Special Issue

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The Journal of Mind and Behavior (JMB) is dedicated to the interdisciplinary approach within psychology and related fields. Mind and behavior position, interact, and causally relate to each other in multi-directional ways; JMB urges the exploration of these interrelationships. The editors are particularly interested in scholarly work in the following areas: □ the psychology, philosophy, and sociology of experimentation and the scientific method □ the relationships among methodology, operationism, and theory construction □ the mind–body problem in the social sciences, psychiatry and the medical sciences, and the physical sciences □ philosophical impact of a mind–body epistemology upon psychology and its theories of consciousness □ critical examinations of the DSM–biopsychiatry–somatotherapy framework of thought and practice □ issues pertaining to the ethical study of cognition, self-awareness, and higher functions of consciousness in nonhuman animals □ phenomenological, teleological, existential, and introspective reports relevant to psychology, psychosocial methodology, and social philosophy □ historical perspectives on the course and nature of psychological science.

JMB is based upon the premise that all meaningful statements about human behavior rest ultimately upon observation — with no one scientific method possessing, a priori, greater credence than another. Emphasis upon experimental control should not preclude the experiment as a measure of behavior outside the scientific laboratory. The editors recognize the need to propagate ideas and speculations as well as the need to form empirical situations for testing them. However, we believe in a working reciprocity between theory and method (not a confounding), and in a unity among the sciences. Manuscripts should accentuate this interdisciplinary approach — either explicitly in their content, or implicitly within their point of view. (Note: we typically do not publish empirical research.)

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On the Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality

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The notions of possession within psychiatry, psychology, anthropology, parapsychology, and demonology are evaluated as to their relative de/merits. The sheer quantity of evidence as to the phenomenology (descriptive facts) of possession means it transcends any dismissal as anecdotal in kind (e.g., the academically archetypal Biblical possession case involving the swine stampede — a so-called "poltergeist," here redefined as *pan-demon-ium* — following the expulsion of the Legion demons). Copious empirical data concerning possession are the same for all contending interpretations, so the prime question is which interpretation has the simplest, most comprehensive explanatory hypothesis. There is a great logical and empirical rigor that may be attached to the traditional conception of demonology. A stereotyped antithesis between science and superstition is suggestive but an alternative, actual dichotomy obtains between good and better hypotheses, which map the same evidential field of facts shared by Biblical demonology and its competing interpretations of possession.

Keywords: best hypothesis, Biblical demonology, multiple personality disorder

> Satan stealthily creeps on us, and by degrees allures us
> by clandestine arts, so that when we go astray we know not
> that we are going astray. Thus gradually we slide,
> until at length we rush headlong into ruin.
>
> Calvin
> *Commentaries,* 1549

Utilizing the traditional criteria of empirical proof and explanation, demonology can be shown to be more credible, respecting possession, than not only

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I dedicate this paper to two intellectually empathic souls, Stephen Harrison and John Smythies, who both charitably supported me in my first philosophical and publishing endeavors. Dr. Harrison gave me inspiration to think my own thoughts. Dr. Smythies is as Descartes, "a man of many hats," a philosopher, physician, psychologist, and a surpassingly informed and investigative neuroscientist tackling that veritably "most complex structure(s) in the known universe," the human brain and its supervenient soul. Thanks finally to my fellow MSU alumna Kathleen Vogel. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mark Crooks. Institute of Mind and Behavior, PO Box 522, Village Station, NYC, New York 10014. Email: crooksma@msu.edu

parapsychology but even psychiatry and psychology. This conclusion is surprising to the extent we have imbibed the Enlightenment worldview (Brinton, 1963; Durant and Durant, 1965). There is value in seeing to what extent our Weltanshauung has so influenced our reason, as indexed by our skepticism regarding any but naturalistic reductions of occult phenomenology.

Parapsychology is known to be historically and conceptually derivative from nineteenth-century's Spiritualism (Murphy, 1961; Rogo, 1979). Such academic transpositions may or may not facilitate one's better appreciation of spiritism, depending upon whether we put any credence in parapsychology's method or pronouncements. But in this paper nothing is being asked from readers except that careful attention be given to the evidential base involved in the phenomenology of occult oppression and possession, and to the question as to which of the alternative explanations best fits that (shared) data and thereby follows the logic of arguing to the best hypothesis.

Anticipating my conclusion, there is no explanatory gain to be had by following the psychological, parapsychological, or psychiatric redefinitions and reconceptualizations of possession over the traditional demonology thesis. Seeming alternative presumptive ontologies (as with psychiatry's multiple personality disorder or parapsychology's poltergeists) are no different in kind from demonology's, the only drawing card being in their presumptive airs of scientific methodology and nomenclature. Nonetheless, there is a common evidential basis, whether construed as paranormal or naturalistic phenomenology.

Such a pathology as possession indeed is a natural kind, with a relatively constant syndrome and historical continuity dating from antiquity. Below I cursorily rehearse some alternative explanations of possession, as psychiatric, Pavlovian, and social anthropological constructs that appear to fragment and delimit this natural kind to suit a more amenable positivist framework. Nonetheless, the logic and the evidence of the matter in toto disclose that these interpretive schemes must ignore, downplay, or otherwise bracket inconvenient phenomenology in order to attain any degree of plausibility. Thus the demonological paradigm, though heretofore having been displaced as a serious explanatory contender respecting possession in particular, in fact has a viable claim to being an argument to the best hypothesis respecting the total evidential base.

This paper's title includes a tripartite play on words: (1) "occult" means the hidden or occluded, signifying the hiding demonic alter that periodically supplants a normal personality; (2) the demoniac's supplanting alter personality is invariably of an evil, occult nature; (3) the psychology of demon possession is generally the upshot of a longstanding occult oppression, often by means of a victim's prolonged "dabbling" in the black arts. This last point pertains directly to the following argument's positing an occult oppression continuum. My thesis may be summarized in one sentence, namely: the more dabbling you do, the more "psychic" you become, and the crazier you get. It is pertinent and convincing to

substantiate this hypothesis by adducing a number of random case histories qua heuristics from the literature spanning anthropology, pastoral counseling, parapsychology, missionary reports, anthropology, psychiatry, and demonology itself.

Note the very perduring phenomenon of possession — it simply will not go away. It remains omnipresent across cohorts of age, sex, nationality, race, culture, historic era; constant in character, phenomenology, and natural kind. There sits today the possessed: raging, thrashing, glowering, threatening, identifying itself as demonic, anecdotally endowed even with clairvoyance, precognition, and mediumistic capacities. No matter how many times such has been redefined, for example as multiple personality disorder, dissociative identity disorder, schizophrenia, hysteria, epilepsy, bipolar, mesmerism; or re-conceived naturalistically (by psychoanalysis, biopsychiatry, *DSM*, or Pavlovian reductionism), its invariant nature defies assimilation to known categories of interpretation. Demonic possession is that stark and glaring fact staring us in the face; the metaphor of incorrigible occultism that defies rationalistic positivism's attempts at denial and dismissal. No apology then needs or should be given respecting the usage of traditional demonological terminology and conception if the field of possession is still so unsettled, after more than a century of psychiatric or parapsychological speculation, which appears no more explanatory than that of the witch hunters it was intended to supplant.

Post-Anecdotal Corroboration

"Post-anecdotal" reporting is a term I have coined as a neologism to signify a mass of anecdotal material that has been accumulated, codified, and organized to indicate the possible or probable causal relations among data (e.g., occult dabbling and its consequent psychopathy and sociopathy). For to continue to designate such suggestive material as anecdotal misses its qualitative transformation to a higher form of evidential value that has been effected by the sorting and analytical process, by such as parapsychology, demonology, or even by "folk occultism." A myriad of independent reports spanning many centuries over varied cultures and all conforming to a few typical patterns means that all bogus perceptions must cancel out and the remaining corroborative testimony cannot be coincidental; the common reportage must be veridical by any accounting of probability. In such a codification there does not need to be massed independent reportage numbering in the thousands; for even a handful from each culture over millennia is sufficient to establish the veridicality of such phenomenology insofar as that handful in toto rules out collusion, hoax, misconception, illusion.[1]

[1] By such criteria, near-death experiences would qualify qua post-anecdotal, as documented in such a scholarly publication as *Journal of Near-Death Studies*. For introductory overviews of the phenomenon, see Moody (1977); Rawlings (1978); cf. Osis and Haraldsson (1977). George Gallup (1982) estimated

An expository method of the post-anecdotal approach may be expressed as below. Summarily list a few typical cases of possession (or other categorical types of corroborated occult phenomenology), then give the logic behind their presentation, namely, their necessary veridicality via an impossibility of hoaxing and fraud, at least regarding fundamental types of the same data when abstracted across centuries and cultures. (Such an exposition is feasible in place of the possible — though unwieldy — alternative of citing massed examples of thousands of anecdotes that, while no doubt being rather convincing in terms of their overwhelming similarity of detail, is impracticable and thereby would lose the audience.) The post-anecdotal method of citing a few representative cases, giving the (primary and secondary) sources for thousands of others, plus the logic of probability involved, suffices for a most succinct and convincing proof.

That there has been fraud in the field of occult investigation has no logical bearing on whether there exist veridical observations. (Though indeed pointing up instances of fraud is an effective rhetorical device standardly used to dissuade and discredit serious investigation.) The post-anecdotal method of assay in which due recognition is given to what must be millions of (admittedly mostly unrecorded) instances of the paranormal that must have been witnessed by millions of persons, and wherein ex hypothesi fraud, misperceptions, delusions and the like are effectively precluded in, or at least winnowed to, a certain subset of cases by the fact of such an aggregated phenomenology, falls into very specific and constant types (e.g., near-death experiences, possession, possibly occult oppression) spanning and transcending millennia, culture, nationality, race, religion, and all other pertinent variables of differentiation.

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eight million Americans have had the experience, either of a "heavenly" or "hellish" character, numbers that must seem incredible until the realization that modern resuscitation techniques are responsible for the majority of cases recounted by the erstwhile clinically — not biologically — deceased. Moody sparked the NDE investigative field with its first research. According to Rawlings, Moody underreported — to the extent of almost complete exclusion — the many negative hell-like experiences that he, as a resuscitator and researcher, had directly observed or compiled. Rawlings later called Moody et al.'s oversampling of positive, "heavenly" sojourn cases and their attendant theosophy-like popularization, an "Omega religion." If my or Dr. Rawlings' characterization of this paradigmatic "heavenly threshold experience" interpretive scheme appears a caricature that wantonly misrepresents that scheme as a kind of *New Age* theosophical religion, witness Moody and Perry's (2005) later book entitled *Reunions*. The procedure listed therein — staring into a mirror for hours waiting for contact with deceased acquaintances — forthrightly promotes *outright necromancy*. The dust jacket for Moody's original work identified him as a practicing Methodist. In his later occult manual the author confabulates what can only be called a dime store theology, misquoting Scripture to justify his newfangled mediumship, explaining away Deuteronomy's (18: 9-14) unequivocal condemnation of such practices (as sorcery). Cf. Dr. John Weldon on the uncanny propensity of certain "heavenly" NDE survivors subsequently (consequentially?) to partake of occult interests in the aftermath of their seeming otherworldly visitation. Such so-called dabbling in occultism has a "statistically significant" correlation (hence causation?) with the pathological phenomenon called *oppression* (see below). "By their fruits ye shall know them."

I write that most instances lie unrecorded, an admission that implies an inherent weakness attributable to my position, but those instances that have been documented and summarized in the literature must number in the tens of thousands and hence are sufficient to establish the veracity of the testimony. My estimate of the other, unrecorded, instances of "uncountable numbers" is an extrapolation from the representative few that have been recorded, and from a cognizance of the attested lore of such experiences in every land and era, even after subtracting the detected or surmised cases of hoodwinking stage magic and other sundry forms of witting or unwitting deception. This must be true of many species of occult phenomenology; and because perhaps only a fraction of one percent has been so accounted for through history and folklore, the debunkers can rely upon an argument from silence (fallacy) as to the vast majority of instances.

Once anecdotes aggregate under types, and implicitly millions of mutually authenticating instances of any given phenomenology (even those within unfashionable occultism) are laid bare in their typifying essentials, the evidence is no longer anecdotal but becomes post-anecdotal fact once such a critical mass has been reached. Isolated instances are admittedly anecdotal; ordered typologies subsuming the homogeneous data have become rational constructs.

The voluminous data base of occultism (and possession in particular) is supplied by historians, anthropologists, parapsychologists, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, missionaries, exorcists, pastoral counselors, debunkers, occultists themselves. Their various literatures may be subjected to a type of meta-analysis to abstract the relevant patterns sought. Of course the fundamental issue concerns the interpretation of the data thus established by the myriad observers; but this too is subject to rational control qua relative explanatory success, empirical validation, and hypothesis strength. (Respecting possession in particular, no rational and informed person doubts its veridical existence attested to over millennia. The only stickler involved pertains to any naturalistic doubt involved in applying demonology to an interpretation of its phenomenology.)

Observational instances of supernaturalism involving two or more witnesses are corroborative in themselves, while the totality of all such substantiated observations over hundreds of cultures and several millennia, including the spontaneous patterning among the data as to types and even subtypes of that phenomenology, is expressive of post-anecdotal corroboration. As with the corroboration of individual instances, so with the gross patterns within the data.

This uniformity of phenomenology makes for a canceling-out of observer biases over the entire evidential base. The varied backgrounds of observers and respondents may be presumed to offset any particular observer biases (e.g., of exorcists if an agnostic academician verifies the recovery). Assuredly, there are some downright kooky specimens within the literature I cite (e.g., from Crabtree and McAll, both of whom are spiritists) but ultimately this becomes of no account once the total picture emerges within the post-anecdotal framework of assay.

The kooky evidence is no different in factual type from that of staid academics, once their extrinsic differential evaluations of that common evidence are peeled away. That common substrate of factuality is exploited by my post-anecdotal method, which transcends the competing interpretive schemes and idiosyncratic biases of the differing researchers to lay bare the bedrock of independently ascertained and cross-corroborative base, and which is the strongest possible proof for the reality and authenticity of the common data.

Randi (1982) lists categories as unicorns, faked fairy photographs, Scientology, psychic Uri Geller's mental spoon bending, Eric Von Daniken, UFOs, pyramidology, Atlantis, biorhythms, Psychic Surgery, Kirlian photography, Bermuda Triangle, and astrology — none of which we should personally hold any brief for, and such phenomena and persons would appear to have no standing in any recognizable canon of post-anecdotal types and subtypes. Nonetheless this brings to the forefront exactly what are my or any proper criteria of inclusion within such a canon. I believe the question of inclusion or exclusion is empirical in its nature, leaving aside that of course no individual psychic as such can be a post-anecdote, though certain of his talents might fall into at least an anecdotal subcategory.

Thus whenever there are any phenomenologies that cannot be explained by naturalistic or positivist criteria, such data are prime candidates for established post-anecdotal status. Accordingly, demonic oppression and possession, and perhaps exorcism in particular arguably all fall within such an interpretive and evidential canon. There are certain questionable categories at present such as dowsing and levitation treated by Randi, phenomena whose standing are not so clear-cut, at least to my limited knowledge, though levitation of the possessed appears to have a bit of anecdotal testimonial strength (Rogo, 1974). The other instances adduced by Randi effectively function as red herrings and straw man caricatures.

There are indeed patterned evidences among, for example, Geller's feats (though I concede to Randi that such are mere stage tricks) and presumably dubious circumstantial correlations as to plane and ship disappearances within the ostensible paranormal environs of Bermuda. But post-anecdotal evidence proper refers to data that transcend particular regions, individuals, cultures, and eras. If it were rejoined that certain categories of evidence might indeed qualify as post-anecdotal in character, as possession and its exorcism, but that these can be furnished fully naturalistic explanations (e.g., multiple personality disorder and the power of suggestion, respectively), this is immaterial at this moment insofar as this debate is not over as to which explanation is the best hypothesis, e.g., psychiatry's versus demonology's, but only whether the evidence in question is either anecdotal or post-anecdotal. The next step indeed is to assess the competing interpretations by arguing to the best hypothesis.

Summers (1926/1956) enunciates what may be termed the residuum canonicity of occult factuality. By this is meant that once the mountain of anecdotal

observations of supernaturalism (e.g., demonology records) are sifted and the obvious or subtle instances of misperception, hoaxing, or publicity-seeking are divested of authentication, the residua of instances stand inexplicable by naturalistic hypotheses and hence constitute prima facie evidence of paranormal reality. Now, I have a sympathy with this logic and methodology but this is not the post-anecdotal principle — though both may well be mutually substantive. Post-anecdotalism argues on the basis of reportage covering millennia and cultures and abstracts archetypal forms of occult phenomenology.

A metaphor of a post-anecdotal organon is illustrated by the method used in this paper. Thus the same factual characteristics of demonic oppression and possession may be gleaned from clinical and field reports of anthropologists, psychologists, occultists, exorcists, parapsychologists, pastoral counselors, demonologists, and psychiatrists, though their interpretative schemata are widely divergent and though often even their interpretations are at right angles to the very evidence they adduce within those discordant interpretations (e.g., the supposed empowerment afforded by a professional demoniac status). This is metaphorical because an analogous situation obtains when persons of widely differing nationalities, etc. report well-nigh identical occult phenomena despite their variegated personal and ethnic backgrounds of belief. The metaphor exhibits a convergence upon typical facts, despite distinct interpretive paradigms and hypotheses, and is a microcosm of the same convergence writ large across entire civilizations and peoples and epochs. Possession itself qualifies as *the* ne plus ultra instance of post-anecdotal evidence, naturalistically interpreted or otherwise; while its concomitant phenomenology as a paranormal surround (poltergeistery) presumably partakes more of an anecdotal character.[2]

David Hume's argument (1777/1975) against miracles is a *petitio principii* (Montgomery, 1975, citing C.S. Lewis). That there is a uniform course of "natural laws" is the very thing in question when assessing the (post-anecdotal) evidence for miraculous or occult phenomenology. Hume wants to say that there can be no supernatural (miracles in particular) because the observed uniformity of a natural course of events precludes it. But this would preclude by scientism's fiat only an artificial respectability of any contrary observance, not the supernatural's actual observed existence. The uniformity of natural laws is what the possibility of supernatural phenomenology calls into question and hence properly cannot be used as an axiom to preclude its investigation. Note this neat confutation renders

[2] Just as we sift post-anecdotal testimonies to ascertain veridical from mistaken observations, so properly we sift the "testimony" of demonic alter personalities emergent upon possession, as to veridicality of their statements. Thus given their incorrigibly psychotic and psychopathic nature, we know demons are pathological liars. But under the duress of exorcism or group prayer, their statements often have a ring of truth that demonology might well collate to the end of better understanding their modus operandi, better to fight them. Otherwise demons' collective psychobabble is just so much noise to be filtered out and ignored.

nugatory a central logical underpinning of all post-Enlightenment a priori debunking of the possibility of paranormal/supernatural phenomenology. As Montgomery observes, this fallacy is required reading for university philosophy classes. How slender a reed was leaned upon to justify ignoring centuries of universal observation — upon such an insufficient specimen of circular reasoning.

We may use an Aesopian fable concerning a stick bundle to contrast the post-anecdotal methodology with the standard technique of occult debunkers, which is to break a few sticks, then (unwarrantably) to generalize to the entire bundle. This presumes the bundle itself can be "cracked" by singling out each individual stick and performing the same operation upon it, until no stick is left unbroken, or less poetically, that there remain no veridical instances of supernatural observation. Contrarily, the post-anecdotal method focuses the mesh of the bundle itself and presumes that the sticks have to be treated corporately, not isolatedly. Thus the historical continuity and universality of certain occult phenomenology, epitomized by possession, constitute the unbreakable bundle by which the individual observational instance is vindicated, barring subtracted hoaxes, and so forth. (One twig is easily broken by itself but becomes unbreakable when grouped collectively in a sheaf. This indefeasible existence and patterning of occult data as possession of course does not in itself support any particular hypothesis regarding that data, e.g., parapsychology's versus demonology's; but again, other data may well differentiate such — e.g., greater explanatory power of demonology over parapsychology, fewer ancillary hypotheses.)

If the debunkers wish to validate their method properly, they would have to address, and prove beyond a reasonable doubt, all the individual instances to determine that every cited observation in the vast evidence pool were fraudulent or mistaken. The overgeneralizations by such as James Randi, Carl Sagan, Paul and Patricia Churchland have come nowhere close to even beginning such an otherwise commendable effort at systematic debunkery.

Just as multiple witnesses to a single (supernatural) incident make for a circumscribed corroborative testimony, so other similar cases within a given culture and time frame are more expansively corroborative thereof. Even broader concentric rings of corroboration manifest when we take similar sightings of specific types and subtypes of evidence across different cultures and eras, spanning the globe and millennia. At that point the whole of the independent yet mutually confirmatory testimony forms an interconnected mesh by which the whole becomes indisputable by any rational canon of verification. The stick bundle has become unbreakable. A contrasting elementary logic of debunking works differently by rhetorically isolating single testimonies, breaking down that evidence by charges of misperception, hoaxing, mass delusion, and thence extrapolating from the ballyhooed anecdote to the entire evidential base, by fallacy of hasty generalization. I place my bet on the bundled testimonies, not upon a fallacious isolation of a weak link or two, thence to deny the whole. That is to turn the mountainous

post-anecdotal evidence on its head, by and for nothing more substantive than oratorical effect.

Oppressive Occultism

There is an initial, preparatory phenomenon called oppression that precedes demonic possession. The atmospheric poisoning by widespread occult practice has been described by a missionary in the field:

> Experientially [occult oppression] is realized as a general, negative dynamism, an oppressive influence upon the mind and emotions and creating…distrust. It generates a counter-acting…repelling social and mental environment.… While its presence is felt, it is most difficult to define and describe. It rests like a heavy cloud upon the community. There is a feeling of discomfort, uneasiness and restlessness, uncertainty, and insecurity.… Often there is irrational fear to the degree that it generates terror and phobia. Suspicion and animosity are a very common phenomena and make life wretched for the whole community. (Peters, 1976, pp. 198–199)

Oppression is not only a social phenomenon but is also an individual pathology:

> Dr. Carl Wickland describes the case of a young musician who got involved with an occult group, sitting in "dark psychic circles," hoping to develop his psychic abilities. He became vulnerable to spirit interference and was tormented by spirit voices. He also complained of great distress in his stomach and refused to eat, having to be force-fed. He finally displayed such severe emotional disturbance that he had to be placed in a mental institution. His brother eventually brought him to Dr.Wickland because he believed spirit possession was involved. (Crabtree, 1985, p. 109)

Collective occultic involvement precipitates quasi-oppressive states among its practitioners. Possession then can be construed as an outcome and epitome of all the preceding oppression phenomenology.

> In my own experience, I myself, not once, but over and over again, have seen all these symptoms unmistakably marked in those whose sole interest and aim in life seemed to be a constant attendance at seances. I have watched, in spite of every effort unable to check and dissuade, the fearfully rapid development of such characteristics in persons who have begun to dabble with Spiritism, at first no doubt in moods of levity and wanton curiosity, but soon with hectic anxiety and the most morbid absorption. Some fifteen years ago in a well-known English provincial town a circle was formed by a number of friends to experiment with table-turning, psychometry, the planchette, ouija-boards, crystal gazing.… The sense of the eerie, the unknown, lent a spice of adventure too. The earlier meetings were informal, first at one house, now at another. They began by being infrequent, almost casual, at fairly long intervals [dabbling proper]. Next a certain evening each week was fixed for these gatherings, which soon were fully attended by all concerned. No member would willingly miss a single reunion. Before long

> they met twice, three times, every evening in the week [obsession].… And so from being mere idle triflers at a new game, incredulous and a little mocking, the whole company became besotted by their practices, fanatics whose thoughts were always and ever centered, and concentrated upon their communion with spirits, who talked of nothing else, who seemed only to live for those evenings when they might meet and enter — as it were — another world. Argument, pleading, reproof, authority, official admonishment, all proved useless; one could only stand by and see the terrible thing doing its deadly work.… In two cases, men, the moral fibre was for a while apparently destroyed altogether; in another case, a woman, there was obsession, and persons who either knew nothing of, or had no sort of belief in, Spiritism, whispered of eccentricities, of outbursts of uncontrolled passion and ravings, which pointed to a disordered mind, to an asylum [e.g., demonomania]. All sank into a state of apathy; former interests vanished… a complete change of character for the worse, a terrible deterioration took place; the physical health suffered; their faces became white and drawn, the eyes dull and glazed, save when Spiritism was discussed, and then they lit with hot unholy fires; one heard covert gossip that hinted of crude debauch, of blasphemous speeches, of license and degradation [Gadarene Legion: see below].… (Summers, 1926/1956, pp. 251–252)

Unger (1971) observes that, anecdotally, occult dabbling and obsessing seem to have a high attrition rate of fatal accidents. This may be explained naturalistically by assuming that generally a fatalistic attitude pervades the mindset of obsessing. (For example, a medical student built his life around a horoscope, thus expressing self-fulfilling prophecy [Koch, 1972]. In the same way, a negative attitude to life from occultism may program one for accidents "unconsciously.")

Insofar as parapsychologist Rogo (1979) dismisses out of hand any question of traditional demonology, there is no conscious and deliberate effort on his part (contra Freeman, 1974; Koch, 1965; or Summers, 1926/1956) to investigate prior or contemporaneous occult involvement of his "focus-persons" at the investigative epicenters of psychokinesis and poltergeistery. But even without such anamneses, one may readily amass an archive of prevalent occultism from his own cited case histories of the paranormal, despite Rogo's denials and implicate cognitive dissonance. Thus in his text there are implications of poltergeistery with a Ouija board, Voodoo hexes and counter-spells (cf. Koch, 1965 on oppressive aftermaths attending "white magic" protective practices), apparitions, desecrations, and an entire chapter devoted to "demonic poltergeists." His alternative systematic Freudian explanation of adolescent emotional repressions as somehow causative of paranormal activity is belied or at least undermined by his own data, let alone when his case histories are ensconced within a broader "post-anecdotal" observational base (see below), of which they are confirmatory.

I suggest from the cases to be canvassed that oppression is as real a clinical phenomenon as are hypnosis and possession. The only difference lies in the greater diffusion of the oppression syndrome, viz. its nebulosity of expression that makes it seemingly conformable to more traditional diagnoses as depression, anxiety, paranoia, even dissociation (e.g., when hounded by poltergeistery). Insofar as

both possession and hypnosis (qua mesmerism) have been redefined as other syndromes or debunked as nonexistent, this should make us wary of discounting the evidence for an oppression symptomatology, especially inasmuch as the three phenomena are usually found implicated with each other. Thus occult oppression shades into possession that itself has some connection with entrancement.

A Continuous Oppression

The term *dabbling in the occult* is a well-nigh universal misnomer and uninformed euphemism insofar as the practice actually leads to fixation, obsession, compulsion (Koch, 1965, 1970) and hence constitutes anything but desultory playfulness, casualness, ineffectuality. Indeed, its characteristic sequelae involve nervous exhaustion or innervation.

A better approximate term is "occult fiddling." The implication is suggested, of Nero's Rome burning, i.e., pathologies accruing while one is so engaged; which still nonetheless understates the dysfunctional consequences of occult engagement. So the best term remains "obsessing," which was the original term for oppressive practices (e.g., Freeman, 1971; Koch, 1965; Penn–Lewis and Roberts, 1912/1973) that was supplanted in favor of the downplaying cliché *dabbling.* "Obsessing" nicely captures an implication of the disorders usually attendant upon demonic oppression through "the working." The proper terms then are occult *obsessions* and *compulsions.*

The psychopathologies attendant upon occult obsessing are likely intrinsic to the very activities (by an unknown principle of causality), not merely contingent or constituting inessential concomitants. I suspect from the wealth of data on the correlations between the two that the obsessing characterizes some essentialism of the practices themselves. Thus there may be merely a contingent connection between, say, using illegal drugs and occult obsessing. (Yet even here, the etymology of the ancient Greek term *pharmakeia* is suggestive: drugs, medicines, potions, spells, sorcery.) In this way someone might mistake psychopathology induced by the drug abuse with the occult practices that were merely gratuitous concomitants of the psychosis actually induced by the inhaled or injected narcotics and stimulants. But the psychological and spiritual oppression that forms a typical syndrome consequent upon occult involvement contrarily likely would be essential to the practices themselves.

Some further illustrative examples of compulsive occult fiddlers, fixators, and obsessors are given here:

> A young lady in private "practiced the tumbler art" on a circular pane of glass supplied with letters [= Ouija board]. She meant by means of this to obtain clarity for every decision and question, regardless of their nature. She developed this private practice…at spiritist sessions [seances]…. She was wont to open this tumbler-moving with prayer and was deeply convinced of the religious quality of the

> practice. In the village she was regarded as a godly woman.… This Spiritist was granted only a short span of life. In the bloom of life she unexpectedly took sick. She surmised her approaching end and remarked that the Saviour would come to take her. A family member present in the room when she died reported the last moments of the departed one. The expiring one suddenly in her agony uttered the words, "Now the Saviour is taking me." She glanced intently toward the window. The focus of her eyes betrayed the approaching of someone invisible. In a flash her facial expression changed to a terrorized grimace, and with a shout of terror she departed. According to the report of the eyewitness it was a scene as if the dying one in the moment of departure awoke from a delusion to a horrible reality. (Koch, 1965, pp. 31–32; cf. Osis and Haraldsson, 1977)

There is something about (now commercially available) Ouija boards and obsessing that permeates much of the literature on the topic (e.g., Freeman, 1974; Koch, 1970):

> What I am stating is based upon the observations and personal experiences of many years and upon communications…which have reached me in the course of these years. Many of these reports are painful in the extreme.… Persons habitually and systematically using the ouija or planchette board, or similar automatic devices for obtaining spirit messages, experience, after a time, a peculiar condition of lassitude and exhaustion.… In professional mediums who practice their power incessantly and for pecuniary gain, this prostration is apt to be so great that they become complete nervous wrecks after a time.… The general health begins to fail, there manifests itself a kind of apathy and weariness of life, which quite unfits the person for the ordinary duties of life and deprives him of all interest in them, and which is only relieved by resort to the board. Communication with the "friends" of the unseen world now becomes the one exciting and all-absorbing [obsessive] interest and occupation.… And in proportion as physical vigor, and therefore the power of resistance and of will, decline, and passivity and apathy increase, the spirit gains closer access to the mind, directs and influences its operations, and, in the course of time, gets complete control of it [cf. Brittle, 1980; Penn–Lewis and Roberts, 1912/1973].… The messages then come with great regularity and conciseness, immediately the experimenter touches the board; but their moral tone is seen to have undergone a very great change. From the normal and healthy mind's point of view they are distinctly immoral and mischievous in their aim and character.… As the "psychic development" advances the entire mental and moral nature of the experimenter becomes disordered and he discovers to his cost that, while it was an easy thing for him to *open* the mental door by which the mind could be invaded, it is a difficult, if not an impossible thing, to *shut* that door and to expel the invader.… Some years ago I came in personal contact with a lady who had developed the power of automatic writing and who retired to bed every night with sheets of paper and a pencil by her bedside. The impulse to seize the pencil would assert itself suddenly and imperatively, and she could secure only an occasional hour of sleep by devoting many preceding hours to the writing. The lady was a mental and physical wreck. (Raupert, 1919, pp. 224–227)

Satanism is the extreme outlier of occult engagement:

> I was constantly searching, however, for something to fill the void in my life. At the age of 17 I met a spiritist medium. "The only way to live," said my new friend,

> "is by the cards and your horoscope. Come, let me show you." I was fascinated. She seemed ruled [heteronomy] by a strange spirit, and in a trance-like vision she laid out my cards and unfolded to me past happenings with an eerie accuracy. She also demonstrated a strange ability to cure diseases. Often doctors sent patients to her [cf. Koch, 1972]. "Here's a deck of cards," she offered one day. "You must always start your day off by laying the cards." Deftly she laid my cards and showed me how to interpret them. I learned the different combinations and their meanings. Soon I was able to spell out future events, it appeared. In months that followed I found myself controlled more and more by this mysterious woman. Step by step she led me into the spirit world until one day she declared, "you're one of us now. Will you take the oath?" Powerless, I nodded agreement. Hardly knowing what I was doing, I cut my finger and with my own blood wrote, "I give to thee, O Satan, my heart, body and soul." I now lived completely by the cards and my horoscope. I hardly dared to breathe without first consulting them. The devil, who now had claim to my soul, tormented me incessantly. I did things that can't be told publicly. By the age of nineteen I was utterly demoralized. Melancholy and depression filled me. I had fits of temper. I couldn't concentrate on my nursing work because of the turmoil of soul, and my job suffered. In March 1960 I signed the horoscope chart that forecast I would take my life on July 26. According to the horoscope, my life was no longer of any use. And so on the night of July 25 I wandered the dark streets searching for a way out. I was terrified at the thought of dying. (McDowell, 1972, p. 364)

An anecdotal case has been made regarding a parapsychological sci-fi brand of satanic magic:

> Bob and Reggie were actively pursuing their studies in magic, while Mark's primary interest lay in electronics, although he was experimenting with psychedelic drugs [a suggested major vector of occult oppression: Freeman, 1971]. Because Mark had always remained somewhat aloof from any discussions of magic, they were all somewhat surprised when he informed them that he had been contacted by what he referred to as an "entity".… But then the apartment began to be visited by poltergeistic manifestations. They would awaken in the morning to find bookcases turned over, furniture strewn about, the entire living room in a mess [cp. Brittle, 1980].… "It took two of us to pull this knife out of the door," Bob said. "It didn't look as though it had been driven into the door. It looked as if it had been materialized inside the door, if that makes any sense.…" The entity had originally represented itself to him as being neutral in the affairs of man. As time had gone on, however, Mark had become rapidly aware that the being had misrepresented itself to him, and was, in reality, a very evil force. But by this time, Mark was committed to the entity and could find no way to drive it out of his head [obsession]. It was holding him to the contract that he had originally made.… "He told me several times in his letters and in telephone conversations that the only way out for him was to destroy himself, because Asmitor [an evil demon, per the apocryphal Book of Tobit] was gradually taking more and more control of his body away from him [heteronomy]. I'd been in his presence during some of these periods earlier, and it seemed from the change in his face and in the depth of his eyes that some other creature was looking at you through Mark's eyes [suicide eventuated].… The whole situation has a lot of similarity to the one in the news recently about the young man who was tied and drowned by his friends at his own wish

> because he'd been told by Satan that he would come back as the leader of several legions of demons." (Steiger, 1973, pp. 225–229; cf. Cerullo, 1973, pp. 64–67)

Steiger's chapter on possession dovetails with Freeman (1974) on the occult nature of "extraterrestrial contact," as to its apparent demonic nature; thus this citation of the electronics student who was instructed by his parapsychological "entity" to inscribe various traditional magical letters around a pentagram in his room. As suggested by an otherwise naive Steiger, the form of the "contacting entity" changes according to the sociocultural context but the real identity of the "divine revelators" remains constant. So for Spiritualists, the means of contact was the seance; today it is by channeling, "alien abductions" (alien occultism), or outright traditional satanism. The identity and "means of contact," i.e., impersonation by demons, would by hypothesis remain unchanging.

Again, Steiger's nominal "alien intelligence" in science fiction guise "commands" his human acolyte to "draw certain symbols" over his bedroom walls, ceiling, and floor. "The basic figure was the traditional pentagram [signifying Satan] with lettering and symbols drawn around it" (p. 228). This otherworldly intelligence characterized itself to an electronics "techie," who was perhaps also a sci-fi aficionado, in twentieth century terms, as a Lovecraftian "visitor from a parallel universe seeking to make contact" with enlightened individuals as himself. Yet oddly the traditional satanic accoutrements were the entity's favored means of expression. This is (anecdotal) supplementary substantiation for Pember and Lang's (1911/1975) thesis respecting the typical impersonating nature of demonic spirits. (The thesis of demonic impersonation appears to have been widespread at the turn of the twentieth century, in the minds of those opposing Spiritualism. I believe there is value in works of such as Pember, Unger, Freeman, Koch, and Penn–Lewis insofar as their observations and interpretations spanned lifetimes of research, and are no less informed — if necessarily more anecdotal — than certain other academics on these issues.)

These spirits' targets are sized up as to predilections and preferments by which they may become "hooked" and thereafter seduced into giving permission for entrance of the "alien" into their lives (cf. Brittle, 1980; Koch, 1970). In a previous era the hook was spiritualist mediumship, and the ostensible souls of the (impersonated) deceased were the bait. Today the deception partakes of sci-fi formats, "alien intelligence," New Age channeling spirit guides. The preternatural revelators are said to accompany their manifestations with typical occult phenomenology (e.g., poltergeists), which lends credence to their (unrecognized) impersonations. Every one of Steiger's "revelators from other realms" appears demonic in character. There is also his attempted assimilation, on a par with McCasland (1951), McNamara (2011), and Davies (1995), of Jesus and the Old Testament prophets to the "positive possession" paradigm (see below).

Pember and Lang's suggestion that nominal spirits of the deceased in spiritualistic seances are actually discarnate demonic spirits impersonating the dead,

would, whatever one thinks of this hypothesis, readily explain the plethora of anecdotal pathology reportage that historically has manifested in the wake of Spiritualism. The same is said by traditional demonology (e.g., Langton, 1949; Unger, 1952), in which these occult presences manifest through conjuration, necromancy, spiritism (e.g., Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972) and are incorrigibly evil (e.g., seemingly inexorably causing sociopathy and psychopathy in their practitioners) in their essential spiritual character. This thesis also supports the notion of a continuum of occult psychopathy, wherein the oppressions from obsessing become more severe the further one goes in the "working." More intensified degrees of paranormal phenomenology emerge *pari passu* with pathologies, signifying a necessarily malignant character of parapsychology's "neutral" forces of ESP and psychokinesis, inter alia.

The German psychologist Hans Bender made a trenchant observation in this context:

> I have seen quite a number of patients who have suffered serious psychic disturbances through the misuse of such [occult] practices. They have become split personalities. The spirits which they called, confused them. He who tries to discover the promises of the other side through superstition endangers himself to fall a prey to the dark side of his psyche. (cited in Koch, 1972, p. 153)

Occult obsessing shades into possession itself. An occult preoccupation continuum may be pictured with four stages: (1) obsessing proper (initial interest with "toying"); (2) an induced obsessive/compulsive disorder; (3) thence demoniac manifestation; (4) finally a full-blown "Gadarene Legion" status (see below).

Oesterreich (1921/1966, pp. 42–43) has detailed the existence of anomalous "lucid possessions" in which there is primary consciousness extant during takeover by demons but powerlessness to stop its domineering activity and an override of the motor and speech activity of the victim. This stage would lie on the occult continuum between severe oppression and manifest possession proper in which an unconsciousness of the primary personality ensues. (We observe that the progressive autonomy obtained by invasive "spirits" seems to develop at an inversely proportionate rate to which autonomy is lost by the increasingly obsessive and compulsive host.)

Oppression and possession represent quantitative grades of occult activity; such gradations can be understood as lying along a continuum of torment and subjection. There may not be any absolute demarcation between oppression and possession on the continuum, in light of such phenomenology as lucid (partial) possession. Thus oppression shades into possession (Koch, 1970), though the defining moment of possession proper (in its classic syndrome) is indeed the initial emergence of a demonic alter identifying itself as such.

Poltergeists precede possession and often follow in the wake of exorcism and indeed surround the possessed during the invasive state. With successful exorcism,

there is often an exteriorized commotion at the final release of a victim (Cristiani, 1962; Rogo, 1979). Thus the pandemonium of oppression would be of the same identity and motive as the possession itself. This is not a fallacy confusing correlation with causation, because all the (parapsychological, demonological) evidence points to a cause-and-effect between the pandemonium and the possessed state, e.g., the commotions causing a nervous breakdown of a targeted victim, and the paranormal commotions immediately consequent upon an efficacious exorcism.

Both oppression's characteristic pandemonium and possessed persons often exhibit pronounced blasphemy. Link this in turn with the nature of demonic imposition: oppression imposes from outside, while possession represents the internal invasion. Thus the external blasphemy becomes internalized with the transition from oppression to possession. The continuous identity of the externalized "poltergeist" and an internalized demonic personality thus would be established.

The occult continuum, from oppression continuing into full possessive invasion, lays out the demonic strategy, viz. using poltergeists to bring about prostration and submission. Then, when the target's willpower is at its nadir and his implicate passivity at its zenith, a poltergeistery attack consists of a legion of takeover forces for possession. Thus the continuum of occult infestation and domination represents an index of the invariant strategy of demonic powers whose purposive and sequential activities are thus laid out and made manifest on that continuum. A number of oppressive stages may be seen in juxtaposition and succession: dabbling, suggestibility, induced passivity, obsession/oppression, spell-binding (mesmerism), hypnotic trance, possession, adept, and demoniac. (The adept is a "master" [bonded] magician, expert wielder of the craft or working. Such categories are not impermeable; thus an Aleister Crowley [Crowley, Symonds, and Grant, 1989; Wilson, 1971, 1987] overlaps adept and satanic divisions — I class the demoniac as a satanic effulgence.)

Jane Roberts (1970) fell unmistakably upon some stage of the occult oppression spectrum. Online videos of Roberts' exhibitions depict textbook instances of possession transformations: "Rapid change of facial expression quickly turns friendliness into a dreadful grimace. A sudden shift of voice, perhaps from a high soprano to a resounding bass, introduces the new personality" (Unger, 1971, pp. 106–107). Hanegraaff (1996) and Newport (1997) state that Roberts' texts are foundational for the extant theosophical New Age movement. Hanegraaff makes an involved academic distinction between the mediumship of the nineteenth century spiritualist seances and today's vogue of channeling (of which Roberts was the prototype during the 1970s), but a more relevant issue is whether the documented dysfunctional sequelae attending classical mediumship are not manifest also in today's channeling, an occult working made fashionable by celebrities as Shirley MacLaine.

Newport (1997, p. 164) tells us that Roberts not surprisingly began her channeling career though the Ouija board, through which fiddling the spirit guide Seth

emerged after a few sessions: "On a few occasions, Roberts channels an entity she later refers to as 'Seth Two.' It appears that 'Seth Two' is a group entity that contains 'Seth.' " Note the suggestive multiplicity of "controllers" that is a routine phenomenology of possession, traditionally conceived of as with "Legion" (see below). "According to Hanegraaff, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that Jane Roberts is regarded as the Muhammad of New Age religion, and Seth is its angel Gabriel. Without their metaphysical [occult] teamwork, the face of the New Age movement of the 1980s would not have developed as it did" (Newport, 1997, p. 165).

There is a continuum of blasphemy. Poltergeistery or pandemonium often exhibit desecration, sacrilege, and attacks upon clergy (Rogo, 1979; Summers, 1926/1956); while with possession proper, the demonically successful sequel to oppression leads to blasphemies, desecration, and revulsion against religious objects and practices, especially against exorcist rites. Thus the common identity of both a poltergeist and the demonic possessor is strongly suggested by this continuum of hateful anti-religious activity, especially as the oppressive pandemonium and possession follow one another in sequence, both concentrating upon the targeted victim.

A Syndrome of Possession

The following excerpt is from Mark's Gospel, almost certainly a Petrine eyewitness account (Barclay, 1968), and is paradigmatic today respecting the phenomenology and psychology of possession (Davies, 1995; Koch, 1970; McCasland, 1951; McNamara, 2011).[3]

> So they arrived on the other side of the lake in the country of the Gerasenes. As Jesus was getting out of the boat, a man in the grip of an evil spirit rushed out to meet him from among the tombs where he was living. It was no longer possible for any human being to restrain him even with a chain. Indeed he had frequently been secured with fetters and lengths of chain, but he had simply snapped the chains and broken the fetters in pieces. No one could do anything with him. All through the night as well as in the daytime he screamed among the tombs and on the hillside, and cut himself with stones. Now, as soon as he saw Jesus in the distance, he ran and kneeled before him, yelling at the top of his voice, "What have you got to do with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God? For God's sake, don't torture me!" For Jesus

[3] The reason Biblical tales of possession remain the interpretive academic standard even today reflects their undoubted verisimilitude, in other words, the conformity of modern instances to those ancient archetypes. If it were stated that Christianity were essentially demonology in its prime tenet, namely, that possession is caused by otherwise discarnate invasive evil spirits, that would be true semantically, though it would also represent an anachronism insofar as typical demonology was antedated by the Gospel by something on the order of one and a half millennia. It would be more historically and theologically proper to say that the demonologists were Christians insofar as demonology's interpretations of the demoniacs' testimonies were a function of Biblical exegesis. Thus, it were proper to maintain and acknowledge that that central demonological thesis — as expressed in this paper — is really derivative from the more fundamental and precursory Biblical "doctrine" of possession.

> had already said, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" Then he asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for there are many of us." Then he begged and prayed him not to send "them" out of the country. A large herd of pigs was grazing there on the hillside, and the evil spirits implored him, "Send us over to the pigs and we'll get into them!" So Jesus allowed them to do this, and they came out of the man, and made off and went into the pigs. The whole herd of about two thousand stampeded down the cliff into the lake and was drowned. The swineherds took to their heels and spread their story in the city and all over the countryside. Then the people came to see what had happened. As they approached Jesus, they saw the man who had been devil-possessed sitting there properly clothed and perfectly sane — the same man who had been possessed by "Legion" — and they were really frightened. Those who had seen the incident told them what had happened to the devil-possessed man and about the disaster to the pigs. Then they began to implore Jesus to leave their district. As he was embarking on the small boat, the man who had been possessed begged that he might go with him. But Jesus would not allow this. "Go home to your own people," he told him, "and tell them what the Lord has done for you, and how kind he has been to you!" So the man went off and began to spread throughout the Ten Towns the story of what Jesus had done for him. And they were all simply amazed. (Mark, chap. 5, J.B. Phillips translation)

The Gadarene demoniac by his titanic might broke not only the fetters but also his chains. Presumably the chains were metallic even supposing the fetters were merely leather bonds that were rubbed off his wrists (Alexander, 1902/1980). A contrary argument, though, relies upon the naturalistic presumption that humans simply do not have the kind of strength needed to break metal chains. But the demoniac is no longer a natural person but rather a human body endowed with demonstrably Herculean powers that evidently defy laws of muscular refractory periods (cp. Penn–Lewis and Roberts, 1912/1973; Unger, 1971). We often hear of the superhuman strength of one person lifting cars to free pinned persons underneath. But such "paranormal" exertion pertains only to such strength lasting seconds via an adrenaline surge, not for continuous hours of effort. (A Roman legion consisted of up to six thousand soldiers and calvary, so this suggests that the strength of demoniacs might be expressive of how many "multiple personalities" are involved in specific possessions.)

Item: *Seventeen* young men were exhausted after a *four hour* struggle with *one* possessed Mexican teenager — who was still "fresh and strong" in its aftermath! (Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972, p. 51; cf. Koch, 1973)

Item: The movie *The Exorcist* was based upon a true story, wherein possession was preceded by typical necromancy (Rogo, 1979): "fiction" in which Hollywood imitates life. Forty-one witnesses gave written attestation to the paranormal phenomenology attending the episodic possession.

Item: An archetypal example of possession is given by Montague Summers, a case involving two brothers named Bruner, in Alsace province, France:

> They were quiet lads of average ability.… In the autumn of 1864 both were seized with a mysterious illness which would not yield to the ordinary remedies.… A number of other doctors who were afterwards consulted declared themselves unable to diagnose such extraordinary symptoms.… Whilst lying on their backs they spun suddenly round like whirling tops with the utmost rapidity. Convulsions seized them, twisting and distorting every limb with unparalleled mobility, or again their bodies would for hours together become absolutely rigid and motionless so that no joint could be bent, whilst they lay motionless as stocks or stones. Fearful fits of vomiting often concluded these attacks. Sometimes they were [mute] for days and could only gibber and [grimace] with blazing eyes and slabbering lips, sometimes they were deaf so that even a pistol fired close to their ears had not the slightest effect. Often they became fantastically excited, gesticulating wildly and shouting incessantly. Their voices were, however, not their normal tones nor even those of children at all, but the strong, harsh, hoarse articulation of rough and savage men. For hours together they would blaspheme in the foulest terms.… They likewise spoke with perfect correctness and answered fluently in different languages, in French, Latin, English, and even in most varied dialects of Spanish and Italian, which [xenoglossia: cf. Rogo, 1974] could by no possible means have been known to them in their normal state.… This has always been considered one of the genuine signs of diabolic possession.… Moreover, both [boys] repeatedly and in exactest detail described events which were happening at a distance [clairvoyance], and upon investigation their accounts were afterwards found to be precisely true in every particular. Their strength was also abnormal, and often in their paroxysms and convulsions it needed the utmost exertions of three powerful men severally to hold these lads who were but nine and seven years old. (Summers, 1926/1956, pp. 238–240)

Item: Augustine, in his *City of God* (Bk. 22, ch. 8) details a possessed young man who hears hymns being sung, begins frightful screaming and seizes an altar to martyrs:

> and the devil in him, with loud lamentation, besought that he might be spared, and confessed where and when and how he took possession of the youth. At last, declaring that he would go out of him, he named one by one the parts of this body which he threatened to mutilate as he went out and with these words he departed from the man. (quoted in McCasland, 1951, p. 89)

Augustine's illustration parallels another from modern times involving a woman in whose specific body parts demons had lodged, and who threatened to kill her if they were expelled (Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972). They nearly succeeded by a strangulation accompanying an efficacious exorcism.

The central symptom motivating a differential diagnosis for possession is multiple personality. Contra Sargent (1973), possession is not identical in kind with mystical states, religious conversions, battlefield dissociation, or Beatlemania. All such states share the same stress physiology (Selye, 1976) with many somatic causes of possession. Yet all these other diseases and stress states are merely contingent associations upon which the possession supervenes under relevant preconditions. Well might possession be called with schizophrenia "the great

masquerader" insofar as demonomania is parasitic upon all these other conditions (Koch, 1970).

It is not the case that ancient descriptions of possession can be assimilated to various purely somatic diseases now known. It is rather the case that possession, ancient (construed as demonic) or modern (construed as multiple personality disorder or dissociative identity disorder), is a unique diagnostic condition answering to Koch's (1970) eight criteria (see below). All these various diseases have in common their physiology of somatic stress (per Sargent, 1973); this generalized state then appears to facilitate entrée to discarnate personalities that oppress or possess their victims.

Possession is a unique state supervening upon many otherwise unrelated diseases, especially where occult flirtation by the victim has occurred (Rogo, 1979; Summers, 1926/1956). The differential diagnosis between the various disease entities as such and their parasitic possession overlay, i.e., demonomania proper, is obtainable by an anamnesis documenting occult obsessing by victims or by their family members (Koch, 1965). We might picture this thesis by laying out various disease states per se; thence overlaying multiple personality atop each one, to bring about the respective composite symptomatology as schizophrenia possession, mania possession, hysterical possession, and so forth. But there also is the fundamental condition by itself alone, "possessive possession," i.e., the demonic displacement of personality pure and simple, devoid of any other facilitating or accompanying disease state.

The perennial problem respecting possession has been to establish its natural kind. The proper modus operandi is to ascertain by abstraction, from the cited various mixed syndromes, the essence of possession and not to conflate such symptomatic complications with that fundament itself. The search for the abstracted idiopathic natural kind has been lost amid the welter of its inessential diagnostic complications. Otherwise we have before us not abstraction for the isolated and representative type but its confounding with an extrinsically affiliated complex of symptoms, as depression or mania, that have often been observed therewith.

Koch (1970, pp. 57–58) gives eight criteria of demonic possession abstracted from the case of the Gadarene demoniac qua archetype of the character. (1) One indwelt by an ulterior personality; (2) excessive physical strength; (3) paroxysms of rage; (4) "split" personality (divergent purposes of possessed and possessor, a kind of "dissociative identity disorder"); (5) resistance to spiritual things; (6) ESP, clairvoyance in particular; (7) variations of voices bespeaking the internal variant of personalities ("Legion"); (8) occult transference (as of Legion into the swine), a criterion that may be generalized as the emergence of a poltergeist-type "paranormal environs."

There are exemplars of genuine demonic possession, as mediums, shamans, voodoos, demoniacs. In contrast, there are pseudo-possessive states as prophetic

inspiration (Freeman, 1968) or mob psychology (McNamara, 2011). There are various dimensions of such a qualitative state of possession: universally negative and destructive (including speciously helpful modes of sorcery and healing), transient (e.g., voodoo trance) versus semi-permanent (Gadarene demoniac), and relatively sedate expressions (e.g., mediumistic communications) versus frenzied forms (shamanic dervishes).

Polarized Possessions

There is a curious distinction posited in extant literature on demonomania that contrasts a positive form of possession to a negative form (Crabtree, 1985; Crapanzano and Garrison, 1977; Davies, 1995; McNamara, 2011; Rogo, 1979; cf. Steiger, 1973). An amazing array of individual creations and collective accoutrements of civilization are attributed by McNamara to a "mastery of spirit possession": mental modeling, imaginative capacities, empathy, altruism, social cooperation, the evolution of concepts of personality and of the gods. Shamans and the deified kings of antiquity rose to prominence through precisely such mastery of spirits.

> The sacred kings used spirit possession to create political order in the present and for future generations. Over time they learned to at least attempt to rule with wisdom and justice.… That model of the uniquely valuable and inalienable individual…was eventually enshrined in the legal codes of the West and to a great extent for people all over the world…all this from humanity's struggles with the gods around the [negative versus positive] form spirit possession would take. (McNamara, 2011, pp. 9–10)

This constructive progress is attributed by McNamara to a "positive" possession, which appears to include even the practitioner's mastery of malevolent spirits. McNamara seems to skirt the devastating pathological sequelae attending possession that have been documented for millennia. Such elementary facts would if taken into account severely crimp his fanciful treatment of the phenomenon, though he does recognize the pathologies supervenient upon "negative" possession. I maintain that (1) possession proper — the only actually existent type — is inherently negative and destructive; which tallies with (2) my denial that there is any natural kind answering to a conflation of his hypothetical negative and positive forms of possession, in which the negative form is subdued and controlled by its more positive expression toward the end of furthering culture.

McNamara's positive possession is not possession in any way. Not in any way has a putative mastering of possession proper advanced civilization, least of all having established representative government. It has befuddled every culture where it has appeared in the past and is doing so today with the cultural resurgence of occultism, predominantly in the New Age discipline of spiritism called *channeling* (Hanegraaff, 1996; Newport, 1997). What is most baffling in

McNamara's biobehavioral account is his contention that the loss of agency consequent upon possession states is said to effect a heightening of voluntaristic agency, epitomized in the superlatively free shaman and divine kings ("royal" demoniacs). The documentary sources from all lands and times attest the absolute loss of consciousness and of primary personality during fits of demonomania. Further, that agency is diminished in proportion as occult obsessing becomes progressively hegemonic in the life of the "dabbler."

> Once separated from its roots in spirit possession, theatre aims at lesser, more tame forms of possession. An actor attempts to embody a character rather than a spirit being. . . . (McNamara, 2011, p. 43)

> Only a Neanderthal acting like a ferocious bear or…a predatory cat, could successfully stalk, corner, and stab to death a huge bison or mammoth. Nothing mysterious [supernatural] is being suggested here. Spirit possession in effect simulates supposed mental states of other agents, in this case animals. It uses all data available on a target agent to an average person and then using standard inferential machinery builds a mental model of the mind and motives of that other agent. (McNamara, 2011, p. 49)

Note McNamara did not put the word "possession" in quotations, so the implication is that he would include thespian character impersonation and mental modeling with demon possession proper. Of course acting involves fully conscious expressions of one's retained, normal personality, not that of a possessing alter.

Mental modeling that subserves the emergence of possessive states, is said to require high imagination, so as to facilitate the demoniac's effectual impersonation of the invasive spirit. But there is no conscious modeling of anyone during states of amnestic displacement of one's self! At most there are preparatory rites, drugs, and hyper-excitation to engender the demonic transition, at which point one's conscious personality is in abeyance for the duration of the possessed state. (Possession proper does not allow of two concurrent personalities manifesting.)

> What is the purpose of the possession as far as the possessing entity is concerned? There seems to me to be three possible answers: (1) there is no particular purpose; (2) there is a positive or helpful purpose; (3) there is some selfish purpose.… [Regarding possibility (2):] Although the motive is basically positive, the method is not. Instead of helping the host, the entity causes confusion and distress. (Crabtree, 1985, p. 219)

Here again we find that, as with putative positive possession (Crapanzano and Garrison, 1977; Davies, 1995; McNamara, 2011), and with "neutral" or "non-demonic" poltergeists (Rogo, 1979), the nominal benefits said to accrue from "helping possessors" (e.g., the "healing demons" phenomenon), including those allegedly from one's family line, are actually sociopathic invariably. This is to leave aside these authors' admittedly outright negative forms of malignant oppression and possession. The simplest and most parsimonious hypothesis rather is to posit

a singular type of possessing "entity" behind each such manifestation, namely, a psychopathic transcendental agent whose actuating purpose is malice and wanton destruction up to and including homicidal intent, yet which masquerades when convenient as a confused or merely "overprotective" spirit so as to disguise its motivation to bystanders as innocuous or even benign.

What McNamara terms positive possession, respecting both practitioners and practices, from, for example, African and Oceanic tribal cultures, was stated by Nevius (1894/1968) to be a widespread object of fear and hatred in nineteenth century Chinese villages. The equivalent spiritistic rituals and beliefs are being cited by both authors, so how do we reconcile their interpretive discrepancy, between evolutionary biobehaviorist reductionism and traditional demonology? Thus healing and divining are said to be practices of helpful spirits. In fact this supposed beneficence is attended generally with long-term sociocultural pathologies (Koch, 1965; Montgomery, 1976; Summers, 1956/1926; Unger, 1971). One reason for the ubiquitous and unwarranted optimism of such sociological accounts as that of McNamara (cf. Crapanzano and Garrison, 1977), might be the secrecy and reticence on the part of tribal practitioners qua informants as to the real purpose and function of their rites and initiations. "If informants told field anthropologists what the central secret of a secret society was they were probably dissimulating" (McNamara, 2011, p. 35). Terrifying initiation rituals and even "executions" (murders) of tribal informers are said to be the lot of those so honored with such secret society membership. I suggest that that nominal sociological optimism is a "false positive" construct generated by Western academics that does not capture the occluded actuality of the terror, fear ("awe" as McNamara terms it), and distrust inspired both by tribal practitioners and indeed by the presumptive demonic spirits energizing (and shielding) the rites and worship themselves.

> The immense mental and spiritual powers of the possession state were now put in service to others and to community, and [Paleolithic] communities took off.... The mob stepped onto the stage of history right at the beginning of the Mesolithic and gained force and traction in the Neolithic. *It has yet to step off the stage, much to the woe and misery of humankind.* Spirit possession, when it is controlled, leads to an exaltation of the [shamanic or priestly or kingly] individual. Uncontrolled, it leads to the frenzied mob that cares not a whit for individuals. (McNamara, 2011, p. 61; emphasis added)

McNamara's altered states of consciousness construct (ASC: cp. Tart, 1969/1990) is expressed as an admittedly speculative and unverifiable escapism into a past Edenic idyll. But with the emergence of written records, to the present day, he admits that ecstatic possession states en masse have been abused to the extent of disrupting entire societies. And even those possession practices he cites from extant hunter/gatherer societies are shown, from his own evidence, to be overall retrogressive, destructive, and dysfunctional. It appears that McNamara's construct of beneficent possession states has as much actual foundation in truth as

that of Sargent's (see below). There is demonstrably, in both, the forcing of recalcitrant evidence into preconceived and specious high valuations of pathological occult infestations, which infestations have attained dominion over individuals and entire cultures, whether in modern tribal forms or within ancient civilizations in toto (cp. Oesterreich, 1921/1966).

> Uncontrolled spirit-possession is the loss of individuality via the submergence and transferral of the self and its functions over to a spirit entity.... Once depersonalization occurs, once that transfer of self from the individual to the group is made, serious evil becomes possible. (McNamara, 2011, pp. 98–99)

Here is another alternative, contrary definition and reconceptualization offered by McNamara in addition to his several previous: "uncontrolled" (negative, demonic) possession assimilated to the phenomenology of mass psychology. Indeed "serious evil" results from the transferral of personal autonomy to group identification but this appears to be a social ill distinct from that attendant upon demonic possession proper, with its archetypal supernatural evil expressing itself as a plethora of self-destructive and psychopathic behaviors, the least of which (if at all) is personal identity being submerged within a mass mentality. There is no mutual inclusiveness between possession as such and deindividuation within a mob psychology.

> Controlled spirit possession always strengthened individual autonomy and self-regulation while uncontrolled possession led inevitably to deindividuation or submergence of the self into a group identity. This is the root cause of demonic spirit-possession experiences. (McNamara, 2011, p. 98)

There are at least four questionable or false statements in these two sentences: (1) whether there is an actual distinction obtaining between controlled ("positive") and uncontrolled ("demon") possession; (2) granted the distinction, whether "controlled" possession leads to greater autonomy and self-regulation; (3) whether negative, demon possession submerges one's personality into a group identity; (4) whether such submergence into a group identity is a root cause of demonic possession. These last two propositions are incontestably false, for the prime form of demon possession takes place outside the context of mass psychology, targeting isolate persons (Koch, 1972). McNamara seems here to be thinking of voodoo rituals, as with Sargent's emphasis; and such effects as observed therein may often partake more of entrancement than possession proper.

The first two propositions above hinge upon McNamara's construct of positive versus negative possession practices and states, which I reject as I believe the evidence shows always only the negative form. The so-called positive possession appears such only to those who do not recognize invariant pathologies attendant upon various occult practices, Western or otherwise. There may be a further confound in this context, respecting the supposed positive effects consequent upon entranced states from spiritistic rituals as voodoo and Macumba. Entrancement (induced via hypnosis, orgiastic rituals) is not possession and hence any alleged

windfall of individual autonomy accruing from entrancement is not to be ascribed to demonomania proper.

Probably what McNamara means by voluntary or controlled possession are two things: (1) rites, procedures, practices designed to facilitate induction of a supposed positive possession, which are indeed voluntarily undertaken; and (2) a misunderstanding of entranced states that are not possession proper, and hence allow for some degree of controlled ecstasy. But in possession proper, there is complete unconsciousness of the primary, displaced personality, hence complete heteronomy.

McNamara contends that his positive possession manifests "controlled" oracular functions. But historically the seance mediums are indeed even rigidly controlled yet nonetheless demonically possessed in McNamara's "negative" sense, incurring the usual litany of pathologies attending obsessing or adept statuses (Koch, 1972; Summers, 1926/1956). Thus McNamara's taxonomy of such states runs afoul of the true natural kind and its sequelae.

This fictitious construct of positive possession stipulates a controlled and beneficent mastery of otherwise invasive and destructive spirits. (Paradoxically, McNamara seems not to believe in spirits' actual existence — what then is dispensing the helpful advice and directives?) Historically, such mastery is said to be had by priests, divine kings, shamans. An obvious modern instance would be the medium and channeler, though he repudiates the latter particularly as consisting of Hollywood hype. But culturally, beyond the fabled construct of sociologists and cultural anthropologists, there seems to be nothing controlled and beneficent about actual possessive states. I think McNamara and others are relying on a bogus intuitive concept of a polarized form of spirit possession, one evil because demonic, the other helpful and constructive. But there is in fact no natural kind answering to "good" possessions insofar as the real thing is intrinsically invasive and destructive. The phenomenology of demonic possession actually has nothing in common with ecstacy in particular. McNamara and others have devised a nonexistent category of beneficial possession, assimilating to it various shamanistic techniques studied and lauded by certain sociologists, then put such into polarized opposition to demonic possession.

Oesterreich (1921/1966) mentions a few cases in centuries past of such nominally positive possessions but it may be taken as axiomatic that such "good spirits" have neither wisdom nor beneficence to dispense by displacing someone's personality. There are no positive possessions. That false construct attains specious plausibility by assuming opposing spiritual functions using the same means of personality displacement by hostile invasion. It is maintained that the invasion and supplanting per se are not bad, only the frenzied uncontrolled expression that the hoi polloi give themselves up to when not properly chaperoned by sanctifying shamanic elites. That irrational frenzy is said to block the otherwise socioculturally productive ends of demonomania. Thus laying down the procrustean

bed of positive versus negative possessive states, McNamara can then proceed to allot incarnation, shamanism, and divine kingship into the "good" bracket, while assigning ecstasy and mass psychology into the category of "evil." But in fact we have a more objective standard than this apportionment. (That apportioning is at variance with Sargent's [1973], who views the orgiastic ritual of voodoo in a positive, cathartic light, irrespective of its accompanying frenzied mass psychology.) This objective standard pertains to the observed psychopathy attendant upon these practices. The empirical case histories one and all suggest inherent destructiveness flowing from the cultus (here, McNamara's "men's secret societies") and its implicate practices and beliefs. Further, McNamara confounds his construct of positive possession with incarnation and with the prophetic inspiration of Israelite prophets and even of Jesus. (For the proper distinction between religious ecstasy — as with ancient Canaanite "dervishes" — versus Hebraic inspiration proper, see Freeman [1968].) McNamara's positive possession is based upon such a broad concept that so many things inherently incongruous can be put under its umbrella. That over-comprehensiveness ignores essential distinctions that otherwise are obliterated when identifying, for example, prophecy, ecstasy, or even divine incarnation with possession.

McNamara's construct of positive versus negative possession states has vague and not exact parallel with Oesterreich's (1921/1966) somnambulistic versus lucid possessive states. Oesterreich's construct, though, seems not to have anything "positive" to say about the lucid trances, unlike Sargent's and McNamara's "cultural evolutionary" sociological accounts.

McNamara's erroneous division of possession may be understood as follows. He splits a "helping demons" phenomenon from demonic possession, making a fictitious beneficent natural kind with shamanic arts and prophetic inspiration, to be contrasted with demo-nic possession proper. In actuality, there is only one possession proper, *demonic* as McNamara and the traditionalists label it, which includes the specious positive expression. The other categories included by him in its positive expression are not possession at all, in any form, for there is no such natural kind.

> She [an exorcised demoniac] visits the Nawala shrine often, and occasionally falls into a trance state in which she impersonates the ["protective"] goddess.… Obviously her propensity for possession has been harnessed in a creative and meaningful way. (Obeyesekere, 1977, p. 292)

It may be seen from such academic accounts that spiritist cultures are to be commended for their propagation of demonomania. The presumption is that any surviving cultural artifact or practice must be in some way redolently beneficent rather than express sociopathic maleficence, even (or especially?) where occultism surfaces.

Demoniacs qua culture bearers is in fact a thesis devolved from Frazer (1890/1994), especially that religion has descended from ancient magical arts.

(Frazer detailed a Polynesian "god-man" who demanded routine human sacrifices to propitiate his demonic whim, ritual sacrifices that were never refused by the tribesmen because the "terror he inspired was extreme.") In this vein, evoking the presence of "gods" (i.e., demons) through occult rituals led to possession in negative or positive forms. In time the "peripheral cults" begat the negative (black magical) forms of ritualistic possession, whereas the "central" cultus of divine-king was of the positive, progressive variety, spawning cultural advance (e.g., Davies, 1995).

> The priests and the populace could become possessed by the deity or become united with the deity by participation in the sacred rites with the deity himself — the [divine] king. When the king became possessed so did all his functionaries and then the populace itself. (McNamara, 2011, p. 107)

This seems to be the rather outlandish formulation of McNamara's extreme generalization of the concept of possession. How and under what circumstances did an entire populace follow the king into his states of positive possession, in Egypt or elsewhere.

McNamara's thesis is that propitiation of the gods was a salutary function of shamans, as today with tribal sorcerers. Nevius (1894/1968) gives contrary evidence that such appeasement only guarantees continued and intensified subjection to oppression by the infesting demonic spirits.[4]

Exorcism Efficacy

Jackson (1976) correctly observed that there is no logical connection between the efficacy of exorcism (such as it is) and an entailed truth of demonology respecting possession. Generally, there is no logical entailment between an explanatory scheme and an even efficacious therapeutic practice (exorcism, group prayer) said to follow from that theory. It would be a fallacy to presume that because exorcism has efficacy to some degree, therefore the demonology that embeds and justifies its practice is vindicated thereby. That is no proof of the theory behind the treatment.

This is strictly correct but if so, what of naturalistic, e.g., psychiatric interpretive schemes that change with the decades yet nonetheless show little or no empirical validation, respecting possession in particular, and which have little or no therapeutic efficacy against possessive states when based upon such inconstant

[4] Though McNamara discounts modern Hollywood channeling as mere commercialism, it seems perfectly consistent using his sociological criteria to assign as culturally relevant and beneficial a role to these modern mediums as he does to his ancient shamans and priest-kings. Helen Schucman was the channel for *A Course in Miracles*, used as a text by the Unity cult (Martin, 1968), and the Foundation for Inner Peace (Newport, 1997) — a New Age text devoted to "healing by forgiveness." Thus those two denominations represent modern Western "healing ministries" that were directed by means of McNamara's "positive possession," in the form of Schucman's book.

schemes (as with certain psychotherapies, psychotropic drugs, or behavioral interventions)? Demonology as a working hypothesis has going for it its constancy over millennia, its worldwide distribution qua explanatory scheme, "its" (logically unentailed) therapeutic success by exorcism, its empirical validity respecting the presenting phenomenology (demon identification and their modus operandi: see below). Such extensive validation is what I mean by its post-anecdotal status of confirmed evidence.

I suggest it is the Age of Enlightenment prejudgment that is responsible for such interpretive disparities, the veritable dichotomy of science versus superstition. But in fact we may see the neat coherence between the highly explanatory demonological theory, empirical observations, and efficacious therapy. The relevant observation here is that even though per strict logic both cases of theory, demonological and medical, should have that same caveat put to them, in practice it seems naturally and forthrightly applicable only to the "superstition" and not at all proper to the clinical issue. The fact that there is such a double standard in face of the properly invariant logical stricture shows up the scientistic prejudice operative throughout the discussion.

I suppose the intuition behind this reasoning is the example of a witch doctor casting out demons and the person subsequently becoming well. But ex hypothesi it was not the deliverance from demons that effected the cure, but rather "suggestion" (McCasland, 1951; Sargent, 1973) — however that works, neurologically speaking. (But the supposition that witch doctors' efficacy is due to suggestion and not actual demon expulsion is itself post-Enlightenment question begging. Catholic exorcism in particular is observed to have had a passably good success rate, judging by anecdotal evidence.) In fact there can be disconnects between erroneous theory and successful practice; but there are also correct theories (e.g., biochemistry) that facilitate correct therapeutics (e.g., the prescription of ascorbate for scorbutic victims). The a priori character of such discussion, and its implication with an irrelevant criterion of academic signification, can be indicated by an inspection of the exorcistic theory and procedure in the concrete.

A person who before becoming possessed is suddenly afflicted with multiple personalities speaking out of him. These "entities" identify themselves as demons, their purposes, their malevolence, their discrete personae. When psychological or psychiatric means are tried and fail, exorcism or group prayer is tried and succeeds, through confronting the demonic figures by presumption of their reality and tailoring the treatment to that specific occult source. I say this is some form of empirical validation of demonology insofar as competing (naturalistic) paradigms of interpretation neither could explain the phenomenology's etiology nor eradicate its recrudescence. A "relic of superstition" though has both a coherent explanation and complementary efficacious therapeutic.

Now comes an expositor of the scientific method (paranormal debunker) and singles out such exorcistic pseudoscience for refutation through emphasizing that

principle of a priori logic, while overlooking the nominally scientific though conceptually failing theorizations in this field as Pavlovian reductionism (Sargent, 1973), psychodynamic theory (McCasland, 1951), biobehaviorism (McNamara, 2011), or anthropological field work (see below). While such a critique is true in that strictly logical sense, what needs to be investigated rather is the relative specific efficacies of exorcism, psychotropics, behavioral deconditioning, talk therapies. If in fact the folk or clerical system of traditional demonology not only obtains empirical validation respecting a descriptive phenomenology (e.g., behavior of demoniacs, identification of type and nature of occupying demons, etc.) but that its "entailed" exorcism targeting those intrusive occupiers has specific efficacy, then the case for explanatory sufficiency has improved qualitatively, just as when anecdotal evidence attains to post-anecdotal status by global and millennial cross-corroboration. Contrarily, if biopsychiatric diagnoses lack empirical validation and its psychotropic treatment modalities (e.g., treating dissociative identity disorder) are failures, this also constitutes a qualitatively higher order of proof of its insufficiency of interpretation. In these ways, strict logical entailment of empirical validation via therapeutic efficacy is not required to establish the relative veracity of one hypothetical framework over another. Such corroboration of therapeutics and theory are sufficient for explanation and practice.

Thus it becomes rationally and practically probable that, when both the demonological interpretive scheme fits the symptomatology and its therapeutic modality of exorcism has specific efficacy to remove the possessive state, its ontology pertaining to invasive spirits disclosed by the scheme should be (relatively) veridical. The converse of this proposition is also justified: if there is neither empirical construct validation nor therapeutic efficacy for such as biopsychiatry, psychoanalysis, or behaviorism when characterizing and treating occult oppression and possession, then this is corroborative as to those schemes' overall inherent failures regarding their stipulated naturalistic ontology.

A woman afflicted with diseases of unknown etiology was put through years of varied medication and surgery until someone bothered to ask her of what her diet consisted. She suffered from clinical scurvy through a malnourishing diet of our ubiquitous processed foods (Cheraskin, Ringsdorf, and Sisley, 1983). The specific antidote to scorbutic diet is of course vitamin C; nothing else will cure that avitaminosis. So analogously if possession is attenuated or cured by exorcism, and only by exorcism alone, the implication is that the efficacious prayers were specific in counteracting the malady in question.

If the naturalistic response were that, "It's all in the head," this would suggest there were no supernatural forces to be "cured," that exorcism expresses only a kind of placebo response; but the cure is still effected by the treatment, even if non-specific in character. McCasland contends that only when psychiatry manages to mimic the supposed efficacy of cures by suggestion will it attain to equality with exorcistic rituals of antiquity. Supposing exorcism or group prayer,

Catholic or otherwise, were efficacious on even the irreligious and unbelieving, that would itself suggest an existential negation of any placebo explanation's banishing of the demonic.

Rogo (1979, p. 193) cites a sufficiency of exorcism's means that expelled a vicious, murderous entity that had targeted a couple and their newborn for savage physical assaults. Such exorcistic efficacy through the centuries is anomalous to parapsychology (let alone to psychiatry) yet is perfectly intelligible within the demonological vantage. This is another class of phenomenology, viz., exorcism's efficacy, (post-?) anecdotally established, an efficacy that is yet bracketed in the psychiatric diagnoses and debunkers' critiques, save perhaps as the "power of suggestion" (e.g., Sargent, 1973). Why are exorcisms still being performed if alternative modern therapies had any amount of effectiveness? Why have not these alternative methods the same curative power of suggestion, if exorcism were indeed simply some manner of placebo? The ancient "science" of demonology might have some answers.

Demonology's Demons

To whatever extent such a thesis is amenable to sociologists and anthropologists, we may agree with a posit, according to which *it is the demoniacs themselves* who have originated that traditional thesis stipulating the *demonic factuality* of possession — which posit we may call the *Nevius Rule.* John Livingstone Nevius (1829–1893) proffered a rebuttal of devastating pith to those as Paul Churchland (1987) who would charge observer bias or explanatory decadence (superstition) in face of manifest occult dispossession of the victim's body:

> This matter of the assumption [appearance] of a new personality [openly avowing itself demonic] throws an important light on the origin of the theory of demon-possession. Most writers regard it as having been devised by the observers of these phenomena, and it is, as we have seen, ascribed to savages. In point of fact, however, it probably should be referred rather to the "demoniac." *It is he who asserts this* [demonology] *theory, and the minds of observers are simply exercised in determining whether this declaration is true or false.* (Nevius, 1894/1968, p. 187; emphasis added)

I would modify slightly Nevius's expression. The *phenomenology* of demon possession, in which a distinct (evil) personage declares itself the new resident and owner of the displaced normal personality's body, is not a *theory,* it is simply the presenting facticity itself, established by straightforward stenography. As Nevius astutely wrote, this fact of usurping occupation is expressed by the demoniac and therefore cannot be ascribed to observers' or theorists' preconceptions. The traditional interpretation of this phenomenology is indeed a theory ("determining whether this declaration is true or false"), called (Biblical) demonology, which is predicated upon precisely that collective (post-anecdotal) body of phenomenological reports and manifestations that proponents of any and every theoretical

persuasion employ to understand the data. Those outside the demonological scheme happen to be at greater variance with the observed facts, which have exhibited remarkable constancy and consistency over millennia, than are the traditionalists.This was emphasized in a further passage by Nevius:

> Now if we consider the changes of personality met within pronounced cases of "demon possession," in the light of the [demonology] theory all these difficulties [attending psychiatric hypotheses] disappear. The splitting away of oneself from another is a matter of course; because there are in fact two (or more) selves, actual, distinct entities, which have no connection except through the physical organization of the subject. Each personality, separate, persistent, and unchanging, has in the nature of the case its own, and only its own memory and consciousness. In a word, the [possession] phenomena which present themselves are only what might be naturally expected. *The* [explanatory] *difficulties encountered are not to be attributed to the phenomena but to the* [naturalistic] *theories adopted to account for them.* (p. 237; emphasis added)

Not only is the demonological hypothesis the simplest but as Nevius observes its competitive hypotheses are responsible for any and every explanatory insufficiency encountered in the literature, deficiencies that must not be attributed to the possession phenomenology or to demonology themselves. (Academic philosophers as Paul and Patricia Churchland [2002] dispose of the troublesome phenomenology itself by redefining it as psychosis, to be treated by neurological means, attributing to modern psychiatry an explanatory success that seems not to be taken so definitively within the field itself.)

The Nevius Rule means that demonology represents the hypothesis nearest to the data, namely, utterances of the possessed; while all other explanations are necessarily at least one or more steps removed from that primary evidence. This argument can be emphasized by turning it around. Take the psychodynamic approach of McCasland (1951) and Macklin (1977), and put an Oedipal/Electra "idiom" into the mouths of the possessed, universalizing such demon-speak so that all shamans, mediums, and demoniacs from antiquity to the present utter psychodynamic terminology, in all cultures. Such an incredible concurrence would not be construed by those therapists as coincidental, but absolutely meaningful and even confirmatory as to a psychodynamic etiology of possessed states. In fact of course no possessed persons speak in idioms; they talk as demonology contends they must, which itself is not coincidental, for as Nevius observes, the demonology "theory" of possession has arisen historically from the testimony of demoniacs themselves. So does this universality of demon-talk attest the truth of demonology? This itself would be circular reasoning because as stated, the demonology is simply a compendium of demon-speak itself, so demon-talk could not be used to confirm the truth of demon-talk. Nonetheless, demonology is the least removed from the originating data, while such as Oedipal/Electra dialectics appear as far removed (indeed anachronistic) as might be imagined.

But is a *DSM* diagnosis of multiple personality as close to the data as demonology, insofar as it recognizes alter personae? No, because every approach acknowledges the empirical facts of possession; but it is only demonology that is not an adventitious interpretation of those facts, for the alter personae themselves supply the traditional "talk" of demonic takeover.

The Nevius Rule states that the essentials of demonology are fashioned by the alter personalities speaking from their possessed victims, not by onlookers. This invariant explains why its symptomatology is constant throughout all ages, cultures, and nations. This means that demonology qua explanatory scheme is qualitatively superior to all competing models (Pavlovian, psychiatric, anthropological, sociological, parapsychological) insofar as these other theorizations are at least one step removed from the traditional explanatory source, namely, the demoniac's testimony.

Now, this principle undoubtedly may seem absurd at first hearing, for such originary source testimony appears inherently pathological nonsense, spoken by "crazy people." But this presumption is a *petitio* from psychiatry *inter alia* because the fundamental question is whether the "multiple personality" is a *DSM*-type disorder or expressive of an occult invasion and dispossession. Of course there is pathology with either interpretation in that the person afflicted becomes dysfunctional mentally, spiritually, physically but I am speaking as to an etiology of the "illness": whether organic or functional (psychiatric disorder) versus an invasion from an exteriorized source (discarnate spirit). Thus one must establish first whether there is a psychiatric disorder explicable in reductionist fashion or the dismissive presumption about "crazy talk" is question begging or expressive of Enlightenment preconception at best.

Regarding demon-speak on the nature of possession, construed qua nonsense, this pejorative is absolutely false in light of the post-anecdotal cross-cultural invariant of the global constancy of the demonological "interpretation" (i.e., blunt attestations of occult alter personalities as to their purpose, modus operandi, and origins) throughout history. This means that such a continuous form of "disorder" must have an equally constant originating "demonic" source, whether naturalistically or supernaturally explained.[5]

By running through a list of syndromes and phenomenologies that have been conflated with possession, we may say with fairness that the concept itself is no more intelligible today despite centuries of psychiatric and psychological analysis.

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[5] Above I have used the term "post-anecdotal," which is but another name for *established patterned factuality*. Thus in any other domain of inquiry, say, medicine, if a given syndrome (e.g., hysteria) has certain characteristics that transcend culture and era, over millennia and across millions of corroborative testimonies, then that medical syndrome is accorded objective reality. But when anything smacking of the supernatural is involved, the possession syndrome in particular, endless hackles are raised as to the minutest points of confirmation and investigation, though the entire evidential base be incontestably factual in the sense here indicated.

Thus hysteria, frenzy (hyperexcitation as Beatlemania), entrancement, revivalist ecstasy, (clinical) hysteria, bipolarity, deindividuation, mesmerism, and battle neurosis have suffered identification with demonomania.

> It is impossible to mistake the cases of possession we have reported for cases of pure and simple mania [contra McCasland, 1951]. On the one hand, the prayers of the ritual are totally ineffectual in cases of natural mania. A maniac would never be relieved by exorcism, nor manifest the explosive reactions of a possessed person [in face of prayers, sacraments, exorcistic rituals]. And on the other, mania does not disappear overnight, as we have seen happen in the majority of the cases of possession.... In cases of mania we never find indications of the presence of a preternatual and obviously alien intelligence as is established in cases of possession.... (Cristiani, 1962, p. 155)

Nevius cites a number of criteria as to demon possession's "reality," which in fact are of general import and application, by which his own post-anecdotal sampling of demonomania in the Far East may be established as credible, which I here abridge. (1) Its witnesses testify to what they have directly seen and heard, of recent occurrence; (2) many other eyewitnesses might be brought forward, of notorious instances commonly observed; (3) no conceivable motive for fraud or deception might be adduced; indeed most instances are found detestable, even shameful to the victims and their families and neighbors, and thought by them to be bizarre and repulsive, per investigative interrogators; (4) such (non-Western) witnesses consider these occult phenomena to be rather mundane, not necessarily marvelous at all (implying they have seen or heard much of it); (5) there could not have been collusion between witnesses insofar as recrudescence of possession cases were widely separated across different regions wherein different dialects were spoken; (6) there was no epidemic of "satanic panic" involved because the observed instances were isolated and independent and did not generate much excitement.

Moody (Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972) recounts the tale of a woman who had three demons expelled, the last nearly strangling her as he left her body. Anyone who had witnessed and assisted (in shifts) during such an ordeal spanning weeks, with demonic agents identifying themselves and their modus operandi, wholly or partially displacing the victim's own personality, doing exactly what they said they were going to do and on their enunciated timetable, would be hard-pressed to remain a skeptic as to the phenomenon of possession. ("But we skeptics do not disavow the phenomenology as such, only its superstitious interpretation" — yet this is what is in question in this monograph, whether a naturalistic explanation of that phenomenology can compete with the traditionalist view.) Of course any "proof" via direct eyewitnessing may be said to be illicit insofar as one's supposed overwrought emotions are no vindication of the posit of a supernatural possession. But in fact Kuhn (1970) has shown the necessary implication of the logic of discovery and the logic of justification. Only in some utopian ideal of scientific objectivity can they be separated, even in the history of

the hard sciences. This means that the "blinders" employed by Koch (1965), Freeman (1971), Penn–Lewis and Roberts (1912/1973) and other lifelong witnesses of occult phenomenology as possession, who interpret such manifestations as either otherworldly or as evil supernaturalism, are no different in kind from other forms of hypothesis that organize and interpret empirical data. Such proponents might appear as cranks and hoot owls only because their worldview does not necessarily hoe to post-Enlightenment prejudice. Their working method of observation, research, and theorization are formally identical with those of the sciences in which empirical material is collected deliberately or serendipitously (the logic of discovery), then explained according to rational principles of maximal comprehensiveness and simplicity (the logic of justification). We say that a child given a hammer sees nails everywhere, and pounds accordingly, even where there are no nails. Analogously, someone with interpretive blinders of "demons on the brain" sees occult phenomenology where actually only psychiatric disorders are operative. But if in practice a working hypothesis of occult forces is relatively successful in respect to given explananda — e.g., oppression, possession, the empirical material subsumed in their explanatory umbrella — then in competition with more naturalistic accounts, it is pounding away admirably and doing precisely what a good hypothesis should do; thereby seeing and explaining things that are anomalous or even invisible to other relatively inadequate interpretive paradigms.

Alfred North Whitehead observed that Western philosophy is a series of footnotes on Plato. Similarly, it may be suggested that no one has really improved upon the ancient characterization of possession as demonic subjection. The latter construct at least fits the facts, as when the demonic possessor(s) identifies himself as such, often openly stating names, purposes, and preconditions for leaving. To intimate that we know so much more today than the ancients because technical names can be provisionally assigned to certain diagnostic conditions is not thereby explanatory. Goethe wrote somewhere that we believe we understand something because we can confer upon it a (diagnostic) name. But what precisely are the contingency histories, neural substrates, or psychodynamic forces behind possession that bespeak a better empirical validation than the prima facie obvious one, namely that occult forces have seized control.

That demonology may well be the best hypothesis to cover the facts of possession may not seem so absurd to a modernist, when one realizes the flagrant oversights already committed by certain anthropologists and psychiatrists (see below). Thus the anthropological thesis of occult empowerment is belied by the data, insofar as shamanic and mediumistic practices are invariably pathological, even if nominally lucrative for the professional adept. And factual paranormal phenomenology is often cited inadvertently by modernist academicians even though it is incongruous with their naturalistic bent and vantage. If so severe a cognitive dissonance beclouds their analyses then it suggests they may have missed a lot more in their canvassing of the (post-anecdotal) case material.

If we dissolve the interpretive frameworks within which the invariant facts of demonic possession reside, it is found that they are essentially identical no matter which explanatory scheme they had been housed within. But what are these facts once thus abstracted and compiled? This question is complicated because there are a variety of demoniacs and types of possession, e.g., "lucid" possession (Oesterreich, 1921/1966), multiple alters, professional demoniacs as mediums and shamans, raging (e.g., Gadarene) versus relatively composed (channeler) varieties. But the characteristic features include alien personalities, blasphemies, psychopathy, short life span (accentuated by fatal "accidents"), chronic illnesses, obsessions/compulsions, occult predilections, trance states, and parapsychology's "paranormal surround."

> Since the demonized state always involves the derangement of body or mind or both, due to demonic and not natural causes, there are, accordingly, always symptoms of disease, more or less violent, in every demonized person; and the severity of these distempers is greatly accentuated in the last fierce paroxysm when the evil spirit quits his habitation. (Unger, 1952, p. 97)

This excerpt points up the opportunistic nature of demonic oppression or possession; and informs us that a paroxysm may be of either possessive or dis-possessive forms.

Psychiatric Questions

Possession proper and schizophrenia might appear prima facie similar and yet there are fundamental differences in kind:

> In contrast to [possession], the utterances of the troubled mental patient [schizophrenic] will simply consist of a series of illogical and nonsensical statements which he may continue to repeat to himself for hours, or he may from time to time hold conversations with figures that appear to him, using the most weird expressions and uttering the most absurd ideas. This will at once cancel out the possibility of possession, for a possessed person, though he may be restless and even driven into a rage at times, will nevertheless remain sane in his thoughts. One can therefore say: a mentally ill person is in fact still ill, even when he exhibits certain symptoms characteristic of possession. On the other hand a possessed person is in fact mentally healthy in spite of the fact that at intervals he may exhibit certain symptoms of mental abnormality. (Koch, 1970, pp. 161–162)

In this context the question should arise, who is the psychotic person involved? Certainly not the possessed victim's prime personality, for that is in unconscious abeyance during such "psychotic episodes." Once the person returns to "normality," i.e., regains his own consciousness, there is generally amnesia supervenient after the dispossessing attack upon the victim's body. This is one of the many paradoxes haunting so-called multiple personality disorder, or possession more generically: the victimized and dispossessed personality is not truly psychotic

between possessive episodes, and indeed cannot be construed as genuinely psychotic insofar as his personality is not the one manifesting during episodic manifestations of the demonic.

I mean to say that it is the demonic personality that is the unalterably psychotic one, by any human standards of psychological or psychiatric measurement. This obvious fact escapes us, for two reasons: (1) ubiquitous disbelief in the supernatural discounts the possibility that an evil supernatural "entity" might indeed come forth under conditions of possession — disbelief especially evinced by those schooled in positivist methods of diagnosis and treatment; (2) the same somatic body of the dispossessed victim is utilized by possessor and possessed, which otherwise interpreted would undermine the presumption that there can be only "one body, one mind." (Compare Kluft and Fine [1993] regarding the systemic resistance of organized psychiatry to even the naturalistic construct of multiple personality disorder, due to this paradox of multiple personalities within one body.) If one asserts that insofar as a single body is "used" by the "possessing entity," ergo the multiple personality syndrome must be endogenous because a single (deranged) nervous system is involved, this is a *petitio principii* because it simply reasserts the positivist psychiatric interpretive scheme that there cannot be exogenous forces imposing themselves from outside upon the victim's nervous system.

That entire question as to whether it is the dispossessed victim or the presumptive body-usurping demon who is psychotic, is bound up with this ontological question of the exogenous versus endogenous etiology of the syndrome. For if, per demonology, occult impositions can be imposed from the outside, and a psychotic intruder of (presently) unknown existential status uses the body of an otherwise psychologically healthy person through which to manifest with its ravings, homicidal behaviors, and so on, then it cannot be classified as an endogenous disorder, and the victim is not truly psychotic himself. Of course presumably there is indeed something deranged within the victim's CNS, which allows such possession to transpire — just as "practice makes perfect" with mediums (professional demoniacs) who more readily go into "trance" via prolonged training. Also, insofar as possession is generally the terminus of a progressive debilitating occult oppression, often initiated by seemingly innocuous fiddling, the psychopathologies preliminary to outright possession represent precursor forms of the terminal "dissociative identity disorder" (which pathologies as nervous breakdowns, preceding cases of possession proper, are often induced by terrifying poltergeists and the like, manifest in wake of the fiddling).

Anyone who contrarily holds that it is the victim who is psychotic, not an exogenous demonic personality, should be required to lend credibility to that hypothesis by at least suggesting some neural "how and where" (say, relevant brain mechanisms and localization) of such supposed endogenous competing

personalities. Otherwise, the dismissal of non-reductionist hypotheses (as demonology's) is a throwaway non-explanation. Recall here Nevius's point respecting the simpler demonological explanation of multiple personalities: two different beings means two different personality types, which is precisely the datum seen in clinical practice, otherwise inexplicable to reductionist psychiatry.

> The disappearance of exorcism [sic] has come about only with the acceptance of a new physiology and psychology which reject the belief that spirits cause disease.... The exorcist with his commands of incantations and charms has today been replaced by a physician who diagnoses disease on the basis of naturalistic theories and then proceeds with treatment along rational lines [p. 16].... But the exorcist also was a physician; it was his function to cure disease; and in general disease was the same then as it is today. It is an historical fact also that the exorcist at times cured the sick.... We have no way of knowing accurately how often the exorcists failed.... But the fact remains that exorcism was at times successful, regardless of how it is to be explained.... The principle of suggestion probably accounts for the cures which were achieved [p. 17].... Just how this principle operates in restoring deranged minds and ailing bodies appears still to be a mystery; but the fact of its healing value cannot be denied. Healing by exorcism usually involved confidence, faith in the healer, and assurance that the demon was driven away. The situation, the sacred person, the powerful words spoken, and belief in the efficacy of what was done were all essential to the cure [p. 18].... Although modern science does not fully understand how the power of suggestion operates to heal mind and bodies, it does recognize the fact, and it makes use of this knowledge in the treatment of disease [p. 20].... Psychiatry has come to be a recognized branch of healing.... Every reputable physician makes a large use of suggestion in his ordinary treatment of disease. Confidence and faith are important aspects of the healing process, without which the physician's power is greatly limited.... *The competent healer* [psychiatrist] *of the future will know how to avoid the pitfalls of exorcism but will utilize the sound principle* [of suggestion] *upon which that practice was based.* (McCasland, 1951, p. 21; emphasis added)

What was obviously intended as an argument to illumine the scientific value of modern psychiatry over pre-scientific exorcism thus eventuates in (1) the admission that exorcism was quite efficacious in healing or attenuating possession; (2) the concession that psychiatry can approximate exorcism's admitted therapeutic efficacy primarily by relying on its presumptive dynamic, namely suggestive power; while (3) psychiatry still (by 1951) had not much comprehension as to how that suggestibility brings about a suppression of the radical personality change that is possession's most conspicuous symptom. (Note that psychiatry in 1951 had still essentially a psychodynamic paradigm, to be contrasted with the biopsychiatric paradigm of today [Breggin, 1991].)

Despite how dated this passage is, it is exemplary in exhibiting how the underlying post-Enlightenment (naturalistic) dismissal of occult phenomenology is mistaken for science (qua ideological scientism). This exposé pertains only to

the explicit admission of McCasland as to an equivalence of the healing principle involved (suggestibility).[6] It presupposes that psychoanalysis indeed has a comparable efficacy to exorcism in cases of possession.

Let us look now to psychoanalytic science diagnoses of Biblical cases of possession, to see if that construct holds water at all.

1. McCasland (1951, pp. 33–38) recounts Matthew 9: 17–27 in which a boy possessed by an "unclean spirit" causes the boy to froth, wallow, pine away, convulse; "and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down." From such symptoms McCasland diagnoses the case as epilepsy. But tellingly he does not explain how a prime symptom, which he had just quoted from Scripture, coheres with his assessment of epileptic seizure: "And oft-times it hath cast him both into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him...." In other words, McCasland has left out self-destructive and suicidal behavior from his diagnosis because presumably it does not usually appear typically in epilepsy. There is a parallel case of suicidal possession cited in Moody (Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972), witnessed by missionaries in China. A woman was deemed possessed and would try to hang herself and once threw herself into a well ("the waters"), saved only by her husband's timely intervention on each occasion. In fact suicide is a routine end for those given to occult oppression or possession (Koch, 1965). There is a kind of occult "opportunistic infection" supervening upon such diseases as depression and epilepsy (Koch, 1970). So even if McCasland's primary diagnosis were correct, this would not rule out a secondary occult possession, which in fact was exhibited by the Chinese woman with its typical symptomatology, and who was dramatically delivered by group prayer.

2. McCasland's (pp. 38–41) diagnosis of manic–depression is given to the Gadarene demoniac. "This psychosis may be relieved when the basic [psychodynamic] conflict situation of the patient's life is corrected and his personality has been given a new orientation." That trite statement implies that if only psychoanalysis had been available in the first century the Gadarene's supposed bipolar condition might have been satisfactorily resolved without need of the obviously efficacious "exorcism," i.e., Jesus's command to Legion, to begone. Evidently the demoniac's acute maniacal behavior is the rationale for that diagnosis but there are a number of problems attendant. (1) There appears no phase of depression in Mark's account; (2) there is the Gadarene's preternatural strength that even repeatedly burst asunder chains and fetters (those ancient handcuffs far wider and thicker

[6] Supposing exorcism were based upon suggestion, it would be equivalent in kind to the placebo response. McCasland (1951) and Sargent (1973) both aver that possession is ultimately of a kind with hypnosis, based upon the phenomenon of suggestibility, though neither author explicates his reductionist meaning very clearly. But this is not a traditional demonological interpretation; it is rather a thesis ultimately derived from the hypnotic method of the occultist Mesmer (cf. Crabtree, 1988; Wilson, 1971). The contrary demonological interpretation is that there are occupying evil personalities that can be driven out, not merely psychological complexes that can be "suggested" away.

than today's versions), which seems beyond any naturalistic explanation, even for a maniac given to uncontrollable restlessness; (3) there was the self-identification of another dominant personality, namely Legion, which displacing, as McCasland observes, bespeaks the idiopathic feature of possession — but this appears not to be a defining symptom of bipolar disorder; (4) a paranormal environs was manifested in the stampeding of the approximately two thousand swine over the cliff in the immediate temporal wake of the dispossession by Jesus.[7]

We come now to a more general criticism of McCasland's psychiatric diagnoses designed to supplant the ancient characterization as possession. The Biblical cases rehearsed by McCasland bear far more resemblance to each other, and to other historical manifestations of documented possession (e.g., paranormal environs, inexplicable strength, multiple personalities), than they do to other complexes as hysteria, epilepsy, psychoneuroses, the psychoses, and dissociation.[8] That is, the eight criteria cited by Koch (1970) have diagnostic and explanatory sufficiency in themselves, and there is nothing additionally attained by trying to force the traditionally recognized occult nature of oppression and possession into standard (naturalistic) psychiatric categories. Oppression and possession are *sui generis* and laws unto themselves; while the psychological or psychiatric attempts to deny or downplay their occult essence express more a post-Enlightenment ideology than any scientific superiority to traditional ("pre-scientific superstitious") paradigms of understanding.

In light of this, McCasland's contention that the psychiatric understanding of possession supersedes the ancient conception as demonic control appears doubtful. In fact, McCasland's own psychoanalytic conception has been superseded today, supposedly by an "intertheoretic identity" (Churchland, 1984) of possession with schizophrenia — itself conceptualized qua brain disorder. But in fact

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[7]McCasland hypothetically ascribes this — cf. Langton (1949), citing scholars who hypothesize the pigs' frenzy to the demoniac's agitation and yelling — to a herd affrighted by the disciplic crowd's commotion attending the demoniac's deliverance but this appears a nonstarter of an explanation. For we are told explicitly by Mark that "always, night and day, in the tombs and the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones"; hence presumably for many years the herds had become accustomed to this strange and haunted figure in their presence roaming unfettered and bellicosely about the pastures and mountains. Indeed the insistent plea and successful departure of Legion into the swine (parapsychologist Rogo's [1974] so-called "possession-poltergeist") suggests the demoniac's affinity for the ritually unclean porcine company, intimating that he had frequented their pasturing on previous occasions.

[8] There is a diagnostic differential between hysteria or other psychiatric symptoms and possession to the extent that, out of eight criteria listed for the archetypal Gadarene incident, five do not fall into any psychiatric classification (Koch, 1970, pp. 57–58). Demonology covers all the criteria in question, psychiatry less than half. Thus not only is there empirical validation of demonology over psychiatry's hysteria or schizophrenia diagnoses, there really is not even congruence of psychiatry with the actual symptomatology of possession to even compare them. Indeed Koch cites a provisional psychiatric categorization of possession with hysteria; even there, the psychiatrist is quoted that possession is not really from evil spirits but is just some form of unknown hysteria, i.e., has not yet been properly assimilated to accepted diagnostic categories.

Breggin (1991) points up the facts behind the headlined breakthroughs regarding schizophrenia, namely, that after the media hype has passed, the reality is that these claims of biopsychiatry are themselves based on shifting sands as with an antiquated psychoanalysis. So McCasland's review of parallels between ancient and modern cases of possession stands; what falls are any claims of intertheoretic identities (cf. Crooks, 2008).

The *DSM*'s construct of multiple personality disorder and now, dissociative identity disorder, is a bracketed (studious ignoring of), denial, and downplaying of the traditional demonological scheme of possession. Multiple personality disorder is also reductionist in its focus on the bald phenomenon of an emergent personality. The *DSM* diagnostic category is an arbitrary abstraction of a circumscribed symptomatology from possession proper, a construction of a non-natural (if naturalistic) kind so that it might "fit" coherently into a suitably austere positivist worldview.

The category of multiple personality disorder is really a belated and grudging concession to reality regarding demonic possession; an apparent attempt to co-opt the natural kind of supernaturalistic dispossession of personality into a form amenable to psychiatric (diagnostic) categories of discourse; a truncated concession to an ineradicable perturbation within the Enlightenment worldview. Multiple personality disorder is an unnatural (if seemingly naturalistic) construct designed to bring the inexplicable within the range of routinized psychiatric diagnosis and constitutes a sedulous bowdlerization of the empirical (if paranormal) phenomenology often surrounding the possessed.

In Kluft and Fine (1993) there is a passing admittance of this thesis that the multiple personality disorder construct may be a secularized scheme of traditional possession.[9] Accordingly, whatever the clinical rationale for its latest transmogrification, that continuous series of transpositions and syndrome rewrites does not impugn the fundamental natural kind in question, viz., possession and its indissociable phenomenology dating back to antiquity.

Pavlovian Possession

An utterly unique behaviorist approach to the essential nature of possession has been given by a practicing psychiatrist:

[9] As Kluft and Fine (1993) document, multiple personality disorder itself was a construct rejected by academic psychology and psychiatry until a few years after a book — *Sybil*, by Flora Schreiber — and movie popularized it. It is odd how media fashions should thus be determinative of academic investigations or consensus as to the reality of syndromes and psychological natural kinds. Multiple personality disorder thus came into recognition after such preceding fashionable publicity, which by itself is merely anecdotal but telling: once a natural phenomenology was arbitrarily made into a Hollywood availability heuristic — a suggestive example of a conceptual type — it was only then and thereby accepted as a diagnostic category within the *DSM*.

> I should say that what in fact happens is that a variety of methods [convulsive therapy, hypnosis, Beatlemania, battle fatigue, voodoo entrancement, "Holy Rolling"] reach the same common endpoint, in which hypnoid, paradoxical and ultraparadoxical states of brain activity make conversion possible, whether the conversion is to religious belief, a political philosophy or any other system of ideas. (Sargent, 1973, p. 83)

In an interpretation that may be termed *Pavlovian reductionism,* the ideational or spiritual content accompanying a behaviorally uniform "conversion" pales into irrelevance if we but focus the supremely pertinent mechanism of canoid-type conditioning underlying all states of stressful exhaustion followed by hypersuggestibility. Sargent's reductionism ultimately is no more successful explanatorily than McCasland's psychoanalytic interpretation of possession, though appears more comprehensively explanatory with more empirical validation. His explicit working method is extrapolation from Pavlov's researches to humanoid "conversions." (Cf. Skinner [1953] on behaviorist reductionism: economic man, political man, religious man have a common denominator that can be comprehended as a unity by extrapolations — generally using infrahuman subjects — from the scientific analysis of behavior in the laboratory.)

It is in fact a reductionism that severely compresses the time window so as to force fit myriad phenomenology of human spirit, thought, life, and affairs into the canoid straitjacket. Thus, behaviorally, there is emphasis on "mesmeric crises" transpiring generally within a few hours' time frame. Functionally there is fixation upon a traumatic "wiping the mental slate clean" with its concomitant transient supervening hypersensitivity to implant new conditioning routines ("beliefs" with humans).

There are various types of behaviors that Sargent identifies as having a common efficacy in bringing about mesmeric crisis: rock music concerts, voodoo dancing, snake-handling ecstasy, Wesleyan sermonizing, front line combat, mystical meditation, drug-induced altered states of consciousness. These hyperexcitatory time compressions signify the span of a few hours in which entrancement may be observed. Though different belief systems may be engendered by these moments of mesmeric crisis, there remains their fundamental unity in hyperexcitation suggestibility.

Regarding such behavioral analyses, a number of them seem strained and even at variance with Sargent's general Pavlovian reductionism (e.g., John Wesley's method of preaching that did not conform to [Holy Roller] hyperexcitation.) The neural mechanisms remain purely hypothetical, with the behavioral descriptions in center stage; though to my admittedly untrained eyes, there is much variation in the behavior (mystical, conversional, abreactive, possessive) said to flow from a common physiology. But if indeed the behavioral commonalities are lacking, how much more so might we rightly suspect their respective neural substrates to so differ.

The essential thesis of Sargent is not unqualifiedly being denied by me, viz., that Pavlovian "physiology" (neurology) underlying hypersuggestibility is behind many or most forms of possession, snake-handling ecstasy, voodoo dissociation. If we turn his interpretive prism but slightly then the same data he records disclose a thesis complementary to his, yet also coherent with post-anecdotal evidence for occult presence and activity within these same phenomena. So Sargent's case histories can be explained as follows: voodoo possessions represent an entrance of spirits under conditions of extreme exhaustion, hypersuggestibility made possible through hours of intense, loud music and "hypnotic" rhythms, and group dynamics.[10]

Do conversion, possession, and abreaction all have the same neurological basis? If so, it would be gratuitous to presume extrinsic demonic invasion if such a naturalistic account could readily dispense with such. But per Koch (1970) and McAll (1982) there are other criteria of demonic possession not addressed by reductionist biopsychiatry, as with inveterate occult phenomenology implicated with real possession (see below). Also, that demonic invasion is often opportunistic, parasitic, and secondary upon more primary diseases as with epilepsy, hysteria, or states of exhaustion within voodoo rites as detailed by Sargent.

The Pavlovian reductionism of Sargent means that there are no ontological referents beyond the induced behavioral (and neurally instantiated) routines in the belief systems of man. Thus the ideational (let alone spiritual) contents of thought are expendable in a scientific study of such ideologies and religions. The only important thing is to isolate the common behavioral parameters of the belief systems in question, e.g., an experimental determination of equivalent, paradoxical, and ultraparadoxical states of excitation and inhibition involved in belief induction or conversion. But in fact such reductionism does not even do justice to the empirical material in question. Thus a narrow time slice of a few hours, involving hysteria followed by catatonia, is the reductionist temporal window used to judge the equivalence of "conversions," which is to leave aside the longer-term behavioral effects of the orientation changes.

Per Sargent, suggestibility would manifest in the supposed entraining phase of possession, not only in its exorcism. Thus the ideational content of demonism present during entrancing excitation would become uncritically accepted once abreaction and convulsion symptoms abate and recovery is effected. The problem with this thesis as an explanation of demonic possession is that the phenomenon of alter personalities explicitly identifying themselves as demons, which is the

[10] Cf. Tallant (1946/1962) respecting the origin of voodoo in African serpent worship. Sargent appears correct in identifying the snake-handling cults with voodoo mechanisms of "conversion" insofar as the orgiastic rites involved appear indistinguishable. Sargent (1973, p. 187) details a young woman sexually exploited by a congregational member after Holy Roller "possession by the spirit." The woman afterwards was sincerely amnestic regarding the exploitation because she had been at the time in a occultic trance akin to voodoo bewitchment.

defining characteristic of possession, appears routinely identical in widely disparate cultures and across millennia (McCasland, 1951; McNamara, 2011; Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972; Nevius, 1894/1968; Summers, 1926/1956) — yet there is no common form of "conditioning" involved in the spontaneous possessing of persons by self-identified demons (even granting empirical validation of Pavlovian reductionist methods at work in them all). How does Sargent's Pavlovian reductionism account for such utterly differing circumstances throughout history bringing about identical forms of demon (or some general form of spirit) possession, which otherwise seems inexplicable insofar as so many different contexts as he cites often lead to that common final pathway, namely, demon possession.

There is a serious discrepancy between Sargent's Pavlovian interpretive method and his own adduced case history of John Wesley, cited in support of that reductionism:

> The most striking psychological manifestations [attending religious conversions] were caused, not by the "emotional" and overwhelmingly eloquent preaching of Whitefield, but by the "logical, expository, and eminently theological discourses of John Wesley".... *even the printed word of Wesley was liable to produce the same results*. (Sargent, 1973, p. 65; emphasis added)

Sargent immediately adds the proviso that as Wesley's sermons were typically "hellfire and brimstone" exhortations, presumably even the written scary texts could by reading effect possessive dissociation! This howler signals the intellectual bankruptcy of his assimilationist Pavlovian reductionism, at least regarding his assessment of religious conversion, insofar as his other examples of induced trance and possession required many hours of hysterical voodoo rites, or alternatively weeks of battlefront exhaustion in order to bring on successive apoplectic and catatonic states. But here, the mere staid "logical and expository" recitation or even casual reading of one of Wesley's fundamentalist sermons is said to have had the same "conversional" effect. In actuality, the involved "mechanisms," physiological, behavioral, or spiritual, therefore must be completely distinct.

Sargent (n.p.) quotes an author as to "the effects of the supposed work of the Holy Ghost or the Devil among Wesley's followers: 'As to persons crying out or being in fits, I shall not pretend to account exactly for that, but only make this observation: it is well known that most of them who have been so exercised were before of no religion at all, but they have since received a sense of pardon, have peace and joy in believing, and are now more holy and happy than ever they were before.'" Sargent dryly puts this in a context as to the imprinting of irrational beliefs supervening upon hysterical states of conversion. But in his nominal scientific objectivity he fails to observe even an elementary distinction between good and evil, sociopathy versus happiness and a productive life; no doubt because such a distinction lacked Pavlovian significance for him. His book indicates that it matters little to him whether the conversional experience leads to bona fide social and

spiritual redemption, or to despondency and madness through voodoo, witchcraft, and occult "dabbling" — a systematic differential outcome that his own case histories and even appended photographs testify to. All that has significance is the behaviorist Pavlovian reductionism said to underlie the trance and possessive phenomena.

"Wesley was forced to wonder whether some of these manifestations [of conversional phenomena] were the work of the Devil rather than the Holy Ghost..." (Sargent, 1973, p. 66). Sargent then recounts an instance in which Wesley was called to aid a young woman in the throes of severe demonic possession, in contortions, screaming as to her damnation. (It is in fact not clear that Sally Jones had even heard one of Wesley's sermons, let alone that it had brought about possession — though he definitely worked upon her to bring about dispossession, a common phenomenon in the context of group prayer as Wesley practiced.) Group prayer and other works by those assembled is said then to have brought relief, peace, and deliverance, just as has been documented in more recent times (Koch, 1970; Moody Bible Institute, 1960/972; Unger, 1971).[11] Thus Sargent's characterization of Wesley as to a confusion of demonic or Paraclete influence represents a reading of his own Pavlovian reductionism into Wesley's account.

Being highly dubious, I spot checked Sargent's claim of Wesley's bafflement and found that there was not a remote suggestion in Wesley's diary that he believed genuine conversions or deliverances were to be confounded with possessions. Only someone as Sargent himself, who does not distinguish between the phenomenology of induced psychopathy and mental health itself but rather lumps them together as "possessive phenomena," would conceive of these disparate expressions as behaviorally and neurologically identical.

Wesley did not doubt that the devil was behind Sally Jones's fight for life and most certainly he did not believe that any hellfire sermons might have been responsible. Only a Pavlovian would confuse the two states of voodoo possession and revivalist repentance by focusing on their nominal similarities of "conversion," and then incredibly misattribute such an oversight to an eighteenth-century divine. Sargent in fact left out of his quotation from Wesley's notebook the clear reference to Sally's demonic possessor speaking in the first person and referring to Sally in the third person, an apt metaphor of possession proper. ("The first personal pronoun

[11] Sargent (1973, p. 45) follows McCasland in calling Jesus's "technique" of dispossession a form of exorcism, when it consisted of a simple and singular command (Unger, 1952). Sargent recounts an incident in Mark (chap. 11): Jesus was presented with a boy who fell into convulsions, the demon was ordered to vacate the child, after which more convulsions ensued. Sargent misunderstands this to mean that Jesus went through a drawn-out ritualistic exorcism that worked the boy into a frenzy, followed by an abreactive collapse — which the narrative by itself or in other similar incidents does not disclose at all. Thus Sargent's drawing of a parallel to these New Testament "exorcisms" has no bearing on his otherwise comprehensive explanation, as not being of a type with Pavlovian, mesmeric, hypnotic Holy Roller trances, stupors or recoveries therefrom that he documents.

always represents the demon while bystanders are addressed in the second person, and the subject "possessed" is generally spoken of in the third person..." [Nevius, 1894/1968, p. 186].) Multiple personality is the classic symptom determining the diagnosis of demonic possession (Crabtree, 1985; McCasland, 1951).

Apparently the allusion to Wesley's alleged confusion is given by Sargent (pp. 64–65) referencing an episode wherein a "French prophetess" was visited in 1739. From the description given in Wesley's notebook, it is clear that the woman was what was called in the nineteenth century a medium, and is now called a channeler. Her utterances were the usual stream of spiritistic platitudes one may find in any theosophy text and her behavior was decidedly mediumistic. Thus Wesley was pragmatically correct on the occasion to render the same judgment in effect as Penn–Lewis and Roberts (1912/1973): "If it be not of God, it will come to naught." In fact, as the history of such occult obsessing shows, it comes to worse than nothing because of its consequent social and personal pathologies.

Part of the persuasiveness of Sargent's confounding of Wesley's conversions with those of voodoo's relies upon his transitional equation of traditional Methodist conversions with snake-handling techniques. Thus the latter, insofar as they involve nominally scriptural handling of snakes as with serpent-worshiping voodoo rites, and insofar as such "religious" handling of snakes is nominally Christian (La Barre, 1962/1969) as with Wesley's Methodism, therefore Wesley's conversions can be superficially equated with voodoo trances through an intermediately common term and concept as *snake-handling* — especially as all are said to share common Pavlovian mechanisms of belief induction. But I would suggest that though the snake-handling of such cults signifies indeed an affinity with voodooism, there is none with any form of Christianity as orthodox as Wesley's.

Sargent makes no qualitative distinction between the antithetical functional social and personal outcomes of demoniac possession and allied pathologies, and genuine religious conversion (traditionally construed by such as Wesley or Unger [1974] as repentance, forgiveness, regeneration, redemption, salvation). Rather, a temporal slice of ostensibly identical mesmeric crises is taken as the essential commonality. (Note Sargent like Pavlov gives hints of unsubstantiated neural mechanisms said to underlie the relevant "reflexology" of respondents, i.e., behavioral axes of measurement.)

Again, Sargent quotes Wesley: "If it be not of God, it will come to naught." Sargent seems not to have understood this obvious spiritual truth he had just quoted. What emerges from demonic possessions is sociopathy and psychopathy; whereas those converted by Wesley's sermons repented and reformed. By focusing upon a wizened time frame Sargent can give the misimpression that there is no difference in kind between demon possession and genuine religious conversion, there being only a common distraught prostration in that analysis. Solely an illicit focus on the bare momentary similarity (not identity) of behavior or functionality (the new conditioning of "beliefs") might render an affirmative judgment of their

equivalence. Certainly the subsequent behaviors (sociopathy and madness versus constructive reformation) are distinct, indicating equally disparate causation despite superficial similarity of a functional "change of orientation." Evidently insofar as Sargent neglected the psychopathies consequent to possession, he was not cognizant of any attending occult oppression as documented by Koch, among others; let alone ascribed any such pathologies to malignant discarnate powers, which he construed as foolish superstition. But would he not recognize even the difference between socially constructive and destructive "conversions," of dabbling versus reformation?

> Sometimes there is some memory of what goes on in ordinary life when the person is possessed, and vice versa. But as one person described it, all the moral values and all the emotions of the other state disappear.... The power of these [entrancing] methods to produce new attitudes and new happiness in living is very great indeed, far greater than most of our modern methods of psychotherapy, or the use of intellectual arguments and persuasion alone. (Sargent, 1973, pp. 155–156)

But in fact Sargent goes on to show that the results of induced possession in various Yoruba cults (as voodoo and Macumba) that he documents have decidedly mixed results in terms of any putative "new happiness" in their practitioners. Putting his mixed results side by side with that of missionaries' observations on such practices (Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972; Montgomery, 1976; Nevius, 1894/1968), combined with that from pastoral counseling (Koch, 1965) or from the history of occultism itself (Brittle, 1980; Summers, 1926/1956) and the picture is far less sanguine than Sargent's possession-friendly pronouncements suggest.

Even if Sargent were not so epistemically naive regarding truth determination (see below), he is demonstrably not an adherent to a pragmatist criterion of truthfulness. Post/anecdotal accounts are given in Booth (1890) as to lives given over to dissipation and self-destruction, turned around and made socially and personally hale by genuine conversion. Families previously wrecked by alcoholism were reunited, prostitutes delivered from their "careers," impecunious parents who had even attempted to poison their son were brought to redemption. Such outcomes become invisible in the time spans alloted by Sargent's Pavlovian account, which thereby render his analysis a *reductio ad absurdum* of the entire theory. Occult degenerations therein are made tantamount to psychological and spiritual recoveries. Following him we would have to assign no difference in human value to vagabondage against productivity, psychosis versus deliverance, pathology against healing. Within such an assessment, even the behavioral evidence is slighted because of the narrow time frame of observation; this within an ostensibly empirical science of behavior analysis.

When the alcoholic wife-beater becomes a teetotaling and reformed family man, this would be explained by Sargent as the implanting of newly conditioned beliefs whose behavioral effects are orthogonal to the previous dysfunctional

routines. Presumably in this analysis the only difference in effects following crisis lies in the differing ideational content. The Bowery bum reformed is simply traversing the course laid out by the novel implanted religious conditioning concerning uplift and outreach; whereas the guttersnipe voodooienne (Tallant, 1946/1962) constitutes a paragon of equally ennobling superstitious belief, the only difference between the two case histories being the differential content of arbitrary belief systems. In fact the post/anecdotal evidence sustaining the charge of disabling pathologies saddling occult fiddlers, versus the equally monumental evidence attesting to genuine constructive personal and social reformation via religious repentance and redemption, are commonplace observances. A contrarian à la Wesley accordingly might suspect that there is a qualitative divide between the two crises, the one being sociopathic and psychopathic because demonic in etiology — see the psychiatric argument above concerning the intrinsically psychotic demoniacal nature — while the socially constructive and liberating crisis came from another, even divine dimension, as different as heaven is from hell.

Sargent extolled the happiness and meaningful life brought about by voodoo practices in the Caribbean and South America; their sordid American reality is given by Tallant (1946/1962), in his recounting of voodoo's debilitating superstitious burden, financial fleecing of the desperately poor as a form of protection money from "hoodooing" (cursing), omnipresent retributive threats, and outright murders committed in the cult's name. And this is to completely leave aside voodoo's associated powers of occult oppression afflicting its practitioners. We should also realize the higher socioeconomic status of its American devotees (and victims) to get an idea of how much worse its expression must be within the Developing Nations where Sargent did his research. Very probably the natives were told to put on a show for the visiting (and paying) urbane British psychiatrist, which would account for his misleading characterization of voodoo's benefits, as indeed in New Orleans the tourists are vouchsafed only the tame stuff as at Mardi Gras. The hard core authentic rituals, even in the Americanized context witnessed and made seemingly picturesque by Tallant, are unspeakably degrading and fearsome.

Such qualitatively distinct modalities of "conversion" can seem comparable only because of Sargent's crude caricature of Holy Rolling snake handlers, replete with their uproarious dancing, clapping, hollering, and ecstatic babbling being taken as representative of the genuine spiritual life (cf. Unger, 1974). That he assimilates this caricature to voodoo has verisimilitude, at least from his personal observations he recounts and the photos he appends. Yet whether this antitype of spirituality, behaviorally indistinguishable from voodoo and Beatlemania, has any productive consequences is left unstated by him. By focusing on the stress-induced "window of crisis," and devising such misleading fallacies of selection, Sargent manages to bring large portions of human experience and endeavor to the (degraded) canoid vantage.

If he had recognized the differential outcomes of true conversion (repentance) and occult possession, perhaps he might have looked for different Pavlovian

mechanisms operative in either. He also appears not to have distinguished at least three possibilities of categorical difference of his conversions: possession (entrance of demonic powers as through voodoo rites), dis-possession (as through religious conversion), and veridical Pavlovian abreaction (truly neutral regarding good or evil spirits, as with recovery from battlefield hysteria or catatonia). Behaviorally, in the abstract, these may seem similar yet there may well be neurological, let alone spiritual, differences. To ignore the psychosocial consequences of these distinct phenomena, and not discriminate properly (beyond a grudging admission) between an unspecified "happiness" achieved through Macumba sorcery and ritual sacrifices, versus a genuinely constructive life, is to court the most grievous confound. The disparate life effects following "the" crisis are absolutely discontinuous.

In spite of himself, Sargent gives citation to extrasensory phenomena surrounding his nominally reductive accounts of trance and possession (cf. Rogo, 1974): telepathy (pp. 24–25); clairvoyance (p. 25); extra-personal knowledge of diagnostic and therapeutic conditions (pp. 24, 41); mediumistic communications (pp. 37–39; 93–94); astral projection (p. 41). His suggestion explaining away clairvoyance might be made against all the paranormal phenomenology that, inexplicably, continually crops up within his ostensibly naturalistic and reductionist account of possession — appears in fact as continuously in his account as in parapsychological or outright demonological literature.[12] In Sargent's rather speculative scheme, heightened or subliminal sensibility and perceptiveness to unwitting cues are said to enable the (non-supernaturally) mesmerized or possessed to infer the contents of unseen papers held behind the backs of others. All forms of seeming ESP as clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition that manifest in the powers of the possessed might then be subtle instances of naturalistic forms of subliminal perceptions (cf. Smythies, 1971). Whether or not that bald

[12] Sargent left out a typical case of clairvoyance and/or precognition by Sally Jones while in the possessed state. She stated to her bystanders that Wesley was galloping hard on his horse through the driving rain at night, on his way to minister to her — via an ultimately efficacious group prayer — when indeed he was still three miles off racing to her presence. A parallel case may be cited of a missionary and two assistants who made an impromptu decision to travel in hopes of aiding a group prayer for two possessed Chinese women:

> "[The women] were heard saying to each other: 'Those three men are coming here, and have got as far as the stream.' Some one asked: 'Who are coming?' The woman replied with great emphasis: 'One of them is that man Leng.' As I was not expected to visit that place until a few days later, a daughter of the family said: 'He will not be here today.' To which the demon replied: 'If he does not come here today, then I am no [geni]. They are now crossing the stream, and will reach here when the sun is about so high,' and she pointed to the west. No one could have known, in the ordinary way, that we were coming, as our visit was not thought of until just before starting. Moreover the two men who went with me were from different villages, at a considerable distance in opposite directions, and had had no previous intention of accompanying me…." The statements of Mr. Leng, as given above, were confirmed by minute examinations of all the parties concerned, and their testimony was clear and consistent. No one in the village or neighborhood doubts the truth of the story; nor do they regard it as anything specially strange or remarkable. (Nevius, 1894/1968, pp. 33–35)

suggestion might be expanded and applied to adequately explain any and every instance of occult phenomenology found in the records of mesmerism, hypnotism, and voodooism, it still would not take into account that these same forms of ESP and paranormal environs (poltergeists, telekinesis) also have been at least anecdotally recorded to surround the occultly oppressed. (Wesley's family rectory was inhabited by poltergeists [Freeman, 1971; Rogo, 1979]. A demonologist more attuned to niceties of theological interpretation than Sargent might suppose the infesting demons were targeting a devout family sustained by the Holy Spirit rather than harassing Gadarene-type demoniacs.)

In fact, in recorded forms of demonic oppression, there is little or no perceptual hypersensitivity as manifests in possession proper for the simple reason that one's thoughts and perceptions are *dulled*, not heightened, by chronic and debilitating depression, anxiety, fear, harassment, and physical prostration; yet the occult phenomenology appears almost as readily as with the possession. Sargent's suggestion then, even under a charitable construction, fails in its purpose of discounting the evidence that he himself adduces.[13] But as the dust jacket describes, "He disputes the existence of gods in so many varied forms [of possession] and suggests that man himself may be responsible for much of what occurs." This is essentially a fractured explanation insofar as Sargent either notes the occult phenomenology in passing without comment, or in that one instance he ascribes, in perfunctory and unsatisfactory fashion, the observed clairvoyance to heightened sensory or attentive functions. This is a fractured working method because it involves two components: naturalistic interpretation of possession phenomena, and either concurrent non-explanation of its concomitant occult phenomena or its inadequate rationalistic explanation-away.

Thus, Koch's criteria of possession involving paranormal data are left unaddressed. Further, there is superfluity of hypotheses insofar as two modes of explanation are required (Pavlovian and occult debunking), rather than the simpler hypothesis of the reality of occult forces of possession, which explains both the possession and the occult data with only one posit. This is ironic insofar as generally it would be assumed that a posit of demonic presence and control as parasitic upon natural occurrences of disease would be supernumerary. (In parallel, Dennett [1991] makes the posit of Cartesian immaterial mind, above and

[13] "It sometimes happened that the demon Peregrino (that is, the sister possessed by this devil…) was in the second-floor dormitory when I was in the parlour, and he would say: 'Is Dona Teresa with the visitors? I will soon make her come….' I did not hear these words, but felt inwardly an inexpressible uneasiness, and rapidly took leave of the persons who had come to see me, doing this without previous deliberation. I then felt the presence of the demon who was in my body; I began without thinking to run, muttering, 'Lord Peregrino calls me'; so I came where the demon was, and before arriving there was already speaking of whatever thing they had under discussion and of which I had had no previous knowledge…" (Oesterreich, 1921/1966, p. 41). Another one of numerable case histories of ESP implicate with — here, multiple — possessions that is recounted without comment by an otherwise skeptical Oesterreich.

beyond the monistic mind/brain thesis, akin to suppositions of ghosts, ectoplasm, and gremlins.) Thus the demon hypothesis meets the criterion of explanatory simplicity expressed by Ockham's razor, versus the more encumbered naturalistic dual-hypothesis.

Sargent (1973, pp. 194, 196–97) suggests that by the fact that any belief system may be arbitrarily implanted by means of Pavlovian techniques, this brings into question the possible factuality of every and any one of them. Note this brings into question Sargent's Pavlovian reductionism itself insofar as he describes his own virtual entrancement at many of the voodoo-like ceremonies he attended and used to draw his generalizations from. ("According to my wife, I looked just as hypnotized and entranced as the snake-handlers whose photographs I was helping to take" [p. 187].) But ironic blowback aside, it seems that every scientific truth must be brought into question, insofar as Sargent's epistemology implies that every eureka experience of any thinker, if it were to involve any passion for insight and understanding, must thereby be invalidated because its truth value were brought into question by its excitatory appearance, at the moment of creation or during its teaching. (For we are told that even the reading of a sermon can bring suggestible entrancement and hence dubiety into the truths of religion.) But perhaps Sargent's agnosticism rests upon the fact/value distinction; thus scientific hypotheses are susceptible to (relative) validation, whereas spiritual belief systems are not. But I have already pointed out that there is an absolute factual and pragmatic criterion as to the relative value of "belief systems": namely, whether they are conducive to somatic, mental, social, and spiritual well-being or whether they tend toward sociopathy, psychopathy, spiritual and physical degeneration. In fact, Pavlovian reductionism, as critiqued above, is wanting even as a scientific hypothesis, leaving aside Sargent's myriad errors of fact and logic involved in his presentation.

Sargent conflates the logics of discovery and justification by the contention that any hypothesis formation engendered within a Pavlovian excitatory state renders the truth value thereof nugatory.[14] Sargent of course would acknowledge the conditions of logical justification that determine the (relative) truth value of hypotheses but would avow these are not applicable to systems of irrational belief as are originated and adhered to via Pavlovian conditioning.

According to Sargent, whatever the immediate psychosocial context surrounding the crisis, there should follow a "conversion" to the belief system of that surround: possession indifferently by demons, Holy Spirit, nationalist propaganda, hoodoo saints, all as a function of variable context. Sargent illicitly has lumped

[14] The two logics are indeed cognitively and emotively implicate per Kuhn (1970) but it is epistemically naive to presume that "passionate" conditions of insight cannot be transcended by rational justification after the fact of any such "intuitive" discovery. See Crooks (2011) for a distinction in kind between (relatively austere) rational belief and the informative criteria that both generate hypotheses and, ex post facto, determine (justify) their relative truthfulness.

various and distinct types of dissociative phenomenology together as an undifferentiated state of "possession" as the common result of a similarly stereotyped mesmeric crisis, a hyperexcitatory vortex that draws into "belief" whatever ideas happen to be present in the immediate environs, rather than construing possession proper as a unique law unto itself.

Questions that arise respecting any possible empirical validation of Sargent's canoid reductionism are manifold. Sargent has grouped together as causes of a nominally singular mesmeric crisis certain instances which are not necessarily so (e.g., reading a sermon as equated with voodoo rites); or as cases of possession those that are not necessarily so (e.g., revivalist conversion). It is not clear that all the myriad causes leading to, and effects leading from, the mesmeric crisis, said to be identical, are in fact the same.[15] The glossalalia (speaking in tongues) phenomenon of snake-handlers is said to flow from a Pavlovian mechanism identical in kind with voodoo possession; yet it is not clear if generally there is expression of multiple personality, let alone genuine possession with those said to be transiently possessed by the Holy Ghost. It seems that Sargent has confounded a stress-induced incoherent babbling plus a figurative "divine possession" with the emergence of a well-defined and at least semipermanent stable of alter personalities speaking articulately through a demoniac, though both cases indeed seem to involve dissociation and temporary amnesia.

Such indiscriminate mixing and matching of different causes of mesmeric crises, and of their effects, comes about through Sargent's exclusive fixation upon his narrowed temporal and behavioral window of crisis/collapse/recovery stages, with the consequent change of belief (conversion). By playing upon various connotations of the words and concepts involved (e.g., speaking in tongues, revival, conversion, trance, crisis), he sedulously fosters the impression that doctrinal Methodism (in particular) is no different in its effects, and thus in its ontological nature, from a caricatured snake-handling, itself no different in kind from voodoo hysteria. Sargent focuses the commonality of stress-induced dissociations, of both canines and humans, leading in the former to new operants and in the latter to novel cognitive–behavioral allegiances and beliefs. In fact demon oppression and possession are parasitic upon somatic diseases, psychiatric disorders, and stress conditions (Freeman, 1971; Koch, 1970); so that veridical possessive states must not necessarily be assimilated indiscriminately to any generic form of mesmeric crisis. Rather, only those cases in which integral occult or demon phenomenology are found with the stress or disease states should be categorized together (e.g., voodoo exhaustion with demonomania proper). The reason such an

[15] For example, the reading of Wesley's sermons as qualitatively equated with dissociative stressors as combat fatigue and voodoo orgies; variant descriptions of the abreaction states themselves, as with repentant weeping after Wesleyan conversion equated with dissociative amnesia attending voodoo entrancement.

elementary clarification was not recognized by Sargent was twofold: he gives no credence to the supernatural, and he evidently lacked discriminatory judgment more generally, as shown by his illicit conflations of disparate phenomena and by his verbal equivocations.

Anthropological Success Stories

The literature discloses anecdotal evidence of "devil's bargains" whereby demonic benefits are supposed to accrue if only the potential applicant willingly "signs up" for a term of some form of occult service. There are chintzy "healings" by demons consisting solely of temporarily obviating only those demon-caused illnesses that then permit of psychic bondage or enslavement (per Nevius) or oppression and eventual possession through propitiation. Per Unger (1971), there is an exchange of a physical affliction's attenuation for psychical disturbances through such as charming and amulets. "Many diseases were not under its control, and it seemed as if it [a "healing demon"] could perfectly cure only such as were inflicted by [other demonic] spirits" (Nevius, 1894/1968, p. 24).

Nevius expatiates upon victims whose fate was to become healers themselves through occult means, for temporary cessation of physical and spiritual sicknesses, for purposes of spreading the eager demons' poisonous net far and wide for more victims made ripe thereby for oppression or possession.[16] There were several instances where the demons promised to leave a possessed victim (at least temporarily) if only the victim and his family would pay obeisance and propitiate with homage the demon at the local temple (or alternatively, become a professional medium or healer in the name of the demon for proselytizing purposes). Tertullian (Nevius, p. 128) wrote of the demons' counterfeit healings that they "kindly" cause the disease, then leave after the relevant enchantments (effectively propitiation) are rendered, effecting a "cure."

Also note the phenomenon of "permission." By such propitiation or "buying protection" from the demon one has given oneself or others the necessary spiritual leeway whereby further affliction is guaranteed. This is a fundamental spiritual principle: permission granted or refused or rescinded (Brittle, 1980; Freeman, 1971; Holzer, 1972; Koch, 1970; Nevius, 1894/1968).

> Gods, spirits, or benevolent ancestral ghosts often provide information and give advice. They predict the future and interpret the past, advise the performance of established rituals, announce the design of new rituals [cf. "teaching demons"], specify charms and medicines to solve problems of health.... (Davies, 1995, p. 39)

[16] Koch (1965) details German occult healers' use of an insidious grimoire, the so-called *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, which authorities in Germany attempted to have banned due to recognized sociopathy and psychopathy induced by its employment; to no legal avail.

All such functions have traditionally been construed as the theory and practice of magic and sorcery, with their plethora of destructive effects on society (e.g., poisoning as a witchcraft specialty). Here, Davies sides with Sargent, McNamara, and certain sociologists lauding demonism ("spirits") against the post-anecdotal array of counterevidence as to its inherent sociopathy, documented by demonologists. The semblance of benefits devolved from that demonism (shamanism, mediumistic practices) is specious. There is no proper posit of the demoniac's "helping demon" distinct from the pathological sort otherwise readily acknowledged (sans supernaturalism) by Davies, McNamara, and their co-thinkers.

Per Davies (1995, p. 63), "helping demons" (in the vocational form of mediums, shamans, healers, soothsayers) are trained within cultural settings and institutions (today, primarily tribal). The cultural institutions are indeed training centers but who originally set up the institutions? Nevius is suggestive respecting the origins of Chinese traditions: a demonic instigation of episodic possession was followed by recruitment of the targeted victim of the demon to set up healing, fortune-telling, worship services of the possessing demon itself.

The standard sociological thesis would be that such institutions had some sort of functional benefit or they would not have emerged and evolved in the first place. The alternative thesis of demonology would be that the institutions arose to subserve a demonic agenda. If this sounds kooky, note that both McNamara and Davies emphasize how much of historical culture is devolved from teachings derived from possessive or trance states of shamans, divine kings, "possessed" prophets. I would agree that much superstitious lore has been generated through "inspired" teachings and practices. I disagree with those academics who assign inspiration to reductionist altered states of consciousness rather than to invasive demonic agents, and further disagree with the assessment that such lore has been culturally progressive, except in the form of deceptive devil's bargains.

This is seen in a quotation of Davies's own text (p. 64), regarding the suffering of an apprenticed possession victim who dares to resist the spirit's calling, entailing inflicted "depressions, extreme alienation, dissociation, and even fugues." These admitted results are indistinguishable from the stages of demonic oppression precedingly proximate to possession, documented by traditional demonologists as Summers, Koch, Unger.

If naturalistic (reductionist psychological or anthropological) explanation is given for "multicultural possession," i.e., its invariant form that transcends all eras, nations, and sociocultural contexts, as for example that this is a programmed complex that manifests within various stress and disease states across historical and racial divides, one should be able to give a sociobiological rationale for its appearance, as is done with the phenotype of altruism. But what conceivable individual or social benefit is derived from the profoundly pathologic phenomenology of demonism. Indeed certain sociologists and psychiatrists (Montgomery et al., 1976; Sargent, 1973) have posited cultural adaptivity for tribal practices that

induce possession but these are highly speculative, dubious, or unspecified or unsubstantiated. The weight of post-anecdotal historical evidence respecting an occult blowback, negativing the individual and the collective, tells heavily against such academic rationalizations.

Macklin's essay may be used as the type for all the others in Crapanzano and Garrison's (1977) anthology. Thus a medium Mrs M. has gone through traumatically stressful life experiences, thence liberated via mediumship at the behest (demand: pp. 50–51) of "spirits." There is one set of facts respecting possessive attacks by the spirits, as used by Macklin, Garrison, Davies, Sargent, and McNamara, which is shared with Koch, Freeman, Unger, Penn–Lewis; only their interpretations or competing hypotheses differ as to the meaning thereof. For Mrs. M, familial facts include: abusive father; mother with disabling migraines; infant sister dies of abscess; fatally injured brother, comatose yet cured by her mother's "folk knowledge" (cf. Mrs. M.'s own occult healing prescriptions and diagnoses); eleven-month pregnancies for two children, difficult deliveries; personal emaciation; chronically ill children, etc. (Anamneses of the possessed often disclose an occult involvement in one's personal or familial background. McAll [1982] is a psychiatrist who corroborates Koch, Summers, Freeman respecting these occult anamneses and also gives related anecdotal reportage of generational afflictions running in families with fiddling histories.)

Here is Macklin's assessment:

> In Mrs. M.'s case, having a [delusional] controlling spirit monk makes it possible for her to manage what might be considered her Oedipus–Electra complex, although it is a somewhat mutilated resolution. She now has an all-loving, all-protecting father figure with whom she can identify.… When possessed by the monk's spirit, Mrs. M. is transformed into the powerful, privileged male she longs to be, and he also provides the opportunity for education [reading occult literature] which her own father denied her. (1977, pp. 55–56).

Though Macklin herself cites extensively the ubiquitous evidence for a paranormal surround, the possible supernatural character attending this dysfunctional family's calamitous history is bracketed and tabled. In fact it might serve admirably as one of Koch's (e.g., 1965) thousands of parade cases of occult oppression: Mrs. M.'s apparitional experiences from childhood; lack of choice (pp. 50–51) as to "career," insofar as the spirits demand it (hence heteronomy, not autonomy); astral projection; chronic paranoia and anxiety state induced from an overwhelming sense of "spirit presences"; various ESP capacities including clairvoyance; traumatizing episode from the vision of a cowled, faceless monk (cp. Brittle, 1980) that thereafter became her "benevolent" and omniscient "gatekeeper," once she undertook her destined occult apprenticeship. These instances are but the highlights of malefic oppression that was followed by obsessive reading of "psychic" literature and grooming for mediumship by encouraging (human) past masters of possessive trance. "Now an ordained minister–medium, she was as fully accredited

[by the National Spiritualist Association] in her career as one could be" (Macklin, p. 54), i.e., had been graduated to a fully fledged possessive demoniac state, "booked for at least two months in advance" (ibid.). [One should cross-grid this empowered psychic's triumphal recovery with those cited by Nevius (1894/1968), viz., female Chinese fortune-tellers shackled by overpowering demonic spirits to a similar career.]

"Stressful periods in the mediums' lives set the stage for the entrance of spirit beings" (Macklin, 1977, p. 58). A most telling observation indeed, though of course Macklin does not accept the existence of spirit beings and so is using the "possession idiom" in a naturalistic (and patronizing) expression as with McCasland, Davies, Sargent. But I recur to the logical principle of arguing to the best hypothesis, regardless of ideological preconception. In the view of Pavlovians, sociologists, psychiatrists, or (here) Hegelian psychodynamic theorists, life stresses precipitate existential choices and behaviors that tend to minimize tensions, leading to a relatively optimized escape hatch; here, of mediumship that awards status, lucre, self-esteem, various emoluments. ("I went under control [became possessed], and when I came back to myself [a "trance-medium of wide reputation"] told me that I had a decided gift, and urged me, 'Go on with it. You'll never be sorry' " [Macklin, 1977, p. 52].) Thus unendurable (though mundanely explicable) stressors lead to psychosocial reorientations in the direction of maximally adaptive lifestyles more conducive to mental health than dysfunctional family strifes, etc. This hypothesis must be tested for relative simplicity, coherence, explanatory success by the principle of best hypothesis.

Leaving aside the Freudian particulars in Macklin's account, all of them come to this scheme of interpretation: from stress to reorientation to "liberation." Yet an explanatory system at least as comprehensive and simple is at hand with traditional demonology. There are victims targeted for personality and bodily dispossession; stressors generated and imposed to maximize terror and minimize resistance (including deployment of apparitions and poltergeists: Brittle, 1980); finally irresistible "careers" imposed to subserve occult agendas on those so wantonly broken (Nevius, Koch, Freeman). [Futile resistance to the subversive takeover is construed romantically as "the dark night of the soul": (Crapanzano, and Garrison, 1977, p. 16).] The ultimate psychological and spiritual empowerment is to become a resigned demoniac, and this in the sociological analysis is conceived as liberation from oppressive psychosocial influences.

I have not even emphasized in this account of Mrs. M. the (typical) facts adduced as to her own debilitating neuroses and virtual psychoses from unrelenting attacks (moderating only upon her submission) that preceded and accompanied the liberating demonic hijack of her life and personality, glaring facts from Macklin's own survey that are corroborated by thousands of similar case studies published by demonology enthusiasts who actually believe in the reality and (destructive) efficacy of occult powers.

Garrison (1977, see foreword) writes of demonic possessive enslavement, with its accompanying physical and psychological abuse and degradation of women, touted by her as "empowering," and as facilitating "long term increases in control" — control acquired supposedly by the possessively enslaved over their lives and careers, rather than by the enslavers! These claims are made by the anthropologist Garrison and the psychoanalytic contributors in her anthology, but their own studies of the victims who are superintended by their demonic controllers speak otherwise. We are informed that feminist anthropologists in particular have taken up interest in possession precisely because of its empowering of the (female) victim. The surreal nature of such conclusions can be seen by pitting such bizarre contentions against the adduced data of those falsely believing in such empowerment. The only power derived from demonic imposition is to the benefit of the parasitic occult spirit having won the battle for domination.

Such chronically dysfunctional and heteronomous persons are given over to wretched superstitions glorifying demonic beings, said to be somehow ennobling and fulfilling of their own life purposes. A possessed woman is about to hurl herself into a fire, but is pulled back by another (Garrison, 1977, p. 6). "Using this cathartic model [of possession], it is seen that Mohammed can maintain his mental stability by periodically removing the charge from his masochistic urges by slashing at his head [during ritual flagellation]…" (p. 13).

> The possession "syndrome" [within Senegal tribes], confirmed by tradition and frequently evoked in the biographies… is characterized by the prevalence of depressive forms. Anorexia and loss of weight, mutism and withdrawal, problems with the locomotive faculties, and apathy are the most recurrent signs of the general shirking of the communicative functions often observed among the possessed. *Those who are hospitalized* [emphasis added] frequently complain of repeated and painful coenesthetic [generalized somesthetic] disorders often linked to problems of reproduction. These patients show evidence of a profound transformation in their actual corporeal experience and in the wealth of their parasensory [occult?] and dream experiences. (Zempleni, 1977, p. 94)

Obeyesekere (1977) tells of "evil ancestral spirits" that become "troublesome poltergeists" unless banished; otherwise they may possess someone (p. 252). Thus Sinhalese folk beliefs are coherent with the post-anecdotal continuum: from poltergeist harassment to possession. The young female victim averred that two possessing demons were "torturing" her (p. 259); this is explained away on the grounds that she "chose" these fictitious spirits (one "of the graveyard," the other "the blood demon") to assuage her sibling rivalry and infantile traumata. Even if we accept such a Freudian interpretation for this singular demoniac, that interpretation has no applicability whatever to myriad other cases having somatic or stress etiologies or an occult anamnesis.

Davies (1995, p. 86) depicts possession as a "coping mechanism," akin to its being an option available to the socioeconomically disadvantaged. This routine

characterization of possession in the literature of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and psychiatry as a conscious choice or strategy designed to maximize personal gain is antithetical to more traditional *observations* of actual possession cases.[17] All such terminology falsely suggests that most or all possessive phenomenology is undertaken voluntarily, when speaking of its "benefits," or of its victims "responding to" (Davies, 1995, p. 86) stressful pressures and thereby "becoming a demon" (ibid.).

There is cognitive dissonance, certainly inconsistency, by such as McNamara and Davies and many of the authors they quote, as to the demoniacs in question being both conscious and unconscious in the practices. I think the locus of confusion lies in the tribal paradigm of shamanic institutions, in which there is a (nominal) voluntarism when taking up the vocation by instruction and initiations. ("Nominally" voluntary because there would be social, familial pressures, let alone any posited demonic influences for submission, which Davies [p. 64] recognizes under the guise of "rites of passage.") But the "dissociative state" is inherently unconscious, so that when the practitioner is "spellbound" there is no such voluntarism manifest, insofar as either entrancement or an alter persona has supervened. This elementary distinction has been overlooked and hence the sociologists' favored reductionist altered states of consciousness explanation of possession is systemically flawed.

The alternative traditional reading of the possession state is that it is spontaneous (if sometimes artifically induced) and invasively enslaving, inherently destructive and at most only speciously beneficial on rare occasions. Hypothesized coping functions and secondary gains of the dysfunction appear as gratuitous panegyrics upon an utterly pernicious and pathological occult phenomenon. The literature's confound of conscious and unconscious states seems derived from a conflation of the preparatory rituals designed to induce trance and possession, as voluntarily undertaken, with the practices themselves (e.g., dispensing fortunes, healing prescriptions) — all combined with the entranced state as such. The actual ASC involved (in commission of the occult trade) is necessarily unconscious and heteronomic.

> The social construction of a demon-possession paradigm allows aggressive reaction and reprisal by possessed persons who cannot in turn retaliate.... Instances of demon-possession are to be found much more commonly among classes and kinds of persons who are otherwise unable aggressively to respond to oppression and insult. Demon-possession is more often than not a coping mechanism, an attempt to solve problems resulting from unsatisfactory personal relationships by those whose

[17] For example, Hobart Freeman states he counseled hundreds of occultly oppressed, who were invariably made dysfunctional. Freeman's pastoral practice may not meet the official *DSM* guidelines for practitioners yet nonetheless he had a doctorate and besides this, I suspect such hands-on witnessing and deductions from so many live cases is of far more pertinent instructional value than all the learned monographs on library shelves regarding a "possession idiom" (Davies, 1995, p. 84).

> social status is so subordinate that they have no other effective recourse. Children may use this means to act out aggressions toward parents [cp. Rogo, 1979 respecting poltergeist causation by frustrated children]; wives may discover that a demon can express to husbands, or mothers-in-law, feelings and demands that [socially] could not otherwise be expressed.… In accounts of demon-possession one must inquire, or at least wonder, why that particular method of communication was adopted.… Because it is socially and physically problematic to be in a state of negative alter-persona possession or, to put it another way, to be considered one who occasionally turns into a demon, anyone adopting that option will have few or no other options available. (Davies, 1995, p. 37)

Insofar as possession is not to be construed as what it appears to be, namely, debilitating and supernatural invasive displacement of a personality, it must be naturalistically categorized as a form of functional adaptation of outcaste persons within the society, or alternatively as having a beneficial role (as shaman, witch doctor) that harmonizes various dynamic tensions arising within a culture. But in possession proper there is no option available to play out a part of the possessed, as if it were an expression of defiant disorder, or of routine conflicts with in-laws. The fundamental fallacy permeating such sociological and anthropological analyses is the presumption that possession is characterized by voluntary role-playing or autonomous persona alteration. This presumption is required by its proponents, despite the (their) overwhelming evidence to the contrary that genuine possession necessitates unconsciousness of the primary personality, because of their desire to derive a "positive spirit possession" from the demonic instances so as to justify their sociological posit of benefits said to accrue from the practice of what has traditionally been construed as destructive sorcery and demonism.

Garrison (1977) delineates six levels of possession for aspiring Puerto Rican mediums, all of them involving frank psychopathologies. An aspirant is supposed to climb the ladder of entrancing degrees, the better to fight off the cruder and more vicious types of "spirits" that enter on the initial levels of possession. But according to Garrison's own analysis, the pathologies only increase in virulence with each new "attainment" of skill. The last two levels of proficiency are nominally those by which one's spirit guides become protective, but even these are said to become uncontrolled and hateful at will. Thus one becomes more pathologic in an effort to stave off further somatic, spiritual, and psychological attacks in such a spiraling demonic protection racket. The Puerto Rican spirit "helpers" are thus no different in kind than the usual "helping demons" (purveyors of "positive possession") that masquerade as protectors and guides, healers and diviners in the generic possession cults.

Pressel (1977, p. 339) gives a listing of six categories of illnesses instigated by sorcery recognized by occult savants: sickness by neglecting or ignoring spirits; hexing by black magic; "demonic revenge"; "karmic illnesses"; "underdeveloped mediumship"; cursing by "evil eye". These are among the occupational hazards of being a Brazilian witch (or simply crossing the path of one). This is in

contradistinction to alleged benefits (status, "power") touted by the anthropologists. There are rules taught for "defensive counter-magic"; thus one overcomes spirit attacks by undergoing further training toward full mediumship. The malignant effects of such development of ESP, for counterattack ("white magic") against black magic or otherwise, are comparably well known in the West (Koch, Freeman, Summers). No wonder Nevius cites the revulsion, fear, and hatred accorded to sorcerers in China during the nineteenth century. Supposedly one can defend oneself only by going to their competition for counter-spells, in an unending spiral of occultism that burdens the entire society with superstition, propitiation, paranoia, hostility.

Brittle (1980) explains the rationale of demonically perpetrated poltergeist activity (a form of paranormal environs) as intended to induce utter mental and physical prostration of targeted victim(s), facilitating possession. Such prostration expresses itself in exhausted passivity, which as Penn–Lewis and Roberts (1912/1973) observes is the desideratum of targeting spirits seeking dominance of their intended subjects. This view also coheres with Sargent's (1973) depiction of African and voodoo rites (cf. Tallant, 1946/1962), abandoning and orgiastic initiations and ceremonies bringing their participants to physical collapse, thereby facilitating possession and trance states (evidenced also with spiritualistic mediumship). It is significant that witch doctors historically have been inveterate opposers of missionaries' work in African and Asian countries (Moody Bible Institute, 1960/1972; Nevius, 1894/1968). These are the prime facilitators of such bewitching rites, rites to which Jacobs (1976) and Tippett (1976) ascribe a sociological function and origin. It seems more apropos to assign etiology of these rites to the demon-inspired witch doctors and voodooiennes, who saddle their congregations with such propitiatory and ritualistic ceremonies and fanatically oppose any change in the spiritistic status quo. No less so than the possession effected by the invasively destructive spirits, these rites would be foisted by malevolent spirits upon entire villages and tribes through the resident serpentine witch doctors, so as to keep their peoples in perpetual occult bondage.

The contrary sociological hypothesis, as cultural accommodationism, bestows practicable communal wisdom and beneficent functionality to these rites. This puts us in mind of early Gnostic sects that construed the Edenic serpent as a liberator from divine restraints that otherwise would keep us in ignorance of good and evil (Rudolph, 1984; cf. Lutzer, 2006).

> We have to assume that [the shaman's] putting on the mind [by possession] of the [totemistic] Bear would actually lead to better information on things vital to the welfare of the tribe, information such as how to effectively track prey, where to find medicinal herbs, how to fight when attacked.… Shamanic spirit possession was not simple ecstasy and ravings. We have to assume that early humans were not fools. They accorded shamans prestige because shamans performed effectively often enough to yield cautious confidence in their powers. (McNamara, 2011, p. 54)

These cited benefits are characteristic of why sociologists and anthropologists accord functional utility to what appear otherwise as dysfunctional "ecstasy and ravings." But it must be observed the same benefits may be said to have accrued from nineteenth century mediums carrying out necromancy for the purpose of consoling the bereaved, or from today's fashionable channelers' services to their Hollywood clientèle. Thus benefits might be defined as broadly as one pleases. What is left out of the final account tally is the documented psychopathology afflicting the beneficiaries, routinely consequent upon such occult practices.

> Possession is instigated by the spirits; people cannot choose spirits and cannot choose to be possessed. Similarly, only the spirit can decide to cease possessing a given person, and it is believed that this almost never happens [!]. Initially the spirit indicates its interest [demand] in possessing an individual through the mode of illness or some other variety of affliction, to get his or her attention and to ascertain that its [possessive] intentions will be taken seriously. In order that the affliction be redressed, the spirit must be honored by special offerings in ceremonies.… Ideally if such an arrangement is worked out quickly, the individual will recover from the affliction and the spirit, if treated well enough over time, will in turn come to protect the individual from the predations of a variety of [competing] evil spirits.… [Refusing to honor commitments, the enslaved adept would attempt flight.] The spirits always "caught" them again, often visiting them with ever more severe illnesses until they were willing to honor their obligations, often at more inflated levels. (Morton, 1977, pp. 195–197).

Such an unchallengeable modus vivendi is termed in jurisprudence a "protection racket" if the extortion is carried out by human perpetrators. Nevius recounts identical stories of Chinese captivities from a century previous to Morton's description of events in modern Ethiopia, and no doubt the post-anecdotal case histories would document the same enslavements worldwide dating back millennia. What is striking is, given the uniformity of such narratives, the virtual impossibility of them being either fabricated or resulting from anything except what the prima facie evidence details, namely, demonic forces targeting theretofore autonomous persons for domination and subjugation and thereafter constructing tribal institutions to accommodate their rule. How otherwise can one explain what would drive persons to flee their homes and families, only to submit eventually to a burdensome occupation of spiritism, debilitated by recurrent illnesses. Are such activities of persons (invariably lucid and sane between bouts of possession: Koch, 1970) to be ascribed to fictitious forces akin to delusions and hallucinations, when such stories clearly speak of agent tormenters that evidently organize a campaign of terror, induced collapse, "recuperation," indefinite regimentation? The stories read as if "real" extortioners were chasing them from one place to another according to a standardized modus operandi, forcing their victims into stereotypical and circumscribed vocations that expand an ever-widening circle of further superstition and subjection ("training") of incoming demoniac apprentices and cadre. The entire system of coercion and enforced superstitious propitiation has been honed

for generations by an obviously intelligent (occult) power. (These magnificent structures of repression currently in place throughout the Developing Nations are the objects of Western academic studies, which theorize as to their culturally adaptive functions.)

Certainly episodic fugue states can drive a person around in such manner, but this is no more than a vague comparison because possession victims are described as fully conscious during their attempted escape from demonic control. Morton gives us a model of how occult forces bring cultural institutions into being that subserve their malevolent intentions towards persons and entire societies.[18]

In light of the obvious organized and systematic enslavement of demoniacs in sorcery cults, ancient and modern, exemplified in shaman cults today, I ask, what explanation can be given of such a global experience of organized degradation for the purpose of worship and propitiation of spirits? It is fundamentally a question of the chicken or the egg origination of the tyrannical institutions of possession cults. Thus, did possession experiences occur spontaneously in antiquity, thence institutions were built around them to contain and exploit their "benefits," by other members of the culture? (A rather odd hypothesis if in fact most such members outside the cult itself tend to fear and hate those practitioners.) If so this is a successful naturalistic and reductionist explanation. But how to account for facts such as those beneficiaries, demoniac "horses," who attempt to flee from their prestigious status but are invariably "caught," not by humans but by the ancestral, demonic spirits themselves, and dragged back willy nilly to their erstwhile profession? The case histories reveal an independent activity of the possessing spirits who systematically enslave and perpetrate such cults; the human institutions of shamans appear secondary to the prime instigation and perpetuation by occult forces. The chicken is the demonic organizing input; the egg is the cultural institutions of "adaptation" to the occult demands. Rather than focus the sociocultural and anthropological dynamics and dimensions of such institutionalized demoniac cults with their alleged cultural benefits, we might better ask as to the relevant originary spiritistic springs of their manifest resultant and pervasive sociopathy and psychopathologies. Such anthologies as Montgomery (1976) and Crapanzano and Garrison (1977) seem to abound in tribal gossip that is then made the basis for psychodynamic analysis of the coterie surrounding the possessed victim, rather than address the more germane question as to the occult factuality

[18] That I have limited myself to a cursory analysis of a few Developing Nations tribal cultures does not mean I exempt Western nations from a similar suggestion of demonic instigation of institutionalizing occult practices and beliefs, e.g., the National Spiritualist Association or the Theosophical Society. But this might strike our modern sophisticate as absurdly puerile thinking. If my thesis seems vaguely plausible concerning extant tribal cultures, but ridiculous when applied to the West, this is a measure of our own disbelief in cultural relativism, at least when applied to our own cultural predilections, despite its near universal sanction when applied elsewhere in discourse within our educational institutions.

characterizing the entire phenomenology. From such gossip material and psychodynamic conclusions, little of substance as to the actual nature of occult forces underwriting the demoniac cults might be derived. Of course addressing this latter question was never the intention of anthropologists and psychologists who from the Enlightenment perspective do not really believe in spiritism in any case. But we should like to hear from them as to their explanation of how such coercive institutions of enforced possession status can be originated and perpetrated by naturalistic means, when their own data contrarily suggest superlatively powerful occult means of keeping the demoniacs in a continuously oppressed state to subserve the cultus. First the academics would have to admit that there *is* any attendant sociopathy and psychopathy, rather than unmitigated cultural merits and personal advantage with shamanism, inter alia. But this entails only their recognizing the meaning of their own facts, which they meticulously record yet inadequately interpret.

> Most [Ethiopian possessive spirits] when speaking through entranced adepts or cult group leaders, speak harshly, exhorting their "horses" [contemptible vehicles of possession] to give them more and costlier offerings, and castigating them for actual or imagined infractions of the rules of the cult or failure to live up to the terms of their respective accommodation agreements. Often these spirit speeches are extremely insulting, with the spirit cursing the possessed and threatening him or her with the direst of consequences that include ravaging illnesses, sterility, and even death. (Morton, 1977, p. 221)

Note these threats were carried out, as detailed by Morton. Such demonic curses and ravages are not illusory but genuine and constant throughout history (Koch, 1972; Montgomery et al., 1976; Summers, 1926/1956). Notwithstanding such abusive and contemptuous treatment of their charges, the demon spirits yet bring about a productive ending to the possessed's mortification, according to Morton's peroration:

> All the elements existed for acceptance by them all of the newly defined relationship of interdependence [among the community of soothsaying demoniacs and their clientele], sanctioned by the paramount mystical authority…and centered around [demoniac] Dawit, who was now, perhaps for the first time, fully integrated into the group and into the [spiritist] cult itself. (Morton, 1977, p. 229)

Morton has just recounted the horrific story of a young man seeking vengeance, who consults the spirits through institutionalized means toward that end, becomes an apprentice to a local accredited sorceress, eventually attaining adept status himself, is threatened by those possessing spirits who predictably bring him nigh unto physical death even though still a youth, and has wasted to an emaciated frame the last time Morton bids him adieu. Yet her account of his occult saga is written to leave us believing that Dawit has somehow fulfilled his potential for "interdependence" through such a nightmarish vocation. The facts recounted are no different in kind from those adduced by "crackpot demonologists" as Nevius

and Summers; it is the interpretations of that constant series of fact regarding possession that differ so profoundly between the two camps.

Nevius states such (Chinese) sorcerers were the universal objects of hostility, fear, hatred.[19] In point of fact Morton's own account agrees with Nevius's; it is only in her final summing up that she softens the narrative and somehow draws forth a commendation of success from a routine tale of demoniacal takeover and subjugation, and incapacitation.

In such treatments at most there seems a reluctant acknowledgment, in tones of scientific objectivity, as to the personal and social destruction wrought by such practices and superstitions, sufferings yet redeemed by constructs of ultimate adaptivity of the afflicted or of his society. Morton's paper (e.g., pp. 197–198) is also enlightening insofar as it casts doubt even upon the extant anthropological maxim that occult vocations generally bring material emoluments (versus intangible or undefinable "empowerment" or "interdependence") in the form of status, lucre, privileges. (Note the parallel to value systems of the Western sorcerer: power, status, control sought by magicians, black arts practitioners in their "working" [Cavendish, 1967].) The story of Ethiopian Dawit, paralleling that of others in the Developing Nations recounted in Crapanzano and Garrison's anthology, shows systemic, progressive degradation of the possessed "horse" to where health, prestige, and living standard drop to the extreme that life becomes an imposing burden bringing high alcohol dependence, anorexia, generalized physical and psychological wastage. Such exemplars of social alienation and psychopathology from possession vocations are strongly at variance with the extant academic paradigm of empowerment attained through demonic subjection.

> The individual has learned to some degree how to behave so as to comport with the expected behavior of the [Holy Spirit], and the audience has learned how to respond correctly to that behavior. (Davies, 1995, p. 30)

This social construct of possession relies upon the posit of "learning" how to behave in a possessed manner so as to satisfy the culturally conditioned expectancies of onlookers, when in fact the "act" of possession involves no learning and is not intended for the benefit of anyone insofar as the possessed is generally unconscious at all times during the episodic loss of primary personality. Any state that is consciously learned for a social purpose ipso facto is not possession. The demonic persona is said to be a function of cultural, national, or tribal context. This is only partially accurate because true possession is not voluntary, except

[19] McNamara terms such horror of them as "awe," a more suitably ambiguous and amorphous word, meaning anything from reverence attending status or rank to fear of occult empowerment by malicious enemies. "Amongst pagan people it is still normal for the sorcerer to enjoy some form of authority and pre-eminence. Everyone hates him, but also fears him and seeks his aid. He has powers which are believed to be supernatural. He is expected to exercise a certain control over illness, natural forces and even over meteorology" (Cristiani, 1962, p. 65).

perhaps in its studied elicitation by its practitioners. Thus it does not partake of intentional, conscious role playing for the benefit or detriment of society for the simple reason that demoniacs are wholly unconscious during the episode. (A better analog is somnambulism in terms of a kind of sleeping negotiation of the environs.)

What is baffling is that Davies (p. 27) quotes Oesterreich to the effect that the personality displacement is complete — how then could there be any learning of a social role by the primary personality? Davies must mean that there is learning by the demonic personality of its prescribed social functions, relying upon and accessing the memories, skills, aptitudes of the primary personality. For as Oesterreich is quoted by Davies, that personality otherwise is wholly unconscious during an episodic possessive state.

> Possession trance is an altered state of consciousness [ASC] wherein an individual experiences a change in personal identity so that he or she feels…to be some other person altogether. (Davies, 1995, p. 26)

But there is no such feeling or experience of primary personality change with its complete displacement. No doubt there is consciousness during possession but it expresses the awareness of the invasive spirit, whose purpose is not cultural benefit but simply the exploitation of the displaced person's body and life for demonic agenda.

The only exceptions to full displacement are rare and transitional, detailed by Oesterreich as "lucid possession," in which the demonic takeover is not quite complete; and these appear invariably pathological, never "positive" so-called "spirit possession."

> The practice of spirit-possession is essentially social in nature. Rarely do individuals enter a possession state in solitude for their own personal benefit. People who become possessed do so in the presence of others and communicate with others. (Davies, 1995, p. 35)

This is a proof text demonstrating that Davies has confounded, throughout his analysis, the conscious preparatory methods used for inducing entrancement or possession with the actual subsequent unconscious "experiential ASC" itself. Both McNamara, who generally follows Davies along this line, and Davies himself use the construct of "conscious possession" as synonymous with their "positive-" and "spirit-possessions."

What I have written already concerning McNamara's inexistent positive possession applies to Davies's spirit-possession. Both conflate sundry incongruous syndromes toward the end of (1) explaining demonic possession naturalistically and reductionistically as an ASC, and (2) touting a socially beneficent form of possession that is a polarized mirror image of its demonic opposite number.

> Traditional possession and exorcism provided a way whereby an individual could project anxiety or even a "mania" onto a spirit which possessed him and then through the process of exorcism disown not only the possessing spirit but its antisocial deeds as well. The trance state provided for this dissociation and reintegration. On the part of society, unacceptable behavior could thus be identified and abolished.... The possession and exorcism rituals, inasmuch as they take place in the context of subliminality, provide a way by which deviant individuals in society can enter the realm of death and decay in the trance state. By so doing, the unconscious may be enabled to express itself. And so, according to Jung: "In this way they grant life to the shadow yet prevent it from taking an upper hand in their daily life." (Jacobs, 1976, p. 177)

A perfect example of anthropological, psychological, and sociological reductionism. Note the possession experience has been taken out of an historical context of occult phenomenology and deposited in a domain of social and psychosocial dys/functions. The ontology of the spiritual pathology is not even considered, no doubt because of its being outside acceptable post-Enlightenment discourse that pervades all academic sociological, anthropological, and psychological research on possession. Obligatory acquiescence is granted to objectivity of observation, that of leaving aside any judgments concerning an in/existence of the spirits in question. But the very focus on psychosocial concomitants in face of the prima facie overriding import of the (unexplained) occult phenomenology, as though it were only a distracting and irrelevant side issue, can mean nothing else than a psychological or social reductionism with a tacit dismissal of any possible reality of the referenced possessors.[20]

There would be two prime oversights by sociologists, as a function of tribal members' fears driven by secrecy and fear of demonic retribution for divulging the purpose and meaning of ritualistic lore. (1) That such practices must be socioculturally beneficial, following a doctrine of cultural evolution that that meme that has survived for ages must have a functional purpose within the group having retained it (thus instigating an academic search for such putative benefits); (2) the "belief system" is at the heart of cultural anthropological and sociological studies, not the truth or veridicality of the beliefs themselves.

Crapanzano and Garrison (1977) and Davies (1995) expound a thesis of the cultural relativity of possession states. Thus, does the fact that there are many possessions in the Developing Nations today, with relatively fewer in the West, endorse a naturalistic explanation of their respective incidence? This seems to turn a simpler reasoning on its head: more extant sorcery in the Developing Nations means more trafficking with demonic powers, hence presumptive greater incidence of possessive cases there. Further, many instances of possession in the West

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[20] Cf. Dennett's (1991) parallel denial of sensory phenomenology for philosophical reductionist purpose. For Dennett questions the "reality" of both veridical and illusory sensory data as visual and auditory percepts in his radical denial of experiential "qualia," labeling them "false beliefs" (Crooks, 2003; Smythies, 2003; Wright, 2003).

may well be misdiagnosed as multiple personality disorder, schizophrenia, mania, dissociative identity disorder along the lines of McCasland and Sargent; not that any therapeutic treatments have been forthcoming for possession as such.[21]

The referenced anthropological texts on demon possession (Crapanzano and Garrison, Montgomery, Davies, McNamara) invariably stress the external concomitants of possession, e.g., rewards or stressors implicated in the causality and etiology of possession states. They also violate the Nevius Rule inasmuch as they are several steps removed from the primary empirical descriptive accounts emanating from the demoniacs themselves, while demonology is closest thereto.

Demon-free Parapsychology

Traditional demonology's interpretive categories of possession inter alia ostensibly have been superseded in explanation by an updated "scientism of the psychical."

> The histories of animal magnetism [Mesmerism], hypnotism, and psychical research are inextricably intertwined.... The literature of any one of these areas cannot but include the literature of the other two. (Crabtree, 1988, p. xvi)

Parapsychology's paranormal "versus" the supernatural (Montgomery, 1975; Murphy, 1961) is nothing more than a veneer of scientific objectivity put upon traditional occultic researches and practices. The fact that, historically, the practice and theory of occult Mesmerism antedated consequential psychical endeavors should properly inform us as to their mutual implication.

Rogo (1979, chap. 6) rehearses three theories of possession; but even though he observes the concomitant phenomenology of poltergeistery that surrounds possession, still the connection never occurs to him that its pandemonium is precursory to possessive displacement. Indeed in the case of Matthew Manning and his conversion into a psychic demoniac after years of carrying about a poltergeist surround, this is termed by Rogo a success story, rather than recognizing the usual pattern of pandemonium followed by a possession status of the targeted victim.

It is possible to "redirect the force" of a poltergeist surrounding a focus-person by "developing a talent for automatic writing" (Rogo, 1979, pp. 266–267). In fact the Ouija "toying" (Rogo's term) is a species of automatic writing, combined with

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[21] This anthropological point respecting the cultural determination of the possessed's personality is applicable to a further inference made by Rogo (1979), viz., that the fact that self-identifying demons speaking through demoniacs are culture-specific must entail that there can be no real demons — because the manifestations of demonomania must be conditioned solely by the primary personality's acculturation within a given historical context. This conclusion strikes me as a non sequitur insofar as the cultural identification displayed by the demonic personality is as arbitrary as the name it furnishes, often for deception. The demoniac, as Rogo observes, often supplies unknown knowledge perhaps obtainable only via precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance, xenoglossia. Accordingly, we may presume that with such occult faculties at their command they can surely access a working knowledge of the particular culture in which they manifest without relying on the acculturation of their victims.

necromancy (spiritistic conjuring of the "dead"). There could result only intensification of the occult oppression by such further entrancement, which makes one a passive recipient of "communications" from the "other side." In fact the boy cited by Rogo who developed his talent became a full-fledged "psychic," i.e., demoniac, after thus expressing his creative side. What Rogo construes as a successful transition in terms of "controlling" the poltergeist ended with the accession of the boy into a mediumistic focal point for demonic forces — precisely what the present model predicts as to the purpose of occult oppression.

We might "with great satisfaction" recognize and commend this "harnessing and redirecting" of the erstwhile persecutive poltergeistery into "creative and psychic abilities" (p. 268). My interpretation is orthogonal to Rogo's, for I maintain the poltergeist was successful in harnessing a new "horse" for spreading occult practices that can bring only further degrading and pathologic sequelae in its train, just as is historically customary with other mediums, shamans, and channelers. The wholesale voluntary or involuntary relinquishing of one's personality and faculties to the invasion is precisely the intended goal of the harassment. Rogo shows he is at one with the anthropologists who laud possessive takeover as expressive of creativity and even being culture-bearing. Middle class mediums may be more subdued in plying their wares than raving demoniacs as the Gadarene victim but the mediums' typical end is no different in kind (Crapanzano and Garrison, 1977; Koch, 1965, 1972; Summers, 1926/1956). And yet Rogo claims that he is one of the few parapsychologists who recognize how dangerous the poltergeist can be! There is not only potential social dysfunction attendant on those fashionable mediumistic practitioners proselytizing the occult gospel (e.g., Jane Roberts and Helen Schucman: Newport, 1997) but also from their academic sympathizers who cannot recognize properly even the salient facts of their own case studies. Rogo's construct of "repressed creativity" of the adolescent expressed by a rampaging poltergeist is tantamount to the anthropologists' canard of "empowering mediumship."

Rogo details the case of Julio, an ideal subject of poltergeist investigation insofar as he was constantly surrounded by occult (psychokinetic) happenings wherever he went, having this "psychic ability" ascribed to him on the grounds that his is a hostile and repressive personality, a hypothesized predisposing factor. But we are also told (p. 104), "Utter passivity was a basic component of his personality...." A passive character is precisely the type sought for and induced by demonic spirits looking for an ingress to human bodies (Brittle, 1980; Penn–Lewis and Roberts, 1912/1973). Julio's described sociopathy, self-destructive acts, and nightmares round out the typical description of someone under occult oppression. Coupled with the observable psychokinetic evidence there should be little further cause for questioning the more traditional diagnosis, namely, that Julio was well on his way to a confirmed demoniac status, slated for invasive personality takeover by prospective new tenants.

Note that there is no need for Rogo's invocation of Freudian categories to shore up his parapsychological interpretation of the data. That ploy merely complicates and makes more dubious his already tenuous attempt to assimilate the supernatural material (e.g., "entities" for demons) to a more positivist guise.

Let us look at the claim that "psychic disturbances" bring on poltergeistery. (Repressed wishes are cited as causative.) By what precise chronometry has Rogo or other parapsychologists determined cause and effect in these matters? Thus the Bell Witch case: a girl is stricken with various physical ailments, said to be a function of her own psychic abilities that are generating the concomitant poltergeist and psychokinetic activity. The traditional explanation would be that cause and effect have been reversed in that explanation; rather, it is the demon(s) that is generating the occult surround and the concurrent physical and psychological oppression. To transfer causality from presumptive exterior demons to hypothetical subconscious processes is not much of an advance in scientific understanding. At least the demonological scheme accounts for the brazenly blasphemous content of the possessed's ravings, and for the prior occult involvement as a causal factor (e.g., Ouija divination). But indeed there does seem to be a causal link between emotive agitation (anger, hostility, fear) or even its absence (passivity, prostration) and demonic activity, namely, the demonological explanation being that the pandemonium represents a calculated uproar instigated precisely for the purpose of inducing possession through chronic emotive loss of control.

Nevius (1894/1968, pp. 321–322) gives fourteen criteria by which mediumship overlaps demonic possession proper, including the progressive development of ESP and paranormal surround, as well as the notorious psychopathic sequelae:

> What are the moral accompaniments and sequences of mediumistic practices? Who does not know them? What is their moral tone? What is their final tendency? What type of character most widely prevails among confirmed and persistent spiritualists? (Nevius, 1894/1968, p. 323)

In particular, the infamous rappings and knockings of so-called poltergeists are said to be a constant attendant upon mediums and their seances; these form the mainstay means of communication between the "familiar spirit" and the necromancer. Note the documented (if anecdotal) correspondence of poltergeists with the possessed whithersoever they may go. Such paranormal surrounds suggest, per demonology anyway, that mediums and channelers (Hanegraaff, 1996) are essentially demoniacs. Nevius makes the pungent observation that at least demoniacs proper are unwilling victims of demonic invasion; mediums are the willing instruments of spirits' communications and "control" (mediumistic term for a familiar spirit).

This brings us to a possibly legitimate intertheoretic identity: that of demoniacs, sybils, mediums, and channelers. (In fact there are many more instances of veridical possession, as with voodooiennes [Sargent] and even ancient Norse

berserkers [McNamara, 2011]; cf. Pember and Lang [1911/1975].) Only their varied functional roles are differentiated, not the fact of their possession: divinatory, oracular, necromantic, the fashioning and codifying of heterodox canons of theosophy.

> Many cases have been cited in previous chapters in which clergymen were attacked upon entering a poltergeist-affiliated house. Likewise, poltergeists will often isolate religious items for specific acts of violence. It is not odd to read that Bibles, icons, or religious paintings are often molested by the poltergeist; and it is no wonder, then, that so many accused the devil of propagating the attacks. (Rogo, 1979, p. 169)

When we are told it is "not odd" that Christian paraphernalia and personages are typical foci of psychokinetic attacks, Rogo must mean this in the sense that it is a common occurrence, not that it is not an unusual and baffling phenomenon in its own right, for he denies the existence of demons actuating such "paranormal activity." But in fact the commonplace sacrilegious phenomenology he thus documents is certainly anomalous to his parapsychological scheme of interpretation, which dispenses with outmoded superstitions. Contrarily, no anomaly thereby affixes to the demonological explanation, as the datum falls right out of its axiomatic premises.

Indeed there are further anecdotes of a similar nature Rogo adduces. A convert from Hinduism is assailed with his family by "psychokinetic" arsons and pelting objects (pp. 169–171); the attacks end only via an exorcism. A pagan convert of antiquity "was startled to see objects floating about his house while stones mysteriously fell upon it" (p. 140; cp. Brittle, 1980; Koch, 1972). A recent convert with his wife and baby are subjected to murderous attacks by an infestation of "noisy ghosts" (pp. 190–195). (Cf. Nevius, Brittle, Koch, Summers for parallel accounts of psychokinetic harassment of converts and of those fleeing oppressive occult practices and liasons.)

Exactly what is the advance in scientific comprehension afforded by parapsychology's redefinitions and bracketing of relevant occult phenomenology, to an understanding of the data as such, whether oppression (e.g., occult surround) or possession itself? Thus "paranormal entities" functional of repressed wishes of those at the epicenter of poltergeists are to be contrasted to the traditional conception of discarnate evil spirits targeting persons for possession. Occult spiritual activity in the form of mind reading and divination are renamed telepathy and precognition and are subjected to empirical investigation using statistical and laboratory experimental methods. The fundamental constructs are not much different, and certainly the phenomenology of the natural kinds ("the facts") considered in either study are identical in the sense of historical constancy.

Rogo, qua scientific parapsychologist, casts a condescending glance and condemnatory fiat at pre-parapsychological understandings of psychokinesis and

poltergeists, which in past centuries were characterized as demons and spirits of the deceased, but now of course we know much better. This attitude is in fact begging the question because whether the parapsychological vantage is more explanatory than demonology's regarding the "paranormal" (supernatural) is the query to be ascertained.

The "paranormal entities" of parapsychology are not other than demonology's demons, an instance of Churchland's (1984) "intertheoretic identity." If taken seriously, this would constitute an ironic reversal of Churchland's scheme: there is reversion from a nominal "science of the paranormal" (which Churchland [1987] in fact rejects) to ignorant "superstition" (demonology of the Dark Ages). But in actuality post-anecdotal evidence supports the traditional scheme better than the "scientifically objective" model. One would predict from the demonological model such as Rogo's findings; they fall from the hypothesis. The generalized prediction from demonology is that parapsychology's "entities" involved in ESP, psychokinesis, paranormal environs will partake of demonic character as assayed by traditional demonology; hence the competing hypotheses admit of an empirical determinant as to the best hypothesis. (Rogo dogmatically states that the traditional phenomenon of hauntings, now known as poltergeists, is not caused by disembodied spirits, but rather by psychokinesis. But as with Murphy [1961], the traditional explanation is thereby slighted, for by hypothesis neither ghosts [spirits of the deceased] nor psi forces are at work, but rather demonic agents that impose upon the living via oppression, impostures, and terrorization designed ultimately to bring about possession.)

Rogo (1979, p. 216) asserts that the causal agency behind "possession–poltergeist" as heretofore ascribed to demonic activity is a doctrine propounded by Roman Catholicism. This is to lack understanding of the Nevius Rule regarding demonology: the "doctrine" of demonic agency has been propounded historically by the alter demonic personality and is not an arbitrary theological construct generated by this or that religion. The votaries and hierophants of religions have only adapted their rituals of exorcism to the indelible facts of those alters' self-identifications.

There is a striking fact pertaining to psychokinesis, ESP, and poltergeists in parapsychology literature. They are invariably and inexorably negative, ugly, and destructive in character, akin to McNamara's and Davies's "negative (sociopathic) possession." Thus stone-throwing, pyromania, blasphemies, houndings, explosions of glass, desecrations, pointless rappings and levitations. Why the invariant and unyielding negativity? Parapsychology would appear to have no obvious rationale available, but demonology readily does, in its identification of all such perpetrating "entities" as evil spiritist agents, whether manifesting in occult oppression, possession, ESP, psychokinesis, apparitions, "hauntings." All these threatening disruptions represent a constant modus operandi ultimately aimed at inducing exhaustion, submission, possession, in that sequence. (Such inherently

rogue activities of presumptive demonic poltergeists are to be contrasted with the altruistic and benevolent protective functions of unfallen angels: Graham, 1975.)

Murphy (1961) and Rogo (1979) document the historical origins of parapsychology in the Spiritualist movement (seances, ghosts, mediumship). Its founding figures as Conan Doyle, Sir William Crookes, Oliver Lodge, and William James were all on the "cutting edge" of spiritist research. This is suggestive when we view the very terms and concepts of parapsychology in toto, e.g., psychokinesis, precognition, clairvoyance. These are ostensibly neutral and objective yet they paper over the obviously demonic character of much of psychokinetic activity and its invariably negative nature (hauntings, injuries, terrorizations); let alone that ESP forms and poltergeists often surround the possessed who exhibit the classic demonic personality. I suggest that the parapsychology categories of thought are not much helpful insofar as the terms and concepts are effective only in masking and confounding the otherwise manifest demonic nature of that occult evidence seen so clearly by traditional demonology.[22]

> Many of the possession–poltergeist phenomena are identical with those of the conventional poltergeist — telekinesis, odd noises, raps, and, in Hans Bender's cases, the ESP ability of the agent.... Xenoglossy [speaking in theretofore unknown languages], so common in possession cases, is unheard of in the literature on the classical poltergeist.... Therefore, poltergeist and possession–poltergeist, although resembling each other, may well be different phenomena... [p. 22]. The demonic theory also explains the frequency of such phenomenology as in-dependent voices, psychokinesis over great distances (since the "demon" could conceivably travel) and types of psychokinesis activity not usually associated with human psychokinesis ability. Totally independent and ostensibly evil beings [cf. Nevius on exogenous origin of displacing, invasive personality] can also easily account for the vicious and even murderous nature of the poltergeist-possession victim, a type of viciousness not found in any phase of conventional mediumship. In short, the conventional demonic theory which postulates that the agency manifesting is from without, not from within the victim's own mind, does explain the phenomenology of the poltergeist–possession better than the conventional poltergeist explanation. Nonetheless, there are still barriers to this explanation" etc. (Rogo, 1974, p. 23).

Given so many admitted overlaps, I suggest contrarily an interpretive reversion to the simpler traditional hypothesis, that the parapsychologist's possession–poltergeist and poltergeist proper express in fact the *same* though variegated phenomenological being, viz., interiorized personality-displacement *demonic incursions,* and exteriorized *demonic excursions,* respectively.

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[22] Insofar as parapsychology's terms as *psychokinesis* and *extrasensory perception* and *poltergeist* (i.e., noisy ghosts) have many of their conceptual origins in 19th century Spiritualism — itself historically implicated with demonology — then more demonological nomenclature is not unreasonable in redefining the parapsychological terminology, as *demono-kinesis* and *demono-sensory perception* and *pan-demon-ium* (i.e., noisy demons) in that there is some anecdotal evidence that phenomenology of these kinds is involved in possession cases.

Holzer (1972) and Rogo eschew nomenclature connoting superstition and traditional demonology but what alternative conception do they offer except "invisible paranormal entities," which are no different in kind than "invisible demonic spirits." Such parapsychologists are in cognitive dissonance insofar as they believe in the ontology of demonology but fear the imputation of being religious fanatics (e.g., "witch burners" or as having "demons on the brain"), and aspire after scientific pretensions.

Rogo's approach speaks of a modernized understanding of the supernatural not exhibited in bygone days. But in fact, examining his facts and data, we find that they are no different in kind whatever from traditional categories of occultism, derived from observation and demonological interpretation. Insofar as the facts are the same, the question as to superiority of interpretation must redound to that scheme that exhibits an argument to the best hypothesis, by simplicity, comprehensiveness.

Enlightenment Savants

An easy way out of confronting post/anecdotal facts pertaining to possession and its encircling poltergeistery is to persuasively undermine the motivations or competencies of their witnesses.

> The assumption so often heard nowadays, [is] that no testimony should be received in such investigations but that of so-called "experts…." In investigations of this kind, *who* are the "experts"? (Nevius, 1894/1968, p. 261)

That possession is an affliction with an uncontested existence is little denied; the only thing at issue is whether it may be better explained naturalistically or supernaturally.

> Psychosis is a fairly common affliction among humans, and in earlier centuries its victims were standardly seen as cases of demonic possession, as instances of Satan's spirit itself, glaring malevolently out at us from behind the victims' eyes. That witches exist was not a matter of any controversy. One would occasionally see them, in any city or hamlet, engaged in incoherent, paranoid, or even murderous behavior. But observable or not, we eventually decided that witches simply do not exist. We concluded that the concept of a witch is an element in a conceptual framework that misrepresents so badly the phenomena to which it was standardly applied that literal application of the notion should be permanently withdrawn. Modern theories of mental dysfunction led to the elimination of witches from our ontology. (Churchland, 1984, p. 44)

Churchland's thesis presupposes (1) that modern reductionist theories of mental illness (e.g., multiple personality disorder, bipolarity) or of "biochemical disorders" (Breggin, 1991; cf. Cohen, 1990, 1994) have been more successful explanatorily than the traditional explanation of demonology; and (2) that it was scientific

advance, rather than scientism and post-Enlightenment ideology, that motivated the shift of interpretative framework regarding possession in particular and the "paranormal" in general. Churchland's argument is fallacious for the swimmingly simple reason that witches exist today and have done so for centuries; most are not only not psychotic but are (nominally) rational devoted practitioners of such as Wicca (Cavendish, 1967; Crooks, 2007; Wilson, 1971).

Churchland's either/or fallacy, namely, that witches are either truly demoniacs or merely mentally dysfunctional, parallels a patent fallacy of irrelevant conclusion: no Satan, ergo no satanists (Sagan, 1996; cf. Victor, 1993). These two fallacies suggest a third one implicit in the minds of many post-Enlightenment savants: no demons, hence no demon possessions. But the empirically attested phenomenology of possession has never been in doubt through the ages (Summers, 1926/1956): blasphemies, convulsions, efficacious exorcisms expelling alternate personalities. Because the demonological *interpretation* of demon possession has been discredited in favor of reductionist explanation (e.g., ASC), therefore phenomenal facts corresponding to the same must be inexistent too: a fallacy of *ignoratio elenchi*.

Churchland's either/or fallacy regarding witches is set aside by that naturalistic third option, namely, that Wiccan adherents among (many) others actually exist (Adler, 1986). But in fact a fourth possibility arises, supposing we accept post-anecdotal evidence of the reality of supernatural (evil): all three slated interpretations might obtain, no necessary mutual exclusion among them. Thus there exist "real" witches qua satanic minions; those "mentally ill" who are mistaken for witches; and naturalistic witches who practice black arts (e.g., poisoning, hexing) but who are not satanic pawns because their "working" is independent of any preternatural powers. Indeed a fifth variant option is suggested by Nevius. At Salem, a number of the accused answered the charges by stating that the accusers themselves were the ones possessed by the devil — not a bad post-anecdotal hypothesis in my opinion, even if it was legally inadmissible at that emotively charged time and place. In this context, that would mean that malicious supernatural agents (of a kind with "demonic poltergeists": Rogo, 1979) falsely implicate others in bewitching activities by taking possession of those (as at Salem) who were themselves innocent of intentional wrongdoing in their accusations. (Churchland's either/or fallacy has its two options clearly derived from the Salem caricature of persons falsely accused by overwrought religious "demonomaniacs" deluded by murderous superstition, certainly not by demonic agents of possession; cf. Sagan, 1996.)

Churchland (1984, 1987) states there is no replicability for parapsychology experiments and tacitly infers from this that there is no other legitimate evidence for the "paranormal." But post-anecdotal evidence constitutes replication of major phenomenology of all major (debatable) types and subtypes of supernaturalism, and this under conditions absolutely precluding cheating, hoaxes, self-deception,

i.e., independent attestation among (ultimately) millions of observers across all cultures and eras — preempting charges of observer bias. If it were answered that these are mere "field studies" (cf. academic Kurt Koch's [1972, 1973] 20,000 case studies involving occult oppression, to name only one researcher) and not hard laboratory evidence, we may well respond that the search for laboratory replication of experiment or observation is itself a kind of artifact of the experimental method, to which all phenomena are not equally susceptible of verification. If we add to this that by supposition the demonic spirits in question are incorrigibly deceptive and willfully elusive, being even "pranksters" (Rogo, 1979) as a function of such demonic intelligence, then this would explain the inability to consistently replicate such phenomenology as ESP or poltergeists really caused by such discarnates.

Post-anecdotal methodology gives the comeuppance to any other dismissive presumption. Because there is not necessarily any amenability of the paranormal to show itself on command (laboratory replicability) does not mean the phenomenology is inexistent or that hoaxing is responsible for any putative "false positive" reports of its presence.[23]

Randi's (1982) methodology of debunking consists of investigating with a jaundiced eye the psychic fakes and charlatans who claim paranormal powers. A practiced stage magician under controlled conditions looks for sleight of hand culminating in bent spoons or fishy card tricks. A few anecdotes of debunked dowsers and mediums suffice by way of extrapolation for, implicitly or explicitly, all other cases of claimed supernaturalism. Pejoratives as liars, cheats, nonsense, the gullible, inter alia liberally suffuse his various unmaskings to rhetorically facilitate the generalization.

But exposing a few instances of paranormal bunkum does not touch post-anecdotes. Notoriety cannot be charged insofar as such central phenomenologies as possession and oppression were not devised for publicity seekers, at least not for their victims and their families, who rather consider the affairs as sordid and loathsome and hence sedulously avoid any publicity (Nevius). Trickery accusations are inappropriate insofar as the evidence is constituted by a kind of meta-analysis from records in the public domain, and abstractions from cross-cultural studies spanning centuries. Thus the data are patterns of phenomenology, not staged outcomes of "sittings" within darkened seances or laboratory demonstrations of psychokinesis, in which individual persons are watched closely to detect their physical means of table-tipping and rappings. Those psychics treated by Randi

[23] Patricia Churchland's (2002) illustrative card trick and debunking of fire walking — recounted in Paul Churchland (1987) — constitute an inductive sample of exactly two instances that are implied, when extrapolated to the entire history of the supernatural, to refute the mountainous (post-anecdotal) evidence attesting to certain subcategories of its reality. Such an elementary error of logic is on a par with her inductive generalization from one unestablished example of a so-called "intertheoretic identity," to the entire history and structure of science (Crooks, 2008; cf. Crooks, 2002a, 2002b).

appear one and all to be publicity hounds, whereas post-anecdotal evidence constitutes a conglomeration of evidence from every and any source — even from unwitting anthropologists and psychologists — which has no intrinsic link to any publicity seeking. Indeed most of the testimonies are derived from singular attestations, fewest of all from controversial flim-flammers seeking notoriety or remuneration. The evidence proper is abstracted from various sources that in its entirety transcends all such disreputable motivations and hence is absolutely impervious to such criticism.

Randi's extrapolation is from a few anecdotes, to ultimately millions of other cases by analogy (the weakest form of logical induction). His argument is that because a few cases have been debunked, all observed or reported instances therefore must be bunk. A post-anecdotal analysis comes from the opposite direction and deduces a contrary conclusion. *When we start from the totality of patterned evidence, showing it could not have been faked because of its independent reportage over centuries and cultures, that identity and mass of corroborated testimony must of its weight discredit the very extrapolation from the debunked cases to the veridical.* Not only do the faked cases (e.g., Uri Geller) not invalidate the post-anecdotally substantiated instances, the coherent mass of testimony in favor of (circumscribed) supernaturalism makes the inductive inference from the debunked cases of null effect, respecting the existence and veracity of the established veridical phenomenology construed in toto. The inescapable and incontrovertible conclusion is that those massed testimonies are mapping a common (supernatural) reality. (Cf. Crooks [2003] regarding privations — here, hoaxes — having meaning only when contrasted to a countervailing norm, namely, *actually existent* veridical phenomena, of which they are privative; also Nevius respecting documented fakes, of any number, as having no controverting logical impingement on even a single substantiated instance.)

Post-anecdotal evidence pertains very little to such testing of alleged paranormal powers of individuals and more with (qualitative) meta-analyses of specific types of occult phenomenology, preeminently possession. Thus Randi's (or Houdini's) net for catching charlatans is not sufficiently fine-meshed enough to capture, let alone debunk, such phenomenology that transcends cheats and hoaxes within a single sitting or "demonstration."

Randi's deficient logic is illustrated (1982, p. 38) where he cites a "major hallmark of paranormal chicanery," viz., the operative presumption that, "If a phenomenon is consistent with previously reported ones, this is cited as strong evidence that it is genuine." Further, "That the [faked photographic evidence was] constructed to match the accounts and the expected appearance seems not to have dawned on any of the investigators." Indeed this reputed chicanery is a cornerstone of my methodological compilation of post-anecdotal evidence — that patterns of consistent testimonies and phenomenologies across cultures and eras suggest cumulative veracity — so that I should address his charge. My answer must be that replication of expected results, whether observationally or experimentally, is the hallmark of

scientific method and indeed Churchland (1987), contrary to his colleague Randi, decries the lack of replication of parapsychological results within the laboratory and counts it against such "pseudoscience." Only someone as ideologically hidebound as Randi would take such an elementary principle of rational inquiry and transform it into an accusation against (solely) investigators of the paranormal.

Sagan's (1996) explanation of supernatural observations by citation of hallucinations, either individual or collective, constitutes an explanation-away of post-anecdotal data that is untenable because of the unique and patterned types and subtypes partitioning the composite mass of testimonies, generated by countless independent observers over the centuries. (Specifically, the pattern and meaning of pandemonium preceding possession, viz., the producing of prostration enabling the possessive invasion, is itself at least an anecdotal factual pattern of evidence.) The thesis of hallucination or mis-perception may dispose of individual instances of occult observation but it is wholly inadequate to explain the independent yet convergent patterning of the data.

Sagan's armchair explanatory overgeneralization — without actual empirical substantiation on a case-by-case basis — of such collective illusion would necessitate a contagion effect among observers within an immediate (sensationalistic) context. Contagions of mass suggestibility are operative only in very limited locales over very short periods of time. Even if all corroborated testimonies of occult activity within the composite historical record were subsumed under that posit of folie à deux, this could never explain the *independently generated and yet identical taxonomies* of the common phenomenologies composing the entire evidential base — which identical taxonomies from independent reportage bespeak the impossibility of any "global-wide hallucinations" taxonomically converging by chance rather than by common (occult) causality — even as with the particulars within possession.

Besides, Sagan's thesis respecting tyranny, injustice, and chronic superstition arising from religious irrationalism is a caricature belied by the Nevius Rule. For, insofar as demoniacs have manifested in every society, there is every reason to believe that the belief in demonic spirits arose from the mouths of the possessed, not necessarily from any scheming priesthood seeking to oppress the masses by fables of bogeymen. He suggests a fallacy of irrelevant conclusion (*ignoratio elenchi*) regarding pernicious consequences following from witch hunts. People died as a result of superstition, therefore demonology must be false.

This is not without historic precedent (Unger, 1952): the rulership of ancient empires as Assyria and Babylon did likewise and were reduced to a condition very much like that caricature of witch hunting Salem as depicted by debunkers as Sagan and Churchland who fear mass irrationalism and superstitiousness. Thus I concur with them as to the cognitive and social dangers emanating from the New Age movement (Newport, 1997) but differ from them as to the rationale therefor. I believe in the existence of (evil) supernaturalism and the contagion it inexorably spreads through its propitiation and practice because of its reality, whereas they

deplore its negative impact on rational pursuits (specifically science) and social sanity precisely because they do not believe in its actual existence — an actuality of pernicious supernaturalism that otherwise may even be interpreted naturalistically for professorial debunkers.

Sagan reviews demonological contentions, at least in a form of Salem caricature, yet does not mention possession. He states (p. 159) of certain religious fundamentalist logic that requires a positing of the devil to underwrite its belief in God, "No Satan, no God." This seems to be Sagan's unspoken modus operandi also, inasmuch as his own animus against religion obligates him to gainsay any evidence of (evil) supernaturalism, to the end of denying any possibility of divine reality within his monopolistic positivist scheme. Paradoxically then, he shares with his excoriated fundamentalists an identical principle of reasoning put to an antithetical purpose.

Sagan decries charges of modern satanic ritual abuse as fictitious on the grounds of its resemblance to alleged alien abduction tales, as well as its pedigree supposedly devolving from the Salem witch trials. But examination of the case histories of occult involvement details a near-universal psychopathy attending satanic practices. Accordingly, evidence of victims being abused or killed by practitioners of the black arts should not be surprising, and by extrapolation from that fact properly we should suspect that such crimes have been integral to occult "devotions" since antiquity (Cavendish, 1967; Graysmith, 1986, 2002; Raschke, 1990; Wilson, 1971).

There are a priori and a posteriori grounds for crediting the satanic mindset being inseparable from psychopathic practices. Graysmith (1986, 2002) recounts the Zodiac serial killer of California as having had upwards of fifty victims. In his taunting letters to the police, he stated that by his murders he was accumulating slaves to serve him later in hell. Cavendish (1967) explains why it is that such "practicing" satanists do not fear that such murderous criminality will land them in eternal torment. Insofar as criminal satanists revel in psychopathic crimes — being spiritually psychotic and morally insane — they believe that hell is not to be a place of *punishment* for them, but rather of *reward* where they will be able to continue their indulgent celebrations throughout eternity. Thus, the rationale for Crowley's motto: "Do what thou wilt." Even supposing that supernatural evil personae as Satan and his demonic cadre are nonexistent, this would not logically entail that (evil) satanists are nonexistent also.[24]

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[24] *Satanism* is defined as the delight and joy in perpetration of evil for its own sake. Any psychopath as a Manson or Zodiac so morally and spiritually deranged that he could believe that he would not be punished (eternally) for his satanic criminality but instead be rewarded with endless "more of the fun," must indeed possess a most unique "theology," in which the order manifest in the universe is conceived not to have been created by an all-beneficent God who seeks the ultimate good of that creation in toto — but rather by a god who orchestrated everything to the end of facilitating satanically destructive practices, "for the fun of it all." Some may not consider the traditional theistic conception to be self-evident, but every conscionable person must suffer revulsion in horror and disgust at the satanic doctrine of eternal reward for criminal psychopathy.

Sagan (1996, pp. 158–159) correlates questions of strictly empirical provenance with those of a seemingly paranormal character. Thus, again, by his proprietary method of "baloney detection" he impugns and confounds those who claim satanic ritual abuse with the reports made by alleged alien abductees. Logically speaking, to contend that because Satan does not exist, therefore satanists do not exist, is a fallacy of irrelevant conclusion insofar as satanic rites have been practiced by satanists, regardless of whether a prince of darkness actually exists or not.[25] Sagan questions the veracity of victims of ritualistic crimes on the tacit basis of a similar fallacy, namely, if there is no Satan, there can be no victims of satanism. Ideological skeptics as Sagan and Churchland have fallen such victims to the Salem caricature that their denials and expunging of evident historical fact are egregious.

> The believers [in extraterrestrial aliens] take the common elements [morphological features of ETs] in their stories as tokens of verisimilitude, rather than as evidence that they have contrived their stories out of a shared culture and biology. (Sagan, 1996, p. 133)

This argument is not applicable to post-anecdotal evidence, which was compiled fortuitously or systematically over centuries and among many different nations by independent witnesses, long before any common global culture came into existence via mass communications during the twentieth century to date. The recognized types and subtypes of evidential patterns of (evil) supernaturalism arose spontaneously and independently in these various cultures (as post-anecdotes) and hence cannot be ascribed to a paucity of imagination confabulating a similitude of "shapely" characters.

> The above assumption [that real occult phenomena manifest through spiritism] is not invalidated by the not infrequent discovery of fraud among the adherents of spiritualism. *A score of impostures will not overthrow the evidence of one fact* [emphasis added]. Though it may be admitted that the existence of numerous impostures tends to produce a presumption [= availability heuristic] that all is imposture, it is equally true…that on the supposition of the phenomena of spiritualism being real, imposture is to be expected. This is true to a greater or less degree of almost every known science. For instance, how much fraud, imposture and failure to effect promised results are found in the history of medical practice [cp. Breggin, 1991]. Spiritualism is not the only system in which untrained and incompetent persons bring reproach upon themselves and those of whom they are the self-appointed representatives. Even persons who have facts to present, often add to these facts and phenomena meretricious accessories, in order to

[25] I have dealt previously (Crooks, 2007) with a similar non sequitur by Paul Churchland (1984). "No Satan, ergo no satanists" expresses a non sequitur logically, and additionally is empirically false in a historical sense, respecting documented case histories (e.g., Graysmith, 1986, 2002; Somerset, 2004). So on both a priori — irrelevant conclusion — and a posteriori — historical falsehood — grounds, the debunkers' thesis regarding satanism is inherently debunked. Otherwise, if such a fallacy were valid and sound reasoning, then Sagan's a priori rejection of Satan could be used to argue against an a posteriori existence of satanic cults.

> increase their attractions and make them more startling to the public eye. We must remember that the deceit of the fictitious accessories may be detected, and the author of them unmasked, while the actual facts remain unaffected. (Nevius, 1894/1968, pp. 315–316)

Two points may be observed. (1) The object lessons of the occult debunkers are the "scores of impostures" that do not objectively overthrow the evidence of even one (let alone millions of) inexplicable manifestations of a paranormal character, though it may seem so because of the social psychologist's *availability heuristic,* wherewith a salient number of instances (often chosen by a fallacy of selection) are employed to impugn an entire class, in detriment to the actual fact(s) obtaining; and (2) that one counterexample is sufficient to upset an entire empirical generalization (e.g., an albino crow disproves the proposition that "all crows are black") may explain why Churchland (1984) sweepingly dismisses — without any scholarly citation — the entire field of paranormal investigation because, as a logician, he must know that otherwise his entire reductionist worldview would be untenable.

> It would be unreasonable…to infer from such individual cases of simulation that all the [possession] phenomena we have been considering are the result of deception and imposture. *Simulation generally presupposes a reality simulated.* (Neivus, 1894/1968, p. 148; emphasis added)

Generally speaking, there are three classes of evidence respecting occult phenomena: (1) from the parapsychology laboratory and literature; (2) post-Enlightenment object lessons of debunking, as Uri Geller, Blavatsky, the Fox sisters, Houdini; (3) post-anecdotal evidence of eyewitnesses respecting at least a few of the fields in question. The object lessons tend to take center stage in the debate, while the parapsychological data are relegated to academics, pro and con. Randi, Sagan, the Churchlands are the professional debunkers who tend to highlight the object lessons so as to implicitly or explicitly extrapolate to what is the extensive post-anecdotal evidence, that is, insofar as it is not simply dismissed outright with generalizations as to hallucinations, delusions, hoodwinking. My focus is upon the post-anecdotal evidence in its own right, bereft of such unsubstantiated dismissal.

A Few Conclusions

All the various possession idioms or *isms,* e.g., Pavlovian, psychiatric, psychodynamic, and anthropological do not constitute proper divisions of labor with differing though complementary applications, respecting the various "levels of discourse" respecting the same phenomenology. Instead, for the most part, they are competing and inconsistent hypotheses.

A naturalistic explanation may be rendered somewhat as follows. "Supposing the correlation of dabbling and oppression does really exist, we may say that

occultism definitely has overtones of sociopathy implicated with its beliefs and practices; therefore such indulgence in them brings on anxiety, depression, even hallucinations of nonexistent apparitions when carried to extremes. At the further end of the continuum, the person who has so dabbled in occultism has filled his consciousness and unconsciousness with ugly and psychopathic imagery; hence it is no surprise when once individuals succumb to the stressors they have subjected themselves to, and a dissociative alter personality emerges from the brew, it blasphemes, rages, intentionally shocks, wantonly destroys." This thesis, counter to demonology's, might be put in slightly different form. "Koch's data on occult dabbling and subsequent pathologies can be readily explained by the obvious supposition that such dabblers were predisposed to such psychopathy, as indicated by their having taken up such weird and antisocial pastimes to begin with, as Charles Manson's starting out with Scientology, thence graduating to satanism [Newport, 1997]. But correlation is not causation." (Though not always, yet correlation is indeed sometimes expressive of causation.) These suppositions are indeed explanatory and seem plausible in their own way, so far as they go, pertaining to matters of predisposition, modeling, and autosuggestion. The other side of the question implicates possible factors other than those of endogenous origin, as rehearsed above.

The occluded modus operandi of supernatural oppression is to facilitate possession, thereby either to destroy through pathologies or to "harness horses" to spread occult doctrines. This thesis renders comprehensively intelligible much of the evidence of supernaturalism and the "purposive intelligence" (Rogo) of poltergeists, psychokinesis, oppression, possession; while the ESP and uncanny phenomenology (e.g., apparitions) accompanying select forms of oppression and infestation are expressive of demonic ontology behind the visible outbreaks.

Zempleni's (1977) work functions as a good overview for all the papers in Crapanzano and Garrison's anthology. Demonic attacks target a victim for possessive personality supplanting; any resistance to the hostile takeover debilitates, hospitalizes, often almost makes the target psychotic through trauma and terror; thence the resignation of the victim to a subdued status of demonic servant. Again, such facts are identical with those observed by authors identifying with the demonological perspective (e.g., Nevius, Freeman, Summers, Koch). "The more dabbling you do, the more psychic you become, and the crazier you get." And given those correlations, the only criterial canon that matters is which hypothesis best accounts for that datum (by the Nevius Rule, Ockham's razor). May the best interpretation win!

From a sheerly pragmatic and phenomenological (descriptive) vantage ground, the theory of demonology and its attendant therapeutic method of exorcism have a good track record of success (Cristiani, 1962; Koch, 1965; Montgomery, 1976). Zinc oxide was used as a topical paste by ancient Egyptians for wound healing; its physiological *how* is now known to be necessary for tissue regeneration (Passwater

and Cranton, 1983). We may say, *mutatis mutandis,* there is empirical validation of demonology and therapeutic efficacy with its accompanying exorcism, even if its explanatory success still remains currently cryptic.

We should discard party factionalism and ideological preferences in favor of the time-honored canonical logical criterion used in every species of rational investigation, which cuts through all the various possession *isms* solely according to their relative explanatory successes. Insofar as possession qua phenomenology is perhaps an ideal of post-anecdotal evidence, only its competing interpretations being incompatible, insofar as demonology needs make the least number of fundamental assumptions beyond the pronouncements of the demoniacs, it is the most credible schema of interpretation.

Traditional (Biblical) demonology has empirical validation (fits the facts); is the most comprehensive (encompassing other occult data as oppression and the paranormal surround, recognized though not even wittingly acknowledged let alone legitimized by its explanatory competition); has the simplest hypothesis of the presenting demonic personalities (per the Nevius Rule); perhaps has the greatest therapeutic efficacy via its associated practice of exorcism (or group prayer); and can boast of Ockham's razor (versus "dualist" naturalistic psychologisms plus their accompanying explanation-away of paranormality). So why does it not have the greatest allegiance of theorists and psychiatrists and psychologists? This is a rhetorical question whose answer is obvious. Demonology and exorcism radically conflict with our post-Enlightenment worldview. But ideological prejudice is extrinsic and thus irrelevant to explanatory sufficiency. By all parameters of explanatory prowess and practical success listed above, intellectual consistency and integrity would demand a pivotal reversion and subscription to the traditionalist paradigm regarding possession, despite any implied necessitated revisions to the contrary positivist worldview.

The irony and paradox involved is that such a successful demonology calls into question — *only* — the otherwise scientifically *monopolistic* naturalism (construed as universality) in favor of a seeming outmoded (though not *observationally* failing) superstitious explanatory paradigm, traditionally — especially in Salem-type caricatures — reeking of witches, familiars, hobgoblins, Sabbats (Scott, 1832/1970). I ask rhetorically: Is it not paradoxical that such a nominally superstitious hypothesis and explanatory framework are more successful than any competing naturalistic scheme, concerning the empirical phenomenology and psychology of demon possession?

Realize that a worldview, positivist or otherwise, by its nature can not be logically entailed by empirical data as such. There is also the complementary suggestion that otherwise successful naturalistic explanations do not receive such validation from their embedding worldview. Thus the post-Enlightenment interpretive paradigm, as such, that did away with "explanatory gremlins" (demons in particular) has never been experimentally or theoretically established. The only

reason it seems to have been so is that the success of naturalistic explanations in the physical sciences seems to necessitate a monopolistic reductionist scheme, an ideology in fact. "Science…does not *as science* provide a cosmology ["metaphysics"], does not answer, indeed does not *ask,* what in this book we have called the Big Questions [concerning philosophy, theology, morals]…. The pursuit of scientific knowledge may well be a *part* of our Western values; it cannot possibly *make* our Western values" (Brinton, 1963, pp. 272, 414).

Churchland is correct that our modernist psychiatric and psychological diagnoses of possession are divergent from the traditional demonological understanding. But in face of evident interpretive failures and confusions of those nominally scientific approaches respecting possession — whenever by chance in academia they are occasionally recognized or acknowledged — perhaps we should examine more closely the virtues of the traditional conception, arguing to the best hypothesis despite contrasting superficial labels of modernity versus superstition.

By the Nevius Rule, demons ("alter-personae": Davies, 1995) themselves define the "discourse" of possession, properly not cultural or theoretical preconceptions. This neatly disposes of Churchland's "intertheoretic identification" schizophrenia construct of demonic possession, for demonology has been a constant across ages and cultures precisely because the demons have not changed their malefic tune in all those distinct contexts — which of course points to an ontological constant behind their variegated appearances, whatever that ontology in fact happens to be. According to Churchland's scheme, the phenomenology of possession is a function of successive theoretical vantages, not of anything intrinsic to the facts themselves (there are only "theory-laden" perceptions: Hanson, 1969). But historically there have been no changing theories as to what possession verily is, at least not as seen from the demoniac's perspective. The facts of possession are today what historically they always have been. Incarnate evil spirits have identified themselves and their agenda with wearisome monotony and braggadocio from ancient times to now. It is we who have stopped listening to their refrain, due to our positivist prejudices.

The Nevius Rule regarding demoniacs' attribution is itself inherently post-anecdotal, e.g., 400-odd cultures attesting to its veracity, but so is the interpretive extension of that rule, namely, that *demon* possession is indeed at work. The Nevius Rule means that the demon possession thesis is ultimately phenomenological rather than theoretical; but that rule's accompanying interpretive thesis is as post-anecdotally attested as the phenomenon of possession itself within those four hundred cultures over millennia.

Obviously by arguing for the interpretive plausibility of demonology I do not mean to reject the success of myriad hard sciences since the Renaissance that happen to be congruent with a post-Enlightenment perspective. I ask only that the reader keep in mind and not reject outright a bit of post-anecdotal evidence contrary to the presumption of the universal absolutism of that scheme — I mean

to question only its presumptive monopoly over any metaphysical speculation. That contrary affirmation consists of merely two premises. First, the undoubted presence of (evil) discarnate and exogenous spirits that possess the bodies and displace the personalities of their victims; and second, that demonology's approach is the hypothesis closest to the empirical data that constitute the post-anecdotal factuality of possession itself, per the Nevius Rule. (That hypothesis that is closest to the empirical explananda is also necessarily the simplest explanation thereof, needing the fewest explanatory "epicycles" by having the fewest unnecessary complications.)

Just as there are personal psychopathies attendant upon so-called dabbling, so there are social pathologies impinging entire societies "addicted to" (obsessed with) such practices. Assyria and Babylon stand out; their entire populaces were hagridden with propitiatory rites and sacrifices, astrological divination, omen readings and charming. A naturalistic (psychological reductionist) explanation would be that these populations became so overwhelmed with endless ritualistic rites and occult fiddling that a pandemic of fear eventually paralyzed the total activity of society, economically, politically, productively. Such psychologisms may be true so far as they go, but we may also extrapolate from the individual pathologies arising from occult preoccupations. There we see unbridled obsessions that implicate occult powers above and beyond personal fears and worries. Probably a critical threshold is reached individually and socially wherein complete collapse ensues: Sargent's "mesmeric crisis" wherein possession supervenes for an individual, or societally in the form of demonic stagnation and paralysis of state and social functioning.[26]

A few preventive recommendations may be suggested. There would be avoidance of all occult activity, literature (e.g., grimoires and manuals), paraphernalia (ceremonial swords, voodoo dolls, amulets), even parapsychology experiment participation, indeed anything facilitating a slippery slope slide into oppression.[27] Kurt Koch recommends destroying fetishes, initiating group prayer, and occult

[26] Governments have dabbled in occultism for purposes of national security (McRae, 1984).

[27] Where dabbling and a "slippery slope" meet is when dabblers end up obsessives and worse, sliding from bad to worse oppression. Whether interpreted as a function of occult forces or naturalistically, the correlation is there requiring further study and explanation. The empirical evidence of that slide obtains at least anecdotally, whether you accept a reality of supernaturalism or prefer to find naturalistic explanations of the correlation of dabbling and oppression/possession. Incidentally, is talk of a slippery slope fallacious? A fallacy arises only in the straw man form in which it is usually presented, qua a necessary conditional proposition: *if* you indulge in occultism, drinking, TV violence viewing, *then* you will necessarily end up a demoniac, alcoholic, serial killer. But that is not the proper argument; rather, it should be argued as statistical fact relative to a normal distribution. Thus circa 10% of a cohort will end up alcoholics if they begin drinking; similarly for dabblers and occult oppression. Also insofar as a continuum is concerned, the assigned qualitative categories are not rigid; i.e., from teetotaler to casual drinker to alcoholic has many overlaps, beyond stereotyped alcoholics as Bowery bums; and occult obsession overlaps with possession. A person's life may be well nigh dysfunctional even if it does not fit DSM parameters. It is a question of degree along a continuum.

renunciation as necessary and efficacious for established cases of oppression. (Cf. Kraft, 1992; Prince, 1998 on the efficacious role of deliverance ministry facing oppression, whereas exorcism proper is directed against possession.) These recommendations are at right angles to those proffered by occult-friendly practitioners as Holzer ("develop your psychic potential"), Rogo ("creative redirection of the attacking poltergeist"), even Jungian professionals who cast horoscopes and consult the *I Ching* for their clientèle in a nominally psychotherapeutic context (Noll, 1994). Such occult saturation therapy training seems almost handcrafted by Rogo's "purposeful intelligence" — which otherwise operates behind the poltergeist/pandemonium — to effectually coral persons into complete mediumistic immurement, no less so than Hasbro's pink Ouija boards pitched toward susceptible children. (The term *Ouija* combines the French and German words for "yes" to create a compulsive *yes-yes* from a definitive *no-no*.)

A summary therapeutic recommendation when anamnesis discloses occult oppression — let alone possession — through prior dabbling, is to get the patient to the nearest group prayer meeting, deliverance ministry, or exorcist though the procedures lack academic significance and partake of an outmoded superstitious mindset. This represents classic American pragmatism in action — whatever works, pragmatically speaking.

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Crooked Spirits and Spiritual Identity Theft: A Keener Response to Crooks?

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Mark Crooks' article offers a new paradigm for exploration: namely, that many instances in the transcultural phenomenon of spirit possession reflect the activity of genuine and harmful spirits. Although subsequent research may refine a number of points, the activity of genuine spirits reflects the most common indigenous explanation and makes sense of a significant part of the data that is more difficult to explain on some other academic paradigms. Indigenous explanations do not always view all spirits as harmful, but they usually treat many spirits as harmful, and a case can be made that this is true of much other spirit activity as well. Crooks' explanatory model brings coherence to many points of data less well served by some competing models, and thus merits continuing exploration.

Keywords: spirits, spirit possession, demons, demonology

Anthropologists, sociologists, missiologists, psychologists and so forth approach spirit possession with competing interpretations derived from their varied disciplines, so that it is genuinely impossible to speak at present of any cross-disciplinary consensus. Such differences should leave room for another approach on the table, one ably proposed by Mark Crooks.

Crooks is brave to challenge a number of competing academic paradigms (such as psychoanalytic and deprivation hypotheses), and his challenges merit serious attention even from those who do not follow his alternative. Crooks is braver still to advance a thesis too often dismissed a priori, despite its fuller and simpler explanatory power on some of the matters in question.

In this response, I hope to highlight sympathetically some strengths of his argument and to probe respectfully what I view as some of its weaknesses. In so doing, I hope to take his model seriously enough to contribute to its refinement. Likewise, his critique may require revision in the models of some of the secondary sources I follow here, and thus ultimately of my own.

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At the outset, I should note that I defer to conventional usage in speaking of "possession," an imprecise label too often encompassing a diverse range of experiences and degrees (cf. Carter, 2000; Gildea, 1974; Johnson and Keller, 2006). ("Demonization" is closer to the typical New Testament designation, and spans a range of conditions. Arguing for degrees of demonization, see, e.g., Davies, 2008, pp. 25–28; Warner, 1988, pp. 84–86.) Although this may be largely a semantic issue, my usage in this response may differ somewhat from Crooks. By wider definitions, both voluntary and involuntary possession states may coexist, sometimes in the same culture (e.g., voluntary for the shaman and "hysterical" for the patient; Peters, 1981, pp. 147–148; see also Basso, 2006) or even the same person (Berenbaum, Kerns, and Raghavan, 2000, p. 30).

Crooks' Challenge to A Priori Assumptions

Enlightenment prejudice against the "supernatural" may be irrelevant to the question of actual spirits if the alleged entities in question are part of nature the way that humans as intelligent actors are. Although the intermediate category of "preternatural" declined in the West after Hume (Daston, 1991, pp. 100–113; cf. Hiebert, 1982, p. 43), it might prove helpful.

Semantics aside, how may spirit possession be explored academically? Replicability is an appropriate epistemic demand only in disciplines amenable to it (not, for example, in historiography or journalism). Nevertheless, and while I do not recommend the exercise, some participant–learner anthropologists have replicated spirit possession experiences with what some participants consider genuine spirits (cf. Goodman, 1988b; Turner, 1993, p. 9; 2006c, p. 203; Wilkie, 1994, pp. 137–140; Winkelman and Carr, 2006, pp. 177–178).

The Phenomenology of Spirit Possession

As Crooks notes, studies overwhelmingly confirm the existence of experiences indigenously interpreted as spirit possession by a vast range of cultures around the world.[1] Strikingly, these observations obtain even though a majority of Western scholars who study these experiences demur from the indigenous interpretation. (More recent studies tend to be more open to the indigenous interpretations; see Boddy, 1994, pp. 408, 410–414, 427; Bradnick, 2017; Keller, 2002, pp. 39–40.) One finds such observations even in nineteenth-century critics of indigenous interpretations of other paranormal activity, such as David Friedrich Strauss (Fabisiak, 2015). Nevertheless, while spirit possession shares some common transcultural

[1] See Boddy, 1994, p. 409; Bourguignon, 1965; 1973b, pp. 17–19; 1976b, pp. 18–21; Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 80; Firth, 1969, p. ix; Morsy, 1991, p. 189; Ward, 1989d, p. 126. For samples, see e.g., Boddy, 1994, pp. 428–434; Crapanzaro and Garrison, 1977; Goodman, 1988a, pp. 1–24, 126; Lewis, 1971.

traits, many of its features are expressed differently in different cultures (see Binsbergen, 1981, pp. 90–91; Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 42–49; Keener, 2011, pp. 793–796). In at least some cases, people are socialized into the role of possession, structuring their behavior according to culturally prescribed expectations (see, e.g., some examples in Bourguignon, 1965, p. 48; Lee, 1989, pp. 251–252, 257; Spanos, 1989, pp. 103–108; Wikstrom, 1989, pp. 32–33).

Whether due to spirits or not, possession trance, though often culturally patterned, typically displays particular neurological patterns.[2] Neurophysiological studies do not demonstrate a particular cause, but they are clear as to some physiological effects (Goodman, 1988a, pp. 1–24, 126).[3] The presence of physiological elements in anomalous experience, as well as its frequency in a range of unrelated cultures, clearly shows that exclusively cultural explanations are often inadequate (McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 47).

Although Western observers have usually explained the behavior differently, Crooks' observations about spirits' self-claims are hardly idiosyncratic. Across many unrelated cultures, behavior and voice change drastically during possession, so that "sometimes it has been hard for the anthropologist to persuade himself [or herself] that it is really the same person as before whom he is watching or confronting" (Firth, 1969, p. x, also noting his own shock when he first witnessed spirit mediumship).[4] Possession normally displaces the previous personality (Mbiti, 1970, p. 106; Montilus, 2006, pp. 3–4; cf. Verger, 1969, pp. 50–51, 53). Often the possessed cannot recall the behavior they exhibited during possession trance.[5] The instances surrounding Jesus, noted by Crooks, do have both ancient and modern parallels (see Keener, 2010b; cf. 2010a; for views about spirits in Mediterranean antiquity, see Ferguson, 1984; Keener, 2011, pp. 769–787).

Most cases of possession do not produce superhuman strength, but, as Crooks notes, in some cases it does appear (see e.g., Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 89; Shoko,

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[2] See e.g., Benson, 1982; Benson and Stark, 1996, pp. 163–164; Bourguignon, 1973a, p. 337; Davies, 1995, pp. 141–142; Prince, 1968a, pp. 127–129; discussion in McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 48.

[3] For common features in altered states of consciousness through history and in diverse societies, see McClenon, 1994, pp. 36–56; 2002, p. 60; McClenon and Nooney, 2002, pp. 47–48; even animals can be susceptible to hypnotic experiences (McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 48).

[4] Emmons, 1982, p. 193; Evans–Pritchard, 1937, p. 165; Gelfand, 1962, p. 169; Greenfield, 2008, pp. 40, 83; Grof, 2010, p. 144; Instone–Brewer, 1996, p. 140; Ising, 2009, pp. 104–105, 168, 169, 171–172, 174–175, 178, 183; Mbiti, 1970, pp. 225–226; McClenon, 1994, pp. 134–135, 226; Midelfort, 1992, p. 127; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 19–22, 97, 208; Scherberger, 2005, p. 62; Shorter, 1985, p. 177; Tippett, 1978, p. 162; Turner, 2006a, p. 50; Wilson, 2008, p. 275.

[5] E.g., Bellamy, 2008, p. 40; Betty, 2005, p. 14; Bourguignon, 1965, pp. 53, 56; Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 87; Field, 1969, pp. 3, 6; Gelfand, 1962, pp. 166, 169; Grof, 2010, p. 145; Horton, 1969, p. 23; Rosny, 1985, pp. 185–186; cf. Oesterreich, 1966, p. 13; Singleton, 1978, p. 477 ("posterior amnesia"); but contrast Shorter, 1970, p. 113. Some claim to know little about the spirits that possess them, claiming to be "powerless in their hands" (Shorter, 1980, p. 48). In some studies, hypnotic amnesia involves role playing rather than genuine neurological amnesia (see Spanos, 1989, pp. 101–102, persuasively; cf. 116–117).

2007, p. 125). Such strength can make it difficult or impossible to restrain the person (e.g., Betty, 2005, pp. 16, 20; Field, 1969, p. 5; Filson, 2006, p. 154; Kaplan and Johnson, 1964, p. 208; Murphy, 1964, p. 58; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 22–23; cf. Edwards, 1989, p. 210; Ising, 2009, p. 174). It can lead to "violent thrashing" (Beauvoir, 2006, p. 129; Wilson, 2008, p. 275), destructiveness (Eliade, 1958, p. 71; Gelfand, 1962, pp. 165, 170; Kaplan and Johnson, 1964, p. 227; Obeyesekere, 1977, p. 251; Schmidt, 1964, p. 145) and self-harm (Katz, 1982, pp. 121–122; Lee, 1968, pp. 41–42, 47; Mbiti, 1970, p. 106), sometimes including, as in the account of the demonized man in Mark 5:5, self-laceration (Evans–Pritchard, 1937, p. 162; Fox, 1964, p. 185; Ising, 2009, pp. 174, 326–327; 1 Kings 18:28). In some settings possession trance yields immunity to pain (Jochim, 1986, p. 154; Mbiti, 1970, pp. 225–226) and even to burns (Beauvoir, 2006, p. 130; Bourguignon, 1976a, p. 12; Filson, 2006, p. 76), though not all cases are necessarily authentic or paranormal (Charpak and Broch, 2004, pp. 29–41); see discussion in McClenon, 1994, pp. 97–100, 115–126; 2002, pp. 71–76.

Benevolent Spirits or Spiritual Identity Theft?

Neutral or positive approaches to other cultures help guard observers against our own prejudices, though personal subjectivity renders elusive complete neutrality. Etic approaches provide crosscultural comparisons more easily than do emic ones, but our academic etic approaches are themselves shaped by particular cultural–philosophic frameworks.[6] Goulet and Young (1994, p. 325) question whether "any scientific experiment" can resolve whether spirits exist.

Nevertheless, academic rigor may allow evaluations from various vantage points, provided the vantage points are clearly stated, such as the evaluator's concern for social harmony, for longevity, for the honor of a particular deity, or the like. Various spiritual and religious traditions diversely evaluate other traditions, and a truly relativistic approach welcomes all these approaches to the table. From this pluralistic standpoint, Crooks' model represents one position among many, but as Crooks observes, at many points his model proves especially consistent with the data that it interprets.

Although the ancient monotheistic view of spirit possession was negative, many cultures regard some spirits as neutral or beneficial.[7] Some societies seek

[6] Worldviews provide introductory grids by which to arrange data, but they must be used heuristically, open to transformation; see Silverman, 1972, pp. 204, 228; on presuppositions in social sciences, see also Murphy, 2006, pp. 33–37.)

[7] See Beattie and Middleton, 1969a, pp. xxi–xxii, xxvii; Brand, 2002, p. 47; Field, 1969, p. 13; Lema, 1999, p. 47; Mbiti, 1970, p. 111; opposing traditional Christian approaches, see Grundmann, 2005, p. 66; Shorter, 1985, pp. 188–189; Stabell, 2010, pp. 462–463, 470. Krippner, 2002, surveys a variety of proposed models and data, including the traditional Christian model of shamans' "demon possession" (pp. 963–964; noting on page 964 that shamans sometimes make these claims about rival shamans), which he rejects, and the various attentional states of different kinds of shamans (p. 967).

possession whereas others seek deliverance from it (Bourguignon, 1965, pp. 42–43). In some (though not all) cultures, shamans seek possession trance (cf. Eliade, 1964, p. 6; Peters, 1981, pp. 10–11); some who invite possession do so to accomplish healing (Fuchs, 1964, pp. 135–137; Hien, 2008, p. 307; Licauco, 1988, p. 95; Southall, 1969, pp. 237–238; cf. Obeyesekere, 1970, p. 108). Anthropological literature includes many studies of shamanic healing (see e.g., Goulet and Young, 1994, pp. 326–327; Scherberger, 2005, pp. 59–64; Turner, 2006a, pp. 56–61; 2006b, pp. 103–140; cf. McClenon and Nooney, 2002), although again, extrinsic interpretations vary (see e.g., Young and Goulet, 1994b, pp. 9–10). Although most cultures view witchcraft and curses negatively, not all shamans are considered witches; further, Wicca, a modern Western creation, differs in design from traditional witchcraft models (see, e.g., Hayes, 1995, pp. 340–342; Hutton, 2007; Magliocco, 2000).[8]

Demanding associations specifically understood as harmful reduces the cases available for study. One may still treat most cases of spirit possession as occult if one broadens the definition of "occult" to include any sort of possession in spiritual contexts, though in this case many would prefer other terminology. Although I agree with Crooks' thesis that such spirit possession is negative, I do so especially based on my larger theological worldview.[9]

Still, studies may often overplay the social benefits that possession brings to the possessed while minimizing the problems it causes them (see Hayes, 2006); for at least some malevolent spirit activity, see e.g., Beattie, 1969, p. 169; Filson, 2006, p. 154; Lewis, 1969, p. 189; Peters, 1981, p. 61; Scherberger, 2005, pp. 57–59; further sources in Keener, 2011, pp. 804–808. Contesting the more relativistic approach thoroughly would require engagement with a vast literature, but Crooks' thesis on this point belongs on the table no less than do other perspectives.

Moreover, Crooks reevaluates many previous case studies, frequently highlighting negative social and personal effects of spirit possession that the approaches of Western observers themselves did not take into account. His observations are crucial; his thesis exposes an obvious blind spot of many competing approaches. (I myself had previously read many of these same studies, often without noticing the points that he raised; the culturally neutral stance of modern anthropology is enormously valuable, but also has vulnerabilities, given the interpreter's own assumptions.) His thesis about negative associations with possession offers a

[8] On traditional witchcraft and its intentions to harm, see e.g., Azenabor, 2006, pp. 30–31; Binsbergen, 1981, p. 243; Favret-Saada, 1988, pp. 123–127; Hair, 1998, p. 140; Hoare, 2004, pp. 127–128; Mayrargue, 2001, p. 286; McNaughton, 1988, p. 69; Obeyesekere, 1975; Reynolds, 1963, pp. 41–44; Scherberger, 2005, pp. 57–59; Shoko, 2007, p. 46; Shorter, 1985, p. 99; Wyk, 2004, pp. 1202–1204.

[9] Including, in addition to historic monotheistic considerations, what missiologists call power encounters (Keener, 2011, pp. 843–856). Some differences may be semantic matters of how different scholars use the designation "possession"; thus, e.g., Tibbs, 2016, uses language of possession for some New Testament Christian experience, qualifying and complementing my demurral.

prediction, which subsequent studies must follow up with further sifting of observations present in the anthropological, missiological, and historical literature in a way that Crooks' introductory study could not treat more fully (although some of the literature will miss correlations that the observers were not looking for).[10]

Despite diverse views regarding some spirits, most cultures regard at least some forms of spirit possession as hostile. Modern medical anthropology distinguishes between cultures that explain sickness exclusively due to material causes and those that often attribute illness to spirits or witchcraft; the latter may constitute a majority of societies.[11] (Murdock, 1980, p. 72, found it in more than 97 percent of the 139 societies studied.) Not only traditional Christian contexts[12] but also a wide variety of cultures use forms of exorcism, most often in various ritual contexts, to treat possession illness,[13] leading to debates among mental health professionals regarding the ethics of approving exorcisms (whether as genuine cures or placebos).[14] In some cultures, exorcists themselves experience trance and/or possession states to expel or manipulate other spirits (Beattie and Middleton, 1969a, p. xxv; Klutz, 2004, pp. 196–97; Peters, 1981, pp. 14–15).

A significant portion of Crooks' treatment of occultism comes from Christian sources, often popular ones, that are highly critical of occult experiences. Some do reflect genuine scholarly research (such as Kurt Koch; many essays in the volume edited by Montgomery; and Nevius); others appear more questionable, such as Hobart Freeman or Penn–Lewis. (I would include Freeman in those sources that Crooks earlier designated "kooky," although Crooks is correct that

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[10] He cites voodoo as an example; for possession in Haitian Vodun, see Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 15–27 (esp. the ritual described in pp. 18–21); Douyon, 1968; Kiev, 1968; Perkinson 2001, pp. 574–575; Tippett, 1978, pp. 155–156. For voodoo deaths, see e.g., Cannon, 1942. For a different perspective, see Montilus, 2006.

[11] Foster, 1976 (noting exceptions on pp. 775–776); esp. Murdock, 1980, pp. 8-27. Brooke, 1991, p. 36, notes that some today accept both spiritual and material causes as complementary. For spirit or witchcraft causes, see e.g., Bourguignon, 1968, p. 17; 1976b, pp. 20–21; Murdock, 1980, pp. 72–76; Neyrey, 1999, pp. 30–31; and the more than forty sources in Keener, 2011, p. 803n99.

[12] E.g., Geleta, 2002; Greenfield, 2008, pp. 141–142; Klutz, 2004, p. 142; McClenon, 1994, pp. 144–145; 2002, p. 59; Mchami, 2001; Oosthuizen, 1989, pp. 79–80, 89; 1992, pp. 117–148; Sharma, 2001, p. 304. Sometimes it competes with local practice; see e.g., Bergunder, 2001, pp. 103–105; 2008, pp. 125–126, 155–158.

[13] Betty, 2005, pp. 14, 16; Garbett, 1969, p. 105; Goodman, 1988a, p. 125; Gray, 1969, p. 171; Kaplan and Johnson, 1964, p. 211; Lewis, 1969, pp. 199, 201, 213; Mbiti, 1970, p. 106; Nevius, 1894, pp. 53–54; Shoko, 2007, p. 97; Tippett, 1967, p. 14; E. Turner 1992a, p. 149; V.W. Turner, 1968, p. 204; for the effectiveness of exorcism in particular kinds of cases, see also Lagerwerf, 1987, pp. 55–56; Shorter, 1980, p. 51.

[14] E.g., Allison, 2000, pp. 116, 119; Bull, Ellason, and Ross 1998, p. 195; Castro–Blanco, 2005; Hexham, 1977; Heinze, 1988a, p. 14 (as a helpful fiction allowing the experience of multiple personality disorder to be objectified); Krippner, 2002, p. 972; Martínez–Taboas, 2005a, p. 18; 2005b; Shorter, 1985, pp. 184–185; Singleton, 1978, p. 478. Ivey, 2002, regards his psychoanalytic language as itself no less a "mythical" construct than the older demonic terminology (pp. 58–59); Pattison, 1992, p. 217, treats "psychoanalytic psychotherapy" as a secular form of "exorcism."

the observations in these sources may comport with and support more consistent ones.) Certainly much popular exorcism/deliverance today misdiagnoses and mistreats what are not demons (see Burgess, 2008, pp. 228–230; Collins, 2009).

Nevertheless, the connection does appear in some professional literature (some of it noted below). As Crooks observes, where genuine paranormal powers appear, the demonological approach provides a more parsimonious explanation than exclusively neurological approaches.

Various Western Academic Interpretations

The approaches of anthropologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and indigenous interpreters vary considerably from one another, often leading to criticism of the others (e.g., Ward 1989b, p. 17; 1989c, p. 9; Wendl 1999, p. 120; for the range of interpretations, see also Keener 2010b, pp. 227–231). Certainly trance states, including some that are indigenously interpreted as possession, are not limited to the narrower sort of "possession" emphasized by Crooks, as Crooks recognizes (Lewis, 1971, pp. 39, 44–45, 64; Prince, 1968a, pp. 122–129). Thus even an induced collapse of an overloaded nervous system may sometimes relieve stresses and aid recovery (Prince, 1968a, pp. 129–130). Some exorcisms probably prove effective by correcting hysterical disorders, although this explanation proves inadequate for some of the phenomena recorded in the New Testament and other sources (see the analysis by Instone–Brewer, 1996, pp. 134–140).

Direct, genuine spirit possession seems unlikely in any cases where suggestion simulates exorcistic deliverance as a placebo; similarly, lack of suggestibility may render some versions of "possession" more difficult (cases in Last, 1991, pp. 52–53).[15] In general, the most hypnotizable 10 percent of people (those most prone to dissociative states) are six times more prone to anomalous experiences than the least hypnotizable 10 percent (Pekala and Cardeña, 2000, p. 71). Possession is more common in cultures that believe in it (Kemp, 1989, p. 75), and explanatory systems can affect the behavior (Bourguignon, 1968, p. 12). Still, these observations need not contest Crooks' view of demons supervening on some prior conditions or neurological states.

Not all explanations are mutually exclusive, and in some societies conditions of marginalization increase susceptibility. Even in societies that affirm spirit possession, stress can provide an obvious precipitating factor or trigger (Ward and Beaubrun, 1980, p. 206). Some anthropologists point out that incidents of possession (cf. Bourguignon, 1973a, p. 339; Nevius, 1894, p. 58; Prince, 1968b; Smith, 2001, pp. 452–453; Stoller, 1989; Wetering, 1983) and both witchcraft and

[15] On the placebo effect, cf. e.g., Beauregard and O'Leary, 2007, pp. 144–150; Droege, 1991, pp. 15–33; Frank, 1961, pp. 65–74; Gaztambide, 2010; Matthews and Clark, 1998, pp. 179–181; Remus, 1997, pp. 110–113.

anti-witchcraft movements (Li, 1996) often increase during dramatic changes in society. Increasing societal stratification (Bourguignon, 1976b, p. 22; Greenbaum, 1973a, p. 84; 1973b, p. 54), or at least status ambiguity (Wilson, 1967, p. 377), seems to increase the likelihood of more trance states.

Possession thus often appears among those marginalized from other means of power in their society (Lewis, 1969, 189–190; Sharp, 1999, p. 4), often especially women (Behrend and Luig, 1999, pp. xvii-xviii; Berger, 1999, pp. 41, 55; Colson, 1969, pp. 90–92, 99–100; Kenyon, 1999; Kessler, 1977, pp. 301–302; Lee, 1969, pp. 143–144, 150–151, 154; Sousa, 1999; Southall, 1969, p. 244; Stirrat, 1977, pp. 138, 151, 154; Walker and Dickerman, 1992). Possession behavior sometimes allows marginalized persons access to desired objects or expression of feelings otherwise inappropriate to express (e.g., Abdalla, 1991, p. 39; Bourguignon, 1965, pp. 50, 53; Chandra shekar, 1989, pp. 88, 91; Lewis, 1992, pp. 315–318; Modarressi, 1968, pp. 154–155; Obeyesekere, 1970, pp. 104–105; Wilson 1967, p. 370). Some societies are also more sympathetic to possession than to acknowledged mental illness (Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 92). In such cases, possession behavior may provide socially sanctioned outlets for feelings.

Although trance states may often perform a cathartic function, this approach does not account for societies where the healer rather than the patient "becomes dissociated" (Prince, 1977, p. xiii). Trance states are more common among the uneducated (Field, 1969, p. 4; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 99, 121, 165, 203, 205), but urbanization and western education do not always displace possession and exorcism (cf. Behrend and Luig, 1999, pp. xiii–xiv; Emmons, 1982, p. 191; Jacobs, 1976, pp. 186–187; Makris and Al-Safi, 1991, p. 118; Shorter, 1985, p. 179).

There are, however, limitations to these observations, since they predict averages rather than individual case outcomes. Some challenge the ideological underpinnings of deprivation hypotheses regarding possession (Binsbergen, 1981, pp. 86–87; cf. 24–25, 77–86), viewing them as reductionist (cf. Hunt, 2010, pp. 183–184; McClenon, 2002, pp. 59–60; Miller and Yamamori, 2007, p. 156). Treating the spiritual experience of "underprivileged people" as "hallucinations" demeans them (Turner, 1992a, p. 3).

The data do not all reduce to a single consistent model, and correlation may sometimes reflect common factors rather than causation; but they might also reveal some conditions most conducive to possession states. Susceptibility does not necessarily explain etiology, and cases of socially generated possession need not rule out genuine demonic activity that originally informed cultural models.

Various Indigenous Interpretations

Cultures themselves vary widely in their frameworks for interpreting possession experiences (see e.g., Bourguignon, 1968, pp. 4–12; Lewis, 1971, p. 44; Pattison, 1992, pp. 205–206; Peters, 1981, pp. 11–16, 46–47, 50). Still, various

cultures' similar experiences generate some similar beliefs even in a number of very different societies (McClenon and Nooney, 2002, p. 47).

While Crooks' negative view of spirit possession is not dominant outside monotheistic traditions, his view that spirits are real is easily the most common view among cultures globally, especially among cultures most directly familiar with such experiences. Even in the United States, a majority of people believe in the reality of spirits. This belief declines somewhat, though only somewhat, with income and education (Baker, 2008, pp. 211–213), the latter itself often reflecting a form of enculturation.

One of the most widespread interpretations is possession or affliction by ancestor spirits or other deceased relatives, though in most cultures ancestors do not possess (Hammond–Tooke, 1989, pp. 55–56).[16] Some view these spirits favorably (see Garbett, 1969, p. 105; Last, 1991, p. 51; V.W. Turner, 1968, p. 14), but many deem them dangerous.[17] Religious or cultic contexts for possession behavior are common (Gray, 1969, p. 171; Tippett, 1978, pp. 148–151), for example in Haitian Vodun (Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 15–27; Douyon, 1968; Kiev, 1968; Perkinson, 2001, pp. 574–575), Taoist rituals (Nevius, 1894, p. 47), Brazilian spiritism (Tippett, 1978, pp. 157–158; Pressel, 1973; 1977, pp. 333–335), in the *zar* cult (Modarressi, 1968) and in Sinhalese and Indo–Tibetan Buddhism (Ames, 1964, pp. 33, 40–41; Wayman, 1968). Cultic contexts often produce social pressure on particular persons to enter possession trance (Firth, 1969, p. xiii; Horton, 1969, pp. 24, 25, 35; Verger, 1969, p. 52).

Western Scholars and Actual Spirits

Crooks is not alone among Western scholars in arguing that actual spirits exist (e.g., Betty, 2005, and sources cited there; Isaacs, 1987; Johnson, 1982; Sall, 1976). While usually rejecting the reality of spirits, postmodernists are more open than were modernists (Goulet and Young, 1994, pp. 323–325; Hoffman and Kurzenberger, 2008, p. 84), and anthropologists have grown increasingly open to indigenous understandings (see Keller. 2002, pp. 39–40; Wilson, 1994, pp. 198–206). An increasing number of Western scholars have also begun recounting their own unexpected experiences with spirits (e.g., Kimball, 1972,

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[16] See Chandra shekar, 1989, p. 81; cf. Barrington–Ward, 1978, p. 456; Beattie and Middleton, 1969a, p. xxvii; Bourguignon, 1976a, pp. 24–27; Eliade, 1964, pp. 365–366; Emmons, 1982, pp. 171–172, 175–176; Field, 1969, p. 9; Hien, 2008, pp. 312, 316; Keller, 2002, pp. 131–132, 155; Jules–Rosette, 1981, pp. 133, 142; Lee, 1969, pp. 131–132; Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 26–27, 186, 209; Zempleni, 1977, p. 92.

[17] Beattie, 1969, p. 162; Colson, 1969, p. 71; Garbett, 1969, p. 123; Obeyesekere, 1977, p. 239; Reynolds, 1963, p. 62; Tenibemas, 1996, p. 23; Turner, 1992a, p. 182; W. Ma, 2002, p. 207; cf. Byaruhanga–Akiiki and Kealotswe, 1995, pp. 111–112; Horton, 1969, p. 15; Shoko, 2007, p. 45 (witches exploit spirits of the dead to steal for them); Southall, 1969, pp. 233 (spirits of deceased soldiers), 246–249, 255 (spirits of earlier chiefs); Welbourn, 1969, pp. 291–292 (on dangerous ghosts).

pp. 188–192; Steyne, 1990, pp. 14–19; Stoller, 1984, p. 110; Young, 1994, p. 174; earlier, Nevius, 1894, pp. ix, 9–13). Local scholars who have not embraced the dominant Western worldview speak even more freely (e.g., Mbiti, 1970, pp. 253–256; Mensah, 2008, p. 176).

Some scholars have experienced possession or the "paranormal" but explain their own experience as possibly merely subjective (McClenon, 1994, pp. 236–237; Peters, 1981, pp. 47, 50). Others go further and attribute their own experiences to actual spirits; most notable is Edith Turner, lecturer in anthropology at the University of Virginia and editor of *Anthropology and Humanism*. Now embracing a proshamanist perspective, she critiques her previous role as a skeptical, nonparticipant anthropological observer as cultural imperialism (Turner, 1992c, p. 28; 1997; cf. Swarz, 1994, p. 209), which she compares to the ethnocentrism of Christian missionaries (Turner, 1992c, p. 30). Turner's own experiential research began with her "experience of seeing a spirit" during a ritual in Zambia (Turner, 1996, pp. xxii–xxiii; cf. Turner, 1992a, pp. 149, 159; 1992b, p. 2; 1993, p. 9; 1994; 2005, p. 403; 2006a, p. 43; 2006b, pp. 1–23). She dismisses as ethnocentric the assumption that anthropological training qualifies one to "understand aspects of a culture better than field subjects" with their generations of cumulative experience (Turner, 1992a, p. 4; cf. 1992c, p. 30). Turner subsequently participated in her traditional Eskimo hosts' experiences with what she deems real spirits (Turner, 1992c, p. 29; 1996, p. 232). Some other anthropologists of religion respectfully include her voice (see Barnes, 2006, pp. 19–20).

Christian Experiences with Spirits

If a vocal minority of anthropologists have been concluding that real spirits exist, many monotheists have long accepted it because of evidence within their respective revelatory canons (especially the Gospels and the Qur'an) and traditions. Many others have also found it consistent with their cultures' experience. Ancient power encounters, or conflicts between opposing spiritual entities, appear in Scripture in Exodus 7:10–12 (cf. 12:12; Tucker, 2005, p. 378); Acts 8:9–13; 13:8–12; and 19:11–20.

Ancient Christians accepted the reality of spirits besides God but believed that, in any confrontation, their God would readily overcome all other spirits not submitted to him. In the second century, the Christian movement often spread through exorcisms; it was considered common knowledge that Christians could cast out demons (Barrett–Lennard, 1994, pp. 228–229; Lampe, 1965, pp. 215–217; MacMullen, 1984, pp. 27–28, 40–41, 60–61; Martin, 1988, pp. 49–50, 58–59; Sears, 1988, pp. 103–104; Young, 1988, pp. 107–108).

Tertullian (c. 155–c. 225) even challenged the church's persecutors to bring demonized people to Christian court hearings; the demon will always submit, he insisted, or if not, the court should feel free to execute the Christian as a fake

(*Apology* 23.4–6)! Tertullian lists prominent pagans whom Christians had cured from evil spirits (Tertullian *Ad Scapulam* 4, in Kelsey, 1973, pp. 136–137). In the fourth century, exorcisms and miracles are the most frequently listed reason for conversion to Christianity (MacMullen, 1984, pp. 61–62). Augustine reports affidavits attesting effective exorcisms (*City of God* 22.8; *Confessions* 9.7.16; Herum, 2009, pp. 63–65).

Still, a divide in cultural assumptions remains (see Acolatse, 2018; Mchami, 2001, p. 17). For example, residents of the Peruvian jungle, exposed for the first time to the Gospel of Mark, dismissed their Western translator's rejection of real demons, noting that it comported with their local reality (Escobar, 2002, p. 86).

Westerners have often changed their paradigms only after a struggle with significant cognitive dissonance (e.g., the doctor in Mullen, 1999, pp. 151–152). Many early Presbyterian missionaries to Korea had learned in seminary that spirits were not real, but most came to believe otherwise in the context of ministry alongside indigenous believers (Kim, 2011, pp. 270–273). My own experiences in Africa and those of my family (my wife is Congolese) have forced me to grapple with some hostile spiritual realities to which I would rather not have been exposed (Keener, 2011, pp. 852–856).

Psychiatric Evaluations

Some observers suggest that spirit possession will be more common in areas where people honor spirits (Berends, 1975, pp. 348–352, 364). This does not mean, however, that it is absent elsewhere. Unfashionable as the idea of real spirits is in Western intellectual discourse, some mental health professionals have become sufficiently convinced about the reality of harmful spirits that they have laid their reputations on the line and noted them openly. These include psychologists and psychiatrists noted in Isaacs 1987, pp. 265–266 (cf. also Johnson, 1982; McAll, 1975, 1976; White, 1988, p. 75). Cf. Grof, 2010, pp. 144–145, for a rare case that exceeded normal psychiatric (or human) bounds. William P. Wilson (1976, pp. 225–230; 2008), professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, provides some case studies. He views most popular cases of "demons" in the West as merely psychological problems, but claims to have encountered real cases, including a woman whose parents practiced the occult. Another psychiatrist, W. C. Johnson, explains most problems as emotional but notes that in his own psychiatric practice he has witnessed three clear cases of possession by a spirit, all of them in patients involved in the occult (Johnson, 1982, pp. 150–153).

David Van Gelder, then a professor of pastoral counseling at Erskine Theological Seminary, rejects most claims of possession (1987, p. 160), but encountered a case that he could explain no other way. When a young man involved with the occult began "snarling like an animal," nails attaching a crucifix to the wall melted, dropping the hot crucifix to the floor. A minister invited the young man

to declare, "Jesus Christ, son of God," but when he began to repeat this, the young man's voice and facial expressions suddenly changed. "You fools," he retorted, "he can't say that." Finally the group decided that he required exorcism, and calling on Jesus, managed to cast the spirit out (Van Gelder, 1987, pp. 151–154). Van Gelder observes that all the mental health professionals present agreed that the youth was not suffering from psychosis or other normal diagnoses (p. 158).

Perhaps the best-known spokesman for this view is psychiatrist Scott Peck, author of *People of the Lie*. He rejects as unfounded most claims of possession but reports that he has encountered rare cases for which he found this the only explanation (2005; see esp. pp. 237–238; cited also in e.g., Betty, 2005, p. 17; Borg, 2006, p. 322n9; Loewen, 1988, pp. 138–139). Peck nevertheless warns that, despite abundant empirical information, the entrenched explanatory models will not recognize demons' reality without a significant paradigm shift (2005, p. 249; on the struggles accompanying larger paradigm shifts, cf. Kuhn, 1970).

McAll's Accounts

Another psychiatrist, R. Kenneth McAll, offers many examples. He observes that only 4 percent of the cases he has treated have required exorcism, but mentions that about 280 of his cases did require exorcism. Consistent with Crooks' expectations, most of these involved the patients' or their familys' occult practices, such as ouija boards, witchcraft, horoscopes, etc. (1975, p. 296) He notes one case where a mother's successful deliverance from spirits proved simultaneous, unknown to them, of her son's instant healing from schizophrenia in a hospital 400 miles away, and the healing from tuberculosis of that son's wife (1975, pp. 296–297). Other cases include:

1. A patient instantly freed from schizophrenia through an exorcism that removed an occult group's curse.
2. The complete healing through an exorcism of a violent person in a padded cell who had previously not spoken for two years.
3. The instant healing of another person in a padded cell, when others far away and without her knowledge prayed for her; her aunt, a mental patient in another country, was cured simultaneously.
4. A six-year-old needed three adults to restrain him, but he was healed when his father repudiated Spiritualism.

McAll also offers a number of other examples of those healed when they or family members renounced occult connections.

Parasitic Demonomania?

Crooks suggests that demonomania is often parasitic on other conditions. This is an important observation, although it might also limit neurological or clinical

identification apart from occult connections (rendering the observed connection between the occult and "possession" circular to this degree). One pastoral/psychological concern for those who affirm genuine spirits in possession syndrome is that it not be used to the exclusion of more conventional modern diagnoses of disorders. Indeed, some earlier "possession" diagnoses may have contributed to the development of "secondary personality"; see Oesterreich, 1966, p. 127; 1974, pp. 111, 140. Some even suggest that, due to role-playing, psychiatric expectations may sometimes contribute to this disorder (Spanos, 1989, pp. 109–118).

It would appear quite difficult, given even healthy people's ability to assume different roles in different settings, to attribute all cases of multiple personality disorder/dissociative identity disorder to actual demons. (For comparison with MPD/DID, cf., e.g., Bourguignon, 1989; Field, 1969, p. 3; Firth, 1969, pp. ix–x, also noting suggestibility on p. xiii.) Possession sometimes offers a religiously meaningful shared cultural idiom for sorts of mental illness that might be helpful to the possessed person (Obeyesekere, 1970).

Invasive spirits could presumably cause other disorders, but they would not account for all cases. Many psychiatrists who acknowledge genuine cases of demonic possession in the West also view them as extremely rare (e.g., Peck), though the cases might also appear so rare because the observers minimalistically accept as genuinely demonic only those instances that cannot be explained otherwise.

Many cases of apparent possession do have more direct psychological explanations (see e.g., Gildea, 1974, pp. 296–298; Smucker and Hostetler, 1988). John White, whose experience with putatively real demons has been noted, treats psychosis as the result of chemical imbalance rather than demons (Loewen, 1988, pp. 137–138). If psychiatric problems may stem from material, emotional and/or spiritual causes, one can never assume the latter as an exclusive or necessarily even a direct contributing cause without compelling evidence. Preternatural phenomena provide one sort of evidence, but these do not appear in most cases. Walsh (2007, pp. 147–148) notes that different paradigms explain the evidence differently and allows that different cases may have different explanations.

Sall (1976) contends that demonization, in contrast to treatable conditions such as psychosis and hallucinations, can be healed only by exorcism or prayer (Bach, 1979, p. 25, questions Sall's criteria; Sall replies in Sall, 1979). An Ethiopian minister I interviewed reports that a hospital psychiatrist there treats psychiatric cases directly but refers genuine cases of possession to the minister and his colleagues (Keener 2011, p. 841). Isaacs (1987) notes cases referred by four Episcopal exorcists and screened for diagnosis by one psychiatrist and four psychologists; these are cases that do not fit other diagnoses. The article finds seven shared characteristics of possession cases, many of these overlapping with Crooks' list. They include experiencing "dark figures" and "audible and coherent voices" that otherwise seem a part of the real world; revulsion toward religious objects (note also Ising, 2009, pp. 171, 183, 326, 337; Woodard, 1955, p. 25); and, most unusually,

"odd phenomena" affecting those *near* the patient, such as "poltergeist-type phenomena and the feeling of suffocation while praying" (Isaacs, 1987, p. 270). A priori assumptions about what factors identify possession may have reduced the possible sample size and thus other possible characteristics. Although superhuman knowledge, strength, and so forth are more obvious signs of possession, psychological criteria are not always adequate for distinguishing natural psychopathology and its sometimes demonic exploitation (Monden, 1966, p. 163).

Power Encounters: Spiritual Confrontations

Some possessing spirits have shown hostility toward Christian conversion or the Christian God (e.g., Field, 1969, p. 8; Lema, 1999, pp. 55–56; Maddox, 1999, p. 156; Michel, 2006, p. 35; Sandgren, 1999, p. 176; Straight, 2007, p. 171). In cultures that emphasize spiritual power, however, rival displays of spiritual power have often led to church growth (Alexander, 2009, pp. 110–114; Johnson, 1970, pp. 54–58; De Wet, 1981, passim).

Power encounters also between missionaries and local spiritual powers persisted through history, for example with Patrick in Ireland (De Wet, 1981, p. 87; Latourette, 1975, p. 348; Neill, 1964, p. 75; Skarsaune and Engelsviken, 2002; Young, 1988, p. 112). Many Enlightenment figures discounted shifting voices as mere trickery (Schmidt, 1998, pp. 279–292), but Wesley treated them as real and cast out the spirits (Tomkins, 2003, p. 72), as did many of his followers (Rack, 1982, pp. 147–149).

An exorcism through nineteenth-century Lutheran pastor Johann Christian Blumhardt impacted the entire region (Ising, 2009, pp. 162–189; cf. Macchia, 1993, pp. 65–68). Christian theologian Karl Barth later used this exorcism as a model of Christ's triumph over evil (Kauffman, 1988, pp. 7–8). Power encounters appear in early twentieth-century indigenous African Christian prophetic movements (Hanciles, 2004, p. 170; Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, 2007, pp. 223–224). They continue today where indigenous Christian preachers confront traditional religions (Itioka, 2002; Khai, 2003, pp. 143–144; Lees and Fiddes, 1997, p. 25; Yung, 2002). Many converts from traditional African religions have burned fetishes and abandoned witchcraft practices due to power encounters (Burgess, 2008, p. 151; Mayrargue, 2001, p. 286; Merz, 2008, p. 203). By addressing perceived local needs, power encounters have expanded Christian movements in, e.g., Haiti (Johnson, 1970, pp. 54–58), Nigeria (Burgess, 2008, p. 153, before subsequent abuses in exorcism ministries), South Asia (Daniel, 1978, pp. 158–159; Pothen, 1990, pp. 305–308), the Philippines (Cole, 2003, p. 264; Ma, 2000), and Indonesia (Wiyono, 2001, pp. 278–279, 282; York, 2003, pp. 250–251).[18]

[18] I have acquired various additional accounts by interviewing associates in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere (e.g., Albert Bissouessoue, interview, Dec. 17, 2009; Paul Mokake, interview, May 13, 2009; Rodney Ragwan, interview, Dec. 15, 2009).

Such displays of spiritual power have proved sufficiently compelling that even a number of shamans who previously claimed contact with spirits have switched allegiances to follow Christ, whom they decide is more powerful (Alexander, 2009, pp. 89, 110; De Wet, 1981, pp. 84–85, 91n2; Green, 2001, p. 108; Khai, 2005, p. 269; Pothen, 1990, p. 189). Thus, for example, a prominent Indonesian shaman had allegedly murdered a thousand people through curses (others also attesting her success); but she claims that she abandoned witchcraft to follow Jesus after experiencing a vision of him (Knapstad, 2005, pp. 83–85; cf. p. 89). An Indonesian doctoral graduate from my institution baptized 28 former witchcraft practitioners in 2011.[19] As illustrated in the accounts of materialistic Westerners converted to belief in spirits, however, the perspectival influence does not go only in a single direction.

Crooks' proposal of genuine, harmful spirits is probably not the best explanation for all claims of spirit possession, but in a number of cases it explains the data better than alternative proposals. It coheres with indigenous explanations and also provides a more economical explanation for data arising from some case studies.

Conclusion

Although any work that breaks new ground will require nuance, often significantly, Crooks' bold statement of a new paradigm (by restating an old one) demands serious attention. While typical psychiatric problems encountered in the West may involve other explanations, for some sorts of phenomena, especially those connected with preternatural phenomena, the activity of genuine, extrahuman spirits remains the simplest, most economical solution.

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Demon Possession: Symbolic Language and the Psychic Fact

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The concept of demon possession fell out of scientific favor with the rise of modern and post-modern philosophies. These ways of thinking, however, have failed to adequately describe the phenomena of demonic possession. They have likewise been unsuccessful in developing an appropriate treatment method for those experiencing the signs and symptoms of classical possession. Though belief in possession has been rejected as superstition, the phenomenon of demonic possession is a psychic fact and necessarily should be approached as such. Re-appropriating a pre-modern philosophy and using an understanding of symbolic language, this article offers a renewed method of understanding the possession state.

Keywords: possession, psychic reality, demonic

Mark Crooks' paper is a study defending the traditional use of a demonological paradigm for understanding the phenomena of demonic possession. He suggests that demonic possession should once again be viewed as a valid phenomenon and commences his argument by pointing out that denial — by merely changing our philosophical paradigm — does not negate the reality of an event. Rather, he contends that when comparing the explanations of the modern interpretations versus the traditional paradigm of demonology that the traditional is more credible than the recently adopted models of the naturalistic sciences.

Using what he calls a "post-anecdotal" method Crooks proceeds to show that the ancient system of demonology is not only just as adequate as the modern medical model but is even more efficient in describing the phenomena of possession states. His approach is similar to the oft-used Jungian method of observing the psyche through the lens of myth and fairytale. This "post-anecdotal" method is analogous to the establishing of mythological contents of the psyche as "psychic facts." The use of demonology to describe psychic facts is similar to Jung's utilizing alchemical symbolism to do the same.

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Psychic facts are just that: reality as it is encountered within the psyche. A psychic fact carries as much weight in the life of the individual as does the supposed "fact" of the external world; it is as influential to the behavior and personality as is an external, environmental factor. It may actually carry more weight and have more substance because, as the mediator of perceptions, the psychic is all that is "real." We must not lose sight of the old Latin proverb: "That which is received is received in the manner of the receiver," meaning that even what we think of as external reality is filtered always through the psyche. Whether that reality is experienced as a mythological symbol or put into modern terms such as sensory gateways or confirmation bias, it is always within the psyche that a perception is processed, and an interpretation provided. To make what originated from within the psyche of less reality than what the psyche receives from the physical environment is merely a modern and post-modern — i.e., materialistic — bias. Such a bias is a new hypothesis to be tested, not a definition of truth. While speaking of the need to accept psychic facts, Jung (1959, para. 44) once stated, "To psychologize this reality out of existence either is ineffectual, or else merely increases the inflation of the ego. One cannot dispose of facts by declaring them unreal." Of course, one must first realize that there is such thing as the psyche, which is often difficult to establish in the minds of many post-modern thinkers who psychologize and continue to de-mythologize the psyche out of existence. Crooks' "Occam's razor" argument that demonology is the simplest and best explanation of the phenomena associated with demon possession goes beyond this subject to add more credence to reestablishing the traditional, pre-modern, view of reality in general.

One difficulty with Crooks' paper is his attempt to work within the confines of an acceptable academic argument. Today such arguments demand a premise founded in post-modern thinking. Crooks' effort to work within this framework is admirable; however, it is virtually impossible. The narrow and often irrational nature of the post-modern framework has no room for what Peter Kreeft refers to as the *moreness* of existence.

Kreeft (2018) has outlined three philosophies that have guided much of our thinking over the past two thousand years: these are traditionalism (or pre-modernism), modernism (or rationalism), and postmodernism (or what he calls irrationalism). In more descriptive language he calls these the philosophies of *moreness*, *sameness*, and *lessness*. In relation to our understanding of life, *moreness* could also be called mysticism; that is, there is more to the world than is seen, or as he quotes Shakespeare "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." *Sameness* is a rationalism (modernism) that conceives that all things are identical, or the same, to what we think they are. "[A]s Hegel put it, 'that which is real is rational and that which is rational is real.' In other words, he says, we are know-it-alls: what is inside our mind and what is outside match pretty perfectly. To believe that, you have to be either a genius,

or very arrogant, or both (like Hegel)" [Kreeft, 2018, p. 9]. This is where much of the twentieth century was stuck. Finally, there is the philosophy of *lessness*, or reductionism, which dominates much thinking at this moment. You can observe it in medicine and psychology where all behaviors and experiences are presently reduced to neurological functioning and brain structures. Obviously, these three philosophies diverge on how one understands the universe surrounding them.

Traditionalism had almost completely fallen out of vogue by the middle of the nineteenth century, and modernism and post-modernism have dominated intellectual thought since then. Biblical and theological studies had been significantly infected by them, leading to the mid-twentieth century's move to demythologize the Bible. Such a move spelled doom for any objective conceptualizing of angels, demons, and a spiritual reality, they being relegated to the junk heap of history or completely psychologized. All that was left was a moral and ethical religion that needed to reach out to perceived societal needs, since these were the true rational realities that touched us.

Since then, such stories as Jesus contending with the Devil in the wilderness have been interpreted as merely him confronting social problems and personal interior psychological complexes, the Devil being reduced to a concept merely signifying such evils. The confrontation of Jesus with the Gerasene demoniac in the modern and post-modern views is merely illustrative of either dealing with a severe psychopathology or as a coded story speaking about some form of societal abuse and rejection of the Gospel message for economic reasons. The idea that Jesus was confronting a real Devil and a real demon-possessed man was discarded as superstitious to the rational and reductionist mind of the modern reader. The Lord's Prayer, which in the Greek contains a statement more appropriately translated "deliver us from the Evil One," is most often translated with the impersonal "deliver us from evil." However, the current reading of these stories and the Lord's Prayer has done little to help us to understand the evils of genocides and degrading abuse; of terrorists, or of people possessed. Evil has not been better understood by our modern outlook; in our intentional arrogance and ignorance it has exponentially multiplied.

Kreeft has called for us to return to the pre-modern, traditionalist philosophy of life in hope that we might once again truly embrace reality and faith, and understand what it means to deal with existential, objective evil both in society and within the individual. I would say it is not so much that we return to the past understanding as that we begin to embrace the earlier philosophy in a new, grander, more conscious, and more mature fashion. This is a return to the wisdom of the Zen master who was once asked about his understanding of life after attaining enlightenment. He looked up and answered, "When I was young, the mountains were the mountains, the rivers were the rivers, and the sky was the sky. Then as I grew, the mountains were no longer the mountains, the rivers no

longer the rivers, and the sky no longer the sky. Now that I am older the mountains are the mountains, the rivers the rivers, and the sky the sky." He had made his own progression from materialistic traditionalism through philosophies of *sameness* and *lessness* to a mature reengagement with a reality of *moreness*. It was the same reality he once knew, engaged in a new manner.

To adequately work toward the healing of persons dealing with the demonic, it is desirable that we embrace reality as did this wise man. To do this we take our traditional understanding of the cosmos and of the human being and look at them with new eyes, seeing through a renewed mythology into these original events. My contribution will be to supplement Crooks' efforts, taking up the pre-modern mythological understanding as often used in Jungian circles, applying an updated mythology that may again describe the psyche in such a manner that possession by demons is no longer odd but reasonable.

The pre-modern philosophies were in near-complete agreement that the cosmos was comprised of three layers. These were the underworld, the middle world of earth, and the upper world of heaven. This is similarly reflected in the book of Genesis when we read that God created the heavens and the earth and then divided the waters of the heaven above from those beneath by means of a firmament called the sky. We had the three layers of waters beneath, waters above, and a dry earth in-between. Then, with the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo this cosmology began to erode. With present-day astronomical equipment and the advent of space travel the idea that we are in some sort of terrarium with holes poked in the roof to allow the light of heaven above to shine through (stars) and the waters above to drop (rain) is completely discredited in the minds of every modern person. So, the contemporary ear is attuned to the modern and post-modern philosophies.

Interestingly though, a desire for the traditional understanding intuitively remains. This is possibly due to the fact that the ancient mythology (as with all enduring mythologies) was speaking of a truth that was to be comprehended symbolically rather than literally. So, the rejection of a concrete understanding of Genesis is merely the rejection of a materialistic error and need not be the rejection of the traditional cosmology when taken symbolically or mythologically. Materialism, and modernism, believe that if something cannot be measured then that something has no reality. Story, as experienced though mythology, is the manner of gauging the reality of that which is beyond what can be measured physically. It is the language of *moreness*.

For us to once again grasp the reality of the actual Devil, objective demons, real angels, and a cosmos that contains them we need to look at the old story and see how we can incorporate them into a now more matured understanding; to look at the old mythology with a renewed vision. The story of Genesis goes something like this. In the beginning God is in his heaven of heavens, the abode of his unchangeable essence. From there he speaks issuing forth his manifest energies

and created the heavens and the earth; however, the earth is still waiting in potential, for it is void and without form. Later, the earth will arise within the midst of the waters of a lower heaven, but first God divides the waters of the upper heavens from that of the lower by placing an extended solid surface between them, which is translated in the King James version of the Bible as a firmament. Then God speaks and withdraws the lower waters creating dry ground: the earth. At this point there is no mention of an underworld, but this will later be associated with the waters under the earth. So, we have a conceptualization of creation which is in accord with the mythologies of the world. There is an upper world of numerous heavens, an underworld, and in between we find the earth. And, above it all is the heaven of heavens where is to be found (if such a term may be used with the unknowable infinite) the essence of God.

As is now obvious, this conceptualization would erode with the examination of the skies by astronomers and the final death knell would come with the experiences of astronauts traveling beyond the atmosphere. With these testimonies, no reasonable person could believe that the sky above us is a solid sheet, implying that we live in some sort of terrestrial terrarium. The outer atmosphere is porous and actually thins rather than thickens at its outermost edge. Even if we transfer the reading of the firmament to the outer edges of the universe, this too is unacceptable to our calculations and to our sense of rational belief. The simple explanation has then been that we have proven that heaven does not exist. However, this has been equally as materialistic an error as believing that the sky is literally solid, since we rely on a materialistic philosophy to "prove" either point.

However, if we take this mythology as we should, seeing it as describing a reality that is beyond the boundaries of rational analysis, we can then place it in a renewed context. Rather than conceive of heaven, earth, and hell as geographical locations, today it is more appropriate to see them as states of being; even as dimensions. This is how St. John Paul, echoing many before him in both the Eastern and Western Church, posited it. In this case the situation would appear as such.

God in his essence sends forth his energy and forms creation. Creation consists of both heaven and earth, though initially only heaven is fully manifested. What actually is the substance of heaven is not described, so, if you wish, you may imagine a vast dimension of heavenly energy. Then, in the midst of this grand dimension, a separation occurs so that within the compass of the grand heavenly another heavenly dimension is delineated. Later we will find that populating these heavenly dimensions are the angels of various species.

Next, within the midst of the second, inner heavenly dimension another dimension forms which is known as earth: the dry land. Creation appears to take on the appearance of the ancient celestial maps; however, rather than concrete spheres ruled by the planets within each sphere, here we have dimensions of reality — states of being — each governed by its own natural laws with the laws of the grander subsuming and transcending those of the lesser, since the lesser was

formed within the grander. The innermost dimension, known Biblically as earth, is our familiar physical universe where $e = mc^2$ is a basic principle. Here is the state of being now being described by string theory, quantum mechanics, and the possible ten-dimensional universe. Overlapping this physical universe is that of an inner heaven. This is the realm of psyche with its own laws and functioning. Whereas space–time dominates the physical realm of earth, or physis, it is often apparent that space does not work the same in the dimension of psyche and so therefore neither does time as we know it. Overlapping the dimensions of physis and psyche is another which traditionally has been referred to as the dimension of spirit, the outer heaven or heavens. And finally, overlapping these, but beyond all, is the Heaven of heavens.

This conception is not novel, it is presaged in other pre-modern understandings; however it does not rely on a materialistic or a geographic concept which defy today's reasonable understanding of the physical universe. The Celts and many others held similar dimensional understandings as they conceived of thin places — liminal spaces — that separated one state of being from the other.

After the creation of this cosmos we read in Genesis about the creation of the beings that populated the material aspect. In the first chapters of Genesis there is no mention of angels, however these species of the heavens are assumed to have been created prior to the formation of the earth, or the material dimension of being. This is posited in early Hebrew thought, articulated clearly in the Book of Enoch, and later expanded upon during the period of intertestamental apocalyptic literature. The early Christians of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages knew and incorporated this literature and gave us our conception of angels. As they would articulate, just as there are creatures of earth over which Adam was given authority (an aspect of his naming them) — these creatures are various in number and function — so we are led to believe that the creatures of the heavenly dimension are various. St. John Damascene and Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite are best known for taking the literature and belief in angels and categorizing them according to species and function. Here we are exploring and utilizing the story of Genesis and Judeo–Christian scriptures. If time allowed we could compare these stories with the Bardo worlds of Tibetan Buddhism and the conceptual landscapes of shamanism. For now we will focus on Hebraic conceptualization.

The implications of this are many. First, since the psychic dimension formed within the midst of the first heavenly condition — the abode of the angels — this psychic dimension would be easily influenced by the angels. Further, since the material dimension formed in the midst of the immaterial or psychic realm, the angels and demons are then able to manipulate and effect the material condition. This is important, for it informs our understanding of how demons may affect our thoughts as well as act upon the environment of a place with infestations. It speaks to how the incredible, and seemingly unbelievable, events such as the manifestation and disappearance of material items may occur during exorcisms; as well as

how demons may influence and even possess humans. With this understanding as a foundation we can begin to examine how possessions occur within the psyche.

A common misconception presented in many descriptions and teachings is that the person is comprised of a body within which is found a soul and deep within at the center is the human spirit. Graphically this is illustrated by a bullseye or target. One can draw an outer circle designating the body. Within the first circle, a second is drawn designating the soul, and within that (the bullseye) is a circle of the human spirit. The problem is that, even though this may be a provocative illustration, it is fundamentally wrong in its comprehension of the human being. It is an anthropology of the human being turned upside down.

Dante illustrated our convoluted perceptions best in his description of the Devil and of Hell. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante and his guide Virgil descend through the rings of Hell starting in a Dark Wood until finally, at the very bottom, they encounter Dis — the Devil — trapped from waist upward in a frozen lake. It is then that Virgil demands that they do a very odd thing. He grabs hold of the hairs on the body of Dis and proceeds to climb headfirst further down the torso. Using Dis' hips and legs as a ladder they descend only to find in a disconcerting manner that now they are ascending up the legs of Lucifer. There above them is Purgatory and Paradise. It is only then that Dante realizes that when he thought he was descending the rings of Hell he was actually ascending. What all thought was down, was up, and up, down. Satan had been cast out of Paradise and, in a spiritual swan dive, was trapped head down in the frozen lake of Hell. We need to join Dante and reverse our common perceptions and turn our thinking right side up.

The more appropriate manner by which to view the human being is as a spirit which has a soul and body; the spirit in this sense being the sum total substance of the person transcendent of the function of either of the parts. Here spirit has the meaning of essence or substance. What we are substantially is comprised of soul and body: we are spirit. In modern language we might refer to it differently and refer to the human spirit as the true self.

To understand a map of the psyche, imagine it in this way: it is as if our souls (the invisible part of ourselves) are a gigantic ocean. Within that ocean swims a tiny little fish, one that we have named the ego, our conscious identity. Within this fish (the ego) is a brain, and here resides rationality and will, which we moderns call our mind. So, you already begin to see that the rational mind that we value so highly is actually a very small — even though vital — aspect of this ocean of the true self.

The fish and its brain are quite important, but certainly not as grand as the ocean. However, this fish — the ego — likes to conceive of the ocean as *its* ocean. It likes to believe that the waters around it are all relative to it, possibly even created by it. To a large degree, this is how Freud saw things, and how most people still view the inner world. Humility demands otherwise. Humility compels the

fish to realize that the ocean is not a part of it, but that it is a part of the ocean; that the ego is a part of the soul, the soul is not a product of the ego. In other words, we do not have an unconscious, an unconscious has us. With this realization the fish (the ego) takes the inner life (the remainder of the ocean) seriously as the grander, more real aspect of life. This image will assist us in further understanding both psychopathology and demonic possession.

Within this ocean of the true self there is also a multitude of other "fish," other personalities or complexes. These are the other voices we hear in our head; the conflicting parts of the fullness of our self. The ego is a very important fish in this picture, because, even though it is not the center of the true self, it is the center of consciousness. The ego is like a flashlight in a dark room.

If we look at all of this in another manner, we can imagine that for a number of reasons our ocean has become rather dark and obscure. As a matter of practical experience, the ocean is essentially unseen, and so we call it the unconscious. Because it is unobserved, and the ego is at least partially experienced, identity is associated with the ego and from that vantage point we talk about "our" unconscious, as if it in some manner belongs to the ego. A great deal of today's psychological theory is based upon this limited and limiting thought: that the ego is central and the unconscious in some manner either belongs to it or is an artifact of it. This is essentially saying that the ocean belongs to the fish, rather than the little fish is merely a creature of the ocean.

God created this metaphorical ocean with fish in it. Our problem has been that the true self, this image of God that was supposed to be lit up to fullness, became darkness leaving only a speck of light shining: the ego. That speck of light, unaware of the vastness of the life of the soul around it, has taken the flashlight of awareness and turned it to shine only on itself. It is like a person in a dark room who has forgotten to explore the room only to turn the light on his own face, satisfied that illuminating himself is quite good enough. Is it then any wonder that we are so self-centered? So the ego is to take its flashlight of consciousness and shine it into the ocean of the soul. As it does so, the inner life is painted with the light of consciousness until the soul is illuminated with light. With these metaphors in mind let us now turn to understand the dynamics of psychopathology and of demonic possession.

Viewing ourselves as a whole populated by various internal personalities and an ego (or identity personality) we can conceptualize the general characteristics of the neuroses and the psychoses. Neurotic disorders[1] — such as obsessive-compulsive disorders, mood disorders, and the like — can be seen as the result of the

[1] Even though the categorization of neurotic disorders has been removed from the recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals, I do not believe that their explanatory value has been diminished as a generalized description of those dysfunctional ego states that are differentiated from conditions in the psychotic range of functioning.

ego building a seemingly firm wall around itself. This is the experience of the average person.

Most of us do not recognize the inner personalities as even existing. We do not remember our dreams where these personalities are most often met. We think the internal conflicts we experience when we have an inner argument are the result of a confused, possibly indecisive, state of mind rather than the result of a disagreement amongst the deeper, independent, parts of the self. However, these confusions are often the result of one part — one or more fish in the ocean of the self — demanding that its desires be met by an otherwise rejecting ego. For the most part the ego is able to fend off the energy of these inner parts, an action we often refer to as denial and repression, and at best suppression. However, some of the energy does get through from stronger inner parts and overwhelms the ego with its energy and its desires. So, it is that St. Paul will say, "that which I would do I do not, and that which I would not do I do" (Romans 7:19).

For example, one of these inner personalities may be focused on sexual behavior and desires. We might call it Eros. When this inner personality is in concert with others such as caring and affiliation and with the virtues acquired by the ego, then this inner personality of Eros will be manifest in marriage as wholesome sexual (erotic) love. When this inner personality is shoved into the unconscious by denial or repression, it can arise and unconsciously assault the ego with all of the feelings and thoughts associated with lust. It may then be seen and experienced as a sexual compulsion or even deviancy.

Another inner personality may be concerned with power. The power to live free as oneself is a God-given gift, and so it is inherent in each psyche. When this power is rightly recognized and lived in concert with caring and love as well as with the ego-acquired virtues of justice and humility, this personality is seen as righteous. We would view that Mother Teresa standing before the Nobel Prize committee and advocating respect for the unborn as a righteous and humble use of power. But if that same desire to manifest power is denied or repressed then it may come out as an unconsciously originated neurosis of a domineering attitude with controlling behaviors and may play a part in the constitution of a narcissistic personality. Keep these interactions amongst the inner personalities and the ego in mind for they will play a significant part in understanding the dynamics of how demons can control the body in the case of a full possession.

Where the ego built a wall of denial and repression in the case of the neuroses, it is just the opposite in the case of the psychoses. In this situation, the ego's attempt at building the wall was faulty and because of this the inner personalities are free-wheeling in their dealings with the ego. The ego is unable to distinguish between forces that are within the vastness of the soul and forces that are completely outside. The individual then has trouble telling the difference between the voice of an inner personality and one that comes from the outer environment;

the person hears voices. The psychotic has difficulty distinguishing between the images of the imagination and those in the outer world and may experience hallucinations and delusions. If neurological issues are also involved the situation becomes even more confusing and complicated.

Using an oversimplification for the purpose of illustration: if the sexual inner personality, or Eros, begins to speak to the ego of the psychotic, the afflicted individual may not be able to distinguish between an inner desire and an outer situation. In that case he may project that inner voice on to another person and then believe that the sexual energy that is actually within his own psyche is coming from another person. We might then have a man (this also could be a woman) who is stalking a famous woman with the sincere belief that she is in love with him. This is a paranoid fantasy — a projection — but the psychotic will experience it as exceptionally real, for the voice and feelings are real. The psychotic is hearing *something*; it is the attributed origin of that *something* that is false.

Most neuroses are not mistaken as having a demonic component, but many psychoses are. Since the individual actually believes that he or she is hearing true outer voices, truly seeing things, and is experiencing things in his or her body that do not have an organic origin, these can easily be mistaken as the activity of demons. The way to distinguish these mental illnesses from demonic activity will be by viewing the whole spectrum of symptoms exhibited. What we have found is that demonic possession is a unique syndrome comprised of signs and symptoms that are different from the signs and symptoms that constitute any of the psychotic syndromes (Isaacs, 2009, 2018).

Even as we distinguish demonic possession from mere demonic activity we recognize that the influence of the demonic in an individual's life is, unfortunately, a given. The story goes, that in much the same way there is an angelic presence in each life, there is also an accompanying demonic element. This assumption is the underlying foundation of C.S. Lewis' wonderful book, *The Screwtape Letters*. How the demonic interacts with our psyches and our physical bodies determines whether we would classify the influence as temptation, obsession (or oppression), or full possession. Using our understanding of the psyche that we employed to comprehend psychopathology we can see the manner by which demons may gain influence.

Demons rarely interact directly with the ego. To do so would be to bring themselves into awareness which is fraught with the possibility of resistance by the individual. It is much more effective to work through a person's unconscious complexes or inner personalities. Being unconscious, the ego is unaware that it is under the influence of a complex that is energized by the demonic.

A demon does not literally, or concretely, enter a psyche but rather influences it from without. It is much more like having a bad friend. The demon will attempt to influence the unconscious aspect of the psyche and energize it to sway the ego and so control the body. If the person is often inhibited and controlled by his or her

fears, then the demon may figuratively "speak" to a fearful inner personality (or complex) which the ego will then experience as potentially debilitating anxiety. If that person is given to lust, then the demon may energize that sexual part of the soul which then would raise sexual images to mind and promote sexual feelings. It is the soul that is producing the images and the feelings, prompted by the demon but not directly produced by the demon. There is a necessary interaction between the demon and the inner aspects of the soul, without which the demon has no power. It is for this reason that there can be no deliverance without inner healing and often inner healing is inhibited without deliverance. It is why consciousness and self-examination are effective tools in dealing with these situations. Likewise, if the ego is fortified by virtues then there are fewer doorways by which demonic influence can control behavior.

Again, we imagine the demon to be like a bad friend. Using lust as an illustration: if that bad friend offers a lustful thought, but you have developed the virtues of fortitude and love, then the thought is barely experienced; if at all. If the bad friend offers the thought and energizes a split-off, sexualized part of the soul, then the ego may experience it as a temptation. If that temptation is strengthened by the ego having acted on it before, then the offer may be experienced more as an obsession or oppression. The psychic complex may be energized, but not to such a degree that the demonic suggestion is yet strong enough to compel action. However, it is strong enough to begin to erode a weakened will within the ego. If given into action enough times, the demon's influence on that part of the psyche may grow to such a degree that, between the demon's energy and the inner personality's energy, the ego is overwhelmed and a full-fledged possession is experienced.

Healing therefore is accomplished in a dual manner. First, the demon's access to the patient's soul needs to be cut off; much as we may ask an addict that is attempting sobriety to avoid their old crowd of drug and alcohol using friends. This severing of the relationship is what is accomplished in exorcism. The second manner is then within the soul, dealing with the inner aspect that the demon is accessing and addressing. This is accomplished through deep spiritual direction and psychotherapy.

Mark Crooks' paper was presented to address the issue as to whether demonic possession is best described by modern naturalistic sciences or by traditional demonology. What he presented was a defense of the use of tradition in understanding that possession does exist. The problem is not whether possession is real or not but is an issue of perspective. The doubt about the demonic is that demons are rarely seen and the possession phenomena appears produced by the afflicted person. Even for the person who accepts a view that demons may exist, the question remains: How are we ever to truly know that what was observed and experienced was demonic and not merely psychic? Is the experience, the loss of volition, the odd perception being influenced by a demon from without, or were these stimulated from an inner source? This is the problem tied up with

the old Latin saying referenced earlier, "That which is received is received in the manner of the receiver." Since all experiences are processed through the psyche, and are therefore a part of the psyche, the differentiation of the source of the image, thought, feeling, or other experience is made difficult because they all have a common recipient and route by which to travel into consciousness: the psyche.

Our conscious interpretation of experiences is like a television. You may receive many channels, many inputs, but all are filtered through the same processor and projected on the same screen. All you really know is that something is on the screen. The source (the channel) is only recognized when it is displayed. Therefore, a psychiatrist that says what she is seeing is psychic is just as correct as the person who says that it may also be demonic. It is merely that the psychiatrist is not looking beyond the psyche to discern another influence at work; primarily because that psychiatrist likely does not believe in the existence of a spiritual world and so halts the search for a cause at the psychic and organic levels neglecting what may be beyond. Hopefully, as scientific knowledge expands and as we listen to Peter Kreeft's call to return to a more reasonable philosophy of *moreness*, then the spiritual and the psychological explanations will no longer be in conflict, but will be viewed as two aspects of one unified reality.

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Commentary on Mark Crooks's Essay, "On the Psychology of Demon Possession: The Occult Personality"

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The present short commentary on Crooks's essay focuses on Crooks's methodological distinction between proper empirical, scientific method and the so-called "religion of science." It argues that only when this distinction is maintained can one avoid a metaphysical positivism that makes impossible any scholarly evaluation of occult phenomena.

I am neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist, but, on the basis of my books *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult* and *Demon Possession,* cited by Mark Crooks in his article under discussion, I have been asked to provide a brief comment concerning it. As a philosopher and professor of law, my remarks will necessarily focus on epistemology and standards of evidence, especially as applied to occult and allegedly supernatural phenomena.

In my view, the most important single contribution of Crooks's article lies in his preference for factual evidence over metaphysical opinion. He rightly holds that — at least since the eighteenth-century so-called Enlightenment — naturalistic worldviews have become a new orthodoxy. To admit anything beyond the naturalistically "normal" identifies one as a naïve obscurantist, deserving of ostracism from the scientific community. To accept any explanations beyond the naturalistic is a mark of political incorrectness and the kiss of academic death.

Crooks, on the other hand, understands the vital distinction between scientific method — relying on empirical, factual evidence no matter the consequences — and what has been termed "the religion of science": the metaphysical commitment to naturalistic explanations, even when the evidence does not offer sufficient support for them. Crooks is a serious empiricist. If the data require, or even favor, non-naturalistic explanations of occult phenomena, he prefers to go with the evidence rather than forcing the data to fit a preconceived naturalistic universe.

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Examples abound throughout the Crooks essay. His critiques of McNamara's "positive possession" and the views of Davies, of Randi, and of Carl Sagan are particularly telling. Let me reinforce the Sagan analysis by material from my most recent work, *Defending the Gospel in Legal Style*.[1]

I deal with Sagan's adage, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof" — an assertion which, if correct, would justify limiting the analysis of occult phenomena such as demon possession to reductionistic naturalism regardless of the weight of the evidence for a non-naturalistic explanation of such occurrences. (In the following lengthy quotation, read "occult" for "religious" or "theological," and "veridical occult phenomenon" for "miracle.")

> When one passes into the realm of religious commitment, does one not face insuperable problems not to be found in the legal realm — since religious decisions are of an eternal dimension? Can the unbeliever not argue that it is simply impossible in principle for evidence — any evidence — to justify religious commitment?
>
> Historically, this style of argument has been presented in different guises. Going back to late classical times is the axiom, "the finite is not capable of the infinite":[2] the world is incapable of the presence of the absolute, so no amount of evidence could ever demonstrate the presence of the infinite in our finite world. The fallacy of this argument (applicable not only to a divine Incarnation and an infallible Bible, but also to the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist) is simply that, *qua* human beings, we have no idea what God is or is not capable of, so we have no business ruling out events *a priori*. It may well be that the reverse of the aphorism is true: *infinitum capax finiti*! Only a factual investigation of the world to see if God has entered it will ever answer the question.
>
> Then there is Lessing's "ditch": the claim that the accidental facts of history can never attain or justify the absolute truths of reason. Here, a serious category mistake has been made. If the "absolute truths of reason" are purely formal, lacking entirely in content, then they have nothing to do with Christian religious claims at all. If, however, they are factual in nature, then only factual investigation and probability reasoning could justify them. But this is exactly what historical proof consists of: probable evidence for historical occurrences. If, for example, God became man in Jesus Christ, that contention is as capable of historical investigation as are any other purported occurrences.
>
> David Hume argued that no miracle could ever be demonstrated, since (on the basis of "uniform experience") it would always be more miraculous that one claiming a miracle or providing evidence for it were not deceiving or deceived than that the miracle actually happened. Miracle arguments (such as the case for the resurrection of Christ) are therefore impossible from the outset. But Hume's position has been thoroughly refuted — and not just by Christian philosophers.[3] The intractable problem with the Humean argument is that it is perfectly circular: to be sure, if nature is completely uniform (i.e., if natural laws are never broken), miracles do

[1] Montgomery, J.W. (2017). *Defending the gospel in legal style* (pp. 26–30). Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft.

[2] Cf. Peter Bruns (1999). Finitum non capax infiniti: Ein antiochenisches Axiom in der Inkarnationslehre Babais des Grossen (nach 628). *Oriens Christianus, 83,* 46–71.

[3] Earman, J. (2000). *Hume's abject failure: The argument against miracles.* New York: Oxford University Press.

not occur. *But that is precisely the question requiring an answer!* And the only way properly to respond is by engaging in serious factual investigation of given miracle claims. One cannot short-circuit the miracles issue by a priori pontifications about the nature of the universe. Indeed, . . . in an Einsteinian, relativistic universe, no event can be excluded on principle: everything is subject to empirical investigation.

But the most influential current argument against the effectiveness of religious claims based on historical evidence is that represented by the adage, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof" — a saying popularized by the late Carl Sagan but which apparently originated with sociologist Marcello Truzzi.[4] Does not this declaration constitute an obvious truth militating against all miracle claims — and in particular the resurrection of Christ? Since a miracle is maximally "extraordinary," would not the evidence required to demonstrate it have to be maximally extraordinary as well?

In a word, the answer is No! Why? In line with what we have noted above, the Truzzi–Sagan tag would have meaning if, and only if, one knew the fabric of the universe — its cosmic laws and what therefore can and cannot happen; but in Einsteinian, relativistic terms, no one has such knowledge, so no one can rationally determine the probabilities for or against a given event: only factual investigation permits one to conclude that event *x* did or event *y* did not occur. . . .

But what about the very concept of a "miracle"? Is not the notion in itself so extraordinary that no amount of evidence could properly count to prove it? Here we must distinguish *mechanism* from *factuality*. The mechanism of a miracle is indeed beyond our ken — but that is irrelevant to whether or not such an event occurs. As long ago as the 18th century, Thomas Sherlock, Master of London's Temple Church and pastor to barristers, noted that the case for the resurrection of Jesus Christ does not depend on our comprehension of how resurrections occur but squarely on whether there is sufficient evidence that Jesus died on the Cross and that following his death he showed himself physically alive to sound witnesses.[5] There is thus nothing "extraordinary" about determining that Jesus rose from the dead: one need only show (a) that he died and (b) that later he was physically alive — determinations which we make every day (though in reverse order).

Are we saying that miracle evidence should be accepted as readily as non-miracle evidence? The visions of Fatima and the appearance of the Angel Moroni to Joseph Smith on the same basis as Lincoln's assassination and Hitler's *Anschluss*? We are saying simply that the standard of proof does not depend on the frequency of the event (since all historical events are unique) nor on the characterisation of the event as "miraculous" or "non-miraculous." The standard of proof depends, in all instances, on the quality of the evidence in behalf of the claimed event — that and nothing more; that and nothing less. If one were to claim that a peach can be miraculously turned into a cumquat, he or she would have to show, by ordinary scientific means, that there is a peach present at the outset, and, then, afterwards, a cumquat. For a resurrection from the dead: the same kind of testimony is required as for any other historical event — in this instance, that the object of the miracle was in fact dead and then, afterwards, physically alive. The issue of proof

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[4] See Montgomery, J.W. (2011). Apologetics insights from the thought of I. J. Good. *Philosophia Christi, 13*, 203–212.

[5] Sherlock, T. (1729). *Tryal of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.* London: J. Roberts. Sherlock's book is photolithographically reproduced in the revised edition of Montgomery, J.W. (1980). *Jurisprudence: A Book of Readings.* Strasbourg: International Scholarly Publishers.

> is not in any way metaphysical: one relies on sound historical investigation of the testimony to miracle claims of past events (or sound contemporary scientific investigation, in the case of the peach). The nature of the claim determines the method of proof, and the standard will be that appropriate to parallel determinations in the same realm.

But let us conclude with the essence of Crooks's argument, in his own words:

> Realize that a worldview, positivist or otherwise, by its nature cannot be logically entailed by empirical data as such. There is also the complementary suggestion that otherwise successful naturalistic explanations do not receive such validation from their embedding worldview. Thus the post-Enlightenment interpretive paradigm, as such, that did away with "explanatory gremlins" (e.g., demons) has never been experimentally or theoretically established. The only reason it seems to have been so is that the success of naturalistic explanations in the physical sciences seems to necessitate a monopolistic reductionist scheme.

If psychologists, parapsychologists, psychiatrists, and historians of ideas were to pay just a modicum of attention to Crooks's seminal essay, those fields of scientific investigation would have the perspective essential for a return to a genuine empirical examination of reality. The result would be a wondrous turnabout, not merely in the investigation of occult phenomena and of the personalities of those suffering such deleterious experiences, but across the entire gamut of scientific endeavor.

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