

The History and Psychology of Spirit Possession and Exorcism

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Note: This writing demonstrates the relative nature between objective and subjective reality. It provides a unique exploration into how the two "realities" can merge to form a singular, event experience.

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INTRODUCTION:

Exorcism is derived from the Greek word *exorkizein* which means "to bind by oath". Evil spirits (demons) which possess a person are exorcised (compelled to leave) by a higher authority, such as God or Christ. "Catholic exorcisms begin, *Adjure te, spiritus nequissime, per Deum omnipotentem...* which means "I adjure thee, most evil spirit, by almighty God...[Lewis, J., p.138, 1995]." The Catholic Church considers possession a battle for the victim's soul, while other cultures embrace spirit possession as an integral part of their spiritual practices.

The word demon originated from the ancient Greek word *daimon* which referred to beings with special powers which placed them between people and the gods. The beings could bestow benefit or carry out the punishment of the gods [Microsoft Encarta, 1994]. The questions arise, "Do demons exist?", "Can they possess a person's body and cast away the person's soul?", "After death do some spirits linger upon the earth plane attaching themselves to the living?", "Do exorcisms really work?", "Why do evil spirits want to harm us?", "Can the living converse with the dead?" (return to top)

PART I:

Historical and Cultural Accounts of Spirit Possession & Exorcism

Every major religious and cultural tradition worldwide has espoused the idea of spirit possession and the need for some form of exorcism [Lewis, J., 1995]. The rites of exorcism have included the use of prayers, commands, fumigations (burning of dung), holy water, hellebore, rue, salt, and roses. The Old Testament shares, "David took a harp, and played with his hand: so, Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him [Wickland, p.18, 1974]." In some cultures, the exorcist functioned in much the same way doctors do now; people would visit the exorcist seeking a cure for illness, misfortune, or bad luck.

Our historical journey of spirit possession takes us back to the beginning of civilization. All forms of sickness, both physical and psychological, were attributed to possessing spirits in ancient Mesopotamia. The number of possessing spirits and demons awaiting to attach to a person were so great it led to a fear described as "one of the most important factors in the daily life of a Babylonian [Sargant, p.59, 1973]." Ancient Babylonian priests served as exorcists who performed the ritual by destroying a clay or wax image of a demon meant to destroy the attached spirit [Microsoft Encarta, 1994]. Assyrian tablets offer the first written accounts for the treatment of illnesses. Treatment included incantations and prayers to the gods, as well as direct challenges to the demons which were believed to inflict diseases of every type [Baldwin, 1991].

The Hindu scriptures called the Vedas composed around 1000BC tell of evil beings who interfere with the work of Hindu gods and harm the living [Microsoft Encarta, 1994]. Accounts from ancient Persia, 6th century BC, offer evidence of exorcism using prayer, ritual, and holy water by the religious leader Zoroaster, who was considered the first magician, and who founded the religion Zoroastrianism [Baldwin, 1991]. It is known that Homer spoke repeatedly of demons, "A sick man pining away is one upon whom an evil spirit has gazed [Wickland, p.18, 1974]." Socrates spoke of the insane as those who are under the influence of demons; Plato affirmed that demons obsessed mortals [Wickland, 1974]. The cult of Dionysus in ancient Greece induced voluntary possession by the gods through the use of wine and sexual rites which resulted in wild madness. The ritual became so widespread throughout ancient Greece that it was legally suppressed in ancient Rome in 186BC due to excesses [Lewis, J., 1995]. Priestesses served as channelers/mediums for the gods of the Greek world. The pronouncements of Apollo at Delphi were given through a priestess who was in trance and interpreted by the priests [Sargant, 1973].

Jesus was the premier exorcist of his time. As much as ¼ of Jesus' healings were exorcisms. The ability to cast out evil spirits was a sign of true discipleship among the apostles. At least 26 references to exorcisms by Jesus may be found in the bible, including, "Jesus preached and cast out devils," Mark 1:39. "Jesus gave his twelve disciples the power against unclean spirits, to cast them out," Matthew 10:1. "The evil spirits went out of them," Acts 19:12. "Jesus rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose," Mark 9:25-27 [Wickland, 1974]. In the exorcism of a madman Jesus had cast out the foul spirits; the spirits then entered into a herd of pigs who in turn ran over a cliff and drowned in the waters below [Lewis, J., 1995].

Judaism exorcist rituals can be traced back to the 1st century AD. The dybbuk is considered an evil spirit which possesses the soul of its victim causing mental illness and changes in the personality. The dybbuk is exorcised through the victim's small toe and may either be redeemed or sent to hell [Guiley, 1991]. In Israel, a long tradition of prophesy has been practiced in which the prophet enters an ecstatic state and becomes a temporary vessel, a mouthpiece for God [Sargant, 1973]. Islam created an elaborate system of

demons. Muslim writings tell of a group of evil beings, called jinn, who cause destruction and preside over places where evil activities take place [Microsoft Encarta, 1994].

The dhikr, a set of phrases which glorify God, is used in conjunction with a set of physical movements and special breathing techniques which allows the Sufis to enter into union with the divine. Poet al-Ghazali observes the state as, "drunk with a drunkenness in which their reason collapsed' they felt utterly possessed by God [Sargant, p.76, 1973]." Ancient folklore contains many stories of demons. The oni of Japan are demons said to bring about storms; ancient Japanese history tells of suddenly arising storms which caused superior enemies from successfully invading the island. Kelpies are known in Scotland to haunt pools, waiting to drown careless travelers [Microsoft Encarta, 1994].

Some shamanic traditions consider demons and evil spirits responsible for stealing human souls resulting in maladies and misfortune. The shaman is responsible for searching for, and recovering, the evicted soul; the demon is driven out and the body returned to its rightful owner [Guiley, 1991]. The word shaman comes from the language of the Arctic Tungus which means "one who is excited, moved, or raised." For the Tungus, a shaman is one who has mastered spirits and who can introduce them into their own body at will. It is not uncommon for a shaman of the Tungus to permanently incarnate one or more spirits which he/she may call upon at will by going into a controlled trance state [Lewis, I., 1971]. "Arctic Hysteria" commonly afflicts women during the harsh winter months in the Polar regions. It may be diagnosed as spirit possession [Lewis, I., 1971].

In many parts of the world spirit possession is strongly related to cultural and social conditions. Considered to have originated in Ethiopia varying forms of zar (sometimes called sar) possession are known to occur. Zar spirits typically possess women whose husbands are considering marrying an additional wife, or where other domestic conflict is present. Exorcism of the zar spirit entails an elaborate, and costly, dance ceremony for the victim. After the expensive ceremony, wives have been known to threaten a relapse if their demands are not met; consequently, extorting further economic sacrifices from their husbands [Lewis, I., 1971]. Possession due to unmet needs, and exorcisms which function to meet those needs is not uncommon. The "zar possession strategy" to get needs met has been adopted by women (and some men) throughout the world: Muslim Somali, Muslim Sudan, Egypt, parts of North Africa, Arabia, East Africa, Arabia, South America, China, Japan, SE Asia, Ceylon, Tanzania, and Cairo [Lewis, I., 1971].

Accounts from the 4th century AD depict gruesome portrayals of exorcism. Zeno of Verona describes, "His face is suddenly deprived of colour, his body rises up of itself, the eyes in madness roll in their sockets and squint horribly, the teeth, covered with a horrible foam, grind between blue-white lips; and limbs twisted in all directions are given over to trembling; he sighs, he weeps; he fears the appointed day of Judgment and complains that he is driven out; he confesses his sex, the time and place he entered into man...[Sargant, p.47, 1973]."

The Middle Ages (500-1500AD) saw a revival of ancient superstition and demonology. The treatment of mental illnesses was primarily left to the clergy who believed evil spirits were the cause. The devils were exorcised through a variety of techniques which caused physical pain, including scourging [Baldwin, 1991]. The Roman Catholic church continued developing the formal rite of exorcism during the medieval era. By 1614 the *Rituale Romanum* was complete; it is still in use today [Baldwin, 1991; Guiley, 1991]. Between 1970 and 1980 the Catholic Church conducted over 600 exorcisms [Baldwin, 1991].

Epidemics of spirit possession have been known to occur. One famous epidemic of demonic possession took place during the 17th century at Loudun. Numerous nuns came down with the affliction. Sister Jeanne des Anges wrote in her memoirs (1640's), "My mind was filled with blasphemies and sometimes I uttered them without being able to stop myself. My thoughts were often bent on devising ways to

displease him (God) and to make others trespass against him...As I went up for Communion the devil took possession of my hand, and when I received the Sacred Host and had half moistened it, the devil flung it into the priest's face. I know full well that I did not do this action freely, but I am fully assured to my deep confusion that I gave the devil occasion to do it [Sargant, p.51, 1973]." One of the exorcists of the Loudun possessions, Father Surin, wrote to a friend, "I have engaged in combat with four of the most potent and malicious devils in hell [Sargant, p.51, 1973]." A lucid outbreak of demonic possession also occurred at a convent in Madrid during the same century. Upon reviewing the Loudun case Aldous Huxley concluded that what began as hysteria turned into an epidemic of demonic possession due to the actions of the exorcists who played on the nuns heightened suggestibility; the same explanation was put forth by an author of that time who wished to remain anonymous [Sargant, 1973].

Throughout history inspirational spirits (God, the Holy Ghost, etc.) have been known to possess entire subgroups within a population. This is most readily observed in the differences between many peripheral cults, separatist religious movements, and their central counterparts. In the peripheral cults inspirational possession is typically open to all participants, whereas in the central religions such possession is reserved for the religious elite. In the latter the elite are chosen by the gods and are personally commissioned by them to exercise divine authority [Lewis, I., 1971].

The changes in the Quaker religious services serve as an example of this. As the Quaker movement became more successful inspirational possession declined. Inspirational possession is likely to continue in movements that remain unpopular, passively opposed, or actively persecuted- as long as support from oppressed sections of the community remains [Lewis, I., 1971]. Most of the Pentecostal movements today operate in this manner. A sect in Russia known as the Khlysty claimed to be inspired by the Word and to incarnate Christ. Meeting in a forest clearing at night lit by hundreds of tapers the devotees would form a large ring and begin to sway and whirl round and round. The ceremony, called the radenyi, would end in orgy, everyone rolling around on the ground in ecstasy or in convulsions [Sargant, 1973].

In the West public interest in spirits was renewed during the mid-19th century through the Spiritualism movement which began in America in 1837 [Baldwin, 1991]. In 1848 a child medium named Margaret Fox claimed to be receiving communication from spirits through knocking sounds. Margaret's sister and father exploited her abilities and aroused sensational news stories [Microsoft Encarta, 1994]. The two basic premises of Spiritualism are 1.) The continuity of personality after death, and 2.) The powers of communication with the spirits of the deceased [Baldwin, 1991]. Later in her life Margaret admitted that the "spirit rappings" were nothing more than tricks.

During the height of Spiritualism people sought cures for unusual mental symptoms by attending seances and having low-level entities exorcised. Dr. Carl Wickland, an American physician, psychologist, and avid spiritualist became the first medically trained person to view mental illness being caused by spirit possession [Guiley, 1991]. Wickland invented a static electricity machine, called a "wimhurst," which transmitted a low-voltage electrical shock to the head and spine of the possessed person through a short wand. The technique exorcised the spirit from the victim through pain. Wickland's wife Anna would be in a trance state in an adjacent room and would serve as a medium for the spirit. Mediums in deep trance are "open doors" for discarnate beings- or newly exorcised spirits. His books *Thirty Years Among the Dead* (1924) and *Gateway to Understanding* (1934) serve as the foundation for contemporary theories and practices of exorcism and spirit attachment. In *Thirty Years Among the Dead*, Wickland writes, "Humanity is surrounded by the thought influence of millions of discarnate beings...A recognition of this fact accounts for a great portion of unbidden thoughts, emotions, strange forebodings, gloomy moods, irritabilities, unreasonable impulses, irrational outbursts of temper, uncontrollable infatuations and countless other mental vagaries [p.17, 1974]."

In 1987 psychologist Dr. Edith Fiore published a book on spirit attachment and its effects on mental and physical health. Her book, *The Unquiet Dead*, generated new interest in the possibility of spirit attachment from therapists and the public alike. Spirit attachment is the term used to describe the presence of entities "attached" to a living person who affect the person's thoughts, actions, emotions, or behaviors to some degree. Fiore's work on spirit attachment came as a result from her work in past-life regression therapy. Discrepancies in past life regressions revealed that many of her client's past lives were really the past lives of discarnate entities attached to the client. Out of 30,000 cases Fiore estimates that 70% of all clients have at least one spirit attached to them [Guiley, 1991]. She considers these to be earthbound spirits (deceased persons) and writes, "Fortunately- to my knowledge- I have never treated a patient who was plagued by demons [Fiore, p.4, 1987]." Some investigators in the field claim that between 70-100% of the population are affected by entities at some time in their lives. British psychiatrist, Arthur Guirdham M.D., has concluded after 40 years of practice that every severe mental illness can be caused by spirit interference [Fiore, 1987].

The remarkable success Edith Fiore was experiencing with her clients through exorcising earthbound spirits led William (Bill) Baldwin to develop the modern-day version of the *Rituale Romanum*, called Spirit Release Therapy (SRT). Baldwin expands on Fiore's work and claims that many of the attached spirits are ones which have never had a physical body- there are indeed demons (called Dark Ones) and they are nearly as common as Fiore's earthbounds. Baldwin depicts a hierarchy of dark-beings and explains their purpose, "The demonic beings are ordered to cause as much pain, suffering, disruption, chaos, damage, destruction and death as possible to as many humans as possible [p.278, 1991]." In a single exorcism it is not uncommon to send more than 200 demonic beings to the Light. Exorcism of the earthbounds and the dark-ones entails the same general process: identification of the spirit(s); dialogue with the entities; release the spirit into the Light; sealing-light mediation; and ongoing therapy [Baldwin, 1991]. In his own research Baldwin has found that more than 80% of his clients showed signs of spirit attachment [1991]. In conducting SRT training Baldwin observes that most therapists initially do not think they will employ using exorcism in their practices to a significant degree, however, "these therapists reported that not only had they used the techniques on new clients, but they had suddenly found some of their regular clients showing signs of spirit attachment. It was as if the clients and entities were waiting for the therapists to learn the techniques [p57, 1991]."

Inspired by the work of Fiore and Baldwin, Irene Hickman refined a technique of exorcism called Remote Depossession. Hickman was concerned of the role that suggestion might play in SRT which works directly with the afflicted person using hypnosis. In Remote Depossession a channel (medium) is used to avoid possible contamination caused by suggestion. Hickman also wondered why dark beings rarely exhibited traditional "demon" qualities through SRT exorcisms. The incredible number of these "demons" which came up during her sessions led her to consider the possibility that the dark-ones may be the projection of negative thought-forms [Hickman, 1995]. In Brazil remote spirit release is routinely conducted for people around the world for free by the Medical Spiritist Association of Sao Paulo [Baldwin, 1991]. In the United States exorcisms through SRT or Remote Depossession may cost a client upwards of \$300- most clients do report experiencing some type of benefit. Homes, pets, businesses, and cars may also be exorcised of entities as well.

Channelers with the ability to consciously allow for temporary spirit possession captured many people's attention during the 1970's and 1980's. Some channelers practiced "conscious channeling" where they simply served as a communication relay between the spirit worlds and the physical world. Others preferred having the spirit(s) take control of their bodies which resulted in a bizarre and fascinating display for the audience. Discarnate relatives deceased religious figures, extraterrestrials, and 7th dimensional spiritual masters were popular "visitors". Although many channeled books contradict one another on concrete issues the writings serve as a source of inspiration for many. Inspirational spirit

possession practiced in Pentecostal movements, faith healings, and revivalist services were also popularized during this era.

Beliefs in spirit possession have remained virtually unchanged since the beginning of civilization. Spirits have been known to bestow spiritual ecstasy, inflict all sorts of mental problems, and cause physical pain and suffering throughout history. SRT considers malevolent spirits to often be the underlying cause of psychological problems, chronic pain, addictions, sleep disorders, and physical ailments which do not respond to conventional treatments. The notion of spirits interacting with the living is deeply embedded in our language. Phrases such: "What's gotten into you," "What possessed you to...", "It's the work of the devil," "Someone was looking over you," "It lifted my spirits," are a part of mainstream language in our society. People have also been known to be possessed by the creative spirit; alcohol and spirits share an intimate relationship to this day; and riots or mobs are often described as having a "spirit of their own" which possess law-abiding citizens causing them to partake of vandalism and looting. Spirit possession is a part of today's society and will most likely continue to interest and fascinate future generations. (return to top)

PART II: The Psychology of Spirit Possession & Exorcism

The history of spirit possession and the rites of exorcism reveal valuable clues into the nature of the phenomenon. Blatant and subtle aspects emerge which seriously threatens the existence of objective spirits interacting with the living. Although spirit possession is commonly considered to be an objective threat to humankind, it remains an exclusively subjective experience. Historical observation reveals that the social and cultural background of a civilization determines the variations, degrees, and meaning of possession. The very experience itself is dependent upon the beliefs, norms, customs, and expectations of society as are the rites of exorcism. Due to societal variables, "It is not for us to judge who is and who is not really "possessed". If someone is, in his own cultural milieu, generally considered to be in a state of spirit possession, then he (or she) is possessed [Lewis, I., p.46, 1971]."

In Haitian voodoo the possessing spirit (a loa) enters the head of the victim and displaces the person's soul [Lewis, I., 1971]. In the West malevolent spirits generally attach to the victim's aura causing various disturbances; inspirational spirits, on the other hand, typically cause soul withdrawal resulting in total possession. The Zar spirit mainly possesses women who are experiencing domestic tension; it appears to leave after the women's needs have been satisfied. Spirit possession ebbs and flows depending upon the current belief system operating within any given society. Possessing spirits have repeatedly sought to possess particular subgroups within a population. Japanese history divulges that the wives and daughters of Emperors are particularly prone to possession [Lewis, I., 1971]. Within societies where spirit possession is validated it many times functions as a last resort for oppressed citizens to acquire attention and get their needs met. "The situation is that spirits which are central to one sub-group in a plural society are marginal to other units within the same system. The enemy is not at the gates, but within the heart of the composite society [Lewis, I., pp.115-116, 1971]."

Belief in spirit possession is the prerequisite for the existence of entities which interfere with the living. It is simple: if a person does not believe in spirit possession, he/she will not experience being possessed by outside beings, whether the spirits be evil or inspirational. Where belief in possession is strong entities are busy possessing individuals and causing all sorts havoc upon the particular society. "In situations around the world, if one believes in possession by a demon or god, the entity will often behave as if it is that demon or god that has been called upon [Auerbach, p.234, 1993]." The beliefs held by the exorcist also directly shape the experience of possession for the possessed. An exorcist seeking to dialogue with possessing spirits is far less likely to encounter the traditional demonic behaviors of hissing, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, and the screaming of obscenities as is the exorcist who believes he is "doing battle

with the forces of hell". "It is the belief system that often serves as the determining factor in conclusions of possession, whether by an individual thinking himself or herself possessed or bothered by psychic forces, or by an investigator or other outside observer [Auerbach, p.231, 1993]."

In the West spirit possession is experienced as one of the most powerful "spiritual" experiences a person can encounter. It is the experience of being taken over by an outside force that one cannot normally perceive a force which maliciously seeks to inflict harm, pain, and torture upon its victim. Spirit possession is a subjective phenomenon which often becomes overwhelming due to the objectified inner interpretation by the victim. Dr. Beth Hedva explains, "...there's something there, but it's not what we think it is. For example, our experience of our mind's projection may be as a demon, or as an evil entity, or as a devil [Auerbach, p.270, 1993]." Most people who encounter poltergeist or PK activity in their home attribute the strange occurrences to evil spirits- evil because it is the unknown- an objective entity because the person cannot believe that the mind can affect matter. The strange phenomenon almost immediately ceases once the "agent" (the person whose mind is creating the disturbances) is identified and psychological issues addressed. Parapsychologist Jeffrey Mishlove points out that beneath the attack of entity attachment will be found something within the person which has allowed for the possession to occur [Auerbach, 1993].

The ability for spirits to possess the living receives validation through the psychic occurrences which normally accompany the possession. Spirits who communicate with the living through channelers often provide certain facts relating to specific individuals in the audience which the person channeling could not possibly have known. This extraordinary ability creates the assumption that there must be a spirit coming through from the spiritual realms; especially in cases where a deceased relative shares fact which only a family member could know. Public interest in Spiritualism and theosophy increased during World War I and World War II for it claimed to offer people the opportunity to communicate with deceased loved ones. It is rare for people who experience the channelers unique talents to consider alternative explanations. The "super-psi" or "super-ESP" hypothesis states that it is the psychic abilities of the living person (in this case the channeler) who is accessing the information (details of the deceased person's life) thus creating the impression that a discarnate soul is speaking [Auerbach, 1986]. The channeler may be unknowingly receiving the information from a living family member who would know the factual details; psi abilities are unimpeded by time and space. Recent studies into the effects of magnetic fields suggest that information may be "locked into" the environment itself [Auerbach, 1996].

Multiple personality disorder (MPD) and schizophrenia are sometimes associated with spirit possession. In MPD the victim assumes a solidified identity of two or more "persons". The personalities can be incredibly diverse claiming to be of a different gender, race, age, and family origin. IQ levels have been known to change between the different personalities; distinct personality profiles accompany each identity; and personality specific mental disorders may also occur. MPD is a severe form of psychological disassociation. A history of childhood incest, torture, or other abuses are found in 95% to 100% of MPD cases [Baldwin, 1991]. Personalities are linked to past traumatic episodes. Each discrete personality retains the person's age, characteristics, and emotional mood of the traumatic event- they are literally stuck or frozen in the incident. Schizophrenia is distinctly different from MPD. Schizophrenia is associated with psychotic symptoms and delusional thinking. Living in an inner reality where one can project their thoughts into the heads of others, that others are implanting thoughts, and/or experiencing hallucinations are typical characteristics of schizophrenia. While it may be tempting to associate multiple personalities as being discarnate spirits, the history-specific nature of each personality arising from the victim's own past makes the spirit possession hypothesis improbable

Spirit possession serves several functions in our society. For those who firmly believe that they are possessed an exorcism may be the only means by which to evoke a cure. It is often turned to as a last resort for those experiencing obstinate psychological disorders. More common it serves as a form of

psychological disassociation. Deep, troublesome psychological material need not be owned by the individual if he/she adopts the ideology of spirit possession. Professor Jeffrey Reiman who served as devil's advocate for the 1991 televised exorcism seen on 20/20 proclaimed, "It (exorcism) means that we don't have to take responsibility for the conditions in our society that breed crime and violence and other forms of evil. We can blame that on the devil as well. So, I think it is a counsel for irresponsibility [Exorcism, ABC Nightline, 1991]." Exorcism can easily be perceived as a quick fix for genuine physical, emotional, and psychological problems.

A great deal of research had been done on the effects of excessive stress. During World War II numerous soldiers developed battle neuroses, including "shell shock". Severe cases of "shell shock", caused by the horrifying realities of modern warfare, resulted in mental and emotional overload causing the victim to completely withdraw from the outside world, locking him into an inner reality of terror no longer being able to function or relate to the outer world. Drugs such as ether and methedrine were given to help create a state of intense emotional excitement which often lead to a state of emotional catharsis. Intense emotional release was the primary agent facilitating recovery. Exorcisms function in the same way. William Sargant explains, "The age-old method of curing the possessed and getting rid of undesirable entities which have invaded them follows the same sort of pattern as our drug abreaction treatments of battle neuroses. The "possessed" patient is worked up into a condition of frenzied emotional excitement, in which he expresses intense anger and fear, and this leads very often to a collapse, which may be followed by a feeling of calm and release from the "demon" which has been tormenting him, just as our patients felt released from traumatic memories [p.45, 1973]."

The underlying processes of exorcism also have much in common with Mesmerism. Mesmer's success in vanquishing unwanted behaviors and symptoms were eerily similar to that of popular exorcist Johann Gassner; yet Mesmer's method did not rely upon an attendant ritual and superstitious trappings. In 1775 a clash between Gassner and Mesmer broke out. Mesmer represented the principles of the new Enlightenment; Gassner the forces of tradition [Baldwin, 1991]. The dynamics of spirit possession exhibit peculiarities as well: "The person who fears that the Devil is near him, suddenly starts to feel with absolute certainty that the Devil is actually in him, and possessing him. Exactly the same mechanism is behind sudden feelings of possession by God, of God dwelling within one or of becoming part of God [Sargant, p.74, 1973]."

William James shared an interest in the psychology of spirit possession. In 1896 he spoke on Demonic Possession in his Lowell Lectures. Expanding on a previous lecture in which he gave 3 types of mutations of the sense of self (insane, hysteric, and somnambulistic), he added to this lecture a 4th: Spirit possession or mediumship [Baldwin, 1991]. Responding to the refusal of the scientific community to consider this 4th mutation he wrote, "That the demon-theory will have its innings again is to my mind absolutely certain [Baldwin, 1991]." James also believed that if there were entities they would have to enter through a cracked or fragmented self. More importantly James wrote how the mind is a system of ideas which manifests different structures formed upon new ideas through a process of expansionism and stagnation. He quotes Professor Leuba's conclusion that, "The ground of the specific assurance in religious dogmas is then an affective (emotional) experience. The objects of faith may even be preposterous; the affective stream will float them along, and invest them with unshakable certitude. The more startling the affective experience, the less explicable it seems, the easier it is to make it the carrier of unsubstantiated notions [Sargant, p.68, 1973]." This explanation offers deep insight into the eager acceptance of spirit possession, as well as the unfathomable powers witnessed in the exorcism ritual.

The individual's psychological processes involved with spirit possession are crucial in understanding the phenomenon. In the Spirit Releasement Therapy, Technique Manual psychological factors are discussed which inadvertently bring the notions of spirit possession and psychological explanations much closer together. Baldwin's observation that "most attached spirits do not make their presence known to the host

[Baldwin, 1991]" is indicative of how the subconscious mind typically operates. The author goes on to elaborate that entities "seem to function at the level of the subconscious [Baldwin, 1991]." A clearer directive that spirit possession is psychological in origin is found on page 219, "The attached entity is functioning within the level of the subconscious mind of the host. The urges, attitudes, likes and dislikes, appetites and behaviors of the entity seem to blend with the client's own [Baldwin, 1991]." There is no evidence which exists that indicates possessing spirits are not from the subconscious mind. Parapsychologist Loyd Auerbach explains, "There's nothing to connect the "demon" with reality, and certainly nothing that says that the new personality isn't some "monster from the Id," from the subconscious [Auerbach, p.258, 1993]."

The psychology of Carl Jung provides a spacious container for considering the psychological elements involved with spirit possession. Rather than exiling the experience to the basement of the unconscious and labeling it a neurosis, Jung affords a deeper explanation. He sees possessing spirits directly related to archetypes and warns, "The chief danger is that of succumbing to the fascinating influence of the archetypes, and this is most likely to happen when the archetypal images are not made conscious...It may even happen that the archetypal figures, which are endowed with a certain autonomy anyway on account of their numinosity, will escape from conscious control altogether and become completely independent, thus producing the phenomenon of possession [Jung, pp.323-324, 1959]." Interestingly, many of the causes for spirit possession (prolonged fatigue, harboring negative emotions, alcoholism, drug use, depression, stress) are the very causes which allow for unconscious content to "spill over" into the conscious mind. Because a great deal of unconscious material is not "owned" by the individual it will most likely be perceived as an incredibly negative existence coming from the "outside". Describing the event as demonic possession is highly accurate; except that the demon originates from within- there do appear to be times when we literally have to "battle our demons" if we like it or not.

Spirit possession and the rites of exorcism are rarely equated with altered states of consciousness (ASC). This is unfortunate because research done in the area of altered states can assist in explaining how and why spirit possession manifests. We know that change in perception, a change in perception results in a change in an individual's reality. Spirit possession is a subjective phenomenon which is experienced as taking place objectively. While the person may know the "demons" are within the body or mind, he/she is totally unidentified with them- they are experienced as alien (objective) intruders. The state of possession usually would not be a person's normal waking state, though this too can occur. Spirit possession, demons, earthbound spirits, and exorcisms are all related.

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