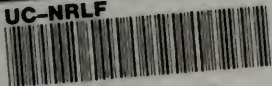
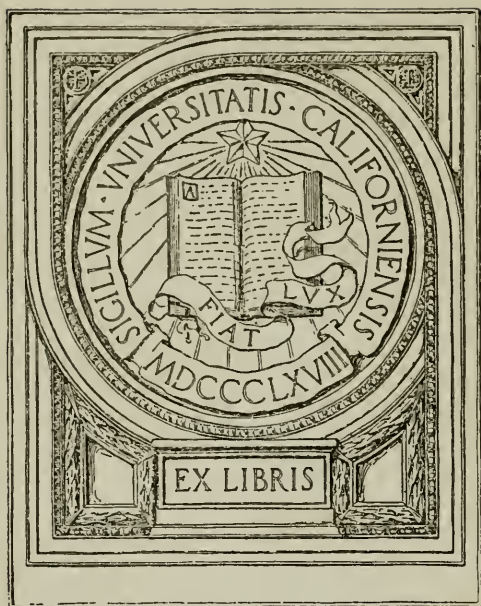


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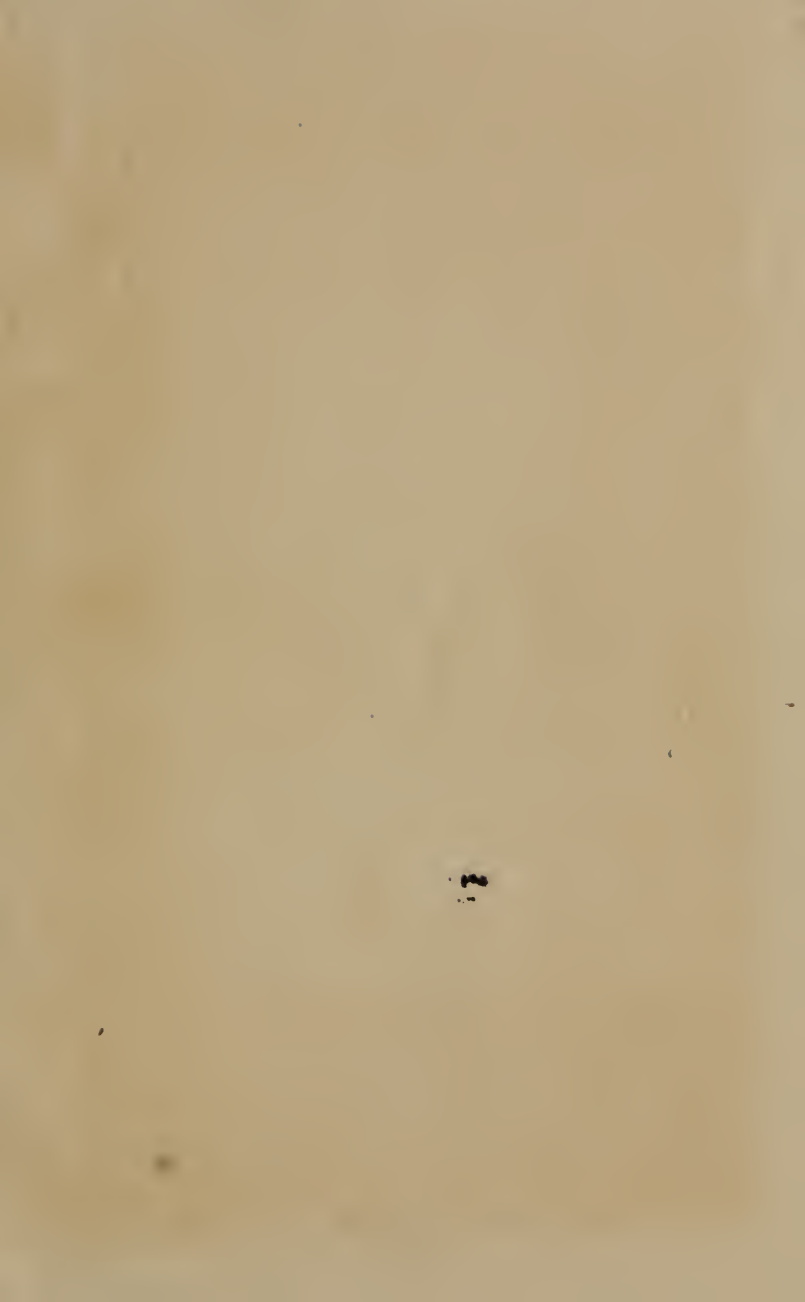
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# THE FOUNDATIONS OF SPIRITUALISM





# The Foundations of Spiritualism

BY

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# THE FOUNDATIONS OF SPIRITUALISM

## PART I

### THE EVIDENCE FOR SURVIVAL

#### I

Psychical Research has undertaken the investigation of a very heterogeneous mass of facts and claims ; but for the purposes of the present discussion the relevant phenomena can roughly be classified under three main heads, as follows :—

- (1) “ Physical ” phenomena ;
- (2) Automatism ;
- (3) Phenomena such as Telepathy,  
Hallucinations, and Apparitions.

It will be convenient to describe these in slightly greater detail before proceeding

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to an analysis of the evidence for Survival and Communication, with which this paper is mainly concerned.

(1) Physical phenomena may be defined as those in which physical effects are apparently produced in the material world by the agency of forces at present unrecognized by physical science. Many such phenomena have been reported from time to time, but the only varieties which need receive serious consideration here are Telekinetic and Parakinetic effects, Raps, and Materializations.

The question of photographic phenomena—"spirit photography"—is still, in my opinion, so obscure evidentially and, even if genuine, likely to be so remotely connected with Survival that I do not feel called upon to deal with it at this juncture.

(But cp. Hereward Carrington's *Physical*

*Phenomena of Spiritualism*, pp. 206-223 ; Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., 117-125 ; *Proc. S.P.R.*, VII., 268-289 ; and contrast Henslow's *Proofs of the Truths of Spiritualism*, which I consider to be very weak).

Telckinesis is the name given to movements of ponderable objects—in the presence of a “medium”—without contact between the object moved and any person present, or the exercise of any of the known methods of force transmission. Parakinesis denotes similar phenomena in which there is contact between the medium (or experimenters) and the object moved, but not of a nature adequate to explain the movements observed.

The phenomena of Raps and similar noises require no further description.

In my opinion these phenomena should

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be regarded as established with a degree of probability amounting, for all practical purposes, to complete certainty.

The early experiments of the late Sir William Crookes with D. D. Home in the seventies are probably quite reliable and many competent and experienced observers were convinced that genuine phenomena of this type were produced in the presence of Eusapia Paladino, the celebrated Neapolitan medium, although it was generally recognized that she did not hesitate to cheat when opportunity offered and genuine phenomena were not forthcoming.

But the classical experiments which, more than all previous work collectively, have served to establish the reality of these occurrences are those undertaken in recent years by Dr. W. J. Crawford of the Belfast Municipal Technical Institute. For full



details and comments reference may be made to Dr. Crawford's two books, *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena* and *Experiments in Psychical Science* (Watkins), and papers by Sir William Barrett and the present writer in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research (Vol. XXX., 306 sqq.). These experiments are of the utmost interest from the scientific point of view but, for reasons which will be given later, they have but little relevance to the present issue.

The same applies to the phenomena known as Materialization, which appears to be very nearly, if not quite, the weakest plank in the Spiritualist platform. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to observe that these phenomena consist in the alleged appearance, in the presence of a medium, of more or less complete human figures

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which are claimed to be those of deceased persons who have, in some obscure fashion, contrived to "materialize" some kind of temporary body. Nor is it necessary to describe in detail the nauseating sequences of fraud and exposure which have characterized this branch of the subject. The weakness of the Spiritualistic claims is adequately dealt with in Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*, Vol. II., 95-116 and 152-160. (Compare also Hereward Carrington's *Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism*, 230 sqq., and *Proc. S.P.R.*, IV., 48 sqq.).

In general it may be said that the number of cases in which fraud has been actually exposed are so numerous, and the cases in which it has not been detected have borne so close a resemblance to those in which it has, that no single historical case of full Materialization can be regarded as even

reasonably convincing—not even the celebrated case of “Katie King,” which satisfied Sir William Crookes and which is dealt with by Mr. Podmore in the second of the two passages referred to above.

Nor is this conclusion affected by the frequent alleged recognition of the “materialized” entity as a friend or relation by one of those present. (Cp. *Proc. S.P.R.*, XXI., 470 and 505-508). Even “M.A. Oxon.” (the late Revd. Stainton Moses), an ardent Spiritualist, said, speaking of “spirit photographs”: “Some people would recognize anything. A broom and a sheet are quite enough for some wild enthusiasts who go with the figure in their eye, and see what they wish to see. . . .”

But in spite of all this there seem to be indications here and there which suggest that there may have been a nucleus of

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genuine phenomena round which the fraudulent imitations and extrapolations gathered. Experience suggests that this is not infrequently the case. A feeble and fugitive genuine phenomena is seized upon by fraudulent mediums, imitated and enlarged, and finally exposed, with the result that the less ambitious original is unjustly discredited.

That this may be so in the particular case under consideration is strongly suggested by the recent experiments of Mme Bisson, Schrenck-Notzing, and Geley with the medium known as "Eva C" *alias* Marthe Béraud. These experiments, conducted with a rigidity of control never before attempted in a case of this kind, indicate that some peculiar, quasi-material and amorphous substance is almost certainly extruded from the body of the entranced

medium. The forms—heads, hands, etc.—which it subsequently appears to assume should in my judgment be regarded with more suspicion at the present stage of the enquiry in spite of the rigorous experimental conditions and of the fact that MM. Schrenck-Notzing and Geley are completely satisfied as to their genuineness.

A very able critical summary of the case is given by Miss Helen de G. Verrall (Mrs. Salter) in *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXVII., and the phenomena are described in detail in Mme Bisson's book, *Les Phénomènes dits de Matérialisation* (Felix Alcan, Paris) and in Schrenck-Notzing's *Materialisation-sphänomène*.\*

Both these works, especially the latter,

\* An English translation of this book by Dr. Fournier d'Albe will be published by Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., at an early date, and an American edition of the same by Messrs. E. P. Dutton & Co., of New York.

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are copiously illustrated by photographs of the phenomena which establish their objectivity beyond any possibility of doubt, although they do not, of course, settle the more complex questions of their genuineness or their ultimate origin.

But it is not necessary to discuss these highly obscure manifestations in any great detail. Even if they ultimately prove to have a genuine foundation they are of comparatively minor significance for the present issue.

Even if a truly recognizable figure of a deceased person were to be "materialized," it would not of itself throw any appreciable light on the problem of survival. Geley and Schrenck-Notzing appear to be of the opinion that the form assumed by the extruded substance is primarily determined by the medium's contemporary dream-

state, and indeed some such supposition seems to be inevitable in order to explain certain observed anomalies, if we are to consider the phenomena as genuine at all.

But the medium's contemporary dream-state may itself be determined by a variety of causes including, probably, telepathic impressions, and might thus well contain a visualized impression of a deceased person derived from the mind, conscious or subconscious, of one of the experimenters present.

I feel, therefore, that, in spite of the stress laid on Materializations by a few Spiritualistic writers, I am entitled to ignore them in the present discussion on the grounds both of their insufficient credentials and of their irrelevance to the issue.

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(2) I now pass to the second main class of phenomena classified under the general name of "Automatisms." This class is by far the most important of the three, and its principal aspects will be fully analysed at a later stage.

It includes all cases in which intelligent communications are obtained, from mediumistic or quasi-mediumistic sources, which are not initiated by the conscious mind of the person or persons physically responsible for their production. The commonest examples are automatic writing, trance-speaking, planchette, the "ouija board," the "glass and letters game," and the messages laboriously spelled out by "table-turning" or by raps. These phenomena are too well-known to need further description here. The messages so obtained—especially from the first two varieties—form



by far the most important part, both in quantity and in quality, of the experimental evidence adduced in favour of Survival.

(3) This class, which includes such phenomena as Telepathy and Apparitions, is again comparatively unimportant so far as any positive light which it throws on the problem of Survival is concerned, although the possibilities of Telepathy are, as will be seen later, of the first importance in providing an alternative hypothesis to the spiritualistic explanation. In view of this, it is relevant to describe briefly the evidence on which the belief in Telepathy rests.

Telepathy has been defined as "the communication of impressions of any sort from one mind to another, independently of the recognized channels of sense (Barrett, *Psychical Research*, p. 68). The evidence

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for it falls naturally into two main groups, namely experimental and spontaneous.

In the former, one of the experimenters, commonly known as the “agent,” concentrates his attention on a diagram (cp. *Proc. S.P.R.*, I., 264 sqq. and II., 24 sqq.), a number (*Proc. S.P.R.*, VI., 128-170), a playing-card drawn from a pack (*Proc. S.P.R.*, VIII., 427-8), a colour (*ibid.*), an idea or mental picture (many cases), an object (*Proc. S.P.R.*, VIII., 423-5 and XXVII., 415 sqq.), or a word, while the other experimenter—the “percipient”—who is sometimes hypnotized, records the impression which comes into his mind. Experiments have also been performed in the transference of such sensations as tastes (*Phantasms of the Living*, Abridged Edn., 43-9) and pains (*ibid.* 48) and of volitional impulses (*Proc. S.P.R.*, VIII., 577-93).

In the second group we find cases where thoughts occupying the mind of one person obtrude themselves into the dreams of another (*Phantasms of the Living*, Abridged Edn., 221-226), or where a person receives a more or less vivid and definite impression of some crisis in the life of a friend or relative for which none of the ordinary means of acquiring information will account (*ibid.*, many cases).

Instances of both these types of evidence are so numerous that it is impossible to give here even the references to them in full. The early volumes of the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. abound in reports on the subject and later accounts will be found in Vols. XXI., 60-94, XXVII., 279 sqq. and 415 sqq., and XXIX., 306 sqq.

The evidence of the second type is dealt with exhaustively in *Phantasms of the*

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*Living* by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, of which an abridged edition was published by Messrs. Kegan Paul in 1918. Adequate summaries of both types are to be found in Myers' *Human Personality*, in Baggally's *Telepathy Genuine and Fraudulent*, in Sir Oliver Lodge's *Survival of Man*, or in any other standard work on the subject. It is moreover unlikely that anyone will seriously question the existence of Telepathy as a "*vera causa*" and I do not think it necessary to go further into its credentials here. In any event I think it will soon become apparent, as the analysis of the evidence proceeds, that it is quite impossible to evade the spiritualistic explanation except by assuming, *inter alia*, a very large measure of telepathic activity on the part of the automatists and other persons concerned.

But the acceptance of Telepathy as a

fact has a certain direct evidential bearing on the question of Survival.

In the first place it is argued that the ability of one mind to *communicate* with another independently of the usual sensory and motor mechanism of the body—and indeed of any physical mechanism at all—renders it distinctly more likely that a mind can *exist* independently of the body. If the Universe provides, so to speak, for extra-physical processes of this kind, it seems not unlikely that it may also provide a similarly transcendental habitat for the minds responsible for such processes.

The force of this argument clearly depends entirely on the validity of the assumption that the telepathic process is not only non-sensory but also non-physical. That such is the case is indicated by two main considerations. First, the telepathic

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process does not seem to obey the law of Inverse Squares. That is to say the intensity of the impression transmitted does not seem to diminish, as the distance between agent and percipient is increased, in the way we should confidently expect if it were transmitted by means of any disturbance in the ether analogous to the transmission of light or the waves employed in wireless telegraphy. Second, there is some reason to suppose that a telepathic impression is transmitted *en bloc*, as a simultaneity, and not as a succession of stimuli to be synthesized by the recipient, as is the case in all forms of direct or indirect sensory communication of thoughts. The most obvious example of the latter process is that of writing and, *a fortiori*, telegraphy by Morse or similar code. But speech, too, not only consists of a succession

of articulated sounds but each of these sounds itself consists of a series of vibrations in the air.

I do not suggest that these considerations are in any way conclusive in showing that the telepathic process is something essentially non-physical ; but they strongly suggest that such is the case, and the argument in favour of the possibility of Survival derived therefrom must accordingly be allowed some weight.

On the other hand Telepathy enormously increases our chances of evading the *prima facie* implications of the evidence on which the spiritistic explanation is based.

I do not propose to give any discussion here of the evidence for Survival afforded by " Apparitions " or " Phantasms of the Dead." These are fully discussed in *Proc. S.P.R.*, VI., 13-35, 229-313, 314-357, and

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VIII., 170 sqq., and in Myers' *Human Personality*, Vol. II., chap. VII.

My chief reason for this omission is that Spiritualists do not in general rely on these phenomena to support their doctrines of whose scientific foundation this paper is primarily a critique. In spite of this the omission would not be justifiable if these phenomena were intrinsically of high evidential value ; but, partly on account of their sporadic and fugitive nature, which makes experimental treatment and close study impracticable, and partly because of the difficulty of excluding Hallucinations and immediate or deferred Telepathy, I consider them to be of no more than secondary importance from the evidential point of view.



## II

I shall now proceed briefly to indicate the kind of evidence which would be necessary to establish Survival, with reasonable certainty, on experimental grounds.

It may be pointed out, in passing, that Survival of bodily death is not synonymous with Immortality, and that to "prove" the former would not necessarily prove the latter, although it would greatly increase the chances in its favour.

In order to establish Survival it is necessary to show that some individual personality has undergone the process of death and has yet remained sufficiently intact to warrant its being described as the same individual. It is not perhaps possible

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to exclude from among the various *a priori* possibilities that of a personality surviving death, in a sense, but being so greatly modified in the process as no longer to be recognizable as an individual—even by itself. But there is no need to follow this ramification of the subject here.

For our present purpose I need only observe that, in the process of satisfying ourselves that any evidential matter emanates from a given discarnate human intelligence, three stages would be logically distinguishable. First, we should have to show that the responsible intelligence is not that of the person through whose bodily mechanism the evidence in question is obtained; second, that it is discarnate, i.e. not that of any person living; third, that it is not only *a* discarnate intelligence but that *particular* discarnate intelligence

which it purports to be. The last step would be the easiest although we cannot *a priori* exclude the possibility of impersonation by discarnate intelligences which might be either human or even non-human.

I think it is clear from the foregoing that the problem reduces itself to one of showing individual personal identity and that no phenomena, however remarkable they may be intrinsically, are of any direct value in establishing Survival unless they bear on this point, although they may, of course, be of *indirect* value in disclosing previously unsuspected properties in the Universe and so increasing the *a priori* chances for there being some provision in it for discarnate existence.

My reasons for dismissing "physical phenomena" so briefly will now be apparent. The fact that, e.g., a table moves in a

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manner inexplicable on normal grounds is no proof that a "spirit" moves it; even if it moves intelligently it does not follow that the intelligence is discarnate—for it may be, and very likely is, some form of secondary intelligence of the medium which is responsible; and even if it could be shown, which would be difficult, that the responsible intelligence were discarnate, it might still be non-human. Moreover, as pointed out above, even if, as an extreme case, we could suppose that the production of an unmistakably recognizable "materialized" form were incontrovertibly established, Survival would not be a logically necessary inference from the fact. It is hardly necessary, I hope, to point out that matter purporting to describe the next life is in no way evidential. Whether it agrees or conflicts with our preconceived ideas it is

equally insusceptible of experimental verification and equally open to the suspicion of having arisen only in some region of the automatist's own mind. The same applies to didactic and doctrinal matter, however orthodox or heretical it may be.

There is one phenomenon of "mixed" nature—partly "physical" and partly automatic—which calls for comment here. I refer to what is known as the "Direct Voice."

It is claimed that in the presence of certain mediums—of whom the best known is Mrs. Wriedt—a voice is heard which is not that of the medium or of any person present. This voice purports to be under the control of discarnate persons and gives messages etc. to those present. I am not prepared to give a definite opinion as to the genuineness of this phenomenon—

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personally I regard it as distinctly dubious ; but, even if it *is* genuine, its evidential import is to be found solely in the *content* of the messages received and not in the *mechanism* of their delivery. So far as I am aware, no evidential matter has been obtained from this source which cannot be paralleled in the more familiar records of trance-speaking and automatic writing.

There is therefore no need to deal with this phenomenon separately here.

### III

Having thus cleared the ground, we can proceed to the analysis of the different types of evidence which have been adduced as affording proof of personal identity.

The manner of obtaining them need not concern us ; it is normally through writing or speaking by a medium or, to use a better word, an " automatist," who may, or may not, be in a state of trance.

These varieties of evidential matter can, I think, legitimately be classified under five heads, in an ascending order of evidential value. I shall deal with these five varieties in order and shall give, for each variety, a summary of one or more actual examples and at least general references to other instances.

(1) *Cases where details concerning the ostensible communicator are given which are known to the student or enquirer but unknown to the automatist.*

Such details will in general consist of names, dates, relationships, personal characteristics, anecdotes, etc., and it may be

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noticed, in passing, that the evidential value of such details will be greater if they are of so trivial a nature as to make it unlikely that they would be known to more than a very limited circle.

As will be seen later, this variety of evidence is not cogent and as it is very abundant I do not think it is necessary to give much in the way of illustration of it. Examples of the sort of thing referred to, taken at random from the first books to hand, are as follows :—

(A) Mr. J. Arthur Hill writing of his experiences with Mr. Wilkinson, a well-known North-of-England medium, says :

“ At my first sitting with him he described and named my mother and other relatives, whom he saw apparently with me. I had no reason to believe that he had any normal knowledge of these people ; certainly



I had never mentioned them to him, and it was in the last degree unlikely that anyone else had. My mother had been dead twenty-two years and was not at all a prominent person. Moreover he got by automatic writing a signed message from her, giving the name of the house in which we lived at the time of her death but which we had left eleven years later. This seemed to be given by way of a test. At later sittings my father and other relatives manifested, with names and identifying detail. . . . The evidence went beyond any possibility of the medium's normal knowledge, and was characteristic of the different communicators in all sorts of subtle ways." (*Psychical Miscellanea*, p. 46).

(B) Hodgson (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XIII., 373) says: ". . . a club friend of my own called Otis made several brief communica-

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tions at sittings. I asked him for a test, and he replied by reminding me of the 'sword dance.' . . . . . He was my *vis-à-vis* in a sword dance given by ourselves and six other members of the club in connection with some Christmas festivities."

(C) Sir Oliver Lodge in his *Survival of Man*, pp. 181-2, describes how, in the course of one of his sittings with Mrs. Piper, he presented to her an old gold watch which he had received that morning by post from an uncle. Another—deceased—uncle to whom the watch had previously belonged purported to communicate and gave his name—"Uncle Jerry"—correctly. Sir Oliver continues :

" ' Uncle Jerry ' recalled episodes such as swimming the creek when they, the communicator and his twin brother, were boys together, and running some risk of

getting drowned ; killing a cat in Smith's field ; the possession of a small rifle and of a long peculiar skin, like a snake skin. . . ." (For full account of sitting see *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. VI., 503 sqq.).

Many instances of this general type occur in the same volume, and in Volume XIII., 284-582, which describes the very well-known " George Pelham " case. The latest example, and in some respects one of the best with which I am acquainted, is to be found in *Proc. S.P.R.*, XXX., 339-554 (i.e. Part LXXVIII., *On a Series of Sitzings with Mrs. Osborne Leonard* by Miss Radclyffe-Hall and (Una) Lady Troubridge).

But it is not necessary for me to multiply instances of this variety of evidential matter. No one with the most rudimentary knowledge of the subject will deny that such material has been obtained in very great

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abundance. Its comparative unimportance will be dealt with later.

(2) *Cases where details concerning the ostensible communicator are given which are not known either to the automatist or to any other person present.*

*Examples :—(A) “ The pearl tie-pin case.”*

This is given by Sir William Barrett in his book *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, pp. 184-5. The ostensible communicator, killed during the war, asked that his pearl tie-pin should be sent to his fiancée, whose name he gave. The engagement, subsequently verified, had been kept a secret and this was the first that his family or friends had heard of it.

(B) *From Mr. A. J. Arthur Hill's Psychical Investigations*, p. 19. The medium says : “. . . . Mr. Leather has brought Elias Sydney. . . . Sidney has been passed

away longer than Mr. Leather.” Mr. Hill had never heard of Elias Sydney and had some difficulty in tracing him ; but he was finally identified as a close friend of the Mr. Leather referred to.

(C) *The “ Group Photograph ” incident*, given by Sir Oliver Lodge in *Raymond* and in *Proc. S.P.R.*, XXIX., 132 sqq. In this case reference was made by the ostensible communicator (Raymond Lodge) to a photograph of himself and brother-officers which was not known, at that time, to anyone present. Identifying details were given and subsequently verified on receipt of the photograph.\*

(D) Several exceptionally good cases (obtained in this instance through “ table-

\* This is one of the very few items of actual evidence given in *Raymond*. Thousands of people, I suppose, have derived their entire knowledge of the subject from this book and imagine that it contains the latest and most cogent evidence obtainable. This is a complete misapprehension.

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turning"—a form of automatism—are quoted by Dr. Paul Joire, (*Psychical and Supernormal Phenomena*, pp. 221-247,) from the *Bulletin* of the Société d'Etudes Psychiques de Nancy, by which body they were obtained.

In these cases various ostensible communicators gave details of their profession, date of birth and of death, places of residence and other details, which were duly verified by the experimenters.

For these examples I have no credentials beyond the imprimatur of Dr Joire, who, however, is a responsible authority.

(E) Sir Oliver Lodge gives a "List of Incidents unknown to or forgotten by, or unknowable to, persons present" which were referred to in the course of his observations of Mrs. Piper's trance. (*Proc. S.P.R.*, VI., 649-650).

For other instances see the many papers on the Piper case in the *Proceedings* of the Society, or Mr J. Arthur Hill's *Psychical Investigations and New Evidences in Psychical Research*.

Classical cases are :—

- (1) The “ Abraham Florentine ” case.  
(*Proc. S.P.R.*, XI. For criticisms  
cp. Podmore's *Studies in Psychical  
Research*, 125-33).
- (2) The “ Blanche Abercromby ” case.  
(Myers' *Human Personality*, II.,  
231-4).
- (3) The “ Brainerd ” case. (*ibid.*, II.,  
457-8).
- (4) The “ Gurwood ” case. (*ibid.*, II.,  
162-7).

(N.B.—I do not regard the credentials of the first two cases as wholly satisfactory).

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Cp. also Sir William Barrett's *On the Threshold of the Unseen*," pp. 226-341, and Hill's *Psychical Investigations*, p. 172. For criticisms of these see *Immortality*, 251 and 252, and for Mr. Hill's reply see *Psychical Miscellanea*, 28-29.

Cp. also *Proc. S.P.R.*, XXX., 487-546.

(3) *Cases in which details concerning the ostensible communicator are given which are unknown to any person living but which are subsequently verified.*

Cases such as these are obviously bound to be very rare. I am acquainted with only very few examples—none of which strike me as altogether satisfactory.

(A) The first of these is an incident from the life of Swedenborg. It is described as follows in Myers' *Human Personality*, p. 569 :—



“ The widow of the Dutch Ambassador at Stockholm was called upon by a goldsmith to pay for a silver service which her husband had purchased. She believed that it had been paid for but could not find the receipt ; so she begged Swedenborg to ask her husband where it was. (N.B. Swedenborg believed that he had the power of communicating with deceased persons. W.W.S.) Three days later he came to her house and informed her in the presence of some visitors that he had conversed with her husband, and had learnt from him that the debt had been paid and that the receipt was in a bureau in an upstairs room. The spirit had said that on pulling out the left hand drawer a board would appear, and on drawing this out a secret compartment would be disclosed, containing his private Dutch correspondence and the receipt.

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The whole company went upstairs and the papers were found, as described, in the secret compartment of which no one had known before."

(B) Another case is one given by Dr. Paul Joire, (*Psychical and Supernormal Phenomena* chap. XIX), and concerns the disappearance of a young Danish Doctor whilst walking in the neighbourhood of Aix-les-Bains. It was ascertained that he had been proposing to visit a notoriously dangerous mountain in the neighbourhood, and it was therefore supposed that he had been the victim of an accident, but in spite of prolonged searching no trace of his body could be found.

Communications were received, through private mediumship, to the effect that he died on a perpendicular precipice of the Revard (local mountain), under an over-

hanging rock near a house used as a shelter for sheep when overtaken by storms. Other details were also given. A special search of the slopes of the Revard was undertaken in consequence of this but without effect, and bad weather prevented its completion at the time.

The body was, however, found in the following spring by the owner of a property on the Revard who had occasion to visit a particularly inaccessible part thereof which was normally never visited either by tourists or huntsmen. The surroundings corresponded closely with those described in the mediumistic communications. On the whole this seems quite a good case and its credentials appear to be excellent.

(4) "*Cross-correspondence.*" Cases in which a message is received partly through one automatist and partly through another ;

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*or where references are made by the same ostensible communicator, through two or more automatists, to the same unusual or characteristic topics.*

In its simplest form this type of evidence does not do more than indicate the existence of some single intelligence dominating both or all the automatists. It does not afford evidence of personal identity unless the selection and method of treatment of the subjects of the correspondence is characteristic of the supposed communicator. But this, as will be seen, is not infrequently the case.

A very large proportion of the work of the Society for Psychical Research in recent years has been devoted to the study of such cross-correspondences and the volumes of the *Proceedings* are full of discussions and analyses of cases of the kind, the majority

of which emanate from the group of ostensible communicators which includes the late F. W. H. Myers, Professor Henry Sidgwick, and Professor Verrall.

The mere fact that this type of evidence, which was foreshadowed by Myers during his life, should have been so greatly developed after his death is in itself of some evidential value. It clearly suggests that Myers and his colleagues are deliberately trying, in the light of their great experience of Psychical Research while on earth, to devise new and unexceptionable methods of proof. The study of such cases has been systematized and brought to a high pitch of technical perfection by members of the Society. Detailed records of the "script" of various automatists have been kept and the necessary precautions have been taken to ensure that the latter do not see each other's productions.

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The subject-matter commonly consists of comparatively recondite classical and literary allusions and an adequate description of the better cases would occupy far more space than is at my disposal here.

The following observations are transcribed from Miss Alice Johnson's study of the subject. (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XXI, 373-5):

“ This (tendency to cross-correspondence) was shown first in Mrs Verrall's script, and a considerable section of her report on it (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XX) is devoted to an account of the cross-correspondences between her script and the script or automatic speech of other automatists. One of the first of these, in May, 1901, was with Mrs Thompson (*cp. cit.*, pp. 207-9), and a striking case occurred with Mrs Piper (pp. 213-17) ; but the most important were the long series with Mrs Forbes, dating from February

1901 onwards. In this account Mrs Verrall includes under the common term of "Cross-correspondence" cases where one automatist describes correctly some fact about the other, and those where references to the same topic occur independently in the two scripts; but a considerable proportion of the cases are of the latter type to which I think it more convenient to restrict the term.

"In studying these in proof in the early part of 1906, I was struck by the fact that in some of the most remarkable instances the statements in the script of one writer were by no means a simple reproduction of statements in the script of the other, but seemed to represent different aspects of the same idea, one supplementing or completing the other. Thus, in one case (p. 223) Mrs. Forbes's script, purporting to come from her

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son Talbot, stated that he must now leave her, since he was looking for a sensitive who wrote automatically, in order that he might obtain corroboration of her own writing. Mrs Verrall, on the same day, wrote of a fir-tree planted in a garden, and the script was signed with a sword and suspended bugle. The latter was part of the badge of the regiment to which Talbot Forbes had belonged, and Mrs Forbes had in her garden some fir-trees grown from seed sent to her by her son. These facts were unknown to Mrs Verrall.

“ In another case (pp. 241-245)—too complicated to summarize here—Mrs Forbes produced, on November 26th and 27th, 1902, references, absolutely meaningless to herself, to a passage in the *Symposium* which Mrs Verrall had been reading on those days. These references also applied



appropriately to an obscure sentence in Mrs Verrall's own script of November 26th, and on December 18th attempts were made in Mrs Forbes's script to give a certain test word 'Dion' or 'Dy,' which, it was stated, 'will be found in Myers' own . . .' Mrs Verrall interpreted the test word at the time, for reasons given, as 'Diotima,' and a description of the same part of the *Symposium*, including the mention of Diotima, did occur in *Human Personality*, which was published about three months later, in February 1903. Further references to the *Symposium* appeared in Mrs Forbes's script in the early part of 1903 (see Mrs Verrall's Report, p. 246) . . . . .

"I became convinced through the study of these cases that there was some special purpose in the particular form they took—all the more because in Mrs Verrall's script

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statements were often associated with them, apparently to draw attention to some peculiar kind of test—described, e.g. as superposing certain things on others, when all would be clear.

“ The characteristic of these cases, or at least of some of them, is that we do not get in the writing of one automatist anything like a mechanical verbatim reproduction of phrases in the other ; we do not even get the same idea expressed in different ways—as might well result from direct telepathy between them. What we get is a fragmentary utterance in one script, which seems to have no particular point or meaning, and another fragmentary utterance in the other, of an equally pointless character ; but, when we put the two together, we see that they supplement one another, and that there is apparently one coherent idea under-

lying both, but only partially expressed in each."

Of specific instances the following examples must suffice :—

(A) *The "spear-sphere" incident.* Hodgson in America suggested to Mrs Piper's "control" that he should appear to Miss Verrall, in England, holding a *spear* in his hand. The word was at first misunderstood as *sphere*. Some days later the control reported that the experiment had been successfully performed. Meanwhile, and of course without knowing what had taken place in America, Mrs Verrall wrote automatically the words, "Panopticon σφαιρᾶς ἀτιτάλλει συνδέγμα μυστικόν. Τί οὐκ ἐβιδῶς; volatile ferrum—pro telo impinget." This script contains clear references to the ideas of both spear and sphere.

An adequate summary is given in

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Barrett's *Psychical Research*, pp. 234-5, and the case is reported in full in *Proc. S.P.R.*, XX, 213-217.

(B) Miss Verrall summarizes another case of true Cross-correspondence with admirable conciseness as follows (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XXVII, 272) :

“ In the H.V. script of January 25th, 1911, we find a quotation from *The White Ship*, a quotation from *Ariel's Song*, a reference to a gate, and a quotation from the first chorus of *Atalanta in Calydon* ; in the ‘ Mac ’\* script of July 8th, 1911, there is a reference to a gate combined with a quotation from *The Triumph of Time*, afterwards associated in the H.V. script with the quotation from *The White Ship* ; in the ‘ Mac ’ script of July 9th, 1911, there is a reference to a gate combined with an

\* “ Mac ” is the nom-de-plume of one of the automatists whose script is studied by the Society. W.W.S.

allusion to the first chorus of *Atalanta in Calydon* ; in the ' Mac ' script of Sept. 6th, 1911, there is a reference to a gate combined with a quotation from *Ariel's Song*." It should be noted that in the " Mac " script of July 8th, 1911, it is distinctly claimed that a cross-correspondence is being attempted.

(C) *The " Ave Roma Immortalis "* case. This, which is one of a number of interconnected cases, is difficult to summarize adequately in a few words.

Mrs Verrall's scripts of March 2nd, 4th and 5th, 1906, contained references to the following ideas :

- (a) Weak defenders of a city against an invading host.
- (b) " Primus inter pares."
- (c) A brother related in feeling though not in blood.

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(d) Pagan and Pope.

(e) The key-bearer (or club-bearer).

There was also a definite assurance that an elucidating reference would be made through another automatist.

This was forthcoming in the phrase " Ave Roma Immortalis " which appeared in the script of Mrs Holland on March 7th. That it was the expected phrase was indicated by the immediately following words, " How could I make it any clearer without giving her the clue ? "

These references, unintelligible in themselves, are made coherent if they are taken to refer to Raphael's picture, in the Stanza d'Eliodoro in the Vatican, of Atilla terrified by the vision of SS. Peter and Paul when meeting Pope Leo who went out to save Rome. (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XXI, 297-303, etc., and XXVII, 11-24). This case strongly

suggests that there was a single intelligence trying to devise a cross-correspondence in which the key to the, otherwise meaningless, script of one automatist is given in the script of the other.

It is, perhaps, easy to evade a given case of this kind of thing by evoking the potentialities of coincidence and of parallel trains of thought in the minds of the two automatists. But this becomes increasingly difficult as the correspondences detected multiply in number and increase in complexity.

Some twenty-three examples are discussed by Mr Piddington in *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXII, alone, and many other instances are to be found in the records of recent years.

(5) *Literary puzzles, etc. Cases in which, by means of more or less recondite allusions,*

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*a literary puzzle is propounded, or a piece of literary criticism is given or referred to or implied, which is manifestly outside the range of the automatist's normal abilities but of a nature especially characteristic of the supposed communicator.*

Mr Gerald Balfour, in discussing one example, gives the following description which is applicable to all cases of the class.

“The method is to propound a literary problem *the construction and solution of which are outside the range of the automatist's normal knowledge*. The solution is at first kept purposely obscure, and it is left to the industry of the interpreters of the script to discover it. When they have failed to do so after ample time given additional indications are doled out in successive scripts until at last the riddle is read.”

Two examples of this type of case may



be noted here. The accounts given are necessarily very condensed as the cases are highly complex.

(A) *The "Statius" case.* (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XXVII, 221-49).

The automatist's script contained the following sentences or allusions which were supposed to emanate from the late Dr Verrall :

- (1) A timid traveller confronted with a stream which he hesitates to try to cross.
- (2) Some—unspecified—passage in a book where this idea occurs.
- (3) "What the passage does not say I draw from my own mind to make the connection clear."
- (4) Hair in a Temple.
- (5) "A man who drove two horses in a less ambitious manner,"

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(6) “ Does God exact day-labour, light denied ? ”

(7) Dante.

The first was the central idea on which most emphasis was laid. The last-named, which was also the last in point of time, gave the clue which enabled the students of the script to identify the passage referred to. This was thought to occur in an essay by Dr Verrall, published with others in 1913, which dealt with a passage in Dante's *Divina Commedia* concerning the poet Statius.

I cannot here go into all the details which arise in connection with the scripts and this Essay. The point is that Dr Verrall maintained that the words used by Dante about the conversion of Statius to Christianity “ imply an antithesis or comparison between Statius and the Greeks of the poem

(the *Thebaid* of Statius), between the “rivers” to which they came and that to which he came, the river, according to the familiar figure, of baptism. This river he long hesitates to pass; he “halted on the other side,” as a man, who was no hero, might, when to be baptised was to be in danger of death,—though, as he tells us, the delay cost him centuries of expiation upon the purgatorial mountains.” (Quotations from the Essay in question).

In view of this I think that the appositeness of the first reference, to a timid traveller confronted by a stream, in a message purporting to come from Dr Verrall will be apparent.

The third reference is a direct paraphrase of a line from the passage which forms the subject of the Essay in question.

The fourth appears to be an allusion to

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*The Hair of Berenice* (Catullus) which for private and unpublished reasons is “connected by very definite intermediate links with Dr Verrall’s essays on Dante and Statius.” Or it may, possibly, refer to a poem by Statius himself.

The words “A man who drove two horses in a less ambitious manner” are also highly appropriate to a message from Dr Verrall in view of the fact that the last work on which he was engaged before his death was a set of lectures on Dryden in the course of which was quoted a passage from Gray comparing Dryden and Milton and containing the lines :

“Behold where Dryden’s less presumptuous car  
Wide o’er the fields of glory bear  
Two coursers of ethereal race, etc.”

The connection with Milton is confirmed by the sixth reference which is a quotation

from his *Sonnet on his Blindness*. This is also appropriate to the lines immediately preceding those quoted from Gray above.

I think it will be admitted that a case of this kind provides evidence of a high order of cogency, for it is difficult to think of a much better way in which a literary man could establish his identity than by such veiled references to characteristic passages in his own work.

In conclusion, it is important to note that, so far as can be ascertained by careful enquiry, the automatist, who is well known to the students of the script, had never seen the Essay in question, which first appeared in an obscure and ephemeral review and was not published in accessible form until after the first script had been written.

For criticisms of this case and replies

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thereto see *Proc. S.P.R.*, XXVII, 459-491.

(B) “ *The Ear of Dionysius* ” (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XXIX, 197-243, 260-286).

This case closely resembles the “ *Staius* ” case in its general features. The supposed communicators were Dr Verrall and Professor Butcher. References to the following topics were found in the scripts concerned :

The Ear of Dionysius.

The stone-quarries at Syracuse where  
prisoners were confined.

The story of Polyphemus and Ulysses.

The story of Acis and Galatea.

Jealousy.

Music and the sound of a musical  
instrument.

Something to be found in Aristotle’s  
*Poetics*.

Satire.

These references remained obscure until the key to the puzzle was provided in the shape of an allusion to Philoxenus of Cythera, an obscure Greek poet.

“ His friendship with Dionysius the Elder was broken either by his frank criticism of the tragedies of the tyrant or in consequence of his passion for Galatea, a beautiful flute-player, who was the mistress of Dionysius. Released from prison by the prince to pass judgment on his verse, the poet exclaimed: ‘ Take me back to the quarries.’ In his confinement he revenged himself by composing his famous dithyramb entitled either *Kyklops* or *Galatea*, in which the poet represented himself as Odysseus, who, to take vengeance on Polyphemus (Dionysius), estranged the affections of the nymph Galatea, of whom the *Kyklops* was enamoured.”

Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets*.

Mr Balfour says : “ Here evidently is the literary unity of which we were in search, and which was to collect the scattered parts of the puzzle devised by the two friends on

the other side into a single whole. . . . Dionysius and his "Ear," the stone-quarries of Syracuse, Ulysses and Polyphemus, Acis and Galatea, Jealousy, and Satire—all these topics fall naturally into place in relation to this account of the poem. Music and the thrumming of a musical instrument can be fitted in without much difficulty, as belonging to the characteristics of dithyrambic poetry."

It may be added that the quarries in question were known as "The Ear of Dionysius" and that the reference to Aristotle's *Poetics* was also found to be relevant.

It is not possible to bring out in so short a summary all the minor points which tend to increase the evidential value of such cases. But even the bare outline is, I think, sufficient to render it difficult not to agree



with Mr Balfour when, after drawing attention to the appearance of deliberation and selectiveness shown by the scripts, he says :

“ I believe the instinctive judgment of trained scholars will be that the Dionysius puzzle could not have been invented, and elaborated without slip or blunder, except by somebody who was himself a scholar, and a ripe and good one. Mrs Willett herself (the automatist) cannot reasonably be credited with its authorship.” (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XXIX, 236).

In all the above varieties of evidential communications there is room for points of resemblance to the personal idiosyncracies of the supposed communicator as regards voice, handwriting, manner, or style. It is not uncommon to encounter assurances to the effect that a trance-speaking medium, for example, spoke on a

particular occasion in the natural voice of the ostensible communicator; or that automatic writing resembled that of the communicator while alive; or that tricks of manner were accurately reproduced.

The "Blanche Abercromby" case referred to above is a well-known example of similarity of handwriting. In this case the automatist (the Revd. Stainton Moses) wrote a passage whose caligraphy was stated to bear a close resemblance to that of the lady purporting to inspire the script, and it was believed that Moses had never had an opportunity of studying the original. Dr Hodgson, whose study of handwriting had done much to expose the frauds perpetrated by the Theosophists (Cp. *Proc. S.P.R.*, III, 276 sqq.) compared the script referred to above with original letters written by the supposed communicator.

In his report he notes distinct resemblances and goes on to say : “ The note-book writing suggests that its author was attempting to reproduce the (original) writing by recalling to memory its chief peculiarities, and not by copying specimens. . . . .” (Myers, *Human Personality*, Vol. II, 232).

Myers apparently regards this judgment as being in favour of a supernormal explanation, but I confess that, to me, it seems to lend itself at least equally well to a more normal explanation.

It will, I think, be admitted that evidence of this type would be very strong if the resemblances could be firmly established, but it is clearly of a type very difficult to fix in a definite form and very liable to originate solely in the imagination of those present at the time it is produced.

I think it wiser therefore to attach no

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weight to it whatsoever. (Cp. *Proc. S.P.R.*, XXIII, 36 sqq.)

### IV

I shall now discuss the explanations, other than that of the activity of deceased persons, which can be advanced to account for the facts which I have briefly described above.

First of all it is necessary to advert for a moment to the question of fraud, which is the charge most commonly brought by uninformed critics against the adherents of the "Spiritistic" explanation. It is, however, wholly inadequate to cover the facts.

Every student of the subject knows that

fraud has been common from the earliest days and that the indiscriminating credulity of enthusiasts has, at all times, invited and fostered it. The early days of modern "Spiritualism" were distinguished by innumerable thaumaturgical performances of a crude and somewhat nauseating type for which professional mediums were almost exclusively responsible; these were again and again exposed, mainly by members of the Society for Psychical Research or persons of the same critical school.

But no serious student of the subject will base any arguments for Survival and Communication on facts in the least resembling these early manifestations. I have tried to make it clear that the evidence for Survival is solely a matter of establishing individual personal identity by the *content* of intelligent automatisms of one kind or

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another, and does not in any way depend on the strangeness or otherwise of the form which such automatisms take. It will, I think, be generally admitted that it is far harder to fabricate evidence of this kind than to produce spurious "physical" phenomena of a nature which might be simulated by prestidigitation and similar means.

The cases which I have cited have been taken mainly, and in the more important instances, exclusively from the records collected by the Society for Psychical Research, who, in addition to being well versed in fraudulent methods, have drawn their material almost entirely from private automatists whose integrity is above suspicion. It is indeed very rare for any professional medium to receive any attention from the Society at all. A certain

number, were, of course, investigated and exposed in the early days ; but, so far as the cases quoted above are concerned, the only automatist to whom the description of " private " does not accurately apply is Mrs Piper who, however, was under such long and close observation by the Society that the chance of fraud may safely be regarded as eliminated in her case. Nor, indeed, has any such accusation ever been brought against her.\*

But I do not think that anyone will seriously advance this hypothesis at the present time, especially in the case of those varieties of evidence described in Section III (4) and (5) above.

\* Mrs. Leonard whose automatisms form the subject-matter of the paper by Lady Troubridge and Miss Radclyffe-Hall referred to at the end of Section III. (1) above is not an amateur; but the elaborate precautions taken by their investigators to guard against any possible fraud completely convinced them of her absolute honesty.

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The real case against the Spiritistic explanation should be formulated on quite different lines, and it is perhaps not the less strong because of the impossibility of devising a sharply defined formula to express it. In dealing with it I shall not, therefore, propound a rigid alternative hypothesis and then proceed to defend it, but shall draw attention to a number of different considerations which, taken collectively, seem to me to make it difficult unreservedly to accept the *prima facie* indications of the evidence.

First of all, then, there are the possibilities of what may conveniently be called “*Latent Memory.*”

Throughout the preceding description of the varieties of evidence I have had occasion to speak of knowledge possessed by one person but not possessed by another. It is,



however, very difficult—almost impossible—to say definitely that a given person does not “know” a thing. An item of information may not be accessible at will, but it does not follow that it is not buried in some mental stratum from which it may be evoked by an appropriate stimulus applied at the (literally) psychological moment.

We may even be unaware that the item concerned has ever been known to us at any time, and yet it may be brought out by suitable conditions. As we walk down the street, or “skim” a newspaper, or idly turn the pages of a book, or consort with people talking among themselves, we are bombarded by a host of impressions of the majority of which we are never fully conscious. We pay little or no attention to them, and unless they are of an exceptionally obtrusive or insistent nature we remain

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unaware of their very existence. And yet they must be supposed to produce some effect on, and be registered somewhere in, our minds.

A good example, in connection with crystal-gazing, is given by Miss Goodrich-Freer in her book, *Essays in Psychological Research* (pp. 113-114) :

“ It had been suggested to me to try to see *words* in the crystal. . . . I soon saw, as if in a cutting from *The Times*, the announcement of the death of a lady, intimate with near friends of my own, and which I should certainly have regarded as an event of interest and consequence under whatever circumstances communicated. The announcement gave every detail of place, name, and date, with the additional statement that it was after a period of prolonged suffering. I had heard nothing

of the lady—resident in America—for some months, and was quite willing to suppose the communication prophetic or clairvoyant. Of this flattering notion I was soon disabused. An examination of the paper of the day before soon showed that the advertisement was there, just as I had seen it in the crystal, and, though at first I was inclined to protest that I had “never *looked* at yesterday’s paper,” I presently remembered that I had in fact handled it, using it as a screen to shade my face from the fire, while talking to a friend in the afternoon. If anyone likes to say that I could not have read and remembered an announcement of strong personal interest without being aware of it, I can only pledge myself to the absolute truth of the story and leave the explanation to those of wider experience than mine. I may add the fact

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that we have since discovered that the lady in question is alive and well, and that the announcement related to someone else of the same name, by no means a common one.

I think this detail is of interest, as excluding the hypothesis of thought-transference from someone already in possession of the news."

The foregoing, will, I think, suffice to show that although it is unlikely that all the observed cases can be explained by invoking "latent memory," it is a possibility which it is difficult to exclude and which should always be borne in mind when considering evidence.

The next difficulty is, of course, the possible scope of Telepathy. It is, perhaps, not much less remarkable, intrinsically, than the spiritistic hypothesis itself and it might be, and has been, urged, that on the

score of *a priori* probability there is nothing to be gained by adopting the telepathic rather than the spiritistic explanation. I am not so sure that this is true, but even if it is it would apply only so long as there was no collateral evidence tending to support one theory rather than the other.

But there *is* considerable collateral evidence in the shape of all those experimental and spontaneous facts, to which I referred above and which—without in any way suggesting the activity of discarnate minds—seem to demand Telepathy for their explanation. In accordance with the general Law of Parsimony, therefore, we must not import a new cause (i.e. “Spirits”) until we have exhausted every other known cause (including Telepathy).

Since the experimental and spontaneous evidence for Telepathy is distinctly good

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we must reject as inconclusive the whole of the first class of evidential matter cited above : that class, namely, in which personal details of the supposed communicator are given which are known to the enquirer but not to the medium. There is always the chance that they may have been "telepathed" from the enquirer to the automatist.

The fact that the former was "not thinking of" the relevant facts at the time does not affect this conclusion. There is distinct evidence that it is not always the idea which is uppermost in the "agent's" mind which is most easily transmitted to the "precipient" in experimental Telepathy. It seems more likely that the transmission is effected between subliminal strata of the minds concerned and that the contemporary supraliminal thought is of

importance only in so far as it may condition the content of that stratum of the mind responsible for the transmission. This it presumably often does, but not necessarily always.

Telepathy has to be stretched rather further to cover the second class of case. One has to suppose that it is effected by proxy, so to speak, or that the mind of the automatist possesses the faculty of "picking up" items of information from the minds of persons who are not present, who are unaware of the process and, very likely, are in no way concerned with the proceedings at all.

This seems rather far-fetched, but the following case, taken from one of Miss Dougall's Essays in "*Immortality*," strongly suggests that something of the kind may at any rate occasionally take place :

“ My friend, whom we will call ‘ Miss A,’ received a visit from an acquaintance we will call ‘ Mrs B.’ The mind of Miss A was at the time absorbed by the details of some striking events which had lately occurred in her own circle, but she did not mention these events to Mrs B, who was not an intimate friend, and was not personally concerned in them. In the course of conversation Mrs B said she was on her way to keep an appointment with a visualizing medium. Asked why she made such appointments, she replied that this medium had the power to see as in a vision the most important factors of her life, and in that way to give her wise advice as to how to act in the present and immediate future. Mrs B took her leave, but in a short time unexpectedly called again on her way home, to tell Miss A that her visit to the medium



this time had been disappointing and useless. The medium had had and had described a series of visions, but nothing in them was recognized by Mrs B, and neither she nor the medium could make any sense out of the visions. Out of politeness, Miss A inquired their nature, and was amazed when Mrs B's recital set forth with considerable detail the events which had absorbed her own mind during Mrs B's visit before she went on to the seance. One curious detail was added: the visions had been ushered into the medium's plane of vision by the figure of a Chinaman in fine apparel. Now, the odd thing was, that that very morning Miss A had happened to pass the Chinese Embassy in London, and had seen two gorgeously attired Chinamen coming down the steps, whose dress had greatly pleased her artistic sense. These China-

men, had, of course, nothing to do with the other events over which in those days her mind was brooding."

I must admit that this case is unique in my experience, but its credentials are good, and I think it prevents us from excluding the never-remote possibility that some form of Telepathy may take place between the automatist and some person neither present at the time nor in any way concerned with the enquiry. It was only by chance that the import of the apparently irrelevant and meaningless visions was discovered in this case and it might well be that such cases would be comparatively common if we happened to hit on the person to whom the similarly meaningless matter related.

In order to evade the spiritistic conclusion in the third type of case we have to suppose that telepathic impressions may

remain latent for a very considerable period. But there are many incidents, both in deliberately experimental and in spontaneous cases of Telepathy which suggest that the rising of an impression into consciousness may be deferred for a short time, and it involves only a difference of degree, and not of kind, to suppose that the latency may be of any required duration.

After all, there is no reason to suppose that the conditions which determine the accessibility to consciousness of an impression acquired telepathically differ in any way from those affecting impressions derived through the ordinary channels of the senses, and there is every reason for believing that the latter do remain latent for long periods. (Cp. the case of Miss Goodrich-Freer above, the ability of many persons to remember under hypnosis in-

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cidents of their lives which are inaccessible to them in their normal state and the results of modern Psychoanalytic methods).

There is, moreover, as always, the question of what is or is not *known* (see above), and we ought not to ignore the possibility of what is commonly called "clairvoyance," i.e., the faculty of perceiving events or objects at a distance otherwise than through the ordinary sense-organs.

For these reasons I do not regard even the third class of case as in any way coercive, and should not do so even if instances of it were very much more numerous and better authenticated than they actually are.

On the other hand, I do not think that any degree of "blind" or "automatic" Telepathy will satisfactorily account for the remaining two classes, which are dis-

tinguished by a purposivity and appearance of design which seems to demand for its production an active initiating intelligence of some kind.

It will be necessary to assume a large measure of telepathy here also, but the more important question is whether there may exist some mental stratum or secondary personality of one of the automatists concerned capable of collecting the requisite material and utilizing it in the markedly intelligent manner which is apparent in, for instance, the "Ear of Dionysios" case. To this question our present knowledge, in my opinion, does not admit of a definite answer, for there are various considerations which show that we should exercise great caution in attempting to assign definite superior limits to the capabilities of incarnate human minds.

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In the first place it should be clearly realized that all forms of automatism seem to consist, in the first instance, in the "tapping" of what are commonly known as the "subliminal" strata of the mind. It is not necessary to enter here into a detailed discussion of the precise psychological significance which should be attached to this term, which was introduced by the late F. W. H. Myers to denote all those thoughts, feelings, or psychological processes which take place "below the threshold," or "beyond the marginal fringe," or "outside the focus" of normal consciousness. He says (*Human Personality*, I, xxi) :

"Excitations are termed *subliminal* when they are too weak to rise into direct notice ; and I have extended the application of the term to feeling, thought, or faculty, which is kept thus submerged, not by its own

weakness, but by the constitution of man's personality. The threshold (*Schwelle*) must be regarded as a level above which waves may rise—like a slab washed by the sea—rather than as the entrance into a chamber.”

The powers of this subliminal self are undoubtedly very great indeed, and we can form some idea of their nature and extent by the study of hypnotic and other trance states, of psychopathological derangements, of dreams, and of those automatisms into which there enters no question of intervention *ab extra*.

We thus find that it is exceedingly suggestible ; that it is capable of performing quite elaborate mental processes, such as calculations and the solution of mathematical problems, without the assistance of the supraliminal mind (Myers' *Human Person-*



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*ality*, II, 372-379); that latent memories are more accessible to it than to the normal self (*ibid.* 370-1); that it is sometimes capable of playing a suggested part with a fidelity and histrionic skill beyond the powers of the normal consciousness; that it will resort to the most ingenious and disingenuous shifts and evasions in order to conceal deficiencies in its knowledge or imperfections in its personation; and that it possesses dramatic powers of a high order, as is shown by the processes of dream-formation.

The phenomena of Multiple Personality are also relevant. The best known instances are those of Ansel Bourne (Myers' *Human Personality*, I, 309-17), of Miss Beauchamp (*Proc. S.P.R.*, XV, 466-83), of the Revd. T. C. Hanna (Sidis & Goodhart's *Multiple Personality*), and of the "Doris"



case (*Proc. American S.P.R.*, Vols. IX, X, and XI).

It is true that certain authorities regard these cases of altered personality as being due to "possession" by an invading discarnate entity, but it is doubtful whether any considerable number of competent psycho-pathologists having first-hand knowledge of such cases would support this view.

The case of "Lucie" described by Janet in his *L'Automatisme Psychologique* and summarized by Myers (*o.p. cit.*, I, 326-331) is of especial interest. In this case the patient's hand would write answers to questions and other matter while the attention of the normal or principal consciousness was otherwise engaged.

Speaking of the genesis of this phenomenon, Myers says: "This was the moment at which in many cases a new and separate

invading personality is assumed ; and if Lucie had believed in possession by devils—as so many similarly constituted subjects in old times believed—we can hardly doubt that the energy now writing through her hand would have assumed the style and title of a ‘familiar spirit.’ Or if, again, she had been a modern Spiritualist, it is probable that the signature of some deceased friend would have appeared at the foot of these communications. But here the communicating intelligence was of so obviously *artificial* a kind that it could scarcely venture to pretend to be either a devil or Lucie’s grandmother.”

And again : “ We have here *demonstrably* what we can find in other cases, only *inferentially*—an intelligence manifesting itself continuously by written answers, of purport quite outside the normal subject’s

supraliminal mind, while yet that intelligence was but a part, a fraction, an aspect, of the normal subject's own identity.

“ We must bear this ascertained fact—for it is as near to an ascertained fact as anything in this perplexing inquiry can bring us—steadily in mind while we deal with future cases. And we must remember that Adrienne (the name given to the artificial secondary personality)—while she was, if I may so say, the subliminal self reduced to its simplest expression—did, nevertheless, manifest certain differences from Lucie, which, if slightly exaggerated, might have been very perplexing. Her handwriting was slightly different, though only in the loose and sprawling character so often found in automatic script. Suppose the handwriting had been rather *more* different, and had vaguely resembled that of some

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deceased member of the family. It is easy to understand what inferences might have been based on such a fact. Again, Adrienne remembered certain incidents in Lucie's childhood which Lucie had wholly forgotten. These events occurred at a grandmother's house. Suppose that the sentence recording them had been signed with the *grandmother's* name, instead of with the merely arbitrary name selected for the convenience of a cool observer. Here, too, it is easy to imagine the confidence—in one sense the well-grounded confidence—with which any knowledge on Lucie's own part of those long past events would have been disclaimed."

So far as general features are concerned, it will scarcely be denied that the change involved in passing from a case of this kind to the ordinary forms of automatic writing,

trance-speaking, and other varieties of "mediumship" is only a matter of degree and not of kind. We must accordingly demand something very exceptional in the *content* of the automatic utterances before we admit so wholly different a cause, *qualitatively*, as the activity of discarnate minds. In accordance with the general scientific principle of least assumption, we must assume that the immediate cause of mediumistic automatisms is a somewhat elaborated secondary personality of this kind. We must also suppose that the various other factors of Telepathy, Latent Memory, Subliminal mental activity, and so forth, which were noted above, may also be at work simultaneously in proportions and degrees to which, in our present ignorance, we cannot assign any definite superior limits.

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If we do this, it is clearly a matter of great difficulty even to devise any type of evidence which could be regarded as really coercive.

In fact, the true case against the spiritistic hypothesis is simply that our knowledge of abnormal psychology is not, at present, extensive enough to admit of our assigning definite limits to what can be achieved by the incarnate mind under suitable conditions, and that, until we are in a position to do so with reasonable precision, we cannot possibly say that any particular feat is beyond its powers and therefore necessarily due to the intervention of discarnate intelligences.

It must be admitted that an argument of this nature is somewhat unsatisfactory and that it will not enable us to offer a neat, cut-and-dried explanation of every evi-

dential "case" which we encounter. But it is in this very vagueness and lack of precision that its strength is founded.

## V

In attempting to form some opinion of the nett resultant of these various considerations, it is important to remember that it is not legitimate to speak of "conclusive proof" or "absolute certainty" in any department of human knowledge. Our greatest certainties are no more than assessments of probabilities at a fraction closely approaching unity, and we cannot hope to do more than form a rough estimate of the comparative chances of the spiritistic or non-spiritistic explanations being actually correct.

This estimate will be the product of two fairly distinct factors: one the result of *ad hoc* investigation of the type summarized above, the other arising from our *a priori* views on the subject and determined quantitatively by the amount of straining necessary to fit the conclusions derived from our *ad hoc* study into the context of our general experience.

I am properly concerned here only with the former of these two factors, but, inasmuch as it is difficult to draw a hard-and-fast dividing line between the considerations which determine the two factors, a personal equation is always liable to complicate any attempt to sum up the results of an *ad hoc* inquiry. I therefore feel that it is germane to the discussion to observe that, while I, personally, happen to believe in Immortality on general re-



ligious and philosophic grounds, I find no more difficulty in supposing that it is of a type which does not admit of experimental verification than in supposing the opposite : and conversely. On *a priori* grounds it seems to me to be just about as likely that communication with the living should be precluded by the conditions under which one survives death as that it should be admitted.

As regards the actual evidence, the whole position reminds me strongly of that of astronomical science before the revolution of ideas commonly associated with the name of Copernicus.

The early astronomers, attempting to explain the observed apparent movements of the sun, moon, planets, and stars, hypothesized sundry combinations of concentric, excentric, and epicyclic motions

taking place about the stationary earth. But the more closely the apparent motions were observed, the more complex was the system of excentrics, etc., required to explain them. Finally, the whole system broke down, and was superseded by the far simpler views now held. In a somewhat similar manner we are being forced into admitting more and more complicated concatenations of Telepathy, Subliminal mental activity, Secondary Personality, and the like in order to evade the spiritistic explanation of certain psychical phenomena.

The analogy should not, of course, be pushed to the extent of concluding that there is, simply on account of the analogy, any considerable probability that we shall ultimately be forced to substitute the spiritistic explanation for the action of the alternative causes. These latter will pre-

sumably always give rise to "perturbations," so to speak, even if the former is ever recognized as an actual cause. Meanwhile, I am of the opinion that, taking into consideration all the available evidence, the balance of probabilities is, on the whole, in favour of the spiritistic explanation—not by any means overwhelmingly, but still distinctly so. It is quite possible that as our knowledge of abnormal psychology increases and new and more crucial tests of Survival are devised—and, perhaps, fail—that I shall alter this opinion. But at present the trend of research seems to me to be in this direction. In the competition between the devising of new types of evidence for Survival and new ways of evading their implications—somewhat reminiscent of the struggle between offensive and defensive weapons in the military

world—the exponents of the former process seem to be drawing ahead. This appears to me to be significant; but it is quite possible that the process may be reversed in the future.

The following passage from the pen of Professor William James, with which I largely sympathize, may suitably close this part of the discussion. It is taken from his report on Mrs Piper's "Hodgson Control":

"I myself can perfectly well imagine spirit-agency, and I find my mind vacillating about it curiously. When I take the phenomena piecemeal, the notion that Mrs Piper's subliminal self should keep her sitters apart as expertly as it does, remembering its past dealings with each of them so well, not mixing their communications more, and all the while humbugging them so

profusely, is quite compatible with what we know of the dream-life of hypnotized subjects. Their consciousness, narrowed to one suggested kind of operation, shows remarkable skill in that operation. If we suppose Mrs Piper's dream-life once for all to have had the notion suggested to it that it must personate spirits to sitters, the fair degree of virtuosity it shows need not, I think, surprise us. Nor need the exceptional memory shown surprise us, for memory seems extraordinarily strong in the sub-conscious life. But I find that when I ascend from the details to the whole meaning of the phenomenon, and especially when I connect the Piper case with all the other cases I know of automatic writing and mediumship, and with the whole record of spirit-possession in human history, the notion that such an immense current of

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experience, complex in so many ways, should spell out absolutely nothing but the words 'intentional humbug' appears very unlikely. The notion that so many men and women, in all other respects honest enough, should have this preposterous monkeying self attached to their personality seems to me so weird that the spirit-theory immediately takes on a more probable appearance. The spirits, if spirits there be, must indeed work under incredible complications and falsifications, but at least, if they are present, some honesty is left in a whole department of the universe which otherwise is run by pure deception. . . . .

“ I am able, while still holding to all the lower principles of interpretation, to imagine the process as more complex. . . . .

“ I can imagine the spirit of (Hodgson) talking to me through inconceivable barriers

of obstruction, and forcing recalcitrant or only partly consilient processes in the Medium to express his thoughts, however dimly." (*Proc. S.P.R.* XXIII, 35-6).





## PART II

### THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

#### VI

In the remainder of this paper I propose to discuss the value which should be attached to the descriptive and didactic matter obtained from mediumistic sources. For this purpose I shall make the temporary assumption that some measure of communication may be regarded as experimentally established ; but this assumption does not, of course, imply that my opinion of the evidence is in any way more favourable to the spiritistic explanation than is indicated by the closing paragraphs of the first part of the paper. It is possible to

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treat this didactic matter with comparative brevity, for the value to be attached to it must necessarily be greatly modified by the doubt which exists as to its origin. It is futile to discuss in great detail what is said by the spirits of the deceased until we are sure that it is they who are saying it.

The complications which appear to prevent the accurate transmission of ideas between the two states of being can be roughly divided under various heads.

First, there is the intrinsic nature of the next life itself. Whatever views may be held on general grounds as to the environment in which the newly deceased personality finds itself, it will scarcely be maintained that it is a material environment of precisely the same nature as that to which we are accustomed. It seems unlikely that "matter" as known to us will play any

part in it at all—it is, perhaps, more probable that it will be a purely “ mental ” existence, although it must be admitted that it is difficult to attach any precise meaning to such a phrase.

But whatever its nature may be it is at least possible—indeed probable—that it is something to which our earthly experience affords no parallel. If this is so, it would be practically impossible to find mundane terms or ideas capable of describing it. It is not difficult to show that it is not impossible to convey an entirely *new* concept from one mind to another, even if one has the ordinary processes of speech or writing fully at command. All one can do is to produce new arrangements of existing concepts in varying proportions and degrees ; completely new concepts can be acquired only by immediate personal experience.

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(Consider, for example, the task of trying to convey the idea of *blueness* to a man who has been blind from birth).

It is, consequently, easy to understand how any attempted description of the next life would inevitably take the form of symbolic statements in terms of earthly experience—the only material common to the minds of both parties to the description.

I feel that it is fair to observe that we appear to have an almost perfect example of this in the descriptive matter of the Apocalypse. Few people would care to maintain that these descriptions are to be taken literally, and, if they were to do so, it would be legitimate to apply to them all the accusations of crude materialism which are brought against certain spiritualistic versions of the nature of the next life. Similarly any interpretation of the Apo-

calyptic visions as being "only symbolic" may, I think, reasonably be applied to the descriptive matter of Spiritualism.

The second point which it is important to note is that, whatever else may take place in the process of communication, we certainly are not dealing with a matter of verbatim dictation. There can be practically no doubt whatever that the phenomenon of automatism, whatever form it may take, consists primarily in the "tapping" of the subliminal mind and in the concomitant abrogation of the normal control of the Judgment and of the Will. That is to say, the communications which we actually receive are the responses of the subliminal mind to certain stimuli, and the only question is whether *any* of these stimuli are of discarnate origin. Even if they are so, it seems safe to suppose, both

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on experimental and *a priori* grounds, that they cannot be in the form of the articulated speech or writing to which we are accustomed. If communication between incarnate and discarnate minds can take place at all, it seems likely, since the latter can hardly be supposed to possess physical bodies like our own, that the process will be essentially telepathic in nature. But, as we have already seen, the telepathic process seems to consist in the transmission of ideas as simultaneities and not as successions of stimuli to be synthesized by the recipient. Professor Hyslop, whose discussion of this matter in the last five chapters of his book *Life after Death* is excellent, speaks, in this connection, of the "pictographic process," a term which admirably suggests a presentational mode of transmitting ideas.

It must also be remembered that the intelligence to which ideas are thus transmitted appears to be, not a normal personality equipped with the usual faculties of judgment and discrimination, but a sort of "dream-personality" subject to all the illogicalities and rambling divagations which beset our dreams, and this is probably one of the principal sources of error. Without committing ourselves to the associationist view of psychology, which William James adequately exploded thirty years ago, it may be conceded that there is a tendency for ideas to be associated together in our minds in such a way that the excitation of one will tend to evoke another. The form which such associations of ideas will take is peculiar to every individual, simply because the connection between different ideas in a given mind is the result of the

previous *experience* of that mind—which is necessarily unique. This fact is utilized by psycho-analysts, and it is possible that an adaptation of it may provide Psychical Researchers in the future with a new test for Survival. But for the present purpose it is sufficient to point out that its effect may very well be that a given idea telepathically transmitted to the subliminal mind of an automatist may be emitted, not as the original idea, but as one associated therewith in that subliminal mind. This might especially be the case, I think, with *common* ideas having, by virtue of their commonness, numerous associations in almost every mind.

Moreover, since different people associate ideas in different ways, it is likely that ideas transmitted will be “coloured” by the general content of the automatist’s



mind. A mind which has been brought up in an atmosphere of contrasted brimstone and golden harps will tend to produce descriptions in these terms, while one which has absorbed the commoner insipidities of "Higher Thought," or the peculiar nomenclature of the Theosophists or Rosicrucians, will show a corresponding bias. This liability of the automatist's mind to run in grooves determined by intellectual environment is copiously exemplified in practice. In Roman Catholic countries, for instance, there is a tendency for automatists to be "controlled" by *soi disant* devils; "Allan Kardec," a keen reincarnationist, found that the mediums whom he studied, and who may reasonably be supposed to have absorbed his views to some extent, commonly transmitted messages supporting this theory, and it is easy to recognize Theosophical

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doctrines in the lucubrations of many modern mediums.

It is not difficult to imagine how this kind of thing may result in serious distortion of the message which the communicator, if such there be, intended to convey.

The next important fact to take into consideration is the part played in the process by the intelligence known as the "Control."

The control is a personality—real or fictitious—who generally, if not invariably, appears to act as intermediary between the medium and the actual communicator. It is suggested that he or she is especially skilled in the manipulation of the medium's bodily mechanism and that better results are obtained if the control passes on the ideas which the "communicator" wishes

to convey, and generally acts as amanuensis, than if the latter tries to operate direct. Well-known controls are "Phinuit" and "Rector" in the case of Mrs Piper, and "Feda" in that of Mrs Leonard. Of these the second has probably been studied more closely than any other. The classical work on the subject is Mrs Sidgwick's monumental essay in Vol. XXVIII of the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. Her provisional conclusion is that the control is probably no more than a secondary personality of the medium's own mind, and, although this cannot be regarded as finally settled, it certainly seems the most plausible hypothesis.

But whether controls are, in general, no more than dream-personalities of the automatist, or whether they are the actual discarnate beings which they claim to be, does not affect the fact that they seem to

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be the usual channel for the transmission of messages, and this fact obviously adds another possibility of distortion to those already enumerated. It must be admitted that we do not always find a control taking charge of automatic utterances, but it may very well be that, in cases where no such intelligence intrudes itself on our notice, its absence is due only to a failure on the part of that dissociated fragment of the automatist's mind which is concerned to claim a separate individual existence.

Some students consider that a process of "tandem" control sometimes occurs, in which the communicator passes his thought to control "A," and control "A" passes it on to control "B," who actually manages the automatist's bodily mechanism. (Cp. Hyslop, *op. cit.*, 213 sqq.)

The whole question is a very difficult one,

but the mere mention of the possibilities will suffice to show the complications which may arise in this way.

Another suggestion which has been made by certain authorities is that the communicator may himself be in an abnormal condition corresponding to that of the incarnate automatist. I do not, personally, think that there is much evidence to support this view beyond occasional remarks by ostensible communicators themselves, but it is certainly not unreasonable to suppose that a *reciprocal* rapprochement is necessary in order to bridge the gulf separating the two orders of existence. If this be so (and we cannot exclude such a possibility), a further source of complication would be introduced.

Yet another possibility is described by Hyslop (*cp. cit.*, 201) in the following words :

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“ There is one more difficulty of very considerable importance which seldom or never receives notice. It is the liability to differences of opinion about the spiritual world on the part of its inhabitants. We never think of this, or we ignore it if we do think of it. It is the habit to assume that a message from the spiritual world tells the facts about it, and we forget . . . that it may be nothing more than the communicator's opinion about it.”

There is also much evidence tending to show that the automatist's mental condition is very unstable, and that the condition of equilibrium which admits of a given communicator retaining sole command of the psychic mechanism involved is easily disturbed. When we remember that the whole process of communication, if it takes place at all, appears to consist of a sequence

of telepathic transmissions of thought, we can easily imagine how this might result in the intrusion of the irrelevant thoughts of other discarnate—or perhaps incarnate—personalities in the neighbourhood. If we are talking to a friend in a room full of people who are also talking to each other, we are oblivious of what these latter are saying so long as we keep our attention concentrated on what our own friend is saying; but if we relax this attention for a moment, we instantly become conscious of fragments of other conversations. Something of the same kind often appears to happen in the process of communication which we are considering here, and, even if no alien thoughts intrude, there is the possibility of the automatist's own mind simply "rambling on" until the necessary condition of equilibrium or attention is re-established.

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These brief notes do not profess to be in any sense a complete description of the complications which may reasonably be supposed to attend the process. A detailed discussion of them would be out of place here, and my object is only to show that they are so numerous and obscure that they render the descriptive matter actually obtained quite worthless except as material for study by experienced students.

Anyone who doubts the legitimacy of this conclusion should read Chapters VII, VIII, and IX of Professor Hyslop's *Life after Death* referred to above.



## VII

In view of the very great known, and possibly still greater unknown, sources of distortion, I think it will be agreed that it is mere waste of time to pay serious attention to the charges of crudity, absurdity, and heterodoxy which have been brought by amateur critics against, for example, certain passages in Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond*. The existence of such passages, which are common enough in spiritualistic literature, and the inconsistencies between them, can adequately be accounted for on the lines indicated above, whether we accept or reject the spiritistic explanation of the origin of other—evidential—matter. Those who reject the

latter must perforce ascribe such passages to the uncontrolled activities of the automatist's subliminal mind, and they cannot legitimately deny to their opponents the right to account for them on the same grounds, merely because the latter contend that some small percentage of the matter obtained has its ultimate origin in the minds of discarnate personalities.

It must be admitted, of course, that passages of the kind we are considering have a certain practical importance by virtue of the effect that they may produce on the minds of uninstructed adherents of the spiritualistic cult. This is dealt with below.

I feel that the considerations outlined above are also relevant to the views of those who seek to attribute to diabolic origin all messages purporting to emanate from the

deceased. This is a point of view which I, personally, find it difficult to understand, for it seems to me that it not only prejudices the issue of a very intricate investigation, but also lacks any sort of good evidence to support it. It is true that, as noted above, one sometimes finds "controls" claiming to be evil spirits, but, clearly, the last thing we should do is to take *any* control at his own valuation. In the absence of normal consciousness a secondary personality might just as well play the part of a devil as of a saint, if it happened for any reason to receive an appropriate suggestion. Nor do I consider that the doctrinal content of the communications received is sufficiently subversive of Christian teaching to warrant our ascribing it to deliberately evil sources. In general, the moral tone is unexceptionable, and the unfortunate tendency to

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indulge in vague aphorisms and sententious platitudes is not confined to admonitions derived from these sources.

It must be admitted that heterodox passages are not uncommon, but neither in quantity nor in quality do they exceed what one might legitimately expect to proceed from subliminal origins.

In this connection it is worth while calling attention to certain aspects of the work of Freud, Jung, Pfister, and other psycho-analysts of the Viennese and Zurich schools. These authorities, headed by Freud the pupil of Breuer, have shown good reason for supposing that the origin of hysterical symptoms is to be found in unfulfilled desires and wishes, unexpressed and frequently unknown to the patient. They have further shown that such desires, inhibited—often subconsciously—during

normal waking life, for reasons of ethics or expediency with which they would conflict, find an outlet in the form of dreams. It is supposed that the latter commonly possess a latent and hidden meaning, more or less effectively disguised by the dramatic form in which they are cast, which can be elicited by an experienced interpreter. In its general principles this view seems firmly established, and we need not dispute the proposition that dream-life is likely to reproduce the repressed mental tendencies of the dreamer.

The importance of this for our present purpose lies in the fact that the mental strata tapped in automatism appear to be closely related to, indeed very probably identical with, those responsible for dream-formation. In such circumstances it is not surprising that utterances primarily

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derived from these strata should exhibit heterodox features different from, and sometimes repugnant to, the considered views of the automatist. This is especially likely to be the case where matters of sexual morality are concerned because of the great strength and deep-seated origin of sexual impulses and the rigour with which they are normally repressed in civilized life.

I suggest that the foregoing considerations are sufficient to account for the whole of the religiously obnoxious matter to be found in spiritualistic literature, without introducing any specifically diabolic factor. It may be noted, however, that if communication with deceased persons *does* take place at all, there is no reason to suppose that the process is one reserved only for those of exemplary moral character; it is quite

possible that the most objectionable personalities might on occasion present themselves and attempt to communicate, and, indeed, anyone familiar with the usual run of amateur experiments in automatism will probably have encountered, or heard of, cases in which this has apparently happened. For myself, I wish for no closer approximation to a diabolic entity than the discarnate spirit of a deliberately wicked human being—or even a Secondary Personality derived from the worst elements in the mental make-up of the ordinary man. It may be noted, however, that such unpleasant intelligences are usually easily disposed of, and, in any case, no sensible person will pay any attention to them except as objects of psychological study.

The foregoing will, I hope, be thought adequate to support my contention that

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polemics centering round the descriptive matter of spiritualistic literature are irrelevant—except in so far as they may deal with purely technical points ; and proceed from an imperfect appreciation of the complexities of the subject on the part of those who prosecute them.

In these circumstances it is not necessary to deal exhaustively with the indications of the very small residuum which may reasonably be supposed to remain after due allowance has been made for the difficulties of interpretation and on the continued assumption that the belief in communication may have some foundation in experimental fact. I consider the whole subject to be so obscure that it is at present premature to express any opinion whatever as to the nature of the next life ; but, if I were pressed on the point, I should feel disposed



to say that the evidence, so far as it goes, suggests the following conclusions :

1. A man is the same five minutes after death as he was five minutes before it, except that he has added one more item to his stock of experiences.

2. That the whole content of consciousness is carried forward into his new environment ; that is to say, his memory is unimpaired and substantially continuous.

3. He is not translated instantaneously either to perfect bliss or the reverse, but continues to reap the fruits of his past life by the operation of inexorable casual laws.

4. His state is not static, but one of progression or retrogression, as in the life we know.

5. He is capable of taking an interest in, and—*ex hypothesi*—maintaining some

measure of contact with, the world he has left.

6.    Some kind of serviceable activity is—still more doubtfully—indicated.

I do not think that any of the foregoing points can fairly be said seriously to conflict with orthodox Christian teaching, and, in any event, I am not prepared to defend any of them very vigorously except perhaps on general grounds only remotely connected with Psychical Research.

PART III

CONCLUSIONS

VIII

It now remains only to correlate the conclusions expressed above with modern Spiritualism as it actually exists.

These conclusions may briefly be summarized as follows :

(1) The experimental evidence for Survival and Communication with the deceased is distinctly good, and shows a tendency to become increasingly so. But it is very difficult to set a limit to the potentialities of the incarnate mind, and it would be rash to assess the chance of the "spiritistic"

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hypothesis proving correct at a value appreciably greater than one half.

(2) The difficulties of interpreting the matter obtained from mediumistic sources are so great that, even if the spiritistic hypothesis is correct, the informative value of the messages received is negligible.

Our final opinion of the value of specifically "Spiritualistic" doctrine must be the *product* of these two conclusions; and, if even their approximate correctness be admitted, there can be no doubt that the phenomenal basis of Spiritualism affords no scientific warrant for the erection of the massive religio-philosophical superstructure which certain uncritical enthusiasts seek to build upon it. If Spiritualists were to confine themselves to affirming the experimental verification of Survival, I would be prepared to concede that they were very

likely right. But this would not of itself serve to differentiate them as a separate sect; there are many authorities more experienced than myself and certainly not less critical, who assess the evidence much more highly than I do, but who feel an equal repugnance to "Spiritualism." It is in their acceptance of "Spirit Teachings" as a "New Revelation" that Spiritualists are treading on thoroughly unsafe ground, for the reasons given in the second part of this paper.

Psychical Research is probably the most intricate subject with which the human intellect has ever grappled, and those who have studied it most will most readily admit the difficulty of forming reliable conclusions about it. The average Spiritualist has little or no scientific training, and is totally unacquainted with the technical difficulties

of the subject. Even if we concede that in the very best cases there is reason to suppose that some measure of communication with the deceased is achieved, we cannot possibly extend this conclusion to *all* cases in which a discarnate personality *purports* to communicate. How is the ordinary person to discriminate between the true and the false? Even if so much as five per cent of mediumistic utterances are in some degree inspired by their ostensible authors, how is the ordinary man to know *which* five per cent is so inspired—or to what extent? Cases are by no means uncommon in which the “Spirit” can be proved to have been no more than a subliminal impersonation which, in slightly different circumstances, would indubitably have been accepted at its own valuation.

The ordinary person who is “convinced”

of the truth of Spiritualistic claims is commonly so convinced by the simpler types of first-hand evidence, and these are quite valueless in the light of instructed criticism. Any indication of supernormal powers on the part of a medium is sufficient for most people, who are commonly guilty of the most astounding illogicalities. Such persons will frequently develop automatic faculties in themselves, and I have known cases where people have directed their whole lives by the instructions thus automatically obtained. The crass folly and grave danger of such a course needs no emphasis from me.

I consider, therefore, that it is impossible to deprecate too strongly promiscuous dabbling in psychical matters by uninstructed persons, especially those of strong emotional tendency. It is true that those

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who talk glibly of the thousands of people now in asylums for the mentally deranged on account of their Spiritualistic practices speak foolishly and without knowledge. But even such extreme cases are not unknown, and uncritical excursions into Spiritualism are seldom likely to prove beneficial.

Probably the best thing that can be said for the cult is that it is the antithesis of Materialism. One might add that it is professedly pro-Christian. But, even so, I feel disposed to apply to it the old and scathing criticism : " There is much in this which is new and much that is true ; but what is true is not new and what is new is not true."

But in deprecating Spiritualism it is important to do so on the right grounds. Wholesale denial of the facts merely displays



ignorance of the subject, and it would be equally ill-advised to denounce as religiously heretical views which should more properly be characterized as scientifically unsubstantiated.

The whole matter reduces itself to this, that the subject is one which should be dealt with exclusively by the expert and not by the amateur. If there were no Spiritualists, we, who are trying to study dispassionately the intricate problems concerned, would not have to contend with the mass of ignorant prejudice which the cruder excesses of the former, not unnaturally, excite in the minds of the public, who are commonly incapable of so much as discriminating between scientific research and quasi-religious propaganda.

Spiritualism is, therefore, to be deprecated, not because there is anything

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intrinsically anti-Christian in the facts themselves or in the scientifically legitimate inferences therefrom—which, indeed, are too meagre to provide a basis for hostility ; but because of the scientific immaturity of the whole subject, the great difficulties connected with it, the unfortunate tendency of Spiritualists to indulge in unwarrantable, and sometimes heterodox, extrapolations from the facts, and the ever-present danger that their uninstructed adherents should accept as inspired Revelation matter which is really no more than the product of incarnate subliminal activities.







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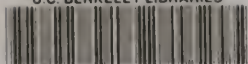
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