

Anomaly

By

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"You know there aren't really ghosts, don't you?" This was a question I was asked not too long ago by someone I am close to. My honest answer was "I don't know". The question really made me step back and think for a moment. After pondering this question for a while I arrived at the conclusion that you have to define the parameters of a "ghost". According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the definition can be broken down into three main categories:

1: the seat of life or intelligence: soul

2: a disembodied soul; *especially*: the soul of a dead person believed to be an inhabitant of the unseen world or to appear to the living in bodily likeness

3: Spirit, Demon

Based on my personal religious beliefs, I very much believe in the existence of the soul and demons. What is not clear to anyone living, including priests, rabbis and theologians is exactly what happens to the soul upon death. The term ghost is used so diversely that we really don't have a clear and common comprehension. The problem here is we are trying to label something of which we don't have a clear understanding.

Have you ever wondered why there are so many claims of paranormal activity worldwide? Taking that a step further, have you ever wondered why, with so many thousands if not millions of claims, that mainstream science does not take paranormal phenomenon seriously? These are questions that I have pondered over many months and did not have a clear idea until recently. The more investigations I have done the better understanding I have developed of human nature and motivations. Also, I have come to realize, the general ignorance that people have of the science of how their environment affects them and how their body's process sensory data based on these environmental influences. I do not mean ignorance in a negative or derogatory way but simply in a general lack of knowledge. So what influences people and their perceptions? Let's explore that for a moment.

First let us eliminate the most obvious. Frankly there is a significant amount of people that are either A- mentally imbalanced or B- looking for attention. Foremost we must understand that the influence for these individuals is the same as those for individuals that have honest and legitimate "paranormal concerns". The only difference is the motivation. While the A and B folks mentioned above are making claims based on their mental instability or for the attention, there was a common source of inspiration that influenced these claims. The influence I speak of is a cultural influence.

Our present day culture as well as all of recorded human history is wrought with a plethora of supernatural claims, stories and beliefs. These have become so engrained in our consciousness over the centuries that they are virtually impossible to ignore. In our modern culture these influences are even more difficult to disregard. The books, short stories, television shows and movies based on ghosts that are out here are too

numerous to count. Heck, we even have a holiday that rolls around every October 31st that is rooted in the supernatural. With this constant media bombardment imposed on people does it influence their perceptions? You bet.

The mentally imbalanced individuals draw from this cultural influence to shape their distorted reality, while the attention seekers draw from this influence to assemble a bogus reality to draw attention and recognition. But what about the people with legitimate "paranormal concerns"? While their claims are honest, they are still drawing from the same cultural influence as the imbalanced and publicity addicts. These honest folks may be exposed to high EMF fields, high mold count, high carbon dioxide levels, high carbon monoxide levels, radiation or some other environmental influence that they are not aware exists. The aforementioned environmental phenomenon can be naturally occurring or manmade but the affects are the same. These environmental influences can all have profound influences on our honest individual's sensory perception. Among these influences are hallucinations, paranoia, feelings of being watched, nausea, headaches, sensations of being touched, skin irritations and disorientation. Drawing from our cultural influence, any or all of these symptoms can easily be perceived by our honest folks as paranormal or a "ghost". They are completely unaware of these unseen environmental influences so their reality is drawn from the cultural influence that has been engrained in their psyche. The combination of the environmental influence coupled with the cultural influence manifests as a paranormal reality for these individuals.

So far it sounds like all paranormal claims are either bogus or delusional doesn't it? Not quite. While the vast majority of these claims have psychological or scientifically prosaic

roots, there is a significant amount that does not. So what are the ones that do not have a prosaic explanation? We defined ghosts earlier so to proceed to answer that question we need a definition of another term – anomaly. An anomaly, according to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the definition can be broken down into two main categories:

1: deviation from the common rule: **IRREGULARITY**

2: something **ANOMALOUS**: something different, abnormal, peculiar, or not easily classified

Something that is different and not easily classified best sums it up. By definition anything that falls under the definition of an anomaly remains under that label until it classified otherwise by solid scientific evidence. Everything from an unexplained cold spot to an apparition on a thermal or digital camera to an evp (electronic voice phenomenon) would fall into the category of an anomaly. While these are intriguing phenomenon and appears to mesh with our cultural influence of ghosts, we cannot apply that definition. There is no clear evidence that allows us to reach the conclusion that these phenomena are ghosts. Until the day comes that we have the scientific evidence to reach such a finding, we must objectively classify such phenomenon as anomalies. My answer to the question "You know there aren't really ghosts, don't you?" is still "I don't know". What I do know is there are anomalies that call for further scientific investigation and research. The term "ghost hunter" has almost become synonymous with paranormal investigation. I would prefer to be known as an "anomaly hunter".

