

Chapter 19 — Telepathy — Mind Reading

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

by
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Sources for Chapter 19, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S., *The Truth About Spiritualism* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1923)
- (2) Rev. Samuel McComb, *The Future Life in the Light of Modern Inquiry* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919)
- (3) William S. Sadler, M.D., *The Physiology of Faith and Fear: Or, The Mind in Health and Disease* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1912)
- (4) Paul Popenoe and Roswell Hill Johnson, *Applied Eugenics* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1922)
- (5) Albert B. Olston, *Mind Power and Privileges* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1902)
- (5) Horatio W. Dresser, Ph.D., *The Open Vision: A Study of Psychic Phenomena* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1920)
- (6) Isaac K. Funk, D.D., LL.D., *The Psychic Riddle* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1907)
- (7) J. Allen Gilbert, Ph.D., M.D., "Spirit Return," in *Scientific American*, August 1925, pp. 85, 143

[Note: Special thanks to Paul Anderson, of Boston, for finding this article and sending it to me, on April 13, 2013. — MB.]

- (8) David P. **Abbott**, *Behind the Scenes with the Mediums* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1916)
- (9) Edmund S. **Conklin**, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927)

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

14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The
 Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd] Telepathy has been variously called mind reading, thought transference, and universal intelligence, and it has been more associated with the propaganda of spiritualism in Great Britain than in this country.

This is probably due to the fact that early in his spiritistic investigations Myers attached a great deal of importance to the rôle of telepathy in connection with various spiritistic and occult manifestations.

Myers was so impressed with the province of telepathy in the study of spiritualism that it was “almost the fundamental doctrine of spiritualistic philosophy” (*TTAS* 149).

[contd] Telepathy should not be confused with alleged second sight, intuition, clairvoyance, etc.

It rests upon an entirely different and separate hypothesis. In this connection it is well to remind the reader that these peculiar psychic tendencies appear to run in families (*TTAS* 149).

[See 2:3.2.]

XIX — TELEPATHY— MIND READING

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Myers was so impressed with the province of telepathy in this connection that he once called it “almost the fundamental doctrine of spiritualistic philosophy.”

19:0.2 Telepathy should not be confused with alleged second sight, intuition, clairvoyance, etc.

It rests upon an entirely different and separate hypothesis, tho all these peculiar psychic tendencies appear to run in families.

Intuition has been defined as an inherited and more or less subconscious spontaneity of idea association,

and there is little question that these so-called psychic gifts, as well as certain well-known psychical tendencies, are definitely hereditary.

THE TELEPATHY HYPOTHESIS

VIII: THE ARGUMENT FROM PSYCHICAL RESEARCH (McComb 140)

1. *The telepathic hypothesis.* (McComb 160)

[contd] By “telepathy” is meant the transmission of thought or feeling from mind to mind independently of the recognized channels of sense (M 160).

Speaking generally, “official” science rejects as pure fancy the alleged facts connoted by the term (M 160).

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

14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd from 19:0.2] I think the consensus of opinion among the scientists today would be that telepathy is merely a popular word symbol which has come into use in explanation of certain coincidences which take place between living individuals and which are to be explained in two general ways:

1. Chance. Coincidences, pure and simple.

19:1.1 Telepathy has been defined as “the transmission of thought or feeling from mind to mind independently of the recognized channels of sense.”

Scientists, as a general rule, whether they belong to the domain of physical science or to that of psychology, have not been disposed to accept the telepathic hypothesis.

I think the consensus among scientists today would be that telepathy is merely a popular word-symbol which has come into use to explain how the same thought sometimes may be entertained at the same moment by two living persons, and that the fact is to be accounted for in two general ways:

1. By chance—coincidence, pure and simple.

SOURCE

2. Similarity of hereditary predisposition, or environmental influences, either or both of which tend to cause two individuals to think of the same thing, approximately, at the same time and under similar circumstances (*TTAS* 149-50).

VIII: THE ARGUMENT FROM PSYCHICAL RESEARCH (McComb 140)

1. *The telepathic hypothesis.* (McComb 160)

[contd from four rows up] For example, Professor Armstrong, who writes a postscript to Mr. Clodd's *If a Man Die Shall He Live Again?*, brackets together "telepathy" and "spiritualism" and denounces both as popular superstitions.

There is no such thing (he holds) as action of mind upon mind apart from the recognized channels of sense, except such as are explicable by shrewd guessing.

We have, as a result, the amusing spectacle

of distinguished men of science appealing to telepathy in order to render the spiritistic theory superfluous,

and of equally distinguished men of science rejecting telepathy as unproved and (as some think) unprovable (McC 160-61).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

2. By similarity of hereditary predisposition, or environmental influences, either or both of which may tend to cause two individuals to think of the same thing, approximately, at the same time and under similar circumstances.

19:1.2 The attitude of the scientific mind is perhaps well expressed by Professor Armstrong, who is disposed to treat telepathy and spiritualism as one and the same thing, and brands them both as popular superstition.

He maintains that there is no such thing as action of mind upon mind, apart from the recognized physical and sensory channels, and explains most of the remarkable coincidences cited by believers in telepathy as the product of shrewd guessing.

19:1.3 Thus we come face to face with a very confusing—not to say amusing—situation in the scientific world.

A minority of eminent scientists have accepted some sort of telepathic hypothesis as a part of their working philosophy, and seek to account for many of the more dignified phenomena of spiritualism on the basis of telepathy,

while at the same time the major portion of the scientific world assigns the entire galaxy of telepathic performances to the limbo of guesswork, coincidence, and fraud.

SOURCE

[Shrewd **guessing**, hints unconsciously supplied by the sitter, **fraud**, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the psychic, the vagaries of secondary personality, chance **coincidence**,—these and other influences must be set aside as inadmissible before we can be sure that we are in the presence of the supernormal (McC 158).]

The present situation of the telepathic hypothesis may be described thus: (1) It is accepted by the great majority of those who have made prolonged investigation,

as a convenient way of stating that active conditions of two **living minds** may be transmitted from one to the other by some supernormal path **as yet unknown** (McC 161-62).

(3) It is accepted by many as a **rival to the spiritistic hypothesis**, as competent to explain all the undoubted facts of psychical research so far as these seem to point to a transcendental cause.

(4) Finally, it is accepted by some experimenters as a process not only of incarnate minds but of minds **discarnate**, and as hinting at a law governing all spiritual intelligences throughout the entire universe (McC 162).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

19:1.4 There are investigators who admit telepathy as a fact

while they deny its connection with anything spiritual or supernatural,

claiming that these communications between **living minds** are effected through channels which are **as yet unknown**,

but which will be found to be in every way natural and material when they are once discovered.

Most scientists who have accepted telepathy as a demonstrated fact, have been rather driven to this position against their wills in an effort to find something to **offset the claims of spiritualism**.

Having failed to institute sufficiently thoroughgoing investigations of spiritistic phenomena to show either their fraudulent character or their psychologic origin, numerous investigators have been tempted to get out of their dilemma by referring certain types of so-called spirit phenomena to telepathy.

The spiritualists are not averse to accepting telepathy as a part of their working philosophy, so long as the term is allowed to include the possibility of **discarnate** spirits communicating with the minds of living humans.

SOURCE

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

19:1.5 It is only fair to the reader to state that,

So far as experimentation has gone there is not a shred of evidence to lead us to suppose that one mind can penetrate the subconscious depths of another mind,

so far as actual and reliable experimentation has proceeded, there has not been developed, up to the present time, a thread of actual evidence which would warrant us in entertaining the belief that one mind can penetrate the subconscious realms of another mind,

and pick out of a myriad elements those that are relevant to the establishment of personal identity (McC 162).

and there, from an almost infinite storehouse of ideas and experiences, select those which would, when brought forth, give proof of either the telepathic hypothesis or the existence of a discarnate spirit performing such a miracle.

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

TELEPATHY AND MAGNETIC HEALING (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 463)

Telepathy is based upon certain assumed laws of intercommunication between human minds, and serves to keep alive the witchcraft delusions of former times.

19:1.6 The theory of telepathy is based upon certain assumed laws of intercommunication between human minds, and keeps alive the witchcraft delusions of former times.

It also serves as the basis for the present-day belief in absent treatments and malicious animal magnetism (*PF&F* 463).

It also serves as the supposed scientific basis for the present-day belief in absent treatments and malicious animal magnetism.

IDENTICAL TWINS

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

14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd from 19:1.1] In consideration of the fact that hereditary similarity may account for the apparent coincidence of two individuals in different parts of the world thinking of the same thing at the same time, we may cite the many experiences recorded of identity of thought on the part of so-called “identical twins” (*TTAS* 150).

I: NATURE OR NURTURE? (*Popenoe & Johnson* 1)

Identical twins have their origin in a different phenomenon—they are believed to be halves of the same egg-cell, in which two growing-points appeared at a very early embryonic stage, each of these developing into a separate individual.

As would be expected, these identical twins are always of the same sex, and extremely like each other, so that sometimes their own mother can not tell them apart (P 5).

“Among my thirty-five detailed cases of close similarity, there are no less than seven in which both twins suffered from some special ailment or had some exceptional peculiarity. Both twins are apt to sicken at the same time in no less than nine out of the thirty-five cases...” (P 7).

19:2.1 Further, in consideration of the fact that hereditary similarity may account for the apparent coincidence of two individuals in different parts of the world thinking of the same thing at the same time, we may cite the many recorded instances of identity of thought on the part of so-called “identical twins.”

19:2.2 Identical twins are supposed to take their origin from a single egg,

and they are always of the same sex and sometimes look so nearly alike that even their own parents are hardly able to tell them apart.

Now, there are numerous cases on record to show that

such identical twins have been known to take the same disease on the same day and at the same hour,

to dream the same dream on the same night at the same hour, awaking practically at the same time; and further, twins of this sort have been known to think substantially the same thought on the same day at the same time, even when the Atlantic Ocean intervened between them.

19:2.3 We explain phenomena of this sort on the ground that these two individuals are really one; that they are exactly alike; that they are but a split embryologic entity. But may not this interesting fact, which in this case we can to some extent understand, serve as an illustration of another and less well-known fact, viz., that two or more individuals, apparently not closely related by blood relationship, may be born with certain basic human endowments and tendencies which are very similar? May not two such individuals, even tho they are not related by family ties, be, after all, psychic or philosophic twins? We know that people who are not closely related may look alike physically; we know there are national, as well as racial, types and tendencies;

[Not only are kindred souls attracted to each other, but kindred minds are also very fraternal and inclined towards co-operation the one with the other. Human minds are sometimes observed to be running in channels of astonishing similarity and inexplicable agreement (16:6.3).]

and so, is it not possible that individuals may be found who run so closely toward a certain type that they can almost read one another's thoughts; that they can almost anticipate one another's feelings and emotions?

At least, it has occurred to me, in the study of heredity in reference to twins—more particularly so-called identical twins—that the facts there discovered might be of assistance in explaining some phases of so-called telepathy.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TELEPATHY

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

TELEPATHY AND MAGNETIC HEALING (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 463)

No doubt many illustrations of so-called telepathy are merely coincidences.

It would be very remarkable, indeed, if no such coincidences should ever occur.

I am far from believing, however, that this offers anything like a general principle which can clear up the whole problem.

One must remember, too, that the fallibility of memory may lead to the description of coincidences which never actually occurred.

Likewise it may lead to a judgment of agreement between the thought of the “receiver” and that of the “transmitter,” when no such agreement, as a matter of fact, exists (*PF&F* 464).

[contd] All intelligent beings recognize the existence of gravitation—that universal law of cohesion which holds all things together.

If a new world should be created in the universe, untold billions of miles away—so far that hundreds of years would pass before its light would reach our earth—the moment such a new planet was born, our world would feel its pull of gravity.

19:3.1 No doubt many illustrations of so-called telepathy are merely coincidences.

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SOURCE

Gravitation is an omnipresent force acting independent of time and space; and even if we were not confronted with the universal religious teaching of a Great Spirit, we would suspect that there existed an all-pervading and universal spiritual intelligence, by the suggestion of analogy from the well-known force of gravitation (PF&F 464).

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

14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd from 19:2.1] *The Universal Mind*. This plausible hypothesis of a Universal Mind completely does away with the assumption of the transfer of thought from one finite mind to another.

There may be a Universal Intelligence whose emanations radiate to all who are in harmony with the Divine Mind.

Every soul who is “in tune with the Infinite” would enjoy the possibility of receiving messages and inspirations from this Central Source.

If this is true, it is not difficult to see that two minds may have the same thought at the same time just as two wireless telegraph stations which are attuned alike may receive, at the same time, the same message, which has been flashed from a vessel out at sea many miles from each station.

Many good people adhere to this view and derive comfort therefrom.

Their own intimate experiences, they affirm, supply testimony in its favor (*TTAS* 150).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Gravitation is an omnipresent force acting independently of time and space; and even if we were not confronted with the universal religious teaching of a Great Spirit, we would suspect by the suggestion of analogy from the well-known force of gravitation that there might exist an all-pervading and universal spiritual intelligence.

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SOURCE

[contd] Even the American Indian had in his religion, the “Great Spirit.”

All modern religions recognize the presence of a universal spirit.

It is a cardinal thought of Christianity that God should pour out His “Spirit upon all flesh.”

Jesus told His followers before His death—before He departed, that He would send them the “Comforter,” the “Holy Ghost,” who would teach and guide them “into all truth” (*TTAS* 150-51).

[contd] I am not disposed to follow the deceptive and illogical reasoning of the telepathist in order to find an explanation of these common experiences of thought harmony and identity.

We are rather disposed to accept the equivalent of the Christian doctrine of the omnipresent Spiritual Mind, the doctrine of the Great Spiritual Teacher, as a basis for some of the phenomena commonly described under the head of telepathy (*TTAS* 151).

[contd] If such phenomena find their explanation either in the doctrine of the Universal Mind or in any other doctrine which assumes the activity of spiritual forces in their production, they, of course, lie outside the realm of physical science and in that of personal religious belief; they are problems in spiritual science (*TTAS* 151).

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19:3.5 I do not feel that I am compelled to follow the illogical reasoning of the telepathist in order to find an explanation of these common experiences of thought-harmony and identity.

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DIVERSE THEORIES

[See 19:3.3, above.]

19:4.1 Some advocates of telepathy even hold that the phenomenon is but the individual recognition of some system of universal broadcasting of spiritual intelligence, another phase of the doctrine of universal intelligence. This presumes the residence within man of some non-physical, or spiritual, entity.

V: TELEPATHY (Olston 57)

Telepathy consists of more than simply imparting an intelligence to some mind at a distance. It has the faculty of, in some way, going to another's mind and bringing back to the objective consciousness information regarding the other person (O 59).

Telepathy and some of its allied phenomena seem also to imply the existence of an intelligence within the individual which can migrate—which can manifest itself in other individuals or at places distant from the personality of its abode.

The telepathists argue for a so-called communication between souls which is equivalent to migration of personality.

[Note: See Funk's *The Widow's Mite*.]

They even teach that the brain of one individual may be so idle and unused that another mind may take possession of it and work it; but they cite little if any evidence, unless it be that of the Watseka Wonder.

II: PSYCHICAL EXPERIENCE (Dresser 13)

According to theosophy, telepathy includes the projection of "thought-forms" from one person to another.

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V: TYPICAL CASES OF SEVERAL CLASSES OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA
(Funk 166)

Sir William Crookes's explanation of phenomena of this kind is that thought makes vibrations, and these vibrations, after the manner suggested by wireless telegraphy, are caught by any human brain receiver which may be attuned to the brain transmitter (F 169).

[contd] People in sympathy with each other tell us that they at times have sat together by the hour and tho they scarcely have uttered a word yet they have felt that somehow they have communed with one another.

We all remember the story that is told of Tennyson once visiting Carlyle, and that these two men sat together in front of the great fireplace and smoked for three hours, and in all that time uttered only now and then a word or two; at last when Tennyson rose to go Carlyle said to him, "Come again, Alfred, we have had a grand time," and he meant it (F 169).

19:4.3 Sir Oliver Lodge, like the late Dr. Funk, believes that he has encountered genuine phenomena which serve to establish the essential claims of telepathy.

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MRS. PIPER AND THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE

V: THE PSYCHIC PHENOMENA OF
SPIRITUALISM (*The Truth About
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14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The
Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd from 19:3.6] *Mrs. Piper and Thought
Transference*. By the time Mrs. Piper got into
the spiritualistic game it was becoming
rather dangerous for mediums to indulge in
physical manifestations, and so Mrs. Piper
stuck rather closely to the direct-voice
mode of transmitting spirit messages,
occasionally indulging in performances that
bordered on the trance.

Prof. James Hyslop, in his investigation of
Mrs. Piper, was so impressed by the large
number of coincidences—he was so
influenced by Mrs. Piper's shrewd
guessing—that in a published report of his
sittings with this medium he advanced the
opinion, that no matter what his ideas
might be about Mrs. Piper's ability to
communicate with the dead, he was sure of
her ability to communicate with the minds
of the living.

In one case it was claimed that Mrs. Piper
was able to project a trans-Atlantic
communication, getting a message from
some living mind in England, and it was
asserted that this particular message while
started out from Great Britain in English
was received in this country in Latin, and
yet it was claimed that Mrs. Piper
understood nothing of the Latin tongue
(*TTAS* 151-52).

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SOURCE

[contd] Most of the investigators who studied Mrs. Piper, if they believed at all in telepathy, usually reached the conclusion that her seances were largely to be explained on that hypothesis.

And so it seems that the theory of telepathy has become, in recent years, very convenient to the psychic researcher as a means of accounting for a vast sphere of psychic phenomena which, on the one hand, the investigators cannot prove to be fraudulent, and which, on the other hand, is not sufficiently evidential to establish its claim to supernatural or spirit origin (*TTAS* 152).

[[Quoting Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, re his visit to New York in 1922:] Mr. Rinn tries to make light of my qualifications as a psychic investigator. I do not wish to blow my own trumpet, but, after all, I am a doctor of medicine, a trained man of science, an authority upon deductive reasoning, and a man of the world who has proved his judgment to be correct upon public questions many times (Joseph F. Rinn, *Sixty Years of Psychic Research: Houdini and I Among the Spiritualists*, 1950).]

[Source?]

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

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TELEPATHY FRAUDS

19:6.1 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle dislikes to think he is not an expert in the detection of fraud and trickery,

and says he is “a doctor of medicine, a trained man of science, and an authority upon deductive reasoning.”

But Sir Arthur unwittingly reveals how easily he, like Sir William Crookes, can be duped. He states that he tested the Zancigs and knows they possess genuine telepathic power. The joke is on Sir Arthur, because the Zancigs are members of the Society of American Magicians, and have never made any claim to supernatural or telepathic power. In fact, Mr. Zancig publicly stated, in the Alhambra Theatre in London, that if he lost his eye-sight and hearing they could never do any of their tricks.

19:6.2 Let us note, in this connection, the following case reported in *The Scientific American*.

“SPIRIT RETURN” (Gilbert 85)

The following letter was given to the Morning Oregonian of Portland, Oregon, and was copied rather widely through the channels of the Associated Press.

Portland, Oregon, May 30, 1922.

Mrs. J. Allen Gilbert (Florence A. Z. Gilbert) died December 17, 1917. For months previous to this time her death was a certainty.

We were both deeply interested in psychology. Both also had friends who were firm believers in the phenomena of so-called spiritualism. Neither of us had any experiences or found any data that left conviction as to the possibility of the “return of the dead.” We felt sure that after her death messages would be brought to me from her friends who are believers along this line. In this I have not been disappointed. In order to get the affair on some sort of scientific basis, previous to her death she and I agreed upon a sign, countersign, password, code, or whatever one may see to call it, by which I might be able to recognize any communication from her as genuine in case such should be alleged. She was to make every possible effort to return but credence was to be given nothing by me unless accompanied by the countersign. Both of us deplored the enormous amount of fraud and deception that is practiced in this field (G 85).

This password or countersign was put in writing and placed in safe deposit under triple seal (G 85).

Mrs. X., the wife of a Dr. X., was stricken with what was plainly a mortal illness;

a compact was made that, after her decease, if she preserved her identity and found communication possible, she would try to communicate.

A countersign was agreed upon and stored away in a safe-deposit box under proper seal;

this countersign was to be used by her in any genuine message.

SOURCE

Repeated messages, reputedly from Mrs. Gilbert, have been brought to me. In no instance have the transmitters of these messages been able to obtain the countersign, simple though it is (G 85).

In order to stimulate attempt in this direction, and thus push the experiment in every possible way, I hereby offer a reward of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) to anyone who will obtain that countersign by communication with Mrs. Gilbert....

(Signed) J. Allen Gilbert. (G 85)

Naturally, the most interesting phase of the correspondence which came to me as a result of this letter, is the fact that up to date there have been sent in one hundred and thirty-nine definite countersigns, all ostensibly from Mrs. Gilbert, all of them different (except three) and all of them wrong (G 85).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

After her death, Dr. X. sought communication from her through mediums. He obtained alleged communications from numerous mediums, but never the password.

He finally offered \$500 for the countersign, but he still has his money.

He has had direct sittings with a large number of mediums, and has had mail communications, more or less spontaneously, from many others.

He has received 109 different alleged counter-signs, not one of them correct.

19:6.3 Dr. X. feels about telepathy more or less as I do, and he would be just about as well pleased to get the correct countersign in one way as in another.

He has accordingly made no effort to exclude telepathy from his sittings. He has, on the contrary, sat in the presence of mediums and concentrated with all his mental energy upon the true password, but to no effect. The production of 109 incorrect countersigns under such conditions can mean but one thing as regards the mediums: a very great number of persons are masquerading as mediums who lack proper capacity for producing genuine "direct messages."

Says the Doctor:

19:6.4 We can forgive a medium for failure to produce any results, for the conditions governing mediumistic procedure are not clearly known and there seems every reason for believing that they are erratic and delicate. We could even forgive a few mediums for getting the wrong message from the wrong spirit or from the wrong telepathic source. But 109 consecutive specific performances that are wrong impress us very unfavorably. It looks altogether too much like an out-and-out guessing contest.

19:6.5 At the same time, the failure of any of Dr. X.'s mediums to produce his countersign telepathically is rather a blow to the adherents of that theory.

THE ANNA EVA FAY TYPE

PERFORMANCES OF THE ANNIE EVA FAY TYPE. (Abbott 253)

19:7.1 In the last twenty years I have attended many performances on the order of mind-reading, and more or less after the type of the Anna Eva Fay séances.

[contd] I have recently met a medium who for some years traveled with a lady giving stage performances of the Annie Eva Fay variety. In this performance the spectators write questions which they desire answered, sign their names,

Spectators in the séance room, or among the audience in the theater, are allowed to write questions which they desire answered, signing their names to these questions.

and retain them.

Sometimes they retain the messages, and sometimes the slips are handed to the usher.

SOURCE

A lady who sits on the stage calls out the names of the respective writers, answering their questions in detail without seeing them.

The spectators usually write on paper which is on tablets furnished by the company; but sometimes they write on their own paper, or bring their questions with them, having written them at their own homes before leaving (A 253).

In gathering up these tablets, the attendants pass around from aisle to aisle in the rear of the audience, where they secretly exchange them for “dummy” tablets which are then carried down and deposited in a pile on the stage near the foot-lights. The originals are sent around secretly under the stage (A 253-54).

The man at the telephone reads the questions and names into it.... The lady on the stage has a receiver such as telephone operators use, (with the head portion removed) concealed under her hair, which is dressed low with two curls over the former (A 256).

This method is superior ... to the “foot telegraph,” which has been employed on occasions (A 256).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

The medium sits upon the stage, blindfolded, and begins to call out the names of these questioners and to answer the questions in detail.

19:7.2 It should be stated that the spectators usually write on paper which is furnished them by the medium or her agent.

It is easy to see that any one of a dozen tricks could be employed for securing transcripts of the inquirer’s question and signature,

which could be rushed by the ushers around the theater and underneath the stage,

whence both the questions and the names could be telephoned

or telegraphed up to the blindfolded medium,

who could thus, in full view of the audience, intelligently discuss any and all of the questions which had been asked her in writing.

SOURCE

[contd] Sometimes, during the performance, the lady reads the questions which the subjects wrote on their own paper. This is called by some performers “reading the house questions” for the reason that the writers of the questions frequently write them at their own houses (A 256).

[Compare A 257.]

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

19:7.3 I knew of one performer who could read questions written by persons in the audience on their own paper,

or at least could call their names and make a show at endeavoring to read and answer questions. I have observed, however, that they are never so successful as in those cases where the questions are written on the paper which the medium’s agents furnish.

I have myself attempted this many times, but the medium was never able to give my name or answer my question, except upon one occasion, a dozen or more years ago,—I remember it well—when a medium, tho failing to get my question through intelligently, did call my name. I was never able fully to discover how she did this, but I am satisfied that one of the ushers, or someone in the house, had seen me writing my question, and altho not able to discover its content, had recognized me, as might easily have been the case in one’s own home town, where one had for many years been accustomed to appear in public.

19:7.4 Another thing I have noticed when you seek to make a test question of this sort for a medium or mind-reader, by writing out the question at home and bringing it to the performance, is that as you read it over

SOURCE

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

[contd] When an attendant sees a spectator in “his section of the house,” either with a “house question” in his hand, or in the act of writing one on his own paper, this spectator is immediately “spotted.” The attendant now secretly learns this person’s name from the local manager, or from some other prominent person. He sends it around, together with the spectator’s occupation, if possible (A 256-57).

Now, during the performance, as the lady answers each spectator’s question, an attendant steps to this person; and while the lady is reading and answering it, he says to the spectator, “Let me see if she gets it right” (A 257).

Now, when the lady begins, by calling the name of the writer of a “house question,” an attendant immediately steps to this person and either catches a glimpse of the question, or asks to see it as in the other cases. If he takes it, he instantly returns it (A 257)

Now this attendant has in his right coat pocket a small tablet and pencil. With his hand in this pocket, he secretly writes the spectator’s question on a sheet, tears it off and folds it up so it is small. [He then secretly relays the question to the medium.] (A 257)

the attendant usually has you “spotted.”

He steps up to your side and says, “Let me see, can I help you?”

Or he may suggest that he can help by concentrating his mind also upon the question.

In this way he is able to read your question

and prompt the medium by various code tones and words, or by the order of asking his questions.

Her assistants are thus able to give her, sometimes, a very full idea of the nature of the question.

SOURCE

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

14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd from 19:5.2] I recently attended a mind reading performance in which I am satisfied that communications were carried to the medium by means of radio.

She wore a form of hair dressing which extended high upon her head, and I believe she had a radio antennae concealed within it, and her hair covered her ears in such a manner that I am convinced a small watchcase receiver could have been so concealed as to enable her to hear messages completely.

This is the first time I have seen a medium carry on such an exhibition and at the same time move about the stage (*TTAS* 152-53).

[contd] And it should be borne in mind that most of these demonstrations are offered to the public as proofs of telepathy (*TTAS* 153).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

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19:7.6 And it should be borne in mind that most of these demonstrations are offered to the public as proofs of telepathy.

THE PROBLEM INVOLVED IN TELEPATHY

19:8.1 It is the attitude of the scientific mind to seek a material explanation for all the doubtful phenomena that are brought forth under the head of telepathy. True, we may not be able at once to find an acceptable materialistic or psychologic explanation for them, but perseverance will enable us to unravel almost all these apparent mysteries.

VI: UNCONSCIOUS EMOTIONS AND WILL (Lay 201)

§16. *Telepathy* (Lay 237)

[contd] Taking any of the phenomena of spiritism, e.g., telepathy, where an idea in the shape of a mental image of sight, sound, touch, etc., appears in my conscious life, and is of such a nature that I cannot explain how it came there through ordinary conscious perception, it is evidently much more in the spirit of the principle of parsimony to explain it as a production of my own mind, not my conscious mind, but the unconscious or subconscious mind.

Certainly it is not truly scientific to invoke for peculiar mental circumstances an explanation that is far more elaborate and roundabout than necessary.

Therefore it will have to be repeatedly emphasized that the scientist's first duty is to explain the apparently exceptional phenomenon of telepathy in any of its forms, for example, as merely the transformation of an unconscious trend into a conscious idea, the message to my conscious life from a part of me that is and always will remain almost totally unconscious (L 237-38).

Lay states the problem admirably when he says:

19:8.2 Taking any of the phenomena of spiritism, e.g., telepathy, where an idea in the shape of a mental image of sight, sound, touch, etc., appears in my conscious life, and is of such a nature that I cannot explain how it came there through ordinary conscious perception, it is evidently much more in the spirit of the principle of parsimony to explain it as a production of my own mind, not my conscious mind, but the unconscious or subconscious mind.

Certainly it is not truly scientific to invoke, for peculiar mental circumstances, an explanation that is far more elaborate and roundabout than necessary.

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SOURCE

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

14. TELEPATHY AND MIND READING (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 149)

[contd from 19:7.6] *Natural Law and Telepathy*. If telepathy is based on natural laws, then any person who would master these laws could practice telepathy.

If telepathy were based on science, like telegraphy, and gramphony, anybody could do it.

When radium was discovered by Curie, the description of the process of its detection was sufficient to enable any other chemist, having the same materials, to secure the same product.

When Jenner published his discovery of vaccination, any other physician could perform the operation.

When antitoxin was discovered, every intelligent physician was in a position to use it successfully.

When telepathy is scientifically proved, then can any and all psychologists practise it. Natural laws are universal in their application (*TTAS* 153).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

19:8.3 If telepathy were based on natural laws, then any person, by mastering these laws, could practise telepathy.

If telepathy were based on science, as are telegraphy and telephony, anybody could do it.

When radium was discovered by Curie, the description of the process of its detection was sufficient to enable any other chemist, having the same materials, to secure the same product.

When Jenner published his discovery of vaccination, any other physician could perform the operation.

When antitoxin was discovered, every intelligent physician was in a position to use it successfully.

When telepathy is scientifically proved, then can any and all psychologists practise it. Natural laws are universal in their application.

19:8.4 I am not saying that the theory of telepathy will never be substantiated. I am merely saying that it has not been proved up to date.

But the fact that the telepathic hypothesis remains as yet unproved has nothing to do with the further fact that the idea of telepathy is very firmly established in the minds of the common people.

SOURCE

[Note: J. Malcolm Bird was an associate editor at *Scientific American* and authored *My Psychic Adventures* (1924).]

XIII: SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA (Conklin 266)

In the examination any given case of alleged telepathic, telesthetic or telekinetic demonstration several sources of error must be considered.

First of all are the errors possible in observation and report (1). Possibilities of illusion and all omissions and inaccuracies of observation of detail must be eliminated (C 289).

Coincidence of thought (2) is another common source of error overlooked or underestimated.... Two people walking together and suddenly beginning to speak of the same thing is poor evidence for telepathy. The fact that the two people are walking together is indication that they have something in common, probably very much. [Etc.] (C 289)

The now familiar tendency to emphasize the positive and neglect negative cases (3) is ever present in these reports (C 290).

The influence of memory distortions (4) seems often to be present (C 290).

The alleged experimental studies of telepathy and telesthesia usually lack a recognition of what might be called the human coefficients (5) for numbers, cards, events, and designs (C 290).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Bird and most of the psychic investigators accept the telepathic hypothesis, and use it freely in explanation of psychic phenomena.

19:8.5 The present-day psychologist would undertake to explain the phenomena of telepathy by one or more of the following methods:

1. Possibility of illusion and omissions and inaccuracies of observation of detail.

2. Coincidence—

shrewd guessing.

3. Emphasizing the positive, neglecting the negative incidents.

4. Memory distortions.

5. Human coefficients—certain numbers, cards, events, and designs

SOURCE

All human beings when told to make a few diagrams will make many which are identical, squares, triangles, circles, etc. (C 290-91).

19: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

are more likely to be thought of, such as drawing circles, squares, triangles, etc.

6. Hereditary identity—as in the case of twins.

7. The possible functioning of alleged spiritual or supernatural beings.

19:8.6 I would not deny that we encounter, now and then, a phenomenon which seems to require something analogous to the telepathic hypothesis to afford a satisfactory explanation. Separate and apart from the whole question of spiritualism, there may exist laws of a perfectly natural order which are at the bottom of some of these unique experiences. I am willing to continue to look at this phase of occult investigation with an open mind. So far, the theory has not been adequately formulated—nor has it been proved.