

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigations of the Felix Experimental Group: 2010–2013

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Abstract—This paper chronicles my introduction to and subsequent investigation of the Felix Experimental Group (FEG) and its exhibitions of classical physical mediumship. It's been nearly a century since investigators have had the opportunity to carefully study standard spiritistic phenomena, including the extruding of ectoplasm, and the FEG is the only current physical mediumistic circle permitting any serious controls. The paper details the progressively stringent controls applied to the production of phenomena, culminating in some well-controlled experiments with video documentation in a secure and private location belonging to one of the investigators.

Introduction

I first learned about the Felix Experimental Group (FEG) and its medium, Kai Mügge, early in 2008, from Jochen Söderling (pseudonym), the cardiologist who eventually became its circle leader. Presumably because of Jochen, and also my reputation (such as it was) as a reasonably knowledgeable proponent of the best macro-PK cases, I soon thereafter found myself included among the email recipients of FEG updates. But as far as I can now reconstruct, my first direct contact with Kai occurred in the Fall of 2009, when we arranged for the first of a series of get-acquainted Skype video calls. By that time I had already been planning with my friend and colleague Peter Mulacz to apply for funding to visit the FEG, and our email discussions had begun with Jochen to make that visit happen.

At the end of March 2010, Peter and I were able to travel to Hanau for an introductory visit with the members of the FEG. We were treated to one cabinet sitting and one table séance, all under casual controls. Prior to our visit, we discussed with both Kai and Jochen the importance of studying and documenting the Felix Circle phenomena under good conditions of control. Both Kai and Jochen expressed their desire to do the same, and, indeed, their avowed concern with carefully documenting the phenomena is consistent with their appreciation of the mediumistic literature. At the same time, however, both Kai and Jochen were eager for us to see, in

the most impressive forms possible, the sorts of phenomena they'd been obtaining during their sittings. Based on their own experience and also their knowledge of the literature, they said they were concerned that controls (including the use of two hi-definition infrared camcorders we'd purchased) would inhibit (if not snuff out) the manifestations they wanted to share with us. They were also concerned, based again on their own experience with previous visitors to the group, that the delicate group dynamics would inevitably be altered merely by having strangers—especially vigilant and critical ones—sit in. And they were concerned that those dynamics might easily be seriously upset if controls were imposed too early. We understood and respected this position. In fact, we felt it was supported by the entire history of mediumistic investigations, as well as oft-cited and relatively recent studies of the psychodynamics of PK sitter groups (e.g., Barham 1988, Batchelder 1984, Isaacs 1984).

Accordingly, we agreed that the essential first step to a thorough and proper study of the Felix Group phenomena would be (a) to socialize with the group members (or at least as many of them as we could meet prior to the first séance), and (b) see for ourselves what a typical séance is like. We said we hoped we could gradually introduce and tighten controls, and both Kai and Jochen said they wanted this as well. But they cautioned that this might reduce the magnitude of the phenomena, and possibly eliminate them altogether. Kai also said that the speed with which we'd be able to introduce controls was not entirely up to the group members. It was also dictated by Kai's control personality, who ostensibly possessed him during cabinet sittings, and who identified himself as the late parapsychologist Hans Bender. The Hans Bender persona (hereafter simply HB) claims to be aided in these matters by a team of postmortem assistants, identified merely as the "Chemists."

During our introductory cabinet séance, the group experienced loud, abundant, and rapid knocking sounds around the walls and ceiling of the room, as well as anomalous object movements of various sorts. The latter included a floating paper "trumpet" with a luminescent strip brought within inches of each sitter's face. Later, during brief periods of red light alternating with periods of darkness, we saw an ostensibly materialized hand and arm hanging from the medium's mouth, and then a moving, large, and not especially lifelike hand moving on the medium's left shoulder while the medium's own hands remained visible and motionless in front of him. At the table séance, we were able to use our IR camcorders for part of the time, and we recorded quite vigorous movements of the table. When the cameras were turned off, we experienced what seemed to be a complete table levitation.

Because most of the phenomena occurred in darkness with no apparent controls, neither Peter nor I could attest to their legitimacy. But we agreed that a controlled follow-up investigation was warranted, and Kai and Jochen concurred. The exigencies of my retirement from UMBC and subsequent move from Maryland delayed my next visit until August 2012. This time I participated in two table séances and one cabinet sitting, assisted on two of those occasions by documentary filmmaker Robert Narholz (who was highlighting the FEG for his forthcoming film, *Finding PK*). By this time both Robert and I had been embraced as friendly and trustworthy observers by the FEG, and we were optimistic that we'd be able to impose reasonable controls that nevertheless respected the idiosyncratic psychology of the medium.

But before proceeding with my account of subsequent séances with the FEG, one crucial matter must be addressed. Because the circle leader, Jochen, prefers (wisely, I'd say) to remain anonymous in order not to jeopardize his reputation as a cardiologist, and because Jochen can too easily and glibly become a target for suspicion so long as nothing is known about him, I believe I should say something about my experiences with and impressions of him as a person.

The objective facts about Jochen, so far as they don't reveal his identity, are these. Although he's now only in his late 30s, Jochen is already a distinguished cardiac surgeon and medical researcher who is widely published and who presents original research at major medical conferences throughout Europe and also in the US. He's affiliated with several hospitals and works at one of the world's most distinguished research centers in Germany.

I was first introduced to Jochen in January 2007. He wrote me an email saying he'd read and very much liked my book *Immortal Remains* (Braude 2003), and that he was eager to engage me in philosophical discussions about the implications of survival data. Because Jochen had begun to realize that certain data and arguments posed serious challenges to the medical science he'd taken for granted, our discussions soon turned into a protracted dialogue about memory trace theory, psychophysical reductionism generally, and the viability and significance of the various sorts of anti-mechanistic arguments I've advanced over the years in my papers and books. It became clear very quickly that Jochen was both thoughtful and highly intelligent, and also a voracious reader. In short order he read nearly everything I'd ever written, and he also began a careful study of the parapsychological literature and the work of other philosophers of science and mind. I could easily understand how Jochen had risen to prominence as a research scientist so early in his life. He clearly understood the philosophically and other technically difficult

works he read, and his questions were invariably probing and sophisticated. And it seemed as though he never slept.

Soon after our discussions began, Jochen raised the topic of macro-PK and the sorts of dramatic cases I covered in *The Limits of Influence* (Braude 1997). He'd already devoured that book as well as much of the primary source material and many important secondary works. So we were able to engage immediately in detailed, penetrating, and wide-ranging discussions about the possibility of fraud in the strongest cases of physical mediumship, as well as in cases documented with less thoroughness and rigor than those of (say) D. D. Home, Eusapia Palladino, and Rudi Schneider.

I met Jochen face-to-face for the first time in February 2008. I was speaking at a conference in Dortmund, Germany, and Jochen traveled to see me. He grilled me as usual about the difficulties of reconciling my anti-mechanistic arguments with the prevailing assumptions of medical science specifically and the physical sciences generally. Jochen also informed me that he'd recently joined a PK sitter group near Frankfurt. He told me he had seen some impressive phenomena, and he was clearly wrestling with the issue of how best to explain them. In the months that followed, I received many email inquiries from Jochen about the scope and adequacy of the skeptical arguments he'd been reading (with his customary appetite), and we also reviewed some of the better-documented physical mediumship cases from the heyday of Spiritualism. It was obvious that Jochen was conflicted about the phenomena (he used to write me that they really "kicked my brain") and that he was determined to be as thorough and fair as possible in evaluating them. I'm convinced that Jochen applied his usual scholarly standards to his study of the FEG phenomena, and now, after six years of immersing himself first-hand in the phenomena and continuing to study both the primary and secondary literature, I'd easily rate Jochen as being one of the most informed people on the planet with respect to the history of macro-PK and the relevant issues concerning the possibility of fraud. During this several-year period, Jochen also reached out to many other psi researchers, and I'm confident that they would confirm my impression of him as extremely bright, conscientious, knowledgeable, and thorough.

Hanau, Summer 2012

Kai's (and the HB persona's) views about the nature of mediumship and the conditions conducive to its demonstration have been profoundly shaped by Kai's familiarity with the literature on the subject. Because he doesn't feel he's as natural or prodigious a mediumistic talent as Home, Palladino, and some others (indeed, he spent many years working diligently to develop his abilities), he feels he's more likely than these virtuosi to be subject to

various constraints—in particular, the negative influence of unsympathetic observers and the inhibiting effects of infrared and other light sources.

So although Kai understood and agreed with me about the advisability of infrared recording, he was pessimistic that HB would allow it. Nevertheless, he was very open to other controls, including a strip search and my intrusive hands-on control of him during the cabinet séance, even though he felt that these measures would at least somewhat diminish the magnitude of the effects. He understood the reasonable point that it was better to document modest phenomena under good conditions of control than dramatic phenomena under poor conditions.

Since the time of my previous visit to the FEG, there had been a notable addition to the regular sitters of the FEG—Kai's wife Julia. The two met in 2011 and married in May 2012. Julia now divides séance responsibilities with Jochen. On most occasions when both are present, she operates the red light which is used occasionally to illuminate Kai or the room, and which is connected to a rheostat. During cabinet sittings, she typically sits to Kai's right, sometimes controlling him but invariably operating the red lamp according to instructions dictated by HB. Jochen still performs the duty of circle leader and also takes charge of operating the CD player, needed for providing inspirational and energy-inducing music into the proceedings.

I'll now describe in detail the three sittings conducted during this visit to Hanau. In the absence of blow-by-blow video, the details are obviously crucial, because they help convey both the flavor of the occasions and the difficulties involved in documenting them.

TABLE SÉANCE 08-22-2012

Attendees in the order of seating, clockwise

Kai Mügge (medium)

Martine (a neighbor and regular sitter)

Steffy Wolpert (Kai's sister-in-law and regular sitter)

Stephen Braude

Robert Narholz (film-maker, musician)

Jochen S. (circle leader, music operator)

Elke Mügge (mother of medium)

As is usually the case in Hanau, the séance was conducted in the cellar/bomb shelter of the Mügge house (described in detail by Nahm, this issue), and it began around 8 p.m. Also as usual, it was divided into two phases: the first in total darkness, and the second under the occasional illumination of the small red lamp (controlled this time by Steffy). At its brightest, the sitters and their hands were clearly visible, and even at a lower setting one could discern those details after adjusting to the light.

Beforehand, Kai expressed his preference for eschewing video recording, preferring (he said) to work on building a good dynamic with Robert and me for the next séance or two, and hopefully for increasing the chance of getting the dramatic levitations reported on other occasions (when, reportedly, the table levitated very high and for long periods). Although I was naturally disappointed at being denied the opportunity to video the proceedings, I understood and accepted Kai's preference, especially since there was still the prospect of using video in a subsequent sitting.

The table used was a dark, circular plastic table 35.5 inches in diameter. Before the séance began, I tried lifting the table myself in order to simulate a levitation. I found that, even though the table was quite light, this was difficult to do, and that it was possible only by extending my arms a considerable distance under the table top. But even then, I couldn't reproduce the sort of smooth rise I'd experienced on my previous trip to Hanau, and it was extremely difficult to prevent the table from tilting to one side. I was also unable to raise it level off the ground by hooking my thumbs under the table top or by placing my foot under a table leg. Jochen and others have also reported being unable to simulate a table levitation by hooking the thumbs under the table top. Thus, so long as all fingers are visible on the table, and so long as at least all but one of the sitters' feet are visible under the table, I'd say it's highly unlikely that fraud best explains a levitation of at least several seconds duration and in which the table top remains parallel to the ground—at least in the absence of some apparatus (e.g., pins in the table top) which prior inspection of the room and table failed to uncover, and certainly in the absence of any evidence suggesting that Kai at some time studied the art of conjuring.¹

The sitting began with an invocation by Kai to the spirits to grace us with their healing power and with demonstrations of their power and presence through the movement of the table. To the accompaniment of some shamanic chanting music, the table began to move within a few minutes, often quite vigorously.

Since the aim of the sitting was to get some clear levitations, and since the mere movements themselves are considerably less interesting if not documented on video, I'll concentrate just on the levitations.

There were five in all, the first two in total darkness and the others in varying degrees of red light. We were all seated during these phenomena. I estimate that during the first levitation, the table rose as much as two feet and hovered for 2 or 3 seconds. The second levitation was less dramatic and of slightly shorter duration. The third levitation, occurring in red light sufficient to see all hands on the table, was notable for the manner in which it rose. Unlike the other four events, the table on this occasion rose relatively

slowly and quite gently, about 18 inches at most, again remaining aloft for 2–3 seconds. Robert and I had agreed to divide the observational controls; he would look above the table and I would look beneath it. On this occasion I could see most feet under the table.

The fourth and fifth levitations occurred within a short space of time, and I can't recall now which was which. But this much I recall clearly. On one of those two occasions the table returned to the ground forcibly and with a thud (as if pushed), rather than seeming to fall back as it did the other four times. Moreover, on both occasions all hands were visible above the table, and on one of the two occasions I saw all feet under the table. So all together, I was able to look under the table three times. Robert reported seeing all hands on those occasions, but he cautioned that as the table rose higher, the more the table top escaped the beam of the low-sitting red lamp. Accordingly, it became harder to see all hands the higher the table rose. Nevertheless, he was able to see the hands *as* the table rose, and the table never rose especially high—no more than 2 feet, and usually less than that.

CABINET SÉANCE 08-24-2012

Attendees in the order of seating, clockwise (doublechecked by Robert Narholz with the official seating chart)

Kai Mügge (medium)

Stephen Braude (control of medium's left leg and arm)

Renate (from Bavaria. This was her 6th cabinet séance with FEG. She is a spiritualist and a great believer in Kai's powers.)

Jochen S. (circle leader, music operator)

Vanessa (originally from Mexico City, now Berlin; this was her first séance)

Robert Narholz

Elke Mügge (mother of medium)

Torsten (first time FEG sitter. He had an angel appear to him while drowning and is convinced of the existence of God and the afterlife/spirits based on his "personal experiences and evidence.")

Martine (a neighbor and regular sitter)

Jens (first time FEG sitter)

Ute (seasoned FEG sitter, but no regular)

Julia M. (medium's wife, control of medium's right leg and arm, light operator)

I arrived first at the Mügge house, shortly before 6 p.m., and after a few minutes chatting upstairs with Kai's parents, I went to the cellar to inspect the premises. Jochen and Robert arrived about five minutes later, and Jochen then walked me through the inspection again, making sure I looked at all parts of the séance room and adjacent areas. Jochen was very insistent about this, wanting to satisfy himself that I didn't miss something that might come back to haunt me later.

Jochen then began to prepare the séance room by arranging the chairs and PK target objects, and sealing off light sources around windows with tape. Robert meanwhile began setting up cameras in case we were later given permission to do video recording. The PK target objects, placed at the far end of the circle away from the cabinet, are typically a small conga drum, and atop that a tambourine and maracas, alternating with a luminescent plaque or balls, or a handkerchief.²

Kai places a strip of black tape on the floor in front of the cabinet. He says the tape marks the near boundary of the PK field which he believes emanates from him. But the main purpose of the tape is to help him maintain a good distance in the dark (once he emerges from the cabinet) from the physical phenomena occurring at the far end of the circle. Kai realizes that this would help deflect facile charges from critics that the phenomena are caused by Kai moving out into the room. It's easy to feel the tape in the darkness with one's shoe, and since I would be sitting immediately to the medium's left while controlling him, I could place my foot in that area to make sure Kai's leg didn't move beyond it. Moreover, the distance from the tape to the drum and target objects was approximately 49.5 inches, considerably greater than Kai's reach.

The other sitters began to arrive around 7:30 p.m. and assembled in the Mügge's dining room around a large dining table. Kai arrived soon thereafter, already somewhat into a distracted or light trance state, but still able to communicate normally. He had also begun to sweat profusely and was drinking large quantities of tea. After the sitters briefly introduced themselves (and because there were several first-time sitters), Kai provided a lengthy introduction of at least 45 minutes about the nature of the controls that would be imposed on the medium, and also the various rules of procedure (e.g., keeping legs and arms close to one's body, not grabbing the "entities" when touched). Kai claims he's been injured (sometimes bleeding) back in the cabinet when this last condition has been breached.

Shortly before 9 p.m. Kai retreated upstairs to deepen his trance state. Then while the guests remained in the dining room, Julia and I returned to the cellar to check it out once again—this time in darkness illuminated by Julia's flashlight. The explanation for the darkness was that the lightbulbs had been removed from their sockets (it's a standard FEG precaution). Moreover, Julia and Jochen insisted on this re-inspection of the premises, for the obvious and sensible reason that the room had been left unattended since my earlier examination. I asked Julia to shine the light on all parts of the séance room, including the cabinet and the curtained-off adjacent space next to the séance area where Kai's computing equipment is set up. I was satisfied that all was in order.

The sitters were asked to leave all watches and cell phones outside the séance room. Then Julia admitted the guests, one by one, into the séance room after checking them with a metal detector. I was scanned as well. (I later learned that for some reason Robert was *not* scanned; he just walked in and finalized the camera arrangements.) At this time the red light in the séance room was on, and some additional light entered from the hallway. Then, while Robert remained in the room to re-check the cameras and ascertain that nothing suspicious occurred, Jochen and I went upstairs to strip-search the medium.

We found Kai dressed only in his underpants (briefs) and considerably further into his trance state (though still conscious of his surroundings). Kai cooperatively allowed us to see under the folds in his belly and inside his underwear. We didn't conduct a full cavity search, but it was clear that no contrivance or mass of cloth or other material was concealed externally. Jochen then provided Kai with a fresh set of clothes, which I inspected before Kai dressed.

Moreover, as I watched, Kai also drank the remaining liquid in a large, transparent plastic bottle of black tea (he typically drinks large quantities of liquid before cabinet sittings to avoid dehydration from the heavy perspiration that usually follows). The point of this was twofold. First, in order to help deflect the skeptical charge that he regurgitates ectoplasm, Kai wanted to drink something that could stain a white or light-colored material. Granted, blueberry syrup (which the materializing medium Eva C. had swallowed)³ would be a more effective means of accomplishing that goal, but it wouldn't be as effective in combating dehydration. Second, Kai wanted to empty this bottle and not take it with him to the cellar. Some have suggested that Kai, who often carries the bottle with him, used it to conceal something that later helps him fraudulently to produce his phenomena. Neither Kai nor I have yet been told exactly how that would be accomplished, and so that skeptical move is currently toothless. But Kai wanted the point to be moot for this séance.

Jochen and I then walked Kai down to the cellar. Kai walked in front of me, with his hands raised in full sight the entire time so that I could be sure that he wasn't grabbing some accessory on the way downstairs. En route downstairs, Kai asked Jochen to go back and bring him a towel that he'd forgotten (to be used for his perspiration). I remained with Kai (his arms raised), and Jochen handed me the towel for my inspection before passing it on to Kai. We then proceeded to the cellar.

The séance began around 9:30 p.m. and lasted for 3 hours 15 minutes. The room was completely dark, and despite the loud music playing from the CD player, we could hear Kai clearly as he began his "holotropic breathing,"

a heavy panting and moaning that could easily be mistaken for the sounds of sexual activity. Ordinarily, this happens only at the beginning of a cabinet séance, but this breathing recurred throughout the evening's activities, as if the medium needed to re-enter the state from which he was involuntarily slipping. Kai later confirmed that it's unusual for him to moan and breathe heavily throughout the séance. He attributed this partly to the lack of energy being contributed by some of the first-time sitters.

As far as I'm concerned, Kai's continued heavy breathing and moaning only made it easier to affirm that throughout the entire séance Kai was sitting in the area of the cabinet and not moving out into the room. Because the physical controls described below were not continuous, this additional and uninterrupted audio control was especially welcome.

After about 15 minutes, HB began to speak through Kai, first in German, but then, at Julia's request, in English. The HB voice is rather coarse, and itself sounds like a partial groan. HB apologized for his lack of command of English and claimed that he was drawing on Kai's knowledge of English (which is considerable). So communication in English with HB was at no time problematical.

HB then exchanged greetings with all the sitters. He explained that the medium would periodically be controlled by the sitters at his sides (at his command) and that at other times he would ask the sitters to form a chain or "circuit" by holding hands. Since the chain terminated with me on one side and Julia on the other, she and I were asked to hold the sitter's hand next to us with both our hands. Jochen was permitted one free hand to manipulate the CD player, but the adjacent sitter not holding one of his hands would instead place a hand on Jochen's shoulder. Thus, assuming the honesty of the sitters, one could ascertain that the sitters were in their chairs and not doing something suspicious or in violation of the rules of procedure. Moreover, at those times I could still ascertain that the medium remained in his place by the cabinet, because my right leg and foot still touched his left leg and foot, and because the medium's heavy breathing and talking were still audible from that location.

The first physical phenomena (as usual) were rapping and scratching noises on the walls or ceiling. Some of the sounds occurred directly behind me, even though my chair was two or three inches at most from the wood-paneled wall (see Nahm, this issue, for a description of the Hanau cellar séance room). Moreover, the sounds were clear and bright, with a wider spectrum of frequencies (especially high frequencies) than the more muffled sounds we'd expect if someone were producing them through the 16-inch-thick concrete wall between the wood paneling and the wine cellar outside the séance room. I'd been warned that, in my position next to the cabinet

(and behind the area where Kai says the PK field penetrates), I'd experience fewer physical phenomena than the others, and presumably fewer such phenomena than I experienced on my previous visit. That turned out to be the case, but I felt it was a reasonable tradeoff for being able to control the medium and for being maximally close to the ectoplasm I hoped would appear later.

The raps, etc., were not as abundant as I'd experienced previously. But it's clear nevertheless that they often came from positions that could not have been produced at all (or without detection) by the medium or a sitter—e.g., from the wall several inches behind my head. The raps also moved quickly around the ceiling and wall and often switched locations more rapidly than one person would have been able to move (especially without detection). During all this, I clearly heard the medium breathing heavily from his position by the cabinet.

Soon, sitters reported being touched, but their reports were no more informative than simple exclamations of having been touched. It would have been more helpful had they described what the touches felt like. Again, I could clearly hear breathing in the cabinet over the music and conversation.

Next, some sitters reported seeing a light or lights in the room. Robert says he felt as if he had a personal light which spent several minutes in front of him, between his knees, and within eight inches of his face. During the first minute or so when these first reports were occurring, I saw nothing, but then I saw a small bright yellow-white light toward the ceiling and slightly to my left and in front of me. It was about the size of a small LED, but unlike an LED of comparable brightness nothing (not even dust) was illuminated in front of it. So it does not seem to have been a light *beam*. Soon the light began to move, and move rapidly, around the room, above and (on the wall) behind the sitters, around the ceiling, and at one point even resting on or near the floor, near to where some sitter's feet would have been (and at that point it was very clear that the light was illuminating nothing in its immediate vicinity).

The next phenomena occurred at the location of the drum, the top of which was covered by maracas and bells. Although I heard nothing from these objects, others reported hearing minor scratchings and sounds of movements in the vicinity, and some of the items on the drum were knocked over. But these events were too faint and distant from my location to make any impression on me.

HB then ordered Julia to prepare three luminescent ping-pong-sized balls I'd purchased two years earlier for the group. She charged them with a small flashlight and then positioned the balls on a black square plate which she placed on top of the drum. According to sitters nearby, after Julia

returned to her seat and extinguished the flashlight, the black plate rattled and the balls were knocked over. After the balls were placed back onto the plate, the plate rotated slightly. HB asked if anyone saw a structure blocking the light from the balls (presumably the entity or entities manipulating the objects). Some say they did, but others not. I did see small black and brief obstructions of the light from the balls. Suddenly, one of the three balls rose quickly (or jumped) and fell to the ground.

Between the occurrences of the different physical phenomena, HB would pause, apparently to store up and concentrate energy for the next manifestation, and on two occasions to deliver messages from “communicators” to specific sitters.⁴ While the physical phenomena occurred, I controlled the medium, and I sometimes controlled Julia as well. During the phenomena I was aware at all times of the medium sitting next to me and to my right (the phenomena thus occurred to my left and sometimes behind me). I was always in contact with the medium’s left foot and usually with part of his left leg, and during the phenomena I usually held at least his left hand—and sometimes felt his right hand beneath that of Julia (when I controlled her as well).

More precisely, the controls worked as follows. I sat to the medium’s left, only a few inches away. My right hand held his left hand and rested on his left leg, which I also touched with my right leg (and my left foot was in front of his left foot). When prompted by HB, I also reached across the medium’s lap and my left hand grabbed one or both of Julia’s hands in such a way that my left forearm rested on Kai’s right leg. This meant that my body effectively blocked the medium’s body in such a way that I could easily tell if he was trying (say) to reach out into the room. I could also be sure that he didn’t move from his spot during the phenomena, many of which took place at least 50 inches from him.

Significantly, and despite his considerable physical separation from the PK target area, the medium’s body often twitched during or immediately prior to the occurrence of phenomena. Moreover, he would often squeeze my hand just prior to or during the phenomena occurring out into the room. This synchronization between a medium’s muscle movements and phenomena at a distance has frequently been reported in the better cases (see, e.g., Bottazzi’s descriptions in his studies of Palladino—Bottazzi 1907, 2011, Giuditta 2010). I should add (though it should be obvious) that there’s a distinct tactile difference between Kai’s massive and fleshy (and sweaty) hands and the considerably more petite and dry hands of Julia. So it was easy to confirm during the periods of double control that I held Julia in her place and that neither she nor the medium had moved out into the experimental area in order to produce the phenomena.

As far as the moving light is concerned, I know some have suggested that it might have been produced surreptitiously by someone waving the little LED flashlight that Julia used to rearrange the objects on or near the drum located 49" away from the black tape on the floor. However, I believe that this was not the case during this séance, because that flashlight was placed inaccessibly under my chair. I'm also reasonably confident that neither Julia nor anyone else using a different mini-flashlight produced the light movements above and to the right of my head. There was no room to maneuver to the right of my chair, and I blocked access from the front and left. So because the light above me and to my right arrived there in a straight path from my left, if someone were carrying a flashlight to produce the effect, that person would have needed to travel along a path obstructed by my body, which was leaning slightly forward and whose legs were still in contact with the medium. So I believe I would have detected by bodily contact someone standing near enough to me to be able to move the light sufficiently far to my right.

After the light phenomena and the second and final communication delivered through HB, HB announced that the energy was rather weak, partly because of some of the new sitters (HB had complained earlier both that someone had extended a limb too far into the "field" and that some sitters were not singing loudly and contributing enough energy to the proceedings), and partly because of the unfamiliarity of having me control the medium. Since, under the circumstances, HB felt he could not provide a full menu of the usual physical manifestations and also produce ectoplasm, he asked which we'd rather see. Ectoplasm was the unanimous choice.

So HB retreated back into the cabinet to build up energy, and he asked Julia to let in some fresh air from the darkened hallway outside the séance room (it had indeed become very stuffy). After about 10 minutes, the ectoplasm portion of the evening began.

Jochen and Robert asked repeatedly if we had permission to video record, and HB apparently conversed with the Chemists on the matter. Eventually, he conveyed the news that no video would be permitted. That's especially disappointing in light of the phenomena that followed.

HB directed Julia and me several times to draw back the curtains of the cabinet, and he instructed Julia as to the appropriate rheostat setting of the red lamp. After each display in red light, HB would retreat back into the cabinet and close the curtains while Julia extinguished the lamp and we waited for the next instruction to pull back the curtains and turn on the red light again.

In the first display of ectoplasm, the red light revealed the medium pulling a substantial quantity of material from his mouth, allowing it to

fall into a heap onto the floor, between his legs but slightly in front of him and outside the cabinet. The material looked like very fine cloth, somewhat translucent and perhaps resembling tulle, muslin, or cheesecloth. I was approximately 3 feet from the material and could see it reasonably well. I estimate that the mass resting on the floor was roughly rectangular: 12–16" long \times 6–8" wide \times 4–5" high. The medium retreated to the cabinet after this.

When, at HB's cue, Julia and I reopened the curtains, we saw the mass still on the floor. HB said he wanted us to see how it embodies energy within itself, and indeed the mass seemed to be flexing throughout, as if it was breathing and animated from beneath. We observed this for 20–30 seconds before the medium (whose hands were inside the cabinet during all this) retreated again behind the curtains.

The next two viewing periods followed the same format and revealed roughly the same thing. In each case, the "breathing" mass served as a base for a gradually developing "arm," about 1.5–2" in diameter, topped with a hand-like appendage having distinguishable (but not clearly separated) fingers. (I didn't recall whether the hand was already visible in a rudimentary form when the light was turned on, or whether it actually appeared from within the mass. But I do recall that the "arm" grew and rose gradually out of the mass.) The fingers remained in a curved, not fully extended position, as if the hand was prepared to grip something. This made it look somewhat like the head of a cobra, as the appendage turned back and forth left and right. The first time this happened, the appendage rose to a height of about 5 or 6 inches. The second time it rose higher, perhaps 12 inches or more, and it seemed to wave as it turned left and right.

The next time we opened the cabinet, we saw an already formed long protrusion or narrow (handleless) column coming from the mass, rising to a height of 3 or 4 feet, looking like a semi-transparent tube. The medium's left hand passed slightly back and forth across the top, as if to show that nothing was pulling the protrusion up from above.

The next display was supposed to show how the ectoplasm can cover the medium and return some of the energy to his organism. This time we saw the material looking like a fine netting covering the medium's legs and part of his torso as if it was a partial cocoon. After this and once the medium was again behind the cabinet curtains, HB said that, because the medium had lost so much water in the hot séance room and during the strain of the long séance, we wouldn't be able to see the ectoplasm retreat into the medium's body. So he quickly thereafter ended the session.

The sitters then filed out of the room, leaving Julia and me alone with Kai, who took at least 10 minutes to regain his senses. The red lamp was

turned on, and I could see in and around the cabinet; nothing suspicious was visible. Julia also showed me the bucket traditionally kept near the medium in case (as sometimes happens) he has to vomit when emerging from trance. Nothing was in the bucket except for a damp towel previously used to cool the medium and which I had inspected earlier as well. Kai took his time smoking a cigarette, and then slowly walked ahead of me with Julia, upstairs. I was the last person in the séance room.

Discussion

Now, what about possible skeptical concerns?

No doubt some will wonder about the periods of darkness between viewings of the ectoplasm in red light. However, since I strip-searched Kai, examined the fresh clothing and towel we gave him, and examined the cabinet and room both before and immediately after the sitting, it would be hasty to rush to skeptical judgment. Certainly, it's not inherently suspicious, and there could easily be other reasons besides deception for the several retreats behind the curtain. HB claimed that it was to "re-charge"—that is, build up his waning energy for the next demonstration. He described his need to retreat occasionally behind the curtain as being like a fish that could exist for short periods out of water, but which then needed to return to the water before re-surfacing. That may or may not be a fair account of what is actually necessary for the phenomena to occur non-fraudulently. And if it is a fair account, it could either be because (a) it's a generally accurate description of how the world works (i.e. what it takes to produce spiritistic phenomena), quite apart from what the medium believes about how the world works, or (b) because it's how the world works for mediums less prodigious (i.e. with more modest abilities) than Home, Rudi Schneider, and some others, or (c) because Kai (or HB) believes that's how the world works and so that's how it works in his case at least.

Some have suggested that the medium used a very fine thread or hair to manipulate the ectoplasmic mass on the floor. This dialectical maneuver seemingly takes a cue from Frank Podmore's unconvincing attempts to explain the phenomena of D. D. Home (see Braude 1997:65, Podmore 1902, 1910). Let's call this skeptical proposal the *Puppeteer Hypothesis*, and I'd say it's improbable, for the following reasons. The mass was outside the cabinet and the medium remained inside. Admittedly, I wasn't looking at the medium's hands while concentrating on the ectoplasm. But the breathing (or flexing) seemed to be animated from within the mass, and the mass was expanding from different points along its surface (so that several strings would presumably have been necessary). If Kai was a mere puppeteer, I believe something would have to be suspended above the mass

at different places. But nothing was above it. And as for the hand, no thread could explain how it gradually took shape, grew and partially opened, and became more determinately hand-like. Then, as the hand turned left and right and back and forth, I believe that too would have required puppet-like hairs manipulated from above. But the medium was behind the mass, in the cabinet. Moreover, since I was with Kai from the time he was strip-searched, and because I saw no contrivance in the séance room before or after the séance, I rate it as highly unlikely that Kai used some other sort of hidden device to produce the animated ectoplasm.

I imagine some will also raise concerns about Jochen's free hand during the earlier (PK) portion of the séance. I concede it's not ideal, but several considerations lessen its significance. For one thing, Jochen was still connected by one hand to an adjacent sitter (either Vanessa or Renate), and so unless his neighbors failed to report it or colluded with him, he couldn't have been free to produce phenomena outside the range of his free arm—e.g., the light to my right or the raps above my head. Another is that similar phenomena have been reported at séances which Jochen didn't attend. So the determined skeptic would have to develop some version of a conspiracy counter-explanation, involving a team of widely dispersed assistants helping Kai no matter where he holds a successful séance. That's always a sign of skeptical desperation in my view. But perhaps most important is the significant fact that the medium twitched immediately prior to or simultaneously with the production of the phenomena. I felt him squeeze my hand tightly and press both his hand and leg against my leg, as if he was straining to expel the phenomena from his body. The phenomena thus seem directly connected to what was going on in the medium, and presumably neither Jochen nor any other non-controlling sitter would have felt these bodily cues and used them as signals to produce the phenomena themselves.

There's one more issue, having to do with Julia, or perhaps with me. And it concerns the following incident. Several times during the object movement part of the séance, we noticed light entering from outside the séance room through small cracks in the séance room door and a door just outside that. We thought that maybe Kai's brother or sister-in-law (who live on the floor above the cellar), or a friend of theirs, might have entered the cellar—although Jochen and Kai assure me this never happens, because these people all know to stay clear of the cellar when Kai has guests for a séance. The third time this happened—but *after* the object movements described above had already occurred—Jochen asked Julia if she could go upstairs to ask the people not to come downstairs again. Jochen didn't want to do this himself, because his role as circle leader is to monitor the interaction between HB and the sitters (and control the music). Julia then

asked HB for permission to leave, and it was granted. She left the room for 50 seconds (the audio recording of the proceedings shows that she left from 1.16.25 to 1.17.15). She then returned and reported that no one had at any time entered the cellar area. Jochen (and later Kai, when he learned about this and confirmed with his family that no one had come downstairs) is convinced that the turning on of the lights was paranormal.

Now I didn't realize Julia had left the room. I thought she remained in the entrance way to the séance room and simply peered into that space. My confusion was probably due to the fact that the conversation between Jochen, Julia, and HB happened quickly and in German. In any event, I didn't follow Julia out of the room to confirm that she brought nothing back with her that might have assisted the subsequent production of ectoplasm, and I blame myself for not pursuing her to be able to report that she did nothing suspicious in her absence. Nevertheless, although this was an unfortunate lapse in control (indeed, I'm assured it's an unprecedented occurrence for anyone to leave the room in the middle of a séance—unless it's someone who fainted and who doesn't then return—which happens occasionally but rarely), I believe it's far from fatal, for the following reasons.

First, when Julia left the room when the séance ended, I saw nothing suspicious on her person, and I'd remind the reader that I saw no props in or around the cabinet. Moreover, as is the case with the object movements, Kai began producing ectoplasm long before he met Julia. More precisely, Kai and Julia met in March 2011. But Kai had been holding cabinet sittings with ectoplasm since the summer of 2009. So once again I suggest that we be careful not to point a suspicious finger at Julia if it commits one (as it would seem to here) to a more general conspiracy theory of Kai's mediumship.

Besides, if Julia had retrieved some contraption when she exited the room, when would she have used it? I often controlled both her and the medium during the object movements and lights. So it seems clear that she was not an accomplice for *those* phenomena. And neither she nor the medium were positioned above the ectoplasm—that is, in a position to be the hypothesized puppeteer. Moreover, if Julia smuggled in a device to animate the ectoplasm, where was it, what kind of device could it be, and how would it have been concealed in my post-séance look around the cabinet? No simple and easily concealable device could have produced a breathing mass on the floor that gradually sprouted an animated hand. If a critic believes otherwise, it's the critic's responsibility to specify what such a device is. And obviously, the mere (and arguably remote) possibility of fraud is no reason to discount the phenomena. The more pertinent issue is: Was there any indication or reason for thinking fraud was *actual* and not simply possible. A priori conviction in the impossibility of the phenomena

counts for nothing and would be the cheapest form of glib criticism. Furthermore, it's worth noting again that Kai has conducted successful cabinet sittings which *neither* Julia nor Jochen attended, and that recourse to a larger conspiracy of confederates is a desperate skeptical gambit.

So, this séance was clearly a major advance over my 2010 cabinet séance with the FEG. I commended Kai for allowing me not only to control him directly, but also to conduct a strip search, and to observe him after the séance (i.e. in conditions I'm quite sure most self-respecting persons would feel to be particularly vulnerable or unattractive). And while I've noted various respects in which the controls could have been better still, I saw no reason not to be encouraged by the results. Kai seemed pleased as well. He indicated he would be happy for Robert and me to make a return visit and that he would very much like to include high-resolution video recording of the ectoplasm. As it turned out, and as I describe below, before a year had passed we were indeed able to improve upon the controls in the Hanau séances and obtain video footage of the ectoplasm.

I should add that the events of the cabinet sitting convinced me that for any follow-up séances we must reduce the number of sitters, especially first-timers. I was quite disappointed that so many attended the cabinet séance, because for months I'd been discussing with both Kai and Jochen my preference for working only with a bare minimum of people. I sympathize with Kai's interest and willingness to include more sitters. For one thing, he's inundated with requests from potential attendees, to the extent that he's now reduced his previous work as a videographer.⁵ And for another, he seems to take energy from the enthusiasm of the sitters, and the more the merrier. As it happened, Kai did screen the first-time participants ahead of time, both before meeting them, and while he interacted with them prior to the séance (he always had the last-minute option of denying them the opportunity to participate). He felt they were acceptable, but that turned out to be wrong in one or two instances.

TABLE SÉANCE 08-25-2012

Attendees in the order of seating, clockwise

Kai Mügge (medium)

Elke Mügge (mother of medium)

Jochen S. (circle leader, light operator)

Stephen Braude

Julia Mügge (medium's wife, music operator)

This session was held on the spur of the moment. Robert had left Germany, and those listed above had gathered in Elke's dining room for

snacks, convivial conversation, and discussion of the previous day's cabinet séance. I believe we were all tired from lack of sleep. The séance had ended in the early morning hours, and Kai evidently hadn't slept at all—as is often the case after a cabinet séance. But everyone seemed relaxed and in good humor. So despite the general level of fatigue, we decided to try a table sitting, and Kai was eager to try infrared video recording.

I hurriedly set up my IR camcorder on a tripod, and I tried to find a location where the view would show as much of the table as possible. I found a location aiming between the initial positions of Kai and Julia. I couldn't foresee that Kai would find his chair very uncomfortable and, while shifting his body (in the dark) to feel better, move to the right and block considerably more of the view.

Apparently, my camcorder battery had been more depleted than I realized, and the camera shut off after 30 minutes. But during that time we had two small table levitations. The smallest lasted about one second, and the table rose only a couple of inches. The other levitation lasted nearly 3 seconds and the table rose to a height of approximately 8 inches. Although Kai's body blocked much of the table, the video shows clearly that the table top was level and parallel to the floor. One can't tell from the video whether Elke (totally out of view) lifted the table normally, but it's highly unlikely. First, I'm confident that deception of this sort would be totally out of character. And second, Jochen and I can attest to how difficult it was to raise Kai's table smoothly by oneself, and we're much stronger than Elke. Moreover, one of Jochen's arms is visible, and the position of his body is incompatible with his reaching his unseen hand far enough under the table. That's also the case with Kai, who moved his right arm up and down above the table, imitating the levitation technique of Eusapia Palladino.

Clearly, the video of this levitation is not evidential. Nevertheless, granting the integrity of the sitters in this friendly and very relaxed sitting, it's arguably a valuable document of a full table levitation. One can view it online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9mVoQFqR6o>.

After the camcorder battery failed, Kai requested red light. From that point on, we enjoyed no more table levitations, although the table occasionally moved quite vigorously, often to the rhythm of the music. Kai soon began to remark that he was feeling some twitching in his left arm, which I learned later is often a precursor to an apport. But at the time, I didn't realize that this might have connected to a request Kai made a little while earlier in the dark, for the "spirits" to present me with a gift.

At one point, Kai was standing next to the table. I could see all the sitters, and I could see that they all held hands in a chain. Suddenly we heard the sound of something dropping onto the table. A quick search on the floor

revealed a small metal statue of the Indian goddess of wisdom, Saraswati, in the familiar pose in which she's often represented, and which is also tattooed onto Julia's arm.

Because this séance was very spur of the moment, I made no careful inspection of the room prior to the beginning of the séance, and I conducted no search of Kai's body or clothes. Also, I can't be certain of what might have happened in the dark prior to turning on the red light. But when the apport appeared, all sitters were visibly joining hands around the table and Kai was talking normally (suggesting that the statue was not hidden in his mouth). Besides, the apport fell loudly onto the table, as if it had been propelled—rather than released—there. If the object had been hidden in Kai's mouth (clearly visible in the red light) or on his body, he would presumably have needed to make some sort of spitting, blowing, or other detectable motion to expel it so forcibly. And if the apport had been concealed externally and somehow positioned ahead of time to fall onto the table, presumably some kind of time-release mechanism would have been required. I can state confidently that I saw nothing on the ceiling or elsewhere when the lights were turned on.

Austria, May 2013

In order to tighten the séance conditions both significantly and relatively painlessly (psychologically) for Kai, Robert and I arranged for the next sittings to be held at Robert's large private farmhouse outside Salzburg. We also arranged for a small and very compatible group of sitters, all of whom Kai liked, all of whom were experienced with the FEG, and all of whom could be lodged comfortably in the farmhouse and kept under casual surveillance. In our more grandiose moments, Robert and I fancied that this investigation would be a contemporary analogue of the famous and successful experiments with Eusapia Palladino, conducted on Richet's private island (Lodge 1894).

Robert and I were aided in these investigations by Michael Nahm, a biologist and psi researcher who is quite experienced with the FEG, both as a sitter and a controller (see his paper in this issue). We were very grateful for his expertise, suggestions, and his help in making Kai feel comfortable and among friends.

PARTICIPANTS:

Kai Mügge (medium)

Julia Mügge (medium's wife, music or light operator)

Jochen S. (circle leader, light operator)

Anna S. (Jochen's wife)

Michael Nahm (biologist, parapsychologist)
Stephen Braude
Robert Narholz (co-investigator, homeowner)

The séance room (see Figure 4) was a large space in Robert's farmhouse occasionally used as a spare bedroom. Its wooden floor was divided into two roomy areas by a pair of steps. Robert removed all furniture except for six folding chairs (with cushions placed on top), a more substantial wooden chair for Kai, two small wooden tables (one for the red lamp and the other for the CD player), and a plastic séance table 33.5" in diameter. The upper portion of the room had some built-in shelves with nothing on them. But otherwise the room was quite bare. The curtained windows could be locked top and bottom from the inside, and then interior shutters could also be locked from top and bottom. Except for brief periods during the setup of the séance room in which we wanted additional light or fresh air, the windows were locked at all times. They were also covered in black paper to prevent outside light from entering the room, and indeed, the room was completely dark when the door was closed and the lights were turned off.

Robert and I also installed padlocks on the séance room door, both inside and out. The room was kept locked when not in use; I had sole possession of the key, and no one knew where I kept it when it was not on my person. When sittings were in session, the room was locked from the inside. The locks are not heavy duty, but they and the interior and exterior door latches are quite noisy. So if someone tried to enter the room during a séance, it should be quite obvious.

For the cabinet sitting, Kai and Julia brought their own assembly, consisting of dark black curtains which they attached to a jumbo hula hoop. The hula hoop was originally broken down into several pieces, each of which I examined carefully before the pieces were attached together. The curtains had strips of black tape attached in many places to the interior, to enhance the opaqueness of the not-quite-opaque material. Robert, Michael, and I inspected all the materials (including those black strips) closely, and for the purpose of verification Robert made a close-up video recording of the objects and the inspection process itself.

The other objects brought by Kai and Julia were PK target objects to be used in both table and cabinet sessions—for example, luminescent white balls, a luminescent plaque, and the usual paper "trumpet" with a luminescent strip attached around the large opening. They also traveled with a small flashlight for charging the luminescent strips. We inspected all these objects as well, but as it turned out (and to our surprise) they played no role in our sittings—except for the flashlight, which we used occasionally

to manually change settings of the red lamp controls in an otherwise dark room, and which was used in a table séance to permit a view inside Kai's mouth prior to an apport.

TABLE SÉANCE 05-11-2013 (see Figure 1)

The séance began after dinner at 7:40 and lasted 1:37. Sitters (clock-wise): Kai, Stephen, Anna, Robert, Julia, Michael, Jochen. Sitters emptied their pockets and removed all rings and watches, to forestall the objection that a familiar conjuring trick involving pins placed on the table was used to raise the table. (I was unable to remove my wedding ring.) The lamp was placed on Julia's right side, between her and Robert.

The door remained locked until sitters entered around 7:30 p.m. Various "inspirational objects" were placed in the rear of the room near the window or on the shelves. These included samples of gold-colored foil from my Gold Leaf Lady case (Braude 2007), which I had shown for the first time to Kai and the others (except Robert) several hours prior to the sitting. But not even Robert knew prior to late afternoon that day that I had the foil with me. Jochen thought that Kai might be sufficiently intrigued by the foil samples to use them subconsciously as a basis for an apport (the kind of thing that he has noticed on many previous occasions). So when Kai finally entered the room, several minutes before we began, Jochen drew his attention to the foil samples, and also to the copy of an obscure Hungarian book on physical (apport) mediumship which Michael was in the process of translating (Elemér Pap's *Toward New Horizons*).

The red lamp was on a small table by Julia's side and was controlled by a rheostat. The light was turned off as the séance began, and was turned on at Kai's request at several points during the séance. Kai also instructed Julia as to the brightness of the illumination.

Kai requested that I control him from his left side and that Jochen control him from his right. Julia expressed considerable eagerness for controls. She even said she preferred that Jochen *not* be seated next to Kai, because he was more likely to be considered by some as suspect than either Robert or Michael. But Kai clearly feels comfortable with Jochen by his side and overrode Julia's request. In any case, Julia asked repeatedly during the sitting for her neighbors Robert and Michael to ensure that she was well controlled.

Although we had several cameras set up to record the proceedings, Kai evidently felt some anxiety about the new locale and the pressure to come up with good results, and so he requested that we begin with all cameras off and that we turn them on only when strong phenomena started to occur.

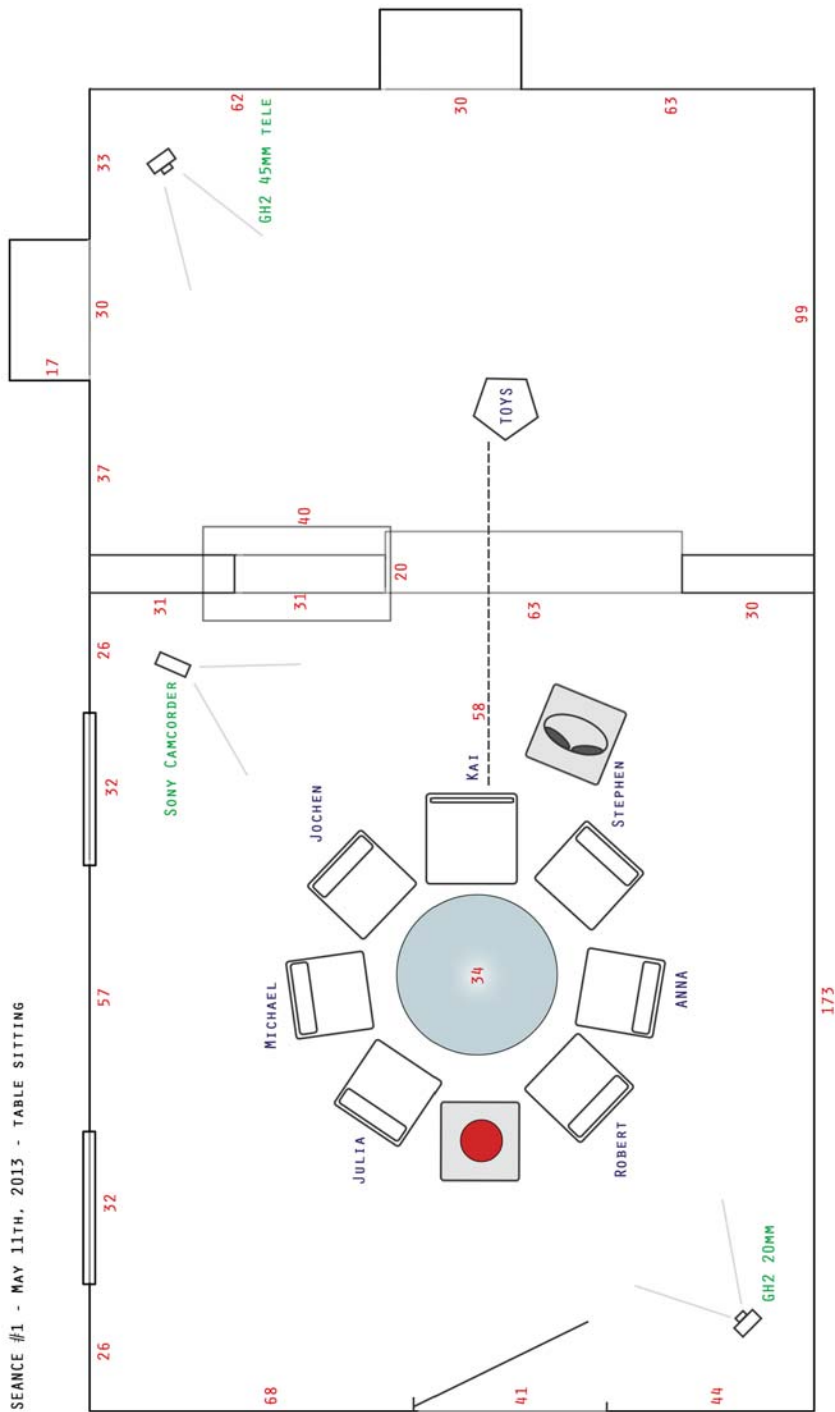


Figure 1. Table Seating at Séance 05-11-2013.

After some table movements, we had a total of four table levitations, all in darkness. At the beginning of the séance, Kai insisted that Jochen and I be in good contact with and control his hands and feet—at least until we had some good table levitations under tight controls and then could be more casual. So Jochen's left knee touched Kai's right leg and his left foot rested on Kai's right foot. His left hand rested atop Kai's left hand. My controls on Kai's left side were the mirror image of Jochen's. These controls were in place for levitations 1, 2, and 4. For levitation 3, my right foot and leg only touched the left foot and leg of Kai. But I could feel Kai's foot clearly though the thin slippers I was wearing.

The levitations lasted between 2 and 8 seconds,⁶ and each time the table rose smoothly, approximately two feet off the ground. It was clear to all sitters that the table surface was always in a horizontal position during the levitations. Before levitation 4, Jochen and Michael felt a breeze, despite the windows all being closed. Then Julia said she felt it, and then Robert added that he felt it on his left side.

There were two apports during the séance, especially impressive given that they occurred in sufficient light to view Kai and the area above the table clearly.

Apport #1: Kai stood up and asked Jochen and me to hold his hands. He then asked Julia to shine the flashlight on his mouth. We could clearly see Kai sticking out his tongue and wiggling it, and at one point a 1.75"-long, 3/8"-thick crystal (Figure 2) dropped forcibly from his mouth onto the table. Although we didn't search Kai ahead of time, it's highly unlikely that Kai had previously concealed the object on his person and at some point in the darkness concealed this in his mouth. For one thing, Kai didn't spit or blow the object out of his mouth; his tongue was sticking out when the crystal appeared. So if the object had been concealed in Kai's mouth, it's unclear how it could have been ejected with such force. Moreover, Kai had been talking normally, clearly, and continually throughout the séance up to this point. Moreover, when the séance was over and when Kai placed the crystal in his mouth and tried to speak, the crystal obviously interfered with the process. It's also highly unlikely that Kai regurgitated the object. We had finished a large meal less than an hour prior to the séance, and it's incredible that Kai could regurgitate that one object and no stomach contents from dinner.

Kai was concerned after the crystal appeared that the object had left a wound in his mouth, and he immediately dabbed his mouth with a tissue to see if there was blood (there wasn't). He said later that it felt as if the apport glided from the roof of his mouth, as was the case when he draws ectoplasm from his mouth.

Apport #2: Kai started to shake and grabbed my and Jochen's hands. Then, with Jochen holding Kai's bare forearm (he was wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt) and feeling over and under Kai's right hand, we clearly saw, under red light, Kai extend his right arm and spread the fingers of his hand. I was holding Kai's left hand at the time. Jochen had been controlling Kai's right hand and arm for several minutes. The apport suddenly dropped forcibly and loudly from the vicinity of Kai's extended right hand, and bounced off



Figure 2. Apport #1, crystal (bottom), Apport #2, copper nugget (middle), and pencil (top) to show size.

the table onto the small table with the red lamp next to Julia. In his notes written later in the evening, Robert described this event as follows: “[Kai] stretched out his right hand, which I could see clearly, and Jochen grasped it, touched it and checked it all over, and we all joined hands, standing up, and then, BANG, something landed on the table.”

Kai was apparently inspired by the Katie foil and Pap volume. Prior to the apport's appearance, he said he or the Chemists were extracting copper either from the foil or from somewhere else. And indeed, the apport was a slightly reddish copper nugget, about $\frac{3}{4}$ " square (Figure 2). It may also be relevant that Kai and Michael earlier in the day had been discussing a mid-20th-century psychic with the surname Messing, which in German means “brass.”

For the final 25 minutes of the séance, we turned on the cameras, but no phenomena occurred during that period. In retrospect it's difficult to say whether the running cameras inhibited the phenomena or whether Kai was simply tired by then. Indeed, it seemed that the session exhausted

Kai. He was dehydrated from having no water or (his favorite) iced tea to replenish what he lost through perspiration, and toward the end of the session he lapsed into a state of stupefaction, barely able to speak. At that point he wanted to pause the session, but Julia decided there was no point in continuing. So the session ended.

Synchronistic postscript: Because we held a second exhausting table séance the next day, the day after that, May 13, was designated a day of rest for Kai, who spent the time quietly at the farmhouse sleeping and making travel arrangements for future séances. So Jochen, Julia, Anna, and Michael toured Salzburg (an hour's drive away), and as they passed a shop selling gemstones and crystals Michael saw in the window a large copper nugget, looking very much like a larger version of the apport we had received two days before. The shopkeeper informed Michael that this is the form in which copper is mined, and that this particular nugget came from Michigan. Inside the shop were more copper nuggets. It's also worth emphasizing that on the day of the séance, it was I who first mentioned copper to Kai and the group, when Kai asked what the composition of Katie's brass foil was. Before that, neither brass nor copper had been topics of conversation.

At first, Kai seemed quite despondent about this turn of events, saying he felt it diminished the significance of the apport. He said that although he had never before held a piece of copper, he felt that because such objects were easily obtainable, it would lead some to suggest he had hidden the nugget on his person prior to the apportation. In fact, Kai said that he didn't know that copper came in the form of such nuggets (indeed, none of us knew that). He said he had believed that the apported object was highly unusual, if not one of a kind, and that his mental images prior to the apport suggested to him that he was forming an object from bits of copper taken partly from Katie's foil samples. So for that reason and because Kai said he felt he had to work especially hard to produce the apport, he was disappointed to discover that his object wasn't something of high strangeness, novel in shape or constitution.

Although I could understand it, I was unable to share Kai's apparent disappointment with this turn of events. I'll comment later in this paper on the evidentiality of the apports. For now, though, it's sufficient to remember that Kai's arm was bare, his hand fully visible and fingers spread when the apport fell from the vicinity of his hand.

TABLE SÉANCE 05-12-2013 (Figure 3 and Figure 4)

The séance began after dinner at 8 p.m. and lasted 1:55. Sitters were arranged as before, with a large gap between Julia (and the red lamp) and Robert, to allow for a clear video camera view under the table. Michael,

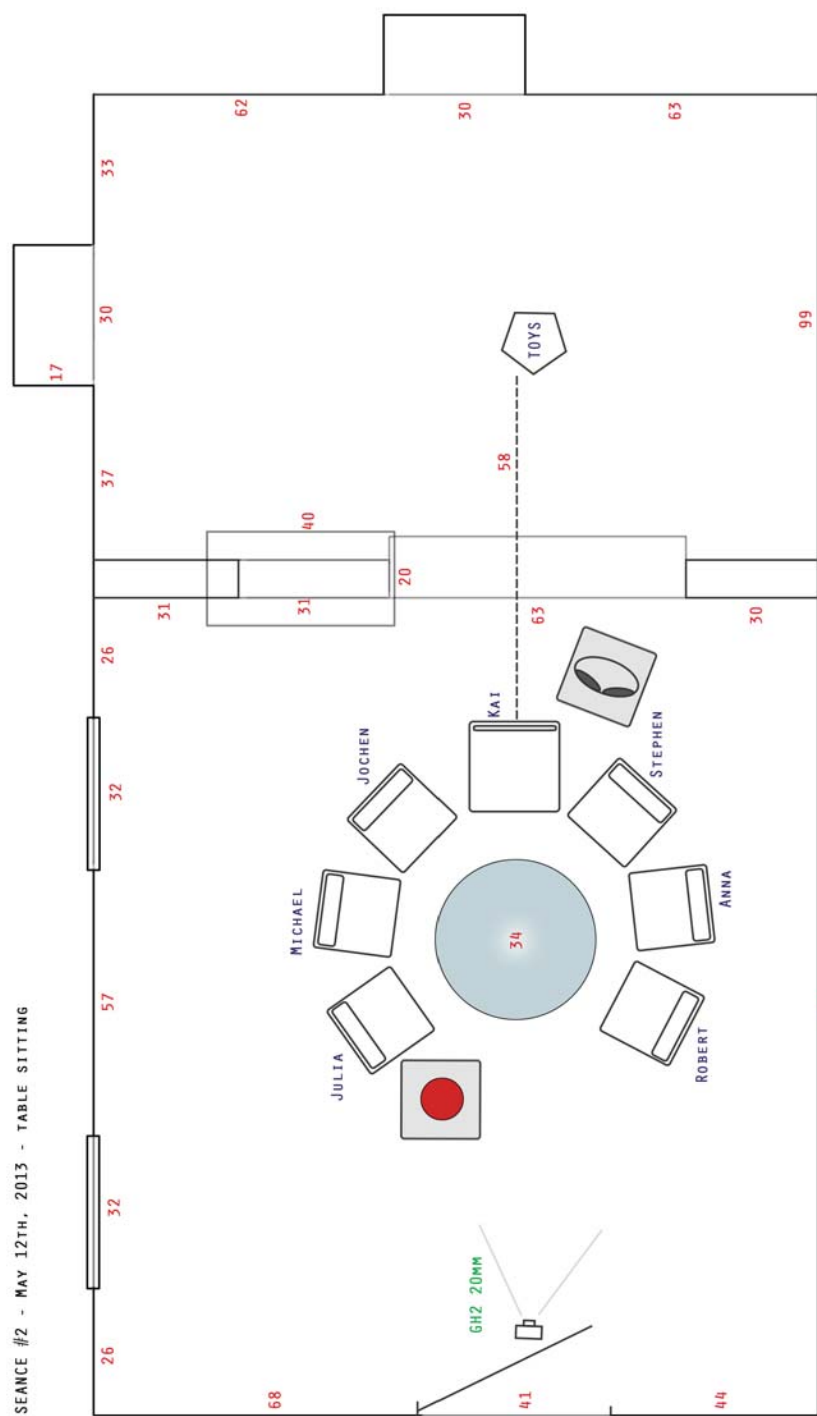


Figure 3. Table Seating at Séance 05-12-2013.



Figure 4. Farmhouse séance room.

Robert, and I carefully checked underneath the table beforehand, and the process was documented on video. Sitters again removed all rings and watches. I wore no shoes, which allowed a more sensitive method of controlling Kai's left foot. The sitters were vigilant throughout to remain in touch with their neighbors' hands and legs. In fact,

because Julia was too far from Robert for normal control, she proposed placing both her knees against Michael's right leg. She did this throughout the séance, and while her left hand was in contact with Michael's right hand, her right hand remained on the lamp switch (which is why we were able to capture the levitations under illumination).

Prior to this sitting, Kai had received indications from the Chemists that they wanted to have one, but only one, video camera turned on for the séance, but placed in the most optimal position for a clear view of the proceedings. Naturally, Robert and I were disappointed. We had hoped to use more cameras under red light or under infrared illumination (which proved in Hanau to work nicely, but which Kai, HB, or the Chemists inexplicably continue to resist). Nevertheless, our results on this occasion were good, and left us feeling optimistic about improving them further in the future.

For the first 70 minutes at least, there were no phenomena apart from some table sliding and occasional shudders suggesting an incipient levitation. After that, we had two strong levitations with one weak levitation between them. The strong levitations lasted between 2 and 3 seconds each, rising between 1.5 and 2.5 feet. When the strong levitations began, Kai instructed Julia to turn on the red light. That allowed us to see and video record the first levitation as it began its descent. And it permitted a good view of the second strong levitation almost from the beginning of its ascent. The video was recorded with a very high ISO (12,800) and slowish 1/13 sec exposure (on an f1.8 lens wide open), but it was sufficient to capture most of the movement clearly and smoothly. The original image is faint, but after tweaking with

image enhancement, Kai's feet and those of most others are clearly visible on the floor, and sitters' hands are clearly visible on the table top. One can also see my right hand touching Kai's left hand and my right foot touching his left foot. The enhanced video segment (Figure 5) is grainy but more than adequate and is perhaps the best video to date of a table levitation.⁷

Kai was again exhausted by the end of the séance. Julia reported that they've never gone two hours without a break (usually they take a break after about 45 minutes). Kai immediately went for a short nap afterward, which Julia also claims Kai never does. It was clear to us all that, despite our efforts to make this meeting as cordial and easygoing as possible, Kai felt considerable pressure to obtain good video documentation of his phenomena. It's feasible that he felt more intimidated by having a battery of video cameras trained on him than in having just one aimed in his direction. And it's probable that he wanted to work under conditions as close as possible to those he finds successful at his séances for the general public—in particular, darkness most of the time and red light occasionally.

Discussion among the sitters after the séance revealed that most had felt under some pressure to obtain good video documentation, and that after more than an hour had passed with no results, they had begun to give up and assumed the session would produce nothing of interest. (I know I started to ponder how best to counter Kai's disappointment.) But I estimate that's about the time we started to see table levitations. Assuming the genuineness of the phenomena, this seems intriguingly like a release-of-effort phenomenon, and it suggests (what should have been clear anyway) that success in these matters doesn't depend solely on Kai.

CABINET SÉANCE 05-14-2013 (Figure 6)

The séance room was carefully searched before and during setup of the cabinet, with video recording of most of the action. And of course the room and windows were kept locked at all times except during setup and preliminary testing of the video cameras in low light, during which either or both Robert and I were in the room. An overturned bucket (replacing the usual conga drum as a repository for target PK objects) was provided by Robert and secured on the floor by tape on one side, 53" from the strip placed in front of the cabinet. Robert, Michael, and I placed pencils (provided by Robert) underneath the strip so that Kai could easily feel them with his shoes and thereby not pass beyond it. The reason for securing the bucket to the floor on only one side was to allow it to be lifted to ensure that nothing had been surreptitiously placed beneath it.



Figure 5. Video stills of table levitation at Séance 05-12-2013.



Figure 5. Video stills of table levitation at Séance 05-12-2013 (continued).

Robert, Michael, and I examined the entire room and its contents after setup was completed and then again a few minutes before the séance commenced. This inspection included a careful search of the cabinet, curtain, and curtain seam, and the process was documented on video. We also examined the black cloths used to cover the PK-target objects with their luminescent strips. These luminescent objects would ordinarily be charged and then set aside for the anticipated object-movement portion of the séance, but kept stashed away and covered near the red lamp to preserve the darkness of the room.

The room was locked at all times except immediately prior to a séance (to allow sitters entrance to the room) and during séance preparation. Whenever the room was open, an investigator was always present—usually either (or both) Robert or me, and briefly Michael as he swept the floor and installed his temperature gauge (which yielded no information of interest—the room temperature was basically constant throughout).⁸ Robert had one of his fisheye lens miniature GoPro video cameras running, as sitters were searched and during their entry into the séance room. He also videoed my walking downstairs with Kai after the strip search. His other GoPro camera was stationed in my room upstairs, which was located directly above the séance room. This would have allowed us to determine whether knocks heard on the ceiling during the séance were caused by an accomplice in my room. In any case, the house was locked, certainly making it difficult (though not impossible) for someone to enter while the rest of us were locked inside the séance room.

Kai spent about 30 minutes, starting around 7:30, reviewing issues and procedures of the séance. He reminded us that although our goal for the evening was to document ectoplasm on video, HB and the Chemists had their own agenda and concerns. Moreover, he (Kai) was in no position to challenge them, since he could only receive communications and not respond, much less interrogate his communicators. So he warned us that the communicators might protest our plan to have Jochen operate the red lamp and control Kai from the medium's right side (rather than have Julia as controller from the right, which has been the usual practice for more than a year now). I was to be the controller on the medium's left side, and there was no question that this would be okay.

After the review session, Kai went upstairs to begin his trance. During this time, Robert instructed Julia as to the optimal red light settings for video, and then Robert and I made a final review inspection of the séance room, which we again documented on video. As expected, the room and its contents had not been altered and we found nothing suspicious. Then Jochen and I went upstairs to conduct a strip search of Kai, who awaited us dressed

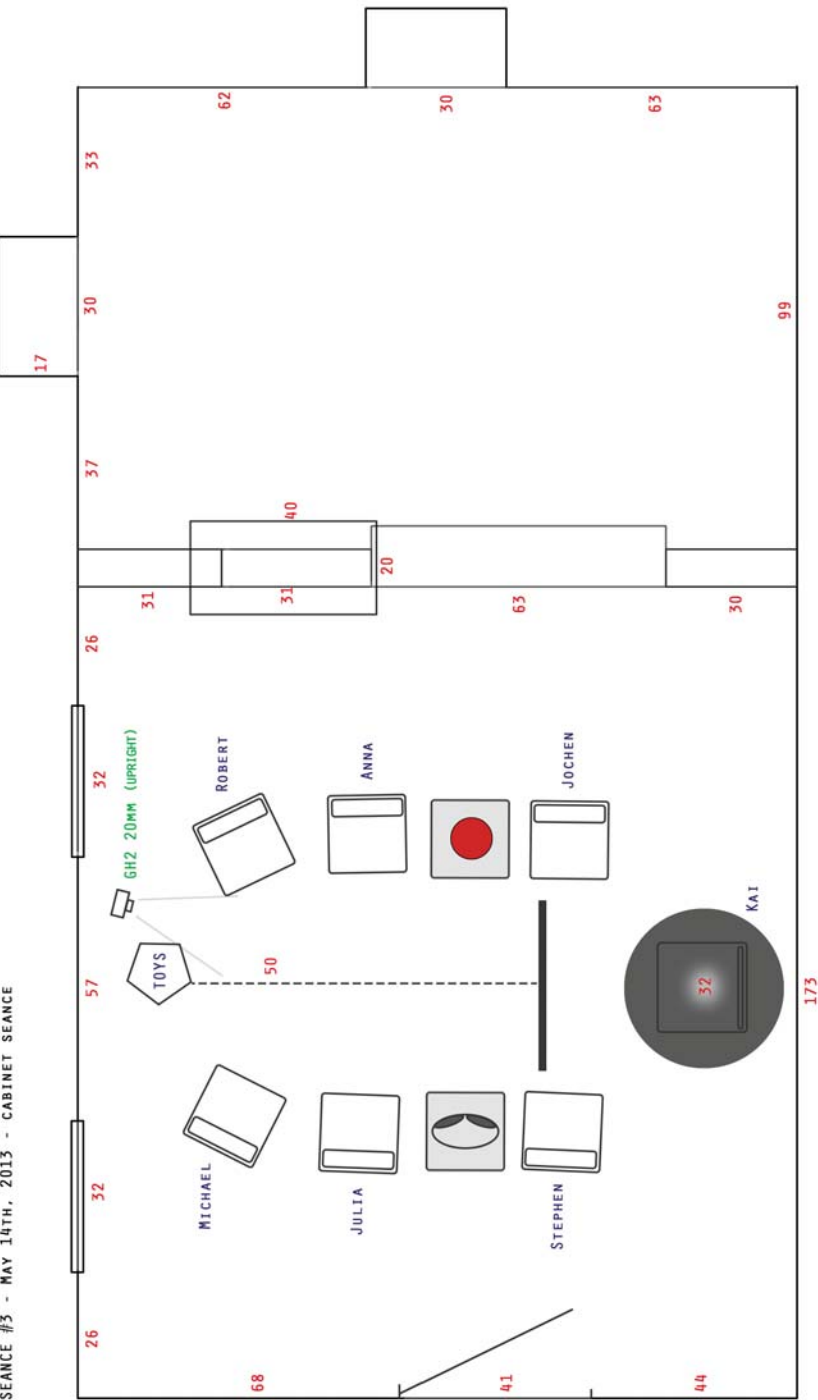


Figure 6. Seating at Séance 05-14-2013.

only in his underpants and socks. I looked inside his underpants, checked his socks, examined the folds in his belly, looked inside his simple athletic shoes (no removable heel), and determined easily that he was concealing no device or stash of material that could be produced as ectoplasm. Jochen and I also carefully inspected the clothing (sweatpants and t-shirt) that Kai would wear for the séance, and they too concealed nothing. Before leaving the room for downstairs, Kai took a large drink from his latest bottle of iced tea, as usual to help forestall the dehydration he experiences during his heavy perspiration in the cabinet (and during an ordinary day, for that matter). The iced tea again was black tea, which would presumably stain any material regurgitated by Kai. However, although the tea is dark, it's not opaque, and one can clearly see if objects are concealed in the bottle. As a further precaution, Robert supplied two water bottles and another iced tea bottle for the séance room, which he videoed me inspecting as we completed our final search of the séance room. Nothing suspicious or out of the ordinary was contained in the sealed bottles, and no one could claim the bottles were props which Kai introduced into the room.

After the strip search, Jochen led Kai downstairs to the séance room, and Kai again kept his arms raised with hands in full view as I followed the pair downstairs. Robert videoed this transit. I unlocked the séance room and led Kai inside. At that point (after Kai seated himself in the cabinet), we allowed the other sitters to enter as Robert and I patted down the male sitters to make sure they introduced no props into the room. Anna independently did a strip search of Julia. After this, I locked the séance room from the inside. The house had already been locked by Michael (and the key hidden, even from Robert), and a GoPro camcorder was placed in a far corner of my room upstairs, with a full view of the door and the entire room.

The séance then began around 8:40 p.m., and Kai went through his usual "holotropic" breathing fairly quickly. Once HB had announced himself and greeted the sitters, he noted that he understood the purpose of this gathering, and so he said he would skip the usual object-movement portion of the séance and concentrate just on the production and viewing of ectoplasm. He claimed that making target objects move at the far end of the circle would expend valuable energy, which he preferred to collect and store in order to document the medium extruding ectoplasm.

HB then insisted, as a precondition for the evening's program and to ensure that Kai's interests are protected, that we grant Kai the right to determine whether any videos collected from the séance are made public. Neither Robert nor I had any problem with that request.

HB then asked to see which levels of red light were necessary for adequate documentation. After that, the medium retreated behind the

curtains again to build up energy. While that was going on, most sitters reported seeing lights from within or around the cabinet, rather than traveling around the room (as is often the case during Kai's cabinet sessions). For example, I saw a bright yellow-white light inside the bottom front of the cabinet, and several of us saw a greenish faint glow from the top of the cabinet. The greenish light is interesting, because if it had been produced from inside the cabinet, it would have needed to be quite bright in order to be seen at all from our positions. If instead the light had been produced outside the cabinet, it would have been very difficult for the medium to have reached that location. Nevertheless, Jochen reported that he saw a smallish rectangular light on his side of the cabinet, clearly outside the curtains and very close to his face.

HB asked me to describe my strip search of Kai in detail, and then he asked whether under the circumstances Kai could have concealed anything that produced those lights. I said I had found nothing that would account for the lights. Granted, I didn't perform a full cavity search, and so I can't guarantee that Kai had no light-emitting devices concealed (say) in his rectum. But if that's the best a skeptic can do to explain the phenomena, I'd say it doesn't undermine the case for the paranormality of the lights. After all, as I noted earlier and as Michael Nahm documents (this issue), we have good evidence that, during object-movement portions of cabinet séances, lights and other phenomena occur at a distance from the medium while he's under full bodily control—that is, under conditions in which it's irrelevant to appeal to light sources concealed within the medium's body.

Next, during a period of singing and "energy-gathering," I and some others thought we heard rapping sounds from the ceiling. But there was so much noise from the music, singing, and shuffling in the cabinet, we could not be certain. There was also a brief period during which the cabinet curtains began to flap (I was touched on my right arm) and I and others felt breezes coming from the direction of the cabinet. HB said this was due to the Chemists concentrating the energy around the medium rather than in front of the strip on the floor outside the cabinet (as would happen during the object-movement portion of the séance).⁹

The medium then began to make choking and gurgling sounds, suggesting the imminent arrival of ectoplasm. Soon thereafter, HB instructed Jochen to turn up the red light and for Jochen and me to open the curtain. Then we clearly saw the medium pull a large quantity of ectoplasm from his mouth, which fell into a pile on the floor in front of him. The video we captured of this, although very grainy after digital enhancement, clearly shows this action, and toward the end of the video, when the medium's left hand was not so close to his mouth, one can clearly see that the material is

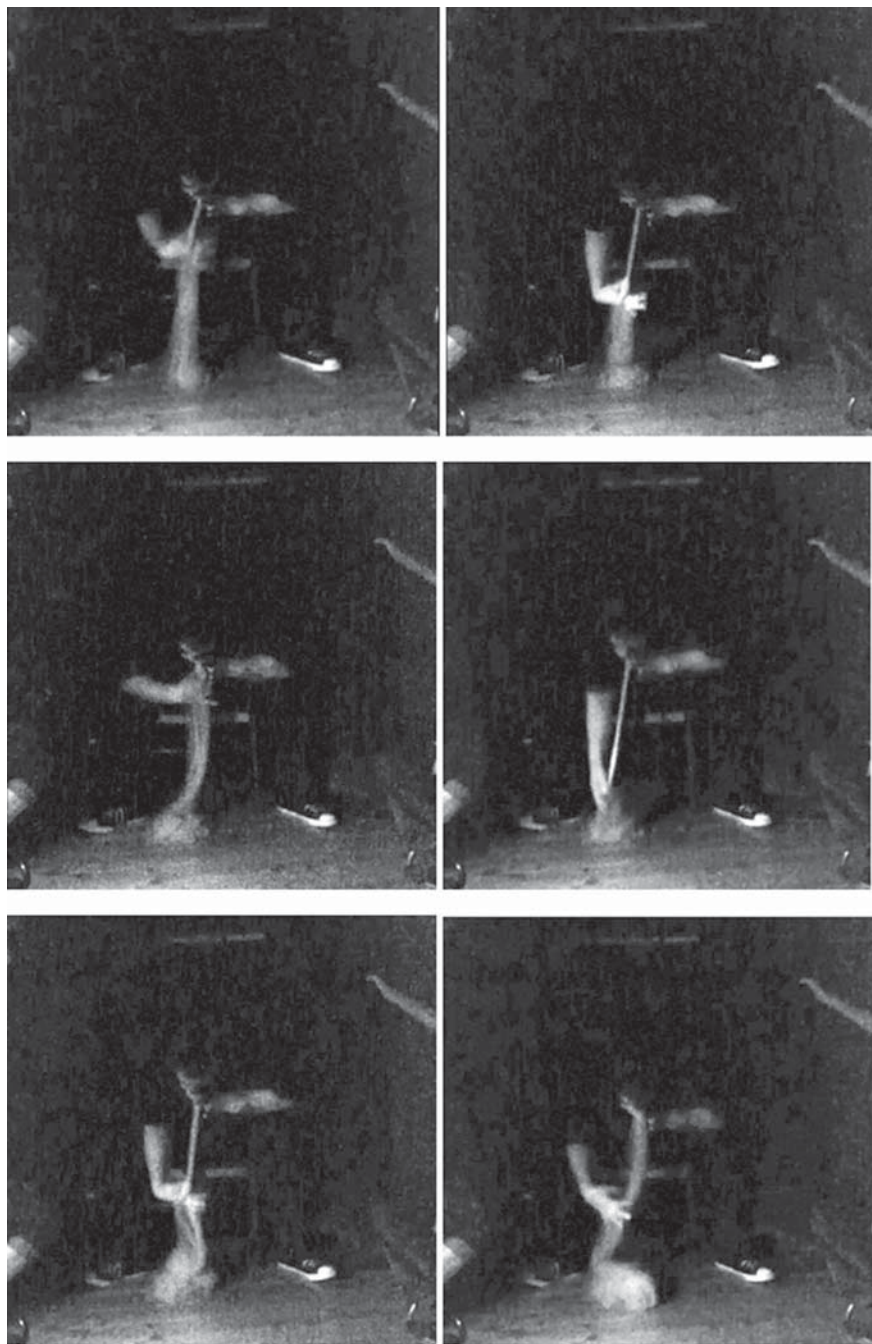


Figure 7. Extruded ectoplasm.

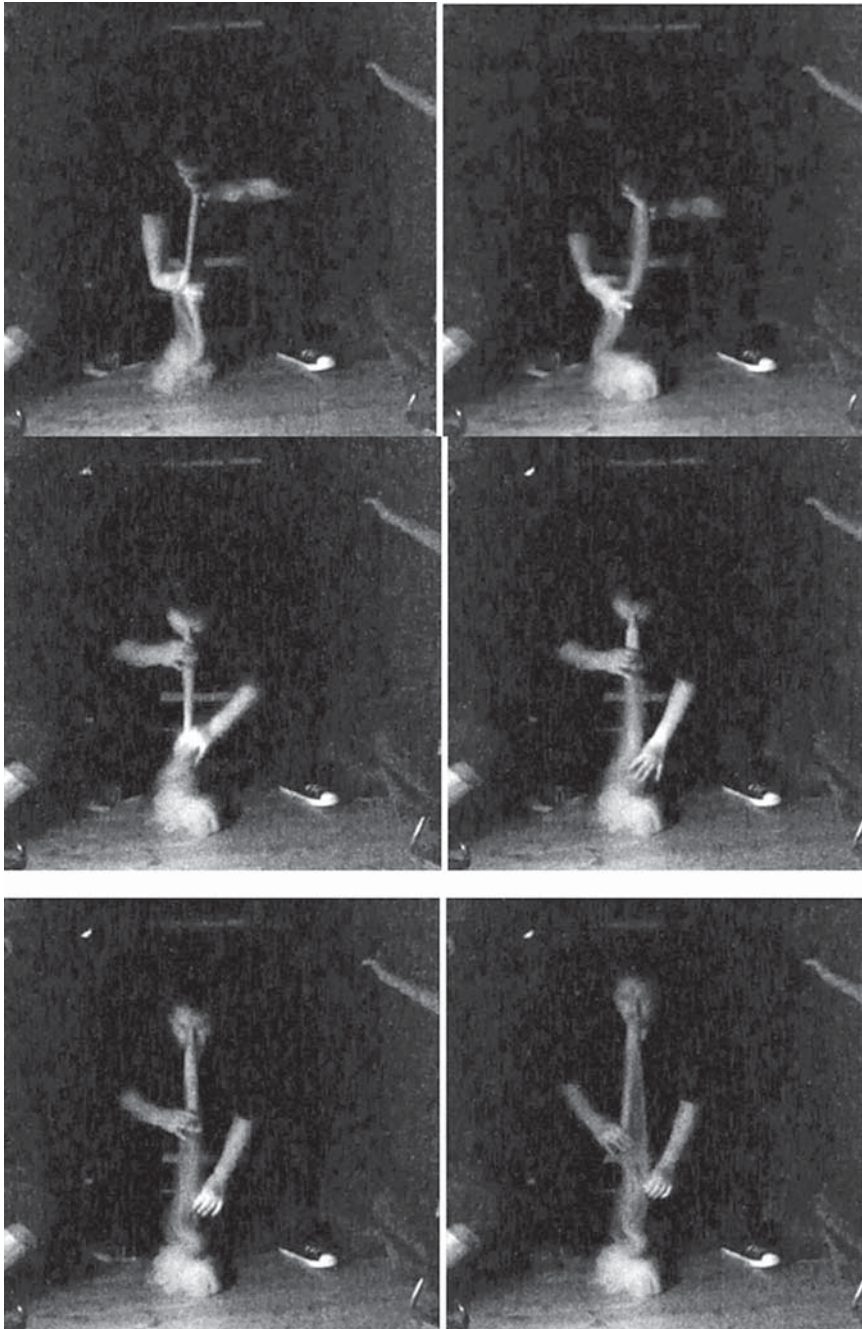


Figure 7. Extruded ectoplasm (continued).

issuing from the medium's mouth and not his hands or near his bare arms (he was, as usual, wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt). The video also reveals the thread-like nature of the material's composition, during the brief period when the medium spread it with his hands. There was no odor from the material, or any evidence of the black tea or Kai's recent meal. It seems improbable, then, that the medium regurgitated the substance.¹⁰

Jochen confirmed that, from his position, he could see the ectoplasm issuing from the medium's mouth. He saw Kai's left hand and fingers spread open, helping to stretch his mouth, and he could look under the hand to see that the material came from the mouth and not his hands. My view on the other side was initially blocked by Kai's left hand stretching his mouth. But he later moved that hand and used both hands to clearly pull more material from his mouth (Figure 7).

We next had a display of greenish glowing ectoplasm. The inspiration for this had apparently grown innocently out of some earlier discussions between Jochen and Kai about the early twentieth-century medium Franek Kluski having produced such a phenomenon.¹¹ HB asked Jochen and me three times to open the cabinet curtains, following short periods of singing and energy-gathering. The first time we saw a thin, glowing column of ectoplasm. This was followed by two more elaborate and impressive displays. In the first of these, the medium held and stretched out the ectoplasm with both hands, rotating it back and forth, and also clockwise and counterclockwise. Next, he held it in a kind of triangular shape and brought it very close to my face and then to Jochen's. I estimate that the ectoplasm was at its closest about 2 inches from my face (close enough to concern me that I might be hit by it and inadvertently injure the medium). As the material was stretched in different directions, I could clearly see that it had a fiber (or thread)-like, structure. Although some observers of mediumistic phenomena have reported odors from ectoplasm (e.g., that of semen or ozone), I detected no odor from the material, even when it was brought so close to my face. And for those concerned about our not having performed a full cavity search of the medium, I can say that I believe I would have smelled the material had it been regurgitated (with or without remnants of Kai's recent meal) or concealed in his rectum. I should also note that the material again had no telltale discoloration, either from food or from excrement. That much is clear even in our grainy video.¹²

After this, we twice opened the curtains to view the mass of ectoplasm on the floor in front of and between the medium's feet. HB wanted us to see how it moved and seemed to breathe. But the level of red light HB permitted was simply too dim for clear observation. At first, it was too low for anyone to see the mass clearly at all. But then HB asked for the light to be increased

slightly. At that point, I bent low, about 18 inches from the mass and could not clearly detect any movement. Perhaps that was because my head was positioned above the mass, because some others, farther back in the room and viewing the mass from the front, reported seeing slight movement on its right side. The video of this seems to confirm that report. It shows brief, small movement toward the end of the clip. Moreover, it also seems clear that the movement is not caused by the medium's foot, because his left foot (the one closest to the movement) is visible and flat on the ground, while his right foot remains active, sometimes partially visible, and audible. As noted in Michael Nahm's essay, the medium's right foot would loudly tap to indicate when to open and close the curtains.

The final ectoplasm display was of Kai completely covered by a "netting" of material from his head to the floor. This "cocoon" is typically created when Kai takes the ectoplasm (either still on the floor or already within his hands), stretches it, and covers himself with it. Allegedly, this re-energizes the organism, although on this occasion it was followed by Kai's premature awakening from trance and thus to the official closing of the séance. A very faint image of the cocoon was captured on video. It revealed that the cocoon was wrapped around Kai and clearly connected to the mass of ectoplasm on the floor. It showed Kai moving the material with his hands, but it was not clear enough to confirm sitters' impressions that the ectoplasm seemed to be of one seamless piece. That impression, if correct, is interesting because the previous, glowing, ectoplasm was spread and torn and revealed gaps between the parts of the material. So it's an open question whether the cocoon was new material or whether it was a repaired version of the previous material.

The medium's emerging out of trance happened behind the closed curtain. So we were unable to observe what happened to the netting we had just seen covering him. But as I note again below, subsequent observation of both the cabinet and Kai immediately after the séance revealed no hidden netting, and no remnants or moisture on the floor.

It's also worth mentioning that during the darkened portions of the séance, sitters' hands were accounted for. Jochen had one hand on the curtain (ready to open it at a moment's notice) and the other on the lamp controls (ready to turn it on at a moment's notice). I had my right hand by the curtain and my left hand holding Julia's right hand atop the CD player. All other sitters had hands joined. Jochen and I needed to be ready with our hands next to the curtain, awaiting the stomping sound of the medium's foot, signaling us to either open or close the curtains.

After I unlocked the door, the sitters filed out of the séance room. I remained behind to examine the room and cabinet, and to observe Kai

recover from the trance. He appeared as if he needed to vomit into the bucket kept at his side for that purpose, but I observed afterward that the bucket contained nothing but some moisture (presumably from spit) and two mostly dry (and odorless) paper towels Kai used to dab his mouth and face.

In the meantime, at Kai's urging, Jochen conducted another strip search and reported to me that nothing suspicious was found on Kai's person or in his clothes.

The entire time of the séance was approximately 1:40.

TABLE SÉANCE 05-16-2013

Sitters were arranged as in the previous table séances. Kai was concerned from the beginning that there would be no phenomena, because he was tired from the previous three séances, and because in nearly nine years of mediumship he'd never been able to have more than three successful séances in one week. But inspired by our earlier results, and intrigued by what he'd seen of Robert's GoPro cameras, he was eager to try a table séance with Robert's conventional video camera positioned as before, supplemented by a GoPro attached to my chest.

Julia's right hand throughout rested on the red light control (awaiting Kai's instructions to turn it on, but sometimes turning the light on under her own volition), and occasional periods of illumination revealed that sitters' fingers were lightly touching the table top, hanging down (as it were) with palms raised.

By comparison to the earlier table sittings, this séance was, indeed, disappointing. The table slid and rotated dramatically on the wooden floor, and partially levitated (usually in darkness) a few times. Turning on the red light tended to snuff out or decrease the table movement, even when the sitters closed their eyes (just in case the inhibiting factor was not the light itself or our knowledge that it was on, but rather the sitters' perception of it).

During a short break after nearly an hour of this activity, we decided to place carpet under the séance table. This would prevent the table from sliding along the floor, and Kai suggested that it would force the energy to concentrate instead on raising the table. Under these conditions the table shuddered dramatically and seemed to make efforts to rise up. We also had three brief partial levitations, captured in part on video. Still, we couldn't rule out the possibility that one or more sitters could consciously or unconsciously simulate the table's movement on carpet under these conditions.

After Kai unsuccessfully challenged the spirits with an ultimatum to end the séance if they didn't produce better results, the session was brought to a close.

Perhaps surprisingly, this negative séance may in fact be a positive result. If, as some magicians like to allege, it's so easy to raise a levitated table with one's hands or just one's thumbs, Kai had ample opportunities in both darkness and dim red light to make it happen. Granted, Kai could have been feigning exhaustion—that can't be ruled out in principle. But it seems more likely to me that if Kai were simply a fraudulent medium, he would have availed himself of the opportunity afforded by darkness to impress us further, rather than go through what would have been the fruitless charade of installing the carpet and presenting the spirits with an ultimatum.

Comments

The video of the table levitation is certainly interesting, but it would be more convincing if Kai's thumbs were visible above the table. Of course, even if it's true that it takes only two thumbs and a little bit of practice to raise a lightweight four-legged table quite smoothly, the fact that a table levitation can be simulated by trickery doesn't establish that it can *only* be produced by trickery. Nevertheless, since neither Jochen nor I (seated to Kai's sides and controlling him) can attest to having controlled Kai's thumbs, subsequent attempts at recording the phenomena clearly need to be conducted under better illumination, with more cameras, and with more sensitive cameras (which we've since obtained), or of course while clearly holding Kai's entire hand in ours. Regrettably, so long as FEG séances require Kai and others to be in contact with the table, the evidence for the genuineness of the levitations will never be as compelling as those from stronger cases of physical mediumship—for example, the Palladino levitations from the 1908 Naples sittings, which often occurred out of Eusapia's reach (Feilding 1963, Feilding, Baggally, & Carrington 1909, Braude, 1997, 2007).

The apports must be rated as less evidential still, simply because Kai was not searched prior to the séance and because in these cases it's especially difficult to rule out masterfully applied sleight of hand. However, both apports occurred in decent red light, good enough to see Kai's extended arm, hand, and fingers clearly, and also (in the case of the crystal) while a flashlight was shone directly into Kai's mouth.¹³ The copper apport remains especially intriguing, though, in view of the fact that it seems to have been produced as a typical Kai reaction to something that had recently commanded his attention and fascinated him. I had shown him Katie's foil only a few hours earlier, and he presumably had no opportunity during that interval, while still at the farmhouse, to come up with a nugget of copper. None of the rest of us had ever before seen a copper nugget, and it's likely that Kai was truthful in saying that he too had never seen one. This apport was the first such object ever to appear in an FEG sitting; FEG apports are

routinely collected by Kai in a display case back in Hanau; and they are also reported on the FEG's blog. Had there been previous copper nugget apports, the event would not have been kept secret. And perhaps most important, it seems highly unlikely that Kai would have traveled to Austria armed in advance with a copper nugget, the significance—indeed, the whole point—of which turned out to be tied closely to an event which he couldn't have predicted.

Moreover, as I noted earlier, Kai's bare right arm and spread fingers were fully visible when the apport appeared, and Jochen had been visibly feeling up and down that arm while I controlled Kai's left hand and foot. Furthermore, the audio recording of this event documents dramatically how loudly that apport struck the table, as if it had been forcibly propelled there and bounced off the table. But if that action had been initiated by Kai's right hand, I believe it would have been seen clearly by all the sitters. And there was certainly no contraption in the room that could have produced that effect. Now, I must note that I've seen an apport drop from magician Jeff McBride's bare arms.¹⁴ However, I did not observe or examine his hands on this occasion, whereas Kai's exposed hand, *spread* fingers, and arm were fully visible while Jochen ran his own hand up and down the arm. Moreover, Jeff's apport was dropped softly, as if it was simply released from a place of concealment; it was not propelled forcibly as Kai's apport was. I believe it's correct to say that a conjuror would need some kind of overtly visible effort or attempt to make the apparently apported object move so vigorously under the conditions obtaining at our séance. But we observed nothing of the kind.

The ectoplasmic manifestations, although produced under decent conditions of control (in stark contrast to those allowed with any other current physical medium), were likewise produced under conditions that can be tightened further. I hope that in future sessions, as Kai becomes more accustomed to being studied carefully, we'll be able to introduce additional improvements, without increasing Kai's anxiety or discomfort, and without compromising the trust and goodwill already established between Kai and the investigators.

Certain features of a Kai cabinet sitting are probably doomed to arouse suspicions in some people—including, of course, darkness, the cabinet itself, and the alleged need to retreat behind the curtain. Many would also point suspiciously to the loud singing requested by HB which could be interpreted as providing covering noise for furtive actions within the cabinet. Kai (or HB) maintains that this helps concentrate energy within the cabinet, and for all we know that might be the case. So I believe we must acknowledge and respect this common feature of a spiritist belief system and work around it as much as possible. Although it seems unlikely that

Kai will consent to the aforementioned and more stringent measures agreed to by Eva C., such as swallowing an emetic to counter the regurgitation hypothesis, and a full cavity search, we might be able to convince him to swallow something more likely than tea to stain regurgitated material—e.g., blueberry juice. Since Kai has been profoundly influenced by the case of Eva C. (among others), we might succeed in encouraging him to copy this relatively painless feature of her mediumship. We should remember, however, that the ectoplasm emerging from Kai's mouth showed no other indications (e.g., odor or traces of his recent meal) of having been brought up from his gut.

It's also unfortunate, and perhaps needlessly suspicious, that the disappearance of the ectoplasm occurred out of sight, in the cabinet. Still, it's not obvious that the ectoplasm's disappearance must be attributed to conjuring. I found nothing suspicious, and certainly no trace of the material, in the cabinet when the séance ended, and Jochen found nothing when he strip-searched Kai afterward. Now I've seen Jeff McBride pull a mass of paper "ectoplasm" out of his mouth (something which can be compressed initially to a very small size and placed in the mouth),¹⁵ which, after he collected it, he then made vanish with a clap of his hands. I've learned that there are devices which magicians can conceal in their sleeves that can rapidly retract the expelled material. Of course, I didn't strip search Jeff in advance or examine his clothing (or even just the roomy sleeves of his kimono) prior to his demonstration. But it's highly unlikely that Kai, who was wearing a short-sleeved t-shirt, had any such accessories at his disposal and which escaped notice in the strip search and inspection of his clothing and the cabinet. As magician Loyd Auerbach wrote me after viewing my slides from the videos and studying an earlier version of this paper, "The problem is disposal of the material afterward. [It's] one thing to hide a compressed packet, quite another to get rid of or re-compress the material" (personal communication November 21, 2013).

Kai seemed quite encouraged by the results of these sittings, and he at least seemed eager to introduce more cameras and better light into the proceedings. He's well aware and proudly informs others that he's the only physical medium currently consenting to any respectable controls, and he's also aware that good video documentation of his phenomena could secure for him a significant place in parapsychological history. Furthermore, I believe Kai can gradually come to feel more comfortable with multiple cameras pointed in his direction, just as people repeatedly interviewed on camera gradually adjust to the presence of cameras and eventually stop noticing them. So I'm hopeful (and cautiously optimistic) that future séances will yield even better results.

Concluding Comments

Although for the reasons noted above I consider much of the evidence I've obtained so far with Kai to be quite good and difficult to explain away, it can't yet be rated as conclusive, and certainly Kai's mediumship cannot at this stage be ranked alongside the best cases from the heyday of spiritualism. Kai is wary of working in the light, although he's grudgingly (but only occasionally) permitted very low illumination, and even then only for relatively brief periods of time. And, despite our success on one occasion in capturing a table levitation with an infrared camcorder, he (or, according to Kai, HB) has since refused requests to permit additional infrared video. This inevitably troubles even open-minded observers, especially since the red lamp used for the séances generates at least as much IR energy as the beam from my IR camcorder. Similarly, Kai (or HB) has so far refused to allow sitters to touch the ectoplasm, on the grounds that doing so could harm the medium. But of course, the ectoplasm falls from the medium's mouth onto the floor, and to my knowledge that contact has never harmed the medium.

However, I believe we must remain open to the possibility that both light and attention, and indeed the medium's beliefs and fears (rational or otherwise), can inhibit genuinely paranormal physical phenomena. The entire history of physical mediumship suggests as much, as do more recent experiments in table-tipping (see, e.g., Barham 1988, Batcheldor 1966, 1984, Brookes-Smith 1973, Brookes-Smith & Hunt 1970, Isaacs 1984). In fact, we need to bear in mind that, at our current and considerable level of parapsychological ignorance, we should be especially circumspect in making assumptions about the conditions favorable or unfavorable to the production of phenomena, or about the forms in which the phenomena should manifest. Feilding addressed the point nicely, in connection with Eusapia's séance preferences.

... I cannot explain why she wished to do these things, any more than I can explain many other items in her procedure, such as why she should wish to have a table, or why she should require a curtain at all. I find, in talking with friends, that when I mention the curtain, they inevitably say, "Ah, a curtain! Why a curtain? What a suspicious fact!" I agree that it may be suspicious, but it is not necessarily so. It is suspicious when used by a materializing medium who goes behind it, and, when a "spirit" comes out, refuses to allow spectators to ascertain whether he is himself still there. But in Eusapia's case, where she sits outside it, I cannot see that, given certain obvious precautions, it is necessarily suspicious. She says it helps to "concentrate the force." Perhaps it does. I do not know what the "force" is, nor what it requires to "concentrate" it. Nor does anyone else. To a person ignorant of photography

it is possible that the use by the photographer of a black cloth over his head would be suspicious. In dealing with an unknown force one can only judge empirically of the utility of certain conditions. That the curtain does have some bearing on the phenomena is clear. Eusapia appears to be en rapport with something within. And she constantly seems to experience the necessity of establishing this rapport by momentary contact with the curtain or by enveloping the table or part of herself in its folds. We never perceived, however, that the phenomena which followed this action had any normal relation to it whatever. (Feilding 1963:107, Feilding, Baggally, & Carrington 1909:397)

Under the circumstances, then, I believe we should cautiously respect Kai's expressed preferences for certain séance conditions, as well as his expressed beliefs about the conditions which either enhance or inhibit his phenomena. It would take nearly transcendental hubris to claim that we know significantly more about these matters now than Fielding knew a century ago.

Moreover, as I've noted above, I believe the resourceful experimenter can find ways to circumvent several (if not many) of the obstacles Kai has placed in the way of optimal controls, and I believe we've succeeded to some extent in doing that. Indeed, considering the most stringent controls described above for both the Hanau and Austrian séances, I submit that the burden of proof shifts to the skeptic to explain, in detail and not merely with vague and general assurances about the possibility of fraud, how fraud could have been perpetrated in those cases. I also believe we must remain open to the possibility that Kai's concerns about scrutiny and controls may be genuine, even if irrational, and that there's more to gain by working with séance conditions that Kai finds acceptable but which may still yield persuasive results, than by insisting on tightening the controls even further. In fact, I encourage readers and investigators to heed the advice of Oliver Lodge, who counseled researchers to

. . . have the common sense to treat [the medium], not as a scientific person engaged in a demonstration, but as a delicate piece of apparatus wherewith they themselves are making an investigation. She is an instrument whose ways and idiosyncracies must be learnt, and to a certain extent humoured, just as one studies and humours the ways of some much less delicate piece of physical apparatus turned out by a skilled instrument-maker. (Lodge 1894:324)

Still, so long as Kai continues to resist better conditions of illumination and observation, especially those in which other carefully investigated mediums have succeeded, his mediumship will be somewhat tainted and

remain an easy (if glib) object of skeptical suspicion. And his achievements will certainly pale in comparison with those of former mediums who produced comparable phenomena under significantly tighter controls.

Of course, there will always be skeptics, no matter how many precautions are taken. So, practically speaking, investigators may simply have to acknowledge a law of diminishing returns in applying controls. Besides, it would hardly be surprising if at some point (given human psychology), continually tightening controls simply snuffs out the phenomena. That's one reason why laboratory phenomena are so modest compared with phenomena in natural settings, if the phenomena can be duplicated at all in the lab. As I've argued elsewhere (e.g., Braude 1997, 2014 forthcoming), since we really are nowhere close to knowing what psi's natural history is (i.e. its function or purpose—if any—in real-life settings), for all we know it may be similar in crucial respects to familiar phenomena or abilities (e.g., sexual performance, athletic skills) that can only be evaluated in their natural contexts, not in the straitjacketed conditions required for formal experiments.

Notes

- ¹ In a private meeting with noted magician Jeff McBride, Jeff claimed that table levitations can be simulated with a four-legged table by using only two thumbs. Jeff tried demonstrating this to me with one of his own tables. He was indeed able to raise that table, but its movement was not nearly as smooth or level as those I've experienced with the FEG. Now admittedly this was a different and heavier table, and Jeff claimed that one only needed more practice to simulate smoother levitations. However, although I have great admiration for Jeff's expertise and knowledge of mediumistic tricks, I think one needs to take this assurance with a grain of salt. Although Jeff is not biased against the possibility of psi phenomena generally, he's clearly and antecedently convinced that all *mediumistic* phenomena are fraudulent (he does apparently accept the reality of PK in what he deems to be less suspicious contexts). So it's difficult to say to what extent Jeff's confidence on this matter resembles the empty assurances concerning mediumistic fraud often expressed by magicians. It remains true that I and others have been unable to raise Kai's table (or the table from the Austrian sessions described below) using only our thumbs, and in any case I doubt that this explanation would suffice for the many accounts (from other FEG séances) of the table rising to the ceiling and remaining there for several seconds. That explanation also fails for the infrared-documented levitation described below, occurring in our last séance, where Kai waved one of his hands above the table as it rose, imitating one of Palladino's familiar gestures.

- ² For more details on the arrangement of the room during an FEG cabinet séance, see Michael Nahm's essay in this issue.
- ³ For more on Eva C., see, e.g., Barrett 1919, Geley 1922, 1927/1975, Schrenck Notzing, 1923a, 1923b, and the summaries of the case in Braude 1997 and Inglis 1977. Eva also submitted to rather heroic measures to comply with proposed controls. She permitted full-cavity searches and drank an emetic before the séance to counter the charge that she simply regurgitated the ectoplasm produced during the séance (and which in any case often appeared *outside* the veil of tulle that covered her face and head).
- ⁴ These were non-evidential and not impressive enough to merit attention here.
- ⁵ I should add that I don't consider it intrinsically suspicious that séances and trance workshops now constitute a major source of income for Kai. Granted, Kai enjoys the attention and adulation of his sitters and workshop participants, and granted the work is very steady. But Kai charges far less than mediums (such as David Thompson) who don't allow for serious control—indeed, Kai's fees just manage to defray his travel expenses; and Kai is able to pursue what are clearly his lifelong interests.
- ⁶ According to Michael Nahm's audio recording of the session.
- ⁷ The video of this and the extruding ectoplasm will be unavailable for public viewing until the release of Robert's documentary, *Finding PK*. However, frames from the video may be viewed on the SSE website, <http://scientificexploration.org>, in my 2013 SSE conference presentation.
- ⁸ Michael also installed the temperature gauge in the vicinity of Kai during two of the table sittings. There, too, no temperature shift was recorded.
- ⁹ The outward flapping of the cabinet curtain has been a frequently reported feature of carefully investigated spiritist séances—for example, in the Palladino case. See, e.g., Bottazzi 1907, 2011, Giuditta 2010, and Feilding 1963. But in the Palladino case, the medium sat outside the curtain when this occurred.
- ¹⁰ Admittedly, Kai could conceivably have regurgitated his recent meal during the period when he was alone, prior to the strip search. Nevertheless, since the ectoplasm was odor-free and showed no discoloration from the tea, it still seems likely that it did not emerge from his gut or alimentary tract.
- ¹¹ For more on Kluski, see Geley 1927/1975, Richet 1923/1975, Barrington 1994a, 1994b, Weaver 1992.
- ¹² At the risk of becoming obnoxiously graphic, I should also add that even if Kai had placed the material in a condom or plastic bag which he hid in his rectum, he would still have had to remove it and its contents without

transferring some odor to his hands, clothes, or a paper towel. But neither Jochen nor I detected an odor when the medium's hands were brought within an inch or two of our faces, and I detected no odor from anything in the cabinet immediately after the séance ended.

¹³ The resolute skeptic can always claim that shining the flashlight into Kai's mouth was simply misdirection.

¹⁴ Cleverly and ironically, Jeff produced an apport of fool's gold.

¹⁵ I should note that this paper "ectoplasm" looked nothing like what emerges from Kai's mouth. The paper emerged from Jeff as a bunch of thin streamers, all of which had many small accordion-like folds, indicating that they had previously been tightly compressed into those folds.

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