

“Res Nullius non res Incorporales?”

“If something is intangible, is it therefore inconsequential?” That is an old Roman point of debate oratory, which travels hand in hand with “Sinistra Manu,” literally, “From the left hand,” or more correctly, “not from the side of strength.”

OK, what does this have to do with paranormal investigations?

Well, pretty much everything. Let’s take a simple example.

If you are in a castle in Scotland and catch an EVP that is speaking French, what might that imply?

If a ghost speaks a language foreign to the native culture, we can assume several things. First, he is not a Gaelic speaker, which would not be a surprise; nor might he be an English speaker, which would put him in a time reference in a relatively modern era.

A French speaker in Scotland would not be unusual, but without a linguist to determine the time period of his style of speech, we would only be guessing at his age, something like hearing Middle English, we would note that it is strange to our ears, but only someone trained as a linguist will be able to determine the exact time period.

Would a spirit haunting a castle in Scotland speak only Gaelic? If high borne from the time of Prince Charles, would he not speak French? Perhaps we could expect only Latin, the “linguistic currently of the time for over a thousand years,” if the ghost were from the early days of Scot history.

Ghost’s as such are spirits and in theory should be able to speak in whatever language they wish. If their intent is to communicate, then why not in modern English to English speaker, French to a Frenchman or German to a German. Theoretically, the spirit should exist in more or less a present state, which is where he should be if we are recording him, the assumption being that if it is attempting to communicate with this world today, he would speak in our vernacular, unless doing otherwise is strictly for effect, remembering that ghost do sometimes lie!

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If you have a ghost that speaks in the vernacular of a thousand years ago, he or she is probably a trace memory or “residual ghost”, the kind of spirit that replays the same scene again and again, who is unaware of time, place or personalities around them at present and who is not interactive with us to any degree. Ruling out that kind of spirit, what we have left is a ghost, who can communicate in our own tongue, but we have to be conscious that a ghost can do and say things for effect... or to mislead.

Of course, this kind of logic may escape some. It is literally out of “left field,” and served up from the weaker side of what otherwise should be logical scientific thought. But it is not inconsequential, even as it may not be tangible, as the topic header suggests. Properly addressed, this is the stuff we study, pure and simple.

Think of it this way... have you ever heard of chaos theory? The name "chaos theory" comes from the fact that the systems that the theory describes are apparently disordered, but chaos theory is really about finding the underlying order in apparently random data. For example the flapping of a single butterfly's wing today produces a tiny change in the state of the atmosphere. Over a period of time, what the atmosphere actually does diverges from what it would have done. So, in a month's time, a tornado that would have devastated the Indonesian coast doesn't happen. Or maybe one that wasn't going to happen does.

Another system in which sensitive dependence on initial conditions is evident is the flip of a coin. There are two variables in a flipping coin: how soon it hits the ground, and how fast it is flipping. Theoretically, it should be possible to control these variables entirely and control how the coin will end up. In practice, it is impossible to control exactly how fast the coin flips and how high it flips. It is possible to put the variables into a certain range, but it is impossible to control it enough to know the final results of the coin toss.

If, I've lost you, my apologies. Simply put Chaos Theory is right at home in paranormal research. In my lifetime, we have seen the pendulum swing from the demand of science for the parapsychologist to provide empiric proof, the ability to reproduce on demand a given paranormal event under controlled conditions, to science now debating the number of alternative universes, which is purely theoretical and hopelessly restricted by that same empiric proof. While many find that a hopeful sign for the future, I find it hopelessly devoid of logic, as I understand it.

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Chaos Theory is still in its relative infancy in science; chaos has been used to explain how an abnormal heartbeat is actually chaotically regular, is right at home in demonstrating the mechanics of fluid dynamics and a host of others seemingly unrelated topics. It is in that relationship of seemingly unrelated items to logical connection that we see the future of studying things that go bump in the night.

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest that chaos theory explains it all, but rather that everything we have failed to explain, could indeed be relative and connected in some odd way, as predicted by Chaos. Logically, the flap of a butterfly wing half way around the world, should not have consequence in the ecology of another, never mind cause a major meteorological event anywhere, yet it does, if Chaos Theory is correct.

So, at least in theory, any number of isolated events could be the primary cause of a paranormal event, no matter how illogical it may seem at first glance.

Here is an inside look at one specific spot on the map that we have all heard of over the last few years. Remember the little ranch in Utah where everything seems turned inside out; the infamous Skinwalker Ranch? For those of you who don't know, this is the home of every odd, paranormal or unexplained phenomenon, from UFOs to Bigfoot, Cryptid dogs and little green men, holes that open and close at will with a host of characters scattered over a location half the size of my little dog ranch. People have written about Skinwalker, books have been published and a host of conferences have discussed what is going on there. The folks who now own the ranch, after several years of research now claim that the activity has abruptly stopped, but insiders have another story to tell.

It seems the powers that be, moved several large pieces of drilling equipment onto the site, along with two “pounders” normally used to put large pilings into place. The machinery has now been reported in use, albeit sporadically at various locations on the property.... But why? Well the theory is that the sound of drilling, thumping and pounding has been found to be a causative factor in the other phenomenon. Make enough noise and that cryptids appear, the UFOs begin to fly by, and all sorts of other phenomenon -- even the common haunting of the ranch house begins.

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Odd? Not really! A long time ago in the Hudson River Valley in Orange County, near the little town of Pine Bush, there was a huge UFO flap. At the time, I was there and while I can't tell you those lights in the sky were UFOs I can tell you that the identification of a Lemur several times the normal size in an environment that should not support such a creature, became common. One of the other phenomenons to be heard here was the constant low toned thumping, just like someone using a pile driver to drill a well that continued unabated for years. No matter how often we flew over the Shawangunk mountains, we could see no drilling activity, but back on the ground the sound was unmistakable. This is not a claim from some author's work of fiction, I was there, I heard it and it is no surprise therefore that I see the obvious connection between Skinwalker in Utah and Pine Bush in New York. While no one is saying it, I think that is the Chaos Theory at work; two unrelated series of events of equal, multiple-strangeness, playing out years apart and half a continent away from each other, with one, not so common link to the same unmistakable conclusion for anyone close enough to see it.

So, at this point you might well be asking, “What does he want me to do about it?” The answer is simple... Observe, record, note and report what you find. To this day Skinwalker to many is an isolated case, when in reality, there is a place of similar size and activity right here in Texas, another that I know of in Oregon, another in Montana, and yet another in Arizona... not to mention again, New York, Maine, and North Carolina. These are unrelated as much by our lack of correlation of data as anything else. Once you observe and share the data, the picture is no longer isolated, which is the mainstay of Chaos Theory!

Am I sure that the Chaos Theory is the key to explaining the unexplained? No, but I know that until we do a better job at mapping what we study and finding other places similar to it, the entire field will be limited to a long list of unrelated events with similar results. One person, in one old house, reporting a haunting is nothing unusual, five becomes interesting; if all the facts suggest similar phenomenon, then a hundred is the beginning of a study and is no longer the isolated random event. Over my lifetime, we have grown in numbers and the field is now filled with eager volunteers. Once properly trained, it will be possible to not only collect but to extrapolate data from the otherwise random events into an argument for a universal explanation of how and why the phenomenon exists.

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Yes, we are still following the path set for us, the pursuit of data that can once and for all prove or disprove the survival of human consciousness after death, but along that same path, we might be able to ascertain the answers to even more intricate questions. This is not something that will come from a government sponsored lab; it will come from field work by volunteers who are, many times, more dedicated than their lettered counterparts, or at least that is what I argued at Duke a lifetime ago.

Am I sure that the answer can be found in Chaos? No, in fact the longer I work in our field, the less sure I am of many things, but I can attest to the truth that in numbers there are remarkable coincidences that tied together seem to hint at a universal law. It is all very much like our original argument concerning the ghost who only speaks in a foreign language. Alone, that fact is truly anecdotal and proves nothing, but when taken as a small part of the whole, we can predict his or her voyage to this place and time, simply by comparing that phenomenon to similar cases over protracted periods within superior numbers. We can be comfortable with a statement that. “Ghosts” can communicate in many languages, dependent on the audience and effect. If you have a ghost who only speaks his native tongue, he is most likely a residual spirit, stuck in time and space and not communicating verbally at all. We come to such a conclusion only after several hundred years of recorded contact with a plethora of spirits who exhibit similar activities.

There are no hard and fast rules, but there are some good overall assumptions that can be made in the field, again based on countless previous investigations. Are they hard and fast rules? No! But they are there to assist the field investigator to come to a reasonable conclusion. We are not always right. In fact I’d be happy if I could say my average is a solid 65%; but we are learning, and as long as we take the time to observe, record, note and report, what we learn now can be built upon later.