BEYOND FAITH AND REASON: THE GENESIS OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND THE SEARCH FOR THE PARANORMAL DOMAIN (1850-1914)

Name:	Robert Radaković
Degrees Held:	BSc Financial Economics
	MA Western Esotericism
Submission for degree of:	PhD Religious Studies
Institution:	Lancaster University,
	Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion
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I declare that the thesis contains 79,834 words (including all footnotes), and does not exceed the permitted maximum of 80,000 words.

I declare that the thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Signed:.....

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Abstract

The late-Victorian period was characterised by rapid social, cultural, and intellectual changes, with all domains open to challenge from numerous and diverse directions. This thesis focusses on a short period in 'the Age of Enlightenment', from the mid-nineteenth century to 1914, during which many groups and individuals wanted to try to answer the ultimate questions about the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it. For them, the well-established fields of science, religion, and philosophy each proved to be inadequate individual tools with which to attempt to answer these questions. Consequently, many members of the cultural and intellectual elite turned to the paranormal domain, within which they saw the potential to answer some of their fundamental questions. Psychical research was a nascent intellectual field that investigated strange phenomena which existed at the borders of orthodox thinking, sitting precariously between the acceptable and the unacceptable. This thesis investigates the cultural, evidential, and sometimes personal motivations of the early paranormal researchers, all of which were members of the Society for Psychical Research, and some of the first theories developed by them. The thesis thus establishes the significance of paranormal research during this period. It discusses, in an intentionally eclectic way not done before, several of the key thinkers of the time. It posits a typology to help understanding of the period. This 'paranormal domain' represents a combination of an intellectual mindset, an investigative methodology, and a spiritual perspective, particular to the early psychical researchers of the SPR.

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Beyond Faith and Reason: The Genesis of Psychical Research and the Search for the Paranormal Domain (1850-1914)

CONTENTS

Introduction

The Religious, Scientific, and Cultural Milieux of the Nineteenth Century

Victorian Britain in the late-nineteenth century was a society caught up in the turbulence of many rapidly evolving advances in science, religion, society, and culture. This intellectually energetic period, also prevalent in the United States and Europe, has continued to influence Western culture ever since. Numerous intertwined currents, such as rationalism, interest in ghosts, and the concept of life after death, both influenced and were influenced by Spiritualism and psychical research.

It was unsurprisingly a time of many contradictions, which both the ordinary person in the street, as well as members of the intellectual and cultural elite, tried to make sense of, often by ever more restrictive religious doctrine or the increasingly materialistic and progressively more specialist physical sciences. For some, this further widened the growing chasm between these two intellectual domains, with some theologians and scientists becoming more entrenched in their own philosophical camps. However, there was also a backlash against both realms by some, with religion perceived as overly dogmatic and science as overly materialistic and reductive. Consequently, there were those of faith who appreciated the necessity for scientific endeavour and sought to use it to validate their own religious beliefs, much like the seventeenth-century Puritan intellectuals had done two centuries earlier.[1] Also, there were many thinkers, primarily from the established intellectual elite, who had either lost their faith or were questioning it more critically, for whom science provided a secular means to help explain their own view of the world around them. The period could be described as operating via a complex network of intellectual themes, rather than simply a series of polarized battles, such as between faith and reason.[2]

Intertwining with the complex scientific advances, religious changes, and the increasing willingness to delve into new intellectual and themes, much social and

[1] Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. 2.
[2] Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn, 'Introduction', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 2.

political transformation was also taking place in this period. Liberal politics in Britain was declining, while socialism and feminism in particular were becoming more prominent, reflecting the growth of more radical thinking. As Matthew Beaumont has noted, much less has been written about the interplay between socialism and the occult, than about the links between feminism and the occult.[3] Social, political, and literary scholars have often overlooked the importance of the occult and the interest in the paranormal at this time, whilst writers on feminism and the occult have perhaps downplayed the influence of socialism.[4] There are more easily discernible links between socialism and feminism, and between feminism and the occult, but not so clear connections between socialism and the occult. As such, the links are naturally more interdisciplinary and perhaps more tenuous, and therefore have been investigated to a lesser extent by scholars. For some, the mood of transformation had inputs from both ancient and more modern traditions of the apocalypse and millenarianism, suggesting a universal reformation driven by a democratic and technocratic brotherhood.[5]

This eclectic mix of attitudes both hindered and helped the progression of thinking about the paranormal, by providing a framework within which the commonalities and discontinuities between science and religion were highlighted. Further, as will be shown in this thesis, structured eclecticism shaped psychical researchers' attempts to reconcile religion and science. It was the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), founded in 1882, which undertook the vast majority of psychical research during this period, and, as such, is the primary focus here. The progressive and questioning environment stimulated by the rapid cultural changes of the time enabled its formation and shaped its motivations. The intellectuals which made up the majority of its membership used a broad scientific methodology to investigate ostensibly paranormal phenomena in an attempt to understand the fundamental questions of nature. Their most important considerations were the

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[3] Matthew Beaumont, 'Socialism and Occultism at the *Fin de Siècle*: Elective Affinities', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 166-168.
[4] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Marlene Tromp, 'Eating, Feeding, and Flesh: Food in Victorian Spiritualism', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
[5] Beaumont, 'Socialism', p. 168.

question of human survival and the existence of a spiritual realm, suggested by both séances and telepathy. As well as the general cultural themes which influenced their early thinking about the paranormal, there were numerous specific philosophical, professional, and personal links which shaped their research and their theories. The general decline in the influence of mainstream religion was a prevalent theme in the period, with religious doubt fuelled by the influence of science on the interpretation of religious doctrine, as well as biblical criticism becoming more important and more acceptable.[6] However, it will be shown that there was also a spiritual revival which took place at this time, with Spiritualism, Theosophy, and other forms of occultism all flourishing. It will be shown that science became more formalized, and more specialized, yet there was some backlash against its increasing materialism. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution provided biological arguments against established religious doctrine for the first time.[7] Within the physical sciences, ether physics described an all-pervasive universal medium,[8] while experimental physics displayed significant similarities to experimental psychical research.[9] We will see that early fringe sciences such as phrenology and mesmerism gave way to hypnotism which was much more palatable to the mainstream scientific community, but also highlighted early links between the mind and the body. Again, as discussed below, there followed an increasing focus on the study of the mind which led to the new scientific field of psychology, its notions on human consciousness being vitally important to theories of paranormal phenomena. Many psychologists were members of the SPR, and often used it as a vehicle to publish their research. The SPR membership published a large number of articles and books presenting the evidence for paranormal phenomena and some speculative thinking upon their nature, some of which are considered in the present work. The thinking of psychical researchers is analysed throughout with a view to highlighting common themes. Those chosen were the most influential theorizers on the paranormal in the early SPR.

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[6] David M. Thompson, *Cambridge Theology in the Nineteenth Century: enquiry, controversy, and truth* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 173-174.
[7] James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (Chicago: Open Court, 1990), p. 9; and Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II: 1860-1901* (London: SCM Press, 1987), p. 1.
[8] Egil Asprem, 'Pondering Imponderables: Occultism in the Mirror of Late Classical Physics', *Aries* 2 (2011), pp. 141-142.
[9] Richard Noakes, 'Haunted thoughts of the careful experimentalist: Psychical research and the troubles of experimental physics', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 48 (2014), p. 53.

Key Arguments in the Thesis

My first key argument is, that in trying to answer some of humanity's fundamental questions, many broad groups in society, ranging from scientists, Spiritualists, occultists, and psychical researchers, found both mainstream science and religion to be inadequate intellectual tools with which to attempt this. *My second key argument* is that this perceived inadequacy necessitated a new intellectual methodology, with some choosing to investigate unusual paranormal phenomena, a *tertium quid* approach which considered aspects of philosophy, science, and religion in combination. *My third key argument*, a consequence of the analysis of the interplay between cultural and individual influences on the psychical researchers of the early SPR, is that a new intellectual mindset was employed, which can be expressed as a distinct domain, the 'paranormal domain.' I describe this domain as consisting of complementary modes of thinking, doing, and being, and are broadly analogous to philosophy, science, and religion. The paranormal domain describes a cohesive new typology, not an amalgam of theories, or a list of paranormal phenomena, but a representation of the critical points of consideration as demonstrated by the early psychical researchers. While not explicitly or entirely essentialist, it does identify those characteristics, which when taken together, serve to demonstrate what the main perception of the paranormal domain was to early psychical researchers, and has not previously been attempted, and is, as such, an important contribution of this work.

It should be noted that this thesis is not an attempt to present an exhaustive history of early psychical theories, but an exploration of the influence and cultural significance of the complex cultural milieu of the late-Victorian period upon them. This environment allowed those who were interested in understanding the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it, but had moved away from mainstream religion and were not attracted to practicing occultism, to undertake scientific psychical research. In a similar way to Christopher Partridge's work on 'occulture',[10] the present work primarily uses a history of cultural ideas approach, attempting to highlight the interplay between the rapidly changing religious, scientific, cultural, and paranormal thinking of the period. It considers the liminal areas between the known

[10] Christopher Partridge, 'Occulture and Everyday Enchantment', in J. R. Lewis and I. B. Tøllefsen (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, Volume 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 315-332.

and the unknown, the acceptable and the unacceptable, where the greatest intellectual tension can often be found.[11] While there is some necessary contextual exploration before 1850, the focus is on the late-nineteenth century, with the start of World War I marking an appropriate end point. The resurgence of Spiritualism as a result of this conflict and the subsequent attempt to establish parapsychology as an academic discipline creates a natural conclusion to the analysis. The hugely diverse questioning environment described in this work was prevalent across all strata of society. This thesis will demonstrate this influence with reference to the establishment of a plethora of intellectual societies, challenges to traditional religious dogma, the growth of esoteric thought, the formalization of psychical research, the cementing of scientific authority, the consequent opposition to physicalism and scientism, and the investigation of human consciousness, all blurring the boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable. The multifarious nature of 'the Age of Enlightenment' had a broad scope and a deep influence, and, from between the mid-nineteenth century and 1914, also fostered a mindset which allowed intellectual consideration of the paranormal.

The methodology used within this thesis is rooted in historical and archival research, with no presumption made as to the validity of paranormal phenomena, or to the veracity of the theories presented by the early psychical investigators explored herein. The thesis is organized throughout so as to present the links to the key ideas of universal and interconnected philosophy, eclectic methodology, and the promotion of spirituality, found to be common amongst all the psychical researchers. The intention here is not to provide a broad history of esotericism, but an exploration of a brief early period of modern paranormal thinking. Unlike previous scholarship of the period, the focus is not on ghosts, or telepathy, or life after death, but on these and many other themes in combination, so as to present a view of the paranormal mindset of early psychical researchers, and is discussed more fully in the subsequent chapter on existing scholarship. As well as addressing the lack of depth of scholarship on the field of early paranormal thinking, the research undertaken in this thesis embraces the inherent, but not random, eclecticism in the field for the first time and shows that

[11] The cultural milieu discussed here has similarities with Campbell's sociological 'cultic milieu'. Colin Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization' in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, ed. by Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw (Walnut Creek, CA.: Altamira Press, 2002), pp. 14-25.

there existed a broadly cohesive mindset, rather than a jumble of nebulous activities. In this way, the thesis presents a scholarly perspective on the key intellectual aspects of the paranormal at the time; it discusses why these characteristics were important and how they came about culturally; and it examines some of the consequent paranormal theories of notable individuals.

In Part I, in which I present some of the historical and scholarly context of the thesis, Chapter 1 introduces the members, activities, and aims of some members of the Society for Psychical Research, the main focus of the present work. Chapter 2 considers existing scholarship, with a review that examines key scholarly literature on the paranormal and Western esotericism, especially typologies and analytical frameworks, as well as the presentation of my own analytical framework. In Part II, in which I examine key religious themes, Chapter 3 considers the influences on, and the impacts of, the decline of mainstream religion. Some of these are endogenous, such as the efforts at liberalisation, and others exogenous, such as the growth of scientific intellectual authority and new academic disciplines. Chapter 4 discusses the spiritual revival of the period, focussing on Spiritualism, Theosophy, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the early psychical researchers of the SPR, and the common motivation and membership shared by these groups. In Part III, in which I explore the most important scientific themes, Chapter 5 presents a number of the scientific fields important to the subsequent systemization of psychical research, such as scientific method, the physical sciences, and the increasing specialization of science and the consequent broad and eclectic scientific methodology utilized by psychical researchers in order to overcome this. Chapter 6 explores phrenology, mesmerism, and hypnosis, followed by a consideration of normal, abnormal, and paranormal psychology, and the critical nature of the concept of consciousness. There is a particular focus on the theories of mind and consciousness critical to thinking about the paranormal. Chapter 7 presents a summary of the analysis of the thesis, followed by the main conclusion, namely the argument that one can demonstrate the existence of an intellectual paranormal domain utilised by the early psychical researchers of the SPR, distinct from, but associated with the established domains of science, religion, and philosophy.

Part I

THE HISTORICAL AND SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

Chapter 1

The Society for Psychical Research

As discussed in the introduction, this thesis uses the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) as an interpretative focus to analyse the cultural and intellectual themes which shaped thinking about the paranormal in the late-nineteenth century. In this chapter, I will briefly consider the formation of the SPR, as well as introduce its key members, activities, and aims. While not intending to be a biographical approach there is necessarily some individual personal context presented for the key personalities. The history of its formation and its early years has been adequately dealt with by other scholars, notably Alan Gauld in *The Founders of Psychical Research* (1968), Renée Haynes in *The Society for Psychical Research 1882-1982: A History* (1982), and more recently by Egil Asprem in 'The Society for Psychical Research', in the compendium *The Occult World* (2015).[1] This chapter takes a different approach. The members are introduced based upon their involvement with the foundation of the Society, and subsequently, there is a focus on those psychical researchers whose endeavours are particularly important to this thesis. This may be due to their prominence in the administrative or investigative activities of the SPR, or as a result of their published works in the field, or both. This second group is discussed in more detail and consists of those individuals, who, when considered collectively, can be regarded as representing the prevalent thinking about the paranormal of the time. This group is separated by those who can be regarded as part of the Sidgwick Circle, the close associates of the Cambridge scholar Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900), and then by those influential members who were not part of this select group, but critical to the analysis in this work. While I will show that all of these contributors, thinkers, and commentators on psychical research, were interested in Spiritualism, none of them were Spiritualists. Those founding members of the SPR who were Spiritualists, such as William Stainton Moses (1839-1892), while important to its foundation, had such a narrow focus for their aims, which was solely to seek the proof of life after death, that their influence on wider paranormal thinking is of limited relevance here. This is

[1] See also John Beloff, *Parapsychology: A Concise History* (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), pp. 64-92.

compounded by their short-lived influence on the SPR after its foundation, until the onset of World War I, which serves as the chronological end point of this thesis. A discussion on the broader influences of Spiritualism is made within Chapter 4, which considers the theme of spiritual revival.

While there were other social groups and societies which preceded the SPR that were interested in ghosts, haunted houses, and spiritualistic phenomena, they were elitist and informal in manner. The Ghost Society (founded in Cambridge in 1851), the Phasmatological Society (founded in Oxford in 1879), and the Ghost Club (founded in London firstly in 1862 by Trinity Fellows, then revived in 1882, in parallel with the SPR)[2] were neither widespread enough nor sufficiently organised to successfully bring together the ideas of scientists, intellectuals, and Spiritualists in a manner suitable for the general public. Shane McCorristine notes that while the Psychological Society of Great Britain (founded in 1875) did operate with special investigative committees and had a more public oriented disposition, it folded in 1879 following the death of its founder, Edward William Cox (1809-1879). Consequently, it was the SPR that took up this 'ghost-seeing-investigative model' with some of the same individuals.[3]

Formation of the Society for Psychical Research

While it is not the intention here to provide a detailed history of the formation of the SPR, but to demonstrate a sense of the environment in which early eclectic psychical theories were born, it is worthwhile highlighting some key points in its early existence. Over this period, an important point to mention is the ever changing influence that Spiritualism had within the early SPR. Having been formed to undertake scientific investigation and research into Spiritualist and other psychical phenomena, the Society had committed Spiritualists amongst its early membership. More concerned with collecting and validating data on paranormal phenomena rather

[2] 'Who are we?', <http:// http://www.ghostclub.org.uk/history.html> [accessed 26 September 2017].
[3] Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England*, 1750-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 103-104.

than theorizing its spiritual and philosophical implications, the scientifically inclined members often found themselves at odds with the Spiritualist wing.[4]

Some, such as, Sidgwick, Frederic Myers (1843-1901), William Crookes (1832-1919), and W. F. Barrett (1844-1925) had undertaken numerous investigations into Spiritualism throughout the 1870s, and there was a general feeling amongst those interested in the field that a greater organisation, systemisation, and scientific methodology was required. In attempting to empirically validate some of the most important questions of human existence a more robust logistical methodology was paramount. This burgeoning 'scientification', as McCorristine describes it, stemmed from the controversial experiments carried out by the distinguished scientists Crookes and Barrett, and were some of the earliest encounters between the scientific community and Spiritualism.[5] Some of Barrett's experiments involved thought-reading, which provided evidence for psychical occurrences which moved away from the increasingly unpalatable physical phenomena. Thus, this provided an alternative means by which to undertake psychical research, which was empirical, experimental, scientific, and less vulgar than some of the mediumistic experiments which these early psychical researchers had become disillusioned with. Current scholarly opinion, while acknowledging the overwhelming significance of the Sidgwick Circle in the formation of the SPR and its early activities, accepts that it was Barrett who formally instigated the procedure for its establishment.[6] Following consultation with Edmund Dawson Rogers (1823-1910), a journalist and Spiritualist, Barrett organised a meeting at the headquarters of the British National Alliance of Spiritualists in London on 6th January 1882, with the Society for Psychical Research officially founded on 20th February.[7]

The very first volume of *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* outlines the broad aims, or 'Objects of the Society', being the investigation of 'that large group of debateable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical, and Spiritualistic.' The Society's purpose was described as to scientifically

[4] Asprem, 'Society', pp. 272-273.
[5] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 109.
[6] Renée Haynes, *The Society for Psychical Research 1882-1982: A History* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1982), p. 4; Trevor Hamilton, *Immortal Longings: FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2009), p. 111; and McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 110, amongst others.
[7] McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 109-110.

investigate, organised on a wide-ranging basis, such phenomena currently 'inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis.'[8] This broad basis was twofold, the Society's members being drawn from diverse intellectual fields, but also allowing for the investigation of all relevant data and evidence, however strange they may seem. Therefore, right from the outset, both the eclectic and universally driven motivations of the early SPR were made explicit, and, as my analysis will show, became embedded within the published works of its members on the field of the paranormal. This comprehensive methodology was categorised into six specific committees:

1. *Committee on Thought-reading*, headed up by Barrett. An examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognised mode of perception. (The phenomena considered included thought-reading and thought-transference, which were later broadly coined by Frederic Myers as 'telepathy.')
2. *Committee on Mesmerism*, headed up by Dr. G. Wyld (1821-1906). The study of hypnotism, and the forms of so-called mesmeric trance, with its alleged insensibility to pain, clairvoyance and other allied phenomena. (These were predominantly mental phenomena, other than thought-reading.)
3. *Committee on Reichenbach's Experiments*, headed up by Walter C. Coffin. A critical revision of Reichenbach's researches with certain organisations called "sensitive," and an enquiry whether such organisations possess any power of perception beyond a highly exalted sensibility of the recognised sensory organs. (These niche phenomena concerned the existence of a new vitalist force, or Odic force, proposed by Baron Carl von Reichenbach (1788-1869), supposedly permeating all living things, and something akin to a combination of electricity, magnetism, heat, and even mesmerism.)
4. *Committee on Apparitions*, headed up by Hensleigh Wedgwood (1803-1891). A careful investigation of any reports, resting on strong testimony, regarding apparitions at the moment of death, or otherwise, or regarding

[8] 'Objects of the Society', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* I (1882), p. 3.

disturbances in houses reputed to be haunted. (This committee concentrated on ghosts, poltergeist activity, and haunted houses.)

5. *Committee on Physical Phenomena*, headed up by Dr. C. Lockhart Robertson (1825-1897). An inquiry into the various physical phenomena commonly called Spiritualistic; with an attempt to discover their causes and general laws. (These were Spiritualist and mediumistic physical phenomena.)
6. *Literary Committee*, jointly headed up by Edmund Gurney (1847-1888) and Myers. The collection and collation of existing materials bearing on the history of these subjects.[9]

The first President was Henry Sidgwick, and the Vice-Presidents were listed as Arthur J. Balfour, M.P., Prof. W. F. Barrett, John R. Hollond, M.P., Richard H. Hutton, Rev. W. Stainton Moses, Hon. Roden Noel, Prof. Balfour Stewart, and Hensleigh Wedgwood.[10]

Myers and Gurney, founding council members, were initially sceptical of the venture, and only agreed to join the SPR if Sidgwick was appointed President. Consequently, despite the founding activities of Barrett, the Cambridge group was central to the Society right from the outset.[11] Hence, the initial ordering of the five investigative committees and the sixth literary committee, more one of classification, cannot be regarded as being a random choice. Despite there being a number of Spiritualists amongst the first officers of the Society, the Cambridge contingent displayed its influence on its methodological direction, relegating the increasingly worrisome physical phenomena associated with Spiritualism to last place in the investigative list, while at the same time promoting the more attractive mental

[9] Ibid., pp. 3-5. It should be noted that a number of the articles and reports in *Journals* and *Proceedings* were authored on this committee basis. One of the most important of these was the 'Report on the Census of Hallucinations', headed up by Sidgwick and presented in the *Proceedings* of the SPR in 1894. See Henry Sidgwick, et al., 'Report on the Census of Hallucinations', *PSPR* 10 (1894), pp. 25-422.

[10] *PSPR* I (1882), p. 1.

[11] Gordon Epperson, *The Mind of Edmund Gurney* (Madison, NJ.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), p. 75; and McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 110-111. In a personal letter to Myers dated 12th February 1884, there is evidence of continued tension between the Sidgwick group and Barrett. See Sidgwick, Papers, Add.Ms.c.100/100.

phenomena. Of these, it was telepathy, investigated by the committee on thought-reading, which assumed a central importance.[12]

Against a background of increasingly prominent socialism and the rising political and cultural profile of many women, those most involved with the investigation of Spiritualist and paranormal phenomena were mainly men. While Mary Boole (1832-1916), wife of the noted mathematician, George Boole (1815-1864), herself a mathematician, was on the committee established by Barrett to formally establish the Society, she resigned from it after a few months, and does not appear in the first list of council members.[13] The majority of those involved in the founding and early activities of the SPR, who we may consider as some of the earliest professional psychical investigators, came from within the echelons of the intellectual and cultural elite.[14] Thus, as Trevor Hamilton contends, the founders of the SPR continued the tradition of wealthy amateurs undertaking research without having to report to anyone but themselves. While this made them intellectually independent, some perceived them as nothing more than an unqualified collection of individuals.[15] McCorristine suggests that from a modern perspective the SPR 'can be interpreted as a workforce responding to cultural change through its construction of spectro-nunciative discursive fields.'[16] In other words, his contention is that the early SPR was comprised of a group of individuals who utilized the opportunities afforded to them by all the varied streams of the rapidly changing cultural environment of the time, as a result of undertaking wide ranging intellectual pursuits. The SPR's focus was to understand the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it, with the notion of life after death as perhaps its most important element. The commonalities between the key areas of operation utilized by the SPR were that they resided at the fringes of orthodoxy, such as religious agnosticism and esoteric spirituality, acceptance of an immaterial realm as well as a material one, but all ultimately

[12] This is recognised by other scholars, for example, see Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 75, and Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 111. It was suggested at the time by psychical researchers, for example, see Edmund Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, eds., *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 vols. (London: Society for Psychical Research/Trübner and Co., 1886), vol. II, p. 270, §7, and F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), vol. I, pp. 95-96, §319.
[13] Haynes, *Society*, pp. 5-6.
[14] Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 40.
[15] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 99.
[16] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 105.

explainable by science. The philosophical, methodological, and ontological tensions caused at these boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable paralleled the strange phenomena observed in their research and were inherent to the existence of the SPR. Gauld suggests that the SPR consciously attempted to link its activities to existing mainstream fields, as well as trying to disseminate its views to the wider 'educated world' through numerous letters and articles.[17] The core of the group associated with the early activities of the SPR came from those closely associated with Henry Sidgwick.

The Sidgwick Circle

Henry Sidgwick

Those individuals who were part of what is now most often referred to as 'the Sidgwick Circle' were either Cambridge scholars, mentored there by Sidgwick, or came from his extended family. The most notable of the Cambridge contingent were the classicists Myers and Gurney, and the Australian expatriate Richard Hodgson (1855-1905), a Doctor of Law from Melbourne, and subsequent student of Sidgwick's at Cambridge. Many of the other prominent members were associated with Sidgwick through his wife, Eleanor Sidgwick née Balfour (1845-1936), a onetime principal of Newnham College, Cambridge. Two of her siblings, Arthur Balfour (1848-1930), president of the SPR between 1892 and 1895, and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom between 1902 and 1905, and Lord Gerald Balfour (1853-1945), a senior British Conservative politician, helped to elevate the early status of the SPR through their deep associations with it, as well as providing financial independence for it.[18] Her brother-in-law was the physicist Lord Rayleigh (1842-1919), and her own advanced capabilities in the mathematical sciences meant that she was able to help him to the extent that they jointly authored scientific papers. Sidgwick's sister was married to E. W. Benson (1829-1896), a future Archbishop of Canterbury.[19] D. G. James notes that Sidgwick's brothers-in-law were 'two of the most conspicuous men in the life of late Victorian England', and thus put him in very close contact with

[17] Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 147.
[18] Egil Asprem, 'The Society for Psychical Research', in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 268; and Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 94.
[19] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 117-119.

'great affairs of Church and State.'[20] However, it should be noted that Sidgwick was an important utilitarian moral philosopher, and an active supporter of educational reform, especially regarding university education for women.[21] The composition of the group demonstrated a three-fold authority which bolstered its legitimacy, consisting of leading members of the scientific, intellectual, and cultural establishment. Most of the group came from families with a mainstream Christian background, with two of them, Sidgwick and Myers, being the sons of clergymen. Various members of the group also had a deep interest in other religions and Spiritualism, which partly explained the appeal of investigating paranormal phenomena.

As Gauld notes, Sidgwick's interest in unusual phenomena was a long-standing one, going back as far as his time as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge. There, he joined the University Ghost Club and collected several stories for it.[22] Sidgwick's investigation of ghost stories influenced his psychical research for the rest of his life. The possibility of direct proof of continued existence was not something that Sidgwick could neglect, either from a theological or an ethical point of view.[23] This early interest in ghost stories was accompanied by his investigation into automatic writing and Spiritualism. Unfortunately, he made little progress in explaining the phenomena. This was both an unexpected frustration for Sidgwick and a motivating force for his intellect, 'having a problem of such magnitude to solve.'[24] As well as the Ghost Club, Sidgwick was also a member of the Cambridge Apostles, the secretive discussion group, and a prominent member of a number of other university clubs during his time there, including the Eranus Society, the Grote Club, the Moral Sciences Club, and, together with his brothers, he founded the Ad Eundem Society. Outside of the university he was a member of Appleton's Association for the Re-Organization of Academical Study, the Metaphysical Society, and the Synthetic Society.[25] As a consequence of his curiosity about Spiritualism and a general interest

[20] D. G. James, *Henry Sidgwick: Science and Faith in Victorian England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 22-23.
[21] Asprem, 'Society', pp. 266, 268.
[22] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 88. A brief history of the Ghost Club can be found online at <http://www.ghostclub.org.uk/history.html> [accessed 25 August 2017].
[23] Arthur Sidgwick and Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick, *Henry Sidgwick: A Memoir* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1906), p. 43.
[24] Ibid., pp. 104-106, 164-165, 169, 171.
[25] William C. Lubenow, *'Only Connect': Learned Societies in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), pp. 153-154.

in the evidence for miracles, according to Gauld, Sidgwick undertook sporadic investigations into mediumship over the period of the late 1850s and 1860s.[26] However, the results of these suggested nothing particularly noteworthy. Gauld further argues that Sidgwick's ethical studies, combined with the publication of Crookes' experiments with Spiritualism, inevitably led him to undertake more empirical research related to the notion of an afterlife, but that their extent and longevity was extended by the later influence of the more eager Myers.[27]

By the end of the 1870s the Sidgwicks had become somewhat disheartened by the lack of evidence for Spiritualist and associated psychic phenomena during the many sittings they had attended or heard reports of. More gradually, Myers' investigations also waned over this period, the increase in cases of proven fraud made against noted mediums perhaps detrimentally influencing what he hoped to learn from such phenomena.[28] The extensive travelling by rail, especially by Myers and Gurney, to all parts of the country to attend sittings and interview witnesses may also have contributed to both the physical and mental fatigue shown at this time. While Myers was more convinced that he had witnessed some truly paranormal phenomena than the Sidgwicks, he did not profess this belief very strongly at this time, so as not to challenge the scepticism of his peers. What they all agreed upon, however, was the need for more stringent observation and caution when dealing with professional mediums.[29] As the Sidgwick Circle's activities dwindled, it was Barrett who continued the investigation of paranormal phenomena, although occasionally with input from Myers. As well as the increasingly physical and somewhat unsavoury mediumistic phenomena, the pair, but mainly Barrett, investigated mesmerism, thought-transference, and haunted properties across the British Isles. While Sidgwick and Myers were interested in Barrett's work and publications on the subject of anomalous phenomena, they were at this time reticent to be part of a wider group dedicated to such investigations in this field. This hesitancy was compounded by the markedly different backgrounds of the elitist Sidgwick and Myers when compared to

[26] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, pp. 33-202. Numerous references to his investigations are made by Sidgwick over this period.
[27] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 88-89. Gauld is referring to Crookes' article on the phenomena of D. D. Home and Kate Fox in William Crookes, 'Notes of an Enquiry into the Phenomena called Spiritual during the years 1870-1873', *Quarterly Journal of Science* 4 (New Series) 11 (Old Series), (1874), pp. 77-97.
[28] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 133.
[29] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 100.

Barrett, and their differing political ideas on subjects such as Irish home rule, wider social reform, and organised labour movements, notwithstanding their views on religion, with Barrett remaining a committed Christian. These differences were to impact the formation of and early development of the SPR.[30] While Sidgwick undertook very little direct psychical research after the formation of the SPR in 1882, his role as its President, and his motivation of his close associates, especially the Cambridge group, make him an important focus for the present work.

Frederic Myers

Myers exhibited a vast breadth of knowledge and expertise on subjects such as hypnosis and abnormal psychology. He was well connected with notable individuals of the time, such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Robert Browning, Lord Alfred Tennyson, George Eliot, and John Ruskin.[31] His outstanding theoretical work, published posthumously, was *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1904), but he also contributed a great many articles to the SPR's *Journals* and *Proceedings*, and undertook extensive psychical research. Of the individuals considered in this thesis, the work of Myers has generated the most scholarship regarding early psychical research.[32]

Myers, like Sidgwick, was also part of the social elite, being related to the vastly moneyed Marshall family through his mother, Susan Marshall (1811-1896). His father, also named Frederic Myers (1811-1851), a graduate and one time fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, was a Church of England clergyman and author.[33] In 1880, he married into more money, the much younger Eveleen Tennant (1856-1937) becoming his wife.[34] Myers was undoubtedly a fine classical scholar, largely due to his diligent study, but also because of his emotional and poetic nature which sought meaningful connections between the commonplace and the profound.[35] This

[30] Ibid., pp. 103-104.
[31] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 3.
[32] In particular, see C. D. Broad, *Lectures on Psychical Research: Incorporating the Perrott Lectures Given In Cambridge University in 1959 and 1960* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962); Gauld, *Founders*; Oppenheim, *Other;* Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy: 1870-1901* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)*;* Hamilton, *Immortal;* McCorristine, *Spectres;* Kripal, *Impossible*.
[33] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 116.
[34] Ibid., p. 135.
[35] Ibid., p. 91.

combination somewhat foreshadowed his later psychical research which attempted to combine a systematic scientific method with an appreciation for the diverse nature of the field and an empirical acceptance of the immaterial. I will show that this *tertium quid* approach was mirrored by many of the other psychical researchers discussed herein, and suggests an intellectually driven interconnectedness which is reflected in their activities and writings, and is consequently presented as an important element of the philosophical mode of thinking in the paranormal domain presented in Chapter 7. Myers' early fascination with Virgil, Plato, and all things Hellenic, faded markedly over time.[36] Nevertheless, there remained a classical influence throughout his life, and it will be shown that Plato, especially, shaped some of his cosmology. Despite having markedly different personalities, Sidgwick, austere, politically and academically liberal, a practical reformer, and Myers, in his early adult life a snob, zealous Conservative, and tumultuously emotional, did have more profound qualities in common. The most fundamental of these was a shared quest to seek clues to help understand what Gauld calls the 'ultimate truth', regardless of how difficult some of the answers might turn out to be.[37] Hamilton states that their common mission was not only fundamentally a moral one, but was also an attempt to prove the existence of some sort of spiritual realm, 'some evidence of ultimate meaning and transcendence.'[38] I will attempt to show that the search for the ultimate truth, or One Truth, was the focus of the investigative and intellectual activities of all the members of the Sidgwick Circle, despite their varied ontological notions, and that the acceptance of a spiritual realm was critical. Frank Miller Turner suggests that the likes of Sidgwick and Myers did not want to fully accept the certainty of scientific naturalism, as the fundamental questions they wished to answer clearly involved non-physical domains such as metaphysics and religion. Abandoning these areas completely would, for them, limit both their intellectual curiosity and their moral framework, which was an anathema to them.[39] This willingness of the early members of the SPR to accept a scientific investigative methodology, but not the narrow perspective of outright scientific naturalism, will become increasingly apparent in the

[36] Ibid., pp. 91-94.
[37] Ibid., p. 100.
[38] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 86.
[39] Frank Miller Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 5; and Bart Schultz, *Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 1.

following chapters. Likewise, the intentionally broad and eclectic approach to psychical research reinforces the universal worldview demonstrated by these individuals. I contend that features of both eclecticism and universality arise from the exploration of the field suggested by the analytical frameworks presented in the next chapter, and therefore naturally form intrinsic characteristics of the paranormal domain, the culmination of the analysis I present at the end of this thesis.

Edmund Gurney

Edmund Gurney was a well-regarded and tireless paranormal investigator and experimenter. One of only two full-time psychical researchers in the SPR at the time, the other being Hodgson, Gurney settled on this vocation having abandoned potential careers in music, medicine, and law.[40] Of the founding members of the SPR, he was one of the most objective, notwithstanding Sidgwick, who was more of a motivational figurehead by this time rather than an active investigator. His major work in this field, *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), was the first large scale publication endorsed by the SPR which tackled paranormal topics such as telepathy, hallucinations, and ghosts. The philosopher C. D. Broad described the work as 'an extremely good example of the classification of a Natural History of Sporadic Paranormal Phenomena.'[41] Sidgwick certainly understood the significance of the work, writing in his private journal on 29th October 1886, 'We have reached the real crisis in the history of the Society, for *Phantasms of the Living* is printed, and advance copies have been sent to the newspapers…'[42] Sidgwick had expressed concerns about the work being jointly written by Myers and Gurney, so Myers' contributions were limited to the 'Introduction' and 'Note on a Suggested Mode for Psychical Interaction.'[43] Additionally, Frank Podmore (1856-1910) was primarily responsible for the collation of the evidential cases used throughout. Nevertheless, the work was unequivocally Gurney's. Despite suggesting that *Phantasms* did not present any paranormal theories,

[40] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 142. For a good overview of Gurney's life see Gordon Epperson, *The Mind of Edmund Gurney*. See also the obituary of Gurney, in Myers, 'The Work of Edmund Gurney in Experimental Psychology', *PSPR* 5 (1888), pp. 359-373, and Trevor C. Hall's controversial *The Strange Case of Edmund Gurney* (London: Duckworth, 1964).
[41] Broad, *Lectures*, p. 10.
[42] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 460.
[43] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 141.

the tome nevertheless contains some important theoretical conjectures.[44] The publication of such a work was a necessary consequence of the vast quantity of cases of paranormal phenomena which had been collated by the SPR since its foundation.

The principal hypothesis presented in *Phantasms* is that apparitions witnessed by a percipient are the result of a telepathic communication initiated by a dying agent.[45] This theory was indicated by the extensive sequence of cases presented in the work, beginning with experimental cases, and continuing with a variety of classified spontaneous cases. These spontaneous cases involved combinations of telepathic messages of ideas, images, emotions, and motor effects, occurring during normal wakefulness, dreams, hypnagogic and hypnopompic states, hallucinated by single or multiple percipients, and sometimes reciprocally.

Richard Hodgson

Hodgson was both one of the most sceptical members of the Sidgwick Circle, but perhaps also one of the most spiritual. He was a believer in the mental mediumship of Spiritualism, but was critical of the physical phenomena, and was regarded as unequalled in the ability to detect error or fraud in psychical investigations. The philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) said of him, '…it is impossible to say in advance whether it will give him more satisfaction to confirm or smash a given case offered to his examination.'[46] It was his unfaltering exposure of fraudulent mediums and the like, especially of the Theosophist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), rather than any particular theorising, that defined him. Additionally, his work on conjuring techniques and mal-observation in psychical research with S. J. Davey, the not inconsiderable task of finishing Myers' *Human Personality* to enable its posthumous publishing, and the trance sittings of Mrs. Piper make for an impressive output in his somewhat short life.[47]

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[44] Important works which have considered Gurney and *Phantasms of the Living* include Broad, *Lectures*, Gauld, *Founders*, Oppenheim, *Other*, Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, and McCorristine, *Spectres*.
[45] Gurney and Myers first introduced the concept of phantasms, crisis apparitions, and hallucinations linked to death and distress in E. Gurney, and F. W. H. Myers, 'Phantasms of the Living', *Fortnightly Review* 39, (1883), pp. 562-577.
[46] William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897; repr. 1912), p. 308.
[47] Marc Antony De Wolfe Howe, *A Memoir of Richard Hodgson, 1855-1905* (Boston. MA.: Private Publication, 1906), pp. 2-3. Read at the Annual Meeting of the Tavern Club, 6th May 1906.

The remaining members of the SPR presented here are those individuals whose activities and writings on the paranormal were particularly influential at the time. Together with those psychical researchers already discussed they form the quorum of personalities most relevant to the present study.

Frank Podmore

Podmore worked tirelessly for the SPR for many years and was the author of many works on various aspects of the paranormal and psychical research. He was perhaps the greatest sceptic of all the early SPR members, yet his beliefs, as far as can be ascertained from his writings, are not of a markedly different nature to that of his colleagues, but may be considered somewhat more critical. A representative example of his unrelentingly questioning attitude to the field was what he called his 'agnostic interpretation' of ghosts, presented in an article entitled 'Phantasms of the Dead from Another Point of View' published in *Proceedings* of 1889. In the article, Podmore states unequivocally that ghosts are not the spirits of dead persons manifesting a quasi-material form walking and communicating on earth. He questioned the adequacy and relevance of the evidence on which a belief in spirits was founded. He also contended that the very existence of the evidence may be primarily due to the pre-existence of that belief in the minds of the witnesses.[48] However, a ghost often appeared to have some semblance of intelligence, and the common view, amongst his SPR colleagues at least, was that the apparition was a hallucination that had some relation to a deceased person.[49]

William James

As one of the founders of the scientific discipline of modern psychology, much has been written about James and his numerous works. What is of interest to the present work are the connections between his psychological theories and his psychical

[48] Frank Podmore, 'Phantasms of the Dead from Another Point of View', *PSPR* 6 (1889), p. 229.
[49] For example, see Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 199-202, §4 and Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 24-25, §123.

research, as well as his views on the methodologies of investigation in this field. McCorristine and Robert A. McDermott both note that James' view of psychical research was that it should be 'a collaborative effort, involving a network of subjects, investigators, editors, publishers, and an enormous amount of financial support.'[50] James stated that 'to no one type of mind is it given to discern the totality of truth.'[51] He investigated and studied psychic phenomena, not as a believer or a seeker, not as a practitioner or apologist for Spiritualism, but to augment his psychological theories, but these unusual occurrences remained central to his life and works throughout his life.[52] I will show that James' systematic yet sympathetic approach was paralleled by nearly all of the other psychical researchers discussed. I will demonstrate that the prevalent investigative methodology employed by the SPR, to combine a scientific methodology with an acceptance of the spiritual, was critical to paranormal thinking of the period.

James' approach to considerations of religion, psychical research, and in fact to all his intellectual endeavours, was a deliberately balanced one. Jeremey Carrette refers to this acceptance of both science and religion as his 'relational universe',[53] and has clear parallels with Faivre's 'correspondences' as well as the characteristic of interconnectedness found with the paranormal domain posited within this thesis. James contended that science should represent a method rather than a rigid belief, but that the two were often indistinguishable. He referred to one such fixed belief as 'mechanical rationalism', with its advocates insisting that non-mechanical classifications were irrational ways of conceiving and explaining even such matters as human life. He said that this mode of thinking went against the ways of thinking that had played the greatest part in human history. James cited religious, ethical, poetical, teleological, emotional, and sentimental thinking, distinct from orthodox science, as the dominant forms of thought.[54] He suggested that when the science of his time became old-fashioned, it would be more because of its omissions of fact, for its ignorance of 'whole ranges and orders of complexity' in the phenomena to be

[50] Robert A. McDermott, 'Introduction', in William James, *Essays in Psychical Research* (Cambridge, MA., and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. xv. Cited in McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 7.
[51] James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 301.
[52] Jeremy Carrette, *William James's Hidden Religious Imagination* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 172.
[53] Ibid , pp. 3, 115.
[54] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp. 323-324.

explained, such as paranormal, than for any deficiency in its spirit and principles.[55] He tackled religious and spiritual themes in the same manner, linking psychology, paranormal phenomena, and ancient mystical beliefs to present a loose cosmology. This concurs with the view of Carrette, who notes that 'James "handles" religion in different ways according to the purposes of his work across a spectrum of the supernatural to the political.'[56] James suggested that experiences of hallucination and other 'presences' allowed, and seem to prove, the existence of in human 'mental machinery' a sense of reality which could manifest religious and spiritual beliefs. He reinforced this notion by stating that in the religious experiences of many, not only their belief merely conceptualised, but a 'quasi-sensible' reality was directly apprehended.[57] In other words, James implied that true religious or spiritual experience was something more than blind faith, and had some objective reality for the individual.

William F. Barrett

We have already seen that the main impetus for the formation of the SPR came from Barrett, but that it was the Sidgwick group that shaped its early structure and activities. He was present at the SPR's inception and far outlived most of the key members of the Sidgwick group. It is therefore appropriate that together with a brief discussion of Henri Bergson (1859-1941) which follows, it should be a consideration of Barrett that helps bring together the close of this analysis of some of the thinking of the early psychical researchers of the SPR, before the onset of World War I changed the Society markedly. His *Psychical Research* (1911) provides a good overview of the entire spectrum of psychical research and phenomena at the time, but like the writings of other orthodox scientists also operating in the paranormal domain, such as Oliver Lodge (1851-1940) and Crookes, it did not present many cohesive theories. Rather, it presented the facts and evidence as observed, pitfalls to avoid in investigative

[55] Ibid., pp. 326-327.
[56] Carrette, *Imagination*, pp. 2, 13.
[57] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longman Green, & Co., 1902; repr. 1917), pp. 58, 62-63.

methodology, and intellectual considerations to abide by so as not to be overly dogmatic or ignore unpalatable observations.[58]

Barrett contended that there was a widespread desire to understand to a greater extent the large class of obscure psychical phenomena which sat precariously within the 'debateable borderland' between the domain of science and the 'dark realms' of ignorance and superstition.[59] In a familiar theme prevalent amongst members of the SPR, Barrett challenged both the domains of religion and science.[60] He complained that religious people often described paranormal or psychical phenomena as supernatural, and therefore not possible to be investigated or even comprehended. While many scientists, he said, saw the phenomena as nothing more than superstition.[61] Barrett found the position of his fellow scientists particularly troubling, noting 'In fact there are some phenomena in physical science which are as rare, elusive and inexplicable as those in psychical research.'[62] He did appreciate, however, that human nature was such that reason led people to be instinctively hostile to the reception of any evidence which could not be readily fitted into the structure of existing knowledge.[63] Further, Barrett suggested that scientific men ignored the key difference between physical and psychical science – the former providing 'gateways of knowledge' via familiar organs of sense, the latter allowing these gateways to occasionally be transcended.[64] However, he always promoted science and the activities of eminent mainstream scientists as vitally important to psychical research.[65] He concurred with Myers that the conscious self, which usually operated in normal waking life, was merely a part of a 'more comprehensive consciousness', a profounder faculty, which was nearly always latent with regards to life on earth, but could become liberated in 'full activity by the change we call death.'[66] Thus, Barrett not only articulated the notion of a hidden consciousness, containing potential higher

[58] For some discussion of both Barrett's attitudes towards paranormal phenomena and some of his research methodology, see Richard Noakes, 'The 'world of the infinitely little': connecting physical and psychical realities circa 1900', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 39 (2008), pp. 331-333. For his thoughts on telepathy, see McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 151-152.
[59] W. F. Barrett, *Psychical Research* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 9.
[60] Noakes, 'Infinitely', p. 325.
[61] Barrett, *Psychical Research*, p. 11.
[62] Ibid., p. 17.
[63] Ibid., pp. 17-18.
[64] Ibid., p. 34.
[65] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 112.
[66] Barrett, *Psychical Research*, p. 34.

faculties, a common theme amongst the early psychical researchers of the SPR, but also the implied concept of a survival hypothesis.

Henri Bergson

A brief mention of Bergson makes an appropriate bookend to the consideration of the early psychical researchers of the SPR, even though he didn't regard himself as such. Chronologically, his official association with the society began just before World War I, and also coincided with an impending change in the nature of psychical research and a renewed interest in Spiritualism, both of which are out of scope of the present work.[67] Early in Bergson's philosophical career he had aspirations of extending the application of the mechanistic explanation of the entire universe, and was heavily influenced by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).[68] He soon found not only Spencer's philosophy insufficient to answer his intellectual questions, but also realised that a mechanistic theory alone was inadequate to answer the most important questions of nature.[69] Bergson returned to the psychology and metaphysics he had previously abandoned, and attempted to fuse these with the strictness of orthodox science. While he sought inspiration from the facts themselves and began some experiments in hypnotism and consciousness, Bergson's doctrine continued to broaden and become more inclusive.[70]

Not all of these psychical researchers presented fully cohesive theories, so an attempt is made over the following chapters to draw out from their writings and psychical research those elements which either explicitly refer to the subject, or where sensible inferences can be made. All of their ideas and theories were developed in an attempt to overcome the perceived inadequacies of both science and religion in understanding the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it. These

[67] These reasons for concluding the analysis at 1914 echo those articulated in Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 2. For recent scholarship on the period immediately after this see Asprem, *Disenchantment*, pp. 372-412.
[68] There is very little relevant recent scholarship on Bergson, but see Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 14-41 for a discussion of Bergson's early mechanistic perspective.
[69] Jacques Chevalier, *Henri Bergson*, trans. by Clare, Lilian A. (London: Rider & Co., 1928), pp. 51-53.
[70] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 190.

individuals spanned the range of academic expertise from the classics, philosophy, psychology, to physics and chemistry, with a number of them straddling more than one of these intellectual domains. Thus, they represent what I contend is a broadly comprehensive population of relevance, authority, and influence with which to separately and collectively explore paranormal thinking. As Noel Annan and Hamilton note, these individuals were all firmly embedded within what the former has called the 'intellectual aristocracy', a broad network of talented individuals who greatly influenced late-Victorian culture.[71]

Concluding Remarks

As indicated above, this thesis uses the early SPR as the central vehicle for the presentation of the ideas of the key intellectuals who undertook or wrote about psychical research, and this chapter outlines some general and some individual motivations for them to do so. This brief overview of the formation of the SPR highlights the significance of the Sidgwick Circle to early thinking about paranormal phenomena, although it was Barrett who formally instigated its creation. The intellectual motivation to better understand the 'ultimate truth' of all of nature was shaped by cultural developments within science and religion.[72] However, many members of the SPR found these domains alone incapable of answering their questions. Scholars such as Sidgwick and Myers rejected traditional Christian faith, but not the entirety of religion. They and their associates accepted the methodology of mainstream science, but sought a broader, more inclusive approach to the verification of knowledge. A widespread interest in ghost hunting and research into Spiritualism, which led to the formation of more organized societies, culminating with the SPR, provided an alternative way for them to approach their intellectual aspirations. They

[71] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 82; and Noel Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', in *Studies in Social History: A Tribute to G. M. Trevelyan*, ed. by J. H. Plumb (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), pp. 242-287.

[72] This point is also made in Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 84, and Gauld, *Founders*, p. 100. For contemporary evidence, see Henry Sidgwick, 'The Theory of Evolution in its Application to Practice', *Mind* OS-1, (1876), p. 64; Edmund Gurney, *Tertium Quid: Chapters On Various Disputed Questions*, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1887), I, p. 328; Barrett, *Psychical Research*, pp. 12-13; [72] Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures & Essays*, trans. by Carr, H. Wildon (London: Macmillan & Company, 1919; repr. 1921), p. 75; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longman Green, & Co., 1902; repr. 1917), p. 411; Oliver Lodge, *Man and the Universe* (London: Methuen & Co., 1908; repr. 18th edition 1917), pp. 70, 104, 188; and Myers, *HP*, II, pp. 271, §985.

developed what they considered to be a scientific approach to the study of paranormal phenomena (phenomena that had been rejected as profane by those of faith and as irrational by adherents of orthodox science). Nevertheless, Barrett and Crookes were two notable scientists who influenced the SPR as a result of their research into mediumistic and mesmeric phenomena. That said, many early investigations were blighted by fraudulent activities and there was a consequent movement away from physical mediumistic phenomena towards mental ones, with telepathy assuming central importance. This research was made possible by the financial and intellectual independence allowed by the elite membership of the early SPR, with Sidgwick conspicuously well connected. The society was more organized than earlier ones, and was represented by a broader range of academic expertise.

Not all of the psychical researchers developed mature theories about the paranormal. However, by considering selected detail of their the published works of the time, together with private letters and memoirs, a clear sense of the important diverse characteristics of early psychical research and the understanding of the paranormal domain as a valid object of intellectual inquiry is provided. As such, it is clear that the SPR can be placed squarely in the centre of the interest in the paranormal during this period. The SPR operated at the fringes of mainstream thinking, highlighting the tensions between the acceptable and the unacceptable. It maintained an eminent public profile from its inception in 1882 through to the Second World War, with the list of its early presidents testament to its cultural and intellectual importance.[73] The SPR was formed during the inquiring milieu of the late-Victorian period, partly as a consequence of the perceived inadequacy of religion and science to satisfy the curiosity exhibited about the universe and humanity's place within it. This chapter has also demonstrated the elitist nature of the Sidgwick Circle and much of the SPR membership, and while typical of other intellectual societies of the time, its uncanny subject matter was not. As such, its intellectual and diverse nature suggests that the complex nature of the paranormal domain outlined in the final chapter is a valid general classification of their thinking.

[73] Asprem, 'Society', p. 272. See The Society for Psychical Research, <http://www.spr.ac.uk/about/about-spr/past-presidents> [accessed 11 February 2019].

Chapter 2

Existing Scholarship

This chapter, which provides a survey of existing scholarship directly related to the current discussion, examines the general relevance of this literature to the field and the specific bearing it has to themes discussed in the present work, with focus on the development of the paranormal domain presented at the end. It must be understood that this is not a thesis on Western esotericism per se, but rather an analysis of the early development of psychical research. Needless to say, there are overlaps, but they are, nevertheless, distinct areas of inquiry. Hence, this thesis is important in its own right because of the subject matter involved and the intentionally broad approach utilized for its exploration. Paranormal phenomena and psychical research were considered unusual in the late-Victorian, and is still regarded as such by many scholars now. Consequently, despite the many significant works referred to here, there does not currently exist the quantity of scholarship on late-Victorian psychical research as does for other fields, especially undertaken using a broad historo-cultural approach. This lack of research is more pronounced given the increasing output and maturity of other recent Victorian scholarship, such as literary, sociological, political, and gender-related. Further, existing scholarship that does cover the field has usually focussed on one key aspect, such as telepathy, ghosts, or immortality. The scholars and their works considered in this chapter are individually and collectively important to this thesis and are integral to the establishment and development of the new paranormal domain. The present work builds upon this scholarship in conjunction with a new analysis of the primary sources. In this way, the diversity of late-Victorian cultural influences on the inherently eclectic, yet broadly cohesive nature of early psychical research becomes more apparent than has been shown previously. This broad and varied approach does not detract from the depth of analysis, however. I highlight the uniqueness of the questioning environment of the time, which allowed all religious, scientific, philosophical, political, and social concepts to be intellectually challenged. Consequently, the characteristics of the paranormal domain, derived from the works and endeavours of the early psychical researchers, classifies and establishes it as distinct from the existing intellectual domains of science, religion, and

philosophy. There are relevant existing typologies which characterize 'esotericism' as a whole, or some important aspects of it. However, the narrower typology of the paranormal domain presented here has not previously been attempted by other scholars, and, as noted above, addresses a distinct range of material. I have organized this literature survey into three main parts. First, I have considered those scholars who in their works have presented either a typology or an analytical framework, or both, of esotericism, or of the paranormal, which I have used to develop my own analytical framework, and refer to throughout this thesis. These scholars are Antoine Faivre, Egil Asprem (with some specific relevant reference to Wouter J. Hanegraaff), Kocku von Stuckrad, and Charles D. Broad. Second, I discuss two scholars who as part of their research into the development of contemporary esoteric themes, demonstrate that esoteric and occult thought was embedded to such an extent within nineteenth-century society, that it helped to shape early thinking about the paranormal, and form an integral part of the wider questioning environment. As well as these broad environmental themes, there are several specific points of convergence between their work and my own research. These scholars are Christopher Partridge and Nicholas Campion. Third, I present those scholars who have influenced, to varying degrees, some of the specific themes arising from my analytical framework, without being used to develop the analytical methodology I have used in the present work. These scholars are John Beloff, Alan Gauld, Trevor Hamilton, Roger Luckhurst, Shane McCorristine, Janet Oppenheim, and Alex Owen. Clearly, some overlap in the above literature is to be expected, and is evident. Some scholars present typologies, analytical frameworks, and discussion of specific relevant themes, while others only articulate the latter, but with noteworthy conclusions.

Esoteric Classification and Analytical Methodologies

When Faivre introduced his important 'components of esotericism' in the 1990s, he was attempting to establish the characteristics of a formalized occult discipline which had previously been largely regarded as a taboo academic field of study.[1] He presented the elements of esotericism in 'the modern West' as a 'form of thought', a

[1] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.

systematic and academic way in which to consider the field.[2] Such an appropriate classification is critical to enable the serious study of an unusual subject, as Hanegraaff contends when he described Faivre's components of esotericism as a 'new synthesis' which 'became fundamental' to the recent growth of the field.[3] This thesis presents a similar 'form of thought', not one which attempts to empirically describe what the paranormal is, but one which illustrates the characteristics of the nascent paranormal domain as it was in the late-nineteenth century. While the paranormal domain can be considered academically as esoteric, again, it is not itself esotericism. Consequently, one would expect any sensible characterization or classification of the paranormal to overlap with Faivre's components of esotericism without being entirely synonymous with them, and it will be shown throughout this thesis that this is the case with the paranormal domain as presented herein. Faivre describes four 'intrinsic' or fundamental components and two 'extrinsic' or relative ones. According to him, the intrinsic elements must all be present within specific scholarly analysis to conclude that a subject is esoteric. The extrinsic elements are frequently seen to be found in such analysis in conjunction with the intrinsic ones, but not in all, and so would be limiting to the exploration if they were considered as fundamental.[4] The present work similarly uses this approach by classifying both intrinsic and extrinsic components of the paranormal domain, albeit under the three modes of philosophy, methodology, and spirituality, or thinking, doing, and being, respectively.

Faivre's four fundamental elements are: 1) Correspondences, the consideration of the principle of universal interdependence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, sometimes referred to by the Hermetic phrase 'As above, so below.'[5] 2) Living Nature, whereby the cosmos is regarded as essentially alive in all parts. The reading of and understanding of Nature exposes a knowledge or 'gnosis' allowing for magic and science. 3) Imagination and Mediations, being the complementary notions which describe rituals, symbolic images, mandalas, and intermediary spirits, which variously allow for the development of a gnosis of Nature. 4) Experience of Transmutation, the individual metamorphosis resulting from the realization of the

[2] Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 10.
[3] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 383, 388.
[4] Faivre, *Access*, pp. 10, 14.
[5] See also, Nicholas Campion, *What Do Astrologers Believe?* (London: Granta Books, 2006), pp. 2-4.

unity of gnosis and inner experience, or intellectual activity and active imagination. The two relative components are: 5) The Praxis of the Concordance, the creative individual and collective will to discover commonalities across varied religious traditions with a view to acquiring an all-encompassing gnosis. 6) Transmission, the dissemination of esoteric teaching from master to disciple, which assumes both the validity of the knowledge, and the critical importance of the initiatory path.[6] It will be shown that features of the paranormal domain are found to varying degrees within this classification. All of the intrinsic characteristics of the mode of thinking, which are universality, inclusivity of the material and the immaterial, eclecticism, and interconnectedness, can be considered as part of element 1) Correspondences. One of the intrinsic characteristics of the mode of doing, scientific method, the extrinsic characteristic in the same mode, idiosyncratic paranormal attributes, and the intrinsic characteristic of higher laws and faculties of the mode of being, can all be regarded as related to 2) Living Nature. The intrinsic characteristics of the mode of doing, hidden faculties and layers of consciousness, and of the mode of being, communication between souls and realms, dovetail with 3) Imagination and Mediations.

Asprem approaches the field from a Western Esoteric perspective in his major 2104 study *The Problem of Disenchantment*. Beginning in 1900, he provides a detailed analysis of esoteric and paranormal thought up to the onset World War II. While overlapping chronologically with the later primary sources discussed in the present thesis, this important work is also relevant here because of some of the congruent historical context he articulates, especially the complexity of contemporary intellectual discourses.[7] Asprem situates his work within Hanegraaff's 'Esotericism 3.0', the third generation of scholarship on Western Esotericism, with an overt emphasis on 'contextualism over essentialism, complexity over simple binaries and stable identities, and a focus on diachronic change over stability.'[8] I likewise place the discussions of the present work within this broad classification. I will show that the epistemological contextualism manifests as the themes explored in this thesis, such as secularization, the impact of a spiritual revival, and the influence of science and

[6] Faivre, *Access*, pp. 10-15.
[7] Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900-1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 1-14.
[8] Ibid., p. 416. This software metaphor, with 'Esotericism 1.0' as overtly religionist, and 'Esotericism 2.0' based on Faivre's paradigm, discussed earlier, is derived from Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in *New Age*, pp. 384-410.

psychology in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. The assumed inherent complexity and interplay between philosophy, science, and religion, necessarily leads to a broad contextual approach which shapes both the themes of my analytical framework and the multifaceted characteristics of my conclusion, the typology of the paranormal domain. While the paranormal domain articulated herein describes the thinking about the paranormal over a short period of time, it is as a consequence of diachronic change of all contextual aspects, and itself will change over time. As such, it may prove useful not only to scholars of psychical research of the period, but also of other periods. Asprem suggests that esoteric discourse occupies an unusual place in between disciplines, and overlaps with religion, science and philosophy.[9] I concur with this, and argue that an analytical framework driven by these intellectual domains is therefore appropriate to explore the complexity of discourses on paranormal thinking and psychical research of the late-nineteenth century.

Asprem's core argument relates to the reaction against Max Weber's sociological theory of intellectualization and rationalization leading to 'the disenchantment of the world.' He reconceptualises this disenchantment as a series of intellectual problems which led to the separation of science and religion, rather than a socio-historic process. His model of disenchantment consists of: Epistemological optimism, the rejection of the mysterious, with Nature being fully explicable by empiricism and reason; Metaphysical scepticism, in which science cannot conceive of anything not empirically shown, with metaphysics as impossible; and Axiological scepticism, the separation of facts and values, with science unable to know anything of 'meaning.' Critically, for Asprem, this model is considered as the 'intellectual sacrifice' necessary to possess religion,[10] and is analogous to the acceptance of spirituality, or the mode of being, in the paranormal domain of the present work. These intellectual 'problems' requiring 'cures' correspond to what I term 'nodes of interaction.' These similarly allow for a dynamic consideration of the subject by looking at the key points of intellectual tension which shaped psychical research of the period, partly driven by a reaction to this disenchantment. Asprem's three problem areas, or dimensions, are: 1. The *social* dimension of rejected knowledge, the *worldview* dimension of enchantment and disenchantment, and the *epistemic*

[9] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 417.
[10] Ibid., p. 36.

dimension of gnosis, higher knowledge, special faculties and methods for obtaining it.[11] This analytical framework has some similarities with my own. The broad cultural themes of science, religion, and philosophy, are analogous to the social dimension. The impacts of these on the SPR and its members can be considered in a similar manner to the worldview dimension. Lastly, the activities, methodologies, and writings of the early psychical researchers reflect aspects of the epistemic dimension.

Of specific relevance to this thesis, Asprem discusses the scientific worldview prevalent in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, with a focus on the contemporary arguments for and against scientific naturalism.[12] While he contends, as do other scholars, that the psychical researchers of the early SPR were motivated to adhere to scientific naturalism to overcome the disenchantment of the time, I will show that they perhaps fell short of this ideal in practice. This concurs with Asprem, who refers to this dilution of scientific naturalism exhibited by the psychical researchers as 'open-ended naturalism.'[13] This is considered primarily in Chapters 5 and 7, which discuss science and the paranormal domain, respectively. Of further specific relevance for the present work, Asprem overlays his model of disenchantment onto the position occupied by some forms of animism, polytheisms, and pantheisms within Owen Flanagan's naturalism-supernaturalism continuum model.[14] Relevant examples occupying this position of the model include the themes of spiritualism, occultism, and psychical research, which mirror closely some of the cultural themes analysed within this thesis.[15]

Stuckrad uses a broad analytical framework, an 'Esoteric field of discourse', in his *Western Esotericism* (2005) which has much of relevance for the present work. He notes that modern research presents esotericism as a structural component of European history of religion and culture, while influencing the evolution of modernity, especially the development of modern science and culture.[16] Emerging, or re-emerging from the 'so-called Hermetism of the Renaissance' and shaped by the

[11] Ibid., p. 418.
[12] Ibid., pp. 86, 151-155.
[13] Ibid., p. 78.
[14] Ibid., pp. 76-77, 79.
[15] Owen Flanagan, 'Varieties of Naturalism', in Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson, *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 430-452.
[16] Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (London and Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2005), pp. 2-3.

increasing scholarly recognition of the interplay between, esotericism, science, and the Enlightenment,[17] Stuckrad's view of the field parallels that which transpires from my own research. I will show that the characteristics of the paranormal domain do not arise from a polarized battle between faith and reason, but rather from the dynamic between these, and other, intellectual and cultural domains.[18] With reference to Faivre's paradigm, Stuckrad, utilizing the more mature scholarship of 'Esotericism 3.0', to use Hanegraaff's term, is critical of the basis of his definition of esotericism as being somewhat tautological. He suggests that Faivre employed a specific phase of modern religious history which excluded Jewish and Islamic esotericism, as well as Buddhism. More inclusively, Stuckrad utilizes the idea of religious pluralism, regarding Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and other European polytheisms as integral elements of European culture.[19] I will show that the paranormal domain presented in this thesis not only assumes a similar religious, or spiritual, pluralism, but also that specific elements of the spiritual revival discussed in Chapter 4 draw upon some aspects of these faiths.

Stuckrad's 'Esoteric field of discourse' attempts to describe the dynamics and development of esoteric discourse in a historical context. He suggests that to understand why particular historical narratives were constructed at particular times, one must consider the social, political, legal, and cultural circumstances which shaped esoteric traditions in particular ways.[20] Likewise, in this thesis, I attempt to describe the commonalities, discontinuities, and the cultural interplay with the intellectual tensions related to a 'paranormal field of discourse' with respect to esoteric scholarship and the specific historical context of the late-nineteenth century.

In addition to Stuckrad's notion of religious pluralism, he underpins his 'Esoteric field of discourse' by considering traditions versus discourses and the plurality of identities, the notions of which are both reflected in the present work. He contends that in the sphere of the history of religions, traditions only affect the discussions directly in a small way, while it is in fact the religious discourses

[17] Ibid., pp. 2-5.
[18] This is also reflected in Asprem's notion of complexity, in Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 417.
[19] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 5. Cathy Gutierrez considers the beginnings of Spiritualism in America in the mid-nineteenth century with respect to this concept of religious pluralism, in Cathy Gutierrez, 'Spiritualism', in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 197.
[20] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, pp. 5-6.

regarding these traditions which are used to describe the historical context representing 'the social organisation of tradition, opinion and knowledge.'[21] Similarly, I am attempting to describe the complexity of the specific historical context of the early psychical research undertaken by members of the SPR in order to highlight an intellectual organisation of tradition, opinion, and knowledge, which manifests as the paranormal domain. Stuckrad argues that his concept of the plurality of identities, with a 'one person, one faith' perspective of religious identity is long-standing, and not just one of modernity. Consequently, he introduces personalities that demonstrate the multi-layered nature of religious identities as part of his historical account.[22] I utilize a similar approach in my analytical framework with my introduction of individuals that highlight the complex nature of the identities of psychical researchers thematically with respect to science, religion, and philosophy, rather than biographically. Despite the interests of some of these thinkers being polemic and idiosyncratic, I argue that they represented a certain cohesion of scientific, philosophic, spiritual, and paranormal concepts which I have attempted to classify.

Stuckrad suggests that a more inclusive interpretative approach is required to fully analyse these historical contexts, utilizing a concept of 'the other.' For him, this notion comprises alternative religious options, but also the interplay between religious systems and political systems.[23] While my own research explores alternative religious, spiritual, and intellectual options, I examine the dynamics between these and psychical research, rather than with political systems. Thus, as Stuckrad concludes that the esoteric is a valid element of discourse,[24] I conclude that the paranormal, itself an element of the esoteric, is also a valid element of discourse which illustrates the continuities and dynamics of the early psychical researchers of the SPR and the discursive transfer between certain aspects of culture, especially science, religion, and philosophy.

Furthermore, Stuckrad views esotericism as being a scholarly construct,[25] and, likewise, I argue that the paranormal domain presented in this work is also such a construct, which describes an element of cultural dynamics rather than a coherent

[21] Ibid., p. 6.
[22] Ibid., p. 7.
[23] Ibid., p. 8.
[24] Ibid., p. 8.
[25] Ibid., p. 9.

doctrine, or a distinct body of tradition. Nevertheless, it is a cohesive form of thought which helps to highlight the important characteristics of thinking about the paranormal.

With respect to Stuckrad's terminology and methodology, what makes my 'paranormal field of discourse' esoteric is the dialectic between the hidden and the revealed, but also the acceptable and the unacceptable, the intellectual tensions which help to describe the 'otherness' or 'deviance' from the intellectual norm of the time.[26] Consequently, one would expect the themes, or motifs, which arise from Stuckrad's discourse to overlap with those emerging from my research in this thesis. Unsurprisingly, we find the familiar concepts of materiality and immateriality, the correspondences between different aspects of the cosmos, such as between body and soul, or spirit and matter, and the concept of living nature, in both.[27]

Broad was SPR President more than once, having published a number of relevant works, with the three most pertinent being *The Mind and Its Place in Nature* (1937), *Religion, Philosophy and Psychical Research* (1953), and *Lectures on Psychical Research* (1962). He is not cited as extensively as most of the other scholars highlighted here, but his diverse insightful comments on paranormal phenomena,[28] Christianity,[29] detail on Gurney[30] and Myers,[31] warrant recognition. In a similar way to this thesis, Broad considers the notions of life after death, telepathy, and consciousness as critically important to the field, but differs from it by avoiding any deep cultural interpretation, other than a religious one. Of greater relevance here is his utilization of analytical philosophy, specifically the concept of 'Basic Limiting Principles', as a framework to assess ostensibly paranormal phenomena investigated by early psychical researchers. These principles define the accepted boundaries of practical activities and scientific theories supported by empirical evidence which reside within ordinary experience. His argument is that psychical research considers those events which appear to conflict with one or more of these principles, with such

[26] Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[27] Ibid., p. 11.
[28] C. D. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1937), p. 428.
[29] C. D. Broad, *Religion, Philosophy and Psychical Research* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), pp. 220-221.
[30] Broad, *Lectures*, pp. 10, 224-225.
[31] Ibid., p. 336.

an occurrence referred to as an 'Ostensibly Paranormal Event.'[32] He suggests that a psychical researcher has to consider whether such an event actually happened, and if so, question if it has been accurately recorded and described. Further, he argues, if it did happen and was correctly recorded, is there really any conflict with any of the basic limiting principles? Broad contends that the event could either be regarded as merely a strange coincidence, explainable by known 'agents and laws', or by agents or laws or both, not yet recognized.[33] We will see throughout this thesis that these are the very same considerations that the early psychical researchers of the SPR made in their paranormal investigations, and form an important part of the second dimension of my analytical framework which focusses on aspects of these individuals.

Broad's classification of the basic limiting principles can be summarized as follows: (1) *General Principles of Causation*. (1.1) It is impossible that an event can begin to have any effects before it has happened. (1.2) It is impossible that an event with a known end date can contribute to cause an event which begins later, unless: (i) The earlier event causes a process of change which continues throughout the period, culminating in the initiation of the later event, or (ii) The earlier event causes a structural change which persists throughout the period, and ultimately combines with another change which causes the later event. (1.3) It is impossible that an event, occurring on a known date and in a known place, can cause an affect at a remote place, unless there is a finite period between the two events comprising of a causal chain of events between the two. (2) *Limitations on the Action of Mind on Matter*. It is impossible for an event in a person's mind to produce directly any change in the material world except certain changes in their own brain. (3) *Dependence of Mind on Brain*. Any mental event causes an associated event in the brain of the living body. (4) *Limitations on Ways of acquiring Knowledge*. (4.1) It is impossible for a person to perceive a physical event or a material thing except via sensations which that event or thing produces in their mind. (4.2) It is impossible for A to know what experiences B is having or has had, unless by some deliberate or unintentional communication or interpretation of bodily gestures or sounds. (4.3) It is impossible for a person to forecast, except by chance, that an event will happen at a particular time and place, other than by inference from data supplied by situations or other persons, or suggested

[32] Broad, *Religion*, p. 7.
[33] Ibid., p. 7.

by experience. (4.4) It is impossible for a person to have knowledge of an event having taken place at some time in the past, other than via direct personal experience, or external communication of that experience.[34]

Thus, the focus of the present work, especially the idea of a paranormal domain, sits squarely within the existing scholarly frameworks of Faivre, Asprem, Stuckrad, and Broad. Such an analysis moves the field away from the purely naturalistic, and as Asprem notes, 'push the limits of reason and evidence into the sphere of the religious.'[35] So, while the direction of esoteric scholarship has moved away from its early overtly religionist perspective, consideration of religious and spiritual themes is critical to an analysis of a 'paranormal field of discourse.' This is reflected in the analytical framework I use within this thesis. It is a two-dimensional historo-cultural matrix, with the broad themes of religion and science on one axis (macro components of the first dimension), with the elements of cultural influences prevalent within general society and individual psychical researchers and their works and activities on the other axis (micro components of the second dimension). The first dimension, broadly delineated into religion, spirituality, science, and psychology, aims to demonstrate the important cultural influences which helped to shape the questioning environment within which the SPR was formed and early psychical research took place. Its macro perspective has similarities to Asprem's 'social' dimension, with the broad influences broken down into smaller sub-themes which aid the analysis. The second dimension considers these influences at a lower level, and some of the individual activities and works undertaken by early members of the SPR. It's micro perspective mirrors Asprem's 'worldview' and 'epistemic' dimensions to a certain degree. The analysis of the works of the early psychical researchers is by no means exhaustive, as this would prove cumbersomely repetitive, and is presented thematically within numerous chapters of this work, rather than biographically, however, some appropriate context is provided. Arising from this analysis, the area of overlap between these two dimensions attempts to present what the paranormal domain was at that time, distinct, but naturally related to science, religion, but also to philosophy. I present this paranormal domain, utilizing a typology which articulates the concepts, values, and practices, which define the paranormal thinking of a

[34] Ibid., pp. 9-12.
[35] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 79.

particular important period in the history of the field. Given the relevant existing scholarship presented above, and the themes emerging from these and from an exploration of the primary sources, I argue that such an analytical framework, focussed on nodes of intellectual and cultural interaction, is particularly appropriate for discussing the late-Victorian paranormal field. It is structured to adequately consider the complexity of discourses about paranormal thinking, and to reflect diverse contexts at different levels, both within general society and within particular individuals. Using the analytical framework described here, which builds upon existing scholarly analytical frameworks of esotericism, I seek to demonstrate the complexity of the cultural history of early psychical research, without playing off religion against science, Christianity against occultism, or reason against superstition. Instead, these, and other themes are intricately intertwined with each other, and I suggest that an analysis of their relationships illustrates the nature of paranormal thinking of the time, and enables an eclectic yet cohesive paranormal domain to be presented.

The Esoteric and the Occult as Cultural Norms

In addition to the broad alignment of this thesis to Hanegraaff's scholarship on 'Esotericism 3.0', briefly mentioned earlier as part of Asprem's approach, two other scholars who have recently explored the impacts of esotericism on contemporary culture are Christopher Partridge in *The Re-enchantment of the West* (2004) and Nicholas Campion in *The New Age in the Modern West* (2016). While the chronology of both works moves way beyond my own thesis, they utilize a historo-cultural context which overlaps to such an extent with the present work that there are many specific congruous points of relevance as well as articulating a broad cultural foundation which underpins my own research. Partridge employs a model of re-enchantment based on the confluence of secularization and sacralization emerging from an essentially non-Christian religio-cultural milieu, the 'occult milieu', or 'occulture.'[36] Stemming from Weber's notion of Disenchantment of the World, he shows that re-enchantment was prevalent in the late-nineteenth century, as it is now. I

[36] Christopher Partridge, *The Re-enchantment of the West: Volume I, Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), p. 3.

argue that this is the very same environment which fostered the early psychical research of the SPR, amongst other aspects of what I term the Spiritual Revival. Campion's underlying theme, derived from Plato, is that history has a direction which is psychologically driven, and its progression is the manifestation of a world soul. He uses the complementary notions of counterculture, utopia, and prophecy to explore this theme in the context of the development of a contemporary New Age,[37] but it his discussion of esotericism which is most relevant to this thesis. Like Partridge's 'occulture', Campion's 'Westocericism' assumes an esoteric philosophy deeply embedded in Western culture, a tradition stemming from seventeenth-century Christian theosophy, medieval Jewish Kabballah, late-classical Neoplatonism, and ultimately ancient Egyptian magic.[38] Referencing Plato's notion of consciousness underpinning matter, and that Ideas are real, Campion highlights the links between the material and immaterial realms, which I will show were also important to the early psychical researchers of the SPR. While he suggests that theosophy was the most influential medium for the transmission of esotericism into the modern world,[39] I will likewise argue that the theosophy of the nineteenth century was an important component of the occulture which enabled and motivated early psychical research. Partridge's occulture and Campion's Westocericism identify the influential esoteric current of the prevalent questioning intellectual and cultural environment within which the early thinking about the paranormal was able to take place in a structured way by early members of the SPR.

Scholarship on Psychical Research

The other key scholars, referenced here on a broader basis rather than one of classification, are John Beloff, Alan Gauld, Trevor Hamilton, Roger Luckhurst, Shane McCorristine, Janet Oppenheim, and Alex Owen. These scholars do not express analytical frameworks or typologies of esotericism, or of the paranormal, which I have explicitly referenced in this work, but are influential enough to warrant their individual mention. John Beloff, President of the SPR over two periods, has written a

[37] Nicholas Campion, *The New Age in the Modern West: Counterculture, Utopia and Prophecy from the Late Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), pp. 1-3.
[38] Ibid., p. 4.
[39] Ibid., p. 5.

number of works on the subject, with portions of his *Existence of Mind* (1962), *Psychological Sciences* (1975), and *Parapsychology* (1993) covering the ground most appropriate to this thesis. His predominantly historical approach is also shaped by professional psychology, focussing on experimental phenomena or occurrences which can be somehow measured or validated. This narrow focus distinguishes it from the broad approach of this thesis, as does his explicitly stated avoidance of cosmological considerations. Nevertheless, Beloff's works are pertinent to this thesis in three key ways. These are the complementary themes of mind-body duality[40] (important to the development of both psychology and psychical research), the emergence of psychology as a distinct science,[41] and the early psychical research of the SPR.[42] In Chapter 6, I make reference to Beloff's notions on the diverse fertile intellectual environment prevalent at the time. The focus on some aspects of these, such as mesmerism and its links to contemporary science, commented upon by him, are also discussed in Chapter 6, which deals with psychology and consciousness. The picture of the formation of the SPR and the importance of the Sidgwick Circle in Chapter 1 relies upon the work of a number of scholars, including Gauld and Hamilton, discussed below, but also to a great extent on Beloff's summary in *Parapsychology*.

Gauld presents a more comprehensive history of the formation of the SPR and its early investigations in his important *The Founders of Psychical Research* (1968). Consequently, he does not utilize an explicit analytical framework, however, he discusses in some depth many of the themes of religious doubt, Spiritualism, and the writings and activities of the likes of Sidgwick, Gurney, and Myers, as I do in this thesis, and so is referenced passim. Gauld posits more of an individual crisis of faith hypothesis rather than a broad cultural one. Further, his discussion of the cosmology of the psychical researchers is presented as both distinct and largely confusing rather than as part of a cohesive paranormal domain, as I posit herein. Nevertheless, he presents an important and relevant perspective on less tangible elements of this

[40] John Beloff, *The Existence of Mind* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1962), p. 22-24.
[41] John Beloff, *Psychological Sciences: A Review of Modern Psychology* (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1975), p. 1.
[42] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 64-92.

discourse, such as the altruistic and duty-led motivations of many of the early psychical researchers, as part of their worldview.[43]

Hamilton focusses on investigations of life after death, with Myers as the chief protagonist, in *Immortal Longings* (2009). Whilst I also recognise in this thesis the importance of Myers to the discourse, my contention is that the complex dynamic between all the key individuals and their interactions with the evolving cultural context of the time is fundamental to effectively describing the field. Hamilton highlights, in the context of psychical research, the themes of the nature of consciousness, mind-body relationships, the influence upon psychology, and the importance of Darwin, all of which I also consider to varying degrees.[44] Other themes that Hamilton discusses which dovetail with my own analysis to some extent include the scientific approach of the SPR, scientific naturalism, the nature of experimentation, and testable hypotheses.[45]

Luckhurst presents a broad, multidisciplinary, yet comprehensive approach in *The Invention of Telepathy* (2002). He explores the concept of telepathy before discussing its place within the wider paranormal. This thesis contrasts with Luckhurst's in that, within it, I consider the entire domain of strange phenomena ahead of any individual element. The endeavours of the psychical researchers were vastly more diverse than the consideration of telepathy alone and my approach here attempts to reflect that. Luckhurst dives deeper into wider Victorian 'occulture' than do the other works here, including, of course, some discussion of gothic literature.[46] Of greatest relevance to the present work is Luckhurst's discussion of the important influences of psychology and the mainstream science to early psychical research, which I largely concur with herein.[47]

McCorristine predominantly concentrates on ghosts and ghost-seeing in *Spectres of the Self* (2010). His underlying thesis is a psychological one, and he suggests that ghosts are aspects of an individual's personality, specifically 'the stuff of dreams.'[48] He concentrates on psychiatry, psychology, and psychical research of

[43] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 186. This can be considered in conjunction with one of Asprem's three problem areas, namely his 'worldview dimension', Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 418.
[44] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 4.
[45] Ibid., pp. 245, 252, 256, 258.
[46] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 90.
[47] Ibid., pp. 72, 75.
[48] McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 1-3.

the nineteenth century, but makes some points on the SPR, scientific naturalism, and Spiritualism which are relevant to my discussion.[49] Given his narrower focus, McCorristine does not consider science, religion, or philosophy in the same depth as is I discuss in this thesis, but he does similarly articulate some of the interplay across these domains.

Oppenheim investigates psychical research over a very similar period to the present work, but with more exploration of Spiritualism, in *The Other World* (1985). With such a strong emphasis on Spiritualism, Oppenheim posits a much greater link between the movement and psychical research than I do. While critically important to understanding the early SPR during this period, Oppenheim underplays the clearly evident disparity in socio-economic backgrounds between the majority of Spiritualists and the majority of the founding members of the SPR, especially of the Sidgwick Circle, highlighted by both Asprem and by myself. She considers the field from a cultural, intellectual, and emotional perspective, and articulates well the intrinsic importance of science, philosophy, and religion to the discussion of early psychical research which mirrors my own research. Oppenheim overtly maintains the importance of mainstream religion, especially Christianity, in her conclusions that both Spiritualists and psychical researchers aspired to bring religion more into line with science, and reduce the threat of science to the fundamental tenets of Christianity.[50] While I will also show a unifying and syncretic motivation of the psychical researchers, I contend that this was more to do with a broader acceptance of spirituality on their part rather than to always be inclusive of Christianity. I will argue that psychical research was less of a surrogate faith, or a pseudoscience, as Oppenheim maintains in Part II of her work,[51] and more of a quest to understand the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it.

Owen discusses Occultism to a greater degree in *The Place of Enchantment* (2004), but also tackles gender more than the other works here, and more than this thesis. Stemming from a similar exploration of disenchantment to Asprem, Owen discusses the changing religious environment, but places the occultism of

[49] Ibid., p. 21.
[50] Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 396-397.
[51] Ibid., pp. 59-110, 205-325.

organizations such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn more centrally within the cultural landscape.

The Analytical Framework

Before the thematic chapters are presented I think it would be prudent to restate the key elements of the analytical framework I have used throughout this thesis. It is a two-dimensional historo-cultural matrix, with the broad themes of religion and science on one axis (the first macro dimension), with cultural influences that influenced individual psychical researchers, their works and activities on the other axis (the second micro dimension). The broad influences of the first dimension, evident within the works of all the scholars discussed earlier, are broken down into smaller sub-themes in the following chapters, while the individual cultural influences, activities, and works of the second dimension are spread appropriately throughout. I present the congruence of the dimensions of this analysis as a paranormal domain, a typology which articulates the concepts, values, and practices which define the paranormal thinking of the early membership of the SPR, an interpretative focus which accurately represents the intellectual fruits of psychical research of the time.

Part II

THE RELIGIOUS THEMES

Chapter 3

The Dilution of Mainstream Religion

Declining Influence

In this chapter, the first part of the religion element of my two-dimensional historo-cultural analytical framework, I explore the intellectual and theological currents which led to the dilution of the influence and importance of Christianity, in particular, in Western societies. This is important from a broad cultural perspective, as it helps to establish the environment in which the SPR was created and early investigation into paranormal phenomena took place. Apart from the direct connections between some of the theological thinkers of the time and early psychical researchers, this chapter also sheds some light on the individual moral and intellectual challenges to mainstream faith which led them down the unusual path of research into paranormal phenomena. As such, this chapter directly supports an element of my first key argument, the perception that religion alone was an inadequate intellectual tool with which to answer the fundamental questions of nature. It therefore also highlights aspects of my second key argument, in that an alternative intellectual approach was required, which I will show throughout the following chapters was the syncretic mindset of the paranormal domain. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, secularization certainly became more manifest, partly fuelled by a growing religious doubt, but this rising uncertainty in faith was just one part of a broader social questioning environment.[1] The general population was becoming increasingly educated,[2] and became more questioning of traditional values and beliefs. In parallel, this inquisitorial atmosphere increased interest in esoteric thought and paranormal phenomena. Consequently, not so much a lack of faith but a lack of confidence in the established Church meant that there was a reduction in church attendance, and fewer

[1] Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 18.
[2] Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 304-327.

men from traditional backgrounds chose to take up Holy Orders.[3] This atmosphere allowed organizations such as the SPR, whose members wanted to explore the truth of nature but were neither religious or inclined to study esoteric spirituality, to undertake the investigation of paranormal phenomena using scientific methodology. Various broadly religious groups, whether followers of mainstream religion (principally Protestantism in Victorian Britain), or adherents of more esoteric spiritual philosophies such as Spiritualism or Theosophy, were the main antagonists to the supremacy of science at this time. The situation was not entirely straightforward, however, as recent scholarship challenges the notion that traditionalists in the Victorian period became more concerned by the growing threat of secularization, which paralleled the increasingly prevalent rationalism.[4] While not completely dismissing this idea, the evidence of declining church attendance and less formal involvement with religious organizations, such as the Church of England, may highlight a growing dissatisfaction with the institutions themselves rather than with religious faith, as suggested by David Nash and Michael Ledger-Lomas. They argue that some individuals were able to make more personal choices about their own spirituality, whether by following mainstream religion in a less dogmatic manner, outside of the established church, or by embracing other, more esoteric belief systems.[5] From the perspective of the increasingly less influential conservative religious institutions, however, this must have appeared as an inevitable erosion of their spiritual, social, and cultural supremacy, and so was just as damaging to them as a 'crisis of faith.'[6] To its hierarchy, the growing disassociation with the established church may well have been indistinguishable from a progressive loss of faith, even if the actual situation was more complex. Timothy Larsen contends that the number of those who professed an 'anti-Christian material atheism' in Victorian Britain was insignificant, while many of those who harboured an affinity with these themes actually returned to a position of faith.[7] This suggests that an intricate network of

[3] David Nash, 'Reassessing the 'Crisis of Faith' in the Victorian Age: Eclecticism and the Spirit of Moral Inquiry', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 16 (2011), pp. 65-66; and Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'Unitarians and the contradictions of liberal Protestantism in Victorian Britain: the Free Christian Union, 1867–70', *Historical Research* 83 (2010), p. 487.
[4] Charles LaPorte, 'Victorian Literature, Religion, and Secularization', *Literature Compass* 10 (2013), pp. 277–278; and Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 28.
[5] Nash, 'Reassessing', pp. 65-66; and Ledger-Lomas, 'Unitarians', pp. 487-488.
[6] See Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe: 1848-1914* (London: Macmillan, 2000).
[7] Timothy Larsen, 'The Regaining of Faith: Reconversions among Popular Radicals in Mid-Victorian England', *Church History*, 70 (2001), p. 528.

differing and often evolving religious perspectives existed, providing a fluid environment in which an interest in Spiritualism and paranormal phenomena became more acceptable.

The erosion of the influence within society of mainstream religion, especially Christianity, was advanced by both endogenous and exogenous factors. From within, the liberal interpretation of scripture and doctrine, which sought to address the rapidly increasing and worrying discontinuities with contemporary knowledge, did make Christian theology more relevant, but, in the process, also diluted its previously unquestioned authority. Some of the influence upon this decline is explored with reference to two compendiums of moderate theological essays written predominantly by Church of England clergy, *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and *Lux Mundi* (1889). Traditionalists, particularly within the Evangelical wing of the church, railed against the emergence of modern theology, which served to widen the gap between the liberalising elements of the Church and the more conservative traditions.[8] This, in turn, led to many becoming disillusioned with the Church.[9] External challenges to traditionalist religion, apart from the increasingly questioning atmosphere which was pervading all of society, came from the growth of science and its developing intellectual authority. The establishment of new academic disciplines, such as ancient history, geology, and biblical criticism, directly impacted elements of Christian teaching. An overly simplistic understanding of 'faith versus reason' emerged, with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution held as the main challenger to conservative theologies. However, it will be shown that the reality was far more complex. These academic advances, in addition to the religious changes taking place within society, inevitably impacted scholarship. In this chapter, I argue, as does Alan Gauld, that the dilution of mainstream religion, especially Christianity, influenced individual members of the SPR to utilize the intellectual concept of a paranormal domain, distinct from science and religion, to help answer their questions about the universe, and humanity's place within it.[10] The analysis of religious themes in this chapter reflects Egil Asprem's broad notion of disenchantment, especially the idea of

[8] Linda Woodhead, *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 96-99.
[9] Chadwick, *Secularization*, pp. 26-27; and McLeod, *Secularisation*, pp. 1-3.
[10] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 32-65.

axiological scepticism expressed about particular Christian doctrine.[11] Further, the important questions about nature and humanity's place within it, being asked by society in general, but certainly by early psychical researchers, can be considered from the perspective of the social and worldview dimensions of Asprem's intellectual problem areas, as an exploration of rejected knowledge and a reaction to disenchantment, discussed in Chapter 2. From the perspective of Kocku von Stuckrad's 'esoteric field of discourse', religious traditions developed into intellectual discourse, with both religious pluralism becoming more acceptable, and the plurality of religious and spiritual identities increasingly manifest, which is explored further in the next chapter.

Secularization and Religious Doubt

It has been well documented, both by commentators at the time and also by more recent scholars, that the nineteenth century saw the swift decline in the influence of conservative forms of religion within society.[12] It perhaps seemed such a pronounced deterioration because it followed a period of increase in the acceptance of religious faith during the early-nineteenth century.[13] What is not clear is whether this secular progression had an inevitability about it, especially when considered within the context of the numerous other rapidly changing cultural themes of the time, such as the advance of industrialisation, regulation of the labour force, and the bureaucratization of governments and social life. More recent scholars, such as Alex Owen, Linda Woodhead, Callum Brown, and Hugh McLeod, while challenging the inevitability of religious decline posited by so many from a socio-historical perspective, do not entirely dismiss the 'crisis of faith' hypothesis as a key contributor

[11] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 36.
[12] Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II: 1860-1901* (London: SCM Press, 1987), p. 423. See also James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (Chicago: Open Court, 1990), pp. 7-12; Linda Woodhead, in *Reinventing Christianity: Nineteenth Century Contexts*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), pp. 1-2, and Linda Woodhead, *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 95-96; Brown, in *Death*, pp. 28-30, 32, and Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in Western Europe, 1850-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 1, and Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation*, pp. 1-3. An important nineteenth century commentator who discussed this decline is W. E. H. Lecky, in W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, vol.1 (London: Longman, Green, and Co.,1865; repr. 1866), pp. 151-153. Frederic Myers cites Lecky's book as evidence of the widespread perception that the second half of the nineteenth century engendered an 'intellectual climate of a wiser age' in Myers, *HP*, I, p. 4, §103.
[13] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 33.

to secularization, but regard it as but one of a number of diverse changes which took place.[14] In its simplest guise, the 'crisis of faith', or even 'loss of faith' theme, which scholars have used until the last few decades to discuss the growing religious uncertainty and secularization of the late-Victorian period, states that the rising doubt was directly proportional to the increase in those who considered themselves modern, rational, and incredulous of superstition. While certainly true for many individuals, it was not true for all. Indeed, more recent scholars reflect my own contention, that this hypothesis is not robust enough to explain the true nature of the interplay between religion, spirituality, and science.[15] The proportion of people who attended church at the end of the nineteenth century was much less than the proportion a century earlier, with secularization manifest across all of society.[16] Even the most strongly devout section of the population in England, the educated middle class Evangelical Christians, now read much that was not the Bible or of a devotional nature, including a greater amount of fiction.[17] Despite the increasing doubts about the literal truth of the Bible and traditional religious doctrines, England still felt very Christian, and public life was not noticeably more secular. However, with towns growing in number and importance, and villages doing the opposite, a more secular atmosphere gradually developed, with church attendances falling, more religious questioning taking place, and the greater level of education paralleling a general political and religious liberalisation.[18] However, reconversion to Christianity was not uncommon at this time.[19] While it is true that church attendance was falling, and that there was a widespread perception that mainstream religion was not fully engaging with modern life, religion was still an integral part of society. However, increasingly, religious

[14] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 9; Woodhead, *Reinventing*, p. 240; Brown, *Death*, p. 30; and McLeod, *Secularisation*, p. 147. See also Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, p. 112, and more generally, Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
[15] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 10-11. Also, Brooke outlines six modes of secularization, in John Hedley Brooke, 'Science and Secularization', in *Reinventing Christianity: Nineteenth Century Contexts*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 232-235.
[16] Larsen, 'Regaining', pp. 527-530.
[17] Ibid., p. 533; and McLeod, *Secularisation*, p. 149. McLeod cites a few notable examples of novels and plays from the 1880s and 1890s which have religious doubt as a central theme, including Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* (1881), Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888), Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Émile Zola's 'Three Cities' trilogy *Lourdes* (1894), *Rome* (1896), and *Paris* (1897), in McLeod, *Secularisation*, pp. 149-150. For more on the contribution of literature to the secularization of religion see Lynne Hapgood, 'The Reconceiving of Christianity': Secularisation, Realism and the Religious Novel: 1888-1900', *Literature and Theology* 10 (1996), pp. 329-350.
[18] Larsen, 'Regaining', p. 533.
[19] Ibid., p. 534.

discussion was organised around the place of religion in society, rather than simply preaching from the Bible.[20] Hence, this suggests not a lack of faith, but a lack of faith in more traditional forms of religion. There was also a reduction in the numbers taking up Holy Orders in the Church of England, partly as a consequence of religious doubt, but also due to a greater reluctance by privileged and educated young men to sacrifice their full participation in a progressively culturally exciting late Victorian society.[21] As A. G. L. Haig has highlighted, talented scholars, and those from the wealthier and more elite echelons of society were increasingly turning their backs on what they perceived as an overly restrictive clerical world. [22] This was compounded by increasingly dogmatic and restrictive ideas within the established Church such as the well-documented Anglican temperance movement.[23] Consequently, despite having occupied a central position within the history and structure of universities for hundreds of years, the Church was now having a declining influence within the academic sphere, while professional science was having a growing impact. Nevertheless, the Church was still hugely important to all aspects of British life, and influenced all members of society. Rather than the familiar 'crisis of faith' hypothesis to explain the Church's declining academic influence, which Haig posits, I concur with Nash and Ledger-Lomas that a growing dissatisfaction with the institution itself was of greater significance.[24]

While secularization should not be confused with dechristianization, as Larsen has pointed out, in the West it was predominantly Christianity that suffered.[25] An almost unique peculiarity of Christianity is that its creed is concerned solely with its own founder. Other religions, including Buddhism and Confucianism, only presupposed the qualities of remarkable wisdom and righteousness of their founders, and that they used these qualities to shape and express certain moral and philosophical truths about life. Others, such as Judaism and Islam, do profess that their founders received extraordinary revelations from God, but do not assert that they were in any way divine, merely uniquely favoured. This is not true of Christ, however, in that the

[20] Ibid., p. 537; and Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 12.
[21] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, p. 1.
[22] A. G. L. Haig, 'The Church, The Universities and Learning in Later Victorian England', *The Historical Journal* 29 (1986), pp. 187-190.
[23] Gerald Wayne Olsen, '"Physician heal thyself": drink, temperance and the medical question in the Victorian and Edwardian Church of England, 1830-1914', *Addiction* 89 (1994), pp. 1167-1168.
[24] Nash, 'Reassessing', p. 65; and Ledger-Lomas, 'Unitarians', p. 487.
[25] Larsen, 'Regaining', p. 542.

historical Jesus is regarded as both human and divine, and, as such, one of the three 'hypostases' of the triune Godhead. Charles D. Broad suggests that this is one of the key reasons why mainstream conservative Christianity may have been more vulnerable to theological and intellectual attack than the conservative traditions of other religions.[26] Some of those who moved away from Christianity, but did not abandon religion, embraced neo-Christian and esoteric movements, including Spiritualism,[27] discussed in the following chapter. Indeed, the latter experienced its greatest period of growth as Evangelical religion in particular was experiencing its fastest decline.[28] In the late-nineteenth century a greater proportion of intellectual agnostics became more prominent within the general population, and this was of much concern to the Church. However, we will see that religions and spirituality in general actually thrived at this time, but so did a movement of anti-religion. Proponents of atheism were more hostile in the 1870s, but by the 1890s the more commonplace discussion of it tempered their blatant aggression. This enabled many denominations to advance, but with more liberal attitudes. Liberal Protestantism, in general, accepted the challenges posed to Christian theology by reason, free thought, and scientific method, expressing itself as rational, yet unmistakably Christian.[29] The more conservative Christian traditions, such as Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Methodism, also flourished. So, while there was some religious progress and modernisation, there was also a reactionary reinforcement of more traditional theologies with some consequent denominational fractioning.[30] The combination of these forces inevitably weakened the Christian voice. The attempts by existing traditionalist branches of the Church to meet the challenge of advancing rationalism and the rapid changes in society strengthened conservative dogmatism. However, this only led to further fragmentation, with each distinct Christian group more resolutely maintaining their ever narrowing theological position, while others left the Church.[31] The presence of more prominent atheists meant that unbelief was discussed more widely, and across all classes of society. Christians slowly adapted their faith to

[26] Broad, *Religion*, pp. 220-221.
[27] Larsen, 'Regaining', p. 543.
[28] For the rise of Spiritualism in Britain see Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism (Complete)* (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2006), pp. 85-93; for some commentary on the decline of Evangelicalism see Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, pp. 270, 336, 471-472.
[29] Woodhead, *Christianity*, pp. 97-99.
[30] Ibid., p. 99.
[31] Webb, *Occult*, pp. 113-116.

incorporate new social and cultural themes, and so while many still outwardly exhibited a conservative attitude, more questions about faith were being inwardly considered, including amongst the clergy.[32] As Christians with a more critical understanding of the Bible became more common, the polar choice between faith and reason became more diffuse. The severity of the science versus religion battles also lessened in the 1890s, as scientists no longer felt obligated to validate faith through science. There were fewer anti-religious scientific voices heard, such as those of John Tyndall (1820-1893) and the biologist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), and while numerous scientists were still critical of the Church, many simply disregarded religion.[33]

There was a growing sense within society that the personal moderation which Christianity expected from individuals in order to achieve moral development was rather lugubrious in an exciting and rapidly modernising world. Many people grew concerned that a decline of religion would lead to a decline in morals within society. Some, like the writer George Eliot (1819-1880), a friend of both Henry Sidgwick and Frederic Myers,[34] and translator of Ludwig Feuerbach's (1804-1872) famous critique of religion, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841) as *The Essence of Christianity* (1854), tried to present a moral framework distinct from religion. Many others found it difficult to distinguish between these domains.[35] However, some did manage to successfully construct a non-religious ethical framework. One such, we have seen, was the Cambridge intellectual Sidgwick, first President of the SPR, who was regarded by his contemporaries as highly ethical and moral, and almost Christian in his conduct and demeanour, despite having rejected Christian faith.[36] He not only expressed doubts about Christianity, but also about science, especially materialism, and the difficulty in reconciling the two domains.[37] While not wishing to take up holy orders, nevertheless, Sidgwick's aspiration to lead a moral and ethical life is indicated when he said, '…when the stream of knowledge is widening day by day, it seems as if a man who wished to benefit mankind by study is forced definitely to take up a

[32] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, pp. 112-113.
[33] Ibid., pp. 114-115.
[34] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, pp. 185, 257-258.
[35] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 49, 102.
[36] Charles D. Cashdollar, *The Transformation of Theology, 1830-1890: Positivism and Protestant Thought in Britain and America* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 316, 318-319. Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 79; and Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 53-54.

speciality…'[38] So, Sidgwick wanted his endeavours to benefit humanity, but did not want to be forced into a clerical life in order to do so. Regarding morality, Sidgwick believed that on an individual basis, a stated position of unbelief should not necessarily cause a decline in principles, but on a national level, somewhere such as England, where religion and morality were still considered to be inherently conjoined, that the decline of religion would in fact lead to a decline in morality. In speaking of living a moral life without Christianity, Sidgwick said, '…suppose the most powerful informing and inspiring faith is only obtainable from ideas which depend on a right view of historical facts – why is this inconceivable?'[39] Reiterating his rejection of Christianity, but not of wanting to help others, he said '…I want to earn my freedom from the Church of England. What a hideous compromise between baseness and heroism!'[40] Sidgwick originally thought that unless an individual literally believed all the teachings of their Church, then they should leave it, rather than continue on dishonestly. However, by the mid-1890s, he expressed the opinion that the Church remained an important focus for moral good in society, with decent and moral persons sticking by it rather than highlight issues with particular doctrines, believing there was no suitable alternative ethical framework.[41] Thus, unless an individual layperson thought negatively about their Church, any doubts stemming from free and independent thinking should be allowed, but that it was unacceptable for the Church to force clergy to use public words with which they did not agree.[42] So, not only did the decline in the influence of religion influence society in general, but individuals important within the sphere of early psychical research. Those, such as Sidgwick and his Cambridge mentees who founded the SPR, expressed their dissatisfaction with religion as both a personal moral barometer or as an all-encompassing intellectual tool.[43] This partly drove the wider philosophical, scientific, and spiritual motivation to answer the fundamental questions of nature, which the Sidgwick Circle and the wider SPR attempted by using the paranormal domain as a focus.

[38] Letter to Roden Noel, February 18th 1860, in Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 47.
[39] Letter to H. G. Dakyns, June 9th 1862, in Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 82.
[40] Letter to H. G. Dakyns, November 26th 1864, in Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 122.
[41] Cashdollar, *Transformation*, p. 320-321.
[42] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, pp. 139-140.
[43] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 32-65.

Liberalism and the Modernisation of Christianity

As has already been suggested, the final decades of the nineteenth century witnessed fast moving social, political, aesthetic, and scientific changes in the West. Anxiety was expressed by some over what they perceived as cultural degeneration, and in Britain this was compounded by signs of irreversible imperial deterioration.[44] I suggest that this anxiety was, for some, one manifestation of 'the Age of Enlightenment', arising from the increasing tension between tradition and progression within society, and parallels the various notions of disenchantment introduced in Chapter 2. In response to this, efforts were made by some from within more conservative traditions to adapt by discussing more moderate forms of religious observance. Many Protestant theologians became more attracted to new ways of thinking about their faith, especially when they sought to promote the Church's involvement in the renovation of society.[45] Whether this helped to create a better alignment between the Church and wider society, or further diluted its influence, is a complex matter. While clearly religious individuals who were committed to their religion and to the tradition and to the institution of the Church, they nevertheless contributed to the dilution of the influence of Christianity. These theologians sought to make the faith more inclusive by embracing the unstoppable growth of science, and expressed these more liberal views in some influential works in the mid to late-Victorian period. This was best exemplified in two collections of theological writings: the broad-church *Essays and Reviews* and the *Lux Mundi* essays, written by liberal Anglo-Catholic theologians,[46] which straddle the key period in the developing liberalisation of Christianity in England. Charles Cashdollar notes that there were two important literary works which somewhat prepared the ground. These were the first of two volumes of Henry Thomas Buckle's (1821-1862) *History of Civilization in England* (1857), and Henry Longueville Mansel's (1820-1871) Bampton Lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought* (1858). While the former dealt with the issue of the scientific approach to the study of history, the latter brought the notion of epistemology more to the forefront of theological thinking.[47]

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[44] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 7.
[45] Cashdollar, *Transformation*, p. 15.
[46] *Essays and Reviews*, ed. by John William Parker (London: J. W. Parker, 1860), and *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, ed. by Charles Gore (London: J. Murray, 1889).
[47] Ibid., pp. 74-75, 81, 84.

Essays and Reviews was collated by Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and Frederick Temple (1821-1902), also at Balliol, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury from 1896 until his death. Despite a statement that each of the authors was only responsible for their own articles and were written entirely independently of each other, the controversy that was generated by some of the essays detrimentally affected the reputation of all of the writers for some time. From the perspective of this thesis, the three most interesting essays are 'On the Study of Evidences of Christianity' by Baden Powell (1796-1860), Professor of Geometry at Oxford and Church of England Priest, 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750', by the academic and priest Mark Pattison (1813-1884), and 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', by Jowett himself.[48] The collection of essays presented four overarching themes which highlight the theological tensions of the time: (i) a disconnect between Christian doctrine and some contemporary intellectual beliefs; (ii) reinforcement of the religious tenet that all truth is of God, and so no intelligent scrutiny of it should be of concern; (iii) reconciliation of the truth of Christianity and the words of the Bible to historical events was unnecessary, as each parable could guide one to religious truth, even if not historically true; and (iv) the truth of revelation should not be proved by reference to miracles and prophecy.[49] Powell espoused positive views on science, and suggested that theologians and religious commentators should take account of new knowledge in different epochs, and actually reject teachings which had been shown to be flawed.[50] Pattison suggested that there was nothing new and nothing wrong with the influence of reason within religious discourses. He attempted to normalize the existence and validity of a wide range of opinions on religious doctrine, and so tried to form a more modern basis for religious authority rather than revelation alone.[51] Pattison expressed the idea that challenging questions about Christian doctrine should be welcomed, as: 'all truth is God's truth.'[52] Hence, clergy should embrace a style of preaching that reflected modern knowledge.[53]

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[48] *Essays and Reviews*, pp. 94, 254, 330. For a fuller account of the entire collection, see Chadwick's analysis in his *The Victorian Church*, pp. 75-97.
[49] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, pp. 75-77.
[50] Baden Powell, 'On the Study of Evidences of Christianity', in *Essays and Reviews*, ed. by John William Parker (London: J. W. Parker, 1860), pp. 94-95.
[51] Mark Pattison, 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750', in *Essays and Reviews*, ed. by John William Parker (London: J. W. Parker, 1860), pp. 257-258.
[52] This is a popular theological claim, particularly in Evangelical circles. See Arthur Holmes, *All Truth is God's Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).
[53] Pattison, 'Tendencies', p. 264.

Jowett also argued that the debate about the authority of Scripture was not a new occurrence. He accepted that these different interpretations of Scripture were as a result of cultural changes such as the progress of the scientific worldview, but also argued that the human mind had evolved, which allowed for different modes of thinking.[54] Jowett stated that any true doctrine of it must conform to disciplines such as science or history, citing specific examples of scientific discrepancy with Christian teaching such as the formation of the Earth and the beginnings of humanity.[55] He said: 'Doubt comes in at the window, when Inquiry is denied at the door.'[56] Again, rooted in Enlightenment rationalism, the general idea was that, because all truth is God's truth, the Church should encourage all attempts to secure it.

The ideas expressed in these essays caused widespread controversy, with calls for mass resignations on the basis that the authors could not morally remain as clergymen. Thinkers such as Sidgwick and Myers were certainly familiar with the theological challenges presented in *Essays and Reviews* from an early age.[57] Some of the essayists were even prosecuted, but the legal judgements were a little ambiguous. Two of the contributors were suspended from their benefices for one year, having been found guilty of denying divine inspiration and eternal punishment, but nearly all the other charges were rejected. This had huge implications for Christianity in Britain. A clergyman could now freely deny the veracity of a particular book of the Bible as long as he did not deny divine authority. He could also deny any prophecy within the Old Testament as being Messianic, and all ostensibly historical events within the Bible could now be interpreted as parable or legend, and thus Anglican clergymen were able to adjust their teaching in light of modern knowledge.[58] The acceptance of biblical criticism did not suddenly become the norm among clergy and educated religious laypersons since it had become legal, and much effort was still required to overcome the traditional inertia. A large proportion of clergy still regarded the new knowledge as untruthful, while those who appreciated that elements of the Bible were legend did not preach so to their uneducated congregations, in case they became troubled by this modern way of teaching. While there was thus some status quo within

[54] Benjamin Jowett, 'On the Interpretation of Scripture', in *Essays and Reviews*, ed. by John William Parker (London: J. W. Parker, 1860), p. 331.
[55] Ibid., pp. 348-350.
[56] Ibid., pp. 351, 373.
[57] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, pp. 40, 49, 64.
[58] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, pp. 78-81.

churches, it became more common at this time for liberal and atheist pamphleteers and orators to disseminate more modern views to the general public. Chadwick suggests that there is some evidence that an increasing number of theologians privately expressed more liberal beliefs, but did not yet voice these publicly, or to their congregations.[59]

The second important compendium of theological essays which attempted to promote open biblical discussion in line with modern knowledge, *Lux Mundi* (1889), was edited by the Oxford theologian and later Bishop of Worcester, Birmingham, and Oxford, Charles Gore (1853-1932). The intention was to incorporate the new social and cultural movements of the time in order to establish their faith within an appropriate and secure intellectual environment.[60] Sidgwick, for one, as well as being acquainted with Gore, was more accepting of the broad and liberal approach of the compendium.[61] The essay which caused the most controversy was Gore's own, 'The Holy Spirit and Inspiration', in which he contended that biblical characters such as Jonah and David could be considered in a mythological context rather than an historical one, but was not a rejection of inspiration. Gore suggested that the study of the Bible should be used in conjunction with other ancient texts and first-hand knowledge.[62] With regards to Genesis, Gore suggested that its inspiration was expressed from a special point of view, that God created everything, including humans, and showed his dealings with humans, and humanity's universal mission to overcome evil and become at one with God again. The implication here, which many took offence to, was that Genesis was not literally and historically true, but that that did not detract from its inspiration.[63]

The famous Bampton lectures of the theologian Henry Liddon (1829-1890), given at Oxford University in 1866, based the flawlessness of the Old Testament on the flawlessness of Christ.[64] Despite the impact of *Essays and Reviews*, and the

[59] Ibid., pp. 97-98.
[60] Ibid., p. 101.
[61] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, pp. 556-558.
[62] Charles Gore, 'The Holy Spirit and Inspiration', in, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, ed. by Charles Gore (London: J. Murray, 1889), p. 316.
[63] Ibid., p. 344.
[64] Henry Parry Liddon, *Eight Lectures Preached Before The University of Oxford, In The Year 1866* (London: Rivingtons, 1868), pp. xix-x. Liddon stated that proper Christian Faith must regard the historical Jesus Christ as true God, true Man, and together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the Founder of Christendom.

subsequent more questioning nature of theological scholarship partly motivated by it, it was not until the immediate period after *Lux Mundi* that saw the fiercest internal disputes within the Church of England. Chadwick suggests that this was due to the fact that previously attacks on the Old Testament came primarily from radicals, but that *Lux Mundi* helped place the argument firmly within the mainstream Church, thereby suggesting some validity.[65] While this was certainly the case, there was a parallel growth of a general more questioning environment in the late-nineteenth century, as evidenced by mainstream science, psychical research, gothic literature, and an increased interest in esoteric spirituality, which also eroded the veracity of the literal truth of the Old Testament. By the time Temple became a Bishop in 1901, most of the opinions expressed in *Essays and Reviews* had become acceptable, as well as legal, although the Roman Catholic Church in England, some individual Anglican congregations, and other nonconformist groups, still dissented.[66] The controversies elicited by *Essays and Reviews* and *Lux Mundi* thus had a multifaceted effect on religion in the second half of the nineteenth century. The intended outcomes of their publication, the modernization of the church and more open biblical discussions, were eventually achieved to a large extent in both practice and law. The moderate writings were part of the increasingly more widespread theological dialogues and debates which considered the ideas of epistemology, the nature of God, and the human relation to God, and the interplay between science and theology.[67] The acceptance of biblical criticism from within the Church, without the fear of the underlying truth and faith being challenged, albeit against a backdrop of growing professional and scholarly comparative religious studies, certainly reinforced the relevance of Christianity in a modern world for many. However, the inevitable dilution of the previously unquestioned historical authority of the Bible made the interpretation of scripture more important than the exact words and events contained therein, and so degraded its spiritual authority for many others. As David M. Thompson notes, there was no simple or infallible way to independently verify Christian dogma, and merely proving the history as correct did not prove the doctrine.[68] The impact of historical scholarship and the research into the natural sciences now implied that ‘the word of

[65] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, p. 102.
[66] Ibid., pp. 103-106.
[67] Cashdollar, *Transformation*, pp. 91-92.
[68] David M. Thompson, *Cambridge Theology in the Nineteenth Century: enquiry, controversy, and truth* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), pp. 173-174.

God is in the Bible', rather than 'the word of God is the Bible.'[69] Thus, the relevance of the Bible was not entirely erased, but changed. Oliver Lodge, for example, referred to biblical myths rather than history, but did not dismiss their relevance: '…the truth embedded in that old Genesis legend is deep.'[70] Despite the evident erosion of the cultural influence of Christianity, the transformation was not an instantaneous and complete one. There persisted a discrepancy between the Bible of home and school, and the Bible of the university. While the way people now thought about religion may have altered, there was only a gradual acceptance of new historic and scientific knowledge by those who still maintained a broadly traditional understanding of the Christian faith. Consequently, their incorporation within the teachings of the Church was protracted. The new theology advanced in subtle and incremental ways, innovatively adapting to aspects of secular thought.[71] Thus, liberalism and the modernisation of Christianity further diluted its influence, with the questioning of religious authority and growing disenchantment being complementary aspects of the social and worldview dimensions of Asprem's intellectual problem areas.[72] Here, Stuckrad's notion of a 'field of discourse', meant that religious traditions developed into intellectual discourse, with both religious pluralism becoming more acceptable, and the plurality of religious and spiritual identities increasingly manifest.[73] The questioning of mainstream religion's truth and authority was such that, for some, literally nothing was sacred, and therefore everything religious was open to inquiry. This was important for psychical researchers, as religion was no longer the only frame of reference for unusual phenomena, whether regarded as supernatural, or paranormal. This was a view expressed by Gurney, Myers, and William James, as I show in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. I argue in the following chapter that this prevalent inquisitorial environment allowed the exploration of the supernatural, which for psychical researchers was the paranormal, without having to have a mainstream religious source.

[69] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, II*, pp. 109-111.
[70] Oliver Lodge, *Life and Matter* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), p. 78. For more on Lodge's theology see Peter Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion: The Debate in Early Twentieth Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), p. 89.
[71] Cashdollar, *Transformation*, p. 447.
[72] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 36.
[73] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 5.

The Progress of Science and University Education

The rapid progress of science during the nineteenth century, many aspects of which are discussed in Part III, was neither a constant linear evolution, nor did it go intellectually and spiritually unchallenged. A number of prominent scientists in the early decades of the nineteenth century were deeply religious.[74] Thus, in the late-nineteenth century, the undoubted progress of 'the Age of Reason', as Webb refers to it, which many thought would intellectually subsume all else, was actually somewhat tempered by reactions against it which came from a number of different directions. Those who subscribed to a more conservative form of faith expressed the authority of the Bible and the doctrines of their tradition more vehemently, but there was also a growth of interest in ancient belief systems, many of which had previously been considered to be superstition.[75] The faith versus reason conflict must therefore take account of esoteric spirituality and occultism, and the partial progression of both domains, with no outright intellectual winner or loser. Additionally, the scientism expressed by many was attacked as being inadequate to explain the entire workings of nature, both on epistemological and ontological grounds.[76] I will show in Chapter 6 that some scientists, such as those practising the new discipline of psychology, maintained a physiological explanation for the machinations of the brain, but many others dismissed this narrow perspective as incapable of helping with the understanding of the human mind and consciousness. However, the situation was complex, with Cashdollar also suggesting that positivism was seen by many in Britain and America as the greatest challenge to religious belief in the nineteenth century.[77] Other scientists, such as Lodge and William Crookes, who also had an interest in the exploration of spiritual matters and psychical phenomena, promoted a broader and more eclectic approach to the research of these peripheral fields of study, rather than purely physicalist methodologies. In trying to reconcile science and religion, Lodge presumed a common acceptance of universal reality when he wrote: 'No doubt both sides would allow that the highest Science and the truest Theology must ultimately be

[74] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 45.
[75] Webb, *Occult*, pp. 7-8. 'Age of Reason' after Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason; Being and Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (London: D.I. Eaton, 1794).
[76] Roy MacLeod, 'The 'Bankruptcy of Science' Debate: The Creed of Science and Its Critics, 1885-1900', *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 7 (1982), p. 2.
[77] Cashdollar, *Transformation*, p. 6.

mutually consistent and harmonious'[78] In his quest to reconcile his scientific with his religious beliefs, Lodge devoted an entire book to exploring the influence of the advance of scientific knowledge upon the understanding of Christianity, *Man and the Universe* (1908). As well as exploring aspects of both of these domains the book also contains much consideration of paranormal phenomena, seemingly as productive a catalyst for integration as any other considered by Lodge, and paralleled my many members of the SPR. However, Lodge stated unequivocally that there were many of science who fully accepted its facts and implications, but also accepted the creeds of the Church. These domains could be entirely separated in the minds of these men, he insisted, 'and do distinctly perceive a reconciling and fusing element.' He declares that this was neither science nor theology, but either philosophy or poetry.[79] This suggests, for Lodge, that some acceptance of a metaphysical or transcendental domain was required in order to successfully merge these seemingly disparate themes. He described both science and religion in terms that would have been broadly acceptable to the majority of his contemporaries, regardless of their particular perspective. Lodge portrayed orthodox modern science as self-contained, self-sufficient, nothing supernatural or miraculous, with no intervention of beings other than human being possible. In parallel, he depicted religion as having interaction with a power or mind, being or beings, beyond the boundaries of scientific understanding. It was not self-contained or self-sufficient, but dependent on unknown being or beings.[80] Further, he posited that if what we term natural was limited to what we had direct scientific knowledge about, then religion was supernatural, or superscientific.[81] For Lodge, this showed the inadequacies of both science and religion as the sole domain by which to attempt to answer the fundamental questions of the universe, as science largely ignored the immaterial, while religion transcended proven scientific facts without incorporating them. Regarding any possible reconciliation between science and religion, he reiterated that both sides must accept 'the truth of the reign of Law, or the Uniformity of Nature.'[82] Like so many of his contemporaries within the SPR, Lodge conveyed a belief in a universal interconnectedness, or One Truth, and like them he referred to it by many different names, suggesting either a lack of understanding of its

[78] Lodge, *Man*, p. 2.
[79] Ibid., p. 4.
[80] Ibid., p. 6.
[81] Ibid., p. 11.
[82] Ibid., p. 26.

true nature, or an attempt to disseminate the notion as broadly as possible, or perhaps both.

Spiritualists regarded orthodox science as merely a subset of their own 'new science', and thus inadequate to explain all the intricacies of the universe, a notion broadly in line with those interested in esoteric spirituality or occultism. Those who still followed traditional religion often ambiguously attempted to use science to validate their faith, but at the same time challenged its inherent physicalism. Despite these attacks on science on nearly all fronts, its increasing specialization and professionalism did progress largely unchecked and this helped it to gain intellectual superiority over conservative interpretations of Christianity.[83] Asprem suggests that Natural Theology, the intellectual motivation to undertake theoretical theology on the basis of the latest natural knowledge, had been a key element of Natural Philosophy up to the Enlightenment period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[84] As well as science gaining rational and academic superiority over religion, he argues that its increased professionalization effectively separated the intellectual domains of theology and science for a time, until scientists, philosophers, and other scholars, were able to openly deliberate the religious and spiritual implications of their research.[85] This contention is largely borne out by my own analysis of these themes in this thesis. McLeod also suggests that the scientific professions wanted the social prestige and recognition still accorded to the clergy.[86] This new academic interest in human values, individual and collective ethics, notions of the afterlife, the connection between humanity and the divine, were all part of the spiritual revival which took place, and is discussed more fully in the following chapter. From the 1860s there had been a growing interest in Spiritualist phenomena among scientists and academics such as Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913) and Sidgwick.[87] It was within this religious, spiritual, and scientific turmoil, a consequence of the tensions highlighted by 'the Age

[83] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 11-15.
[84] Asprem suggests that one of the most important methods by which Natural Theology was debated at the time (and continues to the present day) was through the Gifford Lectures, set up by Lord Gifford, Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 97. See the Gifford Lectures website: <http://www.giffordlectures.org> [accessed 5 March 2019]. For some historical discussion, see Stanley L. Jaki, *Lord Gifford and his Lectures: A Centenary Retrospect* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987).
[85] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, pp. 199-200.
[86] McLeod, *Secularisation*, pp. 156-157.
[87] Ibid., p. 162.

of Enlightenment', that the SPR came to prominence, with its early membership primarily made up of academics, professional scientists, and Spiritualists.

The growing reservations about the validity of Christian doctrine from the mid-nineteenth century onwards were largely blamed on science by both doubters and believers, with some going as far as to accuse science of being the sole cause. These commentators very often used Darwin's evolutionary theories as representative of the entire domain of science, and this oversimplification helped to engender the popular belief that science completely invalidated the truth of Christian teachings, and a great battle ensued between evolutionists and creationists.[88] This was not so true of the educated classes, who expressed greater reservations about the Christian faith than did the uneducated, but with a greater proportion of society becoming educated, the general level of religious doubt increased. Some voiced moral objections to certain aspects of the way in which God was depicted in the Old Testament, and combined with the doctrines of hell and everlasting punishment, found a great deal of biblical teaching more difficult to accept than the idea of evolution by natural selection.[89] John Hedley Brooke argues that the swing towards negative perceptions of the Bible was much more pronounced after the work of scientists, particularly such as Darwin.[90] We have seen that science certainly contributed to the dilution of traditionalist forms of religion, but it was one part of a general decline of its influence and importance. Educated people had already rejected the notion of the Bible as the absolute historical truth in the light of new scientific knowledge. Doctrines, such as the six thousand year age of the Earth and a global flood, were no longer tenable. Hence, such material was regarded as legend or allegory. As well as scientists, the controversies surrounding the factual truth of the teachings of the Bible were also highlighted by philosophers and historians, especially scholars of ancient texts. It was of no apparent concern to the general public that the issues raised by these academics actually put historical study up against conservative interpretations of the Bible, rather than the entirety of science up against the whole domain of religion, yet this simplistic polarized view was predominant.[91] Some people also found it difficult to distinguish between science

[88] Webb, *Occult*, p. 9; and Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II*, p. 1.
[89] Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, p. 175.
[90] Brooke, 'Science and Secularization', p. 229.
[91] Dawson also makes this point, in Gowan Dawson, 'Contextualising the 'War' between Science and Religion', in *Reinventing Christianity: Nineteenth Century Contexts*, ed. by Linda Woodhead (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 249.

attacking religion and an individual scientist condemning religion. Despite many new scientific suppositions contradicting some religious teachings, numerous scientists still remained religious themselves. If a scientist spoke against religion it was not necessarily because he was a scientist, yet the general public perceived it in that way. By only considering a basic clash between religion and science the less educated often assumed that when a scientist challenged religion he did so from an empirical scientific basis, even if this was not always the case. Consequently, as scientific authority became more accepted, the pure faith versus reason conjecture still had a diluting effect on religion, even when science itself was not actually being used to challenge traditional religious teachings.[92]

As well as Darwin's theory of evolution becoming the most accepted explanation of the most recently observed physical evidence, geology also contradicted key parts of the Bible. It became increasingly difficult for both scientists and the general public to reject these parallel ideas and their implications, as there were no adequate alternatives and the literal truth of Genesis had already been largely discarded. Brooke goes as far as to suggest that the earth sciences at this time had a cataclysmic effect on biblical faith, and that the natural and historical sciences progressively nullified and subsumed the supernatural, and therefore the religious.[93] While there was clearly a strong challenge to conservative constructions of Christian doctrine from new scientific knowledge, the resurgence of more conservative elements of theological teaching in reaction to the threat, as well as the rise of alternative spirituality explored in the next chapter shows that this notion is not complex enough to explain the various themes. The predominant straightforward faith versus reason inference made by the public ignored the fact that there were a number of high profile scientists who were still devout Christians, and believed that scientific knowledge validated their faith. These included the likes of Michael Faraday (1791-1867), Lord Kelvin (1824-1907), and James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879).[94] The simple perception of the religion against science conflict was also reinforced by the overly simplistic reporting of individual arguments, such as between Huxley and

[92] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II*, pp. 2-4.
[93] Brooke, 'Science and Secularization', p. 229.
[94] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II*, pp. 5-7.

Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873).[95] Hence, for many, it was more straightforward to unquestioningly regard religion and science as enemies, with new theories about humans and the universe appearing to separate humanity from any divine intervention, a notion abhorred by Christians.[96] Webb suggests that many Christians were disturbed by this concept, as they found it difficult to adequately cope with the intellectual insecurity which it fostered. He expands this idea to include all of society, educated and uneducated alike, suggesting the emotional and intellectual security of everyone was challenged to some extent by a number of interconnected common factors – mental, physical, financial, spiritual, political, social, and cultural. Webb posits that what some scholars have perceived as a 'crisis of faith' was actually a 'crisis of consciousness', intensified by an underlying atmosphere of Romanticism, yet another reaction to scientism.[97] This Romanticism normalized attitudes of drama, escapism, and indulgence, amongst other radical ideals, and was fundamental to aesthetic domains such as gothic literature and art. Webb's 'crisis of consciousness'[98] parallels these themes, and allowed more radical thinking. The implication is, therefore, that both faith and reason were inadequate individual intellectual tools with which to answer the fundamental questions of the universe, and humanity's place within it. I have shown, and will continue to demonstrate, that this was a prevalent view professed by psychical researchers and occultists alike.

Huxley was certainly one of the most vehemently anti-religious scientists of the time, and was said to have seen the battle between science and Christian doctrine as a struggle between enlightened scientific reason and a 'semi-barbarous' Hebrew cosmology. Another scientist who was critical of religion in this period was John Tyndall, yet the staunch materialist perspective he promoted throughout the 1870s provided an easy focus for religious opposition to the more radical aspects of modern

[95] Ibid., pp. 9-10, 13-15. Paradoxically, religious conservatives and scientific positivists were both more comfortable with authority and order, as noted by Cashdollar, in *Transformation*, pp. 289-290. A. J. Balfour's view of Positivism was that it rejected all belief in anything other than phenomena and laws, but was a form of religion devoid of the supernatural, in *Essays and Addresses* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1893; 2nd edition), p. 311.
[96] Hans Frei states that conservatives resisted any independent critical enquiry into the origin and meaning of biblical writings, except for a limited philological analysis, in 'David Friedrich Strauss', in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. by Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Steven Katz, and Patrick Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 217.
[97] Webb, *Occult*, pp. 9-11. For general cultural anxieties of the time, see also J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought 1848-1914* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).
[98] Webb, *Occult*, p. 11.

science.[99] His famous British Association presidential address given in Belfast in 1874 was not universally well received. He presented two key concepts which even some scientists considered went too far. These were that matter could successfully explain all life, and that all cosmological theory should only be considered from a scientific standpoint. Reacting to the criticism Tyndall added a preface when it was published, however it was misunderstood both by those of faith, especially Spiritualists, and by many from the educated classes. His statement that religious facts were as valid as any other facts was taken by those of faith to mean that matter was not universal and all-encompassing, and that the immaterial realm was just as veridical. His warning to religion to stay clear of all physical matters was perceived by others, not only scientists, that science could provide solutions to all human problems. While there may have been some scientists whose professional research actually turned them against religion, most who expressed their anti-religious feelings had not often been practitioners in their pre-scientific adult life. Those scientists who were already religious normally continued to be so, but probably had to adapt their personal belief systems to some extent in order to accommodate wider philosophies.[100]

Those of a more liberal faith were able to accept Darwin's theory of evolution, and the new academic discipline of social anthropology which it led to, as they no longer needed to defend the literal truth of the Bible.[101] From the late-1860s fewer Christian theologians claimed that miracles were needed to prove the veracity of Christian revelation, and therefore the truth of the Bible. Contemporary historical research and scientific empirical observation meant that theologians distanced themselves from the miraculous and supernatural, and explained these phenomena as consequences of Christian revelation rather than as a basis for it.[102] A growing number of churchgoers had already begun to consider many biblical stories as legend rather than historical fact, and this accelerated following the new research of the anthropologists. Science certainly helped to shape aspects of the inquiring environment of the time, in which educated individuals expressed doubt about core Christian doctrines, but it cannot be regarded as the sole cause of its dilution. The

[99] Dawson, 'Contextualising', p. 239.
[100] Webb, *Occult*, pp. 12-15.
[101] Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, p. 175.
[102] Lecky, *Rationalism*, Vol 1, pp. 151-205.

academic motivation to question biblical teachings advanced with the gradual establishment of the comparative study of religion within all layers of education in the 1890s. Christian commentators were no longer able to deliberate upon religious matters by contemplating only Christianity, and needed to study other religions. While this did not directly dilute Christian belief, there was a general growing acceptance of the validity of non-Christian religions which intensified the atmosphere of theological discussion and debate.[103] This wider acceptance is at the core of Stuckrad's concept of religious pluralism, which allowed the 'Esoteric Field of Discourse' to become more intellectually palatable, with the concept of 'the other', or the paranormal domain, considered increasingly less unusual.

The strengthening environment of theological questioning and religious liberalisation also had an impact on university education. The Oxford University Act of 1854 and the Cambridge University Act of 1856, allowed education to be given to, and lower degrees awarded to, members of any or no religion. The traditional role of the universities, to provide a liberal education to the upper and middle classes, many of whom become Church of England clergy, by disseminating knowledge rather than advancing it, was being challenged by an increasingly informed public as neither adequately broad nor sufficiently deep.[104] As a consequence, more fundamental research started to take place, but there were inevitable tensions as the newer, and increasingly more prominent disciplines of history, natural science, philosophy, economics, modern literature, and the like, advanced in parallel to the traditional liberal education. Traditionalists feared the erosion of the extant religious and pastoral Christian framework within the universities. New academics, such as Sidgwick, wanted the rules of celibacy and the obligatory undertaking of a religious profession at Oxford and Cambridge to end, with fellows allowed from any religious background. In this way, fellowship would be seen as a professional academic lay career rather than one step in a clerical one.[105] The Universities Tests Act of 1871 allowed for all degrees and offices (except those related to Holy Orders) to those of any religion, or none, at Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Durham. It also allowed for

[103] Webb, *Occult*, pp. 26-39.
[104] John Henry Newman, *The Scope and Nature of University Education* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1859), pp. viii-ix; and T. W. Heyck, 'Men of Letters to Intellectuals: The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (1980), p. 165.
[105] Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part II*, pp. 439-441.

denominational colleges, but only if they became part of the university after 1871, with examples including Keble College at Oxford and Selwyn College at Cambridge. Despite the Act attempting, in part, to safeguard Anglican doctrine and worship for those undergraduates who wanted it, the increasing numbers of secular dons who were primarily focussed on their academic work inevitably helped to dilute the religious atmosphere within these universities. While conflicts continued for many years, Christianity remained important and there were numerous traditional professors and fellows who continued teaching the old-fashioned ways.[106] However, it was becoming more acceptable to question mainstream religious authority, both academically and in wider society. Against the backdrop of the declining influence of mainstream religion and a more secular academic environment, those members of the SPR, such as Sidgwick, Myers, and Lodge, whose place in society straddled many different domains, were now more able to promote their view of science to investigate paranormal phenomena in a more accepting atmosphere.

Concluding Remarks

An examination of the declining influence of mainstream religion is important from both a general cultural perspective and on a more personal level. While still vitally important within society, the investigation of the changing nature of religion has helped to provide a sense of the questioning intellectual environment of the time which enabled the SPR to be formed. Many of its early members had a traditional Christian upbringing and so exploring individual questioning of their faith exposes something about their motivations to undertake psychical research. Challenges to traditional forms of belief, which were inherently conservative, and reactions to liberalism, have been prevalent within Christianity throughout its history. Rather than diluting its influence and importance, the heightened discussions have often reinvigorated the religion, despite many new denominations being created. However, the rise of science and rationalism, the study of the history of ancient texts, geology, biblical criticism, and other new disciplines, combined with the rise of interest in new forms of belief and esoteric spirituality, for the first time challenged traditional interpretations of the Bible. This not only had a fractioning effect like so often in the

[106] Ibid., pp. 446-449.

past, but also one of diluting the spiritual authority and historical truth, and therefore the very basis of Christian revelation and divine inspiration.

While there clearly was a crisis of faith at this time, it was not all encompassing, and so secularization and religious doubt did not go unchallenged, with an inevitability expressed by some scholars in the past. Traditional Christian doctrines and teaching only experienced a waning influence over many decades, and even during this time pockets of conservative religious fervour increased with new factions being established. The undoubted dilution of Christian belief which took place was not the result of scientific reason defeating religious faith after an isolated epic battle, with only one victor emerging, but rather a mêlée of competing and conflicting intellectual, scientific, religious, spiritual, and cultural themes which all survived, but much altered. There was reaction against the rigid physicalism of some natural scientists, both from those of faith and many other scientists. Other professional academics understood the need for scientific methodology, but questioned its appropriateness for investigating spiritual matters. Likewise, mainstream religion was seen by many educated laypersons and clergy as inadequate to cope with modern knowledge, but attempts to liberalise and modernise it to make it more relevant also had the effect of quietening its voice, initially for those more educated, but later for all. Even the traditional theologians at the predominantly conservative universities, once education and fellowship was allowed for those of all faiths, struggled to hold onto spiritual and academic authority in the face of the now more mainstream new academic disciplines. It was against this backdrop of religious and academic change that the likes of Sidgwick and many of those that he mentored at Cambridge, such as Gurney and Myers, expressed serious religious doubt and began to think in new and more radical ways in an environment in which they were later able to found the SPR, and attempt to tackle the inadequacies of both faith and reason, or religion and science, by researching paranormal phenomena. Thus, this chapter has corroborated part of my first key argument, the perception that religion alone was an inadequate intellectual tool with which to answer the fundamental questions of nature. Therefore, it has also partially explained my second key argument, in that an alternative intellectual approach was required, which I will show becomes manifest within the paranormal domain.

Chapter 4

The Spiritual Revival

Re-Enchantment

While it has been shown that the authority of Christianity was being challenged on numerous fronts, interest in spirituality itself had a resurgence in the late-Victorian period.[1] Reconversions to Evangelical forms of religion, together with those who moved towards more esoteric spirituality, occurred in large enough numbers and proliferated deeply enough across all classes of society that it is unlikely that the 'crisis of faith' hypothesis was the sole cause.[2] In this chapter, the second part of the religious element of my two-dimensional historo-cultural analytical framework, I explore the alternative spirituality embraced by some parts of society, as well as the influence on the paranormal thinking of psychical researchers. As such, it helps to validate my second key argument, the perception by some that a new intellectual approach was required to tackle humanity's fundamental questions. It therefore also describes some of the characteristics of my third key argument, the syncretic methodology of the paranormal domain. As both Alex Owen and Egil Asprem have discussed, the notion of 'disenchantment', or the idea of the supposed victory of intellectualist rationalization over the religious, spiritual, mysterious, and magical, is unfounded as a complete explanation. Indeed, the growth of interest in esoteric spirituality, including occultism, and its cultural impact, was almost as conspicuous as the progress of science was in this period.[3] As both Christopher Partridge and the philosopher Theodor Adorno (who was concerned about the persistence of the irrational in modern societies) have discussed from their different perspectives, this re-enchantment, or spiritual revival, dovetailing naturally with a phase of secularization, is not a theme specific to the *fin de siècle* period, but is 'a perennial feature of human societies.'[4] The occultural diversity of unorthodox spiritualities

[1] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 4.
[2] Ibid., pp. 7-8; and Larsen, 'Regaining', pp. 527-530.
[3] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 10, 17; and Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 93.
[4] Partridge, *Re-enchantment*, p. 43; and T. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, ed. by S. Crook (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 37.

which people became increasingly curious about included such areas as medieval and Renaissance Christian mysticism, heterodox neo-Christianity, non-denominational esoteric philosophy, and a number of occult currents. The most relevant for this thesis were Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (hereafter the Golden Dawn). Owen positions her analysis of 'enchantment', or simplistically, esoteric spirituality, within the 'magic' element of the trinity of a 'magic-religion-science' historo-cultural framework. She equates the 'mystical revival', demonstrated as having taken place during this period, to this broad 'enchantment.'[5] This cultural environment is the very same atmosphere within which the early psychical researchers flourished and formed the SPR, and shaped their thinking about the paranormal. As Janet Oppenheim has shown, the Victorians were well aware of the waning influence of religion within wider society, and suggests that it was primarily Spiritualism and psychical research which helped answer the spiritual and scientific questions inadequately dealt with by mainstream religion.[6] While partly true, Oppenheim perhaps stresses too heavily the similarities between Spiritualism and the SPR, and underplays some commonalities, at least in its early period, between the SPR and both the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn. I suggest that there were two clear branches, one of practitioners and one of investigators, stemming from the same stock of intellectual and cultural elite. While one division chose to practice and study esoteric spirituality or occultism, the other chose to investigate aspects of the same themes scientifically.[7] The practice and study of esoteric spirituality, magic, and occultism, undertaken by the members of organizations such as the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn, while hugely diverse in its detail, can nevertheless be considered as elite and scholarly, and often initiatory.[8] This intellectual elitism could certainly be applied to a large proportion of the early members of the SPR, who also challenged both traditional Christian belief and dogmatic scientism.[9] While both groups wanted to understand the nature of the universe, where they deviated markedly was that those studying esoteric spirituality from within, such as Theosophists, believed that the mysteries of nature could be explained using ancient knowledge and

[5] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 8, 10, 17.
[6] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 1.
[7] William Crookes was perhaps the sole exception, being a fellow of The Royal Society, became president of both the SPR and The Ghost Club, joined the Theosophical Society, and was initiated into the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.
[8] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 7-8.
[9] Ibid., p. 22.

religious traditions (*philosophia perennis* and *prisca theologia*) which they were only rediscovering in their quest to uncover the link between the profane (physical human) and the divine (immaterial deity, or living nature).[10] Occultists, such as members of the Golden Dawn, were even further removed from the evidence gathering of the early psychical researchers, with much of their motivation being the aspiration to control the forces of nature using this ancient knowledge through magic. This quest for control of the natural world could also be regarded as a motivation for some within the mainstream scientific community.[11] Those interested in esoteric spirituality, occultism, and paranormal phenomena, believed that what was generally perceived as reality was merely a sliver of the entire truth of nature, whether through a lack of knowledge and understanding, or because some aspects of it were not accessible to our usual senses. What Owen calls a 'mystical revival' was actually a broader spiritual revival, with both esoteric philosophy and mysticism increasing in popularity and being influenced to varying degrees by neo-Christian movements and Eastern religions. Nicholas Campion and Joscelyn Godwin view the spiritual and esoteric mindset in the nineteenth century as more profoundly ingrained within Western society and refer to the period as one of 'Theosophical Enlightenment.'[12] This complex occultural amalgam made it difficult at the time to distinguish between some traditional and esoteric spiritual themes, compounded by both mainstream religious commentators and occultists highlighting the strong associations between some forms of Paganism and Christianity. These different divisions exhibited a broadly Neoplatonic cohesiveness with three main characteristics, which are reflected in many elements of Antoine Faivre's paradigm, especially his description of correspondences and living nature, discussed in Chapter 2. Firstly, they believed in an immaterial hidden spirit realm. Secondly, they viewed the interconnectedness of all of creation within an animistic universe, presided over by a universal soul. Thirdly, they contended that there was a fundamental harmony between both the material and the immaterial and also the earthly and the spiritual.[13] So, alongside the decline of conservative religion, the rise of science and new disciplines, such as psychology and

[10] Ibid., p. 11; and Antoine Faivre, 'Introduction I', in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, ed. by Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (London: SCM Press, 1993), p. xvi; and Goodrick-Clarke, Esoteric, p. 7.
[11] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 11, 14.
[12] Campion, *New Age*, p. 57; and Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).
[13] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 19-21. For the mixing of Christianity with other supernatural beliefs see Thompson, *Cambridge Theology*, pp. 164-169.

anthropology, there was a spiritual revival, or re-enchantment, which had both broad influences on society, and as will become increasingly apparent, upon psychical research and paranormal thinking. The analysis of esoteric spirituality in this chapter clearly illustrates Asprem's, Owens', and Partridge's notion of disenchantment and the consequent complementary re-enchantment. The 'paranormal field of discourse', which we have seen developed as a consequence of the interplay between scientific and religious themes, is made more distinct by consideration of Kocku von Stuckrad's plurality of religious identities which manifests here by the embracing of esoteric spirituality as part of a wider worldview.

Esoteric Spirituality

Spiritualism[14]

The growth of Spiritualism helped to erode some of the influence of mainstream Christianity and to provide a vast source of evidence to be investigated scientifically. This religious movement, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, has an obvious influence on many aspects of this thesis. A great deal has been written about the beginning of Spiritualism in America and the subsequent rapid dissemination of its ideas there and subsequently in Britain,[15] and so it is not the intention here to reproduce an amalgam of this historiographical analysis. The purpose is to explore those key, albeit somewhat fluid, themes of Spiritualism and its complex cultural

[14] The psychical researchers discussed in this thesis very occasionally used the term 'Spiritism' instead of 'Spiritualism', but made no distinction between the two. However, 'Spiritism' was coined by Allan Kardec (1804-1869) to describe 'a science that deals with the nature, origin, and destiny of spirits, and their relation with the corporeal world', in *What is Spiritism?* (Philadelphia: Allan Kardec Educational Society, 1859; repr. 1999), p. 6. Eduard von Hartmann also made a distinction referring to Kardec's 'Spiritism' which endorsed soul reincarnation, as compared to the American English 'Spiritualism' which promoted a more traditional Christian immortality, in *Spiritism*, trans. by C.C. Massey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1885; repr, 2012), pp. 1-2.

[15] A recent concise history is Cathy Gutierrez, 'Spiritualism', in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015). See also Cathy Gutierrez, *Plato's Ghost: Spiritualism in the American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). A noteworthy recent compendium is *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). Other important works include Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1983); Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003); Alan Gauld, *Mediumship and Survival: A Century of Investigations* (London: Paladin, 1982); McCorristine, *Spectres*; Geoffrey K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Oppenheim, *Other*; Marlene Tromp, *Altered States: Sex, Nation, Drugs, and the Self-fashioning in Victorian Spiritualism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

interactions which allowed some of its adherents to play a highly significant role in the early SPR. However, Spiritualism's narrow focus on proving the continued existence of spiritual life after physical death and its non-scientific approach to paranormal investigation meant that its early influence within the SPR was short-lived. As Alan Gauld notes, the SPR was not founded solely to investigate the notion of human survival after physical death, but the plethora of phenomena regarded as 'mesmeric, psychical, and Spiritualistic.'[16] There were several diverse reasons why Spiritualism grew so rapidly and became so widespread in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Against a backdrop of increasing interest in the early fringe scientific fields of phrenology and mesmerism, Spiritualism was able to firmly establish itself as a new religious movement. While phrenology provided some of the first ways of describing different personality traits and altered mental states, it was the trance states associated with mesmerism which motivated some to become drawn to Spiritualism, and some, later, to psychical research,[17] and is discussed in Chapter 6. Some Spiritualists remained committed Christians, such as the Reverend William Stainton Moses and the writer William Howitt (1792-1879),[18] who both found validation of their religious beliefs within the new movement. Owen suggests that other Spiritualists railed against Christian dogma and ceremony, and considered séances as a purer form of religious gathering, especially associated phenomena such as prophesying and speaking in tongues.[19] Yet other Spiritualists, including the publisher James Burns (1835-1894), rejected all forms of traditional Christian and other religious belief.[20] Many of these tended toward a secular understanding of the world, while others like Louis-Alphonse Cahagnet (1809-1885) were more attracted to visionaries such as Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).[21] As a mystic, Swedenborg's philosophies sat outside both mainstream Spiritualism and psychical research,[22] although Frederic Myers cited him as an influence.[23] What linked all Spiritualists was a desire to commune with deceased loved ones, and thus validate their belief in everlasting happiness. This interest in the continued existence of the

[16] Gauld, *Mediumship*, pp. 1-2.
[17] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 17-20.
[18] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 44, 77.
[19] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 18.
[20] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 86.
[21] Partridge, *High Culture*, p. 126.
[22] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 31.
[23] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 4, §103.

human spirit after bodily death also interested psychical researchers but was not their only motivation. Another factor in the attractiveness of Spiritualism was that there were no gender or class restrictions on who could be a medium, and Spiritualist gatherings could be undertaken either privately or publicly. Also, Spiritualism was not elitist in the same way that psychical research and occultism was.[24]

Many trends led to the formation and development of modern Spiritualism, but its beginnings in America are centred around the events which concerned the Fox family in Hydesville, New York in 1848. The details concerning the noises and supposed spirit communication which troubled the family have previously been extensively written about by many others, and so will not be simply repeated here.[25] Nevertheless, it is worth noting a few key points regarding this important case. Word of the strange phenomena spread quickly in the village and then much further afield. This is perhaps indicative of both a sense of community and of curiosity, an inquisitiveness which somewhat foreshadowed the more structured investigation of Spiritualism and mediumship which was to follow, and remained an important aspect of the movement all the way through to the formation of the SPR, and for some time after. In an attempt to escape the continuing phenomena, Mrs Fox and both daughters moved to Rochester to live with their older married sister, but the strange occurrences appeared to follow them there, and the group of friends that surrounded the Foxes there became the first Spiritualist Circle. Despite being denounced by their own Methodist Church, the Foxes gained the interest of many clergymen with a variety of motivations. Some tried to exorcize the spirits while others pronounced them as either the work of the Devil, or due to the intentional deception of the Fox sisters. Other clergymen, however, were interested in studying the true nature of the phenomena.[26] This questioning attitude towards early Spiritualist phenomena was also exhibited by wider society. A series of public investigations which took place in 1849 in Rochester helped to spread details of the phenomena across America. The first two committees found no detectable fraud on the part of the Foxes, but this was poorly received by some, which led to a third committee being established, composed of the most

[24] Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 9-10; and Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 27.
[25] Gutierrez, *Plato's Ghost*; Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 3. Also, Gauld, *Mediumship*, pp. 3-4; Conan Doyle, *Spiritualism*, pp. 28-31; and Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 11, amongst others. For recollections written by a Fox family member, see A. Leah Underhill, *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* (New York: Thomas R. Knox & Co., 1885).
[26] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

sceptical individuals. This committee was also unable to discover any deception, and the outcome was met with violent unrest. The reports of the events in Rochester relayed across the country by a number of newspapers seemed to stimulate widespread spontaneous and autonomous Spiritualist phenomena, the appearance of a number of new mediums, and the establishment of a number of Spiritualist circles.[27] This almost instantaneous propagation across America was described by Emma Hardinge Britten (1823-1899) as taking place with 'sudden and magical rapidity.'[28] As Geoffrey K. Nelson notes, there are many reports of phenomena akin to the Spiritualist examples having been experienced throughout the world over a long period of time, and it was only the Spiritualist explanation of this type of phenomena that was new.[29] For some, Spiritualism appeared to fill a spiritual void left by the rapid religious, scientific, and political cultural changes at this time. Oppenheim notes that while some regarded Spiritualism as little more than a short-lived fad, for many it was a means by which to alleviate both their religious and scientific anxieties.[30] Certainly, a 'Spiritualist field of discourse', to use Stuckrad's terminology, became manifest, and I contend, became part of the 'paranormal field of discourse' at the formation of the SPR, itself part of a wider 'esoteric field of discourse'.

The early period of the movement was in no way organised, yet during the 1850s, now consisting of many tens of thousands of adherents, it began to coalesce. Spiritualist meetings became more regular and more public, and several Spiritualist papers and magazines were published, although not all remained in existence for long. The frequency of mediumistic phenomena increased and the different types of manifestations experienced were now becoming more common. These included speaking in foreign languages, mediumistic healing, spirit paintings, and even full-body levitations. A number of investigations of mediums had already taken place, predominantly undertaken by those hoping to prove some deception. However, in 1854, a large number of members of the movement itself petitioned Congress to carry out similar investigations with the aim of validating the veracity of Spiritualism, but their request was unsuccessful.[31] As the spread of the movement continued west

[27] Ibid., p. 5.
[28] Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 55.
[29] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 6.
[30] Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 2-3.
[31] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 10.

across America, the reports of occurrences also increased. Some of these had actually taken place before the Hydesville incident but it was only now that the Spiritualist impetus provided a suitable platform upon which to share these earlier happenings.[32] Coincident with this increase in activity was the establishment of a number of Spiritualist groups who sought to investigate the truth of the reported phenomena.[33] So, even in its early period, Spiritualism fostered an environment which allowed its members to question the nature of the unusual phenomena associated with it. This, together with the assumed ontological acceptance of both the material and immaterial, while regarding both religion and science as inadequate sole investigative tools, created a perspective which later aligned very well with the other members of the early SPR.

After the mid-1850s the influence of the Spiritualist movement declined somewhat. The first reason for this, according to Nelson, was the increasing appearance of a small number of eccentrics, who made outlandish public statements which were perceived by sceptics as indicative of some of the most negative aspects of Spiritualism. The second was the troublesome existence of a number of frauds amongst the Spiritualists, who became the focus of attention for many vocal detractors, and thus somewhat tarnished its overall reputation in the eyes of the general public, although not of all mediums.[34] Thirdly, the difficult association of a number of Spiritualist groups with the then radical themes of socialism and free love compounded it's decline. The consequent disenchantment of many Spiritualists caused by a combination of these factors was termed the Recantation Movement by Britten.[35] During the 1860s a number of regional Spiritualist circles tried to establish a formal national movement, but the attempts were unsuccessful. A large number of new Spiritualist circles were formed during the 1870s, but it was not until 1898 that a permanent national organization was established. That said, as Nelson notes, this came too late for the revival of the movement in America.[36] This lack of a cohesive doctrine and of formal organization would mean that its initial influence on the early SPR was limited, despite the clear parallels between the two already mentioned.

[32] Gutierrez, Spiritualism', p. 197.
[33] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 13.
[34] Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 7-9.
[35] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 21, 24-25; and Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism*, p. 255.
[36] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 26-27.

Spiritualism established itself in England more gradually. Curiosity in mesmerism and its related phenomena had been growing by the mid-nineteenth century and, combined with an interest in ghost stories, created an air of inquisitiveness about paranormal phenomena across all layers of society. Ghost stories sold in large numbers and a Ghost Club was set up at Cambridge University in 1851, considered by some as an early forerunner of the SPR. In the early 1850s professional mediums from America began to visit England and they found a receptive public, albeit from the more privileged socio-economic strata who were willing to pay for demonstrations.[37] The introduction of the Spiritualist movement to Britain from America occurred in 1852 with the arrival of the medium Mrs Hayden, accompanied by Mr Stone, a lecturer on animal magnetism. Mediumship was already established in Britain, with the existence of a number of indigenous mediums who gave demonstrations to all layers of society but without garnering the groups of followers as had their American counterparts. The arrival of Mrs Hayden was thus met favourably and with a good deal of interest both by the general public and those with a deeper interest in the field.[38] Mrs Hayden was soon followed by two other American mediums, Mrs Roberts and Miss Jay. The table-tilting phenomena which manifested during the demonstrations of all three mediums, together with the continued activities of mesmerists, helped to generate widespread occurrences of similar phenomena throughout Britain. Primarily held for entertainment purposes, table-tilting evenings became increasingly common and placed the Spiritualist interpretation of psychic events firmly within the centre of cultural consciousness in early 1850s Britain.[39] Despite having no overall official governance during this period Spiritualism still continued to spread, most commonly by loose collectives of amateur investigators, but also by groups coalescing around notable mediums.[40] The most famous was Daniel Dunglas Home (1833-1886), born in Scotland but having emigrated to America in his childhood, who came to England as a celebrated medium in 1855. Although not universally respected, Home occasionally displayed some of

[37] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 66-67.
[38] Ibid., p. 89; and Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 11.
[39] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 91; and Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 11. Convincing the public of the authenticity of table tilting phenomena was not always easy, however. For example, *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph* 1, (1855), p. 3.
[40] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 91-93.

the most remarkable mediumistic phenomena seen at that time, and unusual amongst mediums, sometimes in well-lit conditions.[41]

Spiritualism was unusual in comparison to other religious organizations, in that its purpose was predominantly derived from the phenomena witnessed during Spiritualist gatherings.[42] A useful contemporary classification of the phenomena presented in *The Spiritual Magazine* in February 1860 listed rappings and table-tippings, spirit writings and drawings, trance and trance speaking, clairvoyance and clairaudience, luminous phenomena, spiritual impersonation, spirit music, visible and tactual manifestations, spirit intercourse via mirror, crystal, or vessel of water, apparitions of the departed, visions and previsions, dreams, presentiments, spirit influx, involuntary utterance, and possession.[43] There is a great deal of commonality between these phenomena and those investigated by the early committees of the SPR, as well as some direct links.[44] Most of the phenomena listed were researched by the Committee on Physical Phenomena, explicitly charged with collecting evidence on occurrences related to Spiritualism.[45] Despite the evidence collection and investigation of many of the people and events associated with the above types of phenomena, Spiritualism never developed any truly common rituals or procedures. Its lack of organization, coupled with the often ambiguous nature of the phenomena which manifested in widespread Spiritualist groups, also meant that Spiritualism never developed a coherent doctrine. The key shared beliefs among all Spiritualists was that of human survival after physical death and communication with spirits of the dead, which Gauld terms the 'survival hypothesis.'[46] Cathy Gutierrez highlights other points of agreement amongst committed Spiritualists, including the abolishment of

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[41] For more detail on Home, see Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 10-16; Mme Dunglas Home, *D.D. Home: His Life and Mission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1888; repr. 2010); Elizabeth Jenkins, *The Shadow and the Light: A Defence of Daniel Dunglas Home, the Medium* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982); Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1902), vol. 2, pp. 238, 263; Peter Lamont, *The First Psychic: The Peculiar Mystery of a Notorious Victorian Wizard* (London: Abacus, 2006).
[42] Gutierrez, 'Spiritualism', p. 197.
[43] 'The Manifold Phases of Spiritualism', in *The Spiritual Magazine* I (1860), pp. 50-55, summarized in Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 29-30.
[44] In August 1874, before the SPR's formation, Henry Sidgwick, who was staying at the home of Lord Rayleigh at the time, met the youngest of the Fox sisters, Kate, now married to the London barrister H. D. Jencken, witnessing some raps but little else. Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 93.
[45] 'Committees' in *Journal of Society for Psychical Research* I (1884), p. 13; and Haynes, *Society*, p. 12.
[46] Gauld, *Mediumship*, p. 1. An example of parochial Spiritualist doctrine can be found in *The British Spiritual Telegraph* 1 (1857), p. 4.

hell, the advancement of the soul through several tiers of heaven, and heaven as a model for an ideal earth, the combination of which makes Spiritualism classically neo-Platonic.[47] While the SPR's remit was much broader than the survival hypothesis, incorporating investigation into all paranormal phenomena, it was still of paramount importance. Myers, in his *Human Personality*, stated explicitly that 'the question for man most momentous of all is whether or no he has an immortal soul…whether or no his personality involves any element which can survive bodily death.'[48] It was left to individual Spiritualist groups and their leaders to develop parochial doctrines. Given their wide range of religious beliefs and motivations, from mainstream Christianity to vehement anti-Christianity and abhorrence of all organized churches, this only served to erode the enthusiasm for Spiritualism among the general populace.[49] Some held that Spiritualism could be employed to reinvigorate Christianity by validating its supernatural claims, while others saw the movement as an entirely new and distinct religion.[50] During the mid- to late-Victorian period in the West, Spiritualism held an almost unique role as both a science and a religion, a point noted by a number of recent scholars.[51] The movement claimed to be able to empirically test the central doctrine of human survival after death in a scientific manner, while this attempted natural validation of what those of faith perceived as supernatural elements of religion, rather blurred the distinction between the two domains.[52] While other esoteric and occult groups also sought to bring the domains of religion and science together, often with reference to the human survival of bodily death, the widespread popularity and non-elitist nature of Spiritualism meant that it was more successful than them in stimulating general debate. Consequently, it was also perhaps more influential on the early SPR than these other groups, even though the Spiritualist elements within it were side-lined before too long. Spiritualist influence was undermined by Myers ascribing a psychological foundation to the majority of Spiritualist phenomena, and by Richard Hodgson continually highlighting the instances of fraud amongst its practitioners.[53] As well as disagreements about

[47] Gutierrez, 'Spiritualism', pp. 197, 199.
[48] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 1, §100.
[49] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 84-85.
[50] Ibid., p. 147.
[51] Noakes, 'Sciences', p. 30; Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 290; Tromp, *Altered States*, p. 35; Alex Owen, *Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 37.
[52] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 136-137.
[53] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 159.

scientific methodologies, the more intellectually elitist nature of the patrons of the early SPR certainly jarred with the Spiritualist inclined members.[54] This is slightly at odds with Oppenheim's contention that the most active Spiritualists and psychical researchers were both drawn from the professional middle class and the better educated working class.[55] While this may be true of the Spiritualist contingent, the assertion does not hold so well when considering the most prominent members of the early SPR. Oppenheim is perhaps over emphasizing the congruence between Spiritualism and the SPR here, and ignoring some of the differences in the profiles of their respective membership, but what is certainly evident is that the two heavily influenced each other during the latter's formative years.[56] James Webb goes as far as to conclude that the SPR acted like a Spiritualist church for intellectuals in its earliest period.[57] While many of its activities concerned the investigation of Spiritualist phenomena and the nature of human survival after physical death, these were not the exclusive focus of its research, and, in addition, the SPR professed a scientific methodology. So, Webb's contention is perhaps a little too dismissive of the wider intentions of the society. What is certainly evident is that Spiritualism was important to the formation and development of the early SPR, with a specific committee dedicated to research physical mediumistic phenomena. Consequently, we see in the writings of the early psychical researchers much in common with the Spiritualistic perspective of human survival, spirit communication, and immaterial realms, and all are important characteristics of the paranormal domain. The controversial nature of Spiritualism is reflected in the rejected knowledge of the first of Asprem's three intellectual problem areas, the social dimension. It's promise of human survival and everlasting happiness is likewise manifest within the enchantment of his second worldview dimension.[58] Similarly, the implied communication between souls and realms demonstrates the higher knowledge and special faculties of the third epistemic dimension. Nevertheless, it's narrow focus and non-elitist basis made the movement's direct impact on paranormal thinking somewhat short-lived.

[54] Nelson, *Spiritualism*, pp. 264-265.
[55] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 29.
[56] Ibid., p. 57.
[57] Webb, *Occult*, p. 39.
[58] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 418.

The Theosophical Society

The educated classes became increasingly interested in Eastern cultures and religions in the late-Victorian period, especially for those who sought an occult source for their spiritual growth.[59] As such, it was of no surprise that interest in the Orient was one of the defining characteristics of the Theosophical Society.[60] The society, formed by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) in New York in 1875, originally sought to develop and transform American Spiritualism, but its core tenets quickly moved on from the overtly phenomena based spirituality.[61] What replaced it was a complex, and not entirely cohesive mixture of ancient divine wisdom, Western occultism, and aspects of Buddhism and Hinduism, first presented in Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877), and then in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). These lengthy works articulated her view of the failure of both traditional Christianity and mainstream science to successfully tackle the important metaphysical questions of life and the nature of the universe.[62] Rather than completely rejecting either, Antoine Faivre suggests that the theosophical approach was to intellectually fuse these domains.[63] Asprem concurs, but also contends, as do I, that there was also a paradox, in that the theosophists were anti-materialist on one hand, but sought scientific acceptance on the other.[64] We have seen that the challenge to both religion and science was the same perspective as the American medium Emma Hardinge Britten, as well as the vast majority of the early psychical researchers of the SPR, and would appear to be as much of a motivating factor for them as any traditional doctrine. Blavatsky had previously written about Gnosticism, Paracelsianism, Alchemy, and Rosicrucianism, and elements of these are found within these works. *Isis Unveiled* challenged the scientific materialism prevalent at the time, attacked elements of Christianity, and promoted various forms of esotericism. It tells us of Blavatsky's

[59] Christopher Partridge, 'Lost Horizon: H. P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism', in Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, (eds.), *Handbook of the Theosophical Current* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 310.
[60] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 162.
[61] Ibid., p. 164. For more historical discussion on Blavatsky and the formation of the Theosophical Society, see Joscelyn Godwin, 'Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy', in Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, (eds.), *Handbook of the Theosophical Current* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 13-31.
[62] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 29-31. See Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (Radford, Virginia: Wilder Publications, LLC, repr. 2007); and *The Secret Doctrine* (London: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1888).
[63] Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism*, trans. by Christine Rhone (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 26-27.
[64] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 448.

views toward materialist science, Hermetic philosophy, Christianity, and ancient wisdom religion, and also the spiritual nature of humanity.[65] Faivre notes that Blavatsky drew Hermetic parallels between 'Man and that of the Creator' in the work,[66] a characteristic found in the paranormal domain. *Isis Unveiled* specifically denied the possibility of reincarnation, but subsequent to publication, she adjusted her perception of this theme.[67] The rejection of reincarnation at this time did not preclude the existence of non-physical characteristics of the constitution of humanity, however, with numerous references to the Trinitarian concept of body, soul, and spirit.[68] Blavatsky brought together Buddhist philosophy and early Christianity with the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato to describe a universal divine mind manifest in all things, including all aspects of humanity, from gross physical body, astral soul, and ultimately annihilated spirit.[69] This Trinitarian hierarchy progressed to a septenary one as a result of correspondence, known as the Mahatma Letters, between the supposed Tibetan Masters Koot Hoomi and Morya, Blavatsky, and two significant converts to Theosophy, Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840-1921), and Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912). The letters contained highly complex discussions on the macrocosm of the universe, intermediary beings, karma, and reincarnation.[70] The first publication of the seven-fold principle was actually by Hume in October 1881, while Sinnett described a similar version in his *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883).[71] The first two manifestations (corresponding to the Body) are the Physical Body, consisting of matter alone, and the Vital Principle, an indestructible force. The third to fifth levels, directly related to the Soul, are the Astral Body (the ethereal duplicate of the Physical Body), the Astral Shape (a body of desire), and the physical consciousness or Ego (the physical intelligence). The last two states, paralleling the triune Spirit, are Spiritual consciousness or Ego (a higher sense of consciousness than the level below), and the Spirit itself (an eternal state, emanating from the Absolute).[72] Blavatsky progressed

[65] Godwin, 'Blavatsky', p. 20.
[66] Faivre, *Theosophy*, p. 123.
[67] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 214-222.
[68] "…there is no reincarnation on this earth, for the three parts of the triune man have been united together…" in Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. 1, chap. X, pp. 231-232.
[69] Ibid., Vol. 1, chap. VIII, pp. 190-191.
[70] For more on the controversy surrounding the veracity of these letters, see Godwin, 'Blavatsky', p. 23.
[71] Jean Overton Fuller, *Blavatsky and Her Teachers* (London: East-West Publications, 1988), pp. 78-99; and Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 219-220.
[72] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 220-221.

these levels further to underline the concept of reincarnation and an individual's spiritual growth. The lowest three of these are discarded at death, and the remaining four move on spiritually to the astral plane. The fifth principle divides into the less spiritual fourth principle, below, eventually dissipating, and into the more spiritual sixth principle, above. The remnants of this fifth principle then move on spiritually, together with the sixth and seventh, to a heaven-like state called *Devachan*. The length of time and level of bliss experienced in *Devachan* are defined by the deeds and nature of the individual's spirituality during their physical earthly existence, before rebirth takes place.[73] It will become increasingly apparent that the acceptance of both a physical and a spiritual aspect to humanity, as well as different types of consciousness, have clear parallels with the thinking about the paranormal of psychical researchers of the time.

The Secret Doctrine showed the culmination of Blavatsky's thinking on spiritual evolution, humanity's seven-fold constitution, karma, and reincarnation. Her now more fully developed Theosophy was based on the three tenets of one absolute truth, the cyclical nature of the universe, and the divine spark manifest in every soul through periodic incarnation. This notion of one absolute truth is reflected in the universal perspective expressed by the early psychical researchers. Likewise, the link between the profane and the divine was a shared notion, although the psychical researchers tended to favour the more Western idea of an everlasting individual soul following physical death, rather than the Eastern concept of cyclical reincarnation. Despite reference to the *Stanzas of Dyzan*, and written in a 'Senzar' language, and couched in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Buddhist terminology, much of *The Secret Doctrine* has sources stemming from Hermetic-Kabbalistic Western esoteric traditions.[74] Blavatsky described a Universal Mind, forever cycling through existence and then dissolution, during which its divine spark becomes manifest in all souls, on an individual basis corresponding with aspects of the universal ('as above, so below'). The layers of this complex, divine, universe are operated by a series of intermediary spirits. Through many reincarnations of the soul based on the karma of each previous life, individuals develop spiritually; the highest spiritual elements of Manas, Buddhi, and Atma, which define the eternal being, continue to utilize temporary physical and

[73] A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London, 1883; Santa Cruz, California: BLTC Press, 2008; Kindle edition), pp. 66-88.
[74] Godwin, 'Blavatsky', p. 26.

astral bodies, until such an elevated state is reached that the physical body and the astral body are dissolved, the soul is liberated, and the entity becomes truly divine.[75] Thus we see in Theosophy the familiar Western esoteric elements of universality, the survival of the human soul after bodily death, the unity of the material with the immaterial, the concept of a universal mind, and the existence of a divine spark within humans, all aspects of the paranormal domain, and all demonstrated by Faivre's esoteric paradigm. However, these themes which were shaped by standard Western perceptions of ancient wisdom and traditions are fused with the Eastern concepts of karma and reincarnation in an attempt to occupy the middle ground between science and theology. Campion describes this fusion as a 'synthesis of western occulture…from its ancient philosophical – Neoplatonic – and magical traditions to more recent ones, such as spiritualism, with eastern, especially Indian, teachings.'[76] Thus, we see that while the different movements and societies such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the SPR, were philosophically and intellectually distinct from each other, the boundaries between them were sometimes blurred enough that a great deal of commonality is evident across their key characteristics. These include the acceptance of materiality and immateriality, the concept of human survival, and different layers of consciousness exposing usually latent faculties, elements found in all three modes of the paranormal domain presented in this thesis.

There was some early interaction and common membership between the Theosophical Society, Spiritualism, and the SPR, including the barrister and psychical researcher C. C. Massey (1838-1905), Myers, Sinnett, and the physician Dr. George Wyld.[77] Initial perceptions of Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society by the likes of Sidgwick and other members of the SPR were largely complimentary, and both groups made similar public statements about their objectives. Their intentions both focussed on investigating currently unexplained laws of nature and ostensibly psychical phenomena. These goals, together with the fact that British Theosophy began within the upper echelons of society, unlike British Spiritualism, meant that the early Theosophists and the SPR were in some ways more closely aligned than were Spiritualists and the SPR.[78] Sidgwick made some interesting observations about

[75] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 223-225.
[76] Campion, *New Age*, p. 66.
[77] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 174.
[78] Ibid., pp. 174-175.

Blavatsky in his private journal. He and Myers first met Blavatsky on August 9th 1884, and both were favourably impressed with her straightforward attitude, suggesting that she presented a genuine desire for the good of humankind. Sidgwick and his wife Eleanor were somewhat charmed by Blavatsky's 'amusing indiscretion.' He cited her talking reverentially of the Mahatmas in Tibet, but blurting out that the chief Mahatma 'was the most utter dried-up old mummy that she ever saw.'[79] However, these early commonalities were short lived. Following an investigation into Blavatsky by Hodgson, one of the achievements for which he was perhaps best remembered, he branded her an outright fraud.[80] The accusations directed towards Blavatsky did not have a lasting detrimental impact on her or Theosophy as a movement, but it certainly ended the relationship with the SPR.[81] However, not often reported is the continued admiration that Sidgwick and Hodgson appeared to have had for Blavatsky. Despite Hodgson having reported that all Theosophic phenomena were fraudulent, along with the possibility that she was motivated by Russian patriotism to foment native discontent in India, he still referred to her as 'a remarkable woman'. Likewise, Sidgwick considered her to be 'a great woman.'[82]

The Theosophical Society was born in a questioning environment, with a strong occultural current, which also spawned the SPR. Across the two societies, there were many common aims, ideas, aspirations, as well as some shared elitist membership. To argue that that they were two facets of a single movement would be very far from being correct. To suggest that they, together with Spiritualism, were distinct manifestations of an intellectually fertile environment, receptive to certain esoteric ideas, with its members having different methodologies, is perhaps closer to the truth.

[79] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 384.
[80] Marc Antony De Wolfe Howe, *A Memoir of Richard Hodgson, 1855-1905* (Boston. MA.: Private Publication, 1906), pp. 2-3. Read at the Annual Meeting of the Tavern Club, 6th May 1906.
[81] For a more detailed account of Hodgson's investigations into Blavatsky, see Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 175-178. See also Webb, *The Occult Underworld*, pp. 88-89. For the full text of Hodgson's report, see 'Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society,' *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 3 (1885), pp. 201-400.
[82] Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, pp. 405, 410.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The formation of the Golden Dawn in 1888, which some scholars have intimated was the preeminent magical order of the modern occult revival, enabled occultists to not only study the plethora of divinatory and magical arts, sciences, and philosophies, but also to practise their craft.[83] This was markedly different from the SPR's scientific approach to psychical research, despite many intellectual and cultural commonalities between them. It's founders, the doctors William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925) and William Robert Woodman (1828-1891), and the polyglot Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854-1918), sought a fusion of intellectual Western esoteric traditions with a more practical initiatory and ritualistic occultism.[84] There was already extant a strong public demand for esoteric groups concerned with themes such as Spiritualism and Theosophy, and while these movements, like the Golden Dawn, were freely accessible by women (unlike other popular organizations of the time, such as Freemasonry), the first two were both devoid of any idea of practise unless one was a medium. Additionally, Theosophy was heavily influenced by the orient and was almost anti-Christian in its teachings, which lessened its attractiveness for many.[85] Robert A. Gilbert suggests that one reason for the appeal of the Golden Dawn for some was the opportunity to become initiated as an adept.[86] While superficially similar to clerical orders, the use of ceremonial magic and ritual as a means of spiritual growth appeared to provide the possibility of a level of control over nature not aspired to, or offered within the Church, and was in addition to the order's own version of *philosophia perennis* and *prisca theologia*, similarly promised by other esoteric societies.

There was a distinctly Rosicrucian influence on the Golden Dawn, its founders being noted Freemasons and members of the Masonic-Rosicrucian study group, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA). The links between Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry have been shown by a number of scholars.[87] Westcott studied Kabbalah,

[83] Robert A. Gilbert, 'The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn', in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 237; Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 107, 127; and Gerald Yorke in the foreword to Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. ix.
[84] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, p. 192.
[85] Partridge, 'Lost Horizon', pp. 309-333; see also Gilbert, *Golden Dawn*, p. 238.
[86] Gilbert, *Golden Dawn*, p. 241.
[87] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, p. 192; Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order* (San Francisco, CA.: Weiser Books, 1997), p. 97.

Hermeticism, Alchemy, and Rosicrucianism, while Mathers sought a more practical connection to esotericism and occultism, and became involved with the Hermetic Society, founded by Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846-1888) in 1884, who was also president of the British Theosophical Society. Mathers was introduced to Blavatsky, and while some association remained between them all, he later distanced himself from Kingsford's and Blavatsky's predominantly oriental interests.[88] Westcott and Mathers wrote a substantial amount on their various spiritual and occult interests, achieving what Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke notes was a major restatement of the *prisca theologia* tradition of Renaissance magic, bringing together Hermetism, Neoplatonism, and Kabbalah. They created a type of ancient wisdom based on nineteenth-century comparative religion, presented as a dynamic tradition through almost theatrical rituals and grades, the vast majority intentionally secret to non-initiates.[89] The Golden Dawn was motivated by private demonstration and dissemination, while the SPR was more concerned with investigation and wider publication.

Mathers reclassified the ten sefiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life into a grade structure organized into three distinct orders, similar to the SRIA's nine grade system. The First Order, or Outer Order, consisted of five grades which provided a broad and fully structured curriculum in ceremonial magic. These presented links between the macrocosm and the microcosm with the concept of a human soul containing a divine spark linking an individual to the wider universe.[90] These grades concerned the elemental rituals of earth, air, water, and fire, complemented by Egyptian-Hermetic and Kabbalistic associations, and were designed to bring into balance the elemental forces in the temple (macrocosm) with the psyches of the initiates (microcosm).[91] The Second Order, or Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis, was explicitly Rosicrucian, and consisted of the three grades, all providing instruction in ceremonial magic. The Second Order rituals emphasized the links between natural or sympathetic magic to fundamental techniques in ceremonial magic. The magical

[88] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 197-198.
[89] Ibid., pp. 199-200; and Webb, *Occult*, p. 182. For an overview of this *prisca theologia* tradition, see Wouter Hanegraaff, 'Tradition', in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter Hanegraaff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 1125-1135.
[90] Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 200-201.
[91] Ibid., p. 201. Goodrick-Clarke notes that the dramatic mood of these rituals reflected the ecclesiastical tendency for Anglican ritualism at the time, but also the cultural fashions of neo-Romanticism and Symbolism in literature and the arts.

evocations experienced in these rituals, the stimulation of certain aspects of an individual's psyche corresponding to certain macrocosmic dynamisms of nature, were designed to present magic as a particular type of religious practise which involved will and the advancement of consciousness.[92] Thus, initiates were taking an active role in trying to understand and control nature, rather than the more passive spiritual contemplation undertaken within mainstream Christianity. Additionally, the development of an individual's consciousness in these rituals has parallels to the trance states discussed in Chapter 6, and therefore links to both the hidden layers of consciousness and higher faculties of the paranormal domain. The Third Order, that of the Secret Chiefs, is not relevant for this thesis, given that none of the Golden Dawn's founders had yet attained admittance to it, and the Secret Chiefs were so elusive that only Mathers later claimed to have had any contact with them.

There were superficial similarities of tone and grandeur between the ceremonies of the Golden Dawn and those of Roman Catholicism, as well as the prevalent Anglican Church of the time, which suggests an underlying cultural influence affecting religions generally.[93] The traditions utilized by the Golden Dawn were critical in describing the overriding nature of the Order, and were a major part its attraction.[94] Webb argues that the Golden Dawn was a natural and logical development of the cultural changes which preceded its formation.[95] This may be plausible in isolation, but it is only valid for those who renounced mainstream religion, Spiritualism, the Oriental focus of Theosophy, and were not inclined to undertake the psychical research of the SPR, all of whom were in some way shaped by the same cultural transformations. Thus, I suggest that each of these were natural, yet distinct developments of 'the Age of Enlightenment', not just the Golden Dawn.

Early Psychical Researchers

The early psychical researchers came from the same privileged strata of the intellectual and cultural elite as those who engaged with esoteric spirituality and

[92] Ibid., pp. 201-202. For a comprehensive recent study of magic see also Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic: A Reader* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2013).
[93] Webb, *Occult*, p. 129; and Goodrick-Clarke, *Esoteric*, pp. 199-200.
[94] Webb, *Occult*, p. 322.
[95] Ibid., p. 275. Additionally, Owen notes the prevalence of Christian ethics embedded within the Golden Dawn, in Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 224-225.

occultism, but were motivated to investigate rather than practice. These distinct groups also shared the same diverse religious heritage, ranging from traditionalist Christians, those sceptical of mainstream religion, Spiritualists, and those attracted by more esoteric spiritualities. There are many broad commonalities between psychical research and esoteric spirituality, especially of a Neoplatonic nature, and can be seen across the elements of Faivre's esoteric paradigm. The occluded spirit realm is analogous to the researchers' spirit realm, the latter containing the spirits of the deceased or eternal souls who may or may not have once been corporeal. This spirit realm was believed to be part of a universal animistic cosmology by those inclined to the esoteric, while the paranormal investigators were also interested in the implied inherent interconnectedness of such a universe. The idea of a universal soul, or cosmic mind, associated with an animistic universe was not fully embraced by all psychical researchers, yet some of them conceded that the idea of an overall guiding entity, possibly deific, might exist but be impossible to fully fathom. One natural consequence of this universality was the implied unity of the material with the immaterial, or the earthly with the spiritual, which led to the quest for one truth able to explain the entirety of nature. While the quest to research Natural Theology was found not only within academia, but within the publications of the Theosophical Society, other occult groups, and Spiritualists, it was the SPR which became one of the most important institutions which advanced its communication. Its empirical approach to paranormal phenomena challenged both traditional Christian teaching, and also the now more culturally influential rigid materialism of Victorian naturalism.[96]

Edmund Gurney

The perceived inadequacy of both science and religion to explain the entirety of nature led some, such as Gurney, to contemplate an eclectic 'Natural Religion'. Rather than filling the supernatural void left by the modernization of orthodox Christianity with something else supernatural or magical, he envisaged a religion made up of the 'natural Universe of facts and feelings' manifest through actual existence and operation of phenomena often considered paranormal. For Gurney, it

[96] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, pp. 200-201, 205-206.

was imperative that 'Religion is for all.'[97] He described an inclusive, eclectic, and interconnected spirituality which was not anti-religion but anti-dogma.

Owen contends that Gurney's *Phantasms* considered phenomena which were intimately connected to practical occultism and attempted to normalize them by presenting reasoned causal hypotheses which explained telepathy and hallucinations among the sane.[98] While Gurney's effort to normalize the phenomena is undoubted, by his promotion of scientific methodology and systematic classification, the connection to occultism was as much due to a shared cultural and intellectual background and the common quest to answer the fundamental questions of the universe. However, he challenged the importance of prediction and repeatability within mainstream science. He argued that science was inadequate as the sole methodology by which to fully explore even just the physical nature of humans or the organic world in general, and certainly not sufficient as a tool to consider mental or spiritual phenomena.[99] The clear implication is that scientific, mental, and spiritual phenomena and concepts, were not only valid considerations, but needed to be considered together in order to effectively investigate all of nature.

Owen argues that the connected phenomena of telepathy and clairvoyance, in particular, helped to endorse the occultists' notion of 'supernormal consciousness' to authenticate supernatural occurrences.[100] Gurney's contention was that telepathy was a purely psychical phenomenon with its own domain: 'on the psychical plane it is possible to give to a heterogeneous array of them [psychical facts] a certain orderly coherence, and to present them as a graduated series of natural phenomena.'[101] This psychical plane would appear to be generally analogous to the spiritual realm of the mode of being of the paranormal domain I present in this thesis. Gurney's psychical interpretation was very different from the physiological view held by thinkers such as William Benjamin Carpenter and Thomas Huxley. From the mid-nineteenth century, they first posited automatic cerebral reflex actions to explain physical mediumistic phenomena and then expanded this to suggest that consciousness, and therefore seemingly associated phenomena such as telepathy, were entirely due to the

[97] Gurney, *Tertium Quid*, I, pp. 49-50, 83.
[98] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 171.
[99] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 1-3, §1.
[100] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 171.
[101] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 112-113, §9.

machinations of the brain.[102] Gurney noted that a large proportion of cases of telepathic phenomena related to death, which he calculated as approximately half. Given the unique nature of death, one might have expected a large number of the cases of spontaneous telepathy to be concerned with it, but he was more concerned with the psychical condition of the agent preceding death, not of its absence after it.[103] He thus tried to avoid explicit talk of spirituality, by maintaining a non-sensationalist and rational perspective with regards to these cases by not dwelling on death. Shane McCorristine suggests he 'sought to break up the supernaturalism of the ghost story.'[104] However, its obvious prominence in *Phantasms*, the importance of death in late-Victorian culture, and his numerous religious references, somewhat made Gurney's intended purely rationalist theoretical assertions somewhat ambiguous.[105] He suggested the possibility that there existed various streams of connected psychic life in a single organism. Further, he posited the hypothesis that a single individual may have its psychical being existing on different planes, with 'the stray fragments of 'unconscious intelligence,' and the alternating selves of 'double consciousness,' really belonging to a more fundamental unity…and that the self which ordinary men habitually regard as their proper individuality may after all be only a partial emergence.'[106] Further, he said that given that the approach to death seemed so important to the phenomenon of telepathy, then death itself may be recognised not as the cessation of life, but as a 'liberation of energy.'[107] So, while trying to focus on phenomena of the living, Gurney failed to avoid specific consideration of death and its spiritual implications. Thus, his consideration of consciousness necessarily led him to contemplate and discuss spirituality.

[102] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 58-59; W. B. Carpenter, *Principles of Human Physiology* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1842; ninth edn. 1881); and T. H. Huxley, 'On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History', *Fortnightly Review* 22 (1874), pp. 555-580.
[103] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 229-230, §10.
[104] McCorristine, Spectres, p. 154.
[105] Warwick contends that popular imagination in the Victorian was an 'elaborate cult of death and mourning, with its fascination with ghosts, spiritualism and the occult', in 'Victorian Gothic', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 29.
[106] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 230-231, §10.
[107] Ibid., I, p. 231, §10.

Frederic Myers

Myers discussed spirituality more overtly than Gurney, and stated that 'the question for man most momentous of all is whether or no he has an immortal soul…whether or no his personality involves any element which can survive bodily death.'[108] However, his writings considered predominantly philosophical, psychological, and psychical matters, such as the mind-body problem, abnormal psychology, and telepathy, rather than the 'survival hypothesis' directly.[109] He challenged the problem of 'scientific superstition', the agnostic view amongst many intellectuals of the day, that it was not possible to ever know anything relating to transcendental or psychical matters, or, as he termed it, '*ignoramus et ignorabimus*.'[110] Myers' universalist philosophy was inclusive of everything material and immaterial, and he suggested that the reality of a human soul and some form of spirit world was under-investigated. He proposed that one major reason for this 'World Unseen' not having been sufficiently explored was the pre-eminence of the Christian Church, which assumed responsibility for all spiritual, and therefore paranormal phenomena, accounting for them as the 'activity of her angels or of her fiends.'[111] He cited witchcraft, Mesmerism, Swedenborgianism, and Spiritism (or Spiritualism) as examples of this.[112] He dismissed any belief in witchcraft, yet conceded that there had been a great deal of misunderstanding and unwarranted persecution of witches in the past, suggesting psychological explanations for the observed phenomena. Further, he likened the phenomena to those observed in the experiments undertaken by psychologists such as Charles Richet.[113] As R. C. Finucane has noted, Myers complained of 'philosophies of materialism and of negation' in his *Essays Classical* (1888).[114] He acknowledged that many of his conclusions regarding observed paranormal phenomena coincided with Spiritualists, yet continued to critically attack their main position. As we have seen, their chief contention was the belief that supernormal phenomena were predominantly due to the

[108] Ibid., I, p. 1, §100.
[109] Hamilton, *Immortal*, pp. 193-194. Hamilton suggests that Myers did not present all the evidence available, but does not say why. See also Emily Cook, 'The subliminal consciousness: F. W. H Myers' approach to the problem of survival', *The Journal of Parapsychology* 58 (1994), p. 41.
[110] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 1, §101.
[111] Ibid., I, p. 4, §102.
[112] Ibid., I, p. 4, §103. Myers did not distinguish between the terms 'Spiritism' and 'Spiritualism', using the former only rarely. See the section on Spiritualism in this chapter for some discussion on those who have made a distinction.
[113] Ibid., I, p. 4, §103.
[114] Finucane, *Appearances*, p. 208; and F. W. H. Myers, *Essays Classical* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1888; repr. 1904), p. 105.

action of spirits of the dead. Myers' assertion was that the vast majority were actually due to the action of the still embodied spirit of the agent or percipient himself.[115] He further attacked the Spiritualist movement for its uncritical blind faith, a lack of coherent 'Spiritualistic literature', and a reliance on some fraudulent testimony, all of which made scientists unwilling to study the associated phenomena.[116] This demonstrated his scientifically driven acceptance of the spiritual, but not of Spiritualism.

The view of Myers and his 'small group of Cambridge friends' was, that in order to try to understand the workings of the universe, a new methodology was required, 'more thorough than the champions either of religion or of materialism had yet suggested.'[117] He argued that 'if a spiritual world exists, and if that world has at any epoch been manifest or even discoverable, then it ought to be manifest or discoverable now.'[118] The acceptance of a spiritual realm by Myers and the SPR was undoubted, but their attempts to understand its nature were undeveloped, and relied upon the perceived interaction between the spiritual and the physical world, through phenomena such as telepathy. It was the 'doctrine of telepathy' which Myers regarded as one of the fundamental concepts of his consideration of the supernormal. This 'supersensory communication of mind with mind' not only provided evidence of an immaterial process operating within the material world, but also indicated certain characteristics of the innate nature of humanity and the possible survival of death.[119] He referred to the spiritual world as 'metetherial', defining the term as 'that which appears to lie after or beyond the ether; the metetherial environment denotes the spiritual or transcendental world in which the soul exists.'[120] Referencing ether provided a logical link both to the familiar and to a non-controversial scientific notion of something which was regarded as not purely physical.[121]

For Myers, phenomena such as telepathy suggested two hypotheses: 'either incalculable extension of our own mental powers, or else the influence upon us of minds freer and less trammelled than our own.' For Spiritualists, the second

[115] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 6, §106, and I, pp. xiii, xix.
[116] Ibid., I, pp. 6-7, §106.
[117] Ibid., I, p. 7, §107; and Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 196.
[118] Myers, *HP*, I. p. 7, §107.
[119] Ibid., I, p. 241, §627.
[120] Ibid., I, pp. xix; and I, p. 8, §108.
[121] Ibid., I, p. 9, §109. See my discussion on ether in Chapter 5.

hypothesis was entirely explainable 'by the agency of discarnate minds', and when taken to an extreme, did not require the first at all.[122] He believed that the vast majority of phenomena that appeared to be the result of discarnate spirit intervention were actually explainable by the action of an individual's own spirit. Rather than negating the Spiritualist view, Myers subsumed it by allowing both incarnate and discarnate spirits, thus implying both the existence of a human soul and a spirit world.[123] He regarded an individual's subliminal layers of consciousness as being closer to the spiritual world, nearer to 'the primitive source and extra-terrene initiation of life.'[124] Thus, he regarded the spiritual world, rather than the material earth, as the source of life. I will demonstrate in Chapter 6 that the evidence for these subliminal layers was presumed by Myers to be shown by the disintegration of normal human personality, such as when those of genius demonstrated usually hidden mental faculties. He saw evidence of genius in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, the poets William Blake (1757-1827) and William Wordsworth (1771-1850), the French novelist and memoirist George Sand (1804-1876), the writer Charles Dickens (1812-1870), and the French dramatist François de Curel (1854-1928). He believed there may have been an influence on some of their work, to varying degrees, from their dreams.[125] The cultural importance of dreams during this period is discussed in Chapter 6, as well as the significance within medical and psychological circles, with the interpretation of dreams developing to a greater extent after the turn of the century with the likes of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) , Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), and Henri Bergson.[126] Myers likened the mental faculties of some persons of genius to some sensitives, but suggested that their inspirations did not often exhibit supernormal phenomena to the same degree. However, he believed that some persons of genius were able to receive vague impressions of a world beyond the usual range of senses.[127] He suggested that both artistic and philosophical genius could, using forms of telepathy, gain direct knowledge 'of facts of the universe outside the range of any specified organ or of any planetary view.'[128] He also embraced the idea of 'primary

[122] Ibid., I, p. 15, §113.
[123] Ibid., I, pp. 15-16, §114.
[124] Ibid., I, p. 97, §321.
[125] Ibid., I, pp. 105-107, §329-330.
[126] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 178. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: George Allen, 1913); Havelock Ellis, *The World of Dreams* (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1911); Henri Bergson, *Dreams* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914).
[127] Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 107-108, §331.
[128] Ibid., I, p. 111, §335

passion', using Plato's conception of Love, as 'the energy of integration which makes the Cosmos the Sum of Things,'[129] or as a mediator between God and humanity. He stated that this 'planetary and cosmical' scope of the passion of Love was central to his thinking.[130] Myers paralleled the links between certain persons of genius and the knowledge gained from the spirit world to the links between the material and the immaterial, or the earthly and the divine. This led him to reflect on religion, as humanity's emotional and ethical attitude towards 'Life Unseen', or the spirit world, and that it was inescapably similar to Platonic Love.[131] His concept of genius had other Platonic links, as Jeffrey J. Kripal has posited. In analysing Plato's *Phaedo*, he described the notion of a soul learning a truth of nature by remembering something known in a pre-existent life rather than constructing it for the first time in the present one. This anamnesis, as Plato termed it, was similar to Myers' contention that profound knowledge was already known in the spiritual realm, but could be accessed in the material realm by persons of genius at certain times,[132] and perhaps has associations with William James' notion of a cosmic reservoir of consciousness discussed in Chapter 6.

Myers regarded the spiritual world as 'a metetherial realm… an environment profounder than those environments of matter and ether', which did not depend on the existence of the material world.[133] He viewed each human as a spirit, controlling a body which was a composite of 'lower and smaller lives', with bodily death occurring when it was no longer physically fit for the purpose of acting as the agent for the 'informing spirit.' Myers hoped that his hypothesis would be universally accepted, and appeal to the strength of all philosophies and all religions. He even considered its potential for creating a world-wide faith, so that all could be part of the 'cosmic evolution and…the ultimate vitalising Power.'[134] Alison Butler notes similar notions of a universal religion were popular amongst theosophists and the wider occult community at this time.[135] Gwilym Beckerlegge also highlights this concept within theosophy, but he contends that it was common amongst all religions of the period,

[129] Ibid., I, p. 112, §335
[130] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 195.
[131] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 115, §338; and as noted in Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 85.
[132] Kripal, *Impossible*, pp. 38, 58.
[133] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 215-216, §579-580.
[134] Ibid., I, pp. 217-219, §581-583.
[135] Alison Butler, *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 113.

but especially manifest within the Hindu tradition.[136] Myers demonstrated a belief in a universal interconnectedness when he stated 'the general drift of all our evidence makes for the thesis of *continuity* in cosmic phenomena.'[137] However, he understood that the nature of the theory could make it unpalatable for both scientific and non-scientific thinkers, suggesting that 'you can travel in dreams and infest your enemy as a haunting spirit.'[138] He also contended that there was 'no absolute gulf' between the supernormal perception of ideas as existing in other minds, and the supernormal perception of what was known as matter. He even intimated that all matter may in fact just exist as an idea in 'some cosmic mind,'[139] which appeared to combine a philosophy of Monistic Idealism with the concept of a world-soul, and is analogous to Faivre's idea of a living nature.[140] Oppenheim suggests that in attempting to reconcile his cosmological and psychological theories, Myers created an intellectual problem for himself. This theoretical quandary necessitated what Oppenheim regards as a clumsy concept of an *anima mundi*, or world soul.[141] McCorristine also notes the apparent dichotomy between Myers' 'psychology of the unconscious' versus his quest to understand the nature of the universe within the 'realm of the cosmic'. He also suggests, as I also contend, that this 'double nature' of the empirical intertwined with the mystical was prevalent within most of the Sidgwick Circle.[142] Those outside of the SPR, such as Carpenter and Huxley, saw all normal, abnormal, and creative activities as due to the automatic action of the cerebrum. Their mainstream physical view, which eschewed any metaphysical interpretation, was markedly in contrast with that of Myers and the SPR.[143]

For Myers, the spiritual realm was of preeminent importance, describing the crux of his 'supreme problem' as:

> 'The theoretical question of primary importance
> may be simply that of the existence or non-

[136] Gwilym Beckerlegge, 'Followers of 'Mohammed, Kalee and Dada Nanuk': The Presence of Islam and South Asian Religions in Victorian Britain', in *Religion in Victorian Britain: Vol. V. – Culture and Empire*, ed. by John Wolffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 240.
[137] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 231, §614.
[138] Ibid., I, p. 247, §635.
[139] Ibid., I, p. 278, §660.
[140] Faivre, *Access*, pp. 10-11.
[141] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 261.
[142] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 183.
[143] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 155.

> existence of a spiritual world. The human or practical question of supreme importance is that of man's presence or portion in that world, if it does exist.'[144]

The traditional concept of the ghost provided a suitable vehicle for Myers to tackle this intellectual problem. He believed that a greater understanding of ghosts could be garnered by investigating the supernormal phenomena that occurred between living persons. If one accepted the evidence of phantasms of the living, often occurring near or at the time of death, which he said was overwhelming, he posited that it was a logical progression to consider whether such a phantasm could appear after a person's bodily death, and thus indicate some link to a surviving individual human personality.[145] He regarded the contemporary view of ghosts, being 'a deceased person permitted by Providence to hold communication with survivors', as erroneous. This overtly supernatural idea, reflecting aspects of contemporary popular culture such as gothic literature, was intellectually unpalatable to Myers and the SPR.[146] Instead, he defined a ghost as 'a manifestation of persistent personal energy.'[147] Positing the homogeneousness of the material and the spiritual realms, he stated that 'all cognisable Mind is as continuous as all cognisable Matter.'[148] Additionally, he stated that telepathy was a law which existed in both the spiritual world as well as the material world, proven by the fact that 'those who communicated with us telepathically in this world communicate with us telepathically from the other.'[149] The culmination of this theory was a universal and interconnected philosophy, based on scientific, but not physicalist, observation and experiment, indicating the existence of a human soul and a spirit world: 'Man, therefore, is not a planetary or a transitory being; he persists as very man among cosmic and eternal things.'[150] He described the interconnectedness of all souls, existing as individual personalities but also as part of a universal collective, when he said 'In the boundless ocean of mind innumerable currents and tides shift with the shifting emotion of each

[144] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 25, §124.
[145] Ibid., II, p. 2, §702.
[146] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 173.
[147] Myers, *HP*, II, p. 4, §703.
[148] Ibid., II. p. 2, §701.
[149] Ibid., II, p. 68, §745.
[150] Ibid., II, pp. 4-6, §704.

several soul', culminating in 'theories of the permanence or simultaneity of all phenomena in a timeless Universal Soul.'[151]

Myers discussed the idea of motor automatism, with associated phenomena such as automatic writing and speech, to further his notion of the existence of a human soul and a spiritual realm.[152] He was well aware that there was evidence of the phenomenon of automatic writing, and similar phenomena, going back to antiquity, but cited the rise of modern Spiritualism in the middle of the nineteenth century as the catalyst for bringing it to the attention of 'civilised men' in Europe and America.[153] It was the controversial figure of William Stainton Moses that he chose as an exemplar of the phenomena of automatic writing being elevated to a 'higher plane.' Moses served as one of the first vice-presidents and council members of the SPR, but there were two reasons why he could be considered a controversial choice. Firstly, following the investigation of his friend, the physical medium William Eglinton, a series of damning reports was published by the SPR during 1886 and 1887, and Moses resigned from the society to show solidarity with him.[154] Secondly, the authenticity of Moses' own mediumship was occasionally called into question, although this was usually regarded as unintentional.[155] Myers, however, declared that both he and Gurney thought well of Moses, and were, in fact, motivated by him. Moses claimed that the words expressed in his automatic writing were 'the direct utterances of departed persons, some of them lately dead, some dead long ago.'[156] Myers concluded that when automatic writing appeared to be coherent, especially when knowledge unknown to the writer was received, the existence of a spiritual realm was suggested.[157] However, he dismissed both the concept of reincarnation, which was sometimes implied during motor automatism, and glossolalia (speaking in tongues) which was occasionally observed, as lacking evidence and largely gibberish.[158]

[151] Ibid., II, pp. 68, 76, §745, 752.
[152] Ibid., I, pp. 26-27, §125.
[153] Ibid., II, pp. 116, §825-826; and Nelson, *Spiritualism*, p. 6.
[154] Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 139-140.
[155] Ibid., p. 79.
[156] Myers, *HP*, II, pp. 117-118, §826.
[157] Ibid., II, p. 118, §827.
[158] Ibid., II, p. 137, §837.

Myers considered the intertwined concepts of trance, possession, and ecstasy, as vitally important to his theory of communication between the physical and spiritual realms. He saw the 'automatism of throat and tongue', or 'automatic utterance' as hugely significant. On the occasions when the messages conveyed via this method appeared to emanate from a departed spirit, he inferred a validation of his theory of the subliminal self, discussed in Chapter 6, but also of the survival of the human personality. The consciousness of the individual seemed to be paused, passing into a state of trance, only to be subsequently occupied by an 'invading intelligence', which was able to control a subject's voice and limbs. Possession, as he defined it, was an enhanced form of motor automatism. However, a key difference was that in possession the entranced automatist's own personality seemed to be temporarily, but entirely, substituted by a spirit who was controlling writing or speech. He believed that the many reported examples of trance-phenomena, especially those investigated by Hodgson, had greatly added to the body of evidence which helped to validate this theory.[159] Some contemporary notions of possession at this time considered it to be a physical phenomenon, while others saw it as purely mystical.[160] Myers considered possession phenomena from a psychological perspective rather than a physical one. However, he stressed the importance of not disregarding the physical side, as all metetherial events, and therefore all supernormally initiated sensory and motor automatisms, must somehow affect the world of matter.[161] He also considered other 'action-at-a-distance' phenomena such as telekinesis, but rather ambiguously. He presented a psychological and physiological explanation for telekinesis, which, unusually, contrasted with the spiritual and metaphysical interpretation of the scientists Charles Richet (1850-1935), Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), and Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), especially with regards to the medium Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918).[162]

That the communication suggested by cases of trance-phenomena was fragmentary and difficult to analyse should be of no surprise, according to Myers, as

[159] Ibid, II, pp. 189-190, §900-901.
[160] Sarah A. Willburn, *Possessed Victorians: Extra Spheres in Nineteenth-Century Mystical Writings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 5-6.
[161] Myers, *HP*, II, p. 204, §920.
[162] Ibid., II, p. 205, §921; and II, p. 208, §925; and Simone Natale, *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), pp. 97-98.

physical brains and immaterial personalities were highly complex. Consequently, any communication which seemingly crossed the boundary between the material and non-material, would naturally be imperfect and not necessarily homogeneous. This was despite describing the human brain as 'an arrangement of matter expressly adapted to being acted upon by a spirit.'[163] He stated explicitly what he believed the evidence of recorded apparitions and messages from the 'departing and the departed' had proved. Firstly, the confirmation of the notion of survival, the continuation of the spirit's existence as a 'structural law of the universe', and thus the indisputable legacy of 'each several soul'. Secondly, the proof that there existed a mode of communication between the spiritual world and the material world, whether for telepathic messages or 'the answer of prayer and supplication.' Thirdly, that the surviving spirit retained, to some extent, the memories and loves of earth.[164] He thus presented two evidential levels, the first which helped him to validate the reality of the phenomena, and the second, which concerned the actual contents of the messages, which could be examined independently. He brought the evidence together in a somewhat nebulous cosmic thesis: 'Every element of individual wisdom, virtue, love, develops in infinite evolution toward an ever-highering hope; toward "Him who is at once thine innermost Self, and thine ever unattainable Desire."'[165] His idea combined notions of human physical and spiritual evolution with universality and interconnectedness in both a Platonic and Hermetic manner, describing a moralistic 'As above, so below' connection between the profane human and the divine God.

Myers suggested that 'the law of telepathy', as he has presented it, showing it developing into 'the law of spiritual communication between incarnate and discarnate spirits', was 'the highest law with which our human science can conceivably have to deal.'[166] He reasserted the universal aspect of cosmic law by insisting that this same telepathic form of communication did not just exist only on this planet, 'but wherever in the universe discarnate and incarnate spirits may be intermingled or juxtaposed.'[167] He attempted to link this telepathic communication with religion via the concept of ecstasy. He suggested that the documented cases of trance-phenomena were indicative

[163] Myers, *HP*, II, p. 254, §972.
[164] Ibid., II, pp. 256-257, §974.
[165] Ibid., II, p. 257, §974.
[166] Ibid., II, p. 258, §975.
[167] Ibid., II, p. 258, §975.

of episodes of ecstasy, and that the evidence for ecstasy was stronger than for any other religious belief, citing St. John, St. Paul, Buddha, and Muhammad, as individuals who had experienced similar incidences.[168] He took this further when he admitted the possibility of the source of some communication or knowledge not being from a human soul, but rather a 'reflection of Reality itself; of the World-Soul as the Future; of a pre-existent Cosmorama of infinite fates', and also described the Universe as 'a plenum of infinite knowledge of which all souls form a part.'[169] It will be shown that aspects of these spiritual considerations, paralleled by other members of the SPR, are all reflected in the modes of thinking and being in the paranormal domain presented in Chapter 7.

Richard Hodgson

Hodgson's interest in Spiritualism was awakened by his own vision of a recently departed friend, coincident with a vivid dream of the same individual by a mutual friend who was present at the autopsy.[170] When this general interest led to deeper investigation of the phenomena, Hodgson was so affected by the unreliability of even the best witnesses that he always remained reluctant to validate any physical phenomena related to Spiritualism.[171] However, this did not prevent his eventual full acceptance of a belief in the survival hypothesis, despite the many warnings questioning the observed evidence in much of his writing. Following a number of sittings with Mrs. Piper and George Pelham, Hodgson initially said that the phenomena observed implied the existence of at least some telepathy, but that he found it difficult to accept that either a spiritistic hypothesis, or telepathy from the living, provided a fully adequate explanation.[172] Ultimately, he came to believe that these communications were due to the surviving spirits of dead persons. The disjointedness of many of the communications suggested to Hodgson a spiritualistic rather than a telepathic hypothesis, due to the assumed difficulty of a spirit controlling the medium's organism. The knowledge expressed about the sitters seemed to him to

[168] Ibid., II, pp. 259-260, §976-977.
[169] Ibid., II, pp. 271-3, §985-986.
[170] Richard Hodgson and S. J Davey, 'The Possibilities of Mal-observation and Lapse of Memory from a Practical Point of View,' *PSPR* 4 (1886), p. 405.
[171] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 209.
[172] Richard Hodgson, 'A Record of Observations of Certain Phenomena of Trance,' *PSPR* 8 (1892), p. 1.

be limited to what one might reasonably expect the communicators to know, and so again a spiritualistic process rather than a telepathic one was presumed. Hodgson noted that the communicators were either usually good or usually bad, once more suggesting a spiritualistic hypothesis, otherwise all the good communicators would have to be regarded as gifted telepathic agents. The fact that communicators very often first operated in the presence of friends, then with strangers providing unexpected answers, further implied a spiritualistic hypothesis for him. Hodgson was especially impressed by communications apparently received from suicides and from persons who had died in a state of mental distress, as the communications were more noticeably confused.[173] He contended that if each human was a soul that survives death, then there is no reason to assume that each spirit would have the same ability to convey clear messages from 'the other world'. Furthermore, suggested Hodgson, such a faculty may require some high level of skill, talent, or gift on the part of the spirit, such as a great artist, mathematician, or philosopher may have in the material world.[174] In a personal letter written to a friend, we get a sense of his perception of the universe: 'Everything, absolutely everything – from a spot of ink to all the stars – every faintest thought we think to the contemplation of the highest intelligence in the cosmos, are all in and part of the infinite Goodness.'[175] Thomas A. Baird suggests Hodgson 'was searching for the Source and Secret of All Life.'[176] Hodgson's expression of interconnectedness and universality is something akin to a Neoplatonic cosmology, combining the material with the immaterial, and individual elements part of an all-encompassing quasi-divine unity, again, reflecting Faivre's living nature.

Oliver Lodge

Lodge was another SPR member who embraced a spiritual perspective. Richard Noakes notes that Lodge, as well as Crookes, understood that the investigation of psychical phenomena was perhaps best served by psychologists and physiologists, but given their reluctance, was prepared to extend the boundaries of

[173] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 265-266.
[174] Richard Hodgson, 'A Record of Observations of Certain Phenomena of Trance,' *PSPR* 13 (1898), pp. 362-366.
[175] Howe, *A Memoir*, p. 7.
[176] Thomas A. Baird, *Richard Hodgson: The Story of a Psychical Researcher and His Times* (London: Psychic Press, 1949), p. 4.

physics into the immaterial realm.[177] In contemplating the survival hypothesis, Lodge distinguished between the two perspectives 'man *has* a body' and 'man *is* a body'. If the former was correct, then Lodge saw individuals as a union of soul and body, and without one or the other the entity became incomplete as a person – either corpse, spirit, or both. After death, the final product, whatever it was, could not be described as 'man'. Lodge was adamant that humans belonged to the animal kingdom, existing by utilizing the particles of terrestrial matter. Further, he stated, the soul was that part of a person, or an inter-relation with the physical body, which was dissociated from the body at death, and distinguished a living person from a corpse.[178] Lodge regarded the soul as a controlling and guiding principle which was responsible for individual personal expression and for the construction of the body, but that there existed higher aspects of the soul which enabled feeling, intelligence, and will, and was the repository of mental experience.[179] For Lodge, the soul included mind, but also aspects of spirit, related to the Divine Being, and was the link between spirit and matter.[180] In the religious domain, what Lodge also referred to as 'transcendental, ultra-mundane, or supersensual', he contended that one could expect the same system of certain truth, as one could in physics.[181] Lodge suggested that both with science and with religion, it was perfectly acceptable to undertake speculative theorising based on facts, but one must accept that not everything currently known was entirely true, and was certainly not the entirety of all knowledge, and so continual movement towards truth was paramount. His view of life can be hinted at by understanding his belief that 'matter is the vehicle of the mind, but is dominated and transcended by it.'[182] Lodge considered life to be dependent on matter for its phenomenal appearance, here and now, and for all its terrestrial activities, but that its 'essential existence is continuous and permanent, though its interactions with matter are discontinuous and temporary.'[183] This suggests a superiority of mind over matter, and also implies a hypothesis of survival, which Lodge certainly believed in.[184]

[177] Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 49.
[178] Lodge, *Man*, pp. 156-157.
[179] Noakes, 'Infinitely', p. 328.
[180] Lodge, *Man*, pp. 165-166.
[181] Ibid., p. 85.
[182] Ibid., p. 107.
[183] Ibid., p. 119.
[184] As acknowledged, for example, in Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 5.

In trying to reconcile science and religion, Lodge viewed unusual mental phenomena, such as genius, telepathy, and clairvoyance, as indicative of an 'intelligence' not wholly inaccessible and yet not familiarly accessible.[185] For Lodge, this was suggestive of certain abilities often hidden within an unconscious or subconscious, but also linked the mental and physical aspects of life. The higher mental faculties were sometimes obscured or suppressed, while commonplace mental characteristics and all physical characteristics were more readily accessible. He suggested that the mental and physical were so intertwined that even the crudities of phenomena such as faith healing had an element of truth about them. Lodge said, 'We are not bodies alone, nor spirits alone, but both; our bodies isolate us, our spirits unite us.'[186]

Lodge viewed monism as critical to balanced intellectual thinking, describing it as 'a philosophical system which assumed an essential *oneness* which incorporated all phenomena – material, mental, objective, subjective – as modes of manifestation of one fundamental reality.'[187] Noakes and Oppenheim regard Lodge's all-inclusive perspective as one of ultimate continuity,[188] a combination of universality and interconnectedness intertwining the material and the immaterial realms, and so naturally form characteristics within all three modes of the paranormal domain presented in Chapter 7 – thinking, doing, and being. Lodge defined three monistic theories: 1. Everything was part of an unknown absolute Reality, beyond human apprehension or conception, or 'Idealistic Monism', suggesting that the likes of Herbert Spencer and Spinoza were adherents to it; 2. Fundamental reality was consciousness, with the material world only real according to a consistent set of ideas, an 'Empirical Idealist Monism', whose main advocates were Bishop Berkeley, Hegel, William James, Mach, and Karl Pearson; and 3. that mind, thought, and consciousness were all by-products or epiphenomena of the one fundamental all-embracing reality of matter, energy, or substance, a 'Materialistic Monism', suggesting that Tyndall, Haeckel, and the like, were its chief proponents.[189] Lodge's perspective was: 'Before everything, a philosopher should aim at being all-inclusive; before everything, a man

[185] Lodge, *Man*, p. 41.
[186] Ibid., p. 47.
[187] Lodge, *Life*, p. 6.
[188] Noakes, 'Infinitely, p. 325; and Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 327.
[189] Lodge, *Life*, pp. 6-7.

of science should aim at being definite, clear, and accurate…any attempt at combination is ambitious.'[190] His own cosmology was shaped by this: '1. The Whole is a single undeviating law-saturated cosmos; 2. The Whole consists not of matter and motion alone, nor of spirit and will alone, but of both and all.'[191] This suggests that Lodge considered both scientific method and universal monism as positive motivations in intellectual endeavours, and in broad terms, this is how the early SPR seemed to operate. This parallels the spiritual notions of William Fletcher Barrett, another successful scientist who contemplated the immaterial realm and the survival hypothesis. In considering hidden layers of consciousness he contended that the conscious self, which usually operated in normal waking life, was merely a part of a 'more comprehensive consciousness', and suggested that this profounder faculty, which was nearly always latent with regards to life on earth, may become liberated in 'full activity by the change we call death.'[192] While considering thought-transference, he concluded that there could be no doubt of its reality, however critically one looked at the evidence. Interestingly, he argued that the fact of telepathy rendered a purely materialistic philosophy untenable, on one hand, while affording a rational basis for prayer and inspiration on the other.[193]

Concluding Remarks

It is evident that the late-nineteenth century saw a spiritual revival which impacted all levels of society. This re-enchantment, as articulated by Asprem, Owen, and Partridge, comprised a religious, mystical, magical, and an occult revival. While not detrimentally impacting the rapid progression of science, the spiritual revival was in some ways a reaction to its overt materialism. The impact on the SPR of this revival was two-fold. Firstly, in general terms, society was changing rapidly and becoming more questioning. The spiritual revival was a manifestation of the perceived inadequacies of both science and mainstream religion when attempting to answer questions on the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it. Secondly, the

[190] Ibid., p. 10.
[191] Lodge, *Man*, p. 63. For more on Lodge's cosmology see J. D. Root, 'Science, religion, and psychical research: The monistic thought of Sir Oliver Lodge', *Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978), pp. 245-263.
[192] Barrett, *Psychical Research*, p. 34.
[193] Ibid., p. 34.

impact of individual spiritual and occult groups helped shape the SPR and were in some ways shaped by it. There were common members amongst Spiritualists, the Theosophical Society, and the SPR, especially.[194] However, the latter two, together with the Golden Dawn, came from a similar stock of middle and upper class social, cultural, and intellectual elite, unlike Spiritualism. Where the Spiritualists sought primarily to prove the survival of the human spirit after bodily death, the SPR attempted to investigate this and wider paranormal phenomena in a scientific manner. Dismissing both religion and science, yet incorporating aspects of each, the Theosophists professed the following of a more truly metaphysical and spiritual path, rather than the ritual magic based initiatory occult tradition emphasized by the Golden Dawn. Nevertheless, both the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn adhered to what Campion refers to as '…classical occultism, resting in the belief that true knowledge is hidden from view but can be discovered by adepts with sufficient spiritual or intellectual capacity.'[195] While this was certainly not true for the narrowly focussed Spiritualists, the psychical researchers' intellectual, and often spiritual quest to understand the nature of the universe could be regarded as more closely paralleling the aspiration of the occultists. The spiritual revival considered in this chapter was a hugely influential cultural development, not only for society in general, but also for the particular groups of people who undertook psychical research, and so is a vital component of the overall thesis. The spiritual revival was a key facet of the intellectual tensions of the period, which saw both religion and science as inadequate to answer fundamental questions about the universe. The Spiritualist, esoteric, and occultist themes which typified aspects of this environment allowed the intellectuals of the SPR to flourish for a while, with spirituality thus forming an important characteristic of the paranormal domain. As such, this chapter has reinforced my second key argument, the perception by some that a new intellectual approach was required to tackle humanity's fundamental questions. Further, it has also described some of the individual elements of my third key argument, the syncretic thinking of the paranormal domain.

[194] For a contemporary view of the links between the SPR and the Theosophical Society, see 'What is a Spook?', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* 62 (1886), p. 773; cited in McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 164.
[195] Campion, *New Age*, p. 65.

Part III

THE SCIENTIFIC THEMES

Chapter 5

Science and Technology in the Victorian Era

In this chapter I argue that many scientific and technological currents of the Victorian era helped to shape the questioning environment of the time, within which the SPR was formed, and that these also had direct influences on its members, their activities, and their thinking about the paranormal. As the first part of the science element of my two-dimensional historo-cultural analytical framework, it considers the broad principles of materialism and rationalism and shows that there was a varied acceptance by some, and a rejection by others, and that this shaped thinking about the paranormal at this time. I will also highlight the increasing specialization of science and the eclectic approach employed by the members of the SPR required to overcome this. The normalization of scientific methodology will be shown to have provided validity, authority, and acceptance of scientific theories, and was an explicit motivation of the SPR. However, I will argue that the specific methodologies of its members did not always strictly follow these mainstream scientific frameworks. I also highlight here aspects of the physical sciences, specifically ether physics, experimental physics, and communications technology, which were important to psychical research. As such, this chapter directly supports an aspect of my first key argument, the perception that science alone was an inadequate intellectual tool with which to answer the fundamental questions of nature. Additionally, it highlights the theme of my second key argument, in that an alternative intellectual approach was required, that of the paranormal domain. Consequently, some individual characteristics of that domain, presented as my third key argument, are also illustrated here. The analysis of scientific themes in this chapter reflects Egil Asprem's broad notion of disenchantment, especially the idea of epistemological optimism. Further, the inclusive scientific methodology proposed by the early psychical researchers can be considered from the perspective of the social and worldview dimensions of Asprem's intellectual problem areas, given their aspiration to include all knowledge, which, in turn, was a reaction to the pervading disenchantment of the time. The 'paranormal field of discourse' that this approach helped to engender can be viewed in

the light of Kocku von Stuckrad's 'esoteric field of discourse', but also started to shape a way of thinking about the paranormal which dovetails with his concept of 'the other'.

Materialism, Rationalism, and Specialization

Science in the early to mid-Victorian period was a mix of increasing diversity and intensifying specialization, and included such contentious disciplines as phrenology and mesmerism, discussed in more detail in the next chapter.[1] A number of scholars have commented on the importance of these two fields as precursors to the broader mainstream acceptance of the occult, and the growth of Spiritualism in this period.[2] Initially, they were regarded by some as a 'new science', despite the obvious threat to the authority of the established sciences, which were already espousing the ideological superiority of materialism.[3] This suggests that the significance of 'occulture', to use Christopher Partridge's term, was very much in evidence, with the co-existence of orthodox and unusual cultural themes permeating society.[4] This acceptance and attractiveness of the unusual is clearly reflected in Asprem's notion of the reaction against disenchantment,[5] and Stuckrad's concept of 'the other.'[6]

Materialism at this time was expressed in many different forms and had an influence across the entire range of belief systems. At one extreme was the dogmatic scientism exhibited by some adherents to the modern physical sciences, which dismissed the concept of spirituality altogether.[7] There were others, a little less

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[1] Alison Winter, 'The Construction of Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in the Early Victorian Life Sciences', in *Victorian Science in Context*, ed. by Bernard Lightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 25; and Sherrie Lynne Lyons, *Species, Serpents, Spirits, and Skulls: Science at the Margins in the Victorian Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 1.
[2] These include: J. Jeffrey Franklin, 'The Evolution of Occult Spirituality in Victorian England and the Representative Case of Edward Bulwer-Lytton', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Iwan Rhys Morus, *When Physics Became King* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Winter, 'The Construction of Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies'; Richard Yeo, *Defining Science: William Whewell, Natural Knowledge and Public Debate in Early Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), amongst others.
[3] Richard Noakes, 'The Sciences of Spiritualism in Victorian Britain: Possibilities and Problems', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 30, 32.
[4] Partridge, *Re-enchantment*, p. 3.
[5] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 78.
[6] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, pp. 10-11.
[7] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 36.

fanatical, who were nevertheless vehemently materialist, and had little interest in Spiritualist or paranormal phenomena. For example, the physicist John Tyndall denied the possibility of spiritual or religious phenomena having any association with the physical realm, yet a few of his works were misinterpreted by some Spiritualists.[8] I suggest that the lack of a systematic investigative approach by the Spiritualists not only lessened their influence within the early SPR, as we have seen, but perhaps led them to look for scientific validity where none was really forthcoming. The next group consisted of those who were interested in Spiritualist and paranormal phenomena, but regarded them as still obeying the laws of nature. Their approach was to use scientific methodology to investigate the seemingly immaterial.[9] Asprem argues for a sharper distinction between the philosophical materialism of the hard-line "scientific naturalists" and the mechanistic physics of the scientists of this ideologically less extreme group.[10] This distinction, which I also make, is important here as it implies a particular cohesive mindset exhibited by the early psychical researchers which shaped their investigations, and is reflected in the paranormal domain in Chapter 7. In addition, both laypersons and scholars in this group were influenced by discoveries across a number of rapidly advancing scientific fields, especially in disciplines such as physiology and psychology.[11] A key manifestation of this broad scientific methodology was the formation of The Society for Psychical Research in 1882. As discussed in Chapter 1, its early members, predominantly from the intellectual elite, sought to bring together all data on paranormal phenomena, and introduced many new scientific terms and concepts. Members of the SPR also included a number of Spiritualists, discussed in Chapter 4, a distinct, but overlapping group for whom the overriding goal was the empirical proof of the afterlife. There was thus some commonality with 'Spiritual Science', promoted by Spiritualists who saw mainstream physical science as inferior.[12] The foremost American medium of the period, Emma Hardinge Britten, promoted a more expansive 'spiritual science', driven by both physical and spiritual evidence, fuelled by her perception of the inadequacy of both science and religion.[13] Britten's views were echoed by many

[8] Noakes, 'Sciences', pp. 41-42.
[9] Beaumont, 'Socialism', p. 166.
[10] Egil Asprem, 'Pondering Imponderables: Occultism in the Mirror of Late Classical Physics', *Aries* 2 (2011), pp. 137-138.
[11] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 58.
[12] Noakes, 'Sciences', pp. 34-35.
[13] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

others, and I have shown, and will continue to demonstrate, that the perceived inadequacy of both science and religion paralleled some of the syncretic thinking of the early psychical researchers. The authority of these purely material doctrines was challenged by both Spiritualists and psychical researchers in the late-nineteenth century. As Trevor Hamilton notes, Frederic Myers highlighted the significance of the relationships between mind, body, and brain, in the context of psychical research.[14] He developed a theory of humanity as having a double nature. On one hand, its nature is earthly and physical, or "terrene", and on the other, it is spiritual and immaterial, or "extraterrene". Myers believed in Darwinian evolution for the terrene, but exhibited Neoplatonist thinking when considering the extraterrene.[15] Edmund Gurney presented his view of mind-body duality in *Tertium Quid* (1888), in which he described philosophical ways to transcend the 'duality of mind and matter' and alternative considerations of what matter may be.[16] He developed these ideas further, by suggesting that all matter was correlated with feelings, and therefore intrinsically linked to 'mind-stuff', which was not *a* reality, but *the* reality of the material object. Gurney described the Universe as consisting of nothing but 'mind-stuff', some within minds, and some without.[17] This suggests that Gurney saw the immaterial realm as superior to the material one, without ever entirely dismissing the critical requirement for a material consideration of the universe, implying an inherent universality with clear similarities to Spinoza's double-aspect theory.[18] Most removed from the proponents of materialist scientism were adherents to esoteric movements such as Theosophy and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, both discussed in Chapter 4, who nevertheless sought tangible proof for their ideas.[19] The methodology employed by Theosophists when utilizing the concepts of contemporary science has, however, been noted by scholars as speculative and idiosyncratic.[20] This is in contrast to the attempted systematic scientific endeavours and aspirations of the SPR and its members.

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[14] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 4.
[15] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 68.
[16] Gurney, *Tertium Quid*, I, pp. 320-321.
[17] Ibid., I, p. 325.
[18] For a standard translation, see Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics (Penguin Classics)*, ed. by Edward Curley (London: Penguin Classics, 1996).
[19] Beaumont, 'Socialism', p. 166.
[20] Asprem, 'Pondering', pp. 132-133; and Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 269.

Operating alongside the concept of materialism was an increasingly prominent rationalist discourse. This, of course, was especially evident within science during this period, helping to establish its authority and legitimacy,[21] and therefore attractive to the SPR, which was likewise seeking mainstream acceptance. Despite many of the foremost scientists of the mid-nineteenth century being deeply religious, rationalism became an increasingly critical element of scientific thinking at this time. A key treatise which argued that the only valid way to garner accurate information about the world was via senses was John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) *Logic* (1843). As Aaron Cobb has discussed, 'Mill's philosophy of science reflected a commitment to the view that [empirical] experience alone is the source and justification for all knowledge claims, including knowledge of both mathematical and physical truths.'[22] This work proved influential to numerous scholars at both the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, with Henry Sidgwick, who was introduced in Chapter 1, as one of the founding members of the SPR and its first president, amongst them.[23] The increasingly rationalist considerations of those who went on to undertake psychical research no doubt influenced their scientific investigative methodology. While the increasing interest in mysticism, Spiritualism, and other occult phenomena during this period can no longer be considered as simply a consequence of a growing dissatisfaction with mainstream religion, this 'crisis of faith' hypothesis cannot be completely dismissed for all. For some psychical researchers, rationalism provided a key to unlock the doubts raised by their faith, and explore them in a new way.[24] A number of rationalist and scientifically driven agnostic works written in the latter part of the 1870s, such as G. H. Lewes' *Spiritualism and Materialism* (1876), probably reflected the zenith of rationalist thinking at this time. Together with the growth of the new Oxford idealist philosophy, rationalist scepticism based on science alone became somewhat more diluted, but it had already performed its role as one stream of doubt flowing alongside many others.[25] As well as contributing broadly to the questioning

[21] James R. Lewis, 'The Science Canopy: Religion, Legitimacy, and the Charisma of Science', *Temenos* 46 (2010), p. 10.
[22] Aaron Cobb, 'Mill's Philosophy of Science', in *A Companion to Mill*, ed. by Christopher MacLeod and Dale Miller (Oxford: John Willey, 2017), pp. 234-249; see also Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 45-46.
[23] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 46; and Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 82.
[24] Christine Ferguson, 'Recent Scholarship on Spiritualism and Science', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 19, and Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 46-48, 53-54.
[25] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 62-65.

environment of the period, this inherent rationalism will be shown to have underpinned many of the works and activities of the early psychical researchers.

Another important theme influencing science during this period was that of specialization. As scientific advances were made in both existing and new fields, areas of expertise became more distinct in order to cope with an increasingly complex society. Professional scientists had deeper, more specialized, yet progressively less connected knowledge. Like rationalism, this enhanced expertise implied a greater sense of authority.[26] The increased effort now required to become expert in a particular discipline increasingly precluded the ability to do so in other fields concurrently.[27] There was also an impact on laypersons, who were now less able to undertake scientific activities. Also, scientific terms were now increasingly being used by non-scientists incorrectly or speculatively.[28] The increasing specialization also had the effect of further distancing mainstream science from mainstream religion. Those who undertook psychical research, however, largely continued to use scientific methods in their investigations of the paranormal. Consequently, while utilizing an overtly scientific investigative approach, the early SPR used experts from many different scientific (and non-scientific) fields in an intentionally eclectic manner, in order to overcome this increased specialization. Thus, the inclusivity of the material and the immaterial forms a critical characteristic of the mode of thinking, and eclecticism forms an important element of the mode of doing within the paranormal domain presented in Chapter 7.

The Normalization of Scientific Method

The natural philosophy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the natural history of the eighteenth had by the end of the Victorian period transformed into a form of science much more recognizable to modern eyes. While the names and methodologies changed, the aims did not. Natural philosophy sought to describe and explain the entire system of the world, and late-nineteenth century science was no

[26] Theodore Porter, 'Statistical Utopianism in an Age of Aristocratic Efficiency', *Osiris* 17 (2002), p. 211.
[27] Richard Yeo, 'Science and Intellectual Authority in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Britain: Robert Chambers and "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation"', *Victorian Studies* 28 (1984), p. 24.
[28] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 27.

different.[29] This development had not been a constant and linear progression independent of the complex cultural changes that were taking place, but was intricately intertwined with them. The dilution of mainstream religion, the rise of Spiritualism, increasing socialism and feminism, and the excess of gothic literature was accompanied by the professionalization of science and the formalization of science education.

Underpinning scientific endeavours at this time were overarching debates about scientific method, which could be considered as a crystallization of Asprem's notion of disenchantment. The preeminent theorists of the period were the polymaths John Herschel (1792-1871) and William Whewell (1794-1866),[30] and John Stuart Mill. Each of these noted intellectuals argued the merits of the two main opposing methodologies – inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning – with the former presented more often as having intellectual authority over the latter at this time.[31] The inductive method, heavily reliant on the empiricist works of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), with the gravitational mechanics and optics of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) providing practical examples, sought to develop universal inferences from specific observations. 'On the subject of induction,' declared Mill, 'the task to be performed was that of generalizing modes investigating truth and estimating evidence, by which so many important and recondite laws of nature have, in the various sciences, been aggregated to the stock of human knowledge.'[32] It was the inductive methodology which was promoted by the SPR, evident by its voluminous data gathering and collation, with theories being developed only as a result of its analysis. Deductive reasoning is the methodological opposite of induction, working from a general hypothesis to predict specific observations. The disputes arising from these polarized methodologies were highlighted best by the field of optics. The dominant particle theory of light could only be supported by inductive reasoning, with reference to larger observable physical bodies. The opposing wave, or undulatory theory of light

[29] John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1997; repr. 2008, Kindle Edition), p. 4.
[30] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 41. There are academic and social links between Whewell and Sidgwick, with the former being master of Trinity College, Cambridge, between 1841 and 1846. Additionally, he was Myers' uncle, through marriage to his mother Susan Marshall's sister, Cordelia.
[31] David L. Hull, 'Darwin's Science and Victorian Philosophy of Science', in *Cambridge Companion to Darwin*, ed. by Jonathan Hodge and Gregory Radick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 169-170.
[32] John Stuart Mill, *Logic* VII, cxiii, quoted in Cobb, 'Mill's Philosophy', p. 235.

could not be defended in this way, as it proposed a concept of light waves operating within an invisible and intangible, yet all-pervasive medium. The wave theory was initially considered as little more than speculation, but its predictive success raised the problem of standards (induction) versus achievements (hypothesis).[33]

Herschel, Whewell, and Mill each highlighted the pre-eminence of the bottom-up logic of direct observations over the top-down logic of hypotheses in their main works, yet none of them dismissed the latter. Herschel, in his *Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy* (1830), suggested the possibility of an alternating approach between inductive and deductive reasoning, but presented no cohesive compromise between the two.[34] In Whewell's *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840), he attempted a reconciliation through his 'consilience of inductions'. He posited that one successful causal explanatory theory regarding one set of phenomena, was able to provide an equally successful causal explanation of another group of phenomena, different from original expectations.[35] Mill's *Logic* further reinforced the distinction between inductions and hypotheses, suggesting that while there was a place for deductive reasoning, it was not to be used for the validation of genuine science, which had to derive from observable evidence alone.[36] Their common goal was that of identifying a *vera causa*, or true cause, of observed phenomena. This was very much the aspiration of the early psychical researchers of the SPR, regardless of how unusual paranormal phenomena appeared to be. While Herschel regarded experience as fundamental to physical investigation, he conceded that some phenomena were of too extreme a scale to be experienced directly, and agreed with Whewell that being able to infer unexpected phenomena from a pre-existing theory was acceptable. Whewell even suggested that while *vera causa* were imperative, they need not necessarily be validated by direct experience. This view permitted the existence of theories which didn't require a physical causal system, such as the wave theory of optics, the concept of ether, and even supernatural influences. Consideration of God and the supernatural was not uncommon in scientific works at this time, with many arguing that true science validated religion by supporting Christian faith in a

[33] Hull, 'Darwin's Science', pp. 170-171.
[34] Ibid., p. 171.
[35] Menachem Fisch, 'Whewell's Consilience of Inductions – An Evaluation', *Philosophy of Science* 52 (1985), pp. 239-240.
[36] Hull, 'Darwin's Science', pp. 169-170; Cobb, 'Mill's Philosophy', pp. 234-249.

practical way.[37] Without the requirement for such a physical causal system, the members of the SPR were able to speculate upon and consider immaterial and spiritual notions without transgressing generally accepted scientific methodology, and so paranormal phenomena could be validly investigated within a wider intellectual framework. I will show that this all-inclusive approach was very much advocated by the key early psychical researchers, and links directly to the specific characteristics of inclusivity of the material and immaterial within the mode of thinking and the use of scientific method, albeit intentionally eclectic, within the mode of doing of the paranormal domain.

The Scientific Methodology of Psychical Research

For the psychical researchers of the SPR, the critical importance of observation and materiality was intertwined with speculative theorizing and a reluctance to entirely reject religion. Whether moving inductively towards the universal, or deducing specific truth from the general, scientists and other seekers of the truth of nature aspired to be part of a cohesive intellectual whole, even if its structure was in constant flux.[38] Myers suggested that it was William Crookes who was the first unquestionably distinguished scientist to use their training to explore the links between the material and the immaterial realms, stating that he sought to 'test the alleged mutual influence and interpenetration of the spiritual world and our own by experiments of scientific precision.'[39] This suggests that the acceptance of the importance of both material and immaterial phenomena, the scientific methodology required to investigate their interplay, and the ontological notion of the existence of a spirit world, were all critical to thinking about the paranormal at this time. Consequently, these fundamental characteristics naturally find a place within all modes of the paranormal domain. Crookes' early paranormal investigations, primarily concerned with Spiritualism, took place before the foundation of the SPR, and the rigour of his scientific methodology impressed many of its early members, setting the tone for subsequent psychical research. Crookes stated '…I prefer to enter upon the enquiry with no preconceived

[37] Hull, 'Darwin's Science', pp. 176-178.
[38] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 105.
[39] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 6, §106. See Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 48, for evidence of Crookes' belief in the objective reality of the strange phenomena observed in séances.

notions whatsoever as to what can or cannot be…'[40] He felt duty-bound to apply a thorough investigative methodology to the study of paranormal phenomena and attacked those scientists who simply ignored the facts because they were intellectually awkward.[41] He posited the existence of a general paranormal faculty which he called a 'Psychic Force', without ever explaining its nature. Of significance, however, is Crookes' early realisation that this 'Psychic Force', whatever it was, acted in a capricious manner, and that this unpredictability should be taken into account during investigations.[42] This early acceptance of idiosyncratic attributes, an extrinsic characteristic of the mode of doing of the paranormal domain, was a bold contention for such an eminent scientist, but one paralleled by most other early psychical investigators. Myers, for one, referred to the difficulty with experimentation within psychical research, describing paranormal phenomena and evidence as being 'irregular and capricious.'[43] We will see the importance of this sympathetic approach mirrored in the brief discussion on experimental physics, below. Crookes' concept of a 'Psychic Force', a precursor to the higher faculties suggested by subsequent psychical researchers, appears to derive inductively from his observations. However, the lack of a rigorous theory suggests somewhat deductive reasoning. Nevertheless, the methodologies that had hitherto served him so well in his exploration of physical science were no different to those used in his investigation of the paranormal domain. 'Romantic and superstitious ideas should be entirely banished, and the steps of investigation should be guided by intellect as cold and passionless as the instruments he uses', he stated.[44] Further, Crookes proclaimed, 'If then fraud be found, expose it; if it be a truth, proclaim it. This is the only scientific procedure, and this it is that I purpose steadily to pursue.'[45]

Oliver Lodge, while best known as a scientist, was extremely knowledgeable about Christianity, and was a long-term psychical researcher. Lodge espoused a

[40] William Crookes, *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (London: J. Burns, 1874), p. 4. For more on Crookes' epistemology, see Ian James Kidd, 'Was Sir William Crookes epistemically virtuous?', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 48 (2014), pp. 67-74.
[41] Crookes, *Researches*, p. 4.
[42] Ibid., pp. 9-10. See also, Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 48.
[43] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 169, §519.
[44] Crookes, *Researches*, p. 17.
[45] Ibid., p. 43. See also, Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 49.

balanced approach to all his intellectual endeavours.[46] As a scientist himself, he was perhaps more critical of others of his profession than he was of theologians and philosophers: 'Scientific men who delve into the domain of philosophy often act as though they have no constraints – where speculative hypothesis might rank as theory, and where verification is both unnecessary and impossible.'[47] Thus, his scientific approach was universal, and he promoted the idea of taking all evidence on its merits, however uncomfortable for existing scientific notions, dismissing no fact because it didn't fit some pre-existing domain. However, Lodge held some less objective notions of himself, occasionally displaying an intellectual elitism also evident across most of the members of the Sidgwick group. In considering the merits of controversial works, he suggested that if read by 'the thoroughly educated and well-informed', then this can only be positive, but if read by 'the unbalanced and uncultured', their lack of a suitable critical faculty may cause harm, unless otherwise tempered.[48] In other words, it was all very well to question, but one had to know how to question correctly, with Lodge displaying an inherent prejudice against the less well educated classes. More objectively, Lodge asserted that it would be a 'strange kind of All' that included only the visible material universe, but excluded the mental features such as intelligence, will, emotions, or individual personality.[49] He complained that orthodox science refused to contemplate obscure mental human faculties, such as premonition, inspiration, clairvoyance, and telepathy. He noted that even some philosophers relegated these phenomena to the unconscious or subconscious, where they believed nothing of worth resided. Lodge realised that while some psychologists did see the value in these strange occurrences, especially from a pathological perspective, it was left to psychical researchers to attempt to investigate them more fully.[50] Lodge challenged the implications of materialism, suggesting that 'it's inadequacy and narrowness betray its impotency.' [51] Thus, by ignoring or dismissing other truths and faculties, materialism was perceived as incapable of operating as a universal

[46] Hamilton, *Immortal*, pp. 5, 205, 296. See W. P. Jolly, *Sir Oliver Lodge* (London: Constable, 1974) for the most recent broad scholarship on Lodge. For the development of his religio-scientific worldview see Courtenay Green Raia, 'From Ether Theory to Ether Theology: Oliver Lodge and the Physics of Immortality', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 43 (2007), pp. 19-43.
[47] Lodge, *Life*, p. 2.
[48] Ibid., p. 5. For a discussion on Lodge's approach to scientific methodology in psychical research and the importance of an expert critical faculty, see Noakes, 'Haunted', pp. 49-52.
[49] Lodge, *Man*, pp. 33-34.
[50] Lodge, *Life*, p. 39.
[51] Ibid., p. 52.

philosophy. Therefore, Lodge's universal approach included the acceptance of both the material and the immaterial, with the notion of human consciousness and higher mental faculties being just as valid as physical phenomena within the universe. I will demonstrate that a lack of acceptance of all the evidence, however unpalatable the implications for contemporary thinking, was also anathema to many others within the SPR. Lodge believed that the notion of truth, for a scientist like himself, should be broad enough to be able to take into account ideas way beyond present certainties, but that he should also be intentionally undogmatic, and even passive, in intellectual domains of which he had no expertise.[52]

In trying to incorporate psychical research into this process of reconciliation between science and religion, and the material with the immaterial, Lodge highlighted the phenomenon of telepathy. He believed that telepathy appeared to be exclusively psychical, despite the communication requiring brains to operate. He regarded the process as two minds utilising two brains, with minds obviously not physical. Further, if the entities were not on something like the earth, Lodge believed that physical brains would not be required, with minds being able to travel around the general nexus of communication – something akin to a universal world-mind.[53] He regarded the evidence from psychical research as sufficient to prove the existence of both telepathy and clairvoyance, even though he conceded that the nature of their operation was uncertain. Lodge believed that telepathic phenomena alone strengthened the argument for the transcendence of mind over body, and also suggested a survival hypothesis, which he termed 'individual survival in a discarnate condition.'[54] He also deemed it occasionally possible that a discarnate entity, or some other psychical unit, could utilise another body and to make an attempt at communication and manifestation through that.[55] Here, Lodge is clearly referring to Spiritualist and mediumistic phenomena. Regarding the difficulty of psychical intercommunication, he expressed an idea similar to Myers' 'subliminal self', and Henri Bergson's 'filter theory' discussed in the following chapter: 'Our normal immersion in mundane

[52] Ibid., p. 74.
[53] Ibid., p.188.
[54] Ibid., p. 189. See also Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 5; Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 327; and Noakes, 'Infinitely', p. 325.
[55] Lodge, *Life*, p. 191.

affairs…can hardly facilitate communion with another order of existence…'[56] Thus, Lodge demonstrated an acceptance, from a broad scientific basis, of universality, the importance of both material and immaterial phenomena, the survival hypothesis, and communication between incarnate and discarnate entities using higher laws and faculties. These notions, which will be seen to be prevalent across the majority of the psychical researchers investigated here, form characteristics found across all modes of the paranormal domain.

Another who found the position of his fellow scientists particularly troubling was W. F. Barrett, who noted '…there are some phenomena in physical science which are as rare, elusive and inexplicable as those in psychical research.'[57] Further, he stated '…in my opinion, the supernormal phenomena…do not belong to the material plane, and therefore the laws of the physical universe are inapplicable to them.'[58] Although not a scientist, Sidgwick also had much to say on the matter of scientific methodology used in psychical research, especially in his early presidential addresses to the SPR. Understanding how unusual the field of the paranormal was perceived by many, he suggested that what should be regarded as sufficient proof or evidence of the phenomena of thought-reading, clairvoyance, or Spiritualism, should have to convince the scientific world at large, not just eminent scientific individuals such as Crookes.[59] With so much evidence in these matters arising from fraudulent activities, Sidgwick condoned the occasional use of conjurers for investigations, but cautioned that not all the 'marvels' resembled conjuring tricks, and so they should not be the only investigators, nor should they necessarily be considered the best type.[60] He conceded that if the SPR had limited itself to the investigation of thought-reading, and perhaps clairvoyance and mesmerism, then its undertakings might have been more scientifically palatable. However, to ignore the evidence for haunted houses, spirit-rapping, and the like, would not have been scientifically logical or consistent, according to Sidgwick. He contended that if the quantity and quality of evidence of one phenomenon was acceptable, then a similar quantity and quality of evidence

[56] Ibid., pp. 196-197. Lodge acknowledges this similarity and speaks of Myers' 'subliminal self' doctrine as outlined in his *Human Personality* in positive terms.
[57] W. F. Barrett, *Psychical Research* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 17.
[58] Ibid., p. 109. See also Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 325.
[59] Henry Sidgwick, 'President's Address', *PSPR* 1 (1882), p. 9.
[60] Ibid., p. 10.

should be acceptable for another.[61] By having a scientific spirit and by employing scientific methods, argued Sidgwick, the society was patiently and persistently endeavouring to apply methods analogous to those by which scientific progress had been made in more mainstream fields, to the 'obscure matters which we are studying.'[62] As noted by Asprem, this approach unsurprisingly demonstrated the importance with which he viewed careful philosophical criticism.[63] Sidgwick tackled objections coming from those who believed that the communications apparently received from an unseen world of spirits should be kept as 'sacred mysteries' and not be scrutinised by science, by stating that the SPR had a duty to take these experiences 'as part of the great aggregate which we call Nature.'[64] This not only reinforced the importance of a scientific methodology to psychical research but also the inherent notion of universality which allowed for paranormal phenomena.

Gurney also warned of the intellectual void left by those of science who chose not to investigate taboo subjects such as paranormal phenomena. As Frank Podmore also noted, mainstream science regarded paranormal phenomena as 'outside the realm of organised knowledge' and that it should be investigated by psychologists and physicists, even though most were unwilling to do so.[65] He also spoke of 'the forces of superstition and charlatanry' which made it difficult to investigate the field scientifically.[66] Gurney noted that while the physical sciences were becoming more specialized, and so fewer laypersons were able or willing to talk about them, the same could not be said for psychical research, where everyone seemed to have an opinion on the phenomena observed but with very few of them having undertaken any serious investigation.[67] Highlighting the key characteristic of eclecticism in the mode of doing, he spoke about the increasing diversity and the importance of the links between these varied areas in the development of psychical research: 'the marvellous recent extension of the area of the known through additions to its recognised departments

[61] Ibid., p. 68. See Asprem, *Disenchantment*, pp. 322-323, for more on Sidgwick's aspirations for psychical research.
[62] Henry Sidgwick, 'President's Address', *PSPR* 1 (1883), p. 245.
[63] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 318.
[64] Sidgwick, 'Address', *PSPR* 1 (1883), p. 246.
[65] Frank Podmore, *The Naturalisation of the Supernatural* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), pp. 2, 4.
[66] Podmore, *Apparitions*, p. 4. See also, Blum, *Hunters*, p. 214.
[67] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, p. 5, §3. For more detail on the nature of his investigations, see Blum, *Hunters*, pp. 72, 89-90, 111-112.

and multiplication of their connections.'[68] This important appreciation of interconnectedness parallels Faivre's notion of correspondences, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Gurney, like Lodge, focussed on telepathy as the most important paranormal phenomenon. He defined an 'agent' as the owner of a mind impressing another mind other than by the recognised channels of sense; a 'percipient' as the owner of the mind being impressed by the agent; and 'telepathy' as the fact of this impression between agent and percipient.[69] Roger Luckhurst contends that the theory of agent and percipient was a rejection of the spirits of the dead so important to Spiritualism.[70] Shane McCorristine concurs and suggests that Gurney's phantoms were an attempt to discard the supernatural and promote the authority of scientific naturalism.[71] This is perhaps a little too simplistic a view of what Gurney intended. While scientific naturalism could be said to imply that all objects and events are intrinsic parts of nature, and therefore subject to scientific enquiry, he stated more than once that science alone was not an adequate tool with which to investigate the paranormal. Further, while insisting on a scientific methodology, he adapted it from the rigid physicalism of the time into something broader and less precise, but more appropriate to the field. He described phenomena such as telepathy as 'supernormal', not impossible, or contrary to the laws of nature, but unusual occurrences, as of yet not fully understood by science.[72] He contended that any validation would have undoubted implications on the fundamental metaphysical, psychological, and physical questions considered by humanity. McCorristine suggests that this was a time when science-fiction was rapidly becoming science-fact, and that contemporary communications technology naturally provided accessible metaphors for telepathic phenomena, and cites Barrett as considering the telephone in such a way.[73]

Gurney stated that research into telepathy was best achieved using experimentation, where conditions could be controlled so as to reduce erroneous observations, noting that spontaneous occurrences had exhibited vastly varying

[68] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 6, §3.
[69] Ibid., I, pp. 6-7, §4.
[70] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 72.
[71] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 139.
[72] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 6-7, §4.
[73] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 152.

degrees of quality and were almost impossible to corroborate, although many of these were presented in *Phantasms*.[74] Consequently, he discussed possible sources of error in the evidence, and how best to deal with these, as well as the notion of chance-coincidence.[75] He often referenced spontaneous cases in his psychical research, despite understanding that their strange nature would have been regarded as supernatural by a public mired in sensationalist gothic literature and the Victorian culture of death. He contended that the paranormal domain was unequivocally interconnected to science, religion, and philosophy, but not more important than these established fields, and that only together could humanity's most fundamental questions be adequately tackled. So, while the use of scientific methodology was paramount, he reinforced the idea of an eclectic investigative methodology for psychical research. He stated that for a field such as psychical research, which impacted and was impacted by philosophy, science, and religion, it did not make sense to have researchers consisting of only philosophers, scientists, or theologians, but some combination of these and others.[76]

For Gurney, the 'action-at-a-distance' nature of telepathic phenomena was an important characteristic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it had parallels with both magnetism and mesmerism, and therefore linked both mainstream physical science and contemporary fringe science. However, some scientists at the time saw this as an unwelcome link to Spiritualism.[77] Secondly, the 'action' part of the characteristic could appear to act on a purely immaterial basis, that of mind to mind, although physiologists of the time argued that this was nothing more than brain to brain, and therefore a purely physical phenomenon. Thirdly, telepathy could seem to act between the immaterial and the material realms, as in mind to body, when an agent directed a percipient's body to behave in a certain manner, although again some saw this as a physical brain to body process. Gurney noted that certain individuals showed a greater aptitude for the faculty than others, an example of an idiosyncratic paranormal attribute, describing 'some of the few persons who possess an appreciable degree of

[74] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 7-9, §5.
[75] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 162-163.
[76] Gurney, *Tertium Quid*, I, p. 238.
[77] Noakes, 'Infinitely', pp. 326-327. Noakes suggests that this perceived link was common, citing the Spiritualist James Bixby in W. T. Stead, 'From the Roentgen Rays to the Existence of the Soul', *Borderland* 3 (1896), pp. 319-321.

the abnormal power.'[78] This reinforced his idea of a telepathic impulse as the method of thought-transference, without actually theorising upon its nature. He attempted to develop a psychical theory by using physical analogies, for example, a permanent magnet affecting the nature of any iron coming within its immediate vicinity, making it temporarily magnetic. His contention was that 'it is possible to conceive that vibration-waves, or nervous induction, are a means whereby activity in one brain may evoke a kindred activity in another – with, of course, a similar correspondence of psychical impressions.'[79] Richard Noakes highlights similar contemporary notions of sympathetic brain activity, but with purely physical explanations.[80] Here, Gurney described a type of rapport being created between the agent and the recipient, but seemingly on an ad hoc basis. Therefore, we see Gurney's approach to psychical research was scientific, but included material and immaterial phenomena, and attempted to merge mainstream science with philosophy and religion, an intellectual methodology which we will see was prevalent amongst the non-Spiritualist members of the SPR at this time, and is reflected across all modes of the paranormal domain.

Myers also embraced the immaterial, and placed great expectation on the latent possibilities of suggestion to unlock higher mental faculties. He contended that Mesmerism, explored briefly in the next chapter, was the precursor of hypnotism and of psycho-therapeutics, which was successful despite the scientific opposition it had faced at the time because 'the age was unripe.'[81] He believed that these superior mental sensibilities could be developed gradually in an almost evolutionary manner, but that some individuals already demonstrated these faculties, either through genius, hypnosis, sleep, or ecstasy. One such individual was Emmanuel Swedenborg with his 'exceptional trance-history' and 'supernormal gift.'[82] Myers explained 'supernormal' phenomena as those currently unknown by physical laws, but which did not contravene natural laws, believing this to be impossible. These phenomena were actions of higher laws 'belonging to a more advanced stage of evolution.'[83] He was a firm believer in Darwin's evolutionary theory, contending that humanity would

[78] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, p. 100, §7.
[79] Ibid., I, pp. 111-112, §9.
[80] Noakes, 'Infinitely', pp. 327-328.
[81] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 5, §104.
[82] For more on Swedenborg's life and works, see Michael Stanley, *Emmanuel Swedenborg* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2003) and Jane Williams-Hogan, 'Emmanuel Swedenborg', in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 145-154.
[83] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 5, §105; and Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 42.

continue to change, but ever more rapidly. Luckhurst maintains that evolution remained 'a theoretical spine through his work.'[84]

Myers demonstrated both an extensive understanding of contemporary science and an eclectic way of thinking about and explaining psychological ideas, discussed more fully below, when he introduced his concept of a 'conscious spectrum.'[85] He compared the unifying soul in humans to modern scientific ideas about light, specifically using the electromagnetic spectrum as a multi-layered analogy. He paralleled the non-visible parts of the spectrum, below it moving through the infrared and beyond, and above it through the ultraviolet, to the subliminal aspects of human consciousness. In comparing humanity's gradual advancement in self-awareness to the steadily increasing understanding of the nature of light, he attempted to link the concept of a 'conscious spectrum' to physics, philosophy, and psychology. Myers associated the automatic organic processes, over which we had no control, with the area beyond the red part of the spectrum. Our normal waking consciousness, or supraliminal consciousness, was represented by the visible spectrum. It was beyond the violet part of the spectrum where he placed the supernormal faculties associated with the subliminal self. These had less of a material influence and opened up a 'cosmic prospect.'[86] This cosmic perspective underpinned the entirety of Myers' life and works, forming a critical aspect of his paranormal theories, and the paranormal domain.[87] He moved from phenomena regarded as normal to phenomena viewed as supernormal, but which were 'simply and solely the inevitable results and manifestations of universal Law.'[88] Myers appreciated the uncanny nature of psychical research, describing it as one of 'novelty and strangeness' and appealed urgently for 'some provisional systemisation.'[89] This parallels to some extent the first extrinsic component of Faivre's paradigm, the praxis of concordance, given his desire to make sense of the unusual, and is reflected in the scientific methodology in the mode of doing of the paranormal domain. Thus, even though the questioning environment of the time partly enabled these strange subjects to be researched, he understood that they were not yet considered as sufficiently scientific or academic. He

[84] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 108.
[85] Ibid., I, p. 17, §116; and Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 109.
[86] Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 74-76, §305.
[87] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 38.
[88] Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 18-19, §118; and Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 42.
[89] Myers, *HP*, I, p. vii.

saw examples of genius as evidence for the evolutionary direction which humanity had taken and must inevitably continue to take, but could also be learned, or manifest at times of emotional crisis. For him, the enhanced mental faculties demonstrated during these episodes were evidence of the 'subliminal uprush' of hidden faculties taking control, and could be considered as genius.[90] Myers understood the importance of a scientific methodology, and utilized it for psychical research,[91] however, his was a broad approach, aspiring to incorporate all material and immaterial phenomena, driven by a universal perspective. Thus, we see further validation of key characteristics of the mode of doing of the paranormal domain.

Podmore questioned the stated view of the SPR Literary Committee, which recognised phantasms of dead persons, unrecognised apparitions and voices, and the mysterious noises which popularly suggest hauntings, as generally corresponding to the common idea of ghosts. He argued that a number of cases which fell into this broad category were more likely to be due to thought-transference from the minds of individuals still living, of which he believed there was independent proof. Podmore outlined certain characteristics of cases of 'haunted houses' which he said should be expected to occur, but rarely, if ever, did. For apparitions seen to be actually connected with a deceased person, there would be the expectation of: (1) recognition of features or clothes; (2) correct information given by an apparition of which the percipient has no knowledge; (3) human remains; or (4) other evidence implying that some former tragedy has taken place in the locality of the apparition. Additionally, the apparition should be witnessed by more than one percipient, or appear at a time when the fact of death is not known to the percipient, or verified as an unknown (to the percipient) dead person.[92] Podmore suggested that the distinct lack of the occurrence of some or all of these characteristics may have been due to deliberate hoaxing, hallucinations of memory, or unconscious misrepresentations by the narrator of the experiences of others.[93] Podmore stated that both his own hypothesis and the different ones of his counterparts within the SPR 'are but houses built upon the sand', with all

[90] Ibid., I, pp. 76-77, §306; and Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 47.
[91] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 40.
[92] Frank Podmore, 'Phantasms of the Dead from Another Point of View', *PSPR* 6 (1889), pp. 230, 232.
[93] Ibid., p. 237.

agreed that more evidence was required to come to any legitimate conclusions before unscientifically promoting one theory above another.[94]

Despite being a sceptic on many aspects of the paranormal, Podmore was a strong advocate of the validity of telepathic phenomena.[95] In his *Apparitions and Thought-transference* (1894) he detailed his conclusions regarding telepathy. Podmore stated that a simple sensation or idea may be transferred from one mind to another, in a normal state, and in a hypnotic trance. The transferred idea could manifest as vague distress or terror, an impulse to action, or other complicated movements such as writing. Such phenomena could be obtained by experiment, as the result of some crisis affecting another mind, or, via some state of receptivity in the percipient's mind, established in an as yet unknown manner. Podmore also mentioned the notion of 'telepathic sensitiveness', some aptitude for telepathy which allowed certain individuals access to the higher faculty more often and to a greater extent than others.[96] Thus, idiosyncratic paranormal attributes within psychical research were embraced by those most sceptical, like Podmore, as well as those more open to a spiritual explanation. This characteristic therefore finds a place within the mode of doing of the paranormal domain. Other psychical researchers also saw telepathy as a central paranormal phenomenon but used the perceived veracity of the faculty to posit a survival hypothesis, like Myers. Podmore, however, used his belief in the truth of telepathy to help explain broader aspects of the field, without admitting to the possibility of continued human existence after physical death. He saw telepathy as part of a wider 'more completely systematised' mode of expression, perhaps explaining the personal influence of the operator in hypnotism, many of whom acted as agents in successful telepathic experiments. For Podmore, superstition was subsumed by the paranormal domain, especially when utilising a systematic and scientific approach to its research, even though it could be regarded as an orthodox physical science.

Podmore also made links to the physical phenomena of Spiritualism. He stated that it was generally accepted that these phenomena were due to self-deception, exaggeration, or fraud. However, there were some records which not even Podmore

[94] Ibid., p. 308. McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 172, 180-181, 188.
[95] McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 174, 182.
[96] Frank Podmore, *Apparitions and Thought-Transference: An Examination of the Evidence for Telepathy* (London: Walter Scott, 1894), pp. 371-372.

could easily dismiss. He cited Crookes' movement of a balance, Lord Lindsay seeing Daniel Dunglas Home grow by eleven inches, and the handling of red hot coals in his presence, as examples of cases where it was difficult to believe that all the eminent witnesses were mistaken.[97] Some explained these cases by assuming the discovery of a new physical force, or forces, providing some manipulation of new modes of energy, but Podmore regarded these 'alternatives…of almost incredible stupidity.' While some suggested that the observers were subjects of a collective hypnotic hallucination, he viewed the evidence as exhibiting characteristics of collective telepathic hallucinations.[98] While most, if not all, psychical researchers had not been looking to match physical laws to observed psychical phenomena, Podmore believed that there must come a time when the underlying laws indicated by the facts must be speculated upon. In fact, he viewed the laws as of more interest and importance than the facts themselves. With this in mind he referred to Lodge's call to 'press the doctrine of ultimate intelligibility' which presented a similar motivation to move towards a universal understanding of phenomena, however strange.[99]

William James stated that 'to no one type of mind is it given to discern the totality of truth.'[100] He advocated pragmatism and radical empiricism in his work, motivated by a desire to reconcile competing psychological concepts. Krister Knapp refers to James' quest to find alternatives to seemingly irreconcilable dualist religious and philosophical dilemmas as a *tertium quid*. He was especially interested in the intellectual tensions between the natural and the supernatural, and the normal with the paranormal.[101] James' methodology was similar to the considerations of other psychical researchers in that he used scientific practice to systematize the study of psychic phenomena while simultaneously allowing for an element of subjectivity of the investigator's experience.[102] He found both scientism and religious dogma inadequate distinct intellectual tools with which to answer humanity's ultimate questions. He considered it absurd that phenomena which did not fit into existing

[97] Frank Podmore, *Studies in Psychical Research* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), p. 247. For more on Home, see Lamont, *The First Psychic*.
[98] Podmore, *Apparitions*, pp. 376-381.
[99] Ibid., pp. 381-382. This call was made as part of Lodge's Presidential Address to the Section of Mathematics and Physics of the British Association in August 1891.
[100] James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 301.
[101] Krister Dylan Knapp, *William James: Psychical Research and the Challenge of Modernity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), pp. 5-6.
[102] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 264

scientific paradigms were regarded as paradoxical oddities which must be untrue and were therefore largely ignored. James termed this the 'unclassified residuum', of which he felt that mystical, or paranormal phenomena were most derided by the scientific community.[103] He contended that by considering these phenomena in 'academic-scientific' ways was the best way to help philosophy.[104] Like the majority of psychical researchers considered here, James promoted a scientific methodology which dismissed no evidence, and accepted material and immaterial aspects of the universe. Again, all of these characteristics are found within the paranormal domain described below.

In Chapter 1, I discussed how in his early career Henri Bergson's sought to utilize mechanistic explanation of the entire universe, but he eventually found this inadequate to answer the most important questions of nature.[105] Consequently, Bergson attempted to fuse psychology and metaphysics with the strictness of orthodox science. While he sought inspiration from the facts themselves and began some experiments in hypnotism and consciousness, Bergson's doctrine continued to broaden and became more inclusive: 'Facts drawn from science or from the experience of the inner self, images borrowed from familiar life, nature, or art are constantly used to illustrate the subtleties and fine distinctions in the thought of the philosopher.'[106] Jacques Chevalier notes that Bergson's philosophy was 'an attempt at renovation through the rupture of existing boundaries.'[107] Thus, he focussed on the areas of tension between the acceptable and the unacceptable, with no presumption that the limits of contemporary knowledge were necessarily valid. Bergson's inaugural presidential address to the SPR, delivered in May 1913, conveyed a number of familiar themes prevalent throughout the society's brief existence since its formation in 1882.[108] Regarding the prejudices of scientists, and others, he stated that such individuals did not like new methodologies, or ones they had already rejected. Nevertheless, Bergson stressed that while the facts related to paranormal phenomena had just the same validity as for natural science, the investigative method would be

[103] James, *Will*, pp. 299-300. This point is also made in Carrette, *Imagination*, p. 172.
[104] James, *Will*, p. 303. For more on James' scientific approach see Carrette, *Imagination*, p. 38.
[105] Chevalier, *Henri Bergson*, pp. 51-53.
[106] Ibid., p. 61.
[107] Ibid. p. 67.
[108] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, pp. 60-83. All citations from Chapter III, a reprint of the original translation of the address in Henri Bergson, 'President's Address', *PSPR* 27 (1913), pp. 157-175.

different.[109] One was obliged to use a methodology somewhere between that of a historian and that of a magistrate, he suggested. Bergson declared that even though modern science had created the experimental method, this was not the same as saying that it had developed every field of experience as a result of this methodology. He said that science always tended to mathematics as an ideal, and therefore measurement, but the essence of mental things was not to be easily measurable.[110]

This analysis of some of the key scientific methodologies promoted by early psychical researchers from the SPR reflects all three of Asprem's intellectual problem areas, the social, worldview, and epistemic dimensions, as described in Chapter 2. The broad scientific approaches described can also be regarded as a 'paranormal field of discourse', a subset of Stuckrad's 'esoteric field of discourse', which looks to shed light on his concept of 'the other', here, the unusual paranormal phenomena investigated by the psychical researchers. The analysis shows a level of intellectual cohesiveness which can be expressed as part of the paranormal domain. This was a mindset regarding the validity of unusual phenomena and the ways to investigate them which had common characteristics. Consequently, these components comprise nearly all of the elements, across the three domains of thinking, doing, and being, of the paranormal domain I present in the conclusion of this thesis.

Physical Sciences

Ether Physics

An important scientific concept which was especially popular with key proponents from within the SPR, was that of 'ether physics'. The concept of a universal ether somehow holding together the fabric of the universe had many adherents until the emergence of quantum physics largely consigned it to obscurity.[111] However, the universal aspect of the ether theories paralleled later themes around the reconciliation of the material with the immaterial. The predominance of ether theory at this time derived primarily from its suitability in helping natural philosophers to explain the wave theory of light. Ether was described as a universal dynamic medium, both

[109] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, pp. 62-63.
[110] Ibid. pp. 70-71.
[111] Asprem, 'Pondering', pp. 141-142.

undetectable and subtle, enabling and defining how light behaved. What Asprem terms its 'spatial omnipresence' allowed the concept of ether to be used flexibly in fields other than just optics, such as electricity, magnetism, and theories of matter,[112] and were used by the likes of Myers and Gurney to help explain the interconnectedness of the universe.

In the early-nineteenth century the numerous different manifestations of ether theory coalesced into a more cohesive idea to support wave theory, in direct opposition to the Newtonian corpuscular model, which had thus far held sway in explaining optics. Observations and experiments now increasingly supported wave theory, but scientists assumed a requirement for a medium within which the waves could propagate. Thus, the theory of a 'luminiferous ether' was posited to fill the philosophically unpalatable material void. Many scientists at this time were attempting to unify the fields of electricity, magnetism, and optics. James Clerk Maxwell proposed that light waves were fully explainable by electromagnetism, and so the concept of a 'luminiferous ether', initially only utilized to validate observations within the field of optics, now took on a broader and more fundamental remit, underpinning all electrical and magnetic phenomena as well.[113] This new appreciation of ether influenced the intellectual endeavours of physicists in their considerations of matter, energy, and force for the next few decades.[114] Myers used the concept of the ether, as well as ideas about light and the electromagnetic spectrum, in his *Human Personality* in discussion of discarnate spirits and telepathy.[115] Asprem notes that one of the SPR's central theories at this time regarding ostensible spirit communication during séances was via telepathy, with 'thought-waves' operating mechanistically through the ether, paralleling Maxwellian field theory.[116]

[112] Ibid., p. 134.
[113] Peter M. Harman, *The Natural Philosophy of James Clerk Maxwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 98-99; P. J. Nahin, 'Maxwell's Grand Unification', *Spectrum* 29 (1992), p. 45; and Jed Z. Buchwald, *From Maxwell to Microphysics: Aspects of Electromagnetic Theory in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
[114] Asprem, 'Pondering', pp. 135-136; and Bruce J. Hunt, *The Maxwellians* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 175-206.
[115] Myers, *HP*, II, pp. 141-142, §841-842.
[116] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 214.

Some notable British proponents of Maxwell's theories, such as Lodge, sought more than just mathematics to describe concepts such as ether or electromagnetism.[117] These scientists wanted to be able to conceptualize the physical mechanisms involved in order to better understand and explain them, with experimentation as important as calculation.[118] Lodge declared that in the view of scientists, 'the universe lies before us for investigation.'[119] Peter Dear contends that in the late-Victorian period in Britain a mixture of the concept of ether and a fascination with machines helped scientists to help answer the questions of the universe.[120] According to these predominantly British scientists, this partly physical consideration of observable phenomena could also help explain, and was intimately connected to, the immaterial, idealistic, and theological. The staunch physicalists, however, contended that everything was material, and that there was no immaterial.[121] The concept of a physical, dynamic, yet subtle 'elemental ether' was likened to the underlying truth of nature, as envisaged by the universal 'Mind of God'. It is likely that these concepts of ether were in part influenced by earlier attempts to unify theories of matter, electromagnetism, and light. One such was the atomic vortex theory of William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin, which described the laws of physics as due to the behaviour of singularities arising in the ether, and influenced many other physicists.[122] As noted by Bruce Hunt and Moritz Epple, Thomson's theory also shared certain similarities with Maxwell's 'vortex sponge' theory.[123] Thus, rather than matter being considered fundamental, the more basic consideration was that which enabled the existence of matter and explained its behaviour. Therefore, the concept of ether was attractive to physicists, as it reinforced the intellectual combination of philosophy and theology with physics, a contention already well established. Apart from links to physics and theology, theories of ether

[117] For links between ether physics and theology see Raia, 'From ether theory to ether theology', pp. 19-43. For Lodge's psychical uses of ether see D. B. Wilson, 'The Thought of Late Victorian Physicists: Oliver Lodge's 'Ethereal Body'', *Victorian Studies* 15 (1971), pp. 29-45.
[118] Asprem, 'Pondering', p. 136
[119] Lodge, *Man*, p. 10.
[120] Peter Dear, *The Intelligibility of Nature: How Science Makes Sense of the World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 116-117.
[121] Asprem, 'Pondering', pp. 136-138.
[122] Ibid., pp. 138-140.
[123] Hunt, *Maxwellians*, pp. 77-78; and Moritz Epple, 'Topology, Matter, and Space, I: Topological Notions in 19th-Century Natural Philosophy', *Archive for the Exact Sciences* 42 (1998), p. 324. For a useful overview of the atomic vortex theory, see Samuel J. Lamonaco, 'The Modern Legacies of Thomson's Vortex Theory in Classical Electrodynamics,' in Louis H. Kauffman (ed.), *Proceedings of Symposia in Applied Mathematics* 51 (Providence: American Mathematical Society, 1995), pp. 145-166.

also had strong connections to occultism, especially within movements such as Theosophy.[124] For some, ether was the medium unifying every aspect of nature.[125] It is therefore no surprise that both the scientists and non-scientists of the early SPR embraced the concept of ether and the implications of universality and interconnectedness it suggested for the nature of the cosmos.

Experimental Physics

The more practical area of experimental physics also had an important influence on early paranormal research. As Noakes has highlighted, most recent historians of science have concentrated on overlaying the theories and concepts of mainstream science onto early psychical research, with little consideration of the similarities between the methodologies and issues of experimental physics and the scientific study of psychical phenomena.[126] Myers advocated the increased use of experimentation in validating his theory of the 'subliminal self', especially with telepathy, both between living minds and between the living and the physically dead.[127] While there was a more obvious dynamic between psychical research and psychological ideas of the unconscious, concerted efforts to detect fraud in the séance room were partly undertaken with an increase in the use of physical instrumentation.[128]

There was a growing consideration of mediums as biological test subjects, and séance rooms as laboratories. While experimental psychologists justified their use of instrumentation as a means of creating a distinction between their science and psychical research, many experimental physicists thought that there were experimental problems shared by both fields, leading to common solutions. However, the increased, and often aggressive use of instrumentation, was considered by many as not conducive to successful mediumship, with physical paranormal phenomena already subject to much adverse scientific perception due to their lack of consistent repeatability.[129] The well documented conditions often required by mediums, such as

[124] Asprem, 'Pondering', pp. 141-142.
[125] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 90.
[126] Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 53.
[127] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 27, §125. For discussion of some issues with telepathy experiments, see Ian Hacking, 'Telepathy: Origins of Randomization in Experimental Design', *Isis* 79 (1988), pp. 435-437.
[128] Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 47.
[129] Ibid., pp. 47, 49.

darkened rooms, particular arrangements of furniture, and even allowing only those individuals with certain sympathetic beliefs to attend, led to a situation in which the methodologies of early psychical researchers were strongly challenged on scientific grounds. Scientists such as Wallace and Crookes professed their belief in the veracity of Spiritualist phenomena they had observed, but their claims were dismissed by William Benjamin Carpenter (1813-1885), who also cast doubt on the phenomena produced during mesmerism.[130] Physicists attracted to psychical research were of the opinion that sceptics were very quick to point out how difficult psychical experimentation was, but failed to state that this was also true of experimental physics. Their contention was that merely because some phenomena were difficult to observe or consistently repeat did not invalidate them as scientifically valuable. Investigating whether observed Spiritualist phenomena were veridical or fraudulent, or distinguishing between genuine versus spurious lines in a spectroscope, both seemed to be due to the idiosyncrasies of observable phenomena and the inconsistency of laboratory equipment.[131] Gurney attempted to describe the capricious nature of the skills and methodologies required in early psychical research as an eclectic mixture of procedural rule breaking, somewhere between the laboratory and the hospital, with a wider, less-specialized perspective more appropriate than a technical, more precise one.[132] Psychical phenomena were regarded as intrinsically erratic by many investigators, and therefore an eclectic methodological approach, such as the universal approach suggested by the likes of James and Gurney, was understandable. Others, such as Thomson and Barrett, also promoted a considerate, gentle, but expert approach when dealing with the 'delicate instruments' that were Spiritualist mediums. While the emphasis on the importance of experimental physics was temporary, largely reduced by the early 1900s, the utilization of physical apparatus to both guide the activities of mediums and to detect psychical phenomena was well regarded by both Spiritualists and psychical researchers. In this way, physics

[130] Noakes, 'Sciences', p. 33. See also William Benjamin Carpenter, 'Spiritualism and its Latest Converts', *Quarterly Review* 131 (1871), pp. 301–353. However, for evidence suggesting Carpenter's possible belief in thought-transference, see Shannon Delorme, 'Physiology or psychic Powers? William Carpenter and the debate over Spiritualism in Victorian Britain', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 48 (2014), pp. 57-66.
[131] Noakes, 'Haunted', pp. 49-50.
[132] Ibid., p. 47; and Edmund Gurney, 'The nature of evidence in matters extraordinary', National Review 22 (1884), p. 472.

was for a time able to bridge the intellectual gap between incorporeal matter and living beings in the séance room.[133]

While the likes of Crookes and Lodge heavily tempered their earlier promotion of physics as of preeminent importance in psychical research, both their later public and private statements suggested that what was required was an eclectic combination of observational and interpretative skills from a range of sciences. This included conjuring, jurisprudence, and even literary criticism. Noakes argues that as well as scientific evidence of the spirit world helping to further the debate between the compatibility of scientific and Christian cosmology, the unique combination of intellectual and experimental considerations arising from experimental physics may help to explain why such a high proportion of physicists became interested in psychical research.[134] I would add that physicists wanted to understand all of nature, but by the late-nineteenth century they were more likely to be specialists in only one or two fields. So, while it appeared that they were trying to push the boundaries of their particular scientific field in order to investigate phenomena usually understood to be the reserve of other disciplines, such as psychology or physiology, they were in fact simply satisfying an intellectual curiosity with the only interpretive skills they had. As we have seen, the need for an eclectic investigative approach to psychical research to overcome this specialization has become increasingly apparent over the course of the preceding chapters.

Early experiments in mediumistic phenomena involved participants touching or directing others to do something, so the problem of intentional or inadvertent 'muscle-reading' could arise. Gurney contended, after the discovery that thought-transference could take place without any physical contact, or movement, that the evidence became much more compelling. He also highlighted the problem of fraud, and outlined some ways to reduce its likelihood. These included making either the agent or the percipient oneself, or ensuring that there was a large enough number of agents or percipients, so that evidence could be gathered and analysed in a cumulative way.[135] The prevalence of fraud was problematic throughout this early period of

[133] Noakes, 'Haunted', pp. 50-52.
[134] Ibid., p. 53.
[135] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 17-20, §4.

psychical research, but especially so with physical mediumistic phenomena.[136] Gurney presented some experiments in thought-transference with the Rev. A. M. Creery and his family, undertaken by Barrett, Myers, and himself in the early 1880s, and made some interesting observations about investigative methodology and the nature of observation. The results of the nearly five hundred trials carried out with various members of the Creery family were presented as statistically significant, although the evaluation was rather rudimentary. Of greater interest is how he thought about the data and what it suggested about the characteristics of the phenomenon of thought-transference. With reference to the identification of one playing card from a standard pack of fifty-two, he noticed that when an incorrect guess was made, very often the correct suit was still guessed, and that when a picture card was incorrectly guessed, that a similar picture card was very often guessed. Similarly, for the non-picture cards that were guessed incorrectly, the number was often very close. This confirmed for him the imperfect nature of thought-transference, but that this was to be expected. It paralleled similar observations with a more common sense, such as sight in imperfect light, where repeatability and prediction were likewise not always possible.[137] Acceptance of the imperfect nature of telepathy, and other paranormal phenomena, thus came from the experimental observations, but also helped to shape the perceived need for an broad and eclectic investigative methodology.

Gurney also contended that the inherently imperfect nature of paranormal phenomena was also affected by environmental conditions, such as emotion and attitude. Linking psychical experimentation with physical experimentation, and highlighting idiosyncratic characteristics, he suggested that, 'Questions of mood, of goodwill, of familiarity, may hold the same place in psychical investigation as questions of temperature in a physical laboratory.'[138] The notion of rapport in spontaneous telepathic examples appears to have some similarity with the idea of the creation of a conducive environment in experimental cases. That there were non-physical characteristics that could be controlled or noted as significant with regard to

[136] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 209. For contemporary works on fraudulent activities, see also Julia E. Garrett, *Mediums Unmasked: An Exposé of Modern Spiritualism* (Los Angeles, CA.: H. M. Lee & Bro., 1892); Henry Ridgely Evans, *Hours With the Ghosts or Nineteenth Century Witchcraft* (Chicago, IL.: Laird & Lee, 1897); and Edward D. Lunt , *Mysteries of the Séance and Tricks and Traps of Bogus Mediums* (Boston, MA.: Lunt bros., 1903).
[137] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 20-28, §5.
[138] Ibid., I, pp. 29-30, §6.

the success or otherwise of telepathic phenomena would seem to go against scientific methodology and understanding. However, these characteristics, such as a favourable mood, an emotional link, or a geographical relationship, were considered to be evidentially significant. Barrett was another who warned scientific colleagues not to dismiss the importance of a sympathetic environment in psychical research.[139] This rapport could seemingly be enhanced in a number of ways, such as the agent being in the midst of a crisis or some other highly emotional situation, with the percipient more likely to witness an apparition or some other form of externalised impression, even though they may have been unaware of the situation. Thus, a link was established between the psychical and the physical, with only the idiosyncrasies of each individual experiment being different. He promoted undertaking as large a number of trials as possible. This would to some extent overcome the inherently capricious nature of paranormal phenomena, by accumulating a greater quantity of data, but also, like physical experimentation, would allow the data to be analysed statistically with greater levels of confidence.[140]

While the ability to undertake psychical research using experimentation was considered preferable, the vast number of reports of spontaneous cases, often anecdotal, could not be ignored by those using paranormal phenomena to try to understand the nature of the universe. Consequently, the early psychical researchers of the SPR attempted to systemize the classification and analysis of the evidence provided by such cases, and therefore treat them in the same objective manner as experiments. Gurney described spontaneous cases as lying on the border between the acceptable and the unacceptable, with the continued development of science bringing some of these phenomena previously regarded as facts well within the remit of mainstream science, and rejecting others as mere superstition.[141] He was clear that the most significant type of phenomena to be explored were apparitions at the time of death. He suggested that apparitions occurring after death, what were commonly referred to as ghosts, 'have a wide and strong hold on the popular mind.' Further, he contended that the continued existence of departed friends and relatives had also been one of the most constant elements of religious belief. However, apparitions observed

[139] W. F. Barrett, 'On Some Physical Phenomena, Commonly Called Spiritualistic, Witnessed by the Author', *PSPR* 4 (1886-1887), pp. 41.
[140] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 31-32, §7.
[141] Ibid., I, p. 115, §2.

at either the time of death, or during some period of crisis did not appear to have generated the same sort of mythology around them, and had been largely ignored, or certainly not considered part of 'the recognised order of Nature.'[142] R. C. Finucane notes that he tried to separate the commonly held view of ghosts from the phantasms, apparitions, and hallucinations, but for most people these were as 'ghostly' as any other spectres.[143] Gurney detailed different types of errors that were seen to occur, and which could thus invalidate observations as suitable evidence. These were errors of observation, inference, narration, and memory.[144] In order to successfully identify these errors occurring within spontaneous cases it was desirable to have a clear understanding of what the elements of such a typical telepathic phenomenon were. He classified these as follows: (1) evidence that the agent has had an unusual experience; (2) evidence that the percipient has had a particular impression of the agent; and (3) evidence that the two events coincided in time. Unsurprisingly, the combination of these elements falls within the main aspects of Charles D. Broad's 'basic limiting principles', which consider causality, limitations of the actions of mind on matter, the dependence of mind on brain, and the constraints on methods of acquiring knowledge.[145] The possible areas of misinterpretation, according to Gurney, were therefore one or more of the following: (i) the state of the agent; (ii) the experience of the percipient; (iii) the time of (1); (iv) the time of (2).[146]

Gurney conceded that for any particular case, even if the stated criteria for a telepathic phenomenon had been met, that the conclusion could still be one of coincidence. However, he suggested that with enough cases, the likelihood of chance alone being the cause of the observed telepathic phenomena was increasingly small.[147] He stated a belief in the reality of telepathy, based on the number and quality of spontaneous cases, and reinforced by experimentation, but stressed that this should not be regarded as a dogmatic position. All cases of apparent telepathy must fall into one of three categories: 'either (1) telepathic, or (2) a purely accidental coincidence of a most striking kind, or (3) the result of a fraudulent conspiracy to deceive.' It was his

[142] Ibid., I, pp. 121-122, §3.
[143] R. C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (London: Junction Books, 1982), pp. 194-195.
[144] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, p. 123, §4. For Gurney's detailed analysis, pp. 123-131, §4-6.
[145] Broad, *Religion*, pp. 9-12.
[146] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 131-132, §7.
[147] Ibid., I, pp. 161-164, §17.

view that the quantity and quality of corroborated first-hand cases meeting all the necessary criteria were enough to validate the hypothesis for telepathy and dismiss the other two causes. This did not take into account the far greater quantity of second and third-hand cases, or where complete corroboration was not possible, which still pointed in the direction of a hypothesis of telepathy, but it was hoped that methods of data collection would become easier over time and so further validate the hypothesis.[148]

Gurney contended that phantasms were subjective waking dreams or hallucinations, and not veridical presences, however, they may be linked causally to real events.[149] This not only implied a belief that some theory of telepathy was valid, but that there was an inherent 'action-at-a-distance' component to the process. He admitted that there may still be cases which were presented as telepathic, but were only accidental coincidences, and that it was important to be able to confirm as best one could which of these possibilities was true.[150] He reiterated that 'phantasms of the living' should be regarded as projections of the percipient's brain by which his senses are deceived, often suggesting the presence of another individual. He suggested that in a number of cases, phantasms of this type appear to have coincided closely in time with the death, or some serious crisis in the life of, the person whose presence was seemingly manifest. If these coincidences could be shown to be accidental, then there was little or no case for a theory of telepathy, but if they could not, then the existence of telepathy was proved. This led to two important questions. First, could the evidence be trusted? Second, if it could be trusted, what did it prove? A positive answer to the first question must be taken as given, as otherwise the hundreds of cases in *Phantasms* were worthless. The second question was much more complex to answer, and he presented a rather convoluted, yet systematic approach via a rudimentary statistical 'doctrine of chances.'[151] In this way the likelihood of recorded phenomena occurring by chance could be calculated, and then compared to the number of observations documented and verified for a particular class of cases, and of a known sample size. For Gurney, calculating such probabilities should be employed as an investigative tool for all classes of phenomena, but he stressed the importance of only doing so for one

[148] Ibid., I, pp. 166-169, §19; and Gauld, *Founders*, pp.132-133.
[149] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 547-548, §7; and McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 98-99. 131, 158.
[150] Gurney, *Phantasm*., I, p. 573, §10; and McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 123.
[151] Gurney, *Phantasms*, II, pp. 1-2, §1.

distinct class at a time, and not to confuse and conflate different types of phenomena which were being researched.[152] He stated: 'though this work connects the sleeping and the waking phenomena in their *theoretic* and *psychological* aspects, it carefully and expressly separates them in their *demonstrational* aspect.'[153] Thus, he believed that all telepathic, and by extension, all paranormal phenomena, may have been part of a wider, perhaps universal truth, despite the differences in how they manifested. He suggested that it was obvious that no progress could be made in validating a theory of telepathy without the use of statistics, although he appreciated that some individuals on both sides of the argument may have disagreed.[154]

To this end, the SPR conducted a census of sensory hallucinations in 1886 by means of a 'circular letter' in which correspondents were asked whether they had ever experienced a vivid impression suggesting a human presence but when no one was there.[155] Some 5,705 people were asked the question in an attempt to ascertain the prevalence of such phenomena, and to be used as a benchmark for the chance occurrence of observed phenomena. The detail of the calculations is not relevant to this thesis, but in his summation he stated: 'From these data it may be calculated that the odds against the occurrence, by accident, of as many coincidences of the type in question as that circle produced, are *more than a trillion to 1*.' Further, considering visual phenomena alone, he calculated 'the odds against the occurrence, by accident…are about *a thousand billion trillion trillion trillions to 1*.'[156] Gurney contended that even if a number of the cases were in some way erroneous, or the data incomplete, the margins calculated are so 'ludicrous' that the only conclusion one could draw was that there were a large number 'coincidences' which could not be caused by chance alone.[157] Regardless of this, he insisted that the validation of the theory of telepathy could not be made by the strongest cases alone, but by all cases, each taken on their own merit, and so ensuring objectivity.[158] Thus, we have seen the

[152] McCorristine, Spectres, p. 132. For contemporary discussions on the relevant use of statistics see F. Y. Edgeworth, 'The Calculus of Probabilities applied to Psychical Research I', *PSPR* 3 (1885), pp. 190-199; and John Venn, *The Logic of Chance: An Essay on the Foundations and Province of the Theory of Probability, with Especial Reference to Its Logical Bearings and Its Application to Moral and Social Science, and to Statistics* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1888; 3rd edition), pp. 235-236, 256-258.
[153] Gurney, *Phantasms*, II, pp. 2-3, §1.
[154] Ibid., II, p. 5, §2.
[155] Ibid., II, p. 7, §3.
[156] Ibid., II, pp. 12-18, §6-7. See also Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 351.
[157] Gurney, *Phantasms*, II, pp. 21-22, §8.
[158] Ibid., II, p. 28, §9.

importance of experimentation within psychical research, and the issues shared with physical experimentation linking the two.

Telecommunications Technology

The beginnings of electrical telegraphy emerged from the wired electrical experimentation of the early-nineteenth century and later transformed into its wireless forms.[159] The major considerations of telecommunications technologies of the time with the greatest relevance to this thesis are the communication of information and its inherent 'action-at-a-distance' transmission characteristics. The development of electromagnetism within electrical telegraphy was pioneered in America by the painter and innovator Samuel Morse (1791-1872), who also developed his famous code during this time. This led to a considerable proliferation of commercial telegraph companies in America, Britain, and Continental Europe, but with less pace and commercial rivalry. The use of wired electrical telegraphy extended to military purposes, and saw the construction of vast submarine and land-based wired networks, which firmly established the importance and influence of the technology.[160] Hamilton notes that the widely dispersed nature of the British Empire at this time was made much smaller by underground cable and telegraph, and that the early psychical researchers were now more able to validate cases of telepathic communication from around the world.[161]

Wireless telegraphy emerged in the mid-1880s, initially following experiments into ground based inductive field transmission conducted by Sir William Preece (1834-1913), but was soon superseded by the true radiation field transmission technology of Heinrich Hertz (1857-1894). Hertz's demonstrations and lectures influenced many physicists, including Lodge, Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), Karl Ferdinand Braun (1850-1918), and the Italian Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937). Marconi, rich in both time and finances, was able to develop the commercial potential of Hertz's experiments, cohesively bringing together the work of other scientists and experimenters. He developed and improved ground based aerial technology which

[159] Ken Beauchamp, *History of Telegraphy: Its Technology and Application* (London: The Institution of Engineering and Technology, 2001), p. xix.
[160] Ibid., pp. 51-57, 69, 102.
[161] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 97.

vastly extended the range of transmission. Marconi filed a patent in Britain, as a strong maritime nation, and successfully demonstrated his apparatus in London with the help of Preece, increasing the range of communication to many kilometres. With the help of Lodge, tuning difficulties within Marconi's early apparatus were rectified, technical improvements developed by Braun, which, coupled with an increase in electric power and large enough aerials, enabled a successful transatlantic transmission in 1901.[162]

Much of the early interplay between telecommunications technology and Spiritualism took place in America.[163] The science and apparatus there paralleled what was taking place in Britain and Europe, and the well documented beginnings of the Spiritualist movement coincided with the events surrounding the Fox family in Hydesville, New York, in 1848. An early American Spiritualist newspaper, published in New York by Samuel Byron Brittan (1815-1883), which ran from 1852 to 1860, was called the *Spiritual Telegraph*.[164] In Britain, short-lived periodicals included the *British Spiritual Telegraph*, and the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*.[165] Also, the French Spiritualist Louis-Alphonse Cahagnet's *Arcanes de la Vie Future Devoilés* was translated as *The Celestial Telegraph*.[166] One of the first to make an explicit link between the messages communicated by spirits to living human mediums and contemporary communications technology, was the medium Britten. She described the process as akin to a 'spiritual telegraph', whereby certain environments or people, or both, were charged with a particular aura which enabled them to act as a form of battery which somehow powered the communication.[167] It was claimed by some that

[162] Beauchamp, *Telegraphy*, pp. 184, 186-190.
[163] For a discussion on the use of technology within early Spiritualism, see Gutierrez, 'Spiritualism', pp. 201-204.
[164] Anthony Enns, 'The Undead Author: Spiritualism, Technology and Authorship', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 60-61.
[165] *The British Spiritual Telegraph* 1 (1857); and *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph* 1, (1855).
[166] Raymond Buckland, *The Spirit Book: The Encyclopedia of Clairvoyance, Channeling, and Spirit Communication* (Detroit, MI.: Visible Ink, 2005), p. 238. For a fuller discussion on Cahagnet, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'The First Psychonaut? Louis-Alphonse Cahagnet's Experiments with Narcotics', *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 7 (2016), pp. 105-123; and Christopher Partridge, *High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism, and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 126-135.
[167] Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion Between Earth and the World of the Spirits* (New York: Emma Hardinge Britten, 1870), p. 29.

certain spirits were able to operate physical telegraph keys,[168] and some mediums even opened their own telegraph offices.[169] Thus, this notion of a 'spiritual telegraph', which some saw as contributing to a utopian aspiration of a labour free future, was more than just a clever analogy. The early binary 'yes or no' spirit communications became more sophisticated with the use of letters and numbers, and together with the development of specific spiritual instruments, such as Hudson Tuttle's 'Psychograph', more complex conversations could be transmitted in shorter amounts of time.[170] The early spirit rappings were compared to the dots and dashes of the electric telegraph, but later the mediums themselves were thought of as examples of physics apparatus enabling the concept of transmission, clearly linking with the idiosyncrasies of experimental physics. As Jill Galvan has noted, the increased use of technological terms to describe mediums and séance methodologies by commentators on Spiritualism at the time, subtly modified the debate from ontological issues to epistemological ones. Consequently, discussions on the veracity of Spiritualism were not as important as those on its characteristics, its validity having already been presupposed.[171] Consequently, telecommunications technology of the time can be regarded as part of the scientific mainstream, but its perceived links to Spiritualism also added to the pervading occulture within which the SPR operated. The action-at-a-distance communication phenomena not only reinforced the importance of the material and the immaterial for its members, but had parallels with the communication between incarnate and discarnate souls, and therefore between the terrestrial and spiritual realms.

The physical sciences provided the intellectual authority to validate both usual and unusual phenomena. For the early psychical researchers, specific fields, such as those briefly explored here, helped to shape aspects of early theories of the

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[168] W. W. Aber, *A Guide to Mediumship Given by a Delegation from the Star Circle of the Spirit World* (Kansas City: Aber, 1906), p. 23, as cited by Enns in 'Undead', p. 60.
[169] 'Occult Telegraphy', *Light* (7th April 1888), p. 162, as cited by Enns in 'Undead', p. 60.
[170] Enns, 'Undead', pp. 60-61. Links between telegraphy and spirituality are also noted in Richard J. Noakes, 'Telegraphy Is an Occult Art: Fleetwood Varley and the Diffusion of Electricity to the Other World', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 32 (1999), p. 422; and Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 93-100.
[171] Jill Galvan, 'The Victorian Post-human: Transmission, Information and the Séance', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and The Occult*, ed. by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 82-84.

paranormal, in that they suggested an inherent universality and interconnectedness of the entirety of nature, encompassing both the material and the immaterial realms.[172]

Concluding Remarks

The transformation and growth of science in the nineteenth century was rapid, affecting nearly all facets of Western society. The increasing materialist and rationalist currents, reflective of Asprem's concept of disenchantment, did not progress unabated, however, with some utilizing scientific methodology for their own purposes. The normalization of scientific method and its adoption by the early psychical researchers of the SPR makes the exploration of the influence of science on the investigation of paranormal phenomena critical to this thesis. We have seen that even when utilizing a narrow cultural perspective of Victorian science and technology to consider the beginnings of psychical research, there was a wide variety of interconnected disciplines which underwent intellectual, physical, and even religious interactions with paranormal and Spiritualist thinking. Debates about the intellectual superiority of inductive over deductive reasoning underpinned subsequent discussions about the influence of mainstream scientific disciplines which interacted with the observation or explanation of paranormal phenomena. We have seen that many of the investigations tried to reconcile the material with the immaterial. While the early psychical researchers promoted and utilized a scientific methodology to investigate paranormal phenomena, theirs was a broad and eclectic approach which considered all evidence impartially, but consequently embraced both the material and immaterial realms. Unsurprisingly, the implied universality and interconnectedness of such a paradigm was reflected in the burgeoning 'paranormal field of discourse' of the time, demonstrating Stuckrad's 'esoteric field of discourse' and Partridge's prevalent occulture. The fields connected to the physical sciences, such as ether physics, experimental physics, and telecommunications technology, had clear links to the investigation of Spiritualism and the paranormal. They fostered notions of universality and interconnectedness posited by psychical researchers. Moreover, a

[172] For more discussion on the relationship between psychical research and physical sciences, see Harry M. Collins and Trevor J. Pinch, *Frames of Meaning: The Social Construction of Extraordinary Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) and David Kaiser, *How the Hippies Saved Physics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), pp. 65-95.

number of key researchers in these fields became early members of the SPR. To what extent these scientific ideas gave birth to early psychical research or simply enabled paranormal theories to develop and be shaped by them is open to further consideration. That the impacts of science and the influence of psychical research were both eclectic and far reaching is beyond doubt. This eclecticism was considered an inherent characteristic of the paranormal by early psychical researchers, necessitating a diversity of investigative skills, but was also a natural response to increased scientific specialization and aspirations of philosophical inclusiveness. Therefore, this chapter has strengthened an important aspect part of my first key argument, the perception that science alone was an inadequate intellectual tool with which to answer the fundamental questions of nature. Further, it has highlighted the crux of my second key argument, that an alternative intellectual approach was required, that of the paranormal domain. My third key argument is also supported, in that the themes presented here are important cohesive characteristics found across all modes of that domain.

Chapter 6

Psychology and Consciousness

In this chapter, the second part of the science element of my two-dimensional historo-cultural analytical framework, I argue that psychology assumed a critical role within early theories on the nature of the paranormal, especially the consideration of human consciousness. I will show that while these theories focussed on the significance of human consciousness on the manifestation of paranormal phenomena they also brought together the philosophical and methodical approaches of the early psychical researchers. This chapter reinforces an element of my first key argument, the perception that science alone was an inadequate intellectual tool with which to answer the fundamental questions of nature. It also underpins the core of my second key argument, that an alternative intellectual approach was required, that of the paranormal domain. As such, the key characteristics of these theories find parallels in the three modes of the paranormal domain presented in the next chapter – thinking, doing, and being, and are, in essence, my third key argument. We will see that many of the key individuals in both the psychological and psychical intellectual domains were the same and so there was significant influence in both directions. Despite the many schools of thought within psychology which have at various times competed for intellectual and academic supremacy, it is the inherent dichotomy of positivistic behavioural observation and investigation conflicting with the introspective examination of the mind which makes it relevant to this thesis.[1] This methodological duality parallels investigations exploring the nature of materiality and immateriality undertaken within other disciplines. The gradual intertwining of speculative philosophy, which owed a great deal to the consideration of mind-body duality, with the ever-developing understanding of human physiology helped shape the beginnings of psychology.[2] Clinical and experimental psychology in the late-nineteenth century identified numerous individuals displaying unusual behaviour, and some claimed this

[1] Beloff, *Psychological*, pp. xi-x.
[2] For the early history of neuroscience see Stephen T. Casper, 'History and Neuroscience: An Integrative Legacy', *Isis* 105 (2014), pp. 123–132. See also A. Sommer, 'Crossing the Boundaries of Mind and Body. Psychical Research and the Origins of Modern Psychology' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College, London, 2013).

was evidence of abnormal psychology and others that they exhibited paranormal phenomena. This led to the idea of multiple streams of consciousness and multiple personalities, which was used as evidence by adherents of both a purely psychological explanation for paranormal phenomena, and by those who suggested a spiritual cause. These altered states of consciousness have some similarities to Antoine Faivre's intrinsic characteristic of the Experience of Transmutation, which allows inner experience and intellectual activity to expose otherwise hidden knowledge.[3] The analysis of the psychological themes in this chapter reflects Egil Asprem's broad notion of disenchantment, especially the idea of metaphysical scepticism. Further, the psychological and paranormal theories proposed by the early psychical researchers can be considered from the perspective of the worldview and epistemic dimensions of Asprem's intellectual problem areas, given their continuing reaction to the pervading disenchantment of the time, but also the higher faculties manifest in their research.[4] The 'paranormal field of discourse' that these strange phenomena helped to shape can be considered with respect to Kocku von Stuckrad's 'esoteric field of discourse', and bolsters his notion of 'the other' as a valid conceptual tool.[5] Further enhancing this idea of the paranormal, the psychological considerations by the psychical researchers of what was normal, abnormal, or paranormal, especially their ideas of consciousness, are all reflected in C. D. Broad's 'basic limiting principles'. They explicitly explored the implications of the unusual paranormal phenomena which appeared to transgress the principles of causation, the limitations on the actions of the mind, interactions with the brain, and the usual ways of acquiring knowledge.[6]

Phrenology, Mesmerism, and Hypnotism

Phrenology was a fringe science which attempted to determine a subject's various mental faculties and personality traits by measuring the different sizes of specific parts of the brain. Rising to prominence in the early decades of the nineteenth century, it represented an initial interplay between the material field of physiology and the early immaterial ideas of personality, but is also important for its influence on

[3] Faivre, *Access*, pp. 13-14.
[4] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 418.
[5] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, pp. 5-6, 8.
[6] Broad, *Religion*, p. 7.

mesmerism and hypnotism. As such, it is not only a scientific field important to a paranormal discourse, which would eventually form part of what grew into mainstream psychology,[7] but it also underpins the key element of the mode of thinking of the paranormal domain which considers the inclusivity of the material and the immaterial.

Phrenology's founder was the German anatomist Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), whose primary motivation was to try to develop a philosophy of nature. According to John Van Whye, Gall aspired to utilize scientific authority to validate his phrenological system, despite many of his contemporaries dismissing his work, which has parallels to the negative perception of psychical research by some mainstream scientists at the end of the nineteenth century. He was influenced by the induction methodology of his teacher, Maximilian Stoll (1742-1787),[8] and also by the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who proposed an organic theory of mind and body which described a requirement for material bodily organs interacting with all-pervasive immaterial vital 'powers'. Gall combined this philosophical notion with the physiological and psychological idea that distinct character traits could be determined by features found on a subject's face and head. This early idea progressed into one which suggested innate universal faculties residing in regions of the cerebral cortex known as 'organs', having been developed from his examination of both human and animal skulls, which were then compared with known personality traits. Gall initially called his theory '*Schädellehre*' (doctrine of the skull), then 'Organologie', and finally just 'the physiology of the brain', not favouring the term 'phrenology' coined by the English physician Thomas Forster (1789-1860) in 1815.[9] A fruitful European tour enabled phrenology to spread across continental Europe, Britain, and the United States. This success provided Gall with social and intellectual authority, if not the mainstream scientific validation he sought, but did mean that phrenology left an influential scientific legacy.[10] Gall assumed an inherent universality which both allowed phrenology to be considered as a science and

[7] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, p. 25; and Noakes, 'Sciences', p. 30.
[8] John Van Whye, 'The authority of human nature: the Schädellehre of Franz Joseph Gall', *British Journal for the History of Science* 35 (2002), pp. 17-19.
[9] Ibid., pp. 20-22.
[10] Ibid., pp. 25, 26, 33.

explained some of the nature of its operation, which we will see was similar to the paranormal thinking of early psychical researchers.

Contemporary to phrenology, but with a greater scientific acceptance and a more prodigious legacy, was the field of mesmerism, and its associated notion of 'animal magnetism'. John Beloff notes that it was the Romantic revolution, allowing more unorthodox thought and self-expression, which perhaps enabled its rise.[11] The theory was named after the German physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). He combined his physiological and healing aspirations with his interest in astronomy and his notion of a universal subtle fluid, into a system showing clear influence from more traditional alchemy and astrology.[12] His early treatments in Vienna involved mineral magnets, but soon developed into making sweeping motions with the hands alone over the body of the patient, using the healer's innate 'animal magnetism.'[13] Mesmer claimed that animal magnetism would be of benefit not only to physiology, but also to physics, believing it to convey a physical influence via a universal magnetic fluid which permeated all material bodies.[14] Mesmer's ideas were not well received in Vienna, and he left for Paris where they were looked upon more favourably by the general public, if not by the medical authorities. A prestigious Royal Commission of Inquiry was set up, led by the then U.S. Ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790).[15] Despite the commission deducing that the effects of mesmerism were due to suggestion rather than an all-pervasive magnetism, public interest and further scientific investigation continued. The uncontrolled movement of limbs, convulsions, and trances seen previously were now increasingly accompanied by reports of clairvoyance and other psychic phenomena, rather than mere healing,[16] and so is significant for the investigation of Spiritualist and other paranormal phenomena

[11] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 14, 16.
[12] Alan Gauld, *A History of Hypnotism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1-3.
[13] Ibid., pp. 11-12.
[14] Ibid., p. 11. See Chapter 5 for possible parallels tin my discussion on ether theory.
[15] Richard Broughton, *Parapsychology: The Controversial Science* (London: Rider, 1992), p. 55; and Gauld, *Hypnotism*, pp. 5, 11. See also Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1968); and Betsy van Schlun, *Science and the Imagination: Mesmerism, Media and the Mind in Nineteenth-Century English and American Literature* (Madison, WI.: Galda & Wilch Verlag, 2007), primarily Chapter 2.
[16] Gurney links mesmerism to telepathy in Edmund Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, eds., *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 vols. (London: Society for Psychical Research/Trübner and Co., 1886), I, pp. 11-12, §2.

undertaken by the SPR later in the nineteenth century. The scientific investigations and controversies amongst proponents and dissenters of mesmerism spread quickly across Europe and Britain, and lasted for many years.[17] One of those who strongly challenged the theory that mesmeric effects were due to an unquantifiable vital fluid was the physiologist William Benjamin Carpenter. Rather, he proposed that it was unconscious mental faculties, already known to science, that enabled the trance induced phenomena.[18] As J. Jeffrey Franklin notes, the opposing views regarding mesmerism at this time set the materialists against the spiritually inclined. The physicians saw mesmerism as an entirely scientific manifestation, utilizing either a physics-oriented magnetic or electric 'vital principle', or a biological 'vital fluid' somehow proliferating throughout all life.[19] According to Beloff, this was due to the scientific cultural novelty of physical magnetism, electricity, and galvanism at the time.[20] The Spiritualist perspective fused traditional and modern theological ideas, including esoteric Christianity and occult spirituality, to posit mesmerism as validation of notions of an all-pervasive Spirit.[21] Thus, when considering mesmerism, the seemingly polarized materialists and Spiritualists both appeared to embrace the similar complementary philosophical notions of universality and interconnectedness, important elements of the mode of thinking of the paranormal domain. Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney were very interested in mesmerism and its potential ability to unlock dormant higher mental faculties, such as telepathy and clairvoyance, but they also understood it as a precursor to hypnotism and psycho-therapeutics.[22]

Following Mesmer's death in 1815, his successors, such as his student Marquis de Puységur (1751-1825), continued his work and further promoted mesmeric techniques and theories.[23] The more sophisticated verbal inductive method of inducing somnambulism became preeminent in the field and helped it proliferate across Europe and America. The importance of somnambulistic trance within mesmerism helped it to develop into what became known as hypnotism, a term coined by Étienne Félix d'Henin de Cuvillers (1755-1841) in 1820,[24] and popularized in

[17] Broughton, *Parapsychology*, pp. 55-57.
[18] Noakes, 'Sciences', p. 33.
[19] Franklin, 'Evolution', p. 127.
[20] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, p. 36.
[21] Franklin, 'Evolution', p. 127.
[22] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 5, §104.
[23] Gauld, *Hypnotism*, pp. 39-50.
[24] Ibid., p. 120.

English by James Braid (1795-1860) in about 1843.[25] However, the proliferation of psychic phenomena declined markedly during this period of refinement.[26] Nevertheless, the research into mesmeric somnambulism could be considered as the forerunner to modern psychiatry and theories of the unconscious, as well as being a precursor to psychical research.[27] The importance of mesmerism's 'action-at-a-distance' phenomena of telepathy and magical healing had parallels with later technology born out of the science of electro-magnetism, especially wireless telegraphy, discussed in the previous chapter. It also suggested that the universe was inherently interconnected, with communication possible between all its constituents and realms, whatever their true nature may be, an idea embraced by psychical researchers.

While some still harboured misgivings about hypnotism, the medical psychiatric profession, being its main practitioners, found it less intellectually problematic than mesmerism. This had the effect of demystifying hypnotism, especially as the proliferation of paranormal phenomena had declined.[28] Broad regards the ostensibly paranormal phenomena in hypnosis as due to a mental process which is unconscious to the mind which usually controls a subject's body, while Beloff proposes that these were two were distinct processes.[29] However, I suggest that the overriding therapeutic application undertaken masked such phenomena, with many doctors less interested in these strange events, and others disturbed by them.[30] Indeed, those outside of the medical profession, such as Gurney, utilized hypnotism to induce paranormal phenomena to much success.[31]

Following a rekindling of interest by Charles Richet at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, mesmerism and hypnotism remained important enough to warrant the establishment of a dedicated investigative committee in the early SPR. While called

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[25] Ibid., p. 281. See James Braid, *Neurypnology or the Rationale of Nervous Sleep* (London: J. Churchill, 1843).
[26] Broughton, *Parapsychology*, p. 55-57; and Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 23-24.
[27] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 16-18.
[28] Broughton, *Parapsychology*, p. 55-57.
[29] Broad, *The Mind*, p. 428; and Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 23.
[30] Gauld, *Hypnotism*, pp. 9, 62-64.
[31] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 23, 34-35, 68, 87; and Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 285, 359. See also *Abnormal Hypnotic Phenomena: A Survey of Nineteenth-Century Cases*, 4 vols., ed. by E. J. Dingwall (London: J. A. Churchill, 1968), especially volume 1, France, and volume 4, U. S. A. and Great Britain. For Gurney's experiments in hypnotism, see 'An account of some experiments in mesmerism', *PSPR* 2 (1884), pp. 201-206; and 'The stages of hypnotic memory', *PSPR* 4 (1887), pp. 515-531.

the Committee on Mesmerism, there was little distinction between this field and that of hypnotism.[32] Attempts to distinguish the quasi-physical effects of mesmerism and animal magnetism from the greater psychological influence of hypnotism primarily concerned discussion around the idea of action-at-a-distance.[33] These investigations coincided with the most successful period in the history of early hypnotism, the mid-1880s to the turn of the century, and it had become a significant part of intellectual and mainstream society and culture.[34] There was a profound influence on psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy, at this time, via the investigation of abnormal phenomena such as multiple personalities. The notion of hypnotism became so ingrained within society that there appeared numerous examples of its use within literature.[35]

The intricately linked fields of phrenology, mesmerism, and hypnotism provided early links between the physical body and the immaterial mind. As well as heavily influencing mainstream psychology, the trance phenomena associated with mesmerism and hypnotism appeared to expose hidden mental faculties, ostensibly paranormal, such as telepathy and spirit communication.[36] Thus, not only was experimental psychical research often influenced by hypnotism, it helped to shape aspects of the paranormal domain, such as a universal and interconnected perspective on nature, the existence of hidden mental faculties and layers of consciousness, the reality of a spiritual realm, with human survival and spirit communication all possible. It is therefore no surprise that these characteristics form critical aspects of the paranormal domain presented in this thesis.

Normal, Abnormal, or Paranormal?

During the late-nineteenth century, psychology was understood as the science of the mind, and its proponents sought the truth about the nature of consciousness, or

[32] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, pp. 23, 72-3; and Gauld, *Founders*, p. 146.
[33] Crabtree, *Mesmer*, pp. 270-271.
[34] Gauld, *Hypnotism*, pp. 575-577.
[35] Ibid., pp. 575-577. Examples include *Ursula Mirouët* (1841) by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* (1845) by Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849), *Mémoires d'un médecin* (1846-1848) by Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870), and *Trilby* (1894) by George du Maurier (1834-1896).
[36] Gauld, Hypnotism, pp. 62-64.

investigated mental acts.[37] According to Beloff, the development of psychology as an autonomous empirical science, stemming from a branch of speculative philosophy, came about as the consequence of a growing faith in scientific method, advancements in sensory physiology, the emergence of Darwinism, the science of statistics, the growth of humanitarianism, and the spread of hypnotism.[38] For the early psychical researchers, the association of their theories with the science of psychology not only shaped much of the specific content, but also brought scientific intellectual authority to their work.[39]

There were numerous psychologists, predominantly from the continent, whose works were either highly influential to members of the SPR, or who had direct links to it. This group was made up of distinguished individuals, including the three men considered by many scholars as the founding fathers of psychology, Pierre Janet (1859-1947), William James, and Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920).[40] Also, the research of the heads of two rival French schools of experimental psychology was significant – Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris and Hippolyte Bernheim (1840-1919) at the University of Nancy. Other notable psychologists of the period were Charles Richet and Alfred Binet (1857-1911), also at Salpêtrière, and the psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud, Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920), and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961).[41] Janet, James, Charcot, Richet, and Freud all published articles in the SPR's *Journals* or *Proceedings*, and some were intimately acquainted with the likes of Sidgwick, Gurney, and Myers.[42]

It is commonly held that the beginning of psychology as a distinct scientific discipline was 1879, when Wundt established the first psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig. The introspective experimentation which took place there distinguished it from both its parent disciplines, physiology and philosophy. This

[37] Beloff, *Psychological*, p. 1.
[38] Ibid., pp. 22-23.
[39] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, pp. 49-50.
[40] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 276-279.
[41] Ibid., pp. 276, 278, 338, 358; and Kelly Hurley, 'Science and the Gothic', in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 171, 175.
[42] There is evidence of close correspondence between James, Charcot, Richet, Myers, and Sidgwick which can be found amongst the their archived papers. For example, see letter to William James, 10 August 1886, Myers, Papers, 19/1; letter from Charcot, 5 November 1886, Myers, Papers, 1/111; and letter from Richet, undated, Myers, Papers, 3/171.

early period was solely focussed on the internal mental processes of the mind.[43] This inward-looking intellectual approach was reinforced in James' definition of psychology as 'the Science of Mental Life, both of its phenomena and their conditions. The phenomena are such things as we call feelings, desires, cognition, reasonings, and the like…'[44]

The early science of psychology could be regarded as the fusion of a division of speculative philosophy with elements of sensory physiology. However, rather than tracing a neat line from these already extant intellectual fields, philosophy and physiology more correctly helped to foster elements of the academic environment within which the science of psychology was able to emerge. This was further bolstered by Darwinism, which allowed human behaviour to be considered within a biological context for the first time, as well as the growth and spread of hypnotism.[45] From the outset, the science of psychology, intricately intertwined with contemporary developments in the physiological study of the brain and nervous system, was conspicuously bifurcated.[46] One branch was concerned with clinical psychology, initially driven by French scientists including Charcot, Bernheim, and Janet, and relied upon individual case history.[47] This methodology was very different from the second branch to emerge, experimental psychology, developed by the German scientists Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894), Gustav Fechner (1801-1887), and Wundt. This approach focussed especially on perception and cognition. While the early psychical researchers embraced experimental methodology and statistics, their customary practice of investigating particular cases meant that their endeavours were more in line with clinical psychology rather than experimental psychology.[48]

Before Darwin, scientists interested in investigating human consciousness through neurophysiology, sought to develop general theories. Any disparities found amongst experimental subjects were perceived as a result of careless experimental procedures or inaccurate observation. By the late-nineteenth century, the exploration

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[43] Richard Gross, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour* (London: Hodder Education, 2010), pp. 2-3; and Daniel N. Robinson, *An Intellectual History of Psychology* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 4.
[44] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1890), p. 1.
[45] Beloff, *Psychological*, pp. 22-23.
[46] John M. Reisman, *A History of Clinical Psychology* (New York and London: Brunner-Routledge, 1991), p. 15.
[47] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, p. 125.
[48] Ibid., pp. 125-127.

of these differences became critically important.[49] It was also during this period that the focus of psychical research was shifting from the investigation of physical phenomena to mental phenomena. These included hypnotism, telepathy, and supposed spirit communication, and therefore resided more comfortably within the domain of psychology than the physical sciences.[50] While many medical psychologists rationalized such phenomena as being fully explicable by conventional psychology or neurophysiology, and did not even entertain the idea of investigating them, there were those who thought differently.[51] Some psychologists suggested that the evidence of the unusual phenomena demonstrated the symptoms of abnormal psychology, which therefore warranted further research.[52] Some psychical researchers believed the evidence implied the existence of some possibly spiritual mechanism, which therefore also merited more investigation.[53] The borders between the normal, abnormal, and the paranormal were thus somewhat blurred. Trevor Hamilton suggests that Myers attempted to use Darwinian classification methods to illustrate that normal, abnormal, and paranormal phenomena all came from the same fundamental processes.[54] This not only demonstrated the interconnectedness of these different states, for Myers, but also implied that they were all natural phenomena and therefore ultimately explainable.

The key concept which served to highlight the conflicts between these different perceptions of psychological characteristics was that of human consciousness. The question arose as to whether particular observed mental phenomena suggested one stream of consciousness with anomalous and pathological aspects, or implied multiple streams of consciousness, some behaving orthodoxly and others in a fashion which enabled seemingly paranormal occurrences. These multiple streams of consciousness were closely related to the idea of multiple personalities. Some, such as James and Janet, suggested that the distinct personas and behaviours, while observationally valid, were nothing more than parts of a unique, albeit possibly pathological, human personality.[55] In contrast, Myers saw these phenomena as indicative of some disruption to the normal boundaries between different parts of a

[49] B. R. Hergenhahn and Tracy B. Henley, *An Introduction to the History of Psychology* (London: Cengage Learning, 2013), p. 220.
[50] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 92.
[51] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, p. 95.
[52] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 84.
[53] Beloff, *Parapsychology*, p. 45.
[54] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 4.
[55] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 286.

human personality, and were not pathological.[56] These different perceptions, he contended, were unsurprising. 'It may be expected that supernormal vital phenomena will manifest themselves as far as possible through the same channels as abnormal or morbid vital phenomena.'[57] As these apparently paranormal events often occurred during Spiritualist séances some also believed the possibility that the additional personalities were actually manifestations of spirits, physically separate from the medium, but using them as a means of communication between the immaterial and material realms. The multiple personalities very often became apparent after the medium had entered a trance state, and similar states were sometimes able to be induced by hypnosis.[58] The automatic writing, telepathy, and clairvoyance observed were sometimes considered suggestive of actual psychical activity, rather than solely due to multiple personalities or the notion of communication with disembodied spirits.[59] For those investigators for whom a second stream of consciousness was more theoretically palatable, the notion of phenomena being enabled by unconscious or subconscious layers of personality was posited, rather than by an aberrant single one.[60] For phenomena to be regarded as psychical or paranormal, they had to demonstrate the transgression of normally held belief structures regarding causality, and the interplay between the mind and the brain, which parallel Broad's 'basic limiting principles'. Nevertheless, the psychical researchers did not regard these phenomena as supernatural, but related to higher laws and faculties not yet fully understood.

If one considers in detail the relevant articles published in *Proceedings*, together with a survey of experimental psychology of the time, a cohesive picture can be built up of the nature of the early interplay between psychology and psychical research. The prominent psychologists of the time who sought to further the understanding of human consciousness and anomalous psychological phenomena considered three main areas of study: (I) the examination of ostensibly naturally occurring psychological aberrations within individual clinical subjects; (II) the testing of phenomena induced by mesmerism or hypnotism; and (III) the experimentation of

[56] Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 19-20, §119.
[57] Ibid., II, p. 84, §802.
[58] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 285.
[59] Ibid., p. 288.
[60] Ibid., p. 286.

seemingly psychical phenomena while in a normal state of consciousness.[61] While not all of those investigating psychological phenomena were directly connected to the SPR, reports on their findings were very often published in its *Proceedings*, and therefore shows the intimate relationship between the fields of psychology and psychical research at this time. Space limitations preclude a discussion on the detail of these cases, but some key examples are presented in the footnotes.[62]

Consciousness and the Paranormal

In this section I present some key thinking about human consciousness by the psychical theorists Barrett, Gurney, Myers, James, Bergson, and Podmore, with the intention of showing the importance of the association of their ideas with paranormal phenomena. It will be shown that perceived deviations from the normal states of consciousness were critical to all of the following theories, as this allowed for the exposure of hidden mental faculties with associated paranormal phenomena.[63]

[61] This classification is derived from a survey of volumes 1 to 6 of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, together with Jean Piaget, Paul Fraisse, and Maurice Reuchlin, trans. by Judith Chambers, *Experimental Psychology: Its Scope and Method: I History and Method* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 18-19, 33, 34-37, and George Mandler, *A History of Modern Experimental Psychology: From James and Wundt to Cognitive Science* (Cambridge, MA. and London: The MIT Press, 2007), pp. 51-92.

[62] For a good example of (I), where some disintegration of the usual psychological state of the individual was observed, as well as links to mesmerism, see W. F. Barrett, et al., 'First Report of the Committee on Mesmerism', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 1 (1883), pp. 217-229; and 'Appendix to the Report on Mesmerism', *PSPR* 1 (1883), pp. 284-290. Other members of this committee were Gurney, Myers, Henry N. Ridley (1855-1956), W. H. Stone (1830-1891), George Wyld, and Frank Podmore. For two cases which look at (II), but overlap with (I), especially the notion of multiple personalities, see F. W. H. Myers, 'French Experiments on Strata of Personality', *PSPR* 5 (1888), pp. 374-397. The original essay is in Pierre Janet, 'Les Actes Inconscients dans le Somnambulisme', *Revue Philosophique* (March 1888). For a case report which is a good example of (III), telepathic phenomena, and also some discussion of early statistical analysis used within psychical research, see Edmund Gurney, 'M. Richet's Recent Researches In Thought-transference', *PSPR* 2 (1884), pp. 239-257, with additional mathematical analysis by Gurney, Oliver Lodge, and Alfred Lodge, pp. 257-264. The original paper by Richet is in Charles Richet, 'La Suggestion Mentale at le Calcul des Probabilités', *Revue Philosophique* (December 1884). See Hacking, 'Telepathy', p. 437, and Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, pp. 101-102, for more discussion on this material.

[63] It was understood at the time that unusual states of consciousness could also be induced by the use of drugs, but a detailed discussion of this area is out of scope for this thesis. For more on this, see Partridge, *High Culture*, especially Chapter 5.

William Fletcher Barrett - Trance States

Barrett viewed telepathy as a far more perfect interchange of thought rather than via clumsy speech, but it also allowed the possibility of communion without language between men of all races and tongues, and maybe between every sentient creature.[64] Focussing on trance states, such as those induced via hypnotism, he believed the higher faculties, such as telepathy, could be elevated in particular directions, or even induce hallucinations. For Barrett, this was of theoretical interest in psychical research, as it implied that pure suggestion could create phantasms.[65] He did not hold with a physical mode of transmitting telepathy, such as the notion of 'brain waves' posited by some, and further, '…in my opinion, the supernormal phenomena…do not belong to the material plane, and therefore the laws of the physical universe are inapplicable to them.'[66] Barrett attempted to embrace both science and religion, yet challenged both a purely materialist philosophy and blind faith.[67] He believed that a telepathic thought in some way impressed the subliminal self of an agent, and was then transferred instantaneously across space, to the inner subconscious self of the percipient.[68] However, he added, the outer or conscious self may need to be stimulated into activity to successfully perceive the transmitted impressions, which explained the often noted delays in their emergence. While Barrett believed that the conscious waking self could be involved in telepathic transmission, it was unlikely.[69] He suggested that an understanding of the method of transfer 'from the outer to the inner self and vice versa' would enable telepathy to become a universal and common method of communicating thought,[70] and so is associated with more than one characteristic of the mode of doing of the paranormal domain. However, his speculation attempted no explanation of this method of transfer, and neither did it tackle the paranormal nature of the transfer from one internal 'mind' to another internal 'mind', but it did reinforce the idea of a hidden consciousness which could access higher faculties, and is therefore also significant for the paranormal domain.

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[64] Barrett, 'Phenomena', p. 69.
[65] Ibid., pp. 94-95.
[66] Ibid., p. 109. For more on Barrett's views on brain waves, see Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 215.
[67] W. F. Barrett, 'Science and spiritualism', *Light* 13 (1894), pp. 559, 597, cited in Noakes, 'Infinitely', p. 325.
[68] W. F. Barrett, 'Address by the President', *PSPR* 18 (1903-1904), p. 333. Noakes, 'Infinitely', pp. 327-328.
[69] Barrett, 'Phenomena', pp. 109-110.
[70] Ibid. p. 110.

Barrett stated that while individual cases of visual hallucinations, or phantasms of the living and dead, may have often seemed trivial, it would be unscientific and irrational to ignore the mass of evidence.[71] This same belief was held by nearly all the early psychical researchers of the SPR. Barrett believed that the knowledge received during dreams and crystal-visions were a mingling of fantasy, dream, memory, telepathy, and clairvoyance, and sometimes prevision and traces of spirit communion. He suggested that all the evidence pointed to the existence of a hidden self allowing supernormal knowledge to coexist with normal knowledge, of which he suggested automatic writing was an example.[72] His eclectic and interconnected perspective clearly challenged the disenchantment of the time, as described by Asprem, and others, discussed in Chapter 2. Regarding the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, some of which Barrett called 'telekinetic', he suggested that some may point to a religious unseen world where incarnate and discarnate entities may reside permanently or temporarily, and while he thought that the evidence may have seemed miraculous, it is directly linked to the spiritual themes of the mode of being. He did note, however, that many eminent men, often of science, had been driven to a belief in the genuineness of these phenomena, but suggested that more patient inquiry and investigations need to be made.[73] Richard Noakes notes that the scientists Barrett, Lodge, Crookes, the Third and Fourth Barons Rayleigh, and J. J. Thomson were prepared to extend physics into the 'borderlands' of unusual phenomena.[74] Barrett didn't think that psychical research could take the place of religion, but it did help to show that the 'external', or material, was inadequate to satisfy the life of the soul. He said, 'The psychical order is not the spiritual order, but a stepping-stone in the ascent of the soul to its own self-apprehension, its conscious sharing in the eternal divine life…'[75] Here, Barrett concisely described a consciousness-driven universal and interconnected cosmology, encompassing both the material and immaterial realms, but also the divine spark within each individual, familiar characteristics which are all reflected in the paranormal domain.

[71] Ibid., p. 132.
[72] Ibid., pp. 149-150.
[73] Ibid., pp. 217-218.
[74] Noakes, 'Haunted', p. 49. See also Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 70.
[75] Barrett, 'Phenomena', p. 246. For more discussion on Barrett's lifelong religious beliefs, see Barry H. Wiley, *The Thought Reader Craze: Victorian Science at the Enchanted Boundary* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2012), pp. 71-74.

Edmund Gurney - Phantasms of the Living

Consciousness and Telepathy

In *Phantasms*, Gurney presented a number of experiments with thought-transference which involved the usual senses – especially on telepathy and clairvoyance. Asprem suggests that these were attempts at developing mechanistic models of the unusual phenomena which ultimately failed.[76] Myers' later theorizing on the paranormal, discussed below, is shown to be more romantic and metaphysical, and so Asprem's argument would appear to hold true. Nevertheless, it was well regarded at the time by some, such as James.[77] In these experiments, the effect of thought-transference on the receiving mind of the percipient was one 'in consciousness', whereby an actual image or sensation had been recognised and described. He contrasted these with experimental cases in which the percipient did not recognise the effect of the thought-transference, and could therefore be regarded as an unconscious perception, yet unmistakeably linked to the agent.[78] As we have already seen, it is significant that many of the experiments began with the percipient being placed into a hypnotic trance, a methodology by which more consistently positive results were often achieved. Where observation implied the existence of some form of telepathic influence, but without the conscious knowledge of the percipient, he described this as an 'unconscious intelligence', or a 'second self.'[79] This was clearly similar to the existing psychological notions of consciousness, and Myers suggested that Gurney's work somewhat foreshadowed the 'double consciousness' of Janet.[80] Gurney, embracing both the material and the immaterial, said:

> '"Unconscious intelligence"… may be used in a purely *physical* sense …but it may be used also to describe *psychical* processes which are severed from the main conscious current of an individual's life.'[81]

Gurney posited the concept of different levels of human consciousness, an important aspect of the mode of doing of the paranormal domain, some of which

[76] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, pp. 330-331.
[77] Knapp, *James*, p. 88.
[78] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 58-62, §11.
[79] Ibid., I, pp. 62-71, §12.
[80] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 165.
[81] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, p. 69, §12.

managed commonplace activities requiring little conscious intellectual input, while others controlled higher mental faculties such as telepathy. He reasoned that: 'We may suppose, therefore, that the…effect took place below the threshold of consciousness.'[82] In Richet's experiments, Gurney saw evidence for the validation of his idea of the 'unconscious intelligence', and suggested that such a concept must be present both in the agent and the percipient, and also suggested by cases of spontaneous telepathy. He contended that the mind acted like a 'conduit-pipe' between one unconscious intelligence and another, with the knowledge itself having an 'impulsive quality.'[83]

Hallucinations

Gurney regarded hallucinations as the externalised impressions of sight, hearing, or touch, occurring to persons who were awake, defining them as: 'a percept which lacks, but which can only by distinct reflection be recognised as lacking, the objective basis which it suggests.'[84] One might regard these as a real perception of something which was not itself real. While clearly distinct from normal imagination or memory, he gave no hint as to the faculty or faculties involved. He was not alone in appreciating the difficulty of developing a suitable theory on the matter, admitting: 'we find ourselves in a most perplexed field, where doctors seem to be as much at variance as philosophers.'[85] He stated that whether the object observed in a hallucination was physically there or not, was psychically irrelevant, as the observer's sensory experience was the same regardless. Asprem contends that the study of hallucinations by psychical researchers was undertaken to tackle questions of spirituality and existence on an empirical basis.[86] This suggests that the validity of the hallucinations was paramount, otherwise the evidence was of little worth. However, Gurney's contention was that there was a duality of both mind and sense in operation, so that a purely psychological theory was inadequate, and a physiological perspective

[82] Ibid., I, pp. 70-71, §12.
[83] Ibid., I, p. 79-81, §13. For more on contemporary notions of the unconscious, see Rhodri Hayward, *Resisting History: Religious Transcendence and the Invention of the Unconscious* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), and on multiple personality, Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1984).
[84] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, p. 459, §1.
[85] Ibid., I, p. 460, §1.
[86] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 205.

was also required. To help corroborate this idea, he quoted the neurologist and psychiatrist Jules Baillarger (1809-1890), who in the 1850s said: 'that images sufficiently vivid to be confounded with sensory percepts *have become* sensory percepts.'[87] Others at the time, such as the psychiatrist Henry Maudsley (1835-1918), saw unusual phenomena as malobservation, misinterpretation, or pathological psychology.[88] Gurney contemplated where hallucinations originated, whether in the brain, some physical sensory process, or a combination of the two.[89] While there was a possibility that some 'morbid or abnormal' condition of the outer sensory organs may be the cause of hallucinations, he suggested that a 'purely central initiation', namely the brain, was the most likely.[90] He concluded that hallucinations of the senses could be spontaneously initiated by the brain, and that they were often a pure projection outwards from within the brain.[91] This, of course, did not imply a purely psychical process, as if the mind was regarded purely as residing in the brain, and if the brain was a wholly physiological organ, then the mind may be nothing more than a physical construct. His position was that while some unusual stimulation of the senses corresponding with the lower faculties was possible, hallucinations originated predominantly from the higher faculties and travelled downwards to stimulate the sensory cells. While this may be a purely physiological, and therefore physical process, it allowed for the possibility of an immaterial mind to be the origin of hallucinations. As Janet Oppenheim notes, Gurney was not a dualist, but was unsure as to whether monism would provide the ultimate answer, and posited a *tertium quid* somewhere between mind and matter.[92] This dual nature was echoed by others at the time, such as the philosopher, and American SPR member, Josiah Royce (1855-1916). While he regarded hallucinations as a result of memory disorders, unlike Gurney, his psychological perspective also had an overtly paranormal element, as he considered that percipients were somehow remembering the future.[93] However, McCorristine suggests that the growing strength of dynamic psychiatry and psychology, especially with regards to the concept of double, or split, personalities,

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[87] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 461-464, §2.
[88] Henry Maudsley, *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886), p. 354, as cited in Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 298.
[89] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, p. 464, §3.
[90] Ibid., I, p. 479, §5.
[91] Ibid., I, p. 484, §7.
[92] Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 252-253.
[93] McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 167-168; and Josiah Royce, 'Hallucination of Memory and "Telepathy"', *Mind* 13 (1888), pp. 245, 248.

provided commonplace evidence which countered his paranormal concept of hallucinations.[94] So, while he searched for a physiological explanation for telepathy, Gurney presented a predominantly psychological one, with the nature of consciousness as paramount.

Gurney also presented a number cases which highlighted the significant theoretical concept of rapport, both personal and local.[95] This apparent interconnectedness was observed between individuals, between individuals and places, and sometimes both. This notion of rapport is an example of an idiosyncratic attribute which was often associated with paranormal phenomena, and tempered what was perceived as the inherent capriciousness of the field.[96] Together with other attributes seen throughout psychical research, such as a conducive environment and an innate psychic ability, rapport appeared to work in association with individual consciousness. I therefore suggest that these numerous and varied idiosyncratic paranormal attributes were an important part of paranormal thinking of the time. Such attributes were not always observed and so form an extrinsic element of the mode of doing.

Gurney rejected the idea of a literal physical wraith, or ghost. He proposed two ways in which a theory of wholly psychical impressions could explain the phenomena of collective hallucination. The first was that these were veridical cases where the telepathic impulse from the agent was simultaneously received by all percipients. The second was that a hallucination in one percipient, however caused, found its way to the other percipients by a process of thought-transference, where the first percipient acted like an agent, but was local rather than distant, being in some way 'infectious.'[97] Broad terms Gurney's first theory 'Multiply Directed Telepathic Initiation' and suggests that if applied to cases of phantasms of the dead, a hypothesis of survival is implied.[98] His central thesis was that 'psychical transferences from mind to mind be admitted as *in rerum naturâ*.'[99] He not only considered that telepathy was an intrinsic aspect of nature, but further posited that individual minds should perhaps not be

[94] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 168.
[95] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 212-214, §6.
[96] This validates the notion of 'natural inhibition' created by the rigid environmental settings of experimentation. See Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 362.
[97] Gurney, *Phantasms*, II, pp. 170-171, §1.
[98] Broad, *Lectures*, pp. 224-225.
[99] Gurney, *Phantasms*, II, p. 270, §7.

regarded as entirely solitary entities, but as constituent parts of a collective unity. This implied both an inherent interconnectedness and a universal perspective on the nature of the universe. Owen argues that this collective 'potential unity', presented as a phantasmagorical reality by Gurney, and later by Myers, comes close to the occultist's perception of the supernormal that individual minds can become one in different ways, allowing for abilities such as astral projection (which occultists believe to be a possibility),[100] and suggests some parallel between the ideas of these distinct groups.

Dreams

Gurney saw it as a natural step to move from the internal impressions manifest while awake to those perceived while asleep. He posited that during sleep, any impressions that appeared within a dream did not need to compete with the normal external experiences that usually acted like filters for the mind, and so may be perceived as immediate external experiences, despite them being entirely internal, and thus provided a favourable condition for telepathic phenomena to occur. So, while the phantasm appearing in a dream was an internal perception of the agent rather than the agent existing in reality at the percipient's location, it was nevertheless, for him, significant. However, he suggested that with so many millions of people dreaming every night, there must occur coincidences between what is dreamt by some and what is reality, and so there was a strong argument for the objection of impressions in dreams being used to validate telepathy. To counter this he suggested that dreams which were appropriate to be used as evidence must be of exceptional intensity, whether by repetition, or through unusually extended and vivid recollection of them, and they must also contain some combination of distinct, unexpected, and unusual content.[101] While one may yet consider these requirements as imprecise and difficult to measure, it was the idea of death which provided unusual, but provable, examples. Gurney saw evidence in a number of cases which implied a theory of 'causal connection between event and dream, where the abnormal state of the person dreamt of was regarded as part of the cause.'[102] This reinforced the notion that a heightened psychological state of either the agent, the percipient, or both, could make more

[100] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 173-174.
[101] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 296-303, §1-3.
[102] Ibid., I, pp. 302-303, §3.

readily accessible the usually filtered higher psychical faculties.[103] In the popular culture of the time, dreams had a similar significance to that of death, but also represented the 'blurring of boundaries' between the real and the imaginary, or the rational and the spiritual.[104] There was a growth in the publication of literature about dreams at this time, with occultists particularly focussed on dream phenomena and their interpretation.[105] Psychologists and philosophers were also interested in dreams, but the decline of Romanticism during the nineteenth century meant that the focus moved from creativity to functionality.[106] Thus, we see a general cultural consideration of dreams, as an example of a hidden state of consciousness, applied to specific notions of communication between souls and realms, whether material or immaterial.

Gurney argued that there needed to be some change which occurred within a percipient that allowed the normal threshold of attention to be transcended, and so to allow an impression to take sensory form. This could be as seemingly trivial as the peace and quiet of late evening, or the solitude of sleep. He believed that the ideas and images of the normal waking state acted something like a filter, not allowing through the thoughts unnecessary for ordinary conscious functioning to take place. Further, he referred to examples of 'hypnotic and hystero-epileptic subjects' recognised by contemporary psychology which also allowed the threshold of attention to be reached by affecting some change in the normal waking consciousness.[107] Here we see the now increasingly familiar idea of latent layers of consciousness, which, when exposed, seemed to allow a variety of paranormal phenomena to be observed. These notion of hidden layers of consciousness and higher faculties underpin all the following theories on consciousness and the paranormal, and so form intrinsic parts of

[103] This idea is an example of the transgression of one of Broad's basic limiting principles, namely the limitations on ways of acquiring knowledge, discussed in Chapter 2. See Broad, *Religion*, pp. 11-12.
[104] Coral Ann Howells, 'Canadian Gothic', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 108. For more discussion on dreams of death during the period, see also Hendrika Vande Kemp, 'Psycho-Spiritual Dreams in the Nineteenth Century, Part II: Metaphysics and Immortality', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 22:2 (1994), pp. 97-108.
[105] Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 177-178. For commentary on telepathic dreams, see also Roger Luckhurst, '"Something Tremendous, Something Elemental": On the Ghostly Origins of Psychoanalysis', in *Ghosts: Psychoanalysis Destruction History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Scott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).
[106] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 178. For more contemporary works on dreams, see Henri. F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970).
[107] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 199-202, §4.

the modes of doing and being of the paranormal domain. Gurney defined sensory hallucinations as 'percepts or quasi-percepts which are not originated by anything within the normal range of sense organs and must be *hallucinations*.'[108] This concurs with James' view of hallucinations which was that they had nothing to do with mysticism or the supernormal, suggesting both a physiological and psychological source.[109] McCorristine argues that the emphasis of the physiological theory of apparitions displayed an epistemic connection with the quasi-scientific literature that had existed since the Enlightenment.[110] While this was certainly true, it shouldn't detract from the increasing metaphysical aspect we see in later theories. Gurney described two seemingly polarised theoretical modes of access to the paranormal realm. The first was at times of crisis, such as death, illness, or accident, whereas the second was at times of calmness and serenity, such as in bed, when the usual psychological faculties which operated in a normal waking state, and usually acted as filters to the higher psychical faculties, were temporarily subdued.[111] While these two positions may be considered as fundamentally polarized, their commonality is that both deviate markedly from normal consciousness, which we have seen was considered as enabling paranormal phenomena to occur.

Gurney was certain that there was a psychological element to telepathy, even if it was only at the point of the creation of a sensory form by the percipient, irrespective of the ultimate source. Significant was his belief that his 'telepathic impulse' may have operated simultaneously on various levels, or even below any level, of consciousness.[112] This implied that whatever the nature of the telepathic faculty was, it was usually latent and did not require awareness on behalf of the percipient to be successful. Roger Luckhurst suggests that the concept of telepathy emerged naturally from the developments in energy physics and the contemporary perceptions of the mind in the new psychology of the period.[113] Despite using some metaphors which were related to the physical sciences, what was presented in *Phantasms* stemmed from a physiological and psychological perspective, yet it

[108] Ibid., I, p. 389, §1.
[109] Carrette, *Imagination*, p. 129.
[110] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 119.
[111] For a discussion on how this access could also be induced by drugs, see also Chapter 5 in Partridge, *High Culture*.
[112] Gurney, *Phantasms*, II, p. 73, §4. See also McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 193-194.
[113] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 75.

considered phenomena which had implications for notions of post-mortem survival and the existence of immaterial realms. Gurney tried to avoid explicit discussion of these ontological concepts, but the nature of the evidence presented means that a clear distinction between the normal, the abnormal, and the paranormal could not always be made. Gurney demonstrated the eclectic, scientific, but not physicalist, investigative methodology widely utilized by the SPR. His *tertium quid* approach combined a monistic dual-aspect universal philosophy with ideas of the mind and human consciousness in an attempt to tackle the fundamental questions of nature, and all of these themes form aspects of the paranormal domain.

Frederic Myers - Human Personality

Subliminal Self

No discussion of Myers and *Human Personality* can ignore his concept of the 'subliminal self', originally presented in *Proceedings* from 1892.[114] Hamilton and Broad both note that, for Myers, the subliminal part of human personality was from where 'emerged the insights, the skills, the inspirations, that one associates with genius and the highest creative achievement.'[115] He combined these traits with ostensibly paranormal phenomena, such as mystical visions and telepathy, suggesting that they came from the same subliminal source. He contended that an individual could be trained to develop such skills, and were certainly not 'unhealthy or pathological.'[116] Owen describes his approach as the development of a theory of human personality in which anything that appears supernormal or psychical as being phenomena at the extremes of the spectrum of human potential.[117] Myers' psychological focus was well regarded at the time by the likes of James, who described the main idea as 'a hypothesis of first-rate philosophic importance.'[118]

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[114] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 12, §111. Myers referred to *PSPR* 4 (1887), p. 256. See also 'Human Personality in the light of hypnotic suggestion', *PSPR* 4, (1885), pp. 1-24; and 'Human Personality', *Fortnightly Review* 38 (1885), pp. 637-655.
[115] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 191; and Broad, *Lectures*, p. 336. See also, Kripal, *Impossible*, for an overview of Myers.
[116] Hamilton, *Immortal*, pp. 191-192.
[117] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 174.
[118] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 192; and William James, *Essays in Psychical Research*, ed. by F. W. Burkhard, F. Bowers, and I. K. Skrupskelis (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 200. See also Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 254.

Owen notes that he was influenced by James' own important *Principles of Psychology* (1890),[119] with Luckhurst going as far as to suggest that it was the template for his theory.[120] *Human Personality* deals with what he called 'Disintegrations of Personality', the exposure of different levels of consciousness, which allowed the manifestation of usually latent higher mental faculties perceived as paranormal.

Myers summarised the two main opposing views of the time as the existence of a unifying human soul versus a purely biological entity. The unifying soul was described as a psychic force of unification linking the interconnected minor psychical entities of an organism within one major being, or soul.[121] The physiological interpretation was held by experimental psychologists and mainstream scientists, such as Carpenter and Huxley.[122] Myers stated that purely physical assertions as well as those who blindly believed in the unity of the soul, were both problematic.[123]

His main contention was:

> 'The "conscious Self" of each of us, as we call it – the empirical, the supraliminal Self, as I should prefer to say – does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only so far as regards the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth-life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death.'[124]

Myers delineated between the supraliminal self, or normal waking consciousness, and the subliminal self, or hidden consciousness, together existing as a

[119] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 174.
[120] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 108. Luckhurst notes that Edward W. Cox's *The Mechanism of Man* (London: Longman and Co., 1879) was also an influence. In particular, see Chapter III, 'Of Unconscious Cerebration'.
[121] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 38, §204. Myers often described this as a 'colonial' system.
[122] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 70.
[123] Myers, *HP*., I, p. 11, §109.
[124] Ibid., I, p. 12, §111.

unifying soul.[125] Owen notes that the philosopher and psychologist G. F. Stout (1860-1944) considered Myers' theory of the subliminal self to be as similar to the concept of a 'guardian angel' as it was to contemporary ideas about the mind, which she likens to occultists' notion of a 'Higher Self.'[126] Gauld refutes Stout's idea, as do I, as it suggests two distinct entities rather than one unifying soul, the latter notion clearly implied by Myers.[127] The hidden consciousness Myers described only fully manifested after bodily death, but occasionally became apparent within those of genius, or during other 'disintegrations of personality'. The hidden consciousness opened up the higher, more profound faculties of a soul, which allowed phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, or spirit communication. Ontologically, this presupposed the existence of both a material realm and a spirit world, reflected in all three modes of the paranormal domain. Myers' theory of the subliminal self not only influenced theories about the paranormal but also wider thinking about consciousness. However, some, such as Freud, tried to distance their work from his. Hamilton and James Keeley note that Myers considered Freud to be a latecomer to the field, and may explain his desire to establish his intellectual credentials and present his idea of 'the unconscious' as distinct.[128] Myers suggested that the evidence presented by experimental psychologists increasingly negated the common view of a 'unitary consciousness', and so bolstered his own dual-consciousness theory.[129]

Myers presented the idea of a 'threshold (limen, *Schwelle*) of consciousness', a level above which a sensation or thought must rise before it could be regarded by one's conscious waking life. He extended the use of the word 'subliminal' to mean all that took place beneath that ordinary threshold, and therefore outside the ordinary boundary of waking consciousness.[130] As Hamilton points out, he avoided use of the terms 'unconscious' or 'subconscious', as they could suggest unwanted conceptual implications, such as the requirement for individual awareness of the process.[131]

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[125] Ibid., I, p. 34, §200.
[126] Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 171; and G. F. Stout, 'Mr F. W. H. Myers on 'Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death'', *The Hibbert Journal* 2 (1903), pp. 44-64.
[127] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 295.
[128] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 190. See also James Keeley, 'Subliminal Promptings: psychoanalytic theory and the Society for Psychical Research', *American Imago* 58 (2001), pp. 767-791; and Sigmund Freud, 'A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis', *PSPR* 26 (1912), pp. 312-318.
[129] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 14, §112.
[130] Ibid., I, p. 14, §112; and Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 174.
[131] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 187. He suggests that the derivation of the word 'subliminal' from the Latin word 'limen', meaning threshold, was used by Myers because of his classics training.

Disintegration of Personality

Myers described the different modes of consciousness under which the subliminal faculty could manifest, and thus exhibit supernormal phenomena, as the disintegration of personality. What psychologists of the time called hysteria, or abnormal psychology, Myers viewed as the misinterpretation of the condition whereby not all of the usual part of the spectrum of consciousness associated with normal waking state was available.[132] Even amongst physicians of the time there was a divergence of opinion with regards to perceived insanity or brain disease, with one group positing a physiological approach, and the other a psychological one.[133] Myers viewed the disintegration of personality as the dilution of the supremacy of the supraliminal consciousness, allowing elements of the subliminal to come to the fore by breaking down the filters which usually ensured normality.[134] The exposure of the usually latent layers of consciousness were central not only to Myers' theory, but, as we have seen, also to Gurney's, and, as we will come to see, also to those of James and Bergson, and so are reflected in the mode of doing of the paranormal domain.

i. Genius

An important example of disintegration of personality for Myers was the concept of genius, which he regarded as being an intensification of the conscious spectrum, consisting of a rapid ascent of subliminal faculty into supraliminal consciousness. This contrasted with hysteria, which he saw as the descent and disappearance of faculty which should be supraliminal into depths from which it could not willingly re-emerge.[135] He did not view the subliminal as somehow better than the supraliminal, only that occasional access to it allowed certain persons to utilize faculties usually hidden.[136] As a poet himself, Myers' notion of genius was perhaps similar to the Romantic concept of spiritual insight, rather than akin to a modern notion of intelligence. The word was applied only to poets in the eighteenth century, but

[132] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 62, §231; Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 191; Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 175.
[133] Andrew Scull, 'Psychiatry in the Victorian Era', in *Madhouses, Mad-Doctors, and Madmen: The Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era*, ed. by Andrew Scull (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 21-22.
[134] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 35, §202; and I, pp. 38-39, §208; and Blum, *Hunters*, p.211.
[135] Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 19-20, §119; I, p. 66, §241; and I, p. 71, §302.
[136] Ibid., I, pp. 71-72, §303.

became increasingly used to describe eminent natural philosophers and scientists in the nineteenth.[137] Thus, a potentially spiritual component to his theory was always apparent.

ii. Sleep

Hamilton suggests that Myers foreshadowed the work of Jung and Freud because of the manner in which he described sleep, and the dreams experienced within it, as worthy of investigation, rather than just as the psychological by-product of daily life.[138] Given his consideration of the imaginative power of sleep, and not just its potential for making sense of the complexity of daily activity, this argument would appear to hold true. Myers regarded sleep as the most common way to maintain an adequate presence in the spiritual environment.[139] McCorristine notes that the two planes of existence, the earthly and the cosmic, parallel his conception of the supraliminal and subliminal selves.[140] This is clearly evident from the mixture of scientific methodology and cosmology promoted by Myers throughout his writings on the paranormal. Using the electromagnetic spectrum as an analogy, he proposed that sleep allowed a faint view of those parts of the conscious spectrum not usually visible, both the 'earlier animal condition' below the red end, and the higher mental faculties beyond the violet. The infrared primitive state consisted of organic faculties and sensations which no longer required constant monitoring and maintenance by the waking state, while the supernormal ultraviolet state manifested phenomena which linked to the spiritual world, such as telepathy.[141] Myers described sleep as a type of 'primitive magma' or 'mother-solution', out of which various phases of personality could crystallise, such as somnambulism, trance, and ecstasy.[142] These terms reinforced his scientific thinking, and were indicative of how fundamental to the human personality he regarded sleep. He noted that the transitional states between

[137] Simon Schaffer, 'Genius in Romantic natural philosophy', in *Romanticism and the Sciences*, ed. by Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 82. Christopher Partridge discusses the links between science, Romanticism, and the concept of genius a during this period, with reference to the chemist Humphry Davy (1778-1829), who described the entity in his visions as "the Genius", in Partridge, *High Culture*, p. 65.
[138] Hamilton, *Longings*, p. 276.
[139] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 121, §400.
[140] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 184.
[141] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 122, §402.
[142] Ibid., I, p. 21, §121.

waking and sleeping had often been shown to be periods associated with increased visualisation in individuals, and thus suggested a hidden faculty. These were the hypnagogic state, moving from wakefulness to sleep, and the hypnopompic state, the period transitioning from sleep to being awake, the latter phrase coined by Myers.[143] Others at the time, such as Carpenter, and earlier, Henry Holland (1788-1875), saw the transition between sleep and wakefulness differently, being an extended incremental series of states.[144]

iii. Hypnotism

Myers stated that the legitimacy of his theory of the 'subliminal self' was further increased by experimentation with hypnotism.[145] He conducted tests in hypnotism with the psychologists Janet and Richet, with Janet positing similar views about multiple layers of consciousness, while Richet preferred a 'nervous vibration.'[146] There were also theoretical differences between Charcot at Salpêtrière, and Bernheim at Nancy, at this time, especially regarding the stages of hypnosis. Charcot posited three stages as lethargy, catalepsy, and somnambulism. Hamilton notes that Myers' thinking paralleled the 'less pathological and more patient-centred Nancy approach.'[147] I concur, given that Myers recognised the establishment of hypnosis in the medical profession, but felt that its more profound potential influences on human personality had been scarcely explored.[148] Myers described 'suggestion', the main method of inducing hypnosis, as attempting to create 'co-operations' between the subliminal and supraliminal which sometimes occurred spontaneously at times of genius or inspiration.[149] Kripal notes that Myers fused ideas about hypnotism, telepathy, nature, and spirituality into an almost mystical cosmology,[150] which we see was prevalent throughout his works, even when he was promoting a scientific

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[143] Ibid., I, pp. 124-125, §405. Myers attributes 'hypnagogic' to Alfred Maury, p. xvii.
[144] Helen Groth and Natalya Lusty, *Dreams and Modernity: A Cultural History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 45.
[145] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 22, §122.
[146] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, pp. 102-103. See also, Gauld, *Hypnotism*, pp. 393-400.
[147] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 154. See also, Kripal. *Impossible*, p. 61.
[148] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 22, §122. For more discussion on hypnosis as practiced at the Salpêtrière and Nancy hospitals. see Judith Pintar and Steven Jay Lynn, *Hypnosis: A Brief History* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), pp. 76-96. For a more general history of hypnosis, see Robin Waterfield, *Hidden Depths: A History of Hypnosis* (London: Macmillan, 2002).
[149] Ibid., I, p. 90, §314.
[150] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 72.

methodology. Unsurprisingly, these themes of eclecticism and spirituality are found throughout the paranormal domain.

iv. Sensory Automatism

While Myers believed that the audible and visible phenomena of sensory automatism, such as hallucinations, were created internally, he believed that they were 'ejected into apparent externality', and could transcend even the inspirations of genius in terms of how they explained the subliminal faculty. Those perceptions which conveyed messages from outside of one's own subliminal self enhanced the theory into something broader and more profound than a purely psychological one. These were occurrences of telepathy which took place, not during dreams or hypnosis, but in the waking state.[151] When spontaneous, Myers viewed these as an indication of a convergence of forces operating normally between everyone, an ultimate continuity of existence, 'a supersensory faculty…within us which is not generated from material elements…but which may survive and operate uninjured in a spiritual world.'[152] This demonstrates a fundamental universality and interconnectedness in Myers' cosmology, and again suggests that he embraced both the material and the immaterial, higher laws and faculties, the existence of a spiritual realm, and the possibility of human survival in that realm. Kripal also notes this multi-faceted approach, and argues that this perspective was a manifestation of his promotion of both a physical and a spiritual evolution.[153] It has been shown that these themes were also evident within the writings of the other psychical researchers and therefore are all important elements of the paranormal domain. Like Gurney, Myers noted that apparitions mainly occurred at times of crisis for the agent, but also 'coincident with the coma which frequently precedes death, or with the moment of death itself.'[154] That the portion of the personality which exhibited supernormal powers continued to do so after bodily death suggested an indisputable relationship between the subliminal and the surviving self, according to Myers. He considered the supraliminal part of a personality as just one aspect of the whole complex of human faculty which was

[151] Myers, *H*P, I, p. 24, §123. See also Kripal, *Impossible*, pp. 61, 80.
[152] Myers, *H*P, I, p. 24, §123.
[153] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 70.
[154] Myers, *H*P, I, p. 25, §123.

indicative of a more extensive general power, and that this existed entirely within the metherial realm.[155]

Myers' key objective was to prove the survival of human personality after bodily death and the possibility for still incarnate persons to communicate with these discarnate spirits. To this end, he explored telepathic communications between those who were still alive, and between those still alive and those who were deceased, from which he inferred the existence of a human soul and of a spirit realm within which they operated.[156] Kripal sees Myers' theories as beginning with the analysis of the normal, moving into a discussion of the supernormal, and concluding with the consideration of the empirical evidence for post-mortem survival.[157] I concur with this broad summary, but I would add that we have seen that Myers interlaced discussion of the mystical, metaphysical, and cosmological throughout, even when analysing the normal or promoting a scientific methodology. Similar to this, Turner suggests that he was attempting to resolve his own spiritual problems, and that his theories combined three important ideas of his from the 1880s. In dismissing a purely physiological basis for the nature of humanity, he promoted the independence of psychical from physical existence, the presence of streams of consciousness, and the concept of a human soul.[158] He placed these conclusions within a cosmic, universal, and interconnected framework. He spoke of a place deep within the spiritual environment wherein lay 'the cosmic secret', and that he imagined the origin of life to lie in the spiritual plane.[159] Myers stated that telepathy indefinitely extended the range of an 'unembodied spirit's potential presence', and suggested that in the interaction between the spiritual and material environments, the spiritual was left undiminished, implying its superiority over the material realm. He also touched upon the notion of a World-Soul, perennially conscious of all its past and future, which could be accessed by individual souls as they entered into deeper consciousness. Thus, for Myers, the different levels of human consciousness explained not only humanity's physical existence, but also elements of its psychical life.

[155] Ibid., I, pp. 222-223, §601-602.
[156] Ibid., I, pp. 151-152, §431.
[157] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 61.
[158] Turner, *Between*, p. 124.
[159] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 38, §204.

Myers employed a necessarily broad scientific approach, as he didn't believe that psychological phenomena could be entirely explained from a purely physiological perspective,[160] and so would suggest a perception that ostensibly paranormal phenomena were incompatible with scientific materialism.[161] Oppenheim suggests that both Gurney and Myers attempted to place psychical research firmly within the established academic sphere which already housed experimental and theoretical psychology.[162] As Luckhurst states, the pair had transformed psychical research into a 'dynamic psychology' by the mid-1880s.[163] That said, Myers' writings didn't always adhere to the empirical approach he advocated, especially when discussing cosmic matters.[164] This perhaps suggests his aspiration was for a wider scientific acceptance rather than just a mainstream psychological one, and it may also suggest a wider notion of science itself. As Lodge said of Myers, 'the word science meant something much larger, much more comprehensive: it meant a science and a philosophy and a religion combined… an attempt at a true cosmic scheme.'[165] He believed that the implications of his speculations affected 'every faculty, every hope and aim of man', whether from an ethical, philosophical, or religious perspective. He stated that religion and science were not truly separable or independent, but to investigate the truth of departed souls, it was to them that one must listen.[166] He fully accepted the strangeness of the phenomena and the consequences of the evidence, and conceded that something such as 'occult wisdom' may exist, being 'dominion over the secrets of nature ascetically or magically acquired', but stated that any such claims remained unproven.[167] The eclectic, yet systematic nature of the investigation of consciousness in *Human Personality* provided the search for evidence of an afterlife both psychological and spiritual legitimacy, and significantly influenced subsequent psychical researchers and Spiritualists.[168] Myers promoted a scientific yet eclectic investigative methodology, combining cohesive ideas about the mind and human consciousness, with less cogent notions concerning cosmology and spirituality in an

[160] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 192.
[161] Beloff, *Existence*, p. 214.
[162] Oppenheim, *Other*, p. 249.
[163] Luckhurst, *Telepathy*, p. 107.
[164] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 187.
[165] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 186; and Oliver Lodge, 'In Memory of F. W. H. Myers', *PSPR* 17 (1901-1903), p. 7.
[166] Myers, *HP*, I, pp. 32-33, §128.
[167] Ibid., II, p. 277, §988.
[168] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 183.

attempt to prove the survival of human existence after bodily death, the existence of a soul, and of a spirit realm, all of which manifest as characteristics across all three modes of the paranormal domain.

William James - Consciousness beyond the Margin

James dismissed the idea of unconscious mental states in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), suggesting that rather than perception and reasoning arising from an unconscious faculty, there was in fact consciousness of the actions in question but that it was distinct from the primary cerebration which took place in an individual.[169] James posited the notion that all thoughts were part of a 'personal consciousness', with personality a stream of thoughts, and that the absolute isolation of these thoughts, and therefore of each personal consciousness, should be regarded as a law within psychology.[170] Like Janet, he believed in the validity of secondary streams of consciousness, but that they occurred only rarely, and were examples of aberrant psychology, and were never as fully developed as a primary consciousness.[171] As his theories of consciousness developed, James augmented his psychological theories by investigating and studying psychic phenomena. He did not believe in the survival of the human soul after bodily death or an afterlife, and consequently, he did not believe that human beings in this world could contact surviving souls in the next.[172] Nevertheless, James learned to appreciate Spiritualism as worthy of serious intellectual engagement as the investigation of its phenomena allowed him to employ his *tertium quid* methodology, exhibiting sympathy for both religious and scientific ideals. By intertwining natural psychological phenomena with supernatural religious phenomena, he developed a concept of 'consciousness beyond the margin.'[173] This notion of consciousness split into two parts came about from a combination of investigations into trance mediums during the late 1880s, incorporating research into 'submerged consciousness' undertaken by Gurney, Binet, Bernheim, and Janet.[174]

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[169] James, *Principles*, 2, pp. 111-114.
[170] Ibid., 1, pp. 224-229.
[171] Gauld, *Founders*, p. 286.
[172] Knapp, *James*, pp. 4, 18.
[173] Eugene Taylor, *William James on Consciousness beyond the Margin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 67.
[174] Carrette, *Imagination*, p. 35.

This theory encompassed both normal waking states as well as all other aspects of hidden mental life, and was a development of James' simpler polarized conscious-unconscious theory of the mind presented in his *Principles* (1890).[175] His 'consciousness beyond the margin' was a metaphysical hypothesis, where a hidden self resided, both naturally and within altered mental states. He felt that this 'subliminal self' could at any time interrupt the ordinary self, allowing for the appearance of forgotten memories, supressed ideas, or perhaps ostensibly paranormal phenomena. This notion had clear parallels to Myers' theory of the subliminal self, certainly in construction, if not in any implication of the survival hypothesis.

James found evidence in psychical research pointing to something more than an individualist theory of the conscious, but was not prepared to dismiss his avowed pluralism.[176] Krister Knapp suggests that the supposed spirit-returns of Gurney, Sidgwick, Myers, and Richard Hodgson, following their deaths, motivated James to develop an original theory of immortality.[177] However, McCorristine notes that he found much of the evidence unconvincing.[178] Having rejected the idea of an individual soul, he expanded his concept of consciousness into a new 'cosmic' or 'sublime reservoir theory' of consciousness. This cosmic reservoir of consciousness was accessible by individuals in either a normal or some form of trance state, with all living things having an essence that eventually unites with an ultimate essence or consciousness, but without the inherent aspects of theological monism. James' sublime reservoir theory not only attempted to explain spirit-return, but also aspects of the mind-body problem.[179] His theory of immortality viewed consciousness

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[175] Knapp, *James*, pp. 222-223.
[176] James' pluralistic universe and radical empiricism allowed for occurrences which may never be actually experienced or realized. He contrasted the 'all-form' of monism with the 'each form' of pluralism, with the latter more intimately divine than the former, in William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), pp. 44-45. James' metaphysics and notions of religious experience were influenced by the American Philosopher Benjamin Paul Blood (1832-1919), discussed in Christopher Partridge, *High Culture*, pp. 71-84; see also Christopher A. P. Nelson, 'The Artificial Mystic State of Mind: WJ, Benjamin Paul Blood, and the Nitrous-Oxide Variety of Religious Experience', *Streams of William James* 4 (2002), pp. 23-31.
[177] Knapp, *James*, pp. 247-248. The series of interlinked communications apparently received through different mediums is commonly known as the 'Cross-Correspondences'. For further detail, see: Eleanor Sidgwick, 'The SPR: A short account of its history and work on the occasion of the Society's jubilee in 1932', *PSPR* 41 (1932), p. 26; Oppenheim, *Other*, pp. 133-134; Archie E. Roy, *The Archives of the Mind* (Essex: SNU Publications, 1996), pp. 100-125; Christopher M. Moreman, 'A re-examination of the possibility of chance coincidence as an alternative explanation for mediumistic communication in the cross-correspondences', *JSPR* 67 (2003), pp. 225-242; David Fontana, *Is there an Afterlife? A comprehensive overview of the evidence* (Hampshire: O Books, 2005), pp. 175-185.
[178] McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 137.
[179] Knapp, *James*, pp. 249-250.

supernaturally, but was couched in naturalistic terms. It did not imply that spirit communications were entirely psychological phenomena, nor it did it suggest the soul survived bodily death, but something in between – part psychological and part metaphysical.[180] Thus, supposed spirit communication was explained by the notion of multiple wills, each as a result of an individual consciousness accessing the ultimate essence or consciousness, which he felt remained consistent with his metaphysical pluralism, epistemological pragmatism, and empirical views about consciousness.[181] This combination of psychical research, scientific psychology, ideas about the nature of the brain and consciousness, philosophy, and metaphysical cosmology, while distinct from Myers' subliminal self, clearly shared many aspects with it. Jeremy Carrette, in considering James through his association within religion, argues that the metaphysics that was prevalent throughout his life and works was a manifestation of what he terms his concept of a 'relational universe.'[182] This interconnected physical, metaphysical, and religious perspective of nature is clearly evident in the way in which James embraced both the material and the immaterial realms. Carrette further suggests that James later abandoned consciousness as a concept in favour of this all-encompassing relational universe, and that his metaphysical zeal was due to a combination of his scientific method and his philosophical aspirations.[183] Given his lifelong fascination with both, this notion would appear to hold true. While James continually tried to maintain his pluralism, the idea of an ultimate essence or consciousness, inherent in the sublime reservoir theory, rather resembles a universal monistic absolute reality, a point possibly first posited by Julius Bixler.[184] We have seen a commonality of the scientific, philosophical, and metaphysical aspects of James' approach to the consideration of consciousness and the paranormal with the other psychical researchers examined here, and so, unsurprisingly, these concepts of eclecticism, universality, interconnectedness, inclusivity of both the material and

[180] Ibid., p. 251.
[181] Ibid., pp. 265, 268-269.
[182] Carrette, *Imagination*, pp. 4, 7, 169. For more on James and religion see also Emma Sutton, 'Marcus Aurelius, William James and the "Science of Religions"', in *William James Studies* 4, (2009), pp. 70-89.
[183] Carrette, *Imagination*, pp. 22-23.
[184] Julius Bixler, *Religion in the Philosophy of William James* (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1926), p. 26-27, 147-154. See also Michael R. Slater, 'James's Critique of Monistic Idealism in *A Pluralistic Universe'*, in *William James and the Transatlantic Conversation: Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by Martin Halliwell and Joel D. S. Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Lodge also refers to James as an empirical idealist in a monist tradition, in *Life*, p. 6.

immaterial realms, the promotion of a scientific method, and hidden layers of consciousness are all reflected in the characteristics of the paranormal domain.

Henri Bergson - Filter Theory

In *Matter and Memory* (1896), Bergson considered the problem of dualism and the nature of the union of the soul and body. He regarded matter and spirit as clearly distinct yet inextricably intertwined.[185] Like all the other thinkers on the paranormal discussed in this thesis, he contended that the opposing doctrines of materialism and idealism were both inadequate individual philosophies. For him, pure materialism was repudiated as perception could not be completely explained by operations of the brain, and extreme idealism challenged as matter was seen to extend everywhere in all directions. Untangling the interaction between the two, he said: 'And against these two doctrines we invoke the same testimony, that of consciousness…'[186] By considering the extremes of perception and memory, he described a mechanism whereby different levels of consciousness operated on a subjective basis, either making sense of actual physical observations or invoking memories which could not be held solely in the physical brain.[187] These ideas appear to be the beginnings of his important 'filter theory', published in 1932, but developed over many years prior to this.[188] Broad later progressed this thesis in *The Mind and its Place in Nature* (1937),[189] and this was subsequently advanced by Aldous Huxley in *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (1956),[190] both highlighting the importance of the

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[185] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Paul, Nancy Margaret, and Palmer, W. Scott (London: George Allen & Company, 1896), pp. 234-235. For a recent general discussion of Bergson's works, see Guerlac, *Thinking*. For more on the interplay between science and the philosophy of Bergson, see Jimena Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson and the Debate That Changed Our Understanding of Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).
[186] Ibid., p. 236.
[187] Ibid., p. 237, 304. See Bergson's more detailed consideration of consciousness in *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by Pogson, F. L. (London: George Allen & Company, 1889; repr. 1913).
[188] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), being a translation of *Les Deux Sources De La Morale Et De La Religion* (1932).
[189] Broad, *Mind*, p. 23.
[190] Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (London: Harper Collins, 2009), pp. 10-11. For a more recent discussion on Bergson's filter theory, see also Hein van Dongen, 'A Machine for the Making of Gods: On the Meaning of "Filters" in Henri Bergson', in *Wild Beasts of the Philosophical Desert: Philosophers on Telepathy and Other Exceptional Experiences*, ed. by Hein van Dongen, Hans Gerding, and Rico Sneller (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 92-109.

different states of consciousness and the variety of phenomena associated with them, which appear as the hidden and higher faculties in the paranormal domain. Bergson described these different levels of consciousness as 'different planes', being infinite in number, and manifest depending on what was required by an individual at any point in time.[191] He distinguished between those planes which brought an entity closer to action as being towards one end of a spectrum, with those detached from action, more associated with memory and imagination, being towards the opposite end of it.[192] He suggested that 'lower mental life', or those activities which related to routine or everyday activities, were operated by those planes of consciousness towards the first end of the scale, providing a certain 'intellectual equilibrium.'[193] Bergson speculated that when one was required to undertake more complex intellectual work, such as hypothesising, or considering abstract notions, then this equilibrium was disturbed, with the higher mental faculties utilizing planes of consciousness towards the other end.[194] As we have seen in the other theories of consciousness, he contended that this intellectual equilibrium could also be disrupted by sleep, dreams, insanity, drug intoxication, and the like, and produced a sort of 'psychic vertigo.'[195] For Bergson, the existence of these different planes of consciousness created a progressive link between the physical body and the mental soul.[196] This appreciation of both the material and the immaterial aspects of an individual has parallels to James' dual scientific and metaphysical perspective.[197]

By the time Bergson published his *Creative Evolution* (1907), his infinite number of different planes of consciousness coalesced into two main divisions. Consciousness was now composed of intellect, which was charged with matter, and instinct, similarly charged with life.[198] Here, intellect tended towards the material and commonplace, while instinct tended towards the immaterial and extraordinary. This

[191] Bergson, *Matter*, p. 222.
[192] Ibid., p. 223.
[193] Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, Ontology, Ethics* (London: Continuum Press, 2003), p. 56.
[194] Bergson, *Matter*, pp. 226-227.
[195] Ibid., pp. 227-229; and Lawlor, *Bergsonism*, p. 89.
[196] Bergson, *Matter*, p. 293.
[197] For more on comparisons between James and Bergson, see Frédéric Worms, 'James and Bergson: Reciprocal Readings', in David G. Schultenover, ed., *The Reception of Pragmatism in France and the Rise of Roman Catholic Modernism* (Washington: Catholic University Press of America, 2009), pp. 76-92.
[198] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Mitchell, Arthur (London: Macmillan & Company, 1907; repr. 1954), pp. 187-188.

was a further development of his 'filter' theory, which presumed a mundane intellectual equilibrium until something disrupted it, enabling higher mental faculties, such as telepathy, to manifest. Bergson described the relationship between brain and consciousness as having a solidarity and interdependence, but not parallelism; the greater the complexity of possible actions, the more the consciousness outgrew its physical host.[199] He believed in the absolute reality of a person and his ultimate independence of matter, but science showed that there was an interdependence between conscious life and cerebral activity.[200] This suggests that Bergson held a belief in a survival hypothesis with the existence of a spiritual realm, a point also noted by Robert C. Grogin,[201] but that until bodily death, the life of an individual was a combination of the material and the immaterial, notions found amongst other psychical researchers.

In discussing perception and consciousness in his inaugural SPR presidential address of 1913, Bergson presented what was in essence his 'filter' theory. He suggested that if a mind was only connected to a body by a part of itself, the other part may be able to communicate with corresponding parts of other minds, whether incarnate or discarnate. He stated that our cerebral mechanism did not usually allow through this intercommunication to our consciousness, but when the inhibiting mechanism, or filter, was temporarily not working, these communications manifested in normal consciousness as veridical hallucinations or telepathy.[202] Bergson also believed that the more we became accustomed to the idea of consciousness overflowing the organism, the more natural we would find it to suppose that the soul survived the body: 'If the facts suggest that the mental life is more than just the cerebral life, survival becomes entirely probable.'[203]

Frank Podmore - Sceptic

Podmore also attempted to develop some psychological theories, although Hamilton suggests that rather than speculating, he saw his role as to 'examine anomalous

[199] Ibid., p. 190.
[200] Ibid., p. 283.
[201] Robert C. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France: 1900-1914* (Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1988), p. 57.
[202] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, p. 78; and Grogin, *Bergsonian*, p. 57.
[203] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, pp. 78-79.

phenomena without preconception or bias.'[204] His view was that contemporary physiological knowledge made it unlikely that any known sense-organ, or some unknown one, was able to register what he called 'telepathic stimuli.'[205] He largely dismissed any mesmeric theory of a fluid, and also any notions of radiant nerve-energy, although he admitted that nerve processes were not very well understood, but were unlikely to be able to cope with both 'action at a distance' phenomena and human selectability of stimuli. Podmore noted that when an agent, or percipient, or both, had been asleep, or entranced, strikingly successful phenomena were often observed. This provided him with a clue that there may be some close connection between thought-transference and the subliminal consciousness, such as is manifest in hypnosis, dreams, spontaneous trance, and automatism, and has parallels with the other theories explored above. Podmore questioned whether the faculty of telepathy was just the germ or spark of 'a more splendid faculty', or perhaps the last remains of a vestigial power stunted through disuse. He suggested that the consciousness which lay below the threshold in which telepathy appeared to operate, may have been an early stage of the consciousness of an individual, or may even have been an earlier stage in the history of the human race. Podmore speculated that the subliminal consciousness became both the receptacle for the ideas and sensations continually being crowded out because of the limits of our working consciousness, but also of the faculties not required in normal waking life, such as telepathy.[206] He contended that telepathy did not appear to depend on any material conditions, and was constantly associated with phenomena such as clairvoyance, retrocognition, prevision, all supernormal faculties with no physical explanation. For Podmore, this implied that telepathy had no adherence to terrestrial laws, but supernormal immaterial ones.[207] This theoretical speculation had similarities to both Myers' subliminal self and Bergson's filter theory, but is also interesting because it shows that Podmore was not averse to the idea of an immaterial world, if not necessarily a spiritual one, but there were certainly other theoretical differences between Myers and Podmore.[208] He appeared to accept the possibility of an immaterial realm as an inherent part of the

[204] Hamilton, *Longings*, p. 259.
[205] Frank Podmore, *Apparitions and Thought-Transference: An Examination of the Evidence for Telepathy* (London: Walter Scott, 1894), p. 391.
[206] Ibid., pp. 391-392. See also, McCorristine, *Spectres*, pp. 174-175.
[207] Ibid., pp. 393-394.
[208] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 173. See also McCorristine, *Spectres*, p. 172.

universal laws of nature but not any consequent implication of human survival and the notion of a soul.

Despite critically questioning many aspects of the paranormal, Podmore was a strong advocate of the validity of telepathic phenomena. He suggested that a simple sensation or idea may be transferred from one mind to another, in a normal state, or in a hypnotic trance. Podmore also mentioned the notion of 'telepathic sensitiveness', some aptitude for telepathy which allowed certain individuals access to the higher faculty more often and to a greater extent than others.[209] Other psychical researchers also saw telepathy as a central paranormal phenomenon but used the perceived veracity of the faculty to posit a survival hypothesis, like Myers. Podmore, however, used his belief in the truth of telepathy to help explain broader aspects of the field, without admitting to the possibility of continued human existence after physical death.[210] Podmore's subsequent writings on the field of psychical research were largely reworkings of the ideas presented here, with little or no further theoretical development, but perhaps a softening of his stance towards the survival hypothesis.[211]

I have demonstrated here that the main theoretical psychological considerations of Barrett, Gurney, Myers, James, Bergson, and Podmore, with respect to paranormal phenomena, concerned the nature of human consciousness. It was believed that deviations from what was regarded as normal states of consciousness, whether via trance, sleep, or some other disintegration of personality, enabled certain thresholds of perception and awareness to be transgressed, considered variously as a limen, a margin, or a filter. While these ideas clearly concern the exposure of hidden mental faculties and layers of consciousness, a key scientifically methodological characteristic of the mode of doing of the paranormal domain, these were intermingled with philosophical and a spiritual notions, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, and so impact the others modes of thinking and being.

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[209] Podmore, *Apparitions*, pp. 371-372.
[210] Ibid., pp. 372-373.
[211] For a complete review of Podmore's subsequent writings on the subject, see his *Studies in Psychical Research; Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1902); *Naturalisation of the Supernatural* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908); *Mesmerism and Christian Science: A Short History of Mental Healing* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Company, 1909); *Telepathic Hallucinations: The New View of Ghosts* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1909); and *The Newer Spiritualism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911).

Concluding Remarks

The SPR utilized a scientific methodology in its investigations of paranormal phenomena, but it was the new field of psychology which provided much of the intellectual framework, language, and often the personnel who undertook this research and presented early psychical theories, and so is essential in an exploration of the field. The importance of the mind-body problem was critical not only for the emergence of the science of psychology, but also for its consideration of materiality and immateriality so important to psychical researchers. This was especially true of Spinoza's monistic dual-aspect theory which had parallels with their *tertium quid* approach. Thus, this chapter has tackled some fundamental considerations of early theories of the paranormal and the close interaction that took place between psychologists, physical scientists, and psychical researchers. The science of psychology, emerging from the already well established academic fields of physiology and philosophy, quickly developed into a cohesive intellectual field in the final years of the nineteenth century. Exploring the nature of existence inevitably led to the study of the mind and its interaction with the physical body. Philosophers, physicians, psychologists, and even physical scientists explored individual case studies and undertook psychological experiments in an attempt to distinguish between the normal, abnormal, and paranormal. What transpired was a focus on the mechanism of consciousness, and whether those exhibiting unusual psychological phenomena possessed a single consciousness behaving aberrantly, or multiple streams of consciousness, manifest and behaving differently at various times. Questions arose as to whether the apparent multiple layers of consciousness, which most of the psychological commentators of the time believed existed to some degree, also constituted multiple distinct personalities, and to what extent these subordinate streams of consciousness were known to the primary personality. It was at this juncture that the main contemporary theories of the mind diverged, with some, such as Richet, insisting on the concept of an unconsciousness intelligence, or brain automation, and others, such as James, claiming that no cerebrations were unconscious, merely distinct from the primary personality. Many of the psychological case studies investigated and the experiments undertaken also showed evidence of seemingly paranormal phenomena, such as thought transference and clairvoyance, and

some scientists explored these areas explicitly, often inducing trance states using hypnotism.

A high proportion of the important psychologists and physicians of the time were involved in investigations, experimentation, and theorizing about the nature of the mind, and many of those also demonstrated a keen interest in unusual psychological and psychical phenomena. In fact, thinkers such as James, Richet, and Bergson would become presidents of the SPR, which also acted as a focal point for the reporting of such phenomena. Other scholars, such as Gurney, proved to be an erudite driving force behind its varied activities. Other academics and scientists, who either through personal acquaintance or membership of the SPR, or both, were well versed in, or actual participants in the psychological, scientific, and psychical endeavours of the time, also became early presidents of the SPR. This cross-pollination of individuals meant that the emerging science of psychology certainly influenced early psychical research, but much of this research also shaped the development of a number of psychological fields. Hamilton notes that the psychological theories of Myers influenced not only James, but also Flournoy, Freud, and Jung.[212] Myers himself noted that over the last two decades of the nineteenth century the field of psychology moved on from dismissing any paranormal phenomena as not warranting investigation to considering them as evidence for possible abnormal psychology. While still rejecting a spiritual or psychical source for 'quasi-supernormal phenomena', eminent psychologists such as Flournoy would not previously have considered them as valuable material for research, but became much more willing to do so.[213] Stemming from their belief in one universal truth, each of these thinkers, in their own way, embraced both the material and the immaterial, with an inherent interconnectedness that allowed for telepathic communication within realms, but also across realms, suggesting the possibly of human survival after bodily death. In order to investigate telepathy and other ostensibly paranormal phenomena, these researchers employed a broad and eclectic scientific methodology to further their understanding of human consciousness and the hidden mental faculties that were sometimes exposed through natural or induced altered psychological states. Therefore, this chapter has corroborated aspects of my first key argument, the perception that

[212] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 4.
[213] Myers, *HP*, II, p. 130, §834-835. Myers cites Flournoy's *Des Indes à la planète Mars: Etude sur un cas de Somnambulisme avec Glossalie* (1900).

science alone was an inadequate intellectual tool with which to answer the fundamental questions of nature. It has also confirmed the core of my second key argument, that an alternative intellectual approach was required, that of the paranormal domain. Significantly, the key characteristics of the psychological theories considered in this chapter bring together very nearly all of the elements of the paranormal domain presented in the following chapter, therefore validating my third key argument.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusions

Summary of Themes

The approach to this thesis has been to explore the complex cultural themes, the interplay between intellectual domains, and the individual motivations and ideas of the early psychical researchers in the late-Victorian period and early-twentieth century. Having introduced some context around the Society for Psychical Research and the existing scholarship of the field in Part I, I have used a two-dimensional culturo-historic analytical framework, in Parts II and II, focussing on religious and scientific themes as macro components, and the cultural and specific influences on individual psychical researchers and their theories of the paranormal as micro components. In this way I have been able to move from general themes to specific themes in the presentation of the key arguments of this thesis, which has allowed both a significant breadth and also depth of analysis. What has emerged is a clear sense of the fertile intellectual culture of the period, and some appreciation for the inherent tensions between what was considered acceptable and unacceptable. This questioning environment of the period, intellectually challenging all existing domains from numerous perspectives, enabled the formation of the SPR, which operated primarily at these conflicting boundaries, and shaped the early thinking about paranormal phenomena. This paranormal domain was regarded by the society's membership as a potential means of unification which could be used to bring more closely together the existing domains of philosophy, science, and religion. Some *tertium quid* approach to help answer the most important questions about nature and humanity's place within it was deemed necessary, as each of these well-established fields was regarded as inadequate on its own. The investigation of paranormal phenomena provided clues for some of the researchers as to the possibility of human survival after bodily death and the existence of an immaterial spiritual realm where these souls might reside. While not their only concern, the survival hypothesis was probably their overriding one.

In Chapter 1, I presented some history and context around the SPR, and introduced some of its members, activities, and aims. I showed that its formation and

its early members' thinking about paranormal phenomena developed during a rapidly changing society. For some, their personal intellectual quests to better understand nature and humanity's place within it was bolstered by the cultural developments within science and religion. Like so many individuals, whether Spiritualist or Theosophist, the members of the SPR also found science and religion alone insufficient to answer their questions. What they found was that their early interest in ghost hunting and research into Spiritualism, which led to the formation of more organised societies, culminating with the SPR, provided an alternative means by which to approach their grand intellectual challenges. Scientific methodology was employed, but now in the study of paranormal phenomena, rejected as unnecessary by those of faith and as impossible by those of orthodox science, and is seen in the methodological characteristics of the paranormal domain. It remains unavoidable that these endeavours were only possible because of the financial and intellectual independence allowed by the elite cultural, social, and intellectual echelons within which many of the early SPR membership operated.

In Chapter 2, which discusses the key existing scholarship relevant to the field, I showed how this thesis sits squarely within the scholarly frameworks of Antoine Faivre, Egil Asprem, Kocku von Stuckrad, and Charles D. Broad. Faivre's 'components of esotericism' underpin the paranormal domain as an academic consideration,[1] with many points of congruence highlighted throughout my analysis. I discussed how Asprem's three intellectual problem areas, or dimensions, related to the notion of disenchantment within society, the social, the worldview, and the epistemic,[2] have parallels to my own analytical framework. The broad cultural themes of science and religion are analogous to the social dimension. The impacts of these on the SPR and its members can be considered in a similar manner to the worldview dimension. Lastly, the activities, methodologies, and writings of the early psychical researchers reflect aspects of the epistemic dimension. I demonstrated that the paranormal field of discourse investigated in this thesis can be considered as a subset of Stuckrad's 'esoteric field of discourse', especially when combined with his notion of the 'other.'[3] Also, we have seen that his concepts of religious pluralism and

[1] Faivre, *Access*, pp. 10-14.
[2] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 418.
[3] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, pp. 2-3, 8.

religious plurality of identities[4] help to explain some of the cultural and individual challenges presented in Part II of this thesis, which explores religious themes. Throughout this thesis we have seen that the questions regarding paranormal phenomena that the early psychical researchers asked themselves were largely synonymous with Broad's 'basic limiting principles', which considered causality, limitations of the actions of mind on matter, the dependence of mind on brain, and the constraints on methods of acquiring knowledge.[5] Additionally, I showed that Christopher Partridge's 'occulture'[6] and Nicholas Campion's 'Westocericism'[7] highlight the influential esoteric current of the prevalent questioning intellectual and cultural environment within which the early thinking about the paranormal was able to take place in a structured way by early members of the SPR.

In Chapter 3, the first of the four thematic chapters, I demonstrated that changes within mainstream religious thinking also helped to shape the intellectual tensions of the period. Traditional religions, especially Christianity, experienced a general declining influence in the second half of the nineteenth century. There was an increase in secular thinking during this period, but it has been demonstrated that there was not a gradual linear decline of the influence of Christianity due to a simple widespread crisis of faith or more prevalent rationalist thinking. Rather, there was a complex of cultural themes with each contributing in different ways to this effect. While some did reject traditional Christian doctrine, there were more who expressed a lack of faith in the Church itself. Many members of the SPR, such as Sidgwick, Myers, and Gurney, still regarded themselves as theists, but no longer subscribed to contemporary Christian orthodoxy. Church attendance fell, as did the numbers of those choosing to take up Holy Orders. The traditional interpretation of Christian doctrine was challenged by a growing broad church liberalism, the increasing influence of science, and biblical criticism become more important and more acceptable. Science exerted a general cultural influence, with debate generated by new ideas, such as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. There was also an academic impact, with new fields of study such as anthropology and geology having specific implications for traditional Christian teaching. Those of a non-Christian faith, or of no

[4] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 6.
[5] Broad, *Religion*, pp. 9-12.
[6] Partridge, *Re-enchantment*, p. 3.
[7] Campion, *New Age*, pp. 1-3.

faith, were able to earn degrees for the first time, and this was followed by Fellows no longer being required to take Holy Orders. More academic research was being conducted in the universities rather than just the dissemination of current knowledge to the elite of society as had previously been the case. Against the backdrop of Asprem's depiction of disenchantment[8] and Stuckrad's general and individual challenges to mainstream religion,[9] the early members of the SPR were mired in an environment of religious doubt which drove them to seek alternative intellectual and spiritual explanations. These themes, discussed in depth by Alan Gauld,[10] highlighted the significant concepts of universality, eclecticism, interconnectedness, the link between the profane and the divine, the desire to employ scientific methodology, and the notion of a spiritual realm, and are all found within the characteristics of the paranormal domain presented below.

We have seen that, while there was certainly some decline in the influence of mainstream religion, there were also many reconversions that took place, as well as a resurgence in the more conservative wings of Christian denominations. In Chapter 4, the second of the four thematic chapters, it has been shown that this period was also one of a general spiritual revival, which some scholars have discussed in terms of 're-enchantment.'[11] This revival embraced novel forms of neo-Christianity, esoteric philosophy, such as Theosophy, more practical occultism, and sometimes a combination of all three. Three of the most prominent movements were Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the occultism of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Spiritualism was highly significant for the early SPR, both for its motivations and for its shared membership. Spiritualists were solely focussed on the idea of human survival after bodily death, with a soul residing in a spiritual realm and able to communicate with those still on earth. One of the initial SPR committees was entirely dedicated to the investigation of phenomena associated with Spiritualism, which became manifest in mediumistic séances. Spiritualists regarded both mainstream religion and orthodox science as inadequate intellectual domains with which to prove the existence of an afterlife. The predominantly faith driven emic focus of the Spiritualists clashed with the explicit scientific methodology of the non-Spiritualist

[8] Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 36.
[9] Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 6.
[10] Gauld, *Founders*, pp. 32-65.
[11] Partridge, *Re-Enchantment*, p. 46; and Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 118.

members of the SPR, and the influence of the former upon the latter waned markedly until the onset of World War I. The Theosophical Society also espoused the inadequacy of mainstream religion and orthodox science as tools with which to unlock the secrets of the universe. It expressed more cohesive doctrines than did Spiritualism, especially through the works of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and was a complex combination of ancient wisdom, Western occultism, and aspects of Buddhism and Hinduism, sitting firmly within Faivre's esoteric paradigm[12] and Nicholas Campion's 'Westocericism.'[13] Inherent within its teaching was the concept of a soul and therefore of human survival. This gave it a superficial similarity to the core tenet of Spiritualism. Some early members of the SPR were also members of the Theosophical Society, but, following Hodgson's accusations of fraud levelled at Blavatsky, their mutual interactions largely ceased. The non-Spiritualist members of the SPR and advocates of the Theosophical Society in Britain both came from the culturally and intellectually elite sections of society, in contrast to most Spiritualists. Another group which drew members from the privileged classes were those that followed a more explicitly occultist path. Members of the Golden Dawn, for example, were distinct from the other spiritual groups in that they were practitioners of ceremonial magic, with initiatory progression through a structured curriculum with associated rituals. Against this backdrop of wide-ranging spiritual revival, the early representatives of the SPR chose to investigate and catalogue strange phenomena rather than practice and perform, albeit there was some shared membership amongst all of these groups. Nevertheless, a number of spiritual themes, such as the survival hypothesis, the existence of a soul, a spirit realm, and communication between souls and realms, were fundamentally important to psychical researchers and are reflected in the majority of the spiritual characteristics of the paranormal domain.

In Chapter 5, the third of the thematic chapters, I demonstrated that the SPR was explicit in its intended use of scientific methodology in its investigation of paranormal phenomena. It has been shown, however, that its members utilized an eclectic and all-inclusive scientific approach, not encumbered by the narrower, purely materialistic dogma of contemporary orthodox science. We have seen that science clearly influenced psychical research, whether through its inherent tenets, such as

[12] Faivre, *Access*, pp. 10-14.
[13] Campion, *New Age*, pp. 1-3.

materialism and rationalism, or as a result of its growth and specialization in the period. Nineteenth-century science became normalized, through the defining of inductive and deductive reasoning, and acceptable approaches to forming hypotheses. It has been noted that Mill's balanced approach is likely to have been particularly influential on the likes of Gurney and Myers, and is a key methodological characteristic of the paranormal domain presented below.

Darwin's theory of evolution marked a significant change in thinking about humanity's place in the world. It generated a great deal of debate across all levels of society and in all spheres of intellectual endeavour, with biological arguments challenging religious doctrine for the first time. Prominent SPR members, such as Sidgwick and Lodge, were advocates of the theory, at least on a historical basis. Also, the eminent naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, regarded as having independently formed a similar theory of evolution, was an early member and staunch Spiritualist. More specifically, we have seen that Myers infused the theories in his hugely important *Human Personality* with several evolutionary references. Within the physical sciences, both ether physics and experimental physics had important links to psychical research.[14] Ether physics provided the concept of a subtle, universal, all-pervasive medium, with its inherent interconnectedness enabling and shaping all observable phenomena. While there may be similarities to earlier mesmeric notions of a vital principle or fluid, it is the universal and interconnected characteristics of ether theories which have parallels to the predominantly monistic thinking of psychical researchers. These characteristics form important philosophical characteristics of the paranormal domain. Additionally, ether theories were used to explain electromagnetism, the associated action-at-a-distance phenomena similar to many forms of paranormal phenomena. Both mainstream science and psychical research increasingly utilized experimentation in order to develop theories of the universe. We have seen that both suffered from the same difficulties of experimental repeatability and accuracy, despite orthodox science being perceived as more consistent. Contemporary wireless telecommunications technology was another mainstream example of action-at-a-distance phenomena which had superficial similarities to Spiritualist communications experienced during séances, and are explicitly linked to spiritual characteristics of the paranormal domain. The utilization of scientific

[14] Noakes, 'Haunted', pp. 50-53.

methodology within paranormal research, shown to be broad and eclectic, was a manifestation of the disenchantment in society, as articulated by a number of scholars.[15] I have shown that rather than a strict adherence to scientific naturalism, investigations of paranormal phenomena were driven by a more universal and interconnected philosophy which had impacts on nearly all of the individual characteristics of the paranormal domain, across all three of the modes presented below – thinking, doing, and being.

In Chapter 6, the fourth and last of the thematic chapters, I discussed how the fringe science of phrenology generated early thinking about the links between the material body and the immaterial mind. Its successor, mesmerism, provided concepts of universal vital principles and fluids, and introduced trance states, and different forms of consciousness, to a wider audience. These trance states were often accompanied by paranormal phenomena, which expanded the interest in mesmerism beyond just its potential for healing. By the end of the nineteenth century, mesmerism had transformed into the more acceptable hypnotism, with trances now induced by suggestion. Hypnotism was utilized by physicians, psychologists, and psychical researchers, with the latter group often finding it conducive to the manifestation of paranormal phenomena. In conjunction with this, psychology became a distinct science in the late-Victorian period. It was vitally important to psychical research, but was also partially shaped by it. Emerging from a combination of physiology and speculative philosophy, psychology was initially solely focussed on the study of the mind. Its implications were more far-reaching, however, and provided insights into the issue of mind-body duality. Lodge, Gurney, and Myers all commented on the importance of monist attempts to overcome the problems associated with mind-body duality, especially Spinoza's double-aspect theory, which can be seen within the philosophical characteristics of the paranormal domain. Many of the important early professional psychologists had links with the SPR, including William James, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, Hippolyte Bernheim, and Charles Richet, amongst others. The case studies of the clinical psychologists and the undertakings of the experimental psychologists led to theories of consciousness which tried to clarify what was normal

[15] For example, see Asprem, *Disenchantment*, p. 36; Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism*, p. 6; Partridge, *Re-Enchantment*, p. 46; and Owen, *Enchantment*, p. 118.

or abnormal. The key question was whether the observed strange phenomena and hidden faculties associated with different forms of consciousness were pathological or paranormal. These notions were embraced by psychical researchers with an interest in hidden layers of consciousness, especially Gurney, Myers, James, and Henri Bergson, and can be seen within the philosophical, methodological, and spiritual characteristics of the paranormal domain.

Gurney undertook experiments in hypnotism and was the chief writer of the seminal *Phantasms of the Living*. The work was presented from a physiological perspective, using a scientific methodology which considered both error recognition and statistics, as well as the notion of chance-coincidence. Gurney was explicit that the appropriate investigative methodology for psychical research should be wider, more various, and less technical than ordinary scientific methodology. The vast number of cases of hallucinations presented in the work covered both spontaneous and experimental types, with telepathic communication seeming to take place between an agent and a percipient at times of crisis or death.[16] This suggested to him that the phenomenon of telepathy, implied by the evidence, was an intrinsic part of nature, with individual minds possibly constituent parts of a collective unity.[17] He presented the importance of a universal and interconnected perspective in psychical research, characteristics found across all parts of the paranormal domain.

Myers subsequently developed many of the ideas from *Phantasms* within his *Human Personality*. Primarily written from a psychological perspective, he presented an evolutionary concept of latent faculties of the mind.[18] He similarly espoused a broad scientific methodology and the use of statistics to validate the data. Myers described how the disintegration of personality, such as during sleep, evidence of genius, or in trance states, allowed the usually hidden layers of consciousness, or the 'subliminal self', to manifest. When this normally unseen self was uncovered, it allowed higher mental faculties such as telepathy and clairvoyance to show themselves. With telepathic phenomena holding these different strands together, it was the concept of possession which validated for him the concept of human survival with a soul residing in a spiritual realm. Myers further speculated upon a monistic

[16] Gurney, *Phantasms*, I, pp. 229-230, §10.
[17] We have seen that Roger Luckhurst focusses on telepathy as the central phenomenon of early psychical research, in Luckhurst, *Telepathy*.
[18] Kripal, *Impossible*, p. 61.

cosmology, with distinct but interconnected individual souls as part of a world-soul, but provided no evidence for this. Thus, it can be seen that Myers explored characteristics which are found in all parts of the paranormal domain.

Amongst the thinkers on the paranormal considered in this thesis, it was James and Bergson who provided the most significant similarly developed theories regarding consciousness. James rejected the idea of an individual soul and so expanded his early ideas of consciousness into a 'cosmic' or 'sublime reservoir theory' of consciousness. This cosmic reservoir of consciousness was accessible by individuals in either a normal or some form of trance state, with all living things having an essence that eventually united with an ultimate essence or consciousness. James' theory of immortality did not suggest that the soul survived bodily death, and was part psychological and part metaphysical.[19] Bergson developed a 'filter' theory, which presumed a mundane intellectual equilibrium during normal waking consciousness until something disrupted it.[20] This enabled higher mental faculties to manifest, such as telepathy, but, for Bergson, was also suggestive of the existence of some form of immaterial realm. What links the theories of Myers, James, and Bergson are the hidden layers of consciousness, which, when exposed, allowed ostensibly paranormal phenomena to occur. The implications for human survival, the existence of a soul and a spiritual realm are regarded differently in each of them, however. The theorizing of James and Bergson are reflected in all parts of the paranormal domain.

Not all of the psychical researchers of the early SPR undertook the development of theories about the paranormal. In fact, most of the endeavours involved the systematic gathering of evidence related to ostensibly paranormal phenomena and the presentation of this data in its *Proceedings* and *Journal*. Nevertheless, the published works of the time, whether containing explicit theories or not, together with private letters and memoirs, provide a clear sense of the important characteristics of early psychical research and the understanding of the paranormal domain as a valid intellectual tool. Across the four cultural thematic chapters summarized here, focussing on religion, spirituality, science, and psychology, the thinking and activities associated with the paranormal domain of a number of early psychical researchers has been presented. In terms of chronological scope, influence

[19] Carrette, *Imagination*, p. 169.
[20] Lawlor, *Challenge*, p. 56.

at the time, presentation of theories, and intellectual diversity, Barrett, Lodge, Sidgwick, Gurney, Myers, Hodgson, Podmore, James, and Bergson have provided the main source of works relevant for analysis.

The other psychical researchers did not present mature theories on the paranormal in the same manner as Gurney, Myers, James, and Bergson, but a brief exploration of their works has highlighted many commonalities. Psychical research, they all suggested, should be undertaken using a broad and eclectic scientific methodology. The consideration of both a material realm, and some form of immaterial realm, was strongly proposed by them, including the scientists such as Lodge and Barrett. The evidence, from the cases examined and the experiments undertaken, suggested that paranormal phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition, were as a result of a universal monist cosmology. For some, but not all, its inherent interconnectedness implied the existence of individual human souls as part of a survival hypothesis, a spiritual realm, and communication possible between all individuals and realms, all of which are reflected within the paranormal domain.

The Late-Victorian Paranormal Domain

It has been shown that early psychical researchers questioned both epistemological and ontological philosophies, whether intentionally or otherwise. This suggests that in considering their views on the paranormal a broad approach is most appropriate, so as not to focus on just one critical tool, such as philosophy. This parallels the views of the early psychical researchers, who, like many others, found science and religion to be inadequate individual intellectual tools with which to understand nature, and so turned to the paranormal domain. Care must be taken not to be overly simplistic and paint the complex of influences, people, and theories investigated in this thesis as merely eclectic and nebulous, and without form or cohesion. This thesis untangles the multifarious influences in order to present the new typology of the ‘paranormal domain’. However, while the following classification clearly shows distinct characteristics, there are some inherent terminological and conceptual overlaps. This typology, driven by the analysis of the four main thematic chapters, is primarily intended to be a method of arranging the diverse concepts the late-Victorian psychical researchers contemplated, a classification which other scholars can use to aid the

investigation of psychical research which took place at the time. There is no suggestion that they ever thought of the totality of the paranormal domain in the manner described here, or that the classification necessarily represents the beliefs of members of the group. However, my contention is that they would all have recognised each of the components as critical to their activities in the field. As such, it represents a paranormal mindset, exhibited by these researchers, which allowed the paranormal domain to be considered as valid intellectual tool alongside science and religion.

All of the factors explored in this thesis can be organised into three main components, or modes of the paranormal domain: (i) philosophy, (ii) methodology, and (iii) spirituality. Each of these modes can be further subdivided into intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics. The intrinsic features are found in the works of all the psychical researchers examined, or in so nearly all that I have regarded any exceptions, while noteworthy, as irrelevant to the legitimacy of the classification. The extrinsic features are not found in all the writings on psychical research examined in the present work, but either a high enough proportion of them are, or they are of significant theoretical interest to warrant their inclusion.

1. Philosophy

The first component of the paranormal domain is that of philosophy, or 'mode of thinking.' Bertrand Russell has described philosophy as 'something intermediate between theology and science', and in the paranormal domain presented here, it similarly sits alongside theology and science, or spirituality and methodology, rather than occupying a 'no man's land' between them.[21] All of the psychical researchers were searching for answers to the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it. In their quest for this knowledge, the epistemological justification was made on the basis of evidentialism,[22] and we see this manifest within the scientific methodology employed. As such, both the quality and quantity of collected facts about ostensibly paranormal phenomena was significant for them. Ontologically, the psychical researchers predominantly adhered to an all-encompassing universality, a Oneness, or

[21] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), p. 1.
[22] Kevin McCain, *Evidentialism and Epistemic Justification* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-2, 11.

one truth, having aspects similar to Monistic Idealism,[23] but was closer to Spinoza's double-aspect theory.[24] Universality, as described here, has similarities to Wouter Hanegraaff's 'Universal Interrelatedness'[25] and combines aspects of Antoine Faivre's concept of 'Correspondences' and 'Living Nature' described in Chapter 2. This universality was made up of inherently interconnected constituents, whether they be individual physical atomic particles or individual human souls, or both. Thus, the mode of thinking about the nature of the universe within the paranormal domain, as envisaged by the early psychical researchers, must include both the material and the immaterial realms. As a consequence, we have seen that those individuals with eclectic interests were more willing to develop a mode of thinking which allowed for both the seen and the unseen, empirical physical evidence and an inferred spiritual existence. As Trevor Hamilton has suggested, it should not be considered unusual that with a greater appreciation of magnetism and electricity at this time, combined with the universal concept of ether, that the early researchers would think possible some empirical and theoretical link between the physical and the psychical.[26] The backgrounds of the majority of the theorists discussed sat firmly within a traditional Christian setting, and so regardless to what extent and in what manner each of them rejected or challenged their own religious faith, it was not something that could be simply ignored. Thus, those psychical researchers who were professional scientists, such as Lodge, Crookes, or Barrett, had much in common intellectually and philosophically with those who were not professional scientists but embraced it wholeheartedly, such as Sidgwick, Gurney, and Myers. That their scientific thinking was not purely physicalist goes without saying.

While there was a common belief in one truth amongst the psychical researchers, they had no expectation that their activities would lead to its outright discovery or understanding, but merely highlight certain aspects of it. Investigating those phenomena which appeared to lie on the fringes of contemporary knowledge, or those that seemed to link the material and the immaterial realms, such as telepathy, was an obvious intellectual methodology to utilize. Everything that was observed or accurately inferred must conform to natural laws, as anything else would be unnatural,

[23] Gurney, *Tertium Quid*, I, p. 325; and Lodge, *Life*, p. 6.
[24] Beloff, *Existence*, p. 24.
[25] Hanegraaff, *New Age*, p. 128.
[26] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 84.

and therefore impossible. There was no occurrence that was necessarily impossible, only phenomena that were not yet fully understood. Allowing for the possibility of everything, but not presuming the *prima facie* veracity of anything, correlated well with their notion of one truth. The intrinsic characteristics of the mode of thinking of the paranormal domain are: (i) universality, (ii) inclusivity of the material and the immaterial, (iii) eclecticism, and (iv) interconnectedness; with one extrinsic characteristic: (v) the link between the profane and the divine.

Characteristic (i), universality, was referred to repeatedly by the early psychical researchers, yet many different names for it were used. The nature of this monistic concept, which is encapsulated by the term one truth, was not explained in any of the works examined, but underpins every characteristic of the paranormal domain, especially interconnectedness, interaction, and eclecticism. In fact, the essential aspects of their conception of one truth were considered inexplicable by some of the writers. However, for them, this did not negate either its veracity or the fundamental natural laws which were implied by its existence, and which they believed all phenomena were subject to. The variety of names used for the concept of one truth reinforces its inexplicable nature, while the frequency of their use reflects its critical significance within the paranormal domain.[27] Characteristic (ii), the inclusivity of the material and the immaterial, arises as a consequence of (i) universality. Within the paranormal domain, material and immaterial phenomena are both considered as authentic. While some, such as Myers, posited the superiority of the spirit realm over the physical realm, neither he nor any of the other researchers went as far as to claim idealistic monism, with the mind being all that exists. Both the seen world and the unseen world were thus considered distinct but connected parts of one truth. Characteristic (iii), eclecticism, also stems from (i) universality, and was demonstrated by the broad and all-inclusive approach adopted by all of the early researchers. It has been shown that Gurney and James were perhaps more explicit about their *tertium quid* thinking regarding psychical research, but none of the others ever dismissed any piece of evidence or theoretical implication arising from it, however unpalatable for some. For example, Myers admitted in *Human Personality* that he wasn't expecting the concept of possession to be so critical to his hypothesis,

[27] See Sidgwick, 'Evolution', p. 64; Gurney, *Tertium Quid*, I, p. 328; Barrett, *Psychical Research*, pp. 12-13; Bergson, *Matter*, pp. 236, 261; Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, p. 75; James, *Varieties*, p. 411; Lodge, *Man*, pp. 70, 104, 188; and Myers, *HP*, II, pp. 271, §985.

but the evidence made this unavoidable for him. In fact, the evidentialist quest for knowledge undertaken by these researchers meant that the rejection of ostensibly valid evidence was regarded as inconsistent and unscientific, and we have seen that many of them strongly challenged scientists who discounted facts and concepts because they did not fit into existing paradigms. Characteristic (iv), interconnectedness, is again a consequence of (i) universality. The concept of interconnectedness was considered not only inherent between the physical and spiritual realms, both aspects of one truth, but also between individual souls, whether existing in just one of these realms, or between souls active in different ones. Myers described the Universe as 'a plenum of infinite knowledge of which all souls form a part.'[28] While this naturally helped the researchers to explain aspects of telepathic phenomena, some extended the concept of interconnectedness to also include inanimate objects, thus also allowing for clairvoyance. The extrinsic characteristic (v), the link between the profane and the divine, while implying both universality and interconnectedness, goes further by suggesting the existence of an overriding controlling intelligence in the universe. This intelligence was regarded variously as a deity, a world-soul, or an *anima mundi*, allied with the Neoplatonic 'as above, so below' concept of a divine spark within each individual microcosmic human, linking them to the overarching macrocosm. This notion was not mentioned in all the works considered here, but is significant for its reinforcement of the characteristics of universality, inclusion of the material and the immaterial, and interconnectedness. Myers spoke of 'the World-Soul as the Future',[29] while Podmore mentioned both a 'World-soul', and 'Deity'[30], and are analogous to Faivre's 'Living Nature'. Sidgwick encapsulated the idea well when he said 'I still think the best motto for a true Metaphysic are the lines of Shelley: -

"I am the eye with which the Universe

Beholds itself and knows itself divine."'[31]

[28] Myers, *HP*, II, pp. 272-3, §985-6.
[29] Ibid, II, pp. 271, §985.
[30] Frank Podmore, *The Newer Spiritualism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 300.
[31] In a letter to Roden Noel, August 14th, 1866, quoted in Sidgwick and Sidgwick, *Memoir*, p. 151.

2. Methodology

The second component of the paranormal domain is that of methodology, or 'mode of doing.' The investigative methodologies of the psychical researchers were unequivocally intended to be scientific, and not just those who were professional scientists. To what extent this was successful in practice is very much open to debate. The intention was certainly to employ scientific techniques, even if the data handling and analysis, the practical construction of experiments and the controls used, were often inadequate for the indisputable proof of these strange phenomena to be demonstrated. On the other hand, the eclectic and broad approach used, while perceived by some as unfocussed and unscientific, actually allowed for recorded and observed phenomena to be taken on their own merits, regardless of how strange they seemed. Emily Williams Kelley contends that Gurney and Myers, for example, were 'third way thinkers', developing a *tertium quid* approach derived from Mill, who attempted to find the moderate middle ground between extremes in any given debate.[32] This sense of balance was a hugely important aspect of the methodology of the early psychical researchers, and Richard Noakes and Hamilton both note how historians of science now more fully appreciate the 'fluid context' in which nineteenth-century scientists operated, recognising the interplay between mainstream scientific research and psychical research.[33] Within the scientific community there were a number of competing groups asserting intellectual authority, ranging from the orthodox proponents of Scientific naturalism such as Carpenter and Tyndall, to those interested in Spiritualist and paranormal phenomena, such as Crookes, Lodge, Wallace, and Barrett. Hamilton adds to this two further groups who alleged superior qualities required to undertake paranormal investigations – conjurors and mediums.[34] The paranormal domain as presented here is formulated from ideas of the groups of scientists and non-scientists wishing to utilize scientific methodology, such as Sidgwick, Gurney, Myers, Lodge, and the like, from within the early SPR. What is not an inherent part of the paranormal domain, but hugely important to experimental psychical research, is the detail of the construction of experiments conducted by

[32] Emily Williams Kelly, "F. W. H. Myers and the Empirical Study of the Mind-Body Problem", in Kelly, Edward F., and Kelly, Emily Williams, et al., *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), pp. 62-63, 80-83.
[33] Richard Noakes, 'The historiography of psychical research: lessons from histories of the sciences', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 72 (2008), pp. 65-85; and Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 84.
[34] Hamilton, *Immortal*, p. 100.

psychical researchers. The three intrinsic characteristics of the mode of doing of the paranormal domain are: (i) scientific method, (ii) eclecticism, and (iii) hidden faculties and layers of consciousness; with one extrinsic characteristic: (iv) idiosyncratic paranormal attributes.

Characteristic (i), scientific method, has been shown to be a fundamental tenet of the investigative methodology of the early psychical researchers. The utilization of this approach was written into the society's articles, was a critical component of nearly every presidential address, and was reiterated within the introductory chapters of nearly every work on psychical research published in this period. The early membership consisted of many eminent scientists, yet it has also been suggested that they were perhaps distinct from other scientists, in that they held broader and more eclectic philosophies than many of their mainstream colleagues. Additionally, extensive use was made of observation, testing, and experimentation, which supplemented the data gathering from spontaneous phenomena, and was not just undertaken by the professional scientists within the society. Characteristic (ii), eclecticism, does overlap with the component within the mode of thinking, in that a broad and all-inclusive methodological approach was favoured by this group of researchers, but there are two distinct themes within the mode of doing. Firstly, there was an intentional attempt to utilize the different skills, experience, and aptitudes of diverse individuals in psychical research. While perhaps not an entirely systematic approach, physicians, psychologists, conjurors, writers, politicians, and academics of all disciplines formed comprehensive investigative groups and committees. No one skill set was considered necessarily better suited to the task than any other, with the success of the whole considered more productive than the sum of its parts. Secondly, it has been shown that during the late-Victorian period that academic disciplines, and not just scientific ones, were becoming increasingly specialized. Additionally, there were a number of new fields which arose or became more acceptable, such as psychology, geology, anthropology, and biblical criticism. Consequently, while many of the researchers could still be regarded as polymaths, the depth of their knowledge across diverse fields became increasingly limited. To counteract this specialization, the use of a broad investigative methodology with individual experts was a natural solution. Characteristic (iii), that of hidden faculties and layers of consciousness, is an inherent component of the mode of doing, and while it can be considered a

consequence of the evidence observed, the notion also shaped the nature of psychical research. There were some individuals, such as Podmore, who did not necessarily believe that Myers' theory of the 'subliminal self', James' 'sublime reservoir theory', or Bergson's 'filter theory' implied the existence of a spiritual realm, or a survival hypothesis. However, we have seen that the concept of different layers of consciousness did help explain some paranormal phenomena for them, with the most important hidden faculty being telepathy, but also clairvoyance, and precognition. The extrinsic characteristic (iv), idiosyncratic paranormal attributes, is an amalgam of elements of psychical research with respect to both spontaneous and experimental paranormal phenomena. These are aspects used to explain certain observations, but with no objective or scientific validity of their own. These include the consideration of environment, emotional state, individual aptitude, and the notion of rapport. In some of the few illustrative cases referenced in the present work, there have been examples where the atmosphere created by lighting or the attitude of certain individuals has either helped or hindered the success of manifesting paranormal phenomena, especially in Spiritualist séances. More common, we have seen, were the cases of veridical hallucinations where the agent was at the point of death or experiencing some other crisis, or some other form of heightened emotional state. There are also examples where particular agents or percipients had been selected because of a certain perception of their aptitude, or an unexplainable innate ability, which was in some manner superior to that of others. While this may seem unscientific, the inherently capricious nature of paranormal phenomena meant that any way of improving the frequency of observing such occurrences was more acceptable to the researchers. The notion of rapport between agent and percipient, whether by familial connection or friendship, was frequently encountered in the cases investigated and was used as part explanation for the occurrence of paranormal phenomena. Likewise, a known connection to a particular place or property was utilized in the same manner by psychical researchers.

3. Spirituality

The third component of the paranormal domain is that of spirituality, or 'mode of being.' For the psychical researchers of the period the idea of spirituality was not

merely an acceptance of the idea of an immaterial realm. For some, spirituality remained a traditionally religious concept, with a belief in some form of deity and an afterlife which allowed eventual unity with this godhead. For others, the idea of a religious deity had been rejected, being replaced either by the concept of a universal world-soul or simply an immaterial spiritual realm. Within this realm, whether or not there was a belief in a controlling intelligence, there was the prevalent notion of this being a province where discarnate souls, and sometimes aspects of incarnate souls, could exist. Thus, not only was this spiritual realm where discarnate souls continue to survive after bodily death, but where incarnate souls who temporarily manifested higher mental faculties, such as telepathy, may also possibly have had access to. Consequently, for the psychical researchers, this allowed interaction between souls and between realms. Regardless of the nature of this action-at-a-distance communication, whether a discarnate soul in an immaterial realm was communicating with an incarnate soul on earth, or the latter was somehow accessing the spiritual realm, this interaction and interconnectedness was inherent.[35] Also inherent, therefore, was the explicit belief in the survival of the human personality after bodily death, manifest as some form of soul entity. The spiritual realm was also where the higher laws and human faculties manifested, which one might regard as paranormal or psychical. The four intrinsic characteristics of the mode of being of the paranormal domain are: (i) spiritual realm, (ii) human survival after physical death, or soul, (iii) communication between souls and realms, (iv) higher laws and faculties.

Characteristic (i), the existence of a spiritual realm, is a natural consequence of the ontological concept of universality, or one truth, held by the psychical researchers, the rejection of a purely physicalist universe, and the evidence of spirit communication and other ostensibly paranormal phenomena. Critically, it also allowed for both traditional religious and Spiritualist considerations of an immaterial realm, and so was an essentially malleable concept. Rather like the unfathomable nature of universality in the mode of thinking, psychical researchers utilized many different terms for a the spiritual realm. Sidgwick referred to the spiritual realm as the 'unseen world',[36] while Hodgson spoke of 'the other world.'[37] Myers used variously

[35] This access to the spiritual realm has similarities to the occultists' contemporary notions of astral travel, but was not a belief held by psychical researchers. See Owen, *Enchantment*, pp. 128-129.
[36] Sidgwick, 'President's Address', p. 246.
[37] Hodgson, 'A Record of Observations', p. 362.

the terms 'World Unseen',[38] 'spirit world',[39] and 'metetherial world.'[40] Lodge was not so precise in his terminology, describing it as an 'ethereal order of existence.'[41] James simply used the word 'Unseen.'[42] Barrett's view was that 'The psychical order is not the spiritual order, but a stepping-stone in the ascent of the soul to its own self-apprehension, its conscious sharing in the eternal divine life…'[43] The quest for the proof of characteristic (ii), human survival after physical death, or soul, is posited by many scholars to be the overriding motivation of the early psychical researchers of the SPR.[44] While it was often spoken of by the psychical researchers as the most important question to be addressed during their investigations, it was not the only one. The sheer diversity of research and investigations undertaken by them suggests that while the survival question was the most important element of the broader quest to understand the nature of the universe and humanity's place within it, it was not its sole component. The general description provided by the psychical researchers, whether they believed the survival hypothesis or not, was that the soul was the immaterial and the spiritual part of a human personality which utilized a physical body on earth, but no longer required it after death, after which time it resided in some form of spirit realm. The inherent interconnectedness of the universe allows for characteristic (iii), communication between souls and realms. We have seen numerous examples of the supposed interaction between discarnate souls, presumably residing in a spirit realm, with incarnate souls on earth, investigated by the psychical researchers. This was believed by them to possibly take place during Spiritualistic sittings, spontaneously at times of death or crisis, and also possibly during so-called hauntings. The precise nature of this action-at-a-distance communication was speculated upon by the likes of Gurney, Myers, James, and Bergson, but there was no unequivocal proof demonstrated by them or others. What was common amongst them, however, was the notion of hidden layers of consciousness of the percipient which under certain conditions were able to come to the fore and access the immaterial realm, allowing higher faculties to manifest, such as being able to commune with

[38] Myers, *HP*, I, p. 4, §102.
[39] Ibid., I, p. 115, §338.
[40] Ibid., I, p. 8, §108.
[41] Oliver Lodge, *Survival of Man : A Study in Unrecognised Human Faculty* (London: Methuen & Co., 1909), p. 338.
[42] James, *Varieties*, p. 53.
[43] Barrett, *Psychical Research*, p. 246.
[44] See Blum, *Hunters*; Hamilton, *Immortal*; McCorristine, *Spectres*; and Oppenheim, *Other*.

other souls. This leads on to characteristic (iv), the higher laws and faculties, especially telepathy, but also clairvoyance, precognition and the like, which come about as result of the temporary predominance of usually hidden layers of consciousness, allowing access to an immaterial realm, but not necessarily to interact with discarnate souls.

In summary, the key characteristics of the paranormal domain these psychical researchers described have been classified in this thesis as consisting of three primary modes: thinking, doing, and being – analogous to philosophy, methodology, and spirituality, respectively. The individual characteristics illustrated for the mode of thinking are: (i) universality, (ii) inclusivity of the material and the immaterial, (iii) eclecticism, and (iv) interconnectedness, with an extrinsic characteristic of (v) the link between the profane and the divine. The characteristics for the mode of doing are: (i) scientific method, (ii) eclecticism, and (iii) hidden faculties and layers of consciousness, and an extrinsic characteristic of (iv) idiosyncratic paranormal attributes. The characteristics for the mode of being are: (i) spiritual realm, (ii) human survival after physical death, or soul, (iii) communication between souls and realms, and (iv) higher laws and faculties.

To suggest that the psychical researchers were only trying to prove a survival hypothesis, or that their theories of the paranormal had a solely psychological foundation, is too simplistic a conclusion. Previous conceptions of the period have focussed too heavily on the psychical researchers' fascination with the survival hypothesis, often making it seem like an obsession. While it was of significant importance to them, the reality was that these intellectuals wanted to understand the entirety of nature and humanity's place within it, but felt that they could not rely upon just science, religion, or philosophy to help with this quest. For the psychical researchers of the SPR, the paranormal domain provided for them a liminal *tertium quid* approach which was of unique assistance. Previous scholarship of the period has also often overly concentrated on the exploration of links between psychical research and one other main theme, such as Spiritualism, ghosts, or telepathy. The actuality was that such links did exist and were important, but that they were part of a diverse complex of many such links, or nodes of interaction. Avoidance of this broad and eclectic perspective can easily lead to certain nuances and subtleties being missed, which I believe has been largely eradicated in the present thesis, but with the retention

of an appropriate depth of analysis. There existed a progressive and questioning environment which enabled psychical research to take place, not just by professional scientists, but was undertaken in conjunction with writers, theologians, politicians, and philosophers. While the complex paranormal phenomena were inherently eclectic, there existed a philosophical, methodological, and spiritual cohesion which can be regarded as a unique slice of intellectual thinking about an unusual nascent field of study which flourished for a few short years. So, against the backdrop of Christopher Partridge's 'Occulture' and Nicholas Campion's 'Westocericism', with the prevalence in the late-nineteenth century of uncanny notions of 'the Other', a paranormal mindset with close associations with the characteristics of Antoine Faivre's 'Components of Esotericism' can be established. The questions asked of the paranormal domain by the early psychical researchers align with those suggested by C. D. Broad's 'Basic Limiting Principles', and form part of Kocku von Stuckrad's 'Esoteric Field of Discourse', here a narrower 'Paranormal Field of Discourse', as well as Egil Asprem's 'Intellectual Problems'. The focus of this thesis has been the late-Victorian period, with the uniquely complex cultural and intellectual questioning milieu creating tensions which exposed new investigative methodological approaches. In this manner I believe that I have shown my three key arguments to be valid: firstly, that religion and science were perceived as inadequate sole intellectual domains with which to investigate nature and humanity's place within it; secondly, that a new investigative approach was therefore required, that of psychical research; and thirdly, that the activities, works, and theories of these thinkers can be described cohesively using the intellectual concept of a paranormal domain, with the characteristics presented above. The paranormal domain outlined here provides a good working typology for other researchers in the field. While it may need to be augmented in certain ways, I believe that it can be used more widely to aid scholarship of psychical research focussed on different time periods, and as a basis to start mapping changes in such research over time.

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