

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/physics-and-psychics/>

This video features a speaker reflecting on their academic journey related to the intersections of physics and spiritualism, starting from their PhD in 1998. They recount how their supervisor suggested studying phenomena at the Cavendish Laboratory that intersected with both physics and spiritualist interests, such as electrical discharges and the physicality of psychic phenomena.

The speaker explores the historical context from the early 19th century to the 1930s, noting that many scientists at the time engaged with spiritualism, mesmerism, and other paranormal inquiries while also developing the field of physics. The talk discusses the relationship between science and religion during this period, highlighting that many scientists sought ways to reconcile scientific discoveries with spiritual beliefs, rather than contradict them.

Through examples of scientists like William Crookes and Cromwell Varley, the speaker illustrates how early physicists employed rigorous scientific methods to investigate psychic phenomena and spiritual mediums, creating instruments and methodologies to explore claims of paranormal abilities. These investigations varied in focus, with Crookes emphasizing physical mediumship and Varley incorporating engineering techniques into his spiritual inquiries.

As the narrative progresses into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the speaker describes challenges faced by scientists due to the declining presence of reputable mediums and changing interests in psychical research. They also indicate that while some investigations into physical mediumship waned, interest in mental mediumship grew, which didn't align as closely with physicists' observational strengths.

Towards the end, the speaker discusses modern implications, stressing the importance of maintaining an open-minded approach toward scientific inquiry of all phenomena, including the paranormal. They advocate for a recognition of the courage and ingenuity of early scientists, encouraging a broader view of scientific history that acknowledges the complexities of these intersections. They conclude by emphasizing the relevance of this historical understanding in addressing contemporary global challenges.