

The Vardøgr, Perhaps Another Indicator of the Non-Locality of Consciousness

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Abstract—The author's direct personal experience, in two episodes, with the rather obscure, spontaneous, paranormal phenomenon of the vardøgr is presented in detail. Condensed accounts of several other cases, gradually collected by the author after the first episode, are presented, with concluding commentary about possible useful implications.

Keywords: vardøgr—spirit predecessor—forerunner—pre-arrival—non-locality—apparition—bilocation—doppelgänger—double—phantom double

Introduction

Anyone who has had a paranormal experience is changed by it, and that is roughly one of every two Americans (Burton, cited in McManus, 1988: 65; Hansen, 2001: 15). Perhaps the most dramatic effect on one's personality and worldview is produced by personally experiencing the now well-known NDE (near-death experience). This effect is typically an immediate eradication of the fear of death and a markedly increased appreciation for all aspects of life and for one's fellow men. The vardøgr phenomenon does not produce psychological effects as dramatic as those produced by the NDE, but those persons directly involved are forever convinced that a purely materialistic worldview is untenable.

The Phenomenon

Vardøgr (say, vard-deh-ay'-grr) is a Norwegian word defined as "premonitory sound or sight of a person before he arrives". You will not find this word in a typical English dictionary, nor even in a typical unabridged English dictionary. The above *formal* definition came from a physically remote Norwegian-English dictionary, and even the act of uncovering that small piece of information required the persistent assistance of a dedicated research librarian named Joan Greenberg. The source of the stated phonetic equivalent of the word (author's best effort) was a very helpful telephone receptionist at the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, DC.

Other expressions for the phenomenon that I have uncovered over the years are "spiritual predecessor" for the sound/image itself, or "pre-arrival" for the

overall phenomenon. Please also see *Keywords*. The fact that the only clear-cut but little-known term for the phenomenon is Norwegian is an indication that the subject phenomenon is barely acknowledged in the U.S.

A far more familiar foreign expression, found in most English dictionaries, is the German word *doppelgänger*, literally "double goer", meaning, "a ghostly double or counterpart of a living person". Actually, a *vardøgr* appears to be a specific variation of the *doppelgänger* phenomenon. Both terms can be subsumed under the general heading "apparitions of the living". Another well-known apparition of the living is the so-called crisis apparition where, typically, the image and/or voice of a family member or loved one is sensed by someone at a moment of life-threatening crisis for the former. The term *crisis apparition* is often extended to include such apparitions seen at the moment of death of the former, or very soon thereafter.

An essential difference between the *doppelgänger* and the *vardøgr*, however, is that the *vardøgr* apparently most often presents as only typical sounds of the agent's arrival (generally not including his voice), or sometimes perhaps as just a smell or fragrance, rather than as a visual image. As such, the *vardøgr* presents as a range of effects, as does the ADC ("After-Death Communication", Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1995, in subtitle), whereas a *doppelgänger* seems to be solely a visual image. Incidentally, I have never personally read an account where a *vardøgr* presented as a smell or fragrance. However, other commentators indicate that this variation does occur.

I don't know why there are so few written accounts of the *vardøgr* phenomenon in English-language literature, and especially modern accounts, say, in the latter half of the 20th century. I do not have the facility to conduct a foreign-language literature search. With so many people now coming forward with accounts of NDEs, OBEs (out-of-body experiences), ADCs, alien abductions, past-life memories, etc., the paucity of written *vardøgr* experiences leads me to believe that it is a relatively rare phenomenon. Of course, flying in the face of that conclusion is the fact that the Norwegians have a well-established word for it. However, what I do know is that collecting the small number of written accounts that I do have at hand has taken considerable effort over nearly 20 years. Perhaps the phenomenon is less common in the English-speaking world (more commentary later). The rarity of the phenomenon (also more commentary later) is noted elsewhere (Calkins, 1982: 12; Shepard, 1991).

Two Personal Experiences

I joined the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE) in 1991 at the recommendation of Ian Stevenson, M.D., a longtime member of the Society, and the internationally known, foremost researcher of the phenomenon of reincarnation. My own strong interest in reincarnation had previously led me to contact Ian to express my admiration for him and his work, and also to obtain information on other publications, etc. by him that I had not uncovered in my

own searching to that time. Consequently, as will be seen, my first personal experience with the vardøgr phenomenon occurred about a decade before I joined SSE and, incidentally, also well before I had any interest in the phenomenon of reincarnation.

In the narration of my two experiences, which follows, I have attempted to supply all of the pertinent details that I could. I have noticed that the few written accounts that I have been able to find provide rather skimpy details, which can make it difficult for future researchers to assess how the phenomenon may actually operate. I suspect that many significant details, originally provided by the experiencers, may have fallen victim to normal editing for publication. I hope to avoid that limitation in relating my own experiences, especially considering the nature and intent of the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*.

At the end of the 1970s, I was a dedicated R&D (research and development) mechanical engineer and licensed Professional Engineer, in mid-career, with a wife, two teen-aged kids, and a little house in the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA, where my wife and I still reside as "empty nesters". At that point in my life, I had only a few interests beyond family, career, and technology, primarily related to the shooting sports and fishing.

I was working for a company in Phoenixville, PA, nearly 30 miles due west of my home in Willow Grove, PA. It was springtime 1979, or perhaps 1980. I did not make a written record at the time of this first experience because, at that time, I had essentially no background or specific interest in parapsychology, and no clear idea what the experienced phenomenon was, except for its being *very strange*. The portion of my daily commute (via private automobile) closest to my home (about 20 miles worth) was on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, a well-known, high-speed toll-road. There is a reason for all this detail, as will be seen shortly.

On the day in question, I was driving home alone, although I frequently car-pooled with a colleague. It was a beautiful, warm spring day, and the pressures of my job were quite low at the time, so I was very relaxed. Also, at that time, I had been working for that employer for 3 or 4 years, and thus was very familiar with the route. Finally, traffic was light that day.

Anyone who has driven under similar conditions, i.e., an extremely familiar route, under very relaxed driving conditions, is familiar with a specific state of mind that often occurs, best described as "autopilot", a distinct, altered state of consciousness. In other words, driving an automobile is almost like riding as a passenger on a train or a bus, except the view is a lot better. Under such conditions, the mind wanders easily to the scenery and surroundings, and to day-dreaming. I've always had a strong tendency to daydream when physical and mental circumstances will permit it. Daydreaming also often served me well in my R&D pursuits. Interestingly, ADCs also often occur under exactly these same driving conditions (Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1995: 29, 39).

In any event, I came to my normal exit on the turnpike, at Willow Grove, and drove the half-mile or so final leg of the commute, over local town streets. I parked in my normal spot in the driveway in front of our house, took my

briefcase and sports jacket out of the car, and entered through the front doorway, which was always unlocked in the daytime (with two teen-aged children running in and out constantly).

My wife was at her usual spot in the kitchen preparing supper. Up to this point, it was a scenario that had occurred thousands of times before during our marriage of almost 20 years. She heard me come in, came out of the kitchen, and asked, "What are you doing coming in again?" I answered with my own question, something like, "What are you talking about?" She replied, "You came in about 10 minutes ago and just went upstairs". At this point, I began to get somewhat irritated with her seemingly irrational questions and statements, and said basically, "Hon, what are you talking about? I just now shut down the car in the driveway, and came in!"

She responded with mounting confusion and agitation, insisting that I'd come in a little while earlier and had simply gone upstairs. Then to support her contention, she called upstairs to our son, who was in his bedroom with the door closed, and asked, "[Son's nickname], did you hear your father clump up the steps a little while ago?" He responded with a muffled, "Yeah, Mom".

At this point, my wife became visibly upset and insisted that I check all the upstairs rooms for "the intruder", which I did dutifully, if somewhat grudgingly. After a full inspection, including closets and under beds, I reported back to her. There was no one upstairs except our son.

In defense of my wife (and for my own marital well-being), she is one of the most practical, level-headed people I know. I have never known her to imagine things, hallucinate, or behave in an unusual way—*never!* Further, nothing even remotely like this had ever happened to either of us before. The same goes for our son.

After she calmed down, we talked about what had happened. Except for my initial irritation with her, I had been calm through the whole episode. After all, she had been the one who had the strange experience, not me. She told me that, in my pre-arrival, I had arrived in a seemingly normal way, because she had apparently heard me come in through the front doorway and had looked out from the kitchen to see me. She said that I looked completely normal, at least physically. Interestingly, she didn't mention that my clothing was any different in my pre-arrival from what I was actually wearing; so if there was a difference, it wasn't obvious to her.

What *was* obvious to her was my atypical behavior. During my pre-arrival, when she looked out from the kitchen at me, she told me that I had simply looked back with a neutral expression on my face and walked upstairs, apparently still carrying my briefcase and sports jacket (although she didn't comment on those details either). In any event, such behavior is totally unlike me. Like most people, I'm a creature of habit. When I arrive home, after being away for the day, working or otherwise, and my wife is there, and not out shopping or at her part-time job, my normal pattern is to greet her with, "Hi, Hon! Howya doin'?" Then I give her a little kiss on the cheek, or if she's

working at the sink or stove and has her hands full, a kiss on the back of the neck. It's a little ritual that many couples engage in. Accordingly, during my pre-arrival, she had apparently initially assumed that I had had an especially difficult day and was preoccupied in deep thought.

Well, that's essentially all there was to it. The only other aspect is that, after my inspection of the upstairs of our house, our son, curious about all the commotion, was an eyewitness to the candor of the dialogue between my wife and me. And, as should be obvious to the reader, when my wife saw "me" come in the first time (we didn't know the word *vardøgr* then), I was apparently several miles away, driving alone, at about 60 miles per hour.

For several years following this first experience, none of us, neither I, my wife, nor our son, had any idea that such a thing had ever happened to anyone else, much less knowing that the phenomenon actually had a name. In fact, to this day, even though I have told numerous people close to me of my two experiences, I have never heard another firsthand *verbal* account of the *vardøgr* phenomenon from any other experimenter, nor even a secondhand *verbal* account! This would seem to support the rarity of the phenomenon (noted earlier), as indicated by its relative obscurity, and the very limited number of written accounts available. Accordingly, it would seem that the phenomenon is at least as rare worldwide as the *spontaneous* memories of a past life in children, studied by Ian Stevenson; but perhaps not as rare as the still-baffling phenomenon of spontaneous human combustion (SHC). Indeed, although I have seen those two aforementioned phenomena covered numerous times in various modern television documentaries, I have never seen coverage of the pre-arrival phenomenon, nor heard the word *vardøgr* in that same context. Of course, that doesn't mean that such coverage has not occurred.

By comparison, I have personally heard several verbal accounts by the actual experiencers of the very common ADC phenomenon, experienced by at least 20% of Americans (Guggenheim & Guggenheim, 1995: 21). Indeed, I had a very vivid ADC experience myself, which I still remember distinctly after more than 36 years.

Telling people close to me of my first pre-arrival experience eventually bore useful fruit. One of those people was a trusted co-worker, who repeated my story at home to his wife and her mother, who lived with them. Several years later he gave me a newspaper clipping that his mother-in-law, remembering my story, had kindly passed along for my benefit. Unfortunately, I have only the clipping (which is in front of me as I write this), but not its specific source. However, I suspect from its "style" that it was taken from *The National Enquirer* or an equivalent tabloid—not the best source to quote in this current context. However, it was priceless to me at the time, because it was from that clipping that I first learned the word *vardøgr*. Finally, I had a name for the phenomenon, which could help immeasurably in my search for answers. The heading of the very brief article states: "Top researchers claim: You May Have a Ghostly Double . . . And It Gets Where You're Going Before You Do".

Thus, armed with a name for the phenomenon, and very little free time to research it (this was the “pre-Internet era”), I found my first *formal* definition of the word *vardøgr* (Shepard, 1991) at a public library close to my then place of employment (and definitely *with* the help of the reference librarian). Sometime later, and only by chance, I came across my first written account of the phenomenon, which turns out to have been a rather atypical one (Edsall, 1958, cited in Calkins, 1982: 175, 176), presented below. Nevertheless, it was comforting to have, at last, a detailed account of someone else's similar experience.

Also, the article (in *The National Enquirer?*) stated that the phenomenon is apparently relatively common among the Norwegians, those of Norwegian ancestry, and, to a lesser degree, the Scots, although why these two ethnic groups should be more prone to exhibit the phenomenon is anybody's guess. I am unaware of any significant Norwegian or Scottish ancestry in either of my parents' families.

My second *vardøgr* experience occurred nearly a decade later. At the time, I was writing what turned out to be an unpublished manuscript on the topic of reincarnation. It was in that manuscript that I first committed to writing both of these *vardøgr* accounts. My purpose in including them there was to reinforce the position that our understanding of reality is very incomplete, and that the reality of reincarnation was, even then, far better supported by scientific evidence than was the strange *vardøgr* phenomenon, which I had then directly experienced twice. Accordingly, I kept accurate notes on the second experience, versus just the memories of the three people involved in the first.

The date was Wednesday, August 31, 1988, 8 (or 9) years after the first occurrence. This time the situation, the percipient (viewer), and the locale were very different. But three aspects were consistent. My image was seen by someone who knows me well, it disappeared when out of view of the percipient, and, once again, I was driving at the time my image was seen.

I learned about it the day after it happened. On Thursday morning, September 1, when I arrived at work, and almost before I could get settled in my office, the percipient, a close colleague from our department, cornered me and said something like, “Dave, what the hell were you doing walking around in the parking lot yesterday morning in a ‘monkey-suit’ (slang for a formal business suit)?” Something in my head said, “Uh-oh!” I said, “Pete [not his real name], have a seat”, and I shut my office door to give us privacy.

At first, he probably thought I was going to tell him to keep what he had seen to himself, because presumably I had been involved in some private business activity, such as an interview with a new prospective employer, and I was anxious to keep that information from our current employer. This was an especially valid assumption based on my attire when he had seen “me” the day before.

It might help here to explain that normal dress at that time, in our technically oriented department of about 30 people, typically consisted of open collars and

slacks for most, and ties and dress shirts for senior and management-level people like myself, with their sports jacket on a hanger on the back of their office door. So when someone showed up in a “power suit” (again, formal business attire, such as a banker might wear), the usual wisecrack was something like, “Did you get the job?” or, “Good luck on the interview”. On the other hand, if someone showed up in “grubbies” (old jeans and a tired shirt) when there was furniture or equipment to be moved, or an especially dirty job to be done, the appropriate quip was, “Oh, I see you’re going to do some *real* work today!” The reason for all this detailed discussion of customary office dress will become obvious shortly.

Pete wasn’t really prepared for what came next. Fortunately, he and I knew each other well, having worked together and traveled together extensively on some major engineering projects. Without this camaraderie between us, he would have certainly had even greater difficulty than he did with what I had to say. The privacy of my office also helped.

First, I asked him for details of what he had seen and experienced. His narrative was basically as follows: Per his recollection, the time of the incident had been somewhere between 9:30 and 10:00 A.M. the day before—that time is very significant. He had been chatting with another colleague in that colleague’s cubicle, which was at ground level, and had a large, continuous window (spanning all cubicles on that wall). That window overlooked our (also) ground-level parking lot, which was at the rear of the company’s building, as was the “Research and Engineering Department”, where all three of us worked.

While chatting, he happened to glance out at the parking lot and saw “me” walking across the lot, toward the building’s rear door. The fact that he was convinced that it *was* me will be verified in just a moment. The colleague with whom Pete was chatting was unaware of what Pete was seeing, because that colleague had his back to the window, and Pete was looking over that colleague’s shoulder at “me”. Pete didn’t say anything to the other colleague about seeing “me”, so once again, there was only one percipient who saw “me”, i.e., there was no corroborating eyewitness.

Even though Pete thought that he was looking at the real, physical me, there were three things wrong with the picture, and all three of them apparently registered on him, at least subconsciously. As a result, his automatic impulse was to rush out to the hallway leading from our department to the rear door of the building, where I would have to enter, in order to be the first to intercept and tease me. In our “shop”, any opportunity to “rattle the cage” of a co-worker was seized upon with enthusiasm and devilish glee.

The three things wrong with what he saw were: the time of day, the direction I was walking, and my clothes. My appearance in the parking lot, walking toward the rear entrance between 9:30 and 10:00 A.M., meant that I was arriving 1½ to 2 hours late—very unusual for me. Further, I was walking toward the entrance from a direction which made it appear that I had parked my car somewhere other than my assigned parking space. Finally, Pete, who was viewing me in profile,

saw that I was wearing a dark blue business suit and a white shirt. He couldn't see the color of my tie because I was in profile. I should have been in dress slacks, shirt, and tie, with a sports jacket over one arm, and my briefcase in my other hand—my typical summer outfit. After all, it was the hottest part of the summer—a good time to find any excuse to shed my jacket.

Triggered by my unusual behavior and appearance, Pete dashed out to be the first colleague to get a shot at me. But I was nowhere to be found, not in the hallway, not in the parking lot, nowhere! And, believe me, given how the back entrance to our building was situated, there was nowhere I could have hidden from him, even if that had been my intention. Bewildered, and more than a little disappointed that his plot had been foiled, he wandered back into our department area and asked our department secretary if I was supposed to be at work that day. She said, "No", that instead I had scheduled to be out the entire day to attend a funeral (actually a memorial service).

Truly perplexed by this time, and trying to understand what was happening, he went back outside to the parking lot, just to see if my car was in its regular spot—even though he had just been told that I was not supposed to be there; even though he had seen me walking in from the wrong direction, even though I had just "disappeared". Of course, my parking space was empty, so there was nothing else he could do but wait impatiently for my return the following day.

My side of the episode was decidedly less noteworthy, and I will relate it to you, as I did to him, during our private discussion, that following day.

When he finished telling his side, I said, "Pete, I think I know what happened, and it's not the first time". Then I went on to tell my side, interspersed with the story of the earlier episode where my wife was the percipient, plus what little I had learned about the vardøgr phenomenon, via limited library research, etc.

My side was essentially as follows: I had indeed attended a memorial service for a favorite aunt, my mother's sister, who had passed away a short time earlier. It was by no means a tragic death, but rather a merciful passing. She was full of years, in her early eighties, and had spent her last few years nearly non-responsive, bed-ridden, in a nursing home. So my mood was one of muted sorrow, and anticipation of seeing family members whom I had not seen for some time.

The service was scheduled for 11:00 A.M., about 25 miles from our home. The plan was that my wife and I would leave home at about 9:30 A.M., pick up my mother at her apartment about 8 miles away, at about 10:00 A.M., and then drive to the service. We left our home a few minutes late, say 9:35 A.M., and when we stopped to pick her up, I checked my watch to be sure we weren't running late. It read 10:01 A.M.

The first 5 miles to my mother's apartment were over exactly the same route that I used to commute to work every day, as I had for the past 7+ years. Sound familiar? At 9:35 A.M., rush hour was over and traffic was light, as was my general mood. Sound familiar? However, this time I believe that my wife, in the passenger seat beside me, was the trigger for the phenomenon, instead of being

the percipient, as before. About 2 miles into the trip, she said, "Dave, you poor thing, even on a day when you don't have to work, here you are, driving over the same road", as a commentary on the route we were taking to pick up my mother. Then she fell silent. Naturally, her comment made me think about work and the fact that I wouldn't be there that day. In fact, the closest I ever got to the plant that day was about 5 miles away. In other words, unlike in the previous episode, my image got there, but I never did!

And, as you may have guessed, because we were on our way to attend a memorial service at a church, my attire was appropriate for the occasion. I was wearing a dark blue, pinstriped suit, with a white shirt and a dark red tie. But, for what it's worth, on the drive to my mother's apartment, the suit jacket was hanging on the hook behind the driver's seat; I was not actually wearing it, as my image had, because of the hot day.

The day after the conversation between Pete and me about the episode, I brought in the scanty information that I'd been able to collect on the vardøgr phenomenon. I made copies for Pete just to help him realize that I had not played some complex practical joke on him—a reasonable suspicion on his part—and that he was not losing his mind.

He and I had a little fun with the experience over the next few weeks. Every time he would see me in the plant, he would ask, "Is that really you?" My programmed response was to stop, pinch myself on the arm, and reply, "Yep".

Condensed Vardøgr Accounts by Others

The first two accounts were taken from a collection in a book chapter entitled "Apparitions of the Living" (Peach, 1991). There are four accounts in all in that chapter, the two presented here clearly describing the vardøgr phenomenon. It is interesting that the author of the book, apparently a British woman, presented the four accounts together, with no distinction between them, nor any mention of the term vardøgr. The other two accounts presented are not of the pre-arrival type. As noted, the book was published in 1991 (in London). This may give the reader some further indication of just how obscure the word vardøgr really is!

In the introduction to the chapter containing the four accounts is the following significant statement: "Often there is some evidence of physical debility and/or a state of altered consciousness on the part of the agent at the time of his appearance, and frequently an emotional link of some kind exists between the agent and percipient." As may be seen from the details of my own two experiences, both of these factors were indeed present.

The first account (Salter, 1934, cited in Peach, 1991: 22), condensed for brevity, is as follows (*italics used in these first two accounts are added by your current author*):

In 1918, Dorothy Scott, a nurse suffering from anemia and weakened by influenza, was traveling in Great Britain to make a *surprise* visit to her home, about 5 miles from the nearest train station. She was especially anxious to see

her sister and that sister's three children, who were staying there. Halfway on the walk from the train station to her home, she sat down on a rock to rest. In a dreamy state, owing to her condition, she pictured herself in her home and as being seen by her 3-year-old nephew, Jack. Dorothy was Jack's godmother as well as his aunt, and was very close to him.

Jack told his mother, Alice, that he had just seen his Aunt Dorothy, but she was not there, of course. An hour later, when Dorothy actually arrived, no adult initially believed Jack's second report that she was there.

The second and earlier account (Wyld, approx. 1886, cited in Peach, 1991: 25), apparently from the mid- to late-19th century, and again from Great Britain, concerns a Mrs. L. This charitable woman spent most of her time visiting the poor. Walking home one day, feeling cold and tired, she longed to be at home warming herself at the kitchen fire. At the same time that she was having this wish, she was seen to enter the kitchen of her home by *two* household servants. Going up to the fire, she held out her hands and warmed herself. The servants then saw that she was wearing green kid gloves. Then she suddenly disappeared before their eyes. Greatly alarmed, the servants ran to Mrs. L.'s mother, who, although concerned herself that something was wrong, tried to calm them (and herself) by reminding them that Mrs. L. always wore black gloves, so the image could not have been hers.

A half-hour later, Mrs. L., wearing green kid gloves that she had bought on the way home, actually entered the kitchen and went to the fire to warm herself.

From another source (Edsall, 1958, cited in Calkins, 1982: 175, 176), an importer named Erkson Gorique was visiting Norway for the first time to buy Norwegian china and glass. At his hotel, he was recognized by the desk clerk, based on a visit several months earlier. After several moments of embarrassed confusion between the two men, the clerk wisely and tactfully apologized for his "mistake".

The next day, Gorique went to see a wholesale dealer, a Mr. Olsen. Olsen also expressed his pleasure in seeing his visitor again, after several months. Now totally bewildered, Gorique told Olsen his side of things. Olsen, familiar with the *vardøgr* phenomenon, reassured his guest, telling him that such experiences were not so very uncommon. He said that in Norway such an apparition was called a *vardøgr*, a forerunner, and was not taken *too* seriously (*italics from original*).

The previous account was the very first one that I was able to find, as mentioned earlier.

The last case (Powys, 1882, cited in Gurney et al., 1886/1970: 515) is somewhat similar to my own first episode, except that the phenomenon was entirely auditory. In 1882, and presumably again in Great Britain, a Mrs. Amy C. Powys reported that she had been awaiting her husband's arrival at about 10 P.M. one evening. Hearing a horse-drawn cab drive up to the door, the door-bell ringing and her husband's voice talking to the cabman, then the door opening and his footsteps coming up the stairs, she went to greet him only to find no one there.

About 20 minutes later, her husband actually arrived, his arrival sounding no more real to her than the first one. His train had been late in arriving, and he had been concerned that she would be anxious about him. In retrospect, she realized that during his pre-arrival, after finding no one there, she had gone to the window immediately, only to find the street in front of their house empty and very quiet, with no sound of the cab driving away, i.e., the noise of iron-tired wheels and shod horse's hooves. Then she also realized that no one else in the house (presumably a servant) could have heard the doorbell, because it was never answered.

In addition to these several representative accounts, my personal collection contains another twelve similar vardøgr (pre-arrival) accounts.¹

Possible Implications

An apparent non-locality of consciousness is suggested by the various experiences cited here, my own and those of others; e.g., in my own experiences, *something* was controlling my physical body *and also controlling the automobile it was driving* while, apparently, my consciousness was, in some way, simultaneously influencing the consciousness of another physically remote individual or individuals. However, beyond the unquestionable impact that these experiences have had on me, on my own worldview, and on others close to me (an impact more or less profound and common to all experiencers of paranormal phenomena), I am led to the following observations by substantial personal reading, my membership in SSE, and extensive exposure to the work of its other members:

The vardøgr phenomenon, like so many other paranormal phenomena, probably has existed almost as long as has sentience in mankind. However, it is only one of a whole spectrum of apparition phenomena known to serious investigators. There seems to be no clear consensus among those investigators, who have studied apparition phenomena for well over a century, perhaps much longer, as to what apparitions really are! The writer hardly claims to be one of these investigators, but is instead only an experiencer trying his best to understand his experiences. Hallucinations due to mental abnormality seem to be the least likely explanation for the entire spectrum of apparition phenomena. Mental telepathy, if that is still an acceptable expression here in the 21st century, seems much closer to the truth, but apparition cases involving multiple percipients, and the rare cases involving tangible physical effects, would seem to invalidate that also, as an umbrella explanation.

Rather than attempt a relatively uninformed analysis of what apparition phenomena are, especially in light of far more informed attempts by others, let me take a different tack. At heart, I have always been a pragmatist. My career in nuts-and-bolts mechanical engineering underlines that trait. My favorite observation in that regard is that man used fire as a practical tool for tens, if

not hundreds of thousands, of years with no modern knowledge of thermodynamics, high-temperature chemical reactions, or heat transfer.

Recently, in this journal (*JSE*), highly regarded investigators of the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory (PEAR Lab), specifically, SSE members Bob Jahn and Brenda Dunne, presented what amounted to a status report and some highly incisive scientific speculations on directions for future research (Jahn, 2001; Jahn & Dunne, 2001). A major objective of that future research appears to be to produce substantially more robust effects in mind-matter/mind-machine experiments. Vardøgr experiences, especially the type experienced by the author, if nothing else, are “psychologically robust”! If the reader doubts my position on this, I can put him in touch with the percipients in my two vardøgr episodes, after suitable preliminaries, to assess that position for himself. The expression, “You look like you've just seen a ghost”, comes to mind.

Unfortunately, although robust, vardøgr experiences are also (generally) spontaneous and apparently relatively rare in the modern world, and thus hardly useful in themselves for laboratory application. However, there is a key element, in my own two episodes at least, that may prove critical to robustness in future mind-matter/mind-machine experimentation. That key element is that I knew exactly where I was and exactly what I was doing when my vardøgr appeared to the several percipients. Specifically, *and in both instances*, I was in an altered state of consciousness, i.e., as a result of road hypnosis, and I was daydreaming about a specific location when my image simultaneously appeared to percipients there.

The use of intentionally induced altered states of consciousness in parapsychology research is nothing new (Hansen, 2001: 289, 330, 331). Excellent examples are the well-known Ganzfeld experiments and the CIA's remote-viewing protocols. Unfortunately, neither my own vardøgr experiences nor the other cited examples relate directly to intentional operator effect on a sensitive apparatus, a major focus at PEAR. Further, to my knowledge, PEAR has not conducted any significant research with operators *required* to use altered states of consciousness in their individual experimental runs.

Various techniques for inducing such states are well known and readily available. Several specific techniques come to mind immediately, i.e., meditation, hypnosis, chemical induction, sensory deprivation of the type used in Ganzfeld experiments, or in the even more complex “tanking”, as used in the movie *Altered States*.

Of course, there is no assurance that such techniques would produce more robust operator effects on PEAR's various REGs, but from my pragmatic perspective, they certainly seem to be worth a serious try. Also, I remember that reduction of operator effect over time is a common, unwanted phenomenon in PEAR mind-machine experiments, and further, that operator boredom is also a problem (the two problems are likely related). I have personally experienced the first three of the intentionally induced altered states of consciousness cited

earlier in my article. From those experiences, it would appear that all of those states would, at the very least, moderate operator boredom, and perhaps reduced operator effect as well, or might even achieve the primary objective of enhancing operator effect.

Finally, in a recent research article in *JSE* (Sheldrake & Smart, 2000), a formalized study of a phenomenon well known to many pet owners was presented; wherein the pet (in that case, a dog) appeared able to anticipate its owner's intention to return home at the time the decision to return was made, and especially when the return journey began. The possibility that the same paranormal mechanism responsible for the vardøgr phenomenon is also responsible for this phenomenon in pets is indeed intriguing. I have not encountered this speculation in any of the vardøgr accounts or commentary I have read thus far.

Notes

¹ These twelve accounts are:

Two accounts in Gurney et al. (1886/1970: 516).

Five accounts in McManus (1988: 86, 99, 100).

Five accounts in Crowe (1848/2000: 135, 136, 138, 139) interspersed without distinction among numerous doppelgänger accounts. This source was uncovered in just the past few months as the result of the unexpected gift of the cited book by a friend who knows of my interest in this general area of the paranormal. Were it not for this fortunate coincidence (he was unaware of the presence of the five accounts therein), I would have information on only eleven accounts, spanning a century and a quarter (four in the text and seven in this list), other than my own two accounts.

Also, one commentator on the vardøgr phenomenon has indicated that the prolific modern author on paranormal phenomena, Brad Steiger, presented several accounts in "two" of his numerous books. Unfortunately, I have no more specific information than that to offer at this writing. However, because I have seen several instances where the same accounts are cited in several publications, it is quite possible that Steiger's several accounts have already been cited in this article.

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Editorial Comment

When David Leiter first told me of his *vardøgr* experiences, I recalled an occurrence that I have always categorized as “psychic-like”. In my teens, I had gone out one night with my father. He needed to make a phone call and left me sitting in the car while he went around the corner to a phone booth. A little while later, he called out to me, “Henry, do you have any pennies?” (two pennies being the coins needed at that time, in Australia, to make a phone call). I looked out of the car, but he was not there. A few minutes later, he opened the car door and said, “Henry, do you have any pennies?”. I asked whether he had called out to me a little earlier; he said he had not.

As with Leiter's first experience, at home, a determined skeptic could interpret the event as merely a reasonable expectation built into an hallucination or a waking dream. But Leiter's second experience, of being “seen” coming to work, cannot be so explained. Reading it brought to mind an experience I had long forgotten. Some time in the early or mid-1970s, my wife and I were dining with friends at a restaurant in Lexington, Kentucky; a restaurant where we dined no more than half-a-dozen times in the span of a dozen years. As we ordered, the waitress said that I must really like the food to be eating in the same place two nights running. Of course, I hadn't been there the night before, yet the waitress remained convinced that she had spoken to me in the bar the night before. Now even if my appearance is not entirely idiosyncratic, anyone who has heard me can attest that my accent adds a distinct measure of uniqueness. It seems quite unlikely that someone who looks *and speaks* like me could really have been at that restaurant the previous night.