

Chapter 4 — Control of the Subconscious

*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.

© 2013, 2017 Matthew Block

Sources for Chapter 4, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Paul **Bousfield**, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., *The Omnipotent Self: A Study in Self-Deception and Self-Cure* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1923)

[Note: Sadler probably used the American edition, published by E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, in 1923.]
- (2) Bernard **Hart**, M.D., *The Psychology of Insanity* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1912, 1916)
- (3) William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S., ***The Truth About Spiritualism*** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1923)
- (4) Wilfred **Lay**, Ph.D., *Man's Unconscious Spirit: The Psychoanalysis of Spiritism* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1921)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author (or a previous Sadler book) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.

- (e) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (f) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (g) **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.
- (h) **Gold** highlights key words or themes which will be discussed in the analysis of the chapter.

Matthew Block
10 December 2017

Work-in-progress Version 17 Nov. 2012

© 2012 Matthew Block

Revised 12 Apr. 2013 & 10 Dec. 2017

IV — CONTROL OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

4:0.1 IT is not uncommon, when we are trying to explain to victims of the psychoneuroses how they may gain more control of the subconscious, to have them put this question to us: “Doctor, how does it come that my subconscious exerts such control over me? When did this happen? How did I lose control over it, or did I ever have control? What went wrong and when, that this part of my own mind should come to wield such a tyrannical influence over my health and happiness?”

4:0.2 In an effort honestly to answer this question we have to presuppose not only that knowledge of the subconscious which has been presented in outline in the preceding three chapters of this book, but we must also go back to nursery days—in fact, to the first day of life, if not to a time before the individual was born into this world—in order to find the explanation of this subconscious tyranny. The answer is that most individuals who suffer from nervous and emotional tyranny in reality have never been masters of the subconscious. This is the situation: We are all born into the world with very little or no conscious mind-activity; the subconscious is in complete control. The infantile life is largely a subconscious existence—of course, more accurately speaking, we would say an unconscious existence, but we are using the subconscious in the sense that it refers to this whole domain of the unconscious mental activities.

[See 1:2.2.]

4:0.3 At birth we have no conscious awareness. The child is only vaguely aware—its reactions are instinctive, intuitive, automatic, and vegetative. We are all born with the subconscious as master. The normal individual later escapes, develops a technique of putting the conscious mind of reason and judgment in charge of his emotions and feelings. The neurotic individual fails to emerge from the world of fancy and grows up with the subconscious in charge. He is still a victim of the *inertia* of the prenatal and early infantile life. He refuses to recognize the world of fact and adjust himself to it.

[And here we see the beginning of that which we all possess in after-life, *inertia*, the difficulty of making a beginning of anything, the objection which we have to making efforts (B 53).]

4:0.4 The real fact is that the uncontrolled, unstable, highly irritable, nervous person who is a victim of subconscious domination is simply a baby grown up. Physically he has attained adult proportions, but mentally he is trying to carry on and face the world with a philosophy of living and a psychology of reaction that is wholly infantile, altogether puerile, and in every sense inadequate to meet the demands upon a grown-up individual trying to function in a real world.

NARCISSISM

V: **NARCISSISM** (Bousfield 49)

[See B 38-40.]

4:1.1 Narcissus, it will be recalled, fell in love with, and was led to worship, the reflection of his own image,

and this is exactly what is wrong with the majority of those who are afflicted with some form of the neuroses;

SOURCE

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

and so, when we use the term “Narcissism” in the discussion of psychic and nervous disorders, we are using it with the understanding that

[contd] The term Narcissism has already been mentioned and some slight indication of its importance in character development has been given. We have also examined the derivation of the term, and found that it implies self-interest, self-importance, self-worship;

it implies self-interest, self-centeredness, and self-worship.

all of which characteristics are in modified degrees possessed by everybody (B 49).

In a certain sense we are all guilty of this;

but when these tendencies become magnified to such a point that they begin to interfere with our health and happiness, then we recognize that the subconscious is really at serious mischief.

[Compare B 49-50.]

4:1.2 This begins on the first day of a child’s life—if it has not already begun before birth. As we observe the infant in his crib the first few days of life, he seems to manifest little that could be described as conscious reaction to his environment; but no one would say that he does not react instinctively or intuitively to his environment. He very early learns to make his wants understood in no uncertain terms, and there is no doubt that this tendency to seek the gratification of his personal desires—to secure ministrations to his personal wants—is inherent in the human infant.

4:1.3 Let us more carefully examine this theory that the child is born with certain simple and primitive desires; that the rudimentary subconscious is to a certain extent already guilty of usurping control over the individual. In our study of this question, let us ask: Did the unborn infant experience any sensations before making his entry into the outside world? It is highly probable that he did.

It is true that at birth [the child] commences to undergo many vivid new experiences, but that is no reason for assuming that it has not **undergone any experiences *in utero***, and that these experiences have not made some impressions on the brain (B 51).

We know that the child, previous to birth, has **undergone certain experiences *in utero***.

The physician knows that the little fellow is very lively at times;

Before birth, [the brain, the muscles and the bones] were living tissues, and we know that the **muscles** were at work, for we had felt the baby's movements *in utero*; we know that the heart was at work, driving the blood through the child's arteries (B 50).

he kicks about and indulges in **muscular** exercise

much as he does during those days immediately following birth.

The skin sensation is probably present, altho little exercised because of the fact that he is immersed in a warm water bath of constant temperature; but the moment he is born into the world and the chilly air strikes the sensitive skin, he seldom fails to manifest his recognition of the fact and record his displeasure by lusty crying.

SOURCE

[contd from four rows up] Let us see for a moment what impressions it is likely to have received and registered. First of all, it would most certainly **hear** sounds,

the sounds of the **blood rushing through the mother's arteries** and the sounds from the **outer world**, **muffled** and indistinct when they had penetrated the mother's body.

All these sounds would be of a **soft crooning** nature,

and those caused by the blood in the mother's arteries would be of a **rhythmic, humming**, rising and falling nature,

a kind of **rhythmic lullaby** very similar in many respects to the lullaby the mother will hum to the child when she wishes to put it to sleep at a later period.

We should expect these sounds to be **registered on the child's brain**

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:1.4 It is also highly probable that the unborn child has developed, to a certain extent, the sense of **hearing**.

Of course, the sounds from the **outside world** are greatly **muffled**, much diminished, but they undoubtedly reach his ear.

It is also likely that the sounds of the **blood moving through the larger vessels of the mother**,

as well as the other noises connected with the process of life in both mother and child, have reached his ears.

These, of course, are all **softened**,

and those pertaining to the circulation are regular and **rhythmic**, of a **humming** nature,

much after the fashion of the **crooning** and **rhythmic lullabies** which mothers have learned are so quieting to the child during its early days of life.

4:1.5 And it is highly probable that it is because of this prenatal sensory memory-**registry in the brain of the child** that these nursery lullabies are so effective.

This sort of thing continues to supply the child with the environment it was accustomed to.

These lullabies sung to the child after birth make it feel at home and at ease in that

SOURCE

so that if it ever heard their like again, some chord of *feeling-memory* would be struck,

and some *emotional association* brought to mind.

In the second place, external *movements* would be registered on the child's mind as the mother walked about.

There would be a *swaying or swinging* movement.

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

it continues to hear soft, subdued, rhythmic tones which make an agreeable impression upon the mind-centers, since they supply a continuation or repetition of the most real *feeling-memory* on record in the child's mind.

In other words, there is a familiar and agreeable *emotion associated* with this sort of thing.

The child rests quietly under its influence and soon forms the habit of making a big fuss if its hearing is not occupied with the reception of these lullabies. You see, it is not simply a question of spoiling the child—it came into the world with the habit formed. In a sense, and as far as these things are concerned, the child was born spoiled. It is merely a question of whether the mother will continue to gratify and further develop this prenatal habit or whether she will elect to introduce the child into a new and real world, and thus very early begin to teach it to adjust itself to the facts and realities of this new mode of existence.

4:1.6 It is highly probable that

another memory impression has been made upon the mind of the unborn child by the bodily *movements* of the mother.

As the child is suspended in its prenatal bath, these physical movements on the part of the mother would undoubtedly be experienced as

a sort of *swinging or swaying* motion,

Again we should expect that when, in after life, the child experienced a **swaying** or swinging movement,

a chord of **memory** would be touched again, and these earlier associations would be revived; not as a conscious memory or fact, of course, but as a **feeling** (B 51-52).

[contd] Again, conscious movements of its own **limbs** might be impressed upon it. It would find, when it tried to move, that its movements were limited, and that it attained more perfect peace by refraining from attempting to struggle and change its position.... And finally, its general position with the knees **drawn up** and the chin bent down would be firmly registered,

and it is highly probable that in this way another set of memory registrations is made upon the young and developing brain cells.

It is therefore little to be wondered at that the new-born infant likes to be rocked in his cradle, **swayed** in the mother's arms, gently moved to and fro by whatever method.

It all feels agreeable in that it represents

a continuation of those **feeling-memories** which were being constantly experienced prior to birth.

Again it is very easy to spoil the baby because it was born already more or less spoiled as concerns this desire for being rocked. And again it is a question of policy on the part of the mother. Will she continue to perpetuate these feeling-memories of the prenatal times, and thus keep the infant quiet by supplying the same sensations it was accustomed to before birth; or will she elect to introduce the new-born babe into a new world, a world in which it must sooner or later learn that it is not the whole thing, that it cannot always have its way, that it cannot always have its every whim and feeling-memory gratified?

4:1.7 Another prenatal memory probably consists in the ability to **draw up** the **limbs** and to make other slight muscular movements.

SOURCE

so that when in after-life it again **assumed this position**, once more the chord of memory would be struck, and the old feeling of repose would be likely to return (B 52-53).

[contd] Now, we cannot assume that the child has any active mental state before its birth, but we know that its condition (taken in conjunction with its extremely limited experience) is one as near **omnipotence** (from its standpoint) as may be.... It lives in a world entirely its own, where everything works together for its comfort and well-being (B 53).

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Immediately after birth the child tends to **assume the same position** it occupied in utero.

INFANTILE EGOISM

4:2.1 Before birth a child exists, as it were, alone and in a world by itself.

After birth it only gradually awakens to the realization that it is not the whole world, and even when it begins to realize this fact it only does so dimly, at first believing that all the rest of the world is directly attached to it and run for the exclusive purpose of ministering to it and caring for it. It is indeed a **rude awakening** when the infant learns that it is not **omnipotent**, that it is not the whole show; increasingly this disillusionment proceeds until, with advancing years, the child becomes relatively orientated and learns to take its proper place in life. But all too sad to relate, some children do not thus come to a full realization of these facts, but continue on indefinitely expecting to have every whim gratified, and more or less living the life of childhood with its fantasy of being the center of all creation, of having all the world subject to its beck and call, of expecting everybody to minister to its wants and make easy its journey through life.

SOURCE

Now let us see what happens to this omnipotent **little creature** at **birth**.

It goes through the probably painful process of having its position roughly changed and being thrust into an **atmosphere which is cold** and unusual to it.

Moreover it has to make its first **struggle for breath**,

its first **effort** to sustain existence.

And in its struggle for breath it **utters** cries,

which by experience it very soon finds to be **magic** sounds which enable it to fulfil its wishes (B 53-54).

[contd] After its first **rude awakening**, let us once more see what happens.

It is **wrapped up** in something warm;

that is, it is returned to a semblance of the womb, by having something round it which keeps out the cold (B 54).

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:2.2 The first rude jolt handed this **little creature** is at the time of **birth**,

when a change of **atmospheric temperature** causes the first inconvenience which the little animal has ever been called upon to suffer.

And then it has to begin the **struggle for breath**,

which is automatic and easy when once started,

but which at least requires an **effort** from which the child was free before it was born.

It is in connection with these two early experiences that the child **utters its first sounds**,

and the quickness with which it learns to use the **magical** cry in order to satisfy its wants

constitutes a thorough-going refutation of the theory that the infant has no mind the first few days of its life; it certainly does have, at least, a subconscious mind.

4:2.3 **Let us see what happens.**

As soon as the child is born we **wrap it up** carefully in warm blankets

and do our best to supply it with the temperature it had in the little world of its own before it made its debut into our world.

SOURCE

It frequently **draws its knees up** somewhat if it is placed in such a position that it can do so with ease, and falls asleep (B 54).

It is **gently rocked to and fro** by the nurse or other attendant, and again the semblance of the previous rocking in the womb is returned to it. **Crooning sounds** are murmured over it, and the semblance is still more complete (B 54).

And though it has become acquainted with effort, it is quite obvious that its feeling of omnipotence, if we may so term it for the moment, is hardly yet disturbed, and the world it has come into differs but slightly from the world which it has left; it is still a world in which the infant is the centre and ruler, in which **its every want** is attended to without an effort on its part,

save that it may sometimes have to call attention to its wants by means of that magical **cry** which it soon learns how and when to use,

and which acts in a truly magical manner in accomplishing the fulfilment of all its desires (B 54-55).

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

We dress it in loose garments, so that

it can **draw up its legs** and otherwise use its muscles the same as before birth.

When not sleeping, most of the time it hears a soft, **crooning lullaby** which pleases it, and it is **gently rocked to and fro** with that same swaying movement which it experienced before coming into the outer world.

Little wonder that the feeling persists that this is all there is of existence,

and that there is a universal conspiracy to minister to **its wants** and to see that it is in no wise disturbed.

And the moment this delusion is not effectively maintained,

the little animal lets out a lusty **yowl**,

whereupon the prenatal environment is immediately restored.

SOURCE

[Compare B 55-57.]

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:2.4 All this is a great mistake, especially in the case of children predisposed by heredity to the neuroses. The better method would be to allow the child very quickly to become adjusted to its new environment, and thus early to train it to become used to the ever-changing environment of subsequent life. Sooner or later this baby must step out of its world of fantasy, the world in which it is the center, into that real world, that world of fact where it must gracefully accept disillusionment and gird itself to meet the demands of society, to live as a man among men.

EARLY TRAINING OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Hence, the first piece of advice that one must give to parents is that they should, from the earliest possible moment, train the infant to understand that the magic **cries will not at once produce their expected result**; and the first week in the infant's life is all-important in this matter (B 58-59).

The child should be fed **at regular and proper intervals**, and should be kept warm.

But if it cries, as it will do naturally, it should be left to itself to cry (B 59).

4:3.1 The proper time to begin training the nervous child is the first day of birth; *teach the child that **crying will get it nothing**.*

Let it come early to recognize that

it will be fed, watered, warmed, and cared for **at regular intervals**

regardless of crying.

That it may indulge in crying at will as a form of pulmonary gymnastics; it can't talk or sing, and why shouldn't it cry?

But it should early learn that crying does nothing to change its environment;

SOURCE

If it is left to cry, it will learn very rapidly and at the right period of its life that the sounds which it emits are not magical,

and it will begin to adapt itself to the fact that it lives in a real world which has not been built solely and only for its own delight (B 59).

This cry which brings it gratification, if it has been really effective over a too-prolonged period,

will tend to fix permanently in the child's mind the fact that either weeping or making a magic noise with the mouth

will always attain for it gratification.

And although at a later stage the conscious mind will be obliged to accept a considerable amount of reality and to reject the idea of omnipotence, yet the unconscious mind will persist in the struggle and will make futile efforts to forget reality, to change reality into phantasy, and to regain its omnipotent state (B 57).

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

it should early be taught to lose faith in crying as the magical wand which will bring it anything desired.

To do otherwise is only to do the child an injury by helping to perpetuate the early fantastic notion that

it is the only thing of importance in the world.

4:3.2 I firmly believe that this early impression of the child—

that crying always brings gratification—

tends to fix permanently in its mind the fact that making a noise through its mouth

will in some way tend to change the world of reality, with all its practical demands, into a world of fantasy in which every whim and wish will be gratified.

Sooner or later, of course, disillusionment must come,

and it is the effort to recapture and restrain this spoiled and arrogant subconscious mind that causes so much trouble in our neurotic patients, and which leads to so many nervous miseries and eventual breakdowns.

4:3.3 We see grown-up men and women who indulge in orgies of weeping—for no other cause than that they are just such victims of the untamed subconscious. In childhood weeping brought them everything they wanted; crying never failed to change the rude and inhospitable world of reality into one of pleasant fantasy.

I doubt not that the tendency to

When a person weeps at some unpleasant happening or in anger at something which has touched his pride, exactly the same is taking place [as when a man uses expletives] (B 58).

weep in the presence of displeasing circumstances

is but a revival of this early subconscious memory.

He has obeyed the law of regression, to which I referred in a previous chapter ... (B 58).

You know, there is a constant tendency on the part of evolutionary beings to regress;

there is always the danger of reversion to type, of regression to an earlier stage of existence; and so, when in the face of the unpleasant realities of life we break down and cry, we are, in plain language, simply doing the “baby act.”

That is the way we got things changed when we were infants, and we forget ourselves sufficiently to indulge in the same tactics even after we have grown to adult life and are more or less convinced of the reality of the world in which we live.

4:3.4 In general, these are the same people who were not taught in the cradle that crying was of no avail. In their tender years crying was the magic wand which they waved at will and found that it always brought into existence the desirable and agreeable. Little wonder, having been raised in this way, that later on in life they should resort to weeping when forced to pass through experiences more or less unpleasant! How much better that the new-born child in the first two or three weeks of its life should come to realize that a change of dispensation has occurred, that it is now in a real world, and that it must begin to adapt itself to its new environment.

When a man uses expletives because some task of his has failed to result in success, he is really repeating the infant's cry.

4:3.5 The use of mild expletives under excitement, anger, and other forms of emotional strain is undoubtedly a reversion to this same infantile tendency to try to change one's environment by the mere use of words.

No doubt swearing belongs in the same category.

Since in infancy and early childhood we were able, by the mere utterance of sound, so quickly and effectively to change our environment from the unpleasant and undesirable to the pleasant and desirable, little wonder that the subconscious should overflow on us now and then, when confronted with disagreeable conditions and harassed by unpleasant surroundings!

He is merely uttering a magic sound which his unconscious mind hopes may somehow remedy the failure (B 57-58).

No wonder that we resort to a flow of words representing the outcropping of the subconscious in an effort to correct our present-day surroundings by the method employed in nursery times.

SOURCE

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:3.6 Possibly another memory which comes into the world with us is the tendency to hide the head¹ in the presence of danger

During the war, I knew a youth who was intensely agitated by the air-raids. He felt perfectly safe, however, if he could **crawl under the bed** or table, where he would curl himself into practically the same position as that of a normal baby before birth.

or to **crawl under the bed.**

It seems to be an instinctive reaction to danger on the part of certain individuals,

When questioned, he had not, of course, the slightest conscious knowledge of why he felt safe in such curious circumstances. But it does not seem improbable that the association of ideas produced by his position and by the **confined space** created a feeling akin to that feeling of safety which had been his in his pre-birth omnipotent position where nothing could harm him (B 59-60).

and it probably represents the desire to get into an **enclosed space**—

at least some authorities have suggested that this is a prenatal hang-over.

4:3.7 And so, as time passes, the rude awakening continues.

To return to our Narcissistic infant, we are now impressed with the fact that one thing of the utmost importance in the first years of its life is that it shall gradually come into contact with reality, shall discover that **all things do not belong to it**, that its omnipotent feelings are based purely upon phantasy and not upon reality; and upon the method of its disillusionment and the age at which this begins largely depend the future powers of adaptation of the child to its surroundings (B 61).

The child gradually comes to recognize that **everything about it does not belong to it**,

and in time, if properly trained and disciplined, comes to get over that egocentric oversensitiveness² which appears when it first finds out that the world is not being run as a private performance for its own personal and exclusive benefit.

IDENTIFICATION

VII: **IDENTIFICATION** (Bousfield 74)

It is generally a comparatively slow process through which the infant passes, this one of separating himself in thought and feeling from the objects surrounding him (B 75).

Thus, the infant does not at first distinguish between himself and his **mother**.

When he is hungry, he cries, and he probably has almost as ready access to his **mother's breasts** as if they were part of his own body.

And such imagination is more than encouraged when he is allowed the use of a **rubber teat** to suck in the intervals between his meals (B 75).

4:4.1 As time passes the new-born child begins to identify itself as a distinct personality existing in a real world;

gradually the world changes from the fantastic to the real.

It is highly probable, however, that in the first weeks of life the infant regards its **mother** as a part of itself.

It was so for nine months before birth, and while separated physically from its mother at birth,

it only has to cry and it is fed from its **mother's breast**, nestled close to her body—

at least that is true in the case of all except those babies who have a cow for a foster-mother.

This delusion is further perpetuated in that between nursings, the moment it utters a cry, it has a **rubber teat** quickly put into its mouth.

[Compare B 76.]

We have already mentioned the fairy-tale which encourages the child's phantasy thought. Let us now see how he really obtains pleasure from that **fairy-tale**. It is by **identification**.

In imagination he is a fairy prince or princess, as the case may be; his pleasure in the triumphs and progress of the central figure of the story is that of performing his prodigious deeds by proxy; and if he thus identifies himself with the hero of the story, he is also encouraged to believe that he **possesses the power and qualities** of that hero.

He is less able to realise that he, unlike the hero, cannot perform magic deeds with a mere wave of a wand. Indeed, when the story is over, he will probably play at being a **fairy**, and in phantasy perform the magic deeds again (B 75-76).

It is certainly given the impression that it is master of its environment and that all it needs to do is to cry and it can have what it wants, and so, aside from the hygienic aspects of a rubber teat, the psychology is altogether bad. It delays the time—and makes it altogether harder when it does come—of breaking the news that the child must begin personality adjustment to a new environment.

4:4.2 The **fairy-tale** makes a great appeal to the young mind in that it enables the child to **identify** itself with the hero.

These little folks, in their world of fantasy, easily imagine themselves to **possess all the power and qualities** of the fairy-story characters.

The **fairies** are always doing things by magic, and that is what the young child believes in.

Magic is its watchword. Later on, as the child grows up, it progresses from the fairy-story to the fiction story-book. Here there are more heroes and more magic, and we go on with this sort of training, which all the while is building up the subconscious in the belief that it lives in a world of fantasy and must have its own way.

SOURCE

And it must be remembered that sooner or later the child will have to wake up, will have to realise that it possesses no magic power, and the struggle within it will be great.

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:4.3 Sooner or later the awakening must come—the struggle must be undergone.

And it is a great strain on the nervous system actually to come, through some sudden crisis, to that place where the individual must admit that the world is real, make up his mind to face the facts, and abandon the belief in magic.

4:4.4 Instead of making real men and women out of our children, this whole process of child culture tends to develop Narcissism, which is fraught with grave consequences in the case of the naturally neurotic child.

XI: PHANTASY (Hart 143)

[Identification] consists in identifying ourselves with another individual, either real or fictitious, so that we experience his joys, sorrows, and desires, as if they were our own (H 158).

[Exactly the same thing takes place at theatres, where the Narcissist identifies himself with the actors on the stage (B 77).]

4:4.5 Through the subtle power of the imagination it is possible for most of us to

“identify” ourselves with another individual.

This we do at the drama. We enjoy the play because we identify ourselves with the leading character; we are thinking all the while what we would do in the same situations, and when the hero triumphs we triumph with him. Emotionally speaking, it is a personal triumph for us, as indeed for every other individual in the audience.

SOURCE

One of the best instances is afforded by the reader of a second-rate romantic novel. The explanation of the interest which this type of fiction arouses lies in the fact that the reader identifies himself with the hero, lives with him through a series of astonishing adventures,

falls in love with the heroine, and lives happily ever afterwards.

The novel, in fact, permits the reader to experience the fascinations of day-dreaming without the trouble of constructing the imagery himself (H 159).

[contd] An even better example is presented by the audience of a melodrama... The illusion of reality which attaches to the play allows the day-dreaming to be conducted much more efficiently than in the case of the novel—hence the greater popularity of the drama (H 159).

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

1. PHANTASY AND IMAGINATION (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 121)

The highly organized nervous system of a psychically unstable individual can easily imagine itself to be the hero of the moving picture play,

identifying itself with all the experiences portrayed on the screen,

as indeed he will in the case of the public procession in which some prominent individual, or some hero, is on parade;

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:4.6 Likewise, when we read a novel we identify ourselves with the hero and follow him all the way through.

We fall in love with the heroine as does the hero.

In fact, novels are simply a lazy way of having someone else construct for us our day-dreams;

whereas, in the case of the melodrama, we are having the whole thing acted out in a physical way before our eyes, and thus it becomes still more realistic.

4:4.7 The psychically unstable individual with a highly organized nervous system can easily imagine himself to be the hero of the moving-picture play,

identifying himself with all the experiences portrayed on the screen;

as indeed he will do on viewing a public procession in which some prominent individual is on parade;

SOURCE

such individuals will imagine themselves to be the hero and will experience all the pleasant and gratifying emotions experienced by the hero himself.

This sort of “identification,” or, as it has been termed, “wish evolvment,” furnishes the psychological interpretation for a vast number of mediumistic phenomena.

The mediums desire to be what they profess to be

and thus, through the mental processes of “projection,” on the one hand, and the phantasy of “identification,” on the other, they seek to bring about their “wish evolvment;”

and thus, from the unlimited supply of material in the reservoir of the subconscious mind they bring forth those things which complete the picture

and enable them, through their clairvoyance and clair-audience, to depict to the devotees of spiritism the images of departed spirits and to hear messages from another world (*TTAS* 123-24).

VII: BELIEF BEFORE KNOWLEDGE (Lay 247)

§4. *Verbal Expression* (Lay 256)

Children’s “lies” are all *wish*.

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

in either case he will imagine himself to be the hero and will experience all the gratifying emotions supposed to be experienced by the hero.

This sort of “identification,” or, as it has been termed, “wish evolvment” furnishes the psychological interpretation for a vast number of hysteric manifestations and mediumistic phenomena.

The mediums desire to be what they profess to be,

and so, through the mental processes of “projection,” on the one hand, and the fantasy of “identification” on the other, they seek to bring about their “wish evolvment”;

and thus, from the unlimited supply of material in the reservoir of the subconscious mind, they bring forth those things which complete the picture

and enable them, through their clairvoyance and clairaudience, to depict to the devotees of spiritism the images of departed spirits—messages from another world.

4:4.8 Our daily experience, from childhood to old age, is dominated by the desire to realize the fulfillment of our wishes.

Even the *lies* of childhood are but the expression of a *wish*.

SOURCE

Quite transparently they say what they do just because they wish what they say were, or would become, true (L 257).

VII: IDENTIFICATION (Bousfield 74)

So far so good; if a person can content himself with an occasional theatre or occasional novel, wherewith to take a restful regression to an infantile outlet of energy, no harm is done.

There are times when we must rest, and there are times when we must sleep, which also appears to be Narcissistic regression to a condition somewhat resembling our pre-birth state (B 77-78).

They may unconsciously identify themselves with their father or mother, their relations or friends, or even their enemies, and perhaps, in turn, with everyone with whom they come in contact (B 78).

They feel the pleasures of their friends, they also feel their pains.

They are called sympathetic,

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

In this case it is clear that the little ones say what they do for no other reason than that they inordinately indulge the wish that what they say were true.

In reading fairy-tales and novels their unfortunate infantile training is continued.

It is all extremely pleasant and restful.

It is regression to the infantile type of existence, even to the pre-birth status.

OTHER FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION

4:5.1 This process of "identification" is sometimes applied by children to their parents.

They identify themselves with their fathers and mothers, with friends and enemies.

They may even come to feel an exaggeration of the pleasures as well as the pains of their friends.

Such individuals are commonly regarded as being kind-hearted and sympathetic.

SOURCE

they are often ultra-sympathetic—they are a **nuisance** (B 78).

They call a normal person unsympathetic, perhaps exaggerate the term and call him brutal, wishing indeed that their friends who have climbed higher from Narcissism should regress to their lower stand-point (B 80).

I remember on one occasion I had asked a woman of strong Narcissistic temperament to take a fly out of the corner of my eye. She absolutely refused to do so under any consideration, as she was sure she would hurt me too much... *And she could not imagine that anybody else could have feelings that differed from hers;* and since she identified herself so much with other people, I have no doubt it would have been a real agony to her, had she attempted to extract the fly from my eye (B 78-79).

Worse still, in connection with these people, they not only pour out sympathy in this way, but attribute it to themselves as a **virtue**, and they cannot bring themselves to believe their friends to be really good, unless their friends also can react in a similar way towards them (B 79-80).

We all possess [this type of Narcissistic identification with others] in part, and on the whole **women are more Narcissistic than men.**

Let it not be thought, however, that this is a reflection on women; it is a reflection **on the way they have been brought up,**

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

But all this, when overdeveloped, renders them a **nuisance** to themselves and to society.

Oversympathetic people regard others as hard-hearted and unkind.

They **cannot realize that other people may have feelings different from their own;**

and of course such individuals always feel that their undue sympathy is to be regarded very highly, as a **virtue.**

4:5.2 **I presume the reason why women have more of a tendency toward Narcissism than men**

is to be found **in the way they are brought up.**

SOURCE

for from the earliest times environment impresses them with the idea

that “little boys are made of slugs and snails and puppy-dogs’ tails,

and little girls are made of sugar and spice and all things nice!”

And hence on such lines as these, their Narcissism is encouraged, and their capabilities of facing fact and reality discouraged from the very outset, until differences of temperament are produced in the adults of the two sexes, which in no way belong to Nature, but purely to our conventional and somewhat barbaric stand-point (B 80-81).

Just as the mythical Narcissus himself fell in love with his reflection, so does his prototype of to-day.

An infant is not only the omnipotent center of all, he is also the only interesting portion of the universe in his early days. His interests are entirely self-centred, and his joys and pleasures belong to himself alone; and as he grows older, everything that is like him is identified with himself (B 81).

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

From infancy the little girls are taught that

they are more refined, just a little nicer than boys;

that little boys are made of “slugs and snails and puppy dogs’ tails,”

but little girls are made of “sugar and spice and everything nice.”

A great deal that is different between the boy and girl when grown up is the result of environment and training.

4:5.3 And so, just as Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection, the infant of tender years, finding himself in a world of which he is the center, is quite in love with himself.

His joys and pleasures are all important, and as he grows older

he resents the process of disillusionment whereby he must come to realize that he is not the only intelligent being around which the world revolves.

SOURCE

[See 16:7.4, re projection.]

By identification, however, he can love in a sense those attributes of his own personality which he sees in other persons (B 82).

Hence, **homo-sexuality**, as it is called, is frequently one of the distressing results of an early Narcissistic upbringing (B 82).

[Compare B 82-84.]

Thirdly, there is yet another method of Narcissistic identification. Just as a child identifies itself with its living surroundings, so does it **identify itself with its inanimate surroundings** (B 85).

If you **take away the baby's rattle**, it will cry or stamp or weep with as much vigour and display of emotion as if you had caused it bodily pain by means of rigorous physical punishment.

You have in fact taken away **part of itself** from the little omnipotent person.

In later stages in his career, if his Narcissism has been allowed to remain, the adult will still identify himself with his belongings.

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

4:5.4 This process of "identification," as we grow up, may develop to the point where we attribute to other people all our own undesirable traits and disagreeable tendencies;

and, on the other hand, we tend to recognize in others those things which we are in love with in ourselves.

There is no question in my mind but that a slight degree of homosexuality may be developed in this way.

Men and women are more or less in love with themselves, and when they see in others traits they love in themselves they develop admiration for the people who bear these traits.

This should not be regarded as in any sense abnormal and should not be confused with hereditary homosexuality.

4:5.5 Another phase of identification which the child has to overcome early in life is that of **identifying himself with his inanimate surroundings.**

You **take away the baby's rattle** and he sets up a lusty howl.

You have deprived him of one of those things which he believes are inherently a **part of him.**

And as we grow up this view-point persists.

SOURCE

He will be absurdly upset at the breaking of a tea-cup which belongs to him,

at the theft of some jewelry, at damage done to his clothing or property in some way, however trifling (B 85).

[Cultivate the art of living with yourself as you are, and with the world as it is (*The Science of Living* [1910], p. 359) and many later Sadler books.]

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

The world is full of men and women who are having stormy times all the while because some little thing has been broken,

something has been misplaced,

something has been taken away from them,

their immediate environment has been invaded and the smooth running of their lives has been upset, all of which constitutes a great wrong in their eyes.

They cannot learn how to live with the world as it is and themselves as they are.

They grow up to adult life and even old age with this infantile tendency to regard themselves as the center of all things and their belongings as a part of them.

4:5.6 Parents and teachers are often to blame for the failure of children to outgrow this mental attitude of infancy. It is the duty of the adult to train the rising generation more bravely, more fearlessly, and more complacently to face the world of fact, and thus more early and more successfully to escape from the egoistic delusions of the world of infantile fancy.

TRYING TO DODGE THE REALITY OF LIVING

4:6.1 I was recently consulted by a woman who was in the throes of a nervous breakdown. She was afflicted with nausea, fatigue, insomnia, and a really serious form of mental depression, and what do you suppose was at the bottom of all this?

SOURCE

4: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Nothing more nor less than a little trouble with the kindergarten teacher, who had told her that her little girl was not being properly trained and disciplined at home. On hearing this, the nervous mother fell to thinking over the serious responsibility of raising a child,

[Probably the nearest approach to [complete Narcissistic regression] may be found in cases where some sort of moral or mental conflict has been too much for an extremely Narcissistic mind, which has then completely regressed, refused to recognise the outer world, and developed a certain form of insanity ... (B 62).]

and decided that it was too much for her.

She had a good cry, but that didn't seem to do any good. The kindergarten teacher's criticism still persisted in her mind, and so, since ordinary crying didn't seem to change matters, she threw a real fit. That evening when her husband came home she had another cry, and when that didn't seem to help much, she fell ill—and remained ill for four months. She went away from home; she succeeded in getting rid of the responsibility for the care of her child during that period, and it was no easy task, I can testify, to bring her around to the point where she was willing to go back home and take up again the responsibilities of life which she so longs to avoid.

4:6.2 Here is another story of almost as severe a nervous breakdown from another cause. This patient's husband came home one night and announced that he had been transferred to the Pacific coast and that they must move. The thought of moving was sufficient to set her brain in a whirl, and she didn't stop until she had worked herself up to the point where she experienced a complete nervous collapse.

It took her six months to recover from this breakdown and be ready to move to the Pacific coast. Of course, she had to go, but she was one of those grown-up children who somehow think they can dodge responsibility by indulging in an emotional sprawl.

4:6.3 Some men, when confronted with difficulties, just go out and find a bootlegger and go on a spree. They get drunk, and for the time being they are rid of their problems. And so it is with many a neurotic woman. When she finds herself up against something that is disagreeable, she simply goes on an emotional spree; she has a nervous breakdown, gets sick, goes to a sanatorium, has a nurse for a few weeks, and for the time being she, too, is able to escape her troubles; but, sooner or later, both sprees have to be paid for, and both shirkers have to face the real facts of living, and, like men and women, gird themselves to meet the social and other demands of their day and generation.

1. An example of this same tendency at an earlier age is seen in children who cover their heads with the bedclothes when they are frightened (B 61).
2. ... a person who expects everyone around to consult his wishes and peculiarities or who is merely somewhat impatient, or inclined to irritability, or merely **over-sensitive** to either mental or physical pain (B 62-63).