

Chapter 18 — Automatic Writing

of *The Mind at Mischief:
Tricks and Deceptions of the Subconscious and How to Cope with Them*
(1929)

by
William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S.

© 2012, 2013 Matthew Block

Sources for Chapter 18, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) William S. Sadler, M.D., *The Physiology of Faith and Fear: Or, The Mind in Health and Disease* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1912)
- (2) William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S., *The Truth About Spiritualism* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1923)
- (3) Joseph McCabe, *Is Spiritualism Based on Fraud?: The Evidence Given by Sir A. C. Doyle and Others Drastically Examined* (London: Watts & Co., 1920)
- (4) Bernard Hart, M.D., *The Psychology of Insanity* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1912, 1916)
- (5) Morton Prince, M.D., LL.D., *The Unconscious: The Fundamentals of Human Personality Normal and Abnormal* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914 and 1921)

Key

- (a) Green indicates where a source author (other than Sadler) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) Magenta indicates an earlier Sadler book.
- (c) Yellow highlights most parallelisms.
- (d) Tan highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.

- (e) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.
- (f) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (g) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (h) **Red** indicates either: (1) an obvious error on Sadler's part, brought about, in most cases, by miscopying or misinterpreting his source, or (2) Sadler's use of an earlier text of his that contained time-bound information which he didn't revise when presenting it in *The Mind at Mischief*, resulting in a historical impossibility, or (3) Sadler's use of an earlier text of his which he revised in such a way as to contradict that earlier text.
- (i) **Gold** highlights key words or themes which will be discussed in the analysis of the chapter.

Matthew Block
30 November 2012

Work-in-progress Version 1 July 2012
 © 2012, 2013 Matthew Block
 Revised 30 November 2012

XXXVIII: PSYCHIC FADS AND
 FAKES (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 457)

AUTOMATIC WRITING AND TALKING (*The
 Physiology of Faith and Fear* 462)

[contd] As close of kin to trances and
 so-called visions should be mentioned the
 practices of automatic writing and
 speaking.

The study of multiple personality has shed
 much light on the psychology of automatic
 writing.

When practising it the patient may appear
 to be in his usual state; in fact, he may be
 conversing with some one in a perfectly
 normal and natural manner, when, if a
 pencil is placed in his hand, he will begin to
 write continuously, writing long essays
 which are carefully composed, logically
 arranged, and sometimes extraordinarily
 fine in rhetorical expression; and all this is
 accomplished while the central
 consciousness is entirely ignorant and
 unconscious of everything that is going on
 (*PF&F* 462).

[contd] This automatic writing is in no
 essential different from the experiences of
 crystal-gazing, shell-hearing, and hypnosis.

In automatic writing the activities of the
 marginal consciousness are projected
 outward along the motor line of writing.

XVIII — AUTOMATIC WRITING

18:0.1 AUTOMATIC writing and
 speaking are close of kin to so-called
 trances and visions.

The study of multiple personality has
 shed much light on the psychology of
 automatic writing.

When practising it, the patient may
 appear to be in his usual state; in fact, he
 may be conversing with someone in a
 perfectly natural manner, when, if a
 pencil is placed in his hand, he will begin
 to write continuously, writing long essays
 which are carefully composed, logically
 arranged, and sometimes extraordinarily
 fine in rhetorical expression; and all this
 is accomplished while the central
 consciousness is ignorant of everything
 that is going on.

T E C H N I Q U E O F AUTOMATISM

18:1.1 The conditions governing
 automatic writing are in no essential
 different from those of crystal-gazing,
 shell-hearing, and hypnosis.

The activities of the marginal
 consciousness are projected outward
 along the motor line of writing.

SOURCE

In this case the subconscious activities are not sensory; the primary cause rests neither in auditory nor visual sensation, as in shell-hearing and crystal vision, but in sensations of touch and movement—they are entirely motor.

The central consciousness does not become aware of what is going on in the marginal consciousness until it sees the thoughts expressed by means of the words automatically written.

It will be apparent that to the central consciousness these messages would indeed appear as coming from another world; and so many a psychically unbalanced person, who has been exercised by automatic writing, has been led in this way verily to suppose that these written messages were from the dead, or from the spirits inhabiting other planets (*PF&F* 462).

[contd] The phenomenon of automatic speaking occurs in the same way.

It is another case of a motor expression of psychic projection.

This time the subject is concerned with spoken words, instead of written words.

The speaking may take the form of meaningless syllables, which may sound like a new tongue, or the language may be entirely intelligible and logical.

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

In this case, the subconscious activities are not sensory; the primary cause rests neither in auditory nor in visual sensation, as in shell-hearing, and crystal vision, but in sensations of touch and movement—they are entirely motor.

The central consciousness does not become aware of what is going on in the marginal consciousness until it sees the words that have been automatically written.

18:1.2 It will be apparent that to the central consciousness these messages would indeed appear as coming from another world; and thus many a psychically unbalanced person has been led to believe that these written messages were from the dead, or from spirits inhabiting other planets.

18:1.3 The phenomenon of automatic speaking occurs in the same way.

It is another case of motor expression of psychic projection.

This time the subject is concerned with spoken words instead of written words.

The speaking may take the form of meaningless syllables, which may sound like a new tongue, or the language may be entirely intelligible and logical.

SOURCE

These cases, several of which the author had the opportunity of fully examining a few years ago, are illustrations of those peculiar and unusual automatic talking performances which come to be regarded as the miraculous gift of tongues; and every syllable of their jargon is reverently listened to by their followers, who regard these mysterious utterances with awe, as messages from another world (PF&F 462-63).

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

These cases are illustrations of those peculiar and automatic talking performances which come to be regarded as the miraculous “gift of tongues”; and every syllable of their jargon is reverently listened to by their followers, who regard these mysterious utterances as messages from another world.

18:1.4 It is not necessary, in our study of abnormal psychology, to settle whether or not all of these automatic writers and talkers are self-deceived souls, or whether their writing and speaking has its origin entirely in an overactive subconscious mind which is able to eliminate its complexes in this peculiar fashion.

I am not at all disposed to pronounce all these cases frauds, or even instances of self-deception. It may be altogether possible that some of them are manifestations of genuine activity on the part of actual spiritual forces, but that is not a point for further discussion in this connection.* [*See Appendix.]

The purpose of their recital here is primarily to call attention to the fact that, as they are commonly met with in our every-day life, their net result is to render those who tamper with them more and more susceptible to spiritualistic propaganda.

V: THE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 121)

13. AUTOMATIC WRITING (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 147)

[contd] The automatic talkers and writers, those who “speak with tongues,” etc., constitute the most interesting group of individuals who live their queer lives out on the borderland between the normal and the abnormal in psychology.

These individuals are very interesting to study, from the psychologic standpoint.

I have recently been privileged to thoroughly examine and carefully study not less than half a dozen men and women who are supposed to have the “gift of tongues,” and who are prominently identified with numerous present-day religious movements that exhibit these gifts of the spirits as evidence of Heavenly authenticity (*TTAS* 147).

[contd] I have had some very interesting experiences in connection with the study of automatic writers.

I remember one case which came under my observation some twenty years ago, and after giving this man a thorough course of instruction regarding the physiology and psychology of his strange performances, he gradually lost his power of automatic writing and for the past six or eight years has been wholly unable to indulge in this phenomenon.

18:1.5 The automatic talkers and writers, those who “speak with tongues,” etc., constitute the most interesting group of individuals who live their queer lives out on the borderland between the normal and the abnormal in psychology.

I have recently been privileged to study not less than half a dozen men and women who are supposed to have the “gift of tongues,” and who are prominently identified with religious movements that exhibit these gifts of the spirit as evidence of heavenly authenticity.

CLASSES OF AUTOMATIC WRITERS

18:2.1 I have had some very interesting experiences in connection with the study of automatic writers.

I remember one case which came under my observation many years ago; after this man had had a thorough course of instruction regarding the physiology and psychology of his strange performances, he gradually lost the power of automatic writing, and for the last six or eight years he has been wholly unable to indulge in this phenomenon.

SOURCE

Years ago he was able to take a pencil in his hand, drop off into a sort of passive dream-state, when suddenly the pencil would start in to write messages, as he supposed, having their origin in the spirit world.

In this connection let me record it as my opinion that automatic writing and the automatism manifested in the ouija board performance are very nearly, if not quite, one and the same thing.

That is, I regard them as identical in their psychologic roots—in their psychic origin and direction (*TTAS* 147-48).

[contd] I have found it exceedingly difficult to segregate the sincere and subconscious automatic writers from those performers whose writing is more or less controlled—those who are to a certain degree conscious fraudulent (*TTAS* 148).

[contd] There seems to be an inherent tendency on the part of these psychic freaks and so-called “sensitives” to exaggerate their gifts and, childlike, magnify their performances.

The mental attitude of the medium seems to be to try and outdo other “psychics,” and so there is ever present this sort of urge to the perpetration of fraud (*TTAS* 148).

[contd] Notwithstanding the frauds to be found among automatic writers, there is, nevertheless, a residue who are wholly sincere, honest men and women who believe they are “spirit controlled,” or that in some other way their automatic writings have a spiritual origin (*TTAS* 148).

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Years ago he was able to take a pencil in his hand, drop off into something approaching a passive dream-state, when suddenly the pencil would start to write messages, as he supposed, from the spirit world.

In this connection let me record it as my opinion that automatic writing and the automatism manifested in the ouija-board performance are very nearly, if not quite, one and the same.

That is, I regard them as identical in their psychologic roots—in their psychic origin and direction.

18:2.2 I have found it exceedingly difficult to segregate the sincere and subconscious automatic writers from those who are to a certain degree consciously fraudulent.

There seems to be an inherent tendency on the part of these psychic freaks and so-called “sensitives” to exaggerate their gifts and, childlike, magnify their performances.

The mental attitude of the medium seems to be to try to outdo other “psychics,” and so there is ever present this urge to the perpetration of fraud.

18:2.3 Notwithstanding the frauds to be found among automatic writers, there is, nevertheless, a residue who are wholly sincere; honest men and women who believe they are “spirit controlled,” or that in some other way their automatic writings have a spiritual origin.

VIII: AUTOMATIC WRITING (McCabe 129)

Mr. G. B. Shaw's mother was an automatic artist of that class.

A high-minded medical man of my acquaintance was a medium of the same type (McC 134).

Flammarion never became a Spiritualist, but was quite a fluent automatic writer in his youth. Victorien Sardou, the great dramatist, belonged to the same circle, and was an automatic draughtsman (McC 135).

Quite without a deliberate intention, he signed his automatic writing (on science) "Galileo" (McC 135).

It would appear that Mr. G. B. Shaw's mother was an automatic writer.

I have a very good friend, a professional man, who is an automatic writer,

but who no longer considers that his messages are dictated by discarnate spirits.

18:2.4 While Flammarion never became an out-and-out spiritualist, it is well known that he was a fluent automatic writer in his young days, as was also Sardou, the dramatist, who more largely indulged his gift along the line of automatic drafting.

Flammarion, in reciting some of his own experiences, sheds an interesting sidelight on the performances of automatic writers when he explains how,

after he had written out a considerable thesis on science, he subconsciously signed it "Galileo."

A STRANGE CASE OF AUTOMATIC TALKING

18:3.1 As indicating that all our experiences are conserved in memory* and as a demonstration that anything in the memory—even in the unconscious—can be recalled and find expression in both thought and words, I would cite the case of a patient suffering from Jacksonian epilepsy, which I have reported elsewhere. This singular case is one of automatic talking.

[*It is highly probable that time, say thirty or forty years, will serve actually to efface many of our less vividly registered memories. Many of our memory patterns are not necessarily of lifelong duration.]

[Compare 23:6.4.]

APPENDIX B: A CASE OF CHRONOLOGICAL MEMORY (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 518)

[contd] At the time the following observations were made, the subject, Mr. C., was about thirty years of age.

His general health was apparently good, and he had never passed through any severe illness.

Four years before these observations Mr. C. had engaged in a scuffle with an armed man and was dealt a severe blow on the head with a gunstock.

A short time after this accident he developed a typical case of Jacksonian epilepsy.

18:3.2 At the time when this patient, Mr. C., was operated upon, he was about thirty years of age.

His general health was good; he had never passed through any severe illness.

Four years before coming under our observation, he had been engaged in a scuffle with an armed man, who dealt him a severe blow on the head with a gunstock.

A short time after this accident he developed a typical case of Jacksonian epilepsy.

SOURCE

Immediately after each attack the patient seemed to be in more or less of a dazed condition, during which time he would often engage in usual and extraordinary escapades, even to the extent of going out on the streets at night and holding up pedestrians at the point of a revolver.

As time passed these attacks of post-epileptic insanity grew more and more severe, and lasted for a longer period of time (*PF* 518).

[contd] During these periods of mental aberration following his epileptic attacks, the patient would wander away from home, sometimes being absent from one to three days.

It was during one of these periods, when he was aimlessly wandering about town, that he was picked up and brought to the institution, where the author was permitted to make the observations here recorded.

The patient was at this time also under the observation of Dr. W. B. Holden (*PF* 518).

[contd] Shortly after being placed in his bed and under guard, the patient began to talk in an apparently rational and chronological manner.

His eyes seldom moved, his stare was fixed and concentrated straight ahead.

It was soon apparent that he was relating a section of his life-experience in chronological order, day by day and hour by hour.

All went well

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Immediately after each epileptic attack he seemed to be in a dazed condition, during which he would often engage in extraordinary escapades, even to the extent of going out on the streets at night and holding up pedestrians at the point of a revolver.

As time passed, these attacks of post-epileptic insanity grew more and more severe, and would last for longer periods of time.

18:3.3 During the periods of mental aberration following his seizures, the patient would wander away from home, sometimes being absent two or three days.

It was during one of these wandering periods, in which he was only semi-conscious of what he was doing, that he was picked up and brought to the institution where I was enabled to make the observations here recorded.

18:3.4 Shortly after being placed in his bed, and under guard, the patient began to talk in an apparently rational and chronological manner.

His eyes seldom moved, his gaze was fixed and concentrated straight ahead.

It soon appeared that he was relating a section of his life-experience in chronological order, hour by hour and day by day.

All went well,

SOURCE

until he came down to the time in his life marked by the fight in which he was hit over the head with the gunstock, whereupon he was immediately seized with a paroxysm of convulsions of extraordinary strength and duration.

It required four men to hold him in the bed at this time, or rather on the bed, for mattress and all were quickly precipitated to the floor (PF&F 518-19).

Immediately after a paroxysm of convulsions, this patient would begin to talk in a moderate tone of voice—somewhat of a monotone—concerning his life experience, his general thoughts and acts.

He would begin with some Monday morning, by stretching his arms as on awakening in bed.

He spoke very distinctly when expressing his leading thoughts, while he would quickly slur over numerous unimportant matters.

At one time when under observation, it required him only twenty minutes to pass through a day's experience; and during this brief time he repeated aloud his chief thoughts and described or illustrated in abbreviated pantomime, his chief acts.

He would sometimes move his hands during these narratives, but never undertook to leave the bed, lying quietly on his back and talking continuously.

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

as he talked hour after hour (only requiring that his lips be moistened now and then),

until he came to the time in his life marked by the fight in which he was hit over the head with the gun-stock; whereupon he was immediately seized with a paroxysm of convulsions of extraordinary severity and duration.

It required four powerful men to hold him in bed at this time, or rather on the bed, for the mattress and springs were quickly precipitated to the floor.

18:3.5 Immediately after one of these paroxysms, the patient would begin to talk in a moderate tone of voice, somewhat of a monotone, concerning his experiences, thoughts, and acts.

He would begin with some Monday morning, stretching his arms as on awakening in bed.

He would speak very distinctly when expressing his leading thoughts, while he would quickly slur over numerous unimportant matters.

At one time, I remember, it required only about twenty minutes to pass through a day's experience, and during this brief time he repeated aloud his chief thoughts, and described or illustrated in abbreviated pantomime his chief acts.

He would sometimes move his hands during these narratives, but never undertook to leave the bed, lying quietly on his back and talking continuously.

SOURCE

He would pass through a day's experience in from ten minutes to half an hour, apparently grow sleepy, and with but a few seconds of silence, which corresponded to the night's sleep, would awaken, yawn, stretch his arms upward, yawn again, and then would immediately begin the narration of another day's thoughts and actions (*PF&F* 519).

During one of his longer recitals he passed through three years and a half of his life, apparently relating all the leading thoughts and chief events.

At another time he passed over a period of eleven days which were very thoroughly known to his attendants and observers, and his recital included every known conversation of this period, each of which was very fully, accurately, and chronologically repeated (*PF&F* 520).

[contd] I remember of one day when he was about to describe an experience with me. I told this experience as best I could in advance of his narrative.

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

He would pass through a day's experience in from ten minutes to half an hour, depending on how recent the events were; and upon completing the story of a day he would apparently grow sleepy, and after but a few seconds of silence, which seemed to correspond with the night's sleep, would awaken, yawn, stretch his arms upward, yawn again, and then immediately begin the narration of the next day's thoughts and actions.

IS MEMORY INFALLIBLE?

18:4.1 During one of his longer recitals, lasting about thirty-six hours, he passed through three and a half years of his life, apparently relating all the leading thoughts and chief events.

At another time he passed over a period of eleven days which were very thoroughly known to his attendants and observers, and his recital included every known conversation and experience of this period, each of which was very fully, accurately and chronologically repeated.

18:4.2 I remember, on one of these occasions, when he was approaching a point where he would soon be due to describe an interview with me, I told this experience, as best I could, in advance of his narrative.

SOURCE

In fifteen or twenty minutes he reached the experience I had just anticipated, and gave it just as accurately, filling in a number of details that had slipped my mind; but wherein the details of his story were different from those of mine, I was compelled to recognize that in each and every case he was right and I was wrong; and thus it was demonstrated that his memory in the trance state was far more reliable than my normal memory (*PF&F* 520).

In passing through an experience of this sort, ranging from a few hours to two days, he never slept, but talked incessantly.

He would take no nourishment during this time, but would sit up in bed and drink from one to three glasses of water, his mouth becoming very dry.

He would stop his talking only long enough to drink this water.

The expression of his face was usually quite fixed, except on certain occasions, when his face would grow pale and an angry look would come across it;

at other times his countenance would light up while he was describing some ridiculous experience or relating some humorous episode (*PF&F* 522).

Careful inquiry showed that he possessed absolutely no memory of anything that had happened since the time of his seizure.

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

In fifteen or twenty minutes he reached the experience I had anticipated, and gave it just as accurately, filling in a number of details that had slipped my mind; but wherein the details of his story were different from mine, I was compelled in each case to recognize that he was right and I was wrong; thus it was demonstrated that his memory in the trance state was far more reliable than my normal memory.

18:4.3 In passing through an experience of this sort, ranging from two hours to almost two days, he never slept, but talked incessantly.

He would take no nourishment during this time, but would sit up in bed and drink from one to three glasses of water, or allow his lips to be moistened from time to time.

The drinking of water was all we ever discovered that would stop his talking.

His expression was usually quite fixed, except on certain occasions when his face would grow pale and an angry look would come across it.

At other times his countenance would light up somewhat while he was describing some ridiculous experience or relating some humorous episode.

18:4.4 Careful inquiry (after one of the attacks) showed that he possessed absolutely no memory of anything that had happened since the time of his seizure.

SOURCE

He could always recall that his mind was feeling “queerly,” as he described it, and that he was afraid he was going to have another “spell.”

None of his various depredations (in one of these conversations he described holding up six men in one evening, and four strange purses were found on his person) could be recalled to his mind.

He was blissfully ignorant of all he had done and everything he had said.

He knew of these things only by quizzing his nurses (*PF&F* 522).

The observation and study of this case was enough thoroughly to satisfy the author with respect to a number of propositions in modern psychology. First, that the memory retains well-nigh everything which has passed through the state of consciousness;

while the recollection or the power of recalling facts and experiences may be very imperfect and incomplete, all the incidents exist in the subconscious or marginal state, relatively perfect and complete.

Second, that the mind possesses an inherent chronological sense; that its memories are grouped and stored in chronological order; that the marginal consciousness (subconscious mind) is in possession of all the memory-data of the mind and is able to recall and reproduce the same in logical and chronological order (*PF&F* 523).

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

He could always recall that his “mind was feeling queer” as he described it, and that he was afraid he was “going to have another spell.”

None of his various depredations (in one of these monologues he described holding up six men, and four strange purses were found on his person) could be recalled to his mind.

He seemed to be blissfully ignorant of all that he had done and all that he had said.

He apparently knew of these things only by quizzing his attendants.

18:4.5 Aside from the surgical aspects of this case,

it demonstrated fully to my mind that human memory retains well-nigh everything which has passed through the state of consciousness.

While the power of recalling facts or experiences may be incomplete, all the incidents—the neural patterns—exist in the so-called subconscious mind or marginal state, relatively perfect and complete.

Further, it seems that this case demonstrates that the mind possesses an inherent chronological sense, that its memories are grouped and sorted in chronological order; that the marginal consciousness is in possession of all the memory data of the mind, and is able, under certain conditions, and within reasonable time limits, to recall and reproduce the same in logical order.

SOURCE

[contd] Careful study of this case could not but impress the observer that the human brain-memory is somewhat analogous to a phonograph cylinder, while the mind performs in the capacity of that power which operates, utilizes, reproduces, and otherwise manipulates those things recorded on the brain through the sensory receiving apparatus of the body (*PF&F* 523).

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

18:4.6 Observation of this patient could not fail to impress one with the fact that the human brain-memory, in its behavior, is in many respects analogous to a phonograph record, while the mind performs in the capacity of that power which operates, utilizes, reproduces, and otherwise manipulates those things recorded on the brain through the sensory receiving apparatus of the body.

This case of automatic talking also serves to throw considerable light on the problem of automatic writing.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF AUTOMATISM

VIII: AUTOMATIC WRITING (McCabe 129)

This is a broad characteristic of automatic writing since it began in the fifties of the nineteenth century. At its best it merely reflected the culture of the time, which was often wrong. **Stainton Moses**, for instance, wrote reams of edifying revelation.

18:5.1 Among British spiritualists, perhaps the most famous of the automatic writers was the Rev. **Stainton Moses**.

But a careful study of his writings pertaining to history and other subjects shows that he must have been reexpressing the data found in the storehouse of his own memory.

That some of the data of his subconscious mind were unreliable is proved by the fact that

But I find among his wonderful utterances about ancient history certain statements concerning the early Hindus and Persians which recent discoveries have completely falsified.

many of his statements concerning ancient Oriental races have been shown by subsequent discoveries to be entirely false.

He had been reading certain books which were just passable (though already a little out of date) fifty years ago. Among other things the spirits told him that Manu lived 3,000 B.C., and that there was a high “Brahminical lore” long before that date!

So with Andrew Jackson Davis, the first of these marvellous bringers of wisdom from the spirit world. He had probably read R. Chambers’s *Vestiges of Creation*, and he gave out weird and wonderful revelations about evolution. In the beginning was a clam, which begot a tadpole, which begot a quadruped, and so on.

Davis certainly lied hard when he used to deny that he had read the books to which his “revelations” were traced, but no one can deny his originality (McC 135-36).

A careful scrutiny of his statements shows what books he had been reading—

books that were a little out of date even in his day,

and that have since been shown to be entirely untrue.

18:5.2 Most automatic writers insist that they have not read books whose contents would account for what they write.

Andrew Jackson Davis, one of the early wizards of automatic writing, wrote much about evolution.

He denied having read books on this subject,

but examination of his writings shows so much in common with Chambers’s work that one can only believe he had at some time read the book.

In this connection we must remember that it is entirely possible for a normal person to read a book or magazine article, and to have its subject matter stored away in the subconscious archives of the brain, wholly forgotten by the normal consciousness, and yet to bring it all to light by means of hypnosis, dreams, or automatic writing.

[*Note:* Moses' automatic writings were published during his lifetime. All but one of his twenty-four notebooks have been preserved by the London Spiritualist Alliance.]

18:5.3 Of the many thousands of pages of automatic writing left by the Reverend Mr. Moses, much was published after his death by trustees to whom he left his manuscript.

These records are interesting, but far from convincing as proofs of anything supernatural.

So far as we are aware, no message has ever been received by automatic writing that could not plausibly be shown to have had a natural and normal origin from well-known material which could easily have found its place, through ordinary channels of reading and observation, in the subconscious centers of the mind.

18:5.4 The study of automatic writings shows that they fall into two groups:

18:5.5 1. Those which are but a restatement of ideas and facts which the automatic writer has psychically assimilated in perfectly normal fashion through reading, attendance upon lectures, and otherwise mingling with his fellow men.

18:5.6 2. Those which are manifestly fraudulent on their face.

VII: MESSAGES FROM THE SPIRIT-WORLD (McCabe 109)

In 1911 an advertisement in the *Times* offered £1,000 to any medium who would merely give proof of possessing telepathic power,

and there was not a single offer.

This year Mr. Joseph Rinn, a former member of the American Society for Psychical Research and a life-long inquirer, has deposited with that Society a sum of £1,000 for any evidence of communication with the dead under proper conditions. There again will be no application.

Mediums prefer a simpler and more reverent audience, even if the fees be smaller (McC 128).

[Note: The offer was made in late 1922.]

IV: DISSOCIATION (Hart 38)

Automatic writing has played a large part in the history of spiritualism, and has been attributed by supporters of that doctrine to the activity of some spiritual being who avails himself of the patient's hand in order to manifest to the world his desires and opinions.

About ten years ago a London paper offered a thousand pounds to any medium who would give proof, before a competent tribunal, of possessing telepathic power

or of giving supernatural messages by means of automatic writing, etc.

No one has ever appeared to claim the reward.

Likewise, I think Rinn's offer of a thousand pounds, which he deposited with the American Society for Psychic Research, to be given for bona fide evidence of communication with the dead under proper conditions, has never been awarded.

Most mediums prefer to work for smaller fees with a sympathetic audience.

The five thousand dollar award of *The Scientific American* was not won by any of the mediums examined.

18:5.7 Spiritualists ordinarily maintain that the hand of the automatic writer is controlled by spirit forces,

There is no need, however, to resort to fantastic hypotheses of this type,

and the explanation of the phenomenon is comparatively simple.

A dissociation has taken place, though one far more complete than those hitherto described.

The field of consciousness is divided into two distinct parts, one engaged in conversation, the other comprising the systems of ideas which are finding expression in the automatic writing (H 44).

II: CONSERVATION OF FORGOTTEN EXPERIENCES OF NORMAL, ARTIFICIAL, AND PATHOLOGICAL LIFE (Prince 15)

I. Normal Life (Prince 15)

Evidence from abstraction. (Prince 24)

and that therefore the writing has little or no connection with the mind of the writer—that it is supernatural in origin and represents a message dictated by spirits.

But there is no need of a spirit hypothesis to explain automatic writing.

The explanation of the phenomenon is comparatively simple.

A dissociation has taken place—one far more complete than those of ordinary hysteria.

The field of consciousness is divided into two distinct parts, one engaged in ordinary conversation, perhaps, while the other is dealing with those ideas and complexes which are concerned in automatic writing.

FORGOTTEN EXPERIENCES

18:6.1 In discussing the technique of automatic writing, one authority (Morton Prince) says:

I would here point out that the recovery of forgotten experiences by the method of *abstraction* differs in one respect from their recovery by *automatic writing*. In the former case the recalled experiences being brought back by associative memories enter in the associations and become true conscious recollections, like any other recollections,

while in automatic writing the memories are reproduced in script without entering the personal consciousness at all and while the subject is still in ignorance.

Often even after reading the script his memory still remains a blank.

It is much as if one's ideas had been preserved on a phonographic record and later reproduced without awakening a memory of their original occurrence (P 27).

Evidence obtained by the method of automatic writing. (Prince 15)

Mrs. Holland's script records, as investigation seemed to show, the exact words expressing a personal sentiment contained in a letter written to her twenty years before and long forgotten.

The letter proving this was accidentally discovered* (P 22).

* In the automatic script, which purported to be a spiritistic message from a dead friend named Annette, occurred the enigmatical sentence:

18:6.2 The recalled experiences being brought back by associative memories enter into the associations and become true conscious recollections,

while in automatic writing the memories are reproduced in script without entering the personal consciousness at all and while the subject is still in ignorance.

Often even after reading the script his memory still remains a blank.

It is much as tho one's ideas had been preserved on a phonographic record and later reproduced without awakening a memory of their original occurrence.

18:6.3 In the investigation of Mrs. Holland's automatic writing there was found in one of her automatic scripts a statement in the exact words—as well as reproducing the sentimental context—of a letter which she had written twenty years before.

This experience she had long since forgotten,

but the original letter was accidentally discovered.

In the automatic script, which purported to be a spirit message from a dead friend named Annetta, there was found this sentence:

SOURCE

“Tell her this comes from the friend who loved cradles and cradled things.”

The meaning of this was revealed by the above-mentioned letter to Mrs. Holland, written twenty years previously.

It was from a friend of Annette’s, and quoted an extract from Annette’s will, which ran, “because I love cradles and cradled things.” When Mrs. Holland was tearing up some old letters she came across this one. (“On the automatic writing of Mrs. Holland,” by Miss Alice Johnson: *Proceedings of the S. P. R.*, June, 1908, pp. 288, 289) (P 22).

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

“Tell her this comes from the friend who loves cradles and cradled things.”

Now, the meaning of this enigmatic sentence was revealed by the discovery of the aforementioned letter of twenty years and more before,

for the letter quoted an extract from Annetta’s will, reading, “because I love cradles and cradled things.”

Undoubtedly, if more old letters could be unearthed, or if we could walk at will in the halls of our early memories, we could discover the origin of much that appears in our daily conversation, and in many cases the automatic writers would be able to trace out their alleged spirit-dictated writings to a perfectly normal, natural, and human source, among the rich deposits of past experiences conserved in the unconscious realms of the mind.

18:6.4 And so we must conclude that, in the case of both automatic writing and automatic talking, we now have a thoroughly scientific hypothesis which will account for all phenomena of this kind that deserve to be classified as genuine. Nothing as yet has ever come to us through automatic writing which bears any evidence of supernatural origin, or which contains authentic truths, facts, or principles heretofore unknown to the human race. The automatic writers have given us nothing but what is in every way consistent with our belief that such messages are only a rehash of the common elements of human experience stored away in the subconscious centers of the automatic writer’s own mind.

SOURCE

18: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

18:6.5 The reader is referred to the Appendix for brief notice of a very unusual case of supposedly automatic writing associated with other psychic phenomena which came under my observation many years ago.