

THE FREUDIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

MODERN psychical research aims to prove personal immortality by scientific methods, and while as yet unsuccessful, it has nevertheless adduced some very interesting facts. These have been interpreted by means of the familiar hypothesis of *spiritism*, according to which psychical units can exist independently of bodies, and can communicate with each other by non-physical means. Without denying the possible truth of the spiritistic doctrine, it is the purpose of the present paper to discuss a different interpretation of the facts, one which is suggested by recent psychiatric theory. Because of its definiteness as well as on account of its special relevancy to the situation, we shall make use primarily of the hypothesis of Sigmund Freud¹ with regard to the structure and functioning of the subconscious mind, but it will be obvious that the naturalistic explanation of spiritistic phenomena rests only in part upon the validity of the Freudian theory. The brevity of this article necessitates a very general treatment of the subject, and thus, unfortunately, a neglect of that "individuality of cases," which is so important in nearly all psychological studies.

PSYCHICAL REPRESSION

The key to Freud's psychological theory is his hypothesis of *psychical repression*. Freud's conception of the structure of the individual consciousness resembles that of the psychical researcher, Myers:² the whole of the mind may be compared with a *spectrum*, the elements of which vary progressively in clearness from one end to the other, from the highest level of attention to the lowest regions

¹ Cf. Freud, S. *Über Psychoanalyse*, 1912.

² Myers, F. W. H. "Human Personality," 1903, Vol. I, pp. 17-18.

of the sub- or unconscious. Close to the threshold, the boundary which separates the introspective consciousness from the subliminal region, there are stationed certain elements, or "*Komplexe*," which have the function of guarding the introspective area; these are the so-called "censors," or dominant complexes of the consciousness. All of the images or ideas which can appear before the introspection must first be able to satisfy the censors of their fitness for such "presentation," and such images or ideas as exist in the subconscious but are incapable of passing the censors under ordinary conditions are said to be *repressed*. In general, those images or complexes are repressed which are "incompatible with the ego," ideas which would otherwise tend to take exclusive possession of consciousness and paralyze action. Repressed complexes are usually memories of painful events, with their associates; or kinæsthetic images, with their associates, which if attended to would lead to forbidden lines of conduct.

TYPICAL EFFECTS OF REPRESSION

Common sense assumes that the world of space and of thought or memory is perceived as it actually exists, but if we accept the Freudian theory of repression, we must admit that to a certain extent we see and remember the world *not as it is or was but as we would desire it to be*. We have all a powerful tendency not to perceive, and to fail to recall, incidents and things which are offensive to our own peculiar dispositions. But the censor of consciousness does not have everything his own way; memories and perceptions which cannot obtain admission into the introspective area will nevertheless find a place in subliminal regions, and in this position will not be entirely without effect upon the contents and processes of the introspective field. The mind is a house divided against itself, and very often, for this reason, it comes to disaster. When the guardian complexes relax their hold, as in sleep, the repressed images, more or less disguised in form, take possession of consciousness and constitute the life of dreams. At other times when certain repressed complexes have received a very powerful stimulus, or when through characteristic

processes of their own they have accumulated undue energy, they are able to forcibly break down the guard of the supraliminal region and to take the mind by storm. At such times the individual is said to be subject to hallucinations. Intermediate stages between complete control and the hallucinatory state are characterized by the process of *conversion*, in which the energy of the repressed complex finds an outlet through physiological channels, producing the abnormal motor phenomena of hysteria.¹

GENERAL PERTINENCY OF THE FREUDIAN THEORY TO PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

The general relevancy of the Freudian psychology to the program and results of psychical research may be expressed as follows: The proof of spiritism depends upon the ability of the individual to give a correct, unbiased account of his own experiences. In order to do this he must be acquainted with all of the motives which may possibly influence him in the construction of this account. But the Freudian theory shows that normal individuals are cognizant of only their most superficial motives, and that subconscious mechanisms are constantly at work distorting not only report and memory, but perception itself in the direction of certain preconceived purposes, those which are represented in the characteristic repressions. If you desire to know the motives underlying the life of a given individual, the very last person you should ask is that individual himself.

II. CONTRASTING VIEWS OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

THE SPIRITIST'S NOTION OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

It was to be expected that the doctrine of subconscious action would play an important rôle in the development of the spiritistic hypothesis, since it is in connection with this alleged activity that there occur so many mental phenomena for which common sense seems to require a mystical interpretation. The spiritistic theory of Myers regards the more common processes of subconscious action as dis-

¹ Cf. Freud, S. *Sammlung kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre*, 1912.

tinct links between the introspective consciousness of normal human beings and those of disembodied spirits, and, according to its author, we may hope to employ such manifestations of subconscious forces as dreams, the inspirations of genius, sensory automatism, etc., not only as means of expression for departed personalities, but also in the proof of man's spiritual nature. It is but natural, then, that Myers' attitude toward the subconscious mind should be somewhat idealistic and romantic.

FREUD'S DOCTRINE OF THE IMMORALITY OF THE SUB-CONSCIOUS

How different from this is the Freudian view, in which the subconscious appears to be composed primarily of the moral and æsthetic excreta of the ideal life. The essential forces in subconscious activity are ordinarily those of lust and malicious envy, with all of their most vicious derivatives. This doctrine of "*die Animalität des Unbewussten*" which follows so immediately from the Freudian assumptions — through the repression of natural instincts — throws a light upon subconscious phenomena which is quite different from that cast by the more romantic theory of Myers. On the basis of the Freudian hypothesis we should expect that the most grossly immoral subconsciousnesses would be possessed by those persons who in their supraliminal activities are the most guileless; conscientious clergymen when under the influence of their suppressed complexes should exhibit highly villainous tendencies. On the other hand, rakes and cutthroats, when intoxicated or dreaming, should be pure-minded and gentle. This leads us to suspect all defences of the reliability of spiritistic results which are based upon the asserted impeccability of witnesses. In so far as the results in question are supposed to be dependent upon the subliminal rather than the supraliminal or liminal self, we must conclude that the more impeccable the individual is the more he is to be suspected. We shall return to a more detailed discussion of this matter of the trustworthiness of witnesses to psychical phenomena in the final section of this paper.

THE ANIMAL CLEVERNESS AND KEENNESS OF THE
SUBCONSCIOUS

According to Freud, the repression of primitive instincts cannot be regarded as wholly a matter of individual education; in great part it is the outcome of racial development. All children below four or five years of age possess instinctive tendencies, such as an erotic love of parents of the opposite sex, scatological motives, etc., which are subjected to automatic repression in the normal course of development, and which constitute in after life a source of specific risibilities or of possible perversion.¹ It is in line with this easily demonstrable set of facts to suppose that many of the functional tendencies of our prehuman ancestors have not been *lost* by man, but have merely been *repressed*, this repression occurring, in many cases, prior to the birth of the individual. Now among the faculties of perception and reaction thus confined to the subliminal realm we should expect to find many which when they are released by hypnosis or some other state of dormancy of the upper complexes, such as the hysterical trance characteristic of the typical medium, will give rise to effects suggesting a spiritistic interpretation. When we see a somnambulist walking with an unflinching step along the gutter of a high roof, we may be tempted to say that angels are bearing him up, but the truth probably is that the instincts of the ape are the actually operative forces. We know that if the sleeper is awakened he will be placed in immediate danger of a fall, for his simian agility depends upon subconscious control and will be lost as soon as the inhibitory agencies of the "upper level" come again into play. *The subconscious is not only morally unreliable; it is wonderfully crafty*; it possesses physical sources of perception, and powers of inference and adaptation of an automatic character, which are quite foreign to the introspective mind. We shall point out the significance for mediumistic experiments of two or three such *repressed faculties* in our discussion of clairvoyance and spirit messages. If we accept the Freudian hypothesis with all its implications we must

¹ Cf. Freud, S. Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory (Eng. Trans. by A. A. Brill), 1910.

admit that the faculties of the subconscious mind are more commensurate with those of dumb animals than with the powers and limitations which we ordinarily recognize as human.

THE PERFECTION OF SUBCONSCIOUS MEMORY

There is another very important consideration with reference to the nature of the subconscious, which is distinct from the above, but which is derivable from the same fundamental presuppositions. We refer to Freud's *explanation of forgetfulness*.¹ Modern psychiatric investigation leads us to the conclusion that failure to remember is not due to any weakness of retention as such, but is solely attributable to repression. We would recall with complete accuracy everything which we had ever experienced, if it were not for the fact that almost all of our memories are kept out of the normal consciousness by the structure of the mind. The writer gathers the impression from his relatively superficial acquaintance with the views of psychical researchers that most of these men accept the doctrine of *the perfection of subconscious memory*. But owing to their spiritistic bias they have slurred over the important and far-reaching significance of this principle for the types of phenomena which they are studying. If it is true, as Dr. Morton Prince has given us reason to suppose,² that the intimate details of objects and incidents which have been observed "out of the corner of the eye" can be reproduced in great perfection during the hypnotic or hysterical trance, in which the subconscious complexes are operative, and if, as Freud has shown, our subconscious memory extends back not only as far as the moment of birth, but to experiences of intrauterine life, we must be very careful indeed in our judgment that any given past event or property is not represented by a physically produced record in the mind of a mediumistic person with whom we are experimenting. In the light of the principle of repression we are in duty bound not to accept the affidavit of that person himself in this regard, no matter how honest he may be, for the fact in

¹Freud, S. *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*, 1912.

²In various articles published in this JOURNAL and elsewhere.

question and its subconscious record may never have been in his introspective consciousness at all.

THE MOST PROBABLE TYPES OF PARAMNESIA

In the attempt to explain the results of psychological research upon a naturalistic basis one is tempted to make large use of the concept of *paramnesia*, or false memory. In paramnesia we recall that a certain event has taken place or that a certain idea has previously occurred to us, when as a matter of fact the event or idea in question is a new one. From the point of view of the Freudian psychology it seems that the *memory images* appearing most often in paramnesia should be those which are associated with the most significant or massive of repressed complexes, which represent forms of activity desired but unrealized by certain elements in our personality. Paramnesia would then amount to a "catharsis" of these repressed elements: instead of actually experiencing the desideratum we — or the special complex which is involved — achieve the next best thing, a psychologically complete, but untrue, memory of having experienced it. It is not contrary to the explanation of paramnesia as catharsis to prove that many alleged cases of such false memory center about ideas which are abhorrent to the ordinary introspective consciousness, for all repressed complexes are *ipso facto* thus abhorrent. However, it is always necessary to discriminate between the repression which is primarily due to subjective motives, and that which follows as a consequence of the failure of objective conditions to satisfy appetitive tendencies. A man may dream of the death of his father because of the suppressed jealous hatred of his childhood for his mother's husband, or on the other hand he may dream of the presence before him of a deceased friend, because of a desire which has disappeared from consciousness only on account of its continued disappointment.

FAMILIAR AND UNFAMILIAR IDEAS

In reports of premonitory visions the percipient often notes the fact that previous to the experience his mind had been free from the ideas which the vision concerns.

This is taken as a presumptive point in favor of the supernatural interpretation. But if we suppose these visions to be the expression or release of repressed complexes, the fact that the subject did not anticipate his experience rather strengthens the argument in justification of the naturalistic hypothesis, since it is only when the introspective field is free from certain ideas that these can be said to be repressed.

POINTS OF APPLICATION OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Freud, and psychiatrists in general, suppose the subconscious complexes to be the effective agents in all those types of mental and physiological activity which particularly interest the psychical researcher: dreams, hallucinations, inspirational ideas, automatic writing, the visions of the crystal gazer, the psychic state in hypnotism and hysteria, etc. All of these phenomena are subsumed under the single class of catharses of repressed complexes, or the expression of subconscious tendencies of the mind. This is an important consideration since it indicates the continuity which exists between all of these different states and processes of personality.

III. SOME POSSIBLE NATURAL MEANS OF "TELEPATHY"

THE IMPORTANCE OF TELEPATHY

The notion of telepathy, or "thought transference," has played an important part in modern spiritism. Telepathy is supposed to be the peculiar process by which spirits influence each other, by which the living communicate non-physically with the living, and more especially by which disembodied souls make known their thoughts to the minds of persons still in the flesh. Certain of the experiments of English psychical researchers -- in particular Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick¹ -- have shown that between persons in the same room there is a pronounced telepathic tendency. In the guessing of numbers, lying between ten and ninety, thought of by another person, eleven times as

¹Sidgwick. *Proc. Soc. Psych. Research*, Vol. VI, pp 128-171, 1890.

many successes were made in a rather long series of trials than was to be expected on the basis of pure chance. The question of the means by which this apparent telepathy between the living is accomplished is of cardinal importance for the whole theory of spiritism for the reason that if a naturalistic explanation of this process should be forthcoming it might make logically impossible any further demonstrations of telepathy with the dead, since in any case of supposed communication from departed spirits some living person must exist who shares the memory which is communicated. Otherwise it would be impossible to identify this memory. It is the purpose of this section of our paper to emphasize certain explanatory means of this sort, which have been suggested by others in the customary criticisms of telepathic experiments, but which are given additional probability by the Freudian theory.

THE RELEVANCY OF PSYCHICAL DETERMINISM TO RESEARCHES IN TELEPATHY

Since the program of psychoanalysis defines an attempt to account for human thought and action in terms of the constitution of the subconscious and fore-conscious mind, and in these terms only, it is of necessity *deterministic*; it asserts that absolutely nothing happens in consciousness which has not a cause, and consequently which cannot be adequately explained. We cannot admit that when — as in the experiments upon telepathy which we have mentioned above — the selection of numbers lying between specified limits is demanded of the subject, his choice, if not telepathically determined, is governed by *chance*. A case given by Dr. Ernest Jones of Toronto¹ shows in what manner the seemingly random selection of a number may depend upon the peculiar mental constitution of the individual who selects it, and how the character and basis of this determination may be clearly revealed by psychoanalytical procedure. The method employed by the Freudian school demands a study of the causation of veridical cases of “thought transference” from the point of view

¹ Jones, E. “The Psychopathology of Every-day Life.” *Am. Journ. of Psych.*, Vol. XXII, p. 478, 1911.

of the percipient rather than from that of the agent. The latter method or viewpoint at once suggests telepathy; the former might very well lead us directly to some clearer explanation in ordinary psychophysical terms.

THE MOTOR THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SUB-
CONSCIOUS INTERPRETATION OF MUSCULAR
EXPRESSION

The so-called *agent* in experiments in telepathy endeavors to maintain at the focus of his consciousness the image which he desires to transfer to the percipient. Now if we accept the modern *motor theory of consciousness* we must admit that he cannot do this without calling forth some muscular expression characteristic of the idea which is foremost in his mind, and if this motor activity produces any effect which is physically perceptible to the passive participant in the experiment, the effect in question may become the basis of a pseudo-telepathy, provided it is possible for him to interpret the influence which he feels. Our ordinary means of communication is verbal language; but words are merely auditory symbols for states of mind which were originally represented by "conscious attitudes," and conscious attitudes, as every one knows, are the subjective counterparts of specific muscular conditions of the organism; primitive man *thinks with his muscles*. Gesture language has been designated very appropriately indeed by the word "natural," since it is a type of expression which is both inborn and inevitable. As we have seen in the foregoing section of this paper, the subconscious mind is identified in the Freudian psychology with the primitive animal mind, and this we must suppose to be highly skilled in the interpretation of the unconscious motor expression of thought. The subconscious must be far more acute as a reader of character and mood as these are represented in facial and bodily configurations or changes than is the conscious mind; we probably owe those oftentimes inexplicable feelings of distrust or of confidence which we experience in certain human situations to vague supraliminal reflections of the subconscious interpretation of such muscular expressions. In the realm of the subconscious itself they are

probably far more definite than we feel them to be. As we have explained, these animal capacities have undergone suppression in the course of racial evolution, but they nevertheless continue to exist in the subliminal region of the mind, and can therefore regain their primitive effectiveness whenever, as in hypnosis or various forms of automatism, the inhibiting influences are temporarily removed. Because of the very fact of the repression, this ability to interpret the details of motor attitude seems incomprehensible to the introspective judgment.

DETAILS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE ABOVE POINTS OF VIEW

Experiments in the intentional transmission of ideas between persons not in the same room have thus far proven fruitless. This fact suggests, if it does not enforce, the interpretation of successful trials which is indicated in the above paragraphs. It cannot be justly argued that the interposition of screens, and the like, between the agent and the percipient negatives the interpretation in question, since many of the unconscious movements of the agent can affect his subject through the medium of air vibrations, slight sounds or variations in sound which would be wholly meaningless and perhaps inaudible to the normal attention, but which for the subconscious are rich with significance. Very successful results in this field of investigation can be attributed to the selection of two participants — such as a hypnotist and his customary subjects — who subconsciously understand each other, or who are particularly naive in their attitudes and unconscious expressions. In normal life they need not be especially clever.

IV. PHANTASMS OF THE DEAD

VERIDICAL DREAMS AND HALLUCINATIONS, AND TELEPATHY

In addition to telepathy under experimental conditions one has to consider cases of occasional and perhaps unintentional communication of ideas or perceptions. The most striking instances of this latter type of alleged "thought

transference" appear in hallucinatory experiences which prove to be symbolic of the actual death of the persons whose images are perceived. The investigations of the English Society for Psychological Research¹ seem to prove the existence of a causal relationship between such hallucinations and the physical demise of the individuals whom they represent. Unless we desire to assume the actual presence before the percipient of an extended "spiritual body," it is obviously simplest to explain these experiences by calling into play the principle of telepathy, but telepathy in which the agent is a just-departed spirit.

SOME OF THE COINCIDENCES MAY BE ATTRIBUTED
TO PARAMNESIA

It is perfectly clear that we cannot explain "telepathy" of this sort by any of the mechanisms suggested in the preceding section, and consequently we must resort to other means. One of these which may be applied to certain cases, at least, is that of *paramnesia*. Where no record of the hallucination or dream is made until after the news which it is supposed to have brought has been verified, the possibility is open that the vision never occurred at all, but that the reception of the news of death gave rise to a paramnesic consciousness which resulted in the report of a prior premonitory hallucination. The ground of the causal relationship between the two would thus be made entirely obvious. Now Freud's doctrine of the bestiality of the unconscious justifies the supposition that all of us may subliminally desire the death of intimate relatives or friends. Subconscious desires of this sort will practically always be accounted for by repressed sexual jealousy,² and it is their connection with the sexual complex which is to be regarded as the source of their effectiveness. The discoveries of modern psychiatry make it likely that all boys below a certain age entertain very strong feelings of this nature towards their fathers and brothers, who are rivals for the affection and favors of the mother in the family. Tendencies of an exactly analogous character but with reversal of the sexual

¹ Proc. Soc. Psych. Research, Vol. X.

² Bill, A. A. *Psychoanalysis*, Chap. IX, 1913.

relationships exist in the feminine mind. Similar subconscious attitudes towards rivals in our more mature loves or in business and society are to be expected. Thus we have abundant reason for supposing that there are latent in the minds of nearly all men very persistent and powerful images representing the death of persons with whom they sustain intimate social relationships. If this is true it would appear in the light of our previous discussion that memory errors concerning the presence or absence of such images at specified times are very likely. These errors may be of two sorts: we may remember a dream or hallucinatory perception which as a matter of fact we have not previously experienced, save subconsciously; or, secondly, we may fail to recall presentations of this character which have been frequently conscious, but have not been fulfilled. Both of these disorders of memory militate against the spiritistic interpretation of veridical hallucinations, for negative paramnesia is merely oblivescence, while on the other hand the tendency to forget will apply only to those visions which fail to be verified.

THE SELECTIVE FORGETTING OF DREAMS AND HALLUCINATIONS

This matter of the forgetting of mental events which have been conditioned by the catharsis of repressed complexes is one which is worthy of special notice. It is a general principle that all such experiences tend to pass quickly into oblivion, the more speedily the more they offend the proprieties of the guardians or censors of consciousness, *i. e.*, the more deeply repressed are the complexes which have attained momentary expression. If visions, or pseudo-visions, of the dead are determined, as we have suggested, by the influence of subconscious rivalry complexes, the memories of these visions will tend to be quickly eradicated from the introspectively available data of the mind, for these complexes are normally tabooed. Consequently statements made by percipients to the effect that the visions in question have occurred but a single time during their lives cannot be accepted as reliable evidence. *The theory of repression establishes a very strong presumption*

not only in favor of the appearance of such visions, but also in favor of their rapid oblivescence. We should expect that only the actual realization of the foreshadowed event would permanently establish the memory. It must not be argued from this that *paramnesic* representations ought also to be improbable, because, according to our view, such representations would always be conditioned by the reception of a definite powerful stimulus, such as the physically communicated news of death. The import of this principle of selective (or arrested) forgetting is obvious; the strength of the results thus far obtained by psychical researchers in the study of veridical hallucinations and dreams lies in the fact that on the basis of certain assumptions with regard to the reliability of the collected evidence, these results force us to infer the existence of a causal relationship between actual deaths and the appearance of the visions. Veridical images are seen four hundred and forty times more often than they should be if chance alone were operative (*cf. supra*). But this calculation assumes that the testimony as to the *uniqueness* of the visions is true, and as we have indicated in our preliminary examination of the Freudian theory, the percipient himself cannot be regarded as competent to act as a witness in matters of this sort, except under the criticism of psychoanalytic tests. If, as the concept of repression suggests, it is possible for certain more or less neurotic persons to experience an indefinite number of dreams or hallucinations of the same general nature — say visions of the death of a particular relative — and to forget these experiences almost as soon as they are over, then we can hardly look upon the calculations above referred to as conclusive; the mnemonic fixation of one hallucination in four hundred and forty by its approximate and probable coincidence with an actual similar event would account for the results as readily as the does the hypothesis of telepathy.

DIFFICULTIES WITH THESE EXPLANATIONS

The conversancy of the psychical researcher with individual cases will lead him to deny that the hypothesis of paramnesia is a universally adequate one. It is certainly

an explanation which can be applied to only a fraction of the cases which are cited as evidence for spiritism, but considering the complexity of the phenomena, what reasonable person would dare make the unqualified assertion that all veridical visions are due to exactly the same causes? Another objection which may be raised against the notion of repressed jealousies as a general explanation of "phantasms of the dead" consists in the observation that these visions do not uniformly represent the deceased person as actually dead or injured. But any one who has read Freud's *Traumdeutung*¹ will find in this fact only a confirmation of the point of view which we have taken; the catharsis of such offensive complexes as those of jealous hatred towards relatives and friends can rarely occur without some mollification of the imagery, to conciliate the censors; it is sufficient that the hallucination should *mean* the death of the person represented.

EFFECTS OF THE REPRESSION OF ILL NEWS

We have stated in our introductory remarks that repression may exert a direct influence upon perception, so that objects or events which one would normally recognize pass by unnoticed — unnoticed by the upper consciousness, that is, but recorded with complete accuracy by the subconscious. Let us, as an ideal case, suppose that a young woman, Miss A, is in love with a certain Mr. B, and that they are forced to separate, although Mr. B reciprocates her affection. In parting, the latter tells her that the blow will kill him. The memory of this declaration haunts her for a time, but finally is repressed; she refuses to believe that her sweetheart will die as a result of the separation. Several years after, she is one day confronted with the image of Mr. B, and hears him tell her that he has just passed to the other side, and that if she will look in the evening paper she will find a notice of his death. She does so and verifies the prediction. This seems to be a good case of telepathy between the living and the dead, but if we examine it from the standpoint of the principle of repression we shall see that the psychological explanation is very simple. In the first

¹ Eng. trans. by Brill, A. A. "The Interpretation of Dreams," 1913.

place Miss A had repressed the idea of the death of Mr. B, and consequently possessed a tendency not to think or perceive anything which could suggest that idea. The evening of the hallucination she had picked up the newspaper and had glanced over it hurriedly; she had thus seen the death notice, but had failed to perceive it consciously on account of the repression. However, it was not unperceived by the subconscious complexes with respect to which the repression was established, and it constituted a stimulus to these complexes of so powerful a character that they shortly afterwards broke down the repression, for the time being, and produced the hallucination. This is the recognized mechanism of hallucinations in the Freudian psychology. On account of the fact that the act of picking up the paper and looking it over was associated with the subconscious reception of the bad news, we should expect Miss A to categorically deny having ever seen the paper, when she is questioned on this point; the entire system has been dragged deep into the unconscious. This is, of course, only a sample case. In psychical research, as in psychiatry, each case has peculiarities of its own, and demands individual analysis; it often requires a great deal of insight and imagination to arrive at an understanding of the causes which are active in producing the observed effects. But the general principle which we have here suggested would remain the same in each instance: news of death or dangerous illness is received by the individual who afterwards experiences the veridical vision, without arousing any conscious perception, but on this very account setting into action subconscious forces which culminate in the dream or hallucination. The idea of the death of dear friends is powerfully repressed in the minds of all normal human beings, and for this reason there must exist a very powerful tendency to fail to notice, or to misconstrue all sensory influences which would otherwise bring this idea into consciousness. When we combine this conception with that of the perfection of subconscious memory (*cf. supra*) it becomes a very powerful instrument wherewith to combat the hypothesis of telepathy with the dead.

THE INDIVIDUALITY OF CASES

The psychical researcher will undoubtedly be able to bring forward a number of significant cases to which neither the explanation on previous page nor that of paramnesia can be applied. An ideal case of this sort may be suggested as follows. A woman is dying, and during her last moments she bewails the fact that her best-loved son, who is on the other side of the globe, and is believed by all to be in perfect health and out of physical danger, is also at the point of death. Several trustworthy witnesses are present and hear her lamentations. Some weeks later a letter comes which tells of the actual death of the son at a time which coincides approximately with that of his mother. How will the naturalistic mind deal with this case? Obviously paramnesia is ruled out by the fact that the percipient never receives the physical news of death at all, and the impossibility, under the conditions, of immediate physical communication also makes inapplicable the hypothesis of repressed information. We shall be obliged to assert that the concomitance of the two deaths is due to chance, and the psychical researcher would here in all probability agree with us, but he might not also share in our opinion that the woman's persuasion of her son's death was due simply to wish-fulfillment motivated by the desire to have her son accompany her beyond the grave. As we have already remarked, the processes of the subconscious mind are so intricate that in the study of special cases many different factors must be taken into consideration, and we must not jump to the spiritistic hypothesis until we have exhausted all other probable explanations of a particular event. No one will deny that coincidences occur, and that some cases can be brought forward which suggest the spiritistic interpretation with remarkable cogency, — in which we can see no possibility of a connection between the experience and the physical occurrence which is shadowed forth, except the connection be telepathic. But in such cases we shall do well first to examine by psychoanalytical methods the possible source of the experience in the mind of the percipient himself, and if we find it there the coincidence may

be left to take care of itself. A casual examination of the cases cited in Myers' *Human Personality* leads the writer to believe that after we have eliminated those explicable by paramnesia and repressed information, the number of striking coincidences which remain will not be such as to do injustice to the laws of probability.

VISIONS OF THE DYING

In this connection it may be well to say something concerning the interpretation of the visions experienced by the dying. The psychical researcher finds in these experiences an insight into the nature of life after death. The psychoanalyst, on the other hand, would explain them by the same methods which he applies to dreams and hallucinations: they are the automatic satisfaction of repressed wishes, made possible by the dormancy or decay of the customarily dominant complexes. It is to be expected that dying persons will have visions of dear friends who have passed on before them, for the reason that these are the persons whom they have long wished to see in vain. No one acquainted with the Freudian theory of dreams can read the accounts which are given of mystical death-bed experiences without perceiving in them the same predominance of primitive sexual symbolism which is characteristic not only of normal dreams but also of that religious mythology which is so intimately related with the whole problem of birth and death.

V. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MEDIUM AND HER CLIENTS

THE THEORY OF THE MEDIUM

The focus of interest in psychical research seems to be upon the so-called mediumistic phenomena: trance, motor automatism and the like. Under the right conditions, it is supposed, spirits of the dead are able to take partial possession of the physical faculties of certain persons who are more than ordinarily prone to those conditions of mind and body which are indicative of subconscious control. It is a part of the spiritistic, as well as of the psychological, theory of the medium that her activities, both normal and super-normal, are immediately conditioned by subconscious

processes: spirits, if actually effective, operate *via* the medium's subliminal mind. The phenomena characteristic of the hypnotic state, of the hysterical trance, etc., in connection with which the occurrence of "spirit communication" is most frequently alleged, are those which Freud and all other modern psychiatrists regard as expressions of the subconscious disposition of the individual, and it thus appears that we can apply to the mysteries of the *séance* all of those explanatory conceptions which we have already derived from the Freudian hypothesis of repression.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PERFECTION OF SUBCONSCIOUS MEMORY

One of the most important of these conceptions is, of course, that of the perfection of subconscious memory. The medium in her trance purports to make use of the memory records of departed spirits, and in order to prove that she actually does do this the psychical researcher must show that she herself does not possess similar memories. But when it is admitted that everything which the medium has ever experienced, whether consciously or unconsciously, has left in her subconscious mind a permanent and accurate record which is available in its completeness to the personality of the trance, one perceives that to do this is not an easy matter. Even a person who had been constantly with her throughout her entire life would not be fitted to say what she knew and what she did not know, since the conscious memory, at least, of this second person would be very far from complete or perfect.

THE QUESTION AS TO THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF MEDIUMS

A large number of professional mediums have been proven to be thorough-going swindlers. But there are others with whom most of the work of the psychical researchers has been done, who are unquestionably honest, so far as their normal life is concerned. But in the light of Freud's doctrine of the immorality of the subconscious it is seen that this assurance is of small value, for it is with the subliminal and not with the supraliminal factor in the personality of the medium that the psychical researcher has to deal. When we accuse a medium of making use of

her own memories in the simulation of spirit control we do not say anything which is disparaging to her character, for character is a matter of repressions, and the best, most virtuous, of persons are those who have repressed the greatest number of reprehensible tendencies, and who, consequently, are subconsciously maximally immoral and untrustworthy. In the case of such neurotics as are employed as mediums the activity of the subconscious factors may extend outside of the trance, so that the medium leads a more or less double life, in which, while consciously and seemingly honest, she may nevertheless practise all manner of sly tricks. Even in the person who is wholly unsuspected of neurotic taint tendencies of this sort can be observed.

THE CRAFTINESS OF THE TRANCE PERSONALITY

What has been said in our discussion of telepathy concerning the craftiness of the hypnotized subject applies with redoubled force to the medium in "spirit communication," for here we have to deal with a subconsciousness which is, so to speak, professional in its training. The physical manifestations which occur in the darkened room in the presence of a "psychic," and which are so baffling to those who attempt to discover the means by which they are accomplished, become less inexplicable when we look upon the trance personality as a being endowed with animal cleverness and acuteness in the manipulation of its instruments and in the detection of attempts at interference and exposure. The subconscious cannot become "rattled" or confused, for its adaptations are automatic. Manifestations of apparent clairvoyance or of spirit control may often be accounted for upon the same basis, as we have endeavored to show in our preliminary discussion of telepathic experiments.

UNCONSCIOUS CONFEDERACY ON THE PART OF THE RESEARCHER

Considerations of the above-illustrated variety lead us to realize the possibility of an extensive unconscious collusion between the medium and her clients, the underlying purpose of which is the self-deception of the latter. Many of the psychical researchers undoubtedly nourish a very power-

ful appetite for results favorable to the spiritistic hypothesis. In the field of experimentation scientific honor would necessitate the repression of this complex, and in its repressed condition it would become a subconscious motive which could hardly fail to exert some effect upon the intercourse between the investigator and the medium. Moreover, even obvious outbreaks of this tendency would be neglected by the researcher himself on account of the established repression; even if he noticed at the time that he had revealed something to the medium, he would tend straightway to forget it.

POSSIBLE OPERATION OF THE OLFACTORY FUNCTION IN SEANCES

If we look upon the subconscious mind as a survival of the primitive animal consciousness in which most of the animal functions remain intact (*cf. supra*) we should expect to find that the sensitivity of persons in a condition of trance to *odors* will be very keen. Every one knows how prominent a part the olfactory function plays in animal life, and what fine discrimination the animal exhibits with reference to peculiarities of odor. The peculiar vividness with which characteristic odors bring back to the mind associated impressions is evidence, on the Freudian basis, of the subconscious existence of a rather massive olfactory complex which is normally out of work. But if we suppose that a person in the state of trance finds this primitive function available, we shall not deem it a mystery when such a person, although effectively blindfolded, gives the name of whoever is placed before him, or proceeds to describe the personal appearance and family connections of the latter, provided, of course, that the two have met at some previous time.

THE VISUAL FUNCTION AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS

There is also some probability that the distribution of *visual* impressions with respect to the subconscious mind differs somewhat radically from that normal to the supra-liminal region. In normal psychology there exists a constant parallelism, if not a coincidence, between the center of vision and the focus of consciousness; objects seen by means of the periphery of the retina are unclear. But

since in the lower mammals the optical fovea is rudimentary or absent, and since it seems likely that the concentration of the visual function in a very small area of the retina is conditioned in the apes and man by the development of intellectual tendencies, we may feel justified in arguing that the subconscious mind can see much more clearly with the peripheral regions of the retina than can the conscious. This conclusion, which is a direct consequence of Freud's doctrine of repression (biologically considered), is of great importance for the naturalistic explanation of certain of the phenomena observed in mediumistic and telepathic experiments. Since the retinal "rods" are more primitive in their function than are the "cones," we should expect the subconscious to possess a twilight vision more acute than that of the upper level, the "rods" being, as is well known, the organs of "night vision." This aids us in understanding the physical basis of that cleverness of manipulation of instruments in darkened rooms which we must suppose to be characteristic of such mediums as (say) Eusapia Palladino.

THE DOUBLE DETERMINATION OF COINCIDENCES

A deterministic theory of mental life, such as that of Freud, makes it necessary to assert that everything which an individual thinks, says and does, possesses a definite mental cause. As Professor E. B. Holt puts it, each person's activity can be represented as a "constant function" of his environment; if we knew his individual make-up, and the stimuli which he was receiving at any given time, we could predict his reactions with complete accuracy. This possibility of the scientific prediction of thought and behavior has a very direct bearing upon phenomena of apparent clairvoyance. If it is theoretically possible to forecast personal events by a perfectly normal process of reasoning or inference, it is conceivable that the subconscious mind of the medium can operate upon the same basis and thus generate descriptions of scenes and experiences of which the medium has had no direct knowledge, but the probability of the connection of which with certain persons, can be argued from what she (subconsciously) knows of their individual constitutions. For example, suppose that the clairvoyant is told of the death of a certain man with whom

she has previously had a number of sittings. She immediately describes in some detail the remarks which were made by this man upon his death-bed, in the absence of any possibility of having received a report of these sayings, and her description turns out to be substantially correct. Shall we say that she has made use of supernormal sources of information? Not of necessity, since the words uttered by the dying person cannot be supposed to lack a definite cause, a cause which we should expect to find in the constitution of his subconscious mind. But if we admit what has been set forth above concerning the keenness of perception and inference, and the perfectness of memory of the trance personality, we have reason for believing that the medium will know a great deal about the individual make-up of her former client, and that on the basis of this knowledge she will be able to "guess," with considerable probability of success, the remarks he will make upon his death-bed. The ordinary student of human behavior is influenced by the tacit assumption that many mental occurrences are accidental or without definite causes, but from the psychoanalytical standpoint we must insist that this is never a valid assumption, and that every act and thought, however trivial or seemingly indeterminate, possesses a discoverable mental precondition. In studying premonitory visions or other conscious warnings of future events which are fulfilled, we must always bear carefully in mind two possibilities: first, that the experience in question is an effect of the same cause which finally produces the prophesied occurrence, and second, that the experience is itself the cause of the occurrence. When the event which is foreshadowed is an undesirable one, the idea of its actual happening will tend to be suppressed, and in the repressed condition it will constitute a subconscious motive which may lead the individual quite against his will to fulfill the prophecy. It is even conceivable that in bringing this fulfillment to pass there should be active a subconscious desire that premonitory experiences in general be not falsified by after-events: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets . . ."

HAZINESS AND INCONSTANCY IN SPIRIT COMMUNICATION

The naturalistic interpretation of mediumistic experiments does not have to be reconciled with continuous and clear-cut manifestations; most of the supposed spirit messages are hazy in meaning, and the definitely verifiable ideas, when they do occur, seem to have been selected more or less at random from the stock of memories which we attribute to the communicating personality. Thus we are not required to explain a continued and accurate coincidence of ideas, but merely to account for sporadic and ordinarily rather vague coincidences. These may be supposed to correspond with chance information picked up by the medium from time to time. If such chance information is actually the basis of her communications we should expect the latter to be discontinuous and rambling and hence we shall not have to explain this admitted feature of "spirit messages" by assigning it to the difficulties experienced by the "control."

THE USE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

One way in which the defendants of spiritism may hope to nonplus their opponents may be found in the adoption by them of the procedure of *psychoanalysis*. In this method of the Freudian school we are at last provided with an instrument wherewith we can penetrate the innermost recesses of the mind and search out the causes of individual thought and behavior. The application of psychoanalysis to all supposed cases of telepathy, clairvoyance, and the like, would often serve to settle without dispute the question as to their supernormal causation. Of particular importance in this regard is the detection of sexual factors; the writer deems it probable that a careful examination of the cases of veridical hallucinations already reported by the British and American Societies would reveal the presence and determining activity of such factors. But perhaps it is too much to expect that the English mind will ever recover from its obsession by Mrs. Grundy. If we accept even half of the discoveries of the Freudian school we shall be forced to the conclusion that it is quite hopeless to expect any light upon these problems of abnormal psychology apart from a careful consideration and analysis of their sexual implications.