condition is not one of simple quiescence or arrest of mental life, such as characterizes the state of normal deep sleep and the coma produced by defective cerebral circulation by toxic substances in the blood or by mechanical violence done to the brain.

If we refuse the name trance to ordinary sleep-walking, to normal dreaming, to catalepsy, to the hypnotic state and to stupor, there remain two different states that seem to have equal claims to the name; these may be called the ecstatic trance and the trance of mediumship respectively.

The ecstatic trance is usually characterized by an outward appearance of rapt, generally joyful, contemplation; the subject seems to lose touch for the time being with the world of things and persons about him, owing to the extreme concen- tration of his attention upon some image or train of imagery, which in most cases seems to assume an hallucinatory character (see Hallucination). In most cases, though not in all, the sub­ject remembers in returning to his normal state the nature of his ecstatic vision or other experience, of which a curiously frequent character is the radiance or sense of brilliant luminosity.

In the mediumistic trance the subject generally seems to fall into a profound sleep and to retain, on returning to his normal condition, no memory of any experience during the period of the trance. But in spite of the seeming unconsciousness of the subject, his movements, generally of speech or writing, express, either spontaneously or in response to verbal interrogation, intelligence and sometimes even great intel­lectual and emotional activity. In many cases the parts of the body not directly concerned in these expressions remain in a completely lethargic condition, the eyes being closed, the muscles of neck, trunk and limbs relaxed, and the breathing stertorous.

Trances of these two types seem to have occurred sporadic- ally (occasionally almost epidemically) amongst almost all peoples in all ages. And everywhere popular thought has interpreted them in the same ways. In the ecstatic trance the soul is held to have transcended the bounds of space or time, and to have enjoyed a vision of some earthly event distant in space or time, or of some supernatural sphere or being. The mediumistic trance, on the other hand, popular thought in­terprets as due to the withdrawal of the soul from the body and the taking of its place, the taking possession of the body, by some other soul or spirit; for not infrequently the speech or writing produced by the organs of the entranced subject seems to be, or actually claims to be, the expression of a personality quite other than that of the sleeper. It is noteworthy that in almost all past ages the possessing spirit has been regarded in the great majority of cases as an evil and non-human spirit; whereas in modem times the possessing spirit has usually been regarded as, and often claims to be, the soul or spirit of some deceased human being. Modem science, in accordance with its materialistic and positive tendencies, has rejected these popular interpretations. It inclines to see in the ecstatic trance a case of hallucination induced by prolonged and intense occupation with some emotionally exciting idea, the whole mind becoming so concentrated upon some image in which the idea is bodied forth as to bring all other mental functions into abey­ance. The mediumistic trance it regards as a state similar to deep hypnosis, and seeks to explain it by the application of the notion of cerebral or mental dissociation in one or other of its many current forms; this assimilation finds strong support in the many points of resemblance between the deeper stages of hypnosis and the mediumistic trance, and in the fact that the artificially and deliberately induced state may be connected with the spontaneously occurring trance state by a series of states which form an insensible gradation between them. A striking feature of the mediumistic trance is the frequent occurrence of “ automatic ” speech and writing; and this feature especially may be regarded as warranting the appli- cation of the theory of mental dissociation for its explanation, for such automatic speech and writing are occasionally pro­duced by a considerable number of apparently healthy persons while in a waking condition which presents little or no other symptom of abnormality. In these cases the subject hears his own words, or sees the movement of his hand and his own hand writing, as he hears or sees those of another person, having no sense of initiating or controlling the movements and no anticipatory awareness of the thoughts expressed by the movements. When, as in the majority of cases, such movements merely give fragmentary expression to ideas or facts that have been assimilated by the subject at some earlier date, though perhaps seemingly completely forgotten by him, the theory of mental dissociation affords a plausible and moderately satisfactory explanation of the movements; it regards them as due to the control of ideas or memories which somehow have become detached or loosened from the main system of ideas and tendencies that make up the normal personality, and which operate in more or less complete detachment; and the application of the theory is in many cases further justified by the fact that the “ dissociated ” ideas and memories seem in some cases to become taken up again by, or reincorporated with, the normal personality.

But in recent years a new interest has been given to the study of the mediumistic trance by careful investigations (made with a competence that commands respect) which tend to re-establish the old savage theory of possession, just when it seemed to have become merely an anthropological curiosity. These investiga­tions have been conducted for the most part by members of the Society for Psychical Research, and their most striking results have been obtained by the prolonged study of the automatic speech and writing of the American medium, Mrs Piper. In this case the medium passes into a trance state apparently at will, and during the trance the organs of speech or the hand usually express what purport to be messages from the spirits of. deceased relatives or friends of those who are present. A number of competent and highly critical observers have arrived at the conviction that these messages often comprise statements of facts that could not have come to the knowledge of the medium in any normal fashion; and those who are reluctant to accept the hypothesis of “ possession ” find that they can reject it only at the cost of assuming the operation of tele­pathy *(q.v.)* in an astonishing and unparalleled fashion. During 1907-1908 the investigation was directed to the obtaining of communications which should not be explicable by the most extended use of the hypothesis of telepathic communication from the minds of living persons. The plan adopted was to seek for “ cross-correspondences ” between the communica­tions of the Piper “ controls ” and the automatic writings of several other persons which claimed to be directed by the same disembodied spirits; *i.e.* it was sought to find in the automatic writings of two or more individuals passages each of which in itself would be fragmentary and unintelligible, but which, taken in connexion with similar fragments contemporaneously pro­duced by another and distant writer, should form a significant whole; for it is argued that such passages would constitute irrefutable evidence of the operation of a third intelligence or personality distinct from that of either medium. The results published up to 1909 seem to show that this attempt met with striking success; and they constitute a body of evidence in favour of the hypothesis of possession which no impartial and unprejudiced mind can lightly set aside. Nevertheless, so long as it is possible to believe, as so many of the most competent workers in this field believe, that dissociated fragments of a personality may become synthesized to form a secondary and as it were parasitic personality capable of assuming temporary control of the organs of expression, and so long as we can set no limits to the scope of telepathic communication between embodied minds, [it would seem wellnigh impossible, even by the aid of this novel and ingenious plan of investigation, to achieve completely convincing evidence in favour of the hypothesis of “ possession.”

Literature.—∙F. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism* (London, 1902) ; F. W. Η. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (London, 1903); Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality*