

Survival of Bodily Death
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The Scole Report
David Fontana The Scole Report

During his presentation, David Fontana elaborated upon the Scole Report, which is a summary he originally wrote for the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research. That summary follows below:

The Scole Report Authors Montague Keen, Agronomist, Hon. Media Relations Officer of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), SPR Council Member, Secretary of the SPR Survival Committee; Arthur Ellison, Professor of Electrical Engineering, Vice President of the SPR and twice Past-President; David Fontana, Professor of Educational Psychology, Vice President of the SPR, recent Past-President, and Chair of the SPR Survival Committee. The three authors have between them more than a century of interest and research into psychic phenomena.

Purpose of The Scole Report. The Report details the investigation conducted by the three authors (with the help of a number of co-investigators including lawyer Dr. Hans Schaer and mechanical engineer Walter Schnittger) into the physical phenomena associated with a home circle (known as the Scole Group), founders of the Spiritual Science Foundation. The Scole Group attributed these phenomena to a 'Spirit Team' working with them from the afterlife. The Team was said to include certain eminent deceased members of the SPR.

Membership of the Scole Group. Robin Foy (sales manager; veteran psychical researchers, with a particular interest in physical phenomena), his wife Sandra (office worker; extensive experience in psychical research) and two non-professional mediums, Diana Bylett (spiritual healer; psychic since childhood) and her husband Alan (carpenter).

Integrity of the Scole Group. Dr. Alan Gauld, well-known in both the UK and the USA as a leading psychical researcher, writes that he has known Robin Foy for over 30 years 'without finding any reason to regard him as other than totally sincere'. A similar endorsement of the integrity of Diana and Alan Bylett is given by Mrs. Beverley Dear, a scientist in membership of the SPR, and a neighbor and friend of the Byletts for over 20 years. Experience of the Foyes and the Byletts during the months of the investigation gave the investigators no reason to doubt the accuracy of the respective assessments made by Dr. Gauld and Mrs. Dear.

Furthermore, the investigators concluded that the Scole Group had no discernible financial motive for practicing deception; they were considerably out-of-pocket as a result of their work, and refused financial assistance from the SPR to cover their expenses. Publicity could also be ruled out as a motive for deception, at least in the case of the two mediums, who remained anonymous at their own request throughout the investigation, and would have continued to do so but for a subsequent report in the national press which betrayed their confidence.

Duration of the Investigation. Two years, with monthly 2-3 hour sittings with the Scole Group plus additional sittings as detailed below.

Setting Venue: A cellar in the Foyes' house converted into dedicated seance room. Construction: brick walls, floors and ceiling. Accessible only by a single staircase with a lockable door at the top. Available for thorough search by the investigators both before and after all sittings.

Furniture: round table (approx. 1.2m diameter), obstructed underneath to prevent clandestine movement; upright plastic stacking chairs; trolley holding audio tape recorder. All sittings at Scole were held around this table.

Additional Sittings Additional sittings were held in the home of Dr. Hans Schaer in Zurich (Switzerland), in Dr. Schaer's holiday retreat on the Mediterranean island of Ibiza, in two venues in the USA, and in other European locations. Phenomena were variable across locations, but remained consistent with that witnessed at Scole. Dr. Hans Schaer and Montague Keen were present as investigators at the majority of these additional sittings.

Experimental Conditions. The Scole Group, allegedly on the instructions of their 'Spirit Team', agreed to some of the controls requested by the investigators, but could not agree to them all. The Report provides details, and given the fact that sittings were held primarily in darkness, records particular regret at the embargo placed by the 'Spirit Team' upon infra-red and image-intensifying equipment (allegedly because such devices would distract the attention of the investigators, thus disrupting the focused attention said to be necessary for success). However, sufficient controls operated to render fraud extremely difficult in many instances (e.g. the respective positions of the members of the Scole Group during the sittings were identified by illuminated wrist cuffs). At no time during the sittings was any direct evidence of fraud apparent to the investigators or to any of their co-investigators.

The 'Spirit Team' maintained that they would 'bring their own light', thus rendering infra-red and image-intensifying equipment redundant, and that they were also working towards the eventual production of phenomena in natural light. The first of these promises was fulfilled to the extent that many of the 'spirit lights' referred to in due course below were sufficiently bright and sustained to allow restricted viewing of the seance room, and the second of them to the extent that Dr. Schaer's final sitting was held in good electric light.

(NB Although the absence of infra-red or image-intensifying equipment was disappointing, and has been criticized by skeptics, it is worth pointing out that the presence of this equipment would only have invoked the usual skeptical claim that proficient magicians can fool investigators under their noses in broad daylight.)

Magician's Testimony. Arguments against fraud were strengthened by the presence of a retired professional stage magician (James Webster, an Associate of the Inner Magic Circle with some 40 years interest in psychical research) at three of the sittings. James Webster testified that in his professional opinion even leading magicians could not duplicate the phenomena he witnessed at Scole without lengthy and expensive preparations, and probably not even then. He further testified that any magician who could produce the Scole effects would rapidly make a fortune on the professional stage.

The Phenomena

The Lights The light phenomena were among the most dramatic features observed by the investigators. In most cases, these phenomena were consistent with those reported by past investigators in other settings. Briefly the lights consisted chiefly of the following.

* Single light points, varying from the size of peas to that of medium-sized glass marbles, which variously darted around the room at great speed, appeared to pass through the surface of the seance room table (appearing immediately underneath in areas inaccessible to the Scole Group), settled on outstretched hands for close inspection, sustained circles in mid-air at a speed and with a precision inconsistent with manual manipulation (often 'switching' off various segments of the circle), responded to requests and apparently entered investigators' bodies, entered crystals placed upon the table and either illuminated the whole crystal or moved as a small point of light throughout their structure, entered a glass dome in the center of the table.

* Small lights which appear to enter, illuminate and levitate crystals.

- * Diffused patches of light not reflected off surfaces which traveled around the room at various heights.
- * Light sources which took the form of 'materialized' shapes ('robed' figures with brighter patches of light where faces would be) which then floated around the room, touching the investigators on request.
- * Lights which illuminated an upturned Pyrex bowl from within, providing sufficient sustained light for 'spirit hands' to be seen by the investigators.
- * A light which entered and fully illuminated a crystal in the confines of a Pyrex bowl. The investigators were invited to touch the illuminated crystal before being asked to take their hands away briefly and then 'feel' the crystal again. Although still steadily illuminated and apparently unchanged in shape, the latter on this second investigation offered no resistance to the fingers (i.e. appeared to have become totally insubstantial). On a third investigation the illuminated crystal was felt once more to be substantial.
- * A light which faintly illuminated the inactivated electric light bulb in the center of the room, producing a general glow unconnected with the filament.
- * A small light which entered a glass of water held by Professor Fontana and agitated the water, the proximity of the glass to his lips preventing any obvious intrusion of wires or rods.
- * A small light which entered and illuminated a table tennis ball which was then projected by unknown forces across the room.
- * Lights which illuminated the investigators' feet below the table in areas inaccessible to the Scole Group due to the solid foundation upon which the table rested.
- * A light which illuminated simultaneously six separate 5-cm solid Perspex supports beneath a glass dome on the table, and which also entered the dome itself.
- * A small light which settled on the open palm of a co-investigator (Professor Grattan-Guinness), who then closed his hand to eliminate the possibility of any mechanical attachment to the light.
- * A light which built up into a rock-like shape on the table, before levitating, passing in front of one of the investigators (David Fontana) and halting in front of a co-investigator (Ingrid Slack), allowing her to feel its muslin-like texture.
- * Diffused patches of light which traveled slowly across the room, appearing to take on the rudimentary shape of human faces with apparent 'lips' that moved in synchronicity with strangled attempts at speech.

The Table At relatively frequent intervals the table around which the sittings were held commenced a very rapid vibration which could both be heard and felt by the investigators. On occasions, in spite of its solid base, the table then began to swivel round (as evidenced by the movement of luminous tabs placed on the surface at the cardinal points), passing through some 20 degrees before returning to its original position.

Touches The investigators experienced frequent touches by allegedly spirit hands during the sittings. These touches took the following form.

- * A masculine hand associated with a 'direct voice' phenomena which, at his request, found with immediate accuracy Professor Fontana's hand, grasped and shook it.
- * Small, child-like, feminine hands which gently touched and stroked the hands of the investigators.

- * Perfectly formed hands apparently ending at the wrist, visible in dark outline by the illumination of attendant 'spirit lights'.
- * Touches on the legs of the investigators at points inaccessible to the Scole Group without detection.
- * Hands which placed objects in the palms of investigators at request and with unerring accuracy (explicable by normal means only if the Scole Group are credited with infra-red viewers or image intensifiers).
- * Hands which grasped those of the investigators' and raised their arms to full extension above their heads.
- * Hands which gave playful slaps on the wrist to Montague Keen.

Voices The allegedly paranormal voices took several different forms, in particular as follows.

- * Various 'communicators' spoke through the entranced mediums.
- * 'Direct voices' apparently originated from the region above the table, sometimes speaking in strangled whispers, at other times clearly and relatively strongly. Long experience of sitting in the dark sharpened the hearing and the sense of direction of the investigators, rendering it possible to locate the position of these voices with some accuracy (the investigators were consistently in accord in assigning these voices to precise positions in the room, and in differentiating them from the positions occupied by the members of the Scole Group).
- * Voices impressed themselves upon audio tape in a recorder from which the microphone had been removed.

Apports Several small apports appeared during the investigation, though the Scole Group had a wide range of more impressive objects which had apparently appeared during their closed sittings. One of the most notable of their apports was a copy of the Daily Mail newspaper of 1st April 1944 containing an account of the celebrated trial of medium Helen Duncan. Analysis by the Print Industry Research Association (PRIA) instigated by the investigators confirmed that the newspaper was printed by letterpress on wartime newsprint (which ruled out the possibility of it being a facsimile copy). The PRIA expressed themselves baffled by the fact that the paper was in pristine condition, and showed no signs of the yellowing or aging that would be unavoidable in a newsprint retained from 1944.

Messages Throughout the sittings the investigators were given messages by the Spirit Team, (usually in the course of long conversations) speaking through one or other of the entranced mediums. All sittings were tape-recorded, and the tapes subsequently transcribed in order to provide a complete record of proceedings.

The messages were purportedly designed to strengthen the evidence for survival, and consisted for the most part of enigmatic snippets of information about the writings and doings of the deceased SPR members who claimed to make up part of the 'Spirit Team'. These pieces of information were effectively in the form of puzzles, which the investigators then attempted to solve by a study of early copies of the SPR Proceedings or books such as Sir Oliver Lodge's *The Survival of Man*.

Opinions differ as to the value of these messages in supporting the concept of survival. Puzzles which prove difficult to solve may not be difficult to set, and although considerable research by the investigators was required in order to solve some of the puzzles, the availability of the necessary information in publications held by the SPR or available in the public domain weakens its impact. Full details are given in the Report, and a close study of these details is necessary before conclusions can be drawn.

The same close study is required of information allegedly originating with the 18th/19th Century English poet William Wordsworth.

The Films One of the most impressive features of the phenomena was the production of images on unexposed color film. These images took many forms, including the following.

- * Photographs apparently of unknown groups of people, such as First World War soldiers or airmen.
- * A view of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, with subtly incorrect dimensions.
- * Unknown faces surrounded by cloud-like structures.
- * Abstract images.
- * Hermetic symbols.
- * Written verses of poetry, some of which was identifiable as copies of known poems by F. W. Myers and William Wordsworth.

The investigators placed particular emphasis upon the films in the hope of obtaining permanent paranormal objects (PPO) - i.e. films produced paranormally under conditions precluding any possibility of fraud. The investigators sought to produce a PPO using a 4-step protocol consisting of (i) their own film, (ii) a secure container in which to locate the film during the sittings, (iii) their control of this container throughout, and (iv) their control over the subsequent development of the film.

In the event, results using this protocol fell short of full satisfaction. A film subjected to this protocol produced only a very few tiny star-like points of light against a black background, and was of such poor quality that it was not considered worth retaining (an error of judgement). Other films produced excellent results, but the secure container concerned (referred to in our Report as the 'Alan Box') was provided by the Scole Group and proved possibly vulnerable to fraud, although on one occasion it was held throughout the sitting by co-investigator Walter Schnittger rendering interference by the Scole Group apparently impossible. Later films placed in a secure box provided by the investigators produced no results.

Excellent results were produced on other occasions, although the films concerned were placed upon the table in their sealed tubs rather than in the secure containers.

Survival Given that it is debatable whether the messages conveyed during the sittings can be regarded as strongly supporting the continuing existence of the SPR members concerned, what other evidence does the investigation provide for survival (or, if preferred, for some form of intelligent activity beyond that available to the Scole Group themselves)? Assuming for present purposes the para-normality of the phenomena, this evidence takes a number of forms, in particular those listed below.

- * The direct voices, which were distinct not only in tone but in position from the members of the Scole Group. (As explained in the Report the presence of accomplices can effectively be ruled out.)
- * The 'personalities' ostensibly communicating through the mediums, who manifested a consistency of speech, thought and mannerisms throughout the sittings difficult to explain as conscious deception on the part of the mediums, and incompatible with the existence of multiple trance sub-personalities.
- * The strength and variety of the physical phenomena. To date there is no laboratory evidence that individuals, using known (if not yet universally recognized) psychic abilities are capable of producing the macro pk effects witnessed at Scole in such profusion and with such power. Individuals capable of producing these effects through their own abilities would rapidly become psychic superstars.

Criticisms of the Investigation Criticisms of the investigation are fully detailed in the Report, and come primarily from three distinguished and highly experienced SPR members, namely Dr. Alan Gauld and Professor Donald West (both to whom had a sitting with the Group at which no sign of possible fraud was detected) and Tony Cornell. These criticisms contain no charges of fraud and no direct evidence for it, and focus upon the fact that as the controls were imperfect, fraud could theoretically have taken place. These criticisms can be summarized and answered as follows.

* The vulnerability of the Alan Box which contained some of the films used during the sittings. Experiments by Dr. Gauld revealed that even when padlocked the lid could be opened by swiveling the sockets holding the hasp through which the padlock was threaded. Anticipating this danger we had ensured that paint seals were applied to the screws holding the sockets as a safeguard. When the box was returned to us after Dr. Gauld's experiments these seals were seen to be broken (although Dr. Gauld informs us that this did not happen on his initial openings).

However, the challenge is to take the box from the table (or from Walter Schnittger's grasp in the experiment detailed above), to open the box under the conditions operating during the sittings, to abstract the film contained in the box and to substitute it for a prepared fake, to place the arms of the hasp back in their sockets (a difficult maneuver even in daylight), to replace the box in its exact position on the table (which on occasions was carefully marked prior to the sittings), and to effect all this without detection and without breaking the paint seals.

To date, no critic has undertaken to attempt this feat.

* Some of the images on the films have the appearance of being faked on acetate before being transferred to the films. This criticism is less weighty than it appears. It applies only to one particular film, and the similarity of the images concerned to those obtainable by the acetate method does not constitute direct evidence of fraud. The challenge to critics is to reproduce the filmed material, using this method, under the conditions operating during the sittings.

* Some of the images appearing on the films are taken from identifiable sources. This criticism has little to commend it. We were told in advance that some of the images (though by no means all) were taken from existing sources. The use of existing sources is not regarded as suspicious in remote viewing experiments, which indeed rely upon such sources.

* A major part of the material contained in the messages from allegedly deceased SPR members is reasonably available in the public domain. This is correct, and weakens the impact of the evidence concerned, as mentioned above. However, if indeed communication is possible from deceased individuals, we have no knowledge of the effectiveness of their memories. In the present instance, it may be easier for the 'communicators' to remember information with which they were very familiar while alive rather than obscure references hidden deep in the SPR archives. The matter is one for speculation.

* The controls operated by the investigators were inadequate. It is true that they fell short on occasions of what we desired and requested (e.g. the presence of infra-red viewers). However, the question is whether or not the controls that did operate were sufficient to render fraud unlikely. Attention can be drawn once more to magician James Webster's conviction that the phenomena witnessed under the conditions operating during his sittings could not be replicated even by leading magicians without extensive (and doubtless costly) preparation, and probably not even then.

Conclusion A brief summary such as this does inadequate justice to the Report and to the various arguments for and against the para-normality of the phenomena. A careful reading of the Report remains necessary if informed conclusions are to be reached by those interested. As an appendix to this summary, an extract from the final

chapter of the Report is reproduced (slightly edited) in order to make clear the conditions that would have had to be satisfied if fraud is the explanation of the phenomena witnessed at Scole.

Appendix (Extract from the final chapter of The Scole Report) For fraud to have taken place, it must be understood that two things remained essential throughout the sittings, namely equipment, and movement. The Scole Group would have had to operate the former and engage in the latter. Could they have done so? The reader must be left to reach his or her own decision, but there are certain considerations upon which such a decision should be based. The first is that the Group would have needed to smuggle the equipment into the seance room (which was invariably available for our detailed inspection at all times) for each of the sittings we attended during the two years of our investigation. They would also have been forced to carry this equipment to the various sittings they held abroad, including those that took place at Ibiza under the watchful eyes of Montague Keen and of our fellow-investigators Dr. Hans Schaer and Walter Schnittger, those that took place in Switzerland when Dr. Hans Schaer was present, and those that took place in the USA when Montague Keen was present. In addition, as we have stressed already, the equipment required would have had to be elaborate, ingenious, and in some cases expensive and bulky. It would have had to include contraptions (which even Professor Arthur Ellison, as a leading and highly experienced professor of electrical engineering, cannot explain) for fabricating balls of light that audibly struck the table and then reappeared in the quadrants under the table, that rolled across the table top, that varied in size from that of a pea to a medium-sized marble, that entered crystals and a light bulb and a glass dome, that could submerge in a glass of water held by Professor David Fontana close to his mouth and directly underneath his inclined head and that could be held by Professor Gratton-Guinness between closed cupped hands, that responded to requests, and that rested on and traveled across the palms of sitters and apparently entered their bodies and produced sensations as of internal movement. And including diffused patches of light that traveled slowly across the room, that formed small seemingly robed figures which floated above the table, touched the investigators, and then ascended rapidly to the ceiling before disappearing, and that simulated transparent face-like images complete with what appeared to be moving lips.

In addition the equipment would have had to include the infra-red viewers or image intensifiers essential in order that the Group could find the hands etc. of the investigators unerringly and time after time in the dark (often on request). It would also have included of necessity extending rods, pseudo pods, cassettes of duplicate films, batteries, LEDs, the pieces of lace-like material that were felt when the illuminated figures brushed across our hands, the electric motor (or similar) needed to vibrate the table at very high and sustained frequency, possibly duplicate illuminated armbands, optical fibers and on occasions the equipment needed to transmit messages onto an audio tape in a microphone-deprived recorder. Not impossible, but something of a tall order, and presupposing a lack of elementary observation on the part of the investigators which, if present, should prompt their shame-faced resignation from the Society. The second consideration to keep in mind is that the movement needed in order to operate this equipment would also present major difficulties. As mentioned in the text and as he would be the first to concede, Robin Foy is not exactly built for agile and stealthy movement around a dark room. In addition, he occupied a seat at each sitting only inches away from Professor Arthur Ellison, who was free to reach out and touch him unexpectedly at any time. Hemmed in as he was on the other side by the unit bearing not only the tape recorder that recorded the sittings but the tape recorder used for the background music and the array of music tapes (which he changed frequently and at precisely the appropriate moments), silent movement of any kind would have presented him with many challenges. Sandra Foy, the other non-medium member of the Group, was invariably placed on Professor David Fontana's left, again only inches away and vulnerable to touch by him at any moment. To remove her armbands and frequently absent herself undetected by him would have presented her with challenges only marginally less than those facing her husband. In addition, as neither Robin nor Sandra Foy was in trance, they could be - and very frequently were - engaged in conversation without warning by the investigators. Unfailingly they replied immediately, and from their correct positions. Skeptics may argue that in the darkness the investigators could not identify the positions from which the Foyes were speaking. In reply we repeat that senses such as hearing become more acute when one is accustomed to sitting for long periods in darkness. More importantly, as already made clear, Robin Foy was virtually rubbing shoulders with Arthur Ellison, while Sandra was in similar proximity to David Fontana.

Thus it would have been difficult even for those with less experience than ourselves consistently to be deceived at to their positions in the room.

What of the mediums? If they were responsible for the movement, they would, without detection, have had to manipulate lights at ceiling level one moment then at table level the next, then dive down and circumnavigate the table (the ogives prevented access from underneath) in order to touch the thighs of investigators sitting inches from each other. They would have to levitate crystals under the noses of the investigators, fabricate illuminated materializations on the opposite side of the table from their chairs and allow these materializations to speed up to the ceiling, kneel soundlessly on the table in order to fake direct voices and masquerade as spirits by shaking - on request - the hands of the investigators, and to put cassettes in these same hands (again on request and without fumbling). They would also need to lean across the table to do nefarious things with films in a locked box (opening and then closing the latter by means of its defective hasp), then replace the box in exactly the marked position from which it had been taken.

They would have had variously to produce lights which appeared to enter the sitter's bodies and simulate internal movement, manufacture the diffused patches of light that traveled the length of the room in mid-air, materialize - inches from the sitters - perfect human hands which appeared to end at the wrists and which picked up crystals and were clearly visible in accompanying 'spirit' lights, and lift up, simultaneously and to full stretch, the arms of two investigators separated from each other by the third investigator (a feat which, due to the distance between the two investigators, would need both mediums acting in concert). They would have to perform perfect and sustained circles in the air with pinpoints of light at some distance from their seats and so fast that the circles appeared unbroken, illuminate large crystals from within then apparently dematerialize them while leaving perfect illuminated simulacrum behind to be seen and their emptiness 'felt' by the investigators, swivel the table around soundlessly and then vibrate it at high speed under the fingers of the investigators, and much more besides. On each movement from their positions they would have soundlessly to remove their luminous armbands and leave them on the table (or obscure them and provide duplicates to place on the table), and then replace them around their wrists on their return. And they would have to accomplish all of the above movements while commenting upon the phenomena (and responding at a moment's notice to unexpected questions about them) in simulated trance from their normal seated positions across the table. And all this by mediums who lack the slight figures best suited for clandestine movement.

We are not saying that any of this undetected movement is impossible, we are simply asking the reader to assess the balance of possibilities. In leaving readers to assess this balance for themselves and to draw their own conclusions we are well aware that determined skeptics will always insist on normal explanations. They 'know' that psychic phenomena cannot happen, and are therefore unprepared to countenance even the possibility that it might. And it must be confessed that, life being what it is, there are always loopholes for such skeptics to identify in any investigation. Even had we achieved in full our coveted four-step protocol, it would fail to satisfy all of them. We would be asked if we could be sure the employees of the commercial outfit responsible for developing the films were above suspicion. Might not one or more of them be in league with the Scole Group? And what about the shop where we purchased the film? Could we be sure that another confederate hadn't sold us a prepared film, or that one of the Scole Group hadn't tailed us undetected to the shop and covertly switched the film at or just after the point of sale? And how could we be sure that the fraud-proof box or other container into which we put our film wasn't switched once we arrived at the Foy's? After all, we spent time in conversation with them before each sitting, and a good conjuror can pick a pocket with impunity. How did we know this hadn't happened to us, and the box or container abstracted and replaced with a duplicate, or opened by some expert lock smith and a substitute, suitably marked film inserted? Did we take the precaution when in the Foy's home of always standing and walking in a circle, so that Montague Keen could guard Arthur Ellison's pockets while Arthur guarded David Fontana's and David guarded those of Montague? (the potential for humor in such a set-up would almost have made it worth attempting). And how do we know that we didn't fall asleep during the sitting, so that our precious box could be taken from our nerveless fingers? Could we perhaps have been slipped a sleeping potion to ensure we dozed off? (Incidentally, sleepiness was never a problem for any one of us during the sittings.)

Horror of horrors, could one of the investigators be suspect? Could he have formed a romantic relationship with one or other of the female members of the Scole Group? (if the charge could be made against Sir William Crookes, why not against one of us?). Could either or both these ladies have used sexual charms to distract the investigators at critical points during the sittings? (if the charge could be made in all seriousness against the portly 50 year-old Paladino, surely it could be leveled against the unquestionably more comely Scole ladies?). And so on and on.

Whatever our defense, the determined critic would ultimately offer a sad shake of the head and utter the words that have formed the epitaph of so many past investigations - 'If only you had thought (or been able) to control for'. Field work in psychical research is so vulnerable to this kind of dismissive verdict that one may well question if in fact it is worth the major investment of time, energy and money which it involves. Our answer is that in any area of human behavior, effects that are only observable under the tightly controlled conditions of a laboratory are not really of enduring use or interest. If psychic abilities exist, then they may reasonably be supposed to happen not just in the laboratory but in real life, whether in the seance room or in more familiar surroundings. If they do, it is equally reasonable to propose that they are worth looking into, and that efforts should be made to find the ways in which they are compatible with the rest of our known science. Indeed to propose that efforts should be made to find the ways in which they may add to our scientific knowledge, and in particular augment our understanding of what it is to be human and of whether or not life carries meaning outside that attributed to it by reductionist philosophies.