chemical tests of some sort or other. But so far as we know, this cannot be done. It is therefore natural to suggest that the seat of these traces is something which is not material in the ordinary sense, but somehow interpenetrates the walls or the furniture or whatever it may be : something which is like matter in being extended, and yet like mind in that it retains in itself the *residua* of past experiences. And this is just what the Psychic Ether is supposed to be.

We have tried to conceive of the Psychic Ether as an ether of images. Will this conception of it fit in with the requirements of a psychometrical theory of haunting? I want to show that it will. But I admit that there are difficulties ; and in order to surmount them we shall have to introduce fresh complications.

The essential point in our previous discussion was of course the suggestion that images are persistent and dynamic entities, which when once formed may have a kind of independent life of their own, and may escape more or less completely from the control of their author. Let us now suppose—despite of what we said earlier about their spatial properties—that in certain special circumstances an image or group of images might get itself localised in a particular region of Physical Space. (What circumstances, we shall see later.) Once localised there, they might continue to be so localised for a considerable period, retaining the telepathic charge which they had at first, though this might gradually diminish in intensity. Suppose that a human being now enters the room ; and suppose there is a telepathic affinity between the contents of his mind on the one hand, and these persisting and localised images on the other. A telepathic process then occurs. The result of this might only be that the visitor feels a feeling of emotional *malaise*—which is not uncommon in haunted places—accompanied perhaps by what is called “ a sense

of presence". Or again it might be a dream. Or finally, in the most favourable cases, it might be the generation of a phantasm located in his ordinary waking visual field (or tactual field as the case may be). This apparition might be related to the persisting image in much the same kind of way as the visual sense-datum of a chair is related to the physical chair. For it would certainly be generated by a process originating in the image (a purely psychical one, to be sure, not a psycho-physical one) and it would be located in approximately the same place; its shape might also be a perspectified aspect of the shape which the image has. When a man is aware of an ordinary sense-datum which is related to a chair in this sort of way, we say he is *perceiving* the chair. And so we should be entitled to say here that he is *perceiving* the persistent and localised image. Moreover, if there were other persons in the room whose mental contents had the required telepathic affinity with the persisting image, we could say that these other persons too were perceiving the persistent image as well as he. Likewise he or others might perceive it again on some later occasion. Thus the persisting image would be a kind of "public object", as the chair is; except that it would be "public to" a restricted class of persons—namely all those, and only those, whose mental contents had the requisite minimum<sup>1</sup> of telepathic affinity with it—whereas the chair is public to all percipients with normal eyesight. On the other hand, though public to different people, it would not necessarily be public to different *senses*. It might be visible but not tangible, or tangible but not visible; or perhaps it could only be heard or smelt.

There is a further point which may be worth mentioning. If we now take into account the fact that the persisting image did originate in a living human mind, perhaps a long time ago; and if we prefer to conceive of telepathy as primarily a relation between *mind* and *mind*, and not just between mental contents: then we may say that haunting is a kind of *deferred telepathy*, resulting in the production of a *post-dated telepathic phantasm*. It will be a telepathic transaction between Smith as he was ten years ago, when he lived in this room, and me who am in it now. The telepathic impulse from him will have been stored up, as it were, in the persistent and localised image which he originated and left behind him long ago, and the impulse only reaches me to-day when I come into the room.

This line of reflection suggests another. The person who originated the image may still be alive at the time when the apparition

<sup>1</sup> I say "requisite *minimum*" because we have evidence that the same ghost may be perceived more clearly by some people and less clearly by others. But cf. also pp. 339 *et seq.*, below.

occurs. (The theoretical possibility of "haunting by the living" seems to be actually confirmed in some of the records.) But it is usually found that he is dead, and even that he died many years before. Let us suppose that he *is* dead. Let us also suppose that the haunting is of a fairly complex sort, though still without *physical* effects. For instance, we will suppose that the phantasm is seen in a number of different rooms in the house, and it is seen to move from one room to another, so that the phenomena are "cinematographic" rather than just "photographic". Here then there is a *group* of persisting images, interrelated in a fairly complex way. Now since the original author of these images is dead, Anti-Survivalists will of course wish to maintain that his mind has ceased to exist. But can they quite maintain this, if our explanation of the phenomena is the correct one? For, to put it crudely, a *bit* of him does still survive, even though his body has long since disintegrated. This set of interrelated images is something like a very rudimentary secondary personality. It was split off from his main personality at the time when he lived in this room; it escaped from his control and acquired an independent existence of its own. And it has succeeded in "surviving" the disintegration of his body, even if we say that his main personality has not. To be sure, it need not survive for ever. Eventually the images may lose their telepathic charge and fade away. The fact remains that it has succeeded in surviving for quite a long period, possibly for many years. Of course it is very far from possessing *all* the attributes of a personality. To call it even a secondary personality, even though the adjective "rudimentary" be added, is very likely an indefensible stretching of language. All the same, it is an interrelated set of mental contents, endowed (if we are right) with a certain telepathic power. Moreover, it is a "cinematographic" phantasm which we are now considering: there is the appearance of *movement* and of changes of posture. It is a *series* of visible or quasi-visible shapes. And in the manner in which the series is interrelated there may be, and there often is, the appearance of a rudimentary purpose. The complex of persisting images is dominated as it were by a kind of *idée fixe*. If we did not know that we were seeing a mere apparition, we should say "here is a human being who is behaving in a curious somnambulistic way". Thus, though it may be unjustifiable to call the set of persisting images a rudimentary secondary personality, such language is not without excuse. Perhaps in the circumstances, the crudest terminology is the best. Let us repeat then that a "bit" of the deceased personality has succeeded in surviving.

But once we admit this much, I think we have to go farther. If a

bit of his personality has managed to survive, if something which is at any rate *quasi-mental* has managed to carry on its existence for years quite apart from a brain and nervous system, the survival of a complete personality is not impossible; the antecedent improbability of a complete or integral survival is at any rate diminished. This conclusion is a somewhat curious one. For the Psychometrical Theory of Haunting has seemed acceptable to many people precisely because they thought it was an *alternative* to the Survivalist explanation. And so in a way it is. But the alternatives are not to clear-cut as they look. In the first place, there is actually a Survivalist element in the Psychometrical explanation itself, as I have just shown. It is a question of *how much* survival we must postulate in order to explain the phenomena of Haunting; we have in any case to admit the survival of something, and of something *quasi-mental*. And secondly, as I have also shewn, though the phenomena of Haunting do not in themselves require the hypothesis of complete survival (since something very much less will suffice to explain them), they do indirectly weaken the most important objection against that hypothesis, by shewing that something which is at least *quasi-mental* can exist in the absence of a brain and nervous system.

The account which I have given of Haunting, in terms of persisting and telepathically-charged images, is exposed to certain difficulties, which I must now try to meet. Especially I have to make it consistent with what was said earlier about the spatial properties of the Psychic Ether. I have of course maintained all along that this Ether is an Ether of Images. But I suggested above that the Ether of Images is not a single spatial continuum. An individual image, I said, or again an individual image-field, does have spatial extension, and the notion of spatial location applies *within* it. But I also insisted that *between* one image-field and another there are no spatial relations in the ordinary sense, though there may be relations of telepathic affinity, and these may conceivably be arrangeable in an order having dimensions. But in the account which I have just given of Haunting, it is of course essential to maintain that an image or set of images can be quite literally *localised* in a certain region of Physical Space, for example in a certain room. But if the Psychic Ether as a whole is not a single spatial continuum, how can a part of it be located in Physical Space which *is* a single spatial continuum? There is a further difficulty which arises from the suggestion that Haunting is a sort of deferred Telepathy. For normal Telepathy—including the sort which results in the production of a telepathic

phantasm—seems to be independent of the spatial position of the percipient's body. There may be a telepathic relation between A and B when their bodies are many hundreds of miles apart; and there may be none—or none that we know of—when they are only a yard from each other. But Haunting, whatever theory we may hold about it, seems to *require* a certain sort of spatial relation between the percipient's body and the haunted place or object: moreover it must be a relation of spatial proximity. (Has a ghost ever been seen at even two hundred yards' distance? The usual range seems to be only a few feet.)

There is, however, a normal and fairly familiar phenomenon which may help us here. It is possible to "project" a mental image into space. Thus, with a certain effort, I can now project a visual image of a black cat on to the carpet which I see before me. The cat-like image is then located in my ordinary visual field. Much the same can be done with auditory images. An auditory image resembling the sound of a gramophone can be projected into space, so that it is somewhat as if one were hearing a gramophone in the next room. Some people will perhaps say that they cannot do these things at all, and do not know what I am talking about; others, that they can do them easily; still others, including myself, that they can do them occasionally and only with a special effort. I would suggest, however, that this projecting of images is a process which can and does go on in all of us automatically and perhaps frequently; and that these differences between one person and another are only differences in the degree of consciousness which they have of it, and in the degree of voluntary control which they have acquired over it. I have already suggested that *image-formation* is going on in all of us all the time, whether we are aware of it or not; and the same might be true of *image-projection*.

We may notice that the projection of images is in any case a very peculiar process, quite unlike anything which goes on in the Physical World; and this despite the fact that the image is a spatial entity, having the properties of extension and shape. When the image is "put" into my visual field, it is not at all like putting a book on to the table or "projecting" a tennis ball into the street. The image does not *pass* into my visual field from somewhere else, for it was not located anywhere to begin with; nor does it pass through other places on the way. It simply changes instantaneously from a state of being extended but *unlocated* to a state of being extended and located. I know this sounds like nonsense. But I am simply trying to describe a fairly familiar empirical fact. At least it is familiar to myself and to a number of other people. If there are

any among you who do not know from personal experience what I am talking about, they must just take my description on trust; perhaps their faith may be strengthened by a consideration of the phenomena of Hallucination.

Now we have been assuming—this is the basis of the whole argument—that images, once formed, can persist in being for a long period, independent of the will or knowledge of their author. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that once an image has been projected into a certain region of space, it will remain there as long as it continues to exist. We should have to admit that the images which are responsible for haunting were probably projected *unconsciously*. But I have already suggested that there is no difficulty in admitting this. Thus even though the Ether of Images as a whole is not a single spatial continuum, it appears that a certain bit of it (a certain image or group of images) can come to be as it were “earth-bound” and tied to a particular place in the Physical World, by means of the mechanism of image-projection. And then any telepathic charge which the image may have can only take effect from that particular place as a centre; so that in this special case, though not in others, a “radiation theory” of Telepathy might be feasible—a point which I will consider later.

I now turn to a second difficulty. The haunting apparition is normally a more or less exact copy of the body of some person who formerly lived in the haunted place. That indeed is the point of the preposition “of” when we call it the ghost of Smith or whoever it may be. (We ourselves have already compared it to a photograph or cinematographic picture.) But is this at all what we should have expected if the ghost is a persistent and projected image originating in Smith’s mind? Is it not most uncommon to form an image of one’s own body—especially an accurate one? The puzzle is increased by the fact that the image would have to represent the visible appearance of one’s own body *as seen from without*. If the image was formed and projected by Smith in some period of intense emotion, surely the last thing he would be thinking of at such a time would be the outward aspect of his own body—something which he has only seen occasionally in a mirror? Surely the ghost ought not to be the ghost “of” Smith himself: it ought to be the ghost “of” some other person to whom his thoughts were turned at the time?

The difficulty is a serious one, and I think it applies not merely to my theory, but to any theory which tries to explain the phenomena of Haunting on “psychometric” lines. There seem to be two ways of getting over it. First, it has been thought by some people that there is such a thing as the *mind of a place*. They say it is a



mistake to suppose that memory is exclusively a property of persons and animals. They suggest that walls also have memories (as they are said to have ears) ; or perhaps that a region of physical space, or some extended something interpenetrating it, may retain a memory of events which have gone on in it. This reminds us of the old and queer speculations concerning an *Anima Mundi*, or soul of the world ; only that here it would be an *anima loci*, the soul of a place. I do not myself think that it is necessary to have recourse to anything so strange as this ; I hope to show presently that the difficulty can be met in a less extravagant way. But in case I am wrong in thinking so, I should like to point out in passing that the hypothesis of an *anima loci* is not really quite so queer as it looks at first.

At least it begins to look much less queer if one adopts a certain theory of sense-perception and of the constitution of the material world. This theory, which I think is quite plausible on other grounds, is the one put forward by Bertrand Russell in certain works of his middle period, notably *Our Knowledge of the External World*, *Mysticism and Logic*, and *The Analysis of Mind*. According to it, a piece of matter is not the relatively simple and tidy object which we commonly think it to be, but is a vast and complex *group of sensibilia*. Sensibilia are such entities as colour-expanses, sounds, tactual pressures and the like. In fact they are just such entities as are called *sense-data* or *sensa*, only that they persist in being whether anyone is sensing them or not ; and the sense-data actually sensed by human and other percipients are short temporal slices of such persisting sensibilia. This theory has never yet been worked out completely, and it is obviously exposed to serious objections from both the Physical and the Physiological side. I think myself that these objections can probably be overcome by making the theory slightly more complicated, but it would not be relevant to discuss the matter here. What concerns us now is the mode of spatial location which the sensibilia are said to have. Each of them is not only *at* a certain place but also *from* a certain other place, and until we have mentioned both places, we have not completely specified the sensible's location. Thus a certain mountain, say Skiddaw in Cumberland, is a vast and complex assemblage of " views " which go on existing whether or not anybody is viewing them. One of them will be a view of Skiddaw *from* the top of Helvellyn, another will be a view of it *from* Keswick railway station, others will be *from* various points in Derwentwater, and so on. And when we say that they are views " of " it, each existing from its proper place, we mean that they are members of the group which collectively *is* Skiddaw.

Now this theory may well be combined (as Lord Russell has in fact combined it) with another theory which philosophers call Neutral Monism.<sup>1</sup> According to this, both mind and matter are composed of the same constituents. Such entities as colour-expanses, sounds and the like are not merely objects of a mind's awareness, but actually constituents of that mind. If they are also constituents of the material world, as the previous theory says they are, then mind and matter overlap, and any case of sense-perception is a case of such overlapping. We can now return to the hypothesis of an *anima loci*. Consider any place P, say the middle of a certain drawing-room. Since colour-expanses and other sensibilia are continuously existing from the place, whether or not any percipient organism occupies it, we can regard these sensibilia as forming a group—a group united by the fact that all the members exist *from* the same place P. And if the Neutral Monist theory of mind be adopted, we could regard this group of colour expanses existing from P as constituting a kind of rudimentary mind, the "mind of" place P, an *anima loci*. To be sure, we must now take a further and even more dubious step if we are to get the particular sort of *anima loci* we want. We shall have to endow it with a rudimentary memory as well. We shall have to say that when there are sensibilia existing from a place, then memory-images also come into being which exist from (or at?) that place, and which are more or less accurate reproductions of these sensibilia. These images, we shall have to suppose, remain there permanently, and collectively constitute "the memory of the place". This is certainly a rather extravagant suggestion. We ordinarily think that memory-images can only be *generated* in connection with some sort of brain or nervous system; and we are still disposed to stick to this view about their origin, even if we suppose—as I have been doing—that they acquire a more or less complete independence afterwards. But of course many people also think that such entities as colour-expanses only exist in connection with a brain or nervous system. This is the familiar assumption of the psycho-physiological "subjectivity" of sensible qualities, an assumption which was taken over from the Cartesian philosophy of the seventeenth century, and has been part of Orthodox Science ever

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Russell, *The Analysis of Mind, passim*. The theory of Neutral Monism was first worked out by Ernst Mach in his *Analyse der Empfindungen* (an English translation has been published by the Open Court Company under the title *The Analysis of Sensations*). But the theory had already been suggested by Hume in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (p. 207 in Selby-Bigge's edition) and in Berkeley's *Commonplace Book*, though not in his published works. If I am not mistaken, there are also traces of the theory in some forms of Buddhist metaphysics.

since. If once we reject this assumption and say that such entities as colour-expanses are actually constituents of the Physical World, perhaps it is less difficult to say something similar about memory-images, and to hold that they come into being automatically at any place from which sensibilia exist, whether a nervous system occupies that place or not.

So much then by way of showing that the notion of an *anima loci* or *place-memory*, fantastic though it be, is not quite so fantastic as it seems at first sight. If a place can retain memory-images of the views which formerly existed from that place, and if some of these were views of Smith's body from without, and if these memory-images are what *we* perceive now when we see Smith's ghost : then it is very natural that the ghost resembles Smith's body as it would appear to an external observer.

However, I do not think that we are compelled to accept this queer theory. The difficulty which led us to discuss it can be solved in another and simpler way. The difficulty, it will be recalled, was this : if the external source which causes us to see the apparition is an image which originated in the mind of Smith himself, why should the apparition resemble Smith's own body as it would appear from without? Indeed why should it resemble his own body at all? Now fortunately there is an analogy which we may appeal to, which at least shows that the thing can happen. I refer to the classical telepathic phantasm. This seems to represent the agent's body as he habitually thinks of it, and clothed in the clothes which he thinks of himself as wearing (there is the well-known case of a telepathic phantasm with a patch in the skirt). Sometimes there are additional elements represented, as wounds or injuries, and sometimes the phantasm appears dripping wet. These again are features which the agent would *think* of as characterising his body at the moment, though again he would not have *seen* them as they would look from without. These considerations suggest that a mind *can* form an image of its own body as it would appear from without. Presumably such an image would be formed unconsciously, in accordance with one's likewise unconscious beliefs about the visible characteristics of one's own body. If this is indeed so, there is no reason why Smith should not unconsciously *project* an image of his own body into the space of the room in which he is ; and this image, according to our previous argument, will then persist there, to become in due course the ghost " of " Smith. Perhaps such images of one's own body are more liable to be formed and projected in periods of strong emotion. Or perhaps they are formed and projected constantly (though unconsciously) but in moments of intense emotion they may have a

stronger telepathic charge, or a greater power of persistence, or both.

So far we have considered the phenomena of Haunting from the side of the object perceived. (The sense in which I am using the word "perceive" has been explained on p. 326 above). This object, we suggest, is an image or set of images originating in the mind of someone who formerly lived in the place; projected by him into space, probably unconsciously; endowed with a certain telepathic charge, deriving perhaps from the emotions he felt at the time; and persisting in that place thereafter, independent of the mind or will of the original author. But we have still to consider the situation from the other side, the side of the percipient who "sees" the apparition; and we have to try to understand, as far as we can, the process by which the seeing comes about.

This process can hardly be analogous to the physical and physiological processes which underly our normal visual experience. The ghost which I see may be in the middle of a room which I also see; but the two seeings must be caused in different ways, even though the final results of the two causal processes are similar. For on any theory, and whatever the external factor in ghost-seeing may be, it can hardly be something which emits or reflects ordinary light-rays. Otherwise it would be an ordinary physical object, whose presence could be detected by the ordinary methods of Physical Science. Moreover, it would not then have the *restricted publicity* which ghosts do have, but the unrestricted publicity of an ordinary physical object, and it would have to be tangible as well as visible. Could it then be analogous to a rainbow or mirage, which is visible but not tangible? No, for even so its publicity would not be sufficiently restricted. Anyone with normal eyesight would then be able to see it, provided he stood in the right place; and this is not found to happen. And of course if the external factor in ghost-seeing is what I myself have said it is, namely a persistent and localised mental image, it certainly cannot emit or reflect light-rays, even though it is located in the space of the physical world; it is *in* the physical world, but not *of* it. We have accordingly suggested that the process which enables us to perceive it is not physical but telepathic—a kind of deferred Telepathy.

But if it is telepathic, there is a serious difficulty to be faced. For it appears that *this* telepathic process, unlike all others, must be subject to spatial limitations. If it were a case of ordinary Telepathy, ought I not to see the ghost equally well whether I am here, or in the next street, or in America, provided that I have the right

sort of telepathic receptiveness? But actually of course I shall only see it if I am physically present in the haunted room. Shall we then be driven to say that in this type of case, though in no others, a "radiation theory" of Telepathy is correct? Shall we say that the persistent and localised image emits a radiation of a sort unknown to Physical Science, and that this affects the brain and consequently the mind of the percipient? I do not think we could hold in any case that the radiation affects his *eyes*. For, if so, it ought to be subject to the same kind of laws as ordinary light: and the shape, size and position of the apparition ought to be altered by the interposition of lenses, prisms or mirrors, which does not apparently happen. We have to remember too that sometimes the ghost is only "seen" in a dream, when the percipient's eyes are shut; and sometimes he does not see it at all, and yet he may still experience a vivid "sense of presence". Thus I think we should have to say that these radiations, if such there be, affect the central nervous system directly; not indirectly, by way of a peripheral sense-organ, as light-rays or heat-radiations do. Perhaps this is what happens. But if we are inclined to accept this account of the matter, we must face the consequences. The central nervous system is nothing but a physical object of a very complex sort; and any radiations which can cause changes in it must surely be *physical* radiations, detectable by the methods of Physical Science (even if not yet detected) and able to be diverted or modified by purely physical means. Moreover, if I may repeat it again, the entity which emits them must then itself be a *physical* entity, and must itself be detectable by these same methods: for example, by electrical methods of some very refined sort. Are we prepared to accept these consequences? We certainly cannot say that at present there is any empirical evidence for their truth; and if they are false, the radiation hypothesis must also be false.

I think then that although the process which results in the seeing of a ghost is undoubtedly *spatial* in some sense—as the very meaning of the word "haunting" implies—yet it is not helpful to conceive of it as any sort of radiation, at least in our present state of ignorance. And if it be a telepathic process, we have got to account somehow for the spatial limitations to which it is subject. Can we find any other way of accounting for them, once the radiation theory is rejected? The answer I am going to offer is perhaps the most unpalatable of all the unpalatable things I have suggested in the course of this address; you may think that in putting it forward I am surrendering to the wildest superstitions of the Occultists.

I want to suggest that there may be some truth in the theory of an "aura" or "psychic atmosphere" surrounding the body of a living

person. This theory, if you like, is just another application of the Psychic Ether hypothesis which is the main theme of this address. For this psychic atmosphere would have some of the properties of matter (namely spatial extension and location in Physical Space) and some of the properties of mind. It would be a portion of this Psychic Ether localised in and around a certain place, the place where a living human body now is ; just as a ghost is a portion of this same Psychic Ether localised in a place where a living human being formerly *was*. And I suggest, though I do not quite know the meaning of what I say, that the "stuff" of which this psychic atmosphere is composed is the same as the "stuff" of which images are composed. I will even say, if you prefer, that it actually consists of a vast mass of unconsciously and automatically projected images—images which form the habitual mental content of the person in question—all mixed up together, and having so to say a certain "mass-effect" characteristic of that particular person. I think this suggestion, peculiar as it may seem, will fulfil our requirements in a way in which the Radiation Theory would not. The psychic atmosphere surrounding the percipient is spatial in quite a literal sense. Yet it is not physical, as his nervous system is, and no physical instrument could detect its presence.

We may then proceed to suppose that the thing which the ghost-image primarily affects (by means of the telepathic charge inherent in it) is not the percipient's central nervous system, and still less his eyes or other peripheral sense-organs, but rather this psychic atmosphere which surrounds and perhaps interpenetrates his body. This does at least enable us to say that the two terms involved in the transaction are *in pari materia* ; for the one is a mental image, and the other is either an assemblage of images or is at least composed of "imagy" stuff. We do not have to hold that the one term (the ghost-image) is non-physical and the other physical, as we should if we said that the recipient of the telepathic transmission is the central nervous system. Nor do we have to hold that the one is spatial and the other non-spatial, as we should if we supposed that the recipient is the knowing subject or Pure Ego, which is not literally in space at all. *Both* terms—the persisting and localised image on the one side, the percipient's psychic atmosphere on the other—are alike in being spatial, yet neither is physical. Thus it is at any rate somewhat easier to conceive of a direct causal transaction between them.

Before going farther, we must turn aside to consider another difficulty which is at first sight entirely different from the one which concerns us at present. But I think we shall find in the end that it will help us to form some notion of the causal process by which

ghost-seeing is conditioned. It is a difficulty which applies to any theory of Haunting. It is this. Why is it that so *few* places are haunted? If the haunting of a house (anyhow the type of haunting which we are discussing) is ultimately caused by the emotions or other experiences of persons who formerly lived there, surely any house which has been inhabited for twenty or thirty years ought to be haunted, and indeed haunted by a number of different ghosts? In a town of any age, almost every street corner ought to be packed with apparitions. Even a new house ought soon to be haunted by ghosts of its still-living inhabitants. (As we have seen already, "haunting by the living" is not unknown. But why is it not a great deal more frequent?)

You may reply perhaps that it is not enough that Smith should have lived in the house, nor even that he should have had emotions of certain *sorts* there; what is required is that he should have had emotions of very great *intensity*, and these after all are not so very common. Even so, in any house which has been inhabited for a century—no great age for a house—such intense emotions must surely have occurred quite a number of times. Births, deaths, serious illnesses, accidents, are bound to have occurred in the household. And what about prisons and law courts, or places where religious manifestations of the more extreme kind have been systematically promoted? What about railway stations? Arrivals and departures often cause extremely strong emotions. So even if we say that great intensity of emotion is a necessary condition of haunting, even so it would seem that there ought to be a great deal more haunting than there actually is. It is of course true that a special type of *percipient* is required. It is not everyone who can see a ghost, even granting that the requisite conditions are present on the objective side. But even so, such percipients do exist. Should we not expect *them* to see vastly more ghosts than they do see? For the *objective* conditions, it would seem, must be fulfilled in a very large number of cases.

The solution I would myself suggest is this. I think we should boldly agree that, so far as the objective conditions go, every place which has been inhabited for any length of time *is* haunted by a large number of ghosts. The trouble is, I suggest, that as a rule it is haunted by *too many*, so that their effects obliterate each other. I will explain myself. In any long-inhabited place there will be quite a large number of persistent and localised images, unconsciously produced and projected by the minds of those who have inhabited it. I suggested just now that the "psychic atmosphere" surrounding a person might be a kind of mass-effect due to a large number of

different images which he unconsciously projects. Perhaps in the same sort of way every room which has been inhabited for some time has *its* psychic atmosphere, and likewise every law court and railway station. This psychic atmosphere of the room will be a kind of blending of all the persistent images which have been unconsciously projected into it from time to time. These different images will have different telepathic charges—corresponding to differences of type and intensity between the emotions with which they were originally associated. The result will be a kind of confused amalgam of the whole lot. Consequently, the percipient, even though he has all the requisite subjective qualifications for ghost-seeing, will only be able to say that the room has a characteristic “feel” about it; he will not be able to *see* anything. It might even be that the telepathic charges of the different images cancel each other out, so that nothing is either felt or seen.

I am much inclined to think that the same kind of thing may happen in ordinary Telepathy: that telepathic “impulses” in great numbers are continually reaching everyone, but that normally they inhibit each other, just because they are so numerous and so diverse. If so, the reason why most of us appear to receive no telepathic impressions is that we receive too many, so that no one of them makes any distinct or individual mark upon our minds. If this parallel is not acceptable, I will appeal to a frankly materialistic analogy, drawn from the more familiar world of the Detective Story. When a certain object, say a poker, has been handled by a great number of people, it will be useless to look for thumb-prints on it: not because there are none, but because there are too many, and they are all blended together into an undifferentiable mess. So it may be with the persisting images which previous occupants of a room have left behind them. Just because they are so numerous and so different, no one of them makes any individual impression upon the mind of the percipient. The place is so much haunted that it seems not to be haunted at all.

We can now turn back to our previous question concerning the causal process which results in ghost-seeing. I suggest that the first thing required is the overlapping or interpenetration<sup>1</sup> of two “psychic atmospheres”, the one which surrounds the percipient’s

<sup>1</sup> We have no reason to suppose that images are impenetrable to other images, as material particles are impenetrable to other material particles. So far as we can tell, two localised images could be in the same place in Physical Space. However, if images *are* mutually impenetrable, the process which I have called interpenetration ought rather to be described as a blending or mixture, analogous to the blending of two liquids or gases.



body and the one which pervades the room. This interpenetration of the two psychic atmospheres will be the *spatial* condition which has to be fulfilled if the ghost is to be seen. This is the substitute which I would offer for the Radiation Theory discussed and criticised above. For we may suppose that this interpenetration will cause changes in the psychic atmosphere of the percipient. *Ex hypothesi* a man's psychic atmosphere is affected by processes in his mind. I now want to suggest that the causal relation between them may be two-way, so that his mind is in turn affected by changes in his psychic atmosphere, which after all consists of mental contents belonging to him; for images, though projected into space, are still mental entities. If this be granted, a man's psychic atmosphere will be a kind of secondary body, related to his mind in the same kind of way as the ordinary physical body is, though perhaps more intimately. (The notion of a "spiritual body" additional to the "physical body" is of course an old and familiar one; what is new is only the suggestion that it is composed of unconsciously projected images, or at any rate of image-like stuff.)

But obviously this spatial interpenetration of two psychic atmospheres—the percipient's and the room's—is not a *sufficient* condition of ghost-seeing, but only a *necessary* (indispensable) condition. As I have already said, I think that a telepathic process is also required. I have suggested that every persistent and localised image has a telepathic charge. We may further suppose that telepathic charges can differ in at least two distinct ways: in *quality* and *intensity*. We will next re-introduce the notion of *telepathic affinity* which was mentioned some time ago. This, it will be remembered, was a relation between two psychological contents which makes it possible for the one to have a telepathic effect upon the other.

Now the localised and persistent image, which is the external or objective factor in Haunting, may have a greater or lesser degree of telepathic affinity with the contents of the percipient's psychic atmosphere, or perhaps even none at all; whether it has much, or little, or none will depend on the *quality* of the telepathic charge inherent in it. If the affinity is slight or non-existent, nothing will happen, even though the *spatial* conditions for ghost-seeing are completely fulfilled. And even though the telepathic affinity is great, still nothing will happen if the intensity of the telepathic charge is too low. But let us suppose that the affinity is great and the telepathic charge very strong. Then the localised image *will* have a telepathic effect upon the percipient's psychic atmosphere, and that again upon his mind. In consequence, he will produce and project a phantasm. And if this phantasm corresponds pretty

closely in shape, size and location to the persistent image which started the process, then we may say that he is "perceiving" the persistent image itself. (How shall we discover whether the phantasm *does* correspond to the persistent image? We discover this indirectly, by finding out whether it has a sufficiently close resemblance to the body of some former inhabitant of the room.) Thus the final stage of the process will be the same as it is in the case of the classical telepathic phantasm. The difference will be in the earlier stages. For the occurrence of the classical telepathic phantasm is not dependent upon any particular spatial relation between the agent and the percipient. Moreover, in haunting the *immediate* agent is not a mind, but only an image: though the *ultimate* agent is the mind which originated and projected the image long ago. So it is a case of *deferred* telepathy, resulting in the production of a "post-dated" telepathic phantasm. I have indeed myself suggested that in all telepathy, of whatever sort, the immediate and primary source of the telepathic impulse is a psychical content rather than a mind. Even so, the difference between Haunting and Classical Telepathy still remains. For in Classical Telepathy the telepathically-active psychical content is actually contained in a complete and living personality; whereas in Haunting it has long since got dissociated from the mind which originally owned it, and indeed that mind (if the Anti-Survivalists are right) may long ago have ceased to exist.

We were asking a few pages back why ghost-seeing is a comparatively rare occurrence. We can now add something to our answer. The reason we gave was that most places are haunted too much and as it were too promiscuously. If an apparition is to be seen, there must be a certain constituent in the psychical atmosphere of the room which stands out, so to speak, from the rest. We can now see that it must stand out in two different ways, *both* in respect of quality *and* in respect of intensity. To use the same sort of analogy as before: if a lot of signatures were written all over a small piece of paper, one on top of the other, you could not read any of them. You would see only a confused blur. But if one were written in red ink and all the rest in black, you might be able to read the red one quite well. And you would be more likely to do so if the ink in which it was written had been particularly strong and lasting. Even so, you would not succeed if you happened to be colour-blind.

It may, however, be that great intensity in the telepathic charge can compensate for otherwise unsuitable *quality*. Conversely, if the quality is exactly right (if there is the maximum degree of telepathic

affinity between the persisting image and the mental contents of the percipient) this may compensate for feeble intensity. In terms of our analogy: one might still be able to pick out the red signature from the confused black ones, even if it had faded; and even if a man was colour-blind he might still be able to pick out one which was written in much brighter and fresher ink than the rest. These conditions as to quality and intensity are perhaps not likely to be fulfilled so very frequently. And this may incidentally account also for the many instances in which a man sees just one ghost in his life, without giving any other evidence of supernormal powers, telepathic or otherwise.

I must now bring my remarks to a close. I am well aware that the theory of Haunting which I have sketched is full of loose ends. For one thing, it is much too narrow, in that I have spoken as if images were the only important sort of psychical contents, which is far from being true. Again, the theory has in any case been restricted to one special type of Haunting, the type in which there are no physical effects; it could only be extended to cover other types by introducing additional assumptions, which might have to be very outrageous. Worst of all, my whole explanation may be sheer nonsense from start to finish. Certainly I tremble to think what a hash might be made of it by an even moderately competent second-year student of Philosophy. And yet the initial step, upon which everything depends, the suggestion that mental images may persist in being apart from the mind of their author, is not so utterly extravagant, but only unfamiliar. The current view, that they exist only so long as the act of "imaging" goes on, has been simply taken for granted without any solid argument. And once this initial step is taken, the additional assumptions I have made are, I do not say easy, but at any rate not so very difficult.

However this may be, the risk of nonsense has got to be taken. Unless we are prepared to take it, our subject will never advance out of the fact-collecting stage into the maturity of a genuine science. For, as I have pointed out already, the phenomena which concern us are so unlike those which ordinary language is designed to describe, that the right theory of them, when found, is bound to seem nonsensical at first. We may safely predict that it will be the timidity of our hypotheses, and not their extravagance, which will provoke the derision of posterity.

*Appendix*

There are two rather curious questions which are worth mentioning, though they lie somewhat outside the line of my main argument.

1. According to the "psychic atmosphere" theory sketched above, one would expect that *persons* would sometimes be haunted as well as places. For the psychic atmosphere of a person, like that of a place, consists of a mass of projected images, and they will presumably be telepathically charged. We should expect that sometimes some one of them would stand out from the rest in respect of its quality and intensity, especially if it is connected with some strong and prolonged emotion. In that case it ought to be perceptible to a suitably-qualified percipient. I think there is evidence that this does sometimes happen, though I do not know how good the evidence is.

2. Does anyone ever see the ghost of *himself*? When a man comes into a room which he has inhabited for years, ought he not sometimes to see an apparition of himself, sitting in his favourite chair? Haunting by the living is not unknown, as we have seen. One would almost think that "self-haunting" would be the most common case of it, and indeed that it ought to be quite frequent. The best condition would be that in which the percipient is the *sole* inhabitant of the room and it has never previously been occupied by anyone else. Perhaps this does not happen so very often; even so, it must happen sometimes.

If, however, self-haunting *never* occurs,<sup>1</sup> this is a serious difficulty for my theory. Surely an image projected by myself would have the maximum degree of telepathic affinity with my present mental contents? It would seem then it ought to cause *me* to see an apparition, even if it has no effect on anyone else.

The only solution I can suggest is that the telepathic affinity may be too perfect. Perhaps telepathy only occurs when there is some degree of shock or intrusion. Perhaps a telepathic charge behaves like an electric charge. If two neighbouring bodies have exactly the same electric charge, there is no electrical discharge from the one to the other.

Even so, we should expect that when an adult man revisits the home of his childhood, he would sometimes see the ghost of himself as he formerly *was*, even though he never sees the ghost of himself

<sup>1</sup> Signor Bozzano (*Phénomènes de Hantise*, p. 184) says that it did once occur to Guy de Maupassant. "En rentrant chez lui il se voyait assis dans son fauteuil." The authority for the story is said to be Paul Bourget, but unfortunately Signor Bozzano does not give the reference.

as he now *is* ; for his childish emotions were presumably different from his present ones, and so the images which he then projected would have a different telepathic charge from the images which make up his psychic atmosphere now. Or shall we reply, taking a hint from the Psycho-analysts, that he still retains his childish emotions to this day, in undiminished strength, though they are now repressed into the Unconscious?