



Types of Possessions

A major area of paranormal activity is possession. The phenomenon is said to involve the taking over of the mind by an 'entity' from outside the mind. During possession the whole persona of the individual disappears, leaving only the entity. The history of the paranormal is full of such incidences. But what is the reality of the phenomenon? Does a real 'entity' invade the mind, or can answers be found in the psychology of the experiencer? Or is the answer somewhere in between?

TYPES OF INVASION

There are four main areas of possession. First of all we have demonic, where the person is said to be possessed by a supernatural demon. Another popular form of possession is reincarnation, where a 'past life' is said to take over the host. spiritualism offers many cases of possession, with mediums contacting, and being taken over by, a spirit of a dead person. The practice has now advanced to Channelling, where a discarnate being takes over the person to impart spiritual philosophy. We can see that entities can seem to come from many areas of the supernatural, but does the subject suffer from too many 'tags'? Can we better understand what is going on by ignoring the places entities are said to come from and see if they are 'internal' rather than external?

KNOWN MECHANISMS

There are three areas of mind/brain phenomena that could offer rudimentary answers to possession. In the phenomenon of Multiple Personality, it is believed that the mind can fragment to the point that different aspects of mind appear to be separate personalities. Another area is the Split Brain concept, where it is known that the left and right cerebral hemispheres of the brain can operate independently. The left brain is a logician, whilst the right is emotional, or artistic. We normally live through the left brain, but the right can take over, adding fantasy, as if another 'personality' is in residence. Finally, knowledge imparted through 'entities' can often be accurate and substantial. Here, cryptomnesia – the ability of the mind to remember obscure facts – can offer an answer to this knowledge.

DIALOGUE WITH A MIND

Skeptics usually leave the discussion of possession at this point. In the above psychological/physiological mechanisms they find all the evidence they need to explain the

mystery. It is all to do with conscious/unconscious dialogue expressing desires. This may be true, but in leaving it here, is it a case of taking reductionism too far? Jung would have said: yes. To him, the personal mind was one level of a collective unconscious, populated by symbols and 'archetypes', such as the Child, Sage, Hero or Trickster, as expressed in myth. Yet if we reduce an archetype to its raw content, could we have a 'communal' expression of a particular type of personality? This is quite feasible. I often pose the question: if a group of people shared a similar psychology, would it become sociology? If so, then we can imagine an inner 'dialogue' with the mind producing an 'entity' that may well be internal and personal, but its actual expression could be 'archetypal', and therefore having a grasp on the 'outside.'

DECONSTRUCTING THE INDIVIDUAL

Seeing Jung's 'archetypes' as communal personality fragments leads on to an obvious question: If they exist, are we as 'individual' as we claim to be? Indeed, could the 'individual' be nothing more than a 'congregation' of 'outside' elements? There are, in fact, two areas where the 'outside' is known to affect us. We are very much a product of our culture and society. We use the term 'nurture' to explain its effects upon us. Another term which goes with nurture is 'nature', and is used to represent the effect upon us of inherited characteristics in our genes. If we add Jung's 'archetypes' to this continual invasion of the individual, providing character types, we are left with a simple question: If our nature, nurturing and personalities are all existent on the 'outside', what is left of the individual?

EMOTIONAL ESSENCES

One obvious answer is our memories, and that which we learn through experience. But these aside, we can argue that what we term the 'individual' is really a particular patterning of outside, communal elements. We could well be, in effect, a psychological entity modeled on those 'possessions' we have taken from 'out there.' The possibilities can be extended when we look to emotion. We all express emotion for different reasons, and to different degrees, but the reality is an emotion has a similar effect throughout a culture or species, suggesting that this, too, has a reality 'outside.' When a person is 'possessed' in a paranormal sense, the entity is usually emotional in nature, or expresses a particular desire. In light of the above, we must ask: is this simply an expression of 'inner' turmoil, as a skeptic would suggest, or are we in the position to argue a possession may be just that – an invasion by an 'outside' entity?