

# Subjects of Parapsychology:

# Materialization

*The following writing is not meant as paper for the advanced connoisseur,  
but is the extract of an extended internal work within the project  
“Zwischenwelt”, abridged for newcomers to the field of parapsychology.  
For additional information, a more in-depth literature review is recommended.*

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## 1. Introduction: About parapsychological research

The term parapsychology was introduced by the psychologist Max Dessoir in 1889 <sup>[1]</sup>. Parapsychology investigates paranormal psychic abilities using scientific methods, such as used in traditional psychology (observation, survey etc.) and quantitative empirical methodologies such as used in sociology, psychology and pedagogy.

Parapsychological phenomenon are often also called Psi-Phenomenon<sup>I</sup>. The two main fields of parapsychological research are **Psychokinesis**, the ability of the mind to influence objects without involvement of currently known physical energies and without physical contact between the acting subject and the reacting object (for example telekinesis<sup>II</sup> and psychic healing) and **Extrasensory Perception** (ESP), the ability to acquire information by (psychic) sources currently unexplained by science (best known examples are clairvoyance<sup>III</sup>, precognition<sup>IV</sup> and telepathy<sup>V</sup>).

The earliest parapsychological research was done by the “Ghost Club” in the United Kingdom, where they started already in 1862 to investigate in the appearance of ghosts. In 1882 the “Society for Psychical Research” (SPR) was founded in Great Britain. <sup>[2]</sup>

Further parapsychological unions followed in various countries all over the world, such as the “American Society for Psychical Research” (ASPR) in New York in 1885 <sup>[3]</sup> and the “Psychologische Gesellschaft” in Munich in 1886 <sup>[4]</sup> or the “Institut Métapsychique International” in Paris in 1919 <sup>[5]</sup>. Later followed the “Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene” in Germany in 1950 <sup>[6]</sup> and the “Parapsychological Association” (PA) in the United States in 1957 <sup>[7]</sup>.

The 1970s were a very active period in the field of parapsychological research. Today the research is very limited. Many parapsychology departments at universities all over the world were closed during the last three decades due to doubtful research findings. SPR and ASPR continue their work up to now. Their goal is to research extraordinary and yet unexplained psychic abilities without prejudice and prepossession, although these abilities are not yet satisfactorily explainable on the base of commonly accepted hypotheses. Among the interdisciplinary members there are not only psychologists, but also physicists and philosophers.

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<sup>I</sup> Psi is the first letter of the Greek word for Psyche. The term ‘Psi’ was introduced to the paranormal research as a neutral term for paranormal phenomenon

<sup>II</sup> The movement of objects by scientifically inexplicable means

<sup>III</sup> The power to see objects or events that cannot be perceived by the known human senses

<sup>IV</sup> The knowledge of something in advance of its occurrence

<sup>V</sup> Communication through means other than the known human senses

Parapsychology research was always confronted with a lot of criticism. Many (outside) scientists title parapsychology as pseudo-science. The main critiques are about the lack of serious proofs for the existing hypotheses, that there were no reproducible experiments and that there are no clear theoretical structures, which could explain the phenomenon.

It still shall be deemed to be unproven, that human beings can receive information beyond the known five senses and that human beings can influence material systems through a currently not explained physical way. Nonetheless scientists keep on researching parapsychological phenomenon to find answers to open questions.

Lately some scientists use the term “anomalous mental phenomenon” instead of parapsychological phenomenon, to express these phenomenon in a more scientific-neutrally way.

## **2. Materialization**

### **2.1 Popular Description**

Materialization belongs to the field of psychokinetic phenomenon. In Parapsychology Materialization describes the creation or appearance of matter from unknown sources. People, who claim to have witnessed Materialization, described it as “something that came out of nothing”. According to scripts of early researchers of this topic, it is a phenomenon that normally does not happen just like this, but is an ability practiced by psychic Mediums<sup>VI</sup>, who can communicate with other dimensions through their psychic powers (e.g. during séances<sup>VII</sup>).

### **2.2. Historical Introduction**

The most famous example of materialization is mentioned in the bible, when it was told how Jesus multiplied bread and fish to feed a hungry crowd and that this multiplication happened out of nothing. In the works of the alchemist Thomas Vaughan (1622-1666) is found a description of a substance, drawn from the body that has some of the characteristics of ectoplasm<sup>[8]</sup>, a substance that is often reported to be part of materialization.

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<sup>VI</sup> A medium is a person that is supposed to have the ability to have contact with spirits. Some of them claim to have the ability to produce physical paranormal phenomena such as materialization.

<sup>VII</sup> A séance is an attempt to get in contact with spirits. People sit together in a circle and try to receive spiritualistic messages, often with the help of a medium in their mid.

In Western occultism materialization reached the peak of its popularity during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries among occult circles and their séances with mediums. There were reports about luminous, phantom-like objects. Also animal and human spirits were reported to have materialized. In the Victorian age so-called “ghost photos” were very popular, often taken at Séances. Many of those pictures and most of the Séances are purported to be faked though, because such manifestations either disappeared under controlled conditions or were uncovered by competent observers. Many “ghost photos” could be proven of having had double (or other special) exposure, where the visible result was a ghost-like image then. <sup>[9]</sup>

After some time stories about manipulated Séances and Materializations spread and the spiritistic circles got a seedy reputation. Finally they became smaller and smaller. Since the 1930s only a few reports about Ectoplasm and Materialization have been reported.

### 2.3. Researchers and research of materialization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century various scientists did some research on the field of Materialization. Hereafter a selection:

**Professor Charles Robert Richet** (1850-1935) <sup>[10]</sup>, Noble prize winner of Physiology, introduced the term Ectoplasm during his researches. This term describes a semi-fluid physical substance that supposedly manifests as a result of spiritual energy or a psychic phenomenon. It often appears white and cloudy, vapor-like. Professor Richet described it as exteriorized substance that is produced out of the bodies of mediums. <sup>[11]</sup>

**Julian Ochorowicz** (1850-1917) was a polish philosopher and psychologist. In Paris he worked as co-director of the Institut General Psychologique and conducted studies into spiritualism, hypnosis and telepathy. His hypothesis was, those phenomenons at séances are caused by “fluidic action”, performed at expense of the medium's and other participants power. <sup>[12] [13]</sup>

**Professor W.J. Crawford** (1881 – 1920) was a lecturer in mechanical engineering at Queen's University Belfast. He wrote three books: *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena* (1916), *Experiments in Psychic Science* (1919) and *The Psychic Structures in the Goligher Circle* (1921). He studied ectoplasm and found that during materialization the weight of his medium dropped. <sup>[14]</sup> He stated that “all of the physical manifestations of his mediums... were achieved by the construction of ectoplasmic rods, struts and cantilevers” <sup>[14]</sup>.

**Sir William Crookes** (1832 -1919) was physician and chemist and interested in spiritism. He made researches in his own laboratory with mediums like Daniel Douglas Home, one of the most famous psychokinetic mediums of his time and confirmed his special abilities. <sup>[15]</sup>

**Dr. Gustave Geley** (1865 -1924) was Graduate doctor of the Faculty of Medicine of Lyon in France. He was Director of the Institut Metapsychique International from 1919 – 1924 and wrote among others the book *Clairvoyance and Materialization* (1927). <sup>[16]</sup>

**Eugène Osty** (1874-1938) was a French physician and director of the Institut Métapsychique Internationale after Gustave Geley's death. He investigated psychical phenomenon, partly together with his son Marcel. He wrote the book *Supernormal Faculties in Man*. <sup>[17]</sup>

**Baron Albert von Schrenck-Notzing** (1862 – 1929) was a German doctor, who specialized in psychiatry. He made a lot of research in paranormal sciences, e.g. hypnotic experiments, thought-transference, telekinesis and “teleplastics”<sup>VIII</sup>. The first systematic study of ectoplasm was a joint effort by Schrenck-Notzing and Juliette Bisson, who was conductor of a series of séances between 1909 and 1913. They made a lot of experiments with the celebrated materialization medium Marthe Beraud (known as Eva C.). Schrenck-Notzing wrote a book called *The Phenomena of Materialization* (1920), where he sums up hundreds of experiments conducted for a period of five years with Eva C. He was convinced that the phenomenon of Materialization exists and wanted to introduce it as scientific term. <sup>[18]</sup>



Historic Ectoplasm Photos were often proven to be manipulations

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<sup>VIII</sup> ‘Teleplastics’ was used as a different term for Ectoplasm.

## 2.4. Historical depictions of Materialization

There was a group of well-known mediums that were invited by the scientific researchers for various experiments, e.g. Helene Petrovna, Eva C., Kathleen Goligher, Stanislaw P. or Franek Kluski. Many of those reports have survived till today and can be read in antique books and on plenty of websites about paranormal phenomenon. The following abstracts are taken from various historical reports.

After a séance, the researchers interviewed the mediums about their perceptions. Often they described Materialization as a very energy-absorbing process where they lost physical power, but that would intensify their senses of perception at the same time. <sup>[19]</sup>

Some researchers (e.g. W.J. Crawford) measured the weight of medium and sitters and found out, that mainly the medium, but also the sitters lose weight during materialization. The amount of temporarily lost weight would have corresponded with the amount of appearing ectoplasm. This phenomenon was called partial dematerialization. <sup>[20]</sup>

Some mediums felt the Materialization like little electric shocks coming from their spine and from there expanding to other parts in their body, often finding a way out from their mouth or other body openings, where it became visible to the others as ectoplasm finally. Others said they just would have felt pain during Materialization. <sup>[20]</sup>

There are not only reports about visible Ectoplasm, but also reports about Ectoplasm with psychokinetic and telekinetic effects (e.g. ectoplasm that moved objects or ectoplasmic lines that were experienced as “conveyors of feeling and emotion, (.), not only between the materialized figure and the medium, but also between the medium and the sitters<sup>IX</sup> in the room as well”). Some mediums said, they perceived the thoughts and affections of others. When someone was suffering, they felt the pain and when someone was worried or depressed, it was perceptible too. They could not tell who among the sitters had which feeling, but they noticed those feelings around. Those feelings were in some way reproduced in the brain of the medium. <sup>[20]</sup>

W. J. Crawford, in his study of the “Goligher Circle”<sup>X</sup>, stated that also the sitters in a séance contribute to the ectoplasmic flow and that everyone and everything in the room during a Séance has unconscious influence on the whole situation. <sup>[21]</sup>

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<sup>IX</sup> Sitting attendants in a séance

<sup>X</sup> A spiritualist family from Ireland. They became the subject of a series of experiments by Dr. W. J. Crawford between 1914 and 1920.

Those results of research seemed unbelievable to the scientist at that time, but they tried to find serious explanations for these phenomenon. In his last book, Gustave Geley came to following conclusions: "The primary condition of ectoplasmic phenomena is an anatomic-biologic decentralization in the medium's body and an externalization of the decentralized factors in an amorphous state, solid, liquid or vaporous. (...) Complete materializations are the final product of the ectoplasmic process" [22]

The evidence for the nature of telekinetic ectoplasm rests widely on the claims of the psychical researchers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who examined several spiritualist mediums with supposed materialization abilities. After the early generations of researchers were gone or stopped their work on this field, the following generations of Parapsychologists abandoned the search for ectoplasm. What was further advanced in parapsychology by some of the following researcher generations was occasional research about mediums, trance and extrasensory perception.

## 2.5 More recently scientific research

During the last decades there were almost no reports about materialization anymore and hence there is almost no (practical) research on this field anymore. The overall majority of scientists have up to now no belief that Materialization and Ectoplasm exist.

There were some stories about Indic gurus, who claimed to have the skills for materialization, but the evidences were either missing or doubtful and some gurus were even accused for fraudulent activities. Erlendur Haraldsson, psychologist at the University of Island, researched the Guru Sathya Sai Baba and his materializations for 10 years. In 1977 Haraldsson wrote a book about his research results, where he comes to the conclusion that Sathya Sai Baba has supernatural abilities. Despite of many attempts, any fraud on the part of Baba could not be proven yet, so it is still not clarified how he made the manifestations of jewelry and an ashes-like dust called "Vibuti" possible [23].

Some psychologists tried to explain materializations with a different state of consciousness, as a kind of hallucination, which is initiated and controlled by human mind, so to say autosuggestion [24]

Professor Bender (1907-1991), founder of the German "Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene", researched and explained materializations as artifacts of dissociation<sup>XI</sup>, as artificially caused division processes. [25]

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<sup>XI</sup> Thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations that are separated from the rest of the psyche and that cannot be explained by the concerned person

Just as well the main question within the research about medium abilities is and will be, if seemingly parapsychological phenomenon are based on extrasensory perception, contact with spirits or unknown matters, or come unexplainable perceptions just from the medium's memory or sub consciousness?

Psychoanalyst C.G. Jung and physicist Wolfgang Pauli developed a model that demanded to integrate human consciousness, the psyche, into fundamental theories of physics, because without it, respective theories would not only be incomplete, but even incorrect. Jung and Pauli came to this conclusion, because they watched (more or less) rare and incidental situations in life, where our physical world seems to correspond to our inner psychic situation. Jung explained that with the assumption that psychic and material processes actually arise from one and the same entity. Jung supposed that people like shamans would have certain abilities to synchronize mind and matter. <sup>[26]</sup>

From the side of observational theorists in physics, there were theories that speak against the mind-matter dualism. They imply that paranormal events are not an interaction between mind and matter, but that mind is actually also matter. Hence paranormal events would be matter-matter interactions. <sup>[27]</sup>

Recently paranormal research got scientific support from the side of quantum physics theories, in the field of Psychokinesis and extrasensory perception. One theory is that paranormal effects could be special cases of quantum-physical processes, whereby known principles of space, time and causality are out of order. The phenomenon of non-locality within the quantum physics plays a central role hereby. Non-locality is a direct influence of one object on another distant object. In classic physics action at a distance is incompatible with relativity, but in quantum physics non-locality reappeared in the form of entanglement, which is a concept that refers to connections between subatomic particles that persist regardless of separation by various distances. Such entanglements have been demonstrated experimentally. Theoretical models like the "Model of the pragmatic information" and the "Weak Quantum Theory" assume that there are entanglement correlations behind paranormal experiences, which get a sense through the semantic assignment of occurrences, which get interpreted quasi-causal by the affected people who experience extraordinary phenomenon. <sup>[28]</sup>

The scientists who represent such new theories, do not look on it as contrary to physics, but as endorsement of physics. <sup>[29]</sup>

Future research on this highly complex field could possibly bring some more insights to build theories around paranormal phenomenon.

Not only further research on the side of psychology is necessary, but parapsychology demands an interdisciplinary strategy that includes medicine (neurology), physics, biology and anthropology.

### **3. Epilogue:**

Obviously research in the field of parapsychology is still on the search for many answers. There are plenty of theories around psychokinetic phenomenon, the above mentioned are only a small selection.

However, at this point materialization (and ectoplasm) can only be treated theoretically, since it is not clear how to produce and observe it under laboratory conditions. If at all, materialization seems to become not visible on demand and is thus also not testable on demand under controlled conditions.

Such methodical problems are one of the main reasons, why parapsychological phenomena are so disputed. Parapsychological researchers are confronted with problems of prejudices and ignorance. The Nobel-prize-winning physicist Brian Josephson said once: “Physicists have an emotional response when they hear anything connected with parapsychology” and “Their opinion of parapsychology research is not based on evaluation of the evidence but on a dogmatic belief that all research in this field is false”.<sup>[30]</sup>

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