

THE LOGIC BEHIND AN INVESTIGATION

How do they get there?

Essentially, every culture in recorded history has believed in some form of life after death. Among the many theories some say the spirit continues, but in another realm. Others say the spirit is judged and assigned to a Heaven or a Hell. Some cultures believe the spirit transforms and experiences a series of rebirths or reincarnations. All of these positions are at most a “best guess.” All of these are good answers, and should not have an impact on what we are trying to do.



Arthur Myers, as quoted in *The Ghostly Register* says, “Students of the spiritual take the view that when we die each of us drops our physical body but retains another body, similar but vibrating at different frequencies.” In other words we exit the physical plane and continue in another, perhaps higher spiritual realm. However, it probably is not this simple. Some of us remain “earthbound” for different reasons such as love, fear, justice or attachment to a person, place or thing.

Spiritualism is a monotheistic religion, postulating a belief in god, but they also believe that the spirits of the dead, residing in the Spirit World, can be contacted by mediums. They also believe these sessions, called a séance, can provide specific information about the afterlife.

Some conservative Christians believe ghosts are not spirits of the dead at all, but are actually “wicked demons dispatched by god’s infernal adversary, Satan, to deceive and to do harm.” According to K.B. Napier, “All ghosts, without exception, are demons. Ghosts are never friendly. They are always wicked, even if they appear to be kind.”

Hans Holzer, a well known parapsychologist, disagrees. In one of his books, *Ghosts: True encounters with the World Beyond*, He says, “Ghosts have never harmed anyone except through fear found within the witness, of his own doing and because of ignorance as to what ghosts represent.” He does acknowledge a small number of cases of ghosts attacking the living but he believes them to be “simply a matter of mistaken identity.” In other words, you find what you are looking for.

Hans Holzer is best known for his work on the Amityville Horror incident.

In general, a ghost seems to be a manifestation of the spirit or soul of a person. Many people expand on that idea and include belief in the ghosts of deceased animals.

The belief in ghosts as souls of the departed is closely tied to the concept of animism, an ancient belief which attributes souls to everything in nature. As the nineteenth-century anthropologist James Frazer explains in his classic work, *The Golden Bough*, "souls are the creature within that animates the body." In some ancient cultures, the human soul is sometimes symbolically (or literally) depicted as a bird or other animal; it is generally held that the soul is an exact reproduction original, in every detail, all the way down to clothing the person wore.

A widespread belief is that ghosts are composed of a misty, airy, or subtle material sometimes called "Ectoplasm." Some scientists speculate that this idea may stem from early beliefs that ghosts were the person within the person, most noticeable in ancient cultures as a person's breath, which in cooler environments can appear visibly as a white mist. This viewpoint may have also fostered the metaphorical meaning of "breath" in certain languages, such as the in Latin as *spiritus* and in Greek as *pneuma*. In the Bible, God is said to have animated Adam with a breath.

Many hypotheses have been proposed by both scientists and educated investigators attempting to provide explanations for ghostly encounters. With that in mind, it must be pointed out, most of the evidence for ghosts is largely anecdotal but the belief in ghosts, throughout history, has remained widespread and persistent. However, when the so called *anecdotal* evidence comes from independent sources, people that have not been in contact with each other, this provides a basis for additional research that cannot be ignored.

Theories from other cultures

Believe in ghosts is not limited to modern times. Thousands of stories in history, folklore and even religious texts describe encounters with ghosts.

In ancient **Mesopotamian** people believed that a ghost (gidim) was created at the time of death, then left the body and descended to the netherworld, called Irkalla. The ghost retained the personality of the deceased. This is different from beliefs common

to other cultures, believing the ghost is a part of the person from time of birth and this part survives their death. Some sources say the gidim is inherited from the slain god whose body was used to create man.

THE *BOOK OF THE DEAD* WAS INTENDED TO HELP A DEAD PERSON MAKE A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PERILS OF THE *DUAT*, OR UNDERWORLD, TO THE AFTERLIFE. THE EGYPTIAN CONCEPTS OF DEATH, SOUL AND AFTERLIFE WERE COMPLEX. ONE ASPECT OF DEATH WAS THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE VARIOUS *KHEPERU*, OR MODES OF EXISTENCE.

Ancient **Egyptian** cultures believed in the continued existence of the soul and spirit after death, and this spirit retained the ability to assist or harm the living. They also believed in the possibility of a second death. *The Egyptian book of the Dead* describes some of the beliefs from different periods of ancient Egyptian history. In modern times, the fanciful concept of a mummy coming back to life and wreaking vengeance when disturbed has spawned a whole genre of horror stories and movies.

The **Torah and the Bible** contain more than one references to ghosts. IN general they are considered to be forbidden occult activities. (Deuteronomy 18:11). The most famous reference is in the First Book of Samuel, (I Samuel 28:3-19 KJV), in which a disguised King Saul has the Witch of Endor summon the spirit/ghost of Samuel In the New Testament Jesus persuades the Deciples that he is not a ghost following the resurrection (Luke 24:37-39). Along those same lines, Jesus' followers at first believe him to be a ghost (spirit) when they see him walking on water.

As such, most Christians consider ghosts to be “beings who while tied to earth, no longer live on the material plane.” In fact, some denominations teach that ghosts are beings who linger in an interim state before continuing on to heaven. They believe that on occasion, God would allow some souls to return to earth to warn the living to repent. In the past, most Jews and Christians were taught that it is wrong to attempt to conjure or control spirits (Deuteronomy 28: 9-12).

Some believers take this position even farther believing some ghosts are actually demons in disguise (I Timothy 4:1) saying that "they come to deceive people and draw them away from God and into bondage." They also maintain that attempts to contact the dead may lead to unwanted contact with a demon or “unclean spirit” as recorded in the famous “Exorcist” case involving a fourteen year old boy in the mid 1940’s.

According to other Christian beliefs, appearances of orbs of light, a common paranormal phenomenon attributed to ghosts, can be explained by II Corinthians 11:14, which states that "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

Modern scientific investigations do not support these positions of ghosts as “dangerous.” In general, most investigators believe “there is something out there.” Again, you find what you are looking for, but there is no reason to be frightened.

In **Buddhist philosophy** the so called “Hungry Ghosts” are *ghosts* only in the sense of not being fully alive; not fully capable of living and appreciating what the moment has to offer. Although the Eastern terminology and metaphor is very different, the concept has strong parallels in Western thought.

In his book *Thoughts without a Thinker*, philosopher Mark Epstein remarks,

“The Hungry Ghosts are probably the most vividly drawn metaphors in the Wheel of Life. Phantomlike creatures with withered limbs, grossly bloated bellies, and long thin necks, the Hungry Ghosts in many ways represent a fusion of rage and desire. Tormented by unfulfilled cravings and insatiably demanding of impossible satisfactions, the Hungry Ghosts are searching for gratification for old unfulfilled needs whose time has passed. They are beings who have uncovered a terrible emptiness within themselves, who cannot see the impossibility of correcting something that has already happened. Their ghostlike state represents their attachment to the past.”

Buddhism does teach the existence of ghosts through story and imagery, but they are primarily used as a metaphor to demonstrating that ghosts suffer attempting to fulfill earthly desires. It is thought of as an exercise in futility, because ghosts find themselves without physical bodies and are unable to act on their desires.



In other words they believe ghosts are simply suffering spirits who should be treated with compassion. They are not entities to be feared. Some Buddhists believe ghosts “should be led to the light through chanting and explanation of Buddhist teaching until the golden light of Buddha is seen.

They also teach ghosts can remain around people through concern and love. Also, some ghosts may not understand their own death and the afterlife. Other ghosts are believed to remain earthbound due to self created fear, guilt and shame, forms of “self

condemnation” needing to be resolved. Some ghosts may have no concept of time simply remain stuck, an illusion created by their mind.

A few Buddhists teach Ghost possession can occur when ghosts who suffer from earthly lusts and addictions seek to fulfill those desires or "highs" at the expense of another's physical body.

HINDUISM
TEACHES THAT
THE SOUL OF A
PERSON WILL
CONTINUE TO RE-
INCARNATE ON
EARTH UNTIL FREE
FROM ALL
PHYSICAL,
EARTHLY DESIRES,
WHICH ENDS THE
CYCLE OF GHOSTS
AND SUFFERING

Hinduism says “ghosts are people without physical bodies. They are the souls of people who died before their time, typically by tragedy.” Many Hindus believe human beings have two bodies – the *gross body* and the *subtle body*. When the physical life ends prematurely, with the passing of the gross, the person will remain in an ethereal state subtle body. They remain here until the time of the life is complete and they can acquire an entirely new body. Having not fully experienced the joys of life, ghosts may experience great suffering. Their senses remain intact, but they do not have a physical body that can interact with the physical world. Therefore, it is impossible for the ghost to satisfy their desires and they experience a hell-like existence.

In Hinduism, many followers will cremate the body of a deceased person so the soul (or ghost) cannot re-enter the old body after death. This is believed to be especially true for ghosts who are materialistic in nature, or suffer from earthly lusts and addictions. If the original body is not available, many Hindus believe that some ghosts will seek other bodies and attempt to fulfill those lusts in a new host. This is believed to be the root of some life problems, and is known as ghost possession in some circles. The living become susceptible to ghost possession when they weaken themselves in times of stress or overindulgence.

The basis for ghost problems, ghost illness and ghost possession is found in ancient Hindu writings and ideology. It teaches a somewhat complicated system of dharma, karma and includes concepts of re-birth. As a result, Hinduism contains various rituals, similar to exorcisms, which can rescue followers from ghosts and the problems they cause. These rituals can also assist the ghosts to move onward in their journey

In addition, Hindu beliefs teach that humankind is surrounded by a multitude of spirit entities. They exist within the "ether" that encompasses everything. This *ether* is often thought of as spirit, or energy. It is called *Akasha*. The *Akashic Records* are believed to contain every event in time, recorded in the *ether* as an imprint in

this energy. It may be possible to see ghosts by peering into the *Akashic Records*, using the *third eye*.

Islam (Muslim), as a whole, does not teach the existence of ghosts or reincarnation. The most widely accepted belief is that the spirit of a person remains in the grave until the time of judgment. Islam does however teach about *zars* or spirits that typically possess women, causing sickness, rebellion and marital discord. They also speak of *jinn*, typically believed not to be ghosts or angels, but beings that dwell in the unseen, created before mankind, some good and some bad. All of these creatures created to worship God known as *Allah*.

Though many Muslims do not believe ghosts are found within Islam, it should be noted that a sect known as the *Sufi* do believe in reincarnation, as well as ghosts and spirits. Traditional Islamists say the idea of ghosts came from the pre-Islam time of ignorance and are only a superstition. Looking back at the time before the prophet Mohammed, the Jinn were an integral part of ancient Arabian religion, and they were both good and bad. Traditionally, Mohammed saw jinn and mankind as separate races, both good and bad, all under Allah. In this light, Jinn are somewhat similar to Christianity's Angels and demons.

In general, Ghosts within Islam are described as “negative” because natural deaths are not believed to create ghosts. Some Muslims believe that people who are killed, if their life is abruptly shortened, they remain as negative ghosts with ill-intentions. Some believe the *'ifrit* (or ghost) leaves the body at death, and remains in the cemetery after a peaceful death, awaiting resurrection. However when a person is killed they continue to wander the earth – sometimes where they lived while alive or perhaps at the site of their death.

The Role of Science

Public opinion polls indicate approximately 25 percent of Americans believe in ghosts and roughly 67 percent believe in life after death. However, fact is not determined by belief. For example, in the distant past, most people believed the earth was flat and was the center of the Solar System. Just because most people – the majority – “knew this to be true,” did that change the reality of the Earth's actual shape and position.

In that same light, did molecules exist before they were discovered? With that in mind, can we say ghost *do not* exist just

because we continue to search for them. Does non-belief make ghosts any less real?

PARANORMAL IS A GENERAL TERM THAT DESIGNATES EXPERIENCES THAT LIE OUTSIDE "THE RANGE OF NORMAL EXPERIENCE OF SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION OR THAT INDICATES PHENOMENA THAT ARE UNDERSTOOD TO BE OUTSIDE OF SCIENCE'S **CURRENT** ABILITY TO EXPLAIN OR MEASURE.

Joe Nickell of the *Committee for Skeptical Inquiry* writes, "there is no credible scientific evidence that any location is inhabited by spirits of the dead. Limitations of human perception and ordinary physical explanations can account for ghost sightings."

According to some scientists, changes in air pressure can cause doors to slam. Lights from passing cars reflect in very mysterious ways. Pareidolia is an innate tendency that causes us to recognize patterns in randomness. In other words, humankind is a pattern seeking animal. We find organization in chaos. Some skeptics believe this is what causes people to believe that they have seen ghosts "out of the corner of the eye." The sensitivity of peripheral vision may also account for some sightings. According to Nickell, peripheral vision can easily mislead, especially late at night when the brain is tired and more likely to misinterpret sights and sounds."

Michael Persinger of Laurentian University, Canada, speculates that changes in geomagnetic fields created by tectonic stress or solar activity can stimulate the brain's temporal lobes and produce many of the events reported as. Sound can easily be misinterpreted according to Richard Lord and Richard Wiseman a professor at the University of Hertfordshire observe concluded that infrasound and subsonics can cause humans to experience bizarre feelings in a room, including anxiety, extreme sorrow, paranoia and even the chills. Carbon Monoxide poisoning, which can cause changes in perception of the visual and auditory systems, has been offered as a possible explanation for paranormal activity as early as 1921.

With these facts in mind, it becomes the responsibility of a paranormal researcher to take all of these factors into account. All of these factors must be observed, detected and recorded before the investigation begins. Only then can *changes* be experienced, measured and examined to confirm (or deny) the presence (or non-presence) of any unexplained and perhaps paranormal activity.

However, as Sherlock Holmes observes. "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth. We know that it did not come through the door, the window or the chimney. We know that it could not have been concealed in the room, as there is no concealment possible. When, then, did it come?"

However, in the Paranormal, sometimes we cannot eliminate “the Impossible.”

Summary

All over the world and throughout all cultures there is a remarkable consistency when it comes to “ghosts” and Paranormal activity. As we acquire new knowledge, the “old” ideas will be modified (or eliminated) and new factual knowledge will take its place. New tools are developed and more people are entering the field every day.

We are not playing games, attempting to frighten each other and take back ghost stories that are probably nothing more than wishful thinking and fantasies. The “fun” aspect of an exciting investigation cannot be ignored. Mysteries are always entertaining. However, we are seeking hard evidence and acquiring that evidence can be hard work.

This document may not be copied without permission
Copyright 2012
By Michael A. Henry, PhD
All rights reserved