

## INVESTIGATING MACRO-PHYSICAL PHENOMENA

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There is an old Nasruddin teaching story whose anti-hero insists on looking for a coin under a lamp post in the street, not because that is where he dropped it (in fact, he knows that he lost it in his own unlit home), but because the light is better there. This tale is highly relevant to the question of experimental method in parapsychology generally, but especially in the case of the macro-physical phenomena with which I shall be concerned in this paper. I shall be concentrating on problems encountered in investigating some of the more large-scale effects usually associated with individual subjects, such as the movement of physical objects or sizeable deflections in experimental apparatus—what are usually known as “physical phenomena.”

These phenomena are the step-children of parapsychology, the most spectacular, the most ridiculed and happily jettisoned, the most readily dismissed and yet, ironically, in principle the most scientifically accessible manifestations of the paranormal. There is something more tangible about physical and material existence than about counter-chance bets. Either an object moved—in that case the question is whether or not someone threw it in some normal manner—or else it did not move and then the question arises why did people say it did? Were they lying? Deceived? Hallucinating? Did the recording apparatus malfunction?

The fact that so ostensibly simple a question has not been settled in well over a hundred years of experimenting, but remains a matter of fierce controversy, shows that there must be special difficulties in its resolution and I propose briefly to examine some of these.

In the investigation of the physical phenomena all possible approaches, methods and techniques need to be applied, modified or invented. There is no one single paradigm. To pursue the Nasruddin parable, we must investigate the coin where it is or where we can transport it as best we can.

In this conference we are asked to present our own approach to research and I will, therefore, illustrate this by reference to three cases in which I have been involved to a greater or lesser extent and which illustrate basic methodological issues in the three major contexts in which

these are encountered: a domestically centered poltergeist case which I regard as weak; a well-documented mediumistic case history, partly domestic, partly laboratory based, which seems to me strong and a recent laboratory investigation which has not yet been published. I am using these as illustrations of method rather than as providing evidence.

The RSPK or poltergeist case is the "Enfield" case which has created a certain amount of stir in England. Early in 1977 a poltergeist outbreak was reported in a council house in North London occupied by a Mrs. H. and her four children. There were stories of raps and noises and of objects moving about in the time-honored manner. The police and press were called in. Miss O'Keeffe, Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, suggested to Mr. M. Grosse that he might like to look into the matter and he was soon joined by Mr. G. Playfair, a writer. I was not centrally involved myself, but went to the house as a fairly frequent visitor, the first time in company with Dr. John Beloff, but subsequently on my own or with others, often when neither Mr. Grosse nor Mr. Playfair were present. I also gave some help and advice to David Robertson, then an undergraduate first year physicist intermitting for a year, who spent a fair amount of time at Enfield, among other things setting up video equipment to try to document the phenomena. After our visit to Enfield, John Beloff and I wrote to Mr. Playfair expressing our opinion that nothing had happened in our presence that required or even suggested any other than a normal explanation on that occasion, but we explicitly left open the possibility that genuine phenomena might have occurred at other times. I kept a journal of my own visits and circulated each installment within a day or so after each visit to a number of parapsychologists, including Dr. Beloff and Professor Arthur Ellison.

I wrote not only an account of what happened during each visit behaviorally, but also noted some of my own subjective and emotional reactions as honestly as possible, trying to combine the roles of observer and admitted participant. Inevitably such an account, in which one attempts to report very candidly one's own reactions, must be confidential, at least those parts of it which contain the more personal features. It is quite possible to write such a journal in parts for differential circulation, which I did. Such an account could no more be for publication in full than the partly self-analytic case history notes of an analyst in training, which to some extent they resemble. Indeed, in order to preserve as much objectivity about my own reactions as possible, I also systematically discussed these with F.M.B., an analytical psychologist, a former principal psychiatric social worker at a London teaching hospital, with special expertise in the field of gifted children and who has also done a great deal of work with actors and singers, important in a case where alleged

odd "voices" play a major part. I believe that this attempt at disciplined quasi-analytical and introspective self-monitoring is a promising adjunct to empirical investigation, particularly in RSPK cases, where one is almost invariably precipitated into a disturbed human situation in which it is impossible, even if it were desirable, to maintain impersonal neutrality. Mental states, whether immediately accessible or more hidden, almost certainly play an important part, both in the occurrence of these phenomena and also in their appraisal by investigators.

Eventually Mr. Playfair wrote a book on the subject.<sup>1</sup> I reviewed it for the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Grosse and I exchanged letters in the *Journal* concerning this review,<sup>3</sup> a correspondence that may well not yet be at an end at the time of writing. This correspondence confirmed the usefulness of the device of writing and circulating accounts at the time, since Mr. Grosse, among other things, challenged some of my recollections.

I was not in this case directly engaged in an attempt to capture any phenomena instrumentally, except for transporting apparatus to Enfield for David Robertson. I was later shown a video film in which one of the girls is seen in her bedroom by herself, bending a spoon and metal bar in an all too normal manner and jumping up and down on a bed. To me this interpretation of perfectly ordinary, conscious and rather pathetic imitative trickery is irresistible. Yet in Guy Playfair's book the reader is told that video recording apparatus was set up so that the bedroom could be monitored without the girls' knowledge, but that the attempt was "a total flop . . . Janet hopped out of bed for no apparent reason and peered through the keyhole . . . saw [the TV monitor] and realised we were playing a trick on her. So nothing happened. . . . We all finally decided that Janet had to get out of the house. . . . She left home on 16 June 1978." But I had transported Robertson plus equipment to Enfield on 15 January, 1978. When was the recording I had seen taken? Why is there no mention of it in the book or Mr. Grosse's rejoinder to my review or his rejoinder to my reply? Why does Mr. Playfair himself not take issue with me?

The point I wish to make here is not that in my view a proven example of cheating by the subject disqualifies a case from serious parapsychological consideration. On the contrary, I firmly believe that the traditional SPR methodological stance "once a fraud always a fraud" is gravely mistaken, quite apart from being logically invalid. I would like to put at the very center of the stage the burden of emotional ambivalence that is part and parcel of the lot of the would-be objective and open investigator and which must be faced and shouldered if a worthwhile piece of work is to emerge. Anyone reading the correspondence

in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* can satisfy himself of the extreme pressure under which researchers such as myself are placed, somehow to overlook all the nonsense and to admit the excellence of a poorly researched and doubtful case in which there is, nevertheless, *some* good evidence and testimony. The investigating parapsychologist has to keep an extremely uncomfortable balance between doctrinaire skeptic and dedicated devotee and it is quite difficult not to allow oneself to be coerced into either camp. It is not appropriate here to go into details of the interpersonal and inner conflicts involved, merely to draw attention to the fact that they exist and form part and parcel of the reporting of such cases and that all subsequent evaluation and testimony and, for that matter, instrumental recording must come to terms with them. Also, I have no doubt that this type of emotional pressure alienates scientifically minded would-be investigators and sympathizers.

Moreover, as I see it, the element of play-acting and trickery which is so frequently encountered in RSPK cases is not an epiphenomenon, a side-effect to be discounted and disregarded and which only a hostile and unreasonable skeptic would dwell upon; rather it is part of the important phenomenology of physical paranormality. It is to be taken seriously in its own right, if only because it is likely to shed important light on two quite vital as well as obscure issues: the psychological setting of such cases and the fundamental and so far totally unknown question of *how much* physical paranormality there is or might be in a universe in which there are physical laws or regularities.

The mediumistic case history I wish to refer to is that of Rudi Schneider, of which I have made an extensive study.<sup>4</sup> As critical a parapsychologist as J. Fraser Nicol considers that, to this day, a strong case can be made out for genuine phenomena for this mediumship.<sup>5</sup> It would be neither appropriate nor indeed possible here to review the entire history of Rudi, merely to highlight some of the features that appear to me to be of importance from the point of view of experimental method. Very briefly, Rudi was investigated in his native Austria as well as in Germany, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, France and England in the 1920s and '30s. Documentation concerning him, both in manuscript and published form, is probably unrivaled and it is this which makes possible a combined literary as well as scientific exploration. Rudi was subjected to a very great deal of experimentation, ranging from the most amateur to the most scientific that the technology of the day would permit and the scientific issues raised are still of fundamental importance as well as being unresolved.

A mediumistic case which goes on over a long period of time is intermediate between a "spontaneous" poltergeist outbreak and a system-

atic experimental investigation. It seems to me that a physical medium might well be regarded as a temporarily socialized poltergeist focus, the element of socialization consisting of the recurrent ritual of seances and the habits that grow up around the production of the phenomena. Investigators have to become partners in this ritualized performance if they are to be able to do any investigating and experimenting. The freedom they have to experiment is severely limited by the nature of the situation they are exploring, which is, of course, quite usual in the human sciences. All sorts of social and personal constraints govern, for example, a psychologist's freedom to experiment with children's performance in the classroom or a clinician's with his patients.

One important reason why Rudi was so thoroughly accessible to investigation was, no doubt, that Schrenck-Notzing, one of the noted psychical researchers of his day and a friend and colleague of Richet's, from the earliest days of Rudi's mediumship impressed both on the 11-year-old boy and his parents the importance of scientific control and proper and systematic documentation. There can be no doubt that this was greatly facilitated by the almost caste-like class distinctions of the day, which made the Herr Baron Dr. von Schrenck-Notzing's word law in the small-town artisan Schneider household. It was made plain to the boy that he must accept whatever control conditions experimenters might demand. So far as we know he never refused any conditions whatsoever.

However, at the seances which crystallized, Rudi's control "Olga" reigned supreme, speaking through his mouth in a hoarse whisper. "Olga" certainly did dictate, at any rate up to a point; she pontificated not so much concerning controls which "she" seems to have accepted much as Rudi did, but concerning social factors which might be said to affect the mood of the meeting. One of the most recurrent themes of seance accounts is "Olga's" insistence that sitters should be cheerful (*lustig*), sing, recite, chatter, laugh and generally shed some of their inhibitions concerning sobriety and dignity. "She" frequently demanded light popular music, hateful to many of the researchers.

There is good reason to suppose that a light and boisterous group mood is necessary (though certainly not sufficient) for the production of physical phenomena and this undoubtedly presents problems from a methodological point of view. Very careful prior preparation and planning are needed if a general atmosphere of uncritical jollity is not to interfere with accuracy and thoroughness of observation and experimentation. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that extraverts, who do not mind singing solos to order whilst holding hands with colleagues and strangers, necessarily make the most meticulous and scrupulous ex-

perimenters. The late Harry Price, for whom I cannot be accused of cherishing any unqualified partiality,<sup>6</sup> was by all accounts thoroughly "psi-conductive." Greater, not less care must go into the planning of apparatus, research protocol, etc., than in the context of normal laboratory research, where abandoned hilarity and excitement are not expected as part of the scientist's expertise and stock in trade. Yet, it seems almost certain that something like this needs to be created if major physical phenomena are to be hoped for. It is also plain that researchers must cooperate with whoever or whatever person produces the phenomena and relate to them in a manner likely to elicit cooperation. To do so is one of the human arts necessary for the competent pursuit of the social sciences, yet less time is devoted to this question in parapsychology than it deserves. The subjective is apt to be swept under the tables for the sake of the semblance of "scientific objectivity."

Mention has been made of the wealth of documentation in this case study. I have in my possession, through the good offices of the late Dr. Gerda Walther and the generosity of Mrs. Mitzi Schneider, Rudi's widow, the journals kept by Schneider senior, two dog-eared exercise books in fading, now archaic "Sütterlin" script, referring to 269 sittings between September 8, 1923 and January 1, 1932, signed by, so far as I could decipher, 796 different persons. It is possible to subject a record such as this to a certain amount of quantitative analysis, precisely because of the ritualized nature of the proceedings and the orderly and regular way in which records were kept in this case. Such analysis and evaluation of primary sources is, I believe, of vital importance for the progress of parapsychology, not only for elucidating past happenings, but also and above all for suggesting working hypotheses and improved records for future investigation. Such analysis should be thought of as, so to speak, paper and pencil (and possibly computer) experimentation.

It was possible to group phenomena into types. The categories I eventually chose were movements of objects, visible materializations, levitations of the medium's whole body and reports by sitters that they had felt themselves touched. These categories were in a sense dictated, or at least limited, by the records. I would very much have liked to have added reports of "cold air," for example, and some indication of the intensity and frequency of phenomena. However, the records were not sufficiently systematically explicit on these points.

By preparing tables of the data given in accounts of sittings, one can trace what types of phenomena were reported as occurring at different times, in different circumstances and places and in the absence and presence of certain persons. It becomes plain that seances were far more varied in the presence of certain sitters, that no single sitter was nec-

essary, however, for any given type of phenomenon to be reported, that the presence of no given person guaranteed any particular phenomenon and that there were answers to many other questions which it would be impossible to answer without such painstaking quantitative analysis.

It emerges clearly from an analysis of this type that quantification is one tool among others and a very useful one for promoting understanding, examining characteristics of situations and discriminating between hypotheses.<sup>7</sup>

The Schneider investigation bridges the gap between classical seance accounts of phenomena and modern instrumental recording and documentation. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the case is Dr. Eugene Osty's brilliant utilization of ostensible instrumental malfunctioning. He had devised an infra-red burglar alarm-style system as an anti-fraud precaution, guarding the objects to be moved. This device kept signaling—ostensibly malfunctioning—when nothing visible had, in fact, entered the beam and Osty realized that the interference with infra-red radiation could itself be viewed as the principal paranormal phenomenon to be studied. The episode is a clear instance of the adage that chance favors the prepared mind; a lesser man might have simply decided that the infra-red control system was too much of a complicating nuisance and discarded it. However, he used the device to obtain instrumental records of Rudi's (by that time) declining mediumistic prowess. He demonstrated his more human skills to obtain "Olga's" whole-hearted collaboration in a set-up where "she" tried to "go into the beam," increasing only on a pre-arranged signal such as a count of five or ten and where differently located beam set-ups showed that "she" could localize her interference. He also based upon these results one of the few important working hypotheses in the realm of the major physical paranormal phenomena, namely, that these phenomena are produced by a form of matter invisible in white light, but detectable by infra-red radiation.

It is one of the problems of parapsychology that there is apt to be little continuity in investigation, compared with the degree of systematic follow up, replication and cross checking in normal science. The reasons for this are various, ranging from the relative economic poverty of the subject, *via* the idiosyncratic nature of researchers, to the instability, plasticity and unreliability of the phenomena. Still, it is surprising that so little systematic effect was made to attempt to replicate the Osty<sup>8</sup> and Hope-Rayleigh<sup>9</sup> infra-red effects in the case of other claimants to physical paranormality.

Such an attempt was made, ostensibly with some success, in the third case I mentioned earlier, namely, in the course of the SPR investigation of Matthew Manning, which I convened at City University, London, in

the summer of 1978. My own primary experimental aim was to attempt to replicate Rudi Schneider's infra-red effects. The rationale was as follows: here was a young and still active psychic, who had started as a poltergeist focus, for whom very strong macro-physical phenomena had been claimed, which had by 1978 largely, if not wholly, vanished. In Rudi's case, the IR effects had persisted when gross PK movements had virtually ceased. It was (and remains) my working hypothesis that some vestigial instrumentally recordable effects linger on after overt gross movements have ceased and that such vestigial effects may well be far more abundantly distributed among the population than is usually supposed, even when no gross movements have ever been manifested. I had much earlier asked the late Mr. C. Brookes-Smith, an instrumentation engineer, to construct IR apparatus similar to that used by Osty and, fortunately, this was available when Matthew approached me in the spring of 1978 and asked to be investigated.

Dealing with a sophisticated late 20th century international psychic star subject, one, moreover, who works in the waking state, is very different from dealing with a relatively uneducated trance medium of the '20s and '30s. On the other hand, it is distinctly helpful to work with a highly intelligent subject like Matthew who can contribute his own ideas as to what he did and did not wish to do and who would leave one in no doubt as to what he did and did not like. Matthew was quite willing to try and humor me, for instance, as regards the infra-red, whilst making it plain (before it ostensibly worked) that this was of little or no interest to him. He was by this time keen to do experiments with biological targets such as plants, animals and samples of blood. He felt he had outgrown mere physical displacement of objects and that he had, in a sense, cured himself of physical phenomena by means of his rather exquisite automatic drawings, purporting to be by deceased artists. This self-observation may well be of considerable interest and could be a perfectly useful illustration of something rather like the Freudian concept of sublimation.

The investigation took place at the City University's Bio-Electricity Laboratory in the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, whose head is Professor A. J. Ellison, President of the SPR, who participated in and contributed to the experiments. It is impossible, as well as inappropriate, here to summarize activities and findings, more fully described elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> beyond illustrating the topic of the present conference, namely experimental method.

Every attempt was made to meet, as far as possible, Matthew's own wishes. In particular, three experiments were specifically planned to comply with these, namely, a "poetry experiment" in which snatches of verse



were complexly sealed into envelopes for him to illustrate psychically (A. Gregory); a "bean experiment" to see if he could affect the growth of shoots (M. P. Barrington) and a "hemolysis experiment" to replicate an effect claimed in Texas by William Braud using more sophisticated and rigorous methods (W. Byers Brown). I made an attempt in the earlier stages to adapt my infra-red experiments to Matthew's preferences for biological targets, by placing growing plants in the beam, so that any "influence" from Matthew would have to cross the beam at least partially to reach the target. Other experiments included attempts to influence a very delicate pendulum (A. J. Ellison) and the clairvoyant, or else out-of-the-body, viewing of a sequence of figures on a random event generator (A. J. Ellison).

The experiments were deliberately planned in a manner not wholly dissimilar from the organization of a primary school day in a reasonably "child centered" classroom. In other words, there were a number of activities Matthew could do as and when he felt like it, whilst others required a more rigid setting and time-table. Like all such activity methods, a great deal of preparation is needed in advance if free choice and flexibility are not to degenerate into a chaotic shambles. The most time-consuming experiments requiring the most detailed and disciplined timing and cooperation were without a doubt the hemolysis experiments involving a first experimenter (WBB) and a second experimenter (AG). These experiments (which did not yield positive results) involved a certain amount of what might be thought of as repetitive ritual, which provides both constraint and irritation on the one hand, as well as a certain sense of security and holding together of sessions on the other. At the other extreme were the "poetry" envelopes, which Matthew could do on demand.

In the event, the positive effects in the infra-red rose out of a context of hemolysis and poetry experiments and possibly Matthew's (and probably not only Matthew's!) irritation with experiments and colleagues. Whilst he was being kept waiting (which he very much disliked) for a hemolysis experiment and was attempting some poetry experiments, the interpretation of which caused a certain ill-concealed friction between various members of the investigating team, myself included, Matthew addressed himself to the digital volt meter, which signaled strong deviations from the base-line of the IR beam, whilst the chart recorder traced corresponding deflections. Nothing had happened at earlier sessions, when Matthew had consciously tried to influence *Letidium Sativum* (cress) in the beam.

The IR equipment, with its meters and chart recorder, was permanently set up during all sessions, as was audio equipment, video record-

ings being made during some of Matthew's attempts to influence the infra-red. Professor Ellison's staff, particularly Mr. D. Chapman, his chief scientific officer, changed and monitored power sources during such attempts, to make sure that the instability was not due to fluctuations of the sources. Members of the team read aloud the digital volt-meter readings which corresponded closely to the trace of the chart record. It is, therefore, unlikely that Matthew influenced meters and recorder directly and it is also, in view of the extreme care and considerable expertise of the engineers involved, reasonable to believe that the effects obtained were paranormal. It was not, however, possible to be quite certain that it was the infra-red that was affected, as opposed to the production of some paranormal electrical effects. There was, unfortunately, no mechanism for isolating the infra-red from the rest of the circuit and not time for effecting such a change.

Although in the case of the Rudi Schneider phenomena it seems most plausible to suppose that the IR was in fact affected by some proto-material substance, for the time being we cannot be certain that this was so in the case of Matthew Manning, although it seems that physical paranormality of some sort was probably present. Different modes of action are almost certainly involved in different psychokinetic effects, possibly by following some as yet obscure law of least effort.

At first sight it looked as if the record of the (ostensible) occultations of the infra-red beam in the presence of Matthew Manning could be divided into "episodes." It was hoped that these might be analyzable in terms of different factors obtaining at different times, such as who was present, what records (e.g., video, audio etc.) were in use, so that different "profiles" might be compiled for episodes in a manner analogous to the characterization of Schneider sessions. On closer analysis it turned out that division into "episodes" would impose a spurious method of classification on the records, and that even the appearance of "episodes" is absent during some sessions.

It was also found that no very close timed coincidence between audio and chart records was possible, although there is reasonable over-all correspondence. It became clear that if such timing is deemed desirable, then reliable automatic synchronizing apparatus is essential.

Although there can be no doubt that an automatic audio record is a considerable improvement on the earlier secretarial seance record, new difficulties arose. Not only is total transcription costly and time-consuming, there is, in addition to the timing problems already mentioned, the difficulty that interpretation of the audio record is often ambiguous, especially where participants spoke softly, or far away from the micro-

phone or, as often happened at the same time. Also, qualitative factors, obvious when listening to the recording, are apt to be lost in transcription. Moreover, the auditory record must be treated with considerable discrimination, since obviously not everyone will at all times accurately express exactly what he thinks the moment he thinks it! The auditory record, therefore, although it is an invaluable aid and has considerable evidential and corroborative value, must not be over-estimated as a methodological tool in interpreting data. I believe that our best hope lies in continued cooperation with psychics and/or groups of experimenters in which previously prepared systematic protocols and precisely timed automatic recordings can be combined with spontaneous interaction after the manner of a game which, from its very nature, is subject to rules.

It would seem to emerge from the brief survey of three cases characteristic of the three main types of setting—home, seance and laboratory environments respectively—that investigative and experimental methods are, at any rate for the present, similar in principle. Testimony is required not only for the domestic and seance situation, but is also appropriate for the laboratory setting. Self-analytical and introspective reports, both by subjects and experimenters, may I believe be of importance in all settings, although the difficulties here are obvious and classical; not only a buoyant mood, but also tensions between participants and their effect on the subject may well be highly relevant, if embarrassing. Instrumental monitoring, which is clearly easier the more nearly a situation approximates to a laboratory context, is at least ideally part and parcel of the investigation in all settings. Visual and audio-recordings and chart recordings where some measurable variable is being monitored are at all times desirable.

Lord Kelvin once said "When you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind."<sup>10</sup> This, as is frequently claimed, represents "an expression of the scientific attitude." It is, however, as I see it, a very partial, meagre and unsatisfactory approach to knowledge and understanding. Quantities and numbers are indeed important and indispensable aspects of its pursuit and no one engaged in parapsychological research would wish to deny this. These characteristics abstracted from the world, however, are always and at all times subject to interpretation and incorporation in some semantic fabric, however imperfect and provisional, if they are to have any relationship to human understanding. No form of record, automatic or other, can ultimately replace the selecting, conceptualizing and imaginative as well

as, for good or ill, fallible human observer and interpreter. In the last resort, the adequate pursuit and practice of science is an art.

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#### DISCUSSION

HONORTON: Having had some experience with Geller, I recognize and sympathize enormously with the problems of dealing with the constant distractions of attention. I wonder if you have any thoughts as to what function this may serve, aside from distracting the investigator's attention so that the subject can cheat. Does it induce more randomness in the environment that somehow makes for a stronger psychic function?

GREGORY: Well, I'm inclined to think that it's got nothing to do with cheating, certainly not in Matthew's case. I haven't worked with Geller, but I've got an Ingo Swann story which fits in with this. I do think distraction is important in its own right. Ingo Swann came and had lunch with me at a time when I had the infra-red apparatus set up at home. He was quite taken with it and he played with it and he got nothing. And, then, we all went in to lunch which amounted to a considerable distraction, and there was a great deflection in the infra-red. We didn't count it because it's not controlled against vibrational pressure in my home, but personally I think there was something odd about this very

sizeable deflection we got. When one thinks of a medium like Rudi Schneider, who went into a trance and had a complete secondary personality called Olga who ran things when Rudi was out for the count, I think there is something tremendously important going on. Everybody was alert and critical. There was very tight control throughout. I think deflection of conscious critical attention here and now may well be quite important. Also, every sensitive, every psychic in this field, or the secondary personality or the spirit guide, has always insisted on this business of laughter, shouting, cheerfulness, jollity, happiness, happy-go-luckiness. Now, I think that this is more than an attempt to make the observer uncritical. I think there is an attempt somehow to reach a level of arousal which, unfortunately, isn't compatible with the most critical of attention.