

20th November, 1953.

My dear Harrop,

Thanks for your long letter about Spencer Brown. Of course, I only know him slightly as I was referee for his Fellowship thesis at Trinity, and was sorry that he was not elected. However, the situation there is fairly evident, in that Brown served there for some years as a student in parapsychology and developed a dangerous leaning towards scepticism in a way that seems to have made the parapsychological group in that College feel that they had nursed a viper in their bosom. Anyway, I do not think they were of any help in getting his present Fellowship at <sup>Christchurch</sup> Oxford.

Since being in Cambridge and attending a certain number of talks to undergraduates and postgraduates at philosophical societies and so forth, I have been rather shocked by the readiness with which <sup>n</sup> senior members of the University can be found to tell the young men that various marvellous and magical phenomena are now established beyond dispute. Of course, it is common knowledge from the time of Crookes and Oliver Lodge how much in such cases the wish is father to the thought. However, I had hoped, and indeed expected, to find an atmosphere

in which statements of fact and conclusions therefrom were, as a matter of mere rational technique, expected to be scrupulously examined.

In fact at the moment there must be a number of important people whose susceptibilities Brown has wounded and who would like, as they say, to bawl him down. I expect, of course, that he will make some mistaken statements which will not be allowed to be forgotten, but so far as I can judge he has introduced a very welcome <sup>net</sup> growth of scepticism into this discussion, which was indeed needed at Oxford, but I fancy much more so in Cambridge.

Looking forward to seeing you in the Spring.

Sincerely yours,