

Chapter 23 — Juggling with Consciousness

*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 23, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Wilfred **Lay**, Ph.D., *Man's Unconscious Spirit: The Psychoanalysis of Spiritism* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1921)
- (2) William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S., ***The Truth About Spiritualism*** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1923)
- (3) Morton **Prince**, M.D., LL.D., *The Unconscious: The Fundamentals of Human Personality Normal and Abnormal* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914, 1921)
- (4) William S. Sadler, M.D., ***The Physiology of Faith and Fear: Or, The Mind in Health and Disease*** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1912)
- (5) William S. Sadler, M.D., ***Worry and Nervousness: Or, The Science of Self-Mastery*** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1914, 1923)
- (6) 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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XXIII — JUGGLING WITH CONSCIOUSNESS

23:0.1 BY this time, have I not made it clear that human consciousness is a tricky deceiver? Have I not shown how one's wishes and desires may lead directly to the juggling of consciousness and to the sinister manipulation of its elements?

Let us take another and parting glimpse of the methods whereby one thus comes to practise deception upon one's own self.

XI: MAN'S UNCONSCIOUS SPIRIT (Lay 286)

§3. *Narrowing of Consciousness* (Lay 291)

[contd] Just as the **narrowing of consciousness** to a group of stimuli of vital importance will render everything except that group incapable of entering consciousness, so will the opposite action of **broadening the stream of consciousness** by means of muffled external impressions (**dimmed lights, soft music, etc.**) render a great many more things than usual capable of entering consciousness (L 291-92).

23:0.2 Just as concentration of the mind will serve to focus the attention and thus **narrow the consciousness**, so will other environmental influences serve to widen or **broaden the stream of consciousness**.

It may be that the peculiar and highly suggestive environment of the séance room, with its **dimmed lights, soft music, etc.**, is of real psychologic value; first, to help the medium to broaden the stream of her consciousness, thus facilitating communication between the conscious and the unconscious; and second, to prepare the sitters more easily to draw upon their imagination and thus more readily and sympathetically to interpret and receive the purported spirit messages.

SOURCE

The external conditions of the mediumistic seance are as if planned to evoke the free associations of all the persons concerned (L 292).

In addition to that, the feeling of reality being like other feelings susceptible of being detached from one idea and reattached to others is most likely in such circumstances to dissociate itself from the monotonous sameness of the sitting still and being quiet of the seance

and reassociate itself with the mental images which are in this physical setting in a most favourable situation for emerging from the unconscious (where they exist in the form of indefinite wishes for self-aggrandizement) and appearing in consciousness where they are immediately seized by the expectant and otherwise under-exercised feeling of reality (L 292).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

23:0.3 It has always seemed to me that the séance is most admirably planned and conducted for the purpose of encouraging, in every way possible, the free association of ideas

and the favorable reception and recognition of the slightest impressions on the part of all in attendance.

From a psychologic viewpoint it is well understood how important it is to facilitate free association, when it comes to the encouragement of imagination, fantasy, and experimental hallucinations. The ideal environment and psychic state on the part of both medium and believers would be that which would favor and facilitate the free and easy transference of the "feeling of reality" from one idea or emotion to other ideas and emotions.

Thus we are able to recognize the monotonous quietude of the séance as being in every way favorable to dissociating the "feeling of reality" from the ideas in the forefront of the mind,

and to reassociating it with the slightest sound or the faintest image that may pass through the mind,

or which may be suggested by the medium as passing through her mind.

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

4. THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 128)

Unquestionably the seance room, as conventionally conducted, constitutes a very favorable setting—one which is in every way calculated to encourage the emergence of visual or auditory hallucinations from the realms of the unconscious.

These no sooner appear than the expectant attitude of both medium and spectator disposes them early to transfer to these children of subconscious creation that “feeling of reality,” which justifies the consciousness from that time on in its recognition and reception of these phenomena as a bona fide experience (*ITAS* 129).

XI: MAN’S UNCONSCIOUS SPIRIT (*Lay* 286)

§3. *Narrowing of Consciousness* (*Lay* 291)

The images become more real in proportion to the faintness and diminished intensity of the external sensations.

The less coming from the outside the more will come from inside and vice versa (*L* 294).

It must not be considered necessary that the thoughts, occurring in the sitters amid the undirected circumstances of the seance, should occur in the form of visual images or of auditory images or of the images of any of the other sense qualities.

23:0.4 Unquestionably the séance room, as conventionally conducted, is in every way calculated to encourage the emergence of visual or auditory hallucinations from the realms of the unconscious.

These no sooner appear than the expectant attitude of both medium and spectator disposes them early to transfer to these children of subconscious creation that “feeling of reality” which justifies the consciousness in its reception of these phenomena as a bona fide experience.

Images become more real as external influences are decreased in intensity.

The less the outside is allowed to intrude, the more will come from the inner consciousness, and vice versa.

These hallucinations will not appear to all sitters at a séance as images.

SOURCE

The thoughts may occur merely as verbal thoughts. There are numbers of people who do not have mental imagery at all or who say they do not, though they cannot be accused of not having ideas (L 292-93).

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

I. Normal Life (Prince 15)

Evidence furnished by the method of hypnosis. (Prince 31)

[contd] It is almost common knowledge that when a person is hypnotized—whether lightly or deeply—he may be able to remember once well-known events of his conscious life which he has totally forgotten in the full waking state.

It is not so generally known that he may also be able to recall conscious events of which he was never consciously aware, that is to say, experiences which were entirely subconscious (P 31).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Many persons do not think pictorially—they think verbally.

FORGOTTEN EXPERIENCES

23:1.1 Under hypnosis we can resurrect in the patient's mind two distinct sorts of experiences:

23:1.2 1. Those of which he has at one time been conscious,

and which in the waking state he will recall as being his experiences; that is, he will remember events, images, episodes, etc.

23:1.3 2. Those experiences of which he was never consciously aware,

SOURCE

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

[Compare C 56.]

but which—as in the case of a recent happening—can be proved to have occurred, and thus to have been resurrected from his unconscious centers.

[Compare P 58.]

I have in mind a case in which, under hypnosis, we secured the account of an experience in which the subject had heard a friend of his make a certain statement to a third person. This statement was very clearly and completely recovered from his subconscious mind during hypnosis. In the waking state he denied all knowledge or memory of it. In fact, he expressed a doubt that friend No. 1 had ever made such a statement to friend No. 2; but investigation proved that such a statement was made by friend No. 1 to friend No. 2, and made at a time when the subject was engaged in a telephone conversation a few feet away.

23:1.4 I could cite many cases similar to this, which prove that we not only conserve, in the realms of the unconscious, things which we once knew and have forgotten; but that we also hold there a great deal of material of which we have never been aware—it has dropped into the subconscious reservoir without ever attracting our attention. And how easy to understand that just such material as this could be brought up from the subconscious mind of the medium, and, further, that the medium would be sincere and thoroughly honest in regarding such strange material as a spirit communication!

XVII: SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS (Prince 634)

We have also seen that coconscious processes may exhibit intelligence of a high order, and the same thing is possibly true in a less degree of unconscious processes.

We found evidence showing that a conserved idea may undergo subconscious incubation and elaboration, and that subconscious processes may acquire a marked degree of autonomy, may determine or inhibit conscious processes of thought, solve problems, enter into conflicts, and in various modes produce all sorts of psychological phenomena (hallucinations, impulsive phenomena, aboulia, amnesia, dissociation of personality, etc.) (P 638-39).

[contd] We have seen how, by the use of the experimental method of "*tapping*," and by hypnotic and other procedures, that this same autonomy can be demonstrated, manifesting itself by impulsive phenomena (writing, speech, gestures, and all sorts of motor automatisms) on the one hand, and sensory automatisms (hallucinations) on the other (P 639).

23:1.5 Says Morton Prince:

23:1.6 We have also seen that coconscious processes may exhibit intelligence of a high order, and the same thing is possibly true in a less degree of unconscious processes.

We found evidence showing that a conserved idea may undergo subconscious incubation and elaboration, and that subconscious processes may acquire a marked degree of autonomy, may determine or inhibit conscious processes of thought, solve problems, enter into conflicts, and in various modes produce all sorts of psychological phenomena (hallucinations, impulsive phenomena, aboulia, amnesia, dissociation of personality, etc.).

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T A P P I N G T H E SUBCONSCIOUS

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

18. TAPPING THE SUBCONSCIOUS (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 163)

[contd] It has been scientifically demonstrated that the subconscious mind can hold, formulate, and subsequently give forth for expression, ideas, images, emotions, and associations of ideas, which have never been consciously recognized or entertained for one instant—even in the fringe of the personal consciousness.

Never have these things been brought to the attention of the individual, so that in their subsequent upbringing from the subconscious depths they are recognized as things wholly foreign to that very mind which has just given them birth.

That this is true is conclusively shown in the case of the study of Mrs. Holland who, by automatic writing and in hypnosis, described things transpiring in her environment of which she was wholly unaware at the time (*TTAS* 163).

[contd] In experiments of this sort I have been able to have subjects recall things which had been read in newspapers, but without sufficient attention being paid to them to enable the consciousness to be aware of the fact,

23:2.1 It has been scientifically demonstrated that the subconscious mind can hold, formulate, and subsequently give forth for expression, ideas, images, emotions, and associations of ideas, which have never been consciously recognized or entertained for one instant—even in the fringe of the personal consciousness.

Never have these things been brought to the attention of the individual, so that in their subsequent upbringing from the subconscious depths they seem wholly foreign to the very mind that has just given them birth.

That this is true is conclusively shown in the case of Mrs. Holland, who, both by automatic writing and in hypnosis, described things in her environment of which she was wholly unaware at the time.

23:2.2 In experiments of this sort, I have known subjects to recall events which had been read in newspapers, but read without sufficient attention to enable the critical consciousness to be aware of the fact.

SOURCE

and to trace out in the very depths of the subconscious mind experiences long since forgotten and which were produced as new creations in automatic writing, trance speaking, etc. (*TTAS* 163).

III: CONSERVATION OF FORGOTTEN EXPERIENCES OF NORMAL, ARTIFICIAL, AND PATHOLOGICAL LIFE (Prince 49)

I. Normal Life (Continued) (Prince 49)

Again, in other experiments there appear, in the **crystal, visions** rich in detail of persons whom she does not remember having seen, although it can be proved that she actually has seen them (P 58-59).

[contd] The reproduction of subconscious perceptions and forgotten knowledge in **dreams**, visions, hypnosis, trance states, by automatic writing, etc., is interesting apart from the theory of memory.

Facts of this kind offer a **rational interpretation** of many well-authenticated phenomena exploited in **spiritistic literature**.

Much of the surprising information given by planchette, table rapping, and similar devices commonly employed by mediums, depends upon the **translation of forgotten dormant experiences** into manifestations of this sort.

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I have also known them to trace out, in the very depths of the subconscious mind, experiences which had been long forgotten, and which were produced as new creations in automatic writing or in trance speaking.

23:2.3 Again, in **crystal vision**, people see things as a new apparition which are but a resurrection, or a rehash, of images and ideas buried in the unconscious.

Likewise, in **dreams** these buried and forgotten complexes are reproduced,

and it is just such scientific **facts** as are being brought forth in profusion at the present time that enable us to offer, at last, a **rational and scientific explanation** for the so-called psychic phenomena of **spiritualism** and the endless vagaries of the psychoneuroses.

23:2.4 We are now in position to prove that

the bulk of the information divulged by mediums as emanations from the spirit world are but an up-to-date **translation of their own buried and forgotten experiences**.

In clinical medicine, too, we can often learn, through reproductions obtained by special methods of investigation, the origin of obsessions and other ideas which otherwise are unintelligible (P 59).

II. Forgotten Experiences of Artificial and Pathological States (Prince 61)

Artificial states. (Prince 62)

By automatic writing, also, evidence of the same principle may be obtained. The conserved memories are *tapped*, so to speak.

Thus I suggest to Mrs. R. in hypnosis that after waking she shall write certain verses or sentences.

After being awakened she reproduces automatically, as directed, the desired verses or sentences which, of course, belonged to her hypnotic experiences.

In other words, although the personal consciousness did not remember the hypnotic experience of having received the command and of having given the promise to write the verses, etc.,

And, strange as it may appear,

we are using the very same methods every day in our medical offices to determine the secret origin of nervous disorders, worries, fears, hysterical paralyses, and a host of other neurotic disturbances.

23:2.5 The subconscious can also be tapped in some persons by means of automatic writing.

Thus, if I hypnotize a susceptible subject, and suggest to her that after waking she will write certain phrases from the Bible, a certain poem, or a thesis on a given subject;

and if, after coming out from the hypnotic state, her attention be diverted, and then we put a pencil in her hand, she will write exactly as she has been instructed to write;

and yet a thorough examination will show that

her conscious mind knows nothing of the instructions given to her while hypnotized;

in executing her automatic writing she has no thought that she is doing so in obedience to a command.

SOURCE

the automatic writing by the act of fulfilling the command showed that all this was conserved; here again was evidence of conservation, in some form, of an experience at the very moment when the personal consciousness was unable to voluntarily recall what had taken place in hypnosis (P 64).

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

TRANCES AND CATALEPSY (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 461)

[contd] In the cataleptic state consciousness is diffused—seems to be pushed far out toward the periphery. It is at a dead level of intensity.

The mental life is largely in the dim marginal state.

The physiological processes of the body are slowed down; in fact, they come to assume conditions very much like those which prevail in the hibernating animal.

The body may become stiff and extraordinarily rigid.

It is in this condition that the great trance mediums of history and of the present time usually are found when they receive their wonderful revelations and visions (See Fig. 41.) (*PF&F* 461).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Here again we have the scientific evidence—actual proof—of the conservation of our experiences in the unconscious mind,

and of their ability subsequently to escape in an intelligent and orderly fashion.

TRANCES AND CATALEPSY

23:3.1 In the cataleptic state, consciousness is diffused; it seems to be pushed far out toward the periphery and to be at a dead level of intensity.

The mental life is largely in the dim marginal state.

The physiological processes of the body are slowed down; in fact, they come to assume conditions very much like those which prevail in the hibernating animal.

The body may become stiff—absolutely rigid.

It is in this condition that the great trance mediums of history and of the present time usually are found when they receive their extraordinary revelations and see their wonderful visions.

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

16. TRANCES AND CATALEPSY (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 157)

[contd] It is not uncommon for persons in a cataleptic trance to imagine themselves taking trips to other worlds.

In fact, the wonderful accounts of their experiences, which they write out after these cataleptic attacks are over, are so unique and marvellous as to serve as the basis for founding new sects, cults, and religions.

Many strange and unique religious movements have thus been founded and built up.

It is an interesting study in psychology to note that these trance mediums always see visions in harmony with their own theological beliefs.

For instance, a medium who believed in the natural immortality of the soul, was always led around on her celestial travels by some of her dead and departed friends.

One day she changed her religious views—became a soul sleeper, and ever after that, when having trances, she was piloted about from world to world on her numerous heavenly trips by the angels; no dead or departed friends ever made their appearance in any of her visions after this change in her belief (*TTAS* 157-58).

[contd] Nearly all these victims of trances and nervous catalepsy, sooner or later come to believe themselves to be messengers of God and prophets of Heaven; and no doubt most of them are sincere in this belief.

23:3.2 It is not uncommon for persons in a cataleptic trance to imagine themselves taking trips to other worlds.

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23:3.3 Nearly all these victims of trances and nervous catalepsy, sooner or later come to believe themselves to be messengers of God and prophets of Heaven; and no doubt most of them are sincere in their belief.

SOURCE

Not understanding the physiology and psychology of their afflictions, they sincerely come to look upon their peculiar mental experiences as something supernatural, while their followers blindly believe anything they teach because of the supposed divine character of these so-called revelations (*TTAS* 158).

[It will be observed that most clairvoyants are **women**, for it is a well known fact that women usually possess more of this intuitive ability to discern human nature as compared with men.

Some of the specialists in the study of **ductless glands** tell us that this is because women have a larger **posterior pituitary**; that man possesses a larger anterior lobe and is therefore more gifted in analytical reason and more reliable in mature judgment; but woman, because of this fact that she has a superior posterior lobe of the pituitary gland, has more ability when it comes to sizing up and prognosticating human character (*TTAS* 40-41).]

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Not understanding the physiology and psychology of their afflictions, they naturally come to look upon their peculiar mental experiences as something supernatural, while their followers blindly believe anything they teach because of the supposed divine character of these so-called revelations.

23:3.4 For more than twenty-five years, I have been a careful observer of many different persons who were trance mediums, and who exhibited these peculiar psychic and physical phenomena in connection with dreams and visions.

More than four-fifths of the individuals studied—they have numbered more than a score—have been **women**.

It seems that both the nervous system and the endocrine or **ductless gland** system of the female lend themselves more readily to these phenomena.

I am slow to believe that the spiritual forces of the universe visit the female of the species more frequently because she happens to be a more highly spiritualized creature; I am inclined toward the belief that the phenomena in question are due to the **posterior pituitary** body and other factors of an endocrine or chemical nature, which directly serve in subjecting the nervous system of the female to periodic upheavals and disturbances of both a psychologic and physiologic nature.

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

16. TRANCES AND CATALEPSY (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 157)

Another most interesting phenomenon I have noticed in connection with trance mediums, who, as previously remarked, are in the majority of cases women, is that these trance or cataleptic phenomena which in some respects are very similar to attacks of major hysteria—only carried out still further—I say, it has been my experience that they usually make their appearance after adolescence has been established, and in no case which I have observed, or of which I have known, have these phenomena ever survived the appearance of the **menopause** (*TTAS* 159).

I have never yet observed these phenomena to survive the **menopause**.

VII: THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 193)

6. THE STORY SUMMARIZED (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 205)

Trances, visions, and speaking with tongues, so far as I have studied these phenomena, are fully explained by well-known and established psychologic data. Again, I would distinctly disclaim all intention of discussing or commenting upon the genuine Seers of either ancient or modern times.

23:3.5 I desire to make it distinctly clear that I am not, in this discussion, calling in question or challenging belief in the validity of true **prophets**, either of ancient or of modern times,

who may have been in actual contact with the **spiritual forces of their day and generation**.

The **prophets** of the Almighty are not under discussion in this thesis.

I am not desirous of either raising or discussing that question at all in this thesis.

SOURCE

If there be those who had visions in the olden time, who were the voice of “One crying in the wilderness;” and if there be those who have visions in modern times (and I have met a few of this sort who were very difficult to understand and adequately explain on purely psychologic grounds) I say, if there be those who have seen a vision in our day and generation, it is farthest from our purpose either to judge or stigmatize them (*TTAS* 208-09).

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

16. TRANCES AND CATALEPSY (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 157)

As far as my actual experience goes, as far as I have personally been able to test and observe those who have trances, visions, and other seizures or experiences of this sort, I have not yet contacted with a case in which I could not, after a thoroughgoing psychologic research and painstaking physical examinations, determine fully—at least to my own satisfaction—those various psychic, chemical and physical influences which quite fully accounted for their unusual and extraordinary behavior (*TTAS* 158-59).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I, for one, am perfectly willing to admit that such divinely taught persons may have lived, or may even now live;

but I am equally desirous of making it plain that it is my opinion that the vast majority of those who have made such supernatural claims were either out-and-out frauds or self-deceived individuals, who, in their ignorance of things psychical, actually believed their spells, visions, or visitations to be of divine origin.

As far as my actual experience goes—as far as I have personally been able to test and observe those who have seizures or experiences of this sort—I have not yet met with a case in which I could not, after a thoroughgoing examination, discover certain psychic, chemical, and physical influences which quite fully accounted—at least to my own satisfaction—for their extraordinary behavior.

SOURCE

VII: THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 193)

6. THE STORY SUMMARIZED (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 205)

[contd from 23:3.5] But again, I hasten to record the fact that those few cases of psychic phenomena coming under my observation, which might possibly be of supernatural origin, had nothing whatever in common with spiritualism.

In fact, I may say that they were more or less actively anti-spiritualistic, and therefore their presentation or study does not concern us in this work (*TTAS* 209).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

23:3.6 Perhaps this statement should be qualified by adding that there are possibly one or two exceptions to this general classification of so-called psychics and trance mediums. Many years ago I was made acquainted with a very extraordinary phenomenon of this sort, which it has been my privilege to observe periodically from that time to this, and some day I hope to report more fully upon this unique case;

but I hasten to say that in none of my observations of this individual and the peculiar associated experiences of the night period was there ever anything that pointed toward spiritualism.

In fact, the contacts of this individual with the alleged forces which dominated at such times, whatever they were, were always in a most positive manner antagonistic to, and condemnatory of, all beliefs or tendencies associated with the idea of the return of the dead to participate in the affairs of the world of the living.* [*See Appendix.]

SPIRITISTIC TENDENCIES

23:4.1 But what is the actual influence, the net result, upon the popular mind, of these visions, trances, and other similar manifestations? It must be evident that in the main they are bound to contribute to increasing credulity on the part of the common people, and to lead to a deep-rooted belief in the idea that spiritual forces hovering over us are able to set aside certain suitable and favorable types of individuals to use as mediums and thus to communicate with the living.

23:4.2 Upon persons untrained in the methods of the laboratory, these trances and visions cannot help but make a profound impression. To such minds they constitute conclusive evidence of the existence of spiritual forces operating upon, and through, physical beings; and when these phenomena become associated with the propaganda of the belief in the ability of the spirits of departed humans to communicate with the friends they have left behind among the living, the cause of spiritualism has gained its most powerful ally. And even in cases where such manifestations are not directly allied with spiritualism, their real influence upon the public mind is naturally in that direction.

CRYSTAL-GAZING AND SHELL-HEARING

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

CRYSTAL-GAZING AND SHELL-HEARING
(*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 460)

[contd] Among the psychic delusions of the recent past which persist even to the present hour are to be found the practices of crystal-gazing and shell-hearing. (See Fig. 40.)

Certain persons with unstable nervous systems, when they have long gazed intently into a crystal, become, in a measure, auto-hypnotized.

In such a state, groups of thoughts may be transmitted from the marginal consciousness to the central consciousness, with such a suddenness and vividness as to impress the crystal-gazer with the idea that they originated in the external world.

These thoughts are suddenly projected outward from the consciousness, and take hold of the semi-hypnotized inquirer after the fashion of an ordinary hallucination.

That is, the crystal-gazer has his subconscious images apparently projected into the crystal, so that he sees images, pictures, and other things, which, in his ignorance, he believes originate and actually exist in the crystal (*PF&F* 460).

[contd] The old practice of shell-hearing is an instance of this same sort of reversion of psychic behavior.

23:5.1 Among the psychic delusions of the recent past which persist even to the present hour are to be found the practises of crystal-gazing and shell-hearing.

Certain persons with unstable nervous systems, when they have long gazed intently into a crystal, become, in a measure, auto-hypnotized.

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These thoughts are suddenly projected outward and take hold of the semi-hypnotized inquirer after the fashion of an ordinary hallucination.

That is, the crystal-gazer has his subconscious images apparently projected into the crystal, so that he sees pictures and other things, which, in his ignorance, he believes originated and actually exist in the crystal.

The old practise of shell-hearing is an instance of this same sort of reversion of psychic behavior.

SOURCE

In this case voices originate in the marginal consciousness (the subconscious mind) and are projected outward into the shell, and thus the listener experiences auditory hallucinations.

Crystal-gazing and shell-hearing are analogous to automatic writing and speaking, which will be considered presently (*PF&F* 460-61).

IV: CONSERVATION A RESIDUUM OF EXPERIENCES (Prince 87)

Residual processes underlying hallucinations. (Prince 90)

[contd] We will take the observation of B. C. A. looking into a crystal and reading some printed words—a cable-gram—which she had previously unconsciously overheard.

The words were, let us say, “Best Wishes and Happy New Year.”

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

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Crystal-gazing and shell-hearing are analogous to automatic writing and speaking, which have already been considered.

23:5.2 In crystal-gazing we may also have transference of sensory impressions; that is, something once heard may be transferred in the memory centers from the auditory group to the visual. This is well illustrated by a case reported by Dr. Morton Prince.

On looking into a crystal, the subject read some printed words—a cable-gram which she had previously, but unconsciously, overheard being read.

The words were, if I recall correctly, “Best wishes and a happy New Year.”

Now, this woman actually saw those words while gazing intently into a crystal globe.

This visual picture was not a literal reproduction of the original experience, which was a subconscious *auditory* experience of the same words, of which she was not aware; but plainly, nevertheless, the visual picture must have been determined somehow by the auditory experience. Equally plainly the visual image was not a recurrent phase of the consciousness, for the words of the message had not been previously *seen*.

What occurred was this:

the antecedent auditory perception manifested itself in consciousness *after an interval of time* as a visual hallucination of the words.

There was a reproduction of the original experience but not in its original form.

It had undergone a *secondary alteration* by which the visual perception replaced the auditory perception.

As a memory it was a conversion or *translation* of an auditory experience into terms of another sense.

Now the conversion must have been effected by some mechanism outside of consciousness; that is to say, it was not an ordinary visualization, i. e., intensely vivid secondary images pertaining to a *conscious* memory, as when one thinks of the morning's breakfast table and visualizes it; for there was no conscious memory of the words, or knowledge that there ever had been such an experience.

The words, as such, in the cablegram, had never been seen by her; but she had recently heard them,

and in explaining what actually occurred, psychologically speaking, Dr. Prince offers the following suggestion:

23:5.3 The antecedent auditory perception manifested itself in consciousness *after an interval of time* as a visual hallucination of the words.

There was a reproduction of the original experience but not in its original form.

It had undergone a secondary *alteration* by which the visual perception replaced the auditory perception.

As a memory it was a conversion or *translation* of an auditory experience into terms of another sense.

Now the conversion must have been effected by some mechanism outside of consciousness; that is to say, it was not an ordinary visualization, i.e., intensely vivid secondary images pertaining to a *conscious* memory, as when one thinks of the morning's breakfast table and visualizes it; for there was no conscious memory of the words or knowledge that there ever had been such an experience.

SOURCE

The visualization therefore must have been induced by something not in the content of consciousness,—something which we have called a secondary process, of which the individual is unaware (P 90-91).

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

I. Normal Life (Prince 15)

Evidence from hallucinatory phenomena. (Prince 39)

*Crystal or artificial visions are hallucinatory phenomena which, like automatic writing, can be cultivated by some people.

The common technic is to have a person look into a crystal, at the same time concentrating the mind, or putting himself into a state of abstraction.

Under these conditions the subject sees a vision, i. e., has a **visual hallucination**. The vision may be of some person or place, or may represent a scene which may be enacted.

Because of the use of a crystal such hallucinations are called “crystal visions,” but a crystal is not requisite; any reflecting surface may be sufficient, or even the concentration of the attention.

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

The visualization therefore must have been induced by something not in the content of consciousness—something which we have called a secondary process, of which the individual is unaware.

23:5.4 Like automatic writing, the crystal vision can be cultivated by certain individuals with unstable minds and nervous systems.

Sitting down before the crystal

encourages the shifting of the border consciousness, and facilitates the transference of its content into symbols of vision.

This whole practise is nothing more nor less than **visual hallucination**;

other psychic souls can indulge such experiences without the aid of the glass ball.

They are able to turn the mind adrift and see these visions at will. And in the case of certain forms of insanity, of course, it is this very sort of hallucinatory vision that has taken possession of the brain and goes on grinding out these hallucinations without end.

23:5.5 In crystal vision, the subconscious is being more or less deeply tapped—at least it is being superficially drawn upon—

The crystal or other object used of course acts only by aiding the concentration of attention

and the crystal or other object used is an artificial aid to the concentration of the attention.

and by force of suggestion.—*The subconscious is tapped* (P 42).

It also probably serves, indirectly, as a suggestive influence.

MEMORY ABNORMALITIES

[The lower forms of life seem utterly unable to profit by experience—they have little or no associative memory, and, of course, they are not addicted to the human vice of worry (*Worry and Nervousness* 52).]

[*Chronic Fear* or Common Worry [chapter title], (*Worry and Nervousness* 51-62)]

[Compare C 55.]

23:6.1 Animals without an associative memory are not given to worry,

for worry is chronic fear;

and it is highly probable that the defective functioning of memory is sometimes more or less responsible for the initiation and accumulation of our neurotic fears.

III: MEMORY ABNORMALITIES (Conklin 43)

It seems most convenient to think of the abnormalities of memory in their relationship to the four aspects or processes which make a memory consciousness possible and complete (C 43).

23:6.2 The psychologists are in the habit of recognizing four different kinds of abnormalities which characterize memory,

and they are:

I. Defects as the consequence of imperfect *impression*.

23:6.3 1. *Imperfect impression*—

That which is but vaguely sensed or perceived makes so poor an impression that its subsequent recall or reproduction is not likely (C 44).

This occurs when the sensory stimuli are very slight

The wandering of *attention* because of fatigue and the physiological condition of the central nervous system in fatigue prevent a good impression (C 44).

or when the *attention* is distracted.

Anything which tends to lessen the intensification of the sensory impressions or their emotional accompaniments has to do with lessening memory.

II. Defects as the consequence of imperfect or disturbed *retention* (C 44).

23:6.4 2. *Imperfect retention*—

It is well known that even our most profound sensory impressions are sometimes imperfectly retained.

This is more especially shown in those cases of accidents in which, after recovery,

The remarkable thing here is not the automatic activity after [a college student was injured in a football game] but the fact that he does not recall leaving his laboratory, dressing for the game, the beginning of the game, nor any of its events up to the time of his injury,—that he does not now recall *events which took place some little time prior to* the injury (C 47).

an individual is unable to recall *things which happened immediately before* the accident.

III. Defects due to *disturbance of reproduction* or representation. (C 48)

23:6.5 3. *Abnormal reproduction*—

Sometimes there is a complete amnesia for the *entire past of the patient* and yet it is not of the degenerative type because the past which cannot be voluntarily recalled nor stimulated to re-presentation in waking consciousness can be and is reproduced in dream states and in hypnotism (C 48).

In other cases, altho the content of the memory is normal, the patient is unable properly to recall past events. This amnesia may be more or less complete.

The *entire past life of the patient* may be for the time wiped out.

In other cases certain systematized portions of the past are similarly beyond the possibility of recall or re-presentation in the waking consciousness, and there is likewise adequate evidence that the material is retained but for some reason cannot be recalled (C 48).

In other cases there appears to be a local dissociation,

so that memory is lost only for a certain time and for certain things.

The “shell shock” cases of loss of speech, *paralysis* of arms and legs, etc., are really disturbances of an amnesic nature.

This is well illustrated in the case of hysterical *paralysis*.

In these cases the patients are unable to think in terms of the lost function. They are unable to move hand or arm or leg, as the case may be, because they are unable to think of doing so (C 50).

The patient for the time being has lost the memory of how to move the supposedly paralyzed arm.

IV. Defects due to *disturbances of recognition*. (C 50)

23:6.6 4. *Defective memory due to disturbance of recognition*—

Of such disturbances there can be isolated at least four forms (C 51).

We have four groups of memory disturbance belonging to this class:

SOURCE

1. The complete failure to recognize or the illusion of the “never-seen” (C 51).

2. The illusion of having already seen, false memory or false recognition (C 52).

A friend of the writer’s while tramping through mountains where he had never been before came out into an opening where everything appeared to be familiar, he seemed to recognize it all.

In another instance a man who had never been west of Chicago had business which took him into a town in Iowa. As he started up the street of the town he was surprised to find it familiar, he seemed to have seen it all before (C 52-53).

3. Distortions of memory by “Unconscious inference” (C 54).

Tales of dreams that came true, alleged telepathic experiences, apparitions, the events of spiritistic séances, reports of the conduct of those suspected of insanity, must all be scrutinized with the most meticulous care and checked in every possible way to eliminate such errors (C 54-55).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

23:6.7 a. Those cases characterized by complete failure of memory or the illusion of “never having seen.”

23:6.8 b. The illusion of having already seen.

I have had this experience a number of times in viewing natural scenery

or upon first visiting a town, experiencing very definitely the impression that I had seen these places before.

23:6.9 c. Distortion of memory—

getting the imagination mixed up with the factual details,

as is so commonly illustrated by the tendency to make agreements between telepathic experiences, spiritistic séances, etc.

There is a very definite tendency to get fictitious details woven into the narrative of facts.

SOURCE

4. **Retroactive** paramnesia. (C 55)

We have so often heard from our elders that we did certain exceptionally brilliant things in our childhood

and have ourselves been guilty of occasionally relating the incidents that we find ourselves recalling the time when the events occurred. That which we could not originally recall becomes **fitted into our recollections** through the reports of our elders (C 55).

We are, however, also prone to **confuse** the memory of **phantasies** with the past and eventually fail to distinguish fact from phantasy (C 55).

23: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

23:6.10 d. **Retroactive** memory.

Hearing about things that happened before you were born,

and then **attaching them to your memory complex**, so that later on you actually think you remember these events.

I very well remember recalling a flood experience in my youth; but in adult life investigation proved it happened a year before I was born; it had been so vividly related during my babyhood that it became confused with my memory of real events.

It is also highly probable that we indulge in **fantasy** and then subsequently get these images scrambled with the realities of living, all of which tends to **confuse** us afterward when we attempt to recall these memories.