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A Study of the Psychological Aspects  
of Mrs Willett's Mediumship,  
and of the Statement  
of the Communicators Concerning Process

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A STUDY OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF  
MRS. WILLETT'S MEDIUMSHIP, AND OF THE  
STATEMENTS OF THE COMMUNICATORS CON-  
CERNING PROCESS.

BY GERALD WILLIAM EARL OF BALFOUR, P.C., LL.D.

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

THE lady whose identity is concealed beneath the name of Mrs Willett is already known to readers of the Society's *Proceedings* as an automatist with remarkable powers. I need only refer here to the important papers by Sir Oliver Lodge and Mrs Verrall in volume xxv. of the *Proceedings* on Mrs Willett's "Lethe Scripts", and to two papers of my own in volumes xxvii. and xxix. respectively entitled, "Some Recent Scripts affording Evidence of Personal Survival", and "The Ear of Dionysius". The bulk of Mrs Willett's automatic output is too private for publication. The four papers above mentioned relate, however, to matters in the nature of episodes, separable from the main themes of the scripts. To a very considerable extent this also applies to the subject of the present paper, though there must still remain withheld from publicity a good many passages which I would willingly have quoted by way of illustration had it been open to me to do so.

The materials for the account here presented of the psychological aspects of Mrs Willett's mediumship have been derived from three different sources of information. These are :

(1) Observation of the phenomena *ab extra* by the small group of investigators, especially by those of them who have had frequent sittings with the automatist.

(2) Mrs Willett's own statements concerning the nature of her experiences in the exercise of her faculty, whether such statements were made during the actual course of automatic

production, or volunteered at other times when there could be no doubt about her being in an absolutely normal condition.

(3) Dogmatic statements, for which the scripts alone are responsible, respecting methods and processes of communication.

It is upon the first and second of these sources of information that I shall mainly, though not exclusively, rely in Part I. of the present paper. The third will occupy our attention later.

The material here collected is not put forward either to prove the possession of supernormal powers by Mrs Willett or as evidence of survival and of spirit communication. The possession of supernormal powers I take for granted, nor do I think anyone will care to dispute it who has read the papers relating to her scripts that have been already published in our *Proceedings*. Survival and the possibility and reality of spirit communication are far more debatable questions. My personal belief, arrived at after much study and reflection, leans strongly in favour of an affirmative answer, and I have argued in this sense in both the above-mentioned contributions to *Proceedings*. But I wish to make it clear from the outset that to establish the reality of such communication is not the object of the present paper. All I ask is that its possibility should for the time being be treated as an open question.

It may be charged against me that in the pages which follow the language used is not always consistent with leaving the question open. No doubt for purposes of exposition—and the bulk of what I have to say will be descriptive and expository—it is difficult to avoid adopting the dramatic standpoint of scripts themselves, and speaking of the communicators as if they really were the departed spirits they profess to be. So far as the narrative is concerned, it would be impossible in any other way to present a faithful picture of the observed and recorded facts. If elsewhere the language employed seems sometimes to prejudge the issue and unduly to favour the spiritistic interpretation, I can only say that this was not done with intention. Convenience and simplicity of expression must be my excuse, and I must leave it to the reader to supply whatever qualifications and reservations he may deem to be necessary.

It must be remembered that I am not undertaking to produce

a treatise on mediumship in general, but only a study of the psychological aspects of mediumship as exemplified in one particular case. It would be impossible to do justice to the argument in favour of spirit communication on the basis of the Willett phenomena without violating confidences which I am bound to respect. That is one consideration that weighs with me in leaving this controversy on one side so far as may be practicable, but it is not the only one. It seems to me that an inquiry into the evidence for spirit communication must of necessity carry one beyond the province of psychology proper ; and further I hold the view that our ideas concerning " process " and the *modus operandi* of communication need not be seriously modified howsoever the controversy be decided. What I mean by this will be made clearer presently.

From the psychological standpoint it is now very generally admitted that some sort of mental cleavage exists even in the normal individual. In the phenomena of mediumship this cleavage becomes pronounced. " Supraliminal " and " subliminal ", the conscious and the subconscious self, are terms which have now passed into ordinary usage. They are generally conceived of as being different levels, or *strata*, or phases, of one and the same personality. I do not think such descriptions carry us very far. What these different elements of personality really are, either in themselves or in their relation to each other, remains a problem as obscure as it is deeply interesting. The study of mediumistic phenomena is no less important for the elucidation of the problem than is the study of dreams, hypnosis, hysteria, hallucination, and multiple personality.

The type of mediumship which has attracted most attention is that of which Mrs Piper is the most conspicuous example. The medium lapses into a state of unconsciousness in which all sense of her own personality is apparently lost, and her conscious self is replaced by what claims to be an invading personality from the world of spirit. Mrs Willett is perhaps the most remarkable instance on record of a different type, which, although it has been on the whole less studied, seems to me to be of at least equal or even greater interest. The characteristic feature in her case is that, unlike Mrs Piper, the automatist retains a consciousness of self during the whole process of automatic production. Orthodox psychology may dismiss her

alleged "communications" as merely subjective in the sense that all the factors producing them are to be found within the personality of the medium. To dismiss them as subjective in any other sense than this is to leave altogether unexplained the kind of objectivity that belongs to them by virtue of their appearing *to the medium as communications*—i.e. as having their origin in something not herself. Any hypothesis that provides an adequate explanation of the sense of objectivity that accompanies these communications must, I think, go at least so far as to ascribe them to the activity of some intelligence sufficiently dissociated from the self that receives them to produce in that self the impression that an alien agency is at work, even though the two "selves" may normally be united to form a single personality.

I believe that interaction between dissociated selves belonging to the same bodily organism does, in fact, go a considerable way towards explaining the phenomena of Mrs Willett's mediumship. In some cases it may be the whole explanation. Observe, however, that it does not exclude, but is quite compatible with, the rival explanation which regards the communicators as distinct individual minds,<sup>1</sup> wholly independent of the medium and unconnected with her bodily organism, but interacting with her mind telepathically.

My own view is that there is truth in both explanations,—that communications may be received in some cases from a dissociated self, in other cases from an external agent, in others, again, from both agencies acting in co-operation.

The distinction between independent minds and temporarily dissociated intelligences or "selves" must, of course, be of great importance from many points of view, and of vast and vital importance if the independent minds are held to be dis-

<sup>1</sup> The expression "distinct individual minds" covers both incarnate and discarnate minds. But so far as Mrs Willett's automatic productions are concerned it is to all intents and purposes the discarnate that I have here in view. Instances in which it is reasonable to conjecture that her scripts owe anything to information supernormally imparted by or acquired from either the sitter or any other incarnate mind are in my opinion so rare as to be practically negligible. I believe, however, that they do occasionally occur; and the possibility should never be lost sight of. The existence of telepathic communication between Mrs Willett and Miss Alice Johnson is the subject of the trance-script of May 11, 1912, parts of which are quoted on p. 162 below.

incarnate spirits. But must distinctions which hold good between different classes of communicators necessarily imply corresponding differences in the *modus operandi* of communication ?

Let A and B be dissociated selves connected with the same physical organism, and let C be an independent mind, whether incarnate or discarnate. If A or B receive a message from C otherwise than through the recognised channels of sense we call the communication telepathic. If A receive a communication from B otherwise than through the recognised channels of sense which appears to A to come from a source other than himself, by what process is the communication conveyed ? I do not think Myers ever sufficiently faced this question. My answer would be that here also the process is telepathic ; and that if telepathy be, as I believe it to be, a direct interaction of mind with mind, it matters little *quâ* process, whether the communicator be an independent external mind or a dissociated self of the medium. It is this conception of " process " that constitutes my justification for suggesting that, as regards the psychological aspects of mediumistic phenomena, at all events in Mrs Willett's case,<sup>1</sup> the question of the reality of spirit communication may, without detriment to the inquiry, be left an open one.

In my Presidential Address to the S.P.R. for the year 1906<sup>2</sup> I put forward the idea that the human individual is an ordered association of psychic units, or centres of consciousness, telepathically interconnected. I cannot pretend that the idea has met with any general acceptance. It has, however, received the powerful support of Professor William McDougall, who adopted it in his Presidential Address to the Society for the year 1920,<sup>3</sup> and has once more emphatically maintained it in his *Outline of Abnormal Psychology*.<sup>4</sup> I still look upon it as a

<sup>1</sup> The case of Mrs Piper and other mediums of a similar type raises considerations of a somewhat different order, although here also I see no reason to suppose that there is any essential distinction, so far as process is concerned, between " possession " of the organism by an invading spirit—if such a thing can really take place—and " possession " by a dissociated self ; or that in either case the *modus operandi* is different from that of the familiar but wholly mysterious control exercised over the organism by the normal self.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proceedings*, vol. xix ; also an article which I contributed to the *Hibbert Journal* of April, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> See *Proceedings* of the S.P.R., vol. xxxi.

<sup>4</sup> *An Outline of Abnormal Psychology*, by William McDougall, F.R.S. (1926).

simplifying and unifying hypothesis which may help to explain much that is mysterious and perplexing in the region of Psychological Research. To what extent it is either confirmed or invalidated by the account of Mrs Willett's mediumship given in the following pages it will be for the reader to judge.

For the rest the Willett scripts will be found to provide a fuller and more ambitious attempt to explain the *modus operandi* of communication in her own case than any automatic productions with which I am acquainted. Whatever view we take of the "communicators", and whatever value we may attach to their statements, I shall be disappointed if students of the subject fail to find in some part of the matter now for the first time submitted to them much that is both illuminating and suggestive.

In concluding these introductory remarks, let me say that I make no attempt in what follows to approach the subject of my paper from any other than the purely mental standpoint. For this I offer no apology. I do not contend that the interaction of mind and body has no bearing upon the questions to be discussed. But the phenomena with which I am specially concerned relate not to the interaction of mind with body, but to that of mind with mind, and I do not believe that much light is likely to be thrown upon them by attempts to correlate thought with brain function. The doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism I am unable to accept in any form.



## CHAPTER I

### STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

IN her early girlhood Mrs. Willett discovered that she possessed the power of automatic writing, but, having no one to guide or advise her, she soon gave up the practice of it. In the second half of 1908 circumstances into which I need not enter led to a renewal of her interest in the subject. A correspondence with Mrs Verrall ensued, and in August and September of that year she read the then recently published Report by Miss Johnson on Mrs Holland's script, and felt an impulse to try for script herself. Of her first essays she gives an interesting account in a letter to Mrs Verrall dated October 8, 1908 :

After a few feeble attempts [she writes] the script seemed to come very rapidly, but it is *too definite*, and therefore I distrust its being from an external source. There are, however, one or two curious points in it (I have torn it all up). What worried me was the words seemed to form in my brain before the pen set them down, just before, as if tripping on the written word—a sort of hair's-breadth beforeness.<sup>1</sup> Most are signed Myers or F. W. H. M., but I can't say I think them of value. . . .

The first *recorded* script dates from October 9, and from that time records were regularly kept. We may therefore say that in the case of Mrs Willett, as in that of Mrs Verrall, Mrs "Holland", Mrs Salter, Mrs Wilson and Mrs "King" (Dame Edith Lyttelton), we have a practically complete history of her mediumship from its inception onwards. The history of Mrs Willett's automatic activities has, however, a peculiar interest arising from the fact that it exhibits a marked course of development not found, or at least not found in equal degree, in the scripts of the other five I have mentioned. The different stages of this development I will now try to describe.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the experience of a friend of Henry Sidgwick, recorded in *Human Personality*, vol. ii., p. 123.

During the first stage the communications reach the automatist when she is alone, and in a condition normal or hardly to be distinguished from the normal. They take the form of automatic script in a hand different from Mrs Willett's ordinary hand-writing.<sup>1</sup> But it does not appear that the act of writing is fully automatic in the sense that the hand seems to be moved for her by some external influence and without her co-operation—though something of the kind did apparently occur on one unique occasion (see pp. 123-4 below). According to her own account the words seem to form in her brain "a hair's-breadth" before she sets them down; but this does not mean that her mind anticipates the sense of what is coming, but only each individual word as it comes. As to her recollection, when the script is finished, of what she has written, it is not easy to form any precise estimate, and probably the extent of it varies considerably. I have no doubt, however, that she remembers much more than Mrs Verrall was able to do of her own script (see p. 68 below).

The second stage begins early in January 1909.—Mrs Willett had been anxious about her son's health.

I was at dinner, she records, when I felt strong impression of F. W. H. M. scolding me. I can't explain—but I felt disapprobation and felt it coming from him, and that he was wishing me to know that there was no need for any anxiety. I had the impression that he was conveying to me that if I doubted the impression I was receiving I was to try for script after dinner. I was quite *normal*. I was silent, I suppose, for a few minutes, but I continued my dinner and later—8.40—did try for script, when the following came :

"Myers yes write now no cause for any anxiety none yes let him go back to school no anxiety."

In this incident we have the first attempt to convey a message otherwise than by automatic writing. A more deliberate attempt followed a few weeks later :

*Jan. 29, 1909 (Script).*

... Gurney ... I am always keeping in closest touch with

<sup>1</sup> For the characteristics of Mrs W.'s "scriptic" hand, see pp. 74-78 below.

you try for a minute in your own hand to set down thoughts only<sup>1</sup>

(*In my own writing*) try and set down thoughts can't you hear me speak it saves trouble I want to say something Gurney yes

(*Here I left off writing and held a sort of imaginary conversation with E. G. . . . I was perfectly normal.*)

A fortnight later Myers<sup>2</sup> writes (Feb. 14, 1909) :

. . . I am trying experiments with you to make you hear without writing therefore as it is I Myers who do this deliberately do not fear or wince when words enter your consciousness or subsequently when such words are in the script. On the contrary it will be the success of my purpose if you recognise in yr. script phrases you have found in your consciousness. I know this must be for a while disconcerting and be filled with the fear of that eternal S.S. [*subliminal self*] which I hope we have succeeded in dethroning to some extent. Therefore be agreeing to be disconcerted and do not analyse whence these impressions which I shall in future refer to as Daylight Impressions,—come from, they are parts of a psychic education framed by me for you. . . .

Mentally received communications of this kind, that are consciously apprehended, and either noted down at the time or subsequently remembered and recorded, I shall describe as *Silent D.I.s* (*D.I.* being the abbreviation habitually used by the communicators for *Daylight Impression*), in order to distinguish them from *Spoken D.I.s*, in which the messages as they come are repeated aloud by the automatist in the presence of a sitter. Some confusion has arisen from the use of the term *D.I.* to describe both silent *D.I.s* and spoken *D.I.s*. The silent *D.I.* doubtless served to prepare the way for the spoken *D.I.*, but

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this the First Holland Report, *Proc.*, vol. xxi., pp. 186, 232, which Mrs Willett had seen.

Mrs King habitually records in this way when she is not dictating to a sitter.

<sup>2</sup> I give to the communicators the names they claim, and have not thought it necessary to add the cautionary suffixes and describe them as Myers<sub>w</sub>, Gurney<sub>w</sub>, and so on. The reader will understand that I am not thereby assuming the rightfulness of the claim.

the spoken D.I. belongs, as we shall see, to a later stage of development.

The term silent D.I. might be used to cover every kind of impression presumably telepathic but not contemporaneously externalised either in automatic writing or in automatic speech. In practice, however, I shall confine it to definitely worded messages, or at least to cases where such messages form part of the experience. Impressions of a vaguer character, of which there are many varieties ranging from the sense of a "presence" down to a mere unexplained impulse to action of some kind, are not included under this heading.

Mrs Willett's own account of her experience in two instances makes clear the nature of the phenomenon :

(*Extract from a letter to Mrs Verrall dated February 18, 1909*)

Last night . . . I was sitting idly wondering at it all . . . when I became aware so suddenly and strangely of F. W. H. M.'s presence that I said "Oh!" as if I had run into someone unexpectedly. During what followed I was absolutely normal. I heard nothing with my ears, but the words came from outside into my mind as they do when one is reading a book to oneself. I do not remember exact words, but the first sentence was "Can you hear what I am saying?"—I replied in my mind "Yes".

Again in a letter received by Mrs Verrall on September 27, 1909, with reference to a previous silent D.I. Mrs Willett writes :

I got no impression of *appearance*, only character, and in some way voice or pronunciation (though this doesn't mean that my ears hear, you know!). That is always so in D.I. [*i.e.* in silent D.I.]. I don't feel a sense of "seeing", but an intense sense of personality, like a blind person perhaps might have—and of inflections, such as amusement or emotion on the part of the speaker. If you asked me *how* I know when E. G. is speaking and not F. W. H. M., I can't exactly define, except that to me it would be impossible to be in doubt one instant—and with E. G. I often know he is there a second or two before he speaks. . . . I then sometimes speak first. . . . To me, by now, there isn't anything strange in D.I.s except when I try to explain anything about them; then I realise suddenly they are unusual! But otherwise it gives me no more sense of odd-

ness to be talking to these invisible people than it does to be talking to my son for instance. But I don't think I mentally visualise any sort of "appearance" with regard to them—it is as "minds" and "characters" that they are to me, and yet *not at all* intangible or not-solid realities. . . .

It should be noted that these early methods of communication, namely by means of lone scripts or silent D.I.s, have never fallen into disuse. The further development which we have to trace consists in the addition of other and supplementary methods.

The next new departure dates from the time when Mrs Willett, at the special request of the communicators, consented to "sit" with another person present—in the first instance with Mrs Verrall, and a little later with Sir Oliver Lodge. At these sittings both script and D.I.s were produced, but from the nature of the case spoken D.I.s took the place of silent D.I.s, the automatist repeating the message out loud and the sitter either taking notes or recording *verbatim*. As a rule a short introductory script preceded speech, but this rule was not observed on the occasion of the first "sitter-sitting" and has been departed from once or twice since. During the period of which I am now speaking script written in the presence of a sitter and not followed by a D.I. was also rare, though at a later time it became fairly common.

Throughout the remainder of this paper the term "D.I." unaccompanied by an adjective is to be taken as meaning *spoken* D.I. Where silent D.I. is meant it will always be expressly so described. The use of the term "script" to apply both to "lone script" and to script produced in the presence of a sitter is not likely to give rise to confusion. But I must bespeak the indulgence of my readers if I often employ the convenient phrase "the scripts" to cover the whole automatic output, and not merely that part of it which takes the form of writing.

Even more important than the introduction of a sitter, and closely connected with it, was a gradually increasing tendency on the part of the sensitive to pass into a condition of "daze" or partial unconsciousness.<sup>1</sup> She had sometimes experienced

<sup>1</sup> The communicators claim to have power to induce varying degrees of daze in the automatist.

a feeling of daze even when alone and had, with an effort, pulled herself together in order to avoid "going off." Failure to retain normal consciousness would probably make the continuance even of script impossible for any length of time, unless someone were there to look after the supply and disposition of writing materials. For the recording of a spoken D.I. the presence of a sitter is obviously indispensable. I do not suppose that Mrs Willett sitting entirely alone could ever have become a trance-medium. This consideration was, I believe, the motive of the communicators in urging her to agree to sittings with an "experimenter in charge". At all events, whatever the influences which led to the new departure, they certainly did not have their source in Mrs Willett's normal inclinations. She was far from welcoming the experiment of sitting even with a friend like Mrs Verrall, still less with Sir Oliver Lodge, whom she met for the first time on May 17, 1909. Any idea that she might lose consciousness in the process would have made her still more reluctant.

The first suggestion of a D.I. in the presence of a sitter (Sir O. J. L. was mentioned by name) came in a script from Myers of April 13, 1909, and the experiment was first actually tried on May 21, about five weeks later. The sitter was Mrs Verrall, and this is her contemporary record of the *mise en scène* :

On May 19, 1909, I called on Mrs Willett . . . and had some general talk. It was arranged that I should see her again on the morning of May 21. When I arrived on May 21, she said almost at once that F. W. H. M. wanted to speak to me, and thereupon I was witness of the first "D.I." in which Mrs Willett repeated aloud the impression she received. I had made no preparations and could only take very brief notes. . . . Mrs Willett sat at some little distance from me near a table. . . . She rested her elbows on the table and her face in her hands for a few moments ; then lifted her head, keeping her eyes shut, and spoke as if in answer to someone, saying that she could hear and would repeat. She then spoke slowly aloud, without the "He says" which is characteristic in later developments, and with very much less freedom than I have observed since.

There is nothing either in this account or in the record of the D.I. itself to suggest that Mrs Willett was in anything approach-

ing a state of trance, though some abnormality may fairly be suspected.

Next day a message came in script from Myers to say that he was satisfied with the results obtained, but did not intend to repeat the experiment for some time to come. Accordingly no further attempt at a spoken D.I. was made until January 1910. On the 27th and 28th of that month, and again on April the 5th, sittings took place with Mrs Verrall as recorder. No loss of normal consciousness is noted by the sitter on any of these occasions, but towards the end of the first sitting the communicator, addressing the sensitive, says to her, "You are getting dazed. Don't be agitated." Some of the phrases used in the course of the sitting were remembered by Mrs Willett after it was over—a sure indication, in my opinion, that the "dazed" condition still fell far short of anything like deep trance.

The communicators had several times indicated a desire for a D.I. with Sir Oliver Lodge. Opportunity was found to satisfy the desire in May 1910, when a series of three sittings took place in his presence (May 1, 6, and 21). In the second and third of these an undoubted departure from normality occurred, and probably this was the case in the first also, though to a less degree. In the second of the series the D.I. is opened by Gurney saying, "Tell Lodge I don't want this to develop into trance. You have got that, we are doing something new. Then he says telepathy"; and the sitting closes with the following explicit statement: "You can tell Lodge that you are not unconscious or too dazed to know who you are, what you are, and, as each word comes, what you say. That's all. Good-bye."

I believe this remark of Gurney's, though it has only the authority of the communicator to vouch for its truth, does fairly represent the mental condition of the automatist at the time. It was a condition of partial trance. And this is confirmed by what follows. The recorder notes that after the word "Good-bye" was spoken, "for about a minute Mrs Willett continued with her eyes shut. Presently she said, speaking to herself, 'Pull yourself together and open your eyes and wake yourself up'. She then came to, and looked about her." Sir Oliver apparently took this injunction as having been addressed by the automatist to herself. I think she is only repeating the words of Gurney, who returns, as it were, for a moment in order

to bring her back to normal consciousness. Probably we may see in this incident the rudiments of a waking stage.

Trance is, of course, a difficult term to define, nor is it easy in any given case to determine the point at which partial has merged into deep trance. When, however, the communicators tell us that they do not desire trance in Mrs Willett's case, we must recognise that they are using the term in a very narrow and restricted sense. By "trance" they mean trance *à la Piper*; and, as will appear in the sequel, they are emphatic in distinguishing between Willett phenomena and Piper phenomena. The distinction, as they see it, is so carefully observed that I doubt whether in the whole of the scripts it would be possible to find more than one example of the use of the word trance to describe the Willett phenomena. I am bound to say that such a limitation of the term seems to me both inconvenient and misleading. From 1911 onwards I have witnessed many D.I.s, and I certainly should not hesitate to accept them as belonging to the order of genuine trance.

What I have described as the third stage in Mrs Willett's mediumistic development is essentially a period of transition. It begins with the first introduction of a sitter, in May 1909. Its course is a progress towards deeper and deeper trance. It is perhaps rash to try to determine with precision the point at which really deep trance makes its first appearance. But if I were pressed to fix a date I should be inclined to name September 25, 1910. There had been two long sittings for script followed by D.I., one on September 22 and another on September 24, with Sir Oliver in charge, at both of which the automatist had been in a state far removed from normal. It was contrary to the rule laid down by the communicators to attempt D.I. on two days in succession, and the original intention seems to have been that the sitting on the 25th should, in spite of the presence of a recorder, be for script only—probably for script unattended by any change of consciousness. At the outset the automatist appeared to be quite normal, but the script had not proceeded far when signs of trance began to be noticeable. The sitter's attention was called to what was happening by the communicator himself—in this instance



Gurney. The account of what ensued I quote from Sir Oliver's record :

[*Script*]. She is very dazed *Look* (*O. J. L. looked and saw her apparently slightly entranced, so he said, "Ought I to wake her up ?"*)

[*Script*]. I will I don't want her to develop into a second Piper

(*The way in which the hand wandered over the paper was now reminiscent of Piper conditions. O. J. L. said, "No, I know you consider we have had that and that now you are arranging something different".*)

[*Script*]. *New.*

(*Then Mrs W. woke up, or rather went through a quite brief "waking stage", saying, "He said that's all now, I've arranged it all with Lodge" (waking up more). "Have you had a D.I. ?"*)

(*O. J. L. No, only script.*)

Why do I feel as if I had had a D.I. ?

(*O. J. L. I suppose because you were a little more dazed than usual ; you have done quite a fair amount of script.*)

(*Mrs W. was now normal. On testing her slightly it appeared that she remembered none of the script after the early portion.*)

It will be observed that this contemporary record uses language implying that the automatist was only "slightly entranced", "a little more dazed than usual". I suspect that Sir Oliver was misled by his knowledge that the communicators did not want "trance". Failing—as I think all the investigators at that time failed—to realise that the "trance" which they deprecated was limited to the strictly Piperian variety, he would naturally be slow to recognise that, in the wider and more usual sense of the term, the automatist was deeply entranced already. "Slightly entranced" seems a very inadequate description of a sensitive who wakes up in the belief that she had had a D.I. when nothing of the kind had happened.

I give for what it is worth the conclusion to which a close study of the Willett scripts has led me. The communicators more than once claim that they are putting Mrs Willett through a systematic training in mediumship. I believe that, far from not desiring trance in the wider acceptance of the term, they

were bent from the outset on educating her to become a trance-medium, but a trance-medium of a new kind. The training process had to be gradual, and the word trance was avoided, partly perhaps from fear of alarming her and provoking a resistance which might frustrate their plans, but also to mark the importance which the communicators attached to the contrast between Piper phenomena and the new variety of mediumship which they aimed at developing.

Let me at this point briefly recapitulate. In the first period of Mrs Willett's mediumship lone scripts were the sole method of communication. The second period is marked by the introduction of the silent D.I. As a rule no obvious disturbance of normal consciousness accompanied either of these processes.

In the third period silent D.I.s and lone scripts continue as before ; but a combination of script and spoken D.I. with a recorder present comes into prominence as something new. In the course of these sittings the automatist develops a tendency towards trance, hardly noticeable at first but becoming progressively more and more marked as time went on.

As we have seen, a condition of deep trance was probably reached for the first time on September 25, 1910, but only towards the end of the script, and no D.I. followed. Between that date and May 24, 1911, only one "sitter-sitting" took place. It resulted in the usual type of combined script and D.I.; but so far as can be judged the automatist was not deeply entranced and there was no waking stage. A condition of deep trance maintained through both stages of a sitting was not, in my opinion, reached until May 24, 1911.

With the possibility of trance communication now firmly established the fourth and final period is entered. After nearly three years of training Mrs Willett's mediumship has reached maturity so far as form is concerned. From now onwards no new departure of primary importance remains to be noted, though there was considerable variety of practice in the employment of the different forms of communication at different times. The combination of trance-script followed by D.I. as initial and secondary stages of the same sitting is freely resorted to up to July 1912. An interval of upwards of eighteen months ensued during which no spoken D.I. was attempted. Regard for the

health of the medium was probably the determining consideration; for the greater strain on the vitality of the medium involved in spoken D.I. as compared with script is fully recognised by the communicators. To compensate for the temporary loss of spoken D.I., scripts written in the presence of a sitter become comparatively common. The condition of the automatist during some of these sitter-sittings tends to pass into trance of varying depth. The writing is sometimes interrupted, and the sitter requested to take down a passage from dictation.

A return was made to the regular combination of script and D.I. (but with occasional interpolation of written passages in the D.I.) in February 1914, and use continued to be made of this type of sitting up to August 19, 1915. Since that date there has been only one example of it, and its place seems to have been taken by trance-scripts in the presence of a sitter not followed by D.I. I do not think that this change carries with it any important significance. Probably the D.I. condition implies, on the whole, a deeper trance than is often reached in the trance-script; but the same ends are served in both, namely (1) to get rid of the checks and inhibitions of the normal consciousness, and (2) to enable messages to be conveyed to the sitter of which the automatist is to be kept ignorant. I may here add that, where these objects are not in view, communications made by way of lone scripts do not seem in quality and interest to fall short of those conveyed in trance.

#### SOME COMPARISONS

No account even of the external characteristics of Mrs Willett's mediumship would be complete which failed to note certain features that differentiate it from that of mediums of the type of Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard. Some of these will engage our attention more closely when I come to deal with the phenomena in the light of statements made by the communicators themselves. For the present our concern is rather with such contrasts as are apparent to the observer from outside.

One obvious point of difference is that Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard are essentially trance-mediums, whereas Mrs Willett's automatic faculty is active in every phase of consciousness from normality to deep trance. But the most striking

point of difference is the absence in Mrs Willett's case of anything corresponding to the *Phinuit*, or the *Rector*, of Mrs Piper, to Mrs Thompson's *Nelly*, or to the *Feda* of Mrs Leonard. Mrs Willett always appears to be in direct touch with her trance-personalities, though occasionally one of them may be found helping or speaking for another who is represented as less experienced or as having less aptitude for communication. It is true that certain of the trance-personalities of Mrs Piper or Mrs Leonard, like "G. P." or "A. V. B.", or the father and the sister of Mr Drayton Thomas, also purport to communicate directly without the intervention of a Phinuit or a Feda respectively. But here again there is an important distinction. It is Mrs Willett herself, *in propria persona*, who is in touch with the communicator. Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard when in trance seem to lose all sense of their personal identity, whereas, so far as the observer can judge, this is never the case with Mrs Willett. Her trance sittings abound with remarks describing her own experiences at the moment, and occasionally she will make comments, not always complimentary, on the messages she is asked to transmit. The communicator often addresses her directly, and she him. Even when the communicator, speaking in the first person, refers to the automatist as "she" or "her", interspersed phrases like "He says" reveal that she is all the time conscious of herself and of her part as a reporter. Subtle questions may no doubt be raised concerning the exact relation of the "I" of the Willett scripts to the normal "I" of the sensitive; but any distinction between the two "I's" discernible to the observer leaves them still both identified with the same personality. Mrs Willett's trance sittings generally end in a "waking stage" like Mrs Piper's. In the waking stage Mrs Piper regains her consciousness of self, and this, even apart from any change from writing to speech, clearly marks it off from the stage which precedes it. Mrs Willett, on the other hand, retains a sense of personality throughout, and in the case of trance D.I.s, where no change from writing to speech helps to mark the transition, it is sometimes hard to say just where the D.I. ends and the waking stage begins.

Another point of contrast between Mrs Willett and professional mediums like Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard lies in the widely different conditions under which they work. Sitters

with Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard have been, from the nature of the case, many and miscellaneous; and the communicators, purporting for the most part to be deceased relations and friends of the sitters, have been correspondingly many and miscellaneous. Mrs Willett's scripts—using that term in its widest meaning to include all her automatic records—have been produced in a wholly dissimilar atmosphere. Those who have actually had sittings with her are very few in number—some half dozen or so—and, speaking generally, their object has been a purely disinterested study of what the scripts have to say. In this they have been assisted by another and equally small group of investigators to whom the scripts have been shown. All of these are intimately known to the automatist and pledged to respect her anonymity, and to treat the records as private and confidential except so far as she may decide otherwise. A considerable proportion of her automatic output she has never seen herself, for records of her trance sittings have been in the past systematically withheld from her. Her consent was, of course, required for the publication of the present paper, and many of the passages from the scripts quoted or referred to in it have never until now come within her conscious knowledge.

As the number of sitters with Mrs Willett has been strictly limited, so also the personalities professing to communicate through her form a very small group. Myers and Gurney were the earliest, and for a considerable time the only communicators, but certain others have been added since, including Henry Sidgwick, S. H. Butcher, A. W. Verrall, and one whose real name is concealed from her but whom she knows as the Dark Young Man. Some at least of my readers will have no difficulty in identifying him. Indeed I should be surprised if Mrs Willett herself, to whom the first draft of my paper was shown, has not now realized who he is, though she has not volunteered any statement to me on the subject. Another important figure among the *dramatis personae* is that of a lady who died in early youth more than fifty years ago. She will be referred to in this paper as "the young lady in the old-fashioned dress". Her family name never appears in the scripts, and the normal Mrs Willett has probably never heard of her existence. These all play their part, not as isolated individuals but as members of a band working together with a common purpose. Their co-

operation gives to the Willett scripts a unity which it would be idle to look for in the automatic utterances of Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard, but which, we are not without ground for believing, embraces also the scripts of Mrs Verrall, Mrs "Holland", Mrs Salter, the "Macs", Mrs "King" and Mrs Wilson.<sup>1</sup>

#### COMBINATION OF SCRIPT AND D.I. IN THE SAME SITTING

The combination in which D.I. is regularly preceded by script in the same sitting is peculiar, so far as I am aware, to Mrs Willett. The presence of a recorder or "experimenter in charge" is, of course, a necessary condition of the spoken D.I. But why should the spoken D.I. be so constantly preceded by script, and script, when a recorder is present, have been—at least during several years—so constantly followed by D.I. ?

The combination is not, indeed, absolutely invariable. The very first "sitter-sitting", of May 21, 1909 (see *ante*, p. 54), produced a D.I. without preliminary script; and there have been one or two instances of the same thing since. Of scripts in the presence of an investigator in charge and not followed by D.I. there were three cases, and only three,<sup>2</sup> up to June 1913. The first of these was the script written in the presence of O. J. L. and quoted on p. 57 above; in the second case D.I. was not attempted because on that occasion the medium was judged to be physically unequal to the strain; the third case was a deliberate experiment in which the automatist was expressly instructed to try for a script in my presence without going into trance.<sup>3</sup> It is true that from June 1913 onwards the rule was so far relaxed as to admit of sitter-sittings, which resulted in script without D.I., although mixed, it might be, with occasional passages of dictation. But why was the combination of script first and then D.I. so long and, on the whole, so consistently maintained? What purpose, if any, did it serve?

That the communicators attached some importance to the

<sup>1</sup> To this list may be added Mr and Mrs Kenneth Richmond, from whom scripts have been received from time to time since 1919.

<sup>2</sup> I do not here include two earlier scripts written in the presence of the automatist's mother, and one written in the presence of her husband on December 24, 1911. For this last see below, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> See below, p. 75.

rule during the earlier years of Mrs Willett's mediumship is proved not merely by the strictness with which it was observed, but by sundry passages in the scripts themselves. Thus on March 10, 1910, Gurney writes : " Tell Mrs Verrall I want her to try another D.I. with me some day via you of course to open with script ". Again on May 1, 1910, at a sitting with Sir O. J. L. present, Myers writes : " Try for a D.I. and come back to Sc if I tell you ". But the most explicit statement on the subject is contained in a lone script of July 22, 1911 :

Tell Gerald I want to experiment upon one point I want to find the proper balance between Sc. and D.I. proper what I mean is I want to find out the connection—not the word I want but let it stand between the state [*sic*] of Sc— I am speaking of the Sc which is the initial stage of D I proper—and by D I proper I mean the spoken words—the *stage* of Sc and the stage of D I It may be said that in one case the impression externalises itself by the hand and in the other case by the voice But that is not the way it looks to me from here I want to *speak* of this later My present point is to note that I must experiment to find the balance What amount of Sc facilitates the emerging into the secondary stage viz D I—and what amount of Sc—at what point does the continuance of Sc make that emerging difficult or delayed the relation which the proportion of Sc bears to the secondary stage Say that that is nearer it Without experiment nothing can be learnt I want to experiment in several directions and this is one of them.

It is evident from this extract that the experiments in which the communicators were engaged were experiments relating to *method*. No doubt is cast on the utility of the combination. But the initial step, that of script, is treated as subordinate to the second stage, that of D.I. The centre of interest is the D.I. as an instrument of communication. From the point of view of *method* the chief use of preliminary script is to lead up to D.I.—to " facilitate its emergence ". The thing of real value is the D.I. itself.

That this was the view actually held by the communicators up to the date of the extract is confirmed by an examination of the previous sittings, whether we consider the relative length of the two stages or the matter contained in them. In

every case save one the script-stage had hitherto been relatively short and the D.I. stage relatively long—often as much as ten times as long as the other. In the one exceptional case (of February 9, 1911) when the sittings opened with a fairly long and interesting script, the D.I. seems to have suffered, for it was short and comparatively unimportant.

Similarly as regards content: the short preliminary scripts had in almost every case been concerned with matters of secondary importance—brief conversations with the sitters, instructions with respect to future sittings, the dates at which they were to be held, the length of time which they were to last, and so forth. Communications of substance were for the most part reserved for D.I., and with the change from writing to speech there usually came a change of subject also.

I think the evidence leads to the conclusion that so long as the trance condition even in the D.I. was imperfect, in the preliminary script it was lighter still. I suggest two possibilities: (1) that the lighter stage may have been used in order to induce the deeper stage; (2) that it may have been intended to serve the further purpose of helping to keep Mrs Willett's trance within the limits aimed at by the communicators, and secure it from any danger of passing into the Piperian variety in which the normal consciousness is entirely submerged and its place taken by what purports to be a wholly different personality.

If these conjectures are well founded, the utility of the method may have continued even after the achievement of deep trance in both stages, of which I count the sitting of May 24, 1911, to be the first example. But not long after that date, and possibly as a result of the experiments referred to in the extract quoted above, the stage of preliminary script began to assume greater importance and extend to greater length. It is more and more used for the conveyance of messages of a kind formerly reserved for the D.I. stage, and the distinction of subject-matter as between the two stages becomes less frequent.

Ultimately, as we have already remarked, this general tendency developed into a real change of practice. The rule of "No D.I. without preliminary script" continued to be observed. On the other hand sitter-sittings at which script alone, or a mixture of script and dictation, was produced became common.



In some of these sittings the automatist was practically normal throughout, in others she seemed to pass gradually into trance ; in others again the trance, so far as one can judge, was fully established from the outset. Nevertheless the combination of script and D.I. has never been definitely abandoned, though it became very rare as the years went on. It represents, I believe, for the communicators the high-water mark of successful method in communication. Throughout what I have called the fourth period of Mrs Willett's mediumship a deep form of trance is its invariable characteristic.<sup>1</sup> There are indications that it was the method preferred by the communicators for all messages which it was desired to withhold from the normal consciousness of the automatist. On the other hand the strain imposed upon the automatist by D.I. in the presence of a sitter is admittedly greater than that involved in other processes.<sup>2</sup> It was this consideration, I suspect, coupled with a growing experience of trance-script not followed by D.I., and the realisation by the group on the other side that it might be made to serve their purposes almost as well as D.I. itself, that led in the end to the nearly complete disuse of the combination.

<sup>1</sup> In making this statement I do not count the sitting of December 17, 1913, as falling under the description of combined script and D.I. The long dictated passage in that case is altogether *sui generis*. It does not seem to have been regarded as a D.I. by the communicators themselves. See below, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> There was a wide gap in the production of D.I.s, extending from July 6, 1912, to February 28, 1914, which is probably to be accounted for by reasons connected with the health of the medium at the time. It was certainly not caused by lack of opportunities, for there were seven or eight sitter-present sittings held during the same interval.

## CHAPTER II

### CRITERIA OF THE DIFFERENT STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

- (a) MEMORY OF MESSAGE RECEIVED
- (b) INDICATIONS FROM HANDWRITING
- (c) EXTERNALISATION OF PRESENCES
- (d) INDICATIONS FROM THE WAKING STAGE

My paper on *The Ear of Dionysius* contains a brief statement concerning the different psychological conditions in which the Willett scripts are produced. This statement is not exactly what I should make to-day in the light of fuller experience and further study of the subject. I then wrote: "Many of these [scripts] are written when the automatist is alone, awake, and fully aware of her surroundings. The remainder, produced in the presence of a 'sitter', fall mainly into two classes. Either the automatist is in a normal or nearly normal state of consciousness, much as when she writes scripts by herself, or else she is in a condition of trance. There have been a few intermediate cases, when it is hard to say whether the sensitive is in trance or not. But these are a very small number: in general there is no difficulty whatever in distinguishing."

Apart from the fact that in this statement I do not distinguish between script proper and D.I.—the distinction being irrelevant to my purpose at the moment—I should not now say that the intermediate cases are very few in number, or that in general there is no difficulty in determining how any given script should be classified. The modifications of consciousness exemplified in Mrs Willett's phenomena range over the whole scale from practical normality through partial trance to deep trance. Her automatic productions may be conveniently arranged into classes corresponding to these three descriptions of mental condition. But it must be realised that no clear line of demarcation separates them: the first shades into the second

and the second into the third. Extreme cases at either end of the scale can, of course, be readily classified. Silent D.I.s and lone scripts may all be placed in the nearly normal class. Similarly it is, in my opinion, safe to say that all D.I. sittings subsequent to that of May 24, 1911, are of the deep trance order. On the other hand D.I. sittings before that date, and sitter-sittings without D.I. of a subsequent period, are often not easy to place, and even in the course of the same sitting there may be changes from one state to another. The line is often hard to draw, and I have to confess that in several cases I have felt constrained to draw it differently at different times. Where the question is of just a little more or a little less, clear-cut conclusions are best avoided. One has to be content with general impressions and a considerable margin of uncertainty. Good indications may be gathered from the external demeanour and appearance of the medium when at work, especially by noting the expression of her face, whether she keeps her eyes open or shut, and how far she requires assistance from the sitter in the management of pencil and paper. But there are other signs and tokens which have a psychological interest of their own ; and in what follows I propose to examine certain of these at some length, choosing my illustrations as far as possible from records which may at the same time help to give an idea of the more striking characteristics of Mrs Willett's mediumistic activities.

#### (a) MEMORY OF THE MESSAGE RECEIVED

Silent D.I.s, unless they are written down at the actual moment of reception, which hardly ever occurs in Mrs Willett's case, can, like ordinary dreams, only be recorded from memory. In scripts and spoken D.I.s, on the other hand, we have a contemporaneous record which can afterwards be compared with the recollections, if any, of the content of the messages conveyed. Power to recall such content, or any part of it, after the sitting is over is an important test of the state of consciousness of the automatist during the sitting. It definitely rules out the condition of deep trance. But even complete amnesia of the content of messages cannot, in my opinion, be taken as proof positive of deep trance. In Mrs Willett's case it probably always implies some degree of trance, but this is not true of all

automatists. Mrs Verrall's automatic writing, for instance, clearly belongs to the nearly normal type. Yet so far as her experience in script-production is concerned this is how she describes her first successful attempts :<sup>1</sup> " I was writing in the dark and could not see what I wrote ; the words came to me as single things, and I was so much occupied in recording each as it came that I had not any general notion of what the meaning was. I could never remember the last word ; it seemed to vanish completely as soon as I had written it." And again : " After the first two or three times of writing I never read what had been written till the end, and though I continued to be aware of the particular word, or perhaps two words, that I was writing, I still retained no recollection of what I had just written and no general notion as to the meaning of the whole."

Obviously Mrs Verrall, when she sat for script, was aware that she was writing, was aware of her sensations during the process, and conscious of what was happening round her. All this she remembered. The failure of memory applies only to the content of her script. Even this degree of amnesia, limited as it is, does not seem to be experienced to anything like the same extent by Mrs Willett in the production of her lone scripts, though I would not go so far as to say that it never occurs. But in her sittings the case is different. Thus in an early D.I. (May 6, 1910) we have the assurance of Gurney, already quoted, to the effect that the medium is not unconscious, nor too dazed to know who she is, and, as each word comes, what she says. The same assurance is repeated in a D.I. of August 10, 1910, where we are told that she " is not unconscious—she is fully conscious of each word as it comes, but the last word is effaced, wiped away ". In the light of Mrs Verrall's experience we need not hesitate to accept this as a true account of the facts—so far, at least, as the normal self is concerned.

Both these early D.I.s I count as examples of partial trance ; for though the amnesia, so far as regards the content of the message, is similar to that experienced by Mrs Verrall, I judge from other indications that in these sittings Mrs Willett's state was very decidedly further removed from the normal than was ever the case with Mrs Verrall herself.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xx., pp. 9, 10.

I now proceed to quote *in extenso* the record of a sitter-sitting of considerably later date (December 17, 1913). I do so not because it was a typical sitting—on the contrary it was in some respects singular if not unique—but because it illustrates in an interesting way some of the topics dealt with in the present chapter. If we regard this record from the point of view of form alone, we might suppose that we had before us an example of the familiar combination of preliminary script and following D.I., except that the sitting ends with a reversion to script after an untimely interruption caused by noise outside the room. But in *character* the *dictated* portion is wholly unlike any D.I. in the entire collection. I have never regarded it, nor do I now regard it, as a D.I. proper. There is good evidence to show that neither did the communicators themselves reckon it as such.<sup>1</sup>

The allusions in the short preliminary script are obscure even to the investigators. I do not advise the reader to trouble himself with trying to understand them, but he should note the abrupt change of style which marks the transition from writing to dictation.

*Script, followed by dictation, of December 17, 1913. (Present, G. W. B.)*

Gurney—yes, say this  
 Prometheus and the divine fire, the gift of gods to men  
 Bearing aloft in folded hands of prayer  
 Safe through the windy world the fire divine  
 The ground flame of the crocus

flamentia liliacque The lilies of flame a flame floats above  
 the lily a Pillar of fire, beacon and guiding Dæmon  
 Socrates

*(At this point Mrs W. began dictating to me :)*

It's a picture—a picture that I love and often see.

<sup>1</sup> If we exclude the sitting in question, no D.I.s are recorded between July 6, 1912, and February 28, 1914, an interval of over eighteen months. It is to this long interval that Gurney must be referring when, at the opening of the sitting of February 28, 1914, he warns the investigator in charge that "these first returnings to D.I. need very careful handling and some confusion may appear in the matter transmitted". He could hardly have spoken thus had he counted the dictated portion of the comparatively recent sitting of December 17, 1913, as a D.I.

Marble pillars everywhere—a most heavenly scene. A company of men—small company, discussing everything in heaven and earth, and really reaching the heights of reason—almost unconscious of their visible surroundings. It is a sort of parable of life.

There was such intercourse of the human mind going on in that room, and I know it so well I almost fancy I must have been there, though it happened a long time ago.

Fred uses an expression somewhere—a small company of like-minded men.<sup>1</sup> That's how those men were ; and, you know, they never die (*Here I asked for the dictation to be a little slower.*) Oh, I wish I could say it quickly, because it's all floating past me.

There's a poem of Matthew Arnold's about Christ, that wherever the feet of mercy move up and down where poverty is, Christ is actually present in them now.<sup>2</sup>

Oh, how I wish I could tell what I know. You know, to ordinary people those men who sat talking there long ago are just historical figures, interesting from a hundred points of view, but dead men. Do you know, there's nothing dead in greatness, because there can't be, because all greatness is an emanation from the changeless Absolute. That's why I know those people as if they were alive to-day. I know them much better than many of the people I live with—especially the older man, the Master. He had disciples, you know, and whenever—What I said about that Matthew Arnold poem was because I wanted to say that what was true of Christ is true of that man I'm speaking about.

Oh, do you know that Knowledge isn't the greatest faculty of the human mind. There's a deeper faculty, deriving its—something or other, I missed that—through a more central zone. It's Intuition. It's in Intuition that the Soul acts most freely, and it's by Intuition that it best demonstrates its freedom. There's something about that in Paracelsus.<sup>3</sup> Paracelsus is a *great* allegory.

<sup>1</sup> Obituary Notice of H. S. See *Fragments*, p. 113. Cf. the "companions of Socrates" in same Notice, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> I have not been able to trace this reference.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Browning, *Paracelsus*, v.

What a long way I've got from my picture that I like to look at, or rather from my room where I choose to walk. The meal is for the most part over, and there's a sort of hush of the spirit ; because in that quick interchange of thought new ideas have arisen, and the man that they all look up to, he's borne very far aloft on the wings of the Spirit. And suddenly on the quiet of it all there bursts the sound of revelling coming nearer and nearer—flute players ! (*ecstatically*) Oh ! is it Bacchus and his crew ?<sup>1</sup> Anyhow, there's something rather Bacchanalian about it. They're getting nearer and nearer, and they're hammering on the door, and then in they come. *My* people are all disturbed, and there's great toasting. They take it all in very good part, and they revel away. There are wreaths of flowers, and cups passing, loud jokes. And then, do you know, by degrees some of the crowd melt away, and some of the people go to sleep. And then the whole thing ends up with such a majestic thing, I think ; just that one figure, when the interruption is over, he stays there, like some great beacon shining out above the clouds, walking on the heights of thought ; and the absolute silence reigns, and there he sits.

Do you know that man's as real to me as if I could touch him ! He's an ugly man, only I feel he's sublimely great. You know I've not got to be tied up always to myself. I can get up and walk about in other worlds ; and I very often like to walk through the room where that scene took place.

Have you ever seen the shadow of the Parthenon ?<sup>2</sup> Oh ! (*pause*) It's all very beautiful there. Do you know Edmund would have been very happy in that world. It was the sort of world he wanted, and he strayed into such a hideous age.

(*While the last sentence was being spoken a cart was driven up to the neighbouring door, and loud voices of men were heard. This visibly disturbed Mrs Willett, and quite threw her off the track.*)

<sup>1</sup> Probably a reminiscence of Keats's *Song of the Indian Maid*, from *Endymion* :

“ And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers . . .  
’Twas Bacchus and his crew.”

<sup>2</sup> F. W. H. M., *Fragments* p. 194.

“ And over Plato's homestead fell  
The shadow of the Parthenon.”

Oh!—Oh!—Oh! (*pause*)

I've lost the thread, I've quite lost the thread.

(*At this point a further interruption occurred, and voices were distinctly audible outside the front door. Presently Mrs W. resumed writing, beginning in her "script" hand (which always indicates a nearly normal consciousness) but passing gradually to her natural writing.*)

I've lost the thread. It's all gone. I was so happy I was seeing visions and I did not ever want to leave Fred was with me F. W. H. M. I also saw Henry Sidgwick he had a white beard

Do you know who the young man was I only just caught sight of him for a moment

How nothing time is

All human experience is *One* We are no shadows nor do we pursue shadows <sup>1</sup> Pilgrims in Eternity

We few we few we happy band of Brothers <sup>2</sup>

To the above record I appended a note, written on the same day, giving my general impression of the psychical condition of the automatist at the time of production. This note I here reproduce.

*Note to Willett Script of December 17, 1913, by G. W. B.*

During the greater part of this sitting Mrs Willett, although not in a condition of trance, was certainly further removed than usual from a normal state of consciousness. On my showing her, about an hour later, the part which I had taken down from dictation, she said, "I haven't the faintest recollection of all this, nor do I know what it means". I then told her that it described a famous scene in Plato's *Symposium*, to which allusion had already been made in another script of hers, nearly three years ago (January 3, 1911). The word *Symposium*, however, seemed to convey no meaning to her, though I reminded her that she must have seen it in Mrs Verrall's account (in vol. xx. of the *Proceedings*) of the attempt to reproduce

<sup>1</sup> Burke, *Speech at Bristol*: "What shadows we are and what shadows we pursue": quoted in a Holland script of February 9, 1910, which Mrs Willett had seen.

<sup>2</sup> *Henry V.*, Act IV., Scene iii.



Myers's posthumous message. She has certainly read this, and she remembered something about Diotima. The name of Alcibiades amused her, but recalled no memories. I think we must assume that her conscious knowledge of the *Symposium* and its contents was in all probability greater at one time than at the date of this sitting.

It will be seen that in spite of her complete failure to recall the content of the script,<sup>1</sup> my contemporaneous judgment was that Mrs Willett was "not in a condition of trance", although "certainly further removed than usual from a normal state of consciousness". No doubt I formed this judgment largely on what I noticed of the external behaviour of the automatist, as contrasted with what I was familiar with in undoubted cases of deep trance. I believe I was right in not taking the failure of memory as a proof of deep trance; but I should not now hesitate to describe the sitting as one of partial trance.

Incidentally, I may call attention to three other points of interest:

(1) The change of style when dictation begins seems to indicate a new communicator. Who is this new communicator? No hint is given in any part of the dictated passage that it is a message conveyed by any member of the communicating group. The automatist mentions both Myers and Gurney, but refers to them, as it were, independently and on her own account.

(2) When, on my asking that the dictation should be a little slower, she replies, "Oh, I wish I could say it quickly because it's all floating past me"; and again when she says, "There's a deeper faculty, deriving its—something or other—I missed that—through a more central zone", the "I" seems to be the self to whom the description is given and who at times has a difficulty in giving it out. The exclamation "Oh, is it Bacchus and his crew?" uttered "ecstatically" should also, I think, be attributed to the recording "I". The "I" who is responsible for the description, and seems to be relating its own experiences, must, on this interpretation, be an "I" different from, or at least distinguishable from, the first. If it is not one of the communicating group this second "I" would seem to be a dis-

<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the failure might have been less complete had the automatist been interrogated as soon as the sitting was ended, instead of after an hour's interval.

sociated self, and to be conveying, for expression through the recording self, knowledge acquired either normally and subsequently forgotten by the waking self or supernormally from some (presumably) spiritual source. The question here raised will call for consideration more at length hereafter.

(3) If that portion of the script which follows the interruption by noise had been spoken instead of being written, it might easily be mistaken for a waking stage, since the first few sentences have a curious resemblance to a waking stage in point of style. But apart from the fact that a written waking stage would be of extreme rarity, if not altogether unique, the supposition is further negated by the change, to which attention is called in the record, from the automatist's "script hand" to her natural writing. For that change, as we are about to see, denotes not an awakening or progress towards normality, but a movement in the reverse direction to something nearer a condition of trance.

#### (b) INDICATIONS FROM HANDWRITING

Very little, if any, attempt is made in Willett script to imitate the known handwriting of the several communicators. It is true that in the notes which the automatist is in the habit of appending to her lone scripts, when forwarding them to the care of the investigators, she occasionally uses language implying a distinction between the Myers script and the Gurney script; but this seems to refer to the rapidity and vigour of the writing, and to the size of the letters, rather than to any characteristic form of the writing itself. On the other hand her scripts exhibit two well-marked styles of handwriting which, though they bear no relation to any particular communicator, do appear to have a direct connection with her state of consciousness at the time of writing. An example of the transition from one to the other has already been noticed in the immediately preceding paragraph.

Mrs Willett herself became aware, for the first time, of these two distinct styles of handwriting in circumstances recorded by herself when sending me the script which brought the distinction to her notice. It must be remembered that she had never been shown the scripts written by her when in a condition of deep trance. Her account is as follows:

*Script of December 24, 1911, with Mr Willett present.*

*Note by Mrs W.* Mr Willett having frequently expressed a wish to see script coming, I had for some time been making up my mind to try for script in his presence. . . . I had not expected his presence to make any difference in script, if any came. I did think it might probably prevent any script coming. But what did happen was this : after the first two sheets of script I found I was going off into unconsciousness, was, in fact, going into D.I. The writing . . . is for some sheets not in my script hand, but in something which is almost my ordinary handwriting, except that the *t*'s are not crossed nor the *i*'s dotted. There are also punctuation marks in the script, which my script never has. My eyes were shut, and it was only by a great and continued effort that I got out of the D.I.ey state. I succeeded, but I felt dazed and heavy.

I may supplement this account by some observations of my own, recorded immediately after the sitting of April 18, 1912, to which they relate. It was in February 1911 that my acquaintance with Mrs Willett began. My first sitting with her was on June 4 of the same year, and from that date onwards it had fallen to me to be the principal "experimenter in charge". Between June 4, 1911, and April 18, 1912, I had witnessed a good many sittings of the combined script and D.I. type, in all of which the automatist had been deeply entranced, but I had not until the latter date seen her produce a script in a normal or quasi-normal state of consciousness.

*Note written by G. W. B. immediately after the Sitting of April 18, 1912 :<sup>1</sup>*

The day before this script was produced Mrs Willett had arranged for a sitting with me, at which it was proposed to try for script and D.I. in the usual trance conditions. Next day, however, she told me she had had a "flash D.I." [silent D.I.] instructing her to try for script in my presence, but without going into trance. The instruction was duly followed, and the present script resulted.

I was glad to have this new experience, never having seen the *modus operandi* of Mrs Willett's automatic writing except in

<sup>1</sup> This was one of the three exceptional sittings with an investigator in charge, mentioned on p. 62 above, that were not followed by D.I.

trance conditions. It will be remembered that she once tried for script in Mr Willett's presence, and on that occasion had the greatest difficulty in resisting a disposition to pass over into unconsciousness. No such difficulty was observable on the present occasion. She sat with the block on her knee, holding two or three primroses in her left hand (taken from a bowlful which had been sent us from Whittinghame), and managed the turning over of the leaves without assistance from me. Sometimes she looked at the page as she wrote, but for the most part seemed to be gazing out vacantly into space. Occasionally she closed her eyes altogether. Pauses were not infrequent, but the writing when it came was usually rapid, and sometimes extremely rapid. The character of the handwriting varied. Mrs Willett's "trance-script" is always, I think, written in her own natural hand, and often punctuated. The script which she gets when she is alone, so far as I have seen it, is very different—the letters longer and more regular, the words running more continuously into each other, and stops conspicuous by their absence. When she wrote in Mr Willett's presence and had to struggle to retain consciousness, she noticed a tendency to pass over into the trance style of handwriting, *i.e.* into something more like her own natural hand with stops inserted. There are few or no stops in the present script, but the handwriting changes a good deal; and I am inclined to think that the more closely it resembles her normal style, the further removed she has become from the completely normal consciousness.

Since the above note was written I have had many opportunities of observing the correspondence between the handwriting of the automatist in script and her psychical condition. There can be no doubt that, broadly speaking, the nearer she is to deep trance the more closely does her script approximate to her ordinary handwriting. Punctuation marks are also a sign, though not an infallible one, that she is deeply "under".

Another distinguishing mark of script written in trance or partial trance is the use of erasure to correct errors in writing. In ordinary lone script any faulty or superfluous words which it is desired to alter or omit are left standing. The script just flows on and provides a corrected version without crossing out

what has been wrongly written. I do not think a single erasure is to be found in the scripts, numbering two hundred or more, written before May 24, 1911, the date of the first deep-trance combination of script and D.I. This is the more curious inasmuch as the underlining of particular words in order to emphasise them is freely resorted to. After that date erasures become fairly common, but they are almost entirely confined to sitter-present scripts in which, on other grounds, a condition of at least partial trance may be reasonably inferred.

An interesting example of erasure which occurred on May 11, 1912, may be cited here because it furnishes at the same time an illustration of the distinctions in handwriting. The sitting was for script and D.I. and it opens thus :

Gurney I cant attempt much today the need for repose and peace, which she has not had, that is wanted for definite

The above had been written, filling one page, when the whole was crossed out and a fresh page begun. The opening words were then repeated in a slightly different form :

Gurney G. I can't do much here to-day, she needs solitude and rest, and the life of confused and jarring elements in which she has been breathing is a bar——

The "Gurney" in the first page is in the handwriting characteristic of lone script : then the style gradually changes, and by the time the second page is begun the transition to the trance-script hand (similar to Mrs W.'s ordinary writing) is complete. Possibly the communicator did not wish to proceed until he was satisfied that the automatist was fully entranced.

The return to the natural way of writing in proportion as the normal condition of consciousness gives place to trance is not what one might have expected *a priori*, but is, I think, capable of explanation. Mrs Willett sits for script with the point of the pencil resting on the paper, and lifts it as little as possible. Hence the continuity of line which is the most characteristic feature of the writing. This is the method recommended by the communicators themselves, presumably as that best suited for automatic expression through the hand. Why is it abandoned when the medium is presumably not less but more under their control ? The explanation I suggest is that the artificial

character of the handwriting when the automatist is quite conscious of what she is doing depends upon her giving attention to this rule of practice, and that, when the normal consciousness is lulled, attention to the rule is weakened and ordinary habit reasserts itself. Save in a single exceptional case I do not think Mrs Willett has ever experienced the feeling that her hand was being *moved for her* by some influence external to herself. Her script-writing is not automatic in that sense.

### (c) EXTERNALISATION OF PRESENCES

Mrs Willett's perception of her communicators (I use the word perception deliberately) ranges from bare awareness of a "presence" void of all sensory content to complete sensory hallucination. There is an intermediate form in which what may be called a psycho-sensory element is involved, and in which bare awareness merges into less or more vivid visualisation. But both the bare awareness and the awareness reinforced by mental visualisation differ from ordinary ideas, memory images, and fancy pictures, in being independent of the percipient's volition. They are, as it were, imposed upon her from something not herself, and create a sense of the objectivity and reality of that which is perceived, not indeed identical with, yet not wholly unlike, that which is associated with ordinary sense perception of external objects.

To this intermediate form of externalisation the term "pseudo-hallucination" has been applied. The term may not be altogether free from objection; but I shall continue to use it as a convenient class name emphasising the essentially compelling and involuntary character which the phenomenon shares with true sensory hallucination.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare William James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii., pp. 115 ff., and *Proc. S.P.R.*, vol. x., pp. 86-87.

The importance of pseudo-hallucination was not sufficiently recognised when Gurney wrote his chapter on hallucination in *Phantasms of the Living*.

The sense of objectivity which characterises both bare impressions of presences and so-called pseudo-hallucinations raises questions of the greatest theoretical interest. These will occupy our attention later on. In the present chapter I am more concerned to describe the experiences themselves than to suggest any theory in explanation of them.

Some connection undoubtedly exists in Mrs Willett's case between the ascending scale of externalisation and the different states of consciousness—ranging from all-but-normality to deep trance—which characterise her mediumistic experiences. I should hesitate to affirm that the correlation is regular and invariable, but it is sufficiently marked to be of some psychological interest.

I have already quoted (pp. 52-53 above) two descriptions given by Mrs Willett herself in the early days of her mediumship of the way in which, in silent D.I., she becomes aware of the presence of a communicator and of the message which he wishes to convey to her. My object then was to give a general idea of the characteristics of these silent D.I.s. It will be convenient to repeat the descriptions here with a somewhat different purpose in view.

*Extract from a letter to Mrs Verrall dated February 18, 1909.*

Last night . . . I was sitting idly wondering at it all . . . when I became aware so suddenly and strangely of F.'s presence that I said "Oh!" as if I had run into someone unexpectedly. During what followed I was absolutely normal. I heard nothing with my ears, but the words came from outside into my mind as they do when one is reading a book to oneself. I do not remember exact words but the first sentence was "Can you hear what I am saying?"—I replied in my mind "Yes" . . .

*Extract from a letter received by Mrs Verrall on September 27, 1909.*

I got no impression of *appearance*, only character, and in some way voice or pronunciation (though this doesn't mean that my ears hear, you know!). That is always so in D.I. [i.e. *in silent D.I.*]. I don't feel a sense of "*seeing*", but an intense sense of personality, like a blind person perhaps might have—and of inflection, such as amusement or emotion on the part of the speaker. If you asked me *how* I know when E. G. is speaking and not F., I can't exactly define, except that to me it would be impossible to be in doubt one instant—and with E. G. I often know he is there a second or two before he speaks. . . . I then sometimes speak first. . . . To me, by now, there isn't anything even strange in D.I.s except when I try to explain anything

about them ; then I realise suddenly they are unusual ! But otherwise it gives me no more sense of oddness to be talking to these invisible people than it does to be talking to my son for instance. But I don't think I mentally *visualise* any sort of "appearance" with regard to them—it is as "minds" and "characters" that they are to me, and yet *not at all* intangible or not-solid realities.

The first sentence in this extract refers to a silent D.I. of some months earlier (May 8, 1909), one of the very rare occasions when the "presence" was that of an unrecognised stranger. Mrs Willett's contemporaneous record was as follows : "Got impression of a young man, fashionable, conventional, sporting, very nice, a thorough gentleman, cheerful". At a later date Mrs Verrall, having formed a guess as to the possible identity of the stranger, asked Mrs Willett for further particulars. The letter quoted above was written in answer to this inquiry.

Such experiences are no doubt difficult to define and express in language, and one may be in danger of attributing to Mrs Willett's statements on the subject a precision beyond what it would be fair to look for in them. The two accounts I have quoted relate to different occasions. Both may be accurate. But some interest attaches to a point of difference between them respecting the way in which the words of the communicator reach the automatist. No hearing with the ears is admitted in either case. But whereas the first account compares the coming of the words from outside into her mind to the experience of reading a book to oneself, the second account suggests a mental impression not only of *meaning*, but of the peculiarities of voice and pronunciation. If to this kind of mental *hearing* there was a corresponding mental *seeing*, there should by analogy result some kind of image or representation of external appearance. Mrs Willett, however, denies having any such representation in the typical silent D.I. "I don't think I mentally *visualise* any sort of 'appearance' with regard to [the communicators]—it is as 'minds' and 'characters' that they are to me, and yet *not at all* intangible or not-solid realities."

This last phrase I take to be an attempt to express the sense of objectivity which the experience brings with it. To the percipient the communicator is an independent reality—"a



presence not to be put by". It is possible that some faint and vague idea of appearance is not so wholly absent from her mind as her description seems to imply. But this much, at all events, is clear, that no distinctly visualised picture forms part of the phenomenon, much less any such full-blooded phantasms as most of us are familiar with in our dreams.

The bare awareness of presence may be regarded as the minimum degree in the scale of externalisation. But there is evidently a tendency to develop a higher degree in the scale by the addition of what I have called a psycho-sensory element. Even in the early days of Mrs Willett's mediumship she records a case of silent D.I. in which she was conscious of a presence *coming towards her*, though she was unable to describe how. This at least implies definite localisation in space, which seems to be a first approach to mental visualisation.

Definite localisation in space apparently without visualisation is well illustrated in the following case :

Writing from the Lake of Geneva on September 17, 1922, Mrs Willett records—

I had a strange experience to-day—seemingly meaningless, and yet it made such a deep impression on me that I send it on to you. I was so tired this morning . . . that I decided to go by the early boat to Thonon and back—fresh air and rest. It was a radiant morning—haze on the mountains—but coming back, as I was leaving Nyon, I saw a great white mass—so high I took it at first to be cloud. As we steamed towards Geneva it came more fully into view, and I suddenly realised it must be Mont Blanc—longed for but not seen by me since my arrival. Seen across the intense blue of the lake, and over a range of lower mountains, it was wonderfully beautiful.

I sat down and gazed—then suddenly I heard the words "the Dark Young Man"—not with my ears but inside my mind—as if someone had said it to me in a world where thoughts pass without speech—I hadn't thought of the Dark Young Man for more than a year I am sure—and have been thinking and reading about nothing likely to revive the thought of him.

Someone said, "He's helping you", and quite suddenly I seemed to tumble into a pool of knowledge—"Of course he's been helping you all the time".

I got no sense of who was the speaker, but the Dark Young Man in the flash of a moment was there—quite close to me. . . . We stood there side by side looking at Mont Blanc and the lake and the colour of it all—but especially at the great tower of snow—All sorts of things kept passing through my mind too quickly to seize—a precious moment of human companionship—I don't know how long it lasted—It was like a day-dream yet more real than any reality of waking life.

Why he came or how or where he went I know not.

When cross-examined by me at a later date concerning this incident Mrs Willett assured me in the most positive way that visualisation, or seeing with the mind's eye, formed no part of the experience. Yet her habitual description of this particular communicator as "the Dark Young Man" suggests that at times she must have visualised his presence in a pseudo-hallucinatory form.

In the silent D.I. next to be quoted something of visualised appearance seems to be implied in the descriptive phrase "a piercing glance". But there is an ambiguity even about this—as if somehow it were possible to be aware of appearance without "seeing" even with the eye of the mind. For the rest the impression of personality is for the most part of things impalpable.

January 21, 1911. (*Silent D.I. recorded on the following day.*)

Last night after I had blown out my candle and was just going to sleep I became aware of the presence of a man, a stranger, and—almost at the same moment—knew it was Henry Butcher. I felt his personality, very living, clear, strong, sweetness and strength combined. A piercing glance. He made no introduction but said nothing. So I said to him, "Are you Henry Butcher?" He said, "No, I am Henry Butcher's ghost". I was rather shocked at his saying this, and said, "Oh, very well, I am not at all afraid of ghosts or of the dead".

He said, "Ask Verrall (or A. W., or Dr Verrall, I can't remember which, but I think it was 'Verrall' *tout court*) if he remembers our last conversation (or meeting) and say the word to him.

Ék e téé."

He said it several times. I said "Very well". He seemed

only to want to give that message and then he went in a hurry. I never heard the word *Ék e téé* in my life and don't know what it means, but record this. He was alone, to the best of my knowledge. I never felt a greater sense of vitality and strength than that which seemed to flow from him.

*P.S.*—I hadn't been thinking about him at all.

Concerning this experience Mrs Willett, on January 23, 1911, wrote to Mrs Verrall as follows :

“ Will you let me know whether the following word (if it be one !) has any meaning or associations for your husband.<sup>1</sup> I only heard it *spoken* (D.I.), so don't know how to write it, but the *sound* is *Ék e téé*. First syllable *ék* to rhyme with *peck*. Next one *e* short as one would say *a* if saying quickly ‘ I saw a man ’ : in fact perhaps ‘ *Ék a ti* ’ would be nearer. *Tée* or *ti* to rhyme with *tea*, and long.”

Both the preceding incidents occurred when the percipient believed herself to be normal and fully conscious of her surroundings. In this, of course, she may have been mistaken. Not improbably there was some departure from normality, just as there seem to have been in both cases signs of a transition from the bare awareness of a presence to the stage of pseudo-hallucination.

In the next examples the departure from normality is more clearly evidenced, and is recognised by the automatist herself. She is in a state approaching trance, but not so far entranced as to be unable to recall the experience which she describes. In these experiences the psycho-sensory element has become more pronounced. They are, in fact, typical visual pseudo-hallucinations.

*Script of September 8, 1913. (Present, Mrs Verrall)*

Mrs Willett notes : “ When this script was ended, I felt I did not want to open my eyes and quite ‘ come back ’. I had a strong impression of the presence of Dr Verrall. He seemed to

<sup>1</sup> The word *Ék-a-tée* (Hecate) is a possible reference to a paper by Verrall published in the *Classical Review* for June 1908. But this must remain conjectural. I have no doubt that Butcher had read the paper.

be standing on the opposite side of the table—but my impression was not exactly as I had known him in life. He was now much larger, broader, much darker—very clear-eyed. I told Mrs V. of this impression.”

*Script of January 30, 1921. (Present, G. W. B.)*

*Note by G. W. B.* This script began with the words “Hexameter Hexagonal no Octagonal is the word”. It purported to come from E. G. At the end of the writing I asked how much of it she could remember. She said she could remember nothing except the word “octagonal”, and inquired what this meant. She added that she recollected having had a vivid vision, or picture, of E. G., clearer as to every detail of the face than in any experience she had had for a long time past.

*Script of September 23, 1925. (Present, G. W. B.)*

*Note by G. W. B.* After the sitting was over Mrs Willett told me that when the script was finished she perceived the Dark Young Man standing by her side. He had on a cape, or what appeared like a cape, a costume in which she did not remember ever having seen him before.

*Script of October 1, 1926.*

*Note by Mrs Sidgwick.* [The sitter] told us that when the above script ended Mrs Willett opened her eyes. She was at first extremely dazed and unable, it seemed, to realise where she was or who the sitter was. This lasted for a short time, and then she began to regain normal consciousness and to speak. She said everything seemed small to her. She had been very far away—further than she had been for a long time; that it was a heavenly experience, from which she hated to return. She had been with the Dark Young Man and a woman. She could not describe the latter—did not fully see her, apparently; but was aware of skirts. They had had a delightful conversation *à trois*.

*N.B.*—There was nothing in the script itself corresponding to a “conversation *à trois*”. Mrs Willett seems to be here describing an experience that *followed* the script and constituted a kind of waking stage.

*Sitting of October 16, 1929. (Present, G. W. B. and another.)*

The circumstances of this case were peculiar, and in some respects unique. I have called it a "sitting", but there had been no idea or intention of obtaining a script or communication of any kind. Mrs Willett and I were seated side by side, listening to the great Beethoven trio in B flat, which was being played on the gramophone outside the open door. Another person was in the room, lying on a couch, also listening to the music and paying no attention to us. He was the same who had sat with Mrs Willett on the occasion last mentioned, when the script of October 1, 1926, was obtained. Presently, to my surprise, Mrs Willett shut her eyes and whispered to me, "This room is full of presences". She proceeded to describe to me, still in whispers, what she was seeing, or, rather, mentally *sensing*—for though she spoke as if she was *seeing a phantasm*, she explained that it was with her mind's eye only that she saw. Her whole attention was concentrated on a single figure—that of a lady in an old-fashioned dress, young, and with thick and beautiful hair. She was standing beside the couch, a brilliant light streaming round or from her whole figure. . . .

Towards the end of the slow movement of the trio Mrs Willett remarked that she had been almost in trance, and only with much effort had succeeded in retaining consciousness.

It was impossible to make an absolutely contemporaneous record, but the above account is taken from a statement written down by me on the following morning. I can vouch for its substantial accuracy, and it was independently corroborated by Mrs Willett's own recollections of what happened.

The experiences described in these cases go beyond bare awareness of a presence, and beyond the definite localisation of a presence in space. The element of visualisation is so prominent that one might be tempted to class them as fully developed hallucinatory phantasms. But that is not how they appear to the automatist herself. In the course of preparing this paper I have endeavoured to elicit her views on this question, and find that she draws an absolute distinction between sensory phantasms (apparitions) and mentally visualised personalities. Every one of the five cases I have just cited she unhesitatingly assigned to the second of these categories. In fact it is possible to say

that in the whole course of her mediumistic experience Mrs Willett has never had a genuine visual hallucination *which she was afterwards able to remember and describe.*

Mrs Willett assures me that in her normal state she is a very poor visualiser. It seems probable that her powers in this direction are markedly increased as she passes towards a state of trance. But any visions *which she can recall* on returning to normal consciousness have invariably for her the character of mental pictures. They are pseudo-hallucinations, not hallucinations. And the difference is of kind, not merely of degree. Like presences these visions have an objectivity of their own, but not exactly the objectivity associated with sense perception.

It is quite possible that when in partial trance Mrs Willett may have visions of her communicators which she does not remember, and that these also may take a pseudo-hallucinatory form. In forming a judgment upon this point, however, we have to fall back upon the records themselves, since the automatist cannot afterwards comment on, or be cross-examined on, experiences of which she has no recollection.

In forming a judgment on the nature of her experiences in deep trance we are under a yet greater disability in this respect; for whereas the visions of her light trance are occasionally recalled, of what has happened in deep trance she never seems to remember anything. I think, however, that there can be little doubt that when in deep trance she is in a kind of dream-land, and that the personalities of her trance have the genuine hallucinatory character of the personages in vivid dreams.<sup>1</sup>

It may be difficult to furnish conclusive proof of this from the records; but certainly that is the impression which the study of them produces, and which is forced even more clearly upon the experienced sitter. When she is in deep trance Mrs Willett seems to lose all consciousness of her actual surroundings—always with the very important exception that she remains in touch with the sitter—and to live for the time being in a world of her own in which her communicators appear to her as palpable and life-like human beings, of whose features and dress she can take note, whose touch she can perceive, and in whose presence she feels “at home”, as in a company of friends. Something has been added to mere mental visualisation—some-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Willett tells me that her own dreams are of this realistic character.

thing different in kind. No doubt this difference is physiologically conditioned; but into this region of inquiry I am not competent to adventure.

In support of the view here taken of the apparently sensory objectivity of the personalities of her deep trance I refer the reader to the D.I.s quoted in "The Ear of Dionysius", and generally to the many other passages from D.I.s cited in this paper.

The following example of a waking stage is also not without interest as bearing on the question:

*Waking Stage following Trance-script of September 8, 1918.*  
Present, O. J. L.

I see a young man I don't know. He's standing near a very tall man, with a moustache, the man has. The tall man has got his hand on his shoulder. I've seen that tall man before in a dream. He's got gloves with gauntlets and fur inside them. The other young man said to me, "I haven't worn my brass hat lately". He hasn't got much voice, he doesn't seem to know how to speak very well—(Pause).

They're so icily cold. As I look at them I feel as if my forehead were resting on a solid block of ice. It's like a freezing wind blowing from them to me. (Pause.)

This room's full of ghosts. There are three there, two there, and one over there. Men, all of them. Three of them are young. I can't see them, but I know they are there. I can even tell the places where they are. One of them seems to have been mixed up with rivers. . . . My power is getting dimmer. One of them seems connected with a band, a military band. I don't mean that he played in it, but in his mind just at present is that thought. I don't know what music it is I hear, loud and delicious. He seemed to think about it *à propos* of nothing very much.

The waking stage is, as the term implies, a transition from trance to normal consciousness. In the above example we find a corresponding transition from what I take to be hallucinatory phantasms to presences located in the room in which the sitting took place, but apparently not otherwise externalised. It is not absolutely clear that the one transition is causally connected with the other. But I think some connection between them may be inferred with a high degree of probability.

A striking passage occurs in the waking stage following the D.I. of March 5, 1912. (*Present, G. W. B.*)

... Good bye : thank you

Oh ! what a heavenly thing a world of souls is. Oh ! They're going—They've gone—Seem[ed] like minds only, just as they were going. They were solid before ; then they got transparent ; then they got dim, and I got so heavy . . .

The transition in this case also may correspond to a transition from trance to comparative normality, but as the waking stage continued for a short time after the utterance quoted, the more natural interpretation may be that the change represents the effect of a diminution of *rapport* between the communicators and the medium. It is not so much that her condition alters, as that the communicators are, so to speak, taking their departure.

Enough has perhaps now been said to justify the statement, made at the beginning of this section, that a correlation can be traced in Mrs Willett's case between the different states of consciousness in which her mediumistic phenomena are produced and the different degrees in which her communicators appear to her to be externalised. That her psychical condition is an important element in determining the degree of externalisation seems to me fairly well established. Probably it is the most important, though not the only one.

#### (d) INDICATIONS FROM WAKING STAGE

All trance-sittings must end in a return to normal consciousness. It is only when the transition is accompanied by a continuance of utterances bearing some affinity to trance-utterances, yet distinguishable from them, that we apply to it the term "waking stage".

A study of the Willett scripts leads to the conclusion that sittings during which, judging from other indications, the medium has been practically entranced are sometimes followed by a waking stage, and sometimes not. Hence while the occurrence of a waking stage necessarily implies some degree of trance in the preceding part of the sitting, absence of a waking stage cannot be taken as proof of normality. Again, while deep trance is probably always followed by a waking



stage, the occurrence of a waking stage is not of itself sufficient to distinguish deep trance from partial trance.

In these circumstances it is impossible to attach high importance to the waking stage *taken by itself* as an indication of the psychic state of the medium during the preceding part of the sitting. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to ignore it altogether. Both the fact of its occurrence, and the length to which it extends in any given case, may be of real help in forming an opinion when considered in conjunction with other criteria.

## CHAPTER III

### TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS

- (a) IMPRESSIONS OF " PRESENCES ", AND THE MORE OR LESS VIVID EXTERNALISATION OF THESE
- (b) MENTAL IMAGES
- (c) FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS
- (d) IMPULSES AND INHIBITIONS
- (e) VERBALLY CONVEYED MESSAGES

THE characteristic form of the communications exemplified in the Willett phenomena is that of mental impressions that appear to the sensitive to have their origin in an agency which she distinguishes from her conscious self. The communicators declare that these impressions are telepathically conveyed, and this account of them I think we are entitled to accept, unless another and a better can be found.

The impressions in Mrs Willett's case may be conveniently divided into the classes enumerated below :

- (a) Impressions of " presences ", together with the more or less vivid externalisations of these.
- (b) Mental images.
- (c) Feelings and emotions.
- (d) Impulses and inhibitions.
- (e) Verbally conveyed messages.

- (a) IMPRESSIONS OF " PRESENCES ", AND THE MORE OR LESS VIVID EXTERNALISATION OF THESE

The subject of " presences " and their externalisation has been dealt with at some length in the preceding chapter, but there are one or two further observations which it may be worth while to make.

A presence pure and simple represents, as we have seen, the lowest grade of externalisation ; and the impression of such a

presence may be described, for the purpose of this chapter, as a mental percept of an individual intelligence or self, more or less definitely located in space relatively to the percipient, but otherwise void of all sensory or psycho-sensory element.

Here it may be well to repeat the warning already given in the introduction to this paper. Where I use language appropriate to the standpoint of the scripts, and write as if I assumed the impressions of the automatist to be due, in accordance with their face claim, to the agency of independent discarnate minds, I have neither the intention nor the desire, whatever my own views may be, to exclude any other hypothesis which can adequately account for the sense of objectivity which the impressions carry with them. In particular the possible effects of interaction between dissociated and independent, or quasi-independent, "selves" within the personality of the medium should never be lost sight of.

Objection may perhaps be taken, even from the standpoint of the scripts, to applying the word *communication* in connection with the bare awareness of a presence. A presence may suggest a potential communicator, but can the mere fact of its being perceived entitle us to treat the impression as an actual communication? "Communication" would seem to imply purposive agency: can the bare awareness of a presence carry with it the impression of a purposive agency—or, indeed, of agency of any kind beyond that which a material object may be supposed to exercise as a factor in producing the perception of which it is the object?

It is true that in Mrs Willett's case the impression is seldom, if ever, that of a perfectly indeterminate entity in some sense external to herself. It is as "minds and characters" that presences are apprehended by her. Yet even so a doubt remains concerning the parts respectively played in the experience by what we usually call agent and percipient. Are these impressions of "mind and character" to be regarded as communications intentionally conveyed by the personality concerned, or is the activity really on the side of the percipient alone? Or is the phenomenon in some way a blend of both?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question here propounded is of more importance than might at first sight appear. For it cannot be confined to the mere perception of "presences". Similar doubts may be raised in connection with more developed forms of

Another point to be noticed is this : Mrs Willett claims to be able to distinguish between one communicator and another without any kind of visualisation, and sometimes independently of the reception of any verbal message. Writing to Mrs Verrall on September 27, 1909 (see p. 52 above), she says, "I don't feel a sense of 'seeing', but an intense sense of personality like a blind person perhaps might have—and of inflections, such as amusement or emotion on the part of the speaker. If you ask me *how* I know that E. G. is speaking and not F., I can't exactly define, except that to me it would be impossible to doubt one instant—and with E. G. I often know he is there a second or two before he speaks."

Now if the means of identifying the communicator is already given in the mental apprehension of a "presence", the question at once suggests itself whether its externalisation either as a mental picture (*i.e.* a pseudo-hallucination) or as a sensory phantasm really adds anything that is at once new and objective. Is the externalised form a something contributed by the communicator, or is it due to the subjective activity of the percipient building by association of ideas on the objective foundation provided by the mental percept, much as, in the case of ordinary perception, we build subjectively on the data immediately provided by sensation ?

Readers of *Phantasms of the Living* will recollect the elaborate discussion which Gurney devotes to this question in connection with veridical apparitions. The conclusion he arrives at is that a veridical apparition is the hallucinatory shape in which a telepathic impulse from the mind of a distant person is embodied for the percipient. As such it is subjective. All that is veridical in it is packed into the telepathic impulse in the form of "a nucleus of a transferred impression" ; the embodiment

telepathy—doubts involving the distinction between what may be described as active thought-communication by one mind *to* another, and active thought-acquisition by one mind *from* another. We shall find, when we come to deal in Part II of this paper with statements made by the communicators themselves, that great emphasis is laid upon the distinction in the Willett scripts. A fuller consideration of the subject will then be called for. In the meantime I shall assume that the communications, of which typical examples are given in the present chapter, are communications in the strict sense of the term—that is to say, mental impressions felt by the sensitive to proceed from an intelligent agency distinct from herself.

is the percipient's own creation. In the main I do not dissent from this view. It is obvious, however, that in cases where the apparition is recognised the telepathic nucleus must at least contain some element that makes for identification. And this element must be psychical.

I suggest that the "telepathic nucleus" is something analogous to the impression received by Mrs Willett of "mind, character, and personality" in connection with her impressions of "presences".

This would not, I think, be incompatible with Gurney's view, though I do not say it was the view he would actually have accepted had he been acquainted with the Willett phenomena. Concerning the nature of the "telepathic impulse" and the "nucleus of a transferred impression" he is studiously indefinite. But he is obviously unwilling to admit that it can be anything like an idea or mental picture of the living agent formed in the consciousness of that agent, and transmitted from his mind to that of the percipient. He points out that in experimental telepathy the image transferred resembles the precise object thought of, and not anything not consciously occupying the agent's mind, whereas his own personal appearance is certainly not what we should expect to be consciously occupying the agent's mind in moments of crisis or of death.

There is force in Gurney's argument, though less, I think, when applied to what we are assuming to be disembodied spirits than when applied to telepathy from the living. For disembodied spirits, if such exist and can communicate, are presumably free to choose their own times and seasons, and may have good reasons for consciously and deliberately using a recollection of their personal appearance when in the body as a means of identification by the percipient. I do not think we can exclude this possibility, although, for my own part, I incline to the view that all visualisations of communicators, and *a fortiori* all fully developed hallucinatory phantasms, are to be regarded as subjective constructions—symbolic, it may be, of some objective reality, but still subjective constructions—*except in so far as there is evidence for attributing to a communicator a definite intention to transmit a pictorial image of himself.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted, however, that some spontaneous cases, especially of apparitions about the time of death, in which veridical details of personal

It must be remembered that the communicators who form the effective *dramatis personæ* of Mrs Willett's automatic experiences are very few in number, that of these few she had known Myers and A. W. Verrall while still living, and that she had seen photographs of Edmund Gurney, Henry Sidgwick, and also of the Dark Young Man and of the "lady in an old-fashioned dress", though in the case of these last two she has never identified them as persons of whose existence and history she had any normal knowledge. The material for a subjective externalisation was thus ready at hand for her to draw upon. It must be admitted, however, that in the case of the Dark Young Man the externalisation did not slavishly follow the automatist's recollection of the photograph of him which she had seen. More than once in trance-sittings has she commented upon the photograph as being in certain details an incorrect copy of the original as known to her from direct observation. It is open to us to conjecture that something more than purely subjective construction was here at work.

#### (b) MENTAL IMAGES

Cases in which the scripts give evidence of a deliberate attempt on the part of a communicator to recall his own personal appearance when in the body, and to transmit an impression of it to the medium, are very rare ; but there are at least two instances of it. The record of the earlier and more striking of these is worth reproducing at some length. The passage in question is taken from a sitting with Sir Oliver Lodge on September 24, 1910, which combined script with D.I. in the manner usual at that date. I judge the automatist to have been in a state of light trance.

The preliminary script ends with an intimation from Myers that "Gurney wants to give some data bearing on the telepathic impact". D.I. follows, and the passage I am about to quote takes the form of a conversation *à trois*, Mrs Willett repeating out loud what Gurney says to her and interposing her own observations. To assist the reader I have indicated in square

appearance and circumstance are correctly conveyed, such as could not be known to or guessed by the percipient, are difficult to explain either as impressions telepathically transmitted or as purely subjective elaborations. Experiences of this kind have no place in the records of Willett phenomena.

brackets the speakers to whom the various utterances properly belong.

[*Mrs W.*] E. G. is talking.

[*E. G.*] Don't feel oppressed. You're going to do well. . . .  
(*To O. J. L.*) I want you to see the passage of thought, not ocular nor aural. Mediums. (*To Mrs W.*) Now come, how does it seem to you now? Answer out loud. What, he says, do you often say? Well, say it to Lodge.

[*Mrs W.*] I see what he wants. I'm to tell you what I feel, my thoughts. He's very very near. I feel him just there (*in front near face*). I can only think of those words, they come running in my head: "Nearer he is than breathing closer than hands and feet". I'm all as if I was in light. I'm not seeing with my eyes (*eyes closed all the time*), but it feels as if he was holding both my hands and looking down at me. I'm not seeing his face by — I'm feeling it there. It's always got that look of having known pain. And he says to me, go over it just as it strikes you. I think it's the eyes, the lids are so —

[*E. G.*] Stop a moment, and tell Lodge the thought. I'm throwing in the recollection of what I took my bodily semblance to be, incarnate; see how she catches it. How dangerous analogies are, and yet you could get something by thinking of a magic lantern slide.<sup>1</sup> Dependence on the vividness of my recollection; it's a calling up on my part, a conscious effort, not involuntary. Lodge, are you seeing?

[*O. J. L.*] Yes.

[*E. G.*] Go on.

[*Mrs W.*] I see the lids drooping over the eyes, and how very restful they are to see, like something strong, something that makes me not afraid. Very sad, and yet at the back of that sadness something else; strength, and something else. Next thing I think about, it seems, the delicate backward sweep of the nostrils and the mouth, not quite straight, but oh, how humorous it can look. Not with eyes, this sight.

[*E. G.*] Go on, go down.

[*Mrs W.*] And it's a, yes, how thin his face is; then the ears rather low on the head, and how the chin balances all the face, and such —

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Holland script of November 7, 1903, in which the same illustration is used. This script was published in vol. xxi. of *Proceedings*, p. 186 (June 1908), and had been read by Mrs Willett.

[*E. G.*] Yes, it was my chiefest attitude to life, that compassion.

[*Mrs W.*] And then —

[*E. G.*] Yes, say it out loud, that's what I want Lodge to know.

[*Mrs W.*] It's what I feel, I feel it's good to be here.

\* \* \* \* \*

Evidently what we have here is an attempt to illustrate the telepathic transmission of a memory-image from the communicator to the percipient. The impression is without doubt meant to be understood as a deliberately communicated impression involving not only intention on the part of the agent but effort. The case seems to stand on a widely different footing from the more ordinary examples of visualisation of a presence which it is possible to attribute to the purely subjective activity of the percipient.

I pass to what purport to be transferred mental pictures other than visions of the communicators themselves. Such pictures occur much more sparingly in Mrs Willett's mediumistic experience than, for instance, in that of Mrs King or Mrs Wilson, and rarely except when she is in trance. This may be due to her comparative lack of visualising power when in a state of waking consciousness, for neither Mrs King nor Mrs Wilson, with whom this method of communication is abundantly employed, is a trance-medium. Sometimes the pictures are accompanied by explanatory verbal comments ; sometimes it is left to the unaided ingenuity of the investigators to discover a significance in them. Significance of some kind I think they always possess—that is to say, they are invariably symbolic of something beyond the scenes immediately represented. For the most part this inner meaning is hidden from the automatist, and intended to be so. Indeed it is probably with this very intention that the symbolic form is adopted.

The following may be cited as examples :

*Extract from the D.I. of May 15, 1912. (G. W. B. present and recording.)*

He [*i.e.* the Dark Young Man] speaks about a lady. She doesn't understand very well how the thing is worked. He says, She's been here longer than I have, and I'm helping her



now. She wants to get a thought conveyed. I'll try in this way : Some day—he says this not to be taken as a prognostication, but eventually, when the sum of all things is complete. (He's showing me pictures and explaining them to me. It seems to be a sort of gallery we're walking through. . . .) A long grey sheet of water, rushes swaying—(*gesticulates with her hands*) the lapping—It's very beautiful. "They are waiting on the shore for the boat to bear them o'er." Who shall ferry them ? He need bring no coin (*looking very happy*) Oh ! it's wonderful—it's like something I know about, but it's different. It is confusing. There's a boat—a sort of barge. One figure, one ; a crown (*puts her hands round her head*), black, black draperies, I think. It's coming nearer.

OH ! When you said that, of course I'm remembering, of course. He said, "And from them rose a cry which shivered to the tingling stars". But what is the *detail* that's *different* in what I'm showing you ? he says—There's only one Queen ! It's an allegory—

[*G. W. B.*] Yes, I understand.

"and on the mere the"—it's not "wailing" (*long pause, during part of which the lips move silently*). He says to me, Don't hurry, but don't give up. (*Pause*) Give me time. (*Strikes the palm of her left hand emphatically with her fist, then says triumphantly :*) I've got it ! Contrasts (*pause*) that—conception of Tennyson's with the conception embodied in the other poem, "Opal into rose melts in that morn no heart imagineth".

The percipient is in this case able, with a little assistance from the communicator, to identify the literary source from which the scene impressed upon her mental vision is derived. She also realises that the vision is concerned with a death, and that a contrast is intended :—the mournful draperies of the barge that received the dying King Arthur, and the wailing of the three Queens, on the one hand ; on the other the conception embodied in Myers's poem, "On a Spring Morning at Sea" (*Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 54) :

"And such a sight as this is, I suppose  
 Shall meet thee on the morrow of thy death ;  
 And pearl to sapphire, opal into rose  
 Melt in that morn no heart imagineth".

What the automatist does not understand is the inner significance of the vision, its application to real individuals, and the reason of the substitution of "one Queen" for "three Queens". These are matters reserved for the interpreters to unravel.

*Extracts from the D.I. of February 28, 1914. (Present and recording, G. W. B.)*

Someone's showing me a picture and talking at the same time.

\* \* \* \*

Oh, if I could only say it quickly and get done with it. It's about a cave and a group of men. Somebody then—a trident, rather like a toasting fork, I think.

Poseidon, Poseidon.

Who was it said, It may be that the gulfs will wash us down—find the great Achilles that we knew?

He's got a flaming torch in his hand. And then someone said to me, Can't you think of Noah and the grapes?

\* \* \* \*

Now I seem to be walking about a school, and I meet a *dark boy*,<sup>1</sup> and—it's the name of a Field Marshal I'm trying to get, a German name. And then something says, All this is only memories revived: it's got nothing to do with the purely literary—(*sighs*) There are two people in that literary thing—chiefly concerned in it. They're very close friends (*sobs*)—they've thought it all out together.

\* \* \* \*

[*Waking stage*] Oh, what a beautiful lake! I'm standing on a sort of projecting part running out into it, and there are olive trees all round me.

That little boat, you know.

\* \* \* \*

How beautiful those mountains are. I like the wild part of them above the tilth.

The first three of these extracts have already been published in my paper on "The Ear of Dionysius" (*Proceedings*, vol. xxix.), to which I refer the reader for explanations. The last two, from the waking stage of the same sitting, have nothing to do with

<sup>1</sup> The "dark boy" is A. W. V. as a school-boy at Wellington.

"The Ear of Dionysius," but are connected with the Dark Young Man, of whose identity the normal Mrs Willett is kept in ignorance. They are quite intelligible to the investigating group.

A very special form of significant mental pictures is provided by cases in which the automatist appears to "see" something, and draws a copy of what she is "seeing". I do not say that wherever a drawing occurs in her scripts we are to infer that the thought of the communicator has been impressed upon her in pictorial form. But there is good evidence that this sometimes happens, and it is of specially frequent occurrence when the object drawn is a symbol appropriate to one of the communicating group and is used for the purpose of identification.

There is an interesting variant of this type in which the communicator, endeavouring to transmit a difficult word, seems to the automatist to spell it out letter by letter to her in visible form. Thus in the D.I. of October 8, 1911, of which I was in charge, after a reference to the "transcendental self", the record continues as follows :

Oh, he says, back of that again lies something I dimly reach after and you [i.e. *the sitter*] would call, he says, the Absalom—not Absalom—I'll spell it you, he says : A B S O L and he says O M and rubs O M out and puts instead U T E . . .

In this case the medium apparently sees the letters written up, as it were, on a black board.

The next example is taken from a trance-sitting of June 19, 1916. It was a sitting for script, not for D.I., but in the extract here given spoken remarks are interpolated by the automatist on her own account, or else as repeating what the communicator says to her.

[*Spoken*] A man holds up before me letters . . . I have never known him, but I call him the Dark Young Man.

[*Sitter*] What sort of letters ?

[*Spoken*] Big square letters—would you like me to copy what he showed me ?

[*Written*] OX OXFORD

[*Spoken*] He holds another letter up.

[*Written*] Lux Mundi (*here follows a drawing of a lighted candle*).

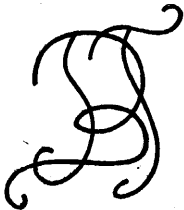
[*Spoken*] I say this belongs and candlestick He laughs and says G. W. B. will explain. . . .

The "I" in the last spoken words I take to be the Dark Young Man, whose remark is repeated in the first person. In drawing a candle the automatist is probably copying what she sees, just as in the case of the letters. *Candle* and *candlestick* are among the identification symbols referred to above.

The extract next to be quoted combines the characteristics both of drawings and of letter-spellings in the form of a monogram. It is further noteworthy as affording an instance of a distinctly visualised mental picture "seen" by the automatist while in a state of normal or nearly normal consciousness. For the script from which it is taken is a lone script, and the record shows conclusively that Mrs Willett was throughout awake and aware of her surroundings.

*From the Lone Script of September 26, 1922.*

There are two who are in all this Both young a man & a woman and hers the influence you feel Hers is the influence of which you feel the pressure A young and very gracious lady . . . I hear the word Perseus & she draws for me the letters



that is a J, not a T.

This is only for the purpose of identifying her . . .

Mrs Willett probably recognises that the allusion in this passage is to Burne Jones and the Perseus series of pictures painted by him, but she does not know, supraliminally at least, who the lady is, or how the allusion can serve "the purpose of identifying her". The identification is not for her benefit, but for that of the interpreters. The foregoing are examples of visualised pictures which, when the medium is in deep trance, probably tend to take for her the form of fully developed sensory hallucinations.

Communications which are primarily dependent for their significance on impressions of sounds (other than verbal sounds, which form a class apart), of scents, and of physical pain are rarely found in Willett script, but do occasionally occur. In these cases also the impressions may take a hallucinatory form in deep-trance sittings.

The subjoined passages, relating to the sense of sound and the sense of smell respectively, are of some interest. They are both taken from the deep-trance D.I. of February 28, 1914, and have already been published in my paper on "The Ear of Dionysius", together with other extracts from the same sitting belonging to the literary puzzle there described. This puzzle, as my readers may remember, purports to have been devised by Henry Butcher and A. W. Verrall in the spirit world, and consists in bringing together by gradual instalments a number of apparently disconnected topics whose inner connection is only revealed when the final instalment provides the key to the whole. Among the various topics is the siege of Syracuse by the Athenians, and the fate of the unfortunate captives imprisoned and set to work in the stone quarries after the defeat of the besiegers. The normal Mrs Willett, be it noted, was entirely ignorant of any part of the story.

... Lots of wars—A siege I hear the sound of chipping  
*(Strikes the fingers of one hand repeatedly against the palm of the other)* It's on stone.

The sound in this case is not an unmeaning noise. It possesses a distinctive quality which the automatist proceeds to associate with the chipping on stone by hammer and chisel. No doubt the interpretation of the sound, as well as the idea of the sound itself, must have been in the mind of the communicator, and may have formed an integral part of the message he wished to transmit. But the record as it stands suggests to me that *for the automatist* the sound is primary, and the interpretation of it an immediate inference drawn by herself.

Having regard to the fact that Mrs Willett was deeply entranced throughout the sitting, I think it probable that the case was one of genuine auditory hallucination. She hears the sound as with her bodily ears, and not merely as with the "inward ear" of the mind. But it does not follow that the

message was received by the percipient in the first instance in the form of a *sensation* of sound—still less, of course, that it was in the form of a sensation of sound that it existed in the mind of the communicator. Rather, I think, should we conceive it as both sent and received in the form of an idea of sound, though at once transmuted, in the case of the percipient, into sensation by a psycho-physical process such as operates in dreams.

Much the same observations apply also to the second of the two passages referred to, which concerns the sense of smell.

... Somebody said something about Father Cam walking arm in arm with the Canongate. What does that mean? Oh! (*sniffs*) What a delicious scent! No rosebud yet by dew empearled . . .

“Father Cam” and “the Canongate” walking arm in arm symbolises the co-operation of the two friends Verrall and Butcher.<sup>1</sup> The automatist is wondering what the meaning can possibly be, when suddenly she stops and sniffs. She is smelling something, declares it to be “delicious”, and finally recognises it as the scent of roses.<sup>2</sup>

The case follows in every way the analogy of the previous one. In the mind of the communicator the idea of roses must have accompanied the idea of the smell. But for the automatist the smell appears to be prior to the interpretation of it. It is recognised as “delicious” before it is recognised as the smell of roses. Again, the experience seems to be clearly one of sensation—hallucinatory, doubtless, but still of sensation and not of imagined sensation. The “sniffing” alone makes it difficult to draw any other conclusion. One does not sniff an idea. But this does not compel us to suppose that the message of the communicator started with, or even included, an actual sensation experienced by himself.

I know of no cases in the Willett records in which a *definite claim* is made to the sympathetic transference from the communicator to the percipient of a sensation, or rather of the idea

<sup>1</sup> For explanation see my paper on “The Ear of Dionysius” (*Proceedings*, vol. xxix., p. 211).

<sup>2</sup> The rose and the scent of roses in Willett script are symbols of S. H. Butcher. The normal Mrs Willett was quite ignorant of their inner meaning.

of sensation, of physical pain.<sup>1</sup> There have been, however, two occasions when it seems probable that this is what we are meant to infer. If I am right in my interpretation the same incident is referred to on both occasions, namely the accident by which the Dark Young Man lost his life when climbing in the high Alps.

*Waking Stage of D.I. of May 11, 1912. (Present, G. W. B.)*

OH, oh, if I could only remember you when you're gone away. I always forget you. I can't make out how I ever came to know you, and why you will never tell me your name, and why you're so kind to me. That's the man—that's my new friend. He's young and—he's got people belonging to him . . .

Oh! I fell down, I fell down. Oh! my head, my head, my head. Oh, oh, oh. (*Groans*) Oh, oh, oh, I bumped my head. Oh, it's all here (*putting her hands to her head below and behind the ears*).

(*Pause: heavy breathing*) Oh, I wish my head would get empty . . .

My contemporary note is as follows: "All this was so dramatically uttered that for the moment I thought Mrs W. had really hurt her head. Apparently, however, it is only the idea of the Dark Young Man's fall, and consequent injury, passing into a sympathetic feeling so strong that the automatist imagines it to have happened to herself."

What I take to be a second reference to the same incident occurred in the D.I. of February 28, 1914, from which I have already had several occasions to quote. The D.I. had been occupied with the "Dionysius puzzle" when the subject was abruptly broken off, and the automatist burst out on her own account:

Oh, oh, it's like frightful explosions going on all round me. [*There was no sound outside to account for this exclamation.*]

Oh, you've come back. I was frightened for a minute. (*Pause*) Why didn't you ever speak?

<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon is often met with in Piper and Thompson records. Cf. also *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 220, where Myers speaks of it as suggesting "incipient possession". It is interesting therefore to note that Mrs Willett's communicators absolutely deny possession in her case. See Part II., Chapter I., p. 169 below.

Oh dear ! oh, my head, oh, my head (*same words repeated five or six times*). Stamp, stamp, thump, thump—Oh, it makes me shudder.

Why didn't you ever speak to me through all those long hours when you stood there taking care of me ?<sup>1</sup> . . .

It is to be observed (1) that on neither of these two occasions is any explicit suggestion made that the pain in the head had a telepathic origin of any kind, still less that it had its source in the mind of the Dark Young Man ; (2) that on the first occasion Mrs Willett had already in the course of the sitting complained of her head being " full to painfulness ", and again, just before the end of the waking stage, exclaimed that she wished " her head would get empty ". Similarly on the second occasion, after the sitting was over, and she had returned to normality, she complained of an uncomfortable feeling in her head " as if the inside of it had been knocked about ".

In these circumstances it is impossible to be quite sure that the experiences described had not a purely physical origin. Nevertheless I have a strong conviction that underlying them there was a telepathic communication of some sort, although it must be admitted that the automatist gives no sign of realising it as such. The peculiar nature of the pain, the association of it with a " fall " or a " thump ", the introduction into both contexts of the Dark Young Man, and the complete absence of any external disturbing cause certainly make for this conclusion.

If the interpretation I have put upon the above incidents is correct, the Dark Young Man's contribution to the experience must have been the idea of pain as it presented itself in connection with the mental picture of the accident. It was presumably received as idea in the mind of the percipient and at once transmuted into actual sensation. If this be so, nothing could more clearly illustrate the nature of sensory hallucination. The pain felt by the automatist was real enough. We call it hallucinatory solely with reference to its *origin*. It was *mentally initiated* instead of having as its starting point the condition of the bodily part apparently affected. If and in so

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a time when Mrs Willett was seriously ill and was conscious of the presence of the Dark Young Man watching over her.



far as it reproduced an idea in the mind of the communicator it was a *veridical* hallucination.

(c) FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Mrs Willett, as we have already seen, claims that her impressions of presences commonly include not only a sense of personality and character, but also of "inflections such as amusement or emotion on the part of the speaker". Waiving the question raised a while back (p. 91) of the parts respectively played in these experiences by the communicator and the automatist, I proceed under the present heading to give a few specific instances in illustration of the claim.

Her first experience of the kind (of date January 7, 1909) has already been quoted (p. 50) as the earliest example of a silent D.I. Mrs Willett had been anxious about her son's health.

I was at dinner, she records, when I felt a strong impression of F. W. H. M. scolding me. I can't explain—but I felt disapprobation and felt it coming from him, and that he was wishing me to know that there was no need for any anxiety. I had the impression that he was conveying to me that if I doubted the impression I was receiving I was to try for script after dinner. I was quite normal. I was silent, I suppose, for a few minutes, but I continued my dinner and later—8.40—did try for script ; when the following came :

Myers yes write now no cause for any anxiety none yes let him go back to school no anxiety.

The above record is of additional interest as furnishing an example of a *thought* conveyed without the assistance of verbal or pictorial expression. It is not until the automatist tries for script that the message takes a definitely verbal form.

*Silent D.I. of February 18, 1909. (Extract from Mrs Willett's record.)*

About 11.30 to-day (February 18) I began to feel that very restless feeling . . . At 11.45 I sat down, close to a cheerful window, with a feeling of "heavy" impression that F. was waiting. I felt as if it were somebody else's impatience.

The first words that came into my mind were ; "Myers yes

now take a sheet of paper only for notes no script but make notes of what I say " I enclose the notes I made. . . .

The whole conversation ended by F. saying he did not want to tire me, and so "farewell". I just got a flash of an impression of E. G. wanting to make a joke and F. not letting him—but it is all *very dim that*, I am clear up to "farewell".

The last sentence appears to provide another example of thought without words or mental imagery.

February 21, 1909. (*Lone Script*; *Myers communicating*.)

(*Note by Mrs Willett concerning her feelings during the writing*.)

"I was restless during writing, as if feeling intense eagerness pouring on to me and I not keeping pace with the dictation."

February 1, 1910. (*Lone Script*.)

Gurney it is quite a short script I want to write Myers says a note made re D.I. of Friday may give rise to . . . inaccurate deductions. . . . Myers wishes the record AMMENDED (*sic*) by a note

Myers yes let me go on . . .

*Mrs Willett notes*: "During all this script I felt very muddled and confused. The writing came in bits. Just before the [name Myers] I got a sense of F. *being there* and then of his brushing away E. G. and starting off the script himself with great impatience and in a very peremptory mood."

June 18, 1911. (*Lone Script*; *E. G. communicating*.)

. . . the passionate desire to return to drive into incarnate minds the conviction of one's own identity the partial successes and the blank failures and the failures to help I know the burden of it the burden of it to its uttermost fraction

*Note by Mrs W.* "There was a terrible sense of struggle—almost of pain—that I got here."

July 15, 1915. (*Lone Script at ———*.) *Extract from Note by Mrs Willett, written after the Script was finished*:

I reached the house about 11.40 and was taken to the ——— Room, where ——— joined me. After a few minutes conversation she left me alone in the room. I wandered about it at first and looked at the pictures, and then I seemed to pass beyond

them, as it were, into the spirit of the room—full of remembered peace and happiness and rest—a strange sense of familiarity and homelikeness.

The room seemed full of unseen presences and of their blessing; it was as if barriers were swept away and I and they became one. I had no sense of personality in the unseen element—it was just there and utterly satisfying . . .

I can't explain at all why the place moves me so deeply with, as I have said, that feeling of coming back after long absence to loved and remembered surroundings. I have only been in the room once before when I tried for script some time in April or May.

All the above examples of communication of feelings and emotions rest upon statements made by the automatist when awake and normal, and are concerned with impressions experienced by her when in a state of practically normal consciousness. In the case of her unremembered trance-experiences, we no longer have her waking comments to help us and have to fall back on the records themselves. It is worthy of note that I can find only one example in the trance-records that is at all closely comparable with the examples already given. The emotion in this case is that aroused in a husband when recalling the grief into which he had been plunged by the early loss of a much-loved wife. The husband himself had by this time passed over, and the grief had become a far off memory, but a memory vivid enough, it would seem, to act telepathically on the automatist.

*Extract from D.I. of April 12, 1914. (Present, G. W. B.)*

. . . Oh, how my heart aches—Oh, I'm in where there's been such awful grief, and I can feel the old pain streaming all over me. It's someone else's pain. It's just heart-breaking. Oh, *Che faro senza Euridice* . . .

In this, as in the previous examples, the automatist feels the emotion as pure emotion, and at the same time is conscious of it as somebody else's emotion. In other trance-sittings the communicated emotion always seems to take some symbolic external form. For instance in the following examples, in which the communicator is presumably visualised in bodily

shape, amusement on the part of the communicator finds expression in laughter, pity in a sigh ; and the automatist herself laughs or sighs in sympathy.

*D.I. of October 8, 1911. (Present, G. W. B.)*

See the passage from this D.I. already quoted on p. 99. The automatist has made the absurd mistake of giving out *The Absolute* as *The Absolom*. Gurney is amused by the mistake ; whereupon the automatist remarks, " Edmund, when you laugh I can't help laughing too ".

*Extract from Trance-script of August 2, 1915. (Present, Mrs V.)*

... [*Dr Verrall communicating*] Would it hurt you to give my chair away ?

(*Mrs V. We've given one away.*)

No the other cushions (*drawing of chair with sloping back*) only I see as in a dark glasly [*sic*] the (*Here Mrs W. sighed deeply, and the sitter suggested that she was tired, and should stop.*) that was my sigh if you can understand The (*Here Mrs W. paused and with some distress said*) " I can't write it ". (" *Can you say it ?* " *the sitter asked, and she replied :*) It's about those boys that will never walk again.

In another case (D.I. of May 13, 1912) the sadness of a communicator takes the form of tears, and the automatist responds by bursting into sobs.

#### (d) IMPULSES AND INHIBITIONS

An impulse to try for script is not uncommonly felt by automatists, and at times has been experienced by Mrs Willett with almost irresistible force, even when the circumstances made it awkward or unpleasant to yield to it. Thus early in the morning of December 8, 1908, while she was still in bed, a strong impulse came upon her to get up and write. She notes in a contemporary record : " Room cold and I very sleepy—resisted and tried to settle off—no good. At last got up. Writing began almost before pen touched paper." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare the experiences of Mrs Holland, described in *Proceedings*, vol. xxi., p. 174.

On August 28, 1910, she writes, "Felt *compelled* by feeling of 'weight' to try for Sc. in midst of great confusion of packing, sorting, and making arrangements for—and going to—London".

Again on August 23, 1911: "About 8.30 a.m. I felt so strong an impulse for Sc. that I sent downstairs for note-block and pencil. I cannot remember a single occasion on which I have had Sc. at such a time, viz. whilst I was still in bed."

A note appended to her lone script of June 12, 1913, is of some interest from other points of view as well.

[The script] was quite unexpected by me. I was just going to begin to dress for dinner, but thought I had time to write my diary . . . As I was closing my diary, I suddenly felt an overwhelming rush of script coming. I looked at the watch lying on the table in front of me and thought there was no time; but I had to sit there and let it come. It just poured out, and was what I call a very "happy" script, coming easily and without effort. It conveys nothing to me, but in one part it interested me, as an exciting incident in a book one is reading interests one. I had that sense of looking on at somebody else's experiences and of reading rather than writing the words. I have marked the passage with two asterisks. . . . I did not read the script (at the moment) and had only a vague idea of what was in it.

One of the strongest expressions of urgency occurs in a statement accompanying the lone script of February 6, 1926:

Heavy with Sc. all day— & finding no uninterrupted time (because of letters, workmen & so on) until 9.30 p.m. when I felt an absolute *rush* as if someone were literally dragging me . . . my bad arm making writing a trial . . . but the Sc. came, often slowly, often with pauses.<sup>1</sup>

Impulses directed to action other than that of trying for script are comparatively infrequent, probably because it was easier and simpler for the communicators to obtain what they

<sup>1</sup>With the above descriptions compare also the account given by Mrs. Willett of the strange experiences preceding the production of the "Dorr" script, when the mental impulse was accompanied by certain very exceptional physical effects (*Proceedings*, vol. xxv., p. 125).

wanted by means of verbal instructions given through script or silent D.I. The following incident, however, provides a case in point, besides being in other ways instructive. The automatist's account of what happened is contained in a letter written on March 23, 1910, to Sir Oliver Lodge, part of which has already been published in Mrs Verrall's paper entitled "Notes on Mrs Willett's Scripts", in *Proceedings*, vol. xxv., pp. 215-16. I reproduce it here in full :

This is not a case of Sc. or D.I. I was sitting quietly after dinner, alone, when I realised that I was beginning to feel dizzy—rather light-headed and generally "queer"—somewhat the sensation that the first few breaths of laughing-gas give one. I could not understand it, for I was quite well. I wondered vaguely what I had eaten for dinner! I tried to throw it off; then my hands seemed to feel rather odd, and I suddenly remembered I had felt like that when the "Dorr" Sc. was written. Hoping I might get rid of the feeling I at once tried for Sc. The words were instantly written. "Myers no script to-night do not be alarmed." Having read the Sc. I tore it up, there seeming to me to be no reason for keeping such a meaningless sentence.

I then began to somehow "feel" that it was something else wanted of me, though I did not know what.

I felt an impulse to get Mrs V.'s Oct./06 "Report" [*Proceedings*, vol. xx.] and I turned over the leaves "trying" various places, but felt I had not got "it", whatever "it" might be, and yet I felt I was on the right track. At last the word "Syringa" struck me (p. 310). I read the page; it conveyed nothing much to me, though the word "Asphodel" which occurs on the same page did; but I somehow felt satisfied that I didn't need to look anywhere: the word was Syringa. Then I felt there was more, but not in that book. After a little time I fetched Mr Piddington's "Report" (Oct. 1908) [*Proceedings*, vol. xxii.]. It is a good long time (months) since I had looked at it. I keep it in a drawer where I also keep Miss Johnson's "Report" (June, 1908)—I took both books out and went and sat down.

Something in me rejected Miss Johnson's, so I took up Mr Piddington's. I wondered if more about Syringa was to be found there; I looked the word up in the index; it was not

there. I then thought I had better turn the pages carelessly and see if I "felt", as I did over *Syringa*, that I had got "it". It was some minutes before I lit on what I knew (though how I can't explain) was wanted;—p. 268 in big print,—"The River of Lethe". The words preceding are:

"Dante enters the Terrestrial Paradise and reaches" (the River of Lethe).

To sum up: my two—I don't know what to call them—impressions or round-about given words (for I seemed *led* to the words) were

Lethe—with *Dante*.

*Syringa*.

(Note: The combination of *Dante's Lethe* with *Syringa* has a meaning for the interpreters, though it had none for the automatist.)

The above account suggests to me that Myers was here making an experiment in a special type of telepathic communication in order to see whether a sensitive could be *impelled* to look up a particular passage in a particular book without being directed thereto by definite verbal instructions. The experiment seems to have been successful, but, so far as I am aware, was never repeated. On the several other occasions when the automatist was "sent" to a literary passage, the volume containing the passage and sometimes even the page on which it occurs were previously indicated in silent D.I.

Her instinctive recognition that the wanted passage had been found may very well rest on a feeling of satisfied assent transmitted to her from the communicator. "I 'knew'", she writes on one of these occasions, "at once—like a divining rod over the water; something in me gave the unmistakable sign that 'it' had been reached".

Inhibition, in the sphere of action, may be regarded as a *negative impulse*. Socrates, in the *Theages* of Plato, describes his "daemon" as a voice which, whenever it occurred, warned him to abstain from doing something that he was about to do, but never took the initiative in urging him to action. The Willett records contain a striking experience in which this kind of negative push (not, however, in the form of a voice) was presently followed by a positive push acting—so it seemed to her

—not through the mind but directly upon the physical organism. The case throws so much light upon certain aspects of Mrs Willett's mediumship, as well as upon her own attitude with regard to the whole inquiry, that I make no apology for reproducing in full the long letter of October 30, 1913, to Sir Oliver Lodge, in which she describes the incident :

*October 30, 1913 (Impression). Statement by Mrs Willett, October 30, 1913.*

I am usually called at 8.15 a.m. To-day it was rather later. The housemaid placed my letters on a table in my bedroom ; and a few minutes later I got up. I did not look at my letters then, as I had only just time to do that part of my dressing which I do before my breakfast if I was to be ready for it at 8.30, at which time it is brought to my bedroom.

It was only after my breakfast had been brought and I had eaten a few mouthfuls that I began to open my letters. I opened one or two which I found contained receipted bills and letters from shops. I then saw a larger envelope beneath the little pile and, taking it up, saw it was addressed to me in Mr Briscoe's<sup>1</sup> handwriting and had " Birmingham " postmark. I at once opened it, as I had been corresponding with Sir O. J. L. about his coming or not coming to —.

I found the envelope contained some largish papers and a letter. I took out only the letter, which was smaller than the papers and dropped out on the tray.

After reading it through (I did this rather hurriedly, and am not able to say what the whole of its contents were about), I picked up the envelope to take out the enclosures when I suddenly felt a *thundering* sort of knock-down-blow conviction that I must not do so.

I looked at Sir O. J. L.'s letter again, and I now (2 p.m.) remember of it this much : that he sent me a copy of a script of mine (I believe August 13), having been directed by Mr G. W. Balfour to do so. I *think* he said I was to compare it with the original.

But still I felt that not to be conquered " push " not to take out of the envelope the enclosures.

Then an odd thing happened. I did not know clearly what

<sup>1</sup> Mr Briscoe was Sir Oliver Lodge's Secretary.



I was going to do and my mind seemed not to work—or rather *two* minds seemed to be at work and not to be acting together. Mind No. 1 got my body up and walked it across the room to the door and put me outside (I only use this wording to indicate that I seemed to be acting like a machine), but Mind No. 2 (which was “me” as I know myself) couldn’t make out why it was that I was there. I stood a few seconds and then looked down at my hands, and saw I had Sir O. J. L.’s envelope in one and his letter in the other.

Mind No. 1 took my hand and put the letter back into the envelope and walked me down a flight of stairs and up another flight. Mind No. 2 looked on and wondered. But when I reached the outside of Mr Willett’s door the two minds flashed together, and I at once knew, somehow, what I was to do.

I went in and handed him the envelope, made him fetch a pencil and write down the time and date and what I told him—viz. : that I had read a letter it, the envelope, contained but not the enclosures.

He asked me why I did this. I said, after a pause, that I didn’t feel I was to read the enclosures. I then in silence hunted about in my mind to find a reason, and then I got hold of it ;—I thought that accidentally Mr G. W. B.’s notes on my script might have been included by Sir O. J. L., and that they might not be intended for my perusal.

So I told Mr Willett this. He said, “Your giving me this envelope and my writing this on it proves nothing—it does not *prove* you have not read all the enclosures”.

I saw the force of this, but I said, “I can’t help that. Keep the envelope and I will tell you later what to do with it.”

I then went back to my own room and finished my breakfast.

The impulse not to read the enclosures in Sir O. J. L.’s envelope got stronger as the morning wore away, and I have now decided to ask Mr Willett to send the envelope with its contents to Mrs Sidgwick in order that she may see whether there is any of Mr G. W. Balfour’s notes included in the copy of the script.

I very much hope that it may prove this is not so, because I see that there is no evidence, other than my word, that the contents of the envelope were not read by me during the 10 minutes it remained in my bedroom.

I expect I am making a fuss about nothing, because Miss Johnson definitely arranged with Sir O. J. L. by letter that *all* copies of S.P.R. papers or scripts intended for me were to go to her in the first instance, that she might go over them before sending them on to me.

I remember she asked that Mr Briscoe might receive definite instructions to this effect, and I wrote to Mrs Sidgwick about this point only a short time ago.

In any case, to avoid a repetition of these kinds of "pushes" or impulses, I should like in future that the arrangement above referred to should be carried out. I am sending this to Mrs Sidgwick, on the same day as Mr Willett sends her Sir O. J. L.'s letter.

I lately (the latter part of September) had an exactly similar feeling of having two minds, one of which moved my body about whilst "I" looked on, and in that case very grave results would have happened if I had not acted on the impulse, as I was thereby saved a serious danger. This makes me feel that I am right in not asking Mr Willett for the return of Sir O. J. L.'s letter, though I quite see that I cannot *prove* that I have not read the enclosures it contains.

I do not like to ask Mr Willett to look and see if Mr Balfour's notes are there, so that it seems best to have the things sent by him direct to Mrs Sidgwick.

*Note by Mrs Sidgwick.* Nov. 1, 1913.

On October 31, 1913, by second post I received from Mr Willett the following note dated October 30th, 1913 :

"My wife has asked me to send you the enclosed, which she gave me at 8.35 a.m. this morning—since which time neither she nor any other person has had access to it. It has remained in my custody under lock and key."

The enclosure consisted of an open envelope containing two type-script copies and her own MS. copy of her script of August 13th, 1913, with her own notes thereon. To each was also appended a note by O. J. L. giving information and clues which it was not desired that Mrs Willett should at present possess. This I cut off from each copy before returning them to her.

ELEANOR MILDRED SIDGWICK.

*Extract from Letter written by O. J. L. to E. M. S.*

The incident of inhibition is certainly interesting, and if by hypothesis we attribute it to "them" I should like more clearly to understand their reasons. It might be (a) that the bargain about sending through A. J. had not been adhered to; but in that case it would be probably Mrs W. herself, not even her subliminal; or it might be (b) that "they" feared that something connected with \* \* had been put in and wanted to make sure; or (c) that "they" were somehow aware of my note and perceived some reason why it should not be read.

The last hypothesis is the most interesting, because it would show a curious amount of knowledge about things done quite apart from and out of the neighbourhood of Mrs W.—things with no particular feeling or emotion behind them. But I confess I incline to hypothesis (a), which is practically a normal one.

I cannot altogether agree with Sir Oliver's diagnosis. It seems to me that we have here a clear case of dissociation, and that the immediate "inhibitor" was a dissociated self which normally would form a subconscious factor of the medium's personality. Quite possibly it may have been acting entirely on its own account. But while there does not appear to be any necessity to invoke the intervention of the group on the other side, and no claim of the kind is made, there does seem to be some ground for supposing the motive of the inhibition to have been a knowledge supernormally acquired of the contents of the envelope. The question would then arise, By whom, or through whom, was this knowledge obtained? Was it obtained directly by the dissociated self, or was the dissociated self prompted by some external agency? There is no doubt that Sir Oliver's notes did convey information which, from the point of view of the investigators, should not have been allowed to reach the automatist.

#### (e) VERBALLY CONVEYED MESSAGES

It is held by some that thought and language are inseparable. I do not think so extreme a view is tenable. So far as I am able to examine my own experience I seem to be clear that thought is possible not only without the assistance of verbal or other conventional symbolism, but without even that of mental imagery. No doubt all such thought is vague, shadowy, ill

determined, and elusive : any attempt to hold it fast and fix it tends to convert it at once into words.

Of course if thought without language or mental images were impossible the telepathic transmission of such thought would be more impossible still. I do not believe it to be impossible. Flashes of meaning may reach the automatist unclothed in symbols of any kind. Probable examples of an experience of this nature will be found on pp. 105 and 106 above. But in all cases the meaning must be given verbal expression if it is to be condensed into a specific message. Whatever the theoretical interest of this type of communication may be, its practical importance in our records is almost nil.

On the other hand verbally expressed messages far exceed in bulk and importance all other types of communication put together. In Mrs Willett's case, as in that of other mediums, they constitute the characteristic form of the phenomena, whether uttered through script-writing or speech or apprehended by the inner ear and subsequently recorded. The differences referred to are probably connected with differences in the process of communication, but language is the essential instrument of communication in all. Moreover as it is in verbal form that the messages are given out, so it is fair, I think, to assume that it is in verbal form that they are sent, unless there is evidence to the contrary. The assumption may not in every case be justified. We can imagine, for instance, a communication sent in the form of a mental picture being automatically translated by the recipient into a verbally expressed meaning ; and there are actually one or two cases in which the communicator complains that a " sound ", *i.e.* a word or a collocation of words, has emerged as a " form-symbol ". But the evident surprise and interest which he exhibits on noting the change show that he regards it as something quite exceptional in his experience. I need not say that, besides the possibility of a radical transformation of this kind, allowance must be made for what the communicators call " sophistication " of the message by misunderstandings, confusions, omissions, additions, and even rejections on the part of the automatist. The numerous records quoted in this paper will, I hope, illustrate these and other shortcomings sufficiently to render their further elaboration in the present chapter unnecessary.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DOUBLE TASK OF GRASPING AND GIVING OUT MESSAGES

- (a) GENERAL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSMISSION
- (b) DIFFICULTIES OF RECEPTION
- (c) DIFFICULTIES OF EMISSION

#### (a) GENERAL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSMISSION

THE gift of mediumship is a natural endowment possessed in a noticeable degree by comparatively few persons. It is capable of improvement by practice, and likely, in the opinion at least of the communicators, to become more wide-spread and more developed as time goes on. Successful communication, however, would seem to depend as much upon the communicator as upon the recipient of the message. Among the limited number of personalities who play a part on the Willett stage there are some who appear unable to communicate without help from others, or only able to do so with the greatest difficulty. Indeed if we are to accept a hint given in one of the sittings, there is a mediumistic faculty on the other side analogous to that of mediums here. The passage is somewhat cryptic, but it clearly implies that there are inequalities of natural aptitude on the communicating side as well as on the receiving.

Given natural aptitude there are certain conditions favourable to communication which are probably common to all sensitives of Mrs Willett's type, and which are repeatedly insisted upon in her scripts. The chief of them seem to be absence of disturbing noise, a sense of security from interruption, a good state of health, serenity of mind, and freedom from fatigue and worry. Apart from these general conditions, and from faith in the reality of the communicators, the mental attitude requisite in Mrs Willett's case for the successful discharge of the double task of grasping and giving out seems to

vary with the style and subject-matter of the communication itself. Sometimes a concentrated effort of attention on her part is called for ; at other times she is instructed deliberately to relax and " let the pen run free ". The minimum of effort is apparently required in scripts of an allusive and disjointed type, which are not intended to convey any connected meaning to her, and which largely consist of fragmentary material lying ready in the mind of the sensitive, and brought, as it were, to the surface by telepathic action from the communicators.<sup>1</sup> In other scripts, and especially in spoken D.I.s, the degree of effort required seems to depend very much on the difficulty of the subject-matter, and to reach a maximum when the subject-matter is highly abstract and beyond the automatist's ordinary powers of comprehension.

In a sitting of June 4, 1911—the first of a series of sittings with me largely occupied with expositions of " process"—the severity of the effort demanded of her, and of the strain resulting from it, becomes almost pathetically apparent. A passage towards the end of this record may be taken as a characteristic though perhaps extreme illustration. The communicator is Gurney.

Oh he says, now say this for me. He says you want to foster in sensitives a sort of dual attitude—belief in their capacity—Oh ! say it slowly—I'm so tired, I'm so tired—oh I'm climbing. Oh ! I'm climbing—belief, Oh I will say it, I will say it—belief in their capacity to have access to the mind of the communicator, together with a wholesome sense of discrimination in regard to the expressions—not right—regard to something to which that access leads—productions.

Oh, he says, you mayn't know it, there's a natural bent to extreme scepticism here. Oh he says, there are such a lot of things I want to tell you, and there's the longing to know when one has struggled how far one has succeeded in making oneself—Oh he says, I mustn't go much further now.

Oh he says, don't give me up, Gerald—help me—and help her.

Oh I can't go on, I'm so tired.

Oh he says, only one more thing—only one more thing for *him*. He says it over and over. I'm trying (*almost sobs*)

<sup>1</sup> See further concerning this type of script in Part II., Chapter III.

Being is antecedent to—Oh he says, You've not got the word I want, but say it—it'll suggest—Yes, that's it, action.

Oh! that's done. (*A pause, after which the waking stage follows.*)<sup>1</sup>

In this sitting the automatist exhausts herself in the effort to repeat words conveying a consecutive train of ideas. She feels they have a meaning, and though she has no interest in the subject on her own account, she strains her attention in an endeavour to understand what nevertheless continually escapes her. Effort of this kind may end in defeating its own object; and it is worth noting that on a later occasion the communicator, after a thoroughly mystifying discourse, advises her to try "going blindly",<sup>2</sup> which I take to imply that she will do better if she ignores the meaning and concentrates upon the mechanical repetition of each word as it comes. If the reader will take the trouble to refer to the very striking passage which thereupon follows (see p. 298 below), I think he will agree that the advice was on that occasion justified by results.

The specific difficulties of mediumship with which I propose to deal in the present chapter fall, as the title of the chapter implies, under two headings—difficulties of reception and difficulties of emission.

Let us consider these in the order named.

#### (b) DIFFICULTIES OF RECEPTION

It has often been noticed that mediums find it hard to grasp proper names. In language the sign and its meaning tend to merge into a unity so complete that we no longer think of them separately. But this ceases to be true of an unfamiliar sign in proportion to its unfamiliarity. Words spoken in an unknown tongue convey no meaning whatever. They are mere sounds, not signs. Single unknown words in a sentence may, of course, gain a kind of significance from their context. Thus even an unfamiliar proper name occurring in a sentence will probably be immediately recognised for what it is, namely a proper name. But in distinguishing one unfamiliar proper name from another

<sup>1</sup> The D.I. from which this passage is taken is given in full on pp. 232-235 below.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 245 below.

we have ultimately only the sound (or the corresponding written symbol) to fall back upon. In verbally expressed messages from a communicator to the medium it must, I think, be assumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that it is a sound-image, apprehended by the "inner ear", that reaches her. If, as seems probable in Mrs Willett's case, the sound-image gets transmuted when she is in deep trance into something indistinguishable by her from sound *heard*, this must be set down (according to my view) as a subjective psycho-physical effect. Most people experience a similar effect in vivid dreams. They seem to hear as they would hear with their ears when awake. But I see no reason to suppose that the difficulty of catching a sound-image telepathically conveyed differs in any essential respect from the difficulty of catching a sound heard in the course of ordinary speech or dictation. In fact the failures experienced by Mrs Willett in catching unfamiliar words such as strange proper names, Latin or Greek phrases,<sup>1</sup> and technical terms are just such as the analogy of dictation would suggest.

The subjoined illustrations of methods employed by the communicators to get over the difficulties thus caused present various points of interest. A lone script of August 25, 1912, ends with the following passage :

Now another thought

Doocalon

No no try again

Dewacorn

*(this word ended in a scribble)*

Dewacorn

NO DEUCALION

the sound is DEW

K

LION not Lion

Write it slowly

Deucalion

I want that said It has a meaning

The stones of the Earth shall praise thee

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Willett is hardly ever able to reproduce Greek or Latin words correctly.



that is what I want said it is I who say it and the word is

Deucalion

that was well caught

Good Child

That sort of thing makes one feel out of breath doesn't it on both sides—

I am going Say too this word He set his bow in (*illegible*) in the clouds<sup>1</sup>

In a note appended to this script Mrs Willett writes :

This part of the script was very odd. Though there was a great deal of effort about it, it was extremely interesting in the same sort of way that it is interesting to get a Patience out. It was written rather like this, as near as words can describe it: After "now I want another thought" there was a pause, then "Doocalon" written slowly and very deliberately, then "No no" written impatiently but good-temperedly. This leads me to suppose that it was not Fred who was writing, because I get a sense of irritability and grumpiness when I am trying to catch a word in this sort of way and he is writing. "Try again"—this seemed to me encouragingly written. "Dewacorn", this word started off quite gaily up to about the *c*, when the next three letters seemed to be beginning to go into scrawls. It ended in a scrawl and a complete stop. Underneath was written again quite plainly "Dewacorn", but whether meant to be in two words or one is not clear to me. I have never heard the expression "dew acorn". After this, on a new line, was written an emphatic NO: then a word was written in very big letters which appear to me to be DEUCALION; however, I send a tracing of it in case it may be anything else. [*Not reproduced here, as it is clearly Deucalion—in large letters, though not in capitals.*] The script then went on about the sound of the word. "DEW" I read as rhyming with *pew*; "K" as rhyming with *pay*; "LION" as the animal. That did not seem right, as the script wrote "not Lion".

<sup>1</sup> Deucalion is the Noah of Greek Mythology. There is probably an allusion to the legend of Deucalion and Pyrrha in the words "the stones of the earth shall praise thee."

Mrs Willett further states that the word "Deucalion" is unknown to her, though she supposes it to be Greek or Latin. She appears not even to recognise it as a proper name—the context in this instance giving no indication one way or the other. In order to ensure the correct recording of the word the communicator adopts the expedient of stressing the pronunciation syllable by syllable, though whether this is done directly through sound-images, or indirectly by means of visualised words whose pronunciation is known to the automatist—Dew, K (the letter) and Lion—or by an indeterminate combination of both methods, is perhaps open to question.

That recourse is sometimes had to the visual representation of a word of which the automatist has failed to catch the sound is beyond doubt. A good example of this has already been given on p. 99 above, where the word "Absolute" is heard in a spoken D.I. as "Absalom", and the communicator corrects the mistake by writing up ABSOLOM letter by letter, as it were, upon a black board, then rubbing out the last two letters and substituting for them the letters UTE.

A somewhat similar example is provided by a passage in the D.I. of June 4, 1911. The communicator is explaining that a message may lie dormant in the mind of the automatist for some time before it emerges in script.

Often there is a fairly long period of—don't get that word—it contains a *g* and an *s* and a *t* and an *a* (*G. W. B. suggests "gestation", but no notice is taken of this*) Say incubation he says—and then comes the uprush.

"Don't get that word—it contains a *g* and an *s* and a *t* and an *a*" is clearly a remark made by the automatist on her own account. The word in the mind of the communicator was evidently "gestation". As it conveys no meaning to the automatist, he supplements the thought of it as pronounced by the thought of the characters as written. When even this fails he substitutes another word of similar import in its place.

In another case, which I quote from the D.I. of January 21, 1912, the wanted word is supplemented by a mental representation of the thing signified. The waking stage had begun, and had proceeded for some minutes in the usual way, when the

communicator seemed to return, and the following was uttered :

He says to me, Write : only that. The shield, the mother. Oh, he says, on the shield there were different scenes, but there was one scene round the centre—and he says, say the word Knob, if you like, it's not the proper word—that's what I want an allusion to—round the extreme centre. Oh, he says, what an expression, extreme ! He says, Please remember, my thought of the central point comes out through her as the extreme centre !

“The shield, the mother” is almost certainly a reference to the description in the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* viii., 607 *seq.*) of the shield forged by Vulcan for Aeneas at the request of his mother, Venus. On the shield was represented a series of scenes from famous episodes in Roman history, with the battle of Actium as a centre-piece. The word wanted is apparently “Boss” : but either the communicator failed to get hold of the right word himself or he failed to impress it on the automatist. *Faute de mieux* he offers “Knob” instead ; but (if I understand the passage rightly) supplements it with a mental picture of the central point of the shield. “The extreme centre” is the automatist's interpretation of the mental picture, and does not represent *words* spoken by the communicator, who indeed disavows the expression with some indignation.

Perhaps the most surprising expedient resorted to by the communicators in order to get a proper name recorded was the production in script of the name Dorr by operating on the automatist *telergically* instead of telepathically.<sup>1</sup> At least that is the account of their procedure given subsequently by themselves, as is shown by the following extracts :

*From the D.I. of May 6, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

Edmund Gurney. Tell Lodge I don't want this to develop into trance.

(O. J. L. Oh !)

You have got that, we are doing something new. Then he says Telepathy. If you want to see the want of success—no, not that—the labour of getting anything telergic done here, he

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of this incident, and a facsimile of the script, see Sir Oliver Lodge's paper on the “Lethe Scripts” in *Proceedings*, vol. xxv., p. 125 ff.

can see the word DORR. That was a case of that word with two l's and a t<sup>1</sup> That word [i.e. Dorr] had to be given in that way, after efforts had been made to convey it telepathically without success. It was a great strain on both sides. We don't want to move any atoms in the brain directly.

(O. J. L. Am I to understand that when you do it telergically you do move atoms in the brain ?)

No, we bring to bear certain currents. He says Thunder and Lightning.<sup>2</sup>

*From the Lone Script of June 5, 1910.*

. . . I MYERS made a pun I got in a WORD I wanted by wrapping it up in a QUOTATION Later I got the WORD itself after an effort which disturbed my machine and which Gurney deprecated as being an exemplification of the End justifies the Means . . . Myers I got the WORD in by choosing a quotation in which it occurs and which was known to the normal intelligence of my machine.

The quotation in question, "There was a *door* to which I found no key", had been given in the first "Lethe script" on February 4, 1910. The Dorr script followed on the next day.

Mrs Willett's own description of her experiences on the occasion of the production of the Dorr script will be found in *Proceedings*, vol. xxv., p. 125. It is not inconsistent with the account given by Gurney and Myers, though naturally it does not use the same terms. There can be no doubt that the word Dorr is written in a hand utterly unlike either the ordinary script-hand or Mrs Willett's normal handwriting. The experience was a unique one up to the time of its occurrence, and I believe it has never been repeated.

I remarked above that the expedient employed by the communicators on this occasion was a surprising one. How surprising will be more fully realised when we come to deal in Part II with their own explanations of the *modus operandi* used by them in communicating through Mrs Willett, and with the sharp distinction, founded on this very difference of telepathy

<sup>1</sup> I.e. That was a case of telergy. In a script of August 20, 1909, the word "telergical" had been spelt "telligical."

<sup>2</sup> See p. 166 below.

from telergy, which they draw between her mediumship and that of Mrs Piper. It is quite true, as Sir Oliver Lodge has said, that the appearance in the script of the name Dorr at this precise juncture was of high evidential value; but it is very strange that they should have been unable to secure this otherwise than by a complete abandonment of their avowed methods.

I conclude this series of examples by quoting *in extenso* a short script, written in my presence but not in trance conditions, which may serve to illustrate more than one of the points already touched upon, besides showing that the difficulty experienced in grasping unfamiliar words may also be felt in relation to phrases and quotations, even when these are normally known to the automatist.

*Script of June 22, 1913. (Present, G. W. B.)*

To pace beside the waters What does that mean  
 Cor Coral no Coronals Why plural try again  
 It is only said for purposes of identification to [scribble] identify  
 the communicator

green the

small green blant (*here Mrs W. burst out into a hearty laugh and said, "I spelt a word wrong, and he laughed"*)

*pl a n t*

That is better the wearing of the green  
*at last!*

Now for the message quite a short one a message of remembrance and hope turn over

The unsleeping watcher say that When God of old our fathers have told us

try again the Syrian blue that should lead by an association of ideas to the passage which I wish to never mind go on try again

Music might help Israel and his seed for ever Israel watching over that is it go on She will understand Slumbereth  
 not nor sleepeth now say it give her time Gurney said that

shes just touched it How like a trout nibbling at a fly He  
watching over Israel slumbereth not nor sleepeth good

To conclude the Sc with a

(Here Mrs W. stopped as if at a loss for a word and presently said, "What do you call the beginning of a piece of writing?" I suggested *preface, proem, preamble*: she accepted none of these, but almost immediately after found what she was seeking, and said out loud, as well as wrote down, *Prologue*. "And what is it comes at the end?" she asked. "Epilogue," I said. "Epilogue," she repeated, and wrote it down. I have little doubt that what the communicator meant to say was, "To conclude with an epilogue".)

Prologue and Epilogue

a (*scribble*) An island temple,

(Here Mrs W. again stopped and said: "I can see the thoughts, but it's so difficult to get the words. What is it you say when a criminal takes refuge in a Cathedral?" "Sanctuary," I suggested, and this was accepted.)

Sanctuary priests

(Another pause, and then she said, "It's Latin, and I can't quite get it". I encouraged her to try her best and write down something. Nothing, however, was written, though the words *opus* and *corona* were uttered out loud. I asked if it were "Finis coronat opus", but she answered, "No; there is no *finis* and the word is distinctly *corona* not *coronat*". "Enough" was then written, and the script came to an end.)

*Enough*

This script is wholly taken up with a message to Mrs Verrall on the occasion of the anniversary of her husband's death, which occurred on June 18 of the previous year. The communicator is S. H. Butcher. He is not named, but his identity is indicated at the outset by allusions to Demosthenes and to Ireland. (Butcher was an Irishman, and he was engaged upon an edition of Demosthenes at the time of his death.) The script proceeds with its "message of remembrance and hope", and concludes with further allusions to Demosthenes—this time to his death in the temple of Poseidon on the island of Calauria, where he had taken sanctuary. The opening words of the script, which refer to the story of Demosthenes practising the

art of oratory by declaiming on the seashore with pebbles in his mouth, give the "prologue" to his career, the allusion to his famous speech *De Corona* represents its culminating triumph, his suicide in the "island temple" the "epilogue".

So much it is necessary to say by way of explanation in order to make the script intelligible. Our present concern, however, is with the difficulties experienced by the automatist in getting the phrase "the wearing o' the green", the text from Psalm cxxi., the words "Prologue", "Epilogue", and "Sanctuary", and the final message in Latin.

The failure over the Latin calls for no comment except so far as the distinction insisted on between "corona" and "coronat" suggests that the word must have reached her—whether as an auditory or as a visual image—in a quite definite form, for I do not think she had the least idea of what the script was driving at.

As regards "the wearing o' the green" the rough drawing representing a shamrock leaf is probably the reproduction of a picture impressed on the mental vision of the automatist. The communicator may have tried to give the *word* shamrock without success, and afterwards attempted to convey the *meaning* by the help of a visual image of the thing signified and the description of it as "a small green plant". The transition to "the wearing o' the green" is then effected by an association of ideas ready provided in the mind of the automatist.

Association of ideas is again made use of to enable her by a roundabout way to arrive at the quotation from Psalm cxxi—"He watching over Israel slumbereth not nor sleepeth".<sup>1</sup> Why there should have been so much difficulty in getting "the wearing o' the green" or the biblical quotation is something of a puzzle, especially as both one and the other had appeared in earlier Willett script. Indeed "He that watcheth over Israel slumbereth not nor sleepeth" had already been sent as a message to Mrs Verrall in a script of May 13, 1912, about a month before

<sup>1</sup> The actual words of the verse both in the Authorised Version and in the Prayer Book are "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep". Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (English version) has: "He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps". "Music might help" may be a reference to the *Elijah*.

Dr Verrall died. There was no difficulty about its reception on that occasion. But the actual communicator was then Gurney, who gives the message on Butcher's behalf. On the present occasion Butcher was himself the communicator, and some allowance should perhaps be made for his comparative inexperience. It is also possible that quotations, as such, really are hard to get through; and it is certainly noteworthy that neither in Mrs Willett's script (which abounds in quotations) nor, I believe, in that of any other automatist of our group, can any quotation—as apart from a literary reference—be found which there is good reason to think had never been known to their normal selves. Nevertheless such explanations seem unconvincing where, as in the present case, not only was the quotation a very familiar one, but no less than four other quotations—"When God of old", "Our fathers have told us", "the Syrian blue", and "Israel [Abraham] and his seed for ever"—are pressed into the service before the required one is achieved.

There remains the difficulty of getting the words "Prologue", "Epilogue", and "Sanctuary". "I can see the thoughts", Mrs Willett says, "but it is so difficult to get the words". The experience of feeling after a word which seems just out of reach is familiar to everyone. It is not a case of thought without language, but a failure to recall a particular conventional sign the recovery of which does not add to the thought or make it really clearer than before. Is the automatist's difficulty in this case simply that of which we all have experience? If so, in what form had the thought come to her, if it truly conveyed a message from the communicator? Had the communicator himself failed to find the appropriate word, and had he transmitted his thought by means of a periphrasis, leaving it to the automatist to fill in the blank? Or had he used the correct word but failed to impress it on the mental hearing of the automatist? I leave these questions unanswered, but it seems to me they are not without bearing on the process of communication.

The difficulties we have been considering so far are such as arise from the unfamiliarity of particular words and phrases. Another, and, from the point of view of the perfection or imperfection of the records, probably more important source of



trouble and confusion, is inability on the part of the automatist to follow and grasp the too-rapid flow of the communicators' thoughts.

Here are a few passages which indicate the nature of the difficulty :

*Lone Script of November 13, 1910. (Myers communicating.)*

Let thoughts flit past you. Cease [seize] what you can. Make records that others may delve . . . thoughts escape me and you get them confused . . .

*Lone Script of December 3, 1911. (Myers communicating.)*

In my eagerness . . . the thoughts come so quickly that they slip past you and you do not grasp any one quite clearly Resist that sense of general understanding as of an onlooker watching and come here and grasp my words.

*D.I. of March 13, 1912—Waking Stage. (Present, O. J. L.)*

It's so very tiresome to have lots of things you can't catch running through your mind, lots of isolated words . . . no, it's no use.

*Script of June 26, 1913. (Present, G. W. B.)*

Such a flow of words flitting past me try to seize some . . . ["Try to seize some" is, of course, a request by the communicator.]

*D.I. of February 28, 1914. (Present, G. W. B.)*

. . . I am so confused. I'm all with things flitting past me. I don't seem to catch them . . . That one eye has got something to do with the one ear. That's what they wanted me to say. There's such a mass of things, you see, running through my mind that I can't catch anything.

*Trance-Script of February 28, 1914. (Present, G. W. B.)*

So many thoughts and none caught.

It is evident that for omissions and imperfections in the records arising from a rapidity in the flow of ideas that exceeds the receiving capacity of the automatist, a share, and perhaps the larger share, of responsibility must rest with the communi-

cator. Sometimes the automatist begs the communicator to speak more slowly. But it seems that this is not always easy for him to do. Myers would appear to be the greatest sinner in this respect. On one occasion (in the D.I. of March 15, 1912) he is represented as saying that he cannot get a series of quotations through "because they jostle each another, and I stand speechless and impotent from the very force of my longing to utter". On this Gurney comments, "Myers doesn't manage things as well as I do. He takes more out of her. He doesn't shield off from her sufficiently; he let's the whole blaze come out in his impatience".

### (c) DIFFICULTIES OF EMISSION

A message must be grasped before it can be given out, and therefore in a sense every impediment to effective reception is also an impediment to effective emission. It would seem, however, (a) that the power to receive does not, in the view of the communicators, carry with it the power to give out, unless certain conditions are fulfilled; and (b) that even where the power to give out is actually in operation, special causes may be at work to hinder or prevent particular parts of a message from duly emerging.

The clearest exposition furnished by the communicators of the general conditions to which the giving-out power is subject is contained in a lone script of April 16, 1911:

[*Myers communicating*] . . . The point we have to study is to find the line where the incarnate spirit is sufficiently over the Border to be in a state to *receive* and yet sufficiently controlling by its own power its own supraliminal and therefore able to transmit. We don't therefore desire the kind of trance that is of Piper essence though we could and sometimes have induced much the same thing<sup>1</sup> Get this clear. We want the operator to be so linked with its mechanism as to control that mechanism herself. We want her also to be so linked with us as to be able to receive definite telepathic write the word radiation. There is one glory of the sun and another of the stars there is the mediumistic gift of emitting and the other gift of receiving . . .

<sup>1</sup> This can hardly refer to the Dorr script (see p. 124 above), since the medium was not in trance on that occasion.

According to this statement the twofold gift of mediumship depends for its successful exercise in Mrs Willett's case upon a maintenance of *rapport* on the one hand between the communicators and "the incarnate spirit", on the other hand between "the incarnate spirit" and "its own supraliminal". It is through control of its supraliminal that the spirit of the medium is linked with its mechanism of utterance, whether by speech or by writing. To lose that control is to lose the power to record.

The above account of one aspect of "process" rests, from the nature of the case, almost wholly on the authority of the communicators, and the fuller treatment of the subject of which it forms part must be reserved for Part II., to which it properly belongs. But it could not well be passed over without mention in the present chapter.

The most striking instance of an alleged failure to record, ascribed by the communicators to a break-down of the conditions affirmed by them to be essential to success, occurs in a D.I. of March 13, 1912, when Sir Oliver Lodge was "in charge". Somewhat earlier in the sitting Myers had worked himself up into a state of passionate eagerness. "He's trembling", says the automatist, "I see him trembling". A pause follows, and then an interval during which other communicators take their share of speaking. Presently Gurney says :

Lodge, did you notice just now she was so completely over the border [that] though in those instants things swept into her consciousness, she couldn't pass them back ; he says I want Gerald to be fully told of this because he says it throws light upon the method.

(O. J. L. All will be told him.)

She projected herself in a rush of sympathy.

(O. J. L. I saw her do it.)

And I must use symbols, he says, in describing what occurred, but the blaze of light and the revelation was so tremendous in its force and effect that the lesser thing, the power to communicate thought, lessens the—the power of acquiring it.<sup>1</sup> Thought

<sup>1</sup> There is obvious confusion here. What is meant is that the lesser thing, the power to communicate the knowledge acquired, suffers from the very fact that the power of acquiring it has been increased. The word "communicate" in this passage is employed in the unusual sense of "utter" or "pass on for the benefit of the sitter".

is not the right word, but you can let it stand ; put the Primacy of the knowing faculty, and the secondariness of the transmitting, the communicating, faculty ; the soul's instinctive recognition of truth far out-leaping the possibility of the condensation of it to that point where it can be grasped and framed in language. That's what happened then. We have to keep her at the point where both sides can be touched, but then she let go on your side and by the power of, not to be measured in words, of (to frame a clumsy expression) recognitive sympathy she broke away and passed, and knew, but could not utter.

In the main the explanation here given by Gurney accords with the more general exposition quoted above from the script of April 16, 1911.<sup>1</sup> An overwhelming rush of sympathy has swept the incarnate spirit so completely "over the border", and into such close *rapport* with the communicator, that for the time being it loses its control over the supraliminal. With that loss goes also loss of the faculty of emission, while the faculty of acquiring knowledge is actually enhanced. Compare also the opening passage of the

<sup>1</sup> I say that the explanation accords *in the main* with that previously quoted, because the words "Thought is not the right word" and the statement that "the soul's instinctive recognition of truth far outleaps the possibility of the condensation of it to that point where it can be grasped and framed in language" show that what is here in question is not the reception of a telepathic message, but the acquisition of knowledge by *telæsthesia* in the very peculiar sense of that term adopted in the Willett scripts. Compare the statement in the D.I. of October 8, 1911: "Oh, he says, telepathy's one thing—that's thought communication: telæsthesia is knowledge, not thought, acquired by the subliminal when operating normally in the metetherial". For a full discussion of this important subject I refer the reader to chapter 3 of Part II.

I may further note that failure to record through inability to control the mechanism of utterance is one thing ; failure to record because the knowledge acquired cannot be condensed into language is another. Are we to understand that in this instance there were *two* grounds of failure, the second being additional to the first and independent of it ?

A third explanation differing from both the others is given by Gurney in a script of October 26, 1926. "The real truth", he says, "is that the intense emotion of the communicator blends with the intense emotion in a sensitive receiver—so that nothing is done but the setting up of a violent vibration in which concrete ideas disappear".

*Script of July 22, 1917. (Present, G. W. B.)*

There is a difficulty of margin—To-day one touch would draw you so deeply within our influence that the result would be nil for others you would be unable to record or carry back only one touch & we unite <sup>1</sup> & I want them to understand that I purposely hold you away—at arms length as it were so that you may record.

Turning now to the cases where there is no general suspension of the power to give out, but where nevertheless the emergence of particular messages or parts of a message appears to be inhibited, we have first of all to remark that Mrs Willett herself claims to exercise a conscious discretion in the matter of what she records and what she rejects.

In a note written by her on February 10, 1923, with reference to a script produced on the preceding day she says :

I was very much interested when — last night spoke of *Memory*—because it ties on to my Sc. of earlier in the day.

I had rejected several times this sentence

“ Memory, a wreathèd shell ” <sup>2</sup>

with the impression of a quotation & a hesitation as to “ Keats ”. My Sc. was so full of effort & muddle to me that I didn't put down everything that came to me. . . . I was hesitating, rejecting and accepting all the time—

Another Memory point I *rejected* was “ The stream of Memory ”—Neither of these points seemed to come clear to me. The first one recurred more than once, the other I only received—or half-caught—once.

A conversation with Mrs Willett which took place on September 22, 1925, and was recorded by Mr Piddington from notes taken while she was speaking, bears upon the same question.

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *In Three Days* :

“ Feel where my life broke off from thine,  
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—  
Only one touch and we combine ! ”

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Burden of Itys* :

“ O Memory, cast down thy wreathèd shell ”.

In the course of conversation [writes Mr P.] I referred to the fact (already known to Mrs Willett) that Mrs Salter for a year or two past goes into trance ; and I said that her trance phenomena show how many of the impressions she receives fail to get expressed. Mrs Willett asked if Mrs Salter rejected much of what she received ; and after I had made a brief reply to this question, she went on to say that she herself often rejected impressions that came to her as useless or uninteresting. She gave as an example an impression she had had at some time between 3 and 6 p.m. on the preceding day, September 21, 1925, and which she described to me in more or less the following terms :

“ The first sentence was ‘ The Sanctuary ’. The next sentence was a reference to the Lamp hanging in the Sanctuary ; and the third sentence was a reference to the Flame in the Lamp hanging in the Sanctuary ”.

(Here she said something about the thing being rather like the House that Jack built.)

“ And then I saw this lovely Flame. My conscious instinct was to reject as useless ; but the impression conveyed to me was that it came to me from someone who thought it good. If anyone had said ‘ You’re quite wrong, and the person conveying this message is right ’, I should have got oceans of script ”.<sup>1</sup>

Conscious and deliberate rejection of impressions duly received may, one can well believe, be the cause of a good many gaps and incoherences in the scripts. But there is a class of cases which it will not cover, namely where there is an obvious desire and even effort to give out, accompanied by a strange and almost mysterious inability to do so.

Such expressions as “ I can hear the words, but I can’t make my lips say them—they won’t say them ” (D.I. of July 16, 1911) imply an inhibition which mere selective preference of one item of a communication over another is insufficient to account for.

<sup>1</sup> The impression here recorded seems to have been an experience on the border-line between a silent D.I. and a lone script. I do not gather that Mrs Willett was sitting for script at the time, but had she proceeded to do so I have little doubt that a script would have resulted. As a matter of fact, the main ideas conveyed in the impression did actually emerge in a script produced on the following day (September 23, 1925) in my presence.

The following D.I. illustrates the point, and has besides an interest of its own which I trust may be held to excuse my quoting it at considerable length.

I should explain that the evening before this sitting I had been reading a paper to the Cambridge Branch of the S.P.R. on *Parallelism and Telepathy*. "Epiphenomenalism" was also touched on incidentally, and, of course, in any discussion of these two doctrines, the third psycho-physical doctrine—that of "Interactionism"—must be implicitly referred to, though I do not think the word was actually used. I had, however, dealt with all three in a paper contributed to the *Hibbert Journal* (April, 1910); and it is possible that Mrs Willett may have seen this paper, though I do not think she had. There are some numbers of the *Hibbert Journal* in her country house, and I asked her to give me a list of them. The one containing my article was not among the number. It is, of course, also possible that she may have read about Epiphenomenalism, Parallelism, and Interactionism elsewhere: references to all of these had occurred previously in scripts and D.I.s.

Mrs Willett was not present at the meeting of the Cambridge S.P.R. the night before the sitting; but she knew about it, and some hint of the subject of the paper had probably been given in her presence.

*D.I. of May 11, 1912. (Present, G. W. B.)*

Yes . . . Oh, how did I get here? It's like Alice in the looking-glass. I see a glass that seems to shut out, and then someone seems to put out a hand and pull me through

Sweet after rain ambrosial showers<sup>1</sup>

(Pause) Oh I'll try. Tennyson. (Pause) I'm seeing thoughts but I'm not catching them. What are the three tenable—I don't get that next word and then it goes on—in regard to the phenomenon of consciousness? Somebody asked a question. Do you know Henry Sidgwick has sometimes such a quizzical look in his face. He said to me, Don't make two bites of a cherry, but bolt this whole and see what happens.

(Sighs) Sounds to me very stupid. I've hunted about in my mind and I don't find anything else. What does it mean? It's

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, "In Memoriam," lxxxvi. "Sweet after showers, ambrosial air."

only words. (*Gesticulating with both hands*) There, just like that—is—then there's a word *that* long—(*motioning with hands*) consciousness.

I've got it—Oh, it's disappointing when my lips won't say it.

L—— touched me, and I can say it now.<sup>1</sup> Epiphenomenal—that's the last of the three words.

Oh! Sidgwick said (*waving her hands*) something to do with a room and a lot of people

Listen not to the specious lure of the parallelistic phantasy, but nail unto the mast that complicated fragment of truth—nail unto the mast?—the flag of—Oh, I'm so sorry, I'm afraid I've lost it. [*"Nail unto the mast" was spoken interrogatively, as if the automatist was asking whether she had the right words.*]

Don't go (*entreatingly*), I'll try again. Oh, how gentle and strong he is.<sup>2</sup>

He says, Tell him to nail to the mast the flag with one word on it, which is a symbol for a complicated fragment of truth—but he says it's the right line, he says like that,—though baffling and perplexing, cleave thou to it. It's because it's only partially apprehended that the timid and the lazy mind slips back from it into the barren and easy and absolutely worthless theory, he says, of a dual (*placing her two hands parallel to each other*) dual side by side, presumably independent. Oh, he says, the whole thing's full of fallacies, you can't stretch it to that, he says.

He's telling L—— something. It's so odd. L——'s knowing something which I'm not knowing, but I'm knowing that when L—— touches me I shall know it too. It's the flag word.

(*Triumphantly*) I've got it! Oh, but now I've got to give it out.

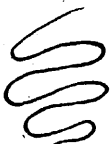
Oh, I'm all buzzing. (*Waving hands*) I can't think why people talk about such stupid things. Such long stupid words (*Sighs and stretches herself: then places her hands side by side again, saying*) That's gone away now.

<sup>1</sup> L—— is a deceased relation of Mrs Willett, who, though hardly ever communicating *in propria persona*, occasionally intervenes to facilitate the process of communication by others. See also the extract from the sitting of January 21, 1912, p. 149 below.

<sup>2</sup> The Dark Young Man is here indicated.



Now it's a thing like this (*drawing with her finger in the air*)



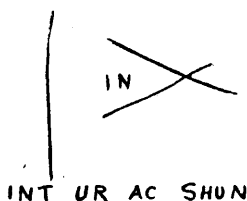
It's like a plait—it's woven strands.

Oh! I see it a hundred ways, but I can't get it out.<sup>1</sup>

(G. W. B. "I understand.")

Somebody says, Don't help her.

Oh, I think I can draw it better [*takes my block and draws as below, except the word INT UR AC SHUN which is added later*]



Edmund makes me laugh. He says, Well, think of Ur of the Chaldees. He's making a joke, and they're very angry with him; but the point of it is the terrible effect of disembodiment in one singularly sensitive to shades of sound. He says that Ur would make Fred shudder.<sup>2</sup>

I must try it you know, it's perfectly ridiculous.

(*Here INT UR AC SHUN was added at the foot of the drawing*)

Henry says, Thread the maze, but don't lose that strand. There's a lot of confused thinking suggested by that word to many minds. You've all of you only been fingering at the outsides of the theory, but it's there where the gold lies.

Consciousness (*waving hands*) and matter, mind and matter; and he says, There was a line about the will that felt the fleshly screen.<sup>3</sup> Oh, oh, there are some very mystical [*word omitted from the record here: perhaps "meanings"*] wrapped up in those lines of Tennyson's. He says, I've quoted Browning, but the mind of Tennyson playing on the mysteries of consciousness

<sup>1</sup> The difficulty in getting out the word "interaction" is rather curious, seeing it was twice written in the script immediately preceding the D.I.

<sup>2</sup> UR for ER. The joke is thoroughly characteristic of the living Gurney as I knew him.

<sup>3</sup> Browning, *The Last Ride Together*.

—the phenomena of consciousness—is extraordinarily interesting to anyone studying the mysteries—oh, what a word—of in-ter-ac-tion-al-ism (*pronounced slowly, syllable by syllable*).

What is the parallelistic theory? (*Expression of great disgust*) To have to come all the way to talk about these things! He says, Just to say that. He says that Frank,<sup>1</sup> I and Frank, he says, are a splendid combination in studying the interaction of mind and matter, because you want biological and philosophical knowledge. But, he says, I can't now say what I want to.

I simply cannot go on any longer; that must be all.

[*Probably a remark by the automatist on her own account; at least, so I thought at the time from the tone in which the words were uttered.*]

(*Laughs heartily*) Edmund says, This is really the last bite. The interaction—I'm not sure that word's quite right. It's either action or interaction. It isn't interaction [? int ur ac shun], though he says it might be interaction for the interactionalist.

The light cast upon interaction by the researches into human faculty. It's very odd: do you know they can have machines for telling you the pressure in boilers? Well, there's a machine they've got to find out what's the pressure in me, and all that (*putting her hands to her head*) is too full. It's full to painfulness.

(*G. W. B.* Hadn't you better stop, Gurney?)

He says, Just let me throw this, and then that's all.

You can't make parallelism square with the conclusions to which recent research points. *Pauvres parallélistes!* They're like drowning men clinging to spars. But the epiphenomenalistic bosh (*pronouncing with difficulty*) that's simply blown away. It's one of the blind alleys of human thought.

*Oh!* I don't want to hear any more: I'm tired.

And the other and perhaps more specious kind of bosh has got to go too.

(*Laughing*) Edmund spoke of the philosophic omelettes. He said research was breaking lots of eggs, and some schools had best get their egg-whisks ready.

[*At this point the waking stage began.*]

<sup>1</sup> Christian name of the Dark Young Man. It is seldom given in the scripts, and only when the automatist is in deep trance.

I have no obvious explanation to offer of the difficulty of emission exemplified in this D.I., but I suspect it to be connected in some way or other with a lack of harmonious co-operation between the different elements in the personality of the medium, whether we call these elements the subliminal and the supraliminal or regard them as distinct centres of consciousness whose relation to each other varies from all but complete independence to at least an appearance of complete unity.

The communicators declare that a general suspension of the giving-out power results from the "incarnate spirit" losing control of "its own supraliminal", and therewith the control of the medium's mechanism of utterance. The supraliminal ceases to *record* because it ceases to *receive* from the subliminal. I suggest as one possible explanation of the incapacity to give out particular parts of a message that it may be due to active *resistance* on the part of the supraliminal. It receives, but is unwilling to transmit. Why it should be unwilling in any given instance may be difficult to say. In the case before us the reluctance might arise from sheer irritation and disgust at being called upon to play a part in the exposition of a subject in which it takes no interest, and the technical terms of which it does not understand. Readers of "The Ear of Dionysius" will remember the passage in which the automatist gives vent to her annoyance at the task imposed upon her: "Oh, Edmund says powder first and jam afterwards. You see it seems a long time since I was here with them—and I want to talk and enjoy myself (*spoken querulously*). And I've all the time to keep on working, and seeing and listening to such boring old—Oh! Ugh!"

A more frequent cause (it may fairly be conjectured) of unwillingness to record is the fear which often, especially in the early days of her mediumship, used to assail the automatist, that the message which reaches her comes not from the ostensible communicators but from something in herself. The communicators are, in fact, well aware of this sceptical attitude, and more than once complain of the obstacles which it places in their way.

Another possible explanation would be to suppose that the *rapport* between the subliminal and the supraliminal, though not wholly destroyed as in the case of the complete suspension

of the giving-out power, is nevertheless at times too imperfect to permit of the subliminal effectively impressing upon the supraliminal those parts of a message the reception of which might in any case have been expected to prove difficult. Some apprehension of the general sense might be imparted, but not the expression of it in precise terms. The remedy would then be to make the *rapport* more perfect ; and the intervention of L —, described in the D.I. we have been considering, would be directed to this end, just as, on the other supposition, its object would be to overcome the reluctance of the supraliminal.

Perplexing doubts may easily be raised with respect to both explanations ; but these are of a kind that are bound to confront us so soon as we try to face the fundamental question that has been haunting the background of our inquiry all the time—Who or what is the “ I ” of the scripts ?

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## CHAPTER V

### DISSOCIATION

WHEN describing the communications characteristic of Willett phenomena as mental impressions which appear to the automatist to have their origin in an agency which she distinguishes from her conscious self, I was careful to leave room for the hypothesis which would ascribe such impressions to the action of one dissociated element of the personality upon another. That this hypothesis will suffice to cover the whole of the phenomena of mediumship I do not believe. But if by dissociation we mean no more than that in certain circumstances a plurality of consciousnesses manifests itself where previously there had been at least an appearance of unity, the evidence for it is overwhelming<sup>1</sup>; and I am far from denying that interaction of the dissociated elements may be the complete explanation of some mediumistic experiences, and may enter as a factor into many more.

There is undoubtedly something of a paradox in describing communications as impressions which appear to the automatist to have their origin in an agency other than herself, and then including in the scope of the term impressions which have their origin in a part of herself. Can there be a part of herself which is not her very self, yet may in some sense claim to be herself in virtue of being a co-conscious element in the make up of her total personality? Two consciousnesses, each with the attri-

<sup>1</sup> "Dissociation" naturally suggests a precedent condition of *association*; but it would be unsafe to *assume* as certain that before dissociation (or after it) the dissociated elements of a personality are in *closer* relation than during dissociation. During dissociation, and while communication is going on, they at least *interact*. It is *conceivable*—though this is not my own view—that in the normal state preceding and following dissociation their relation may be that of mutual indifference and latency, and the sole bond of connection the fact of their being associated with the same bodily organism. It is possible to question even the very existence of secondary selves when not in process of manifestation.

butes of a self, are manifested during dissociation. Has one of them a better title than the other to be regarded as the true self of the automatist? If so, is the true self of the automatist the consciousness which impresses, or the consciousness which receives the impression, the agent or the percipient? Or should we reserve the name of true self to the unduplicated normal consciousness which the ordinary man habitually identifies with himself? What, in any case, is the relation of the dissociated selves to the normal consciousness before and after dissociation? These are difficult questions, and to ask them is to start other questions no less difficult. The whole subject belongs to a region of mystery, and any attempt to unravel its complexities must probably be for a long time to come provisional and speculative. I am fully aware that any suggestions I may be able to offer are necessarily of this character; but I am not without hope that a careful study of Willett phenomena may at least add a few stones to the foundations on which a satisfactory theory of human personality may eventually be built.

In the Willett records the great majority of communications purport to come from the spirit world. There are a few cases, however, in which no claim of this kind is made, and which we may *prima facie* assume to be cases of impressions produced in one dissociated element of the personality by the agency of another. The lengthy passages cited on pp. 69-74 and pp. 112 ff. are instances in point. I am afraid I must ask the reader to re-read these with some care with a view to their bearing on the subject of the present chapter. Let us designate the passages in question by the letters A and B respectively.

In A, if my interpretation is right, which I admit is by no means certain, two "I's" are in evidence, an "I" that communicates certain of its experiences past and present, and an "I" that receives the communication and is responsible for reproducing it vocally. To the receiving "I" it would appear that the communication was being conveyed to it by an agency other than itself. Yet the experiences described seem certainly to be presented in a form which suggests that they are to be taken as experiences of the automatist herself, while we have also to identify with the automatist herself the "I" which receives and utters.

On the whole I am inclined to regard the " I " who tells the tale of her vision in this script as a secondary self whose communication is repeated *verbatim* in the first person by the receiving and recording self. Repetition in the first person of the remarks of a communicator is a frequent occurrence in the case of messages purporting to come from Gurney or Myers ; and if my interpretation is right it would tend to confirm my idea that the *modus operandi* is the same whether the communicator be a secondary self or an independent spirit.

I should add that throughout the spoken portion of the sitting I judge Mrs Willett to have been in a state of partial, but not profound, trance.

During the experience described in B she was clearly wide awake and fully aware of her surroundings. The drama so vividly related by Mrs Willett begins with the self in what I suppose we may assume to be its normal unduplicated condition. Dissociation first shows itself in a " knock-down " conviction that an action contemplated by the normal self must not be carried out. This inhibitory impression we are entitled to treat as a form of "communication ".

In the next phase the dissociation is carried a step further. Two contrasted " minds " appear on the stage together. One of these (called by Mrs W. Mind No. 1), which I take to be the source of the inhibition, proceeds to cause certain movements of the body and limbs which, from its own point of view, are evidently purposeful. Mind No. 2 (described by Mrs Willett as " me as I know myself ") plays no part in the production of the movements, does not understand their object, and looks on at them with wonder and incomprehension. Finally, the two minds seem to " flash together " ; normality is restored, and " I at once knew ", says Mrs Willett, " what I was to do ".

This very remarkable experience contains several points of special interest.

One of the questions which I mooted at the beginning of the present chapter was whether the true self of the automatist was to be identified (1) with the consciousness which impresses, or (2) with the consciousness that receives the impression, or (3) with the unduplicated normal consciousness which precedes and follows dissociation. Mrs Willett's experience described above suggests a part answer to this question by identifying the



mind receiving the impression (Mind No. 2) with "me as I know myself"—that is to say, with the normal consciousness. For her these two I's are one and the same self. If that view be accepted—and for my part I am ready to accept and to adopt it as my own—the position is considerably simplified. The three selves with which we started as possible competitors in the claim to be regarded as the true self of the automatist have been reduced to two. It is possible, no doubt, to draw a distinction between the normal self in normal conditions and the same self as modified during dissociation. There may even be some convenience in using the term "primary self" to signify the normal self as thus modified—provided always we are on our guard against the mistake of treating the normal and the primary self as distinct psychical entities. They are the same self—the same Ego or centre of consciousness—only with different environment and a changed content of consciousness. They are not two Egos, but successive states of one.

Mrs Willett's identification of Mind No. 2 with her normal self stands in strong contrast with the sharp distinction which she draws between Mind No. 2 and Mind No. 1. Note that she does not actually use the expression "me" or "I" of Mind No. 1 at all. It might even be contended that Mind No. 1 is not really a dissociated self, but an independent entity outside the personality altogether. Nevertheless this was clearly not the view of it held by Mrs Willett, nor do I believe it to be the true view. Her own instinctive conception is implied in the words "The two minds flashed together, and I at once knew what I was to do". She pictures to herself the two minds joining together so as to form one mind. But the one mind is still Mind No. 2. It is Mind No. 1 that has ceased to be in evidence. This account of the phenomenon may not be its correct interpretation; but it is clear evidence that she regarded Mind No. 1 as part of her own personality, and not as an intruder from outside.

Another point of interest is provided by the automatic physical movements caused by Mind No. 1. If Mind No. 1 and Mind No. 2 are to be regarded as roughly equivalent to the subliminal and the supraliminal of the scripts it would seem to follow that the subliminal is able to produce intelligent movements of the body quite independently of the supraliminal,

and perhaps even against its will. On the other hand, in the passage quoted on p. 130 above we are given by the communicators to understand that the externalisation of messages through voice or hand is only possible in Mrs Willett's case to the subliminal acting through the supraliminal. Are the two views consistent with each other? They do not seem easy to reconcile. But the action of the mental on the physical is so mysterious, and so little light is really thrown upon it by the Willett phenomena or by the statements of the communicators respecting "process", that I prefer to leave the question unanswered.<sup>1</sup> So far as I recollect, the only other automatic movements recorded among Willett phenomena which the automatist is not only not conscious of producing, but is conscious of *not* producing—are those which occurred in connection with the Dorr script.<sup>2</sup> But in that case the movements were claimed by the communicators as a *telergic* effect brought about by themselves. It is very difficult to get from automatists any precise account of the sense in which they feel their scripts to be automatic; but I believe the cases in which they appear to themselves to be looking on while the hand is being moved by an apparently independent agency are rare. In the Willett records the Dorr script seems to be the only clear example. But an experience of December 8, 1908, may be worth noting, when the automatist tried for script in obedience to a strong impulse, and records that "writing began almost before pen touched paper".

I have next to call attention, but rather by way of contrast than of resemblance, to another Willett record, as remarkable in its way as either of those which we have just been considering. The incident described occurred towards the end of the waking stage following the trance D.I. of May 13, 1912.

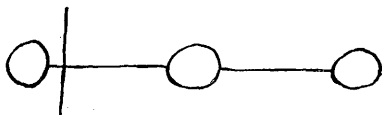
The automatist had already remarked that the communicators were "all gone", and after a pause had opened her eyes and looked round her, though she failed at first to recognise the room in which we were sitting. She was still in a condition of

<sup>1</sup> In the D.I. of May 11, 1912, quoted on pp. 135-138 above, the epiphcnomenal and parallelistic hypotheses concerning the relations of mind and body are rejected in favour of interactionism. Otherwise the subject is very slightly touched upon in the Willett scripts.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 123 above.

partial trance, and continued to ramble on with dreamy reminiscences of things seen and heard in the course of the D.I. The account of what ensued is taken from a note drawn up by me within two days of the sitting. I had supposed the waking stage to be coming to an end when—

Mrs Willett proceeded to talk in what might, save for two peculiarities, have been taken to be a quite normal manner. The two peculiarities were : (1) that, instead of looking *at* me, she seemed to be for the most part deliberately looking in another direction, or, when she did occasionally turn her eyes straight towards me, to be focussing them on something beyond and not on me at all ; (2) that, although the conversation was carried on between us in the ordinary way, and lasted at least ten minutes, she never during that time seemed to realise who I was, or to take any trouble to do so. At one moment I asked her point-blank to look at me and say if she knew me. Upon that she turned towards me and answered that she did not, but thought she might be able to make out who I was, if she tried sufficiently hard ; adding that she did not wish to try just then, because she wanted to go on talking about Henry Sidgwick. In effect, the conversation was chiefly upon H. S., though in the course of it she remarked that she seemed to see me between two others, and thereupon took up the pencil and drew the figure given below.



The middle circle, she said, was me, and the two outer ones the others with whom I was connected. I asked whether either or both of "the others" had already "passed over".

"I make the division *there*", she said, drawing the vertical line. "This one" (pointing to the circle on the left), "is on the other side ; you and the other are still here".

Her remarks about H. S. were quite interesting, but I made no attempt to take them down in writing, as the conversation between us was too rapid. She described the impression which she had gathered from her supernormal experience of him. Among other things she said she thought he was rather deficient

in a feeling for things of beauty in his surroundings; and pointing to the tiles of the fireplace of the drawing-room at Grange Terrace, Cambridge, where we were sitting, she said "For instance, he would not mind *those*, whereas they would be impossible for me". She called the house Henry Sidgwick's house, and on my saying it was *Mrs* Sidgwick's house, insisted that it was his, not hers, that his books were there and that he frequently came and looked at them!

She said H. S. often put questions to her on philosophical subjects expressed in simple language in order to find out how a particular view was likely to strike the ordinary common-sense mind. His attitude as a thinker when in the body had been much misunderstood. He believed it would be many ages before humanity reached anything like a basis of certainty, and in the mean time vast assumptions must be made. But he did not like making assumptions, and often objected to the assumptions made by Myers.

A good deal more was said, which I do not remember with sufficient clearness to record. But the point is, that it was all quite coherent, and that, apart from the peculiarities I have mentioned, there was nothing to make one suspect that she was not in a perfectly normal condition. No waking stage within my experience has at all closely resembled this one; but some of its features appear in those of March 13th and 15th, 1912, when O. J. L. was in charge. These cases show a similar coherence of thought, so much so that when I first read O. J. L.'s account I wondered whether he had not set down a good deal that was uttered after Mrs Willett had become completely normal again. In the light of what I have now myself witnessed, I am more doubtful about this. It is worth noting that during the waking stage of March 13th, 1912, Mrs Willett, although she does recognise O. J. L., hesitates a little, and seems not quite confident that she is right.

The case here recorded (let us designate it by the letter C) has one marked feature in common with both A and B. It is not suggested in any of the three that a communicator from outside is taking any active part in the proceedings. On the other hand, whereas in both A and B two dissociated selves manifest themselves simultaneously, we have apparently one

speaker, and one speaker only, on the stage in C. In other words A and B are cases of co-conscious intelligences interacting with each other, whereas C presents the appearance of a single intelligence discoursing upon its own past and present experiences. Does the intelligence manifesting itself in C correspond to Mind No. 2 in B, *i.e.* to "me as I know myself", or to Mind No. 1 from which Mind No. 2 expressly distinguishes itself? My own view is that it corresponds to Mind No. 2, but to Mind No. 2 in a state of gradual transition to normality. The communicators—in this case claiming to be the spirits of deceased persons—are said to have "gone". If, instead of being what they claimed to be, they were in reality dissociated secondary selves belonging to the personality of the automatist, we might describe the situation by saying that, dissociation having come to an end, the secondary selves have vanished from ken, leaving the percipient or "primary" self in solitary possession. But this percipient or primary self is none other than the normal self in an abnormal phase. The identity of the "I" is maintained throughout the waking stage, at the end of which it is unmistakably Mrs Willett's normal self. In the transition to normality a change has undoubtedly taken place. I hold that this must be regarded as a change in the content of consciousness of a single self, not a change from one self to another. Probably the present case is but an outstanding example of something that occurs in a more or less pronounced form in every waking stage, especially when the automatist has been deeply entranced. Even after dissociation has completely ceased the single self may still retain some memory of its experiences during dissociation—a memory which tends to fade away like a dream as consciousness of its normal surroundings returns.

To return to A and B: up to this point we have treated dissociation as being a division of the personality into two components, roughly corresponding to the supraliminal and the subliminal of Myers. What warrant have we for limiting the number of components to two? Myers himself<sup>1</sup> regarded human personality as in some sense "polypsychic", and considered it "permissible and convenient" to treat "a subliminal self" and "subliminal selves" as interchangeable

<sup>1</sup> *Human Personality*, vol. i., sect. 112.

terms. His conception of the different "selves" as so many layers or *strata* of a single psychical entity is, as I have said, one which I cannot accept. But on the question of multiplicity *versus* duality I think he was right. Certain passages from Willett records, in which the automatist, speaking in the first person, describes her experiences at the moment, either during trance or in the course of emerging from trance, may be quoted in support of this view; and we shall come across it again later in statements attributed to the communicators themselves.

*D.I. of January 21, 1912. (Present, G. W. B.)*

I never saw that person before (*Pause*) Oh, he says, note this—very dim. He holds up a hand. The unrecognised strand—oh, he says, perhaps partially recognised would be more accurate. It's very odd, I'm only seeing him when he's touching Henry Sidgwick, and only seeing Henry Sidgwick when he's—Oh! I look through L——<sup>1</sup> at him. It's like a chain. Oh, there's a chain of me's, and then L——, and then him and then the dim man<sup>2</sup> . . .

A little later in the same sitting she says :


*Oh*, I understood that and I lost it. Oh, there is a me that understands what they say, and in handing it on to the next ME it slips and my hands are empty.

Again at the end of the waking stage in the same sitting she remarked :

It all seems to be whirling about—a number of me's whirling round and joining to make one me.

*D.I. of March 13, 1912. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[*Spoken during waking stage*] Oh, dear me. I don't seem able to arrange myself somehow—I seem all bits. Where is

me? Where is me? all  whirling.

*D.I. of February 28, 1914. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[*Spoken during waking stage*] I can't remember who I am. I know I'm somebody; and I'm all coming together, you know, and the bits don't fit.

<sup>1</sup> See footnote on p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> The "dim man" is the Dark Young Man.

It is hard to say how far we should attach literal credence to these statements, but I am strongly inclined to believe that they represent at least a symbolic adumbration of the truth. The conception, to which they clearly point, is that of a personality consisting of a multiplicity of selves normally co-operating so as to produce the appearance of a single self, but capable of dissociation into more or less independently-acting psychic elements. To some such conception I think we are almost driven; but the nature of the selves and of their mutual relations remains a very obscure problem.

A chain of *me's* is represented in the first extract as connecting with another apparently analogous chain of spirit communicators; and in the second extract a message from the communicators is said to be handed on from one *me* to another with possible loss in the process of transmission.

The idea of a chain of *me's* may not be fundamentally incompatible with Myers's conception of a unitary soul differentiated into distinguishable strata, but nevertheless essentially *one*. This is the doctrine expounded, though not, I think, with perfect consistency, in *Human Personality*; and it is also, as we shall see in Part II., the doctrine expounded by the group who purport to communicate through Mrs Willett's mediumship. It does not, however, appear to me to be the most natural interpretation of Mrs Willett's own experiences as described by her in the passages I have quoted. Such phrases as "a number of *me's* whirling round and joining to make one *me*" seem to apply much more aptly to individual psychic units than to "strata" of a unitary consciousness. Moreover, the description of a chain of *me's* continuous with a chain of spirit communicators surely points to a relation between the *me's* similar to the relation assumed to exist between the spirit communicators and the medium, and between the spirit communicators themselves—in other words, to a relation between distinct psychic entities. The validity of this inference does not depend on the assumption that the communicators really are the spirits they purport to be, but rests on the undoubted fact that that is what they are taken to be *by the automatist*. The argument would still hold good even if we choose to regard the communicators as so many additional *me's* masquerading as spirits.

Incidentally I may remark that if the relation between the units in any place in the combined chain is telepathic, there is good reason for supposing that it is telepathic throughout.

Whatever may be the method of communication between the different *me's* which form links in the chain, the chain itself is represented as terminating in a *me* which observes the other *me's*, and is the ultimate recipient of the message that is being conveyed through them. It continues to observe the other *me's* on the breaking up of the chain in the early stages of a return to normality; and when the automatist uses the first person to describe her own experiences it is always the observing *me* that speaks. I have no hesitation in treating it as a phase of the automatist's normal self—in fact as the *me* to which, in discussing the experience described in B, I have applied the term "primary self". The primary self, I once more repeat, is the same self as the normal self; but by reason of dissociation the environment is different, and therewith the mental content likewise.

The reader will not be surprised when I add that for me this same self is also the automatist's true self. Myers, however, thought otherwise, holding that the true self is to be found in the subliminal; a doctrine that appears to be accepted by the communicators in Willett scripts. The subject is one that calls for further examination, but I prefer to leave it alone for the present with the intention of returning to it in a later chapter.

The question may be asked, Does the control of the bodily organism during dissociation remain throughout with the primary *me*, or does it on occasion pass either to a secondary *me* or to a genuinely external communicator? Whatever may be the case with sensitives of the Piper type, my impression about Mrs Willett is that even in trance her primary self is never displaced from general command of the organism, though some partial displacement appears to have occurred in the exceptional instances described on p. 145 above. It is to be noted that in both of these exceptional instances the automatist was awake and aware of her surroundings.

The degree of departure from normality exhibited by the primary self during dissociation varies widely in different cases. Broadly speaking, it is greatest when the automatist is deeply entranced. It is reduced almost to the vanishing point in



silent D.I.s and lone scripts. Here an interesting question arises. If communications are accepted as coming from a source within the sensitive some degree of dissociation must needs be presumed in order to account for the fact that they *appear* to reach her from an independent agency. But now let us suppose that the communications are really what they purport to be, namely, messages from a genuinely external source. In that case I see no absolute necessity for postulating any degree of dissociation however slight. An external communicator impressing his message on the normal self should be at least as effective in creating a sense of alien origin as a secondary self communicating with a primary self. Myers, indeed, took it for granted that a telepathic message from an external source can only reach the supraliminal through the subliminal as intermediary. This would make dissociation an invariable factor in the process of communication from whatever source. I can well believe that it is a frequent factor in the process, but where the possibility of an external communicator is admitted I see no reason for supposing that it is a necessary one.<sup>1</sup>

That the passage from normality through dissociation to restored normality is a passage from at least apparent unity to duality or plurality and so back again is not likely to be disputed. But the nature of the unity, and the relation of the dissociated elements to the normal self before and after dissociation, offer a wide field for doubt and speculation. If my identification of the primary self with the normal self is accepted, the problem is really concerned only with the secondary self (or selves). When Mrs Willett in Extract B describes the "flashing together" of the two minds, and in the D.I. of January 21, 1912, speaks of a number of *me's* whirling round and joining to make one *me*, what is the true interpretation of her experience? Is it that, when combined, the various *me's* will have lost their individual identity and collapsed into a single unitary self? Or are we to suppose that, although they continue to exist as individual psychic units and to interact with the primary self, consciousness of that interaction has ceased at least so far as the primary self is concerned? Or, again, should we carry this idea still further, and suppose that, when the sensitive returns to a normal condition, the interaction

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 276 ff. below.

between the primary and the secondary *me's* comes to an end altogether, leaving the primary *me* in sole occupation of the field?

I doubt whether we are yet in a position definitely to answer these questions, or to feel confident that even the formulation of them is not inadequate and misleading. All three hypotheses may be wide of the mark. But if we are to choose between them, my own view, for what it is worth, inclines strongly to the second as at least likely to be nearer the truth than either of the others.

If we consider the various *types* of mediumistic communications as distinguished from the *content* in any given case, are we driven to regard any of them as beyond the competence of a dissociated self to produce by its own unassisted agency? I do not think we are. The wide range of phenomena extending from simple dream experiences and ordinary automatic writing to the hallucinations imposed on Miss Beauchamp by "Sally" in the famous case described by Dr Morton Prince, seems to point to the activity of a dissociated self as the sufficient explanation of every *type* of message. True, we have still to account for the curiously persistent claim—on that supposition, fraudulent—of communicators to be discarnate spirits. But it is the *super-normal element in the content* of communications,<sup>1</sup> coupled with the general evidence in favour of telepathy, that chiefly throws doubt on the all-sufficiency of the explanation.

Its insufficiency would be partly remedied if it were legitimate to assume the existence of dissociated selves endowed with powers of "independent clairvoyance". An entity so endowed might, out of its own resources, and without the co-operation of any other mind, become a communicator of knowledge supernormally acquired. I would not venture to pronounce an explanation on these lines of certain mediumistic phenomena to be impossible, though it could not be stretched to cover the whole ground. But it involves an incursion into the marvellous at least as great as the hypothesis of telepathy. The evidence for it is insufficient in quantity and quality<sup>2</sup>: in Mrs Willett's

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., pp. 198-9.

<sup>2</sup> Written before I had seen Professor Rhine's work on *Extra-sensory Perception*, which certainly establishes a *prima facie* case in favour of "pure" clairvoyance.

ease it is, in my opinion, wholly wanting. Certainly there is no manifestation in her records of knowledge supernormally obtained that could not be more easily and simply accounted for by telepathic interaction with another mind.

Short of crediting a dissociated self with the faculty of clairvoyantly acquiring knowledge on its own account, it is possible to suppose that in certain cases and in certain directions it may possess exceptional capacities exceeding those exhibited by the normal self. Much automatic utterance is of so feeble a character as to suggest that the intelligence responsible for it is inferior in capacity to the normal self. If we could be sure that this inferiority is invariable, we should have to seek elsewhere for the source of any automatic product that clearly surpassed the limits of the automatist's normal capacity. There does not seem, however, to be any good reason for assuming that dissociated selves are necessarily either inferior or superior, mentally or morally, to the normal self. As Myers says, "Hidden in the depths of our being is a rubbish-heap as well as a treasure-house".

The most notable instance that I know of in the history of psychical research, not even excepting the famous case of Helène Smith, of a mediumistic product exceeding what we should expect from the known intellectual abilities and mental equipment of the automatist, is that presented by the case of Mrs Curran, now Mrs Rogers, an American lady who, without going into trance, dictates in rapid and apparently unpremeditated flow long novels and pieces of poetry of literary merit very far beyond the recognised capacities of the normal self. In the case of Helène Smith, Myers himself attributes the automatic product to the activity of a secondary self.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Mrs Curran, the ostensible communicator is a discarnate spirit calling itself Patience Worth, and claiming to have lived its earthly life in England in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Here also an explanation has been sought in purely subliminal inspiration; and though in this particular instance the explanation bristles with difficulties, the question of origin must still be regarded as an open one. I express no opinion one way or the other and am content to follow Dr Walter Prince, who has devoted a whole volume to the case, and who sums up

<sup>1</sup> See *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 133.

his conclusions as follows: "Either our concept of what we call the subconscious must be radically altered, so as to include potencies of which we have hitherto had no knowledge, or else some cause operating through but not originating in the subconsciousness of Mrs Curran must be acknowledged". If we reject the second alternative it only remains to accept Mrs Curran as a truly remarkable example of "genius" assuming the most pronouncedly mediumistic form.

I have cited the Patience Worth case here because it seems to me that we shall have just the same alternatives to choose between when we come to deal in the second part of this paper with statements made in Willett scripts respecting the *modus operandi* and the processes of communication. These statements, and also certain philosophical disquisitions, of which a specimen will be found in the Appendix to this paper, whatever else we may think of them, show a power of thought on difficult and abstruse subjects which, knowing Mrs Willett as intimately as I do, I certainly should not have expected from her normal self. The contrast between product and normal capacity is not so striking in Mrs Willett's case as in that of Mrs Curran, for Mrs Willett is a well-read and exceptionally intelligent lady, and if she gave her mind to the subjects in question could doubtless succeed in gaining a more or less adequate grasp of them. But, as a matter of fact, though she possesses a copy of the abridged edition of *Human Personality*, and must be presumed to have read it, and is besides acquainted with the contributions made by Mrs Verrall, Mr Piddington, Miss Johnson, and Sir Oliver Lodge to vols. xx., xxi., xxii., xxiv., and xxv. of the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R., the psychological aspects of psychical research have singularly little interest for her. They have seldom been mentioned between us; and judging from remarks that have fallen from her from time to time, I should say that her normal understanding of them is very much below the level reached in the treatment of them in her scripts. If I had before me only those Willett scripts to which I have been referring, I frankly admit that I should have been at a loss whether to attribute them to subliminal activity or to a source entirely outside the personality of the medium. Probably, like Dr Walter Prince, I should be content to suspend judgment. But having before me the whole of the Willett

scripts, and being in a position to compare them with the scripts of other automatists of our group and with facts known to me but not known to Mrs Willett herself, I am personally of opinion that they contain evidence of supernormally acquired knowledge which no mere subliminal mentation will suffice to account for. My readers are not in this position, and for reasons stated in the introduction to this paper I cannot put them in possession of the considerations that have chiefly weighed with me. All they have to go upon in the way of evidence of supernormal communications is that provided by the papers already published in the *Proceedings* of the Society and mentioned in the introduction. I cannot complain if they do what I should probably do in their place, and suspend judgment. And that, indeed, is all I ask them to do.

I conclude this chapter with some brief reflections arising out of a comparison of mediumship with genius—the latter term being here used in the sense given to it by Myers, which makes its essential characteristic to consist in the interaction of supraliminal with subliminal mentation.<sup>1</sup> Myers's definition deliberately excludes from the scope of genius inspiration directly proceeding from a spiritual source<sup>2</sup>; and in this respect it is plain that mediumship extends to a wider field than genius, for it includes all communications that seem to the automatist to proceed from some independent source, irrespective of the question whether that source be genuinely external or what Myers calls subliminal.

From my point of view—that is to say, in relation to the nature of the process—this limitation of the field of genius seems arbitrary, and even irrelevant. I am unwilling to regard inspiration proceeding from a mental source within the personality as essentially different in kind from inspiration proceeding from a mind external to it. But apart from the limitation in question, what, if any, is the distinction between genius as understood by Myers and mediumship? There are cases on record where genius takes a purely mediumistic form.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally I may remark that it also involves a refusal to admit that the supraliminal consciousness is capable on its own account of producing a work of genius—a limitation which I cannot but regard as arbitrary and unsupported by evidence.

“ On ne travaille pas ”, writes De Musset, “ on écoute, c'est comme un inconnu qui vous parle à l'oreille ”.<sup>1</sup> The very words might have been used by Mrs Willett in describing her silent D.I.s. The experience of Helène Smith and Mrs Curran, to which I have already referred, however interpreted, seem to be phenomena of the same order. A distinction between genius and mediumship is evidently not to be looked for where dissociation is as clearly manifested as it was in the case of De Musset. It is where there is no manifest evidence of dissociation that genius, conceived as successful co-operation of subliminal with supraliminal elements, parts company with mediumship. When a medium's apprehension of a “ message ” as proceeding from an agency other than herself comes to an end the mediumistic activity as such ceases with it. It is otherwise with the activity of genius. If genius consists, as Myers holds, in the interaction of subliminal with supraliminal mentation, we must recognise that in the majority of cases that interaction goes on subconsciously so far as the normal self is concerned. The thoughts resulting from it in the conscious mind will then appear to that mind to be its own thoughts, not thoughts impressed on it from elsewhere. I am far from denying that there may be truth in this conception. But it is obvious that it must be a matter of inference. I do not see how we can have direct evidence of it.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 89.

## PART II

### INTRODUCTORY

IN Part I. of this paper I have considered the phenomena of Mrs Willett's mediumship mainly in the light thrown upon them by the observation of the investigators, and by the comments and descriptions of her experiences provided by the sensitive herself either in retrospect or during the actual course of the sittings. My next task will be to extract from the records and set forth as clearly as I can the statements purporting to come from the communicators, and to express their views upon the psychology of mediumship and the methods and processes of communication.

These statements, as might have been anticipated, from whatever source they really proceed, show general conformity with the opinions held by Myers and expounded in his great work on *Human Personality*. *But the conformity is by no means complete*; the differences will, I think, be found of no less interest than the resemblances. Moreover, in the description of the *modus operandi* in certain cases the scripts present us with an elaboration of detail to which nothing in *Human Personality*, or, so far as I know, anywhere else in the literature of the subject can fairly be said to correspond.

Though the communicators usually speak as with the authority of an insight claiming to be superior to ours, it is interesting to note how repeatedly and emphatically they insist upon the limitations of their knowledge, and on the need for continued research and experiment on their own side as well as on ours. The following extracts illustrate this point.

*Lone Script of October 16, 1908. (Myers communicating.)*

... much is unknown to us even and you are all far behind us in knowledge ...

*Lone Script of November 3, 1908. (Myers communicating.)*

... I cannot explain half the mysteries of Life yet but I see more than you do ...

*Lone Script of January 6, 1909. (Myers communicating.)*

... experiments are necessary here as on earth constant experiments with machines no 2 of which are alike ...

*Lone Script of January 28, 1909. (Myers communicating.)*

... I am now going to begin fresh experiments you might tell Mrs V. when opportunity occurs that the need for experiment from this side has not been sufficiently grasped on your side ...

*Lone Script of February 2, 1909. (Myers communicating.)*

... The very active branch of our work this side is the experimental branch ...

*Lone Script of April 9, 1909. (Myers sends a message to O. J. L.)*

... Remember there is as much room in some ways for speculation here as with you and many mysteries remain mysteries only approached from other and higher standpoints ...

*Lone Script of April 22, 1909. (Message from Myers to O. J. L.)*

... When I speak of emotional radiation I am speaking of a law as yet but very partially understood by me. I can see the result but much in regard to its working is obscure to me ...

*Lone Script of April 30, 1909. (Myers, in answer to a request from O. J. L. for information on certain scientific problems.)*

... Much and more than you suspect is absolutely hidden from me Myers the small amount in one way of accretion of knowledge which succeeds Myers<sup>1</sup> bodily dissolution is a surprise to every spirit that crosses the Rubicon ...

<sup>1</sup>The apparently superfluous introduction of the name of the communicator even in the middle of a sentence is frequent in the Lone Script of Mrs Willett's early period. The purpose to be served by this device is not very clear. It is not often found in later scripts.



*Lone Script of March 20, 1910. (Message from Myers to O. J. L.)*

... Re D I I think Gurney's plan a distinct improvement on mine the formal repetition word for word and sentence for sentence seems to trouble the machine it is better to let her give the sense—using as far as she *can* the words given to her But not straining after complete verbal accuracy anyhow for the present The faculty should *develop* [sic] It is but little understood so far and we must experiment to find out upon which lines it will best come to maturity . . .

*D.I. of May 6, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[*Myers speaking*] He says that if he lived for ever the study of new sensitives would never lose interest for him. There are so many varying conditions and self-induced difficulties. Many of these really come from self-hallucination of individual minds, who would stereotype the phenomenon ; but it's best to let it grow its own way unhampered, free, serene and calm ; above all, calm and free . . .

*D.I. of May 21, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[*Probably Gurney speaking*] . . . There is an awful danger in your thinking, a heap of you, that the learning stage is so much over now that you can think you have precedents, can lay down rules, and that sensitives can be standardised. Whereas, as a matter of fact, there are many varieties, and you can't lay down canons, you can't bring them up to a standard. You have still much to learn, so have we . . .

[*Myers speaking*] No one is so overpowered by my ignorance as I am,—I, Myers. Every machine is different, and experience is the sole instructor . . .

*Lone Script of June 19, 1910. (Myers communicating.)*

... Say this The Ideal is the Real What men call Visionary is the Bare *fact* What they call *fact* is often evanescent vapour which will melt into nothingness before the light of truth

I yearn to say the bare bones are the unreal the Magic Vision Holy Grail is the Actual I am feeling after much that is yet obscure to me My knowledge is fragmentary and as I progress I feel its limits more . . .

*D.I. of August 26, 1910. (Present, Mrs Verrall.)*

[*Henry Sidgwick speaking*] . . . What is inspiration, if I only knew. It's the defect of knowledge here that causes confusion. Wonderfully similar is our condition in regard to knowledge of reaching back, as yours of reaching up . . .

*D.I. of September 21, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

. . . H. S. said, If I only knew what inspiration was! Note, this had meaning as showing our lack of knowledge. We see hints, but the chain is not properly apprehended by us . . .

*D.I. of September 24, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[On August 4, Mrs Willett had recorded that between 11 a.m. and 12.45 p.m. she heard the "persistent ticking of a clock, intermittent, coming from near the mantelpiece. When I went up to it it stopped. I did this several times, and after an interval it began again. There is no clock in the room." Early in the sitting of September 24 O. J. L. records that there came a "rap", which he could not locate, but which was certainly objective. Later on further reference was made to the subject, as follows :]

[*Gurney speaking*] What do you make out about super-normal phenomenon here ?

(O. J. L. took this to be asking about his own attitude towards physical phenomena in general ; so he said, "Do you mean physical phenomena ?")

[*Gurney*] There was one here.

(O. J. L. Do you mean the raps ?)

[*Gurney*] Yes, not only raps, there was the clock. It was not hallucination—not hallucination in my sense, as I used the word. It's objective.

(O. J. L. I wish you would tell me more about those things.)

[*Gurney*] You're not going to get to the proof of survival that way.

(O. J. L. No, I know, but they are interesting in themselves.)

[*Gurney*] You never seem to realise how little we know. I'm not—sometimes I know and can't get it through, but very often I don't know.

(O. J. L. Yet you seemed to be producing those raps somehow.)

[*Gurney*] They never occur unless in the presence of a medium.

(*O. J. L.* Yes : that's why I fancy they are physiological.)

[*Gurney*] There's something physiological that is usable, and it is occasionally used with intention, but very often it's merely incidental to the type of machine. I'm most careful not to—about me he says—we don't want it here, he says, but the capacity sometimes is useful for reinforcing evidence . . .

*D.I. of January 21, 1912. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[*Gurney speaking*] . . . Sidgwick is always pointing out the liability to misinterpretation which the use of analogies and terms proper to one department of knowledge being imported into unmapped, ill-mapped regions —

*Trance-script preceding D.I. of May 11, 1912. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[*Gurney speaking*] . . . I think Alice<sup>1</sup> must be having personal experience of the higher kind of telepathy the touch of souls through means other than those of sense.

If for you the observing of that phenomena [*sic*] between the living-living and the living-dead is interesting let it not be forgotten how profoundly interesting for *us* is the investigation of a like phenomena between the living-living and the living-living.

To study that in this sensitive plant<sup>2</sup> is an important part of our research work, and has a direct bearing upon our own efforts to increase our powers of "touch". *Do you see.*

(*G. W. B.* I see perfectly.)

*We learn* : and the extraordinary weaving of threads between mind and mind and the subconscious processes (continuing on in intervals when the conscious selves are quite unoccupied with the subject)<sup>3</sup> of the Agent Percipient and Percipient Agent is an eternal revelation to us . . . We find a rich field for observation classification and study in the Filaments . . . and threads woven between the selves of A. J. and —<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* Miss Alice Johnson, who had recently been in Mrs Willett's company;

<sup>2</sup> By "this sensitive plant" is meant the Automatism.

<sup>3</sup> The brackets in this sentence have been added by me in order to make the meaning plain.

<sup>4</sup> The "dash" here represents a nick-name applied by Gurney to the sensitive. It was written very slowly and letter by letter, probably in order to avoid rousing her attention.

Tell A.J. that the action of mind on mind is a problem to *us* and the subject of investigation as bearing upon our own efforts to communicate We give thanks and claim her as a laboratory subject . . . we are accumulating experience and *data*

Research on both sides. Frank <sup>1</sup> wants that *clear* infinitely  
 complex—patient toil, here a little and there a little

I will speak now a moment and then must be gone—But I have got 1 point through that I wanted our study of the interaction of mind on mind, embodied minds as bearing on the like interaction between minds of discarnate personalities [and embodied minds] <sup>2</sup>

These repeated admissions of ignorance should not be lost sight of in any judgment we may form of the value to be attached to dogmatic statements by the communicators. They also convey an impressive warning of the extreme difficulty and complexity of the subject, and of the danger of making confident generalisations upon insufficient data.

<sup>1</sup> See footnote on p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> The words "and embodied minds" are not in the original record, but are required to make clear what I have no doubt is the meaning of the passage.

## CHAPTER I

### TELEPATHY, TELERGY, POSSESSION

As we already had occasion to notice, there is nothing in Mrs Willett's mediumship corresponding to the "control" which forms such a characteristic feature in that of Mrs Piper, Mrs Leonard, and other trance-mediums. Whatever may be its true nature, the control represents itself as the surviving spirit of somebody once in the flesh, which for the time being supplants the spirit of the medium in the use of the physical organism, whether to express its own ideas or to transmit messages from other spirits. In the latter case it is these other spirits who are spoken of as "communicators", and the process by which they communicate with the control is presumably assumed to be telepathic, though I do not think this is always made clear. Sometimes, however, the control itself gives place to a communicator, who is then said to be in "direct communication"; *i.e.* the relation of the direct communicator to the medium is in no essential respect different from that of the regular control when the regular control is expressing its own ideas and not transmitting messages from others. Direct communication is, in fact, equivalent to control; and certain of Mrs Piper's trance-personalities, who began as communicators, ended by themselves taking on the part of regular controls, transmitting messages from other spirits and generally assuming charge of the organism of the medium. In control and direct communication so conceived there does not seem to be any room for telepathy in the commonly accepted application of the term, which limits it to interaction between one *mind* and another. The process is telergical, not telepathic. The self of the medium is off the stage altogether, and what we are left with is the controlling spirit using the physical organism of the medium to convey its message to the sitter.

In communications of the Willett type, on the other hand, the self of the medium is never off the stage, and telepathy

would seem to be of the essence of the process. The difference is important, and great stress is laid upon it in the Willett scripts by the communicators themselves.

Let us now see what they have to say on the subject.

*Lone Script of February 2, 1909. (Myers communicating.)*

... Re telepathy : Obviously not matter to matter, equally—though not so obviously—not mind to matter—mind to mind—Note that—quite transcending matter, it is from the persisting element of discarne—to the persistible element still incarnate . . .

*Lone Script of March 4, 1909. (Myers communicating.)*

... Myers I wish to go back to telepathy . . . Not from brain to brain as matter no not at all in that line will you reach the idea it is beyond matter . . . yes repeat repeat re telepathy that it must be conceived of in terms of super-sensual law. Nor must it be supposed to be of one quality or grade but of varied degrees this is a point ill expressed but a point. Degrees and types not similar but allied. Therefore do not go with those who would explain it as a merely material function as yet imperfectly understood. Lift it right out of that . . .

*D.I. of May 21, 1909. (Present, Mrs Verrall. This was the first sitting in presence of a sitter, and the first spoken D.I.)*

... There is nothing telergic in this case ; it is purely telepathic . . .

*Lone Script of June 10, 1909. (Myers communicating.)*

... The response to some extent—how large an extent I do not yet exactly know—the response conditions the power the power of transmission. All telergic phenomena is [*sic.*] clumsy and creaking creaking in comparison with telepathic medium. It is to telepathy that I look for the nearest approach to perfect intercommunication between Met Etherial and terrene Strata and I sum up one aspect in those words Thought leaps out to wed with thought . . .

*Lone Script of August 20, 1909. (Gurney communicating.)*

... Myers dislikes the word control in regard to us . . . in the case of your Scs Myers says it will lead to idea of possession

invasion tellurgical [*sic.*] control. It is the exercise of pure telepathic Modus Operandi Myers wants this made clear . . .

*D.I. of January 27, 1910. (Present, Mrs Verrall.)*

. . . Myers—make clear that this is telepathy, not speaking to physical part or counterpart of physical parts, mind incarnate in touch with mind discarnate . . .

*Lone script of March 7, 1910. (Myers communicating.)*

. . . Go back to telepathy one moment Not not of the Organism nor of any shadow of it not pertaining to Matter not the result of any physical peculiarity No it is the law of the Metetherial it is the mark of evolution evolution in human faculty the extension of man's powers not evolved by the friction of material self-preservation Not protoplasmic but Cosmic . . .

*D.I. of April 5, 1910. (Present, Mrs Verrall.)*

. . . [*Henry Sidgwick speaking*] I do not call this a machine—the notion of mechanism is a false one—but a sport—Mendel, not Sohn . . .

*D.I. of May 6, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

Edmund Gurney. Tell Lodge I don't want this to develop into trance. You have got that, we are doing something new. Then he says Telepathy. If you want to see the . . . labour of getting anything telergic done here, he can see the word DORR. That was a case of that word with two l's and a t.<sup>1</sup> That word [*i.e. the word DORR*] had to be given in that way after efforts had been made to convey it telepathically without success. It was a great strain on both sides. We don't want to move any atom in the brain directly.

(*O. J. L.* Am I to understand then that when you do it telergically you do move atoms in the brain ?)

No, we bring to bear certain currents. He says Thunder and Lightning.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See footnote on p. 124 above.

<sup>2</sup> I suspect that Gurney has misunderstood the question put to him, and that his answer refers to *telepathic* communication and its subsequent externalisation in speech or writing. This is certainly the sense in which the

*D.I. of May 21, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[*Myers communicating*] . . . Are you clear we wish to avoid trance ?

(*O. J. L.* Yes, I understand that. You regard this as something new and different.)

Sidgwick, in a way, thought there might be some suggestion from seeing Mrs Piper in trance ;<sup>1</sup> but it's not been so. The bunglings of the new method may be worth more than the perfecting of the old. . . . Oh, Lodge, there is one thing that is very uppermost in my mind. I'm trusting this machine to you, Lodge. You are not to let her try sitting—Yes, write that word—You are not to let anyone else experiment with her but Mrs Verrall. I won't answer for it if you let anyone else meddle.

(*O. J. L.* No, I quite understand that you do not want her to do Mrs Piper's sort of work . . .)

Lodge, there is a terrible competition. You can take an analogy from land, property—a preserve, my preserve. That is complete here in this machine. She is not one taken over from a hundred other influences. It is like reclaimed land, ownership undisputed.

Now Gurney says that Lodge will go wrong there, and will think that you mean possession. There is no possession. Lodge must not get that idea into his head.

(*O. J. L.* Do you mean that there is no such thing as possession, or no possession in this case ?)

There is possession, but not here. Fred says if he could only have Mrs Piper to himself and you and me . . .

*Lone script of June 25, 1910. (Gurney communicating.)*

Telepathy not possession is your work—with Mrs Piper it is possession We don't turn you out we use you where you are.

*D.I. of August 25, 1910. (Present, Mrs Verrall.)*

[*H. Sidgwick reported as saying*] . . . look not to immediate

simile of lightning and thunder is used in a very early Willett script (November 22, 1908) :

“(To my complaining that words in my mind tripped up my pen :) Yes, that is it that is telepathy the machine or pen and slower like lightning and thunder write to record.”

<sup>1</sup> On May 9, 1910, O. J. L. and Mrs Willett had an appointment with Mrs Piper at the rooms of the S.P.R.



success but to improved methods. Silence is essential in this case. It is no disembodiment, but impact from outside. It's like reaching something just out of reach . . .

[*Myers speaking*] . . . distracting sounds—stuff your ears [to *Mrs W.* *She thereupon did.*] Check any sign of trance [to *Mrs V.*] This is a new stage: the first steps are better than the swiftest crawl. Remove your hands [to *Mrs W.*], it hinders your hearing [*Mrs W. took her hands away from her ears. Then she said :*] Oh, it's Fred . . .

*D.I. of August 26, 1910. (Present, Mrs Verrall.)*

[*H. Sidgwick speaking*] . . . the double difficulty to grasp and to give

(*Mrs V. What ?*)<sup>1</sup>

losing touch now—receding—she is receding. What is inspiration, if I only knew . . .

*Script of September 25, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*<sup>2</sup>

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . She is very dazed *Look (O. J. L. looked and saw her apparently slightly entranced, so he said Ought I to wake her up ?)*

*I will.* I don't want her to develop into a second Piper.

(*The way in which the hand wandered over the paper was now reminiscent of Piper conditions. O. J. L. said : No, I know you consider we have had that and that now you are arranging something different.*)

*New.*

*Lone Script of December 25, 1910.*

[*William James communicating*] . . . To attempt is best I believe it I first person singular Not F W H M though he moves mechanism for me objects to this as implying telergical phenomena . . .

[*Myers communicating*] I have been doing something new Letting a participation be Participation of control I the mechanical no the mechanic other the Steerer.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Verrall explains that she interposed with this question because Mrs Willett seemed near trance, and she had been told the day before to check any appearance of trance.

<sup>2</sup> For the circumstances connected with this script and my comments see *antea*, pp. 56-7.

*Script of February 9, 1911, preceding D.I. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . Is there any more you want to ask me Lodge ?

(*O. J. L.* Yes, I want to ask wherein the difference consists between Piper phenomena and Willett phenomena : they seem both under similar control now.)

Control implies erroneous thought I am not tellergically [*sic*] here not replacing the spirit of the vehicle but using it where it is *telepathically* There is a complete difference from Piper methods here I merely submerge normal supraliminal and telepathically use the subliminal And what does the term extraliminal convey <sup>1</sup>

(*O. J. L.* Well, it conveys something round about, or outside the mechanism, not entering into it.)

No, she remains the totality of herself I impress her by thoughts It is she who uses the nerve (*drawing of zigzag line*) from her, physiologically

(*O. J. L.* Yes, I understand, the physiological mechanism is hers, you exercise only mental or psychical influence.)

Psychic yes . . .

*Lone Script of April 16, 1911. (Myers communicating.)*

. . . Myers Let me again emphasise the difference that exists between Piper and Willett phenomena the former is possession the complete all but complete withdrawal of the spirit the other is the blending of incarnate and excarnate spirits there is nothing telergic it is a form of telepathy the point we have to study is to find the line where the incarnate spirit is sufficiently over the border to be in a state to receive and yet sufficiently controlling by its own power its own supraliminal and therefore able to transmit.

We don't therefore desire the kind of trance that is of Piper essence though we could and sometimes have induced much the same thing <sup>2</sup> Get this clear We want the operator to be

<sup>1</sup> The term "extraliminal" does not occur elsewhere in Willett scripts. It is apparently used here to denote the external relation of the communicator to the entire self of the sensitive.

<sup>2</sup> This cannot refer to the "Dorr incident", because on that occasion the sensitive remained fully awake and aware of her surroundings. I imagine the communicator must have had in mind some medium or mediums other than either Mrs Willett or Mrs Piper.

so linked with its mechanism as to control that mechanism herself We want her also to be so linked to us as to be able to receive definite telepathic write the word radiation there is one glory of the sun and another of the stars there is the mediumistic gift of emitting and the other gift of receiving . . .

*Script of January 10, 1914. (Present, O. J. L.)*

. . . we do not want to be involved in automatists not of our own choosing investigate as you will but leave us and our subjects entirely out of it—You have to have the agency of a reflecting mind a mind to act as Reflector Hold on to that idea and remember there are lower and higher forms of manifestation and in the higher telepathy plays the dominant part . . .

*Trance-script of April 15, 1918. (Present, O. J. L.)*

F. W. H. M. This is not possession Lodge not in the sense of a direct control the element of telepathy is greater than that of the ordinary direct control . . .

These pronouncements leave no doubt concerning the views of the communicators on the essentially *mental* character of Mrs Willett's mediumship. According to them not only is the message telepathically conveyed to the subliminal of the sensitive, but in certain cases, if not in all, it passes from her subliminal to her supraliminal by what can only be conceived as a mental process before it is externalised in the form of speech or writing. The actual externalisation seems to be represented as the work of the supraliminal. As we shall see later the communicators do not admit the passage of thought from subliminal to supraliminal to be telepathic. But if it is not telepathic, what is it? To this point we shall have occasion to return hereafter.

The extracts collected above raise another question to which no clear answer seems to be provided in the scripts themselves. The communicators more than once deprecate trance in Mrs Willett's case, yet the course of development of her mediumship is clearly in the direction of trance. Her earlier communications came to her when she was in a state practically indistinguishable from normality—when, indeed, any suspicion of abnormality rested entirely on the mere fact of communications being

received.<sup>1</sup> Nor has the method of communication by lone scripts and silent D.I.s ceased at any period to be employed, though it has been supplemented by automatic writing and utterance obtained in the presence of a sitter and showing a continuous progress through light trance to deeper trance, ultimately culminating in a state in which the sensitive loses all consciousness of her surroundings except of the presence of the sitter, and on awaking retains no memory of what has happened during the sitting.

How is this consistent with the distinct statements made by the communicators that they "do not want this to develop into trance", or with the instruction given to Mrs Verrall at the sitting of August 25, 1910, to check any appearance of trance?

I have already given in Chapter I. of Part I. what I hope may be accepted as a satisfactory explanation of the difficulty (see p. 56 above). The communicators were putting Mrs Willett through a course of gradual training in mediumship. They were aiming at something *new*, and by something new they meant something different from the Piper trance—namely a condition in which, though the sensitive lost consciousness of her surroundings and memory of what happened during the sitting, she nevertheless, unlike Mrs Piper, retained consciousness of her own personality throughout. To refuse to apply the term "trance" to such a condition seems to me misleading, and I have not thought it desirable in this matter to follow the example of the communicators and depart from established usage. In the early days of her mediumship the idea of passing into trance was repugnant to Mrs Willett. The communicators may have avoided the word partly from fear of alarming her, but chiefly, I think, they did so in order to emphasise the novelty of the type of mediumship at which they were aiming. They certainly have avoided the word most successfully. In the whole series of scripts I can only find one clear instance of its being used to describe Willett conditions. Elsewhere it always means trance *à la Piper*.

<sup>1</sup> The mere fact of communications being received would not of itself be a valid ground for inferring abnormality if we could be sure that they were derived from an extraneous source and not from a dissociated self. See on this point my remarks on p. 152 above.

The novelty, then, consists in this, that even in deep trance Mrs Willett retains a consciousness of self, whereas Mrs Piper loses all sense of her own personality.<sup>1</sup>

Why is so much importance attached to this difference? It is because it involves the whole difference that separates telepathy from telergy, and telepathic communication from "possession". So long as the self of the medium is in evidence the natural presumption is that any communication from outside must be between mind and mind; but if the self is wholly eliminated the externalisation of the message must be effected by direct action on the physical organism of the medium by the outside agency itself.

Concerning the phenomena of the Piper trance the views expressed or implied in Willett script are, broadly speaking, the same that we find in *Human Personality*. The Myers of the scripts and the author of *Human Personality* are at one in treating the essential feature in Mrs Piper's case to be "possession", by which is meant that the spirit of the medium quits the body and that its place is taken by an invading extraneous spirit. No attempt is made either in *Human Personality* or in the scripts to elucidate the process by which the invading spirit controls the physical organism, but it is practically taken for granted—and I do not see what other hypothesis is open to us—that "the extraneous spirit acts on a man's organism in very much the same way as the man's own spirit habitually acts upon it".<sup>2</sup>

Possession, in short, in the wider sense of the term, is simply that relation of a mind to a body which enables it to interact with and control the body. From the point of view of *process* it does not seem to matter whether the control be exercised by an invading spirit or by the mind normally associated with the body.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the question remains whether such invasion

<sup>1</sup> Whether the communicators are justified in describing the peculiarity as new I cannot say with confidence, though I do not think any case quite like Mrs Willett's is to be found in *Human Personality*. Of late years Mrs Salter (Miss Helen Verrall), sitting with her husband as recorder, passes into trance without losing consciousness of self; but her trance is a light one.

<sup>2</sup> *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> Possession of the organism by a dissociated fragment of the medium's personality is abundantly recognised by Myers, though he prefers to describe

ever actually takes place, and in particular whether the "regular controls"—Phinuit and the Emperor Band—are entitled to be regarded as extraneous spirits.

The Myers of *Human Personality* ended by accepting as independent excarnate spirits not only the communicators—some of whom purport to take on occasion the place of the regular controls and "possess" the vacated body of the medium—but also the regular controls themselves, in spite of the very strong arguments for regarding these, at least, as dissociated elements of the medium's own personality. The independent status of the regular controls is not disputed in Willett script, but neither is it so unambiguously affirmed as to constitute a definite pronouncement. Phinuit is never referred to in the scripts, the Emperor Band only once, and that in reply to a direct question put by Sir O. J. L. The answer then given was so vague and evasive—a thing rare in Willett script—that one is tempted to read into it a desire to avoid any expression of opinion on the subject.

The contrast drawn in Willett scripts between the Willett phenomena and those of the Piper trance rests, as I have said, upon the distinction between telepathy and telergy, telergical action being the *modus operandi* of a spirit in possession of the medium's physical organism.

Once, and apparently only once, in the case of Mrs Willett are we given to understand that telergical methods were employed in place of telepathic. This was when the name Dorr was telergically written, after attempts to get it written by telepathic communication had failed. Yet even on this occasion we have to note a fundamental divergence from the Piper type of possession. In the Piper trance, we are told, there is "complete or all but complete withdrawal of the spirit", and an extraneous invading spirit takes its place. When the name Dorr was written, on the other hand, there was not even an approach to trance: the automatist was awake and aware of

it by the term *control*, and to reserve the term *possession* for possession by an extraneous spirit. He admits, however, that to discriminate one from the other may be a very difficult task, and that in forming a judgment we have to fall back on the *content* of the communications received—that is to say, on inferences drawn from other than psychological considerations. (See *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 198; also p. 153 above.)

what was going on. If the Dorr incident was really a case of "possession", it was a case of possession shared between the invading spirit and the spirit of the medium. Instances of the shared possession of the organs of speech and of voice by two distinct controls have occurred in the history of Mrs Piper's mediumship, but the controls in such cases have always purported to be invading spirits. A closer parallel is provided by the experience of Mrs Willett recorded on pp. 112-113 above, when Mind No. 1 seemed to control the body while Mind No. 2 looked on and wondered; but there was no question there of either "mind" being other than a dissociated element of the sensitive's own personality.

The Myers of the Willett scripts and the Myers of *Human Personality* agree, as we have seen, in the descriptions which they give of the nature of the Piper trance-phenomena. But as soon as we pass from mere description to consider the comparative significance to be attached to the two methods of communication—the telergic and the telepathic—the agreement ceases. To the Myers of *Human Personality* "possession" represented the culminating point of perfection in the methods of communication with the spirit world.<sup>1</sup> He also reached the paradoxical conclusion that telepathy, carried to its highest

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., pp. 189-90. "On the whole, I did not then [*i.e.* in 1888] anticipate that the theory of possession could be presented as more than a plausible speculation, or as a supplement to other lines of proof of man's survival of death. The position of things, as the reader of the *S.P.R. Proceedings* knows, has in the last decade undergone a complete change. The trance phenomena of Mrs Piper—so long and so carefully watched by Dr Hodgson and others—formed, I think, by far the most remarkable mass of psychical evidence till then adduced in any quarter. And more recently other series of trance phenomena with other 'mediums'—though still incomplete—have added materially to the evidence obtained through Mrs Piper. The result broadly is that these phenomena of possession are now the most amply attested, as well as intrinsically the most advanced, in our whole repertory.

"Nor again is the mere increment of direct evidence, important though that is, the sole factor in the changed situation. Not only has direct evidence grown, but indirect evidence, so to say, has moved to meet it. The notion of personality—of the control of organism by spirit—has gradually been so modified that possession, which passed till the other day as a mere survival of savage thought, is now seen to be the consummation, the furthest development, of many lines of experiment, observation, reflection, which the preceding chapters have opened to our view."

degree, passes into possession. "In the incursion of the possessing spirit", he writes, "we have telepathic invasion achieving its completest victory".<sup>1</sup> In other words telepathy from an extraneous spirit achieves its completest victory when it ceases to be telepathy and becomes telergy.

It is from a similar standpoint that, in his "Scheme of Vital Faculty",<sup>2</sup> he places "possession" higher in the scale than "ideation inspired by spirits". Mrs Willett is an example of the latter, Mrs Piper of the former.

The Willett scripts, on the contrary, seem to assign a higher place to telepathy than to possession. See especially the lone script of June 10, 1909, quoted in the above collection of extracts :

The response to some extent—how large an extent I do not yet exactly know—the response conditions the power of transmission. All telergic phenomena is clumsy and creaking in comparison with telepathic medium. It is to telepathy that I look for the nearest approach to perfect intercommunication between Met Etherial and terrene Strata and I sum up one aspect in those words Thought leaps out to wed with thought.

If the Myers of *Human Personality* and the Myers of the scripts are one and the same, this statement reads like a retraction of the opinion expressed in his book.

Is it possible to effect a *rapprochement* between the two types of phenomena? What seems to be required for this purpose is some kind of "telepathic possession". Suggestions of this are to be found in *Human Personality*, and something more than suggestions in the Willett scripts. When Myers tells us that "in the incursion of the possessing spirit we have telepathic invasion achieving its completest victory", his idea seems to be that the telepathic invader actively displaces the spirit of the sensitive, and only when that displacement is complete, or all but complete, does true possession—*i.e.* telergic possession—ensue. "If", he writes, "we analyse our observations of possession, we find two main factors—the central operation, which is the control by a spirit of the sensitive's organism; and the indispensable pre-requisite, which is the partial and temporary desertion of that organism by the

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. ii., pp. 203-4.

<sup>2</sup> *H.P.*, vol. ii., pp. 552-3.



percipient's own spirit".<sup>1</sup> Now if the invading spirit is active in bringing about the desertion of its organism by the spirit of the sensitive, and this activity is telepathic, what is the relation between the two spirits while the process of displacement, or supersession, is still in progress? So long as the relation is a relation of mind to mind, then, even though in certain cases it may simulate true possession, it should, in my view, be more properly described as "telepathic possession". My real difference from Myers is this, that whereas for him telepathic invasion is a stage on the way to telergical control by the invader, I prefer to think of it as continuing to be a mental phenomenon however far it is carried. It is still a relation between two minds, even if the telepathic interaction between them is such that they almost seem to fuse together and merge into one. Even in so extreme a case the spirit of the sensitive has not been eliminated, and may continue to be that element in the blended whole which acts upon the physical organism. This does not amount to saying that there is no such thing as telergic control by an invading spirit. On that point I am expressing no opinion. But what passes for true possession may sometimes—perhaps always—be what I have called telepathic possession; and, in any case, it can hardly be correct to regard telergic control as the final term in a telepathic series.

We have next to consider certain passages in Willett script which bear upon the same subject. One of these in particular, from a trance-sitting of February 7, 1915, will, I think, be found of such real interest as to be worth reproducing at some length.

On the night of September 29-30, 1914, Mrs Willett had a very vivid dream which she had a strong impulse to record, though it had no special meaning for her. The opening incidents of the dream were recalled later on in the trance-sitting just referred to. I give them here in her own words.

In my dream I found myself standing on the crest of a mountain (alp) with a high wall of snow before me which prevented me from seeing the view which I somehow knew was spread out beyond. Beside me was standing a man—I know nothing of his appearance & he was not anyone I knew—I only got an impression of strength & gentleness. We spoke to

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 192.

each other, but what we said I can't now remember. Then he put his foot in the wall of snow & beat down a place about half way up it into which I could place my feet. When it was firm (from the down-trodden snow which he had stamped into a sort of flat pigeon-hole) I put one foot up & dug my nails into the snow trying to heave myself up, but I could not. Then he lifted me in his arms & somehow lifted me right over the top of the wall of snow & held me over the edge. . . .

The dream-record continues with much detail of description that does not concern us here. More than four months passed without any reference to the dream in the scripts. But on February 7, 1915, in a D.I. with myself as recorder, the communicator—evidently the Dark Young Man, although he is not mentioned by that name—returned to the subject as follows :

*D.I. of February 7, 1915. (Present, G. W. B.)*

Oh, oh ! (*Pause*)

He reminded me of how he had taken me up to a very high place. The stillness of that Alpine height ! He says something about—oh, it's so extraordinarily difficult that I can never make them understand. I'll try. It's something like this—what does percussion mean ?

(*G. W. B. It means striking.*)

Then he says, repercussion. What is that ?

(*G. W. B. Striking and rebounding.*)

He says, the extraordinary sensation of feeling the grip of the foot on the snow, with that unforgettable sound of *scrunching*. And then he says, This is the way telepathy comes in. I—[*pause*] transmutation of memories—(*indignantly*) how *can* one get such words ? First there's the telepathy from me to her, the impression sinking and recovered by her in sleep, and in and through that recovery making tangible and objective for me those physical memories which demand cognition in a physical—in a physical something—in order to be grasped by me again, a memory ; and then he says the word *stimulus*—that's where the repercussion thing comes in—a re-experienced sensation telepathically—not apprehended, isn't quite right—through the experience of an embodied personality, which experience was due to telepathic stimulus. He says this has a great bearing on

the theories that have been held about possession (doesn't like the word *great bearing*) an important bearing. Oh, and then he says a German word, Doppel.

I think I could draw it for him. (*Takes her block and writes instead of speaking. While the writing was in progress I was requested more than once to read out loud what had been written.*)

A initial stimulus

B reaction to same, in sleep

C re-reaction on to initial stimulator

D re-re-reaction on to percipient

& then the threads (*Drawing of two lines crossing each other. The crossed lines were once drawn, and then the motion of drawing them was repeated several times without the pencil touching the paper*) ad infinitum

[*Speech resumed*] until we twain be oned. This is the sort of thing Paul spoke about—about his not knowing himself, only Christ in him, or something like that.<sup>1</sup> And of course you see the point in its relation to all mystical experience, don't you? that—he says what he wants to emphasise is not his power outwards into the material world, but its effect—oh, how frightfully difficult it is!—on himself.

(*G. W. B. Reciprocal action?*)

Wait a minute, he says. He says that's not what he wants. He does not deny that it's appropriate, but it's not the thing he's wanting to say. It's the effect on himself in giving him such an extension and enhancement of memory as to amount to the re-experience of the remembered sensation.

Thank heaven, I've finished with that!<sup>2</sup>

What makes this (*touching her own arm*) so rare a—he says he does hate the word *instrument*, because anything less mechanical was never made in heaven or earth—Oh! (*this exclamation was uttered in a tone of disgust and impatience*) He thinks perhaps if you say so rare an *entity* for us, is that hypersensitiveness of mind and body—I've got it!—which not only enables the initial stimulus to be so vividly and freshly appre-

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii., 20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

<sup>2</sup> This is, of course, an exclamation of relief uttered by the automatist on her own account.

hended, but returns it to *us* re-enhanced and re-valued—read from “hypersensitive” (*G. W. B. does so*)—and as it were leaving behind it the driving power of a something added to it which springs out of herself and yet which is the response to something received. That’s where the difference between the Verrall phenomena comes in. The difference lies in the degree to which the stimulus is perceived, to a large degree; but the vital difference is in that secondary process. Do you see?

(*G. W. B. Yes.*)

And that’s where the difference about conditions comes in. H. V. especially is a sort of “one-process” automatist—do you know? M. V. is less so, but still there’s gulfs between her and *this*. But for the working of that secondary step in *this* there must be rest and peace. Do you know that time about which I spoke in the beginning?

(*G. W. B. Yes.*)

The vividness of her sensation then was compounded of not only the initial stimulus but of the answering one that sprang from me—now that’s where it’s so difficult to say it—on the receipt of the enhanced and heightened reflection of what I’d already given . . .

At this point the communicator passed to a fresh topic. When he had apparently finished what he had to say, I inquired if I might ask a question. No notice was taken: presently the automatist opened her eyes, and the waking stage began. After it had proceeded for a short while, Mrs Willett noted the departure of the communicator, and a curious episode ensued:

I’ve seen this room before, but I can’t remember where it is. (*Points to a water-colour picture representing the Firth of Forth, and the coast of East Lothian, seen from some point in Fife.*) I’m not accustomed to the view from that side, I generally see it from the other side. Why has that man painted it from behind to fore, so to speak? Do you see what I mean? He’s stood in the wrong place—stupid idiot! You see, why I like my view best is because I’m accustomed to it, and I’ve seen it all my life from the other side. It makes me quite giddy seeing it the wrong way about. You can’t reverse pictures so that they stay right, can you? I’m looking at where I generally stand; and that’s what’s bothering me, you see. (*Gets up and goes to*

*the fireplace.*) That's where I used to stand—just about there.<sup>1</sup>  
(*Points with finger to the spot.*)

I leave this striking D.I. to speak for itself, only adding, with regard to the passage quoted from the waking stage, that whereas the words "I've seen this room before, but I can't remember where it is" seem to be uttered by the automatist on her own account, what follows is probably to be understood as spoken by the Dark Young Man. He may have returned after it was stated that he had gone away, and the automatist may be merely repeating, as so often happens in D.I., the *ipsissima verba* of an ordinary telepathic communication. Nevertheless, the incident is so peculiar that I am inclined to see in it something more than this. The personality of the automatist appears to merge so completely into that of the communicator as to lead one to suspect the latter of a desire to give a practical illustration of that reciprocal interweaving of two minds which he had described earlier in the D.I., and which, without being "possession" in the full sense of the term, may yet reproduce some of the characteristics of "possession". I regard it, in fact, as an illustration of what I call *telepathic possession*.

Examples of telepathic communication approaching, or passing into, telepathic possession are not very common in Mrs Willett's experiences. I am tempted, however, to count as such the two instances of a transferred idea of pain described in Chapter III. of Part I. (pp. 103-4 above). There also, if my interpretation is right, the communicator is the Dark Young Man. In the case of the second of the two incidents there seemed to be a brief recurrence, in the waking stage, of the pain in the head which had been felt in the trance itself; and this was followed by words implying that the automatist was puzzled about her own identity.

Oh, I feel so giddy. I'm tumbling down. (*Rests her head on the table.*) I can't remember who I am. I know I'm somebody; and I'm coming together, you know, and the bits don't fit.

Compare also a dream-experience of the night of October 30,

<sup>1</sup> The point indicated was on the southern side of the Firth of Forth, and might quite well represent the position of the Dark Young Man's Scottish home. The automatist herself had no personal knowledge of the neighbourhood.

1908. In a lone script written on the day following Myers claimed that he had tried and succeeded "in getting into your mentality". In a contemporary note Mrs Willett explains :

I had had other confused dreams the previous night, as well as an intensely vivid impression of Fred's presence. I can only describe it by saying I felt myself so blending with him as almost to seem to be becoming him.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the above I may refer to another note by Mrs Willett (already cited on pp. 106-107 above), in which she describes her experiences on being left alone to try for script in a room at ———.

The room seemed full of unseen presences and of their blessing ; it was as if barriers were swept away and I and they became one. I had no sense of personality in the unseen element—it was just there and utterly satisfying.

Further illustrations of the way in which at times the sensitive seems partially to identify herself with the communicator will be found in Part I., Chapter III, section (c). But perhaps the most striking example is provided by the waking stage of a trance-script written in the presence of Sir Oliver Lodge, April 19, 1918. The script had ended with the signature F., and the record continues :

*(The instant "F" had been written Mrs W. raised her head and dropped the pencil. I thought she was going to speak, but she*

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare this with the experiences of Professor Flournoy's medium Hélène Smith. I quote from the account given in *Human Personality*, vol. ii., p. 133. "When the séance begins, the main actor is Hélène's guide *Leopold* (a pseudonym for Cagliostro) who speaks and writes through her, and is, in fact, either her leading spirit control or (much more probably) her most developed form of secondary personality. Hélène, indeed, has sometimes the impression of *becoming* Leopold for a moment. Professor Flournoy compares this sensation with the experience of Mr Hill Tout (*Proceedings*, S.P.R., vol. xi., p. 309), who feels himself *becoming* his own father, who is manifesting through him."

Myers himself does not dispute the probability that these are cases of incipient possession by secondary personalities. As the reader is aware, I draw no distinction—nor indeed did Myers (see *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 197)—so far as process is concerned, between possession by a dissociated self and possession by an extraneous spirit. And the same would, of course, hold good of telepathic possession, of which I count the experiences both of Hélène and of Mr Tout to be examples.

slowly, and after a long pause, entered the waking stage): Oh! (pause) Fred. Fred. So strange to be somebody else. To feel somebody's heart beating inside, and someone else's mind inside your mind. And there isn't any time or place, and either you're loosed or they're entered, and you all of a sudden know everything that ever was. You understand everything. It's like every single thing and time and thought and everything brought down to one point.<sup>1</sup> . . .

The importance of *reciprocity* as between the communicator and the percipient—and especially its importance to the communicator—is insisted on not only in the long D.I. quoted above but also elsewhere in Willett script.<sup>2</sup> This, I take it, is what is meant when we are told (in a passage already twice quoted) that “the response conditions the power of transmission”, and that this aspect of communication may be summed up in the words, “Thought leaps out to wed with thought”. Power is conditioned by response; hence belief in the personality of the communicators is “an absolutely vital part of the conditions which make it easy for us to work” (script of May 26, 1910). Indeed, in two remarkable passages the communicator seems to imply that his own realisation of self when communicating depends on the recognition of his reality by the sensitive:

*D.I. of May 1, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

[*Myers speaking*] . . . No one understands as I do the confusion and the mistakes, and the apparently negative result.

(*O. J. L.* Yes, but I think we also are aware of the difficulties.)

He says it is far worse for him. He is trying to make himself real to people who are not only conscious of their own reality,

<sup>1</sup> Compare “In Memoriam,” xcv.:

The living soul was flashed on mine,  
And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd  
About empyreal heights of thought,  
And came on that which is, and caught  
The deep pulsations of the world.

This section of “In Memoriam” is frequently referred to in the scripts.

For further remarks on this extract see p. 220 below.

<sup>2</sup> For reciprocal “weaving” between two incarnate minds, see the Willett script of May 11, 1912, quoted in pp. 162-163 above.

but also are among people who admit their reality. How much of your sense of reality is due to that? Think that over. There is a paralysing sense of isolation in the experience of coming back . . . one needs something reciprocal . . .

*D.I. of May 24, 1911. (Present, Mrs Verrall.)*

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . He is trying to explain something I don't understand. Self-realisation achieved through the other than self. What is the process necessary for the self-realisation? It's a German word and I can't see it. Welt something or other—one spirit only with labour attaining self-realisation through the myriad self-created sentient. Turn it all round like that (*here Mrs W. moved her hands as if turning something over*) and conceive of the possibility of there being interchange of self-realisation. . . . I know I'm real through her recognition of my reality.<sup>1</sup> . . .

The German word beginning with *Welt* is evidently *Weltgeist*, and the general substance of the extract is strongly reminiscent of a well-known passage from the Preface to Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Speaking of the various forms in which individuals have been organised into communities, Hegel says: "The world spirit had the patience to traverse these forms, and to undertake the tremendous labour of world-history . . . and he did so because by no less a labour could he attain to a consciousness of his own nature". The passage has often been quoted or at least phrases from it: the version here given is taken from Seth's *Hegelianism and Personality*. The script does not reproduce it with verbal exactness; but the underlying idea is clearly the same, and it is difficult to believe that the passage itself was unknown to whatever intelligence was responsible for the communication.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to the view here expressed, the *Weltgeist*, or Absolute Spirit, attains to self-realisation only in relation to the multiplicity of finite spirits. "Turn this round", says the communicator, *i.e.* look at the question from the point of view of the finite spirit. May it not be that the attainment of self-consciousness by a finite spirit A requires not only A's consciousness of B's reality, but also B's recognition of A's reality, and similarly with B?

<sup>2</sup> The last sentence in Chapter IX of *Human Personality* may also be compared: "Our struggle is the struggle of the Universe itself; and the very Godhead finds fulfilment through our upward-striving souls."



The extract has obvious points of affinity with the D.I. of February 7, 1915. It is not difficult to understand that reciprocity may be a condition of all successful communication, and an essential factor in any approach to telepathic possession. But taken by itself it hardly seems sufficient to account for the special characteristics suggestive of possession, even of the telepathic order—characteristics which must certainly include some kind of ascendancy or domination of the possessing mind over the possessed. Something beyond reciprocity seems to be involved ; but what that something is, and what are the conditions favourable to its coming into play, are questions to which I do not think any clear answer has been furnished by the scripts.

I hazard the conjecture that normal mentality in the individual may involve an element of telepathic possession by the primary self of the other psychical units in the group that enter into the constitution of the personality as a whole.

## CHAPTER II

### TELEPATHY, TELÆSTHESIA, EXCURSUS

I PREFACE this chapter and the two that follow it with an admission of the difficulties I have found at times in trying to give clear and coherent expression to the statements of the communicators concerning the subject-matter with which they deal. I have done my best to throw light on obscurities, to fill up gaps in exposition and to reconcile or explain apparent, or perhaps real, inconsistencies ; but I must crave the indulgence of the reader if I occasionally content myself with putting together the relevant passages, leaving him to draw his own conclusions.

Telepathy, we are repeatedly told, is an interaction between mind and mind. It is fully recognised that it may, and does, take place between one incarnate mind and another incarnate mind ;<sup>1</sup> but the telepathy with which the scripts deal has special reference to interaction between the incarnate mind of the sensitive and what purport to be discarnate minds belonging to the world of spirits. The process is sometimes described as a "blending" of the minds concerned—a neutral term which does not of itself raise any questions regarding the nature or importance of the respective contribution which each makes to the total result.

It is with questions of this kind that the present chapter will be mainly occupied. Granted the probability of *some* degree of reciprocity in the transaction, is it yet correct to speak of the relation as if it were always one of active communicator to comparatively passive recipient, or may it also happen that the activity is rather on the side of the perceiving mind, which reads, as it were, and appropriates the content of the other mind with little, if any, co-operation on the part of the latter ?

<sup>1</sup> See p. 162 above. Interaction between supraliminal and subliminal in the same individual is also fully accepted as fact, although (wrongly, I think) it is not allowed by the communicators to count as telepathic.

The distinction here drawn is not merely the familiar one between agent and percipient. It is also, as we shall see, a distinction between two kinds of activity—the activity which *impresses* thought upon another mind, and the activity which makes the content of another mind its own. Both processes are in ordinary parlance included in the term telepathy. Both appear, from explanations furnished by the communicators, to be used at one stage or another of the more complicated methods of communication which we shall have to consider in a later chapter. I see no difficulty in supposing that both activities may be, perhaps in some degree always are, concurrently operative without either of them losing its distinctive character. Be that as it may, in the Willett scripts they are sharply contrasted, and in the important passage I am about to quote the distinction is stressed to the point of confining the term *telepathy* to the communicating activity alone.

If the reader will refer back to the long extract given on pp. 95-96 above, he will note that the communicator (in this instance Gurney) is there deliberately trying to illustrate the nature of telepathy by impressing on the automatist a mental image of what he remembered himself to be like when in the body. What he wishes to show by this example is that telepathy implies *voluntary* action on the part of a communicating agent. The subjoined extract, taken from a little later on in the same sitting, carries the subject on somewhat further.

*From the D.I. of September 24, 1910. (O. J. L. recording.)*

... [*Gurney speaking*] Telepathy isn't involuntary, it's—I'm going to do it like this—what's the word? Propulsion—you watch the receipt.

[*Mrs W.*] Now he's as if holding my hands, it's as if having a tooth out, you've got to set your teeth and go through with it. He says James and another name.

[*E. G.*] Now she's got it, and you watch it coming up. It's got into the subliminal.

[*Mrs W.*] Hyslop! (*uttered in a tone of surprise*) Oh, he says, Good; he's pleased.

[*E. G.*] Lodge, this terribly exhausting.<sup>1</sup> I think you've

<sup>1</sup> The statement that "This terribly exhausting" refers, I think, not only to the successful transmission of the name Hyslop, but also, and perhaps

got something now. Wait a bit, let Lodge think, and then let him speak and you rest. (*To Lodge*) Now you speak.

[*O. J. L.*] I gather that you have been trying to explain, or rather illustrate the process of telepathy to me.

[*E. G.*] Yes.

[*O. J. L.*] And that you got William James through, and then a word that perhaps she does not know, Hyslop. Does she know it?

[*E. G.*] Oh yes, she's read it, but she doesn't know why I say it, nor do you, in that juxtaposition. Let me know when the meaning that is there is seen by you. There may be a little time to pass first, but when the meaning is plain, say so.

[*O. J. L.*] About telepathy, you mean it has to be purposed, that the thought cannot be picked up from stray people, that it has to be injected?

[*E. G.*] What you say about telepathy isn't altogether right. It's not one thing and one process, but there are degrees of it, and it depends on the instrument partly and upon the familiarity of the agent. There must be practice on both sides.

Here's what appears to be a complete contradiction of what I've said, and yet both are facts. Through my carelessness she will sometimes see telepathically <sup>1</sup> what I hadn't intended her to know. There are three more <sup>2</sup> things that I can speak of. [*Understood by O. J. L. to mean three processes of telepathy.*]

There's the direct—directing—conscious—intended—what's the word?

[*O. J. L.*] Impact?

[*E. G.*] No, no, that's the other end—propulsion.

more particularly, to the effort involved in summoning up, and impressing on the sensitive, the memory-image of himself when in the body. Cf. Holland script of November 21, 1903 (published in *Proceedings*, vol. xxi., and seen by Mrs Willett); . . . "It was a tremendous effort to him [*i.e.* Myers] to appear in your mind's eye the way that he did a fortnight ago, and it has weakened the messages ever since".

<sup>1</sup> The word "telepathically" seems to be used here, and very occasionally elsewhere, of activity on the side of the percipient. But possibly the phrase "see telepathically" is loosely used where "receive as a telepathically transmitted message" would have more accurately represented what the communicator wished to convey.

<sup>2</sup> The word "more" here seems to be a mistake. Only three processes in all are described.

[O. J. L.] Yes, I see.

[Mrs W.] The starting end, he's speaking of.

[O. J. L.] Yes ;—emission ? radiation ?

[E. G.] No, that's not the word I want, there's too many connotations about that. The sparking end—something like that—like two big clouds coming together and then the lightning ; something like that. That's one kind ; and then the other kind that led to this theory of unconscious mentality in the discarnate—the coma business, dream business. I can only take, about it, say, pull out the stops I see in front of me. I'm putting it the way I can get it through.

[Mrs W.] He's encouraging me.

[E. G.] I wish Lodge would tell you so.

[O. J. L.] Yes, you are doing well.

[E. G.] My [*word illegible in notes*] way of putting it is letting down a shutter. If I am what you would call very "close" to her, I could shut off certain impressions and then I can switch them on.

[O. J. L.] Is it like removing a screen ?

[E. G.] Ah (he says), screen. Do you remember about a screen long ago ?<sup>1</sup> [*Did not wait for an answer but continued*] A third thing may happen ;—when the shutter is down there may be a *leak*, without deliberate switching,—a general as against a specialised impact may take place. Do I express it ?

[O. J. L.] Yes, that is quite clear.

[E. G.] In my record there's a case in point, that Mrs Verrall has, of a leak which called out corresponding thought in the mind which was the very last I would have desired to stimulate . . .

The three kinds of telepathic communication here enumerated have this in common, that they imply voluntary action on the part of the communicator. Where they differ is in the manner and degree in which voluntary action plays a part in the result. The first kind, metaphorically comparable to the deliberate aiming of a projectile at a particular object, may be taken as the most direct and typical form. The second and third kinds are not very clearly defined, and it is possible that errors have

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings*, vol. ii., p. 201 ff., for an account of experiments by E. G. where the "subject" was placed behind a screen.

crept into the record of what the speaker is represented as saying. He compares the process to the letting down (*i.e.* the opening) of a shutter, whereby his thoughts are able telepathically to affect another mind. When the shutter is let down one of two things may happen :

(a) When the communicator is very "close" to the sensitive he can "shut off certain impressions and then switch them on". I understand the suggestion to be that the effect of the shutting off and switching on is to break the continuity of the message, and so give rise to "the theory of unconscious mentality in the discarnate—the coma business, dream business". But I do not feel confident that this explanation is the true one.

Or, (b) "there may be a *leak* without deliberate switching—a general as against a specialised impact may take place".

The difference between the two cases I take to be this. In both the mind of the communicator is consciously active, but in (a) a particular impression is deliberately "switched on" and specially directed to the percipient; whereas in (b) it reaches her independently of the communicator's will, and even, it may be, contrary to his intention.

It is to this third kind that Gurney had already alluded when he says, "Through my carelessness she will sometimes see telepathically what I hadn't intended her to know". He admits that such a case may appear to be "a complete contradiction" of his previous statement that "telepathy isn't involuntary", but he in no way withdraws or qualifies the statement. It is evident, however, that there may be great difficulty in deciding whether such a case is primarily one of thought-communication or thought-perception.

If a definition of telepathy which excludes thought-perception as opposed to thought-communication is to be accepted as representing the considered doctrine of the Willett scripts, what term, if any, is employed in them to describe the spirit activity of the perceiving mind? The answer to this question is not so simple as might be supposed. The expression mind-reading does not, I think, occur in the scripts. The nearest equivalent appears to be *telæsthesia*, employed in a sense strangely different from that which it bears in Human Personality.

The relation between telepathy and telæsthesia as it was understood by Myers on the one hand, and as it seems to be

conceived in the Willett scripts on the other hand, furnishes points of much interest.

In the Glossary prefixed to *Human Personality* Myers has provided us with what is evidently a carefully thought-out definition of the two terms, comparing them in respect both of resemblance and of difference. I quote it here *in extenso*.

*Telepathy and Telæsthesia*.—It has become possible, I think, to discriminate between these two words somewhat more sharply than when I first suggested them in 1882. Telepathy may still be defined as “the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another independently of the recognised channels of sense”. The *distance* between agent and percipient which the derivation of the word—“feeling at a distance”—implies, need, in fact, only be such as to prevent the operation of whatever known modes of perception are not excluded by the other conditions of the case. Telepathy may thus exist between two men in the same room as truly as between one man in England and another in Australia, or between one man still living on earth and another man long since departed. *Telæsthesia*—perception at a distance—may conveniently be interpreted in a similar way, as implying any direct sensation or perception of objects or conditions independently of the recognised channels of sense, and also under such circumstances that no known mind external to the percipient’s can be suggested as the source of the knowledge thus gained.

The above may be usefully supplemented by further remarks which I quote from the Glossary under the heading of Clairvoyance. Clairvoyance Myers defines as “the faculty or act of perceiving, as though visually, with some coincidental truth, some distant scene”; and he goes on to say:

“I have preferred to use the term *telæsthesia* for distant perception. For the faculty has seldom any close analogy with an extension of *sight*; the perception of distant scenes being often more or less symbolical and in other ways out of accord with what actual sight would show in the locality of the vision. On the other hand, *telæsthesia* merges into telepathy, since we cannot say how far the perception of a distant scene may

in essential be the perception of the content of a distant *mind*".<sup>1</sup>

The characteristic marks of telæsthesia in Myers's sense of the term (apart from the quality of supernormality which it has in common with telepathy) may be re-stated thus :

(1) The knowledge acquired by it is a knowledge of " objects and conditions ", whereas telepathy extends to " the transference of impressions of any kind from one mind to another " ;

(2) The knowledge must come to the percipient independently of telepathy from any other mind that can be suggested as its source. Clairvoyance that can plausibly be referred to thought transference is not telæsthesia in the Myersian sense.

The first of these characteristics I leave over for comment later on. As regards the second, the condition laid down " that no mind external to the percipient's can be suggested as the source of the knowledge gained ", may serve a useful purpose in assisting the provisional classification of individual cases, but is, I think, open to criticism from the scientific point of view. It embodies no definite principle, but only a rule of convenience founded on the ignorance of the investigator. He may be unable to suggest any known mind as a source of the supernormally acquired knowledge. But his ignorance does not contradict the possibility of there being a mind unknown to him, yet capable of providing such a source, nor alter the fact if it be a fact. The statement quoted above from the Glossary to *Human Personality* under the heading of Clairvoyance, that we cannot say how far the perception of a distant *scene* may in essential be the perception of the contents of a distant *mind*, lends additional force to this criticism. It would have been more logical, in my view, to have provided a definition of telæsthesia that would have identified it outright with independent clairvoyance, leaving open the question whether such a faculty is really found in man, or whether every form of clairvoyance should not rather be explained as a variety of telepathy. Of course, the effect would be to relegate to the limbo of doubt cases that Myers would have classified as telæsthetic. There is also the possibility to be considered that both

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the whole subject see *H.P.*, vol. i., pp. 275 seq.



processes might be in operation concurrently without being "merged" in the sense of becoming indistinguishable.

I pass to the consideration of the very different significance attached to the word *telæsthesia* in Willett script.

It is clear from what precedes that, in comparing telepathy with telæsthesia, Myers takes little or no note of the distinction between the activity of thought-communication and the activity of thought-perception. Telepathy for him includes both. In the Willett scripts, on the other hand, this distinction assumes capital importance. Telepathy is defined so as to exclude mind-reading; and telæsthesia is treated as including mind-reading, if not actually identified with it.

I believe the distinction to be an important one, and am inclined to think that it has been unduly neglected in *Human Personality*. But this novel use of familiar terms is apt to lead to confusion, and in the ensuing discussion, in order to conduce to clearness and at the same time to avoid clumsy periphrases, I propose to use the symbol "telæsthesia (M)" and "telepathy (M)" in contradistinction to "telæsthesia (W)" and "telepathy (W)" to denote the different meanings which the words bear in *Human Personality* and in the Willett scripts respectively. I further propose to retain the word *clairvoyance* as a term of general significance (not, of course, confined to the sense of vision), and to employ it, contrary to modern usage, to cover both the "independent clairvoyance" which corresponds most nearly to Myers's definition of telæsthesia, and the "telepathic clairvoyance" which that definition if carried to its logical conclusion would exclude.

In order to make intelligible what follows I must begin by explaining the meaning of a term which, so far as I know, is peculiar to Mrs Willett, namely *Mutual Selection*. "Mutual selection" is described as part of a process preliminary to the production of certain kinds of scripts. Success in the production of these scripts requires (we are told) on the part of the sensitive "a capacity for *Excursus* allied to a capacity for definite selection"; and by "excursus" is meant the passing, as it were, outside herself and entering into communion with the spiritual world. The communicator and the sensitive are represented as "mutually selecting" from each other's minds—

the communicator from the contents of "the conscious and unconscious self" of the sensitive, the sensitive from "such part of the mind of the communicating spirit as she can have access to".<sup>1</sup> The part of the communicator's mind to which she can have access is limited (we are told) to that which can naturally link on to human incarnate thought, but, subject to that limitation, includes the "potential" as well as the "actual" content of his mind.<sup>2</sup>

As the result of this mutual selection there now lies in the "whole self" of the automatist the original matter from which the communicator's selection is made *plus* the matter she has acquired by selection from him. The material so provided may remain unused and dormant in the mind of the automatist until the moment comes for it to emerge under the guiding influence of *telepathy* from the communicator.

The foregoing explanation will, I hope, assist the reader to follow the line of thought contained in the extract from the D.I. of October 8, 1911, to which I have next to call attention.<sup>3</sup>

*D.I. of October 8, 1911. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . He says, tell G. to read me again his own words.

[*G. W. B.*] Shall I read the first question ?

All.

[*G. W. B.*] The first question is : In mutual selection you say that the sensitive can select from such part of *your* mind as she can have access to. What part is this ?

He says, I want to suggest something which, while not contradicting your question, will open another window. Oh if I could only not drop like that. Oh hold me tight. And he says, she can select—he says a word to me—*telæsthesia*—oh he says, you none of you make enough allowance for what that implies, and the results of that can be shepherded and guided up to the threshold of normal consciousness.

<sup>1</sup> The phrases in inverted commas in this paragraph are taken from the D.I. of June 4, 1911. See below, pp. 232-5.

<sup>2</sup> For "potential" and "actual" in this connection see pp. 199 ff. below.

<sup>3</sup> That part of the sitting of October 8, 1911—including the preliminary trance-script—which precedes this extract is given in Part II, Chapter IV., pp. 290 ff. below. See also pp. 238 ff. for comments on the extract so far as it bears on "process".

Oh he says, telæsthesia is a bed-rock truth, a power of acquiring knowledge direct without the intervention of discarnate mind.

Oh he says, telepathy's one thing—that's thought communication: telæsthesia is knowledge, not thought, acquired by the subliminal when operating normally in the metetherial.

Oh he says, Here comes in our work again. Oh he says, What I'm saying may be used to cut at the spiritualistic hypothesis, but it doesn't. Again, who selects what of the total of telæsthetically acquired knowledge shall externalise itself—shall blend itself with those elements received by direct telepathic impact? Oh he says, Supposing I take her into a room, and I screen off any action of my own mind on hers: her subliminal with its useful copious pinch of the salt of Eve's curiosity takes stock of the contents of the room. Normal consciousness is later regained, and lying in the subliminal is knowledge of certain objects perceived, not as the result of the action of my mind, but as the result of telæsthetic faculty. Oh he says, Here come I on script intent. Here be arrows for my quiver. Who selects which of all the—Have patience with me, oh, Edmund, I am trying, oh, I'm such a great way away. Oh, Edmund,—Oh he says, Who applies the stimulus under which certain ideas—use that word, not what I wanted—emerge, blended, which upon study will be found to be relevant to the total aim of that particular piece of automatism?

Oh he says, of all the contents of that mythical room say she carries back a rough and partial knowledge—not partial to the subliminal but reaching the point of externalisation much as Browning's London moon<sup>1</sup> did—in the process of externalisation, there it is where the loss occurs. Oh he says, of those ten<sup>2</sup> say two emerge—to me how interesting. I see the work of my hand, the double process.

Say I wrote of horses. I get telepathically the idea of sound, clatter of the horses' gallop. I get the idea in a Verrall channel, for instance, of Pegasus; I get the idea perhaps of chariot races—equus, or something like that, he says—and I select and push up into its place where it will be grasped and exter-

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *One Word More*: "Dying now impoverished here in London".

<sup>2</sup> There has been no previous mention of "ten" items.

nalised two trump cards telæsthetically acquired—call it horse-shoe, or, he says, the steeds of Dawn. The point is, I didn't place them there; I found and selected them: and the eight other elements—or objects—seen in the room remain dormant and never externalise themselves perhaps. The spiritistic agency decides what element appropriate to its own activity shall emerge alongside and intertwined with matter placed in position by direct telepathic impact.

Oh he says, give the next question quickly. . . .

There is much in this extract relating to processes of communication that I must pass over for the moment, though I shall have a good deal to say about it in the next chapter. For the present I am concerned mainly with its bearing upon the sense in which the term *telæsthesia* is used in Willett scripts.

The statements that telæsthesia is "a power of acquiring knowledge direct without the intervention of discarnate mind", and that the knowledge so gained has to do with "objects", not with "thoughts", may seem, at first sight, to suggest the characteristic features of telæsthesia as defined in *Human Personality*.<sup>1</sup> But a brief consideration shows that this would be an entirely wrong conclusion. The whole tenor of the extract and the intimate connection which it establishes between telæsthesia and mutual selection prove decisively that what the communicator is thinking of is not a relation between a mind and "things", but between one mind and another. When he speaks of knowledge acquired direct "without the intervention of discarnate mind", I cannot doubt that he means "without the *active* intervention of discarnate mind". The language employed might with advantage have been more precise, but any other interpretation would make utter havoc of the entire passage. The phrase "without the intervention of discarnate mind" is misleading in another respect also. "Without the active intervention of a mind external to the percipient's, whether incarnate or discarnate", would, I think, have more accurately represented the communicator's conception of telæsthesia in general, although what he has immediately in view is the relation of the sensitive with disembodied spirits.

<sup>1</sup> See *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 136, where the phrase "without another mind's intervention" is used.

Telæsthesia (M) and telæsthesia (W) have this in common, that both are activities of a perceiving mind. Indeed the definition given by Myers, if carried to its logical conclusion, would eliminate the idea of an *agent* altogether, and for agent and percipient would substitute percipient and object perceived. This would not be equally true of telæsthesia (W), but activity on the part of the percipient still remains its most essential characteristic. "I take her into a room",<sup>1</sup> [says Gurney], "and I screen off any action of my own mind on hers: her subliminal with its useful copious pinch of the salt of Eve's curiosity takes stock of the contents of the room. Normal consciousness is later regained, and lying in the subliminal is knowledge of certain objects perceived, not as the result of the action of any mind, but as the result of telæsthetic faculty."

We start, then, from this, that both telæsthesia (M) and telæsthesia (W) are essentially activities of perception. The difference between them becomes apparent when we ask the question, What do these activities enable us to perceive? or, to put the same thing in another form, What is at once the source and the subject-matter of the knowledge acquired by their exercise?

Consider first the case of telæsthesia (M). It is defined as "a direct sensation or perception of *objects or conditions*" independently of the recognised channels of sense, and independently also of "any known mind that can be suggested as the source of the knowledge gained". Perception of *objects or conditions* is a somewhat vague phrase, but I take it to mean much the same as the more precise expression employed by Mrs Sidgwick in her paper on "The Evidence for Clairvoyance" in vol. vii. of *Proceedings*—"Knowledge of facts such as we normally acquire by the use of our senses". More explicitly still, telæsthesia (M) may be described as immediate knowledge, supernormally acquired, of facts relating to the world of physical reality.

Telæsthesia (W), on the other hand, even if it were possible to find a formula for it which would include immediate knowledge of this kind, is represented as having a different field of

<sup>1</sup> By the words "I take her into a room" Gurney means "I present material to her to select from which is appropriate to a theme or topic chosen by me". See below, pp. 240 ff.

operation, namely the content of another *mind*. This claim it is that constitutes the true centre of interest and novelty in the position taken up in the Willett scripts, and that we must try, if possible, to understand.

In so far as telæsthesia (W) is the perception of the contents of another mind, it clearly cannot be—like telæsthesia (M)—*direct* perception of facts relating to external reality. It may, however, be indirect perception of such facts, or what is known as telepathic clairvoyance. Such cases are rare in the records of Mrs Willett's experiences ; but there is at least one example which may properly come under this heading. She had on various occasions spoken to me of an oft-recurring dream in which she seemed to herself to visit a certain house, and to take delight in wandering through its rooms and passages. She called it her dream house, but always identified it in her mind with a real house, of the existence of which she was aware, though she had never been there. When, at a later time, she actually visited the real house, and was able to compare the details she was familiar with in her dream, with what she now saw with her eyes, it was found that in many respects the dream house corresponded much more closely with the internal arrangements of the house as it was fifty or sixty years ago than with contemporary fact. When asked to explain this she replied that she could not exactly say, but that she connected her dream house in some way with children who had lived in it. Her own impression was that her experience was in some sense dependent on the recollections of other minds. If not due to telepathic "impact" from those minds, which would bring it under the head of telepathy (W), this would be a case of telæsthesia (W). Probably Myers himself would have classed it as a case of telæsthesia (M).

Clairvoyance of the kind illustrated by Mrs Willett's dream house experience is what would be most readily suggested by the general description given of telæsthesia (W) in the D.I. of October 8, 1911—"Knowledge, not thought, acquired by the subliminal when operating normally in the metetherial". It would, moreover, be knowledge open to verification by comparison with what the senses can tell us, in the same way as knowledge gained by independent clairvoyance, differing from the latter only in respect of its having been indirectly acquired

through the mediation of other minds, instead of by direct supernormal perception.

But in order to understand what the scripts are really driving at we have to consider not merely general descriptions, but the actual examples of the process which are provided for our enlightenment. When we do this it becomes clear that telæsthesia (W) goes far beyond the scope even of telepathic clairvoyance itself.

Let us now go back to the passage in the D.I. of October 8, 1911 (p. 194 above), beginning with the words "Say I wrote of horses". I paraphrase it according to my notion of its purport, though, of course, my interpretation is to be taken for what it is worth. The communicator is evidently referring to the production of cross-correspondences between two or more automatists. He supposes himself to have taken as the central theme of a cross-correspondence the subject of horses. By telepathic impact he gets in a Verrall script allusions, say, to *Pegasus* and to *chariot races*. (Note that both these topics are spoken of as *ideas*.) He "trumps" them, so to speak, in Willett script with two "cards", or "objects", already telæsthetically acquired by her by selection from the content of his own mind—*horse-shoe*, let us say, or the *Steeds of Dawn*: in other words he in his turn selects these from the content of the sensitive's mind to which they now belong, and by active telepathic influence causes them to emerge in their appropriate context.

Whatever the ground or justification may be for treating the telepathically impressed *Pegasus* as an idea, and the telæsthetically acquired *Steeds of Dawn* as an "object", it is evident that both one and the other might be housed in the same "mythical room", and that neither has any title to be regarded as pertaining to the world of external reality.<sup>1</sup> It is clear also that any "evidential" value they may possess in a resulting script must be tested, if it can be tested at all, by methods quite other than an appeal to the evidence of the senses. We have passed clean away from the province of telepathic clairvoyance.

<sup>1</sup> On a later occasion the "objects" or "elements" which are expressly singled out as having been "mutually selected" are apposite literary quotations. See below, p. 255.

Reference has already been made to statements in the scripts concerning the sources of information (*i.e.* the minds) upon which, in mutual selection, the selectors respectively draw. A closer examination of these statements may help to throw light on the questions we have been discussing. The following are the passages on which we have mainly to rely, apart, of course, from the two extracts already quoted.

*From the D.I. of June 4, 1911. (G. W. B. present.)*<sup>1</sup>

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . Say that after—Oh! how difficult it is—say that after deliberation a certain theme is selected. Then he says something in German—*motif*—to be got through various channels. I'm only speaking now of the process of selection, he says, and in so far as that's concerned I'm limited to the contents of the conscious and unconscious self. . . . Remember I am distinctly ruling out the thoughts suggested by the words telepathy and inspiration. Oh he says, Well then I look over the available factors—oh, and see what will serve. Oh he says, it isn't only I who select. Oh he says, now you've got it. There's another field for selection—and it's such part of my mind, I, Gurney, as she can have access to. Oh he says, What part? Why—oh, I've missed a word—something something limited to—then I've skipped something, but I hear him say thoughts potentially. Oh he says, Put it another way. Having access to my mind her selection is chiefly limited to that which can naturally link on to human incarnate thought. Oh he says, I wish I could get that word *potential* rightly used. I'm not saying it's limited to the actual but to the potential content. . . .

He says, I think I got some things I wanted said about selection. It's the thought of its being as it were a mutual process that I want driven home. . . .

*D.I. of July 16, 1911. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . (*G. W. B.* In a previous D.I. you distinguished between actual and potential thoughts, and said that in mutual selection the receiver was limited to the *potential* thoughts of the communicator.<sup>2</sup> Can you explain this further?)

<sup>1</sup> This D.I. is quoted in full in the next chapter, pp. 232 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The words were "I'm not saying it's limited to the actual but to the potential content". Apparently I took this to mean that it was limited to



Potential naturally transcends actual, and it is not at the actual that the limit lies.

(*G. W. B.* Perhaps the subject is too difficult to pursue now.)

What I said I want to get clear. Limit does not lie at the actual.

(*G. W. B.* here said something not recorded, and a brief conversation ensued. *Inter alia* he asked if actual and potential thoughts were the same as conscious and unconscious thoughts : the answer was Not at all. *E. G.* then continued :)

Potential means possible to be apprehended of mind as it exists in the parts—potential to the parts—using the word *parts* in contradistinction to the word whole. Oh he says, the parts can't be conscious of the whole, but the whole can be conscious of itself as a whole, and also as a whole of parts.

He says, I must let her go away, *G.* Oh he says, When I'm not trying to transmit, I'd write script that the very Gods might envy, and I go over and over things that would be of priceless value to transmit. . . .

*Trance-script preceding D.I. of October 8, 1911.*<sup>1</sup> (*Present, G. W. B.*)

[*Gurney communicating*] . . . Is there any special point you wish to deal with to-day?—The points in regard to mutual selection need further elucidation. *Mutual* . . .

(*G. W. B.* I have some questions I should like to put to you on that very subject : shall I put them now ?)

Yes.

(*G. W. B.* In mutual selection you say that the sensitive can select from such part of *your* mind as she can have access to. What part is this ?)

All that part to which the subliminal of the sensitive has *natural* access, operating normally on the metetherial plane. She has access to. It is difficult to get it clear. Let me go slowly and *feel* if need be for my meaning in a round-about way.

Human experience—that part of my mind to which human experience affords a *point de repère* —

the potential to the exclusion of the actual. From the present and subsequent statements it seems that the true meaning was “ I'm not saying it's limited to the actual, but to the actual *plus* the potential ”.

<sup>1</sup> This trance-script is again quoted in Part II., Chapter IV. See pp. 290 ff.

(G. W. B. I understand that : but you distinguish between the actual and the potential content of your mind. Has the sensitive access to both ?)

Yes, yes, yes.

(G. W. B. You say *you* have access to the contents of the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive. Does the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive correspond to the distinction between the actual and potential content of *your* mind ?)

No—wait. I have access to—repeat that sentence to me.

(G. W. B. repeats as above.)

Unconscious is not an equivalent for potential. NO.

(G. W. B. Does the unconscious mind of the sensitive mean what we commonly call her subliminal ?)

Yes—but it means *all* the centres of it, to use a physiological analogy.

(G. W. B. Is there anything in the discarnate consciousness which corresponds to the subliminal self of the incarnate ?)

What a *huge* subject you open up ! Let me get her to speech first. Yes—say that again.

(G. W. B. repeats.)

The larger includes the less.

(G. W. B. Is the larger the supraliminal or ———)

No, no, the subliminal of *course*, *that* is allied to the transcendental self—*that* transcendental self might be referred to in a rough and ready manner by terming it the subliminal of the discarnate. Subliminal—read it to me.

(G. W. B. reads what has just been said.)

As the <sup>1</sup> It is possible to refer to it as that and imply a truth—It is a good rough generalisation. . . .

I do not profess to understand all the statements contained in the various extracts which I have quoted, or to be able to fit them comfortably into their places in a comprehensive whole; but so far as I can I will endeavour to summarise what appears to me to be their broad general effect. A distinction is made between the field for selection open to the discarnate communicator and that open to the sensitive. The communicator is said

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* "as the subliminal" is to be substituted for "by terming it the subliminal".

to have access to the "whole self" of the sensitive—that is to say, to her conscious and unconscious self; and her conscious and unconscious self are identified with her supraliminal and subliminal self.

The sensitive, on the other hand, has access to that part only of the discarnate communicator's mind the content of which can link on to human incarnate thought. Between that part of his mind and the part to which she has no access the relation is, roughly speaking, similar to that between the supraliminal and the subliminal of the incarnate—using the term subliminal here to denote what is highest and best in the human mind. The suggestion seems to be that the subliminal of the discarnate uses categories which are beyond the reach of incarnate mind, much as the categories employed by the human mind are beyond the comprehension of the mind of animals. Thus while the field of selection open to the discarnate communicator is the "whole self" of the sensitive, the field open to the sensitive is confined to what may be described, with some approximation to truth, as the supraliminal of the discarnate.

There is no great difficulty in following the thought up to this point, whatever value we may be disposed to attach to it. But a further distinction is made between the *actual* and the *potential* content of that part of the discarnate mind to which the sensitive has access. The words potential and actual, applied to the content of a mind, must mean potential or actual in relation to that mind, not in relation to another mind. "Potential", therefore, cannot be interpreted to mean "possible of apprehension by the sensitive". It must signify something which is now latent but in certain conditions can become actual in one and the same mind. What is this something?

In the D.I. of June 4, 1911, Gurney expresses the wish that he "could get that word potential rightly used". It is the more strange that his own statements on the subject should not have been more explicit. The potential content, we are told, lies beyond the actual, and the sensitive has access to both in her selection from the mind of the discarnate. But for further information we have to be content for the most part with negatives. Actual and potential thoughts are *not* the same as conscious and unconscious thoughts; the distinction between

the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive does *not* correspond to the distinction between the actual and potential content of the discarnate mind; "unconscious" is *not* an equivalent for "potential". There is the further statement that "potential" means "possible to be apprehended of mind as it exists in the parts—using the word 'parts' in contradistinction to the word 'whole'": but this, I must confess, appears to me to be a case of *obscurum per obscurius*. In the end the student of the scripts is thrown back upon his own resources for an interpretation of the term. Does it relate to something characteristic of the discarnate mind as such? or does it apply to incarnate mind as well? We are not definitely told that in mutual selection the mind of the sensitive to which the communicator has access comprises a potential as well as an actual element. Assuming, however, as I think we reasonably may, that the distinction between potential and actual content is to be understood as applying to minds in general, whether incarnate or discarnate, I suggest that by "potential content" is meant the store of past impressions which have become and remain latent unless called up into present consciousness and made actual by an exercise of memory. It is something like the "preconscious" of Freud.

This is not the place to consider the problems presented by the phenomena of memory, or to discuss on its merits the claim that one mind may be able to appropriate the latent memory-content of another, not indeed as memories of its own, but as so many more or less detached ideas and images. All I am concerned with at present is to interpret to the best of my ability the statements made in the scripts respecting telæsthesia and telepathy and their relations to each other.

Let us return once more to the statement in the D.I. of October 8, 1911, that telepathy is communication of thought, telæsthesia the acquisition of knowledge. The distinction between an activity of communication and an activity of acquisition is clear enough. The distinction between thought and knowledge is less easy to grasp. By "thought" in this connection I understand every kind of idea, image, emotion, etc., forming the conscious content of the mind of the communicator at the moment of communication. It is, in fact, that "actual content" of his mind, to which, we are told, as well as

to the potential content, the sensitive has telæsthetic access in mutual selection.

What, then, is the nature of the "knowledge" which is to be distinguished from "thought"?

My answer would be that the knowledge differs from the thought only in being knowledge actively acquired by one mind of the thought in another mind. What is "thought" from the standpoint of the thinker becomes an object of knowledge from the standpoint of the percipient. The thought is what it is—has an objectivity of its own—irrespective of the question whether it is correctly apprehended.

Similarly with respect to potential content. Let us suppose we are right in assuming that by the potential content of a mind is meant its latent memories. Then, so far as telæsthesia is perception of the latent memories of another person, the knowledge thus acquired must be determined by the nature of the memory-content of the mind from which the percipient mind draws its information. The latent memories of that mind (say, for example, "horse-shoe" or "the steeds of dawn") have become, when telæsthetically apprehended, so many "objects perceived"—mental objects, no doubt, but still "objects" independent of the percipient, the real significance of which remains the same even if it has been misapprehended or distorted in the process.

It is important to notice that no attempt is made in the scripts to bring independent clairvoyance within the scope of telæsthesia (W). Indeed, it is possible to go further, and say that the very existence of such a faculty is ignored by the communicators. *They neither affirm nor reject it, but simply pass the subject over in silence.* Considering the prominence given to it in *Human Personality*, this strikes me as not a little remarkable. Whether it was an attitude deliberately adopted, or whether the omission was accidental, I am unable to say. No example of independent clairvoyance can, in my opinion, be found in the records of the Willett phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The experience of her dream house might probably have been reckoned by Myers as a case of telæsthesia (M) on the ground that "no known mind external to the percipient's can be suggested as the source of the knowledge gained". But Mrs Willett herself, as we have seen, was inclined to attribute it to the recollections of persons who had lived there as children in days gone

In any case, if there be such a thing as independent clairvoyance, so deep a chasm separates it from mind-reading that to apply the same class-name to both seems to me more likely to mislead than to enlighten.

The discussion of the subject in the present paper has been complicated, first by the ambiguity in Myers's definition of telæsthesia to which I have already called attention, and secondly by the absence of any pronouncement in the scripts for or against telæsthetic apprehension of external reality without the intervention of another mind. The result has been that telæsthesia (M) has seemed to leave a loophole for the admission of telepathic clairvoyance, and telæsthesia (W) to leave a loophole for the admission of independent clairvoyance. If we make up our minds to get rid of these loopholes, and boldly identify telæsthesia (M) with independent clairvoyance, and telæsthesia (W) with mind-reading, I do not consider that we shall have departed from the spirit of *Human Personality* in the one case, or from that of the scripts in the other, and I am sure we shall have made a useful contribution to the cause of clear thinking.

An idealistic theory of the universe may resolve matter into the content of some cosmic mind. There is a passage in *Human Personality* in which Myers toys with this Berkeleian doctrine.<sup>1</sup> But as long as we treat the distinction between matter and mind

by, and to me, at least, this explanation is far preferable to that of independent clairvoyance. There is an element of retro-cognition in the dream house experience; and I find it hard to believe that retro-cognitive telæsthesia could ever be independent of the memories of some mind or other.

<sup>1</sup> "It was needful [in connection with the meaning of so-called 'travelling clairvoyance'] to consider how far there was a continuous transition between these excursions and directer transferences between mind and mind,—between telæsthesia and telepathy. It now seems to me that such a continuous transition may well exist, and that there is no absolute gulf between the supernormal perception of ideas as existing in other minds, and the supernormal perception of what we know as matter. All matter may, for aught we know, exist as an idea in some cosmic mind, with which mind each individual spirit may be in relation, as fully as with individual minds. The difference perhaps lies rather in the fact that there may be generally a *summons* from a cognate mind which starts the so-called agent's mind into action; his invasion may be in some way *invited*; while a spiritual excursion among inanimate objects only may often lack an impulse to start it". (*H.P.*, vol. i., p. 278.)

as fundamental—and we can hardly do otherwise without deserting the province of psychology for that of metaphysics—so long shall we be under the necessity of treating the distinction between telæsthesia (M) (=independent clairvoyance) and telæsthesia (W) (=thought-perception) as fundamental also. The idealistic hypothesis would not even provide, as Myers seems to think, a continuous transition between the two. Its effect would rather be to do away with the conception of independent clairvoyance altogether, and leave telæsthesia (W) alone in possession of the field.

Occasional hints are to be found in *Human Personality* of a disposition to extend telæsthesia (M) so as to include intuitions of the spiritual world. Consider, for instance, the following passages :

A vague but genuine consciousness of the spiritual environment ; that (it seems) is the degree of revelation which artistic or philosophic genius is capable of conferring. Subliminal uprushes, in other words, so far as they are intellectual, tend to become *telæsthetic*. They bring with them indefinite intimations of what I hold to be the great truth that the human spirit is essentially capable of a deeper than sensorial perception, of a direct knowledge of facts of the universe outside the range of any specialised organ or any planetary view (*H.P.*, vol. i., p. 111).

We are already familiar with "travelling clairvoyance", a spirit's change of centre of perception among the scenes of the material world. May there not be an extension of travelling clairvoyance to the spiritual world ? a spontaneous transfer of the centre of perception into that region from whence discarnate spirits seem now able, on their side, to communicate with growing freedom ? (*H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 259.)

Genius, as has been already said, is a kind of exalted but undeveloped clairvoyance. The subliminal uprush which inspires the poet or the musician, presents to him a deep but vague perception of that world unseen, through which the seer or the sensitive projects a narrower but exacter gaze. (*H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 282.)

Such suggestions are really incompatible with Myers's definition of telæsthesia, and they seem to be rather half-heartedly advanced. Had they been definitely accepted and

consistently thought out, I think they would have led Myers to revise his definition, perhaps on lines more in accord with the views expressed in the Willett scripts.

The reader who has had the perseverance to accompany me thus far through the somewhat wearisome disquisitions of the present chapter may, I fear, in the end lose patience and begin to ask whether any useful purpose is served by lengthy discussion of points of difference possibly verbal rather than real. Granted, he may say, that the terms telepathy and telæsthesia are used in a sense other than that which they bear in *Human Personality*, do the new meanings give a juster insight into the facts, or merely rearrange and rename them? Much is obviously lost by giving new meanings to terms of art already familiar. Has any compensating advantage been gained in the present case?

I do not consider these doubts wholly unjustified. The limitation of the word telepathy to the active transmission of thought by one mind to another, although it has hitherto been generally employed to include mind-reading as well, is not an innovation to be welcomed. A word is wanted to cover both activities of mental interaction. Telepathy had hitherto served this purpose well, and the terminology of the scripts provides no convenient substitute. It would surely have been better to have retained telepathy as a generic term to include thought-communication and thought-perception as subordinate species.

The new meaning given to telæsthesia has more to justify it, because in this case the effect is to extend the scope of the term, not to restrict it. Moreover, mind-reading, as an activity of *perception*, has an etymological claim to the title, and the communicators might fairly argue that this aspect of it would not be sufficiently emphasised except by giving it a name which would clearly indicate affinity with the other form of supernormal perception. If the scripts had employed telæsthesia as a generic term to include, as subordinate species, (1) independent clairvoyance, or supernormal perception of physical objects, and (2) mind-reading, or supernormal perception of mental objects, something could be urged in favour of such a classification. But actually they have so treated the subject as to ignore independent clairvoyance, and to all intents and



purposes appropriate the word telæsthesia to describe what Myers's definition was certainly meant to exclude. This has not tended to clearness, and it has greatly increased the difficulties of exposition. I am not satisfied with the definition of telæsthesia in *Human Personality*. It does not unambiguously exclude telepathic clairvoyance, as, in my view, it logically should do. But here again I think it would have been better to let the old term stand as practically equivalent to independent clairvoyance, and leave the supernormal perception of mental objects to rank as a form of telepathy.

When, however, we turn from questions of terminology to questions of substance, the sharp division of what is ordinarily called telepathy into two contrasted activities, an activity of communication and an activity of perception, possesses, in my opinion, a high degree of interest. The distinction itself is, of course, not strictly speaking new. It has always been recognised that the terms agent and percipient might, in certain cases, convey a misleading idea of the true nature of the relation, and that when a thought in A's mind becomes telepathically shared by B, the dynamic factor in the process may be on the side of B rather than of A. But, so far as I am aware, very little attempt had been made, up to the time when the Willett scripts quoted in this section were produced, to follow up the idea whether in its general implication or in its bearing on particular cases.<sup>1</sup>

In these circumstances the positive assertion in the scripts that one mind may be able to perceive and apprehend the contents, actual and potential, of another mind without that other's active intervention does, in effect, open up new avenues for thought, and if true, represents a real advance in our knowledge of the subject. It no doubt suggests as many difficult questions as it answers. But to expect from a single automatist anything in the nature of a complete exposition of the methods and processes of communication would hardly be reasonable.

One question inevitably forced on our attention by the

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this chapter I notice that Professor Driesch, in his book on *Psychical Research* (translated by Th. Besterman, 1933) lays great stress on the distinction between thought-communication and thought-reading, and, like the communicators in the Willett scripts, confines the term *telepathy* exclusively to the former.

Willett scripts is this : What is the relation to each other of the two kinds of activity ? Are they in any circumstances mutually independent, or does the exercise of the one activity necessarily call the other into operation ?

I find it difficult to believe that the activity of communication (telepathy (W)) can ever be effective without some responding activity of apprehension (telæsthesia (W)). Conscious reception must imply activity. It is easier to conceive the activity of apprehension as being effective without calling into play a responding activity of communication, at all events if the object apprehended is, as the scripts affirm it may be, the potential content of another mind. But without going so far as to deny the possibility of extreme cases in which one activity may be in operation to the complete exclusion of the other, I can scarcely doubt that in general both factors contribute in varying measure to the total result. From this point of view, instead of asking which of the parties concerned is the agent and which is the percipient, we should rather inquire which of the two activities forms the starting-point of the process, and use this test as a basis for classifying any given case as an example of communication (telepathic emission), or as an example of mind-reading (telepathic perception).

It may not always be easy, or even possible, to answer this question. In experimental telepathy, for instance, can we say with confidence which of the two activities is the initiating factor in the result of the experiment ? Both agent and percipient are consciously exerting themselves, the agent to impress an idea on the mind of the percipient and the percipient to read the mind of the agent. In such a case the two activities may well be independent and concurrent factors in the process.

Consider, on the other hand, those automatic productions of a sensitive like Mrs Willett which take the form of lengthy verbal messages appearing to her to proceed from a source other than herself. Whatever that source may be, whether a dis-carnate spirit or a dissociated self, it would surely be paradoxical to regard these as anything else than communications in respect of which the apprehending activity plays the secondary part of a listener in relation to a speaker.

Yet I certainly should not be prepared to say that all mediumistic phenomena belong to this class. We have it on

the authority of the Willett scripts themselves that the sensitive can, and does, draw upon the content of another mind without the active intervention of the latter. I refrain from dogmatizing on the subject, but I suspect that the remarkable super-normal insight of many professional mediums into the private affairs of their sitters originates rather in mind-reading than in any activity of communication either from the subliminal of the sitter or from some independent mind whether incarnate or discarnate. Here, as elsewhere, however, the problem is complicated by the possibility of interaction between the subliminal and the supraliminal of the medium herself. It may be that her subliminal acts in a double capacity, as a mind-reader in relation to the sitter, and as a communicator to that part of herself which records whether by speech or in writing.

Very interesting are the reciprocal cases described in the last chapter (pp. 177 ff.). In these telepathy (W) and telæsthesia (W) are both in operation together, but the agent becomes the percipient and the percipient the agent in rapid alternation. "Thought leaps out to wed with thought", and "Response conditions the power of transmission" in such wise that the process may be conceived as continuing *ad infinitum* "until we twain be one". If complete oneness were ever actually achieved, this would presumably mean not that the two activities had ceased to be distinguishable, but that they had ceased as such to exist.

If the reader will take the trouble to glance back at Chapter III. of Part I. on *Types of Communications* he will probably come to the conclusion that some of the experiences there treated as *communications* might with almost equal plausibility be classed as cases of thought-perception. Indeed I raised this very question myself with regard to the awareness of "presences" unattended by any impression of a more definite character. Should bare awareness of a "presence" count as a *communication* in the technical sense of the term? The formal answer according to my view would be, Yes, if it arises from a telepathic impact directed by another mind; No, if it originates in the exercise of an independent perceptive activity by the sensitive. But I do not pretend that this answer would carry us much further.

How are we to determine which of the two activities is

primary and which is secondary? Might not both be operative simultaneously and in equal measure? A passage in the D.I. of March 13, 1912 (see p. 215 below), refers to "the unseen companions, the presences known by that unexplored faculty, intuition". Intuition is associated in the scripts with activity of perception, but it is not necessary to accept this statement as definitely settling the question.

The more elaborate and complicated processes of communication (described in the extracts quoted on pp. 192-195 above), in which the material utilised in the scripts is said to be derived from the products of "mutual selection" supplemented and guided by direct telepathic impulse, must be reserved for separate treatment in the next chapter.

I have still, however, something to say in the present chapter upon the psychical experience, to which the scripts apply the term "excursus".

The reader will remember that in the D.I. of June 4, 1911, which was mainly devoted to the topic of "mutual selection", a capacity for excursus on the part of the sensitive was laid down by Gurney as one of the conditions of successful production of a certain type of script. Capacity for excursus I interpreted to mean a power of going in some sense outside oneself in order to enter into communion with the spiritual world. This brief description sufficed for the moment, but the subject deserves more detailed examination.

Let me begin by putting together in chronological order the more important passages<sup>1</sup> that relate to it, only premising that in Willett scripts *excursus* and *ecstasy* are used as practically synonymous terms.

*Extract from Lone Script of April 16, 1911.*

... Myers Let me again emphasise the difference that exists between Piper and Willett phenomena the former is possession the complete all but complete withdrawal of the spirit the

<sup>1</sup> Several of these have been quoted already. But repetition is almost unavoidable in a paper like the present one. If the reader is constantly asked to turn back to some previous chapter in which a relevant passage has been cited in some other connection, he is apt to end by disregarding the request, and the argument will suffer in consequence. I have not hesitated to use a wide discretion in deciding where to refer back and where to repeat.

other is the blending of incarnate and excarnate spirits there is nothing telergic it is a form of telepathy the point we have to study is to find the line where the incarnate spirit is sufficiently over the border to be in a state to receive and yet sufficiently controlling by its own power its own supraliminal and therefore able to transmit . . . We want the operator to be so linked with its mechanism as to control that mechanism herself We want her also to be so linked with us as to be able to receive definite telepathic write the word radiation<sup>1</sup> . . .

*Extract from Lone Script of May 11, 1911.*

. . . Myers I want to say lethargic that word Myers another thought meditation quite other it is It is the setting free of the reasoning and persisting element in man Compare the two states Calm is well But calm is not all Lethargy is not an accession of power but a benumbed condition of the spirit Meditation is a stilling of the outward avenues of sense impressions . . . which gives access to an uprush say the word enhanced powers . . . I want the states contrasted

Extasy springs from meditation La Vernia S. Francis and the stigmata Your young man shall dream dreams Myers go on The freeing of that which is capable of intuitional say tele and opticon Myers visions of the far distant worlds<sup>2</sup>

The other state is a torpor of the whole man moral phisical and metaphisical . . .

*Extract from D.I. of June 4, 1911. (Present, G. W. B.)*

. . . He says, Say how you feel. Oh I'm all right. I'm far. I'm far. He says, I want to speak—and, he says, What I'm going to say is not to be taken as applying to D.I., when the communication is more direct and simpler, and, he says, not to be taken as applying to all sensitives, or even to all phenomena

<sup>1</sup> The crossing of the border (=Excursus), is here treated as preparatory to the reception of telepathic communication. In the D.I. of March 13, 1912 (see p. 215 below), it is represented as leading to the acquisition of knowledge by the exercise of telæsthesia (W).

<sup>2</sup> I do not interpret this as referring to independent clairvoyance of material objects, but to intuitions of the spiritual world. Compare "I can get up and walk about in other worlds, and I very often like to walk through the room where that scene took place" (*i.e.* the scene of the Symposium) in the script of December 17, 1933.

of any given sensitive. But it's an attempt to show how in some cases some scripts are produced.

The descending chain, telepathy—inspiration—telepathy—selection. Oh he says, What thought is implied by the words "mutual selection"? . . . I want to make a shot at a partial definition of what constitutes mediumship. That organisation in which the capacity for—what an odd word—oh, Edmund, say it slowly—*excursus* is allied to the capacity for definite selection.<sup>1</sup> Then finally the possession of as it were a vent, through which the knowledge can emerge . . .

*Extract from Lone Script of August 24, 1911.*

. . . I wish I could get you to understand the meaning of the word *excursus* as it is in my mind. The falling of the barriers say that there is the dual process . . . the hemming in the partitioning off the localising the selfing. All that is one process. Now reverse it and say the escape the unifying the delocalisation of the soul that is nearer get the thought clear testifying to the existence of a whole say that who said experience is the only guide yes but what experience?<sup>2</sup> Do not limit it to these faculties artificially fostered by the pressure of the earth stage environment go on say amphibious the native element is more than one<sup>3</sup> the temporary accidentals evoqued [*sic.*] by the pressure of say the word self determined conditions<sup>4</sup> But they should not usurp nor be regarded as primary nor be made the measure why do you break when I have the word almost in your grasp the extension of faculty no arbitrary fixing of the norm that is a shifting point I am trying to get the thought implied by the words norma[*l*] to that portion of consciousness which transcends that field occupied by say

<sup>1</sup> The subject of this extract will be more fully dealt with in the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the ideas contained in the remainder of this paragraph will be found in *H.P.*, vol. i., pp. 76-8. Cf. also Myers's essay on "Tennyson as Prophet" in *Science and a Future Life*, pp. 154-65.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.* the earth-stage environment and the "metetherial". The sensitive is, in a special degree, a denizen of both. Cf. *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> The individual life is represented in Willett script as coming into being by an act of free will.

sense impressions <sup>1</sup> that is not what I wanted to say because it is limited I wanted something marking off a much larger tract but sense impressions is right as far as it goes try again Man is not man as yet <sup>2</sup> that is better Man is standardised in accordance with the hitherto ideal of workability that is better I want to emphasise the necessity of an . . . evolution of standards that is confused but the thought is there

Again say this sweet scented blossom the perfume at dusk it floats forth and when the eye cannot discern the least petal yet the knowledge of its blossoms is conveyed Now one channel and now another informs the central mind <sup>3</sup> the perfume borne upon the breeze kings in their pomp and pageant pass as dream or mirage but the little childrens dower that survives its yellow face smiles up to many a sun and beside many a stream the fringed go on the fringe of blossom tilth and vineyard hive and heath and herd so too the unbroken line <sup>4</sup> say the word spiritual initiates <sup>5</sup> initiates to the Greeks

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* normal to the subliminal consciousness, which transcends not merely the senses, but all the ordinary faculties adapted to the necessities of our earthly life.

<sup>2</sup> Browning, *Paracelsus*, Pt. V.

<sup>3</sup> "The central mind" I take to mean the ruling individual soul (see *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 74). But it might mean "the great centre into which are gathered up all the individual experiences"; for which see the extract from the script of March 22, 1912, given on p. 216 below.

<sup>4</sup> The passage from "kings in their pomp" down to "so too the unbroken line" seems on first reading both obscure and irrelevant; but comparison with other passages in Willett's script shows that the reference here is to poets whose peculiar genius has given them "some sense of insight or entrance into a supernal world" (*H.P.*, vol. i., p. 109). The poets particularly alluded to are Tennyson, Virgil (indirectly through Tennyson's "To Virgil"), Browning ("Home Thoughts from Abroad"), and Wordsworth—"the unbroken line" being the "Daffodils" "in never ending line", seen often since by "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude". The names of Tennyson, Browning, and Wordsworth all appear on the same page that contains the quotation just given from the chapter on Genius in *Human Personality*, which makes this interpretation practically certain. Compare also *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 261: "We need not deny the transcendental ecstasy to any of the strong souls who have claimed to feel it;—to Elijah or to Isaiah, to Plato or to Plotinus, to St. John or to St. Paul, to Buddha or to Mahomet, to Virgil or Dante, to St. Theresa or to Joan of Arc, to Kant or to Swedenborg, to Wordsworth or to Tennyson."

<sup>5</sup> "Spiritual initiates" is probably equivalent to "ecstasies".

foolishness<sup>1</sup> the coherency and solidarity of all human experience.

*Extract from Lone Script of August 25, 1911.*

Write and first this

the major chord of the harmonies contained within the Scr of both automatists<sup>2</sup> Do you know where it is they centre round one thought more than one but one is primary say the word extasy use it in the psychological sense . . .

*Extract from the D.I. of March 13, 1912. (Present, O. J. L.)*

. . . He says the unseen companions, the presences known by that unexplored faculty of the human mind, intuition<sup>3</sup> . . .

Lodge, that's Edmund who speaks now, did you notice just now she was so completely over the border that, though in those instants things swept into her consciousness, she couldn't pass them back? he says I want Gerald to be fully told of this because he says it throws light upon the methods

(O. J. L. All will be told him.)

She projected herself in a rush of sympathy . . .

For the continuation of this passage, and my comments on the passage as a whole, see Chapter IV. of Part I., pp. 131-2 above. The force of excursus seems to have carried the sensitive so far "over the border" as to nullify the third of the three conditions of successful mediumship enumerated in the extract from the D.I. of June 4, 1911, namely "the possession as it were of a vent, through which the knowledge can emerge". She "knew but could not utter" what she knew.

*Extract from Lone Script of October 13, 1912.*

. . . The one remains the many fall and pass<sup>4</sup> Central unity linking all experience To live again in other lives that is

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor., i. 23, "Unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness". See Myers's "Obituary Notice of Henry Sidgwick" in *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, pp. 102-5, where this saying is quoted, and applied to religious orthodoxy and to science respectively. In the same passage occurs the phrase "raise the cosmos into intelligible coherence".

At the date of this script Miss Helen Verrall was on a visit to Mrs Willett, and it was arranged that each should try for script, independently of the other, on the same day, but not at the same hour.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 211 above.

<sup>4</sup> Shelley, *Adonais*, lii.



nearer To relive and to realise through the experience of the living That is what the dead do <sup>1</sup> . . . To be satisfied through another's filling solidarity say that No man liveth unto himself <sup>2</sup> Deep underlying deep the central unity deepest of all is the mere sense of human companionship

The dead are not dead but alive <sup>3</sup> His living soul was flashed on mine and we through empyreal heights were whirled And came on that which is <sup>4</sup> Here you see he is conscious of having escaped from the shackles of the time idea Again he uses it in the line What is and no man understands <sup>5</sup> Who shall reveal the changeless to man and how shall he realise the eternal now <sup>6</sup>

To know oneself by escaping from the limits of self and thou art God and these thyself art they [F. W. H. M., *A Cosmic Outlook* : " And these are God and thou thyself art they. "]

*Extract from Lone Script of November 10, 1912.*

. . . The days of the miraculous are not over nor yet those of the direct incursion of the metetherial element influence afflatus The excursive power of the mind and again the invasion into the sphere of time of those elements which erstwhile bound in its shackles now have passed into . . . a state of emancipation

*Extract from Lone Script of March 22, 1913.*

. . . Oh how *superficial* has been the grasp of man upon the truths of the solidarity of the human race The inconceivable oneness of Souls <sup>7</sup> . . . What links is the eternal sequence of human emotions hopes and fears and joys and sorrows There is a great centre into which are gathered up all the individual

<sup>1</sup> For an instance of this see the D.I. on February 7, 1915, quoted in full on pp. 177 ff. above. It is interesting to compare *Peter Ibbetson*, vol. ii., pp. 170 ff.—a book which Mrs Willett had read—though there the emphasis is laid on the experience which the living can draw from the dead rather than the other way. The present script itself seems to pass to this latter point of view in the words " his living soul was flashed on mine," and the passage that follows.

<sup>2</sup> *Romans*, xiv. 7 ; quoted in *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> Tennyson, *Vastness* ; quoted in Myers's " Tennyson as Prophet " on p. 153 of *Science and a Future Life*.

<sup>4</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xcv.

<sup>5</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxxiv.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> This phrase occurs in *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 287. See also *ibid.*, p. 282.

experiences<sup>1</sup> . . . Can we reach them those that remain Do they know how those who have fallen asleep keep watch beside their daily path Emphasise the word daily To them we may become faint memories for us they remain constant companions it is our unguessed influence that touches them when they do not suspect it But at the times when the normal life is hushed into a moment or a day of *recueillement*<sup>2</sup> then perhaps they feel the touch of a vanished hand . . .

*Extracts from the Script of December 14, 1913. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[Although Mrs Willett was never at any time in a condition of deep trance during this sitting, she was clearly not her normal self, especially towards the end.]

I will build my tabernacle in the hearts of men The altar not of stone but of the tablets of the heart<sup>3</sup> That gives the idea of INCURSION that force which seeks to penetrate Now give the other —

To enter into the great calm The waveless heights So shall that which is in appearance twain be ONED.<sup>4</sup> And these are God and thou thyself are [art] they<sup>5</sup> He that seeks the heavenly word proceeding forth Yet leaving not the Father's side<sup>6</sup> and again the soul that rises in us bearing yet the stamp of its source or provenance in those moments of blank misgivings, fallings from us—before which our mortal nature did tremble<sup>7</sup> golden threads of eternity in the warp and woof of human life<sup>8</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 31, quoted in footnote (2) on p. 224 below.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> 2 *Cor.*, iii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See the passage from Plotinus quoted in *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *A Cosmic Outlook (Fragments)*, p. 181). See p. 251 below, where the context of this line is quoted in a footnote.

<sup>6</sup> *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 311. I am doubtful of the meaning here, but I think the lines of the hymn are intended to represent the incursive force, and the quotation from Wordsworth's ode the impulse to excursus.

<sup>7</sup> Wordsworth, *Ode on Imitations of Immortality*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Vaughan, *The Retreat* :

And felt through all my fleshly dress  
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

These lines are quoted in Myers's *Wordsworth*, p. 132.

[What here follows was *spoken*, and should probably be regarded as a kind of waking stage.]

I'm going to come back, but I want to say one thing. It's that last speech of Arthur—not exactly the last, but when he knows himself no phantom nor the high God—something.<sup>1</sup>

Well, would you just say it's those moments that make the true record of a life ; and in proportion to the richness of those experiences is the richness of each human life to be measured.<sup>2</sup> It's the escape from the smaller into the larger—separate no longer but one life alone.<sup>3</sup>

I must come back, you know. It's just like waking up in prison from a dream that one has been at home. Don't you ever walk out of yourself ? Aren't you tired of being always yourself ? It's so heavenly to be out of myself—when I'm everything, you know, and everything else is me.

*Extracts from the Script of December 17, 1913. (Present, G. W. B.)*

[This script has already been quoted in full in Chapter II. of Part I, pp. 69 ff. The description of the Symposium, which forms its main subject, may itself be intended as an illustration of knowledge gained by excursus. The extracts here given are taken from the latter part of the sitting.]

[*Spoken*] . . . Do you know that man's as real to me as If I could touch him ! He's an ugly man, only I feel he's sublimely

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *The Holy Grail*. Compare also Myers's essay on "Tennyson as Prophet" in *Science and a Future Life* : "Take again the words of King Arthur at the end of the 'Holy Grail'—the spiritually central passage, so to say, in all the 'Idylls of the King'—when the king describes the visions of the night or of the day which come when earthly work is done—

In moments when he feels he cannot die,  
And knows himself no vision to himself,  
Nor the high God a vision ;

and compare this with any one of the passages where Plotinus endeavours in halting speech to reproduce those moments of unison whose memory brightens his arid argument with oases of a lucid joy".

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., pp. 260-1 : "It is these subjective feelings of vision or inspiration which have to many men formed the most impressive and fruitful moments of life. While not allowing an objective truth to their revelations, we shall now be prepared to admit a reality to the subjective experience."

<sup>3</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 148.

great. You know I've not got to be tied up always to myself. I can get up and walk about in other worlds ; and I very often like to walk through the room where that scene took place. Have you ever seen the shadow of the Parthenon ?<sup>1</sup> Oh ! (Pause) It's all very beautiful there. Do you know Edmund would have been very happy in that world. It was the sort of world he wanted, and he strayed into such a hideous age. (*Interruption at this point by noise outside.*)

[Written] I've lost the thread. It's all gone. I was so happy I was seeing visions and I did not ever want to leave Fred was with me F. W. H. M. I also saw Henry Sidgwick he had a white beard Do you know who the young man<sup>2</sup> was I only just caught sight of him for a moment

How nothing time is All human experience is one . . .

*Extract from Script before D.I. of February 7, 1915. (Present, G. W. B.)*

. . . Come ye apart Come and rest

I want to get out of myself I'm so tired of myself I want to be enlarged

They say Come Come and I've left the darkness and come home.<sup>3</sup> I see men as trees walking several men There's Fred—and Edmund—and the man who said . . he was Henry. Butcher's ghost<sup>4</sup>—and I see a young copy of A W<sup>5</sup> and I see the Patient Philosopher<sup>6</sup>—and now

I never forget [*Here follows D.I. with the Dark Young Man communicating.*]

*From the Waking Stage following Trance-script of April 19, 1918. (Present, O. J. L.)*

Oh ! (Pause) Fred. Fred So strange to be somebody else.

<sup>1</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 194 :

“ And over Plato's homestead fell  
The shadow of the Parthenon.”

<sup>2</sup> The Dark Young Man is indicated.

<sup>3</sup> By “ home ” here is meant the “ metetherial ”. Compare the extract from the script of August 24, 1911, “ Say Amphibious the Native element is more than One ”.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 82 above.

<sup>5</sup> A. W. is Dr Verrall. See pp. 83-4 above.

<sup>6</sup> *I.e.* Professor Sidgwick.

To feel somebody's heart beating inside you, and somebody else's mind inside your mind. And there isn't any time or place, and either you're loosed or they're entered,<sup>1</sup> and you all of a sudden know everything that ever was. You understand everything. It's like every single thing and time and thought and everything brought down to one point . . .

*Extract from the sitting of June 8, 1930. (Present, G. W. B.; Mrs Willett in partial trance.)*

. . . Everybody gone !

What is the meaning of the word *excursus* ?

(G. W. B. *Excursus* is the going out to meet something else.

It's the opposite to invasion.)

Well, that's the way I do these things.

*Note.*—The sitting had opened with a communication in writing from an unidentified source—perhaps the Dark Young Man. This was followed by a dictated passage, in which the automatist described, as if on her own account and from her own present observation, a scene in which certain members of the group on the other side, including the Dark Young Man, were taking part. She was evidently visualising them in the form in which they might have appeared during life. After a pause the record proceeded as above.

The foregoing extracts make it clear that the term *excursus* is used in Willett scripts to denote an *act* by which the incarnate spirit seeks to place itself in conscious relation with a spiritual environment. This spiritual environment—the *metetherial* as it is often called—is declared to be the soul's true native element. The passing into it, which is the effect of *excursus*, is variously described as “the crossing of a border”, “the freeing of that which is capable of intuitional visions of far distant worlds”, “the falling of barriers”, “the delocalisation of the soul testifying to the existence of a whole”, “the escape

<sup>1</sup> “Either you're loosed or they're entered” I take to mean that the case is one either of *excursus* or of *incursion*, and that the bewildered sensitive hardly knows which. “To be somebody else” and to “feel somebody else's mind inside your mind” points to *incursion*, and what I have called “telepathic possession” (see pp. 175 ff. above): on the other hand the sense of timelessness and of omniscience suggest *excursus* and communion with the “Central Unity linking all experience”.

from the limits of self", "the escape of the smaller into the larger".

The occasional footnotes appended to the several extracts may be usefully supplemented by a few observations of a more general character intended to throw light on some doubtful and difficult points, though I fear others will remain of which I cannot hope to give a thoroughly satisfactory explanation.

I have interpreted *excursus* as involving an "act" on the part of the sensitive; and by "act" I mean something that implies conscious purpose and effort. In his chapter on "Trance, Possession and Ecstasy," Myers remarks: "*Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen* : these sensitives [*i.e.* the favoured individuals possessing the natural capacity] have but to sink into a deep *recueillement*, a guarded slumber, and that gate stands manifestly ajar. It is rather on the other side of the gulf that difficulties and perplexities come thick and fast".<sup>1</sup> *Excursus*, however, in the Willett scripts, means more than mere passivity. The Myers of the scripts tells us (in the script of May 11, 1911, quoted below) that, "Ecstasy springs from meditation"; and he draws an emphatic distinction between meditation and lethargy or torpor. The very term "*excursus*" suggests an active process; and the language employed by the sensitive herself, in such phrases as "I want to get out of myself, I'm so tired of myself, I want to be enlarged", carries a similar implication. Compare also the striking statement in the waking stage of the sitting of June 8, 1930, in which she informs us that *excursus* is "the way I do these things", meaning that it is by *excursus* that she acquires knowledge of happenings in the world of spirits.

Nevertheless, I do not think the act of *excursus* constitutes in itself an achieved communion with the spiritual world. From the side of the sensitive it is rather a kind of reaching out towards the unseen—"a listening in silence, knowing that the silence is an unforgoable prelude to the spoken word", to borrow an expression from a script not included in the collection of extracts.<sup>2</sup> The attitude of expectation *favours* telepathic interaction, but another factor is indispensable. Not until the mind of the sensitive has passed into a relation more or less definite with discarnate mind does *excursus* actually become in

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> From the script of May 20, 1915.

the full sense co-operation and communion between the living and the dead, though "the vague but genuine consciousness of the spiritual environment", which Myers claims in certain cases for artistic or philosophic genius, is recognised as a kind of rudimentary communion with the spiritual world.<sup>1</sup>

Communion led up to by excursus may (I conceive) take either of the two forms the consideration of which has occupied so much of our attention in the present section. It may take the form in which telepathic communication is the primary activity and telepathic perception plays only a secondary part; or it may take the form in which the primary activity is the telepathic perception of the contents of another mind, any active response of that mind being of secondary significance, if not entirely absent. There seems to be no reason to suppose that the sensitive cannot telepathically impress discarnate minds: in fact, something of the kind would seem to occur in those reciprocal cases of which the D.I. of February 7, 1915 (see pp. 177 ff. above), furnishes so interesting an example. But on the whole it may be said that, so far as the Willett records are concerned, activity of communication is almost entirely on the side of the discarnate, whereas the power, in some measure, of reading each other's mind is claimed for both sides as an important factor in the production of a certain type of scripts. Indeed, this power in the sensitive is repeatedly declared to be the prerogative of the subliminal acting *normally* in the metetherial: knowledge thereby acquired is *supernormally* acquired only from the point of view of the supraliminal.

In the script of November 10, 1912, "the excursive power of the mind" is opposed to "the invasion into the sphere of time of those elements which, erstwhile bound in its shackles, now have passed into a state of emancipation". And again in the script of December 14, 1913, we read: "I will build my tabernacle in the hearts of men, the altar not of stone, but of the tablets of the heart. That gives the idea of INCURSION, the force which seeks to penetrate. Now give the other—to enter into the great calm, the waveless heights. So shall that which is in appearance twain be ONED, and these are God and thou thyself art they".

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. i., pp. 111 and 218.

If these passages stood alone one might be tempted to interpret them as identifying "invasion" or "incursion" with the activity of communication, and excursus with the activity of perception. I do not think this would be entirely correct. I prefer to regard excursus as a kind of preparatory stage, facilitating the exercise of either activity whether by the sensitive or by a discarnate spirit. But that excursus is in a special degree associated in the scripts with telepathic perception by the sensitive, and particularly with telepathic perception independent of the active intervention of the mind whose content is perceived, seems to me beyond doubt. This independent activity of perception, constituting what I may call the most characteristic form of telæsthesia (W), is sometimes described in the scripts by the term *intuition*.

In this connection the record of the sitting of December 17, 1913, quoted in full on pp. 69 ff., and again referred to on p. 218 above, is, I venture to think, very instructive. If my understanding of the dictated part of the record is correct, the communicator is not one of the group on the other side, but the "subliminal self" of the sensitive dictating to her supraliminal. Speaking apparently *in propria persona*, she describes in considerable detail, and almost as if it were a contemporaneous experience of her own, the scene immortalised in the *Symposium* of Plato. It presents itself to her first as a picture—"a picture that I often love and see. Marble pillars everywhere—a most heavenly scene. A company of men—small company discussing everything in heaven and earth. . . . There was such intercourse of the human mind going on in that room, and I know it so well I almost fancy I must have been there, though it happened a long time ago". In the sequel "my picture that I like to look at" becomes "my room where I choose to walk", and various incidents in the story, including the irruption of Alcibiades and his riotous friends, are described as if they were being enacted before her very eyes. Finally, she ends up (see p. 219 above) by saying, "You know I've not got to be tied up always to myself. I can get up and walk about in other worlds; and I very often like to walk through the room where that scene took place".

It is possible that we have here an ordinary case of cryptomnesia. But it is also possible that the scene thus vividly



described may be intended as an illustration of excursus leading up to independent telepathic perception of the memory content of some other mind or minds. If that be a true account of the experience, the next question will be, From what other mind or minds was the knowledge acquired? The answer that most readily suggests itself is, The mind or minds of one or more of the group on the other side, whom the sensitive describes as having been present and recognised by her, although not as actually communicating. Nevertheless, I cannot help suspecting that this is not what we are meant to understand. I invite careful attention to the remark at the end of the sitting: "How nothing time is! All human experience is one"; and beg the reader to compare it with the waking stage of the immediately preceding sitting of December 14, 1913, especially with its concluding sentences: "Don't you ever walk out of yourself? Aren't you tired of being always yourself? It's so heavenly to be out of myself, when I'm everything, you know, and everything else is me". Compare again a passage from the script of March 22, 1913: "Oh how superficial has been the grasp of man upon the truths of the solidarity of the human race, the inconceivable oneness of Souls. . . What links is the eternal sequence of human emotions, hopes and fears, and joys and sorrows. There is a great centre into which is gathered up all the individual experiences".

From these passages<sup>1</sup> it is perhaps not overbold to conjecture that the mind from whose memories we are to understand the vision of the *Symposium* to be derived is this same great centre, conceived as in some sense a unity in multiplicity, or collective unity, of all individual souls, in which time vanishes into an eternal now.<sup>2</sup> At this point, however, we enter upon a region

<sup>1</sup> The extract from the sitting of April 19, 1918 (p. 219 above) should also be considered, although *prima facie* the experiences described in it by the sensitive would appear to be a case of "telepathic possession" by another individual consciousness, rather than of communion with universal mind. I suspect there is confusion in the passage.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 31. "The knowledge of the past which automatic communications manifest is in most cases apparently referable to the actual memory of persons still existing beyond the tomb. It reaches us telepathically, as from a mind in which remote scenes are still imprinted. But there are certain scenes which are not easily assigned to the individual memory of any given spirit. And if it be possible for us to learn of present facts by telæsthesia

of speculative mysticism into which I will not attempt to penetrate further.

The extracts relating to the subject of *excursus* contain a good many allusions to opinions expressed in *Human Personality*, and even to particular passages in that work. References to some of these have been given in footnotes to the extracts themselves. Speaking generally, I should say that the meaning of *excursus* and *ecstasy* in the Willett scripts does not differ widely from that of the corresponding terms<sup>1</sup> in *Human Personality*. Nevertheless there are differences, and not unimportant ones; and to these I must now advert.

The definition of *ecstasy* given in the Glossary to *Human Personality* runs as follows:

*Ecstasy*.—A trance during which the spirit of the automatist partially quits his body, entering into a state in which the spiritual world is more or less open to its perception, and in which it so far ceases to occupy its organism as to leave room for an invading spirit to use it in somewhat the same fashion as its owner is accustomed to use it.

If my interpretation of *ecstasy* as understood by the Willett communicators is correct, they would accept that part of this definition which describes *ecstasy* as a state in which the spiritual world is more or less open to the perception of the

as well as by telepathy;—by some direct supernormal percipience without the intervention of any other mind to which the facts are already known,—may there not be also a retro-cognitive telæsthesia by which we may attain a direct knowledge of facts in the past?

“Some conception of this kind may possibly come nearest to the truth. It may even be that some World Soul is perennially conscious of all its past; and that individual souls, as they enter into deeper consciousness, enter into something which is at once reminiscence and actuality”. . . . Cf. also *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 76.

<sup>1</sup> The corresponding terms in *Human Personality* are *ecstasy* and *excursion*. For *excursion* the scripts substitute *excursus*; but I do not think there is any significance in the changed form of the word. *Ecstasy* and *excursus* are synonymous terms in the scripts. Between *ecstasy* and *excursion* in *H.P.* the difference is hardly one of substance. Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 210, “No line of absolute separation can be drawn between the brief psychical *excursions* previously described, and those more prolonged *excursions* of the spirit which I would group under the name of *ecstasy*”.

spirit of the automatist, but would not accept, as conditions of its entering that state, either that the automatist must be entranced, or that his spirit should partially quit the body ; nor would they admit any necessary connection between ecstasy and possession. To admit the latter would indeed be equivalent to denying that Mrs Willett was ever in a state of ecstasy, for they emphatically deny that in her case possession ever takes place.

It is right to add that when, in his chapter on Trance, Possession, and Ecstasy, Myers comes to treat of the subject in detail, the terms of the definition of ecstasy given in the Glossary are not rigidly insisted on. The subjoined passage from that chapter<sup>1</sup> may be taken, I think, as expressing his more considered views :

Among the cases of trance [he writes] discussed in this chapter we have found intimately interwoven with the phenomena of possession many instances of its correlative,—ecstasy. Mrs Piper's fragmentary utterances and visions during her passage from trance to waking life,—utterances and visions that fade away and leave no remembrance in her waking self ; Moses' occasional visions, his journeys in the " spirit world " which he recorded on returning to his ordinary consciousness ; Home's entrancement and converse with the various controls whose messages he gave ;—all these suggest actual excursions of the incarnate spirit from its organism. The theoretical importance of these spiritual excursions is, of course, very great. It is, indeed, so great that most men will hesitate to accept a thesis which carries us straight into the inmost sanctuary of mysticism ; which preaches " a precursory entrance into the most holy place, as by divine transportation ".

Yet I think that this belief, although extreme, is not, at the point to which our evidence has carried us, in any real way improbable. To put the matter briefly, if a spirit from outside can enter the organism, the spirit from inside can go out, can change its centre of perception and action, in a way less complete and irrevocable than the change of death. Ecstasy would thus be simply the complementary or correlative aspect of spirit-control. Such a change need not be a *spatial* change,

any more than there need be any *spatial* change for the spirit which invades the deserted organism. Nay, further, if the incarnate spirit can in this manner change its centre of perception in response (so to say) to a discarnate spirit's invasion of the organism, there is no obvious reason why it should not do so on other occasions as well. We are already familiar with "travelling clairvoyance", a spirit's change of centre of perception among the scenes of the material world. May there not be an extension of travelling clairvoyance to the spiritual world? a spontaneous transfer of the centre of perception into that region from whence discarnate spirits seem now to be able, on their side, to communicate with growing freedom?

I gather from this passage :

(1) That complete trance, in which the spirit of the automatist so far ceases to occupy its organism as to leave room for an invading spirit to use that organism *telergically*, is no longer regarded as a necessary condition of ecstasy, inasmuch as ecstasy is not denied to Mrs Piper's waking stage, when she is represented as having "returned to her body", and as speaking on her own account in the first person.

(2) That though the phenomena recorded of Mrs Piper, of Stainton Moses, and of Home, "suggest actual excursions of the incarnate spirit from its organism", this "change in its centre of perception", "need not be a *spatial* change any more than there need be any *spatial* change for the spirit which invades the deserted organism".

(3) That even if ecstasy be a condition of possession, possession is not necessarily a condition of ecstasy. If the incarnate spirit can "change its centre of perception in response (so to say) to a discarnate spirit's invasion of the organism", there is no obvious reason why it should not do so on other occasions as well".

I do not think it will be disputed that the important passages which I have quoted show signs of a movement of thought in a direction favourable to the conception of excursus or ecstasy presented in the Willett scripts.

Nevertheless I find it difficult to resist the impression that for the Myers of *Human Personality* ecstasy implied actual locomotion in space, and that any more subtle interpretation

of the phenomena did not really commend itself to him.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand I know of nothing in Willett script leading us to suppose that her descriptions of excursus in terms of motion in space are meant to be literally interpreted. When she speaks of "walking out of herself", of "walking about in other worlds", of becoming "enlarged", it is manifest that these expressions are metaphorical and figurative, or, at most, are to be taken as representing the dreamlike construction subjectively superimposed by the sensitive upon the experience of a change of environment from the "etherial" to the "metetherial".

Here as elsewhere, in so far as the Willett scripts indicate a departure from the teachings of *Human Personality*, the tendency appears to be towards a more consistently idealistic standpoint.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See especially *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. lone script of June 19, 1910, (Myers communicating): "All I touch shows me this the Real is the Ideal the transcendental view of material phenomena is the truest".

## CHAPTER III

### HOW SOME SCRIPTS ARE PRODUCED

MRS WILLETT'S automatic productions are of two well-marked types. To one type belong those which are consecutive, coherent, and for the most part readily intelligible; to the other those which are scrappy, disjointed, allusive, and often difficult of interpretation. A similar distinction applies also to the scripts of other members of the group—Mrs Verrall, Mrs Salter, Mrs "Holland", Dame Edith Lyttelton (Mrs "King"), Mrs Wilson, Mr and Mrs Kenneth Richmond—but in their case the disjointed scripts greatly outnumber the continuous ones, and, so far as I am able to judge, also outweigh them in importance. The Willett scripts, on the other hand, contain abundance of noteworthy examples of both types; and the main advantage to the communicators in resorting to the disjointed and allusive type seems to be, in her case (and probably in that of other members of the group), a resulting obscurity which conceals from the automatist the inner meaning of what she is writing or speaking, and is therefore well adapted for the production of cross-correspondences. The work of interpretation is deliberately reserved to the investigators. Thus in the lone script of June 10, 1910, we read: "Myers to-day I want only *allusions* which others will sift . . . let the pen run let the hand lie limp so shall the word come that is not understood of many what I say now you understand not but you shall know hereafter". And again on November 13, 1910: "Let thoughts flit past you cease [seize] what you can make records that others may delve . . . Let the words come to you a blank but of others understandable". Doubtless much the same purpose is served by the employment of trance conditions for messages which the communicators do not wish the sensitive to remember after the sitting is over.

In the early days of Mrs Willett's mediumship the scripts were practically all of the consecutive type, and were largely

occupied with messages personal to herself. The disjointed and allusive type first appears in the so-called "Lethe scripts" of February 4 and February 10, 1910, for which see *Proceedings*, vol. xxv., pp. 122-4, and pp. 148-50.

After this disjointed scripts become fairly common, and occasionally passages with the characteristics of each type succeed one another in the same script. When the communicator means to embark on disjointed script he frequently begins with the words, "Let the pen run", or some equivalent phrase. This I take to be an injunction to let production be as effortless and as automatic as possible.

The strong contrast between the two types of script naturally began to attract the attention of the investigators, and its significance to be a subject of discussion among us. Finally, on February 9, 1911, Sir Oliver Lodge put a direct question to Gurney.

*Extract from the Script of February 9, 1911. (Present, O. J. L.)*

(O. J. L. . . . There is another question I want to ask. We have had lately long lists of quotations, so many and so widely supplied that it would appear as if cross-correspondence must occasionally occur by accident. Some of the group feel that. They want to know whether you are sending these of set purpose.)

Yes, who says so ?

(O. J. L. Well, we have been talking it over lately with G. W. B. and J. G. P. and Mrs S.)

Do they suggest shorter scripts ?

(O. J. L. No, they do not want to suggest anything definite, only to find out whether the scripts which are arriving are considered on your side quite wise and satisfactory.)

Do you mean the M. V. case or W. ?

(O. J. L. Oh, I do not mean W. only ; I mean Verrall and Holland also. We think that sceptics will claim that the cross-correspondences are accidental ; also that the meaning is so obscure that we may miss it, for we assume that besides cross-correspondence you wish to convey a definite meaning too.)

They were allusive. You must get through a good bulk of matter to get in what you want said from our standpoint. They are not without threads of connexion. But listen. Those

threads extend also in subliminal of automatist. Thus if I would say *fire* I Gurney might make allusion to Phœbus or to Zoroaster Her subliminal *may* conceivably go one better and shove in Salamander

(O. J. L. Yes, well, that is what we rather suspected, that subliminal activity was mixed with your intention.)

What ?

(O. J. L. repeated.)

Who ? Woven strands Pick out the gold thread . . .

The above passage gave the first clear hint that there was something peculiar about the process by which disjointed scripts were produced. It was not until some months later that the subject was resumed. In the interval Gurney had been expressing a strong desire to be placed in direct communication with me ; but Mrs Willett herself, whom I had met for the first time only a few days before the date of the script just quoted, had felt a very natural reluctance to add a comparative stranger to the number of her "sitters", hitherto confined to Mrs Verrall and Sir Oliver Lodge. Gurney, however, insisted (he and I had been close friends in days gone by), and it was ultimately arranged that I should have a sitting on June 4, 1911. It is evident from the subjoined script that Gurney was anxious to explain to me certain aspects of the process of communication.

#### *Lone Script of May 21, 1911.*

Gurney I wish I could get you to understand why I wanted to speak to Gerald What I wanted to say was for his information and not yours that is why I refused to put it into script. You don't understand his point of view But it is completely intelligible to me He is interested in the process as distinct from the *product*. And it was about the process that I wanted to speak And the less you know of the process the better . . . because the recipient is best left in ignorance of the method. But it does not follow that the investigator need be . . .

I now come to the sitting of June 4, 1911, the first at which I was present. After a short preliminary script, D.I. followed in accordance with the customary routine already described. The sensitive was fully entranced. I have already had occasion to quote more than one passage from this D.I. in connection



with *telæsthesia* and *excursus* ; but in view of the light which it throws upon " process " I here reproduce it in full, adding such footnotes as may be useful for the elucidation of minor points.

D.I. of June 4, 1911. (*Present, G. W. B.*)

Oh he says, something French, . . . *pas qui coûte* <sup>1</sup>

Oh yes, I know—I'm trying, I will try.

He says, say how you feel. Oh I'm all right.

I'm far, I'm far.

He says, I want to speak—and he says, what I'm going to say is not to be taken as applying to D.I., when the communication is more direct and simpler, and he says, not to be taken as applying to all sensitives or even to all phenomena of any given sensitive. But it's an attempt to show how in some cases some scripts are produced.

The descending chain, telepathy—inspiration—telepathy <sup>2</sup>—selection. Oh he says, What thought is implied by the words " mutual selection " ?

Oh he says, Is he there ? (*G. W. B.* Yes, I'm here.)

Does it reach him ? (*G. W. B.* Yes, I hear quite well.)

I want to make a shot at a partial definition of what constitutes mediumship.

That organisation in which the capacity for—what an odd word—Oh, Edmund, say it slowly—*excursus* is allied to the capacity for definite selection. Then finally the possession of as it were a vent, through which the knowledge can emerge.

Oh he says, there's a line of Tennyson's I'm thinking of—lies open unto me. <sup>3</sup>

And all things he says like that, he says I don't repeat. I thought I'd said it—I wonder where I am. He says, don't lose the thread.

Oh he says, what I'm going to say now may lead to some

<sup>1</sup> *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte* refers, of course, to Mrs W.'s reluctance to try for D.I. with a comparative stranger. Some sounds preceded the words *pas qui coûte* but they were almost inaudible.

<sup>2</sup> The repetition of the word " telepathy " is probably a surplusage here, the " descending chain " being *telepathy, inspiration, selection*. See pp. 252 ff. below.

<sup>3</sup> Tennyson, *Princess* :

" Now lies the Earth all Danae to the stars,  
And all thy heart lies open unto me."

misunderstanding, according as whether the right or the wrong deductions are drawn from it.

It's something like this. [*Pause.*]

Say that after—Oh! how difficult it is—say that after deliberation a certain theme is selected. Then he says something in German—*motif*—to be got through various channels. I'm only speaking now of the process of selection, he says, and in so far as that's concerned I'm limited to the contents of the conscious and unconscious self.

Oh he says, Gerald—Oh he says like that. He's calling someone. Nobody answers—he keeps on calling someone. He says Gerald. Oh he keeps on calling. Oh! he says, where is Gerald? (*G. W. B.* I'm here.)

Oh he says, does he hear? how can I know that he hears? (*G. W. B.* All right, I'm hearing perfectly.)

Oh I see him so plainly.<sup>1</sup>

He says to me, Don't fail me—go on, go back to where you left off—about the mind.

Mind, he says, was the last word.<sup>2</sup> He says, Remember I am distinctly ruling out the thoughts suggested by the words telepathy and inspiration. Oh he says, Well then I look over the available factors—oh, and see what will serve. Oh he says, it isn't only I who select. Oh he says, now you've got it. There's another field for selection—and it's such part of my mind, I, Gurney, as she can have access to. Oh he says, What part? Why? Oh, I've missed a word—something something limited to—then I've skipped something, but I hear him say thoughts potentially.

Oh he says, put it another way. Having access to my mind her selection is chiefly limited to that which can naturally link on to human incarnate thought. Oh he says, I wish I could get that word *potential* rightly used. I'm not saying it's limited to the actual but to the potential content.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I think "Oh I see him so plainly" is a remark made by the automatist on her own account. "Him" = Gurney.

<sup>2</sup> This evidently refers back to the mention of "the conscious and unconscious self". The word *mind* was not used.

<sup>3</sup> What Gurney intends to say is "I don't mean that her selection is limited to the actual content of my mind; it includes the potential content as well". See footnote on p. 199 above; and for the meaning of "potential" in this connection, see pp. 202-3.

Oh he says, does he see what I'm driving at ?

(*G. W. B.* I think I do and no doubt I shall understand still better when I read it over.)

He says, That's where the gamble comes in. How will it be used, the knowledge supernormally gained ? Now then, you have present in the whole self the matter from which I selected, plus the matter supernormally acquired from me. Now comes the weaving. Oh he says, That's where subliminal activity comes in. Oh he says, it's a dangerous weapon, yet we can't do without it.

Often there is a fairly long period of—don't get that word—it contains a *g* and an *s* and a *t* and an *n*.<sup>1</sup> [*G. W. B. suggests "gestation" but no notice is taken of this.*] Say incubation, he says—and then comes the uprush. And then, he says, now I must bring in telepathy as the guiding influence. He says this process is only one among a great variety. Oh he says, We must experiment—he says, so much is unmapped.

Oh, and he says, the waste of material when we keep on hammering at one point—approaching it from every—can't read that word—of the compass—only to find that the point had been grasped and that we might have passed on to new matter.

Oh he says, I can't see your mind, Gerald, but I can feel you in some dim way through her. He says, It's a sort of lucky-bag, her mind to me—when I'm not shut out from it.

He says I think I got some things I wanted said about selection. It's the thought of its being as it were a mutual process that I want driven home.

Oh he says, now say this for me. He says, you want to foster in sensitives a sort of dual attitude—belief in their capacity. Oh ! say it slowly—I'm so tired, I'm so tired—oh I'm climbing. Oh ! I'm climbing. belief, Oh I will, I will say it—belief in their capacity to have access to the mind of the communicator, together with a wholesome sense of discrimina-

<sup>1</sup>The word was evidently "gestation"; but the passage is interesting as showing that Mrs W. sometimes *sees* rather than *hears* the message which it is wished to convey to her. Compare the examples given on p. 99 above. There is another instance of the same peculiarity only a few lines further on, when she fails to get the word "quarter" (of the compass) and explains, not that she cannot hear it, but that she cannot *read* it.

tion<sup>1</sup> in regard to the expressions—not right—regard to something to which that access leads—productions.

Oh he says, you mayn't know it, there's a natural bent to extreme scepticism here.

Oh he says, there are such a lot of things I want to tell you, and there's the longing to know when one has struggled how far one has succeeded in making oneself—Oh he says, I mustn't go much further now.

Oh he says, don't give me up Gerald—help me—and help her.

Oh I can't go on, I'm so tired.

Oh he says, only one more thing—only one more thing for him.

He says it over and over. I'm trying (*almost sobs*).

Being is antecedent to—Oh he says, you've not got the word I want, but say it—it'll suggest—Yes, that's it, action.<sup>2</sup>

Oh that's done.

[*A pause ; after which waking stage follows.*]

There can be no doubt, I think, that in this D.I. Gurney is referring to the class of scripts that I have described as “dis-jointed”. He tells us expressly that what he is going to say is not to be taken as applying to D.I. “when the communication is more direct and simpler”, nor as applying “to all sensitives, or even to all phenomena of any given sensitive”, and that all he is attempting is to show “how in some cases some scripts are produced”. On the part of the communicator the production of this special class of scripts involves, in addition to the use of telepathy and inspiration (later on explained as a variety of telepathic action), a third activity, namely selection from the contents, subliminal and supraliminal, of the mind of the sensitive. On the part of the medium there is required—(1) the faculty of *excursus*, (2) the capacity for definite selection from the contents of the mind of the communicator, and (3) the power of externalising by writing or otherwise the knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “the capacity for definite selection” which is included in the “partial definition of what constitutes mediumship” given in the earlier part of the sitting.

<sup>2</sup> This remark is an anticipation of statements made in later scripts, but I do not understand its relevance here. Cf. the lone script of August 20, 1911, given in the appendix to this paper. “*Action and Truth* which is dependant which is primary.”

thereby acquired. The power of externalisation is, of course, an indispensable condition of mediumship in any form ; and this may also be true in some measure of the faculty of excursus.

The rôle played by telepathy and inspiration in the production of disjointed scripts is left over for later consideration ; and similarly, on the side of the sensitive, nothing more is said about excursus or about the faculty of mediumistic " emission ". Instead the script concentrates upon selection, and especially on the fact of its *mutual* exercise by both the parties concerned.

It is hardly necessary to dwell here on those passages in the D.I. that relate to the sources of information upon which, in mutual selection, the selectors are said respectively to draw—namely the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive, and the content, actual and potential, of the mind of the communicator. This aspect of the subject has already been sufficiently dealt with in the preceding section. What I am now concerned with is the process employed in the production of scripts of the special class which the communicator has in view, and the part which mutual selection is said to play in it.

The class in question I have assumed to be that of disjointed scripts ; and one purpose of these scripts—already suspected by the investigators—is clearly brought out in the words " Say that after deliberation a certain theme is selected.<sup>1</sup> Then he says something in German—*motif*—to be got through various channels." Evidently the object aimed at is a cross-correspondence with other automatists of the group, which shall centre upon and serve to develop the chosen theme. What is wanted is not a mere simple and superficial correspondence of detached words or phrases appearing in the scripts of different automatists. In order to achieve the purpose of the communicator the correspondences must be relevant to some non-obvious whole to which the automatists are contributing without being aware of the inner meaning of what they write. As Gurney explains on another occasion, " The *reason* for selection

<sup>1</sup> Note that the selection of a theme or subject of a C.C. is not to be confused with the " mutual selection " which is the main topic of the D.I. The use of the same word in both connections is perhaps unfortunate, but should not give rise to any misunderstanding.

Gurney does not say who " deliberates ", or who decides upon the theme to be chosen. On this point see p. 243 below.

of subjects of C.C. is then demonstrated when the *thread* the central thread is picked out." <sup>1</sup>

It would seem that for the production of disjointed scripts the accumulation beforehand of suitable material is, if not necessary, at least advantageous, and that herein lies the special function of the selection which the sensitive makes from the contents of the mind of the communicator. That selection is clearly *preparatory*: it is not made at the time of the production of the script. Is the selection by the communicator *preparatory* like that of the sensitive, or does it come into operation only at the very end of the process, when the moment has come for actual externalisation?

Selection by the communicator must certainly be supposed to occur in the final stage of the process, but may it not operate at an earlier stage also? The very phrase "mutual selection" seems rather to suggest that selection by the sensitive and at least *some* selection by the communicator belong to the same stage in the process. That this is so, and that the stage in question is a preparatory one, is a natural inference from the form of words used by Gurney when he says: "Now then [*i.e.* apparently *after* mutual selection has taken place] you have present in the whole self the matter from which I selected plus the matter supernormally acquired from me. Now comes the weaving."

Without attempting to pass a final judgment on this point, we may summarise the process described in the D.I. of June 4, 1911, as including four successive stages:

- (1) the choice of a theme;
- (2) the selection of material relevant to the theme, by the sensitive from the mind of the communicator, and probably also by the communicator from the mind of the sensitive;
- (3) a period of "incubation", often a long one, during which there comes into play an operation described as "weaving", and consisting in some kind of subliminal activity;
- (4) actual production of script, involving selection by the communicator from the "available factors" in the mind of the sensitive, and the bringing in of telepathy as a "guiding influence".

<sup>1</sup> Trance-script preceding D.I. of September 10, 1911. (Present, G. W. B.)

The first, third, and fourth stages are but briefly indicated in the D.I. we are now considering, but further light is thrown upon them in later sittings, to which I shall presently have to call attention.

The D.I. of June 4, 1911, may fairly be said to mark a fresh departure in the Willett communications relating to process. It is the first of a series of deliverances of an essentially dogmatic character, containing statements which, if accepted at all, must be accepted on the authority of the communicators. The deliberate choice of a theme, and the partial dependence of the communicator upon selection from material already in the minds of the automatists, might indeed be plausibly inferred from observed facts; but selection by the sensitive from the mind of the communicator and detailed descriptions of any part of the process are matters which must be taken on trust. I am far from dismissing them on that account as void of interest. But my part in dealing with them will be that of interpreter rather than critic, except so far as I may find it impossible to reconcile one statement in the scripts with another.

Next in the series in order of date, to the D.I. of June 4, 1911, comes a long and important passage from the D.I. of October 8 of the same year. It has already been quoted *in extenso* in the preceding chapter (pp. 193-5). My purpose on that occasion was to throw light on the meaning of the term *telæsthesia* in Willett scripts. But the passage has an equally important bearing on the subject of the present chapter and I am afraid I must trouble the reader to look back and study it from this new point of view.

It begins with a question I had already asked, and to which a partial answer had been returned, in the preliminary stage of the sitting. I now, at the request of the communicator, repeated the question: "In mutual selection you say that the sensitive can select from such part of your mind as she can have access to. What part is this?" Instead of attempting to amplify his former reply the communicator says he would like to suggest something which will "open another window". Dropping all reference to the *source*—the actual and potential content of his mind—from which the sensitive is said to acquire information, he lays stress upon the nature of the activity by

which the acquisition is made. To this activity he applies the term *telæsthesia*—the first appearance of the term in Willett script—and expressly distinguishes it from *telepathy*. “Telepathy”, he says, “is one thing—that’s thought communication; telæsthesia is knowledge, not thought, acquired by the subliminal when operating normally in the metetherial”. Of course “mind-reading” (=telæsthesia (W)) had always been assumed as the basis and presupposition of “selection”; but never, I think, so emphatically as now, or in such sharp distinction from telepathy. I have already gone so fully in the preceding chapter into the peculiar meaning attached to the terms telepathy and telæsthesia in Willett scripts that it would be waste of time to travel over the same ground again. The implication, however, that telæsthesia is a *normal* activity of the subliminal “when operating in the metetherial”<sup>1</sup> calls for a passing comment. In the D.I. of June 4 Gurney had spoken of the knowledge present in the “whole self” of the sensitive as including matter *supernormally* acquired from his own mind. The apparent inconsistency is probably to be explained on the view that knowledge normally acquired by the subliminal may properly be regarded as supernormally acquired by the supraliminal when passed on to the latter by the subliminal. In any case the exercise of telæsthetic faculty by the subliminal when operating “in the metetherial” is not once only, but repeatedly affirmed to be normal and natural to it.

The communicator now returns to the risk he had previously hinted at in the D.I. on June 4, of a false inference being drawn from what he is about to say. If the materials out of which cross-correspondences are produced are provided ready-made in the minds of the automatists, is it necessary to postulate an external intelligence, and that a discarnate one, to account for them? The D.I. of October 8, 1911, suggests a triple answer to this question. In the first place part of the material from which the final product is selected has been previously acquired (as explained in the D.I. of June 4) from the mind of the communicator himself, and to that extent must be regarded as fresh material not already contained in the mind of the automatist. In the second place, it must not be forgotten that the message

<sup>1</sup> “When operating normally in the metetherial” is equivalent, I think, to “during excursus”.



as finally externalised may include "elements received by direct telepathic impact". Lastly, and this is the most important consideration of all, evidence of spiritistic intervention is to be sought in the choice of topics resulting from the selection itself and their relation to a central idea known to the communicators, but not known to the automatists concerned in a cross-correspondence.

Oh, he says, What I'm saying may be used to cut at the spiritistic hypothesis, but it doesn't. Again, who selects what of the total of telæsthetically acquired knowledge shall externalise itself—shall blend itself with those elements received by direct telepathic impact? . . . Who applies the stimulus under which certain ideas—use that word, not what I wanted—emerge, blended, which upon study will be found to be relevant to the total aim of that particular piece of automatism?

By "relevant to the total aim of that particular piece of automatism" Gurney means relevant to what in the D.I. of June 4 he had spoken of as a "theme" or "motif", common to a number of cryptic allusions scattered among various automatists.

The rest of the paragraph, of which I have just quoted the first and last sentences, provides an imaginary account of what may be supposed to happen in the second of the four stages, into which the process as a whole may be divided:

Oh, he says, Supposing I take her into a room, and I screen off any action of my own mind on hers: her subliminal with its useful copious pinch of the salt of Eve's curiosity takes stock of the contents of the room. Normal consciousness is later regained, and lying in the subliminal is knowledge of certain objects perceived, not as the result of the action of my mind, but as the result of telæsthetic faculty. Oh, he says, Here come I on script intent. Here be arrows for my quiver.

There are several points in this passage that call for notice.

First of all, what is meant by a "room"? It cannot be identified outright with the "theme": yet it is obviously connected with the theme. We shall not go far wrong if in this place we take it to signify a collection of materials appropriate to the theme.

Next, observe that Gurney claims to be the agent in the taking of the sensitive into the "room". This would seem to imply that he brings telepathic influence to bear on her, whereby she is made acquainted with the general character of the contents of the room; and not till after that is done does he screen off any action of his own mind on her and leave her to acquire "telæsthetically" a knowledge of the individual "objects" contained in it. This account will have to be considered in the light of later statements.

Finally, it is made quite clear that this second stage is one of preparation, during which materials are being accumulated for future use. It is followed by the third stage, described in the D.I. of June 4 as a period of "incubation". I think it is to this third stage that the next paragraph of the extract refers; though it is difficult to say whether "the loss" of which it speaks is represented as occurring *before* the process of externalisation or during it:

Oh, he says, of all the contents of that mythical room say she carries back a rough and partial knowledge—not partial to the subliminal but reaching the point of externalisation much as Browning's London moon did—in the process of externalisation, there it is where the loss occurs. Oh, he says, of those ten say two emerge—to me how interesting. I see the work of my hand, the double process.

According to the D.I. of June 4 there occurs in the third stage what the communicator calls a "weaving". It is in the weaving, he tells us, that "subliminal activity comes in. Oh, he says, it's a dangerous weapon, yet we cannot do without it." The "danger" referred to I take to be, in part at least, that of the loss incurred in the passing of the more perfect knowledge acquired by the subliminal into the rough and partial knowledge which is all that survives by the time the "point of externalisation" is reached. Thus of the ten<sup>1</sup> original items perhaps only two ultimately emerge. Further discussion of the third stage must await my comments on the next script.

The "double process" I understand to mean the process of mutual selection.

The last paragraph of the extract undoubtedly relates to the

<sup>1</sup> There had been no previous mention of *ten* items.

fourth and final stage of the process—that of actual production, in which selection is on the side of the communicator and “the spiritistic agency decides what element appropriate to its own activity shall emerge alongside and intertwined with matter placed in position by direct telepathic impact”.

By way of illustration the communicator supposes the production of a cross-correspondence to be in progress, with *horses* as its central theme. He has already telepathically impressed on Mrs Verrall ideas appropriate to the theme—as, for instance, that of *Pegasus*; and he follows this up by selecting and pushing up where they will be grasped and externalised two “trump cards” telæsthetically acquired by Mrs Willett—say *horse-shoe* or the *Steeds of Dawn*. The appearance in Verrall script of *Pegasus* and kindred ideas, and in Willett script of *horse-shoe* and *Steeds of Dawn*, would constitute a cross-correspondence, doubtless of a very crude and elementary kind, but claimed as illustrating the use of different methods in communication—one of them employing telepathy pure and simple and the other telepathy as a stimulating and guiding influence operating on material acquired by telæsthesia. Nothing is said about material already existing independently in the mind of the sensitive, but for the emergence of this also it is clear that telepathic stimulation and guidance might be effectively employed.

The next extract to be cited is from the D.I. of January 21, 1912. It is in many respects a remarkable and impressive passage, but it is also a difficult one both in itself and in relation to previous statements. I think I shall best consult the convenience of the reader by following up the text of the record with a paraphrase which will convey my own interpretation of it.

*Extract from D.I. of January 21, 1912. (Present, G. W. B.)*

(G. W. B. You referred at a former sitting to telæsthesia as a process by which the mind of the sensitive acquired knowledge on its own account. The subject came up in connection with what you call mutual selection. You spoke of taking the sensitive into a “room” and screening off any action of your own mind on hers; whereupon her subliminal proceeds to take stock of the contents of the room. Do you mean a real room, or only a room existing in your mind?)

I'll throw something at you, and you must make what you can of it.

I'll take that portion of her which can emerge in uprush, and I, as it were, link it on with that deeper subliminal which can be in touch with what I want to get known ; so that there is that portion of her which can normally acquire telæsthetically in its own deep profound plane passing on the knowledge to that plane from which an uprush can come. Oh, he says, what I'm going to say to you now makes Sidgwick tear his hair, because it's meaning the Ocean in a child's bucket.

I'm going to call that deepest portion, nearer to the transcendental self—I'm going to call it—anything you like, any symbol, say H. Well, the H-self and I agree on what we want—what I want—to get transmitted, and which the H-self normally, in its own H-ness, through its own cognitive faculties, can know. And here is the " bucket " process, it's here where just because it's the most difficult I shall fail worst in trying to get near the thought. The H-self will touch the uprushable self just the grade below the uprushable, and the uprushable and the grade below will receive the knowledge from the H. But in putting it into the uprushable focus, as it were, it will know that a sort of crystallisation, often through symbolism, must be arrived at : and we will imagine, if you like, that that having been foreseen both by me and the H-self, we determined upon what sort of crystals to aim at, so that the uprushable self has, as it were, presented to it what I called a " room ", the knowledge which the H-self is informing to the point where it becomes uprushable. Just below that uprushable point there's a sort of dim moment where both modes enter into cognition—I mean, where a knowledge of the thing as it is in the H-stage is united to a knowledge of the crystals which, the emblem which, can best express that which in its H-ness cannot, or rarely, uprush—for all these states are variable and the success variable. Then comes that moment of binding when the self that lies in juxtaposition to the uprushable absorbs the knowledge from H, and passes it on to the uprushable point in such a state as makes uprush possible. It then rushes out as word spoken or written, or dreams, or never-to-be-denied moments of prescience, precognition of supernormal knowledge. But that supernormal will contain within it the

normally acquired knowledge of H—that element of normality will be there. Oh, he says, that isn't the invariable method, only one of them; and he says, The telepathic impact is another . . .

*Paraphrase of the above.*

In answer to my question about the "room" Gurney distinguishes between different grades of the subliminal self. There is a deeper self which can telæsthetically acquire knowledge direct from the communicating spirit of that which he wants to get known. There is another self on a less profound plane to which the knowledge so acquired can be passed on, and through whose action it can emerge in *uprush*. There is also a self—"the self in juxtaposition to the uprushable"—which is intermediate between the other two. Let H stand for the deeper self;  $H_1$  for the intermediate self; and  $H_2$  for the self which is immediately responsible for the emergence of the message in written or spoken word. The communicator and H agree upon what they want to get transmitted, H having acquired knowledge of this through the faculty of telæsthetic cognition which is native to it in virtue of its H-ness. What happens next is admittedly difficult to explain, but it is something of this kind. Contact is effected in the first place between H and  $H_1$ , and later, through the mediation of  $H_1$ , between H and  $H_2$ . The knowledge which H has acquired from the communicator is thus passed on to both  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , but not in the form in which it has been acquired by H. In that form it would be all but impossible for it to emerge. Some change must take place analogous to crystallisation out of a state of fluidity. The individual crystals should be symbolic or emblematic of the knowledge acquired by H, but they are not the direct expression of that knowledge. Now it is possible for the necessary crystallisation to be brought about by concerted action between the communicator and H. They can decide what type of "crystals" are appropriate in the particular case. The crystallisation itself is effected in  $H_1$ ,<sup>1</sup> with the result that  $H_2$  has presented to it what had been called a "room"—that is to say, a collection

<sup>1</sup> The paraphrase somewhat outruns the text at this point; but what I have added seems to me a not unfair inference from other statements in the record.

of "crystals" of a kind best fitted to express the knowledge acquired by H in a form in which it can be externalised. There is a dim moment when the original knowledge and its crystallised expression both enter into cognition together.<sup>1</sup>

Finally comes the "binding", when, under the influence of the communicator,<sup>2</sup> H, H<sub>1</sub>, and H<sub>2</sub> are linked up one with another. H<sub>1</sub> absorbs the knowledge from H and passes it on to H<sub>2</sub> in crystallised form. It is then automatically externalised, and may convey veridical messages, supernormal from the standpoint of the supraliminal self but embodying knowledge normally acquired by H through the exercise of its telæsthetic faculty.

This is only one among several methods; direct telepathic emission is another.

Before commenting on the substance of the statements in the extract quoted and paraphrased above, I should like to call attention to a peculiarity of style in it which I do not think can be matched in any didactic pronouncement of similar length uttered through the voice in the whole of Mrs Willett's automatic productions. The writing stage that preceded the D.I. had been comparatively short, but the sitting as a whole was an unusually long one, lasting nearly two hours. The passage we are now considering came at the very end of it, and was preceded by discussions of a decidedly abstruse character which seem to have bewildered the sensitive and put a severe strain upon her attention. The record of these discussions abounds in the familiar interjected phrases "He says", "Oh he says", whereas the long answer to my question about the "room" is uniquely free from them. Just before I asked it Gurney had addressed a word of encouragement to the sensitive: "He says, you've got it now, and he says, No bones broken—and he says to me, You know, dear, I feel sometimes I must appear to you like the Devil when he said Cast thyself down, but he says if only you'll go blindly there'll be no pieces to pick up". I suggest that the advice to "go blindly" was acted upon by the sensitive, and that the almost complete absence of the usual interjections was due to her simply repeating each word as it came and not attempting to grasp the meaning sentence by sentence.

<sup>1</sup> Presumably in H<sub>1</sub>.

<sup>2</sup> See note 1 on opposite page.

As regards the substance of the extract, the first question to be asked is, Does it describe the same process as that to which the D.I.s of June 4 and October 8 refer, or a different one? The occasion of Gurney's statement was my request to him to explain the meaning of the term "room", which he had used in the D.I. of October 8. His reply, couched in carefully chosen language, acknowledged his previous use of the term ("what I called a room"); and one would naturally suppose that in explaining it he would have in mind the same process as that in connection with which it had originally been employed. And in some respects the process which he goes on to expound does present the same family features which the two earlier descriptions of "how some scripts are produced" had already made familiar. There is the choice of a theme, the telæsthetic acquisition of knowledge by the sensitive from the mind of the communicator, the period of incubation and subliminal activity, and finally the automatic outpouring by writing or by voice. But closer examination reveals points of difference which cannot be regarded either as unessential details or as mere elaboration of something previously indicated in outline.

The greater complexity of the process as a whole, arising from the recognition of three distinct "grades" in the subliminal of the automatist and of the interaction between them, might, indeed, be brought under the latter head; for it may be plausibly contended that this very interaction constitutes the "weaving" spoken of in the D.I. of June 4 as a dangerous but necessary operation. Similarly with respect to the so-called "room" common to both accounts: so long as we confine our attention to what is in the room there does not seem to be any real distinction between the appropriate "objects" of the earlier description and the appropriate "symbols" or "emblems" of the later. Gurney might with reason claim that in the later account my question about the nature of the room was sufficiently answered. It is when we consider not the nature of the room but (1) its relation to the actors concerned, and (2) the faculty by which its contents are apprehended, that we begin to realise how impossible it is to reconcile the two accounts except by treating them as applying to processes which, though kin to one another, are not identical.

In the D.I. of October 8 we are told that the communicator

takes the sensitive into the "room" and screens off the action of his own mind upon hers. Her telæsthetic faculty thereupon comes into play; she takes stock of the room on her own account, and makes her selection from the "objects" she perceives in it. Briefly, the room exists in the mind of the communicator and the sensitive acquires knowledge of its contents by telæsthesia.

According to the D.I. of January 21, 1912, the general character of the symbolic contents of the room is determined by agreement between the communicator and H, the deepest subliminal self of the sensitive. But the room itself and the items it contains come into existence in a second subliminal self ( $H_1$ ), and through it are "presented" to a third ( $H_2$ ). By what process the knowledge possessed by one self passes to another we are not told; but other passages in the scripts leave no doubt that the process is not to be understood as either telæsthetic or telepathic. The part played by telæsthesia is confined to the initial stage of the whole operation, and in a later script (see p. 253 below) the suggestion of telepathy between the supraliminal and subliminal selves is emphatically negated. In the view of the communicators telepathy—and we may safely assume telæsthesia also—is confined to interaction between minds of individuals external to each other. But this is a subject which will engage our attention in the next chapter.

On the whole I am forced to the conclusion that in the D.I. of January 21, 1912, Gurney is expounding a variant of the process previously described, and doing this deliberately. Why he should have omitted to make this clear I cannot say; but it is only fair to remember that in the D.I. of June 4 he warns us that the process he is there describing is only one of a great variety, and that he himself has much to learn. "We must experiment, he says; so much is unmapped."

Among other noteworthy points in the D.I. of January 21 is Gurney's frank confession of probable failure in his attempt to explain how the telæsthetically acquired knowledge of the H-self becomes transmuted into a form in which it can be externalised. Whether the difficulty arises from a sense of imperfect understanding on his own part, or from an inherent inadequacy of language to express recondite psychic operations,



he does not say. The interpreter is, of course, bound to give as clear cut a rendering as he can of dark sayings in the scripts ; but it should not be forgotten that in attempting precision of statement he may end by being further from the real intention of the communicator than if he had been content to observe a judicious vagueness.

In the previous expositions of " how some scripts are produced " Gurney spoke of the subliminal as if it were a single unsubdivided self, while distinguishing it from the supraliminal or normal consciousness of the sensitive. It would be wrong to say that different " levels " or " strata " of the subliminal itself were recognised for the first time in the present passage. Indeed the difficulty of conceiving the self as at once one and many had already been raised by me, and had been a subject of discussion in the earlier portion of this very sitting. To that question I shall have to return in the next chapter. But to ascribe the process of " crystallisation " to the interaction of the different grades of the subliminal is, I think, new. Possibly, however, it is not so much new as now for the first time clearly stated.

I have suggested above that the interaction of the different grades of the subliminal corresponds to the third stage in the process described in the D.I. of June 4—namely that of " weaving " and " subliminal activity ". It is arguable that " weaving " and " subliminal activity " in that passage refer to interaction of the different grades *within* the subliminal, though it is also possible that the communicator is thinking of interaction between the subliminal as one whole and the supraliminal. The distinction is a real, but hardly a fundamental one. We are elsewhere told that the supraliminal is, " as it were, the upper crust of the subliminal ", and that " the interaction between the two is continuous ", though " the supraliminal consciousness of the interaction varies ".<sup>1</sup> If the symbols H, H<sub>1</sub>, and H<sub>2</sub> be taken as representing three grades of the subliminal no very serious objection would seem to lie against adding H<sub>3</sub> to the series to represent the supraliminal, and extending the interpretation of " weaving " and " subliminal activity " so as to include the interaction of all four grades of the self. This way of looking at the matter may help to har-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 291-2 below.

monise the accounts of the third stage in the process (that which immediately precedes the uprush) given in the two D.I.s respectively, though it would not remove the difficulties presented by the problem of the "room".

If the two accounts of this stage are really in essentials at one with each other it follows that the result of the "weaving", like that of the crystallisation, must be to reduce to symbols and allusions the knowledge telæsthetically acquired by the deeper subliminal self. Confirmation of this is furnished by a hint casually dropped in the sitting of May 24, 1911. "I wish", says the communicator, "I could get you to understand the thought that underlies the word 'weaving'. Symbolism is a dangerous weapon". Compare this with the statement in the D.I. of June 4, about a fortnight later: "He says, That's where the gamble comes in. How will it be used, the knowledge supernormally gained? Now then you have present in the whole self the matter from which I selected plus the matter supernormally acquired from me. Now comes the weaving. Oh, he says, that's where subliminal activity comes in. Oh, he says, It's a dangerous weapon, yet we can't do without it". The inevitable conclusion from a comparison of these two passages is that weaving results in symbolism, and that the operation is at once necessary and dangerous.

Why necessary, and why dangerous? The answer to the first question is supplied by the D.I. of January 21, 1912. Symbolism is necessary because otherwise the message "cannot—or but rarely—uprush" and be externalised. The obstacle presumably lies in the supraliminal, which, if it understood the inner meaning of the message, might refuse to transmit it. But this is one of many points on which more light would be welcome. I think we have good ground for believing that in certain cases the communicators themselves do not desire the inner meaning to be understood save by the investigators, who have all the scripts before them and can piece the mosaic together.

On the other hand one can hardly doubt that conversion into symbolic form is declared to be dangerous because it threatens the integrity of the message. If a message received by direct telepathic impact is liable to "sophistication", how much greater will be the risk in the case of a message which can only

emerge and reach its ultimate destination broken up into isolated parts and disguised as a collection of symbols and allusions. The necessity for symbolism we have to take on trust ; its dangers are obvious.

If the process with which we have been lately dealing shows some divergences from the type originally described, it is to this earlier type that the statements contained in the two scripts next to be considered seem more properly to apply. The scripts in question are both trance-productions, consecutive in point of date, and linked together by interesting connections of matter. What is new in them relates mainly to the final stage of the process—that of externalisation. But both scripts have something to say on the subject of mutual selection, and the second of the two gives illustrations of “selected” items by means of actual examples drawn from a recent lone script of the disjointed type. The reader may be glad to have before him an extract from this lone script by way of preparation for the communicators’ subsequent references to it, and also because the script itself may serve as a fairly representative specimen of its class.

*Extract from the Lone Script of February 16, 1912. (Gurney communicating.)*

The melody heard at dawn the dawn of more than mortal  
light Pass thou within the self that fades and for the  
limited and finite exchanges the consciousness of the greater  
whole a pulse of the infinite The self that is deeper far  
Rerisen<sup>1</sup> say that the light that never was on land or sea<sup>2</sup>  
Cosmos he said it the dawn of the spirit.

<sup>1</sup> There are clear references in this passage to the poem entitled “A Cosmic Outlook” in Myers’s *Fragments of Prose and Poetry* :

“Inward! ay, deeper far than love or scorn,  
Deeper than bloom of virtue, stain of sin.  
Rend thou the veil and pass alone within,  
Stand naked there and feel thyself forlorn!  
Nay! in what world, then, Spirit wast thou born?  
Or to what World-Soul art thou entered in?  
Feel thyself fade, feel the great life begin,  
With Love re-rising in the cosmic morn”.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth, *Peele Castle in a Storm*.

Flaccus no that is wrong<sup>1</sup> He who wrote long ago the  
 modern singer and the ancient one<sup>2</sup> the types and the con-  
 trast Contrast emphasise that the imperative tense The  
 ark of the Lord<sup>3</sup> the toiling of the serf<sup>4</sup> it all has place

Fears may be liars<sup>5</sup> FEARS not tears— Deeper far he  
 wanted that said

The new world worth your old<sup>6</sup> something like that This  
 muddy vesture of decay<sup>7</sup> when that mortal shall have put  
 on immortality<sup>8</sup>

The inmost goal say that Ardour<sup>9</sup>

Pleasant is the light of the sun<sup>10</sup> and the green appearing  
 of the leaves

Who shall praise thee in the grave<sup>11</sup> in the land where all  
 things are forgotten

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Willett notes: "This might be Tlaccus. I don't know what it means". *Flaccus* is apparently used instead of the more familiar *Horace* in order not to arrest the attention of the automatist. In the trance-script preceding D.I. of March 5, 1912, ODE HORACE is openly referred to. In the trance-script of March 13, 1912 (see p. 256 below) the words "no that is wrong" are claimed by Gurney as a "message" from the subliminal of the automatist to her supraliminal, and are explained as referring not to *Flaccus* (which had been correctly written), but to an erroneous impression on the part of the supraliminal that what *should* have been written was *Tlaccus*.

<sup>2</sup> "The modern singer and the ancient one" are Myers and Horace respectively. On the whole subject of the Horace Ode question, and of the contrasted views of Man's destiny after death, see Mr Piddington's papers in vol. xxii. of *Proceedings*, and Part LX. of vol. xxiv., both of which had been seen by Mrs Willett.

<sup>3</sup> I do not understand this allusion, unless "Ark" is a confused reference to the "Archytas Ode" of Horace.

<sup>4</sup> "The toiling of the serf" is almost certainly a reference to the *ἐράρπους* of *Odyssey* xi., 489.

<sup>5</sup> Clough, *Say not the struggle*.

<sup>6</sup> Browning, *Abt Vogler*.

<sup>7</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, v., i.

<sup>8</sup> *1 Cor.*, xv., 54, and *Burial Service*.

<sup>9</sup> Myers, *A Cosmic Outlook*:

"The inward ardour yearns to the inmost goal;  
 The endless goal is one with the endless way;  
 From every gulf the tides of Being roll,  
 From every zenith burns the indwelling day;  
 And life in Life has drowned thee and Soul in Soul,  
 And these are God, and thou thyself art they."

<sup>10</sup> *Eccl.*, xi., 7.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Psalms* cxv., 17.

But the drawing of Blake for Blair was it Blairs grave holds the truth <sup>1</sup>

*Extract from the Trance-sitting of March 5, 1912. (Gurney communicating.)*

*[This extract begins with the concluding portion of the Writing Stage, and passes on to D.I.]*

Now do you want to ask anything ?

(G. W. B. Shall I ask now, during the writing stage ?)

Yes

(G. W. B. If I understand you rightly, you spoke in an earlier D.I. of telepathy, inspiration, and mutual selection, as being distinct processes, forming a descending chain. Is that correct ?)

Say again. 1 2 3

(G. W. B. repeats question. *D.I. immediately follows.*)

... Telepathy, inspiration, mutual selection—He says they mark different stages of the soul's commerce, it sounds like. He says it's very difficult to get it, dear, but it's best for me to get some rough definitions down. He says, Telepathy is the action of mind upon mind ; not of brain upon brain, but of mind upon mind. And he says, there are as many varieties of telepathy as there are varieties of human beings. He says, Telepathy shades off into inspiration, and inspiration shades off into mutual selection—and he says, which piece of bosh I commend to the attention of Miss Johnson !

He says he would like to sing an ode, beginning

“ O thou on whom the mantle of my office has descended ”.<sup>2</sup>

Now they're trying, you know, to sit on poor Edmund. I can hear them laughing. And he says that the irresistible tendency to make jokes he attributes chiefly and directly to Fred having said of him that his personality flowered chiefly in his humour,<sup>3</sup> and Fred has often said that if he had to write that paper again he'd have that out. And Edmund says, Let that be a warning to obituary writers. And he says, Who

<sup>1</sup> Drawing by Blake, well known to Mrs Willett, representing an aged figure entering a tomb, and a youth rising to life above it.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Johnson was at this time Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, of which Gurney had been the Hon. Secretary.

<sup>3</sup> See Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 79.

knows but the world has lost a masterpiece in Gurney's ode ? Oh, he says, Book I. i., of which only one line has been preserved to us.

He says, In telepathy there is the mind that makes the emission of the idea, and the mind which receives the impact of it ; and it's often very definite, he says. And he says it's not the whole truth to say that inspiration is more general, but it's the half truth to say that inspiration is the stimulation of something already contained in the subliminal which, under pressure of inspiration, forces its way to the threshold. Oh, he says, Inspiration may be from within as well as from without. But he says you can't speak of telepathy between the supra-liminal and the subliminal—

(*G. W. B.* Ah ! I was going to ask that very question.)

but you can speak of inspiration by the subliminal ; you can also speak of inspiration by the subliminal of matter— Oh, he says to me, Don't loose, dear. Oh, it *is* sometimes a strain to keep near you. Sometimes I feel all sliding down. He says, You can speak of inspiration from the subliminal. Some one says, You've got that down already, and Edmund says, Shut up, you fool ! (*He's stroking my forehead.*) The matter which is inspired up to the threshold may be matter acquired by selection.

He says, Inspiration may be from within, but it may be from without. Oh, he says, Every moment I gave to the study of hypnotic states and post-hypnotic states I feel was among the best spent of all my time.

(*G. W. B.* Yes, Gurney, those were splendid papers of yours.)

Oh, he says, It's not only what I learnt then, but what I've been able to apply here. For instance : Say, using the words in their rough way, that a mutual selection is made—mutually from her mind and mine. It's possible for me to suggest to her subliminal that at a given time such and such an idea shall, as it were, be recovered—one might almost say, recovered out of the sediment—and come to the top. Or I may use another process. I may hit a particular atom in the sediment that I want by telepathic impact or stimulation, and make it come to the surface that way. But that particular process of telepathy I should designate as “inspirational” telepathy, because it's affecting that which is already within the mind.

Oh, he says, I think I have done enough for to-day.

(G. W. B. I think you have, Gurney. But may I ask one more question ?)

Yes.

(G. W. B. In communicating with me through D.I. at the present moment, what process are you using ?)

Rather take that when I'm fresh. But he says, Both processes are used in D.I. And he says, This statement is only to be taken as an introduction to further discussion.

*Extract from Trance-script preceding D.I. of March 13, 1912.*  
(Present, O. J. L.)

Autos the wind windless heavens—Calm<sup>1</sup>  
the flight of the one to the One<sup>2</sup>

Autos My Tennyson<sup>3</sup> Autos

Gurney He is here F.

Wait

---

Gurney Lodge is that you ?

(O. J. L. Yes, that's me.)

Glad to see you after such a long interval

very glad Lodge how are you ?

(O. J. L. All right. Very glad to see you again too.)

We're getting on People are beginning to entertain ideas as to the *possibility* of our existence, and even of our identity

(O. J. L. Yes, quite true.)

*spade work* and on it we hope to raise the foundation of the temple

Have you anything special to speak of, because Myers is here and once he is "on" so to speak I may not be able to break in.

G spoke of the 3 processes of telepathy, inspiration and mutual selection, and as to the part they played in D.I.—

If he would see the part they play in Sc the last from

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the *αὐτὸς οὐρανὸς ἀκύμων* case. See *Proceedings*, vol. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> From a passage in Plotinus, *Enneades*, v., 2-3, translated in *Human Personality*, vol. ii., p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. F. W. H. M.'s poem *To Tennyson*, to which *αὐτὸς οὐρανὸς ἀκύμων* was prefixed as a motto.

here<sup>1</sup> is a good instance, and contains examples of all three methods—

Inspiration—*i.e.* stimulation by telepathic  
(*Wait*)

means of that already normally contained (and normally acquired by) within the mind of the *sensitive*

Sensitive (She never could spell)—

*Example*

1. Who shall praise thee the grave etc.

2. *Blair*, drawing by Blake—

Mutual selection

I select those from amongst the possible allusions ready to hand

Mutual selection

*She* selects (by operation of the subliminal acting normally on its own plane and in its own environment) she selects from my mind

Pleasant is the sun etc.,

put on immortality

(*Wait*)

light that never was, etc.

and (note this *Pid*) by direct telepathic *Shock* she gets *Flaccus* She half unconsciously reads it as *Tlaccus*, and she speaks to subliminal her supra l in the words *No that is wrong*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the script of February 16, 1912, from which all the examples that follow are taken.

Apart from the name "*Flaccus*", which Gurney claims to have been given by means of telepathic shock or impact, the remaining five examples are all examples of mutual selection—the selector in the case of the first two being the communicator, in the case of the last three the sensitive. The first two (above the line drawn across the page) are also given as instances of emergence under telepathic inspiration: the last three—though this is not expressly stated—I take to be meant as instances of emergence under subliminal inspiration.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote (1) on p. 251 above. There is some slight confusion here. The explanation would be clearer if it ran thus: "She gets *Flaccus*; she half unconsciously reads it as *Tlaccus*, and she speaks to—that is to say, her subliminal speaks to—her supraliminal in the words 'No, that is wrong'". For comments on this incident see p. 309 below.



The telepathic impact is <sup>1</sup> has given to the larger self the correct *sound* Flaccus—the conscious self half cognises it and dreamily sees Tlaccus, but not until after it has been externalised, and externalised correctly—

“Tlaccus” dreams the smaller self No that is wrong replies the larger self (yet are they not 2 but 1—, put in for G.’s benefit this He tried to get me on to the horns of a duality which would amount to an *almost* amount to a conception of the selves as separated in such a way as to amount to 2 entities But I was *not* to be *impaled*) <sup>2</sup>

Well here the right knower (by sub 1) <sup>3</sup> corrects the dreamer (supra 1) and there is a bit of psychology in that passage but I point to and claim Flaccus as an instance of telepathy—

There is another <sup>4</sup> but Myers is pressing to speak

(O. J. L. That’s all clear, Gurney.)

Shall I let him begin now ?

(O. J. L. Yes, if he’s ready. I’ve nothing special to say to you.)

Good

F. W. H. M.

[*Writing changed and slow, i.e. deliberate.—Note by O. J. L.*]

\* \* \* \*

For purposes of general comment it will be convenient to take the two expository extracts (of March 5 and 13) as forming a single whole. My question about telepathy, inspiration, and mutual selection refers back to the D.I. of June 4, 1911, in which telepathy, inspiration, and selection were described as a “descending chain” in the production of scripts of a certain class. As the D.I. proceeded, the “thoughts suggested by telepathy and inspiration” were deliberately “ruled out” for the time being, though telepathy was later on briefly alluded to as a “guiding influence” in the final stage of the process. The

<sup>1</sup> Contemporary note by O. J. L. : “ ‘is’ is underlined in the script, but the intention evidently was to erase it ”.

<sup>2</sup> For comments on this passage see pp. 309-10.

<sup>3</sup> “by sub 1” is probably equivalent to “by which I mean the subliminal”.

<sup>4</sup> Possibly this may refer to the passage “Fears may be liars FEARS not tears”; for here also *Fears* has been correctly written, and “FEARS not *tears*” may be represented as addressed by the subliminal to a doubt arising in the supraliminal.

bulk of the D.I. was devoted to the subject of selection, with special insistence on its mutual character—the communicator selecting from the mind of the sensitive, and the sensitive from the mind of the communicator.

The extracts now before us are chiefly concerned with the topics passed over in the D.I. of June 4. Comparatively little is said in them about mutual selection, though the script of March 13 purports to contain actual examples both of selection by the communicator and of selection by the sensitive.

Gurney opens his exposition by telling us that telepathy shades off into inspiration, and inspiration into mutual selection. But he immediately qualifies this statement by describing it as a piece of *bosh* which he commends to the attention of Miss Johnson. I suppose he means by this that the statement, though containing a measure of truth, is not really illuminating. Why he drags Miss Johnson in there is nothing to show, but I vaguely suspect that there is a reference here to her "Third Report on Mrs Holland's Script", in *Proceedings*, vol. xxv., which contained a section on "The Principle of Selection in the Production of Scripts". This paper had been sent to Mrs Willett on July 1, 1911.

Gurney had been challenged by my question to say what he meant by a "descending chain". Telepathy shading off into inspiration, and inspiration shading off into mutual selection, is, I think, intended as his answer—but it is an answer which he does not press, and to which he seems to attach no particular importance.

The statements that follow are somewhat confusing. When Gurney lays it down that "in telepathy there is the mind that makes the emission of the idea, and the mind which receives the impact of it, and it's often very definite", he is clearly thinking of a direct telepathic communication from an emitting mind to a receiving mind of something that was not in the receiving mind before. The appearance of the word *Flaccus* in the disjointed script of February 16, 1912, is later on cited as an illustration of telepathy in this sense. On the other hand the characteristic note of inspiration is said to be that it operates on material already contained in the subliminal and forces it to emerge. It becomes evident, however, as we proceed, that certain forms of inspiration involve telepathy as an essential

factor in the process. One of these forms Gurney actually designates as a "process of telepathy", adding, however, that "that particular process of telepathy I should designate as inspirational telepathy, because it's affecting what is already in the mind". The same process he refers to in another passage as "inspiration—*i.e.* stimulation by telepathic means of that already normally contained in the mind of the sensitive".

At first reading there may seem to be a serious inconsistency in these various statements, telepathy being at one moment sharply distinguished from inspiration, while at another the two are so far identified that it appears to be a matter of indifference whether we speak of inspirational telepathy or telepathic inspiration. But I doubt whether the inconsistency is more than superficial. It must be remembered that Gurney had begun by remarking that there are as many varieties of telepathy as there are of human beings. The variety of telepathy which consists in the emission of a definite idea by one mind, and its reception by another which had not previously contained it, may be regarded as the most distinctive and characteristic form of telepathy, but it is not the only form. The telepathy which stimulates an idea already pre-existing in another mind to emerge and externalise itself is a different variety; and when the process takes this form it may be properly classed as inspiration. In passing from telepathy pure and simple to inspiration, we may be said to pass from a higher variety of telepathy to a lower. In passing from inspiration to mutual selection, we leave telepathy altogether and enter the province of telæsthesia—using both of these terms in the peculiar sense given to them in Willett scripts. It is this aspect of the case, I think, that Gurney has in view when he talks of telepathy shading off into inspiration, and inspiration shading off into mutual selection.

Let us now consider somewhat more closely the statements made concerning inspiration.

Inspiration, it appears, may either proceed from without, or, in other words, have its ultimate source in the communicator; or it may proceed from within, in which case the inspiring agent is either the subliminal operating on the supra-liminal or one grade of the subliminal operating on another. Whether it proceed from without or from within, the material

on which it works may be the normally existing content of the mind of the sensitive, or such additional knowledge as she may have acquired by selection.<sup>1</sup>

I take first the case of inspiration from without. Two forms of this are specified, and it may be convenient that I should quote once more the important passage which describes and distinguishes them :

He says, Inspiration may be from within, but it may be from without. Oh he says, Every moment I gave to the study of hypnotic states and post-hypnotic states I feel was among the best spent of all my time. Oh, he says, It's not only what I learnt then, but what I've been able to apply here. For instance : Say, using the words in their rough way, that a mutual selection is made—mutually from her mind and mine. It's possible for me to suggest to her subliminal that at a given time such and such an idea shall, as it were, be recovered—one might almost say, recovered out of the sediment and come to the top. Or I may use another process. I may hit a particular atom in the sediment that I want by telepathic impact or stimulation, and make it come to the surface that way. But that particular process of telepathy I should designate as inspirational telepathy, because it's affecting that which is already within the mind.

The first of the two forms of "inspiration from without" here described possesses a special interest, because no mention of it—certainly no explicit mention of it—has been made before, and the account now given of it may help to explain a difficulty to which I called attention earlier in this chapter. When discussing the subject of mutual selection in my comments on the D.I. of June 4, 1911, I raised a question respecting the stage at which selection by the communicator from the mind of the

<sup>1</sup> In the extract from the trance-sitting of March 5, 1912, two examples are cited of selection by the communicator from the mind of the sensitive ("Who shall praise thee the grave, etc.", and "*Blair*, drawing by Blake") and three examples of selection by the sensitive from the mind of the communicator ("Pleasant is the sun, etc.", "put on immortality", and "Light that never was, etc."). These examples must be accepted for what he represents them to be : at all events we are hardly in a position to criticise. But all five are at the same time examples of inspiration, the first two of inspiration from without and the last three presumably of inspiration from within.

sensitive comes into play. "Selection by the communicator", I wrote, "must certainly be supposed to occur in the *final* stage of the process, but may it not operate at an earlier stage also?"<sup>1</sup> This seemed a natural inference from the language of the D.I., but it was not easy to see what effective purpose selection by the communicator could serve at a *preparatory* stage, unless, in some way left unexplained, the eventual emergence of the selected items was thereby promoted.

The passage I have just quoted appears to provide an answer to this difficulty. Selection by the communicator at a preparatory stage may be something more than selection. It may be selection *plus* the kind of suggestion which the hypnotiser makes to the hypnotised subject, and which the subject, after waking, automatically carries out. The two cases are not quite on all fours, for the hypnotiser uses normal methods of conveying his suggestion whereas we must suppose the communicator to convey his suggestion telepathically. But in either case an appeal is made to the subliminal by an external agency to bring about a certain effect not at the moment but after an agreed interval. Inspiration of this type belongs to what I have called the second stage of the process. We might describe it as suggestive inspiration.

The other form of inspiration from without is that for which previous scripts have already prepared us. The D.I. of June 4, 1911, calls it "telepathy as a guiding influence"; the D.I. of October 8, 1911, speaks of it as a "stimulus" applied by the communicator whereby knowledge telæsthetically acquired by the sensitive can be "shepherded and guided up to the threshold of normal consciousness". These descriptions are obviously anticipations of the inspirational telepathy and telepathic inspiration of the trance-sittings of March 5 and March 13, 1911.

Inspiration from without of this second type belongs to the fourth or final stage of the process—that which immediately leads to externalisation. It should be clearly understood, however, that both types involve the employment of telepathy as an operative influence, though the mode of applying it differs in the two cases. Indeed the very phrase "inspiration

<sup>1</sup> See p. 237 above.

from without" seems hardly consistent with any other interpretation.

Is telepathy equally involved in inspiration *from within*? Inspiration from within is inspiration by the subliminal, or by some stratum of the subliminal, which plays the part corresponding to that of the communicator in inspiration from without. Analogy suggests that here also telepathy enters as an essential element in the process. I was about to ask a question on the subject, which is one that has long had an interest for me, when I was anticipated by Gurney. "You can't speak", he says, "of telepathy between the supraliminal and the subliminal". This peremptory statement raises issues of great interest, about which I shall have more to say in the next chapter. But the reader will readily see that it has an intimate connection with a fundamental difference of view between the communicators and myself respecting the nature of the subliminal and supraliminal selves and their relations to each other, to which he makes a humorous allusion towards the end of the trance-script of March 13 :

... The telepathic impact has given to the larger self the correct *sound* Flaccus—the conscious self half cognises it and dreamily sees Tlaccus, but not until after it has been externalised, and externalised correctly. "Tlaccus" dreams the smaller self No that is wrong replies the larger self (yet they are not 2 but 1—, put in for G.'s benefit this He tried to get me on to the horns of a duality which would amount almost amount to a conception of the selves as separated in such a way as to amount to 2 entities But I was *not* to be *impaled*).

Here also further discussion must be postponed until the next chapter. What we have immediately to consider is not the nature of the subliminal and supraliminal selves, but the part played by inspiration from within in the process of automatic production. Inspiration from within, whatever interpretation be placed upon it, is at all events a form of subliminal activity. It is not, however, to be identified with the subliminal activity associated with the third stage of the process described in the D.I. of June 4, 1911. That activity, if I have understood the scripts rightly, was of a preparatory character, resulting in the "weaving" of material to be used in the fourth and final stage

—the stage of externalisation. It is to this final stage that the activity manifested in inspiration from within belongs. We are forbidden to call it *telepathic*—that term being held to be applicable only to inspiration from without. But if we look merely to effects, and to the part played in automatic production by the two activities respectively, it is likely to be difficult, or even impossible, for the investigator to distinguish one from the other.

I may here refer back to a passage from the script of February 9, 1911, already quoted on pp. 230-1 above.

They [*i.e.* the scripts in question] were allusive. You must get through a good bulk of matter to get in what you want said from our standpoint. They are not without threads of connection. But listen. Those threads extend also in subliminal of automatist. Thus if I would say *fire* I Gurney might make an allusion to Phœbus or Zoroaster Her subliminal *may* conceivably go one better and shove in Salamander

(O. J. L. Yes, well, that is what we rather expected, that subliminal activity was mixed with your intention.)

... Woven strands Pick out the gold thread.

In the supposed case "Salamander" would be a contribution inspired from within, though a harmless one and in consonance with the general tenor of the message inspired from without, or conveyed by direct telepathic impact from the communicator. But the injunction to "pick out the gold thread" is an admission that the subliminal activity which inspires from within may on occasion be not harmless but misleading. I am afraid we must go even further and frankly concede that the whole of any given production may be the work of subliminal activity, unless the contents of the message are such as to afford satisfactory evidence of an external origin. But on this subject I have already said enough in Chapter V. of Part I. (see p. 153 above).

## CHAPTER IV

### SUPRALIMINAL AND SUBLIMINAL, AND MYERS'S DOCTRINE OF THE SOUL

"THE supraliminal" and "the subliminal" are terms so engrained in the literature of psychical research that it would be impossible to dispense with them in any discussion of mediumistic productions. Most of all would this be impossible in the case of a study of communications professing to come from Myers and Gurney, and reproducing—though, as we have seen, with considerable modifications—the teachings of *Human Personality*. At the same time, as the reader is aware, I am not satisfied with the doctrine of the subliminal and supraliminal selves set forth in that monumental work and cannot but feel that Myers's treatment of the subject has tended to make a perplexing problem more perplexing still. He extends the meaning of the term "subliminal", which was originally purely adjectival, to denote a substantive psychic entity capable of interacting with the supraliminal; and yet this same supraliminal (man's normal consciousness) he ends by treating as nothing more than a "phase" of the subliminal, or even a faculty exercised by it. I do not hide from myself that the constant use of Myers's terminology throughout this paper, while all the time my conception of the structure of human personality differed from his, has greatly increased the difficulties of exposition, and also, I fear, the difficulties of the reader in following the argument.

If ten intelligent persons were severally set to give an account of the doctrines of *Human Personality* concerning "the supraliminal", "the subliminal", and the "soul", which Myers held to be the persisting and immortal element in man, I doubt whether any two of them would be found to agree in all their conclusions. But as part of my present task is to compare the teaching of *Human Personality* regarding these subjects with the statements contained in Willett scripts, I must do my best



to provide a version of Myers's views adequate for my purpose, and expressed, as far as possible, in his own words. This will be accompanied by a running commentary designed to mark the divergence between what I understand to be Myers's ideas and my own.

I regard each man, [writes Myers<sup>1</sup>], as at once profoundly unitary and almost infinitely composite, as inheriting from earthly ancestors a multiplex and "colonial" organism—polyzoic and perhaps polypsychic in an extreme degree; but also as ruling and unifying that organism by a soul or spirit absolutely beyond our present analysis—a soul which has originated in a spiritual or metetherial environment, which even while embodied subsists in that environment; and which will still subsist therein after the body's decay.

Apart from the somewhat hesitating phrase "polyzoic and perhaps polypsychic" this passage might be regarded as being concerned wholly with the problem of the relation of mind to body. So conceived Myers treats the problem as unsolved and perhaps insoluble.

It is, of course, impossible for us, [he continues], to picture to ourselves the way in which the individual life of each cell of the body is reconciled with the unity of the central life which controls the body as a whole. But this difficulty is not created or intensified by the hypothesis of a separate and persistent soul. On no hypothesis can we really understand the collaboration and the subordination of the cell-lives of any multicellular animal. It is as mysterious in the star-fish as it is in Plato.

Consistently with these views the problem of mind and body occupies in *Human Personality* a comparatively subordinate place. Myers's doctrine is, indeed, essentially interactional, leaving no room for the rival doctrines of parallelism and epiphenomenalism; and this is also the standpoint of the Willett scripts, explicitly maintained in the D.I. of May 11, 1912—the one and only sitting devoted to the subject—already quoted in an earlier chapter.<sup>2</sup> But this was not the question that mainly interested him, and to the problem of mind and

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 135 above.

body I shall not need, save incidentally, to refer again. The real centre of interest, alike in *Human Personality* and in the Willett scripts, lies in the domain of mind.

No writer has insisted more strongly than Myers on the co-existence of diverse apparently independent streams of consciousness in the make-up of each man's personality. It was with reference to these independent streams of consciousness, and not to the relation of mind to body, that he gave a new significance to the term *subliminal*. The passage in which this new significance is explained is so important that I feel bound to quote it in full.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a threshold (*limen, Schwelle*) of consciousness ;—of a level above which sensation or thought must rise before it can enter into our conscious life ;—is a simple and familiar one. The word *subliminal*,—meaning “beneath that threshold”, has already been used to define those sensations which are too feeble to be individually recognised. I propose to extend the meaning of the term, so as to make it cover *all* that takes place beneath the ordinary threshold, or say, if preferred, outside the ordinary margin of consciousness ;—not only those faint stimulations whose very faintness keeps them submerged, but much else which psychology as yet scarcely recognises ; sensations, thoughts, emotions, which may be strong, definite, and independent, but which, by the original constitution of our being, seldom emerge into that *supraliminal* current of consciousness which we habitually identify with *ourselves*. Perceiving (as this book will try to show) that these submerged thoughts and emotions possess the characteristics which we associate with conscious life, I feel bound to speak of a *subliminal* or *ultra-marginal* consciousness,—a consciousness which we shall see, for instance, uttering or writing sentences quite as complex and coherent as the supraliminal consciousness could make them. Perceiving further that this conscious life beneath the threshold or beyond the margin seems to be no discontinuous or intermittent thing ; that not only are these isolated subliminal processes comparable with isolated supraliminal processes (as when a problem is solved by some unknown procedure in a dream), but that there also is a continuous subliminal chain

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 14.

of memory (or more chains than one) involving just that kind of individual and persistent revival of old impressions, and response to new ones, which we commonly call a self,—I find it permissible and convenient to speak of subliminal selves, or more briefly of a subliminal self. I do not indeed by using this term assume that there are two correlative and parallel selves existing always within each of us. Rather I mean by the subliminal self that part of the self which is commonly subliminal; and I conceive that there may be,—not only co-operations between these quasi-independent trains of thought,—but also upheavals and alternations of personality of many kinds, so that what was once below the surface may for a time, or permanently, rise above it. And I conceive also that no self of which we can here have cognisance is in reality more than a fragment of a larger self,—revealed in a fashion at once shifting and limited through an organism not so framed as to afford it full manifestation.

The idea of a number of selves associated simultaneously with the same organism, appears at first sight so difficult to reconcile with any unitary view of the nature of personality, that I can well believe that Myers must have hesitated long before definitely committing himself to it. In the end he accepted it whole-heartedly as one of the foundation-stones of his speculation. The possibility of separate and independent but contemporaneous streams of memory and perception in one and the same individual became with him a “root-conception”<sup>1</sup> which he has perhaps done more than any other man to make familiar. The series of masterly chapters in which he works out the application of the conception to the phenomena of genius, sleep, hypnosis, sensory and motor automatism, and mediumship, will be for ever memorable in the history of the subject.

But another fundamental conviction to which Myers tenaciously clings is that man's personality not only appears to be, but truly is, in some sense, unitary. The question is, In what sense?

The two extreme views concerning the nature of the self Myers illustrates by quotations from the writings of Reid and of Ribot respectively.<sup>2</sup> According to Reid “it is impossible

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 10.

that a person should be in part the same and in part different, because a person is a *monad* and is not divisible into parts " According to Ribot " the self is a co-ordination. It oscillates between two extremes, at each of which it ceases to exist ; absolute unity and absolute incoherence " .

The problem which Myers set himself is " the reconciliation of the two opposing systems in a profounder synthesis " . It was a notable attempt. But to me, at least, the solution he offers us is untenable, and cannot be made to cover all the phenomena which he sets out to explain and harmonise.

Our psychical unity [he tells us <sup>1</sup>] is federative and unstable ; it has arisen from irregular accretions in the remote past ; it consists even now only in the limited collaboration of multiple groups. These discontinuities and incoherences in the ego the older psychologists managed to ignore. Yet infancy, idiocy, sleep, insanity, decay—these breaks and stagnancies in the conscious stream were always present to show us, even more forcibly than delicate analyses show us now, that the first obvious conception of man's continuous and unitary personality was wholly insecure ; and that if indeed a soul inspired the body, that soul must be sought for far beneath those bodily conditions by which its self-manifestation was clouded and obscured.

I venture to think that the " breaks and stagnancies in the conscious stream " were no less obvious to " the older psychologists " than to Myers himself. They would have regarded them as successive changes in the content of the ego ; and so long as the sense of identity was maintained notwithstanding the changes, they would have found no insuperable difficulty in fitting them into their conception of the ego as a " monad " . They would also have recognised that these changes were intimately connected with bodily conditions ; and so far as the relations of mind and body were concerned, some of them, at least, might have been ready to accept Myers's conception of an immortal soul ruling and unifying the organism with which it is associated.

What never occurred to these earlier thinkers was the possibility that there might be co-existent and contemporaneous

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 16.

streams of consciousness in the same person, each with the characteristics of a "self", and so far independent of each other as to be unconscious of each other's action, or even to engage in a conflict of wills and in acts of mutual hostility. Had they become convinced by evidence that this state of things was not merely a possibility but a fact, it would still have been open to them to cling to their conception of a monadic ego, even while driven to admit that there might be more than one ego associated with the same organism. Myers recognises the existence of co-conscious selves associated with the same organism, but does not deem this incompatible with a true psychical unity, of which these selves are aspects or phases.

To those passages in the extracts already quoted which bear upon this question I will add yet one more :<sup>1</sup>

In favour of the partisans of the unity of the ego, the effect of the new evidence is to raise their claim to a far higher ground, and to substantiate it for the first time with the strongest presumptive proof which can be imagined for it ;— a proof, namely, that the ego can and does survive—not only the minor disintegrations which affect it during earth-life—but the crowning disintegration of bodily death. In view of this unhopèd-for ratification of their highest dream, they may be more than content to surrender as untenable the far narrower conception of the unitary self which was all that "common-sense philosophies" had ventured to claim. The "conscious self" of each of us, as we call it,—the empirical, the supra-liminal self, as I should prefer to say—does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a yet more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only so far as regards the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth-life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death.

Let me now try to sum up in a series of propositions the various statements concerning the nature of the soul made in the foregoing passages.

- (1) The soul is a spiritual entity which existed before its

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., pp. 11, 12.

association with the body, and will continue to exist after that association has been dissolved by bodily death.

- (2) In its liberated condition the soul is unanalysable by us, but is in communion with the spiritual or metetherial world. Even in its embodied life communion with the spiritual world, though hampered and limited, is not wholly lost.
- (3) The soul is essentially distinct from the bodily organism which it rules and unifies. How it rules and unifies the bodily organism is wholly unknown to us.
- (4) As regards the diverse streams of consciousness sufficiently independent of each other to merit the description of "selves", which experience shows can exist contemporaneously in the individual man, the soul is not a mere agent of unification of these lesser selves, but is itself their unity. It is the whole of which they are parts.

If we seek to place a definite meaning upon the last of these propositions, it is evidently essential to come to a clear understanding of what we mean by a "self". Strange to say, Myers never seems to have undertaken a systematic examination into the question here raised. When he speaks of the soul as a self, and when he applies the same term to "the continuous subliminal chain of memory (or more chains than one) involving just that persistent revival of old impressions, and response to new ones, which we commonly call a 'self'", is he using the term in the same sense in both cases? If he is, then he ought to regard the independent streams of consciousness as self-conscious egos, aware of their continuing identity, and of their distinction from other self-conscious egos, and from the bodily organism with which they are associated. If, on the other hand, he is using the term self in different senses in the two cases, this should have been made abundantly clear and the nature of the difference carefully defined. As a matter of fact he seems to me to waver between two incompatible points of view. Sometimes he appears to regard the independent currents of consciousness as genuine psychic entities with all the attributes of a self-conscious being; at other times as merely different activities or states of such a being. The two conceptions remain unre-

conciled ; and I doubt whether Myers ever sufficiently recognised the incongruity between them. Yet the distinction is surely fundamental. Except in a metaphorical sense the different activities of a self-conscious being have no more right to the title of "selves" than have the unattended "thoughts without a thinker" of a very different school of psychologists.

If the "selves" referred to in proposition (4) are to be taken as real psychical entities or egos, the doctrine of the soul enunciated in it would bear a strong family resemblance to Fechner's theory of the compounding of consciousness. In the form of the theory maintained by Fechner the unity resulting from the compounding of consciousness is nothing but the components themselves, although nevertheless each component retains its separate individuality inside the unity. The theory of the compounding of consciousnesses presents formidable logical difficulties ; for how can co-conscious egos be at the same time one and the same ego ? Notwithstanding these difficulties Fechner's idea had a strong attraction for no less a thinker than William James ; and it is interesting to note that James himself has called attention to the connection between the Fechnerian doctrine and the phenomena studied by psychical research.<sup>1</sup> But if at any time Myers's speculations on the structure of human personality beckoned him in the direction of a mystic interpretation on the lines of a compounding of consciousnesses, such an interpretation certainly did not represent his fully considered views.

I do not think any of the statements concerning the soul made in the introductory chapter to *Human Personality* carry us much beyond the four propositions enumerated above. But in Chapter VI. a new development of the doctrine introduces us to that part of it which is most characteristic of its author. "The subliminal", which hitherto has been treated as only a part or fragment of a larger whole, is now identified with that whole itself ; in other words, with the soul.

Myers himself is fully alive to the significance of the step thus taken, as the opening words of Chapter VI. bear witness : <sup>2</sup>

We have now reached [he writes] a central node in our complex argument. Several lines of evidence, already pursued,

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on a Pluralistic Universe*, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 220.

converge here to form the starting-point for a new departure. Our view of the subliminal self must pass in this chapter through a profound transition. The glimpses which we have till now obtained of it have shown it as something incidental, subordinate, fragmentary. But henceforth it will gradually assume the character of something persistent, principal, unitary ; appearing at last as the deepest and most permanent representative of man's true being.

To the four previous propositions, therefore, we can now add a fifth :

(5) The soul and the subliminal are one.<sup>1</sup>

Again, a couple of pages later we read :

By ordinary psychology, supraliminal life is accepted as representing the normal or substantive personality, of which subliminal life is the semi-conscious substratum, or half-illuminated fringe, or the morbid excrescence. I, on the other hand, regard supraliminal life merely as a *privileged case* of personality ; a special phase of our personality, which is easiest for us to study, because it is simplified for us by our ready consciousness of what is going on in it ; yet which is by no means necessarily either central or prepotent, could we see our whole being in comprehensive view.

Now if we regard the whole supraliminal personality as a special case of something much more extensive, it follows that we must similarly regard all human faculty, and each sense severally, as mere special or privileged cases of some more general power.

All human terrene faculty will be in this view simply a selection from faculty existing in the metetherial world ; such part of that antecedent, even if not individualised, faculty as may be expressible through each several human organism.

<sup>1</sup> If all the five propositions be read together it would seem to result that the subliminal is at once a part of the whole, and also the whole itself. I cannot recall that Myers has anywhere given a clear and authoritative explanation of this apparent paradox. More than one explanation might perhaps be attempted. Nevertheless I suspect there is confusion of thought here. The difficulty is, I think, only the old one of conceiving how co-conscious selves can at the same time be one and the same self. Fechner's solution I can only describe as frankly mystical. Myers seems to me to end by ignoring the problem, and to be hardly aware that any difficulty exists.



These passages seem definitely to negative the idea of personality as comprising independent co-conscious streams of mentality, each with the characteristic of a true self. The "selves", although still called *selves*, have become "phases" of a single self. In coming down so distinctly on the unitarian side of the controversy, it was more than ever incumbent on Myers to explain how the independent currents of consciousness can *appear* to have the characteristics of selves without being true selves. This he has not done. I cannot but hold that in neglecting to deal with this difficulty he has failed to give us that "profounder synthesis" of conflicting views which he set out to provide. The problem of reconciling unity and plurality is not solved by practically denying plurality, or by disguising it in the form of layers or strata of a single unitary self. What is more, the conception of a plurality of selves within the personality persistently refuses to be suppressed or ignored. It continues to assert itself all through the book, and is, I believe, forced upon us by much of the very evidence which Myers himself has so laboriously collected. Let me cite one passage out of the many that would equally serve to illustrate the point:<sup>1</sup>

These splits of personality seem occasionally to destroy all sympathy between the normal individual and a divergent fraction. No great sympathy was felt by Léonie II. for Léonie I. And Dr Morton Prince's case shows us in the deepest and ablest of the personalities of his "Miss Beauchamp" positively spiteful in its relation to her main identity.

Bizarre though a house thus divided against itself may seem, the moral dissidence is merely an exaggeration of the moral discontinuity already observable in the typical case of Mrs Newnham. *There* the secondary intelligence was merely tricky, not malevolent. But its trickiness was wholly alien from Mrs Newnham's character,—was something, indeed, which she would have energetically repudiated.

It seems, therefore,—and the analogy of dreams points in this direction also,—that our moral nature is as easily split up as our intellectual nature, and that we cannot be any more certain that the minor current of personality which is diverted into some new channel will retain *moral* than that it will retain intellectual coherence.

<sup>1</sup> See *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 199.

In spite of the disparaging remarks which Myers in this passage bestows on the secondary personalities in the cases of Miss Beauchamp and of Mrs Newnham, it is nevertheless of the essence of the "new departure" to exalt the subliminal at the expense of the supraliminal consciousness.

There are times when the doctrine which identifies the true self of a man with the subliminal seems in Myers's hands to imply no more than a broad claim that the capacity of the human mind is manifested at its highest and best in communion with the spiritual world. But at other times his language goes far beyond this, and presents us with the picture of a mind divided, as it were, into compartments each with a distinct consciousness and memory of its own. Intercourse with the world of the senses is assigned to the supraliminal compartment, intercourse with the metetherial to the subliminal. Based upon a conception of this kind the identification of man's true self with his subliminal self appears to me as a paradox which even Myers's literary skill and fervour of conviction have failed to make plausible. It could not for a moment be maintained if the separate currents of mentality were interpreted as being genuinely distinct selves. The true self of a man could not in that case be other than the self of which he has direct and immediate knowledge. But even when I do my best to place myself at Myers's point of view, and try to conceive co-conscious intelligences as "phases" of a single self-conscious ego, I altogether fail to see why this single self-conscious ego is to be identified with the subliminal self (or selves) rather than with the supraliminal self which both common sense and orthodox psychology treat as the true self of a man. We are asked to believe that our true self is a self the very existence of which the vast majority of mankind have never even suspected. The main evidence for its existence is derived from the phenomena of abnormal psychology, and in particular from the comparatively rare occasions when the subliminal ceases to be subliminal, and "messages" pass from it, in some way which we shall presently have to consider, into supraliminal consciousness. When this happens what takes place? If the subliminal "phase" of a man's consciousness represented his true self, we might actually expect that, on ceasing to be subliminal, it would absorb into itself the supraliminal phase, and the two

phases would be as one self. But the facts point quite the other way.

When the subliminal ceases to be subliminal and manifests itself to the supraliminal, we have what is called dissociation of the personality. Dissociation implies at least duality where previously there has been every appearance of unity. What may be the relation of the dissociated elements before and after dissociation is a very obscure problem which offers a wide field to conjecture and speculation. The continued existence of the subliminal, at times when it is subliminal, may be a plausible inference from the observed phenomena, but *ex vi termini* the supraliminal can have no direct experience of it. All we can affirm with certainty is that at such times the supraliminal consciousness appears to itself to be in solitary possession. During dissociation, on the other hand, the supraliminal recognises the presence of an agency which it distinguishes from itself; but it does not lose its sense of personal identity over and against that agency. The sense of personal identity persists alike through the normal and the abnormal state.<sup>1</sup> It is true that in extreme cases of alternations of personality the normal consciousness may seem to be dispossessed altogether. But this is not, in my view at least, to be interpreted as a merging into unity of one phase of consciousness in another, but rather as the temporary replacement in control of the organism of one self by another self.

In an earlier chapter<sup>2</sup> on dissociation of the personality I have given an account of an interesting experience that befel Mrs Willett in which her normal self seemed to develop into a duality of independent selves, or "minds" as she calls them,—one of the two minds being "me as I know myself", and the other a mind which she somehow connects with herself, but at

<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon of dissociation may also be considered from the other side, that is to say, from the side of the hitherto subliminal self which has now, by reason of dissociation, ceased to be subliminal in the adjectival sense, and is apprehended by the supraliminal as an independent communicating agency. Does the subliminal self, when thus made manifest to the supraliminal consciousness, claim identity with that consciousness? On the contrary, we find the secondary self insisting on its separate individuality, even to the point of claiming—falsely, if it is in truth only a secondary self—to be a genuinely external communicator.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 143 ff.

the same time distinguishes from the "me as I know myself". Presently the two minds seemed to "flash into one, and I at once knew what I was to do". The meaning of this I take to be that what the other mind willed her to do had now become part of her own will. But whatever interpretation we place upon the two minds "flashing into one", it is clear that in the result it is the supraliminal that remains in possession of the field, while the subliminal subsides into subliminality.

My own instinctive conviction is that my true self is the "me as I know myself", and that it will be as this *me*, with its formed character and stored memories, that I shall survive, if survival there be. Other selves co-conscious with "me as I know myself" may also survive. If so, it is permissible to hazard a guess that as they have apparently co-operated when in the body, so they, or some of them, may continue to co-operate when no longer in the body, and that each of us may find himself in the "metetherial" world the member of a group of selves with which he has already, when in the body, been associated in closer relation than with the rest of his environment. But here we enter a region where no verification is possible.

I do not propose to dwell at length on the objections that may be urged against Myers's theory in connection with the separate memories of the minor selves (or self-like elements) within the personality<sup>1</sup>; nor, again, on the difficulties inevitably suggested by his frank admission that the subliminal is a rubbish heap as

<sup>1</sup> To overcome the difficulties arising out of the separateness of the memory chains of the minor selves it would be necessary to assume that the subliminal, as identified with the soul, not merely has access to the memories of the supraliminal, but appropriates them *as memories of its own*: otherwise it would not be the "I as I know myself" that survives, but another personality altogether. This is hard to reconcile with Myers's "root-conception" (see p. 266 above) of the dissociability of the self as "the possibility that different fractions of the personality can act so far independently of each other that the one is not conscious of the other's action". It is also, I think, inconsistent with the observed facts in certain cases of multiple personality. See on this subject McDougall's *Outline of Abnormal Psychology*, p. 542: "We find repeatedly that, when one personality obtains command of the memories of another, he distinguishes between his own memories and those of that other. And when a co-conscious personality is aware of the thoughts and feelings of the other, it is not that for the time being the two personalities become merged in one common stream of thinking. Rather the co-conscious per-

well as a treasure house.<sup>1</sup> These objections and difficulties I do, indeed, regard as fatal to his peculiar conception of the subliminal as representing the true unitary self in man, and the persisting element in him which survives the dissolution of the body. But I pass them by and proceed to enquire why, in the face of so many obvious considerations, Myers still adheres to that conception, and makes it in fact the central feature of his whole system.

The explanation is not, I think, far to seek. It lies in Myers's firm conviction, already referred to, that direct (*i.e.* telepathic) communion between individual minds represents the highest activity of which the soul is capable, and that the exercise of that activity is strictly the prerogative of the subliminal. I may say at once that I should hold the latter view to be unproved, even on his own hypothesis of a unitary soul divided into supraliminal and subliminal compartments. Yet it is not altogether surprising that Myers should have been attracted to it. There could be no doubt that many of the most remarkable cases of supernormal phenomena recorded in *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. have been accompanied by dissociation. Might not dissociation, and the subliminal activity implied in dissociation, be the indispensable condition of such phenomena, and not merely incidental concomitants of their occurrence? It is true that supernormal manifestations occur also when the percipient is to all appearance in a perfectly normal condition. But it is always possible to suppose that in these cases too there has been some measure of dissociation, even though so slight as to pass unnoticed. On that assumption may we not further suppose that the actual recipient of the telepathic message is the subliminal self, and that it is through the subliminal self, and not directly, that the supraliminal self becomes aware of it? One step farther and we reach the position definitely taken up by Myers that supernormal powers are the exclusive prerogative of the subliminal, and that the subliminal alone is

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sonality reports the experiences of the other as something of which he becomes aware as experiences foreign to himself; he knows what the other thinks and feels, but he has also his own thoughts and feelings about the same object or topic".

<sup>1</sup> *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 72. It was to this feature in Myers's conception of the subliminal that William James took the strongest exception. See his review of *Human Personality* in *Proceedings*, vol. xviii., p. 32.

equipped to share in the free communion with a spiritual world which awaits the surviving soul.

I cannot, of course, say that it was precisely by these steps that Myers arrived at his conclusion. But he ended by formulating it quite explicitly. In the *Scheme of Vital Faculty*, which forms an Appendix to Chapter IX. in vol. ii. of *Human Personality*, he distinguishes between

- I. The supraliminal, or empirical, consciousness ; aware only of the material world through sensory impressions ;
- II. The subliminal consciousness ; obscurely aware of the transcendental world through telepathic and telæsthetic impressions ;
- III. The subliminal consciousness, discerning and influenced by disembodied spirits in a spiritual world.

The distinction between II. and III. is unimportant in the present connection : the really important dividing line is between the supraliminal and the subliminal—that is to say, between I. on the one side and II. and III. taken together on the other. It is to be noted that the principle on which the dividing line is here drawn rests upon the possession or non-possession of supernormal powers. Where, however, the possession or non-possession of such powers by the supraliminal is the very point at issue, it is clear that a definition of this kind gives no help towards deciding the question of fact. A disputed definition is not an argument.

I do not suppose that Myers himself would claim to have produced proof that the supraliminal, the "I as I know myself" is incapable of acting or being acted on telepathically. He seems to take this for granted, as something almost self-evident.<sup>1</sup> Self-evident it certainly is not. I can discover no

<sup>1</sup> See, however, *H.P.*, vol. i., p. 97 : "One characteristic of the subliminal in my view is that it is in closer relation than the supraliminal to the spiritual world". This would seem to be a tacit admission that the supraliminal may be to some extent in relation with the spiritual world. Cf. also vol. ii., p. 237, where, in comparing the case of Mrs Piper with that of Stainton Moses or Hume he represents one of the points of difference as consisting in the fact that "her supraliminal self shows no traces of any supernormal faculty whatever". This ought to mean that some trace of supernormal faculty *was* discernible in the case of the other two. But this was not his usual attitude. Thus in vol. ii., p. 124, he speaks of "that region of supernormal knowledge which for the supraliminal is so definitely closed".

*a priori* connection between subliminality and supranormal faculty. Given the fact of telepathic intercourse between one mind and another, I should have thought it simpler and safer to start by assuming that whatever partakes of the nature of mind is likely to partake in some degree, however slight, of telepathic sensibility. If any difference in this respect is found in practice between the two selves, it would seem easy to ascribe it to the greater freedom from sensory impressions which the subliminal may in general be supposed to enjoy in comparison with the supraliminal.<sup>1</sup>

Direct proof of the capacity of the supraliminal to receive telepathic impressions is, I admit, not easy, perhaps not possible, to secure. The successful results which have been obtained in telepathic experiments with subjects apparently in a normal condition, though not without weight as *prima facie* evidence, are not conclusive, because the alternative explanation, which attributes them to subliminal receptivity in the first instance, cannot be summarily dismissed. The messages received by Mrs Willett in her silent D.I.s and lone scripts, even if we accept them as coming from sources outside herself, fall short of proof for the same reason.

Yet it may fairly be contended, and is indeed obvious, that this alternative explanation itself affords presumptive evidence that the supraliminal is at least not restricted to sensory impressions, but can receive mental impressions also, albeit only through the mediation of the subliminal.<sup>2</sup> Nay, more :

<sup>1</sup> Note, however, that Myers does not hesitate on occasion to ascribe keener sensory perception to the subliminal than to the supraliminal. See, for instance, *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 550. "Even as the subliminal self can present visual or auditory phantasms for supraliminal observation; even as the human agent, acting telepathically, can present—still through subliminal agency—his own phantasmal appearance for the percipient to recognise, so can the spirit". . . . "The spirit is here acting concurrently with the supraliminal intelligence, just as the subliminal intelligence has already done". The last sentence might seem to imply that the departed spirit, when producing a phantasmal appearance of itself, acts directly on the supraliminal. If so, it must be taken as an unguarded statement, which does not represent Myers's real view. What I imagine he meant is that, in the case supposed, two consciousnesses are concurrently active, that of the spirit and that of the supraliminal self which continues to be aware of its normal environment. His theory requires, in order to account for the phenomenon, the addition

have we any good ground for placing the process of communication between the subliminal and the supraliminal on a different footing, *qua process*, from that which in admitted cases of supernormal communication between individuals we describe as telepathic? Both processes are mental: can we make any valid distinction between them so far as the *modus operandi* is concerned?

Whatever answer be given to this question, it is common ground to both sides of the controversy that "messages" can pass from one mental element of the personality—whatever interpretation we give to the term "element"—to another. Further, it is common ground that it is often exceedingly difficult, in fact impossible, to distinguish between messages passing from a subliminal to a supraliminal mental element and messages passing supernormally from the mind of one man to that of another, or from a discarnate to an incarnate mind.<sup>1</sup>

Where the effects are indistinguishable there is a presumption, though of course no certainty, that the causes also are similar—in other words, that if the process is telepathic in one case, it is also telepathic in the other.

This, as the reader knows, is the view that commends itself of a third consciousness, namely that of the subliminal self, which receives the "message" from the spirit *telepathically*, and passes it on to the supraliminal by some process which is assumed to be *not* telepathic, although its nature is otherwise very obscurely indicated.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 88, where, with references to the automatisms which he classes together as "*message-bearing or nunciative automatisms*", Myers remarks, "I do not, of course, mean that they all of them bring messages from sources external to the automatist's own mind. In some cases they probably do this; but as a rule the so-called messages seem more probably to originate within the automatist's own personality. Why, then, it may be asked, do I call them messages? We do not usually speak of a man as sending a message to himself. The answer to this question involves, as we shall presently see, the profoundest conception of these automatisms to which we can as yet attain. They present themselves to us as messages communicated from one stratum to another stratum of the same personality".

Compare also the important statement in *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 198, which, although primarily applying to *possession*, must be held to be no less applicable to the case of "nunciative" automatisms. It must be borne in mind that, in Myers's view, an organism can be "possessed" by its own subliminal, and that he regards possession by an external spirit to be telepathy carried to the point where it ceases to be telepathy and becomes direct control of the organism. See pp. 174-5 above.



to me. Once, at least, in *Human Personality* Myers himself seems to come near it. In vol. ii., pp. 5-6, he writes :

Wherever there is hallucination, whether delusive or veridical, I hold that a message of some sort is forcing its way upwards from one stratum of personality to another,—a message which may be merely dreamlike and incoherent, or which may symbolise a fact otherwise unreachable by the percipient personality. And the mechanism seems much the same whether the message's path be continued within one individual or pass between two ; whether A's own submerged self be signalling to his emergent self, or B be telepathically stimulating the hidden fountains of perception in A.

When quoting this passage in my presidential address in 1906 I expressed some surprise that the hint contained in it of telepathic action between the two selves within one individual was not further followed up by Myers. Closer study of the whole subject has, however, convinced me that, without the surrender of some of his most cherished doctrines, it would have been impossible for him to accept telepathy as a true account of the process by which messages are conveyed from one mental element within the personality to another.

In order to avoid the use of clumsy periphrases let us describe communication which passes from one mental element within the personality to another by the term *interior*, and communication which passes supernormally from one individual to another by the term *exterior*. "Exterior" communication by common consent we describe as telepathic. Is "interior" communication also telepathic, and if not, what is the nature of the process by which it takes place ?

Interior telepathy, if accepted as a fact, would, of course, be in flat contradiction to the doctrine that telepathic faculty is confined to the subliminal. But its implications do not end there. Telepathy is so clearly identified in *Human Personality* with the process of communication between distinct psychical entities that to accept the idea of interior telepathy would be in effect equivalent to recognising the mental elements associated together in the individual man as being such distinct psychical entities. We are thus once more brought up before the old question concerning the selfhood of the independent

currents of consciousness that are somehow combined in one and the same individual human being. Are these independent currents true *selves*, or are they *phases, fragments, layers, strata*, of one and the same unitary self?

Interior telepathy interpreted as a process of communication between distinct psychical entities or true selves is incompatible with Myers's doctrine of the soul as the all-embracing unity of the mental elements of the personality. It is incompatible with the conception of the mental elements themselves as merely different manifestations or aspects of the soul's activity. It is equally incompatible, I think, with the doctrine that identifies man's true self with his subliminal self. The *idea* of interior telepathy must surely have occurred to Myers. I have little doubt that his rejection of it was deliberate, and that he himself must have felt it to be inconsistent with other parts of his teaching.

Myers recognises interior communication as a mental process, but treats it as a mental process of a different kind from telepathy. This is clearly brought out in a footnote to a passage immediately following the one just quoted :

Some word is much needed to express communication between one state and another, *e.g.* between the somnambulant and the waking state, or, in hypnotism, the cataleptic and the somnambulant, etc. The word "methectic" (*μεθεκτικός*) seems to me the most suitable, especially since *μέθεξις* happens to be the word used by Plato (*Parm.*, 132 b) for participation between ideas and concrete objects. Or the word "inter-state" might be pressed into this new duty.

In this footnote Myers proposes the term *methexis* for what I have called above *interior communication*. Interior communication is, in his view, always methectic, never telepathic. If I am asked whether, in my view, interior communication is always telepathic, my answer must be, Yes, *if the selves between whom communication takes place are true selves*. But at this point the controversy once more resolves itself into the original difference of opinion concerning the nature of the mental elements between which the interaction takes place. Those who hold the mental elements to be true selves will inevitably take the further step and treat communication between them as

telepathic. Those who hold them to be phases, strata, or "states" of a single unitary self will naturally and rightly seek for some other term to describe the passage of thought from one to the other. But if thus stripped of the attributes of true selfhood, can the mental elements continue to furnish the key to the obscure phenomena of abnormal psychology which Myers believed himself to possess in his conception of supraliminal and subliminal selves? My own reply to this question can only be in the negative.

There is one further observation which I should like to add. Accepting the reality both of interior and of exterior communication, I have noted the practical difficulty—fully admitted by Myers himself—of deciding to which of the two classes a given case should properly be assigned. Assume now, for the sake of argument, what I believe is still the doctrine of "orthodox" psychology, that there is no such thing as exterior communication; that is to say that there is no telepathic communication either between living individuals or between incarnate and discarnate spirits, and that the phenomena which have led to the hypothesis of such communication are in fact to be explained as cases of interior communication. With this assumption we shall have altogether banished telepathy in the sense in which Myers uses the term. But the problem of the apparently independent origin of the "messages" has thereby become not less but more insistent than before. For the readiest explanation of some, at all events, of these messages is to attribute them to the activity of external agents incarnate or discarnate. If this explanation is summarily excluded—if all "nunciative automatisms" are, in Myers's phrase, messages "sent by a man to himself"—the hypothesis that would ascribe them to interaction between different phases or states of a unitary soul would surely be strained to the breaking point. From this point of view I think the idea of a plurality of selves or centres of consciousness associated together in the same body, capable of interacting with each other in such a way as to constitute the reality and not merely the appearance of independent agency, is one which should be seriously considered even by orthodox psychology. It is right, however, to point out that, with this new conception, telepathy, or something barely to be distinguished from it, would be reinstated in the form of interior

communication although rejected in the form of exterior communication.

Although there is a good deal in my presidential address of 1906 which I should wish to modify, or at least to express in other words, if I were writing to-day, I nevertheless venture to quote one passage from it that gives an outline sketch of the structure of human personality as I conceive it, which, in spite of gaps left unfilled and problems left unsolved, I still prefer to the picture drawn by Myers :

On the view which I have tentatively outlined it is possible, I think, to frame a more definite conception of the different factors that unite to form the individual human being, and of the relations between them, than I, at all events, have been able to derive from Myers's account of the supraliminal and subliminal selves.

Every psychical centre associated with the organism would, in accordance with this view, have to be regarded as "subliminal" <sup>1</sup> to every other, though indeed it might be better to drop that term altogether in describing the relation as I conceive it. The self of which we are each of us conscious is neither the organism as a whole nor any grouping of psychical centres within the organism. It is a single mind or soul whose conscious states at any given moment are the expression of its reaction against its entire environment. What is its environment? In the larger sense (and this must not be forgotten in considering the question of survival after the dissolution of the organism), its environment is nothing less than the whole universe other than itself. In the narrower sense its environment is the physical organism and every psychical centre associated therewith. The presupposition of a plurality of real existences, coupled with the observed facts as to the concurrent activity of different streams of consciousness within a single organism, has thus inevitably brought us in sight of the idea first put forward by Leibnitz, that the living creature is a kind of hierarchy of monads arranged in orderly and systematic relations with each other, each reflecting in its own way the

<sup>1</sup> I.e. in the sense in which Myers uses the word when he tells us that by the subliminal self he means "that part of the self which is commonly subliminal". See the passage from *H.P.*, quoted on p. 266 above.

states of consciousness of all the rest. Only whereas Leibnitz denied all real interaction between the monads and sought to account for the apparent interaction by his famous doctrine of pre-established harmony, we have assumed throughout that the interaction is real, and conjectured that in part at least it might be of essentially the same character as that which, as between distinct living organisms, we call telepathic.

Any further observations I have to make concerning the interaction of the mental elements which contribute to the personality of the individual man may with advantage be deferred until the reader has been placed in a position to compare the statements in Willett scripts relating to the subjects dealt with in the present chapter with the summary I have attempted to give of Myers's teaching on the same subject in *Human Personality*.

A good many of the extracts which follow have already been quoted in various preceding chapters. Here, as elsewhere, for reasons already explained on p. 211 above, I have not hesitated to repeat quotations where it seemed to me that the convenience of the reader would best be consulted by doing so. The extracts in the present case have been arranged with due regard to chronological order, but not too rigidly to permit of departure from that order for the sake of bringing related passages into juxtaposition, or for other good cause.

I will begin with two passages which conform closely to Myers's doctrine of the soul, representing it as a spiritual entity that existed before its association with the body, and will survive bodily destruction, but which, even during its embodied life, can be in touch with its original native element, namely the metetherial world as opposed to the world of matter. Stated thus broadly, the doctrine is reproduced, and, I think, consistently adhered to throughout the Willett scripts.

Compare the following passages :

*Extract from Lone Script of April 9, 1909.*

Descent into generation primarily the response of mind to mind—add the thought of Myers mind precipitated as it were into matter through matter to manifestation beginning in the almost pure material material form the gradual dawning or

recollection of its native element mind all being but a means to this end the return enriched and enhanced to the metetherial Myers mind to mind descent through matter liberation by degrees from the mere material form of earliest days gradual repenetration into the realm of mind and eventual self projection into that realm.

*Extract from Lone Script of July 20, 1909.*

Myers prayer is not petition still less it is it singing boys<sup>1</sup> or Myers posture or any convention of the mind. It is the return of the soul into its native element from it springs power

Give the French word RECUEILLEMENT I want that word written.

It is the momentary withdrawal from the things of sense to those supersensual realms of ideas in which the true personality lies. Myers enough.

It will be noted that in both these passages the soul is treated as a unitary self, and without reference to the distinction between the subliminal and supraliminal selves which lies at the root of so many difficulties. Nevertheless this distinction is quite explicit in Willett script from the very beginning, as the following extracts show :

*Extract from Lone Script of January 31, 1909.*

The reason why you get messages at times upon subjects that you have been pondering on is that you have so pondered by telepathic impulse and it is the identical impulse that leads to these scripts this often leads to things being attributed to the subliminal but I have so far not devised anything to remedy this.

*Extract from Lone Script of February 14, 1909.*

I am trying experiments with you to make you hear without writing therefore as it is I Myers who do this deliberately do not fear or wince when words enter your consciousness or subsequently when such words are in the script. On the contrary it will be the success of my purpose if you recognise in yr. script

<sup>1</sup> Myers, "Sunrise" (*Fragments*, p. 160) :

"O the heaven, O the joys  
Such as priest and singing boys  
Cannot sing or say".

phrases you have found in your consciousness. I know this must be for a while disconcerting and be filled with the fear of that eternal s.s [subliminal self] which I hope we have succeeded in dethroning to some extent. Therefore be agreeing to be disconcerted and do not analyse whence these impressions which I shall in future refer to as daylight impressions,—come from, they are parts of a psychic education framed by me for you.

In these passages the difficulty of distinguishing between messages which have their source in the subliminal and messages which proceed from minds external to the percipient's is frankly recognised ; but it is not made clear whether messages from independent minds can reach the supraliminal direct, or whether the intervention of the subliminal is to be regarded as an indispensable condition of their passing into normal consciousness. The latter, as we have seen, is the doctrine of *Human Personality* ; and I think it must also be accepted as the doctrine of the Willett scripts.

In Mrs Willett's case the two stages in the process by which messages from an independent mind are received and externalised are represented as being either gradual and extending over a period of time, or practically simultaneous and issuing in an immediate effect.

*Extract from the Lone Script of August 14, 1910.*

... realise continually that impressions are as it were soaking in at times when you are unaware of any receptive impulse the uprush from the threshold of one strata [sic] to the other is the moment of conscious reception but the impressions have been accumulating on the other strata unknown to you.

*Extract from the D.I. of September 24, 1910. (Present, O. J. L.)*

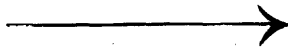
Telepathy isn't involuntary, it's—I'm going to do it like this—what's the word ? Propulsion—you watch the receipt. Now he's as if holding my hands, it's as if having a tooth out, you've got to set your teeth and go through with it. He says James and another name ; now she's got it, and you watch it coming up. It's got into the subliminal. Hyslop ! (*said in a surprised tone*). Oh, he says, Good ; he's pleased. Lodge, this is terribly exhausting.

*Extract from the Lone Script of August 6, 1911.*

Write the word seed implanted in the bed-rock of the sub-conscious mind and say if it fall upon good ground it shall bring forth an hundred fold Who is the sower and what is the sowing but an act of faith but it is faith that springs from past experience the seed germinates and the due season of blossom comes but the blossom is not a new birth it is part of a process no it is part of something in process of completion this is confused but the thought is there.

*Extract from Trance-script preceding D.I. of May 13, 1912.*  
(Present, G. W. B.)

The thought strikes like a bullet



or an arrow

Launched from here it reaches its destination sometimes instantaneously it rushes up to the supraliminal strata of consciousness sometimes there is a pause<sup>1</sup> Half-dreams What did Wordsworth say, fallings from us vanishings Blank misgivings<sup>2</sup>

Whether the process of reception and externalisation be gradual or practically instantaneous, the primary recipient is always assumed to be the subliminal, and the message to reach the supraliminal only through the subliminal as intermediary.

*Extract from Script preceding D.I. of February 9, 1911.*  
(Present, O. J. L.)

Is there more you want to ask me Lodge ?

(O. J. L. Yes, I want to ask wherein the difference consists between Piper phenomena and Willett phenomena : they seem both under similar control now.)

<sup>1</sup> With this statement compare *H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 521 : "The 'telepathic impact', as we have sometimes called it, is no blunt shock. It may be sudden ; but it may also be persistent ; it may sometimes be overwhelming, but it can be insinuating too. It is not a bolt discharged and done with ; it is a vital influence at work on the percipient's subliminal self". The two accounts, however, are not identical ; for here the tardiness is ascribed to the nature of the impact on the subliminal, whereas according to the statement in the script it results from a lag in transmission from subliminal to supraliminal.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*.



Control implies erroneous thought. I am not telergically here not replacing the spirit of the vehicle but using it where it is *telepathically*. There is complete difference from Piper methods here I merely submerge normal supraliminal and telepathically use the subliminal<sup>1</sup> And what does the word extraliminal convey

(O. J. L. Well, it conveys something round about, or outside the mechanism, not entering into it.)

No she remains the totality [*sic.*] of herself I impress her by thoughts It is she who uses the nerve (*drawing of zigzag line*) from her, phisiologically [*sic.*]

(O. J. L. Yes, I understand, the physiological mechanism is hers, you exercise only mental or psychical influence.)

Psychic yes

*Extract from Lone Script of April 16, 1911.*

Myers Let me again emphasise the difference that exists between Piper and Willett phenomena the former is possession the complete all but complete withdrawal of the spirit the other is the blending of incarnate and excarnate spirits there is nothing telergic it is a form of telepathy the point we have to study is to find the line where the incarnate spirit is sufficiently over the border to be in a state to receive and yet sufficiently controlling by its own power its own supraliminal and therefore able to transmit

We dont therefore desire the kind of trance that is of Piper essence though we could and sometimes have induced much the same thing Get this clear We want the operator to be so linked with its mechanism as to control that mechanism herself We want her also to be so linked to us as to be able to receive definite telepathic write the word radiation there is one glory of the sun and another of the stars there is the mediumistic gift of emitting and the other gift of receiving

The statement in the script preceding D.I. of February 9,

<sup>1</sup> The Willett communicators repeatedly claim that they can throw the sensitive into lighter or deeper trance at their pleasure. If the process consists in "submerging the supraliminal", how is this effected? If by direct telepathic action, telepathic sensitivity on the part of the supraliminal would seem to be conceded, though elsewhere denied. Are we to understand that here also the communicator only acts on the supraliminal indirectly, *i.e.* mediately through the agency of the subliminal?

1911, that the sensitive "remains the totality of herself I impress her by thoughts It is she who uses the nerve", should be carefully noted. Hitherto the structure of the self as at once unitary and composite had been quietly assumed, and no suggestion had been made that this conception presents any kind of difficulty or problem. The emphatic assurance now given that throughout the process the sensitive remains the totality of herself, and that "herself" includes both subliminal and supraliminal, gives perhaps for the first time in the scripts, a hint of the possibility that this assumption is open to question.

Up to this point the statements made by the communicators call for little general comment. They suggest no substantial deviations from the teachings contained in *Human Personality*. In the important series of trance-scripts and D.I.s starting from the sitting of June 4, 1911, and mainly devoted to the subject of *process*, the question of the structure of the personality is brought more explicitly to the front and several new ideas are introduced which seem to be something more than mere amplifications of Myers's teaching, and even, at least in the use of certain technical terms, to be inconsistent with it.

In the two preceding chapters I have dealt with the topic of telepathy, interpreted as the active communication of thought; with telæsthesia, interpreted as mind-reading; with "mutual selection", presupposing a kind of reciprocal telæsthesia; with subliminal "weaving", involving, at least in certain cases, the dividing up of the subliminal into a plurality of "selves" interacting with each other and with the supraliminal. All these topics have some connection, and the last of them a very direct connection, with the subject-matter of the present chapter. I shall, however, take it for granted that the reader is acquainted with the general contents of Chapters II. and III. and for my present purpose will concentrate upon the three trance-sittings of October 8, 1911, January 21, 1912, and March 5, 1912—the only sittings at which the more controversial points at issue are brought into conspicuous prominence. At all these sittings I was present as investigator in charge. The relevant passages in them are here quoted practically *in extenso*. This will entail the inclusion of several more or less lengthy extracts, with which the reader has already been made acquainted; but I think he will agree with me that in the

present instance, at all events, the advantages of repetition outweigh the drawbacks.

*From the Trance-sitting of October 8, 1911, beginning with Script and passing on to D.I. (Present G. W. B.)*

Is there any special point you wish to deal with to-day.—

The points in regard to mutual selection need further illucidation [*sic*]. *Mutual.*

We can only get things through by *degrees*. It assists us when we know where the main points needing further effort lie—or we may spend our strength on that which is already clear to you.

(*G. W. B.* I have some questions I should like to put to you on that very subject : Shall I put them now ?)

Yes.

(*G. W. B.* In mutual selection you say that the sensitive can select from such part of *your* mind as she can have access to. What part is this ?)

All that part to which the subliminal of the sensitive has *natural* access, operating normally upon the metethereal plane. She has access to.

It is difficult to get it clear. Let me go slowly and *feel* if need be for my meaning in a round-about way.

Human experience—that part of my mind to which human experience affords a *point de repère*—<sup>1</sup>

(*G. W. B.* I understand that : but you distinguish between the actual and the potential content of your mind. Has the sensitive access to both ?)

Yes. Yes. Yes.

(*G. W. B.* You say you have access to the contents of the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive. Does the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive correspond to the distinction between the actual and potential content of your mind ?)

No—wait. I have access to—repeat that sentence to me.

(*G. W. B. repeats as above.*)

Unconscious is not an equivalent for potential. *NO.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 202 above.

<sup>2</sup> For the meaning of “potential” in this passage, and the distinction between “actual and potential” on the one side and “conscious and unconscious” on the other, see pp. 200 ff. above.

(*G. W. B.* Does the unconscious mind of the sensitive mean what we commonly call her subliminal ?)

Yes—but it means *all* the centres of it, to use a physiological [*sic.*] analogy.<sup>1</sup>

(*G. W. B.* Is there anything in the discarnate consciousness which corresponds to the subliminal self of the incarnate ?)

What a *huge* subject you open up !

Let me get her to speech first. Yes—say that again.

(*G. W. B. repeats.*)

The larger includes the less.

(*G. W. B.* Is the larger the supraliminal or —)

No, no, the subliminal of *course*, *that* is allied to the transcendental self—*that* transcendental self might be referred to in a rough and ready manner by terming it the subliminal of the discarnate Subliminal Read it to me.

(*G. W. B. reads what has just been said.*)

as the<sup>2</sup> It is possible to refer to it as that and imply a truth—

It is a good rough generalisation.

(*G. W. B.* One more question. Myers in his book on Human Personality speaks of the supraliminal and the subliminal sometimes in language which seems to characterise them as separate though closely associated selves, but more generally as if they were merely different strata of one and the same individual consciousness. How are these two views to be reconciled ?)

I want several of these questions read to me again, but let me get her into D.I. secondary stage first.

(*G. W. B.* Shall we go on to D.I. at once ?)

Yes.

[*D.I. now begins.*]

He says there are many gradations—Oh he says, Oh Edmund. Oh, I will. He says there is an ascending chain. He says, Normal, supraliminal consciousness—that varies in depth and is, as it were, the upper crust of the subliminal.

Oh he says, I speak now of incarnate subjects. Then the

<sup>1</sup> A return is made to this observation in the D.I. of January 21, 1912. See pp. 295-6 below.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* “as the subliminal” is to be substituted for “by terming it the subliminal”.

next link is the subliminal. The interaction between the two is continuous.

(*G. W. B. was about to speak but E. G. went on.*)

Don't interrupt me—but the supraliminal consciousness of that interaction varies. He says, in that direction evolutionary principles should be recognised.

Oh he says, putting it at its lowest, the supraliminal will find that it *pays* to attend to subliminal impulse and intuition—and he says, the supraliminal as it now is is largely the result of attention to what pays. Oh he says, value for life as it has been in the past, and he says, you might call the supraliminal a group of paying activities—not the word I want, but it will do.

And he says, the subliminal is rivetted<sup>1</sup> on to the transcendental self—the ulterior pre-existing pre-subliminal, in something of the same sense as the subliminal is pre-supraliminal. He says, Pass now to the discarnate. The persisting elements contain, in largest proportions, elements of the subconscious self. This is obscure. Oh he says, the persistible self contains—the largest element is subliminal.

He says, the largest proportion of the persisting whole is that summed up in the words subliminal-self element, together with an admixture—and a very vital admixture—of the supraliminal.

Oh he says, the supraliminal and the subliminal are parts of one whole. They may act apparently so disconnectedly as to lead one from the incarnate standpoint to think of them as separate. Oh he says, think of the subliminal as a principle normally operating in the metetherial, and in—oh, Edmund, it's so difficult—oh hold tight of me, I'm slipping—Oh he says, read me from where I said—

(*G. W. B. reads from "think of the subliminal" down to "metetherial".*)

And in the best conditions—in the achieved—when that is achieved which is aimed at, the subliminal informs and guides the supraliminal as the transcendental self forms and guides the subliminal. Oh he says, that is the incarnate—Oh he says, I've got a muddle here somewhere. What I've been speaking of refers to the incarnate; and with regard to the discarnate

<sup>1</sup> The term "rivetted" here is meant, I think, to carry on the metaphor of links of a chain.

—it's a rough generalisation—take the persisting element, which will be largely composed of subliminal with a vital percentage of supraliminal, and call that blended consciousness if you will—rough shots, mind, G.—call it, if you will, discarnate supraliminality, and you will get as a deeper strata [*sic*] the transcendental self.

Oh he says, back of that again lies something I dimly reach after and you would call, he says, the Absalom—*not* Absalom—I'll spell it you, he says : A B S O L and he says O M and rubs O M out and puts instead U T E. Oh he says—Edmund, when you laugh I can't help laughing too—and he says the ascending scale bound by gold chains round the feet of God.<sup>1</sup>

Oh he says, there are seas to be explored, and I can only sail a little way out and come back with a report that the sea stretches infinitely vast beyond them.

So much of *your* activity is really of the child's spade order, and he says (*pause*) oh he says, she's dropped it. He says, tell G. to read me again his own words.

(*G. W. B.* Shall I read the first question ?)

All.

(*G. W. B.* The first question is : In mutual selection you say that the sensitive can select from such part of *your* mind as she can have access to. What part is this ?)

He says, I want to suggest something which, while not contradicting your question, will open another window. Oh if I could only not drop like that. Oh hold me tight. And he says, she can select—he says a word to me—telæsthesia—oh he says, you none of you make enough allowance for what that implies, and the results of that can be shepherded and guided up to the threshold of normal consciousness.

Oh he says, telæsthesia is a bed-rock truth, a power of acquiring knowledge direct without the intervention of discarnate mind.

Oh he says, telepathy's one thing—that's thought communication ; telæsthesia is knowledge, not thought, acquired by the subliminal when operating normally in the metetherial.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *Morte d'Arthur*.

<sup>2</sup> For "telæsthesia" see Part II., Chapter III. The omitted portion of the D.I. (here indicated by asterisks) is given in full on pp. 194-5 above.

Oh he says, give the next question quickly.

(*G. W. B.* The next question is this: You distinguish between the actual and the potential content of your mind. Has the sensitive access to both?)

I have said what the limitations necessarily are. I think I have got that clear. Read me when next I come my answer to that question and I will amplify it. Go ahead, G.

(*G. W. B.* You say you have access to the contents of the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive. Does the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind of the sensitive correspond to the distinction between the actual and potential content of *your* mind?)

He says, I've answered that as far as I can now.

(*G. W. B.* Fourth question: Is there anything in the discarnate consciousness which corresponds to the subliminal self of the incarnate?)

He says, I've not done so badly on that, I think.

(*G. W. B.* Last question: Myers in his book speaks of the supraliminal and the subliminal sometimes as if they were separate though closely associated *selves*, but more commonly as if they were merely different *strata* of one and the same individual consciousness. How are these two views to be reconciled?)

He says, I understand. Oh, he says, she's going very heavily now. Better not tax her further.

The extract which follows is taken from another very long trance-sitting. It forms the concluding portion of the D.I. stage. The script preceding D.I., and the earlier portion of the D.I. itself, had been occupied with other topics.

*Extract from D.I. of January 21, 1922. (Present, G. W. B.)*

Edmund says, Gerald.

[*A few sentences follow which I was told not to take down: after which I was asked for questions.*]

He laughs and says, Now we're to get back to the transcendental self!

(*G. W. B.* Some time ago,<sup>1</sup> when I asked you whether the unconscious mind of the sensitive means what we commonly

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* in the trance-script preceding D.I. of October 8, 1911.

call her subliminal, you answered, "Yes<sup>1</sup>—but it means *all* the centres of it, to use a physiological analogy". Is the subliminal to be regarded as a number of distinct, or at all events distinguishable, centres of consciousness ?

He says, Ranges of varying depth. Tell me again, slowly.  
(*Question is repeated.*)

It's *One* : and an enlightening point of view—I think it is—is to conceive of it as allied and distinguishable—I missed a word—and then grouped round one nucleus. He says, Your interpretation of centres of consciousness may not be mine—and he says, How far have I got through information in answer ?

(*G. W. B.* Perhaps it might help to put it in this way. You spoke of a continuous interaction between the subliminal and the supraliminal. Are the centres of consciousness of the subliminal related to each other in a manner analogous to the relation of the subliminal to the supraliminal ?)

Wait. Something about centres of cognition. He says, Tentacles of the star-fish. Interaction, he says, is right. The supraliminal and the subliminal ebb and flow ; and he says

<sup>1</sup> In the important passage already quoted on p. 265 above Myers defines his use of the term "subliminal" as covering "all that takes place beneath the ordinary threshold of consciousness". When the communicator identifies the unconscious mind of the sensitive with her subliminal, it is presumably in this sense that he uses the word. But the adjective "unconscious" in this connection is apt to be misleading. It is not the subliminal which is unconscious, but the supraliminal in regard to the subliminal. The subliminal is conceived as comprising all mental process which does not reach the level of consciousness *in the supraliminal*. Neither the Myers of *Human Personality* nor the communicators in the Willett scripts mean to represent the subliminal self as unconscious on its own account. On the contrary it is common ground for both that in the subliminal the highest manifestation of mind is to be found.

The interpretation of the passage which follows, down to "tentacles of the star-fish", is far from clear. By "centres of consciousness" I had meant "selves"; but Gurney's answer seems to refer to the relation between mind and body, and even to identify "centres of consciousness" with the organs of sense. Are the centres of consciousness which are described as "grouped round one nucleus", from which they are distinguishable, the same as the "centres of cognition" which are compared to the tentacles of a star-fish, and also the same as the centres of *sub-consciousness* which are said, a little lower down, to inform a central whole ?

I think there has been misunderstanding between Gurney and myself, and that more confusion has resulted than I can successfully attempt to unravel.



that the profundities of the subliminal which grade right up and merge into what I've spoken of as the transcendental self, the central unity, the self-conscious whole achieving its self-consciousness by the hemming off<sup>1</sup>—But, he says, if you're going to confuse any of this with the whole question of secondary and tertiary personalities and their respective memories of each other, you'd be making a mistake. Those are cases of dislocation, imperfect and often pathological. Oh, he says, It's the creak of the machine, that—But, he says, the subliminal—he says the supraliminal—has access to—he says to me, You've got the analogies all wrong, try again. Begin the other end, he says. The transcendental self—he says something about a point of release—oh, Edmund, you *do bore me* so—the passing of itself into stratas [*sic*] of subliminality—the subliminal—he says it's like a continuous impetus, like waves of sound. *Bang* (here hand came down on the table with a thump); and then the subliminal rippling out into the supraliminal.<sup>2</sup> But, he says, the interaction of the three is continuous and perpetual—and the centres of sub-consciousness, he says, inform a central whole. And he says, Sidgwick is always pointing out the liability to misinterpretation which the use of analogies and terms proper to one department of knowledge being imported into unmapped, ill-mapped, regions—But, he says, when the thing works properly, all the links—the links are continuous, he says. And he says the point where the transcendental merges into the subliminal—*merges* may bring a number of associations for you which may not be in the least applicable—he says, between that point and the point which has been mapped with the word supraliminal there's no complete break : it's like number.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See footnote (1) on p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> I do not pretend to understand the statements here made.

<sup>3</sup> The comparison with number is perhaps not altogether felicitous. In number the element of discreteness is usually conceived to be the prominent one. On the other hand in abstract number the element of continuity is also present in so far as the units composing any given number, as number, make one whole without any gap between them. The illustration which follows, of space divided into arbitrary cubes for purposes of convenience, seems more aptly to express the communicator's meaning. The dividing lines are to be regarded as shifting, not as unalterably fixed.

(*G. W. B.* You speak of a continuous interaction between the transcendental and the subliminal and the supraliminal. Does not interaction imply duality or multiplicity? In a sense, individual human beings are parts of one whole—that is, they are all rooted, as it were, in the Absolute. Are supraliminal and subliminal separate in a manner analogous to the separateness of different human beings?)

*B O S H!* (*very loud and emphatic*) different aspects of the same thing.

(*G. W. B.* But some think that individuals are different aspects of the Absolute.)

He says to me, Come on. He says, One. and he says, Really there's some sense in these words, for purposes of convenience marked off into arbitrary cubes.<sup>1</sup> The cubes in different individuals—and he says, You would put the thresholds of different individuals in different places. The cubes make one pattern.

(*G. W. B.* I'm not putting forward a doctrine, but only asking a question. How the same thing can be both one and many has always given rise to difficulties. What I wished to know was whether supraliminal and subliminal are distinct in a manner analogous to the distinctness of different human beings.)

Not in that sense. He says that's extremely important. I've got your thought, G. My answer is, No, not in that sense. It's very difficult, but he says, what is the relation between the human being and the Absolute? He says, Answer me that.

(*G. W. B.* That is the most difficult question in philosophy.)

He says, It's the Absolute on its way to self-consciousness. Oh, he says, if I could get the right words, while there's no analogy as I've made clear,<sup>2</sup> there *is* an analogy between the supraliminal and the subliminal, and the individual rooted in the Absolute and the Absolute. And he says, You've got it now, and he says, No bones broken—and he says to me, You know, dear, I feel sometimes I must appear to you like the

<sup>1</sup> See note 3 on opposite page.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* while there's no analogy between the relation of supraliminal to subliminal and the relation of one human individual to another, there *is* an analogy between the relation of supraliminal to subliminal and the relation of the individual rooted in the Absolute to the Absolute.

Devil when he said, Cast thyself down ; but, he says, if only you'll go blindly <sup>1</sup> there'll be no pieces to pick up. And he says, I really got what I wanted in answer to Gerald, and I believe he'll make it clear.

(*G. W. B.* Is there any harm in asking questions like these ?)

He says, If you'll ask them realising the difficulties we have got to encounter, and not mistaking a poor result for anything more than a failure to inform, you'll do no harm, and help us to break through. Oh he says, Another nut, and then I'm gone. (*A pause.*) I'm waiting for the nut.

(*G. W. B.* Oh, I see. You want me to ask another question You referred at a former sitting to telæsthesia as a process by which the mind of the sensitive acquired knowledge on its own account. The subject came up in connection with what you called mutual selection. You spoke of taking the sensitive into " a room " and screening off any action of your own mind on hers ; whereupon her subliminal proceeds to take stock of the contents of the room. Do you mean a real room, or only a room existing in your mind ?)

I'll throw something at you, and you must make what you can of it.<sup>2</sup>

I'll take that portion of her which can emerge in uprush, and I, as it were, link it on with that deeper subliminal which can be in touch with what I want to get known ; so that there is that portion of her which can normally acquire telæsthetically in its own deep profound plane passing on the knowledge to that plane from which an uprush can come. Oh he says, what I'm going to say to you now makes Sidgwick tear his hair, because it's meaning the ocean in a child's bucket.

I'm going to call that deepest portion, nearer to the transcendental self—I'm going to call it—anything you like, any symbol, say H. Well, the H-self and I agree on what we want—what I want—to get transmitted, and which the H-self normally, in its own H-ness, through its own cognitive faculites, can know. And here is the " bucket " process, it's here where just because it's the most difficult I shall fail worst in trying to get near the thought. The H-self will touch the uprushable

<sup>1</sup> See p. 245 above.

<sup>2</sup> For comments on the passage which here follows see pp. 246 ff.

self just the grade below the uprushable, and the uprushable and the grade below will receive the knowledge from the H. But in getting it into the uprushable focus as it were, it will know that a sort of crystallisation, often through symbolism must be arrived at : and we will imagine, if you like, that that having been foreseen both by me and the H-self, we determined upon what sort of crystals to aim at, so that the uprushable self has as it were presented to it what I called a " room ", the knowledge which the H-self is informing to the point where it becomes uprushable. Just below that uprushable point there's a sort of dim moment where both modes enter into cognition—I mean, where a knowledge of the thing as it is in the H-stage is united to a knowledge of the crystals which, the emblem which, can best express that which in its H-ness cannot, or rarely, uprush—for all these states are variable and the success variable. Then comes that moment of binding when the self that lies in juxtaposition to the uprushable absorbs the knowledge from H, and passes it on to the uprushable point in such a state as makes uprush possible. It then rushes out as word spoken or written, or dreams, or never-to-be-denied moments of prescience, pre-cognition of supernormal knowledge. But that supernormal will contain within it the normally acquired knowledge of H—that element of normality will be there. Oh, he says, that isn't the invariable method, only one of them ; and he says, The telepathic impact is another. He says the normal powers—Oh he says, I must let her go.

*Extract from the D.I. of March 5, 1912.<sup>1</sup> (Present, G. W. B.)*

Telepathy, inspiration, mutual selection—he says they mark different stages of the soul's commerce, it sounds like. He says it's very difficult to get it, dear, but it's best for me to get some rough definition down . . .

He says, In telepathy there is the mind that makes the emission of the idea, and the mind that receives the impact of it ; and it's often very definite, he says. And he says it's not the whole truth to say that inspiration is more general, but it's the half truth to say that inspiration is the stimulation of something already contained in the subliminal which, under

<sup>1</sup> For comments on this D.I. see pp. 256 ff.

pressure of inspiration forces its way to the threshold. Oh he says, Inspiration may be from within as well as from without. But he says you can't speak of telepathy between the supraliminal and the subliminal—

(*G. W. B.* Ah! I was going to ask that very question.)

but you can speak of inspiration by the subliminal; you can also speak of inspiration by the subliminal of matter— . . . The matter which is inspired up to the threshold may be matter acquired by selection.

He says, Inspiration may be from within, but it may be from without. Oh he says, Every moment I gave to the study of hypnotic states and post-hypnotic states I feel was among the best spent of all my time.

(*G. W. B.* Yes, Gurney, those were splendid papers of yours.)

Oh he says, It's not only what I learnt then, but what I've been able to apply here. For instance: Say, using the words in their rough way, that a mutual selection is made—mutually from her mind and mine. It's possible for me to suggest to her subliminal that at a given time such and such an idea shall as it were be recovered—one might almost say, recovered out of the sediment—and come to the top. Or I may use another process. I may hit a particular atom in the sediment that I want by telepathic impact or stimulation, and make it come to the surface that way. But that particular process of telepathy I should designate as "inspirational" telepathy, because it's affecting that which is already within the mind.

Oh, he says, I think I have done enough for to-day.

Though in parts obscure and occasionally (I suspect) confused, the scripts just quoted—to whatever source we attribute them—must surely count among the most remarkable automatic utterances on abstract questions that we possess. On this aspect of the subject I refer back to what I have already said in Chapter V. of Part I. (see p. 155 above). If the scripts in question are the product, not of inspiration from an external intelligence, but of subliminal mentation, I am driven to the conclusion that the subliminal in this instance has exhibited a subtlety of speculative thought very decidedly beyond anything I believe the Mrs Willett with whom I am intimately acquainted to be capable of. Mrs Willett herself, to whom the

trance-productions have now been shown for the first time, assures me that they are "so much Greek" to her, and leave her utterly bewildered and *bored*.

It is not, however, with the source of these scripts that I am here concerned, but with their content. The statements made in them, so far as they relate to the subject matter of the present chapter, can be usefully disentangled so as to fall under two headings :

- (1) Statements regarding the supraliminal and the subliminal in the incarnate ;
- (2) Statements regarding the transcendental self, and the relation of the soul to the Absolute.

The matters treated of under the second heading may be conveniently taken first. They are really of an order so purely speculative as hardly to come within the scope of the present paper. Nevertheless, a brief reference to them is desirable here, partly because comparison with corresponding ideas in *Human Personality* has an interest for us ; partly because the account given of the soul in its relation to the Absolute throws some light on the question which more properly concerns us, namely the conception to be found in the scripts of the relation of supraliminal and subliminal in the incarnate personality.

The term "transcendental" is repeatedly used in the fragments pieced together by the editors of *Human Personality*<sup>1</sup> to form the concluding portion of Chapter IX. of that work, and, so far as my observation goes, nowhere else in the body of the book. The use of the term in Willett automatic productions is practically confined to the scripts of October 8, 1911, and January 21, 1912, and even there it occurs only in the combination, "The transcendental self". This phrase is common both to the scripts in question and to the concluding portion of Chapter IX., and provides a link between them which is perhaps not without significance.

If Mrs Willett had read the concluding portion of Chapter IX., it would be reasonable to infer that her scripts of October 1, 1911, and January 21, 1912, owe something of their content to that circumstance. But her acquaintance with *Human Per-*

<sup>1</sup> See *Editorial Note* to the Preface in *H.P.*, vol. i., p. x. The portion of vol. ii., chapter ix., here referred to, begins on p. 259.

*sonality* is entirely derived from the abridged version edited by Mr Leopold Myers. She assures me that to the best of her knowledge she has never so much as held a copy of the larger work in her hand. Now in the abridged version the concluding portion of Chapter IX. is so severely cut down that the seventeen or eighteen pages which it occupies in the original are reduced to less than three, and in those three pages the word "transcendental" does not once appear. It does, however, once occur in the *Synopsis of a Scheme of Vital Faculty*, which forms Appendix A to Chapter IX., and which is included in the abridged version. Even there there is no mention of the "transcendental self", only of the "transcendental world". On the other hand, it is just in the concluding sections of Chapter IX. that Myers gives the freest rein to his speculation, and they must certainly be held to express his most fully developed ideas on the subject with which they deal. If the Willett scripts are messages from an external source, and that source Myers himself (or Gurney speaking for the pair<sup>1</sup>) there would be nothing surprising in his employment, when communicating, of a term which he had already begun to use in his latest writings.

In *Human Personality* "the transcendental self" is contrasted with "the empirical self"; and this conjunction recalls the distinction between the transcendental ego and the empirical ego, with which we are familiar in Kantian phraseology. The similarity, however, is only verbal. For Kant the transcendental ego has a significance purely epistemological. It is the identical self as the necessary condition of experience, whereas the empirical self is the self with its serial content or succession of mental states.

In *Human Personality*, on the other hand, the adjective "transcendental" is synonymous with "spiritual" or "met-etherial", as in the phrase, "transcendental world", "transcendental mode of perception", "transcendental faculty",

<sup>1</sup> Cf. lone script of January 5, 1911, "This is all one message from 2 men. Sometimes the signature is F that means that I am here But rarely without him" (i.e. Gurney.) Whether the actual communicator is Gurney or Myers seems to depend mainly on the sitter. With O. J. L. as sitter, it is usually Myers; with me as sitter, it is almost invariably Gurney. This is dramatically appropriate, since I knew Gurney much better than I did Myers.

“transcendental environment”; and the transcendental self as opposed to the empirical self is simply the subliminal as opposed to the supraliminal.

We have already seen, in the chapter dealing with telepathy and telæsthesia, an example of the way in which the Willett scripts, while adopting the language of *Human Personality*, have introduced considerable changes in the meaning of the technical terms employed. One's first impression is that something of the same kind has happened in the case of the transcendental self; and in a measure this is true.

The transcendental self of the scripts is not the same as the transcendental self of *Human Personality*. The latter, as I have said, is the subliminal as opposed to the supraliminal in the incarnate. The former “is the ulterior pre-existing pre-subliminal in something of the same sense as the subliminal is pre-supraliminal”. As such it may fairly be described as the subliminal in the discarnate, and “the subliminal of the subliminal” in the incarnate.

It is clear that what we are offered in the scripts is an analysis of the soul into grades or degrees of spirituality.

In the incarnate these grades are

- (1) the supraliminal;
- (2) the subliminal;
- (3) the transcendental self.

In the discarnate all three grades are still present, but some elements characteristic of the supraliminal consciousness in the incarnate have, if my interpretation is correct, disappeared, while the remainder have become “blended” with what was the incarnate subliminal to form what we may, if we please, regard as a discarnate supraliminal.<sup>1</sup> The transcendental self will then, by analogy, represent the discarnate subliminal.

This account of the transcendental self cannot be wholly reconciled with the use of the term in *Human Personality*, but the discrepancy does not appear to me to be fundamental. It

<sup>1</sup> A “vital percentage” of supraliminal elements (see D.I. of October 8th, 1911) is presumably held to be retained by the discarnate spirit in order to account for the memories which it continues to possess of its earthly life, and also, perhaps, for some power of perceiving material things. But there is no distinct statement to this effect in the scripts.



must be remembered that Myers himself treats the subliminal as consisting of strata, or layers, of different depths, and in this he is followed by the scripts. "Ranges of different depths" is the description of it in the D.I., January 21, 1912, and in the same D.I. Gurney refers to "the profundities of the subliminal which grade right up and merge into what I've spoken of as the transcendental self". It might be plausibly contended that the transcendental self of the scripts is merely a special name for the deepest of a number of strata in the subliminal, and that the transcendental self of *Human Personality* includes this stratum as part of itself. I think, however, that the difference between the two goes somewhat beyond this. In distinguishing the transcendental self from the subliminal the scripts certainly mean to imply a difference of degree that has passed into a difference of kind, analogous to the difference between subliminal and supraliminal.<sup>1</sup> In what does the difference of kind consist? No clear answer is provided in the scripts. But material for an answer is, I think, to be found in the Synopsis prefixed to the "Scheme of Vital Faculty" (*H.P.*, vol. ii., p. 505), to which I have already had occasion to refer earlier in the present chapter (see p. 277 above). We are there presented with a threefold division of consciousness into (1) the supraliminal or empirical consciousness aware only of the material world through sensory impressions; (2) the subliminal consciousness obscurely aware of the transcendental world through telepathic and telæsthetic impressions; and (3) the subliminal consciousness discerning and influenced by disembodied spirits in a spiritual world. When I had this triple division previously under consideration I passed over the distinction (2) and (3) as unimportant in connection with the subject under discussion at the moment. What I have now to suggest is that the "subliminal consciousness discerning and influenced by disembodied spirits in a spiritual world" at once corresponds to and explains the transcendental self of the scripts. It is the name that is new rather than the distinction. But this new name, or, to be more accurate, this specialised application of a name already used by Myers in a looser and more general sense, is quite in

<sup>1</sup> Note that in the D.I. of January 21, 1912, the "H-self" is represented as that portion of the subliminal which is nearest to the transcendental self, but is at the same time distinguished from it. See p. 298 above.

consonance with his teaching, and might well have been accepted by him as an improvement in terminology.

The synopsis of the "Scheme of Vital Faculty", though not the scheme itself in detail, is included, as we have seen, in Mr Leopold Myers's abridged version of *Human Personality*, and Mrs Willett must be presumed to have read it.

The account given in the D.I. of January 21, 1912, of the relation between the soul and "the Absolute" raises questions which one could not even begin to discuss without plunging into metaphysics. Noteworthy among these is the remarkable doctrine which attributes the origin of the individual soul to the process of the Absolute "on its way to self-consciousness".<sup>1</sup> So far as I can recollect nothing quite like this is to be found in *Human Personality*.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me to bear the mark of derivation from post-Kantian idealistic speculation, of which, curiously enough, a good many traces crop up in the scripts.<sup>3</sup> Here, again, if the scripts are the work of the automatist's subliminal self, from what source were the ideas expressed in them obtained? The normal Mrs Willett is unable to throw any light upon this question.

Of greater interest, because it has some bearing on the main subject of the present chapter, is the ascending scale which is represented as extending beyond the transcendental self and reaching towards the Absolute. No attempt is made to define the further stages in the scale. The communicator himself admits that even to the emancipated spirit the region that lies beyond the transcendental self is a region of conjecture. "There are seas to be explored", says Gurney, "and I can only sail a little way out and come back with a report that the sea stretches infinitely vast beyond them". What he has in mind seems to be a progress by stages through which the individual ego passes in

<sup>1</sup> Earlier in the same D.I. statements are made which seem to imply that the transcendental self, like the Absolute, achieves self-consciousness by "hemming off", i.e. by self-limitation. But the script is so obscure at this point that I feel very uncertain of the true interpretation.

<sup>2</sup> See, however, the last sentence in chapter ix. of *Human Personality*, quoted in the footnote (2) on p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the reference to Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* in the D.I. of May 24, 1911 (p. 183 above).

its upward course, the relation between the stages being conceived as analogous to the relation between the supraliminal and subliminal "selves".

We have now to revert to the first of our two headings, and examine the account given in the scripts of the nature of this relation in the incarnate human being.

Let us begin by noting the important admission that while "the supraliminal and the subliminal are parts of one whole, they may act apparently so disconnectedly as to lead one from the incarnate standpoint to think of them as separate".

How is this possible ?

I do not think it would be unfair to Myers to say that he accepted the paradox as a true description of the nature of the soul. The soul is at once a unitary self, or ego, and a self distinguishable into parts sufficiently independent of each other to deserve on their own account to be described as "selves".

In essentials this is also the doctrine of the scripts. At the same time I think I see signs that the communicators realised more fully than the Myers of *Human Personality* appears to have done the difficulties inherent in his solution of the problem. On two points there is a noticeable change of attitude. On the one hand there is a tendency to emphasise the unity by blurring the lines of division between the "selves" so as to resolve them into a continuous whole. On the other hand, there seems to be a disposition to soften the paradox of the independence of the parts by setting aside as irrelevant certain observed phenomena which are on the face of them hard to reconcile with the doctrine.

The question I put to Gurney in the sitting of October 8, 1911, was this: "Myers in his book speaks of the supraliminal and the subliminal sometimes as if they were separate though closely associated selves, but more commonly as if they were different strata of one and the same individual consciousness. How are these two views to be reconciled?"

In reply Gurney says that in the individual consciousness there are many gradations, and he compares it to an ascending chain, *i.e.* a chain of which the successive links represent ascending degrees of spirituality. He proceeds to tell us something of the nature of the relation of the links with special reference to

the case of the supraliminal and the subliminal. "Normal supraliminal consciousness", we are informed, "varies in depth, and is, as it were, the upper crust of the subliminal. . . . The interaction between the two is continuous<sup>1</sup> . . . but the supraliminal consciousness of that interaction varies". We have here two statements, each of them interesting, though I am doubtful how far they are consistent. The natural meaning of the first would seem to be that the supraliminal varies in content, and at times includes a content which is usually confined to the subliminal. This would imply an enlarged range of supraliminal activity, and supraliminal and subliminal, regarded as parts of our whole, would appear to be either overlapping each other or advancing and receding respectively as the case may be. On the other hand, the second of the two statements rather suggests that the additional content is derived from the subliminal by a process of interaction—we are not allowed to call it telepathic interaction—and that the "variation in depth" attributed to the supraliminal may be merely a variation in its threshold of consciousness.

Another possible interpretation would be that a kind of blending of the parts may take place so as to produce a "blended consciousness" similar to that which the communicator describes as forming the supraliminal of the discarnate.

Whatever interpretation we adopt it is evident the "chain of links" is a very inadequate symbol to express the kind of unity in difference of which we are in search.

In the D.I. of January 21, 1912, the subject is resumed. Following upon a difficult passage which I take to be concerned with another subject altogether, namely the relation between mind and body, the statements made in the earlier sitting are in effect repeated.

Interaction, he says, is right. The supraliminal and the subliminal ebb and flow. . . . But if you're going to confuse any of this with the whole question of secondary and tertiary personalities and their respective memories of each other, you'll be making a mistake. Those are cases of dislocation, imperfect and often pathological. Oh! he says, it's the creaking of the machine that . . . But, he says, when the thing works properly

<sup>1</sup> "Continuous" here = unceasing, perpetual.

all the links are continuous, he says, and the point where the transcendental merges with the subliminal—*merges* may bring a number of associations for you which may not be in the least applicable—he says, between that point and the point which has been mapped out with the word supraliminal there's no complete break : it's like number.

Here I intervened with a remark that was intended to bring the discussion to a definite issue : “ You speak of a continuous interaction between the transcendental, the subliminal and the supraliminal. Does not interaction imply duality or multiplicity ? In a sense individual human beings are parts of one whole—that is, they are all rooted, as it were, in the absolute. Are supraliminal and subliminal separate in a manner analogous to the separation of different human beings ? ”

The real drift of my previous questions seems now to flash into Gurney's mind for the first time. The effect was dramatic. “ BOSH ”, he almost shouted—at least the word was uttered by the automatist in a tone of voice so loud and startling that for the moment I was fairly taken aback. “ Bosh ! different aspects of the same thing ”.

No doubt it is to this incident that Gurney is referring when, in a later script (quoted on p. 256 above), he charges me with having tried to get him “ on the horns of a duality which would *almost* amount to a conception of the selves as separated in such a way as to amount to 2 entities ”. Yet even now it is clear that he has not fully grasped the nature of the dilemma as it presents itself to me. If supraliminal and subliminal are to be regarded as *aspects* of a unitary self, I should have nothing to say in deprecation of his contemptuous outburst. That aspects of a self cannot be selves on their own account is, in fact, one of the very points for which I have been contending throughout the present chapter. If they are aspects of a self they cannot be separate selves : if they are not separate selves, how can they be used in satisfactory explanation of those phenomena of abnormal psychology for the understanding of which separate selves seem to be imperatively demanded—such, for instance, as secondary personalities of the Sally Beauchamp type, or those “ nunciative automatisms ” which Myers himself admits to be indistinguishable in form and circumstance from tele-

pathic messages accepted by him as proceeding from independent entities whether spirits of the dead or other human beings? Neither in *Human Personality* nor in the Willett scripts do I find any plausible answer to this question. Indeed, one might go further and suggest that the scripts now under consideration show a distinct disposition to shirk it. We are expressly warned not to confuse the relation of supraliminal to subliminal "with the whole question of secondary and tertiary personalities and their respective memories of each other. . . . Those are cases of dislocation, imperfect and often pathological, the creak of the machine". In other words, explanation of them is to be sought in organic disturbances. That they are often connected with organic disturbances may readily be conceded; but the Myers of *Human Personality* would have frankly admitted, and indeed strenuously contended, that the splitting of the personality into at least quasi-independent selves occurs in persons to all appearance perfectly healthy, and calls for explanation in terms of mind.

Of course, if you sweep on one side all phenomena that seem hard to reconcile with your theory, you simplify the problem; but you do so at the expense of leaving it unsolved.

The same tendency to avoid facing crucial cases is discernible, I think, in what I may call the Flaccus-Tlaccus incident. This incident provides the only case claimed by the scripts as a definite example of a "message" sent by the subliminal self—on its own account, and not merely as transmitter of messages from a communicating spirit—to the supraliminal.

The automatist, who was not in trance, records a name received by her as "Flaccus". This was correct; but it was followed by the remark, "No, that is wrong". In a note, written after the sitting was over, she adds—evidently with reference to the correcting words—that what she had recorded as "Flaccus" might have been "Tlaccus". In a later script (see pp. 255-6 above) Gurney interprets the words, "No, that is wrong", not as forming part of the communicator's message, but as being a remark addressed by the automatist's subliminal self to her supraliminal, and as applying, not to the correctly recorded "Flaccus", but to an erroneous impression on the part of the supraliminal that perhaps what should have been written was "Tlaccus".

Left to my own resources I should have supposed that the automatist herself took the words "no, that is wrong", to come from the communicator; and that afterwards, on reading over the script, had applied them to the name "Flaccus", and remembered that she had doubted at the time whether this might not have been "Tlaccus". The interpretation of the words as addressed by the subliminal to the supraliminal, and referring to an unexpressed thought, rests upon the authority of Gurney alone. Let us assume he was right, at least to this extent, that the words were no part of the communicator's message, but represent the emergence of a doubt in Mrs Willett's own mind. It seems quite unnecessary to invoke the machinery of a supraliminal and a subliminal self in order to explain so familiar a psychic experience. It would certainly never have occurred to me to regard it as evidence of an interaction between two independent entities associated together in the same organism.

There are, of course, plenty of mental experiences which are capable of being described in figurative language that implies some sort of duplication of mind; as, for instance, when some one, hesitating what course of action he shall adopt, says, "I was in two minds about it". In such a case nobody would seriously suggest that an interaction between two distinct selves is involved. The duality is in the thought, not in the thinker, who holds the alternatives together and compares them. I should unhesitatingly assign the Flaccus-Tlaccus incident to this type of experience, if, with Gurney, we ascribe the correcting words to the automatist herself. But the question remains, is it possible to reduce to this type the cases in which, to quote Gurney's own words, the selves "act apparently so disconnectedly as to lead one to think of them as separate"?

Here the Flaccus-Tlaccus incident is not illuminating.

It is important to make as clear as possible the distinction, as I see it, between phases of a self and separate selves. For me phases of a self are *successive* states of ego; they signify changes in the contents of consciousness of an ego. Separate selves, on the other hand, are *co-conscious* egos; that is to say, egos which bear the characteristic marks of self-hood *contem-*

poraneously.<sup>1</sup> Successive states of an ego may, I am quite ready to grant, present such contrasts as to produce marked alterations of personality.<sup>2</sup> I am further ready to grant that even in cases where memory of experience in state A seems to be completely lost in state B, nevertheless fragmentary recollection of those experiences may occasionally rise to the surface and mingle in a puzzling manner with the contents of state B—though I certainly should not describe the intrusive memories as messages from an A self to a B self.

What I am not prepared to believe is that successive states of an ego can ever be equivalent to a plurality of co-conscious egos capable of interaction with each other. To speak of successive states of an ego as “selves” in any sense is, in my view, misleading: to confuse them with co-conscious selves is to commit a serious error.

I cannot but think that Myers was guilty of this error when he tried to make his theory of the subliminal and the supra-liminal do double duty, and provide him with an account of the structure of human personality which satisfied the claims at once of unity and of plurality. Both the unity and the plurality have suffered in the process. When he wishes to emphasise the unity, the element of plurality is whittled down to a difference of aspects, or phases, or even faculties of a unitary self. When the claim of plurality is uppermost he does not hesitate to use language the natural meaning of which is that the self *as such* is divisible into fragmentary parts.

My own ideas I will once more try to sum up in baldest outline.

The self which we all habitually recognise as being *ourselves* is one and indivisible, but it is associated in the personality as a whole, not only with an organism, but with a number of centres of consciousness each of which is to be regarded as similarly one and indivisible, that is to say, as a self or monad. Among these other selves it occupies a position of primacy, and in normal conditions is in supreme control of the organism.

<sup>1</sup> For illustrations in Mrs Willett's case of the distinction between co-conscious egos and successive states of the same ego, see pp. 147-8 above.

<sup>2</sup> I doubt, however, whether extreme cases of alternating personalities are to be explained in this way. I refer the reader to my remarks on this subject on p. 274.



This conception of human personality is avowedly based on the observed phenomena of abnormal psychology. We have no direct evidence of the existence of these other, or secondary, selves, except when they reveal themselves as dissociated intelligences capable of acting on the primary self and being acted on by it. Nevertheless the continuing existence of the dissociated selves after and before dissociation is at least a plausible assumption; and, if they continue to exist, it is a further plausible assumption that they may continue to interact with the primary self and influence its conscious or subconscious content, even though the influence is no longer recognised by the primary self as proceeding from an independent source.

Finally, in order to complete my hypothesis, I have to generalise, and to assume that this composite psychical constitution, of which there is evidence in exceptional cases (and perhaps in dreaming), is not confined to such cases, but is a common characteristic of all human personality. If this be so, interaction with the subordinate selves may be continually at work modifying the thought-content of the primary self of all of us; but unless the modification appears to the primary self to be impressed upon it from without by something other than itself, its thoughts will be *for it* its own thoughts, and will carry with them no *objective*<sup>1</sup> significance.

Interaction within the group of selves I conceive to be telepathic; and I by no means exclude the possibility—or even the probability—of a similar interaction between them and a spiritual environment external to them.

I make no attempt to carry my analysis further or to try to imagine in detail how the different factors in human personality work together to produce unity and order. Any such attempt would involve an enquiry not only into the relation of mind to mind, but of mind to body, with the metaphysical problem of the relation of mind and matter looming in the background. In this paper I have confined myself all but entirely to the direct relation of mind to mind, a subject the systematic investigation of which may almost be said to date from the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research. Even now I suppose the majority of psychologists would deny that there was any direct relation between individual minds, as such, other

<sup>1</sup> See p. 46 above.

than the negative one of mutual exclusiveness and impenetrability. I do not believe that that view will prove to be permanently sustainable. I have tried to find a place for the principle of telepathy within the structure of human personality; and convinced as I am that the true explanation of the lower is to be sought in the higher, and not of the higher in the lower, I am not without hope that the same principle in a modified form may ultimately be found applicable to the relation of mind to body also.

One word in conclusion. I hold Myers's work in high admiration, and regard *Phantasms of the Living* and *Human Personality* as the greatest contributions yet made to the study of the subjects with which psychical research deals. Although in the present chapter prominence has inevitably been given to points on which I differ from him rather than to points of agreement, it is far from my wish to stress the differences unduly. I do not indeed look upon them as unimportant from the theoretical standpoint. But if regard be had to the conclusion at which Myers arrived on the matters which he had most at heart, I do not think the acceptance of my views need substantially affect his position one way or the other. Myers considered that he had proved three things<sup>1</sup>: in the first place, that survival is a reality; in the second place, that between the spiritual and the material worlds an avenue of communication does, in fact, exist; in the third place, that the surviving spirit retains, at least in some measure, the memories and loves of earth. With these conclusions I am in sympathy, though Myers was surely oversanguine in holding them to be proved. Evidence is slowly accumulating, but even to-day, more than a generation after his death, I cannot say that it amounts to proof.

On the other hand the case for survival does not rest on Myers's analysis of human personality, and would in no way suffer by a change in our conception of it that would substitute a group of subordinate selves interacting with a dominant self, and in normal conditions subliminal thereto, for a single self mysteriously divisible into layers or strata that interact with each other as if they were independent co-conscious selves. The difference between the two conceptions may affect our

<sup>1</sup> See *H.P.*, vol. ii., pp. 256-7,

ideas concerning the process of communication. But for evidence to enable us to distinguish between what I have called "interior" and "exterior" communication, and, again, between communication from minds incarnate and communication from minds discarnate, we must look to content of the communications themselves. Sidelights upon this most difficult line of inquiry may be found here and there in the foregoing pages, but the inquiry itself lies outside the subject proper of this paper.

*November, 1934.*

## APPENDIX

I RELEGATE the subjoined script to an appendix because its main subject-matter is metaphysical rather than psychological. But I venture to think it may be of interest to readers of my paper, both for its own sake and as a striking illustration of the dilemma which faces us in cases similar to that of "Patience Worth", cited above, p. 154.

*Lone Script of August 20, 1911.*

Myers the mystery of life write that so much more inscrutable than the mystery of death the well go on the endless roll of the sons of men the storms the same storms raising only different particles of spray whirling a moment above the roar of the central sea they sink back into the arms of the abiding ocean Yes say that the abiding ocean of vital force How far does the consciousness of the spray stretch No how far does the consciousness of the spray (*scribble*) no how far does the consciousness of the seas existence crystalise itself no how far does the consciousness of the seas existence stretch or spread as far as the spray is concerned You have not got it clear the spray is by the action of the sea shot off into space for the fraction of a second.

How far in that seconds duration does the consciousness of the seas existence remain individualised in the sprays atom

this is not as I wanted it say [said] but let it stand And does the consciousness of the atom include also the facts of its interrelation with the seas depths as well as with its surface And does it include its say the word return Do you know what exists Why the sea and the momentarily isolated fragment of it tossed by its own volition into the sprays sweep Also the well go on also the idea of the spray as it is in the seas heart also the idea of the sea as it lies potential and latent in the heart of the sprays smallest drop and above that there would be one thing more the resolution of it all no yes the say the word comprehensiveness summing up that which includes

no the mind in which the seas action the seas consciousness  
 the sprays action the sprays consciousness and the conscious-  
 ness of its own consciousness of all those forenamed con-  
 sciousnesses—in which all is resolved that is better the one  
 resolution ultimate that which gathers up and incorporates  
 which is the sea and yet the not sea which is the atom within  
 the sprays drop write the word differentiation [*sic.*] It is very  
 difficult to get it clear But write for the weight of inspiration  
 is upon you

I am trying to give you what you are potentially no poten-  
 tially able to select <sup>1</sup>

There is a whole in which the relation of the spray to the sea  
 is clearly cognised and understood that is partly what I wanted  
 to say and say again Deep calling unto deep

the deeps of consciousness

the atoms vary but the sea is the same

How liable to misinterpretation exclaims the cautious H S

But of that whole which is sea and not sea spray and not  
 spray which is within and yet without write the word that  
 observer of phenomena transcending and yet immanent

that is better of that whole you may catch at times an  
 intuitional apprehension

Will it do to pace the sad confusion through <sup>2</sup>

But that which is above the seas clamour and yet within it  
 which is the wind and the vacuum well go on to that mind  
 the confusion may be but part of a process no part of a process  
 in process of proceeding that is well let her go on

Whirl of systems Roll of suns <sup>3</sup>

How much does the sprays consciousness contribute to the  
 transcending IDEA go on and how much does it depend  
 upon it

<sup>1</sup> The text is so confused that it is impossible to be sure of the meaning here. On the whole I am inclined to think that the word "no" should be "not", and that the sentence should run, "I am trying to give you what you are not potentially able to select"—*i.e.* what you are not yourself able to select from the potential contents of my mind. There is evidently a reference back to the statements made in the D.I. of June 4, 1911. See footnote (3) on p. 233 above.

<sup>2</sup> Clough, "Through a Glass Darkly."

<sup>3</sup> Tennyson, *God and the Universe*, incorrectly quoted. Should be "Rush of suns and roll of systems".

Is this sheer nonsense think you Try again What is real  
is what lies at the back of objective phenomena

Is there then an abstract verity of things a verity other  
than that achieved by the process of being dont hesitate go  
on a verity other than that CREATED by things in their  
action of being try again Are things symptomatic of an  
abiding and total sum of truth

I have got the word at last

### TRUTH

or do things contribute and form and create the only reality  
that is more what I wanted to ask I want to get at the thought  
implied by the juxtaposition of the words

### ACTION and TRUTH<sup>1</sup>

which is dependent which is primary and which well say  
the word derivative You have travelled far and now you must  
go back

Yes I know you have been very near sleep the heavy eyelids  
have closed more than once

Weary heart in a world outgrown but that is not the *whole*  
truth It would have been easier for you if you could have  
loosed the cable and set sail in D I I know But there was no  
one to take charge of the mechanism to day and so you were  
working under double pressure one hand tightly grasping the  
sense world

Is that a new word to you

I want to say once more I said it elsewhere

How far the little candle sheds its beams<sup>2</sup>  
sheds its light

Take a message for me

If you could understand the constituent parts and their  
corelation of the tiniest drop of spray you would be on the  
way to achieving knowledge of the seas depth this is not  
for you but for another the thought lies too in the crannied  
wall<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare the concluding words of the D.I. of June 4, 1911 (p. 235 above).

<sup>2</sup> *The Merchant of Venice*, v., i. The idea intended to be conveyed is probably the same as that in "Flower in the Crannied Wall".

<sup>3</sup> Tennyson, *Flower in the Crannied Wall*.

but Sidgwick will *speak* of this later. He feels the burden of unuttered words. Do they think of him as standing dry and secure above the seas roar careless of the turmoil in which he himself was once a buffeted swimmer. He pondered deeply on many things, pondered all his life with a sort of serene patience which yet was not dull or drugged but was partly the result of a belief in the possibility<sup>1</sup> of obtaining any answer—underline the word any and partly the realisation [*sic*] that the time had not yet come when the time honoured answers had proved to be completely unsatisfying to the sons of men—the thought that he was by his own labour and by loyalty to his Spirits Vision—hastening that hour made him often uneasy for he had no solution to offer in the place of those which he destroyed—destroyed quite as much by his silence as by the spoken word. He never had Gurneys complete inability to accept life at its own value. How like you and Gurney are that is partly the secret of Gurneys power to help you and power to control you powers greater than I shall ever approach anywhere near to. He can always tell how things will present themselves to your mind and that means that he can that he has some that he has a large measure of a large mass no you have mistaken the key word this knowledge enables him to effect results by a twofold process that is not what I wanted to say Try again

He is enabled to calculate with extraordinary accuracy the effect of any given thing upon you and therefore of your probable subsequent reaction to it that is clumsy. But it is near my meaning. But the understanding springing from similarity of outlook is a very close and binding link

the last words I wish to read thus

A very powerful instrument in his hands

The outlook is a past outlook for him now. But one does not forget strata. Why do you stop one does not forget the tracts of moral emotional and mental experience through which one has travelled

Farewell F

[Sc. began at 11.5 a.m. ; ended at 12.10. I was very drowsy and in places caught myself dropping off to sleep.]

<sup>1</sup> "Possibility" should, I think, be "impossibility".