

Lawfulness Versus Caprice: Is There a "Law of Psychic Phenomena" ?¹

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More than a half-century ago Thomas Jay Hudson offered an extraordinary book to clarify the newly gained data in psychical research under the title *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* (3). His basic generalization was very simple: There are two kinds of mind—conscious and subconscious. The conscious mind, which is capable of generalized and inductive reasoning, deals with the world of sense data and immediate reality; the subconscious mind, which is capable of deductive reasoning only, deals with the paranormal. Hudson did not really describe any laws of psychic phenomena. Yet I think his contribution was valuable, because it taught us to look for real laws, real principles to replace the chaos and seeming caprice so characteristic of our field.

Much of Hudson's conception of the subconscious was already familiar from the early work of the (London) Society for Psychical Research, and its masterful exposition is to be found in F. W. H. Myers' *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (7). We owe to Myers much of our understanding of the dynamics of genius, of sleep and dreams, of dissociation, and of the portals thence leading into the world of the paranormal. Myers believed fervently, as did Hudson, that there is lawfulness in the subconscious, in the subliminal, in the world below the threshold of consciousness. Myers, in point of fact, went further, for he offered many laws, some of them cross-articulated with one another, and some of them rather well buttressed with the case material of his day. The fact that today Myers seems to have been rather hasty in some of his conclusions is not destructive of the beauty of the intellectual system which he created; in fact, if he had been cautious, he would have built only a series of scattered towers, cupolas, and arched façades, but not a system of intellectual architecture.

But the problem facing us today is whether there really is a law of psychic phenomena, such as Hudson asked us to believe, or a system of interrelated laws, such as was offered by Myers.

¹ This paper was delivered by Professor Murphy at a meeting of the Society held on March 16, 1964.

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Obituary: Dr. Nandor Fodor

We regret to record the sudden death of Dr. Nandor Fodor, psychoanalyst and psychical researcher, on May 17, 1964. He was born in Hungary in 1895 and received the LL.D. degree from the Royal Hungarian University of Science in 1917.

Dr. Fodor was a member of the A.S.P.R. and had contributed many articles to the *Journal*; his final contribution, a note on his experiences with the graphology of Rafael Schermann, was published in the July, 1964, issue. He was the Society's London correspondent from 1936 to 1939, at which time he became a permanent resident of New York, and his "Letter from London" appeared regularly in the *Journal* during those years.

Dr. Fodor was the author of many widely-read books in the field of psychical research, among them *The Encyclopedia of Psychic Science* (1934), *These Mysterious People* (1936), *On the Trail of the Poltergeist* (1958), *The Haunted Mind* (1960), and *Mind Over Space* (1962). At the time of his death, he had recently completed work on a book dealing with Freud's early years, *The Voice Within*. His immediate survivors are his widow, a daughter, and a granddaughter.