

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUGGESTION.

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Heredity and environment make the individual what he is. Heredity represents a mass of potent suggestions transmitted through the medium of "heredity-carriers" called germi-plasma which in uniting form the embryo of the human being. Environment may be defined as the suggestion to the maturing and educating self by surrounding influences.

Suggestibility may be divided into two classes, that of suggestibility in the normal state of the individual or normal suggestibility and that of suggestibility in the abnormal state of the individual, or abnormal suggestibility.

The soil favorable for the seeds of suggestion exist in the normal individual. The suggestible element is a constituent of our nature. Normal suggestibility though always with us rarely attracts our attention as it manifests itself in but trivial things. When, however it rises to the surface in great fury and cripples on its way every thing it can destroy, menace life and throws social order in the wildest state of confusion, we call it a mob. Deep down in the nature of man we find hidden the spirit of suggestibility. Man is often defined as a social animal; this is true, but it gives little insight into the psychical state of the individuals composing the society. He has also been termed a rational animal but this scarcely holds true to all classes of men. It is not sociality nor rationality that best characterize the average specimen of mankind, but suggestibility, for man is a suggestible animal. This fact of suggestibility existing in the normal individual is of the utmost importance in the theoretical field of knowledge, in psychology, ethics, sociology, history, as well as in practical life, politics, economics, and in education. For the work of this paper, however, the discussion will be confined mostly to that of suggestibility in the abnormal state or abnormal suggestibility, studying its relation to the subjective or hypnotic state and various other psychic phenomena.



Since the hysterical and hypnotic states do not belong to the routine of our every day experience but occur only under special conditions we will have sufficient reason for terming these states as abnormal.

The law of suggestion is undoubtedly the greatest discovery in Psychis Science, in all psychic phenomena it plays its subtle role.

As all abnormal suggestibility concerns itself directly with the subjective or subconscious as well as with the objective self, we will now consider some of the principle attributes of these two selves.

The objective mind takes cognizance of the outer world. Its media of observation are the five physical senses. This self is the outgrowth of man's physical necessities. It is a guide in his struggle with material environment. The highest function of this mind is that of reasoning.

The subjective mind takes cognizance of its environment by a means independent of the five senses. It preceives by intuition. It is the seat of the emotion emotions and of the memory, the latter faculty being perfect. This mind performs its highest functions when the objective senses are asleep. It is the subjective mind that possesses what is known as the clairvoyant power and the power to know the thoughts of others without the aid of the ordinary, objective means of communication. The subjective mind appears to be a distinct entity, having independent functions and powers and possessing a mental organization of its own and is capable of surtaining an existence independent of the body. Another name for this self is the soul.

One of the most important points of difference between the two minds relates to the subject of suggestion. The objective mind or man in his normal condition is not subject to control against positive knowledge, reason or the evidence of his senses by the suggestion of another. The sub-conscious mind or man in the hypnotic state, is constantly and unqualifiedly amenable to controll by suggestion. The subjective mind does not possess the power of inductive



The fundamental law of hypnotism is the absolute amenability of the subjective mind to control by the power of suggestion. All phenomena such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought transference, hypnotism and spiritism or mediumship, are embraced in the one generic title, subjective or hypnotic and are therefore governed by the same law.

Hypnosis or hypnotic sleep is a condition of the mind in which the mental action and will power of a subject are under the control of an operator who has induced the state. Researches of Professor Liebault in the field of hypnotism seconded by those of his pupil, Professor Bernheim, have made discoveries which throw light upon the whole domain of psychological investigation. The discovery is this, "that hypnotic subjects are constantly amenable to the power of suggestion in the all-potent factor in the production of all hypnotic phenomena". This proposition has been demonstrated to be true beyond all doubt.

In order successfully to hypnotize an individual there are five conditions which must be brought about. The first and foremost of these is that of fixation of the attention. This is an indispensable condition. An individual in order to be hypnotizable must possess the power of directing their attention in a certain direction. Those who can by no means fix their attention or who suffer from absent-mindedness or are stupid and hence lack the power of concentration, cannot be hypnotized unless some compelling means of establishing control is resorted to, such as the injection of morphia hypodermatically.

The second condition is that of monotony of impressions. The operator must prevent new impressions from reaching the subject. In the majority of cases the monotonous and continuous impression of none of the senses produce a certain intellectual drowsiness, the prelude of sleep.

The third condition is that of limitation of voluntary movements. The subject sits down into as comfortable a position as possible, and is required to relax his muscles and make as few movements as possible.



reasoning but its processes are always deductive or syllogistic, it always taking for its premise the suggested idea. That is to say, the subjective mind accepts without hesitation every statement given to it, no matter how absurd it may seem to the objective self of the individual. There is another principle which should here be mentioned and which apparently is not so well understood by hypnotists generally. The phenomena to which I refer is that of auto-suggestion.

Professor Bernheim and others have recognized it and its power to modify the results of one class of hypnotic phenomena, but seemingly do not recognize its true significance. It is in fact of equal importance with the general principle of suggestion and forms a necessary part of it. Auto-suggestion may be defined as the suggestion by an objective consciousness to its own subjective consciousness. It modifies all phenomena and it sometimes is thought to be an exception to the general rule but if properly understood it will be found to harmonize completely with the fundamental law of suggestion.

Since the two minds are possessed of independent functions and powers it follows that the subjective mind of the individual is amenable to the control of his own objective mind as well as to the objective mind of another. We find many examples of this. For instance a person cannot be hypnotized against his will. In this case the constant auto-suggestion of the objective mind of the individual to his subjective mind is stronger than the suggestion of the operator and therefore prevails. Again, if a person is strongly opposed to the use of tobacco, no amount of persuasion on the part of the operator can induce him to go contrary to his principles. And so we find auto-suggestion playing its subtle role, often to the astonishment of the operator by rendering his subject disobedient when he expected absolute submissiveness. This fact does not in the least stand contrary to the one that the all controlling power of the subjective mind is that of suggestion but on the contrary demonstrates its never-failing accuracy. It only shows that the strongest suggestion must always prevail.



The next requisite is that of limitation of the field of consciousness. Thus the method of Braid narrows the field of consciousness to a brilliant point, mesmerism to the passes, that of the Nancy School to the tip of a finger held before the subject or to the one idea of expectation of sleep. A strong emotion narrows down to the field of consciousness. We often find people who under the strain of intense excitement loose, so to say, their senses, their mind seems to be paralyzed or rather the one idea of the excitement banishes all other ideas, hence a limitation of the field of consciousness. Intensely emotional or hysterical natures can often be thrown into the hypnotic state by some strong sudden stimulus, such as a thunder clap.

The last condition required is that of inhibition. The subject must inhibit all ideas and images that come up before his mind.

When all these conditions are brought about the subject is thrown into an artificial sleep, his condition is one of passive obedience, the objective consciousness being entirely in obedience, and the subjective self maintaining control of the intellect.

Proper suggestion given when the individual is in the state of hypnosis can be used to great advantage in promoting the moral culture of such individual. There is an idea strongly grafted in the minds of a great majority of people that the ability of one man to hypnotize places in his hands a very dangerous power and one which in the hands of an immoral man may be used for criminal purposes. In the case of a virtuous subject, this cannot be the case. Thousands of experiments are daily being performed to demonstrate the impossibility of controlling the hypnotic subject so far as to cause him to do that which he believes or knows to be wrong.

Auto-suggestion comes in to aid the individual. Auto-suggestion in its broad significance embraces not only the suggestions of the objective self to its own subjective self, but also the habits of thought of the individual and the settled principles and convictions of his whole life and the stronger and deeper



rooted these are the more difficult are they to be overcome by the suggestions of another. This is one of the greatest proofs of its universality of the law of suggestion, i.e., that the stronger suggestion must prevail. One of the assertions made by those who hold that, outside of the medical profession, crime is the necessary result of hypnotic treatment in that a subject can be made to commit suicide by suggesting to him the propriety of so doing. There is no ground for such a supposition and the reason will be made obvious when we consider some of the distinctive attributes of the subjective mind. It will not be disputed that the attribute in the subjective mind of man known as intuition corresponds to what in animals is called instinct.

There are three primary functions or instincts of the subjective mind which are common to all men and animals. The first pertains to the preservation of the life of the individual, hence is called the instinct of self-preservation. The second the instinct of reproduction. The third pertains to the preservation of life generally and one's offspring particularly. The potency of these instincts is so well known as not to require comment.

There is one peculiarity pertaining to the subjective activity when the life of the individual is imperiled or that of offspring endangered that is not so generally understood. In such cases the subjective mind takes prompt possession of the person and every act, so long as active exertion is necessary to preserve the endangered life, is subjective. That this is the case is shown, first by the preternatural strength bestowed on the person under such circumstances; second by the complete obedience of fear; third by the wonderful presence of mind displayed in the quick adaptation of every means to its proper appropriate end, i.e. in doing the proper thing at the proper time. Comment is often made as to the wonderful "presence of mind" displayed by individuals in a time of great peril where immediate action is required and there is no time for reflection or reasoning out a mode of action or defense. The "presence of mind" is nothing more or less than subjective activity or in other words, instinctive action, the objective self being



for the time in almost complete obedience. That this is true is further proven by the fact that a person in deadly peril will often emerge from the very jaws of death with steady nerves, the coolest and most collected person present. This action is often mistaken for bravery but it has nothing whatever to do with the question of personal bravery. The worst coward under such conditions will act with the same coolness as the bravest man. The condition of persons at such a time is very closely related though not identical with the state of whole or partial hypnosis. It may be that at such a time the faculties of the objective and subjective minds are in perfect synchronism, but it is certain that every evidence of subjective activity is present. The fact to be deduced from this and one which may be set down as a fundamental truth of hypnosis is that the auto-suggestion most difficult to overcome is that which originates in the normal action of the subjective mind, in other words, that of instinctive auto-suggestion.

There is no doubt but that hypnotism can under the hands of a skillful and high minded operator, be used to a great advantage in moral culture. Hypnotism if properly applied to cases of degenerates and criminals can restore them by giving sub-suggestions to the subliminal self as will create a disgust for such action will inspire in him a desire to do better. This treatment cannot all be given at one sitting but must be taken up gradually. Abdication to stimulants and drugs, habits of stealing and lying, dangerous delusions, immoral impulses, eccentric and unmanageable dispositions in children and general incorrigibility are all curable by hypnotic suggestion.

Stammering, stuttering and such speech defects may also be cured by this means. High purpose and earnest endeavor may be substituted in character for viscous and sordid aims, good ideals for low standards, habits of thought concentration for habit's of rambling and similar cases are all subject to this powerful factor, that of hypnotic suggestion. Frequent repetition of the hypnotic procedure increase the subjects susceptibility. Where as hypnotism often repeated as an educating and strengthening influence, with a view to inducing a healthy mental



habit, is absolutely harmless, the constant use of a hypnotized person for exhibition or other unworthy or useless purpose may lead to a physical depletion, weakening of the mental powers, hysterics and even insanity. Therefore, as John Quackenbos says, we see the wisdom of restricting the use of hypnotic suggestion to those who thoroughly understand the danger of such process and possess sufficient character to use it conscientiously. In the hands of such persons suggestion may be made a most valuable aid to the objective ethical training in the reformatories.

Reformers can do a noble work by means of this power of suggesting pure thoughts and wholesome aspirations to the subliminal self of the wayward character.

In the realm of psycholotherapeutics or mental healing we again recognize the all potent influence of suggestion. The most important method of healing the sick now in practice may be summarized under the following heads.

First:- Mind cure,-this is a method of healing based upon the fact that all diseases are due to abnormal conditions of the mind and that the latter can be cured by the direct action of the mind of the healer upon that of the patient.

Second:- Prayer and Religion Cure. To this class belong those cures affected by prayer alone and are known in this country as faith or prayer cures.

Third:- Christian Science. Their mode of healing rests upon the supposition of unreality of matter, this assumed as a major premise it follows that our bodies are unreal and that disease is therefore a diseased state of mind which is the only thing in existence.

Fourth:- Spiritism. This system is based on the assumption that spirits of the dead operate directly or indirectly through a medium on the subject.

Fifth:- Mesmerism,-this includes all the systems founded on the assertion that there exists in man a fluid which can be transmitted from one to another, at the will of the operator, and which fluid results in a cure of the diseases organism.

Sixth:- The last one to be mentioned is that of Suggestive Hypnotism. This system is founded on the supposition that persons in the hypnotic state are



constantly amenable to control by suggestion and then pain may be alleriated, fever abated, etc. and thus nature the healer is allowed to do the work of restoration.

Thus we have six different systems of psychotherapeutics founded upon as many different theories and the most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is that there must be some underlying principle which is common to them all. The fundamental proposition of the hypothesis to be considered are, first, - that man possesses two minds, the objective and subjective. Second, - that the subjective mind is constantly amenable to control by suggestion. These propositions have been proven true beyond chance of doubt. The third proposition is, to quote T.J. Hudson's words " that the subjective mind has absolute control of the functions, conditions and sensations of the body." This last proposition seems almost self evident to one acquainted with the simplest phenonema of hypnotism. These three propositions give us the working hypothesis employed in all psychotherapeutics.

Faith is a necessary condition on the part of the patient. It follows from an hypothesis that the subjective mind of the individual is constantly amenable to control by suggestions by his objective mind as it is to the suggestions of another. Therefore whatever be the objective belief of the subject if he will assume to have faith, active or passively, his subjective mind will be controlled by the suggestion and the desired result will be produced. The faith required for suggestive therapeutics is a purely subjective faith and such a condition is attained by cessation of active opposition of the objective mind. This is the reason that perfect passivity of the patient is the one essential condition. It is undoubtedly much better if both the faith of the subjective and objective mind is secured but this is not essential, if the patient will in good faith make the necessary auto-suggestion to his subjective mind either in words or or by submitting passively to the suggestions of the healer. This state of passivity is of the utmost importance, in fact the whole science of mental healing may be expressed in two words, - passivity and suggestion.



Auto-suggestion is of vast importance in its relation to mental healing. Auto-suggestion when properly used and understood affords a means of enabling every one to heal himself at least to hold himself in the proper mental attitude to make permanent the good efforts of hypnotic treatment by others.

In the phenomena of spiritism we again recognize the influence of suggestion. This is shown in the readiness with which spirits can be made to respond to calls made upon them whether they have any existence or not. It is a well known fact that any one can obtain a communication from an imaginary person as well as from a real one, provided the medium does not happen to be acquainted with the fact. This control over the medium is noted in another way. It is a well known fact that in order to have a successful spiritual seance, it is necessary that "harmonious conditions prevail". The very presence of a sceptic will often prevent any manifestations. It is often the case that one present at such a seance will remark "that he does not expect any manifestations because it always happens when he is present that no communications can be secured." Then this character of a remark is made in nine cases out of ten the "spirits" will refuse to respond. This part is in strict accordance with the universality of suggestion for the presence of a sceptic acts as an ever present and all powerful suggestion that promised communication is impossible.

No medium can be powerful enough to produce his phenomena under test conditions in the presence of a hostile and sceptical investigating committee. Therefore the conclusion is that the subjective mind of the medium, under the control of suggestion, thinks itself to be the spirit of some deceased person whose name is suggested. The medium is in a subjective or hypnotic state. It is not the fault of the medium that he has such ideas, his subjective mind has been educated to that belief both through the objective education of the individual and environment. It is his religious belief. It is thus seen that in order to explain spiritism on the hypothesis that it has origin in the subjective self it does



not necessitate the accusing of the medium of dishonesty and insincerity when he attributed it to disembodied spirits. His sub-conscious mind has never been taught other wise or had any other explanation of the phenomena.

There are a number of ways by which the operations of the subjective mind can be brought above the threshold of consciousness. When by any of the various ways this is done a phonema is produced. Each of these phenomena has sometime in the history of man been attributed to the workings of disembodied spirits. The principal phenomena of this kind are clairvoyance,mesmerism,or hypnotism,percussive sounds(spirit rappings) movement of portable bodies (table tipping) automatic writing and the appearance of phantoms.

Of these,telepathy,phypnotism and clairvoyance have ceased to be regarded as results of supernatural powers,they being now recognized as inherent in man, and are used to a considerable extent in the explanation of other phenomena. As in all these phenomena the laws of suggestion prevail,we will now take up the definition of telepathy. Telepathy is the power to know the thought of another without the aid of the ordinary objective means of communication. Telepathic communications are seen in the form of visions which are as varied as is the character of those communing. The mind of these medium is dominated by the idea that he is to controled by spirits and he becomes wholly or partially self-hypnotized. This suggestion being made to him,his mind will prodeed to fill in details in some way with very logical circumstantiality of detail and wonderful acumen. Again the subjective mind of his subject is also controlled by a suggestion of greater or less strength that the spirits of the dead are about to be evolved and is also ready with its logical deductions from the suggested premises and so will perform its part of the seance with the same acumen and alertness. Hence we have two subjective minds en rapport and the conditions for a telepathic communication established. The medium then unconsciously employs mind reading to impart to his subject information regards persons and events of which even the medium has no previous knowledge. Inaall classes



reason for this is obvious. When we consider the fact that this writing has always been associated with the idea of spirit communication. In cases where the the automatist knows nothing of spiritism and consequently there is no suggestion of the spirits having any thing to do with it, the subjective mind will not assume to be a spirit.

Under the head of Trance may be grouped all of that class of cases in which objective faculties are for the time being held in obedience and the subjective mind becomes very active. A variety of names have been applied to such conditions. Such as hypnosis, mesmeric trance, ecstasy, somnambulism, catalepsy, etc. The leading characteristics of a trancer are first complete or partial obedience to the objective mind, second, activity of the subjective mind; third, - perfect amenability of the subjective mind to control by suggestion. The laws of suggestion govern all trance seers. If the medium is possessed of ideas of his own and no others are suggested, he will see visions from the spirit world which will exactly correspond to his own ideas.

On the other hand we find that ghosts or phantoms whether of the living or dead, are not controlled by suggestion, but we find a distinct reason for this. A ghost or phantom is an intensified telepathic vision, its objective persistency and permanence being in exact proportion to the intensity of the sensation which caused it. It is the embodiment of the thought or idea. A ghost is never known to have more than one idea or purpose. Therefore a phantom, in not being controlled by a suggestion, possesses the characteristics we might expect to distinguish an embodied thought of a soul from the soul itself.

There is another psychic phenomena which is deserving of notice not only on account of the fact that it is governed by the same law which we are discussing but because of its great importance and practical interest. The subject to which I refer is that of catalepsy or suspended animation, and consequently a premature burial.



of phenomena generally attributed to spirits we find that telepathy plays a very important part and it is this that throws so much mystery around these phenomena and it explains that which without its aid would be inexplicable on any other hypothesis than that attributing these manifestations to the agency of disembodied spirits.

In thus assenting to the part that telepathy plays in spirit phenomena we must not forget that it is not necessary that a person have objective knowledge of a part in order to enable him to communicate it telepathically to the medium for no matter how superficially a fact is impressed upon the objective consciousness it is forever fixed on the subjective memory and is always available when the case demands it.

Clairvoyance is not distinctly defined but it is the seeing of visions and is often said to be identical with telepathy.

Clairaudience may be defined as "clear hearing". This is a faculty of the mind more rarely developed than is that of clairvoyance. The same law of suggestion which governs other phenomena governs that character of the clairaudient manifestations. Thus if the suggestion is entertained that the communication proceeds from disembodied spirits or the guardian angel of the receiver the character will be assumed by the subconscious self and the future communications will be based on that assertion. Many have undoubtedly gone insane by constantly hearing what they thought were spirit voices. The subjective mind dominated by the false suggestion gradually obtained control of the objective faculties and Reason abdicated her throne.

Automatic writing consists in placing a pencil in the hand and letting it write. The subjective mind assumes control of the muscles and nerves of the hand and arm and propels the pencil, the objective consciousness being meantime perpetually quiet and often totally unconscious of what is being written. The entity that guides the pencil almost invariably assumes to be a spirit. The



There are two erroneous impressions which very generally prevail regarding this phenomena. The one is that catalepsy is a disease or always caused by disease. The other is that the depriving the subject of air will cause death in a few hours. Both of these statements are fairly disproved of by the well known experiments of the East Indian fakirs. One of these experiments was that of Fakir of Lahore, who permitted himself to be buried alive in an airtight vault for a period of six weeks, after which time he was restored to consciousness. Catalepsy may be divided into four classes, differing from one another only in the cause by which they are produced. The first is that of catalepsy produced by hypnotic suggestion, epidemic catalepsy, third self induced catalepsy, fourth, catalepsy arising from disease or nervous exhaustion. Suggestion is the all potent factor in the production of catalepsy of the first three kinds, as it is in all hypnotic phenomena. In that of the first case, it may be caused by the suggestion of an operator. In that of the second case it may arise from a subject seeing other cataleptic subject. It arises from the fear or mental suggestion of his probably of being the next victim. In that of the third case, the catalepsy is brought on by auto-suggestion and it is well illustrated by the experiments of East Indian fakirs.

A patient in the condition of suspended animation induced by disease or nervous exhaustion is amenable to control by suggestion exactly as an individual is in the state of hypnosis. A patient in such a condition is always conscious suggestively to all that takes place about him. Therefore the conclusion to be derived from these facts are of great importance. The most vital one is that, when a subject suffering from a disease which might result in such a state, all the remarks at his bedside tend to deepen and prolong the lethargy. The friends both in their words and actions tend to impress upon him the subject of death. The doctor feels his pulse and after it has become imperceptible he turns to his friends and pronounces that the patient is dead. Accordingly a case of long-



suspended animation is the result.

Thus we see that suggestion forms one of the most important branches of the whole subject of psychological phenomena. All hypnotic phenomena are the result of suggestion in some form. This is the great discovery of the Nancy School; and when it is thoroughly appreciated and understood it will be found to be the master key that will unlock the secrets of all psychological mystery. That this discovery is unqualifidely true no longer admits of doubt, as it is acknowledged by nearly every scientist in the civilized world.