



Editorial: A Ghost Story

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Volume 7 Issue 2

Received Date: April 04, 2023

Published Date: April 18, 2023

DOI: [10.23880/jobd-16000233](https://doi.org/10.23880/jobd-16000233)

Editorial

Ghost doctors in white coats. The topic surprised me and it kept going around in my mind (see previous editorial: The Strange Case of Galté). The article about the Chilean lawyer Galté is illustrative and exciting. Nevertheless, it is not the only one. There is a fair amount of literature on the subject and also renowned mediums who have published books. And, in spite of the fact that rational thought based on science leads to the dismissal of these testimonies, there are several authors, some of them with the gift of being a medium Van Praahg, et al. [1], and others who worked with them Kardec [2], who have international prestige. Their texts embrace the relevance and value of “traditional” medicine, whether it be Western medicine or its variants.

Spirits...Ghosts...I was thinking of talking about viruses (both perhaps?).

Perhaps this writing would proceed more easily if the editorial line were purely literary; for example, the ghosts in literature, the specters of Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker or Greek tragedies. Nevertheless, I have decided to take the risk and permeate the membrane of the rational. In a certain way, viruses can be considered ghosts, since they are not living bodies as such. They have a very simple structure and cross the cell wall to make copies of themselves (using the machinery of their host). Like a good ghost story, viruses, not only... DO NOT have a single known origin, but many of them and they burst inopportunely into normal life. The ghostly imprint of viruses has not, however, prevented us from dealing with epidemics in an increasingly efficient manner (from the Spanish Flu to Covid-19 version BA.5 Omicron) [3]. And through the timeline, viruses have been grouped according to their genetic material, their appearance, and their method of replication. But let us hide the viruses...for a

while, or let's leave them in the realm of ghosts, if I may use the term.

The occult and medicine have often intertwined. And the fascination for *matter versus spirit* interaction dates back to a couple of centuries ago, where medicine had certain quirks of its time [4]. If we take the Victorian century, for example, the 19th century, a seance was perhaps safer than undergoing surgery. A surgical procedure could verge on butchery (that is at least until asepsis, disinfection, potable water systems and others were introduced, during that same 19th century).

There were physician-philosophers during that time who emerged with the skill and inspiration to try to bridge both worlds, like skilled surfers on a mysterious wave that could easily drown. Drowning by discredit. It happened, to take an interesting example, to the inventor of Mesmerism [5]: Franz Antón Mesmer (1734-1815) [6], who believed in animal magnetism. He posed that each human had a magnetic fluid, an active “energy” that allows the body to function, and if it became imbalanced, it caused diseases. First, Mesmer healed with magnets and then with his hands (the invisible flow passed through). Unfortunately, the Doctor's quest did not end too well for him. Although he did have his period of success and fame, (curing the so-called *nervous weaknesses*), it was impossible to prove the theory of the invisible magnetic fluid, which seemed more like ghost hocus pocus [7]. Despite all this, the experience of this German doctor brought the power of the mind to the forefront, and was an ascending step in the union of both worlds (years later, when hypnosis appeared, his name would enjoy certain vindication) [8].

However, there were always disputes between doctors who called spiritualist-type medicine *pseudoscience*, or flat out claimed it was downright dangerous. On the other hand, there were radical spiritualists and others with political

savvy (sound familiar?). The latter professed that Spiritism was a valid interpretation of the world, and that it should also...commence its scientific period.

Then the story flowed like a bubbling waterfall; the development of hypnosis, the collective unconscious of Jung and others. Changes and mutations occurred. Indeed, the current holistic concept drinks from many sources, some active whose spectrum is traceable, and others that have remained immobile in the museum. Make a list, dear reader: animal magnetism, hypnosis, extrasensory perception (ESP), and psychotronics, NLP or the popular Coach. Dare to look for origins and similarities [9], let yourself be surprised..., the same with a name change? All of the above have at least one common word: Spirit.

Marilyn Rossner [10] is a psychologist and educator; she is also a famous medium for her past international predictions (the fall of the Berlin wall). She works by combining many disciplines, such as yoga and education. In her book, *"Do You Have an Invitation to Go to Heaven?"*, she talks about her gift (the ability to communicate with ghosts) [11], about her beginnings as a repository of skills that most do not understand and that have also caused her to be rejected by people. To my amazement, in her book, she also speaks about heavenly hospitals. The medium also says in her book that very soon we will be able to use technology to see the spirit world. (Perhaps if Mesmer's ghost communicated with a medium today, he would surely ask for a reprint of his writings.)

Viruses, of course, are not ghosts. Their behavior has given me an idea; an analogy for this editorial. The viruses were isolated and discovered by the Russian virologist Dimitri Ivanovski [12] searching for the disease that affected tobacco plants in 1887, however, their presence on the planet dates back to much earlier times. At the end of writing this article, the Google algorithm showed me a sudden news item; the first case of virus overlap published in the Journal of Infection reviewed in the Spanish newspaper El País. A 36-year-old Italian man had been infected with 3 viruses at the same time: Covid 19, Monkeypox and HIV. No, it is not a ghost story or a work of literary fiction, but reality. But, of course, we have the advances and technology to face it. There is a lot of technology that has mutated for the benefit

of human beings.

There are also digital viruses, but that's another story..

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