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ECTOPLASM: A REPORT FROM EXPERIENCES

John R. Crowley

"Ectoplasm", which is generally referred to as a hypothetical substance "ostensibly emitted by some physical mediums", is actually a well established reality which is essential to physical mediumship. Dr. Charles Richet, who coined the word, was sure it existed. The author cites three other authorities concerning the reality of ectoplasm and then draws on his own experience with physical mediums to report events in which ectoplasm was involved.

Since physical mediums, such as those that perform in materialization or trumpet seances, are not usually met with, when one broaches the topic "Ectoplasm" one must expect a considerable doubt, even rejection, and perhaps not a little bit of sheer ignorance. Such ignorance might be voiced as "Ectoplasm--does it exist?" or "Materialization mediums--what are they?" or "Physical mediums--you mean like Donald Douglas Home-but he was a freak of nature and anyway, he died a hundred years ago."

I am writing this article because I want to offer some facts and some explanations of the facts. Besides having acquaintance with the pertinent literature--an acquaintance available to anyone--I have also had a considerable amount of experience of physical mediums in action and have come to know personally a number of the outstanding practitioners of this art so often referred to as, "oh, a hundred years ago, possible, but now, alas, no more!" My experience began in 1947 and continues well into 1986, a few weeks prior to my writing this article.

But facts empirically gathered are not enough if one wants understanding. At some point the mind reaches for an explanation, an embracing theory, a way in which to link ectoplasm and physical mediumship into one's life view, in all its dimensions. I will make an attempt in this direction.

But let's start with the question, "What is ectoplasm?" That is, what happens that has given rise to the invention of the term? For example, what was Dr. Charles Richet referring to when he invented and continued to use the word?

About Richet one reads in *The Guidebook for the Study of Psychical Research* by the late Robert Ashby:

Charles Richet, 1850-1935...President of the SPR, 1905. Richet was a cautious, skeptical investigator who had strongly criticized William Crookes' acceptance of paranormal phenomena in the 1870's. However, he undertook his own studies and became a leading figure in European psychical research. Especially interested in physical phenomena, he studied Eusapia Paladino, Eva. C. Kluski, Rudi Schneider, and other important mediums, coined the term "ectoplasm" for the quasi-physical substance supposedly used in materializations; with Geley is obtained what he considered fraud-proof evidence for the reality of ectoplasmic phenomena under laboratory conditions ...and he held firmly to an anti-spiritualistic interpretation of paranormal phenomena.

Richet's major work on "Psi" was *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, 1923. The book runs over 600 pages; divided into four books, book III concerns us for it is entitled "Objective Metaphysics", and has three parts: (a) on Telekinesis, (b) on Ectoplasmic Forms; and (c) on Haunted Houses. So our concern is with Book III, part b, on Ectoplasmic Forms. 2

Richet begins by saying that the SPR:

started with the axiom and the fundamental principle that there are no material phenomena,

and that everything is subjective. But in the forty years from 1880 to 1920 ideas have evolved. Sidgwick died without admitting either telekinesis or ectoplasm. Myers (F.W.H.), at first hostile ended by fully accepting and resolutely maintaining their objectivity. F. Podmore...no...but Sir Oliver Lodge, who at first recognized only the full reality of subjective phenomena, accepts now the objectivity of material phenomena. 3

Again, what is ectoplasm? In Richet's view, it is related to protoplasm, which has the general meaning of the basic substance of bodily life. "Ecto" means exterior, on the outside; so to say that it is exterior or visible and palpable protoplasm is not far off the mark.

What does ectoplasm do? It exudes from the orifices of the medium, particularly the mouth, but also the nostrils, or from the skin, particularly in the areas of the solar plexus and the breast. Can it be seen? Yes, it has been seen on occasion in full white light, but usually fares better in red light, which is used in most materialization seances.

Can ectoplasm be touched? Is it tangible? Yes. What does it do, what shape does it take and to what purpose? Here again Richet is pertinent:

Many curious facts on the genesis of the materializations are observable, for only very rarely do materializations appear abruptly. They form by a concentration of matter around a central nucleus; much as a planet forms in a nebula, or cells by concentration of a protoplasmic material...There first appears a more or less formless mass, which may not even be visible, but which can be felt and seems capable of mechanical action. One can hardly help imagining that movements of the table are due to mechanical energy, this half-visible hand...whose resistance can be felt...these are the formations which I call ectoplasm, for they seem to emanate from Eusapia's actual body. I have seen an almost rectilinear prolongation emerge from Eusapia's body, its termination acting like a living hand..At the Villa Carmen I saw fully organized form rise from the floor, and a few minutes later it rose up in a straight line and became a small man enveloped in a kind of white burnoose, who took two or three halting steps in front of the curtain and then sank to the floor and disappeared as if, through a trap door. 4

We see another facet of Richet's study of ectoplasm in the following:

It has been asked how there can be materialization of clothes. This objection is somewhat naive, for the materialization of the hand is no easier to understand than of the glove that covers it. It is clear, however, that materialization may be of inanimate objects and not of the human body only.

It would seem that materialization of garments discredits somewhat the hypothesis that a deceased human being should materialize. Prima facie it was unlikely that a body dissolved by putrefaction or disintegrated by cremation should be reconstructed, though the wild hypothesis of an astral body (!) might be advanced. But what about the astral presentment of a garment, a hat, an eyeglass, or a walking stick? This is the height of folly. It seems to me much wiser to verify without pretending to understand, and to admit that any explanation we can give can hardly escape being ridiculous. 3

From the previous paragraph we can see what Philip Ashby meant when he wrote: "and he (Riches) held firmly to an anti-spiritualistic interpretation of pare normal phenomena." (Later on in this article, we shall hear from Richet speaking from a different point of view.) More important perhaps than his opinion was his telling question about how the materializations of inanimate things as such clothes, an eye-glass, a walking stick could be brought about-- as indeed it is. Some light on this question is thrown by some of the comments of our next authority, Raynor Johnson.

Dr. Raynor Johnson, a physicist and a college president in Australia, M.A., (Oxen), Ph.D. (London), writes with the benefit of 34 years more history under his belt. He entirely echoes

Richet in affirming the actuality of ectoplasm and of physical phenomena generally, but differs markedly in that he embraces, although with a certain modesty and with some reservations, the hypothesis that spirit and the astral body do exist. 6

Concluding some historical examples of impressive mediumship, Johnson says:

These are some of the strange, if rare, phenomena of mediumship. If they are not the activity of discarnate minds, it is difficult to find any satisfactory hypothesis short of some universal psychic record or collective memory from which wonders of all kinds can be drawn by the mind of the medium suitably related to it. When we are driven to a postulate of this comprehensiveness, it would seem more reasonable to consider the claim made by the control!

As for Johnson's words on ectoplasm, we read:

To the plain man the phenomena of materialization are perhaps the most extraordinary of all. They consist in the appearance of some kind of material substance, which has apparently exuded from the person of the medium. The substance, usually called ectoplasm, is capable of being molded into forms which carry out intelligent movements. 8 ...What do the observations of "materialization" amount to? This surely: that our senses record data, i.e., visual data of shape and color and movement, tactile data of resistance to touch etc., similar to commonplace everyday sense-data but under conditions where we would not expect to find them.

Johnson concludes his chapter, "Materialization Phenomena", with the following very philosophical paragraph which is characteristic of this man who added to his status as physicist that of psychical researcher, and in his later years, of mystic and esoteric philosopher.

If we try to visualize in a little more detail how materialization operates, I think we must look at the normal phenomenon of growth in Nature. If we ask such questions as: Why does a beech tree produce only beech leaves and not serrated leaves like the oak or a fan of leaves like the horse chestnut? Why does the flower grow to its particular pattern and shape and no others? Why does the repair of a wound follow the pattern of the original form and not create an anatomical monstrosity? We must visualize the existence of a force-field, a sort of three-dimensional pattern to which what we loosely call "Matter" must conform. The medium in which this idea-pattern is sustained is our old friend the psychic ether. Sense data clothe this idea pattern in the psychic aether as flesh clothes the skeleton, We know nothing, absolutely nothing, of the process. All we can say is that it seems possible--even probable--that in the materialization phenomena we have an activity of our finite individual minds which is of the same nature. If so, then the study of the conditions of this creative and artistic activity in ourselves--this so-called paranormal activity--should offer us basic clues to the nature of the physical world, and especially to the nature of living things and the laws of growth. 10

To sum up what Richet and Raynor Johnson have written about ectoplasm and physical mediumship, we see the following: (a) Does Ectoplasm exist? Answer by both: yes. (b) Does it exude from the body of the medium? Answer by both: yes. (c) Does it take various shapes, including that of human beings, but also that of objects such as clothes? Rods and levers? Answer by both: yes. (d) How does one integrate the fact of ectoplasm and what it does into a reasonable philosophy? Here the two authorities differ. Here Richet says that he simply does not know the answer. He admits just three possibilities of an answer:

1. The phenomena are due to the dead, whose consciousness still persists without material substratum. This is the spiritist theory, which seems to be the least likely of any.
2. There are angels, spirits, (daimones) who can act on matter, and intervene in human affairs.
3. The human intelligence (body and soul) is sufficiently powerful to produce both material manifestations (ectoplasm) and the subjective manifestations (cryptesthesia) that amaze us.

If I admit this third hypothesis as obviously superior to the others it is not that I believe it very strongly. Far otherwise, I am well aware how frail it is, how incredible, almost as incredible as the two former.

...and I adopt without reserve a fourth proposition which has every chance of being true - we have as yet no satisfactory hypothesis to put forward. 11

I will talk now about my own personal experience with physical mediums, which began in 1947 and has continued, with some interruptions, ever since. These reports or anecdotes are of course not authoritative, but they have the advantage of being concrete and vivid. In 1947 I was very fortunate to have my first experience and several more that followed in the next few years under the direction of a very experienced spiritual teacher. The School formed by this teacher, in New York City, was in charge of the proceedings, the medium was hired after careful investigation, and the seances were explicitly directed toward "proving survival" beyond a reasonable doubt.

All these early seances I attended were trumpet seances. They were conducted in absolute darkness with the exception that a luminous phosphorescent adhesive strip was attached to the large end of the trumpet. As the trumpet, in a collapsed state, lay on the floor in the middle of the circle, we could all see this light reflected from the polished hardwood of the bare floor. Among the phenomena that occurred: the trumpet snapped into an erect condition; it levitated and eventually sailed around the high-ceilinged room well above our heads; returning to the floor with a clatter that elicited not a few gasps, it next rose gently to the height of our heads, and circled, blowing before each sitter. When it came to the sitter on my right, it struck her on the head; she yelped, and everyone else laughed.

Shortly after this the trumpet, in a position about three feet above the floor, emitted a most loud and astonishing "bark". It was the medium's Indian control announcing himself, gruff but friendly. The medium, a most gentle and rather old man, of course was long since in trance, not in a cabinet or enclosure but seated at one end of our oval, in a comfortable arm chair while we sitters sat in folding metal chairs.

The Indian, "Reindeer", chuckled over the gasps he had produced with his initial "bark", then explained why he had kilt the lady to my right, my wife Grace, so smartly on the head. He said that she was so frightened that her feelings were causing "static" and this would prevent good results, so he "knocked it out of her." What followed was a series of persons from the other side speaking to their loved ones, and doing so in a way that would contribute toward proving that they were who they claimed to be. The reader will find in this Journal, Vol. 7, no. 4 an article, "The Hu Sa Fu Story", which gives a full account of a part of this seance.

In terms of ectoplasm, what can be said of this seance? Simply, that all trumpet seances feature the voice as coming not from the entranced medium directly but from the mouth of the trumpet wherever it positions itself. Secondly, the trumpet is elevated and moved and directed through the agency of ectoplasmic "rods and levers" operated by the spirit controls. The voice, as it comes forth from the trumpet varies in tone and pitch and indeed gender seems to take on quite an individual character, although this degree of the variety of individual character varies considerably from medium to medium and from occasion to occasion.

So much for our introduction. Much time elapsed and then about seventeen years ago I participated in a psychic development training group led by a Spiritualist minister. In the process of weekly meetings over a period of almost a year, I began to experience phenomena both in the meetings and at home. At home I began to receive quite audible sharp "raps" often punctuating or saying a kind of "Yes" to something spoken or even something thought. On one occasion I counted fifty such raps over a period of about fifteen minutes.

One may ask, "What have spirit raps got to do with ectoplasm?" I must say for some time I did not think there was much connection. Our minds are so ruled by the gross and the obvious that

it did not occur to me that these light

inconsequential and momentary raps could require any arrangement between spirit and man. I thought that spirit could do this by itself! But the real explanation is found in the following statement: 'in fact, even the tiniest of spirit raps could not be produced without the aid of a physical body from which is drawn the necessary ectoplasm.' 12

Later on, after I had developed further, the raps could be loud indeed. I want to speak of just one instance. It occurred about 11:30 one Sunday night. I had been reading a book on spiritual healing and was the last to bed. However, instead of falling to sleep I kept thinking about the stimulating book. Here was my train of thought: "what a marvelous thing that the framers of the US. Constitution wrote into it the separation of Church and State, setting religion, and indeed all religious, free from political control. If that hadn't happened we would probably not have had the enormous variety of innovations in religion--such as, well, such as Kathryn Kuhlman and her very demonstrative church services devoted to healing..."

Boom...!

As this thought completed itself in my mind, there came in a corner of our bedroom the loudest spirit voice--not a rap but a boom--I had ever heard. The room seemed to shake and my wife awoke from a sound sleep. As was my practice with psychic events, I immediately wrote down a brief description of what had happened, writing my "three guesses" as to who in spirit was the source of the rap: (1) the principal author of the separation of Church and State provision of the Constitution; (2) Kathryn Kuhlman; and (3) some other person, perhaps my spirit Teacher. I finished writing and then looked to see that I had written legibly and what I read was: (1) Kathryn Kuhlman; (2) Kathryn Kuhlman; (3) Kathryn Kuhlman. A week later, during a seance, Kathryn came through and confirmed that indeed that was she that had produced the "rap" that was more like a "boom". Incidentally, she also said that she and others "upstairs" were working on marvelous new things in spiritual healing. 3

My real initiation into "ectoplasmic" mediumship, however, came with my first materialization seance. Again

I was very fortunate that this initiation came under the direction of and via the mediumship of an expert like the Reverend Warren Smith. Smith for a member of years was the "star" medium of the Temple of Truth camp in Euphrata, Pa. He was the most powerful of the several materialization mediums there. His gift was so much in demand that he confined himself entirely to materialization and trumpet seances, except for occasional clairvoyant demonstrations in the chapel.

This, my first materialization seance, was conducted with about twenty sitters in a room illumined by red light. Although gifted clairvoyants in the audience reported that they could see spirits, their features and their clothing, in the dark, for most people the red light was necessary to make the spirits, clothed in ectoplasmic bodies and garments, visible to their purely psychical vision. Spirits appeared, stayed briefly, making warm conversation with their loved ones in the flesh and then withdrew into the cabinet--i.e., behind the curtained area within which sat the entranced medium.

With twenty or more people to serve, Miss Firefly, warren Smith's internationally famous door-keeper, organized things with a totally competent and sprightly efficiency. The door-keeper's task is to admit the spirits, place them in order, clothe them in ectoplasm, and introduce them to the audience. She begins the seance, after a prayer has been led by the cabinet attendant, by greeting each person individually, and then leading a song or two, sometimes singing at the top of her lungs an aria from light opera. Miss Firefly also is constantly watching to see that the etheric energy is flowing strongly enough to keep the materializations going. SO sometimes she will break into the proceedings to ask for another song. She also coaches each sitter in how to speak up warmly and loudly when their own visitor from spirit comes, and to be totally

silent at all other times. It became clear that a seance is not just the result of a good medium in good form, but depends on the doorkeeper and her assistants, on the visiting spirits themselves, and to a noticeable extent on the cooperation and wholehearted support from the sitters.

I SEE ECTOPLASM FOR THE FIRST TIME: A year or two later I had the following experience in a seance attended by fifteen or twenty people, including my wife and some friends. After the visits of a number of loved ones to each sitter, Miss Firefly (It was again a Warren Smith seance) said she had someone special for us, and a gentleman materialized on our right, standing close enough to be clearly visible under the red light. He looked a distinguished and learned gentleman; and he was, for he introduced himself as Dr. William James. He said he was currently engaged in leading a team effort "on his side" which was conducting an experiment in a new way of orienting people who were victims of sudden death. The habitual way was to conduct them one by one to their closest relatives who had predeceased them. But Dr. James was leading a mission to do something different. They were trying this experiment on a group of about forty college students, who, accompanied by their two professors, had just recently died in a plane crash over the Andes Mountains while returning from a South American field trip. He said that the idea behind this experiment was that both at their college and on this long and interesting field trip these forty-two people had forged a real bond, which one might call a soul-bond.

"We are to see," said Dr. James, "if keeping them all together works better to smooth the passage than the customary way...and actually I can report that so far it seems to be working indeed very well." Meanwhile, we were punctuating his talk with a number of questions and words of admiration and approval.

"Now", he said, "would you like to meet one of the students who, as you call it, "died" in the plane crash, and has been a part of our experiment?" Naturally, we said yes. and a young man materialized and stood next to him. We talked with him and were struck by his total normality...no evidence of trauma to heart or mind caused by his sudden death.

As to our main topic, ectoplasm, this memorable incident is of course just one more instance of a successful materialization, made possible by a very gifted physical medium who can provide ample supplies of ectoplasm ...enough to produce not one but two fully formed "persons" at once. But the main event that day as it concerns ectoplasm is what immediately followed. The young man departed, and now a gentleman about Dr. James' age appeared to our left and a few steps closer to us than James. Dr. James introduced this new comer as his old friend and scientific colleague and fellow President of the Society for Psychical Research Dr. Charles Richet. Richet smiled and in a very modest and easy-going voice said, "Well, I can guess what you want me to show you, eh? we said, with a laugh, in one voice, "Ectoplasm"" Richet then said, Well, I'll try to do it, but I'll have to ask one of you to volunteer." While I hesitated, wondering whether I should risk it, a young man seated to my right rose and volunteered. Richet addressed him by name and asked him to stand facing the audience, while he took his position to the young man's left. Richet then proceeded very gently to "tease" this white, filmy cotton-candy sort of substance out of the area of the young man's solar plexus. Richet was very nonchalant and his volunteer was taking it rather well. Richet told a few jokes as the wispy beginnings became a veritable outpouring and the exuded ectoplasm now as thick and wide as a white bath towel very slowly settled to the floor.

Now Richet looked at us in mock consternation and asked, "What are we going to do with all this stuff? Tsk, tsk, let's see if there's any way to get it back." Now he teased upward and sure enough what had been unreeled gradually returned. When at last no ectoplasm showed outside the volunteer, Dr. Richet said he could return to his seat and added, "After the seance is over I want you to lie down for a while--first have a glass or two of water--and then you will be perfectly all right."

At this point of experience I had seen many examples of the effects of ectoplasm, as in

trumpet seances, and I had seen quite a few materializations wherein those manifesting do so by transforming the ectoplasm by the exercise of their wills into a body they can move in, touch with, and speak through. Now, in the James-Richet seance, I had seen the stuff itself in what might be called the raw and unfabricated form-das ding an sich. There were several more learning experiences to come.

A year later, my wife and I and several of our children attended an afternoon trumpet seance. After we came out, we sat in the bright sun. My youngest, a boy then of eleven, a very direct and outspoken young man, looked at me and with a disgusted grimace said, "Some "gook" is coming out of your nose." My wife then noticed and said, "It's not mucus; it's ectoplasm; and it's not coming out; it's going back!"

Which was indeed the case. It reminded me of the fact that on several occasions I had experienced for some time after a seance a feeling of depletion, or "drain of energy". Once, noticing the way I felt, a veteran seance-goer said, "Just go down and lie on the grass for a half hour, and you'll feel all right.

This all reminded me of Kay, a friend of ours who was a sensitive. She told us she frequently found when weighing herself before and after a seance that she would lose up to five pounds. Later I learned that the "Controls" draw the ectoplasm not only and primarily from the medium but also from some, or indeed many of the sitters.

At this point I wish to turn to the third and last of the "authorities" I will cite. This is a booklet of 35 pages entitled *Psychic Facts: A series of fifteen lessons on the laws governing mental and physical mediumship* by Peggy Barnes. This book was written specifically by a veteran medium and for mediums in training as well as sitters desiring to really understand "what was going on."

Here, about ectoplasm we read:

This substance [ectoplasm] in its many forms is used as the basis of all physical manifestations. It forms the body and clothing of a materialized spirit; it forms into rods and masses, strong and fibrous, to be used in all feats of ectoplasmic telekinesis; through its power the trumpet is levitated and the ectoplasmic hands and rods are formed that produce independent and automatic writing; in fact, even the tiniest of spirit raps could not be produced without the aid of a physical body from which is drawn the necessary ectoplasm. spirits without the use of a material instrument are powerless to produce a sound or anything that comes into the range of our five physical senses, for they live in a higher range vibration of which we are unconscious.

Further we read:

Ectoplasm is an elusive substance which emanates from the body of a medium; it exudes from all the natural orifices the mucous membrane and the skin...it comes in many different forms colors and conditions...it may be gaseous, liquid, or fibrous; it may be soft as velvet with a moist sticky surface, or it may be rough and solid; it can assume different colors or be of a soft white grey, or black; it can be invisible, although it has weight and gives sensation on contact and can make an imprint on plastic substances; in materialization, it sometimes takes on gorgeous colors from the flowers and gowns of those in the room, and the manifesting entities are able to bring out a beautiful pattern on the ectoplasmic gauze which forms their robes. It is extremely sensitive to light and deteriorates when subjected to its rays. The spirit teachers tell us that the chemicals in the light rays tear down the ectoplasm, so that they are at this time experimenting to find a chemical to add to the ectoplasm that will enable it to withstand the devastating power of light.

This substance which is the basis of all manifestations of physical mediumship, is sometimes called ideoplasm, because it is sensitive to the thoughts and ideas of the sitters and the spirits. To be a physical medium the body must contain a superabundance of certain chemicals. One of our greatest scientists has made the statement that only one in 100,000 human bodies contains a sufficient amount of these chemicals to present a full-form materialization. Just

what the necessary chemicals are we do not know. 15

Peggy Barnes, the author of *Psychic Facts* and of twelve other small books was the close associate and cabinet attendance of one of the outstanding physical mediums of the twentieth century, Rev. Ethel Riley Post-Parrish. she founded the Temple of Truth in the late twenties and in 1932, with the name changed to Camp Silver Belle after her doorkeeper, set up in the Mountain Springs Hotel and its spacious grounds in Ephrata, PA. This organization, which has resumed the name Temple of Truth, continues under the leadership of her grandson, its Spiritual Director, Rev. Joseph Riley.

A medium's spirit forces, one must understand, are those who train the medium, guide him or her and teach. An example of such is Sir Joseph Banks, Rev. Riley Post-Parrish's Teacher, to whom Peggy Barnes attributes many statements including the following:

...ectoplasm is an outer layer of protoplasm, an etherialized protoplasm, we might say. As we know, protoplasm is the basis of all plant and animal life. (It is safe to assume that physical mediumship requires either a superabundance of one of the chemicals contained in protoplasm or the addition of an unknown chemical built up by spirit power.) 16

We have reached a point in this exposition in which it may not be premature to draw some conclusions. We see that there is a difference between a Richet, a scientist not personally and inwardly in tune with the mediums he observed and tested, and Peggy Barnes. He remained at all times objective to them, as a modern medical specialist doing x-rays of patients sent to him by their internist perhaps remains objective to and uninvolved with the patient. His duty is simply to take the x-ray and perhaps read it. Raynor Johnson had the advantage of writing forty years later but also of being a mystic and personally in tune with the mediums' world. But in the case of Peggy Barnes' little book, we have "the real thing" (as the novelist Henry James, William's brother, would say.)¹⁷ We have a medium writing for mediums and novices, with the economy of expression which achieves more in 35 little pages than Richet in his 626-page master work.

Without realizing it, millions of people have experienced attempts to do physical mediumship. I refer to the ouija board. Most, many of them children or adolescents, take up the board in a spirit of play, a parlor game. But those have any degree of inclination toward mediumship, and whose ectoplasm can be drawn out, will have their hands overlain by a spirit hand gloved as it were, in ectoplasm. I have been told by a former Chairman of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Study (England) that his organization was urging the Government to ban the advertisement and sale of the ouija board, for they are widely used by all comers, who have no idea of what mediumship involves and who come to the "sacred task" without any preparation, without prayer or meditation. Doing so, they may and too often do attract immature, wayward, even mischievous spirit, who delight in this easy opportunity to play at "controlling a medium." The Committee's attempt was wise and justified. I do not know if it succeeded.

Now it is the right time to add a remark in definition of "spirit" and "spirits". It has been for years the standard term used by Spiritualists and mediums generally to designate any discarnate entity, of any grade of moral level, whether it be Aunt Mabel "coming for a chat" or one's Master Teacher. In strict philosophical terms, to use "spirit" and "spirits" this way is incorrect. It is philosophically incorrect to call all people who have passed out of the physical body "spirits". It is equally incorrect to call the plane of vibration they are now on "the spiritual world". "Spirit" and "spiritual" should be reserved for a very high state of evolvment and its vibrational level. "Associated with this plane are such words as Light, Mind, Wisdom, the Pattern worlds, Nirvana, Amenti, the Higher Heavens, etc." ¹⁸ Therefore, I have been incorrect in saying, above, that the casual ouija-board users often "attract immature, wayward even mischievous spirits." And yet the general indiscriminating use of "spirits" prevails so totally that I have decided not to fight them but to join them. The alternatives do not seem to appeal--e.g., "discarnates."

To return to the item above about the misuse of the ouija board, I said that some who use the

latter come to the "sacred task" of mediumship without prayerful, meditative preparation. I want to add that to be a medium is a sacred calling. It requires long and expert apprenticeship, and should be practiced only in a highly conditioned and sacred setting. In such a setting two good things happen: the medium is protected, and his power is enhanced. It is still a tragedy that not only the public but also the "establishment" (e.g., religious, academic, political) seems ignorant of mediumship. It is particularly tragic that the Religious establishment is slow to show interest in mediumship or willingness to learn about it. Because of this ignorance and unwillingness mediums are left to go it practically alone.

It is also tragic and ironic that the two best known of the few organizations intended specifically for the purpose of studying psychic phenomena scientifically, the Society for Psychical Research (London) and the American Society for Psychical Research (New York) appear not to have gotten beyond the level reached by Dr. Richet in 1923. This means that they have not accepted the first premise of mediumship, viz., that the medium is a medium, that is, an intermediary between spirits, the discarnates, and us in the physical body. They are deaf to the constant word from mediums that it is Spirit, not they, which does the work and which communicates and that it is Spirit which draws out the ectoplasm, using it for various phenomena in order to teach earthbound humanity that there is another world, that death is not final but only a passage, that their loved ones still live in that world beyond and love them still and succeed in communicating with them.

In the case of Richet, one can perhaps understand that as a specialist in the physical body (his Nobel prize was for physiology), he was naturally biased toward focusing on the palpable, the visible, the photographable (i.e., ectoplasmic phenomena) and also toward refusing to accept the intangible, viz., that there is an intelligent being designing the effects with intention of convincing Richet and his colleagues that the discarnates and the spiritual world exist. Richet closed his *Thirty Years of Psychical Research* with the conclusion that he had no theory to explain the indubitable facts of ectoplasmic phenomena but that he thought the Spiritualist hypothesis was the least likely. With such a conclusion reached by such a great authority, it is no wonder that after Richet both organizations turned their attention away from mediums, even though Richet himself had written, "The medium is the sine qua non of psychic research."

There may be another factor that contributed to this attitude toward mediums. That other factor may be snobbery. Richet and most of the other scientists could not believe that anything spiritual could emanate from the illiterate Eusapia Paladino, the little orphan from the slums of Naples. She was not only of dubious background and totally uneducated, she was also unethical. Many times Richet caught her cheating during the investigations of her physical mediumship, faking the phenomena, an act that many other mediums as well have been accused of. How do we explain this? How do we excuse? Perhaps the child in Eusapia could not be restrained from being mocking and having fun. Perhaps she got bored being endlessly tested, stripped, manacled, her hands held by old professors! Perhaps she deeply resented being treated like an object.

The poet Alexander Pope wrote:

A little learning is a dangerous thing-
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.

In the case of studying mediums, "drinking deep" means more than what Richet did. "Getting to know you, getting to know all about you..." All about you. I have been about the business of experiencing the psychic and the mystical and trying to understand it and to cultivate it for more than fifty years. I have read thousands of books, associated closely with parapsychologists, philosophers, and scores of mediums. I have seen no way that a non-believer, that is a person congenitally inhospitable to the possibility that the spiritual is real, will feel that anything has been proved to his satisfaction. There are others who are perfectly at home with the fact and the whole idea from the moment of their first experience. Woman's intuition? Jung's intuition type? Perhaps it has something to do with the mysterious thing called

"taste".

We have been invited to the "Castle". We should not mistake the vestibule for the outer hall, nor the inner hall for the reception room, nor the reception room for the banquet room! If the places to which we have penetrated have not brought us to drink of the cup of joy, we have not gone far enough. And once we have tasted the cup of joy, no other drink will satisfy, even though we lose for a time even the memory of its taste, we will some time return for more.

1 Robert H. Ashby, *The Guidebook for the Study of Psychological Research*.

New York, N.Y.: Weiser, 1973. p. 162.

2 Charles Richet, *Thirty Years of Psychological Research: Being a Treatise on Metaphysics*. trans. by Stanley de Brath. New York, N.Y.: Macmillan. 1923.

3 Richet, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

4 *Ibid.* pp. 468-70.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 475-76.

6 R(aynor) C(arey) Johnson, *Psychical Research*. New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 19560.

7 Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

8 *Ibid.*, p- 90.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

11 Richet, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

12 Peggy Barnes, *Psychic Facts* (a book of 35 pp. written about 1935 under the sponsorship of the Temple of Truth and available at its bookstore, Box 88, Mt. Springs Hotel, Euphrata, Pa. 17522).

13 Kathryn Kuhlman passed over around 1975, I believe. Although an ordained Baptist minister, she operated her healing ministry independently conducting daily radio and weekly TV broadcasts. See her *God Can Do It Again*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

14 Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 27

15 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

17 Henry James, "The Real Thing" in Bradley, Beatty, Long, and Perkins. *The American Tradition in Literature*. 4th ea., Vol. 2 New York, N.Y.: Grosset Dunlap-Norton, 1974. pp. 493-514.

18 May Benzenberg Mayer, *A Primary Glossary of Psychological and Philosophical Terms*. New York, N.Y.: Pojodag Publications; London: John M. Watkins, 1932. p. 11

John R. Crowley is a member of the Board of Trustees of ARPR. He is Associate Prof. Emeritus, Department of English, State University of New York at Brockport. His address is 395 Oakdale Dr., Rochester, N.Y. 14618.