

## COMMENTARY

### **Further Comments about Kai Mügge's Alleged Mediumship and Recent Developments**

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**Abstract**—In 2014, I published an article on the Felix Experimental Group, its medium Kai Mügge (KM), and my involvement in following the development of the phenomena reported around KM (Nahm 2014). In that article, I showed convincingly (in my opinion) that KM had cheated in the past, in particular with regard to producing a red “spirit” light with a magician’s LED device, and with regard to producing (self-luminous) ectoplasm with the help of Halloween spider web while pretending to be in a trance. Recent developments and publications render it recommendable to summarize a few aspects of the aftermath of that previous publication.

#### **Comment on Recent Publications and the Role of the FEG's Former Circle Leader**

Accusing a purported medium explicitly of producing fraudulent phenomena is a grave act, and it is only tolerable if it is supported 100% by facts. With regard to the repeated and purposeful use of the aforementioned red LED, KM’s fraud is established by 109 photographs that show how he used it during séances, by the discovery of such an LED device in KM’s travel bag by his former Circle Leader Jochen Soederling (pseudonym, JS), and by KM’s admission to JS of having used this device. Consequently, in response to KM’s recurrent public assertions that the conclusions presented in my report (Nahm 2014) were naively false and perfidious, I informed the members of Robin Foy’s forum “Physical Mediumship for You” (PM4U) on December 18, 2014, that KM had confessed to having used an LED device in a telephone conversation on April 2, 2014, with his former Circle Leader, and that JS informed not only me about it (compare also Nahm 2014:266, Braude 2014:331, Braude 2016 in this issue). Still, KM aggressively denied that this conversation and his confession had ever taken place, accused me again of spreading lies, and, curiously, he announced that his Circle Leader will defend the phenomena of his mediumship in the not-too-distant future.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 2015, Leo Ruickbie, the Editor of the *Paranormal Review*, asked me to contribute an article about KM for that magazine. He stated that there were still many rumors about KM that needed to be countered by advancing a balanced scientific view on the matter. After hesitating for quite some time, not wanting to become engaged in this cumbrous debate again, a number of reasons convinced me eventually that it might still be worthwhile to contribute a short comment on what I call “Promissory Mediumship” (in reference to Karl Popper’s concept of “promissory materialism”). A key characteristic of promissory mediums is to make promises that never come true. Promissory mediums aim at keeping the interest in their mediumship alive by announcing developments of phenomena and control methods that are ultimately never kept—or are kept in only such a way that they still remain unsatisfying. This behavior was exemplified by KM’s repeated promise that his former Circle Leader JS will eventually vouch for the genuineness of KM’s phenomena. In fact, JS has stressed on numerous occasions in personal conversations via emails and telephone conversations, with me and with several other persons, that he is very disappointed because of KM’s cheating and thus not willing to defend KM in public. Moreover, JS stressed that he has hardly been in contact anymore with KM for many months, and that he was only interested in arranging one more followup investigation with Stephen Braude. Drawing from my many conversations with JS, I explicitly addressed him as the “former” Circle Leader in my article, and argued that those who still await a defense of KM’s mediumship from him will have a long wait ahead of them. Prior to its publication, I sent the article draft to JS for his inspection. He didn’t oppose anything I had written, and the article was duly published in the *Paranormal Review*, Issue 74 (Nahm 2015).

Yet, when I read Ruickbie’s second article about KM in the very next issue of the *Paranormal Review*, Issue 75 (Ruickbie 2015a), I was struck with utter astonishment. In this article, Ruickbie described how “Circle Leader” JS was present on both occasions when he visited the Circle, as if nothing had happened, seemingly being still in good contact with KM. Moreover, JS talked with Ruickbie at length on both occasions, describing numerous phenomena, and he vouched for their genuineness—thus, openly defending the mediumship of KM—just as the latter had announced he would several times on PM4U and elsewhere. As a result, Ruickbie’s article appeared to prove KM right, and to disprove the core argument of my article on Promissory Mediumship in the previous issue of the *Paranormal Review*. Attentive readers might even have suspected that I had purposefully misled them with fictitious claims to debunk KM, and that consequently, other parts of my writings are not entirely credible, to say the least.

Of course, I immediately contacted Ruickbie and JS, inquiring about the reasons for their sudden and unexpected change in conduct. JS readily apologized and offered to write a declaration for me in which he would try to set the record straight again. But, because of the events described by Braude in this issue, I am not in contact with JS anymore. Hence, I take the freedom to publish the basic content of the declaration that JS intended to write and publicize for me:

- JS had not read my article on Promissory Mediumship properly, and thus he didn't put its content in relation to the article to be written by Ruickbie several weeks later.
- JS hasn't considered himself to be the FEG Circle Leader for a long time.
- JS had indeed hardly been in contact with Kai for many months before joining the two visits of Ruickbie in Hanau. He joined these visits to show renewed support to KM, because his aim was to create the best and most psi-conductive atmosphere for the upcoming joint test sittings for table phenomena with Stephen Braude (see Braude 2016, this issue).
- JS's affirmative appraisal regarding the genuineness of KM's phenomena discussed with Ruickbie was only valid for phenomena occurring at table sittings, and he told Ruickbie so. In fact, knowing that KM has cheated on several occasions during cabinet sittings, JS has strong reservations regarding the potential genuineness of the phenomena produced in trance sittings. However, according to JS, Ruickbie asked him to report only about positive experiences, which was in line with JS's own approach of creating a supportive mood for the upcoming test sittings.

After all, however, Ruickbie's article (2015a) had quite an adverse effect. JS's unexpected public support of KM fueled long-standing suspicions that he was an accomplice of KM, which resulted in a considerable deterioration of the atmosphere during the test sittings (Braude 2016, this issue).

### **Comment on Myth-Making Regarding KM's Phenomena**

Moreover, both that article by Ruickbie as well as Ruickbie's previous article in Issue 75 of the *Paranormal Review*, in which he offered KM the opportunity to tell his "story" (Ruickbie 2015b), contributed to spreading further rumors about KM, some of which, at least, are definitively wrong. For example, he wrote how JS told him "about lights that have been seen outside the séance room at previous sittings. One light was seen to leave the

room and go into the antechamber and settle on some blank sheets of paper. Afterward a face was found on the paper as though burnt into it" (Ruickbie 2015a:12). This description of the occurrence in question is false in two important respects, and JS has explicitly admitted this to me in personal communication.

First, the light was not seen outside the séance room, much less was it seen to settle on blank paper sheets. According to the protocol of the sitting and to personal discussions about this occurrence I had with Circle members including KM when I started visiting them in Hanau in 2008, the door of the séance room was closed as it always was during sittings. The supposed spirit light simply vanished inside the room in the vicinity of the closed door. Only later, when the face on the paper in the anteroom was discovered, did the sitters *infer* that the light might have passed through the door, and might have left the face on the paper.

Second, the face was not "burnt" into the paper. Rather, it was a quite normal coin rubbing from a former German 2-DM coin, being drawn with a pencil. It seemed to show the face of Kurt Schumacher, a former German politician. This was stated in the "small print" of the German séance protocol from February 28, 2008, which was included as a kind of attachment on KM's blog posting from March 1, 2008, along with a photograph of this pencil sketch. In the meantime, I superposed this coin rubbing on an image of Kurt Schumacher's head on a 2-DM coin in Adobe Photoshop CS2, blending them with various degrees of opacity. Even the most minute details of both faces such as filigree skin folds on the forehead match perfectly, so that the identity and the origin of this face must be regarded as established.

Yet, KM did not inform his target group for the blog, namely English-speaking readers around the world, about the potential identity of this face, let alone that it was a coin rubbing. And because the "spirit light" spared the German writing around Schumacher's head as well as the edges of the coin, surrounding the image instead with pencil-drawn sinuous lines, it was difficult to tell that the face originated from a coin for anybody who didn't read the enlarged version of the German séance protocol after clicking on it. Accordingly, in the main English text of KM's blog posting, the face was labeled a "paranormally produced miniature pencil-painting," presumably produced with the pencil that was placed in the prepared corner for direct writings in the anteroom. After its appearance, this "pencil painting" of Schumacher's head was regarded as so important that it even served as the FEG logo on séance protocols for some time. In another blog posting from February 24, 2010, KM showed the coin rubbing of Schumacher's face again and described it as a paranormal "pencil-scribbling of an unknown man's face." And in 2015, it has finally turned into a face of supposedly

unknown origin that was “burnt” into a paper by a spirit light, as witnessed by sitters!

This episode illustrates how sensational rumors or myths that are often very difficult to erase again are created by carelessly embellishing much more unspectacular basic facts. It thus highlights the obvious importance of reporting phenomena properly—especially in such a difficult and fraud-loaded field of study as physical mediumship.

Still, different people might interpret the Schumacher episode differently. For me, at least, it is one more sign that the development of KM’s alleged mediumship contained suspicious elements from the start. The blog posting about the supposed “paranormally produced miniature pencil-painting” from March 1, 2008, was the third posting on KM’s blog. Looking back, I wonder why a supposedly genuine spirit light should have left a pencil-made coin rubbing of Kurt Schumacher’s head while sparing the writing and the edges of the coin, surrounding it instead with nicely oscillating and powerfully drawn sinuous lines that look rather human-made. Moreover, I wonder why KM didn’t inform the English-speaking world at large in 2008 and thereafter about the potential identity of this peculiar face, and about it being most likely a simple coin rubbing.

#### **Comment on Some of KM’s “Ectoplasm”**

I have already argued in my previous paper (Nahm 2014) that the proven (and now also admitted) use of a red LED by KM, presented as a highlight of some of his séances between 2011 and 2013, and allegedly representing a special “condensed” form of ectoplasm, constitutes strong evidence that other ectoplasm phenomena were faked as well. This appraisal is further supported by a séance report of a sitting held on February 18, 2011, in Koblenz, which was sent to me by Hermann Haushahn some months ago, and which was previously unknown to me. In addition to the “different private séances” once mentioned on KM’s blog, this report thus constitutes the sixth documented purposeful use of the red LED during public séances of KM. It was written by an external guest sitter for the newsletter Hermann circulated at that time to about 500 readers.

According to this report, KM displayed the red LED and the ectoplasm two times in alternation at this sitting. After the first display of the red LED and the “normal” ectoplasm, KM’s alleged trance control personality “Hans Bender” asked the sitters if they would like to see the red “spirit” light again, which they joyfully affirmed. Indeed, KM showed the red LED again, and this was followed by another display of “normal” ectoplasm. Kai’s smuggling of this LED device into the séance room, as well as its deployment and its subsequent re-concealing, were undoubtedly performed

in a conscious state. But since that step in his performance was a component of a grander plan that included showing “normal” ectoplasm in alternation with this LED, I find it impossible to avoid the conclusion that both KM’s trance and “normal” ectoplasm were consciously faked during these occurrences as well. This in turn suggests that KM must be very skilled in producing fake “normal” ectoplasm.

In fact, I know by now of five other sitters apart from myself (see Nahm 2014) who have on at least eight different occasions seen a fine thread that led upward toward the cabinet roof from rising ectoplasmic hands or columns. Several sitters also noted how KM’s right hand especially seemed to be hidden at the back of the cabinet when ectoplasm structures rose, but not during other ectoplasm displays. This is supported by numerous photographs from KM’s blog, many of which are deleted at present. Much more could be said about the alleged ectoplasm and its context. But because I don’t own copyrights to the photos that would illustrate my arguments, I only add a comment here about a peculiar video clip that was discussed before.

Braude (2014) has described how KM sent him a video clip that KM allegedly produced back in 2012, and in which KM had allegedly (and quite erroneously) established that Halloween cobweb was a completely different material compared to some of his ectoplasm (Braude 2014:329ff, Nahm 2014:271ff). This bizarre clip was recorded in KM’s packed kitchen and shows only him alone.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, not even his then Circle Leader JS knew about the production of a video clip about Halloween cobweb for KM’s blog in 2012, let alone about suspicions that KM might have used such cobweb material around that time (see also Braude 2014:331). Rather, as JS has repeatedly affirmed to me in person (thus mirroring my own experience with KM), KM fervently denied to him ever having heard of Halloween cobweb when JS first asked him about it in 2014. Only after KM learned that we had copies of his transaction documents of his voluminous cobweb order via Ebay, did he suddenly backpedal and inform Braude about this video clip.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> My posting on PM4U and KM’s reply are preserved on web.archive.org; scroll down at <https://web.archive.org/web/20150203175224/http://www.spiritualismlink.com/t2208p375-investigation-into-the-mediumship-of-kai-muegge>

<sup>2</sup> As described in my paper (Nahm 2014:272), the cobweb brand KM showed in this video was different from the cobweb brand he ordered in October 2013. Hence, it might be of interest that KM placed an order

at another German Halloween online shop that sells the precise cobweb brand he showed in the video clip. This order dates from August 29, 2013. Still, because KM deactivated the function that would allow other customers to see which item he had bought, one can only speculate if he indeed ordered the Halloween cobweb bag he showed in the video on this occasion, or a different Halloween gimmick.

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