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'THERE IS NO DEATH':
BELIEF AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
OF REALITY IN A
CANADIAN SPIRITUALIST CHURCH:
A STUDY IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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of
Sociology and Anthropology

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APPROVAL

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'THERE IS NO DEATH': BELIEF AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY IN A

CANADIAN SPIRITUALIST CHURCH: A STUDY IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE.

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ABSTRACT

Individuals and groups interact to coproduce their experience of reality. Individual cultures create culture-specific realities or universes of meaning, in relation to which subgroups may define subuniverses of meaning. The Spiritualist Church movement is one such subuniverse of meaning to which the sociology of knowledge may be usefully applied. The sociology of knowledge maintains that the 'reality' of everyday life is both socially created and paradigmatic, in relation to which individuals weigh and evaluate life's experiences and from which personal meaning is formed. Individuals share in their common cultures which define what is real and what is not.

Spiritualism claims to prove the survival of death through the evidence of spirit mediumship and 'psychic phenomena'. For spiritualists, the world of the spirits is both ontologically real and accessible through mediumship, though mediumship itself is not usually a sensory experience. Mediumship exists as a subjective kind of experience to which is attributed an objective status. In the spiritualist context we may ask, "By what kind of process does the subjective experience of mediumship come to be interpreted as being related to, or involved with, an allegedly objective domain?"

The spiritualist construction of reality occurs on three main levels: the social level, the phenomenological level and the cosmological level. The process of that reality construction is a microcosm of the process at work on a larger scale.

throughout the wider society, and it is through this process that meaning is generated. The spiritualist experience and what it means to be a spiritualist are described and analysed in terms of the spiritualist social construction of reality. The spiritualist "leap of faith" is in the acceptance of what is considered to be "proof" of survival of death. What passes as proof of survival, however, may have little or nothing to do with the veridicality of the evidence or the ontological reality of the associated phenomena. But for spiritualists, daily life is potentially charged with metaphysical significance and the act of daily living itself becomes an act of spiritual significance.

DEDICATION

To my mother and father, Frank and Laura Biscop, on the occasion
of their 50th. anniversary, September 3, 1985. With love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Last, but not least, I owe a debt of gratitude to all the spiritualists and spiritualist churches who welcomed my research and fieldwork.

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I. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thesis arose out of a former thesis (1981) which was concerned with exploring some of the models for spirit possession in relation to local spiritist (spiritualist) mediums. One of the conclusions of that thesis was that while following the positivist paradigm prevalent in the social sciences allows us to collect and analyse certain kinds of data, following it does not allow us to address the question of meaning. That is to say, the paradigm has both its usefulness and its limitations. It does not address the question of what it means to be any particular kind of thing, nor what it means to have any particular kind of experience.⁽¹⁾

The former thesis concluded that, "in dealing with human beings, including that realm of human endeavour known as knowledge, one must, at some point, address the problem of meaning in any given area."(p. 122) It was in an effort to address the question of meaning that the present study was undertaken, being considerably expanded both theoretically and empirically beyond the previous thesis. While the former thesis was based on interviews with six trance possession mediums who served one particular spiritualist church and on fieldwork done

in that church, the present thesis is more broadly based. It includes protracted fieldwork in one particular church but also includes fieldwork done in a number of other spiritualist churches in Canada and the United States.

As well, the present thesis is concerned with the spiritualist movement as a whole as reflected in the various churches, and it is concerned with spiritualist mediumship as both a major part of the churches and of the experience of spiritualists in constructing their view of reality. Personal meaning is related to and part of group meaning. Expressed in somewhat mathematical language, personal meaning is a subset of the set of group meaning, a subset through which group meaning is embodied and expressed. Knowledge is related to what is relevant to the individual and the group, and it is that relevance which determines what particular ways of thinking, feeling and acting will become attached to the belief system.

In the spiritualist context, mediumship is a central element, the 'meaning' of which is generated through three levels of relevance: to the group as a whole, to individual mediums, and to individual spiritualists. These three levels of relevance intersect at various points within the framework of the movement. It is through observation and analysis of such relevance structures that one can move toward the articulation of meaning. It is to the question of meaning that the sociology of knowledge is addressed, and it is the sociology of knowledge which provides the theoretical referent of the present thesis.

The ethnographic data was collected through fieldwork as an 'insider'. Since spiritualist church groups vary considerably (2) while adhering to a general kind of structure and belief system, the ethnographic material is presented more or less as if it were describing only one group, based as it is mainly on one particular church group, as others have done previously (Skultans, 1974). While it is not a model per se, it appears more like a composite picture in that material from another group may be integrated into the description for reading ease. However, where this occurs the text or notes indicate such differences. While the ethnographic data are derived mainly from one particular church, they represent some twelve Canadian churches and three American churches.

The role of participant observer as an insider was made possible by ten years of personal interest and involvement in the movement, and in interest in related matters such as parapsychology and shamanism. It was felt by spiritualists that because of my personal interest I would be unlikely to write anything offensive to them or to the movement. However, my first thesis was met with some negative reaction on the part of some spiritualists. Accordingly, while I cannot guarantee that no spiritualist will react negatively to all or part of this thesis, it is to be hoped that I have not unfairly treated either individual spiritualists or individual spiritualist churches. In addition to insider participant observation as a known anthropological fieldworker, observation as an 'interested

person' was also used, particularly in American spiritualist churches. As an insider participant observer I was actively involved as a full member of the particular church participating in all aspects of the church and attending at least one service per week and frequently being in attendance at some other activity at least one more time per week. At times attendance may have risen to four times per week. As a fully participating member, I also socialized frequently with the church as a whole and with various members or groups of members and as a member of the executive I was privy to many of the most intimate and important decisions and interactions of the church.

METHODOLOGY: The Role of Insider

An 'insider' position may be achieved in one of two ways. It may be achieved through taking on the role of insider. Indeed, the very goal of participant observation, the prime methodology of social anthropology, is to become a kind of insider, the traditional role of the anthropological fieldworker. Nonetheless, in most field situations one always remains an outsider, by reason of cultural or ethnic or socioeconomic factors. However much the anthropologist participates in the life of the tribe or village or group, everyone is aware to some extent at least that the anthropologist is an outsider.

But there is another way of achieving an insider position, and that is to begin as an insider and to adopt the role of anthropologist. The shift in consciousness is, in this case, the mirror image of the former, as it were, but it is really no different from it in process. In another sense, however, there is a difference, a profound but subtle difference. The difference is one of personal investment and of risks to that investment.

The anthropologist adopting an insider position has a personal investment in the results of fieldwork. One's career is affected by it, and much future academic work may be related to it. But the adopting of the insider role does not carry with it a personal investment in the studied people themselves: at the end of fieldwork the anthropologist will pack up his tent and go home. Personal life is quite separate from the studied group, though the fieldworker may retain some personal ties, as is often the case. But they are ties at a distance, not ties at home.

The fieldworker who begins as an insider has a double investment in that there is an investment in the group itself and an investment in the role of anthropologist and the outcome of the fieldwork. One may threaten, damage or destroy the other. Or both may be destroyed. In addressing the risks, the fieldworker must address both long and short term priorities of an acutely personal nature.

The training of an anthropologist is both a critical and an analytical one. In attempting to comprehend the behaviour of other human beings, one is turned back, at some point, on one's self; that process of reflection, through training, may deal the death blow to personal investment as an insider. That is the risk.

There may be a saving factor, however. If the role of anthropologist is adopted at a point in time of diminished or diminishing investment in the group to be observed, then the risk is minimized and the possibilities for better work are concomitantly increased. Only the individual can assess this situation. Alternately one may find the effort required in the role of anthropologist itself may simply bring with it, in time, a lessening of personal investment. The effect, in either case, is the same. One must be prepared to accept the consequences of the situation. Such was my own case, wherein I began as an insider adopting the role of anthropologist and ended as anthropologist adopting the role of insider.

There are obvious advantages and disadvantages, methodologically speaking, to doing fieldwork as an insider of the second kind. My own experience has led to the perception of eight advantages and eight disadvantages, which may, however, be weighted differently. The advantages include: (1) an increased awareness and understanding of the observed group; (2) enjoyment of an increased or ready made trust of the group; (3) subtleties of all kinds are more easily perceived; (4) social interactions

tend to be more transparent; (5) personal relations are easier to form; (6) there is no need for translation, either linguistically or symbolically; (7) fewer new contacts will be required; and finally, (8) a fuller and more accurate ethnography is more possible.

On the side of disadvantages, (1) there is a risk of decreased objectivity; (2) one may be hesitant to report negative or unpleasant observations; (3) further, there may be a hesitancy to report 'sensitive' material; (4) because various things may be taken for granted, they may be missed or downplayed; (5) similarly, what might be obvious to an outsider might be missed or ignored by an insider; (6) personal relations may be damaged by the ethnographic reporting; (7) one's personal investment in the observed group, in other than personal relations, may likewise be lessened, damaged or destroyed; and finally, (8) one's very familiarity with the language, concepts and behaviour may obscure the possible danger that the actual ethnographic information is not as clear to others as it is to one's self.

it will be seen that while all of the advantages are primarily methodological, some of the disadvantages are entirely personal, though they run a methodological risk as well. It is in the disadvantages that weighting is likely to become more important than it is in terms of the advantages, and it is here where priorities and personal investment must be addressed, a task which only the individual can accomplish.

Perhaps not so obvious are a number of other concerns in the matter of undertaking fieldwork as an insider. The traditional field areas of social anthropology have been tribal and peasant societies, or cultures that may appear to be more exotic than one's own. In choosing the role of insider, one is more apt to be working in some sector of one's own culture, and tend to feel deprived of the conceptual and psychological experience of working in a foreign culture. Nonetheless, the process of 'doing' anthropology is still the same, and the training in anthropology is not training in a particular culture, but rather training in that process of doing anthropology. Readings in ethnography acquaint the beginning fieldworker with a diversity of cultures and methodologies, and the proficiency acquired first 'at home' may be utilized further afield at a later date.

Apart from methodological considerations, the insider fieldworker may face several kinds of psychological tension and conflict. To begin with, conflict may arise between the theoretical framework with which the fieldworker is working and the behaviour of the observed group. While this may be a problem for any fieldworker, it may become intensified for the insider, who may wonder if observation is at fault because of the insider position, or if the group does not fit the theory, and if not, why not? Perhaps more importantly, conflict may arise through data analysis: discrepancies may appear between what is perceived as true as a result of analysis, and what is believed

true as an insider.

The result of this might be the suppression of data or analysis (consciously or unconsciously); or a readjustment in the belief system might occur. However, resolution might also occur through some form of withdrawal from the observed group either personally or psychologically or conceptually. The withdrawal might be into skepticism or cynicism, applied either generally or to specific institutions, groups or belief systems. Yet another possibility is resolution through dialectic. New insight into the old (insider) situation might lead to a synthesis between data/theory and personal belief, leading to retention of the theory and modification of the belief system, without complete loss of either one.

My own fieldwork was begun as an insider of the second kind, in which case the role of anthropologist was the adopted one. Over time, a reversal of sorts took place, whereby the role of anthropologist became the dominant one. (3) The major methodology, then, was insider participant observation as a known and recognized insider, except for a brief period of fieldwork outside the local area in which case I appeared as an interested outsider. Field notes were made after actual observation, as quickly and discretely as possible, though it was often known that I was making notes. Occasionally I met with some suspicion, but generally was not interfered with; and occasionally someone pointed out something that "should be put in the thesis", though it may or may not have been included. At a later date,

observational material was arranged under the three categories of social, phenomenological and cosmological. The actual data analysis is qualitative rather than quantitative, in keeping with the theoretical framework and objectives of the thesis. I do not claim to have tested a theory or examined a model. I merely applied a theory which appealed to me personally and which explicitly is directed to the kind of issues I wished to investigate, and which seemed workable under the conditions of the study. Many more similar studies would have to be undertaken before it could be claimed that the theory had been tested. Nonetheless, I have found the theory to be highly workable, achieving what I had hoped it would achieve, an understanding of what it means to be a particular kind of human being, a spiritualist.

Other recent academic studies of spiritualist groups have adopted different theoretical approaches. Nelson's (1969) study of British spiritualism was undertaken from a broad sociological point of view, while Moore's studies (1972, 1977) have been studies in cultural history. Skultans (1974; 1976) adapted Lewis' (1971) study of possession cults to a Welsh context. Zaretsky (1974) undertook an ethnolinguistic analysis of spiritualist argot in use among Bay City area spiritualists, while Macklin (1977) demonstrated how one could choose to view New England spiritualist trance mediums as either peripheral to mainstream culture (and possibly pathological) or as sharing in mainstream American values.⁽⁴⁾ Biscop (1981) also drew upon Lewis' work,

while Tschanz (1981) made use of Zaretsky's approach.

The implications of the present research are rather broad. Many more questions remain to be asked and answered. The theory of the social construction of reality might be applied in many contexts. Because it is a macro theory, it is impractical to apply it empirically on a macro level, but it can (as in this instance) be applied to smaller groups or subgroups within the wider society in an empirical manner. It might be applied in a particularly useful fashion to what are commonly called deviant subgroups within the society but to marginal or fringe groups as well. In fact, it might even be applicable to certain kinds of individuals; for example, it could be asked how a delusional schizophrenic constructs personal reality.

In regard to spiritualism and spiritualists, many questions remain. How spiritualists integrate their identity as spiritualists and members of a marginal group with their identities as members of the wider society is not taken up here; it remains an open question. One might also ask as to what becomes of those who leave the movement; have they, for example, failed to identify with mediums or to accept mediumship as proving survival.

For anthropologists there is the question as to the relationship of spiritualism to spiritistic groups and phenomena found cross-culturally. Certainly there are obvious comparisons to the spirit mediums, diviners, healers, shamans, sorcerers and witches of other cultures. The broader question of why and how

such groups sustain their existence in a scientific and technological society remains, perhaps bound up with remnants of magical thinking or psychological phenomena that have yet to be researched. In summary then, while this study answers certain kinds of questions, it is to be hoped that it raises even more questions yet to be answered.

NOTES

NOTES

1. Psychology has long recognized the inherent human drives, but on a social level, it can be argued that the "urge to meaning" is as much a human drive as any of the more biologically based drives. Human beings not only experience life: they interpret their experiences and give meaning to them.
2. The first major division in the spiritualist movement is that of the English language form as against that of the romance language form. The former may or may not include a belief in reincarnation, while the latter includes such a belief as one of its principles. The second major division is that of the christian spiritualist churches as against the non-christian spiritualist churches. Specific church groups may define their christian elements differently from others, so considerable variation in belief structure is possible. This variation in turn will have some bearing on the other structures and activities of the particular church group.
3. Without belabouring the point, it should be noted that the role reversal from insider to social scientist is qualitatively different from that of the social scientist 'becoming' and insider.
4. In a related area, that of parapsychology, Collins and Pinch (1982) demonstrated that the same data- studies of supposed paranormal metal bending- could be used to support theoretically and paradigmatically opposed points of view.

II. CHAPTER TWO: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Introduction

The primary concern of the sociology of knowledge is the relationship between thought and its social context. It is precisely that relationship between spiritualist thought and its socio-religious context that will be explored in the present thesis, using the analytical tools laid out in this chapter. Berger and Luckmann claim that the roots of the sociology of knowledge are to be found in 19th century German historical scholarship, combined with elements from Marx, Nietzsche and others. "It is from Marx that the sociology of knowledge derived its root proposition that man's consciousness is determined by his social being." (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.5) Both Marx and Nietzsche were also concerned with the political dimensions of the relationship of consciousness to social life. The notions of 'ideology', 'false consciousness',⁽¹⁾ and of struggles for power on various levels including that of ideation, have entered the discipline from them. (Ibid., pp.5,6) The political dimensions of the relationship of consciousness to social life may be seen in small groups as well as on a larger scale throughout the society. From historical scholarship comes the idea of "the inevitable historicity of human thought" (Ibid., p7), and if one is to understand present day spiritualism, some historical

background is useful, as will be found in chapter 3.

Scheler contributed the concept of the a priori nature of human knowledge in respect to human experience: human experience is related to a priori knowledge as a given and, moreover, as the natural way of perceiving the world. (Ibid.) Mannheim's concern was with the phenomenon of ideology, feeling that, "ideologizing influences, while they could not be eradicated completely, could be mitigated by the systematic analysis of as many as possible of the varying socially grounded positions." (Ibid, pp.8,9) Clarity could accordingly be achieved, and it was to the task of arriving at such clarity that the sociology of knowledge was directed. Merton's concepts of "manifest" and "latent" functions have been utilized to distinguish between the consciously intended and the unconsciously unintended functions of ideas. (Ibid., p.10) Thus the central question for the sociology of knowledge, as it has been arrived at under those varying influences, and as it will be applied to the spiritualist case, can be formulated, "as follows: How is it possible that the subjective meanings become objective facticities?" (Ibid., p.17) It is to the answering of this question that the theory of the social construction of reality, one of the major formulations of the sociology of knowledge, is addressed. (2) The social construction of reality begins with the process of socialization. As will be demonstrated below, socialization into any group of importance to an individual, such as a religious affiliation, will tend to be a microcosm of

the larger process of socialization; or, it will be a less emotionally charged process of secondary socialization. It is through socialization process that identity begins to be created.

Socialization and Identity

As human beings, we are born into a pre-existing human culture and human society. As a species, homo sapiens, we share with all other human beings a general level of physicality: bodies with sensory apparatus. But beyond a simple level of bodily functioning, our experience of being in the physical world is conditioned, and to a very considerable degree, determined by, the culture and society into which we are born. Even our sensory apparatus may be conditioned by that culture and society. ⁽³⁾ Certainly some kinds of bodily functioning are limited by culture and society: sexual expression is limited in varying ways in various societies, and society affirms what is right and proper for nourishment. "One man's meat is another man's poison" can be literally true: faced with the prospect of eating certain foods, whether they be useable by the body or not, the stomach may involuntarily revolt. The sago-palm larvae so valued by the ~~Asmat~~ people of Papua-New Guinea, would undoubtedly prove quite unpalatable to the most sophisticated gastronome of Vancouver.

Because we are born into a social world, consisting at least of mother and child, the "first and most original empirical observation" we make, as Schutz says, is that of "the existence of other human beings and of the meaning of their actions." (Schutz, 1954; as in Thompson & Tunstall, 1971, p.494) It is from that social interaction that we begin to formulate the sense of ourselves. Our first experience of the "social dialectic" occurs as the experience of the interaction of mother and child, in a relatively undifferentiated kind of way (i.e. others may occupy the role of Mother). The first experience of identity differentiation is that of the offspring as separate from the Mother, however nebulous that differentiation may be. The self, as experienced by the individual, is a self experienced in relation to others, the significant others ⁽⁴⁾ in the individual's life:

the self is a reflected entity, reflecting the attitudes first taken by significant others toward it; the individual becomes what he is addressed as by his significant others. ... It entails a dialectic between identification by others and self-identification, between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity. The dialectic which is present each moment the individual identifies with his significant others is, as it were, the particularization in individual life of the general dialectic of society... (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.121) ⁽⁵⁾

The child's first experience of a social role is that of the Mother, and from there the child expands to the roles of significant others in its life. Attitudes and roles are experienced together, and abstraction gradually occurs as the child moves from roles and attitudes of significant others to

roles and attitudes in general. The child's first face-to-face interaction is with significant others, and it is from these first face-to-face interactions that the meanings of social life are apprehended, which later will allow a continuity of meaning when dealing with generalized others. For the young child, the social world and the natural world are the same. It is only later that they come to be distinguished.

"...Language appears to the child as inherent in the nature of things, and he cannot grasp the notion of conventionality. A thing is what it is called, and it could not be called anything else." (Berger & Luckmann, op. cit., p.56) Language is experienced as an objectivity or 'facticity'. Language is; it exists, and it exists apart from and prior to, the individual's grasp of it. Language is perhaps the prime facticity, being the instrument of inner life (thought processes) and of social life, or 'outer' life: without language, both social life and thinking would not be possible.

Because language learning is, in itself, an internalizing process in which an "objective facticity" (language) is internalized to the extent, even, that it provides cognitive structures,⁽⁶⁾ language learning may be perceived as the paradigmatic process for all socialization. "The common objectifications of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification." (Berger & Luckmann, Ibid., p.35) Because linguistic signification itself is a cultural product and reflective of the culture that devises and uses it, cultural

factors are internalized through the language and then absorbed into individual cognitive structures, of which language is such an important part.⁽⁷⁾

Primary or initial socialization introduces the individual to the basic building blocks of social life with which 'reality' will be constructed and experienced as a thing apart from its creator. In the exchange between mother and child, the individual is presented with the first face-to-face situation, in which "the other's subjectivity is available ... through a maximum of symptoms." (Berger & Luckmann, p.28) Those symptoms include an entire range of auditory, tactile, verbal and non-verbal gestures and actions, which may or may not be correctly interpreted, but "no other form of social relating can reproduce the plenitude of symptoms of subjectivity present in the face-to-face situation. Only here is the other's subjectivity emphatically 'close'. All other forms of relating to the other are, in varying degrees, 'remote'." (Berger & Luckmann, p.28) And it is just such face-to-face situations that the dialectic of identity between self and its reflections through significant, and later generalized others, begins.

The first experience of social roles begins likewise in the initial face-to-face situations with significant others, abstracted later to cover generalized situations and others.

Language ties together both the inner world and the outer world, and in the process of learning language, is reflected the entire socialization process. Both subjectivity and

objectivities are conveyed through language, and language comes to be the single greatest cohesive factor in life, as it is lived individually and collectively. Through language, it is possible to speak about or deal with matters that are not found in the face-to-face situation. Accordingly, language both structures, binds and transcends at the same time, extending the face-to-face situation to an almost infinite radius. Thus, in primary socialization, we are confronted with three basic building blocks of social life and the social construction of reality: face-to-face situations, roles, and language. Over time, the individual's comprehension and utilization of all three will grow. The experience of all three begins in and relates to everyday life as it is lived in social situations, but over time expansion occurs to cover a broader range of possibilities than only everyday life. Still, our initial experience of life begins in the context of everyday life, and the social structures we create are based on the three basic units which arise in the context of everyday life. The three 'basic building blocks' of social life are likewise utilized in secondary socialization, which, in many respect, repeats the process of primary socialization but with a lessor emotional 'charge'. This situation of secondary socialization repeating the process of primary socialization will be seen in the case of the new-comer, or 'novitiate' spiritualist's initial socialization into spiritualism, as discussed below.

The reality of everyday life is, then, the prime or paradigmatic reality on which we base all other realities and to which we relate all other experiences for adjudication.

The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I know that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubt about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life. This suspension of doubt is so firm that to abandon it, as I might want to do, say, in theoretical or religious contemplation, I have to make an extreme transition. (Berger & Luckmann, Ibid., p.23)

As basic as it may be, however, the reality of everyday life is not the only reality that the individual encounters throughout the lifetime.

Dreams, meditative states, drug-induced states or other kinds of trance conditions, aesthetic and religious experience are all 'realities' as well as is the prime reality of everyday life. These states are 'realities' in that they are experienced as 'real' and reacted to, as such, though they are distinguished from, and related to, the reality of everyday life. Everyday reality, in this sense includes the possibility of such 'other' realities. They are realities to which most of us will succumb at one time or another, each having its own coerciveness to one extent or another. But each may be considered a "finite province of meaning" (Berger and Luckmann, p.24), a sub-set of the everyday reality to which consciousness always returns. That is to say, we may consider everyday reality as a set of meanings, the 'exact' number of which is culturally determined, and which

is composed of x number of subsets of meaning which are finite or defined within the limits of the set. Each finite province of meaning is characterized by a shift in the attention of consciousness away from everyday reality. "While there are, of course, shifts in attention within everyday life, the shift to a finite province of meaning is of a much more radical kind. A radical change takes place in the tension of consciousness. In the context of religious experience this has been aptly called 'leaping'." (Berger & Luckmann, p.25) In the spiritualist context, this 'leaping' is a specific kind of 'leap of faith' which, once taken, then allows spiritualist 'reality' to become the prime sub-set of everyday reality, transforming the consciousness of everyday reality itself, so that the consciousness of everyday reality becomes a spiritualist consciousness of everyday reality.

It is language which assures, nonetheless, the paramount position of the reality of the everyday world. That everyday world is structured both temporally and spatially: the "stream of consciousness" is such that it is ordered temporally, and temporality is in itself ordered in different levels as it is available both intrasubjectively and intersubjectively, as in psychic or inner (or 'biological') time and the socially created calendar and clock. Because language deals with the 'here and now' and yet is capable of transcending the mundane and the present, "language bridges different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole. The

transcendences have spatial, temporal and social dimensions." (Berger & Luckmann, p.37) In its transcendent ability, language can make present in the here and now that which is not present.

' "Ipso facto a vast accumulation of experiences and meanings can become objectified in the 'here and now'. Put simply, through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment" (Ibid.), including the 'world' of transcendent reality, the spiritual world; or, in the case of spiritualists, the 'world' of the spirits, which is both transcendent of and interpenetrating with the social and physical world.

The reality of everyday life is apprehended as an ordered reality, in which is found an array of things that have already been designated as objects before my arrival on the scene. The phenomena of everyday life, no matter how mundane, seem prearranged in independent patterns that are beyond my control. Language itself provides categories with which I might apprehend others in apparently objective ways: I apprehend my friend as 'friend', as 'companion', as a 'man', as 'young', 'middleclass', 'athletic' or 'scholarly' and so forth. These categories are categories signifying schemes or patterns that have already been typified by the culture in which I live. They are typificatory schemes by which the other is apprehended. Such typificatory schemes make the social world both knowable and known. In face-to-face situations, they are reciprocal; my friend apprehends me in much the same way that I apprehend him, with allowances for individual differences in personal biographies.

There is, nonetheless, an element of 'negotiation' in such typificatory situations even in a face-to-face context, but such negotiation itself tends to be pre-arranged: my friend may choose to interact in an unexpected manner, but there may be predictability in the conditions under which he may so act in unexpected ways. (8) In the case of subgroups of specific nature, such as religious groups, these typified situations may be both 'formal' as in religious services, or 'informal' as in social events or parties, etc.. The further removed from face-to-face situations that typifications of social interaction become, the more anonymous they become, and the less direct they become. There still may be means available, such as personal interest or similarities of experience, to make removed situations less removed and anonymous. The details of personal biographies may be called upon in this personalizing way which renders a potentially anonymous situation more like a face-to-face situation. The demonstrations of mediumship that occur in spiritualist churches on the part of mediums may often be seen to incorporate personal biographical elements which help to make a potentially anonymous or depersonalized situation into a resemblance of a face to face situation. For example, the anonymous quality of a spiritualist 'Billet Reading', as will be discussed below, becomes 'personalized' through interjections by the medium in reference to her own biography, in this case in reference to her 'fit' of depression. Again, typificatory schemes are important here. "Social structure is the sum total

of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life." (Ibid., p.32)

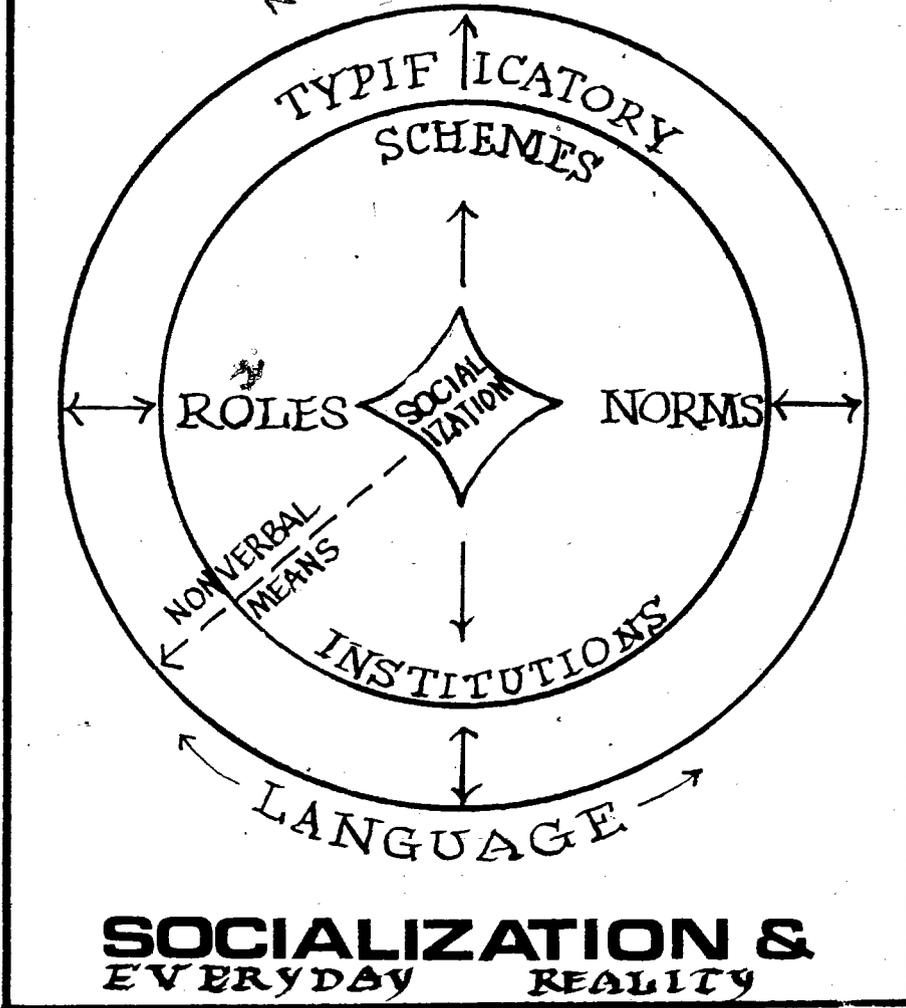
Such typifications serve not only as an ongoing guide to social interaction, but also serve as indices of the subjective intentions and meanings of the other. Where there is no face-to-face situation, language provides the prime guide to subjectivity, through its transcendent capacity, making the temporally and spatially removed present in the here-and-now. The long distance telephone call through various time zones is an example, where additional (non-verbal) factors may or may not be present. Non-verbal factors themselves, of course, are subject to typificatory schemes⁽⁹⁾: a sigh is just a sigh, but it may be assigned a typical meaning, the context of which will provide clues as to its correct meaning.

The reality of everyday life is a taken-for-granted reality. It is apprehended in an ongoing way through a series of typificatory schemes which, while negotiable, are built into predictable known patterns learned, as part of the social stock of knowledge, as we go through life. Our own subjectivity and that of others is available to us through language, typificatory schemes and non-verbal behaviour. Such means are necessary for predictability: without the possibility of predictability, social interaction falls into chaos. We begin to learn typificatory schemes and to experience predictability from birth

onwards. Each culture creates for itself appropriate and acceptable behaviour patterns which are internalized through socialization. Socialization is based on everyday life, as is language which objectifies, enshrines and crystalizes typifications and the norms of culture. The social roles which cultures create and the institutions provided for enacting them are experienced first in face-to-face situations and are legitimated in the culture itself. Meaning and subjectivity are both conveyed through language⁽¹⁰⁾ and typificatory schemes, bolstered by non-verbal behavior which is itself typified. We might diagram this interactive process as follows:.

Figure

2.1 :



Institutionalization

Each human culture builds for itself, in an ongoing process, a social stock of knowledge based first on the pragmatics of everyday life. That social stock of knowledge, which contains a large measure of "recipe knowledge" as well as

more specialized knowledge, is also socially distributed. Repeating the same typificatory schemes, or habitualization, leads to institutionalization. Occurring where types of actors (social types if you will) reciprocally engage in habitualized actions, institutionalization provides a direction for activity that might otherwise be lacking. (p. 51)

Through a shared history, reciprocal typifications of action are built up, and provide on-going "objective" patterns of conduct. By so doing, these reciprocal typifications of action become elements in the control of human conduct. In fact, institutionalization is almost inevitable in every case where a social situation continues over time. Institutions may or may not be accompanied by mechanisms of sanctions for their support; nonetheless, by their very nature they have coerciveness and effectiveness as social control elements, "by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible." (Ibid., p.52) In spiritualist development circles, for example, patterns of conduct are predefined and controlled by the circle leader, thus leading to a kind of consensus that is submitted to the leader for interpretation and validation.

Each culture as well sets limits on the amount of deviance possible in terms of predefined conduct patterns. Even deviance itself will tend to be expressed in predefined patterns. What is typified in any context will be what is relevant to those

concerned, in their common situation. From face-to-face situations, larger relevance structures will be constructed. "An institutional world, then, is experienced as an objective reality. It has a history that antedates the individual's birth and is not accessible to his biographical recollection." (Ibid., p.56) It may, however, exist in written form, and thus be available.

Nonetheless, because of the interconnectedness of social relationships, the individual's biography is still able to be located within the objective history of the society, and the institutions of the society will be experienced as objective and historical facticities, with coercive power over the individual. That coercive power comes from control mechanisms usually attached to them and from "the sheer force of their facticity." (Ibid., p.57) While the social world, for the individual, is experienced as an objective world, it is nonetheless humanly produced, and "does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it." (p.57)⁽¹¹⁾

Beyond a certain level of physical functioning in the natural world, the individual is immersed in, and molded by, the socially objectivated and socially produced world. Self-identity is achieved in relation to that social world, with its institutions, its common stock of knowledge, its roles and norms.

The Common Stock of Knowledge

Social interaction is affected by the common participation of the actors in the social stock of knowledge that is available to them. A considerable amount of knowledge is 'recipe knowledge', knowledge limited to "pragmatic competence in routine performances." (Ibid., p.40) As long as life presents no major problems, there is no need to go beyond this recipe knowledge. It is only when experience provides elements that are unfamiliar (anomalous situations) or when problems are presented that fail to become resolved by 'recipe knowledge', that we are forced to move beyond the formulaic.

For the most part, however, the social stock of knowledge is adequate for our needs, having been created by the culture into which we have been born, and being there before us. The reality of everyday life is presented to us through the social stock of knowledge, which is available to us in varying degrees from the very familiar to the very remote (p.42) and is structured in terms of relevance. Some of my relevance structures will be determined by practical or pragmatic interests, and others by my overall position in society. Of course, relevance structures of mine will intersect with those of others at various points. This becomes especially apparent where there are common roles. Accordingly, the knowledge of the relevance structures of others is an extremely important element in the knowledge of everyday life. Within specific subgroups,

those relevance structures may be both group-created and personally or individually, created. (pp.42,43)

The social stock of knowledge presents itself as an integrated whole and, related as it is to pragmatic everyday reality, it has as well a taken-for-granted quality. Accordingly, it provides the 'natural' means to integrate discrete and diverse elements of personal knowledge and experience. It includes both the basic relevance structures for everyday life as well as its own relevance structure. (Ibid., pp.41-43) The social stock of knowledge is also socially distributed, "possessed differently by different individuals and types of individuals. (Ibid., p.43) It includes sociological relevance structures: I know how to act as a man, and I both know and experience 'manly' emotions.

The character of the self as a social product is not limited to the particular configuration the individual identifies as himself (for instance, as "a man" in the particular way in which this identity is defined and formed in the culture in question), but to the comprehensive psychological equipment that serves as an appendage to the particular configuration (for instance, "manly" emotions, attitudes and even somatic reactions.) It goes without saying, then, that the organism and, even more, the self cannot be adequately understood apart from the particular social context in which they were shaped. (Ibid., p.48)

That is to say, many kinds of emotions are socially created.

When situations are encountered that are at odds with the socially known and expected - situations tending to be outside the bounds of social norms, or anomalous situations- conflict may occur on both emotional and cognitive levels. For example, cultural dictates may decide that it is 'unmanly' to cry under

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certain conditions. Because of the social stock of knowledge, I will recognize such conditions yet react to them in ways that are outside cultural dictates: I may actually wish to cry but may block both the emotions leading to crying (emotional or psychological level) as well as the act of crying itself (somatic level). Such a conflicting situation may be reacted to as an anomalous situation, one which is outside the bounds of ordinary social knowledge and norms. While it may be recognized cognitively that it is unmanly to cry in the situation, there is also an emotional component which may block the act of crying itself. Anomalous experiences may then include anomalous emotional factors as well as cognitive factors. In a situation or context in which these anomalous experiences are 'resolved', the emotional resolution that results may add additional strength and support to the cognitive resolution. (Or, resolution may be only partial: cognitive but not emotional, and vice-versa, in which case some kind of tension remains.)

Social Knowledge and 'Cognitive Assonance'

Where there is collectively relevant conduct, institutionalization may take place. In general, the integration of the institutional order can only be understood in terms of the knowledge the social actors have of it; but the various segments that together comprise our experience of the social construction of everyday reality may or may not be integrated

with one another either logically or in terms of how they work together. (p.59) Nonetheless, because some relevance structures will be common to all members of a collectivity, institutions in general will tend to integrated and everyday reality appear as a unity.

More importantly perhaps is the need for cognitive assonance on both group and individual level. That is to say, while social roles and performances can be segregated, "meanings tend toward at least minimal consistency. As the individual reflects about the successive moments of his experience, he tries to fit their meanings into a consistent biographical framework. This tendency increases as the individual shares with others his meanings and their biographical integration." (Ibid., p.60) Because of this individual and group integration, it becomes possible to delineate group meaning, if not individual meaning. Accordingly, we can speak of the 'meaning' of being a 'spiritualist', or of the meaning of being an individual in a specific subgroup context. The individual experiences his social view of the world as a consistent whole and will tend to explain its functioning, or even its malfunctioning, in terms of his knowledge of that world as a consistent whole. (Ibid., p.61) Language is the means by which logic is imposed or superimposed on the objectivated social world (p.60), the social world appearing as an objective fact for those within it, and language provides the major integrative factor in that world.

The knowledge that both individuals and collectivities have of the institutional order is primarily of a 'pre-theoretical' nature. It is pragmatic knowledge, of which 'recipe knowledge', maxims, morals, proverbs, folk wisdom, myths, values and beliefs comprise the bulk of this pre-theoretical knowledge. Such knowledge will not only define institutionalized areas of conduct, it will also define the social situations covered by them. Because it also constructs and defines the roles appropriate to the institutionalized areas, it both predicts and controls the actual conduct in the institutionalized areas by providing ready-made (and known) patterns of action and interaction.

Since this knowledge is itself socially objectivated as knowledge per se, as a valid description of reality, any form of deviance from the institutional order will summarily be defined as a departure from reality and be categorized according to socially constructed deviance categories such as mental illness, moral laxness or depravity, ignorance or whatever other deviant categories the collectivity has defined. (p.62) Individuals who may fall into such categories will not only experience whatever social sanctions may be accorded to them, but also, dependent on individual socialization, will experience psychological tension or suffering as well.⁽¹²⁾ Because that which is unknown will tend to be assimilated into the framework and categories of the known, cognitive assonance will be maintained by both individuals and the collectivity,⁽¹³⁾ in terms of the social

stock of knowledge.

Roles and the Transmission of Knowledge

As several individuals come to share common biographical features, a common stock of knowledge becomes available and, once objectivated in language or a sign system of some kind, the possibility then arises for reiterated objectification of those shared experiences. They are then available as objectivities for others, present or future, who share the same sign system. Language or the sign system provides a means for the objectifying of new experiences as well, and allows them entry into the pre-existing stock of knowledge with the possibility of future transmission. The spiritualist forms of mediumship began with the Fox sisters in 1848; their experiences first became known by word of mouth, then were reported in the press. It was not long after discussions appeared in the press that other mediums began coming forward, as discussed below in chapter 3. Once designated linguistically, language abstracts the experiences from individual biographies and makes them anonymous. Accordingly, language becomes the repository of collective experiences, but, once the experiences become anonymous through their objectification in language, the origin of the experiences can become lost and tradition may invent different origins, in which case the past history of the collectivity can be restructured or reinterpreted without

damaging the institutional order. (pp.63-65)

It is the objectivated meanings of institutional activity that will be transmitted as knowledge, based on the recognition of the institution as a pragmatic and permanent solution to a permanent problem. Some types of individuals may be designated as official transmitters of the social knowledge, while other types may be designated as recipients. The actual transmission of the knowledge may also be typified, and various devices may be used in the transmission. (pp.65-67)

Difficulties in the legitimation of meaning and their transmission may arise either through socialization - conflicting or successive meanings may not be easily internalized - or through conflict between either the meanings themselves or the legitimators of those meanings. Again, "no a priori consistency, let alone functionality, may be presumed as existing between different institutions and the forms of transmission of knowledge pertaining to them." (p.67)

When performances, the routine enactment of social situations, become typified and therefore objectified, roles become possible. Through roles, both the acting self and acting others may become typified. "We can properly begin to speak of roles when this kind of typification occurs in the context of an objectified stock of knowledge common to a collectivity of actors." (p.69) That is, both specific actions and forms of action may become typified, and therefore repeatable by any actor of the appropriate type. It then becomes possible for the

actor to be conceived of as only partially involved in the action since, at any given moment, the actor may also embody roles other than the present one. While I may be a student, because I am also, at other times, a musician or an athlete, I am not fully involved in the action of being a student. "In other words, a segment of the self is objectified in terms of the socially available typifications. This segment is the truly 'social self', which is subjectively experienced as distinct from and even confronting the self in its totality." (p.68) It is because of this inherent possibility of confrontation and conflict within the same individual that an individual can experience antithetical attitudes, etc..

It is through roles that institutions become embodied in individual experience. Through playing the roles, the individual participates in the world of other actors, but by internalizing the roles that world takes on its subjective reality for the individual actor. (p.69) Standards for the role performance will be part of the common stock of knowledge and used both as controls in the performance and as a means to verify the validity of the actors. The repertoire of roles represents the institutional order in two ways: the actual performance of the role is a representation of the role itself, and the role per se also represents the interconnectedness of conduct of the institutional order. It is through the actual performance of the roles ongoingly that the institution is maintained and manifested. (p.69,70) Some roles may serve only as symbolic

representations of the integrated totality of the institutional order, as found usually in political or religious institutions. Since spiritualism claims to provide proof of survival of death through the evidence of mediumship the role of medium can be seen as a symbolic representation of the whole of the movement.

The learning of roles involves more than just sufficient knowledge for the outward performance of the roles. One learns also a wider context of the roles drawing from the body of knowledge that is both directly and indirectly appropriate to the roles. The role-player or social actor comes to know and experience both the cognitive and psychological levels of the role, along with the affective knowledge (the knowledge of the affective ability of the role) that allows for a degree of creativity and spontaneity in the role. In such a way, the social actor is given the material with which to meet the full standards for performance and verification. (p.72) Again, the institutional order is real only so far as it is lived in the actual performance of roles.

The Integration of Meanings and the Symbolic Universe

The individual in society experiences a multiplicity of realities through participation in a multiplicity of roles. The more complex the society, the more complex the realities and roles. The common stock of knowledge provides both generalized and specific knowledge, roles and meanings. As the individual

seeks to integrate different meanings into a consistent whole, so too the larger society will attempt to integrate sub-universes of meaning and finite provinces of meaning into a whole. "The chances of subuniverses appearing, of course, increase steadily with progressive division of labour and economic surplus." (p.79) Knowledge is both a social product and an important factor in social change. This is as true for the generalized stock of knowledge as it is for specific sub universes: once a body of knowledge becomes an autonomous universe or subuniverse of meaning, it acquires the capacity to act back upon the society or social group that has produced it. (p.80) Consequently, integration is important for the collectivity as a whole, and, if individuals are to experience satisfaction within the collectivity, the society must "provide an overall context of objective sense for the individual's fragmented social experience and knowledge." (p.78) This is most readily done in terms of the symbolic universe.

Integration is collectively achieved through legitimation of various kinds, most importantly by means of a symbolic universe that integrates "different provinces of meaning and encompass(es) the institutional order in a symbolic totality." (p.88) Because of this symbolic totality, "all the sectors of the institutionalized order are integrated in an all-embracing frame of reference, which now constitutes a universe in the literal sense of the word, because all human experience can now be conceived of as taking place within it." (Ibid.) The symbolic

universe becomes the transcendent reality to which is referred all aspects of reality that are experienced as transcendent of everyday reality.

Legitimation, according to Berger and Luckmann, occurs on four levels: (1) the Incipient Level, which is pre-theoretical and which occurs as soon as there is a linguistic system through which the objectification of human experience is transmitted. This is the foundation of self-evident knowledge on which all other levels must be constructed if they are to be incorporated into the tradition of the collectivity. (2) The Rudimentary Theoretical Level, the level of proverbs, adages, folk tales, etc. which is pragmatic and related to concrete things. (3) Explicit Theories, in which sectors of the institutional order are legitimated in terms of specialized or differentiated knowledge, often entrusted to a specialized personnel. This level tends to become the level of 'pure theory', in which "the sphere of legitimation begins to attain a measure of autonomy vis-a-vis the legitimated institutional processes." And (4), Symbolic Universes, referring to realities other than those of everyday experience "that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality." (pp.87,88)

The reification of social phenomena - apprehending human phenomena as things, either in non-human or supra-human terms - permits a merger of the world of nature and the world of institutions. That is to say, the world of human institutions is

then perceived as more than purely human. It is perceived as necessary and as fate, and lived accordingly, happily or unhappily. Roles themselves may be reified in the form of institutions and then experienced as inevitable, and inevitability for which the individual can disclaim responsibility. Identity itself, or the total self as it is experienced by the social actor, may be reified. Such reification may apply to both one's own sense of identity and to that of others. In such reification, the individual becomes totally identified with the set of socially assigned typifications. (p.84)

Institutions become reified when they are given an ontological status that is independent of their human activity and signification. Mediumship is a spiritualist institution that is accorded such a status. That is to say, a socially-created 'world' comes to be known and experienced as a 'natural' world, as an inevitable world. Thus the world of the spirits, the Summer Land of the spiritualists, is a natural world of 'higher vibration' to which we shall inevitably make our way, after death. Mythic origins, for example, might be evoked; marriage may be seen as a necessary human re-enactment of the divine act of creation rather than as an ongoing human production. (p.84)

While reification may apply to the institutional order as a whole and to individuals within it, legitimation of the social order must include a 'vertical' level in relation to individual lifespans as well as the 'horizontal' level of integration and

subjective plausibility of the institutional order as a whole so that individuals are able to be 'located' in both the historical or social world and the transcendental world or symbolic universe of the society. (p.86) It is through legitimation that the primary objectifications of the collectivity are made both objectively available and subjectively plausible to the individuals within it. Legitimation both explains and justifies the institutional order, first "by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings" and secondly "by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives." (Ibid.) The transmission of the objectifications of the institutional order to a new generation will inevitably necessitate legitimation.

The Symbolic Universe

The symbolic universe creates and permits a hierarchy of realities, while sustaining the paramount importance of everyday reality. Once created, even marginal or for that matter anomalous experiences may be integrated into one's biography through reference to the symbolic universe. The significance of dreams, for example, will be determined by reference to the symbolic universe and thereby related to everyday life, "re-establishing in each instance the paramount status of the latter and mitigating the shock that accompanies the passage from one reality to another." (p.90) In doing so, the symbolic universe "provides the ultimate legitimation of the

institutional order by bestowing upon it the primacy in the hierarchy of human experience." (p.91) The symbolic universe itself, then, is the complete matrix in which is embedded all socially objectivated meanings of the social group as well as all subjectively 'real' meanings of individuals in the social group. Lesser legitimation theories will tend to be seen "as special perspectives on phenomena that are aspects of this world. Institutional roles become modes of participation in a universe that transcends and includes the institutional order." (p.89) For example, for spiritualists the world of the spirits both transcends and interpenetrates the social or mundane world of the embodied. It is a world that is participated in through mediumship, the central role of the movement.

In terms of individual biographies, symbolic universes may provide legitimation in a number of ways. Provision may be made for the individual passing through developmental stages to feel a part of "the nature of things." Rites of passage may do this in one context, but a psychological theory of personality development can provide the same sureness of correctness in another context. Identity transformations may still be related to everyday social life, and the individual may accordingly still feel assured "that he really is what he considers himself to be as he plays his routine social roles, in broad daylight and under the eyes of significant others." (p.93) The process of socialization into spiritualism includes steps or stages, rites of passage if you will, of "spiritual unfoldment" through

sitting in psychic development circles, and identity assurance is maintained by the circle leader while being bolstered through conversation and interaction with other circle sitters.

The symbolic universe plays a most important part in the legitimation of individual biographies in relation to death, "the marginal situation par excellence for the individual." (p.93) Death may also be seen as the "most terrifying threat to the taken-for-granted reality of everyday life" (Ibid.), calling into question that very taken-for-grantedness. Accordingly, the location of death within the scheme of things is of the greatest importance to any society or subgroup for the legitimation of its institutional order.

The legitimation of death must address itself to two tasks: it must provide assurance and support for individuals after the death of significant others, and it must enable the individual to face personal death while continuing to perform everyday routines. The transcending power of the symbolic universe is seen most clearly in its legitimation of death, and the "fundamental terror-assuaging character of the ultimate legitimations of the paramount reality of everyday life is revealed. The primacy of the social objectivation of everyday life can retain its subjective plausibility only if it is constantly protected against terror." (p.94)

The temporality of everyday life becomes related to a broader spectrum of time and experience, past and future, through the symbolic universe. It provides a history that is

shared by all the members socialized within the group, and a common frame of reference for the future projection of collective and individual action. "Thus the symbolic universe links men with their predecessors and their successors in a meaningful totality, serving to transform the finitude of individual existence and bestowing meaning upon the individual's death." (p.95) In creating the symbolic universe, "the empirical community is transposed onto a cosmic plane and made majestically independent of the vicissitudes of individual existence." (Ibid.) The spiritualist-legitimation of death is a central issue to the movement as a whole as well as to the roles institutionalized within it. In its symbolic universe, the spirits of the past are available through mediumship to the present and to the individual. The 'empirical community' and the 'cosmological' community of the spirit world are co-present and interconnect through mediumship and psychic phenomena.

Maintaining the Symbolic Universe

Man both creates and maintains his universe, from its pragmatic to its symbolic aspects. While psychologists might speak of human drives, we might also speak of the urge to meaning: in the creation of culture, man creates meaning, and it would seem that the urge to meaning, individually and collectively, is as ever-present as any of the basic human drives. As Berger and Luckmann put it, "As man externalizes

himself, he constructs the world into which he externalizes himself. In the process of externalization, he projects his own meanings into reality." (p.96) Symbolic universes are the farthest projection of meaning, but symbolic universes can and do change, and can be threatened by subuniverses. The totality of the symbolic universe of mediaeval christendom was threatened and eventually disturbed by the Protestant Reformation and, in many respects, later replaced by the universe of science and technology. Collectivities must maintain their symbolic universes against change and against competing universes or subuniverses. Legitimations extending from that of discrete institutions to the integrated symbolic universe achieve that maintenance.

Symbolic universes tend to be self-maintaining so long as there are not particular problems. But because they are human constructs, whatever their claim otherwise, they are also at least potentially problematic. Being transcendent of everyday reality, the sensory apparatus and face to face situations, symbolic universes cannot be so easily incorporated into the socialization process as everyday reality can be: the gods are not so present as are other human beings. Further, complete socialization is probably not possible, due to the flexibility of the human species. Some individuals will be more socialized than others.

As threatening subuniverses appear, their existence in itself tends to demonstrate the non-inevitability of the

symbolic universe. In strengthening the legitimation of the symbolic universe against the subuniverse, the symbolic universe and its institutional order will not only be re-legitimized but probably also modified. The success of particular legitimations and the conceptual machinery behind them will be related to the power held by the legitimators: the more powerful will obviously tend to impose their definition of reality on the weaker. The maintenance of symbolic universes will be achieved through what has already been present in some form, if not in a dominant form, in the institutions supporting the symbolic universe. (pp.97-101)

Mythology, theology, philosophy and science each represent different, even successive, modes of conceptualization used in legitimating symbolic universes. While each may be co-present in any given collectivity, or be dominant or reflect a subuniverse, each operates in a specific way. Mythology, the oldest, can be described as "a conception of reality that posits the ongoing penetration of the world of everyday experience by sacred forces." (p.102) That is to say, as a mode of thought, mythological thought "operates within the continuity between the human world and the world of the gods." (p.103) Theological thought is more theoretically systematized and more removed from the pre-theoretical or naive level, mediating between the world of the gods and the world of man. "With the transition from mythology to theology, everyday life appears less ongoingly penetrated by sacred forces." (p.103)⁽¹⁴⁾ Philosophy tends

toward a rational but not necessarily empirical view of the world, whereas science "not only completes the removal of the sacred from the world of everyday life, but removes universe-maintaining knowledge as such from that world. Everyday life becomes bereft of both sacred legitimation and the sort of theoretical intelligibility that would link it with the symbolic universe in its intended totality." (Ibid.) Spiritualism operates on the basis of all four of these modes of thought, since the world of everyday reality is interpenetrated by spirit forces (mythological mode) in ways that are ordered and known through revealed material (theological mode). But spiritualism is conceived of as being both a philosophy and a science, the science of mediumship through which the philosophy is revealed.

While any given collectivity may base its conceptualization on any one or more of these four basic modes of thought, each collectivity must also have a means of dealing with whatever is defined as deviance. Berger and Luckmann, not inappropriately, use the term "therapy" as a general category to cover institutionalized methods for dealing with deviance at the individual or subgroup level. In therapy, the legitimating apparatus is applied to individual cases. Since

every society faces the danger of individual deviance, we may assume that therapy in one form or another is a global social phenomenon. Its specific institutional arrangements, from exorcism to psychoanalysis, from pastoral care to personnel counselling programs, belong of course, under the category of social control. (p.104)

To be effective, therapy must include a theory of deviance, diagnostic tools, and curative procedures. The deviant's

conduct, in general, like a subuniverse of meaning, constitutes a challenge to the taken-for-grantedness of the symbolic universe and its everyday reality, in both its cognitive and normative aspects. Specialists in the appropriate body of knowledge will be called upon for the implementation of that knowledge when needed. "Successful therapy establishes a symmetry between the conceptual machinery and its subjective appropriation in the individual's consciousness; it resocializes the deviant into the objective reality of the symbolic universe of society." (p.104) The 'return to normalcy' experienced by the individual will bring subjective satisfaction. In short, then, "Therapy uses a conceptual machinery to keep everyone within the universe in question." (Ibid.) The spiritualist 'rescue circle' may be seen as akin to 'group therapy': disembodied spirits who have become disturbed, lost, depressed or whatever are returned to a 'normal' spirit state through the active aid of embodied spirits. It may be said that these 'lost souls' have been kept within the spiritualist universe and returned to the norms of that universe. (See below for further discussion.)

The more complex the society, the more complex will be the machinery for legitimation and maintenance. The chances for unsuccessful socialization will also increase and therefore the need for therapeutic mechanisms will also increase. "As long as there is no fundamental conflict between the mediated definitions of reality, but only differences between versions of the same common reality, the chances for successful therapy are

good." (p.155)

RESOCIALIZATION AND SECONDARY SOCIALIZATION:

Maintaining the Subjective Universe

While it may be said that reality is socially defined, those definitions will nonetheless be embodied in individuals and groups of individuals. Rival definitions of reality will be related to differentiated and possibly rival social groups, whose rivalries will be translated in rival theoretical terms. Monopolistic or traditional definitions of reality, and the accompanying legitimators, tend to have an investment in the status quo and social stability, and to be resistive to, or inhibitive of, social change. Conversely, pluralistic situations incline toward social change. Historically, monopolistic or traditional definitions of reality have tended to be embodied in politico-religious institutions and the personnel administering and adhering to them. Pluralism, however, tends to encourage skepticism and to provide for the possibility of innovation. As such it accordingly also tends to be subversive of the traditional status quo, particularly in regard to the taken for granted reality of that status quo. (15)

Subuniverses of meaning will also, of course, be embodied in and legitimated by, subsocieties: "counter definitions of

reality require counter societies." (p.117) The individual is, however, inherently "protected" from rival definitions of reality in primary socialization, but unsuccessful socialization may require re-socialization through 'therapy'; or, secondary socialization might admit the possibility of rival definitions of reality or, at least, might admit the possibility of subuniverses of meaning. That is to say, at the level of secondary socialization, subuniverses of meaning may be successfully integrated into individual biographies without necessitating resocialization.

...society is understood in terms of an ongoing dialectical process⁽¹⁶⁾ composed of the three moments of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. As far as the societal phenomenon is concerned, these moments are not to be thought of as occurring in temporal sequence. ... In the life of every individual there is a temporal sequence, in the course of which he is inducted into participation in the social dialectic. (p.119)

In individual biographies, the beginning point of this process is internalization, "the immediate apprehension or interpretation of an objective event as expressing meaning ..." (p.119) which is perceived as a manifestation of another's subjective processes. Through internalization of that meaning, the other's subjectivity accordingly becomes meaningful to myself. However, there is no guarantee in this process that I actually understand the other person; in fact, I may misunderstand him. But for the most part, in most situations being typified as they are, I have at least a reasonable array of symptoms to build my subjective apprehension of the other's

subjectivity. The initial context for the process is in the face-to-face situation of mother and child, spreading out from significant others to generalized others. As internalization becomes fuller and more complex, the individual establishes a "nexus of motivations" (p.120) with the other in which sequences of situations are intersubjectively linked together in a mutual ongoing identification. I identify with the other and understand the world in which he lives, which becomes my own. "We now not only understand each other's definitions of shared situations, we define them reciprocally." (Ibid.)

The formation of the self, then, involves a dialectic "between identification by others and self-identification, between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity. The dialectic, which is present each moment the individual identifies with his significant others, is, as it were, the particularization in individual life of the general dialectic of society ..." (p.121) This process is life-long, and it is crystallized with the internalization of language. When the generalized other is likewise internalized, "a symmetrical relationship is established between objective and subjective reality. What is real "outside" corresponds to what is real 'within'." (p.123) For spiritualists, the 'real' world of the spirits is experienced 'within' the individual spiritualist and the medium, even, in some cases, within the body of the medium, as well as within the mind. Language again is the intermediating vehicle in both directions, creating unity of both inner and

outer worlds.

In primary socialization, the world internalized is the taken-for-granted world of everyday reality, the socially constructed world that is, and which appears as inevitable and real. Subsequently internalized worlds will never have quite the same impact on the developing consciousness of the individual. Accordingly, the most successfully internalized subsequent worlds will be those that appropriate most and disturb least that world of primary socialization.

The extent and character of secondary socialization, internalizing, as it does, institutionally based 'sub-worlds', will be related to the complexity of the division of labour and the social distribution of knowledge that goes with it. Primary socialization requires the emotionally charged identification with significant others, whereas secondary socialization, as against re-socialization,⁽¹⁷⁾ requires only the mutual identification with generalized others.⁽¹⁸⁾ The subjective sense that the internalizations of secondary socialization are real is much less strong in secondary socialization because of the lesser emotional charge of the identification process. (p.131)

It is only through great upheaval in the personal biography that the internalizations of primary socialization are disturbed, but much less is required to disturb or destroy realities internalized in secondary socialization.

The process of secondary socialization, not being so emotionally charged as that of primary socialization, permits a

more rational and controlled approach. Formal education, for example, is a major form of the institutional means of secondary socialization. However, the realities of secondary socialization, being less deeply rooted than those of primary socialization, are more vulnerable to challenges, and therefore more easily displaced. Nonetheless, as the primary reality is ongoingly re-inforced by legitimations, secondary realities must also be maintained by secondary legitimations.

We may distinguish between routine reality maintenance and crisis maintenance. Because it is embodied in routines, the reality of everyday life easily maintains itself, reaffirmed ongoingly in social interaction: internalized initially by a social process, it is maintained by social processes which "are not drastically different from those of the earlier internalization. They also reflect the fact that subjective reality must stand in a relationship with an objective reality that is socially defined." (p.137) Significant others greatly aid in the on-going confirmation of identity in the routine maintenance of reality, just as they did in primary socialization.

More important, however, is conversation. "One may view the individual's everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality." (p.140) Some sectors of what is still being taken for granted will be reinforced and others weakened through conversation, while new items are added

and others dropped. (p.143) That is to say, subjective reality is related to and dependent upon, plausibility structures: the specific social base and processes required in its maintenance, that maintenance being primarily achieved through conversation both with specific and generalized others. In small groups such as church groups conversation plays an especially important part in maintaining group and individual identity and solidarity, and thereby maintaining the belief structure as well.

Doubt about the definition of reality is suspended also because of plausibility structures: "specific social sanctions against such reality-distintegrating doubts have been internalized and are ongoingly reaffirmed. Ridicule is one such sanction. As long as he remains within the plausibility structure, the individual feels himself to be ridiculous whenever doubts ... arise." (Ibid.) When significant conversation with the mediators of plausibility structures is disrupted, however, doubt may occur. Reinforcement through conversation, therefore, is necessary in the maintenance of reality structures. 'Conversation' occurs at all levels of spiritualism, and is the main vehicle for transmission of spirit messages.

Transformation and Alternation

Maintenance procedures under crisis situations are essentially the same as routine maintenance, but more explicit and intensified, frequently using ritualistic techniques. (Ibid.) When the individual successfully internalizes subuniverses of meaning, identity transformation occurs, however slight or fully the case may be, along with some degree of transformation in the apprehension of reality. However, since primary socialization is never complete, transformation will also never be complete, even if it is subjectively apprehended as total: at least the physical body and the natural world remain the same.⁽¹⁹⁾ Transformations that appear total may be called alternations, the historical prototype of which is religious conversion.

For alternation to occur, there must be a process of re-socialization in which emotionally charged identification with the personnel concerned replicates the status of significant others of early childhood. (p.144) However, because primary socialization has occurred, and often secondary socialization intervened or, at least, begun, both social and conceptual conditions will be necessary for successful alternation, the social conditions providing the matrix and embodiment for the conceptual conditions. For example, a church group which provided social support for handicapped persons as well as a conceptual integration of the idea of handicapping

into its teachings would be more apt to successfully convert a handicapped person than a church group which did not supply such apparatus. This might be true for social or psychological handicaps as well as, or against, say, physical handicaps. "The most important social condition is the availability of an effective plausibility structure that is a social base serving as the 'laboratory' of transformation. This plausibility structure will be mediated to the individual by means of significant others, with whom he must establish strongly affective identification." (p.144) The socialization of spiritualists includes the presentation of mediums as identificatory significant others, the most important role models in the movement on the basis of whose performance the 'leap of faith' will be made. That is to say, mediums are presented both as members of a status category to be attained and as individuals to be emulated. The possibility of a degree of emotional identification with mediums is set up for the initiate, an emotional identification which can become a form of identification with a significant other. Such identification can provide the emotional 'charge' for successful conversion, though the degree of identification will of course vary individually. The conversion experience must, however, be on-goingly maintained as a plausible and meaningful reality, accomplished in this case by the religious community.⁽²⁰⁾ Significant conversation partners will change and the "new plausibility structure will typically provide various therapeutic procedures

to take care of 'backsliding' tendencies. These procedures follow the general pattern of therapy ..." (p.146)

In legitimating alternation, not only must the new reality be legitimated but also the stages by which it is appropriated and the means by which it is maintained must also be legitimated. In addition, and most importantly, alternative realities, or the 'old' reality, must be removed or abandoned, "reinterpreted within the legitimating apparatus of the new reality" because of the emotional strength of the 'old' reality. "...Everything preceding the alternation is now apprehended as leading toward it ... everything following it as flowing from its new reality. This involves a reinterpretation of past biographies in toto, following the formula "Then I thought ... now I know ..." (p.146) Put in other words, the biographical rupture "is thus identified with a cognitive separation of darkness and light." (Ibid.) Many spiritualists claim to have had a background in orthodox churches (see discussion below in chapter 4) and often maintain that their ideas then, especially in regard to death and the nature of the afterlife, were based on faith, but now are based on knowledge. This change may frequently be expressed in terms of gaining enlightenment. In the process of reinterpretation, the individual may unconsciously fabricate or invent biographical events that will create harmony between what is remembered and its reinterpretation. (p.147) Such creation will add to cognitive and emotional assonance. One of the differences between alternation or re-socialization and

secondary socialization is the location of the reality 'base'. In secondary socialization, the reality base is the past, of primary socialization on the other hand, the reality base of re-socialization or alternation is the present.

Counter definitions of reality require social groups to provide a plausibility structure, and where any such individuals as have been unsuccessfully socialized congregate in durable groups, the possibility of rival or counter definitions occurs. That congregating itself "triggers a process of change that will introduce a more complex distribution of knowledge. A counter-reality may now begin to be objectivated in the marginal group of the unsuccessfully socialized." (p.152) As mentioned above, most spiritualists claim to have entered the movement from an orthodox background, usually having been raised in an orthodox Christian church with which they later became disenchanted. It is in that sense that it might be said that most spiritualists were unsuccessfully socialized in orthodox religious communities. Identity transformation may occur when the individual experiences a rupture "between his 'visible' conduct in the larger community and his 'invisible' self-identification as someone quite different. Psychological tension may result, until the rupture is healed either through therapeutic return to the larger community or through alternation into the marginal community." (p.153) However if, as may happen, the primary socialization of the individual has included the mediation of discrepant worlds by significant

others, "... there may be a socially concealed assymetry between 'public' and 'private' biography." (p.156) In such a case, the individual may be able to successfully integrate alternation into his subjective reality without rupture or undue psychological tension. More than likely, though, "such mediation of accutely discrepant worlds by significant others in primary socialization" (p.155) will lead to unsuccessful socialization, leaving the door open, as it were, to the experience of alternation.

Discrepancies between primary and secondary socialization can also lead to unsuccessful socialization. The unity of primary socialization may be maintained, but secondary socialization may present alternative realities and identities as subjective options. (p.157) Since secondary socialization includes the internalization of different realities without the necessity of identification with significant others in an emotionally charged context, those new realities may be internalized as realities to be used for specific purposes, rather than as total identity realities. (p.158)

We may summarize by saying that identity transformations occur as a result of some measure of unsuccessful socialization. Since most socialization is never completely successful, most individuals experience some degree of identity transformation. The greater the flexibility of the primary socialization, the greater is the possibility for identity transformation. Some identity transformations appear complete, or almost complete, as

a result of resocialization though "alternation". Alternation requires an emotionally charged identification with new significant others, which replicates the process of primary socialization, whereas most identity transformations require only the internalization of alternate realities at the level of secondary socialization.⁽²¹⁾ Conversion to spiritualism seems to involve for some, at least, a degree of secondary socialization that may begin to approach actual re-socialization. For most, however, the conversion experience is probably not so deeply entrenched, since many people attracted to the movement do not become attached to a particular church, or do not come to fulfill any of the institutionalized roles. It is also common for spiritualists to be interested, or involved in, aspects of 'alternate' life-styles such as alternate healing methods, which may be a further indication of 'unsuccessful socialization'.

Identity and Cultural Psychologies

Different cultures create different psychologies, theories, if you will, as to the nature of personal identity. "Psychologies pertain to a dimension of reality that is of the greatest and most continuous subjective relevance for all individuals, therefore the dialectic between theory and reality affects the individual in a palpably direct and intensive manner." (p.161) Psychoanalysis, for example, might be said to be an important psychology of industrialized western society,

while Voudin theory can be considered a 'psychology' of certain peoples. In their respective cultural contexts, each provides a theory of identity and development of the individual and his personal biography. Both "demonstrate their empirical adequacy (in their own cultural contexts) by their applicability in therapy, but neither thereby demonstrates the ontological status of its categories." They may not exist outside their respective social worlds, but because they are defined as existing within those social worlds they may be "internalized as realities in the course of socialization." (p.162) In general, psychological status will be defined according to the prevailing definitions of reality, while being itself socially defined. Certain kinds of behaviour on the part of individuals in Europe of the Middle Ages was defined as indicative of their being witches in league with the Devil. While such categories and theories have been largely, but not totally, displaced in more recent times, they have been displaced by theories and categories equally socially created and equally claiming to be a valid description of reality.

Psychological theories serve to legitimate identity maintenance as well as identity-repair procedures. They provide the "theoretical linkage between identity and world, as these are both socially defined and subjectively appropriated. (p.162) While they are legitimating aspects of the social definition of reality, "their realizing potency is particularly great because it is actualized by emotionally charged processes of

identity-formation." (p.163) Such psychological theories may also encompass the relation of identity to its biological substratum, as well as to its social dimensions. The dialectic between identity and its biological substratum is often "apprehended as a struggle between a 'higher' and a 'lower' self, respectively equated with social identity and pre-social, possibly anti-social animality." (p. 167) Mediating as they do on a theoretical basis the relationship between identity or the social world, and biology or the natural world, psychologies may be seen to presuppose a cosmology which itself has already defined the nature of the total universe. Finally, just as there may be a dominant psychology, subgroups may define rival psychologies as part of their rival definitions of reality. Spiritualists, being part of the wider society, may be seen to hold most of the prevalent popular psychological notions of the wider society, which might be said to be rather adulterated versions of academic and clinical psychology. But there is, nonetheless, a rather distinct spiritualist psychology, as discussed below, which deals with the nature of 'mind' and the nature of personal identity, including the relationship to body, the 'substratum' of biology, expressed in a particular relationship to the concept of 'vibrations'. It is a kind of neo-Cartesian psychology, stressing the independence of mind from body and articulating the ways in which mind and body are linked.

Man may be "biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others" (p.168) but it is the interaction between human beings in concrete situations that produces the actual world that is experienced as reality. Spiritualists come to construct their[?] experience of reality in specific church groups, and in concrete interactions. But those specific church groups are themselves the product of historical processes and the general shaping trends of the spiritualist movement as an organized whole. That is to say, spiritualist churches exist in the context of the spiritualist movement, and before we can both appreciate and comprehend the individual variations of specific church groups, we must have some understanding of the wider context and history which shape the individual churches and their construction of the spiritualist experience of reality.

NOTES

NOTES

1. From Marx comes the notion of 'ideology', the use of ideas to serve as a basis for the justification of social and political manipulations; and that of 'false consciousness' wherein a social group fails to perceive itself as a social group and forms a consciousness of itself based on another social group.
2. It can be argued of course that no theory is perfect. The theory of the social construction of reality is a rather static model of social interaction and perhaps does not pay sufficient attention to the dynamics of social change in the society as a whole. As well, it tends to overlook the element of negotiation in social interaction, being more concerned with elements of stability and continuity. Nonetheless it is well suited to application to a small group or subsociety such as a spiritualist church group. In the present study, the element of negotiation may be seen to be implicit in many of the ethnographic descriptions and at times becomes more explicit, as in discussions of sitting in development circles or seances.
3. See, for example, L.S. Foerstel's article (1977), "Cultural Influences on Perception" (Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication, v.4, No.1, Spring, 1977)
4. The notion of the 'significant other' and the 'generalized other' are derived from G.S. Mead, the former referring to those persons of first and prime importance in identity-formation, with whom there is an emotionally charged identification, persons such as parents, siblings and so forth; the latter referring to those others with whom identification may be possible, but without the emotional charge of significant others. See, for example, A.L. Strauss, ed., The Social Psychology of G.S. Mead (University of Chicago Press, 1956)
5. Throughout Chapter Two, the discussion, unless stated otherwise, is derived from Berger and Luckmann's 1966 work, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Doubleday and Co., New York, 1966). This particular work was chosen because it is less philosophically oriented and more empirically oriented than

most of the other works in the theory of the social construction of reality. It is an appropriate work since this present work is empirical in focus, being a field study of a spiritualist church group, and the choice of Berger and Luckmann's approach accordingly creates a harmony between theoretical and empirical dimensions.

6. Berger and Luckmann argue that, by means of language, the individual's objectifications of himself become "massively and continuously available" to himself as well as to the conversation partner, permitting spontaneous response to his being "without the 'interruption' of deliberate reflection." Accordingly, they argue, language makes the individual's subjectivity more real both to himself and to the conversation partner. "This capacity of language to crystallize and stabilize (for the individual his) own subjectivity is retained (albeit with modifications) as language is detached from the face-to-face situation. This very important characteristic of language is well caught in the saying that men must talk about themselves until they know themselves." (p.36)
7. Needless to say, logic itself is dependent on language, in some form, either verbal, as in speech, or pure symbolic form, as in mathematics.
8. An application of these concepts in psychotherapy is found in games theory as applied to social situations. See, for example, Eric Berne's, Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships (Grove Press, New York, 1964); in a more directly sociological fashion, see Goffman's The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Reality,
9. In the course of socialization, the individual comes to recognize a host of non-verbal factors involved in face-to-face situations, such as gestures, or body language, intonation and inflection, facial expressions, etc. But these, too, tend to be culturally defined and typified, and therefore repeatable and comprehensible. The elaborate formalism of the bushido code of samurai in feudal Japan, for example, contained a typified coding of non-verbal factors requiring skilled manipulation for communication and social interaction.
10. "Language also typifies experiences," Berger and Luckmann maintain, "allowing me to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to myself but also to my fellow men. As it typifies, it also anonymizes experiences, for the typified experiences can, in principle, be duplicated by anyone falling into the category in question." (p.37)
11. This concept has important implications for the scientific

study of psi phenomena, wherein, since phenomena of a psi nature occur in the context of a social world, the ontological status of phenomena must be considered in relation to the social context, a factor which is not always considered.

12. Individuals who have not been successfully socialized at all, and who do not seem to experience such psychological tension, are known, in this society, as 'sociopaths'.
13. By 'cognitive assonance' I mean harmony, consistency and unity of concepts in both thinking and general belief systems or structures. For example, an individual Christian might experience cognitive dissonance if his belief in the vicarious atonement of Christ were suddenly coupled with a belief in the need for successive reincarnations.
14. Berger and Luckmann's position here seems a little simplified and may not hold true for individuals. While, for example, there is a rich theology available in Christianity, for many Christians the daily penetration into 'reality' of sacred forces may be experienced through perceived aid from God, the Virgin or many popular saints. Here it is probably necessary to make the distinction between an overall social mode of thought and the individual use or rejection of that mode in subjective day-to-day thinking.
15. Berger and Luckmann see the religious sect as prototypical of subsocieties tending to be subversive of the traditional religious status quo. "Within the sheltering community of the sect, even the most wildly deviant conceptions take on the character of objective reality. Conversely, sectarian withdrawal is typical of situations in which previously objectivated definitions of reality disintegrate, that is, become deobjectivated in the larger society."(pp. 116, 117)
16. In regard to the importance of ideas in this dialectic, Berger and Luckmann argue that, "... the relationship between 'ideas' and their sustaining social processes is always a dialectic one ...Consequently social change must always be understood as ~~standing~~ in a dialectic relationship to the 'history of ideas'. Both 'idealistic' and 'materialistic' understandings of the relationship overlook this dialectic, and thus distort history."(pp. 117, 118)
17. Re-socialization, as against secondary socialization, as the term implies, attempts a replication of the process of primary socialization, involving an emotionally charged identification with new significant others, usually drawn from within the new social group.

18. Secondary socialization, under certain conditions, nonetheless may shade toward resocialization, in which case the differences between the two may only be in degree, rather than kind.
19. In cases where there is sudden or unexpected changes in the physical body, identity often remains the same. For example, in cases of considerable weight loss (or gain), while the individual may appear quite different even to significant others, self-identity may still be apprehended in previous terms of overweight or slimness, etc. In other words, while transformation is possible and even usual, in general self-identity tends toward stability.
20. In the secular life, Berger and Luckmann argue that both political indoctrination and psychotherapy accomplish the same kind of process as the conversion experience. (pp.145,146)
21. This idea affords an explanation between types of conversion experiences. The conversion to a fundamentalist, 'born again' church group, as against say a change from Roman to Anglo Catholicism, may involve, and almost certainly does involve a profound emotional transformation, as against a possible theological or much less emotional transformation. In the former instance, there is probably a considerable degree of re-socialization, whereas the latter might involve only a conceptual shift.

III. CHAPTER THREE: THE FIELD AREA

The Spiritualist Church Movement

The modern religious/philosophical church movement known as spiritualism dates its formal beginnings from March, 1848, in Hydesville, New York State. Because the history of the movement is well recorded, and in considerable detail, only a brief history of that movement and of related matters is given here. (Capron, 1852; Doyle, 1926; Hardinge, 1870; Podmore, 1904; Porter, 1958; Fornell, 1964; Moore, 1977; Nelson, 1969; Kerr, 1972)

In March of 1848, the Fox family of Hydesville began to experience unusual rapping sounds in their small family home for which there was no apparent known cause. The rappings were produced from walls, ceilings, floors and furniture. At first the family paid little attention to them, but as they continued, and increased in intensity, the family began to investigate. On the night of March 31, one of the young daughters, concerned that perhaps the sounds were being produced by "Mr. Splitfoot", the Devil, challenged the unseen force to respond to her finger-snapping. Each snap was echoed by a responding knock. An alphabet was devised whereby questions might be answered, the unseen visitor seeming to know a great deal about the family and

the neighbours, who had soon been called in to witness this most unusual phenomenon. It was revealed that the unseen visitor was indeed a spirit, the late C.B. Rosma, an itinerent pedlar who claimed to have been murdered by a former occupant and buried beneath the house.

The cellar was dug up in the hopes of finding the skeleton. Doyle claims that, "At a depth of five feet they found a plank, and further digging disclosed charcaol and quick lime, and finally human hair and bones, which were pronounced by expert medical testimony to belong to a human skeleton." (Doyle, 1926; 1975, p.73) Other accounts claim⁽¹⁾ that implements such as a pedlar might be expected to be carrying were also found. However, it was not until 1904 when, it is claimed, an almost complete human skeleton was found in the house, "between the earth and crumbling cedar walls..." (Ibid.) While it has never been firmly established to whom the skeleton belonged, if in fact it existed at all, the movement had already been firmly established by 1904, and perhaps it was no longer quite so important.

The rappings in the Fox house continued to attract wide-spread attention, people coming from all over the district to witness the pheonomenon. Soon the events were being published in local newspapers, coming to the attention of a number of notable people. It was established that the daughters, first Cathrine (Kate), then Margaret, and later Leah (Mrs. Fish) were the mediums for the rapping sounds. However, similar occurances

began to appear in various other places, and other people came forward as rapping mediums.⁽²⁾ (Given the times the entertainment value of the phenomena should not be overlooked.) Committees to investigate the phenomena were set up, some individuals siding in favour of the genuineness, others convinced of fraudulence or hoax, and still others proclaiming them to be the work of the Devil. But public interest was behind them, and it was not before long that the Fox sisters were publicly displaying the new "Spiritual Telegraph" in packed halls and theatres to all who would pay an admittance fee. Soon, as might be expected, they had many imitators.

There was frequently, however, much discussion at these meetings, and not infrequently violence broke out amongst the supporters and detractors. Nonetheless, serious investigation of the phenomena also continued, with the same results: some were convinced, some were unconvinced; some were receptive, some antagonistic. There were those who began to see a religious or philosophical value in the phenomena, whereby great Truth might be revealed by Higher Powers than their incarnate brethren. And there were those who saw the phenomena as a manifestation of the prophecies of a mesmeric clairvoyant/healer by the name of Andrew Jackson Davies, the "Seer of Pougkeepsie", another small town in New York State.⁽³⁾ In many ways similar to the more modern American "sleeping clairvoyant", Edgar Cayce (died, 1943)⁽⁴⁾ Jackson had prophesied, somewhat earlier, the assault of spirit forces on the physical world in a 'new dispensation' of

spiritual enlightenment designed to raise mankind to new spiritual heights (in 1847: Principles of Nature).

By the early 1850's churches were appearing, and by 1860, the movement was beginning to spread to England. While it is difficult to estimate with any exactitude the numbers of people attracted to spiritualism in the 1850's in America, certainly they were not inconsiderable, and were seen as a threat to the established churches of the day (see Moore, 1977). The numbers peaked toward 1860, and with the outbreak of the Civil War, sharply declined, rising again somewhat after the war but probably never reaching the extremes of the 1850's. Also during the 1850's, various other kinds of phenomena began to appear, the current repertoire of mediumship probably being fully in place by 1860. (See below for a Table of Mediumship)

American mediums and lecturers began travelling to England, Canada and elsewhere by the early 1850's, lecturing and demonstrating this new form of spirit communication, native mediums appearing in their wake. (cf. Hardinge, 1970) (London, Ontario established a spiritualist church in the 1870's, which may have been the first in Canada. By the early part of the 20th Century, there were churches all across the country, in many smaller cities as well as in the larger urban areas.) (5) While there was obviously frequent fraudulence amongst the mediums, there were probably also many who sincerely believed in what they were doing, and enough serious minded and intelligent followers to stem the tide of criticism, antagonism and

hostility that was directed against the movement. Some of those followers were men and women of status, who not infrequently became spokesmen for the fledgling movement. Only one schism later occurred, which is still present in the movement, that between a 'Christian' form of the movement and a 'non-Christian' (perhaps 'a-Christian' would be more precise) form. The question of reincarnation is also an issue which has caused some division in the ranks, some accepting the notion, others denying it, and yet others taking an open or indifferent approach to the matter.

(6)

The movement, as it stands today, is organized on the basis of Seven Principles, which are taught in a non-dogmatic way, "open to individual interpretation". They are, (1) The Fatherhood of God; (2) The Brotherhood of Man; (3) Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels; (4) The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul; (5) Personal Responsibility; (6) Compensation and Retribution Hereafter for all the Good and Evil Deeds Done on Earth; (7) Eternal Progress Open to Every Human Soul. (Spiritualist Hymnal) The various spiritualist church groups or associations may express these principles somewhat differently, and some, such as in the Kardecist groups, may add a principle of Reincarnation. Nonetheless, in general these principles form the organizational basis of the movement.

It is particularly in connection with the 5th and 7th Principles that the spiritualist movement becomes distinct from orthodox christian or mainstream church groups. (7) And it is

under the 3rd Principle that it takes on a more unique quality or position. The principle of Personal Responsibility stresses that the individual is responsible for his or her own life condition and spiritual unfoldment. It can also be taken as a rejection of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, implying that each individual must seek his or her own atonement and 'salvation' according to the dictates of conscience. Nonetheless, because it is open to individual interpretation, it remains possible for an individual of Christian persuasion to continue to accept the vicarious atonement, the emphasis then being placed on the individual's active part in spiritual development. Principle number seven implies that spiritualism does not accept the standard Christian notion of Heaven and Hell, with its concomitant need for 'salvation', and that in the spiritualist system there is no eternal damnation. This is in keeping with the philosophy of the movement in relation to notions as to the nature of the After Life.

It is under the 3rd Principle that mediumship is found, mediums being spiritually gifted individuals who have the ability, in one or more forms, to communicate with the spirit world, "the higher side of life", or "the other side" as it is most frequently called. It is through communication with the spirit world via the "psychic phenomena" of mediumship that the philosophy of the movement is revealed, and likewise through mediumship that the movement claims to be able to prove the personal survival of death. It may be said, therefore, that the

spiritualist movement is both revelatory and phenomenological, with a somewhat charismatic orientation.

Because of its production of psi phenomena through mediumship, the spiritualist movement has always claimed to be 'scientific', and amenable to scientific inquiry. As well, it has claimed to be an instrument for the reconciliation of science and religion, not dissimilar to Auguste Comte's Positivist Religion. There are two basic categories of mediumship, physical and mental. Figure 3.1 describes and classifies the various types of mediumship:

Figure 3.1:

MEDIUMSHIP

PHYSICAL:

- **Materialization:** in which spirit entities become solid and substantial to the point of being touchable and vocal. Plants and objects may also be materialized, however.
- **Etherialization:** similar to materialization, but the entities, while clearly visible, are not fully substantial and solid.
- **Trumpet mediumship:** in which a slim, open-ended cone or funnel of lightweight metal (the trumpet) is used to produce spirit voices. The trumpet is reported to float about the room, touching people, while the voices come from it.
- **Transfiguration:** wherein spirit entities are enabled to project themselves onto the features of the medium in a mask-like, objective way.
- **Direct Voice:** the producing of spirit voices without any physical means or instruments, the voices appearing to come out of the air, sometimes from a globe of light.
- **Apport mediumship:** the producing or materializing of small objects, such as semi-precious stones, through a trumpet.
- **Scotographs:** the production of spirit photographic portraits on photographic printing paper which is held to the participants' stomach and then passed through the same processing solutions as negatives.
- **Psychometry:** the ability to "tune into" a person through holding an object such as a piece of jewelry that has been in contact with the person; or, tuning into the object itself.
- **Psychic Art:** usually done by a person with artistic ability, but not necessarily so, wherein he or she clairvoyantly sees a spirit entity and then proceeds to draw a portrait of it.
- **Automatic writing/piano playing, etc.:** wherein the hand or arm of the medium is "taken over" to produce writing in a script different from his or her own, or to produce musical compositions and recitals by spirit musicians.
- **Spiritual Healing:** usually accomplished by the "laying-on" of hands as in more orthodox churches, but also includes "absent" or mental healing accomplished by "sending thoughts" to the sufferer.

MENTAL:

- **Clairvoyance:** the ability to see spirit entities either "objectively" (similar to physical sight, but the entities appear to be transparent) or "subjectively" by means of mental images or impressions
 - **Clairaudience:** the ability to psychically 'hear' the voices of spirits, either objectively or subjectively as in clairaudience. Spiritualists claim that some schizophrenics who hear voices have actually "opened up" clairaudiently. Clairaudience does not seem to be common; probably because of the similarity with schizophrenic experience, it is not much desired.
Clairsentience: a general term that can be used to cover the psychic equivalent of any of the five senses, or to mean the ability to "sense" the presence of a spirit entity much the way one can "sense" or feel the presence of another person in a darkened room.
Inspirational writing/Speaking: wherein spirit entities transmit messages, ideas or thoughts directly to the consciousness of the medium without trance being involved.
 - **Trance control:** voluntary and temporary spirit possession, wherein the body of the medium is utilized by spirit entities to speak to people on the "earth plane"; there are degrees of trance, and in the deeper degrees, the medium is not conscious of what is being said, though most of the time the or she will have some awareness of the contents. (See below for a fuller description.)
 - Indicates trance performance.
 - Indicates that it may be performed in trance, but usually is not.
-

Most spiritualist churches hold regular services on Sundays and perhaps throughout the week, depending on individual churches, the services usually consisting of two main parts, a Lecture (almost never referred to as a 'sermon') and a demonstration of mediumship, usually clairvoyance. These will be interspersed with hymns and the announcements, and the service will usually also include some form of spiritual healing, either

by prayer and/or laying on of hands. The format may vary slightly from church to church, and some churches develop distinctive styles. Ministers, where they are found, may use regalia from simple stoles to more elaborate robes or gowns. Few, if any, affect the standard clerical collar. Some churches may not have ministers associated with them, or, they may call upon the ministerial services of other churches or non-associated ministers. Ministers may or may not be mediums themselves, although usually they are. Many mediums are not ministers, and for the most part, local legal restrictions depending, it is not necessary for mediums to be ordained ministers. (8) It is generally felt amongst spiritualists that neither churches nor ministers are essential to the movement and its philosophy, but that such allow a socially acceptable format in the context of the wider society, serving as a social and organizational format in which to present the philosophy. In other words, they use a culturally acceptable structure, that of formal church organization.

In addition to the services, most spiritualist churches offer psychic development classes for the development of mediumship, and may as well offer other spiritual services such as healing, "rescue circles" (for the aid and enlightenment of spirits needing help 'on the other side'), 'message circles', private readings with mediums, and the usual fund raising and social events. Most churches also maintain a lending library of books and pamphlets dealing with spiritualism and related

matters. Many run a Lyceum, the spiritualist equivalent of Sunday school. Discussion groups and philosophy groups may also be held.

In addition to the formal church structures, there will also be informal structures, such as 'home circles' or seances which may act as psychic development classes or which may focus on a particular role, such as healing or rescue work. As with any social group, informal social networking will occur which may or may not but probably usually will be related to the power structure of the particular church.

There are a number of chartering or regulatory associations of spiritualist churches, but independent churches and groups are also found. Many churches are founded by, and organized around, a particular medium, who is usually also a minister, and who may assume both jural and social domination, at the same time perhaps influencing a particular philosophical stance. This seems particularly true in the United States, as Zaretsky reports, but less true in Canada.

However, many churches are operated on a democratic basis with an elected executive and regular members' meetings. It is seldom that a spiritualist church group owns its property or meeting place. Usually spiritualist groups occupy rented premises or perhaps operate out of the minister's own home, in the case of smaller groups. Few ministers are able to be supported by their congregations, and either make their living by offering private readings and consultations, or by occupying

themselves at a routine job.

From its beginnings, the spiritualist movement has attracted adherents from all socio-economic groups, from unskilled labourers to university and professional people, with the largest majority being from what is commonly called the working and middle classes. (9) Ages will likewise range widely, from children and adolescents to the elderly, usually with the women being in at least a slight majority. Also from its beginnings, the movement has tended to attract liberals or types who are, if not peripheral at least less than mainstream. Many are involved in facets of 'alternate' lifestyles such as vegetarianism, herbology, naturopathic and chiropractic techniques, reflexology and accupressure, animal welfare and ecological or environmental groups. In the early days of the movement, there were communal groups of various types and connections with the feminist movement, 'free love' groups and various socialist-oriented political groups. While the majority of mediums are women, men also serve as mediums and, perhaps more than women, as healers. (10)

Most spiritualists claim to have had at least some 'psychic' experience either prior to, or since inception into, the spiritualist movement, however simple the experience may have been. Few claim to have been raised as spiritualists, most coming to the movement as a result of dissatisfaction with some orthodox church. While most claim a Christian background, some come into the movement from an agnostic or Jewish background,

or, occasionally, from an Eastern background. There is some ethnic variety in most church groups, such as might be expected in an ethnically pluralistic society.

Psychical Societies

Along with the rise of the spiritualist churches came various study and research groups, the English Society for Psychical Research (1883) and its American branch, the American Society for Psychical Research (1885) being the most academic and prestigious, publishing both a Journal and The Proceedings. There is also, in England, the College of Psychic Studies, and there are many local Psychic Societies which, while they often profess a more 'scientific' attitude toward the phenomena, differ little from the churches except in their organizational structure. Usually they share with the churches the same beliefs, practices and even personnel. It sometimes happens that a Psychic Society will also have a church attached to it, but run separately from it.

The English Society for Psychical Research was founded by a group of prominent academics and British notables, some among them being adherents of the spiritualist movement. Very early on, though, a schism developed between the non-spiritualists, and the spiritualists, the non-spiritualists winning the day. Henry Sidgwick, professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge, was the first President of the Society, and many of the academics

were also associated with Cambridge University.

In 1887, its Council Members and Honorary Members included a past Prime Minister (Gladstone...), and a future Prime Minister (Arthur Balfour); eight F.R.S.'s -Wallace, Couch -Adams, Lord Rayleigh, Oliver Lodge, A. Macalister, J. Venn, Balfour Stewart and J.J. Thomson; two bishops; and Tennyson and Ruskin, two of the outstanding literary figures of the day. There were also a number of celebrities amongst the ordinary members -for instance, 'Lewis Carroll', J.A. Symonds and William Bateson -together with a surprizing number of titled persons, some of whom were perhaps more decorative than distinguished. (Gauld, 1968, p.140)

Just as early spiritualism promised a reconciliation between science and religion, some of the early members of the Society "were keenly aware of the anti-religious tendencies of the day ⁽¹¹⁾ and there is no doubt that several of them saw in psychical research a possible antidote to contemporary materialism." (Ibid.) Many of them came from religious households but had abandoned their original faiths or even had become agnostic. Few, if any, expected their studies and research to lead to direct religious revelation. Rather, because they were interested in religious and philosophical questions, they were "very much disposed to hope that it would in the end prove possible to give what might be called optimistic answers to them." (Ibid., p.141; see also Grattan-Guinness (ed.), 1983)

The stated aim of the Society was "to investigate that large body of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric ⁽¹²⁾ psychical and "spiritualistic", and to do so 'without prejudice or prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned enquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems, one not less obscure nor less

hotly debated.'"(Gauld, Ibid., p.138)

The early research of the Society included not only alleged claims of spirit communication and trance mediumistic performances, the most important of which were studies of the Boston medium, Mrs. Lenore Piper, and the Neopolitan medium, Eusapia Palladino; but also claims of physical mediumship, most of which were quickly dispatched as being fraudulent. Some forms of mediumship, either mental or physical, however, remained open, unable to be either satisfactorily proven or disproven. The interest in trance personalities led into discussions of what is currently termed, 'multiple personality', and probably influenced the body of theory dealing with the same. (cf. Kenny, 1981) (13)

The investigations of mental mediumship led to the study of 'thought-transference', or 'telepathy' as one of the most prominent researchers, F.W. Meyers, came to call it. Mesmeric phenomena (or what is currently called, hypnotism), apparitions or phantasms of the living and the dead ('crisis apparitions') and speculations in moral philosophy and psychology, were all part of the considerable work of the early Society, taken up in America by, amongst others, the psychologist, William James, the leading light of the American Branch of the Society. Both the English Society for Psychical Research and the American Society for Psychical Research continue their work in the investigation of allegedly paranormal phenomena.

For some of the early researchers, their investigations did enable them to obtain 'optimistic' answers to philosophical and religious questions. (14) Some came, in fact, to accept the idea that the human personality did indeed survive bodily death intact, and some became adherents of spiritualism. Others remained open minded to such questions, and not a few became, or remained, skeptical in the matter. For them, William James perhaps summarized the matter in his "Last Report" (1909) wherein he still remained optimistic, feeling that, "Hardly, as yet, has the surface of the facts called 'psychic' begun to be scratched for scientific purposes. It is through following these facts,... that the greatest scientific conquests of the coming generation will be achieved." (p.325)

Tri-Partite Division of the Study

The spiritualist church movement, by its nature, is phenomenological (involving phenomena produced through mediumship) and revelatory, its philosophy being, ultimately, cosmological in nature while also bearing application to everyday living. Because it is a human, formal institution, including informal institutions, it comprises a social group (or groups) in which the institutions are embodied. It thus takes on a dimension of social relationships and interaction, as does any social group. While it claims to be 'scientific', and while it has been subjected to various kinds of scientific study, the

present study does not claim to examine the ontological status of the phenomena nor the veridicality of the evidence adduced for the survival of death. For the present purposes the phenomena are accepted as real, at least in the minds of the believers, and the veridicality of the evidence is unimportant. It should be noted that where terms are defined, the definitions are mine but based on observation and insider understanding.

In keeping with Smart's (1973) 'wholistic' approach, the present study will attempt to analyse a particular church group in the context of the whole movement, as much as is feasible. As a heuristic device, the study is divided into three main sections or dimensions, the social dimension, or that of social (status) relationships, the phenomenological dimension, or that of the mediumistic production of psi phenomena; and the cosmological dimension, or that of the philosophical, theological, and religious dimension of the movement as it is in itself and as it is embodied in institutions and vivified in individuals. While the tri-partite division is heuristic and convenient, it also appears as appropriate to the nature of the movement itself, the social dimension being related to 'this world', the physical world; and the phenomenological being related to that which bridges the two worlds, the demonstration of mediumship. Both the human world and the world of the gods or spirits are then being accounted for, as well as the relationship between them which, for spiritualists, is not just a cognitive relationship but also, and most importantly, an

experiential relationship. In doing so, both the hope and the attempt is to study this particular religious/philosophical group "in a warm way and to follow the logic of the structures" it creates (Smart, 1973, p.38). We begin then with the social level, the level of real human beings involved in social relationships of various kinds and engaged in the act of living and interacting as spiritualists.

(NOTE: The use of double script brackets which begins in the following chapter indicates sections of spiritualist philosophy reconstructed ethnographically rather than taken from the written literature. It is set aside by the brackets in this way to indicate its nature while yet being integrated in the ethnographic material. In this way, the relationship between the belief system and practice is more clearly seen.)

NOTES

NOTES

1. Doyle's account includes the original depositions of the family and of some neighbours, in regard to the original phenomena and the digging, etc.. Since they were not all written at the same time, nor necessarily all that close in time, to the occurrence of the phenomena, there are some discrepancies in the accounts though not of a major kind.
2. Doyle maintains that there is evidence suggesting that some of these rapping mediums were not exactly new, that they may have been practicing before the Fox sisters appeared but until there began to be some publicity and apparent recognition, they had remained in the psychic closet, so to speak.
3. Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), the "Prophet of the New Revelation" as Doyle calls him, was born of poor and uneducated parents. "He was feeble in body and starved in mind. Outside an occasional school primer he could only recall one book that he had ever read up to his 16th. year. Yet in that poor entity there lurked such spiritual forces that before he was twenty he had written one of the most profound and original books of philosophy ever produced." (p.42) That work was the Great Harmonia, which describes and reflects upon his out of the body experiences or "soul-flights" in which he learned much about the nature of the after-life, the experience of death, spiritual realities and spiritual realms. (Much of what he supposedly saw was similar to the visions and revelations of Swedenborg (1688-1771), the Swedish philosopher, scientist and mystic. Both Swedenborg and Davis are claimed by spiritualists as being antecedents or forerunners of the movement, although a specific church grew up around Swedenborg's revelations distinct from spiritualist churches.
4. Davis was able, in a hypnotic trance state, to do apparently accurate clairvoyant medical readings on people not physically present, both diagnosing the condition and prescribing curative remedies. In this aspect he is remarkably similar to Edgar Cayce (1877-1943), who also demonstrated a like talent. In Cayce's case, documentation of his readings was begun early in his career, and later a

foundation was established for the study and promulgation of the information contained in the readings (the "Association for Research and Enlightenment", or A.R.E.). A considerable number of books and articles have appeared based on the Cayce readings.

While Davis was born in New York state and Cayce in Kentucky, it should be noted that a number of significant modern religious movements has their origins in the eastern United States, all within a few years of one another. Spiritualism, Mormonism and Christian Science all had their origins there, amongst others.

5. By 1908 Vancouver had a spiritualist church, the First Spiritual Church of Vancouver. In the next two or three years one or more other churches appeared, and in 1911 a merger took place from which resulted The First United Spiritualist Church of Greater Vancouver, which is still in existence today and therefore not only one of the oldest spiritualist churches in Canada but also one of the oldest continuous churches in the Canadian spiritualist movement.
6. The spiritualist movement in romance countries such as France and Brazil, is based largely on the works of Alain Kardec (1804-1869), which includes material on reincarnation. Accordingly these groups often include a principle on reincarnation along with the other seven principles as above. Some of the spiritist groups in South America are also syncretistic, combining elements of Kardecism, Catholicism and Afro-originating religions in their belief and ritual. (cf., Leacock and Leacock, 1972)
7. Spiritualism is sometimes seen as an occult group, or esoteric group, and classified with such groups as Theosophy or its off-shoot Anthroposophy or other more modern cults or groups. This is a charge which spiritualists deny, maintaining that there has never been anything esoteric about it and that it is scientific and not occult in nature. Nevertheless, many spiritualists are read in the literature of the Theosophy society and in similar kinds of teachings, all of which are "revealed" teachings from spirit sources of one sort or another, usually revealed through some form of mediumship. Currently there are a number of groups expressing beliefs and practices that are related to the spiritualist church movement but which may be said to be rather syncretistic in taking ideas from a number of older metaphysical movements and from spiritualism, putting them together in a somewhat more modern form. Not infrequently, such groups claim a long history, due to the many and successive reincarnations of the leader, who may be considered by the followers to be at least semi-divine. Contact with extraterrestrial beings is sometimes a part of their revealed philosophy. What these movements or groups tend to have in common is: (1) a

"revealed" philosophy or belief system from (2) a "high" spiritual source usually (3) through the mediumship of a leader or leaders of semi-divine spiritual unfoldment. There is a similarity of claims as well as a similarity of teachings, and the claim is sometimes made that the teachings has their origins in the ancient lost continent of Atlantis or Lemuria.

8. In many of the states of the United States, a medium who is not either an ordained minister or a minister in training can be prosecuted under various fortune-telling laws. Accordingly, most mediums in the U.S. are ministers, or at least ministers in training. In Canada, many mediums, but not all, are ministers, but there seems to be less emphasis on the ministry than in the U.S.
9. cf., Biscop 1981, p.58,59, in this regard; and also Nelson, 1969.
10. During fieldwork in the principal church, on which this study is based, there were between 40 and 50 registered members in the congregation, in addition to which there were up to 50 or so regular attendants, some of whom were attendants of other churches as well. The usual number in attendance at services was about 25 to 35, although there have been up to 100 people present for special visiting mediums. Anyone seeking membership must be sponsored by two members, with a waiting period of up to three months before the membership application may be ratified by the congregation. Seldom is an applicant refused membership, and such refusal would only occur on the advice of the Executive of the church or on strong opposition from one of the members who might persuade other members to vote against the application. I have never seen such happen, but I am aware of one individual who was de facto kept from membership by having her application tabled until she finally withdrew it. In this case, she was perceived as a potential troublemaker by one of the members of the executive, a fact which time later bore out. However, there are no functions of the church which nonmembers are not eligible to attend other than the regular monthly members' meeting.

At the time of fieldwork, most of the regular members were perceived by me as falling roughly into what is commonly called the middle class, though some were of a skilled workingclass background. For example, eight members held one or more university degrees (there were two professional engineers, and one member with a graduate degree); two were RN's and three individuals had backgrounds in various forms of mental health work. That is to say, that at that time approximately 21% of the membership had university degrees and/or professional status. However, this appears from other fieldwork to be

rather unusual in that spiritualism tends to draw its followers more from what is commonly called the working class than from other classes, though, as Nelson states, to some extent it cuts across class distinctions.

The majority of the members were in the 30-50 year old age bracket, with perhaps 6 or so in their 20's and about the same number over 50. There were varying numbers of children though none were regular attendants, and 2 or 3 adolescents. The minimal age for membership was 18 though an associate membership was available for those 16-18 and there was 1 adolescent in this category.

The majority of platform workers were women, whereas the majority of healers were men. In 1979, the list of platform workers for the church was based on the working of 7 men and 15 women acting as either speaker and/or clairvoyant. There were 40 male speakers as compared to 64 women; and 56 male clairvoyants as compared to 128 women as based on these 22 people.

In terms of political and social ideals, there was a general tendency toward a socialistic perspective regardless of political affiliation. There were several open homosexuals in the congregation and the general attitude toward them was quite accepting. Women outnumbered the men in the membership but only slightly, and some of the positions on the Executive tended to be filled by women though not necessarily.

11. Cf., Moore (1977), for an analysis of the conflicts between science and religion at mid 19th. century.
12. "Mesmeric phenomena were trance phenomena of a hypnotic nature, so called after the experiments, writings and claims of Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), an Austrian medical doctor who discovered, supposedly, a cure for various ailments through the use of "animal magnetism". He believed that all matter is ultimately fluid-like and that there is mutual magnetic influence between living and non-living things. This influence could be stimulated through the use of certain techniques to produce healing results. In the early 19th. century there were often travelling "mesmerists" or "magnetizers" who went about demonstrating the associated phenomena which, as Podmore rightly points out (1904), helped prepare a climate of acceptance for the demonstration of spiritualist phenomena. While both the theories and experiments of Mesmer are discounted today, nonetheless he is recognized as the founder of hypnosis and hypnotherapy.
13. A number of important and influential psychologists were interested in, or involved with, psychical research. In America, William James was a major figure behind the American branch of the Society for Psychic Research, and in Europe both Freud and Jung at various times addressed the

Society, while Flournoy and Oesterreich dealt with various aspects of spirit possession. (See bibliography.)

14. At a later point, the Anglican/Episcopalian Church appointed a committee to investigate the claims of the spiritualist movement and to consider what relevance, if any, the movement had for the Church of England. In 1937, the committee prepared a report that was favourable to spiritualism, but which, for various reasons was not publicly acknowledged or published until much later. (cf., Barbanell (1959), pp.198ff.) In the later 1960's, the American Episcopalian bishop, James Pike, caused considerable stir by his personal investigations of psychic phenomena and mediumship after the death of his son. (See Pike, 1968)

IV. CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Division of Labor

The individual's experience of self and the identity formation that arises in conjunction with that experience begins in relation to others, the significant others and then the generalized others. So too, the process of self-identity creation as a spiritualist begins in relation to other spiritualists. It begins in the matrix of social relationships, some of which are institutionalized and some of which are informal, which are particular to spiritualism. Within the framework of spiritualism, as will be seen in this chapter, provision is made for the adopting of both significant others (in this case, mediums) and generalized others (congregational members) so that socialization into spiritualism moves at least somewhat beyond secondary socialization to a degree approximating resocialization.

The social division of labor in the spiritualist movement is such that there are two primary categories of adherents, workers and non-workers, workers being those who 'work' on the platform, as the front area of the church or hall is referred to; and non-workers being a term describing all other members. 'Workers', then, are mediums, speakers, healers and others,

usually members of the executive acting as chairperson for services. 'Workers' and 'non-workers' is a hierarchical bipartite categorization of the division of labor, but it does not necessarily indicate the actual power distribution within any particular spiritualist church. It is a theoretical categorization as well as an institutional or practical categorization, reducible in many ways to 'mediums' and 'non-mediums', although not necessarily so. It is also a status categorization.

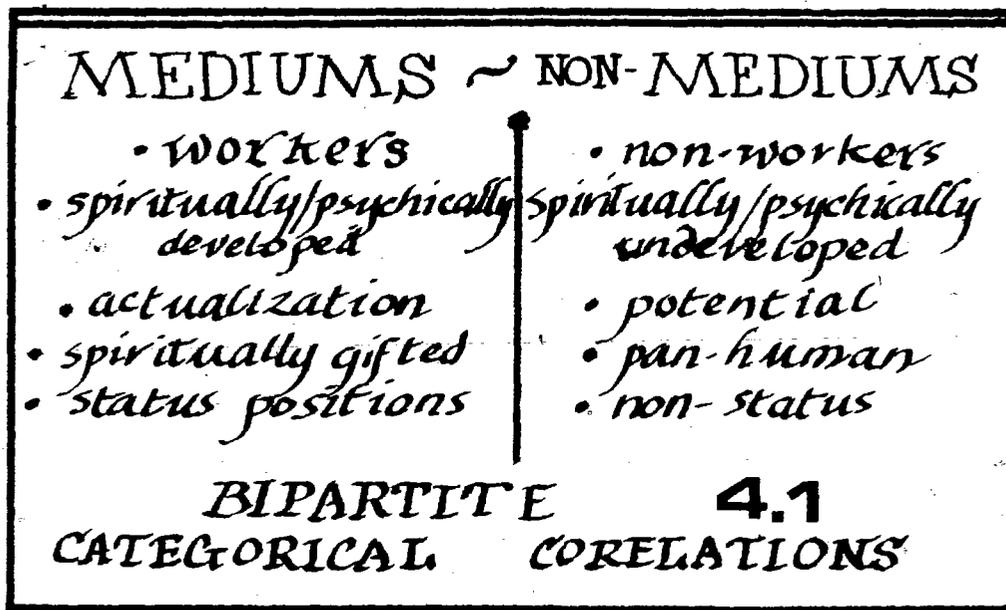
{{Psychic ability is pan-human: the psychic or spiritual faculties are merely the higher etheric counterpart of the sensory apparatus of the physical body. That is to say, we are all spirits with a physical body. Death is merely a change, a dropping of the physical body and continuing existence of consciousness resident in the spiritual, or etheric, or astral body, the perfected counterpart of the physical body which is connected to the physical body by the Silver Cord, the etheric counterpart of the umbilical cord.}}

The various psychic faculties, then, are the spiritual equivalent of the sensory apparatus, the faculties which we will use after death while resident in the etheric body. Clairvoyance involves the use of the etheric vision; clairaudience involves the use of the etheric hearing; psychometry draws upon the etheric organs of touch; there are no specific equivalent terms for tasting or smelling but both can be experienced etherically as well as physically.

Because psychic ability and mediumship are dependent upon the etheric or spiritual faculties, we are all, potentially at least, mediums. {{Through participation in psychic development classes, coupled with sincere and responsible desire, any one of us may begin to develop our psychic faculties, although as with any human ability, there will be some individuals who are more gifted than others, and who will go on to become platform workers and mediums.}}

A number of categorical correlations can be made in regard to this primary division:

Figure 4.1:



There is present in this categorization an implicit level of conflict, since it consists of a number of paired and mutually exclusive opposites. Skultans (1974) has noticed this problem:

One of the attractions of spiritualism is that it deceptively promises high ritual status to all adherents: spiritualist doctrine recognizes the universality of mediumistic or spiritual power in a

latent, if not manifest form. Moreover, mediumistic power is the currency in terms of which status within the movement is acquired. However, high status is by definition scarce; if it is too easily acquired it loses value and thus destroys itself. Thus there is conflict and the elements of self-destruction at the very core of spiritualist doctrine. As a result, whilst the theoretical universality of mediumistic power is readily acknowledged, its actual manifestations constitute a threat to all committed spiritualists. This threat is increased by the absence of clearly formulated beliefs and structure within the groups. (pp. 61-62)

Her assessment of the conflict situation, however, fails to distinguish adequately between the theoretical level and the institutional level, and fails to adequately perceive the legitimating mechanisms at work. The conflict, for Skultans, is resolved on an individual basis through alternation between operating on the basis of 'group norms' and operating on a basis of 'anti-group norms'.⁽¹⁾ Group norms "involve a readiness to abide by the explicit and implicit rules of the group thereby expressing solidarity"; anti-group norms, on the other hand, "involve the violation of the explicit and implicit rules of the group." (Ibid., p.62) She maintains that group norms "operate where status is safe; anti-group norms operate where status is threatened." (Ibid.)

There is simply no conflict on the theoretical level; the 'elements of self-destruction', as Skultans sees this conflict, are not "at the very core of spiritualist doctrine". The doctrine is quite clear: all human beings are potential mediums because mediumship involves the use of 'soul' or 'psychic' faculties which all human beings possess by virtue of being spirits in a physical body, the physical body being the

counterpart of the perfected etheric or spirit body. The conflict is at the institutional level. As Berger and Luckmann have pointed out (p.59), there need not be a functional and logical integration of all the institutional elements. However, for a social group to continue in existence, there must be mechanisms at both individual and group levels to circumvent problems arising from conflict, and the spiritualist movement, which has long recognized this problem - albeit in an indirect way, is no exception to this situation. It perpetuates its own legitimating factors and devices.

Legitimations and Demonstrations

Demonstrations of mediumship are an essential part of the doctrine and structure of the spiritualist movement. The claim to prove survival of bodily death rests on the demonstration of mediumship in an ongoing manner: without mediums, there would be no one to commune with the spirit world while in the body; without spirit communication there would be no revealed philosophy on which to build the theoretical aspects of the movement. Clearly, the ongoing demonstrations of mediumship provide the phenomenological (and experiential) basis for the entire movement, the spirit communication that is being demonstrated being probably the functional equivalent of eucharistic participation in orthodox Christian churches, especially Roman and Anglo catholic ones.⁽²⁾ If, as Skultans

argues, the actual manifestations of mediumistic power "constitute a threat to all committed spiritualists" (there is some syntactical ambiguity in her statement, however), then logically the movement should have self-destructed long before the present.⁽³⁾

In fact, the "absence of clearly formulated beliefs and structure within the groups" does not increase the element of threat. Rather it is one of the legitimating devices working to create solidarity and integration between the theoretical and institutional order. Considerable flexibility is maintained in terms of belief, allowing a wide range of possible interpretations at the individual level, which is institutionalized in the stand that the Seven Principles are themselves open to individual interpretation. The beginning spiritualist is made aware of this from the onset of his or her career in the movement and is socialized into the possibility of broad interpretation. The claim is often made that spiritualism does not have all the answers, and that those in spirit are not infallible, though they may have greater avenues of knowledge open to them. {{Because they have passed through the portals of death, this does not mean they have gone through a radical change of consciousness. In fact, the personality, character, memories and consciousness are all the same as they were while the individual was on the earth plane. All that has changed is the body. The physical body has been laid aside and the soul or spirit, the consciousness, is now resident in the astral or

etheric or spiritual body. People will continue to learn, to grow and to change, and may be of great help to people on the earth plane, eventually progressing to the point where they may chose to work as guides or helpers. Knowledge, then, is a result of the progressive unfoldment of the individual, but no two individuals are completely alike, and their understanding will be different, as will be the rate of their spiritual unfoldment.}}

This flexibility of belief allows for individualism both theoretically and institutionally. Allowance is thus made for the different theoretical and psychic stances of individual mediums and workers, as well as for the individualism of non-workers. Considerable variation may be seen in the addresses from the platform, while yet there will be at least informal but generally known guidelines to acceptability of both content and style of presentation. The same is true also for demonstrations of mediumship. While there may be variations between and within church groups, there will nonetheless be guidelines and standards acting as agents of social control for demonstrations and lectures, generally extended to healers and healing as well.

The movement has long recognized the possibility of egotism on the part of individual mediums, and of the concomitant possible competition for followers. "Like attracts like" is a common saying and idea among spiritualists: it is for them one of the natural laws of the universe. {{Since like attracts like, mediums will attract spirit guides and workers of similar

vibration,⁽⁴⁾ but they might also draw followers and students of similar vibrations. While some mediums will undoubtedly be drawn into the work for egotistical reasons, most will come into it to be of service to others. Those who come into it for ego reasons will soon discover the error of their ways and will not succeed. They may even lose their psychic powers. However, spirit will use whoever they can, so while a particular medium may not be that advanced spiritually, she or he might nonetheless be a good medium for spirit to work through. What is important is the message, the work that spirit is doing, and not who it's done through.}}

Such a concept acts as a theoretical legitimation of the possibility of lack of 'spirituality' at the institutional level as embodied in concrete, individual mediums and other workers. It legitimates differences in mediumistic performances and can act as a counterbalance to criticism of individual mediums. (cf. Skultans, Ibid., p.65ff) Mediums may become known as specialists in one area or another: some may be better at providing 'proof of survival' or evidential material,⁽⁵⁾ others may be more adept at counselling or at predictive statements. Some mediums consider it beneath the dignity of mediumship to deal with 'earthly' or 'material' matters and claim to give only spiritual messages or readings, yet others claim to recognize the importance of living in the world as our spiritual learning ground.

Mediumship is a status category, and in any given local area there may be a hierarchical status accorded to the mediums. Because it is a status category, it therefore carries with it a certain charismatic quality or aspect, which individual mediums may utilize or develop differently. It is obviously important for a professional medium, whose livelihood depends on followers and repeat business (in the sense of fees or donations for mediumistic services), to maintain status and charismatic qualities. But not all mediums are professional in the sense of earning a living from their mediumship. Many, if not most, derive only part of their income from the provision of mediumistic services, and some derive little, if any, financial reward for their services. Status, prestige and reputation can, of course, be their own rewards, and most mediums, professional or otherwise, will have a group of followers who may travel from church to church if the medium works at different churches; or, if a favourite medium has a particular church or location, there may be a stable congregation. A stable congregation may, of course, adhere about a particular church irrespective of any particular medium.

In the latter case, there will be more emphasis on legitimate power than on charismatic power and leadership, though charismatic elements may still be seen in situations of legitimate power. In cases where a church group is not centered around a particular medium, there will usually be a democratic type of organization with an elected board of officers, the

Executive. Leadership then acquires legitimation through the electoral process, but charismatic elements will still be present as embodied in individuals. (6)

The basic categorization of social relationships in the spiritualist church movement is that of the bipartite division of labor, as stated above, often coextensive with 'mediums' and 'non-mediums'. The categorization is also one of status and hierarchy, but power may be charismatic or legitimate or both, depending on the organizational structure of the particular group. However, in chapter two it was argued that the power structure and other aspects of the group structure will be legitimated by various mechanisms at work within the society or group. There are four levels on which legitimation will occur within the society or group. In spiritualism, the incipient level of legitimation of this bipartite division of labor is found in the very beginnings of the movement, the prime social structure relationship (those who can produce the manifestations of spirit communication and those who can't) on which the movement is based. The rudimentary theoretical level of legitimation involves the use of a number of generalized statements drawn from, and related to, the philosophy of the movement and expressed as natural law (eg., "Like attracts like"); it also involves 'common sense' maxims drawn from the wider society, such as "no one is perfect", "life is a learning experience", and so forth. (7) At the explicit theoretical level, the division of labor is legitimated in terms of general psychic

development theory as expressed in development classes and home circles, where one of the aims is to produce mediums to continue the work. Socialization into the role of worker/medium takes place at the institutional or practical end of this explicit theoretical level of legitimation. The symbolic universe of the spiritualist movement enfolds all its members (and all human beings) in its legitimation of death, spirit communication and the pan-human possession of psychic ability, due to the inherently spiritual nature of the human species.

The legitimating process includes the legitimation of individualism, and therefore of the possibility of conflict, on the theoretical level. The theoretical level also legitimates differences in performance and beliefs at the level of the individual medium, and it provides, at the level of the symbolic universe, the concept of 'giftedness', which then differentiates those with mediumistic ability in quantity from those with little mediumistic ability. At the institutional level, actual demonstrations of mediumship are legitimated ongoingly in the services and in development classes, the latter providing a certain amount of comfortable or reassuring legitimation of non-medium status for those "less gifted individuals". {{The Law of Life is such that Eternal Progress is open to every human soul, and so, if we don't unfold our spiritual and psychic here, we'll do it in the hereafter. And we'll have all eternity to do it.}}

Factionalization and Accusations

Pluralism, as Berger and Luckmann argue, encourages skepticism and innovation, and tends to be threatening to the taken-for-granted reality of the group. Spiritualism legitimizes and institutionalizes a kind of pluralism in the form of individualism, at both theoretical and institutional levels. While the history of the movement shows a tendency to factionalism in limited ways, there are still all the usual forces of integration at work, and the major divisions of the movement have long been present. The Kardecist division (see previous note) began in the early 1850's, the christian/non-christian division occurring early also.

Nonetheless, factions do occur, and may lead to separate church groups or competing groups within a single church association.⁽⁸⁾ Competition for status and followers may develop between mediums, and circles which originated within the fold of the church may be withdrawn to a home, usually that of the medium, allowing greater control over the sitters. Such factionalism may or may not be legitimated in theoretical terms; that is, in terms of spiritualist philosophy. Generally it is understandable in terms of personal power and charismatic qualities, which may involve a conflict between charismatic individuals, such as mediums and 'legitimate' individuals, perhaps elected officers. Occasionally there may be ideological differences, such as Skultans relates for the groups she has

studied. (pp.64ff.)

At least one conflict in an important Vancouver church some years ago led to legal action in the form of a suit filed against the church by a factional group of the church on the basis of ideological considerations. This was very much a case of rival sub-universes of meaning within the symbolic universe of spiritualist philosophy, the competition being between the church as a whole and a group which felt that the church was insufficiently Christian in its outlook and should include more Christian paraphernalia in the decor and liturgy of the church. The suit on the part of the 'Christian faction' was dismissed in court, ending in a group of individuals withdrawing from the church, and the church itself adopting a new constitution to protect itself from future conflicts of this particular ideological and institutional kind. Factionalization of this particular kind, however, is probably fairly common among groups whose belief systems revolve around the demonstration of charismatic gifts, since status and prestige tend to be dependent upon such demonstrations rather than inherent in offices. Access to status thus becomes more restricted than in cases where it is accessible through office and competition tends to become keener.

Within the movement as a whole, however, there is a concept which permits the functional equivalent of witchcraft accusations as they occur in other cultures. One of the philosophical maxims of spiritualism is that, "Thoughts are

things", that once thoughts are "put out" into the universe they are capable of independent effect, including, under some circumstances, even physical effects. {{All matter vibrates at its own rate of frequency, as does thought-energy. But mind operates on a higher frequency than, and is capable of exerting influence over, matter. .Because of the Law of Attraction, thoughts put out into the universe- on the etheric plane- will attract thoughts of similar vibration, returning with increased strength to the sender. While a single thought may be insufficient to affect a particular end, a constant stream of such thoughts over a period of time can become very powerful either for good or for evil. This is an instrumentation of which all human beings are capable, because all human beings are capable of thought. And human beings are capable of directing thought either consciously or unconsciously, and that thought can be either positive or negative.}}

Belief systems which include a concept of the manipulation of matter by mind (mind as expressed either ritually through manipulation of sacred or magic objects; or mind expressed in conceptual operation, the conscious direction of thought), will lead to the possibility of witchcraft accusations. (9) For wherever 'reality' is viewed as 'unfixed' or 'impermanent', the implication is that, in some way it is then manipulable. Given the nature of human society and institutions, it then becomes inevitable that accusations of such manipulation will occur and that, as a probable corollary of such beliefs, external events

will be assigned a meaning tending to confirm such beliefs. Anthropologists have traditionally studied witchcraft as it occurs in tribal or technologically simpler societies.

In 1937, Evans-Pritchard's study of magic and witchcraft among the Azande people of Africa became almost a model for subsequent anthropological studies of witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard's study related both magical beliefs and practices to the belief system of the society as a whole, showing them to be an integral part of the society, as well as being coherent and consistent. Thus, witchcraft beliefs were seen, not as anomalous features of an exotic society, but as part and parcel of the larger society in which they were found.

In western, or Euro-American society, we have seen the coupling of witchcraft with a belief in cooperation with the Devil on the part of supposed witches. Such beliefs and accusations reached their peak in the Inquisition, and were doctrinally elaborated in the Papal Bull of 1486, the Maleus Malificarum, or "Hammer of Witches".

In secularized, materialistic contemporary technological society, one may be surprised to find some forms of witchcraft beliefs still existing, but the popular appeal of literature, films and television programs dealing with the occult, the paranormal or supernatural, attests to the continuing interest in all such beliefs and phenomena. An interest, however, is not necessarily a belief, and a belief is not perhaps fully integrated into a belief system until it is operationalized in

some way in practice. Accordingly, it is difficult to measure the extent of popular belief in such things as witchcraft.

As Victor Turner points out (1964;67), anthropologists have not always been too careful in distinguishing between witchcraft and sorcery, even when the distinction is made by the society in question. Evans-Pritchard (1937) distinguished Zande sorcery from witchcraft in that sorcery was always conscious and voluntary whereas witchcraft could be unconscious and involuntary. However, there is an underlying relationship between witchcraft and sorcery that may be somewhat responsible for this confusion, and which is relevant to the spiritualist movement.

Evans-Pritchard's studies demonstrate that witchcraft explains unfortunate events: it imposes the social order on the non-determinate order; humankind is not simply subject to the caprices of fate, but is subject to the manipulations of sorcerers and witches, either consciously or unconsciously practicing their arts. Both witchcraft and sorcery involve manipulation of aspects of the universe (gods, spirits, natural forces, etc.) ordinarily perceived as outside the social order, by individuals or groups within the overall social order. The implication is that the natural world is manipulable by humankind and therefore can be seen as being of an 'unfixed' or impermanent nature. Sorcery may utilize an intermediary device, or ritual objects, which are viewed as somehow being closer to the natural world and to the desired end. Witchcraft may

operate directly, without use of intermediaries, which implies the possibility of 'mind over matter', the possibility of the manipulation of the natural world by mind or mental force of some kind. Sorcery is always a conscious and volitional act, witchcraft may be unconscious and involuntary.

Among spiritualists there are two especially perjorative accusations, both of them related to psychic matters. The first is that an individual - who may or may not be a medium-"has someone with them", which means that the individual has 'drawn' or attracted unenlightened or 'unevolved' or 'negative' spirit entities. In other words, the individual is being influenced by malevolent spirits. Because spiritualists believe in the Law of Attraction, the implication of this remark is either that the individual has done something of a negative nature; or, that the individual is of a questionable character to have drawn such negative spirit forces.

The second accusation is that an individual has been "sending out" or "putting out" negativity in the form of negative thoughts or negative vibrations. This is the more serious of the two accusations, since it implies at least the possibility of conscious and direct malice resulting, in turn, in a direct effect on other individuals. In the first case, through ignorance or lack of appropriate understanding, one could unwittingly 'draw' negative entities, but one is unlikely to 'put out' negativity through sheer ignorance. The newcomer to spiritualism is early made aware that "you get back just what

you put out", so that one is soon made aware of the psychic—and by implication social consequences of putting out negativity. A seasoned spiritualist would be well aware of this.

Both these concepts are related to the idea that thoughts are things, whether expressed physically in language or left on the mental plane. A constructive use of the idea of thoughts as things is seen in absent or mental healing. The absent form of healing, as against laying-on-of-hands types, consists of directing positive, healing thoughts toward the afflicted individual, visualizing the person as being in perfect health and receiving energy. {{The Law of Attraction will guarantee that the healing thoughts, once gone out, will become intensified and do their work even if the patient is not aware that healing is going out.}}

Either perjorative accusation can imply or directly state that some one is negative, manipulative or malicious, and is using thought energy and/or spirit entities for personal gain in some way. Because everyone has psychic ability, anyone can so direct thought energy, either consciously or unconsciously, and therefore there is no special class of people or special powers or training required. All men and women are potential 'witches' in the spiritualist scheme of things. What might be called the spiritualist equivalent of witchcraft activity is not a special class of activity: rather, it is a special class of motive or intent.

It is likewise a kind of inversion of the positive order of things. Turner maintains,

the behaviour of witches in most societies is not altogether, as Professor Winter argues, 'the exact reverse' of that of other people (Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa, p. 292.). It has certainly some 'inverted' features, but others are rather caricatures of normal behaviour. And the world of witchcraft, as it appears in tribal beliefs, is not the 'structural' world upside-down or in mirror-image. It is a world of decay, where all that is normal, healthy, ordered is reduced to chaos and 'primordial slime'. (1964, p.323)

Few spiritualists would believe in witchcraft per se, especially in keeping with the claim of spiritualism as being scientific; belief in witchcraft would be dismissed as unscientific, except perhaps as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy in those instances where people actually did believe in it. Nonetheless, the possibility of witchcraft and therefore the concomitant possibility of witchcraft accusations exist in spiritualism in the form of a manipulative mental act directed toward a particular end, the ability of which to perform is the provenance of all men and women. All thought activity is potentially a form of witchcraft activity. What distinguishes ordinary thought activity from the negative kind referred to here is motive or intent.

On the surface, spiritualist activity that could be labelled witchcraft includes the possibility of both unconscious, involuntary activity and conscious voluntary activity. Negativity, as a state of action, need not be conscious and is not necessarily beyond the realm of the individual mental manipulation of the natural world. The world

of spiritualist negativity is not a world of 'chaos and primordial slime': it is the everyday world of the mental plane manipulated toward personal gain and the disadvantage or discomfort of others.

The equivalent of sorcery is also possible in the spiritualist world, occurring when a person is consciously manipulating spirit entities for private ends.{{Because of the Law of Attraction, manipulative and self-serving people will find lots of manipulative spirits to help them.}} This obviously only applies to a special category of persons, namely mediums, who are developed psychically to a sufficient degree to undertake such manipulation with greater effect. That is to say, only those who are mediumistically developed will actually be able to work with spirit entities. As in the Zande world where all men and women are potential witches, so too in the spiritualist world. And as in Zande where sorcery requires special training to produce a special class of people and activity, so too spiritualist mediums are potential sorcerers, whose special mediumistic training makes their sorcery possible.

Whether manipulation of the natural or spiritual world is done consciously or not, the individual is nonetheless personally responsible (Principle 5) and must be prepared to accept the consequences (Principle 6). We have then an interlayering of concepts and the application of those concepts in the social world, concerning the functional equivalent of witchcraft accusations among spiritualists, which might be

diagrammed as below, Diagram 2.

In the spiritualist scheme of things it is 'mind' which is the intermediary between the natural or physical world and the transcendental world. It is also mind which unites the social world to the physical and spiritual worlds. It may be said that mind operates on two axes, the horizontal or temporal axis, and the spatio or vertical hierarchical axis. The intersection of these axes represents the phenomenological domain of the spiritualist movement, partaking in both the social world (mediumship), the natural world (physical phenomena and 'real' events), and the spiritual/hierarchical world (messages and revealed philosophy from spirit). This is diagrammed in Diagram 3, below.

Figure 4.2: Witchcraft Accusations;

COSMOLOGICAL - DIMENSION: THE SYMBOLIC UNIVERSE

A - moral nature of universe; unfixd, impermanent

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION: THE MORAL UNIVERSE

Principle 3: Communion of spirits, Ministry of Angels

Principle 5: Personal Responsibility

Principle 6: Compensation & Retribution

PHENOMENOLOGICAL DIMENSION:

Manipulation by mind, expressed 'mentally' or physically; as related to Figure 4.2

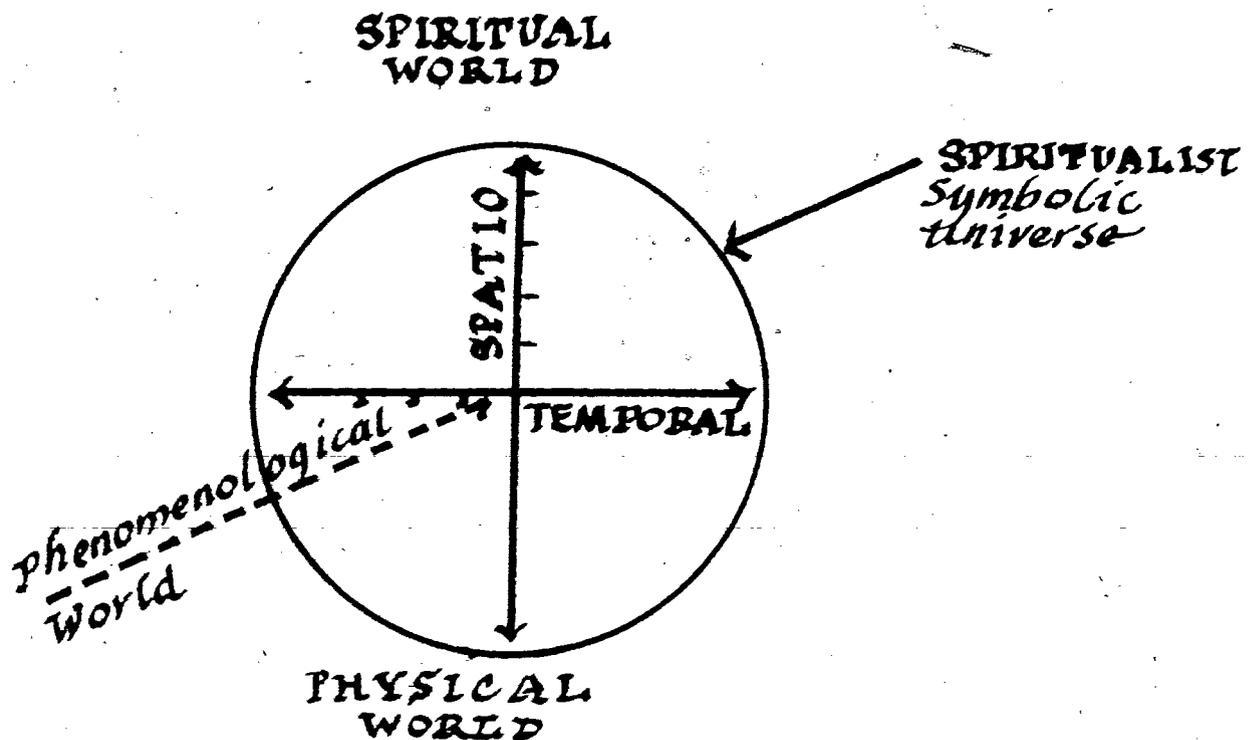
SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

Status relationships and social gain; accusations of witchcraft type of manipulation

PHYSICAL DIMENSION:

'Real' events perceived as indicative of witchcraft type of manipulations

Figure 4.3: Axes of the Mind in Operation



5
{{The universe is simply there. It is a-moral in nature, operating on the basis of Natural and Spiritual Law. It is ultimately through the exercise of personal responsibility that the universe becomes moral, fit for human habitation. It is mind that is the vehicle for the exercise of personal responsibility, and it is mind in operation that unites the world of spirits and the world of men. Since there is no death, the point of transition is only a small point on the continuum of eternal existence, marking the transition from the material or physical domain to the spiritual domain. It is Divine Mind, or Mind in Principle, which creates all things, and human mind, or mind in operation, which spans both the spatial and temporal dimensions of life; as it unfolds further, transcending its physical and

social limitations, the closer mind in operation approaches to Divine Mind, until finally the two become one.⁽¹⁰⁾ The physical/material universe is actually illusionary, the creating reality behind it being Divine or Infinite Mind, but through the operation of individual mind we become co-creators of the universe. The aim or ultimate purpose of spiritualism is to aid the individual in uniting with God, the Creative or Infinite Mind of the universe.}}⁽¹¹⁾

The anthropological literature on witchcraft and witchcraft accusations suggests that such beliefs and accusations exist in several functional ways. They serve as levelling devices between individuals of either similar or different status; they are a means of explaining the inexplicable; and they are an instrument for the focusing of and dealing with intergroup or intragroup tensions and rivalries. They may be the instrument of social change. The spiritualist equivalent of witchcraft accusations -charges of negativity and/or manipulation- directed toward specific individuals does the same things.

Some years ago a major rift occurred in a particular Canadian spiritualist church as a result of conflict occurring over a two to three year period. This was a conflict between a charismatic leader and a legitimate leader: between a medium and an elected official, each with followers or supporters who were likewise drawn into the conflict. There was a period of approximately eighteen months of growing conflict before any accusations were actually voiced. A number of previous conflicts

in the church had left the executive and some of the members wary of further conflicts.

An ideological element was present in the conflict, the elected official representing what might be called a philosophical position in that the official placed more emphasis and importance on the philosophical and religious aspects of spiritualism. The medium, on the other hand, represented the phenomenological side of the movement.

Under the influence of the elected official, psychic development classes were expanded, well controlled and directed, to make them more accessible to all interested and less subject to the whims of particular mediums. Such things as tea leaf and card readings were frowned upon in general, and dismissed entirely as ways of fund raising for the church. In general, what this policy effected was greater emphasis on the intellectual and spiritual aspects of the movement, with a corresponding de-emphasis on mediumship, especially of the more theatrical kind. For example, guidelines were formulated for the conduct and appearance of platform workers. The policy also underplayed the supporting of persons as candidates for the ministry.

The medium in question had a reputation for moodiness, and was perceived as being unpredictable in her mood shifts and tending to depression. These qualities were seen as being evident in her platform work as well as in her more mundane interactions. Eventually she was perceived as becoming more and

more hostile to the members of the executive and some of the senior members of the congregation, while 'courting' newer members. There was fear of losing the membership in terms of support groups, on both sides of the conflict. The medium herself had expressed fears of being left out of various social events and informal gatherings, and also expressed concern that she was not working often enough on the platform, suggesting that she was being snubbed there as well.

A series of accidents occurred over a brief period of time to several members of the executive and senior members. These were mainly car accidents, none of them actually serious but all of them having been potentially serious accidents with possible loss of life. The accidents seemed to bear a resemblance to one another. (12) While these accidents were never directly blamed on the medium in question, several people began suggesting that "the negativity she was putting out" could have been an important factor in the accidents. As well, several platform workers complained of difficulty in their platform work whenever she was present in the congregation, and this was also attributed to her negativity and hostility.

Eventually the conflict erupted into open confrontation on both sides. The medium and her husband and several supporters resigned from the congregation when it became known that they would be asked to resign, but before the fact, as it were. At present, there are still some long term repercussions being felt from this conflict.

In keeping with witchcraft accusations in tribal societies, we see here the use of similar ideas to explain unfortunate events, and we see accusations being used as levelling devices between individuals in competition for status and power, that competition being expressed in terms of ideological and policy differences. Perhaps more importantly, though, such accusations among spiritualists demonstrate or legitimate aspects of the symbolic universe and theoretical or cosmological level of the movement in concrete, social reality. Individuals must take responsibility for their actions, whether conscious or unconscious, and mind can influence matter. The world of Principle and Idea becomes demonstrably present in, and legitimated in, the everyday world of social interaction.

The set of interactions outlined above can be seen to fall into a series of developmental stages, with crescendo and diminuendo:

1. General decline in social relationships between concerned factions, probably as a result of or related to the shift in emphasis away from mediumship to philosophy.

2. Interpretation of accidental events as meaningful or even planned.

3. Lines drawn up and roles taken: the 'manipulator*' versus those with 'pure' motives.

4. Alternate occasions or situations created by one side to offset the other.

5. Hostilities become open and overt accusations begin.

6. Accidents, injury and unpleasant circumstances are now interpreted not just as meaningful or planned but as prima facie evidence of malicious manipulation or witchcraft.

7. Hostilities come to a head and fission occurs: crescendo.

8. Regrouping, slow fission and fusion, and new alliances forming, with at least occasional accusations: diminuendo.

We are not herewith describing activities of witchcraft and witchcraft accusations in some technologically simple, tribal society. To the contrary, we are describing activities and interactions of a group of relatively sophisticated Euro-Americans in a technologically complex society, some of whom are professionals and well educated people. Yet those actions and interactions are cast in a mode of thought and explanatory devices similar to those found in past times or in simpler societies. However, it must be noted that we are also dealing with a small-scale society, a bounded corporate group with social and territorial limits (a church group with a church), held together by common Principles, interests, philosophy and so forth. It is a corporate group with status differences: workers versus non-workers, executive officers versus ordinary members. It is also a corporate group which includes a possible split between duly elected officials or leaders and charismatic leaders, both sides of which will seek to legitimate and retain both power and their respective sub-universes of meaning. Here, the psychic or phenomenological

level has begun to shade into the metaphysical or cosmological level, providing a multilevel example of the validity of spiritualist teachings particularly for the newer members of the church, although this is not necessarily consciously seen by the social actors. In the end, the group with the greatest power - both legitimate and charismatic power- won out.

The suggestion here, then, is that whenever there exists some form of belief, however it may be formulated, in the possibility of individual direct participation (manipulation) in the essential quality of the universe as it is perceived to be, there also will be found accusations of witchcraft. For wherever reality is viewed as unfixed or impermanent, the implication is that in some way it is then manipulable. Given the nature of human society and institutions, it becomes almost inevitable that accusations of such manipulation will then occur and that, as a probable corollary of such beliefs, external events in everyday reality will be assigned a meaning tending to confirm such beliefs, thereby legitimating both the theoretical and the institutional order.

THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS:

Those Attracted to Spiritualism

The great majority of spiritualists have not been raised in spiritualist households.⁽¹³⁾ Most 'come into' the movement from backgrounds of Christianity, though seldom of the more fundamentalist groups who generally consider the movement to be the work of the Devil. All of the major Christian churches will be represented in the spiritualist movement, and adherents to the movement frequently claim dissatisfaction with the faith in which they were raised. Often they see themselves as 'seekers' of the Truth, and some claim to have investigated various faiths and teachings along the way to the spiritualist movement. It is also not uncommon to find individuals who have come into spiritualism from a Jewish background, and occasionally one finds individuals from Buddhist or Hindu background. Nelson (1972) has investigated the background of spiritualists, and in an earlier study (1969), found there to be several major reasons why individuals were drawn into the movement.

Nelson argues that deprivation is important in the motivation for membership in spiritualism, and that "membership...has always been socially mixed in class terms, though the majority appear to be members of the lower middle and artisan classes." (p.266) But it is not social deprivation that is the basis for motivation, but rather 'felt deprivation' or disadvantage in three forms: the desire for comfort after bereavement from the death of a significant other; curiosity

about the after-life;⁽¹⁴⁾ and reassurance of the personal survival of the Self. He argues that these three forms of motivation are not class-determined, and that the movement currently, and throughout its history, has recruited members from all social classes. Further, Nelson maintains that because most spiritualists have rejected the ethical values of the larger society to which they belong, they feel deprived of a set of ethical values. Accordingly, they seek an alternate set of ethical values to guide the way they organize their lives.

Deprivation, according to Nelson, is felt on a psychic level as well, being "a condition in which an individual feels that life and the universe has no meaning..."(p.266) Psychic deprivation may result from the death of a significant other. "The loss of a close personal associate (through death) is probably the most common stimulus to membership of the spiritualist movement, but the problem of death as an abstract concept may also stimulate an interest in the study and investigation of psychic phenomena, and lead to membership in the spiritualist movement."(Ibid.)Nelson's observations of the case of British spiritualists is confirmed for the case of Canadian spiritualists as well (Biscop, 1981). An additional motivating factor may be seen in the matter of life decisions. Many individuals seek mediums for 'private readings', when dealing with personal crises or life-decisions, and in this sense, the role of medium includes aspects of what might be called 'folk psycho-therapist' and guidance counsellor, to which

further discussion is given below. Some of the individuals unacquainted with spiritualism will become members as a result of such contact with mediums. Others will not infrequently claim to have had personal psychic experience (psi experience) which led them to spiritualism directly or indirectly, and the biographies of mediums themselves almost always include claims of early psi experience (Biscop, 1981). When considering such claims, however, one must also consider the possible, and even probable, re-interpretation or reconstruction of such experiences along spiritualist lines after inculcation into the movement.

Nelson's observations can be considered from the point of view of the theory of the social construction of reality. Obviously, the adoption of a new religious/philosophical belief system (spiritualism) at an adult life-stage, as against those few whose primary socialization has included exposure to spiritualism, falls into the category of secondary socialization. To some extent, it will approach, at least, a degree of re-socialization, as discussed below. Nelson's concept of deprivation may be viewed as an emotionally charged condition operating on three levels: the level of the Self (re-assurance of personal survival); the level of the Significant Other (bereavement over the loss of a close personal associate); and a theoretical/intellectual level, 'curiosity about the after-life' which can be seen as a kind of level of the generalized other. We have, then, an emotionally charged situation affecting the

levels of the Self, the Significant Other, and the Generalized Other, operating, as it were, to 'set the stage' for the action of becoming a spiritualist. The rejection of a previously held set of ethical guidelines which is an experience that is both emotional and intellectual gives further emotional impact to the above scenario of deprivation. It may be surmised, then, that individuals who become spiritualists are individuals who are primed, or predisposed, to become spiritualists. Such a statement does not, however, allow for choice or chance conditions; it merely indicates a probable personal state leading to a probable conversion experience. {{Individuals will be drawn to spiritualism when they're ready for it. When you're ready for it, something will happen to put you in touch with it. Certainly the guides will try to see to it, that you come in contact with it, especially if there is a chance they can use you as a worker or medium. It's no accident that you're directed to spiritualism.}}

The spritualist movement may be seen as an institution devoted to the legitimation of death, "the marginal situation par excellence for the individual" and the "most terrifying threat to the taken-for-granted realities of everyday life." The movement fulfills the two most important tasks in the legitimation of death: it provides "assurance and support for individuals after the death of significant others", and it enables "individuals to face personal death while continuing to perform everyday routines." For example, one middle-aged couple

in a Vancouver church became involved in the movement, by their admission, because of dissatisfaction with a previous religious affiliation and an interest in psi phenomena. After a period of growing involvement with the particular church in which they had become members, they experienced the death of a young adult son, and the mother of the husband, in a short period of time. The couple claimed that they would never have been able to handle the loss of these two significant others "had they not had the advantage of their spiritualist 'knowledge'".

The spiritualist legitimation of death, of course, takes place in the overall context of the movement, but that legitimation is embodied in the roles and institutions of the movement, expressed theoretically in the philosophy of the movement and made concrete in the demonstrations of mediumship, and personalized by spirit messages from 'loved ones' or 'guides'. Socialization into the movement begins on the basis of felt deprivation in one or several forms, as discussed above, an emotionally charged situation which presents individuals who are, as it were, vessels emptied of the old and waiting to be filled with the new. Because of this initial emotionally-charged situation, the secondary socialization that the movement provides, as well as its legitimation of death itself, may, and for some individuals probably does, approach actual re-socialization.

Socialization & Identity in Spiritualism

Socialization into spiritualism begins with the presentation of a 'rival definition of reality', which might be caught in the phrase, "There is no death". It is a rival definition of reality that is not immediately perceivable in its entirety; over time and exposure it will become built-up. The new-comer to spiritualism is told 'to go slowly', to ask questions, to be open-minded but quizzical and even critical. He is told that spiritualism will hold up under scrutiny, and that he will receive the kind of proof that he requires, which 'may not be proof for anyone else' but that it will be tailored to his own needs for proof. He is told to 'keep seeking' and to investigate both the phenomena and the philosophy of the movement.

Initial contact with spiritualism will almost always involve a face-to-face situation: a private reading with a medium, or a church service in which there is a demonstration of mediumship. In the initial contact of the face-to-face situation, the medium is presented as a significant other, and gradually a form of identification is built up,⁽¹⁵⁾ based on the premise that all human beings are inherently 'psychic' and therefore potential mediums. It is quite common for new-comers to receive messages from mediums to the effect that they are 'quite psychic' themselves, or that they 'have hunches' which are a form of psychic ability. The new-comer may be told that at

times he has the feeling of a presence in the room, when no one else is physically present, or that sometimes he 'knows things' before they occur, or perhaps has had the experience of thinking of someone who then appears, or telephones. That is to say, the new-comer early on will be given a message or messages confirming, usually in the form of reference to some common experience, his own psi ability. The process of legitimation begins at the level of (relatively) common every-day reality, made clearer theoretically by the teaching of the ubiquitousness of psi-ability. This legitimation of aspects of everyday reality as being psychic, or psi, in nature (though unrecognized as such) serves to begin the legitimation of the rival (spiritualist) definition of reality, as well as to create the ground work for identification with mediums as significant others.

It is explained to the new-comer that demonstrations of mediumship prove survival. Initial messages to new-comers may be vague or very general in content, in a way that may have wide applicability. It is explained, however, that in order to protect confidentiality, the messages are delivered in such a way that the recipient alone should be able to understand them or interpret them, while their meanings are not comprehensible to the congregation itself. Initial messages may or may not include references to spirit entities, though this will happen in time. In this way, the new-comer may be allowed some leeway in acceptance of the spiritualist position, perhaps becoming

intrigued by the apparent psychic nature of the information that is delivered in the message, without being 'put off' by reference to particular spirit entities. While such a period of 'non-threatening' exposure allows the individual new-comer some leeway, it also allows the mediums and congregations some time to get to know the new-comer, which may be advantageous. This situation does not apply to visiting mediums who may know nothing whatsoever about anyone in the congregation.⁽¹⁶⁾ In such cases as that of a visiting medium the medium's demonstrated ability to effectively deliver messages to a congregation whose members are unfamiliar, may be used as an illustration to 'bolster' the claims for mediumship, and as an example of excellence in the role performance.⁽¹⁷⁾

Initial socialization into spiritualism involves the learning of a new language. Appropriate to a 'rival definition of reality', or a 'sub-universe of meaning', the language of spiritualism is the language of ordinary usage, of everyday life, but adapted in non-standard ways. Zaretsky (1974) has studied the language of spiritualists, particularly as evidenced in the 'Bay City' area of the United States. Many of his general ideas about that language apply in the Canadian case, though not necessarily all of his ideas are applicable.⁽¹⁸⁾ He says, "The argot meanings of the terms have been created by spiritualists and are often not understood by native speakers of English who are unfamiliar with the beliefs, rituals, or social organization of these churches." (p.167)

Zaretsky claims that, "the argot is a secret and sensitive area with church personnel", (p.186) and that initially he had some difficulties in inquiring as to the meaning of terms. Such difficulties would be unlikely to occur in Canadian spiritualist churches. While the argot used in Canadian churches might show a range of variant meanings and usage from group to group and individual to individual, it cannot be said to be secretive or particularly sensitive, nor is the usage restricted in hierarchical fashion as Zaretsky claims for Bay City area. While initiates may require a period of time to acquire familiarity with the argot, inter-church differences are not so great such that attendance at any one church would require learning a very different set of terms in order to attend another church.⁽¹⁹⁾ Of some ten Canadian spiritualist churches in three different cities with which I am familiar (some in considerable detail, others less so), only one is specifically constituted as a 'non-Christian' spiritualist church. Others may vary in the degree to which they may consider themselves 'Christian' and in the adoption of ideational or belief structures of a Christian nature. The same will hold true for the symbols and artifacts customarily associated with Christianity, such as crosses, Bibles, 'holy pictures', and so forth: some Canadian spiritualist churches will use some of them, but may eschew any or all of them.⁽²⁰⁾ Accordingly, language differences, and even theological differences, are not as great as they appear to be among American spiritualist churches.⁽²¹⁾ Zaretsky refers to

language as being of a "sacred nature" (p.188). My own limited field work in the Bay City area would allow me to neither accept nor reject this label, unless it were taken only in a broad sense as being 'sacred' in that it referred to things of a religious and spiritual nature. The users' consideration of it would be another matter, and my fieldwork in Canadian spiritualist churches would not indicate to me that the users of the language would consider it 'sacred' in any sense other than the broad one above.

Similarly, Zaretsky's argument in regard to the "power of the spoken word" would be exaggerated in the Canadian case. He says that,

Their claim is that words, once uttered, have the power to create or effect the referent which they symbolize. This belief is conceptualized by the saying: "Words are things; once spoken, they are deposited into the ether and will be picked up by like-thinking people." Once a word has been spoken, and particularly in the idiom of the spiritualist argot, its referent gains an objective reality, a material manifestation which it might have lacked prior to being verbally uttered. (p.190)

In a Canadian spiritualist church, one would be more apt to hear it expressed as, "Thoughts are things ...". Both these statements are theological, if you will, as well as social, and may indicate a difference of some degree between American and Canadian spiritualist churches, or it may indicate regional differences.⁽²²⁾ Few Canadian spiritualists would credit words themselves with any power, but would contend that it is the thoughts that have effective power, words or spoken language being only a physical vehicle for the thoughts.

The social implication of this belief, Zaretsky argues, is that the church participant "must use words very cautiously and self-consciously, because through his verbal utterances he effects both a personal and a social reality for himself and his fellow participants in the church." (p.190) Unlike the American case, no Canadian participant is restricted by his language use, and while what is said may and will affect his social (and therefore, personal) reality, effects of a more metaphysical nature, as discussed above (Ch. 4, Section III) are seen as dependent not on words but on thought itself. However, Zaretsky informs us that, "there are no supernatural sanctions for misuse of the spiritualist argot. While there are social conflicts over the use of terms, they are purely intra-church encounters resolved within the church social organization and never involve supernatural or spiritual remedy agents." (p.191) The misuse of language in a Canadian spiritualist church could lead, as well, to intra-church conflict, though such conflict would be more apt to be based on theological or interpretive differences which, of course, could either lead to interpersonal conflict; or, as in other cases of rival sub-universes of meaning, could result from actual social conflict or competition. Expressed differently, spiritualism itself provides a rival definition of reality to that of the wider society, of which it is a part. It is, then, a sub-universe of meaning, employing a language that is derived from standard English terms used in a way that is distinctive to the movement, but related to other similar metaphysical

movements and pop cultures ('hip culture'), such as the use of the term 'vibration' which is discussed below. Within the movement itself, there is considerable variation and range of usage of the terms. In Canadian spiritualist churches, there is no restriction on language usage in the hierarchical way as seen by Zaretsky⁽²³⁾, and initial socialization into the movement includes the learning of the language, a spiritualist derivation of standard English terms.

Together with the learning of a new language, and with the presentation of mediums as identification figures and significant others, the newcomer is also introduced to the various roles of the spiritualist sub-universe. These roles are seen likewise embodied in face-to-face situations of church services and private consultations or readings, and informal ones of post-service coffee gatherings and social networks.

The most important role in the spiritualist movement is that of the medium. This is the ideal role of the psychically developed and spiritually unfolded individual who is the go-between of two worlds, that of the physical, material world of mortals, and the etheric, non-material world of spirits. {{The medium is the instrument in the physical realm for those in the spirit world, the Summer Land. After the transition called 'death', the physical body is left aside and the consciousness of the individual then resides in the astral, or etheric, body, the spiritual counterpart of the physical body called also the 'spirit body'. This is a perfected body. In the

Summer land, spirits experience life as solidly and concretely as we do in the physical world, only it is governable by thought. It is this world, this realm of life, that the medium contacts. Not all spirits reside in the Summer Land: there are greater and less-developed spirits on higher and lower planes, though all will eventually evolve to higher planes, according to the Laws of Nature and the Laws of God.}}

The demonstration of mediumship, either in private or in public, presents an exceptional individual, one who is able to gather information from sources and by means beyond the 'normal' or usual. Most mediums are clairvoyant: able to obtain information from spirit entities, and correctly communicate that information to the recipient in the physical realm. They are then, message workers, giving messages from spirit loved ones and spirit helpers (or 'guides') to clients or members of the congregation. They are also message givers in that they 'bring through' the spiritual message to clients and congregation, when they speak either in trance control (spirit possession) or by 'spirit inspiration' without the adoption of a trance state. (cf. Biscop, 1981) The teachings that they offer will be such as are provided by their spirit guides, and since like attracts like the teachings will be a reflection of their own ideas and beliefs. As Zaretsky says,

... the medium may bring a message to the whole congregation on how to lead the good life and get in tune with nature's laws, which are God's laws. Abiding by this knowledge is supposed to prevent the parishoner from being defeated by the life-problems he faces. This message constitutes the church's teaching and is

regarded as the philosophical portion of Spiritualism.
(p.191)

The medium may begin by giving a reading from one of the many books of spiritualist philosophy, or some other spiritual, religious or philosophical book. Readings are often taken from the Bible, but may also be taken from literature or any other 'appropriate' source. Several readings may be used, and ideally the address will follow on the theme of the readings. In this sense, the role of the medium is also that of spiritual teacher.⁽²⁴⁾

But message work involves informal counselling, as advice, direction and prescriptions are given both in platform work, as part of the demonstration, and in private readings. The role includes that of spiritual and personal counsellor.⁽²⁵⁾ It also includes prognosticator, leader and purveyor of material which is claimed to provide proof of personal survival of bodily death. It may include the general role of pastor. All these aspects will be examined in detail.

Message Work

Spiritualist mediumistic messages or readings generally contain three kinds of information: evidential material, by which it is claimed to prove survival of the human personality beyond bodily death; counselling information, which may be of a spiritual nature but often is more practically oriented, and predictive information, usually related to the counselling

aspects but which may extend beyond to other life aspects.

The common thread between all three kinds of information is related to the implicit evidential aspects: the medium allegedly receives the information from spirit loved ones and passes it on to the recipient. {{Spirit, being somewhat wiser and less limited than those of us 'in the body', may be able to see 'further down the line', and thus warn or direct us as necessary and helpful.}}

The late Irish-born medium and author, Eileen Garrett⁽²⁶⁾, summarizes the qualities of 'evidential' material:

In this field of research, the evidence of persistent memory after death can best be made known by the recollection of sometimes trifling but intimate incidents, known only to the family, which have made a permanent impression. A broken toy remembered and described ... a broken promise, a family joke - things that have a personal flavour are more likely to be remembered after the breath takes its leave of the body. Cross correspondence, the reception of part of a message given through one or two or three sensitives, is often striking. If such messages are outside the medium's range of knowledge and are characteristic of the personality who communicates, it can be considered fair proof of the continued memory of the one who has died. (1968; p.61)

Garret goes on to state that, "The question of mediumship largely turns upon proof of identity - the proof given through the sensitive must be clear and coherent." (Ibid., p.62) Nonetheless, many spiritualist mediums place little emphasis on evidential material, though some have built their reputations upon it, and yet others include it in their 'work' but see 'spiritual communication', such as that with 'spirit guides', as being of more importance. Clearly, for all its claims of

presenting proof of survival, the survival of spiritualism itself as a sect involves more than the production of alleged "evidential" material. Nonetheless, this is the stated ideal, and much spiritualist activity is related in some way to this ideal. (27)

In terms of socialization of the novitiate into spiritualism, the novitiate is introduced to the medium as an individual with links to the wisdom and foresight of the spirit realm. The medium is also introduced as a "worker", and the novitiate is accordingly socialized into one of the most important of spiritualist idea/values, that of 'work' and of each individual having his or her 'spiritual work' to do, either on this plane of life or in the discarnate realms. That is to say, through presentation of the medium as an ideal identificatory figure, the new spiritualist is socialized both to a role and to important aspects of the conceptual and belief system of the movement. (28)

The flow of the three kinds of information generally given in readings, evidential material, counselling and predictive material, embodies, by implication and symbolically, a second key concept of the spiritualist movement, the notion of "progress" expressed directly in the Principle (7), "Eternal progress open to every human soul." When it is demonstrated that "spirit can look ahead", it is implied that here is something we are moving toward, and that progress is, or will be, taking place. {"Progress" is the driving force behind evolution, and

it is through spiritual and physical evolution that God's plan for the universe is unfolded.}} Progress is equated with growth, and growth with life.

Mediums are spiritual teachers in that, frequently acting as speakers at services, either by 'inspiration' or in a dissociated trance state wherein spirit controls or guides speak through the physical body, they are the prime disseminators of the philosophy of the movement. (The written literature and social interaction are the other means of dissemination.) Acting in this way, they quite literally 'embody' the philosophy of the movement, revealed, as it is, from supposed spirit sources.

They are also teachers in that they often hold or direct 'circles' or 'seances' or 'classes' for the purpose of the development of mediumship and psychic ability.

The role of medium, by its very nature, is one directed toward service, service to the spirit realm and service to the the incarnate world, as teacher and as message worker. The spiritualist ideal might be summarized by saying that it is an ideal of progressive spiritual unfoldment through the giving of service to others in work. The ideal is related to the 'protestant work ethic' translated to a mediumistic domain, and tied into a rather 19th century concept of progress. The ideal incorporates values which of themselves, as Macklin has duly noted (1977), are what we might term 'mainstream' American values. It is the way in which the values are embodied that is rather distinctive.

By presenting counselling information from spirit (with due noted reservations), the role of medium, in its counselling aspects, includes a specific notion of service: the noblest service is that of directly helping others in their spiritual progress. On the actual level, as against the ideal level, the counselling information is often of a practical or common sense nature, thus reinforcing basic social knowledge and social norms. Implicit in this is the presentation of mediums as normative individuals who, while spiritual, are also in the world as we all are. Thus the ideal is presented as an attainable and practical one.

As 'purveyor' of evidential material, mediumship involves this notion both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, mediums are in touch with the spirit world and therefore, ipso facto, they produce evidential information. On a practical level, the kinds of information they do produce is claimed to be evidential. The individual is socialized into this belief and in responding to information as providing evidence of survival, a mutually reinforcing process is set up whereby both medium and recipient interact to reinforce the claim of the production of evidential material. Because of this mutually reinforcing process into which the individual (and medium, for that matter) is socialized, information which if critically examined would be seen to be of little evidential quality, is accepted by both parties as evidential. Seen by the congregation as a whole, it is reinforced for them as well. This is the spiritualist 'leap

of faith'.

The role of medium does not necessarily include that of pastor, although this may be more generally the case in American spiritualist churches. Again, this is ideally related to the notion of service to others, but practically may involve a more charismatic quality and become, as Zaretsky noted (1974), quite authoritarian and dogmatic.

Other Roles: The Spiritual Healer

Next to message work, the work of healing is probably considered the most important spiritual work done in spiritualist churches. Accordingly, the role of healer, like that of medium, is also an idealized role, the healer being a spiritually unfolded individual who seeks to be of service to others through the gift of healing. The healing role, however, does not require the explicit demonstration of psychic or mediumistic ability in the way that mediumship does. In fact, 'psychic' aspects of healing may be downplayed in deference to the mediumistic demonstrations. (29)

It is expected, however, that an aspiring healer has some mediumistic or psychic ability, since the role is conceptualized as working with the aid of spirit healers, who help direct "the healing energy" from "higher planes" through the healer to the client, or patient. (30) Because, like mediumship, spiritual healing ability is derived from the base of pan-human psychic

ability, it is, theoretically, a role open to all spiritualists. On a practical level, however, individual personalities, charismatic qualities and social relationships (or networking) will be the factors influencing the selection of personnel to occupy the healer roles.

Spiritual healing is done either after the service, or, in some cases, is made part of the service; or, there may be a special time set aside for a healing service. The healing of animals may be included, along with that of humans, though this would usually be done in the animal's absence rather than with the animal present. Spiritual healing is accomplished either absently, or on the mental plane, through prayer and the direction of healing thoughts; or by direct contact (or near contact) in a form of laying-on-of-hands. The former method involves visualizing the individual in need of healing as being "in perfect health of mind, body and spirit." It is through the power of thought that this kind of healing can be "just as good as" contact ("magnetic") healing, or laying-on-of-hands.⁽³¹⁾ Laying-on-of-hands is usually accomplished through the healer making a series of passes over the patient's body, particularly over the affected part if it has been identified. It is argued that the healer is 'cleansing' the aura of the patient and that this, in turn will affect the physical body (or mental and/or emotional state) of the recipient of the healing. In some cases, the healer may actually contact the body of the patient especially along the length of the spine where the 'chakras' or

psychic centers are located. This, it is believed, acts as a stimulant to the glands associated with the chakras ⁽³²⁾, and in such stimulation, the healer is able to revitalize (or 'recharge') the patient.

The aspiring healer will be taught the 'proper' techniques for contact healing such that he/she learns social delicacy in the matter. Nevertheless, occasionally a healer will be dubbed a "feeler-healer", indicating that he (it will almost invariably be a man, in this case) is doing unnecessary touching in his healing work.

In general, women tend to become mediums and men tend to become healers, though of course there are male mediums and female healers.⁽³³⁾ It is not uncommon, however, for male mediums to be either acknowledged or imputed homosexuals (Macklin, 1977; Biscop, 1981). This would seem to be in keeping with Lewis's (1971) notions of peripheral spirit possession cults, though spiritualism shares characteristics of both peripheral and mainstream possession cults. (Biscop, 1981)

Other Roles: Platform Workers and Circle Leaders

'Platform workers' will be all those who work on the platform or altar area of a spiritualist church. That includes mediums, speakers, chairpersons and possibly healers. Some of the workers may be students sitting in development circles or classes, or ministerial students. Individual churches may

provide explicit instructions or recommendations for conduct and behavior of platform workers, and at least one church was in the custom of providing a mimeographed guideline sheet to all platform workers. In it, it stressed that motive is

Always the most important. The platform should never be used for personal reasons - i.e., to enter into debate with an earlier speaker, chairperson, etc.; to further one's own personal desire or ends; or to "get at" someone in particular who may or may not be present. The platform, in whatever capacity you're working, is to be used for the higher purpose of spiritual development, enlightenment, service and teaching. You cannot attract the teachers and guides you wish if your motives are less than totally unselfish.

The guideline also suggests appropriate dress:

Dress and manner should always be dignified, appropriate and comfortable whilst being neat, clean and tidy. Over-dressed workers - especially with too much jangly jewellery - can be as distracting to the congregation and to each other as one who is untidy or carelessly dressed. Remember - to the newcomer you are spiritualism!

While the guideline states the ideal, it acknowledges, implicitly at least, that individuals do not always live up to those ideals, ⁽³⁴⁾ and admonishes workers to,

At all times be harmonious with the other workers. This may require a degree of maturity and development at times but must be striven for. It is not always possible to be completely in accord with all the other workers on the platform but once on that platform, all personalities must be forgotten and harmony must exist. How else can you attune yourself to your spirit workers and helpers if you are not yourself in harmony?

Circle leaders are the informal teachers of spiritualism, in the sense that platform speakers are the formal teachers. Circle leaders are usually mediums and usually platform workers, so formal and informal teaching are generally embodied in the

same individual. Platform teaching is also formal in that, in some way, it follows the form and structure of public speaking, and is expected to conform to the standards of good public speaking, whether delivered in trance or not. Circle or class leadership involves teaching in a less structured manner, accomplished more through social interaction than through lecture, although it is common for there to be a short lecture at the end of the class if the medium or circle leader does trance control mediumship.

If the role of platform teacher is more formal and structured, the role of circle leader is less formal and structured, and the personality of the medium or leader may be more apparent. It is, in fact, within the development circle that the movement nourishes and replenishes itself, providing the training and socialization of future mediums and platform workers.

The medium or leader is the undisputed head of the development circle or class. If there is more than one medium present, which is unlikely, deferential behavior of some kind might occur on the part of the secondary medium, such that a hierarchical situation is maintained. The ideal circle leader is, of course a developed clairvoyant medium, who is both knowledgeable and experienced, and who can, when necessary, psychically confirm or deny information that the sitters might 'receive'. (See below for further discussion.) {{The leader will be able to maintain order and harmony; see that each sitter

receives adequate attention and understands how to differentiate between the modes of sensing, feeling, seeing and knowing; utilize a range of exercises and techniques such that sitters are stimulated and do not become bored; ensures that sitters take a common sense approach to development and to the philosophy: e.g., sitters do not immediately begin to clairvoyantly communicate with Jesus Christ or men from Mars on their first sitting.}}

Development classes or circles may be set up in such a way that the individual passes through successive developmental stages, and thus is made to feel part of "the nature of things" in regard to spiritualism and, for that matter, of mediumship itself.

Identity Maintenance

In addition to services and development classes, most spiritualist groups will provide non-formal means of identity maintenance. These include post-service coffee socials, and more intimate post-development class socials. The former as in many churches provides the newcomer and the adherent with the opportunity to begin the socialization process in a 'safe', relaxed atmosphere which is, nonetheless, sanctioned by the church because it takes place on the church property. The newcomer is made to feel welcome and may also see that perhaps spiritualists and mediums are not as peculiar as thought

previously: they are rather ordinary individuals after all.

This kind of informal socializing acts as a balance to the process of identification with mediums as specially gifted individuals and role models. It also sets the tone for 'correct' attitude: mediums are special people in their role as mediums but we're all possessing of psychic ability and we're all, in the long run, ordinary people. This correct attitude serves both to reinforce the specialness of mediumship and platform work, and to suggest to the newcomer that it is all natural and rather ordinary and therefore well within the realm of possibility.

The more intimate social gatherings after development classes and such, whether in the church or in a private home, serve to foster a sense of comradeship and contribute a highly important identity-maintenance element: ongoing conversation, in a face-to-face situation in a context of the community of believers. Identity and 'reality' are ongoingly maintained in such informal social gatherings, as well as in the more formal settings of services and classes. Here, too, the balance is maintained between the formality of the class setting and the informality of the post-class socializing. Since it is not uncommon for members to sit in circles for many years, such identity-maintaining devices are truly ongoing.

As might be expected, an individual might proceed through various levels of inculcation to a more 'core' position in terms of any spiritualist group. Usually this will involve becoming closer to, or even a student of, the pastor or medium, or at

least of becoming closer to the executive of the Board, or its equivalent. "Spiritual closeness" may lead to 'social' closeness as, conversely, 'social' closeness may lead to perceived 'spiritual' closeness.

For newcomers to spiritualism, then, the socialization process is one of secondary socialization which may, for some, approach, or be equivalent to, a form of re-socialization. As was argued above, many or even most newcomers to spiritualism have experienced some form of psychic deprivation, an emotionally-charged condition operating on the level of the self, the significant other, and the generalized other. (Chapter 2) Deprivation in any one of these forms can set the emotional stage for entry into spiritualism.⁽³⁵⁾ Initial socialization in the movement involves face-to-face situations, usually of a relatively intimate scale (small church groups or private readings) and identification figures (mediums). The newcomer is assured of the 'naturalness' of it all by being more aware of the ubiquitousness of psychic ability and of his or her own psychic ability. In time, the spiritualist language is learned and socialization moves to greater depths through levels of increasing intimacy in development classes and informal social events. As identity transformation occurs, the new identity is reinforced and sustained through further conversation and social interaction. The social level, in general, subsumes the phenomenological and cosmological levels, and in turn, those levels, like a Chinese puzzle, support and maintain the social

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1. Just how resolution occurs is not made clear in Skultán's work which, in general, seems to deal with a very specific kind of spiritualist group. Much of what she claims for this group would not be accurate for all, or other, spiritualist groups.
2. Eucharistic participation in those Christian churches holding a belief in the "real presence", or transubstantiation (the bread and wine becoming the body and blood of Christ, and not just a symbol of them), allows a direct personal contact with the divinity and the spiritual world. In the same way, spirit communication in a spiritualist church allows a direct personal contact with the spiritual world. Both instances are also a manifesting or operationalizing of the idea of the interpenetration of the spiritual and physical realms, further expressed on the individual level by the idea of a spiritual soul or consciousness resident in the physical body.
3. It should be noted, however, that there is a tendency to factionalism and even to some extent to schism within the spiritualist movement. Partly this is undoubtedly due to the charismatic qualities of mediumship and the 'spiritual gifts'. The Kardecist/non-Kardecist schism arose out of the teachings of one particular person (Alain Kardec); the other major division is the Christian/non-Christian split which revolves around the significance of Christ.
4. For spiritualists, the word, 'vibration', is central and significant, at once precise and yet broadly referent. In a similar way to the concept of the atomic vibration of matter, 'vibration' is a quality of all matter, of everything in the universe, including people, both incarnate and discarnate. It can apply to thought energy ("someone is putting out bad vibes") but it can also be used as a character description ("I get such good vibes from him") or as a description of group social action ("the vibes at the party were really mixed"). The precise usage of the term must often be determined by the context.
5. 'Evidential material' is knowledge or information gathered psychically which purports to provide evidence for the

personal survival of bodily death. The material will include names and descriptions of spirit entities and details of personal identity, such as unusual traits or characteristics; references to shared memories held in common between the alleged spirit entity and the recipient of the message from spirit. Further discussion will be found below, in several places.

6. Cf. the sociology of Max Weber for a discussion of charismatic leadership, especially 1964.
7. Zaretsky (1974) has studied spiritualist argot in the Bay City area of the United States, and finds that spiritualists use ordinary or common language in uncommon ways, and employ a linguistic hierarchy that relates to social status. This is discussed below.
8. Spiritualists acknowledge the tendency to factionalism that is found in the movement, and most histories of the movement make some reference to it as well.
9. Another group with a somewhat similar view of the relation of mind to matter, and which was also founded on the demonstration of phenomena is Christian Science. In Christian Science, the emphasis is on the demonstration of healing through mental ability or manipulation. Unlike traditional christian orthodoxy, christian science views sin as 'error', but error of perception rather than error of action, and disease as the result of accepting an erroneous or imperfect idea. The universe is an aspect of Mind and it is through Mind that healing is achieved, matter being merely the illusion of reality. Considering its similarity to spiritualism in its view of the universe and of the relation of mind to matter, one might reasonably expect to find some form of witchcraft accusations. In fact, one finds just such an example, the more interesting because, like the spiritualist example, it relates to status differences and relationships, and ties in the theoretical and social levels.

Although it is ignored or glossed over by more recent biographers of Mary Baker Eddy, Milmine (1909), who was not a Christian Scientist, relates the matter of Eddy's suit against one of her former illustrious students. In 1878, she brought suit against Daniel Spofford under the witchcraft laws of Massachussets. The bill of complaint claimed that Spofford "is a mesmerist and practices the art of mesmerism and by his said art and the power of his mind influences and controls the minds and bodies of other persons and uses his said power and art for the purpose of injuring the persons and property and social relations of others and does by said means so injure them." (Melmine, 1909; p. 240) The case was heard, appropriately enough, in Salem Judicial Court, May 17, 1878. In November of that

year the case was dismissed, with considerable amusement in local newspapers and even in court itself.

This was only one of many suits that Eddy took out against former students. While it was the only one to specify witchcraft through mesmerism, Melmine claims that Eddy had long felt former students to be mentally tormenting and harming her at a distance, and at times she retaliated by gathering a group of students together to direct their mental attention against these former students, a practice to which a number of her otherwise loyal students objected. In all these cases, it seems that the former students had perhaps threatened to surpass the master in regard to their alleged healing abilities and personal charisma.

10. This is expressed rather more abstractly than most spiritualists might tend to do, but I have done so to try and clarify the concepts.
11. Here we see a similarity to eastern or oriental philosophies, with their notions of nirvana and of the continuing progression toward union with the source of all.
12. For example, one woman fell and broke her elbow, another man suddenly developed severe tendonitis in the elbow; one woman jammed her hand in a car door and broke three fingers; the elected official referred to was rear-ended in her car and suffered whiplash, as did her daughter in an almost identical accident in the same car; another medium fell and broke his ankle on the evening of the day before he was due to work on a platform with the accused medium; a married couple were each and separately struck by their respective parked cars (which apparently slipped their parking brakes) and both were knocked down, the wife breaking her ankle and the husband breaking his wrist. Several of the above people also suffered severe financial set-backs in the same period, and a number of couples with previously stable relationships developed relationship difficulties. Yet another man lost control of his vehicle on the highway, colliding with a dividing median and suffering shock and damage to the vehicle. These accidents, all of which occurred in a relatively short period of time (several weeks) were attributed to the negativity that was being directed to the people involved. It was explained that ordinarily the negativity couldn't affect you, but that you had to keep your (psychic) guard up against it, particularly if you were vulnerable by being tired, preoccupied or depressed. It was under such conditions that one might allow the door to open, so to speak, to the negativity that was waiting.
13. In fact I can recall only two cases where spiritualists have been raised by spiritualist parents. Of these, in one

case only a single offspring had continued in spiritualism and had become a minister, though he was not a medium. His siblings had become associated with christian churches, though two, in later years, returned to the spiritualist church. In the other case, the offspring, his wife and children, were active in several churches, though none of them were mediums or ministers. Though the movement provides Lycaeums, or 'Sunday School' for the children of members, children will not necessarily become members. The insistence on personal responsibility is such that while parents are encouraged to introduce their children to spiritualism, they are also encouraged to allow their children to 'make up their own minds' in the matter. Further, the recognition by spiritualists that only individuals who are 'ready' for spiritualism will be drawn to it, mitigates against heavy indoctrination.

14. Curiosity about a possible after-life may itself be highly charged emotionally, even in cases where an individual has not experienced bereavement in the death of a significant other. By its very nature, the idea of death is already highly charged, and such curiosity about an after-life may be a response to that highly charged idea.
15. The importance of the demonstration and subsequent identification process is probably similar to the importance of demonstrations of glossolalia, as reported by Goodman (1972), in which she demonstrated from her case studies that "the capacity for the behaviour (was acquired) for the first time as the result of a demonstration." In two particular cases, "Neither of the two men saw any connection between the visit (of an evangelizing group) and their acquisition of the behavior: Juan viewed it mainly as resulting from God's intention to give him a sign concerning his ministry, and Salvador related it to the fact of his wife's conversion." Goodman felt, "however, that a learning situation was involved..." (p.35). In a similar way, the role of medium is a learned, or acquired, role, based on the ongoing demonstrations of the role and gradual exposure to the subtleties of the role performance.
16. This is not meant to imply that the demonstrations of mediums never contain evidence of psi ability, or the gathering of information from means beyond the normal waking consciousness of the medium. What is important here is the social setting of the demonstration, whatever the process at work, and the effect of the message on the recipient. We are concerned here with the interpretive processes at work in dealing with the message. An analysis of a message demonstrating the levels of interpretation that can be brought to bear on it, is given below.
17. In those rare situations where the performance of a

visiting medium is deemed poor, or unsatisfactory, the performance still may be used in an illustratory manner, by showing, in this case, how not to perform as a medium. This is what might be called, 'negative legitimation'.

18. Zaretsky maintains that in the Bay City area, individual churches, despite the chartering body, "are really centered around the personalities of their medium-pastors and possess many of the attributes of a charismatic cult" (p.176) to such an extent that the pastor maintains "complete and pervasive authority...over church activities." (p.177) While this would often be true in the Canadian case, it is not uncommon to find a church whose elected officials may over-ride the influence of the pastor, if there is a pastor at all, or of the mediums working there.
19. My fieldnotes include an amusing example of a newcomer's difficulties with the language. In spiritualist argot, 'to sit' (and the forms of the verb) means to sit in or participate in a psychic development class (or circle, or seance, or spiritual unfoldment class). An elderly medium who was somewhat hard of hearing and none too well-sighted, was demonstrating clairvoyance as a visiting medium in a particular church. She 'came to' a particular young man in the congregation who, it became apparent, was a newcomer to the movement, a fact which the medium did not seem to realize. Finally she asked him, "Are you sitting, dear?" After a pause, he replied, with a slightly puzzled look, "Yes." She remarked, "That's very good. How long have you been sitting?" "Oh, about forty minutes now." At that point, laughter from the congregation made the medium realize her mistake.
20. Compare this, for example, to the accoutrements of one spiritualist church rostrum which I visited in the Bay City area, described in chapter five. The rostrum held votive objects that might be classed as syncretist to the extreme.
21. I know of only one Canadian church whose pastor attempted to institute the giving of Communion, in orthodox Christian fashion. He was not successful and later left the church to be installed as the pastor of an American spiritualist church.
22. There is considerable crossing of the border between Canada and the U.S. by mediums and even by members of congregations, particularly on the east and west coasts. But there is also tran-Atlantic travel: British mediums are often invited to serve Canadian churches and psychic societies, and Canadian mediums may do likewise. The extent and nature of such interaction, however, is generally beyond the scope of the present work.

23. That is not to say that there are no restrictions on language at all. The newcomer whose language usage suggested that he or she was a fully developed medium - that is, while not necessarily stating that he or she was a medium, but suggesting as much - might be met with some suspicion until it was established that such was the case. Usually, it would take a public demonstration to establish the claim fully, but not necessarily so, as it may be established via social networks. Within the churches themselves, care is taken to ensure correct language usage on the part of platform workers and potential workers, by introducing them to correct usage in psychic development classes and circles. While there will be considerable tolerance in language usage, individuals persisting in idiosyncratic language usage might be perceived as being a threat to the established order, in which case a number of strategies might be employed to deal with the situation.
24. At the congregational level, American churches also make use of readings in connection with the address. But in a private reading, or message, "Any reference to a written text within the message is regarded as preaching or moralizing and is not likely to be accepted." (Zaretsky, loc. cit., p.191) This would be generally true in the Canadian case as in the American.
25. Few mediums are trained therapists or counsellors, though some may be so trained. They are absolved from responsibility, so to speak, because of the claim that what they 'receive' is coming to them 'from spirit'. Clients are advised, however, that they should consider spirit advice in the same manner as advice from someone in the physical world: if the advisor is someone whose advice they would trust and be likely to accept, then they should feel free to do so. Otherwise, they may either reject it, or 'hold it' for future consideration. The stress on personal responsibility within the movement also cautions the client to 'think for himself', but many people, it is admitted by spiritualists, come because they are unable to make decisions. However, because the role of medium is an idealized one, and because the spirit world is portrayed as more perfected than the mundane world, many people will probably react to the spirit advice as being more authoritative than it may claim to be. Nonetheless, it is usually just "common sense" advice anyway, no matter what its alleged source or reputed value.
26. Garrett herself was never fully convinced of the spiritualist point of view, nor of the actual evidential quality of the information relayed through her alleged spirit controls. She relates, "My own lack of a true belief in the identity of the controls troubled me. I had never been certain of their reality or that the messages they

conveyed from their "universe" about those who had departed this life were truly evidence of life after death. The people who came to communicate with the 'living dead' usually lacked sufficient profundity for critical examination of the communication they received. Instead of gaining moral strength, they continued to seek out those who would give them easy assurance that life after death had indeed been proven." (Garrett, 1968, p.85)

27. For a discussion of 'survival' material, see among others, Ducasse (1948, 1961, 1969) and Beard (1966).
28. Individual mediums may be presented as human beings with flaws, or the newcomer may experience contradictory reports about individual mediums, or whatever. It is important to keep in mind here however, that we are dealing with an ideal situation, an ideal to be emulated and toward which one should be working.
29. Healers may be told, for example, that if, when in the process of administering a spiritual healing they begin to 'pick up' messages or psychic impressions, they should simply ignore them and leave them for the mediums; or, if they are unable to do so, they should not interrupt the healing by passing the message to the client, but rather they should wait until after the healing and deliver the message privately. It is argued that such is proper conduct for healers, but what such considerations serve is to keep the roles distinct, while allowing for a common faculty (mediumistic ability) in the production of associated phenomena. Further, if there can be said to be a charismatic or status hierarchy in spiritualism, such instructions serve to keep the hierarchical order firmly in place, with mediums at the top.
30. The imagery used to describe the healing process is frequently of an electrical, or electromagnetic nature; or sometimes, more mundanely expressed in similes to water conduits, either natural or man-made. Nonetheless, I have never really heard just how this "flow" of healing energy is directed by "spirit helpers" through the healer. This is an area which, I feel, is not as explicitly conceptualized as other aspects of spiritualism. Some of the imagery seems derived from early 19th century electrical experimentation and from Mesmerism. As Moore points out (1977), the way for initial spiritualist phenomena was prepared by itinerent practitioners of Mesmeric healing and other phenomena, while the general social structure of the movement was probably formed by the same currents of 19th century American culture that gave rise to the denominationalism so characteristic of 19th and 20th century American religious institutions. (cf. Mosley, 1981)

31. Spiritualism shares this kind of concept with other metaphysical movements, such as Christian Science, Science of Mind, and Unity.
32. This type of laying on of hands is more related to eastern, or oriental concepts of healing and well-being. The term 'chakra' is Sanskrit, for example, and the chakras are 'nodal points' in the flow of energy through the body, in accupuncturist terms. It is also directly related to "Therapeutic Touch Healing", which is practiced in a number of hospitals in Canada and the United States. (cf., Kreiger, 1979) In other words, there is at least some scientific evidence for the efficacy of this type of healing. However, what is important to recognize here is that when the belief in the efficacy exists, the tendency will be to attribute any kind of cessation of the problem, or apparent positive change, to the efficacy of the healing.
33. This is what is commonly said among spiritualists. In fact, such may not be the case, as Table 3 (below) seems to indicate. The figures were compiled from an (incomplete) directory of spiritualist churches of Canada, for 1982. Not all the churches listed included lists of personnel.

Figure 4.4:

MEDIUMS AND HEALERS	
BY GENDER DISTRIBUTION	
NO. OF CITIES: 18	NO. OF CHURCHES: 33
Mediums:	Healers:
MALE 30	MALE 33
FEMALE 33	FEMALE 44
UNIDENTIFIABLE: 2	UNIDENTIFIABLE: 0
% Difference:	% Difference:
10% MORE FEMALES THAN MALES	33% MORE FEMALES THAN MALES

Skultans claims however, that, "Although men form only a small percentage of the total membership, they provide about half the mediums and nearly all the healers." (Skultans, 1974, p.45)

34. In fact, the reference to "too much jangly jewellery" was aimed at a specific medium, who was given to rather elaborate, almost theatrical dress and appearance.
35. What is not discussed here, for lack of space, is what distinguishes the spiritualist conversion experience from any other kind of religious conversion experience. What, for example, conditions one to become a spiritualist as against a Mormon, a Jehovah's Witness, or a Krishna? Some of the factors are undoubtedly implicit in the present discussion, but also undoubtedly deserve separate treatment. What constitutes the 'leap of faith' for spiritualists in the generalized acceptance of mediumship as proving survival. This is discussed further below.

V. CHAPTER FIVE: COSMOLOGICAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL LEVELS

General Considerations of Spiritualist Phenomena

Personal identity as a spiritualist is arrived at through social relationships. Some of those relationships will embody different aspects of the movement. Yet spiritualism will be experienced also through the cosmological and phenomenological levels, and it is through these levels that the essence of the movement, for the adherents, is experienced. In this chapter those levels are considered, especially as major elements in the spiritualist construction of reality.

The social level of the spiritualist movement is embodied in virtually every aspect of the movement and in the individuals and social relationships that make it up. It is formally embodied in the roles since the roles include, at least implicitly if not explicitly, modes of conduct as well as correct attitude: that is to say, the roles include both the prescriptions for conduct in terms of external action and prescriptions for the inner state or attitude that confirms, through internalization, the role for the individual performing it. The social level is also informally embodied in the institutions (themselves both formal and informal) that make up the public or 'active' or externalized aspect of the movement.

The cosmological level is implicit in the structure of the movement as a whole, as will be seen below in discussions of reflective aspects of spiritualism; it is also made explicit in both the teaching aspects of the movement and in its philosophy. The cosmological level is also both explicit and implicit in terms of the social stock of knowledge of the movement and its self-legitimation. In areas where reification may occur, legitimation of the reification will be accomplished through rationale or explanation in terms of the cosmological level. structure of the movement as a whole and made explicit in the teaching or philosophical aspects of the movement. But the cosmological level is both explicit and implicit in terms of the social stock of knowledge of the movement and its self-legitimation. It may also provide the rationale or explanation for any reification that might occur.

It is at the phenomenological level that the spiritualist movement truly externalizes itself. This level includes both the mediumistic phenomena of the movement and the institutions provided for the development, control and demonstration of the phenomena of mediumship. At the same time, this is the phenomenological level in a more epistemological sense, since it is through participation in the phenomena that one experiences spiritualism in a concrete kind of way: the cosmological or metaphysical aspects of the movement are made concrete and present in the here-and-now of the phenomenological level. The phenomenological level validates and legitimates the

cosmological level: "There is no death" is more than a hypothetical statement: it is experientially 'proven' through the phenomena.

The mediumistic phenomena of spiritualism are generally produced under certain conditions: the conditions of Sunday services or seance conditions, the latter of which may include dim or colored lighting, or even complete darkness. The former, not untypical of church services, include hymn singing, communal prayer, and perhaps periods of meditation. While these are what might be called 'quietistic' devices, as against the drumming, clapping and dancing of other cultures or cultural groups, the net effect is the same. They are aids in the production of what appears to be a dissociated state of some kind (varying degrees of dissociation are possible).⁽¹⁾ The conditions of development classes, which we might term "seance" conditions as against "service conditions", though somewhat different from service conditions, likewise function as aids to the production of dissociated states. Again, varying degrees of dissociation are possible. Eventually however, as other forms of mentalistic phenomena demonstrate (eg., post-hypnotic suggestion) the actual presence of the stimuli is not necessary to induce the state: when sufficient motivation is present, the attitude and memory of the stimuli are sufficient to produce the actual dissociative state. For this reason, phenomena may be produced apart from the usual conditions amenable to its production. That is to say, interior states giving rise to the production of mediumistic

phenomena may begin in a socially constructed and mediated context, but in time may be self-induced, without the full range of stimuli. We may then conclude that the inductive techniques have been internalized.

Specific Considerations:Services

Spiritualists will admit that there is nothing intrinsic to spiritualist doctrine such that services should be held on Sunday and not on some other day of the week. In doing so they claim to be following cultural tradition and the habits of most people, accustomed as they are in this society to the notion of church on Sunday. Nonetheless, holding services on Sunday (though some churches may hold them on other days as well) automatically inculcates a certain amount of religious feeling, if only through association with Christianity's cultural traditions. But holding services on another day of the week (as many Christian churches do), also suggests the notion that spiritualism is not just a religious philosophy "for Sundays" but for everyday of the week. While spiritualism claims to be a religious philosophy rather than a 'religion' per se, it nonetheless uses many of the conventional trappings of religion which, while they may not have the symbolic content and context of orthodoxy, are still part of the mechanisms used to induce an appropriate religious state in the attendants. (2)

The singing of hymns is used to "raise the vibrations" at services and, at times, in circles or classes. The notion of 'vibration' is central to the spiritualist concept of both the mundane and the transcendental worlds, and hymn singing is tantamount to "harmonious group vibration", in which everyone can, and usually does, play a part. {{Everyone can sing, to one extent or another, just as everyone has psychic ability to one extent or another, so everyone can help raise the vibrations. This makes it easier for the workers to get through, and everyone enjoys it more.}} Through congregational and group singing, the notions of "vibrations" and "raising the vibrations" are made accessible to the newcomer in a concrete and mundane kind of way, just as in Christian congregations singing is often used as a demonstration of Christian joy and brotherhood.

It is not at all uncommon for there to be student mediums/ministers/workers on 'the platform' at spiritualist services. While this provides training and public exposure (under the eye of the pastor or the equivalent) it also acts as a demonstration of the hierarchical social structure of the movement, which itself can be seen as a reflection of the cosmological notions of the spiritual hierarchy.⁽³⁾ It also embodies the notion of work/service as the spiritual necessity of all human beings, and of progress and evolution. Mediumship is something that is worked at and progressively attained through service to others. As well it includes another central concept of spiritualist

philosophy: "Like attracts like". The different levels or degrees of mediumship and the different approaches of the individuals in question provide a concrete demonstration of this maxim, since individuals will "attract spirit guides and workers" as appropriate to their level of development and interests. Mediumship, it is claimed, is the interface between the two discrepant (though overlapping) worlds, the physical or mundane and the spiritual or transcendental. Sociologically speaking, this is very true, since mediums produce the phenomena that make the transcendent world of the belief system concretely available to the mundane world of the believers.

As is typical in other churches, the lecture or address is an important device for the formal teaching of spiritualist philosophy. The lecture may be delivered from notes, or given "inspirationally", in which case it is claimed that the medium is directly being 'inspired' by his or her spirit guides without the intervention of a trance condition. It is customary to begin the lecture with a reading from the bible or some other appropriate piece of philosophical, spiritual or even literary writing. Some mediums will request another person (perhaps the chairperson) to find and deliver the reading, whereupon the spirit workers will inspire an address related to the reading.

At other times the lecture is delivered in a state that spiritualists refer to as 'trance control', a form of spirit possession or a dissociative state in which the personality of the medium is absented to some degree. The degrees can vary from

"light" trance, or "overshadowing", to "deep trance" in which state the medium allegedly has no knowledge or awareness of what is said, and his/her spirit 'controls' or guides speak "through the instrument".

In the performance of inspirational and 'trance control' lectures the spirit world is made directly a part of the teachings of the movement: the 'revealed' nature of the doctrines is made ongoingly concrete, as is the claim that, in fact, the mundane world is interpenetrated by the transcendental world, which itself is available to the inhabitants of the mundane world through the various forms of mediumship. {{Life and death are but the two sides of a river, and we pass from one to the other in the final crossing.}}

A further point is demonstrated in inspirational and trance control lectures, and that is the 'dissolubility' of the personality, or, if you will, the transparency of the physical body and its accompanying personality. {{We are spirits with a body, and those in the spirit world are spirits without a body. The body is but a vehicle, while on the earth plane, for the consciousness resident in it. In trance-control mediumship, as in out-of-body experiences or 'astral travelling', we temporarily vacate the body, with the same ease and in the same way that we vacate the body in the final crossing. Only then the Silver Cord is disconnected, whereas in trance mediumship or astral travelling, the cord is merely stretched or expanded, rather than being severed.}} Human personality is a thing apart

from the physical apparatus in which it is housed, and the connections to the body are not so strong or so permanent that it cannot be temporarily displaced. The demonstration of trance-control mediumship thus serves to legitimate the notion that death is an easy process and not a fearful thing: it is no more difficult than the temporary vacating of the physical body that occurs when the medium allows him or herself to be used "under control" by the spirit guides. {{It is, after all, one universe, in which Matter and Spirit are two sides of the same coin, the one interpenetrated by the other, and the other independent of, yet inherent in, the former.}}

Healing

Most spiritualist services include, either within the body of the service or afterwards, spiritual healing, done either through prayer or, in a more customarily spiritualist manner, through laying-on-of-hands. Healings in the latter mode are usually conducted with the patient sitting on a stool, or sideways on a chair, so that the healer has access to the back of the patient. Generally the healings begin with the healer making sweeping or passing movements along the spine of the patient, although some healers begin by holding their hands over the head of the patient. Some may ask if the patient has specific problems or complaints, then move to that area of the body, while others prefer to intuit or "tune into" what is

troubling the patient. In some cases, however, the latter is advised against, since this could be construed as diagnosing and the healer therefore liable to charges of practising medicine without a license.

Where healings have occurred and a patient has improved or recovered, claims will usually be made that the healing has been effective. However, patients are usually also advised that they should seek appropriate medical treatment, spiritual healing being viewed as an adjunct to medical treatment, though it is claimed that it can be completely effective in its own right. Urging patients to seek professional medical attention covers the healer in a legal sense, but it also stresses the separate domains of healing that are involved, implying, of course, that healing is complete when it is holistic, involving body, mind, and spirit.

The spiritual healer is conceived of as "working" with spirit healers. The universal healing power is transmitted through the spirit healers, because of their higher rate of vibrations, and stepped-down, if you will, through their mediums. The healer, like the medium, must "raise his or her vibrations" so that the energy flow may be transmitted to the patient.

Spiritual healing, whatever its medical or psychological efficacy, reaffirms common humanity and group solidarity. It is a ritual of problem sharing and a ritual of comfort. It creates an acceptable social/philosophical context for physical contact

and touching, confirming the identity of the individuals involved and confirming the role of healer and the pre-eminence of 'spirit' in the healing process.⁽⁴⁾ It also indirectly places the emphasis in the healing process on the mental and psychological factors. Spiritual healing, as it is practiced by spiritualists, is not 'faith healing' per se, since it is claimed that healing can be accomplished without the consent or the knowledge of the individual, as in "absent" or "mental healing", or as in the case of the spiritual healing of animals or small children. It is further claimed that healing can be accomplished in spite of any faith on the part of the patient. It is acknowledged, however, that an attitude of open-mindedness is very helpful in the process. ⁽⁵⁾

Virtually any kind of medical or psychological condition may be brought forward for healing. Serious communicable diseases would not be brought forward for healing via laying-on-of-hands, but could be brought forward for absent healing. Relationships may be part of the 'problem', as Skultans cites for her group of Welsh spiritualists, but those relationships are not necessarily male-female relationships. They might as easily be, say, employer-employee relationships, parent-offspring or sibling relationships; or simply friendship relationships. In some cases, chronic conditions might be "brought forward" for healing, or, while this is not common, the conditions might be social or even material, such as financial difficulties that are brought forward for healing. While animals

will probably not be brought directly to the healing service, they are often "placed on the absent healing list", and one spiritualist church used to have a special yearly service dedicated to providing evidence for animal survival and healing.

Message-Work

Few spiritualist services are conducted without the inclusion of a demonstration of mediumship, referred to as "spirit communion" or "spiritual communion", or simply "clairvoyance", the most common form of mediumship. The latter may be done by means of Billet Reading (common in American spiritualist churches) or by simple clairvoyance, though some times psychometry in some form may be used. Typically, spirit messages are mundane, even banal, but ideally three kinds of information are conveyed: evidential information; counselling information, which may include comfort for the bereaved; and predictive information, which usually relates to the counselling information. Like shamans and mediums in other cultures, spiritualist mediums in their role as counsellor may be seen as folk-psychotherapist, to whom clients will often turn in times of life crises.

Individual mediums may achieve a reputation for one aspect of message work as against another. Some may be noted for their evidential abilities while others may be respected for their abilities as counsellors. Typically, most will operate at all

three levels. 'Evidential material', as referred to in an earlier chapter, consists of descriptions of departed persons, their manner of passing, peculiar personal biographical details, location of residence, time and place of passing; name(s) of the departed; relationship to the recipient of the message; employment or occupation, character and personality of the departed, and so forth; in short, as many biographical details as the medium is able to obtain in a few moments of time. It is claimed that names are difficult to obtain clairvoyantly, though some mediums seem more adept at it than others. Some mediums simply use a vague catch-all such as, "Spirit says...". Spirit entities may be referred to as "Angel Loved Ones" (as against "Angel Guardians" which refers to spirit guides or workers) or "Dear Departed", or may most commonly be referred to as "spirit". Messages may be brought from departed friends, relatives and associates; from spirit guides and teachers; or occasionally from spirits who are allegedly unknown to the recipient but who have "been drawn" to the recipient for whatever reason (eg., "Like attracts like"). The emphasis, however, is usually on what is being communicated, rather than on who is doing the communicating, and mediums vary in their emphasis on providing proof of survival. For some, it is the most important aspect of mediumship, but for others the teaching and counselling aspects of communication are the most important.

It is claimed that through intimate, if unimportant, details recipients of messages are assured of authentic

communication. For example, a medium might say, "I have your uncle present. He tells me that he is your father's brother, and that when you were a small child, he used to take you fishing in a stream near where he lived. He says, 'Do you remember when you caught a big eel, and it scared you? You were so frightened of it, because it wiggled and jumped around so much.'" On meeting a friend or a loved one after a long absence, it is said, one does not talk of art and politics, science and religion. One talks and reminisces about intimate things and concerns.

Such is the rationale behind much of the mundane and trivial nature of spirit messages and evidential material. Several things are accomplished in this way, however unawares the actors in the situation may be. Common or mundane experiences may be seen to have metaphysical implications, and ordinary daily life is raised to a spiritual dimension in this kind of two-way process: the transcendental world is 'lowered' to an ordinary level, and the mundane world is 'raised' to a spiritual dimension. Even the smallest of details may become spiritualized by inclusion of them as evidential material. This can also apply to physical objects: "Your uncle says that you lost your new fishing reel, but you found it somewhere unexpected. Well, he wants you to know it was him that moved it. He always was a real joker!"

As in other aspects of the movement, our common humanity is affirmed in such messages. If healing affirms our common humanity in physical bodies and as suffering beings, message

work affirms our common humanity in social terms. It is a legitimation of identity in social and individual terms, even after death. {{Those in spirit are still as much a part of our lives as we are of theirs. They return to express their love, care and concern for those of us they've left behind.}} The democracy of death is asserted, and legitimated as the great leveller of all humanity. At the same time, there is but one universe whose twin sides of 'spirit' and 'matter' are conjoined by a common humanity. {{It is a universe of love, wherein spirit lovingly reaches out to those still in the incarnate world through mediums who serve in love.}} For the believers, it is a comforting and humanized system, in which the act of daily living in itself is a spiritual and meaningful act.

In a demonstration of clairvoyance, the medium is drawn to individuals in the congregation "by the spirit guide or by seeing a light over the individual", or by some other such means. Various mediums claim various means by which they are drawn to the recipients, a few claiming it is simply "a feeling" that they get. Billet reading, on the other hand, consists of folded peieces of paper placed in a basket, on which those wishing a message have written a question. The billet is then marked with an identifying symbol of the recipient's design. Ideally, the individual does not mark it with his or her name, and ideally the medium does not open the billet before delivering the message, which will allegedly be a response, in some way, to the question. At times, however, the medium may

first read the question and then attempt to "tune in" to the answer. (6)

Messages, whether or not they contain any genuine paranormally-received information, or any survival information, are also an element in the co-production of reality, in which both the medium and the congregation or recipient are involved, as the following example will demonstrate. The case is that of a billet reading given in an American spiritualist church in the course of fieldwork undertaken in what is conventionally referred to as the Bay City area of the United States, in the summer of 1983. I have chosen to include this example for analysis for several reasons, the most important being the fact that I was a total stranger to the congregation and the mediums, although I had been present at the service the previous Sunday. However, the medium who read the billet had not been present the previous Sunday. The reading was taped, as was the entire service, by the pastor of the church, from whom I was afterwards able to borrow and transcribe the tape. It was also chosen for inclusion because it does not particularly contain any alleged 'survival' information. Nonetheless, it does contain a few bits of information that might have been obtained in some unusual or paranormal fashion, several 'hits' as parapsychologists refer to them. However, what will be demonstrated is that even when messages do contain 'hits', what the recipient does with the message still determines its overall impact and its importance in respect to the spiritualist construction of reality. To begin

with, some ethnographic description, is useful.

The Temple of Spiritual Illumination is on the second floor of an older duplex in the central residential area of the city, on a quiet side street. The pastor is the Rev. Helen Thayer, and she holds spiritual unfoldment classes and other activities in the church. There are 18 folding chairs in the main room, with a counter-like altar behind which sits Rev. Thayer and any other worker who is assisting with the service.

At the top of the entry stairwell is a small table with a pad of paper, some pencils, a donation box, a basket and a sign marked, "Billet Readings". I drop a dollar bill in the box, write a question on a sheet of paper, fold it and mark it with a circle in which is printed the letter, P. Upon entering the room after placing the billet in the basket, I observe that the table would be visible to those sitting behind the altar only by bending forward and peering around the door-frame, in which case only the back of the billet writer would be observable to the viewer. In this way I satisfy myself that so far, at least, it is unlikely that anyone would have seen what I wrote and how I marked the billet. I then watch to see if anyone goes to the billets before the service starts. No one does.

The entire setting is rather dowdy and run down. The impression is that if Rev. Thayer makes a living from her ministry, either it is rather meagre, or she hides it very well.

The altar is a syncretist's delight, holding 2 green votive candles, 2 vases of yellow daisies, 2 white porcelain 'Happy

Buddhas', 1 statue of Mary as Queen of Heaven, 1 picture of Mary as Mother of Perpetual Help, a small statue of a unicorn and one of a horse, plus several tiny items that I cannot see clearly.

Present are nine people in all, six women (two of them young) and three men, from age 35 or so. Most of the same people were present the previous week, so I seem to be the only stranger present, as it was apparent that the pastor was acquainted with all the others.

The question I have written on my billet is, "How will things work out back home?" I have given considerable thought in advance to the question, anticipating that my Canadian accent might indicate that I was not from the Bay City area, and so my question might draw out any obvious "reading" of my appearance, etc.. Besides, I'm a poor liar. The question is almost a 'trap' question, since it seems vague enough to be able to give rise to a number of possible interpretations, yet specific enough to draw out obvious possibilities. My question, then, was composed as a challenging question of a type that is frequently seen in such circumstances yet which might bring out any obvious extrapolations being done by the medium, on the basis of my general appearance and manner. Nonetheless, in all fairness, there is a situation at home about which I am genuinely concerned.

It is a typical spiritualist service of lecture, hymns, and demonstration. The only healing that is done is through prayer rather than laying-on-of-hands. On the platform with Rev. Thayer

is Susanne, a "student at the center", a woman probably in her late 30's and with a strong British accent; and Rev. Jane, who had not been present the previous Sunday, an elderly woman with a bright red wig, long skirt and running shoes who, we are told, had been ordained by Rev. Thayer. As the billet readings were about to begin, Jack, a member, goes into the hallway to fetch the basket with the billets, and places it on the altar. Rev. Thayer holds it up high, and Rev. Jane takes one out. It is she who will do my billet reading. The billet is removed, the sign marking it is announced, the medium pauses with her eyes closed for a few minutes, then proceeds to the reading, at the end of which she asks whose billet it is. I later time my reading, which seemed average in length, at 4 minutes and 35 seconds.

Transcription of the Billet Reading

Well, to me the circle is a circle of light: what we send out comes back to us.

And I don't know what the 'P' is for. Spirit is telling me the 'P' is for 'Peace'. I feel you are a peaceful person. Ah...spirit is now telling me the 'P' stands for 'Paul', that you know somebody by that name. They give me the name of Paul and they're telling me you're trying to accomplish too many things at one time. And to take one thing at a time until you accomplish that.

Ah...you jump around and sometimes you're sort of scattered. . . .

And I'm getting a light. . . I know what this is and its a depressed light, and I feel that you're often depressed. . . Ah. . . and you've got to rise away from that. Everybody gets depressed. I had a fit this morning! (Congregation laughs. Rev. Thayer interjects, "And it took me three hours to talk her out of it!" Further laughter) But I got up and carried on! That's what you've got to do. It's all part of strengthening the backbone!

And spirit wants to bring you a healing. . . Ah. . . because they're putting the healing light in there . . . and whoever this is, they have a healthy amount of temper, because they're showing me red. And they've got a lot of energy with this temper. Ah...and sometimes the temper nearly blows them away!

Ah...but their energy keeps them going.

Ah...it's going around and around. I don't know why. I feel - well, I think it's your busy mind. Your mind just goes round and round and round and sometimes you don't know where to jump, and I think this is why spirit says, "Take one thing at a time." Ah...you got all these things up in your head and you don't know which way to jump.

And you, too, are...um...whoever this belongs to... um...you can go two ways. I see two roads and you're standing here and you're wondering which way to go. Um...well, if one

idea don't work, then try the other. We can't always get it right the first time. . . .

I feel that you send out a lot of love...um... when you're not in this depressed state. And even when you are, you're still sending out love and hopefulness. That's what they're telling me.

They say,...um..."God never promised you a rose garden", that you...um...He can help you, but He can't solve all your problems. So I'll leave this with you and say, 'God bless you.' Whose billet is this?

(Its mine.)

Huh?

(Its mine and my name is Paul.)

Is it? I'll be darned! I said, 'Peace'.Did that have anything to do with it?

(Yes.)

And then they told me,'Paul'.

(That's right.)

((The medium opens the billet and silently reads the question, which was "How will things work out back home?"))

I think I answered that in a round about way.

(I think so.)

Yeah. And if it takes - your mind- you got so many things up here you don't know what to do first. But maybe - I feel that- patience and peace and love will solve it. OK? And you can only try.

(That's right. Thank you.)

Analysis of the Interaction

For the sociologically oriented researcher, it is entirely possible to take a contextually flexible point of view in the reaction to and analysis of such data as the above billet reading. Collins and Pinch (1982) have shown the usefulness of this kind of position, especially in terms of the sociology of knowledge. The analytical polarities, of course, will tend to swing to either the side of the believer or to the side of the non-believer/skeptic, while it is possible to conceive of some kind of middle position. Nonetheless, since the attempt here is to demonstrate the social construction of reality resulting from the interaction between the medium and the recipient, the logical step is to take the side of a believer. However, such a step is perhaps best accomplished by also portraying the opposite polarity, thus throwing into relief the process of interpretive construction that can occur on the basis of a foundation (mediumistic performances) which many non-spiritualists would consider insufficient to build upon.

A further point, though not directly relevant in this instance, should be reiterated here. In the initial socialization process, the newcomer is told that the medium proves survival through the production of evidential material. Accepting this, the recipient of messages acknowledges that the

medium is proving survival. Feedback from the recipient reinforces the medium's belief that he or she is proving survival (the veridicality or non-veridicality of the evidence notwithstanding). This is further conveyed to the congregation in a process that is on-going in any demonstration of mediumship. The medium has learned the attitudes and techniques, and the language, appropriate to the role in development classes and such from those who have gone before, so to speak. Thus there is a mutually reinforcing process that occurs ongoingly, in spite of the actual veridicality of the contents of the message or evidence. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the case of supposed survival evidence, but it also applies to other kinds of messages or readings, such as the case in point, which will be demonstrated in the following analysis which considers the reading from the polarities of the skeptic and the believer portraying the inner processes involved in dealing with the reading and well as the social interaction involved in the interpretation of it. It should also be stressed that this is an entirely hypothetical response, yet there is a bias in it in that it is based on autobiographical features. In doing so, however, it is hoped that the flavour of the 'real' process is conveyed. For the sake of clarity the units are numbered and the medium's section is printed in bold face. The skeptic's section is underlined and the believer's response is in ordinary typeface.

1. Well, to me the circle is a circle of light, what we send out

comes back to us.

This is a symbolic and philosophical statement that applies to anyone in almost any context. It need not have anything to do with me or my billet question.

This is a symbolic and philosophical statement that is universal in coverage. In terms of my question it suggests that how I handle the situation at home will be what I get back from it. And the idea is central to most spiritual teachings and acceptable to me.

2. And I don't know what the 'P' is for. Spirit is telling me the 'P' is for peace. I feel you are a peaceful person.

Here the medium is simply guessing according to her religious beliefs. While I may or may not consider myself a peaceful person, most people would probably consider themselves to be peaceful. So again, this could apply to anyone. Besides, it's kind of flattering.

I consider myself a peaceful person by nature. I don't hold grudges and I seldom meet a person about whom I can find nothing to like. As well, I'm somewhat active in the peace movement and the antinuclear movement and recently walked in the march for peace back home.

3. Ah...spirit is now telling me the 'P' is for Paul, that you know somebody by that name.

This was almost a direct hit, in that she did get my name. Unfortunately she missed by changing it to knowing somebody by that name. Who doesn't know somebody by that name?

My name is Paul and I know someone in spirit by that name, as well as having several friends by the same name. She's quite correct.

4. They're giving me the name of Paul and they're telling me you're trying to accomplish too many things at one time. And to take one thing at a time until you accomplish that. Ah...you jump around and sometimes you're kind of scattered....

We still have not established who Paul is. While it's true that my interests and activities are highly diversified -she's right on that- I don't think I'm trying to accomplish too many things at one time. If I were, I wouldn't be accomplishing anything, which is not the case. I can't, in all practicality, take one thing at a time until I've accomplished it because most of the things I do can be accomplished only over a period of time. And to try and do one at a time would be impossible. Anyone who supposedly knows me should know that. So, no matter where the advice is supposedly coming from, it's at best impractical and at worst totally useless. While maybe it could be said that I "jump around", this would only be because of my highly diversified interests and activities. Nor do I think I'm particularly scattered. I'm able to focus all my attention on the task at hand.

Again, the medium is completely accurate. I have many interests and activities and I tend to get too involved in too many things, never giving any one my full attention or capacity. It would indeed be much wiser not to jump around too much.

Sometimes I do feel scattered and out of touch.

5. And I'm getting a light...I know what this is, and and it's a depressed light and I feel that you're often depressed ...Ah... you've got to rise away from that. Everybody gets depressed.

I am not often depressed. I am occasionally depressed, but not in the clinical sense of the word. While it's a truism that everybody gets depressed, it's also true that everybody must rise away from it. This statement can be summarized simply by saying, "You're human too!"

I wouldn't say that I'm often depressed, but I certainly would say that I have a tendency to depression, something I have to fight against. While it's true that everyone gets depressed, some have a greater tendency to it than others, and I'd have to include myself in that group. She's more or less right.

6. I had a fit this morning! (Laughter from congregation. Rev. Thayer interjects, "And it took me three hours to talk her out of it!" Further laughter.) But I got up and carried on! That's what you have to do! It's all part of strengthening the backbone.

Here she's simply asserting her own humanity and common human experience. And making light of what can be a serious situation. She's moralizing a bit, too.

There's no real information being relayed here. The medium is human herself, but she's right. You just have to get up and carry on.

7. And spirit wants to bring you a healing. Ah...because they're

putting the healing light in there...

Most people most of the time need some kind of healing for some kind of condition. However, I must admit she's right. I did injure my knee at the gym this week and couldn't get around for a couple of days. Of course it might be showing in the way I walk, and she might have noticed that, if she knows whose billet she has.

She's right again. I injured my knee at the gym and was stuck in my hotel room for two days. It's still sore, too.

8. And whoever this is they have a healthy amount of temper because they're showing me red. And they've got a lot of energy with this temper. Ah...and sometimes the temper nearly blows them away! Ah...but their energy keeps them going.

This can only be taken as a statement about character and personality. It is a fairly broad based statement and is roughly true in that sense, rather like certain kinds of astrological character statements. They may be true only because of their generality.

She's right. I don't often get angry but when I do, watch out. I've been known to throw things around when I do. However, I have endeavoured to learn to use my anger in a constructive way, rather than in a destructive way, and in that sense the energy keeps me going.

9. Ah...it's going around and around. I don't know why. I feel-well, I think it's your busy mind. Your mind just goes round and round and round and sometimes you just don't know

where to jump off and I think this is why spirit says, "Take one thing at a time". Ah...you got all these things up in your head and you don't know which way to jump.

The medium herself has made the connection here with her previous statement. All the information is doing is shifting levels from that of action to that of mental activity. The two generally go together, so nothing new is really being added here. It's simply expanding and expounding on what has already been said.

She's more or less right here, too. Just as I'm active in a variety of ways and things, my mental functioning and ideas relate to very different things and areas. My academic and intellectual interests are as varied as my other interests and pursuits.

10. And you, too, are...um...whoever this belongs to...um... you can go two ways. I see two roads and you're standing here and you're wondering which way to go. Um...well, if one idea don't work, then try the other. We can't always get it right the first time.

Again in this case we have information that is so generally symbolic it could apply to almost anyone in any situation. Further, it's so vague it could cover widely discrepant situations.

At the time of this reading I am considering returning to the field of social services as a career after finishing my academic work, as there are so few opportunities in the academic

area. So in that sense, I could go one of two ways, and I'm not sure which. I may not have gotten it right the first time, since I really was more inclined to an academic career.

11. I feel that you send out a lot of love...um...when your'e not in this depressed state. And even when you are, your'e still sending out love and hopefulness. That's what they're telling me.

This seems contradictory: either I send out love and hopefulness under all conditions, or I don't when I'm depressed. However, ignoring the possible contradiction, this is a flattering statement, if nothing else.

I think that what she's getting at here is that I tend to send out love and hopefulness in general, but that when I'm feeling down, I may not have it to put out. At other times, even when I'm feeling down myself, I still manage to extend love and hopefulness to others. In that sense, her statement is a nice affirmation for me.

12. They say...um...God never promised you a rose garden, that you...um...He can help you, but He can't solve all your problems. So I'll leave you with this and say, 'God bless you.' Whose billet is this?

Here again such a statement is obviously symbolic and is obviously meant to convey more than its literal meaning. 'Promising a rose garden' is generally taken to mean, 'promising an easy time', and so the statement would mean something like, 'God never promised your life would be easy'. I'm not aware that

God ever promised me anything. Further, I have no assumptions that life should be easy. This statement seems to be more in the nature of a comment on life in general, from her point of view. The rest of the statement follows in similar fashion, but it conveys no real information.

This is a most interesting statement, considering my years of involvement in the field of mental health, both publicly and in private practice. I Never Promised You A Rose Garden is a book by Hannah Green relating to mental health. My own life has not exactly been a rose garden, but one of the things I've come to recognize is personal responsibility, that I am the maker of my own problems and that I must likewise be the solver of them. Once again she's very accurate.

It's mine.

Huh?

It's mine, and my name is Paul.

Is it? I'll be darned! I said 'peace'. Did that have anything to do with it? to do with it?

Yes.

And then they told me, 'Paul'.

That's right.

Here I am merely attempting to create rapport with the medium. No further information is being conveyed, and I'm simply ending the interaction on a positive and pleasant note.}

(In the above interaction, I'm just confirming the medium's accuracy.

14. (She reads the billet question.)

I think I answered that in a round about way.

I think so.

Here I am continuing to interact in a warm and pleasant way. I am not at all sure she has answered the question in any way, but I respond neutrally, saving face for her, when I say, "I think so."

The medium has answered the question in a round about way, at the beginning when she expressed it philosophically and spiritually by saying, "what you get back is what you put out."

15. Yeah. And it takes- your mind- you get so many things up here you don't know what to do first. But maybe - I feel that- patience and peace and love will solve it. And you can only try.

That's right. Thank you.

This is a kind of summary and conclusion of what has been said. The only information that might be considered new is 'patience and peace and love will solve it.' Ostensibly she is responding to the question on the billet, but in fact it's not clear what she's responding to. To a person supposedly given to fits of temper, such advice might be quite appropriate in a general kind of way. Certainly, from a religious or spiritual point of view, it is true. She is assuming that the question involves some kind of social situation, whereas, in fact, it might have been a purely financial matter, in which case the advice is not particularly appropriate.

Here the medium is referring to the situation back home in a philosophical way, with which I can agree. Her remarks are predictive, though in a fairly safe, general kind of way, since patience, peace and love will solve just about anything. But in this particular situation, involving a relationship, the message is particularly appropriate and again I confirm her accuracy and judgement.

Comments on the Analysis: Interaction

While the foregoing message was delivered by the medium addressing the congregation in general and without actual reference to the billet writer, at least throughout most of the reading it nonetheless consists of an interactive process between the medium and her congregation, and between she and an as-yet-unidentified individual in the congregation. This is borne out by the fact of the pastor's interjection and the concomitant congregational laughter and agreement. Laughter is common in spiritualist churches, and many groups pride themselves on conducting their services with dignity and with light-heartedness. It is common for mediums, while delivering a message, to involve the other platform workers, or even a congregational member, or the whole congregation, in an 'aside' remark, a small joke, or an amusing story or anecdote. In this way, though the message is being delivered to an individual, it becomes, at least during the service, the common property of

all. It is in this sense that it can be said that all messages are messages to the congregation as a whole, no matter to whom they are individually delivered.

Because of the feedback process involved in virtually all demonstrations of clairvoyance or other forms of messages, a further level of sharing occurs, in that the congregation is then involved by 'listening in', so to speak, in the individual's response. A positive response to the medium and her message becomes a further affirmation of both the message and its contents. Even if, for example, any particular individual has not been personally satisfied that the medium (or mediumship in general) is providing proof of survival or the relaying of information through some kind of paranormal means, the reaction and affirmation of other members of the group can become a vicarious affirmation for the individual, thus making it that much easier for the individual, at some point in time, to accept what it is said that is being done. This amounts to a form of subtle peer pressure to conform to the norms of the group. Critics of the movement will often assert that spiritualists are a gullible lot, because of their willingness to accept a lot of allegedly 'evidential' and 'psychic' information as real, whereas in fact the information may contain no such veridicality as either evidence or as paranormal. But it is not simply a matter of 'gullibility', though such may be a factor in individual cases. Rather it is a result of the socialization process and of all the pressures toward conforming to group

standards and norms.

New initiates into the movement, or strangers to the group, will be allowed a period of lassitude if it appears that they are not accepting the messages that they are given. Either they will become properly socialized, or they will drift away because they tend to be passed over in the message-giving process; or, if they are persistent in attending services and are still not 'accepting' messages, they will become known as difficult, or impossible, to 'read' for, in which case they will simply tend to be ignored by the mediums. This would be the case in standard clairvoyance where, if the individual should object to not receiving a message, the medium has the option of declaring that it is not his/her fault if there is no message for the individual, that it is spirit who decides who needs a message or not. The alternative is to tell the individual that he/she does not really need a message, even though the individual in question might feel otherwise. In such cases as billet reading, it is more difficult to avoid 'undesirable' individuals, since all are free to deposit billets. It may be speculated in such situations (7) that eventually the mediums will become familiar with the markings that an individual will tend to use as identification on the outside of the billets, and probably with the kind of questions the individual will ask, and therefore be able to 'temper' the messages in such a way as to eventually make them acceptable to the difficult individual. In other words, they may, unconsciously perhaps, come to 'feed' the

individual with the kind of information desired or acceptable to him. (8)

A 'legitimizing' or 'affirmational' structure may also be seen in the billet reading above. The message begins with a philosophical and symbolic statement, affirming what is sometimes known as the Law of the Circle, or the Law of Return, or, in other words, karma. It is said that such was what Jesus meant by his statement, "As ye sow, so do ye reap"; or, as expressed in the Old Testament, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Here the medium is affirming the validity of the metaphysical concept, seen as a Law of Nature by spiritualists, in daily living. As individuals living in the physical world, we are nonetheless subject to the spiritual or metaphysical laws of the universe, along with the physical laws. Accordingly, it is implied, we must so live our lives as to avoid conflict with divine (natural) law. Thus the opening remarks are a statement of metaphysical principle, an implied validation of that principle, and a moral injunction to both the recipient and the congregation as a whole, setting the proper tone for the rest of the message following.

Following that is a kind of spiritual 'salute' to the unknown recipient: "I feel you are a peaceful person." The recipient is thus adulated and affirmed as a spiritual person, the effect of which is to psychologically make the individual more willing to accept the rest of the message. The next section contains the 'counselling' portion of the message, expressed in

rather commonsense, or 'recipe' terms. In fact the billet reading can be broken down into distinct sections, in which the entire message comes full circle, as follows:

(1)Metaphysical statement, affirmation and moral injunction: Law of the Circle, karma

(2)Spiritual "salute" and personal affirmation: You are a peaceful person

(3)General activity counselling: Don't do so many things at once

(4)Psychological counselling: Rise up from depression

(5)MIDPOINT: Self-affirmation of the medium: "I had a fit this morning", sunstantiated by peer affirmation: "And it took me three hours to talk her out of it!", followed by congregational affirmation via laughter, in which the entire common humanity of all involved, as well as the mediumistic process, are implicitly affirmed.

(6)Physical counselling: "Spirit wants to bring a healing."

(7)Character counselling: Don't get blown away by anger.

(8)Intellectual counselling: Your mind is too busy; take one thing at a time.

(9)Predictive/career counselling: You can go two ways, try the other.

(10)Spiritual re-affirmation and summary counselling: RETURN TO BEGINNING by a further metaphysical statement: God never promised you a rose garden. He can help you but He can't solve all your problems.

(11) Closing interaction and affirmation via the feedback process.

(12) Final moral injunction and summary: Patience, Peace and Love

The message has come full circle, affirming and thereby legitimating Metaphysical Principle, the mediumsistic process, the individual and the congregation, all in the simple straightforward language of common usage whereby the mundane and the ordinary are nonetheless raised to the level of the metaphysical and the spiritual. And it has been accomplished with warmth and laughter in 4 minutes and 35 seconds. Of such stuff is mediumship made.

Development Classes and Circles

Psychic development classes or circles are the birth place of mediumship, through which the spiritualist movement renews itself and its supply of mediums and other workers. Virtually every spiritualist church group runs weekly classes or circles, if not in the church premises then in the home of the pastor or some member. There may be several classes in operation at the same time, perhaps in various stages of development or "progress". Some may be convened for the express purpose of developing a particular form of mediumistic phenomena, such as materialization or trumpet mediumship, but most will be convened for the development of the more common forms of mediumship:

clairvoyance, psychometry and perhaps trance mediumship.

Usually classes are held under conditions of dim light or, less commonly, in darkness. It is said that natural or artificial light (except for red light)⁽⁹⁾ inhibits the production of ectoplasm from the bodies of the sitters and mediums. Ectoplasm is the substance supposedly produced by sitters' and mediums' bodies that can be used by spirits to materialize either themselves or inanimate objects. It appears as a kind of smokey, viscous material. (For photographic examples, see Barbanell, 1959.) As well, and perhaps more important since materialization is not so common it is argued that dimming the lights simply reduces the distractions from the surrounding environment, thus making it easier to create a meditative state which is the desired attitude for circle sitting. It is sometimes said that sitting under a blue light makes it easier to see the auras around people and sometimes easier to perceive spirit entities in the room. Occasionally a circle may sit under a combination of red and blue lights, or even under full light. The latter might be done "in an effort to help people develop in a way that is closer to platform conditions", in which case it becomes possible for the medium to work in full light on the platform.

The usual position assumed for sitting is a relaxed posture, but upright (so that the chakras or psychic centers along the spine are aligned, which facilitates the energy flow). Usually the hands are placed in the lap, palms turned up (energy

flows out of the palms) or palms turned down on the legs. If one is "giving off" energy then one should sit in such a manner that the circuit is open (palms out), but if one is receiving energy then it is more useful that the circuit be closed (palms in). Feet should be firmly touching the floor so that the individual is properly "grounded". One may close one's eyes to draw inward but sometimes alternating periods of closed and open eyes may permit the individual sitter to experience images and events both psychically and physically, thus facilitating the distinction between clairvoyant ~~perception~~ and that which is perceived by the physical senses in a psychically heightened condition of vibration.

It is common for people to "see spirit lights", small flashes of colored light rather akin to seeing fire-flies. These lights, it is explained, indicate the presence of the guides and loved ones. It is also quite common for people to experience cool or warm air currents moving about, particularly around the legs or feet or occasionally "brushing" across the head, neck, or other extremities of the body. Spontaneous shivers down the back are said to indicate the closeness of a spirit entity, the shiver resulting from the energy flow of the spirit vibration and aura contacting the aura and vibratory rate of the sitter. Unusual and involuntary physical movements, such as the drawing back of the sitter's head, are said to be the result of the spirits 'pulling' at the aura of the individual, but this can be stopped by requesting the spirit entity to cease. Sudden noises

in the room may be said to be spirit knockings or rappings, not unlike the Hydesville rappings, in which case the origins of the spiritualist movement are ongoingly re-affirmed in the present. This further suggests, and thereby affirms, the continuity of the relevatory nature of the philosophy of the movement, and its spirit origins. Such or similar occurrences in daily life might also be interpreted as evidence of spirit presence.

Every circle or class will have a leader, usually a medium, whose function is to direct and control the circle, to devise exercises to facilitate psychic unfoldment; to moderate differences of opinion and 'correct' sitters impressions (i.e. 'psychic' impressions) where necessary; to teach proper circle techniques and conduct; to teach proper courtesy and respect both for what is being done and to the spirit workers. (10) It is said that there will be a set of circle-guides and workers parallel to the sitters, who also have a spirit-leader in the same way that there is a circle leader. In this way, the parallel (the 'reflective' parallel, one might say) between the spirit plane and the physical plane, is affirmed, as is the hierarchical and orderly social structure. "As above, so below; as below, so above" is a spiritualist (and occultist) maxim, coined, it is said, by Hermes Trismagistrus, the mythical occult figure and supposed founder of ancient mystery schools. (See Hall, 1962)

In the development circle, then, the spiritualist novitiate (and for that matter the seasoned sitter) is led to experience

spirit presence in a number of ways, both psychically and physically. The reality of that presence is thus brought home to the individual in a direct, experiential kind of way, as against the more removed experience of message work in the course of services of the church.

Laughter and joking frequently occurs before the circle is 'opened' in prayer by the medium, or circle leader. Sometimes hymns, or even secular songs will be sung, in both cases the effect being to 'raise the vibrations'. Nonetheless, circle sitting is seen as, if not a kind of sacred performance, at least as a kind of reverential activity, though it may not be conducted in a formal or stuffy kind of way. In fact, it is ideally conducted, like the services, with dignity but not with formality that may actually hinder the unfoldment process. Everyone should be in a relaxed, uplifted and positive frame of mind, and should leave their worries, cares and problems "at the circle door." In such a manner is the atmosphere created, and, hopefully, harmony maintained, for without harmony, "nothing productive will come out of the circle." It is the responsibility of the circle leader to maintain harmony, and should an individual be perceived as being inharmonious, the leader may request the individual to withdraw from the circle. However, since this tends to create bad feelings, the leader will do as much as possible to get the individual in question in harmony with the group before taking the step to request withdrawal from the circle.

Much of the circle will be conducted in the silence. Sitters may be encouraged to "give off" impressions as they occur: to verbalize what they experience throughout the circle. The group may "concentrate" on individuals in it, perhaps several throughout the time of the circle, the others being "concentrated on" the following week. In this process, the leader will request the group to "send energy to" or "concentrate on" a particular individual for a period of time, perhaps five minutes or so. This involves the mental direction of energy, usually through the palms of hands held toward the individual. In this way, the individual is given an energy boost to help raise his vibrations, and the group then attunes to the individual in the silence. After this, the circle leader will ask the sitters, in turn, to give off any impressions they may have received during the attunement, after which the individual concentrated on will be asked to give off whatever he or she may have experienced. The sitters will be instructed to try and distinguish between various modes of receiving, whether through mental imagery, "feeling", "sensing", "intuiting", or perhaps "hearing" or even seeing with the eyes open. Sitters may also be taught, and ideally this will be done, to open and close themselves off psychically. They are taught always to "ask for protection" when they begin any psychic venture, to put the White Light (or Christ-Light) of protection around themselves; to visualize their auras expanding, and, when finished, to pull it tightly about themselves again. They may be taught to open

the chakras, or psychic centers, starting with the highest (the 'Crown Chakra' at the top of the head) and finishing with the lowest, the sacral or sex chakra at the base of the spine; and to close the chakras in reverse order, thus being always protected by the higher chakras. (cf. Appendix A) This may be accomplished by visualizing the centers as doors or gates or even as flowers to be opened or closed. In this way, the sitters are taught how to open psychically to receive impressions or to attune as desired while also being able to close-off to any unwanted vibrations, conditions or even entities.

Exercises of varying kinds may follow. Circle leaders may have a personal repertoire of exercises, or some may be shared amongst them. For example, the leader might place a sealed envelope in the center of the circle, containing a photograph or some article or object, and ask the group to try to tune into the contents of the envelope, asking them to individually give off their impressions after a period of attunement in the silence, reserving, until the end, the actual disclosure of the envelope's contents. The leader may then attempt to analyze the impressions people have received, as to whether they were symbolic, or literal, or perhaps a combination of the two. Sitters may be asked to exchange articles of jewelry, watches or other objects that have been in close contact with them for a period of time, and so try their hands at psychometry, tuning in to a person through holding an object which has "picked up" the individual's vibrations. It is explained that the vibrations of

human beings are higher than that of inanimate matter, and that they are therefore impressed upon physical objects that have been in contact with people. Objects themselves have a rate of vibration to which one can attune, thus gathering information independently of human beings. In that sense, every object, as well as every individual, carries its biography with it in its vibrations, and the universe may accordingly be read by an individual sensitive who is adequately attuned to it. The implication of the spiritualist perspective is that all knowledge is then available to anyone who is able to adequately attune to it: the universe is a door waiting to be opened.

The circle leader might "put a condition" into the centre of the circle, and let the sitters attempt to tune into it. In this case, the leader "sends" an image, or perhaps thinks of a situation and mentally visualizes it as present in the center of the circle and therefore available to the sitters to tune into, in the same manner as above.

Trance mediumship may also be facilitated in the circle. (11) One or more individuals in the circle may be perceived as having trance mediumship abilities, identified by the circle leader or some other medium; or, simply on the basis of the individual's own feelings that "spirit is drawing close" and wishes to use the person as an instrument. The onset of the trance phenomenon is usually signalled by audible respiratory changes in the rate and intensity of breathing. As the possessing spirit draws close, he or she will then attempt to

aid the medium in raising his or her vibrations so that he or she may more easily move aside to partially or completely vacate the physical body. It is said that individuals with trance mediumship abilities are more easily able to raise their vibrations than other people, accomplished generally through deep, rhythmic breathing. It is also said that one must never physically touch an entranced medium as the 'shock' to her or his system could be dangerous, or even lethal. However, if for some reason the entranced individual should touch someone, it is felt that this is less harmful than vice-versa. For the most part, however, physical contact with a possessed medium is to be avoided. (12)

In the initial stages, and perhaps until the process is easy for the medium, the circle leader may assist the novice medium by standing close, palms facing the medium, usually as in healing from behind, adding energy to the entranced medium. The circle leader may hold his or her hands above the throat and upper chest areas of the medium in an effort to add energy to the specific body areas most needing it in the initial stages, the voice area which the possessing spirit will be using and the lungs, to help further raise the vibrations through controlled breathing. Some individuals will be seen to be 'natural' trance mediums, and "fall in trance" completely unexpectedly, perhaps even in their first sitting in a circle. (13) In most cases however, some assistance may be called for on the part of the circle leader. It may take several, or even many, attempts at

inducing the trance situation before even a word is forthcoming from the possessing spirit. If the medium seems to be becoming agitated, the possessing spirit will be told to "go easy on the instrument", and if a measure of control is not restored, the spirit may be told to "please leave now and try again some other time." When possession finally becomes partially or completely facilitated, the spirit may speak only a few words to begin with, perhaps only a brief greeting or a comment that he or she is 'happy to be here.' Later, with more experience at entering the trance state, the medium may be able to produce short lectures of a philosophical or spiritual nature, or perhaps deliver messages to other circle members through the possessing spirit. Eventually, it is expected that full possession will allow the medium to publicly lecture in the trance state at the services. Additionally, the trance medium may develop into a rescue medium (see below). A few clairvoyants demonstrate clairvoyant mediumship in the entranced state, though this is not common.

As in healing, the actions of the circle leader in assisting the induction of trance mediumship are to be understood in terms of the belief system, related as it is to yogic or eastern philosophies of energy flow, chakras and raising of the vibrations. Trance mediumship in general literally embodies the spirit-world making the transcendental world a concrete experiential state, and at least to a certain extent, in the here-and-now. It vividly demonstrates that there

is no death, that consciousness can be laid aside from the physical body temporarily without ill effects, as it is laid aside permanently in death. Death is only a change from one state to a higher state, from one rate of vibration to a higher rate, and no more to be feared than the temporary laying aside of consciousness that occurs in trance mediumship. Exposure to the process of trance mediumship development for the circle sitters thus affirms the illusionary quality of death, removing much of its sting.

In the development circle, then, the novitiate spiritualist is exposed to a considerable range of mediumistic phenomena and the explanations surrounding them. Unlike the more formal and removed quality of the services, in the classes one is exposed to the phenomena in a personal experiential kind of way, literally internalizing the experiences and understanding. The basic hierarchical structure of the movement and its cosmological correlates are also experienced and internalized. The conversational apparatus of the circle confirms one's identity as a novice spiritualist; or, for those of more experience provides an on-going affirmational apparatus, ever renewing the experiences, involvement and meanings.

The circle may draw to a close with a lecture or summary or question and answer period by the leader, and be followed by an informal socializing period over coffee, tea and snacks. In this case, the students have further opportunities to interact and discuss the events of the circle and other circle or church

business. Thus the cosmological level has been made concrete and experiential through the phenomenological level, and the whole is carried over into the social level. Of such stuff is the development circle made.

As might be expected in any small group on-going social situation, individual and factional relationships will appear, grow, change and develop. Conflicts may result; competition may arise among leaders for circle sitters, or even among circles for circle leaders. Some circles may acquire more status than others, either due to the status of the circle leader, or to the range and quality of the phenomena that are being produced, or, possibly, because of the status of the sitters themselves. However, most church development circles are basic, and though a circle may be in progress over an extended period of time, most church circles are for a limited period of time, with a turn-over of sitters. Home circles are more apt to take on a long-range or even a permanent character, with little turn-over in sitters. In many respects, the latter is considered an ideal situation, since harmony can be more easily maintained where the sitters are all well-acquainted with one another, even if their only social interaction occurs in the context of the circle, and because some kinds of phenomena, it is claimed, tend to be developed only over a period of time. The duration of a circle, however, will probably depend on its productivity of phenomena: there must be at least a minimum amount of productivity to maintain interest on the part of the sitters, although some

circles may be maintained on the strength of potential phenomena. Individual circles may define their own productivity in different ways, however, and undoubtedly for some sitters at least, the social relationships involved in the circle may be sufficient to maintain interest, apart from the productivity of phenomena.

On an individual basis, a sitter who is not personally progressing by developing some form of mediumship, or who does not appear to be experiencing the kinds of things that other sitters appear to be experiencing, may be placated by being told that he or she is acting as a 'battery' to the rest of the circle. That is to say, he or she is providing extra power or energy that is being used by the rest of the circle, perhaps to the extent, even, that the circle could not function productively without the presence of the battery-person. In this way, of course, it is said that the individual is being of special service to the circle. Indeed the concept of the battery is additionally legitimated and institutionalized in healing, wherein novice healers may begin the unfoldment of their spiritual healing powers by being a battery to an established healer. In this case, the battery will usually sit opposite to the patient and lightly hold the patient's hands, while closing the eyes and directing energy through the connected hands to the patient. A circle leader may also be considered a battery when assisting in the inducement of the trance state in trance-control mediumship. Thus the role of battery, a role that

can be ascribed to virtually anyone, is legitimated in several ways, and provides a role option where no others may be found. A circle leader has the option of directing any sitter to act as a battery in his or her place, further legitimating the role and its availability.

Other Circles: Rescue Circles

Rescue circles are one of a number of special circles,⁽¹⁴⁾ or seances, held for various purposes by spiritualists. Rescue circles are held for the express purpose of 'rescuing' lost souls', or people who have passed into spirit in a lost, confused or agitated condition and are 'wandering about' the spirit world aimlessly, or even destructively, as in cases of supposed poltergeist phenomena or other injurious kinds of phenomena, or circumstances. Individuals who have passed through an act of violence, suicide, war or accident, might become candidates for rescue work. They would then require help in recognizing and readjusting to their new situation and environment in spirit. These are not for the most part malicious or malevolent spirit entities, but merely spirits who are confused, agitated and so forth. In some cases, they may have remained attached to the place of their passing or to the people they were with, or perhaps may have sought to 'get through' to loved ones here on the earth plane. In some cases, however, they may in fact be malicious or malevolent, causing anxiety or even

harm, physically or mentally, to people on the earth plane, in which case considerably more force may be required in getting them to move on or progress.

Spiritualist rescue circles were widely popular during the first and second world wars, when vast numbers of service personnel and citizens were 'passing into spirit'.⁽¹⁵⁾ In peace time, there has tended to be fewer rescue circles. Some may be convened only sporadically, or on a special occasion, while some might be held on-goingly, on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.⁽¹⁶⁾ Many churches, perhaps most, do not hold them.

Rescue mediumship is an application of trance mediumship, and it is said to be both difficult and even dangerous for the medium, since it exposes him or her to many different kinds of vibrations. Further, the medium must be of strong character and personality to withstand the onslaught of so many difficult or unpleasant spirit entities and conditions. Accordingly, the medium must also be in good physical health. For these reasons, many, or even most trance mediums shun rescue work, though it is conceded to be a 'great service to spirit'.

Working with the rescue circle on the other side will be a spirit circle, responsible for bringing forward the entities that will possess the medium, and be counselled by the sitters. After the circle is opened with a prayer and the placing of the light of protection about the circle and the medium, the medium enters the trance state, and the entities will begin to manifest, one at a time, through the medium.

The spirits will manifest in typical ways through the medium, but perhaps with more vehemence, physical agitation, and even foul language than would ever be associated with the gentle, even tepid, spirit guides. If it can be said that the philosophy and spirituality of the movement is manifested through the spirit guides of trance mediums, then it can equally be said that the humanity of the movement in all its flaws is manifested through rescue mediumship. Rescue mediumship is almost the mirror-image of 'standard' trance mediumship. Both are spiritually sanctioned as acts of service, and as in a mirror rescue mediumship reflects the spiritualism of trance mediumship but in a very different kind of way. It provides a confirmation of life decisions and a kind of moral injunction through the use of almost allegorical characters and situations.

The spirit entities that come forward for rescue may be perceived by the sitters as individuals, but they are also social types, or allegorical characters: the drunkard still wanting another drink; the loose woman, perhaps murdered by a jealous lover; the lost child who wandered into the woods and wants Mommy; the angry priest or minister, whose expectations of the next life have not been met; the heroin addict still looking for a 'fix', or the acid head who was convinced he could fly; the macho man who died proving his virility; or the aging beauty who committed suicide because she was growing older; the accident victim, or victim of war; and so forth. Each of them will be adjured to "look around and see who's there" and will be

questioned as to what was last remembered. This is done in the effort to make them realize their condition, that they are no longer embodied but only in temporary possession of a medium's body so that they might be helped to progress or arrive "where they should be going".

Sitters in the circle take turns in being the one to do the actual counselling. Although most of the sitters may be totally inexperienced in counselling, through experience in the circle those more adept at the process may help those less experienced, perhaps until a general level of perceived competency is achieved. A circle may sit for an hour or more at a time, and the number of spirits rescued will vary with the length or brevity of individual cases. Perhaps as many as a dozen will be helped in this way.

Once the spirit has finally recognized and accepted his condition, he will then be adjured to "go with" another spirit perceived to be present, perhaps a friend or loved one, or even a spirit guide, who has come forward to be clairvoyantly perceived by one or more of the sitters. These will be, if you will, well adjusted spirits, who may have been unsuccessfully trying to aid the needy spirit. The sitter may pass a name and description to the counselling sitter, who will then ask the possessing spirit if he or she recognizes the other spirit person, and is told that the other spirit is there to help, to lead the needy spirit "to the light", where he'll finally be at peace. The possessing spirit will then be blessed and 'sent on

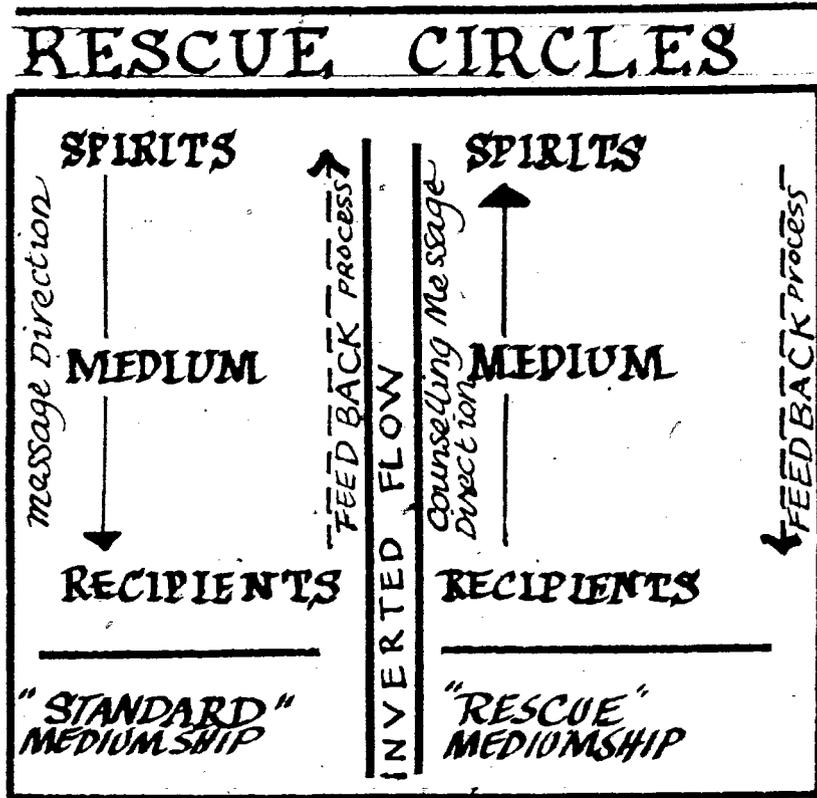
his way'. (I am not aware of any situations where circle sitters actually seemed to personally know any of the spirits being rescued.)

Such would be a fairly typical rescue circle. The case of malevolent spirits is somewhat similar, but will usually require a 'firmer hand' not only in convincing them of their condition but also in getting them to move on, as they might be stubbornly attached to a particular place, or situation, or person. In fact, they might become so attached to being once again embodied, if only in a 'borrowed body' that they become difficult to dislodge from the possessing state. It is recognized that involuntary spirit possession can thus affect a trance medium (most possession being voluntary) perhaps even to a permanent degree resulting in institutionalization of the medium.⁽¹⁷⁾ However, it is conceded that the rescue guides would not bring forward any spirit entity who was likely to permanently possess the medium. But because of such difficulties, the medium requires a strong character and personality. Some spirits may be so unruly as to necessitate the use of 'psychic bonds' or 'chains' so that they are controlled. They might even require temporary or long-term incarceration in the astral or etheric equivalent of a jail, or holding cell.

Accordingly, the rescue circle might be said to be a case of embodied spirits (sitters) helping disembodied spirits to 'progress' through the means of a temporarily dis-embodied spirit, the rescue medium. The 'world' of the rescue circle

represents all three levels of being, disembodied, embodied, and the liminal position of temporary disembodiment. One can 'function' on all three levels in a concrete kind of way. Thus the co-existence of and continuity with the spirit world is re-affirmed in a different kind of way. But the social and human world, together with spiritualist values, are also affirmed in the rescue circles. Individuals must accept personal responsibility for their own conditions, including that of adjustment to the spirit world. But 'progress' is still possible, as those who 'move forward' in spirit demonstrate. The work ethic is affirmed by the spiritual work of the circle itself, and confirmed on the spirit side by the 'work' of the rescue guides. Communication and co-operation between the two sides, spirit and embodied, results in service to others of great help. Spirit 'reaches through the veil' to help those of us still 'on the earth plane' in many ways, but we, too, can reach through to help spirit on their side. Thus it can be said that the rescue circle is a reflection of standard mediumship (in which spirit reaches out to help humankind individually and collectively) by being the means by which individuals and groups can reach out to spirit on their own. But if it is a reflection, it is also an inversion of 'standard mediumship, as diagrammed below:

Figure 5.1:



By the same token, it can also be said that in the rescue circle the spirit world becomes re-created in the image and likeness of the social world, since it is the social and physical world that is manipulating the spirit world to conform to its norms.

The 'spirit traveller's tales', if you will, of distress, of violence, fear and suffering, unfolded in the course of the rescue circle serve as negative examples of personal biographies

that affirm the spiritualist value system, and at least some of the values of the society of which spiritualism and spiritualists are a part. Personal responsibility through self-control is one such value, illustrated through instances of alcohol and drug abuse, violence and criminal behavior leading to untimely death; or through excessive sensuality and sexuality as in jealousy, prostitution, and so forth. Religious intolerance and lack of 'true' perspectives, especially in regard to the after-life, may be instanced in helping the spirits of departed clergy and religious. Proper child care may be affirmed through aiding lost, abandoned or abused spirit children, so unlike the child-guides of many mediums. Warfare is negated by assisting soldiers and citizens killed in battle or war-related incidences: Vietnamese spirits are still helped, and occasionally even a spirit veteran of World War I or II. Spiritual and social democracy is asserted, by assisting the spirits of any ethnic or religious, political or national group who might be 'brought forward'. Even the perpetrators of vile crimes may be helped to 'progress' in the spirit world where they were unable to do so in the social world.

The values of 'work' and the concept of 'progress' (and its correlate, 'evolution') have already been mentioned. The more obvious values of compassion, care, spiritual and psychological nourishing are constantly and on-goingly dramatized and affirmed, as are co-operation, responsibility, honesty and sharing. Within spiritualist society, rescue circle personnel

are the social workers and the psychotherapists, and may even be considered spiritual house-keepers when they are called as they sometimes are to 'clear' a home of disturbing spirit influences.

The feedback process of rescue mediumship, unlike platform mediumship, occurs mainly within the circle itself, but in this instance the circle can be compared to the congregation of recipients, as in the preceding diagram. But additional feedback may come from outside the circle, in those instances where a group may be called upon to 'clear' a home or location of some sort. After the rescue circle has taken place, the circle may contact or be contacted by the inhabitants, perhaps a few days later, to disclose the conditions and determine if a successful 'clearing' has taken place. Occasionally a second sitting may be required, and in those instances which seem completely unsuccessful, and there will be some, it will be argued that those concerned in fact do not wish to be 'clear' of the condition, even if this is only on an unconscious level. Further, it will be maintained that a successful removal of the troubling spirits will be possible only when the concerned parties have 'let go' of the desire to maintain the condition. For no matter how many spirits may be dispossessed, so to speak, new ones will only arrive to fill in the vacuum left behind, because of the Law of Attraction.

In general, however, rescue circles affirm and legitimate positive (spiritualist and social) values, and serve as a kind of dramatized moral injunction to 'live the good life' according

to the group norms. But, should 'mistakes' occur, it is still possible to overcome them and progress, for there is no death, only eternal progress open to every human soul, whatever his or her state at the time of death. {{What determines our state 'on the other side' is how we have lived our lives 'on this side', how we have conducted ourselves and our relationships, how we have thought and felt and acted.}}

Other Activities and Events

Some spiritualist churches operate "lyceums" or the equivalent of Sunday schools, based on the ideas of Andrew Jackson Davis and other eminent spiritualists in the 19th and early 20th century. The "Lyceum Manual" is a spiritualist catechism, written in question and answer form, presenting the basic spiritualist beliefs. But since the movement tends to be non-dogmatic, individualistic, and to some extent, charismatic in quality, much of the teaching of the movement occurs without any reference to the Manual. As well, since virtually every medium is a potential teacher and instructor in the ongoing revelation of the spiritualist movement by means of his or her spirit teachers, there is considerable flexibility of belief and point of view. This tends to be reflected in the differences among the various 'chartering' organizations of spiritualist churches: while most belong to some chartering organization, other churches operate completely independently. (18)

Spiritualism is mainly an adult-adopted religion, and there may be few, or even no children, in any given church group; accordingly not all groups will offer a lyceum. For the great majority of spiritualists, then, lyceums have not been part of their experience of spiritualism.

The various social events of an informal nature that occur after services and circles are an important aspect of the socialization process of the members, both initially and on-goingly. It is here that the conversational level of the movement is created and maintained, a level into which the new-comer is gradually introduced and which through time may become extended to a broader non-church context and embrace a large part (for some, the largest part) of social life. At this point it may be said that the individual is a fully socialized spiritualist, to a degree that the spiritualist belief system and values tends to 'inform' the larger part of the individual's life, extending into occupation, politics and general cognitive processes. The belief system then tends to become validated in the events of daily living: the reality of everyday living conforms to the spiritualist view of reality, which is that of a daily life that is interpenetrated by spiritual forces and beings. One becomes aware for example, while doing the morning dishes, of unseen presences in the kitchen; or one thinks of a particular friend, and shortly the telephone rings with a call from the friend "because the psychic connection has been made." Occurrences which once may have been assumed to be mundane and

ordinary may now become charged with metaphysical significance.⁽¹⁹⁾ One's reading habits change, and perhaps one's book shelves become filled with works on psychic phenomena, spiritualism, occultism⁽²⁰⁾ and other philosophical and spiritual matters. The phenomenological level has been extended to the details of every-day reality.

In the social events, ideas are exchanged, beliefs compared and expressed, information, anecdotes and personal experiences are shared in conversation. Such interaction with others ongoingly confirms one's identity as a spiritualist. Occasional private readings with mediums help to confirm the 'reality' of the phenomena and the teachings in a more intimate and personal way than attending services or even sitting in circles. While one may or may not receive a message at the services, there may be occasional 'message circles' where one is almost assured of a personal message.

Since most spiritualist churches operate out of rented premises and seldom have money to spare, work parties may be arranged from time to time for the repair and maintenance of the premises. The sharing of work in a very conventional manner becomes in the practical realm a reflection of the 'work-sharing' that occurs in the spirit world, and thus harmony is created between 'both sides of life' even in purely practical ways. The one affirms the other: conversation with the spirit world through the demonstrations of mediumship 'maintains' that world, and conversation during social events and daily living

maintains the social world of spiritualists. {{Through mediumship, we may converse with the spirits almost as easily as we do to one another via the telephone.}} It was no accident that early spiritualists referred to 'spirit rappings' as the "spiritual telegraph." I have heard more than one spiritualist maintain that if we were all developed psychically, we would put the telephone companies out of business!

Some churches may hold special fund-raising events, such as teas or dinners or games evenings, which often, however, take on a 'psychic' character perhaps by doing readings for donations or a small fee. Picnics may be held, or parties in the home, in which much of the conversation may be oriented to spiritualist and church matters. In all these ordinary ways, the spiritualist reality is made a part of the reality of everyday life, and the world is recreated in the image and likeness of spiritualism just as for Christians or Buddhists or what have you the world becomes recreated into their image of it in rather ordinary and mundane ways.

Nonetheless, there is an 'advantage' for spiritualists, even in the completion of daily tasks, in that they might be receiving assistance from the spirit world or they may be able to attune to obtain needed information, or 'manifest' necessary goods or services that would be helpful in the tasks of daily living, health and well-being, and in matters of personal and spiritual unfoldment. The spirit world is, after all, "but a thought away", interpenetrating, as it does, the world of

everyday living and its concomitant reality.

Spiritualists sometimes make reference to "the nut-fringe", those individuals of a markedly eccentric or even 'psychotic' character who at least occasionally attend spiritualist meetings or services, and some of whom may even be tolerated as regular attendants. Such individuals tend to throw into relief, by contrast, spiritualist values and ideals, and the margins or limits of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. They are the peripheral characters of spiritualist society, which, in general, is a highly tolerant one both because of its doctrinal system and its social structure. (Spiritualists do remarkably little prosyletizing in comparison to most religious or church groups.) Typical of the 'nut-fringe' might be individuals claiming to have been in face-to-face contact with extraterrestrials and UFO's, to be in constant contact with spirit persons of great eminence such as Jesus Christ or Ghandi, or Queen Victoria and Abraham Lincoln. Or perhaps they may be individuals "clinging to spirit" loved ones in an extreme way such that they are seen to abnignate personal responsibility. Or perhaps they are individuals claiming to have a "great message" from spirit that will "save the world." Excessive claims to former lives on the earth plane as historical personages of status or eminence also fall into the nut-fringe category: people claiming to have been Julius Caesar or Napoleon, Cleopatra or Mary, Queen of Scots. In general, they may be seen to represent the extremes of the belief system, especially in a

way that removes them from the ordinary realities of daily living. Such people will usually be perceived as being peripheral even to the wider society, perhaps having too many psychedelic experiences (psychedelic drugs are not condoned by spiritualists, because they are psychically dangerous), or because they have "dabbled" in psychic matters without proper understanding, direction and control. They are, then, 'uncontrolled' individuals, who have allowed their imagination or psychic abilities to run away with them and gotten into a state of 'psychic chaos' and confusion. As Skultans has pointed out (p.48), the concept of 'control' is important to spiritualists. In fact, it is more than a concept, it is a central value. Accordingly, individuals in peripheral categories ('nut-fringe') are individuals who are perceived as being 'out of control'. Such individuals will be seen to be mismanaging their daily lives and social relationships.⁽²¹⁾ Conversely, individuals who may hold extreme beliefs but are seen as 'functioning' well,⁽²²⁾ or managing their daily lives and social relationships in an acceptable way will be treated tolerantly but perhaps with skepticism of their beliefs.

Spiritualist congregations are usually composed of a rather broad range of individuals from various classes of society, from the less-educated to the well-educated, and from the socially and economically deprived to the professional class. Although Zaretsky (1974) found many of the spiritualists whom he studied in the Bay City area to be rather marginal in terms of the wider

soociety, this would not particularly seem to be the case in Canadian spiritualist groups. (cf. Nelson, 1969; Macklin, 1977; Biscop, 1981) Nonetheless, whatever their socio-economic background, all spiritualists contact the same basic kinds of phenomena and encounter the same cosmology. From such, and in response to such, individual spiritualists construct both their spiritualist reality and -ultimately- their everyday reality as well. Spiritualism has a world-view that is particular to it, by which spiritualists focus their reality.

NOTES

NOTES

1. See Field, 1960; Goodman, 1972; and Sargant, 1973; among others, for discussions of dissociative states in tribal and peasant cultures.
2. I have, on occasion, seen this carried to extremes, eg., when I attended a service at which there were six people in attendance, along with four ministers all of whom were gowned and stoled, and wearing large crosses around their neck.
3. Spiritualists, like other metaphysical or 'occult' groups, conceive of the spiritual and transcendental universe as being structured into a hierarchical order of seven or more 'planes', through which individual spirits progress in ever-refining stages of spiritual unfoldment. The analogy is to radio wave, wherein each plane is a successively 'higher' frequency of vibration. Spirit guides may be drawn from various planes, up to and including that of the Ascending Masters, or Great Souls. Many spiritualists would claim, however, that the higher planes are inaccessible to us because of our imperfections, and that the beings who dwell on these planes of vibration are removed beyond earthly interests and seldom 'draw near' the earth plane. What teachings they might give will be passed along down from plane to plane until, finally, through the spirit guides and workers, they are given to humankind. Similarly, the 'band' of spirit guides or workers will be organized in hierarchical fashion according to degrees of 'closeness' and importance to the individual. The band will be directed by a prime teacher and will probably include representatives of various ethnic groups, particularly of ancient peoples who are considered to have been particularly spiritually developed, such as North American Indians, Chinese, Egyptian and East Indian.
4. Skultans views the healing ritual as a kind of erotic drama between male healers and female patients, a view with which I would have to disagree. She says, "My impressions of healing are that it is a very erotic episode. The words, movements and sounds are suggestive of an ecstatic woman. Breathing is especially important; it must be slow, deep and preferably audible. In fact, this is considered a

necessary part of being in contact with spirit and letting the power penetrate. If no specific part of a woman's body is given for healing it is usually the abdomen which receives attention. From the point of view of a non-spiritualist observer of this drama a few salient features emerge. These are that the interaction occurs between a man and a woman; that the man is the active partner in the interchange; that the woman is essentially passive with the exception of her expression of appreciation of the man's activities; that the interaction consists of physical contact of a decidedly non-aggressive or even tender kind." (Ibid., p.50) She also sees a possible sexual undertone in the device used to "close off" from impressions or conditions that are unwanted, that of crossing one's arms or legs. She says, The symptoms can be made to disappear by saying: 'Take it away, please.' Alternatively, one may cross one's arms or, less obtrusively, one's legs in order to to make one's body inaccessible to spirit influence. At the one level, no doubt, such crossings may have a Christian significance. But in the case of crossing one's legs there may also be sexual undertones, in that the women may bar sexual access." (ibid., p.49)

While such may be the case among Welsh spiritualist groups, Skultans ignores some very obvious points in regard to spiritualist philosophy which are relevant here, as well as possible ethnographic differences among spiritualist groups. Yoga and most meditative techniques stress the importance of proper breathing, in controlled, rhythmic fashion, for deep relaxation and entering into meditative states. This has been attested to medically, and is likewise used in hypnotherapy and general relaxation techniques. It is not surprising to find such an orientation and emphasis among spiritualists, particularly in view of the somewhat 'eastern' orientation of the movement's philosophy. Added to this is the rather obvious connection, symbolically speaking, between 'spirit' and 'breath' as in the etymology of the word 'inspire'. But spiritualists add another dimension to the situation in their concept of the 'seat of power' being located in the solar plexus, the pit of the stomach, a major 'chakra' in the yogic tradition. Secondly to the chakra of the solar plexus is the Heart Chakra, considered to be the chakra through which passes the life-force or energy from the universal source, or God. The area of the Heart Chakra, located as it is in this system of reckoning, above the solar plexus chakra, is also the area in which the silver cord is attached, it being the spiritual equivalent to the umbilical cord. The crossing of arms or legs is a symbolic gesture which "cuts the power" from and to these prime chakras, thus 'cutting off' access. The gesture, if it can be said at all to be sexual, is so only symbolically: the individual will not be 'violated' by unwanted impressions or spirit forces. It is not a

particularly Christian crossing: it is, in fact a much more 'pagan' (i.e., 'Eastern') symbolic gesture.)

Healings do not necessarily occur between men healers and women patients. The opposite is just as likely, or just as common as same-gender healings. Age is not particularly a factor in healings either, and while it is undoubtedly at times a form of physical and comforting contact, it is more in the nature of an institutionalized ritual physical contact, a kind of metaphysical hugging, in which common humanity and group solidarity is affirmed. Careful breathing increases the amount of prana, or life-energy, that both healer and patient receive, and it helps "raise the vibrations" for both as well as increasing the state of relaxation and meditation. Breath and breathing is the intermediary between spirit and matter, and the vehicle for prana, or universal life-energy. (For a more purely yogic discussion of the chakras, prana, etc., see Swami Sri Yukteswar The Holy Science, 1974.)

5. About the only 'aid' that might be used in "creating the right conditions in the healing room" would be music. Incense or other devices are not ordinarily used, but music, either taped or played by the pianist or organist, is common. Trance conditions are not usually used in healing, though both healer and patient may close their eyes during the process.
6. It must be admitted that when I have witnessed the situation of the medium first reading the billet and then delivering the 'message', it somehow seemed akin to 'cheating', even though the practice was accepted by the congregation. Certainly, such practice would not be permitted in any kind of scientific parapsychology experiment.
7. Insufficient field-familiarity with billet-reading mediumship, not common in Canadian spiritualist churches, focuses me to speculate in this case.
8. One instance of deftness in a medium's dealing with a difficult client comes to mind. In this case, the man was not so much a 'difficult' or unaccepting recipient as he was well-known to be an extreme eccentric, with rather obsessive particular concerns. He had also a reputation as a "message grabber" or "puller", an individual who is constantly seeking a message even if there were no messages forthcoming for him. (Mediums claim that certain individuals 'draw' from them, or 'psychically pull at them'.) The medium here was doing standard clairvoyance to a small congregation, wherein it might reasonably be expected that all the attendants would receive a message. Her custom, however, was to ask the attendants, each in turn before she began her clairvoyance, if they "had

anything to give off" themselves. This particular gentleman "gave off" at some length, in regard to himself, to the extent that the medium had to cut him off somewhat short. Later, when she had given messages to the rest of the congregation and again had to deal with him, she began by saying, "Well, you've already gotten your own message" and proceeded to merely re-iterate briefly, what he had said previously, with which he could not help but agree.

9. There is an implicit analogy here to photographic 'development' processes -sitting under the red light produces the 'images' that clairvoyants percieve. However, I am not aware of anyone actually making the comparison or analogy.
10. It may be said that the 'reality' of what is experienced in the course of the circle is a reality by negotiation or consensus, in which the circle leader is the negotiator between the sitters and between the sitters and the spirit world.
11. Skultans describes the rather typical process of such facilitation in a development circle but I can neither accept her analysis of the procedure nor her opinion that there is also here, as in healing, "a certain sexual element." (p.51) She writes, "in his capacity as mentor Mr Forde (the circle leader) takes up a position immediately behind Alice's chair. Alice, whilst her mediumistic powers are highly developed as a result of the sixteen years she has sat in a circle, still has considerable difficulty in 'going under control' as opposed to becoming 'impressed' by messages and conditions. It is this 'failing' which Mr Forde tries to remedy. He very gently places both his hands on her shoulders and softly coaxes her to breathe more deeply and relax. As Alice gradually begins to show signs of possession, as she begins to tremble and sigh, Mr Forde offers her reassurance. 'It's alright', he says, 'I'm here, I'm holding you, you're perfectly safe.' Alice, in the small, unsteady voice of a spirit possessing her, replies: 'Is it? Don't let go of me! Hold me! Hold me, won't you?' In fact, the whole drama revolves around the need to provide a safe, reassuring, male environment whilst the spirit enters. In this procedure the role of the male in guiding and touching the female is mystically sanctioned." (pp.50,51) She claims that, "It is thought that most women are too self-controlled and inhibited to be natural 'instruments'. Hence, they must learn gradually to relax, 'to let themselves go' and submit to spirit. The man, therefore, assumes the role of mentor." (p.50)

I have never heard such ideas expressed in any spiritualist group with which I have had connections. In fact, I am sure that in most of them such notions would provoke cries of sexism and discrimination, if not harsher

recriminations. The roles of 'mentor' and circle leader, as well as that of trance medium, would most definitely not be gender-specific. And again, Skultans has failed to understand the symbolism and its metaphysical underpinnings.

12. Of course, I have never encountered anyone who has actually so suffered from touching an entranced medium. I have, however, heard stories about such events, but the matter seems to be more a part of spiritualist mythology than anything else.
13. This is frequently reported in the biographies of trance mediums. See, for example, Garrett, 1968; Biscop, 1981.
14. Unfortunately I have no direct personal experience of physical phenomena circles. They are rare among modern spiritualists, partly no doubt because of their reputation, in the past, for fraudulence or trickery. I have only read accounts of such seances, mainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century literature on the subject, or heard stories from spiritualists about such seances. The Proceedings and Journals of the English and American societies for Psychical Research contain such accounts, as do many of the books and papers on spiritualism by spiritualists (e.g., Barbaneau, 1951), and the reader is referred to them. I have sat in some circles where a 'trumpet' had been placed in the center of the circle, which some sitters claimed to have seen move or 'vibrate', but I have seen nothing to personally think the trumpet was doing anything other than simply sitting there. Once, in my own home, some years ago, I had occasion to think that a tea-kettle had been unexplainedly removed from its accustomed burner on the stove, to another burner, and all the burners of the gas stove switched on. The stove appeared to be in good working condition and I was alone in my apartment at the time, and to the best of my knowledge, not in any unusual frame of mind or psychological state. However, I may have been predisposed to some kind of personal proof and revelation, wherein I interpreted the event as some kind of physical phenomena. While I am as yet unable to explain the event, if, in fact, it even needs an explanation, such is my only experience of what may have been physical phenomena. In general, I remain skeptical.
15. I recall seeing in a local antique store a rather lovely, large hand-colored lithograph of World War I vintage, portraying a young mother in a startled gesture or posture, standing in a garden with a young child playing at her feet. A short distance away, she sees the spirit of her husband, in uniform, his arms outstretched to her. Such a spirit might well be a candidate for 'rescue' if he were lingering close to the earth plane rather than 'moving on'

or progressing.

16. There are presently at least two rescue circles sitting ongoingly in the Vancouver area, both of which were originally connected to a particular church but have since become independent. The medium for one is a man, for the other, is a woman.
17. Spiritualists often claim that many people incarcerated in mental hospitals are, in fact, involuntarily possessed by spirits and not actually insane. Further, they claim that many of these people could be freed from this possession and be released, if it were possible to go into the institutions. This is also acknowledged by Skultans (p.148). Additionally, it has been argued that in at least one area of psychiatric and psychological research, that of the theory of multiple personality, early researchers may have based much of their theory on (and possibly been confused by) studies of trance mediumship, personalities and phenomena.(cf. Kenny, 1981)
18. In England and the United States, chartering organizations seem to divide on two issues, that of Christian versus non-Christian orientation (however they may be defined), and/or the matter of re-incarnation. In Canada, however, the differences are not so marked.
19. While it may be said that spiritualism is a religious philosophy that 'normalizes' the anomolous, the movement might also be said to be one that 'anomalizes' the 'normal'.
20. Although popular bookstores frequently carry spiritualist books (or spiritualist-related works) under 'occult' listings, spiritualists often do not like to consider themselves as 'occultist', claiming that spiritualism is a scientific philosophy meant for daily living, and not something esoteric.
21. For example, a certain gentleman, whom we shall call 'George', is a well-known figure in a number of local spiritualist churches, which he has been attending for quite a few years. While always dressed quite conventionally and formally in shirt and tie and jacket, he is generally somewhat disheveled, odoriferous and even dirty. George is over-weight, 'puffy' and rather asthmatic. He has long been unemployed, and apparently spends much of this time reading. He seems to be proccupied with receiving messages from his departed mother, and is known as a 'message-puller'. Over the years a number of mediums have attempted respectively to take him 'under wing' and help him 'get his life together', all to no avail. He speaks frequently of his 'project' with which 'spirit is helping'

and who 'want him to do it', though no one seems to know what this 'project' is. George, now becoming elderly, is seen as lacking self-control, and is overly dependent on spirit ("They can help you, but they can't solve all your problems.") to the extent that he will probably never do anything much with his remaining years on the earth plane. Instead, he will have to progress 'on the other side'.

22. The criterion of 'functionality' is often used in psychiatric or psychological assessment. While spiritualists use it in a more popular and less 'clinical' kind of way, in both cases the criterion really amounts amount to an indicator of the degree of successful socialization and general personality stability.

VI. CHAPTER 6: THE SPIRITUALIST WORLD VIEW

General Considerations:

It is through the creation of a symbolic universe that the entirety of a culture or a subuniverse of meaning such as a particular religion is legitimated. It is on the cosmological level of spiritualism that the symbolic universe of the movement is most clearly seen, especially in relation to its concepts concerning death and the nature of the afterlife. "As above, so below; as below, so above." This occult maxim summarizes the spiritualist view of the afterlife and its relation to the mundane world. The spirit world and the world of mortals are parallel worlds, each with their respective cultures and societies. The spirit world is the one we have left, and to which we shall return, when our period of embodiment is finished. It is a far-country, but one that is knowable through mediumship, of which it has been said that mediums are the ethnographers. (Tschanz, 1981) It is also a country in which we may travel, in the sleep-state and in out-of-body experiences. It is the idealized and idyllic summerland, where all is peace and harmony, at least for those dwelling there. Some may become lost and wander aimlessly about seeking its shores, and thus come to know more nebulous regions. Still others will have

progressed beyond its realms to a yet more distant country, a higher plane of vibration.

{{It is love, expressed through care and service, that unites these parallel worlds. Those dwellers of a far country reach out, through ties of love and friendship, to be of service to those left behind. As we progress here on the earth plane, so, too, many of those who draw close to us from spirit will also make progress, learning from us as we learn through them. Still others draw close to teach us the Laws of Nature and of God, so that our world might be a better place to live in, and so that we might be better prepared for our life in that world. Progress is available for all who choose it, even the most fallen and downcast. Spirit is always willing to help those who are willing to help themselves, and for those who aren't yet willing, we can send thoughts for their enlightenment and upliftment, and pray that they might have the understanding to change their ways. But if not, then we must bless them and let them go their way. Natural Law will take care of them, and eventually all will evolve into a higher rate of vibration. There is no evil, only ignorance and failure to comply with Natural Law, whether one is in spirit or on the earth plane, for the same laws apply to everyone everywhere. The Law of Compensation and Retribution will assure that what individuals put out, for good or ill, will eventually return to them, increased and multiplied because 'like attracts like'. We are all children of the same Father/Mother God, brothers and sisters

in the Spirit. Some of us may be more blessed than others here in the earth plane, but we are all equal in the Spirit, and we have a responsibility to help others less fortunate than ourselves. But we, too, must evolve along with all life. For such is God's plan of unfoldment for the universe.}}

Spiritualist philosophy is considered to be a 'revealed' philosophy, revealed by the spirit world through mediumship and concretely demonstrated by the phenomena of mediumship. In many respects, it is a simplistic philosophy, but not a naive philosophy, and it is argued that real spiritual truth is always simple, available to the common man in the way that more complex philosophies and theologies often are not. For those who are not sufficiently satisfied with the philosophy, they might turn to the more esoteric spiritualistic philosophies, such as that of Theosophy. One elderly spiritualist of my acquaintance, who as a young man had toured parts of Canada with Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle promoting spiritualism back in the 1920's⁽¹⁾, was fond of saying that Theosophy may appeal to the intellect but spiritualism appealed to the heart and soul.

That philosophy teaches the parallel quality of the spirit world, which interpenetrates with and touches on the mundane world in many ways. In the spirit world, individuals continue to indulge their interests, develop their abilities and do their work. There are institutions of learning, facilities for research, and facilities for the care of those recently arrived in the spirit world. It is possible even to continue to indulge

in rather earthly habits, smoking, drinking and eating, for those who are unable or unwilling to forego them, though they are all things of the earth plane and best left behind, as they are no longer necessary or relevant. Addictions and imperfections will also be left behind, as, once free of the physical body, individual consciousness resides in the astral, or etheric body, which is a perfected body, or vehicle of consciousness. But that body, like all of the spirit world, is manipulable by mind in a way that is seldom possible, though certainly not impossible, to residents of the earth plane. {{The spirit world of the Summer Land is 'held in place', if you will, by the combined mental power of all its inhabitants.⁽²⁾ As one progresses to higher planes of vibration, one becomes increasingly independent of the need for form, particularly form that replicates that of earthly existence. But it is to the Summer Land that most of us will journey, until such time as we are ready to evolve to a higher level, and have freed ourselves of ties to the earth plane.}}

Evolution/progress, service/work are paired concepts of higher/lower degrees: Evolution is the overall plan for the universe and all life, but it is measured, in 'lower' form, by individual and collective progress. Service to life is the ideal, but it is manifest, in 'lower' form, in one's spiritual (and other kinds of) work. Thus the parallel structure is maintained on a cognitive level, moving from the ideal into the practical order. The activities of individuals and

collectivities create and affirm the interpenetration of the spiritual domain on the cognitive and practical levels. But the paired concepts above involve the notion and ideals of order and control: Evolution is an orderly plan, unfolding step by step; progress should be accomplished with orderly control. Service is the spiritual order of activity, and work should be done in an orderly and controlled manner. Mediumship should be developed and -demonstrated in an orderly and controlled fashion: uncontrolled mediumship is potentially harmful and even dangerous. (3)

Spiritualism legitimates death in very special ways, as it also resolves the issues of 'sin' and 'guilt'. It 'assauges the terror' of death first by 'demonstrating', through its teachings and its mediumship that the moment or act of death itself is not to be feared: 'stepping out' of the body is no more difficult or fearsome than stepping out of an automobile or changing one's clothes. While the moments leading to death may be filled with pain and anguish, depending on one's condition at passing, all are removed forever at the actual moment of 'release': one releases oneself from the body into an unfettered and more perfected life. Indeed, the experience itself is unlikely to be a solitary one: spirit guides and loved ones are likely to be there assisting, and one may even perceive their comforting presence. One is lead toward the light, experiencing the love and joy that is waiting to enfold the newly-released spirit in 'the peace that surpasses understanding'. (4)

Secondly, the spiritualist view of the afterlife, the Summer Land, is an immensely comforting one. It is a country not so far, and it is familiar territory, whose very concreteness and structure repeat the concreteness and structure of the world we have left behind. It is not an ending, but a new beginning, where there is yet the possibility of continuing to indulge our interests and activities, to continue to progress, and to carry on our social relationships with those who have gone before us, as well as eventually reaching back to those left behind. It is, then, the anthropomorphized world par excellence, a world continuous with the known and loved and enjoyed. But it is also a world of renewed potential, in which growth and change is still possible without the encumbrances that may have held us back during our brief sojourn on the earth plane. Indeed, life itself, considered to be a 'school room' or learning experience, is seen as more of a sojourn away from that 'greater life' to which we return than death is a sojourn away from life.

Sin and guilt become easily resolved in this scheme of things because there is no punishment per se. There is no 'heaven' nor 'hell' as such, except for what we may create for ourselves, out of our own expectations. There is only the kind of 'neutral' territory of the Summer Land. Those who may die consumed with guilt for imaginary transgressions or sin may indeed find themselves in some kind of self-created hell, according to their expectations. This 'lower astral plane' might indeed be peopled with others of similar ilk, but it is not a

permanent condition and it is one from which the individual can free himself through understanding. It is said that spirit-teachers come down from higher planes to help people free themselves from this plane, and it was to this plane that Jesus descended after his death on the cross. Sin is that which people conceive to be sin: there is only failure to live in accordance with Natural and Divine Law. There is no punishment, but only the immutable workings of the Law, which assure that perfect compensation and retribution will occur. Always one is given both the option and the opportunity to make amends, through service to others, for any shortcomings or failures. Prayer for the departed is appropriate, since by prayer we are, in effect, "sending out thoughts" for the care and safekeeping of the departed, and our thoughts can act as a beacon of light to help them on their way, especially in those cases where for whatever reason someone is confused or lost or unable to ask for help for themselves, especially because of their preconceptions or belief systems. In addition to prayer, rescue circles may help set them on their way.

The fundamental terror-assuaging capacity of everyday life in holding back the terror associated with death is here extended to the metaphysical domain, from 'life' through death and into the spirit world. We can come to know what to expect, and our expectations will be met in the far country whose nature is, in fact, so very well known to us already. It is the social world extended, in a more perfected way, into eternity. But it

is nonetheless still a world of possibilities and change, not a static heaven of bliss but a pleasant, even joyful, world of continued human activity and interaction, as dynamic a world as that which we have left behind.

In the spirit world we will learn to develop our mental abilities to full capacity. We will learn how to 'create out of nothing', to draw into form from the universal energy by means of mind-power, an exercise which some of us may begin to attempt while still on the earth plane but which is more difficult here because of the slower rate of vibration and the denser material of the physical world. The spirit world is of a higher rate of vibration and therefore made of a 'finer material', more easily manipulable by mind alone. This is also true of the spirit body. The spirit body changes throughout the lifetime in accordance with the physical body, but after death it can be reshaped by mind power. It is said that most often people will alter their spirit bodies to the appearance of mature adulthood, perhaps that of around age thirty. Some may choose other ages; for example, the child-guides of many mediums are said to have chosen to remain and work in that manner, though in fact they are not children. Further, though individuals may 'grow up' to, or revert to, the appearance of mature adults, when they communicate to the physical world through the mediums, they will do so in the form in which they passed into spirit, so that they may be more easily recognized. Of course, no matter what their appearance may be, their vibrations remain the same, and it is

the recognition of the vibrations, that is the ultimate criterion. (5)

Spiritualists and 'Reality': Potential and Control

Reality, for spiritualists, is not a fixed quantity or dimension: it is permeable and transformable. It is a matrix in which mind exerts its formative and creative influence. Both the mundane and the supramundane worlds are malleable by mind power, though it is more difficult to manipulate the mundane world, because of its denser or slower vibration, than the higher vibration or 'finer' material of the supramundane world. (6) The universe may be said to be merely energy in potential, some of that potential being expressed in physical matter, the rest being potentially useable by those in the higher dimensions. But its use in the higher dimensions is temporary: it may be changed or altered through consensus into new forms. Thus it remains always in potential, a potential that can be reformed at will. Reality in the physical and social realm is likewise a potentiality: it is not what it seems to be, since it is constantly interpenetrated by the supramundane world. Its potential is that to become a higher vibration, and its apparent solidity is only that: an appearance, an illusion, the 'Veil of Maya' which is drawn about us when we are embodied, birth being the sleep of forgetfulness through which we forget our eternal home to which we shall later return.

Mediumship demonstrates the interpenetration of the two worlds, but it is in the development circle that sitters experience at first hand the illusionary quality of reality and its potential manipulability. Reality is a kind of 'reality by consensus', and 'reality by authority': if several sitters experience, apparently, the same thing (a sensation, an image, etc.), it is defined as 'real' and interpreted by the circle leader. What is real, then, is what is defined as being real, through consensus and authority. (It is not an authority that is unquestionable or infallible, however.) This experiential notion, or rather this notion that is experienced directly in the circle becomes in time extended to the social domain: life outside the circle comes to be experienced as more akin to life within the circle. Ordinary phenomena may in fact be 'disguised' psychic phenomena, or indices of spirit presences, and therefore of metaphysical significance. But one must after all 'keep one's feet on the ground' and not 'get carried away by the imagination' or 'get out of control'. Control, then, is the means by which reality is kept in place. Nonetheless, even a brilliant conversation may be a manifestation of one's attunement to brilliant spirit guides, as is demonstrated in inspirational lectures on the platform. However, there are reasonable limits as to what may be experienced as psychic or of possible metaphysical significance. (7)

All these means, on the cognitive level, lead to the internalization of the belief system. In services and especially

in circles, shared perceptions lead to shared conceptions, and the experience of reality, being interpreted according to the belief system leads as might be expected to the internalization of the belief system. The leap of faith, as it applies to spiritualism, hinges on one major point: acceptance that mediumship proves survival. Once this is accepted and internalized as 'true', then everything else falls into place: bereavement is resolved, sin and guilt are soon resolved (and orthodoxy perhaps finished with), and the terror of death is assuaged. Once this acceptance has been internalized, then it becomes possible to uncritically accept demonstrations of mediumship that may be completely without veridicality of evidential material as nonetheless somehow proving not only survival but all else that is associated with mediumship. Death and life are then continuous and one may comfortably live one's life, go on with the business of living, in the security of knowing that there is no death. The anomalous has been normalized, but the normal has also been anomalized within the context of the belief system, and the mundane world raised to a level of metaphysical significance. Thus the 'life of the spirit' is led in the 'here and the now' as much as, and much like, it will be in the 'there and then'.

Psychology, Identity and Transformation

Cultural 'psychologies', or theories of personal identity creation, development and maintenance are elaborated by whole cultures, according to Berger and Luckmann. But rival sub-groups may also create rival psychologies, which, however, presuppose a cosmology which has already defined the nature of the universe. There is, then, an implicit psychology in spiritualism, which deals with the nature of personal identity and the process of transformation.

Being part of the wider society, 'psychologized' as it is, individual spiritualists may or may not be familiar with the prevalent psychological concepts, and may or may not accept them as is their choice. As might perhaps be expected, however, there is a general popular kind of psychology that is au courant among spiritualists and which requires no great amount of consideration here except perhaps as it may touch upon aspects of 'indigenous' spiritualist psychology. (8)

In the spiritualist view, the universe being manipulable by mind, it might be said that 'mind is the builder', whether in an incarnate or discarnate form. Mind is eternal: it exists before embodiment as it will continue to exist after the body. As such, however, it is not fixed or static: we were whole persons before we entered embodiment and, though we add to mind our experiences while on the earth plane, we will continue to be whole persons after we have left embodiment. Mind, then, is also potential, as

is the universe. It is potential to 'become', but it is also in the process of 'becoming': it adds to itself through embodiment.⁽⁹⁾ But it is also potential to act, and it does act, both in the social world of embodiment and the spirit world of disembodiment. In its acting, mind is creative, ranging from the creativity found in the mundane world to the 'creating out of nothingness' (universal energy) that occurs on the supramundane world. Therefore mind is: potential and actualization; both created (by God) and creative (as God, or Divine Mind is); active and passive (it can be 'impressed', as mediums are in the demonstration of phenomena); it is eternal - coming before embodiment - and temporal: coming into embodiment.

The concept of mind is both inclusive of and exclusive of, character and personality. It is potentially inclusive of character and personality because these attributes can be added to mind (through embodiment), though there may exist prior to embodiment some kind of 'proto-character' and personality; and it is potentially exclusive of them because it can exist, as some spirits do, without ever embodying. Because it is 'builder' when in action, it must also contain the 'blueprint' for form, the 'ideal' from which it actualizes form. It is likewise force, since it is the active force which actualizes the potential of the form or ideal.

Mind is obviously then independent of body, as it is independent from and inclusive of form, at least in potential. Mind is also inclusive of choice and of free will: therefore

'personal responsibility' is both the ideal and ultimately the consequence of action and choice. Since mind is independent of body, character and personality are likewise independent of body existing in potential before body and as part of mind after disembodiment. But character and personality are things or attributes added to mind during embodiment, and are 'of the earth' in that sense. Accordingly, character and personality, or things of the earth plane, are eternalized after disembodiment;⁽¹⁰⁾ thus, in a sense, at least part of the mundane world is eternal, both potentially and actually.

The body, then, is but an expression, a 'projection' if you will of mind. Character and personality, being independent of body, it stands to reason that the connections between mind and body are tenuous, able to be 'stretched' or 'expanded', and thus permitting the body to be vacated temporarily, as in trance mediumship, or permanently as at death. Because the body is merely a 'shell' or vehicle for the expression of consciousness, it can be utilized, or possessed by another spirit, being a mind in disembodied form.⁽¹¹⁾ The 'points of connection' between the astral or spirit body are the chakras, the brain, and the astral equivalent of the umbilical cord, the Silver Cord.

Mind, then, is not really resident in the body. In fact, if it can be said to be 'resident' anywhere, it would be in the astral, or spirit body, itself but another vehicle for consciousness. The brain is merely a sense-organ, or organizing center through which mind in both voluntary and involuntary ways

operates the body, utilizing the data from the senses to do so.

The five senses themselves are the physical equivalents of, and vehicles of operation of, the spirit or astral faculties. Mediumship depends on the ability of mind to operate, or experience, directly through the spirit-faculties, bypassing the sensory apparatus. In terms of mediumistic usage, the equivalence would be as follows:

Figure 6.1 :

FACULTY-EQUIVALENTS ¹²

- | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. vision | ~ | clairvoyance |
| 2. hearing | ~ | clair audience |
| 3. olfactory | ~ | 'psychic' smelling* |
| 4. touch | ~ | psychometry |
| 5. taste | ~ | 'psychic' tasting* |

(* no specific equivalent)

The biological substratum of identity for spiritualists is not so strongly connected to other identity factors (character and personality) as it might be in 'standard' psychology. Being part of the earth, so to speak, the body and its functionings are controlled ultimately by mind, vitalized as it were by the universal life-energy, or 'prana'. Composed of the 'denser' material of the earth plane, the physical body is thus an appropriate vehicle for the experience of life on the earth plane, as the etheric body is the appropriate finer-material body for the experience of life in the spirit world. While the needs of the body must be attended to, it must also be kept in control. It is, however, quite appropriate to indulge those needs, at least to a reasonable extent, though over-indulgence can cause us to become fixated on things of the earth plane and thereby obscure our spiritual reasons for embodiment and interrupt our progress.

Insanity may be due to malevolent or 'unenlightened' spirit possession, but it may also be due to organic causes, or to disturbances in the character and personality. The first may be 'cured' by some form of exorcism, or through some form of psychotherapy, as organic causes may be cured by standard medical practices. Disturbances may be cured likewise by psychotherapy. All of these problems will be removed at death, the first and second by vacating the physical body, and the third by continuing to progress on the spirit side of life.

While it may be important for our sojourn in the social world that these conditions be cured, in the long run they will be removed nonetheless. But since 'mind is the builder', it is mind that is the important element in any kind of healing, be it physical, psychological or spiritual.

Since character and personality are attributes of mind, identity transformations may occur as a result of mental changes. Thus, while one may derive benefit from the experience of sitting in circle, one can also benefit and be transformed by understanding. Changes in attitude, being changes of mind, can bring healing and personal transformation. (13)

Spiritualism and Salvation

In the spiritualist belief system, there is neither Heaven nor Hell, neither sin nor punishment; accordingly, the concept of salvation, in a Christian sense, is not applicable to spiritualists. {{We are spirits with a body, come from the spirit world and to the spirit world we shall return. The 'judgement' after death is our self-judgement, wherein we decide if we were successful, spiritually speaking, during our embodiment, or not. If we decide that we were not successful, we still have the opportunity to progress in the spirit world; and even if we do decide that we were successful, we shall still continue to progress, albeit at our own rate, since progress is the inexorable law of the evolutionary scheme or plan of the

universe. (14)}}

Since we are 'personally responsible' for ourselves, there is no need for the supposed vicarious atonement of Christ's crucifixion. The Principle of Personal Responsibility affirms this, though individuals are free to formulate some other view of personal responsibility that might include the notion of Christ's vicarious atonement. In a sense, however, there is a kind of salvation implicit in spiritualism.

There is first the kind of automatic salvation whereby we enter the Summer Land. This applies, potentially at least, to all who pass into spirit. The exceptions are those who wind up in a temporary hell-like situation, described above. But salvation from that situation is made possible either by an inward change that is spontaneous, or that is prompted by the visits of spirit teachers, from higher planes, or by the thoughts and prayers of those left behind. The work of rescue circles might also implement this change of realization or understanding. Accordingly, we might term this, "salvation through understanding" or "salvation by self-realization" when already in a disembodied state.

There is also salvation by "self-realization" when in the embodied state. This may be accomplished through the aid of the 'higher self' acting upon the 'lower self' (15), or through the assistance of the spirit guides, or by both. Essentially it involves coming to understand and live by the Laws of God and Nature, particularly, though not necessarily, as taught by

spiritualism. This form of salvation assures that we will live free from the fear of death, and that we will almost assuredly 'wake' to find ourselves in Summer Land, although we may, if we have greatly progressed, go directly to a higher plane. Still, we are most likely at least to rest briefly in Summer Land before doing so. We might term this "election to the knowledgeable through experience and understanding", prior to disembodiment. Our psychic experiences and development may then be seen as 'signs' of our election. (The use of the term 'election' here was suggested by Dr. M. Kenny.)

Spiritualism and 'Consciousness'

The concept of 'consciousness' is at best a difficult and complex one. It is no less so in the spiritualist context, yet it is obviously a centrally important one. 'Mind' and 'consciousness' are not synonymous in the spiritualist context: spiritualists acknowledge the existence of the unconscious, or the subconscious of common psychology, in addition to which spiritualists may speak of the 'superconsciousness' or 'supraconsciousness', though the latter expression is not common. It is the superconsciousness which is associated with the 'higher self': it is, if you will, a spiritual and spiritualized consciousness, free of the perceptual and conceptual limitations of ordinary waking consciousness, that is 'at one' with Divine Mind or the spiritual universe. It is a

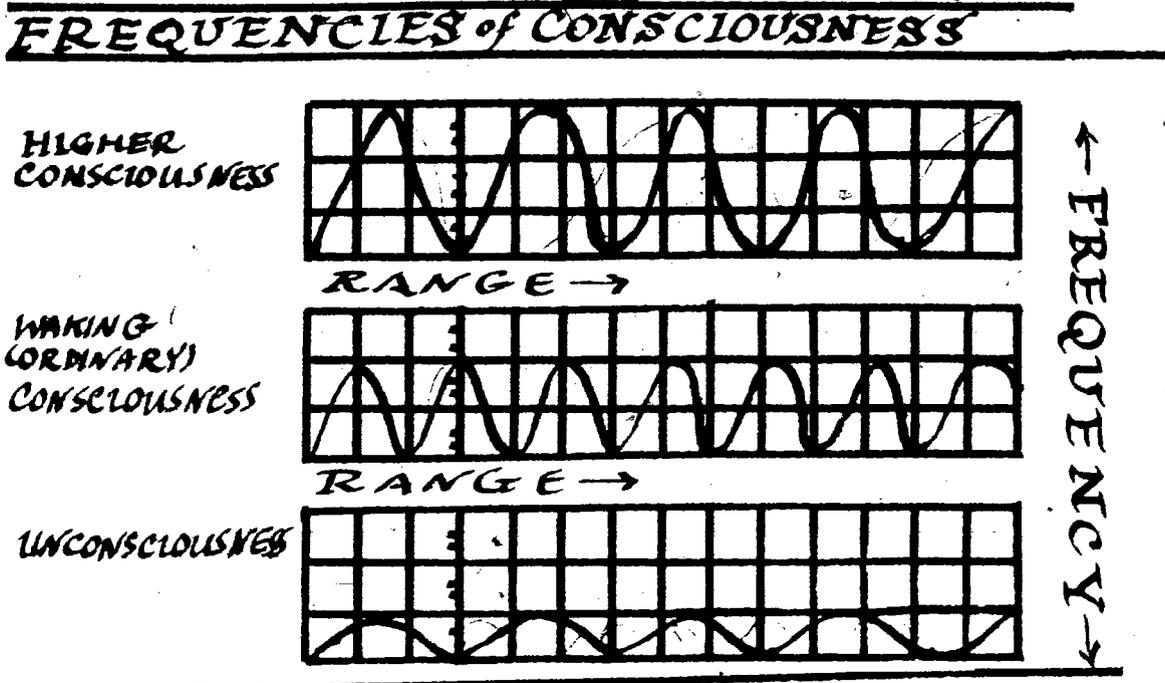
source of all knowledge and an ultimate director of action, a perfected consciousness that is a 'true' reflection of Divine Consciousness. Accordingly, 'consciousness' may be divided into three levels: the unconscious, which appears to be associated with the 'lower self' and the physical body, though through the subconscious one may 'tap into' or attune to the superconsciousness; the ordinary 'waking' consciousness of daily living; and the superconsciousness or 'spiritual consciousness' which is available to, but not necessarily present with, ordinary waking consciousness: it is a kind of 'Guardian' consciousness.⁽¹⁶⁾ Ordinary waking consciousness may attune to the superconsciousness in a spiritually unfolded individual, (though not necessarily merely in a psychically unfolded individual⁽¹⁷⁾). But the superconsciousness may also be tapped into via the unconscious. Thus it would appear that ordinary consciousness may 'flow', if you will, in either direction: 'up' to the superconsciousness directly, or 'down' through the unconsciousness to the superconsciousness, 'up' and 'down' here, being rather relative terms. But considered in the context of the concept of 'vibrations', the matter becomes somewhat clearer. Each level represents a rate of vibration sympathetic with the vibratory rates of levels of life. The superconsciousness is a higher vibration of consciousness in tune with the spiritual domain, or supramundane world; the ordinary waking consciousness is a vibratory rate of consciousness that is in tune with, or sympathetic with, the

mundane world, and the unconscious, a vibratory rate that is lower and in tune with the lower sensory aspects of life. The question then becomes, "how is it possible to tune in to the superconsciousness through the unconscious?" But before tackling this question, let us decide what 'consciousness' is. Consciousness is the sum totality of the vibrational frequencies of Mind. It is Mind 'in vibration', or Mind in action, Mind as a capacity-exercising 'real' entity. It is a frequency totality, along whose range a given point may be selected for operational purposes. Because we are in the body, the ordinary operational frequency (waking consciousness) is set at a sympathetic frequency to the real world of social interaction and so forth. The unconsciousness represents the lower rate of vibration sympathetic to lower (sensory or 'animal') life. All three levels of consciousness are co-existent and co-operational, but 'consciousness as experienced by the individual is the experience of a particular frequency 'selected out' from the totality. Most commonly, this will be the frequency of ordinary, waking consciousness. The individual human being may then be described as an individualized Mind, consisting of a total set of vibrational frequencies (consciousness) selectively attuned to a particular range and 'housed' in both a physical body which is discarded at death, and a 'finer' body, the spirit body, its 'housing' in the disembodied state. Free will is the instrument of frequency selection, or capacitor, which can be used to raise or lower the rate of vibrational frequency. The physical body,

being of a 'denser' material associated with matter, acts as a 'poor conductor' and therefore tends to maintain a slower rate of vibration: once encased in the physical body, consciousness is, to a considerable extent, held prisoner in the world of matter. Those who are psychically (and/or spiritually) unfolded are temporarily able to free themselves from the restraints of the physical body and raise their vibrations to a higher level,⁽¹⁸⁾ thus tuning in to the inhabitants of that frequency of vibration, the inhabitants of the spirit world.

Our problem is solveable. The unconscious, which is 'un'-conscious because one's 'capacitor' is not ordinarily attuned to it, is a slower frequency of vibration. But the 'higher planes', the planes of superconsciousness, are 'higher' frequencies operating in a 'slower' range. The unconscious is a frequency of slower vibration and 'slower' range, and it becomes easier, when operating in the slower frequency and range, to slip into the other slower range (but higher frequency) of the higher (or 'eternal') vibrations. We might try to graph the situation as follows, bearing in mind that we are operating under cover of analogy:

Figure 6.2:



If we were to superimpose the graph of the unconscious onto the graph of the superconsciousness, we would see that though the frequencies are different, the range is similar. Thus, by analogy, we may be permitted some understanding of the claim that one can 'reach through the unconscious' to the superconsciousness. What is further apparent here is the orderliness of it all, the connection to science and the notion of control: all frequencies of vibration are under the control of Free Will. 'Uncontrolled' individuals then, are individuals whose Free Will has lessened or loosened control of their frequencies of vibration, resulting in 'mental static'. In summary, the 'individual' in spiritualist psychology consists of an eternal Mind, operating in three major frequencies of

vibration, the sum total of which is 'consciousness', encased in a physical body whose counterpart is the astral, or spirit body. Through the unconscious level of vibrational frequency, the ordinary person is able to maintain contact with the 'higher self'; the spiritually unfolded individual is able to reach up to higher levels from ordinary consciousness. "As above, so below; as below, so above." The hierarchical and reflective structure of the movement and its cosmology encompasses both the universe and the individual. Of such stuff are individuals, especially spiritualist individuals, made. We have, then, accounted for spiritualists themselves in their co-production of reality. But our analysis is not yet complete, for spiritualism is not complete without the spirits, and so we must move to give due consideration to the invisibles.

NOTES

NOTES

1. This same gentleman's biography was recently collected by another anthropologist, Linda Tschanz, shortly before his death, and is now in the National Archives in Ottawa.
2. The parallel here, of course, is that the social world is 'held in place' by consensus of its inhabitants, which, sociologically speaking is quite true.
3. I do not wish to imply that spiritualists are themselves rigid and controlled people, ungiven to spontaneity, and inclined toward social sobriety. Such is not the case, as is easily evidenced by the laughter and informality so characteristic of spiritualist services and other events. There are no taboos against alcohol or particular foods, though vegetarianism may be adopted by many spiritualists, nor against dancing and all forms of popular entertainment. Nonetheless, the notions and values of order and control are an important feature of the philosophy and cosmology, and even of the social structure, of the movement.
4. It is interesting, and some would say relevant, that the spiritualist description of the experience of dying is remarkably similar to that described in out-of-the-body experiences of near-death, as recorded by people such as Kubler-Ross (1969) and Moody (1976), among others. There can, of course, be a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon. For an interesting cinematographic treatment of some of these concepts and for treatment of spiritual healing, the reader is recommended to a film entitled Resurrection, starring Ellen Burstyn.
5. It sometimes asked of spiritualists whether or not 'evil spirits' may impersonate other spirits, and if the mediums (and the recipients) may not then be misled by the 'evil spirits'. The usual reply to this is that it may be possible, but that mediums learn to distinguish between good and bad vibrations (whatever the appearance of the spirit); that such impersonation probably serves no purpose; and that the individual, either medium or recipient, is protected by the Law of Attraction and therefore only good spirits are likely to 'draw near'; and finally, that the spirit guides are more astute in such

matters and will not let unwanted or undesirable spirits draw close. It may be said, then that there is a "spirit-screening process" related to the concept of 'vibrations'.

6. I use the term, 'supramundane' here as it seems more appropriate and accurate, since the spirit world can be said to be 'mundane' in its reflection of the ordinary, mundane world of mortals, yet is 'above' and 'beyond' that world because of its special characteristics.
7. Here, I do not mean to imply that all spiritualists conduct their daily lives in each and every instance as a possibility of some form of spirit communication or of metaphysical significance, because such is not the case. It is, however, a logical possibility of the belief system and of the social construction of reality that is associated with it. Possibly some individuals do experience their daily lives in this extreme form, but the social control factors of the group norms would mitigate against it, and such individuals would most likely be conceived of being 'out of control' and even 'psychotic'. The ongoing conversational level of church groups provides, for the most part, the vehicle for such control: one conforms to the norms and limits of the group, and those limits also define, ultimately, what may or may not be experienced as 'psychic' or of metaphysical significance.
8. Some aspects of spiritualist psychology are undoubtedly likely to be common to other metaphysical or 'New Age' groups, but such comparison is beyond the scope of the present work.
9. And some would say, through successive re-embodiments, in re-incarnation.
10. The logic here becomes rather more complex in regard to successive re-embodiment, which, however, is a step not all spiritualists would be prepared to take. (cf. Ducasse, 1969, for some philosophical discussion of the issues.)
11. Some teachings maintain that the spirit, or astral body, itself is merely another vehicle for consciousness, to be itself cast aside when re-birth occurs. This would be more typical of the re-incarnationist point of view.
12. It is interesting to note that the more 'intimate' or 'internally receptive' facilities, taste and smell, seem to have no specific terminology or mediumistic equivalent, at least as far as I am aware, though I have heard mediums claim to be 'smelling' or 'tasting' when it was evident from the context that they meant that they were doing so 'psychically'.

13. I do not claim that spiritualists have a well-developed and clear concept of 'mind' in the philosophical sense, nor that what I have described here is a totally accurate portrayal of the complete concept as it exists among spiritualists. It is, I believe, a 'working portrayal' and analysis of the concept as it appears to exist popularly among spiritualists, as also is the case with the concept of 'consciousness'.
14. Many spiritualists would say that we live our lives in accordance with a life-plan, the 'blueprint' for which remains accessible to us in our unconscious. This plan we will formulate before embodiment, in collaboration with those who will act as our spirit guides. Since we pass through the 'sleep of forgetfulness' to enter into embodiment, we may not remember this plan, though because it is consciously known to the spirit guides, it is they who will help us try to implement it even if we are unaware of their assistance. This plan is not of a 'fixed fate' sort of nature, but rather more in the nature of a working outline whose details we will fill in as we go through life, perhaps checking or altering it from time to time by 'accessing' it through the subconscious in dreams or meditation. Through the co-operation with Divine Mind, the right connections with the right people will be made as, and when, necessary.
15. The concept of the 'higher self' is not necessarily an intrinsic part of spiritualist philosophy, but it is one that many spiritualists speak of. It seems to be derived from more esoteric spiritualistic sources, such as Theosophy, where it is known (from the Sanskrit) as the 'Atman'. It may be referred to as the 'oversoul' or the 'Christ-self'. Essentially it teaches that part of our consciousness is always 'in touch' with the Divine Mind, or the Divine Source, or God, and that through our own 'higher self' we may be illuminated, or guided and inspired. Ideally it is that part of us that spirit guides are taking direction from and working in conjunction with. It is also an ideal of spiritual unfoldment that we aspire to 'become one' with the divinized aspect of consciousness.
16. One may be tempted here to see an analogy with, and reflection of, the Freudian tri-partite division of Id, Ego and Super-Ego, but such would be a loose, and rather inaccurate analogy.
17. Spiritualists theoretically make the distinction between a 'psychically unfolded' individual and a 'spiritually unfolded' individual: spiritual unfoldment does not necessarily bring 'psychic unfoldment', as one can be a good and spiritual person without being 'psychic'. Nor does 'psychic unfoldment' necessarily indicate one's degree of

spirituality. Ideally the two go together: psychic unfoldment should bring greater personal responsibility and an increase in spirituality, while one's spirituality will tend to stimulate one's psychic faculties. Practically speaking, the two are taken as synonymous, and the psychically unfolded individual is presupposed to be spiritually unfolded as well. The term 'spiritual unfoldment class' is synonymous with 'psychic development class' and, as argued above, psychic development and experience may be taken as 'signs of election'.

18. The appropriateness of spiritualists' analogy of mediumship to the radio is seen clearly here.

VII. CHAPTER 7: THE NATURE OF THE SPIRITS

Categories and Culture

An account of spiritualism would not be complete without an account of the spirits themselves. Spiritualists do not necessarily agree on the various kinds and levels of spirits, and the movement as a whole is concerned mainly with two categories, numbers 5 and 6, "Angel Guardians" and "Angel Loved Ones". Some of the theory about the spirits is apparently derived from, or related to, the teachings of other 'occult' groups, such as theosophy or similar movements, and some probably from Swedenborg's philosophy. In addition, some is derived directly from the teachings of such highly respected spirit guides as Silver Birch, through the writings of Barbanell and others. The categories are hierarchical, relating to different levels of vibration, as outlined in Table 5: Categories of Spirits. The relation of the spirit guides to the individual is diagrammed in Diagram 7, following below.

It is said that every individual will have at least one permanent spirit guide, called variously the Gate Keeper, the Protector, or sometimes Teacher/Protector, who is associated with the individual, from birth through death. The purpose of this particular spirit is to help the individual in spiritual

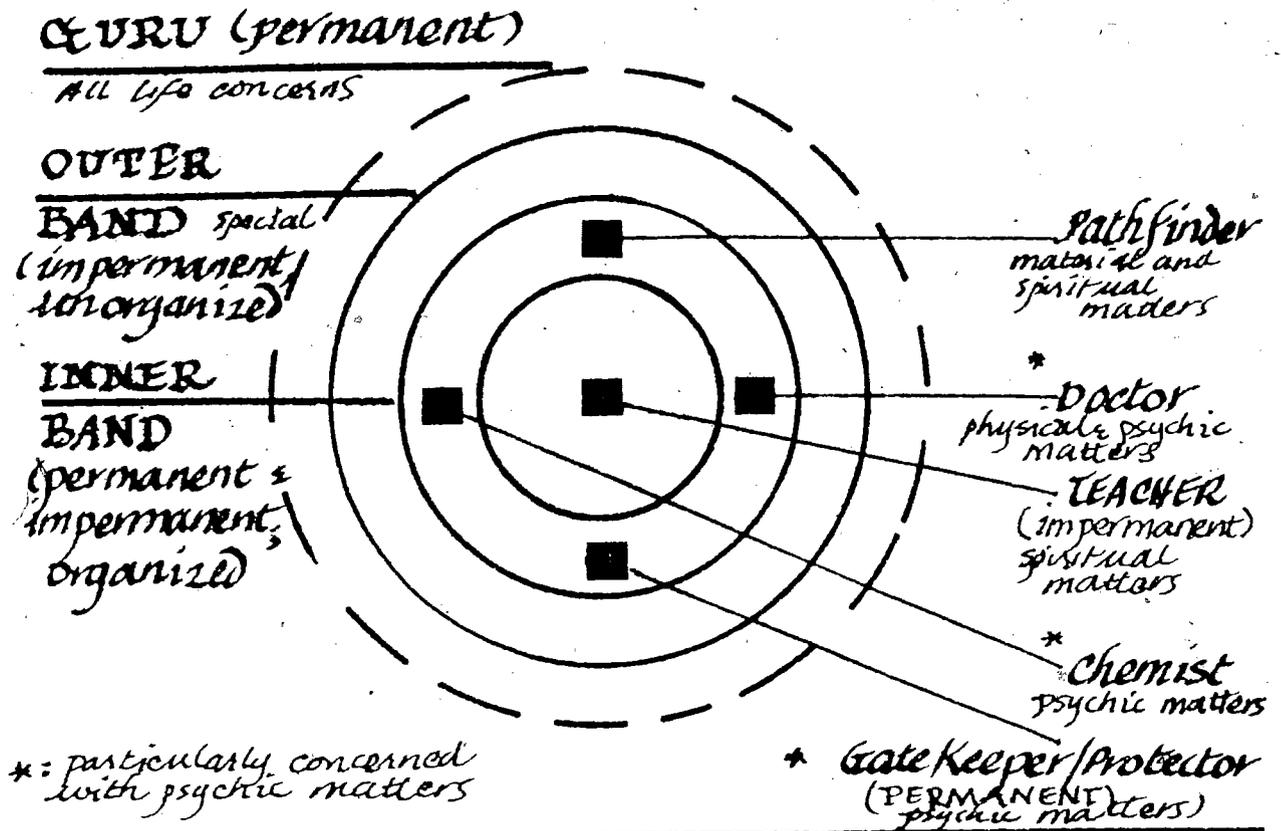
Figure 7.1:

CATEGORIES of SPIRITS :		
COSMIC PLANES (LITTLE or NO CONCERN)	1. Cosmic Spirits	} uncultured (+ +)
	2. Angelic Beings	
ASTRAL PLANES (Less concern)	3. Ascended Masters	} Beyond culture
	4. Gurus	
(Major Concern)	5. Angel Guardians	} cultured (+)
	6. Unrecognized Loved Ones	
	7. Loved Ones	
EARTH PLANES		
(Less Concern)	8. Unevolved spirits	} cultured (-)
	9. Astral Demons	
	LOWER ASTRAL PLANES	10. Thought Forms

direction and in life purposes as much as possible. Some people may have more than one spirit guide, dependent on life purpose or plan, or dependent on the level of spiritual unfoldment that has been attained. Since there are more spirits at any time on the spirit plane than there are incarnate beings, there are spirit guides enough to serve everyone. The average person has at least five, arranged in the Inner Band as indicated in the Diagram. There may be additional workers in an Outer Band. Mediums and other spiritually evolved people may have a considerable number of spirit guides, or Angel Guardians.

Figure 7.2:

SYMBOLIC · LOCATION of the SPIRIT · GUIDES



The Inner Band is composed of five spirits, who, with the exception of the Protector, may or may not be permanently attached to the person. As the person grows and develops spiritually, it may become necessary or useful to make changes in the band. Since Like Attracts Like, the appropriate vibration of spirit will be drawn to the person at the right time. In front of the individual is the Path Finder, a spirit who is usually from a culture or society with simpler technology (such

as North American Indians, Zulus, etc.). Standing to the right is the Doctor or Healer, and to the left is the Chemist. While part of the Doctor's function is to maintain health and harmony in the physical body of the incarnate spirit, the Chemist is also an agent of transformation of the body. In this case, the transformation tends to be for psychic reasons, though the transformation may be in terms of the body chemistry of the person. It is the Chemist who will make the necessary adjustments to the chemical makeup of the individual for the purpose of psychic development and for sitting in circle with others, where it may be necessary to change the vibrational frequency of the sitter in order to harmonize with the other sitters. In addition to promoting and maintaining the good health of the individual in his care, the Doctor may also work through the person mediumistically in spiritual healing.

Located behind the individual is the Protector or Gate Keeper. It is this spirit who protects the incarnate spirit from harm both physically and psychically, the spirit who tends to be permanently attached throughout the lifetime. When there are no other workers with the incarnate person, the Protector may also act as Teacher; and, when sitting in circle or operating mediumistically, it is the Gate Keeper who brings the spirits forward for purposes of communication or trance control. The Teacher is above the incarnate person, acting as spiritual director and overseer of the Inner Band. Presiding over both Inner and Outer Bands is the Master Teacher or Guru, who may

have one or more incarnate 'students' in his tutelage. The spirit guides themselves will have guides or teachers from higher planes.

In the case of mediums, the Gate Keeper assumes great importance as the agent of communication, whether through possession or other forms of mediumship. If individual discarnate spirit entities that are considered less than desirable are brought forward, it is said that the Gate Keeper is not doing his job properly and may need to be reprimanded by the medium. Both the Chemist and the Gate Keeper are, then, particularly connected to the mediumistic development of their incarnate charges.

In contrast, the Path Finder and the Doctor are more concerned with the physical and material matters of their charges. It is the Path Finder who guides the way in life matters and creates openings when needed. The Path Finder may be called upon, for example, in helping to find employment opportunities. In such a case, the Path Finder would not be responsible for creating the job but might assist the incarnate charge in locating a job by, say, drawing his attention to an ad in a newspaper. The Doctor might suggest psychically to the charge that he, say, lose weight or quit smoking, or seek treatment for some illness.

The Teacher of course is concerned with the direct and explicit spiritual teaching and growth of the individual. The student charge might be directed to various books, for example,

for spiritual edification or be directed to spiritual activities or groups. In the development of trance control mediumship, it will be the Teacher who will lecture through the possessed medium. The Teacher will also direct the other workers in the discharge of their duties, in order that as many as possible of the activities of the charge might be directed in appropriate spiritual channels. However, as an individual incarnate charge increases in spiritual understanding and development, the Teacher may move aside for a new Teacher. {{It is said that, "When the ear of the student is ready, then come the lips of the Master to fill it with wisdom.}}

The Outer Band is comprised of no fixed number of workers who will come forward to assist the charge with special tasks and situations. These spirits may come and go, and may work with several or even many incarnate spirits. The Outer Band is under the direction of the Guru or Master Teacher, though it may be the Teacher from the Inner Band who provides liason between the two Bands. The Guru is generally permanent and of high vibration, being the one responsible for the overall spiritual direction of the individual through life.

In regard to gender and culture, it may be said that males have mainly male spirit guides and females have mainly female spirit guides. What is important, however, is not gender but likeness of vibration which is independent of gender. Ultimately there is no gender in the spirit world, though spirits may maintain the appearance and quality of gender. Nonetheless,

there appear to be more male spirit guides than female, though this is probably a reflection of the position of greater dominance of males in the wider society.

A special case is that of child spirit guides. It is said that some spirits chose to remain in the form of children, bringing to people on the earth plane the joy, vitality and upliftment that is special to children. Often these guides are referred to as "joy guides", and in the case of mediums may be employed as agents in bringing forward spirits for communication or in directing the medium to those in the congregation in need of a message. Their function, then, is variable and general, though it can become specific.

The members of the Inner Band are almost always culled from cultures other than that of the incarnate charge. The Path Finder is usually from a technologically simpler society, one that is considered to be closer to nature. Teachers are most always drawn from cultures or societies of the past, or from a culture or society considered to have been spiritually advanced. Examples might be mediaeval monks, Indian yogis, buddhist priests, ancient Egyptians, and so forth. In contrast, members of the Outer Band might be mixed, some from the above kinds of societies and others from Euro-American society, perhaps even close in time. "Unrecognized Helpers" fall into this category (see below). Child guides may also be from other cultures and other times.

In general, spirits are from spirit culture. But spirit culture, at least on the planes of vibration closer to the earth plane, such as the Summer Land, is a reflection of earth culture, and inhabitants of the spirit world reflect the culture of their earth origin. It may be noted that the further removed from earth culture one moves, the less 'cultured' the categories become. Again, a reflective hierarchical situation is seen.

The spirits of departed loved ones and of spirit guides are products of recognizable human (earthly) cultures, though they are to varying degrees becoming socialized into spirit culture, which nonetheless is not so very different from earth culture. Because the spirit world is a more idealized and perfected world than the earthly one, we may say that it is positively cultured (+): On the other hand, spirits who are lost or unevolved, those needing rescue, are likewise products of recognizable human culture, while becoming socialized in a non-idealized situation, a world that is 'cultured' but negatively so (-). In the case of spirit guides and those on lower astral levels, it may be said that the Law of Attraction transcends culture and cultural differences both positively and negatively. But as one moves higher or lower in vibration, one encounters beings without culture, or 'uncultured' beings: Angel Beings and Cosmic Spirits have never incarnated in the physical world, and are thus without culture; at least, they are without human culture in any form, and may then be said to be positively uncultured (++) . Likewise, astral demons or evil entities are uncultured

negatively (--). If culture is a human product, and if humans are the product of culture, then Angel Beings and Cosmic Spirits exist in the humanless realm of pure spirit. Similarly, and more clearly so, thought forms exist at the lower end of the vibrational scale and are not really beings at all but rather the accumulated product of thought-energy condensed in such a way as to have a kind of pseudo-life of their own. Thought forms begin as human products and are manipulated by their creators up to a certain point of intensity whereat they may achieve an independence from their creators, and even act back upon them. Thought forms seem to be a pseudo-concrete example of the Law of Return, that what you put out (create) returns to you, said in regard to thought as well as to action. They seem to be the negative equivalent of positive healing thoughts. The implication is that negativity tends to become unstoppable and a thing apart from its creator. Yet one seldom hears of positive thought forms, though theoretically they should exist on the equivalent higher plane.

It is tempting to follow Levi-Strauss and see in spirit categories a nature/culture dichotomy. This would be true, however, only if we were to identify pure spirit (either positive or negative) with nature, and those closer to the earth plane and including the earth plane with culture. But such a dichotomy does not hold up with regard to spiritualism. There is an apparent dichotomy, the spirit/matter dichotomy, but it is only an apparent dichotomy, the two sides of the same coin as it

were, because it is bridged by human beings. Human beings are spirits who take on a physical body (matter) only to return to spirit after discarding the body at death. 'Nature' encompasses both matter and spirit, and culture is embedded in nature, being a human product in both the natural (physical) world and the spirit world. At the same time, culture, like its human creators, taken in the abstract sense, bridges both worlds: culture is part of the mundane world (human culture) and part of the transcendental world (spirit culture). In fact, it is culture which separates us from the realm of 'pure' spirit, in either its higher or lower aspects. The dichotomy in spiritualism is not that of nature/culture, but rather that of culture/spirit. Again, it is not a complete dichotomy but only an apparent dichotomy: as spirits with a body, we progress from human culture to spirit culture and eventually, through higher levels of vibration, to a culture-less state of being.

Categories of Closeness

There are two sub-categories of Angel Loved Ones: those who are known and recognized in some way, and those who may draw close because of the Law of Attraction but are unknown or unrecognized. While proof of survival is dependent on spirits of the first sub-category, another kind of proof is demonstrated by the second sub-category. That proof is proof of our human and spirit interconnectedness, proof that we are a human family

whether embodied or disembodied, transcendent of kinship ties. That is because these are spirits whom we have not previously known while they were on the earth plane, yet who have been attracted to us because they share a common interest or because they are "learning to be of service" in a simpler kind of way than the way of the spirit guides who are more knowledgeable and spiritually advanced. They are 'ancilliary' or auxilliary spirit guides, and their 'proof' is proof of the Law of Service. They are also a kind of disembodied moral injunction, indicating ('demonstrating') the need to begin our apprenticeship in service while we are still embodied.

This is also a kind of mediumsitic catch-all category, because if a recipient is unable to recognize a particular spirit entity as described by a medium, the spirit might be assigned to this second sub-category of unknown spirit loved ones. Some known and recognized spirit loved ones might also approach this category, or perhaps become intercategory, in the case of distant ancestral figures about whom little or nothing is known, such as a great-great grandparent.

There is an implicit and graduated hierarchy of closeness or recognition that moves from degrees of closeness to degrees of distance that can be set out as follows, in an ascending hierarchy: The concept of closeness, however, is a relative one, as well as being rather ambivalent. 'Closeness' may indicate location: "There is a spirit standing close to you.". It may also indicate vibrational similarity and therefore a degree of

DEGREES OF CLOSENESS :

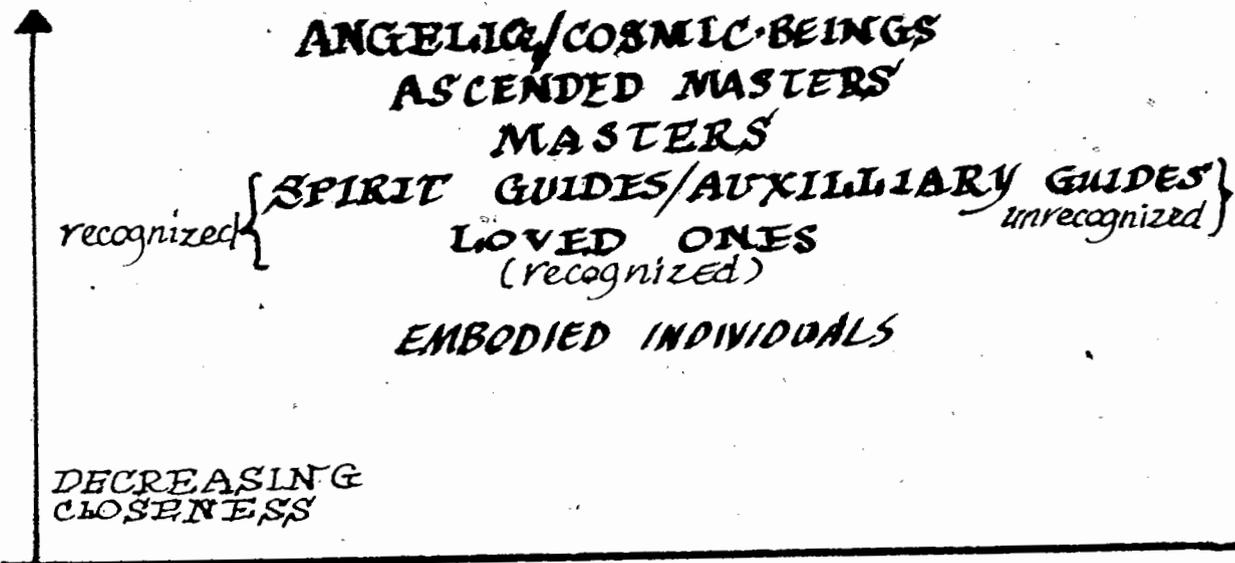


Figure 7.3

sympathy (as in sympathetic vibrations): "Your spirit guide is very close to you." It may be used to indicate time: "The condition is very close to you." The same term can be used as a measure of psychical or spiritual development: "She's a very closed person." "To close down" means to psychically dis-attune: "Close your psychic centers and then pull your aura close to you." As with so many spiritualist terms, as Zaretsky points out (1974), this is an example of a term from standard English being used in non-standard terms, the meaning of which must be determined from the context. More than one meaning can be implied at the same time. One may be 'close' to a spirit guide in the vibrational sense but not close in location or familiarity. 'Closeness' may also be indicative of a psychic occurrence: "I feel my guide drawing close." In the same way,

'closeness' may be causative or provocative: the drawing close of a guide may not only indicate or signal an occurrence, it may also cause it.

Spirit Possession

When the spirit guides or controls of a trance medium draw close, usually the medium will enter the trance state, resulting in message work or a trance reading or lecture, or in conversation with the spirits. The first signal of the encroaching state will be a fluttering of the eyelids followed by closing of the eyes. In experienced trance mediums, the medium may simply close the eyes and enter the state. The next signal, and usually a more definitive one, is a change in respiratory rate: the breathing will become slower, deeper and rhythmical, then return to normal. The return to normal indicates the occupancy has occurred. If the medium is sitting, which is the usual beginning posture, he or she will probably assume the circle-sitting posture: relaxed but upright, hands in the lap, feet on the floor. In delivering a trance lecture on the platform, some mediums may come to the rostrum before entering the possessed state and enter from the standing position. Others may enter the state while sitting and then be stood up by the possessing spirit. Occasionally a medium may deliver a trance address from the sitting position, but this is unusual.

Some mediums may be so close to their guide while delivering clairvoyance that the guide 'comes through' partially, in words or phrases, usually in some allegedly foreign language, perhaps a North American Indian language. These cases, which are now considered to be rather old-fashioned, seem to be similar to glossolalia (cf. Goodman, 1974).

In the beginning of the trance performance, the voice of the medium may be considerably altered from its normal condition or qualities. The pitch may be higher or lower, and its intensity increased or decreased, depending on the possessing spirit. The rhythms of speech may also change, as well as the style of speaking. The content of what is said may appear to be different from the medium's usual concerns or interests or ideas, but, so it is said, because of the Law of Attraction, the content will probably not be radically different from that of the medium's common interests and ideas. After a period in the possessed state, the voice of the medium may gradually return to something closer to the usual vocal qualities and speech of the medium. Nonetheless, the effect of the performance is to altogether give the impression of a personality and character different from the medium.

That impression is managed through a number of conveying (and hopefully, convincing) devices. We have seen from the cosmology of the movement that the spirit world interpenetrates the social world and that we are all spirits, some with a body

and some discarnate, and that mind, whose attributes are character and personality, is independent of the body. The symbolism of the breathing (from the Latin, 'inspire', which also gives rise to 'inspiration') or respiratory changes which most clearly demarcate the possessed from the non-possessed state, is here transparent: the personality of the medium is temporarily 'expired' from the body and a new personality, that of the possessing spirit, is 'inspired' into the body. That the possessing spirit is now in control should be appropriately signalled in a sensory way (the brain and sensory organs being the means of control of the mind in the body). Accordingly, one of the most directly sensory communicative devices is used: the change in voice, with its concomitant implied social referent (conversation). Next, indicating the cognitive change that should be expected if a new personality is present, the speech patterns and language use appear to be changed. (Many of these changes are also seen in cases of alleged multiple personality syndromes.) There may now be postural or gestural changes, either in the body itself or in the facial expressions, or in both.

For the impression to be fully managed, especially before an audience that is acquainted with the medium, the changes that mark the distinction between the personality of the medium and that of the possessing spirit must be relatively dramatic ones. However, because the spirit world and its inhabitants are not, after all, so very different from the social world and its

embodied inhabitants, the changes must be not so dramatic as to be unacceptable. For example, as described in the previous thesis (1981), one male medium whose child guide made a sudden and startling appearance on the platform (speaking in a high-pitched, loud childish voice) was admonished for inappropriate and unnecessary conduct on the platform, having failed to exercise sufficient control over the possessing spirit and its behavior.

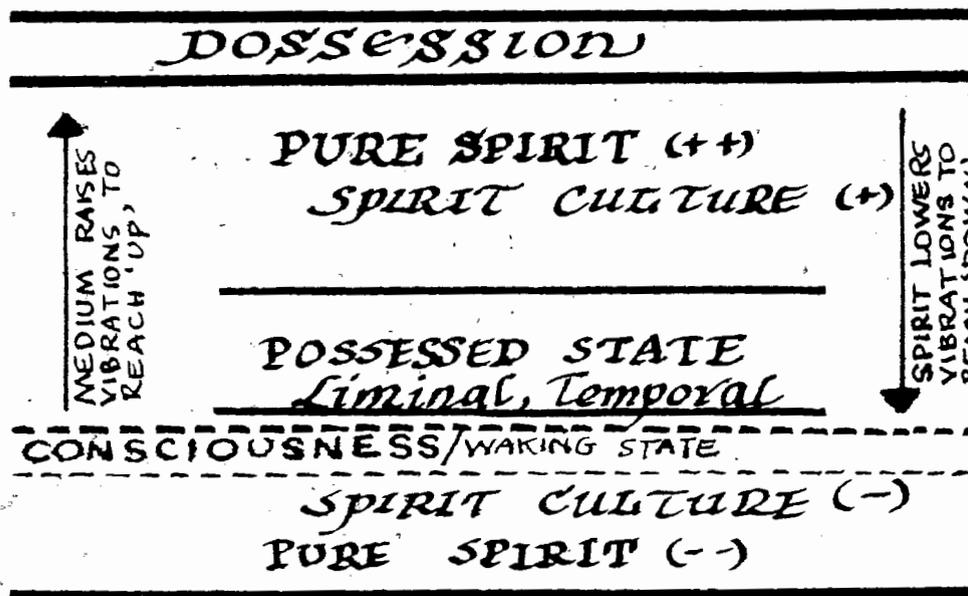
In general, spirit-possessed spiritualist mediums do not move about a great deal, unlike the trance performers of other cultures, who may dance, sing or what have you (cf., for example, Lambek, 1981). But some movement occurs: standing up or sitting down, gestures of face, hands and arms, and movement of the head. It is a display of 'restricted' movement, a symbolic expression of the restrictions of the spirit (in both senses of the word) in the body. Before the entrance into the trance state is signalled by the respiratory changes and before the possessing spirit begins to speak, the body of the medium may slump forward into a sinking position, only to be erected when the spirit begins to speak. Here we see a symbolic gesture indicating the full or complete vacating of the body by the spirit of the medium, and its subsequent re-erecting (ressurrecting) by the possessing spirit. The "little death" of possession is replaced by the new life of the possessing entity. The end of the trance performance is signalled by the reverse order of events: there is the slumping forward followed by

respiratory changes, followed by re-erection and reappearance of the medium's normal personality as signalled by the opening of the eyes. The eyes, being the 'windows of the soul', are usually closed during the trance performance, symbolically indicating the vacating of the body by the spirit of the medium and the temporary residency of the new occupant, the possessing spirit. The 'little' drama of trance mediumship, initiated by quietistic devices, is symbolic of the greater drama of the death of the body and entry into the spirit world. The body is but a temporary prison of the spirit, from which we shall be freed at death. As in all mediumistic demonstrations, it also symbolically and ritually portrays the interpenetration of the social and spirit worlds, but it portrays this in a concrete and embodied kind of way. In that sense, trance mediumship 'embodies' the role of the medium in a literal as well as symbolic kind of way, 'sacralizing' both the role and the individual medium in so doing.

Yet, perhaps paradoxically, the possessed state is the most liminal state in spiritualism for both the medium and the possessing spirits. The spirit of the medium is neither fully in the spirit world in the possessed state (the Silver Cord remains connected), nor fully in the mundane world (being out of the body). The possessing spirit is no longer resident in the spirit world but temporarily resident in the mundane world. Since the possessing spirit has no Silver Cord connection to the host body, it can only ever be temporarily present and not completely

present in the mundane world. For both the medium and the spirit in possession, the state is at once liminal and temporary. The liminality of possession is ultimately an a-cultural state, partaking fully of neither the culture of the mundane world nor of the spirit world. In a sense it drifts between the cultures, looking 'back' to earth culture and 'forward' to spirit culture. It is then akin to the uncultured or cultureless states of pure spirit whether positive or negative. Symbolically, it is the essence of mediumship, as diagrammed below.

Figure 7.4:



Through trance mediumship, the medium experiences mediumship itself in a completely internalized kind of way. The symbolism of closing the eyes is also a symbolism of closing the eyes to the mundane world in order to withdraw into the inner experience of spirit contact and the spirit world, literally through the medium of the body itself. The spirit world is thus both an inner world and an outer world in a double sense: it is an inner world because it is experienced within the body. It is an outer world because it is beyond the mundane world; yet, it interpenetrates that mundane world while at the same time it is also outer in the sense that the world of other spirits with a body (the social world) is outside the body of the medium. The distinctions between inside and outside are destroyed in the possessed state. Conceptually, the idea of the spirit world interpenetrating the social world (the 'outside' is really 'inside') becomes individually focused in the trance medium who, in the possessed state experiences that outside (spirit world) on the inside (within the body). Just as the boundaries between the spirit world and the social world are rather transparent and amorphous, so too are the distinctions between inside and outside.

Returning to imagery, it could be said that mediumship is analogous to photography, in that the medium 'captures' images of the spirit world through a wide focus when teaching about the spirit world and its inhabitants; or through a narrower focus when delivering particular spirit messages; and through an even

narrower and internalized focus when 'photographing' in the possessed state. The restricted movement discussed above is a 'sign of life', but it is life restricted by the limitations of earthly (physical and social) existence; whereas the image of life-in-the-spirit is an image of life unrestricted and unlimited, a life in which we share not just then but also now, if we can but find it within. The kingdom of spirit is the kingdom within. It is breath that marks its boundaries and mind that controls its door. "Mind" and 'spirit' are coterminous, and the trance condition a metaphor for being in the spirit while in the body. The body is the 'field' in which we are humanized, for we are ultimately only fully human when we are embodied, during which period we acquire the character and personality which we will then take back to the spirit world when we return.

Otherwise, the spirits are not, in a sense, human beings. They are the spirits of human beings once embodied, who have lost or shed their humanizing apparatus while retaining the attributes that were attained through it, literally and symbolically. It then stands to reason that spirit-culture is not perfected human culture but a culture qualitatively different from it, however much the two may seem to resemble each other. In the same sense, mediums do not contact departed human beings, but rather they contact the 'images' of once-embodied human beings. Trance mediums 'develop' those images within their entire bodies, while it might be said that clairvoyants develop the images within their minds and

visualizing abilities. By the same token, it might be said that materialization mediums develop the images 'outside' of their minds and bodies, in the cabinet of materialization mediumship. What is known about the spirit world by spiritualists is not the actual world of spirits, but rather an 'image' of that world, itself an image of the social or mundane world. The act of divine creation whereby mankind was created in the image and likeness of God (however that is to be interpreted) is here inverted: the spirit world is an image created in the likeness of the mundane world.

In the case of spirit possession in Mayotte, Lambek argues (1981) that, "The world that possession opens up is a troubling one, a world of contradiction, in which psyche and society are seldom in accord." (p.182) In contrast, in the spiritualist context, the world that possession opens up is a comforting one, in which psyche and society tend to be in accord because the spirit world is sufficiently reflective of the mundane world, supposedly known and knowable through the many devices of mediumship. In trance mediumship, that world is participated in most intimately, and through all forms of mediumship it is made available, albeit somewhat vicariously, to all spiritualists. "... (T)he ordinary world is illuminated by its contrast with the extraordinary" (Ibid., p.183) and the extraordinary world is illuminated by its contrast with the ordinary world. The reality of everyday life is transposed and perfected in the reality of everyday life in the spirit world. Community is created on both

sides of 'the Veil'.

Relationships, Human and Spirit

In many cultures which include spirit mediumship and/or possession, it is often argued by anthropologists that the relationship between the spirits and their human charges or hosts is a contractual one, in which the spirits provide various services for the humans who in turn render gifts or ceremonies to the spirits. Spirits in Mayotte, for example, are fond of both drinking cologne and pouring it over themselves (cf., Lambek, 1981). The spirits of some of the Afro-brazilian bataques require gifts of food, water and alcoholic beverages to be placed under their altars (cf., Leacock and Leacock, 1972). In such cases, the spirits enter into various kinds of relationships with the families and associates of the mediums involved, and both mediums and clients receive a variety of services from them.

The relationship of spirits to spiritualists is not so very different, though perhaps more subtle. It is contractual and reciprocal, but the duties and obligations of both parties are not so transparent. Spirits may or may not enter into relationships with families and associates. (1) The specific functions or duties of the Inner Band have been discussed above, as well as reference having been made to the general functions of the Outer Band. Possession obviously carries with it an

implication of a degree of intimacy that is beyond that of other forms of mediumship, though all forms involve a certain degree since "there's always someone there," except perhaps in the most intimate of moments. Even then, spirit may be present.⁽²⁾

While spirits may assist the incarnates with a number of services and counselling - let us not forget that a Canadian Prime Minister was wont to commune with spirits- one may ask in what ways is reciprocity concluded? Ceremony, in fact, is rendered to the spirits, as it is in other cultures. For spiritualists, Sunday services accomplish the rendering of ceremony since the services are geared to the demonstration of the reality of spirits and of the belief system, as well as to the reality of the ability (mediumship) that makes it all possible. The spirits are not worshipped per se, but homage is paid to them by the structure and religiosity of the services.⁽³⁾ It is quite clear that individual spiritualists have high regard for their spirit guides, and some mediums and others consider them as absolute and dogmatic authorities on many matters. While it is recommended that one give due consideration to advice and counsel from Angel Loved Ones, who may not be so advanced, it is expected that one will heed the advice and counsel of the Angel Guardians. It is clear then that both homage and ceremonial, including the use of ritual garments in some cases, are paid to the spirits. There may be special ceremonial days, the equivalent of orthodox holy days. While they may or may not correspond to orthodox holy days, they may

nonetheless be special to spiritualists. For example, the service that is closest to Remembrance Day (Armistice) is often given special consideration and ceremony. The annual Animal service referred to above is another example.

Material gifts would ~~not~~ be either required by, or given to, the spiritualist spirits.⁽⁴⁾ But humans may sometimes receive material gifts from the spirits, as in the case of allegedly apported objects and semi-precious stones, usually by means of trumpet mediumship. Some spiritualists regard such objects with veneration and as great evidence for proof.

Healing may be considered a gift from spirit, delivered through spirits to the recipient, and mediumship itself may be so considered since spirit help is needed in developing it. Mediums may be considered doubly gifted individuals, gifted in having the ability of mediumship and gifted in being helped by spirit to develop it. In this way, giftedness itself can be seen as a kind of "election sign". It may also be said that in developing mediumship and in using it in service to others one is returning the gifts of the spirit to spirits both incarnate and discarnate. The spiritualist concept of service itself may be considered as a return gift, by spirits-in-the-body to spirits out-of-the-body as well as in-the-body.

The relationship of spirits to humans is also contractual in that it is, for the most part, not a permanent one. Spirits come and go as needed, except for one or two such as the Protector. In those cases, it might be said that they are under

life-long contract to the incarnate charge. While contractual, the relationship is ideally conceived of as one of mutual respect, the spirits never directly interfering in the lives of their earthly charges, and the incarnate parties never expecting spirits "to live their lives for them"; because of this, while the relation is contractual, it is idealized as being contractual at a distance. In practice, of course, many spiritualists rely heavily on their guides or Angel Loved Ones for advice, direction and assistance in most or all of their life-situations from the most mundane—such as finding a parking space—to the most important sorts of decisions. (5)

It should be emphasized that though individual spirits may come and go throughout the lifetime of the incarnate person, the relationship itself remains, being there from before birth⁽⁶⁾ and beyond death, as it is the guides and Loved Ones who will assist the departing spirit in leaving the body and returning to the Summer Land. There, after a period of rest and readjustment, the individual will take up all the relationships and activities that were important while on the earthplane, perhaps adding to them while continuing to progress eternally.

It was argued above that for spiritualists the universe is a-moral. It becomes moral and fit for human habitation through the exercise of free will in acts for which one must accept personal responsibility. The spiritual and natural laws of the universe operate with mathematical precision, and everything and everyone are subject to them. Through spiritual development (as

against psychic development) one becomes increasingly freer of the adverse effects of the laws, learning to live in harmony with them and even to manipulate them for the good. They can, of course, be manipulated for evil, but such will always rebound back on the evil doer, as will good return to the doer of good. The spirits evince a range of qualities and degrees of moral behavior. It is generally considered that the guides and helpers work with strong moral concerns and clear moral precepts, which may not be so true of lesser developed spirits and not true at all of the lower spirits. Morality, in regard to the spirits, is correlated with degrees of culture (+,++) and unculture (-,--). The morality of the guides is positively correlated (+) and that of the higher planes even more so (++); conversely, in regard to the lower planes (-),(--).

The morality of the spirit guides may or may not reflect the conventional morality of the wider society. In general, it appears to be at least somewhat more liberal than conventional morality. However, it cannot be said to be a complete sub-universe of morality separate from conventional morality. (7) At times, when questioned on moral issues, the guides may be seen to reflect the thinking of the mediums through whom they work. At other times, it is said, they may take a stance on issues that is quite different from that of their mediums, thus forcing the mediums to rethink the issues and perhaps change position on them. Thus it can be said that the guides in general act as agents of moral good and moral change. Departed Loved

Ones, on the other hand, will tend to reflect the moral positions which they held in life, though over time as they progress in the spirit world, they may change in such matters.

The various levels of spirit guides are not coercive in their moral stances. They preach personal responsibility and their moral statements are not infrequently ambiguous. Nonetheless, because it is a morality related to the operation of spiritual/natural law, we might term it a naturalistic morality. Of it, Findlay summarizes (1933):

...the following logical deductions are naturally drawn from the information which comes to us from those who have passed on to this larger life.

(4) That our ethical conduct should be guided by the golden rule, given first to the world by the great Confucius, "Whatsoever you would that others would do to you, do it also unto them".

(5) That each individual is his own saviour, and that he cannot look to someone else to bear his sins and suffer for his mistakes.

(6) That each individual reaps as he sows, and that he makes his happiness or unhappiness just as he harmonizes with his surroundings. That he gravitates naturally to the place in the etheric world in harmony with his desires, as there desires can be gratified more easily than here on earth.

(7) And finally, that the path of progress is never closed, and that there is no known end to the advancement of the individual.

Summary and Conclusions

An earlier work on the spiritualist church movement (Biscop, 1981) concluded that, "in dealing with human beings, including that realm of human endeavour known as knowledge, one must, at some point, address the problem of meaning in any given area."

(p.122) One must move beyond the limits of the positivist paradigm in order to arrive at a 'humanized' understanding for the meaning that a phenomenon holds, both in itself and for those involved in it. This is as true for the study of so-called psychic phenomena and mediumship as it is for any other phenomena, whether social/or natural. For knowledge, without meaning, is merely facts. It becomes relevant only with meaning.

This present work has attempted to move beyond knowledge into 'meaning', in an effort to understand what it 'means' to be a spiritualist, and how spiritualists construct their relevance structures which give meaning to the experience of being a spiritualist. Perforce, analysis must be analysis of relevance structures, their creation, maintenance and interconnectedness within the fabric of the whole.

For the adherents of spiritualism, to be a spiritualist means to know the comfort that there is no death, that consciousness is continuous after the transition of death, that the after-life is known and knowable and that it is a perfected reflection of the everyday reality of life in the body. More important, it means to come to know the 'reality' of the belief system, not on a basis simply of faith and doctrinal authority but on the basis of personal experience: it is to know the security of election to the faithful by personal experience. For those who develop mediumship, they may be said to participate themselves in the afterlife while still in the embodied state.

But the leap of faith is in the acceptance of proof of survival. It is often said that when one desires proof of spirit, one will receive proof that is tailored to personal needs. That proof may not be sufficient for someone else, but it will be proof for the particular individual. (And, as might be expected in the context of the social construction of reality, 'proof' will be given.) It is because of the leap of faith being so closely associated with the proof of survival that individual spiritualists often seem preoccupied with receiving proof; some, in fact, are chided by other members for not seeking more spiritual things, and some mediums may even deign to be uninterested in trying to provide proof of survival, that being beneath them for whatever reason. But 'proof of survival', in some form, is essential to individual spiritualists, and therefore to the movement as a whole. What passes as proof of survival however, may have little or nothing to do with the veridicality of survival evidence, or the reality of any of the phenomena in any kind of ontological way. Some individuals will make the leap of faith more easily than others; some, more critical, or perhaps more cynical than others, or more hardened against faith because of the rejection of orthodoxy, might take much longer to make the leap. Some may even require several years of exposure and socialization before it is made. Mediums themselves may constantly seek proof, and a few, although they are unlikely to be directly connected to spiritualism, may never make that leap, though they may provide satisfactory proof for

others. Eileen Garret was such a medium, as she reveals in her autobiography (1968).

Spiritualists conceive of themselves as 'seekers', in search of spiritual truths. That seeking may lead them to a long search for proof. But even for seasoned spiritualists who have made the leap of faith, ongoing involvement with the movement will tend to reaffirm proof of survival, and their personal experiences, either as sitters in circles or through some kind of perceived psychic phenomena confirm their identities as spiritualists. There are many spiritualists who are not connected with particular churches, or who may have turned their backs on spiritualist churches altogether, but who continue to sit in home circles. In such cases, ongoing conversation connected with the circle, and the personal experience itself, tend nonetheless, to be the identity-maintaining devices that others find in church involvement.

To be a spiritualist also means to experience the ongoing reality of daily life in a way that is different from the experience of most non-spiritualists. Daily life is itself an imperfect reflection of life on the higher planes, and spirit may draw close at any time. Daily living is thus charged with potential metaphysical significance, and the act of daily living itself becomes an act of spiritual significance. The concepts and ideals of the cosmological level, evolution/progress, service/work, become elements of daily, lived experience.

21

Science itself becomes, in the spiritualist perspective, allied to spiritualism. Spiritualism is scientific, 'proving' survival through psychic phenomena as demonstrated by mediumship: mediums are the scientists, the circle sitters are the observers and co-experimenters, and proof of survival is the outcome. Because it is 'scientific' and proceeds in an orderly, controlled manner, it is thus more credible, in the eyes of believers⁽⁸⁾, and the reality of the phenomena even more affirmed. The concern with science, and the tendency both to anomalise the normal and to normalize the anomalous tends to remove much of the mystery of it all, while yet, for the believers, much of the excitement and wonder of life still remains. In this sense, spiritualists really do not deserve their popular association with so-called occultism and "the mysterious unknown." For spiritualists, all is at least knowable, and at least a good part of that which is knowable is, in fact, known. For such is demonstrated to the believers through the phenomena of mediumship which make the reality of death a humanized and more tolerable reality. Death becomes a far country, pleasant and idyllic, wherein we shall be reunited with those whom we have loved and lost, and where we shall be able to continue our lives much as we have lived them, or would have liked to have lived them, while on the earth plane. It is a universe of love unfolding as it should, carefully and in perfect measure according to Natural and Spiritual Law. Spiritual and psychic experiences lead to knowledge and to the

spiritualist reality, and in the everyday common stock of spiritualist knowledge, "There is no death."

NOTES

NOTES

1. I know of at least one family in which husband and children (adolescents and young adults) frequently turned to their spirit-possessed mother or wife for guidance and assistance with different kinds of problems ranging from help with automotive repairs to love-lorn advice in regard to dates and relationships. In other cases, I have only intimations that the same kind of interaction occurs. We may consider such instances as "spirit-extended" families, including one or more possessing spirits as part of them.
2. I was told of one instance of a medium who was suddenly possessed while in the act of making love, much to the consternation and surprise of the intimate partner, who received a lecture on matters of personal concern about which the medium had no knowledge. In fact, it was a new relationship for both of the partners and their first act of intimacy. Both expressed surprise at the event, but had come to look upon it with considerable amusement.
3. Any syncretistic symbolic aspects of the services merely attest the universality of the spirits and the beliefs involved.
4. After all, the spirits are not of the material world and have no use for physical things. As well, they are able to manifest anything they may need on the higher plane.
5. This situation, of course, is not so very different from that of members of orthodox religions praying to God or the saints for the same types of assistance, but theoretically it is more directly experiential than the situations of orthodoxy. That is to say, while one's prayers may appear to be answered, the saints are not as apt to directly answer back as the spirits are!
6. It is sometimes said that those spirits who have chosen to work with an individual as guides are spirits who were known to the individual on the higher planes prior to incarnation on the earth plane. They may have worked with their charge in formulating the life plan with which they will assist throughout the period of incarnation.

7. This is in keeping with the findings of the previous thesis in that spiritualism shows characteristics of both man (or central) possession cults, with which is associated a socially conventional morality; and peripheral possession cults with which are associated alternate or sub-universes of morality.
8. Elsewhere (Biscop, 1981) I have argued that spiritualism's claim to scientific status is, at best (depending on one's point of view, of course) a debatable claim. I have also argued that an analogy between spiritualism and science is, however, somewhat more accurate than the claim to scientific status. Macklin (1977) refers to mediums as being "scientists manque", which is a description with which I would agree.

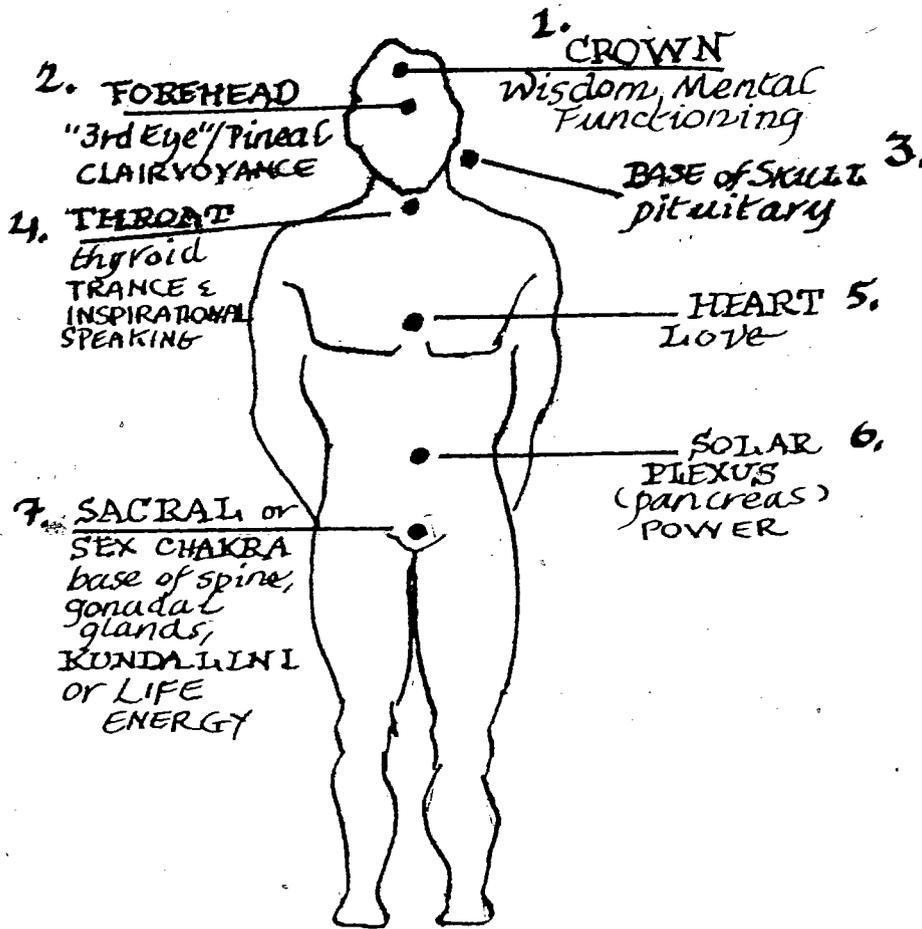
APPENDIX A

THE CHAKRAS

The chakras or psychic centers are nodal points of the meridians of energy flow in the body. They are the points at which the spirit body is connected to the physical body, along with the Silver Cord. They are the organs of the psychic faculties, arranged in alignment with the spine. In the yogic traditions, each is associated with a particular sound and color and each has a name and symbol. Spiritualists associate them each with a particular gland. Symbolism of a spiritual or mediumistic level is also indicated.

Figure A.1 :

The CHAKRAS ~



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