

The phenomena have been widespread with credible investigators reporting on cases throughout Europe and America beginning in the nineteenth century, and continuing throughout the twentieth.

Many photographs have been taken of ectoplasmic forms. These would be unconvincing except for the accompanying information provided by investigators and corroboration by witnesses.

Of interest are the findings of W. J. Crawford, a lecturer in mechanical engineering who examined the mediumistic work of Kathleen Goligher in the early 1900s. Among his theories and discoveries were ectoplasmic “rods” that seemed to cause the levitation of objects. He also found relationships between physical manifestations, including raps and levitations, and the weight, not only of the medium, but of the other participants in the séances.

Crawford was also able to trace the origins and workings of the ectoplasm. His engineering model however did not explain other related phenomena such as luminosity and the seeming suspension of the gravitational field e.g., the adhering of objects to a tilted table or the tilting of a candle’s flame when the candle was at an angle. However, his experience may illustrate the concept of ideoplasty in which the experimenter’s theory is confirmed because his beliefs affect the medium who in turn shapes the phenomena.

Physical mediums, although out of fashion, still exist. I encourage seeking out those who might lend themselves to investigation. I also want to urge investigators to attempt séances as the “Philip” group in Canada did.

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## A SURVEY OF MEDIUMS IN ICELAND

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We contacted and interviewed all persons we were able to find with experiences of trance or automatism, that is, who had experienced involuntary speech or writing, at least a few times. These were 31 persons, 17 men and 14 women ranging in age from 19 to 70 ( $M = 45$ ). 18 of them had fallen in trance more than 100 times, so most of them were practicing mediums, either professionally or in private home circles or organised groups like healing groups. About half of them admitted receiving pay for their psychic work and for two it was this their main income.

These mediums could be roughly divided into three rather equal-sized groups,

- a) Spiritists, where the emphasis was on communication with the deceased.
- b) Groups seeking healing from spirit helpers and deceased doctors who continued their healing work after death.
- c) Group exclusively found in Iceland, “nyalssinnar”, who believe that after death we are reborn on other planets in other solar systems, and can then communicate with people on this earth either through dreams or trance.
- d) The main purpose of this survey was to learn about how the mediumship started and developed in these individuals. About half of them first fell into trance at home (four of them being alone), or in the homes of friends and did so unexpectedly and involuntarily, whereas 40% experienced mediumship as a result of trying to fall into trance or after training. It also happened that the first trance took place unexpectedly and involuntarily at a seance when someone else was in trance.

About 41% were fully conscious when they experienced their first trance, which then consisted of involuntary speech where they felt that that some entity had taken control of their organs of speech. Another 40% knew nothing about what happened and had full amnesia about it, and were told about the incident by those who had been present. The rest, 20%, were inbetween, being partially conscious and observing what happened, and partially unaware of what took place.

77% felt that a distinct personality took over when they felt into their first trance. In most instances this personality was unknown to the individual, was from distant times, or a foreign person, like an Indian, or a contemporary person generally known (like a physician) but had not been known to the individual. With time the relationship with this distinct otherworldly personality became quite close but we had the impression that with time little further knowledge was obtained about the life of that personality who became the mediums control.

Very few experienced the trance as an unpleasant, mostly it was experienced as neutral or pleasant. All our interviewees looked upon these personalities as deceased persons, none of them considered them a fiction of their mind or a part of their unconscious. For them these were external beings distinct from themselves.

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