

Eyewitness Testimony (Analysis)

Reports of spontaneous paranormal occurrences are often contested on the grounds that witnesses were mistaken in what they thought they observed. This article analyses the extent to which eyewitness testimony can be trusted in this field.

Introduction

A familiar view, held not only by parapsychological skeptics and those only casually familiar with the field, but also by many seasoned parapsychologists, is that quantitative laboratory evidence is inherently cleaner—and potentially more impressive—than evidence based on eyewitness reports. The reasons typically given in support of that contention are first, that quantitative experiments uniquely allow for the control and manipulation of experimental variables, and second, that eyewitness accounts are too unreliable to establish the reality of psi phenomena and to support theory-development. Both of those general reasons can be challenged, but this essay will focus only on the second. There are good reasons for thinking that eyewitness accounts cannot be easily dismissed, at least for the best spontaneous cases, and thus that non-experimental or semi-experimental evidence deserves much more respect than many believe.

Further Preliminaries

Challenges to the reliability of eyewitness accounts typically focus on cases of physical mediumship, poltergeists, and apparitions, in which (we're told) observers ordinarily base their reports on phenomena from darkened séance rooms, or those gained under other poor psychological and physical conditions of observation (e.g., periods of distress or distraction, or objects moving too quickly to be observed and described reliably). Moreover, these are conditions in which observers are particularly liable to misperceive in accordance with their own biases or predispositions in favor of the paranormal.

Before considering the weaknesses in this received wisdom, an important terminological point deserves mention. In his discussion of spontaneous cases, Stevenson made the useful distinction between the *authenticity* and *evidentiality* of an eyewitness report of an ostensibly paranormal event.¹ Elaborating somewhat on Stevenson's use of the terms, let us say that

(D1) A report of an ostensibly paranormal event is *authentic* if and only if the reliability of the testimony is such that the event probably occurred as reported.

(D2) A report of an ostensibly paranormal event is *evidential* if and only if the report is authentic and the event is plausibly interpreted as paranormal.

This distinction matters because most of the skeptical arguments examined below attempt to undercut claims of paranormality by attacking the authenticity of eyewitness reports. In fact, the prevailing distrust of non-experimental evidence seems primarily to be a distrust of its authenticity. Lab reports, by contrast, are

usually assumed (even by skeptics) to be authentic: while parapsychologists have sometimes been accused of fabricating their results, they are more usually blamed for using inadequate methodology. So when experimental studies are challenged, it is usually on the grounds that the results are not plausibly interpreted as paranormal.

With this distinction in mind, consider now the principal arguments for the alleged unreliability of human testimony. (The issue of outright *fraud* will be covered in a separate article.)

Testimony *In General*

The most radical position would be a sweeping indictment of all human testimony. Some might argue that observation and testimony are inherently fallible and that what is inherently fallible cannot be trusted. But of course the matter is not that simple. No source of evidence is immune from error, including those on which we frequently rely—including, for example, laboratory studies in science, which may rest on the fallible activities of observation, notation, and instrument readings. In fact, it should be kept in mind that in daily life we rely on observation and testimony all the time, often quite successfully. So even if we grant that eyewitness reports are fallible, it doesn't follow that they are unreliable to a very high degree, or simply too unreliable to be trusted in this context.

We should also note that observation reports are never absolutely (or categorically) acceptable. At best, they can only be *conditionally* acceptable. Granted, sometimes the conditions are clearly satisfied, and so some reports can be highly reliable. Nevertheless, several factors influence whether or not (or to what degree) we accept a particular observation claim. Probably the most important are: (a) the capabilities, condition, interests, and integrity of the observer, (b) the nature of the object(s) allegedly observed, and (c) the means of observation and the conditions under which the observation occurred. When we evaluate reports of paranormal phenomena, we weight these factors differently in different cases. But in general, it matters: (a) whether the observers are trained, sober, honest, alert, calm, prone to exaggeration, subject to flights of imagination, blessed with good eyesight, and whether they have strong prior interests in observing carefully and accurately; (b) whether the objects are too small to see easily, whether they are easily mistaken for other things, or whether (like fairies, extraterrestrials, and unicorns) they are of a kind whose existence cannot be taken for granted; and (c) whether the objects were observed at close range, with or without the aid of instruments, whether they were stationary or moving rapidly, whether the observation occurred under decent light, through a dirty window, amidst various distractions, etc.

Presumably, then, what is at issue here is not the integrity, in general, of observation and testimony. Rather, it is whether (or to what extent) the best cases satisfy sensible conditions for reliability. So the specific question that must be addressed is: Do we have good reasons for discounting or distrusting eyewitness reports in the strongest cases of non-experimental parapsychological evidence? That is, do we have good reasons for thinking that the phenomena in these cases didn't occur as reported?

More moderate sceptics might reply that although human testimony generally is fallible, some cases are better documented than others, especially scientific laboratory reports. After all, they might say, many scientists, on the same or on different occasions, report the same results, and that type of collective and repeated testimony is more credible than the isolated and untestable reports found in the semi-experimental and anecdotal literature of parapsychology.

Of course, some non-experimental case reports are isolated and unique. But there exist many collective eyewitness accounts of ostensibly paranormal phenomena, as well as reports of unusual sorts of phenomena occurring on more than one occasion. These may be found in many cases of physical mediumship, poltergeist disturbances, and apparitions. Moreover, as Gauld and Cornell's survey of poltergeist and haunting cases demonstrates, non-experimental case reports frequently agree on peculiar and unexpected details, even when the reports are made independently of one another and under quite different social and cultural conditions.² Among these details are: the slow and gentle trajectories of airborne objects, the apparent passage of levitated objects through walls and closed doors, and the poltergeist bombardment with human excrement. This convergence of independent testimony cannot easily be brushed aside, because until recently victims of poltergeist disturbances have tended to be unfamiliar both with the literature on the subject (if any existed) and with other contemporaneous cases of the same kind. Furthermore, when close examination of poltergeist cases suggests strongly that those involved share no common underlying needs to experience or report phenomena of this sort (especially in their details), and in the absence of any reasonable proposals about what those needs might be, we simply have to entertain seriously the hypothesis that the phenomena occurred largely as reported.

The literature on apparitions also displays an impressive degree of internal coherence, and perhaps most important, it is not of the sort one would have expected.³ One could argue, following West,⁴ that similarity in apparition reports might be explained in much the same way as we account for similarity in descriptions of ghosts found in popular fiction—namely, as due to widely-diffused ideas about what ghosts should be like. But first-hand reports of apparitions tend to differ strikingly from the apparently popular conception of ghosts. For example, apparitions tend not to engage the subject in prolonged conversations, and they tend not to leave behind physical traces or produce other physical effects.

Of course, it is easy to see how in the nineteenth century the printed word might have spread the general conception of a ghost. But it is unclear whether there was a comparably widespread, general, and familiar conception of an apparition (especially of the living). Although a few discussions of apparitions (as opposed to ghosts) were published during that period, they were arguably neither as popular nor as widely disseminated as accounts of ghosts. Moreover, apparently only a very small number of the percipients surveyed knew each other or had heard about another's experience of an apparition. Many, in fact, had been reluctant to mention their experiences to anyone. Therefore, it does not seem promising to try to explain away the classic apparitional type emerging in *Phantasms of the Living*⁵ by appealing to common mechanisms for disseminating ideas or myths.

The Argument from Human Bias: Initial Considerations

Nevertheless, some might protest that witnesses of ostensibly paranormal phenomena are disposed to see the miraculous or to see what they want, and thus they are prone to misperceive, deceive themselves, and perhaps even lie or exaggerate (possibly unconsciously) to protect their preconceptions. Therefore, they would conclude, it is more reasonable to suppose that some process of motivated misperception, self-deception, or dishonesty is at work than to treat such eyewitness testimony as serious evidence for the paranormal. But this rejoinder is still unsatisfactory, for several reasons.

First, even if witnesses were biased or predisposed to experience paranormal phenomena, that would not explain why the biased misperceptions or reports are similar in so many peculiar details. One would need an elaborate psychological theory (to say the least) to explain why people of dissimilar backgrounds and cultures, with apparently no common needs to experience bizarre phenomena of any sort, independently report (for example) ‘raining’ stones—or excrement—inside a house, the slow and gentle movement of transported objects, or the intense heat of apparent apports.

Moreover, an argument from bias could be used to undermine virtually every scientific report requiring instrument readings and ordinary human observation. After all, it’s not just parapsychologists and ‘plain folk’ who have strong beliefs, desires, and predispositions about how the universe works. Presumably, mainstream scientists have at least as much at stake - and at least as many reasons for perceptual biases—as do witnesses of the paranormal. They might even have more, considering how success in the lab can make or break their careers, especially when their research is novel and potentially groundbreaking.

Furthermore (and more important), the Argument from Human Bias cuts two ways, against reports by the credulous and the incredulous. If our biases may lead one to malobserve, misremember, or lie, then we should be as suspicious of testimony from nonbelievers as from believers. If (based on their favorable dispositions) we distrust reports by the apparently credulous or sympathetic that certain odd phenomena occurred, we should (by parity of reasoning) be equally wary of reports by the incredulous or unsympathetic that the alleged phenomena did *not* occur (or that cheating occurred instead). So, we adopt an indefensible double standard if we distrust only testimony in favor of the paranormal.

For example, the philosopher CJ Ducasse wrote,

... allegations of detection of fraud, or of malobservation, or of misinterpretation of what was observed, or of hypnotically induced hallucinations, have to be scrutinized *as closely and as critically* as must the testimony *for* the reality of the phenomena. For there is likely to be just as much wishful thinking, prejudice, emotion, snap judgment, naiveté, and intellectual dishonesty on the side of orthodoxy, of skepticism, and of conservatism, as on the side of hunger for and of belief in the marvelous. The

emotional motivation for irresponsible disbelief is, in fact, probably even stronger—especially in scientifically educated persons whose pride of knowledge is at stake—than is in other persons the motivation for irresponsible belief.[6](#)

Ducasse's caveat about irresponsible disbelief is buttressed by a wealth of evidence. Possibly the best documented case of this sort concerns Scottish physicist Sir David Brewster.[7](#) Its essentials are as follows. In 1855, Brewster attended two of Home's séances, first (at the invitation of Lord Brougham) in the home of William Cox and then at the Rymers'. After the Cox séance, Home wrote to a friend in the United States, claiming that Brewster and the others had admitted their inability to explain his physical phenomena by any normal means. The letter was subsequently published in some newspapers, and before long the story of the Cox séance traveled back to London, where Home's letter was reprinted in the *Morning Advertiser*. Brewster then wrote to the *Advertiser*, denying that he had found the phenomena inexplicable and charging, 'I saw enough to satisfy myself that they could all be produced by human hands and feet, and to prove that some of them, at least, had such an origin'.[8](#)

Brewster's letter sparked an intense exchange in the *Advertiser*.[9](#) Cox wrote and reminded Brewster that he had remarked at the time, 'This upsets the philosophy of 50 years'. Brewster also alleged that he had not been permitted to look under the table. Cox denied this, as did TA Trollope, who had attended the Rymer séance. Trollope pointed out that Home and Rymer had encouraged Brewster to look under the table, which Brewster did, and that while he looked under the table, the table moved apparently without Home's agency. Trollope also noted that Brewster admitted to having seen the movement. Nevertheless, Brewster refused to retract his claim and then added, somewhat revealingly,

Rather than believe that spirits made the noise, I *will conjecture* that the raps were produced by Mr. Home's toes...and rather than believe that spirits raised the table, I *will conjecture* that it was done by the agency of Mr. Home's feet.[10](#)

It was not until 1869, a year after Brewster's death, that the controversy was settled and Brewster's dishonesty revealed. Brewster's daughter published in that year *The Home Life of Sir David Brewster* (no pun intended), in which she unwittingly included an account by her father of the séances, written at the time. Of the Cox séance he writes,

[Lord Brougham] invited me to accompany him in order to assist in finding out the trick. We four sat down at a moderately-sized table, the structure of which we were invited to examine. In a short time the table shuddered, and a tremulous motion ran up all our arms; at our bidding these motions ceased, and returned. The most unaccountable rappings were produced in various parts of the table; and the table actually rose from the ground when no hand was upon it. A larger table was produced, and exhibited similar movements.

... a small hand-bell was then laid down with its mouth on the carpet, and, after lying for some time, it actually rang when nothing could have touched it.

The bell was then placed on the other side, still upon the carpet, and it came over to me and placed itself in my hand. It did the same to Lord Brougham.

These were the principal experiments; we could give no explanation of them, and could not conjecture how they could be produced by any kind of mechanism.[11](#)

After these revelations, the *Spectator* remarked, rather lamely, 'The hero of science does not acquit himself as we could wish or expect'.

The Argument from Human Bias: Further Considerations

In the previous section, it was granted that witnesses might be predisposed to experience the phenomena they report. But in fact, that concession was unnecessary; it is often false that witnesses are biased in favor of the phenomena. Indeed, it is obvious that many who investigate the paranormal are motivated primarily by curiosity and the need to know (whatever the outcome). In fact, in some of the best cases, witnesses of mediumistic phenomena have clearly been biased *against* the reported phenomena. For example, it would be ludicrous to attribute psi-favorable biases to the skeptics who reluctantly admitted, after careful study of the mediums DD Home and Eusapia Palladino, that their physical phenomena were not produced fraudulently. In fact, the comments of the 'Fraud Squad' investigating Palladino in Naples in 1908, present a case study in cognitive dissonance.[12](#) Similarly, Charles Richet said of his own belief in the physical phenomena of Palladino,

It took me twenty years of patient researches to arrive at my present conviction. Nay,—to make one last confession,—I am not yet even absolutely and irremediably convinced! In spite of the astounding phenomena I have witnessed during my sixty experiments with Eusapia, I have still a trace of doubt; doubt which is weak, indeed to-day, but which may perchance be stronger to-morrow. Yet such doubts, if they come, will not be due so much to any defect in the actual experiment, as to the inexorable strength of prepossession which holds me back from adopting a conclusion which contravenes the habitual and almost unanimous opinion of mankind.[13](#)

Moreover, the careful and detailed accounts of many poltergeist cases suggest strongly that witnesses often neither hoped nor expected to experience the phenomena. Indeed, as Rogo observed, in his review of Gauld and Cornell's *Poltergeists*,

Most people who initially confront the poltergeist, as Gauld shows ..., do not usually assume that anything paranormal is occurring. Their first reaction is to find a normal explanation for the events in question. On this basis, such a witness would not be expected to malobserve a PK event in such a way as to exaggerate the unusualness of the event. He would tend to normalize it. That would be consistent with his motivation.[14](#)

Granted, the belief-systems of many witnesses allow for the possibility of poltergeist and other physical phenomena. But merely being open to the possibility of a phenomenon would not explain why a person actually reports having observed it. Being open to the possibility of a phenomenon is different from being biased or predisposed to observe it or to believe that the phenomenon occurs. For example, although many would concede that it is possible that alien spaceships will visit or have visited the Earth, they might nevertheless assign to such events a probability approaching zero. As a matter of fact, one can be open to the possibility of a phenomenon but be biased *against* observing or believing in it. That is undoubtedly why many parents can be blinded to drug use among their children. Even when they concede that it's not literally impossible that their children use drugs, they might also feel strongly that it's something that happens only in other families.

Furthermore, the probability of misperception through motivated seeing increases as conditions of observation deteriorate. But many of the more dramatic spontaneous phenomena have been observed collectively, near at hand, in good light, with clear heads, etc. In this category belong many of the mediumistic phenomena of Home and Palladino, as well as some of the more spectacular poltergeist manifestations, such as the slow and apparently deliberate movements of objects through the air, enormous quantities of stones seeming to materialize at an indoor ceiling and then 'rain' down upon the room's occupants,¹⁵ and (in the Eleanore Zugun case)¹⁶ the sudden appearance at close range of bite and scratch marks on the hands and face of an ostensible poltergeist agent/victim.

But (some might protest), we know from so-called *staged incident* experiments that people can be guilty of outright malobservation. In studies, subjects are presented with an unexpected and carefully prearranged confrontation or dispute. Later, when questioned about the incident, it turns out they often failed to observe what happened, and sometimes they report things that never occurred. However, these results are irrelevant to the most impressive cases of physical mediumship. For one thing, the magnitude of error demonstrated in staged incidents (while undoubtedly important for determining guilt or innocence in a court of law) is much smaller than what is required to explain away the best mediumistic and poltergeist evidence. But more important, whereas staged incidents encourage malobservation and misreporting, the best non-experimental cases were actually *conducive* to accurate eyewitness testimony. In those latter cases, observers were not taken by surprise; they often knew in advance what to look for (including what sort of deception might be involved); lighting was good; and the phenomena often lingered long enough to permit sustained and repeated observation and hands-on inspection.

As far as apparitions are concerned, many occur when subjects are relaxed. Also, witnesses frequently remark how natural and non-startling the occurrences are. In fact, apparitions are typically recognized as such only after subjects realize that the object apparently perceived had to have been elsewhere. Therefore, although experiences of apparitions are certainly unexpected, they often lack the gut-wrenching element of surprise that might undermine the credibility or reliability of accounts of many normal phenomena. Furthermore, the apparitions tend not to be particularly action-packed; frequently they do no more than appear for a brief time,

and on rare occasions they utter something. Thus, witnesses of apparitions seldom confront the dizzying array of events that witnesses of crimes and staged incidents must remember. It would seem, therefore, that many witnesses of apparitions are in at least as good a position to give accounts of what they experience as are witnesses of ordinary events whose observational prowess is left unchallenged.

Of course, it is with regard to the physical phenomena of the séance room and poltergeist cases that the possibility of malobservation is most frequently invoked. It is well known that dubious and sometimes outlandish observation reports have issued from darkened séance rooms. In fact, there is also semi-experimental evidence showing that under certain (rather poor) séance conditions and for certain kinds of small-scale ostensibly paranormal phenomena (e.g., slate-writing), subjects err in their observations and sometimes report events that never occurred.¹⁷ But the conditions of these tests were much more conducive to malobservation than those in the best studies of mediums, and the magnitude of error in the former (as in staged incidents) is again much smaller than what we would have to posit in the latter.

Similar considerations apply to the skeptical argument that, because memory is notoriously unreliable, witnesses are liable to forget or misremember. For one thing, much of the best testimony from mediumistic cases was written at the time or soon thereafter. In fact, in the Palladino case observations were sometimes dictated on the spot to a nearby stenographer. Furthermore, much of the scientific evidence for memory loss concerns experiments with boring or very ordinary material (e.g., dull stories or nonsense syllables). In fact, evidence confirms the commonsense observation that people tend to remember dramatic, interesting, and relevant events, and that those memories change or fade very little over time. Perhaps it's ironic that one of the best-known critics of eyewitness testimony, Elizabeth Loftus, cites experimental confirmation in support of that position and also approvingly cites DS Gardner's claim that:

The extraordinary, colorful, novel, unusual, and interesting scenes attract our attention and hold our interest, both attention and interest being important aids to memory. The opposite of this principle is inversely true—routine, commonplace and insignificant circumstances are rarely remembered as specific incidents.¹⁸

Loftus also cites experimental support for the commonsense observation that memory reports are more reliable when the perceived events or objects are observed repeatedly or for extended periods.¹⁹ Needless to say, that is precisely one of the reasons the best spontaneous parapsychological cases matter.

Should we suppose, then, that non-experimental case reports demonstrate no more than a natural desire for publicity or notoriety, especially when it might spice up an otherwise humdrum existence? At best, that explanation might work for a small percentage of the non-experimental cases. Often, eyewitnesses clearly have nothing to gain from making depositions about the odd phenomena they believe they observed. Nor have they attempted to capitalize on their experiences. In fact, the notoriety likely to be achieved in most cases is predictably unpleasant. For example, once their plight becomes known, victims of poltergeist disturbances are

frequently subject to harassments of other kinds—in particular, the invasion of privacy by curiosity-seekers, publicity-hungry debunkers, and (especially in times past) the scorn or ridicule of those who attribute the disturbances to the work of the devil or something comparably unsavory.

Similarly, prominent defenders of physical mediumship have usually had to endure a good deal of public and professional derision, and often their careers suffered because of their interest in the paranormal. In the eyes of many, the reputations of both William Crookes and Alfred Russel Wallace were permanently tainted by their interest in spiritualistic phenomena. In fact, Crookes's devotion to mediumistic investigations seems to have earned him, on the whole, more aggravation than public reward.[20](#)

For that matter, observers of ostensibly paranormal phenomena have sometimes withheld information because they feared ridicule or loss of professional prestige and credibility. Of particular interest in this connection are the unreported exhibitions of ESP and unusual physical phenomena that were apparently observed in some early French studies of hypnosis.[21](#) And despite the very promising results of certain nineteenth-century experiments in hypnosis and ESP (dealing with hypnotic induction at a distance), scientists seemed reluctant to pursue the matter and turned their attention to more conservative areas of investigation.[22](#) Thus, Richet admitted, in his disarmingly candid address to the SPR,

In the course of these studies [in somnambulism] I had here and there observed certain facts of lucidity, of premonition, of telepathy; but since these facts were denied and ridiculed on every side, I had not pushed independence of mind so far as to believe them. I deliberately shut my eyes to phenomena which lay plain before me, and rather than discuss them I chose the easier course of denying them altogether. Or, I should rather say, instead of pondering on these inexplicable facts I simply put them aside, and set them down to some illusion, or some error of observation.[23](#)

Critics sometimes appeal to the possibility of collective hypnosis or mass hallucination. Significantly, however, the best-informed skeptics usually avoid this line altogether, and it is easy to see why. First, regarding hypnosis: there is no evidence that the appropriate kind of mass hypnosis has ever occurred—that is, inducing people to issue the same or concordant observational reports in conditions widely recognized as being unfavorable to hypnosis, and (most important) despite the well-known and great variability in human hypnotic susceptibility. Also, considering the amount of good evidence, from different mediums, proponents of this view would have to explain the sheer multiplicity of apparently untrained but prodigiously gifted mesmerists, all of whom were mysteriously able to do what no one has ever explicitly demonstrated—that is, to transcend the variations in human hypnotic susceptibility and induce collective and concordant experiences in unselected subjects, many of whom were taking specific precautions against suggestion.

In fact, if a medium could, through suggestion, get different people simultaneously to experience and report the same phenomena, and also do this under conditions unfavorable to suggestion, arguably that ability would be as paranormal as what it's

supposed to explain away, looking suspiciously like telepathic influence. Moreover, the hypothesis of collective hypnosis is difficult to square with the permanent physical records of the reported phenomena—for example, mechanically recorded measurements, or broken heavy tables shattered from descending too rapidly from previously levitated positions.

The second hypothesis, of collective hallucination, is similarly untenable. It can't remotely account for the continued success under good conditions, and often for many years, of mediums like Home and Palladino. Since witnesses weren't engaged in something like mushroom rituals, there would have to be a lot of spontaneous hallucinating going on, over many decades, resulting in people having the same or similar non-veridical experiences. Besides, this hypothesis fails to account for the causal relevance of the medium's presence. If the medium had nothing to do with witnesses' allegedly false observational reports, why were they hallucinating in the first place? But if the medium was responsible, then (since mediums weren't dispensing hallucinogens) it looks like this hypothesis is really just one of collective hypnosis, which we've seen is inadequate to the facts.

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Endnotes

Footnotes

- [1.](#) Stevenson (1968).
- [2.](#) Gauld & Cornell (1979).
- [3.](#) Gurney, Myers, & Podmore (1886); Tyrrell (1942).
- [4.](#) West (1948).
- [5.](#) Gurney et al (1886).
- [6.](#) Ducasse (1958), 22, (*italics in original*).
- [7.](#) Fodor (1966), 37ff; M.D.D. Home (1888/1976), 36-43; Inglis (1977), 227-29; Jenkins (1982), 32-36; Podmore (1902/1963) vol. 2, 142-44; Zorab (1975); and especially D.D. Home (1863/1972), appendix.
- [8.](#) D.D. Home (1863/1972), 241.
- [9.](#) A relatively accessible source for the correspondence is Home (1863/1972), 237-61.
- [10.](#) Home (1863/1972), 247, (*italics in original*).
- [11.](#) Gordon (1869), 257-58.
- [12.](#) Feilding (1963); Feilding, Baggally, & Carrington (1909).
- [13.](#) Richet (1899), 157.
- [14.](#) Rogo (1979), 334.
- [15.](#) e.g., Healy & Cropper (2014).
- [16.](#) See Gauld & Cornell (1979), 127-42.
- [17.](#) Besterman (1932); Hodgson (1892); Hodgson & Davey (1887).
- [18.](#) Loftus (1979), 27.
- [19.](#) Loftus (1979), 24-25.
- [20.](#) Crookes (1874); Medhurst & Goldney (1964); Medhurst, Goldney, & Barrington (1972).
- [21.](#) See Dingwall (1967), vol. 1, 220ff; and Inglis (1977), 255-56. The reported phenomena resembled those reported later during the heyday of Spiritualism, and included moving needles and suspended balls, apports of various kinds, and even human levitation.
- [22.](#) See Eisenbud (1970), 54-60. Eisenbud properly notes that the spectre of distant telepathic influence was probably intolerably frightening.
- [23.](#) Richet (1899), 153-54.