

## The Psychologist's Introduction

*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.

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### Source for The Psychologist's Introduction

- (1) William S. Sadler, M.D., F.A.C.S., *The Truth About Spiritualism* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1923)

### Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author (other than Sadler) 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.

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I: WHY IS SPIRITUALISM (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 1)

6. THE WORLD WAR—DEFENSE REACTIONS  
 (*The Truth About Spiritualism* 14)

*Different Sorts of Defense Reactions.*

[contd] In these days we hear a good deal about defense reactions.

For instance, they tell us that our interest in sports and our devotion to games is a defense reaction on the part of the common people

against the tedious routine and monotony of the daily grind in our commonplace lives.

The psychologists tell us that so many people pursue intoxications of various sorts as a defense reaction against the dull and sordid conditions of their daily life,

against the humdrum existence and the lack of romance in our common experience.

We are told that intoxication, on the one hand, and sports on the other,

help us to escape from a real and uninteresting existence into a world of stimulating and entertaining romance (*TTAS* 17).

We are further told by the psychologists that much of what we call religion is a defense reaction—an effort on our part to escape a sense of insecurity that attends this life ... (*TTAS* 18).

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PI:1 WE ARE hearing of the “defense reaction” to-day in many connections.

Our interest in sports and our following after the games, we are told, is a defense

against the tedium of the routine that fills our lives.

Our seeking after intoxication is a reaction of defense against the sordid conditions in which we live and work,

or against the humdrum of a daily life that contains no element of romance.

In intoxication and in sport

are escapes from the real and hateful into a world of fascinating imagery and stimulating romantic struggle.

In religion is our defense against the sense of insecurity and of transitoriness that we associate with worldly affairs.

SOURCE

[contd from two rows up] We are further taught that the bully browbeats his companions because he has an inherent sense of inferiority (*TTAS* 17).

And so psychologists are wont to interpret this inner urge—this curiosity and attraction which leads to the seance room—

as a sort of defense reaction which so many people are unconsciously indulging as the result of the loss of religious authority over the masses by the theologic dogmas and creeds of the present day (*TTAS* 18).

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The bombast of the bully, his “feeling big,” is his defense reaction opposed to a sense of inferiority which he cannot tolerate and which he therefore seeks to crush.

As one runs through the literature of the psychiatrist and the psychoanalyst of the day, one gains the impression that much of our behavior and almost every emotional reaction that one experiences is a defense; not a defense, to be sure, that one makes deliberately and with foresight, but automatically, one might say, as an indoor plant by the window bends toward the light, away from the dark.

PI:2 We need not be surprised, therefore, when we discover that the inner urge that drives tens of thousands in the spirit of curiosity, of earnest belief, or of longing, to the private séance where materializations are assumed to be seen and felt, to the auditorium and to the book markets where volumes on the occult are on sale;

we need not be surprised, I say, if this inner urge is interpreted

as a reaction of defense.

But a defense against what in this instance? We are told that the conventional religion of the day is sterilized by dogma;

that theology and formalism have brought it to a sorry pass; that it no longer stimulates faith in a life beyond the grave, and that it awakens no anticipatory imagery of continuing constructive activity on our part or of resting in Elysian fields—all this, now and again, from the mouth of the destructive critic.

But human nature cries out for continuity beyond the veil. There is that in us that will not tolerate an abrupt closing of accounts, at the moment of death, with all that we have learned to cherish.

[contd] And so today, just as the ditch digger craves his alcohol, and the grocery clerk seeks his out-of-door sport, as the means of obtaining relief from the tedium of daily life,

Precisely, then, as the ditch-digger and the salesmen at the ribbon-counter, as a measure of defense, must get away from their real but unromantic existence by intoxication or in sport,

so each one of the masses who follows the occult is rebellious against the termination of existence for his friends and against his own impending *finale*.

Many of them no longer find sufficient defense in the current religion and religious practises,

so in this day of materialistic philosophy, tens of thousands of people are turning away from decadent religion to seek consolation and confirmation of their belief in a future existence at the hands of modern spiritualism (*TTAS* 18).

and they turn their faces, therefore, toward materializations so-called, that seem to promise them immediate demonstration of the reality of a continuous existence.

And in this connection, it is important to emphasize the fact that we are never critical or rational in our defense reactions (*TTAS* 19).

PI:3 We are never critical of our defenses—of defenses in the sense in which we use the term.

We are not in the habit, for instance, of standing off to gaze narrowly upon our day-dreams and to inquire whether our castles in the air have a substantial foundation; how we can ride upon a charger in battle when we are a thousand miles from the army in the field. Whilst we are participating in sport, either as spectator or otherwise, we never stop for a cold weighing of the question whether we have really escaped from sordid affairs. We are satisfied with the air-castle, with the charger, and with participation in the game, and that is the end of it. The follower of the occult likewise is satisfied. The “appearances” he accepts. To deny them is for the seeker to stand in the way of the great urge of his nature. It is, in fact, as much a denial of his nature as it would be for the plant by the window, by taking thought of itself, to attempt a perpendicular growth.

2. SPIRITUALISM LIKE FALLING IN LOVE  
(*The Truth About Spiritualism* 5)

In a word, one of the explanations of our devotion to modern spiritualism is what psychologists call “the will to believe” (*TTAS* 6).

We are dealing here, only in other terms, with the “will to believe,” the great urge of human nature to accept rather than to reject.

PI:4 While we are thinking of this phenomenon—the running after mediums and materializations—and describing it as a defense reaction, let me suggest that it is determined in some measure by the times and circumstances. The girl wearied by hours of working button-holes would not find defense in a day-dream in which she entertains herself with imagery of touring the country roads in a high-powered car if the automobile were yet to be invented, or if touring were not a very highly favored form of recreation.

Likewise there is a spirit of the age that helps on a reaction of defense that consists in a following after so-called spiritistic phenomena. A materialistic spirit abroad is making its contribution.

PI:5 The author of this book has done a real service to science and to the general public by means of his searching investigations into the nature and operations of neurotics, hysterics, and psychics, and no less by publishing his results and interpretations in untechnical form. In the practise of his profession he has come into intimate personal contact with a large and interesting group of men and women who exhibit some phase or another of abnormal psychology. To these contacts he has brought a clear vision for details, and has recorded in this book his conclusions respecting the nature and technique of these numerous psychic phenomena.

PI:6 The psychiatrists of our day are showing us that in the background of our personalities are wells of latent memories that may account, literally by the wholesale, for the phenomena of dreams, automatic writings, "spirit communications," and many of the phenomena connected with hysteria, dissociation, and other abnormal psychic states.

PI:7 The remarkable sensitivity of unusual individuals must bear a relation to many of the cases we have in mind.

[Note: Sadler, in *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* [1912], discusses the Hansen and Lehmann study on pp. 463-64. In the preface to that book, Sadler acknowledges his indebtedness to Gault, "for his painstaking examination of those chapters dealing with the psychological phase of our subject, and for his many helpful suggestions and valuable criticisms." It is possible that Sadler learned of the Hansen and Lehmann investigations from Gault.]

The report of Hansen and Lehmann upon a case of alleged thought-transference or telepathy has tremendous significance.

The two subjects of their investigations had bewildered the English public with “demonstrations” of telepathic communication. In the experimental situation they were blindfolded and stationed one at each end of a long hallway. One of them was able to report correctly in a large proportion of instances what was in the other’s thought, and this was being accepted as proof of the transfer of thought-waves from one to the other by unnatural—or supernatural—means. But when the investigators had erected a sound-reflector at one end of the hall so constructed that its focus was at the opposite end, and when the transmitter was placed before it, the other man at the opposite extremity of the hall was much more successful than he had ever been before in interpreting his companion’s thought. Only one hypothesis can explain this experience. The transmitter’s thought was registered without his knowledge in delicate vibrations of his vocal apparatus. These vibrations were transmitted to the air and through it to the supersensitive ear of the receiver. Unusual, indeed! But such sensitivity is not unknown, in certain hysterical types, at any rate. Indeed, we are now learning that the capacities of normal persons to learn to make sensory discriminations of fine differences are beyond our dreams of the extraordinary.

[*Note:* Gault’s experiments were reported on in *Popular Science Monthly*, March 1925 (“New Instrument Enables the Deaf to Hear with Their Hands”); in *Popular Mechanics*, June 1926 (“Teaching Deaf to Hear through Their Fingers”); in *Archives of Otolaryngology*, Vol. 3, 1926 (“Touch as a Substitute for Hearing in the Interpretation and Control of Speech”), and elsewhere.]

In experiments initiated and directed by the writer, normal individuals are learning to interpret human speech by means of the vibrations of another’s vocal organs when they are conducted instrumentally to the learner’s fingers. The deaf in his laboratory are learning to interpret speech by its feel, to correct their own vocal expression thereby, and by the same means to acquire the pleasures of a language-sense.

SOURCE

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Not only so, but we have unquestionable evidence from the war-maimed and others of the capacity of men to make extraordinary adaptations to situations that give pause to those of us who are in possession of the normal capacities of human kind.

p1:8 Truly we are but at the threshold of our knowledge of the latent psychic powers of men.

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