THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUGGESTION

A RESEARCH INTO THE SUBCONSCIOUS NATURE OF MAN AND SOCIETY

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PART I.

SUGGESTIBILITY.

CHAPTER I.

SUGGESTION AND SUGGESTIBILITY.

Psychological investigators employ the term "suggestion" in such a careless and loose fashion that the reader is often puzzled as to its actual meaning. Suggestion is sometimes used for an idea bringing in its train another idea, and is thus identified with association. Some extend the province of suggestion, and make it so broad as to coincide with any influence man exerts on his fellow-beings. Others narrow down suggestion and suggestibility to mere symptoms of hysterical neurosis. This is done by the adherents of the Salpêtrière school. Suggestion, again, is used by the Nancy school to indicate the cause which produces that peculiar state of mind in which the phenomena of suggestibility become especially prominent.

This vague and hazy condition of the subject of suggestion causes much confusion in psychological discussions. To free the subject from this confusion of tongues, we must endeavour in some way or other to give a strict definition of suggestion, and rigorously study the phenomena contained within the limited field

of our investigation. We must not follow in the way of those writers who employ the terms suggestion and suggestibility in all possible meanings. Such carelessness can not but lead into a tangle of words. In order to give a full description of suggestion and make its boundary lines clear, distinct, and definite, let us take a few concrete cases and inspect them closely.

I hold a newspaper in my hands and begin to roll it up; soon I find that my friend sitting opposite me rolled up his in a similar way. This, we say, is a case of suggestion.

My friend Mr. A. is absent-minded; he sits near the table, thinking of some abstruse mathematical problem that baffles all his efforts to solve it. Absorbed in the solution of that intractable problem, he is blind and deaf to what is going on around him. His eyes are directed on the table, but he appears not to see any of the objects there. I put two glasses of water on the table, and at short intervals make passes in the direction of the glasses—passes which he seems not to perceive; then I resolutely stretch out my hand, take one of the glasses, and begin to drink. My friend follows suit—dreamily he raises his hand, takes the glass, and begins to sip, awakening fully to consciousness when a good part of the tumbler is emptied.

To take an interesting and amusing case given by Ochorowitz in his book Mental Suggestion:

"My friend P., a man no less absent-minded than he is keen of intellect, was playing chess in a neighbouring room. Others of us were talking near the door. I had made the remark that it was my friend's habit when he paid the closest attention to the game to whistle an air from Madame Angot. I was about to accompany him by beating time on the table. But

now is. His argumentation is absurd, his motive is contemptible, and still, as a rule, he carries the body of the crowd, unless another stump orator interferes and turns the stream of sentiment in another direction. The speech of Antony in Julius Cæsar is an excellent example of suggestion.

All these examples undoubtedly belong to the province of suggestion. Now what are their characteristic traits? What are the elements common to all these cases of suggestion? We find in all these instances a stream of consciousness that goes on flowing in its peculiar, individual, idiosyncratic way; suddenly from the depths of the stream a wave rises to the surface, swamps the rest of the waves, overflows the banks, deflects for a while the course of the current, and then suddenly subsides, disappears, and the stream resumes its natural course, flowing once more in its former bed. On tracing the cause of this disturbance, we invariably find that it is due to some external source, to some other stream running alongside the one disturbed. Stating the same in the language of Baldwin, we may say that "by suggestion is meant a great class of phenomena typified by the abrupt entrance from without into consciousness—of an idea or image which becomes a part of the stream of thought, and tends to produce the muscular and volitional efforts which ordinarily follow upon its presence." *

Is this our last say of suggestion? Far from being the case. On closer inspection of our examples we find some more traits which are of the utmost importance. The subject accepts *uncritically* the idea suggested to him, and carries it out almost *automatically*. This can

* Psychology, vol. ii.

be easily detected in nearly every instance of suggestion, but it stands out especially clear and sharp in its outline in cases of hypnosis.

I hypnotized Mr. F., * and commanded that, after awakening, when he would hear me cough, he should take three oranges on the table and give them to my friends who were present at the *séance*. I woke him up. A few minutes later I coughed; he snatched from the table the oranges, which were, in fact, nothing but ordinary potatoes, and distributed them among my friends. While carrying out this post-hypnotic suggestion he appeared to be in a peculiar automatic condition. His movements were hurried, as if some spring was loosened in his ideo-motor mechanism; his eyes were dull and glassy; it was plain he was in a semiconscious state. On my asking him afterward how the oranges appeared to him he replied: "They seemed to me rather queer; they were too small and heavy for oranges. I thought they were lemons, but I did not attempt to examine them; something impelled me to carry out the order and be done with it."

To take a still better example from the store of my hypnotic experiments: I hypnotized Mr. F., and suggested to him that after awakening, on hearing me cough, he should take the umbrella, open it, and promenade in the room three times. I woke him up. A few minutes later I coughed; up went his legs, but he

* Let me say at the outset that all the subjects on whom I made hypnotic experiments were never hypnotized by any one else before. Whatever, therefore, occurred during hypnosis was not due to previous suggestive training unknown to me. Each subject was fully under my observation. I took the precaution of isolating my subjects from extraneous suggestion. During trance I suggested to them that no one should be able to hypnotize them. I ask the reader to bear this in mind.

remained sitting in the chair. I coughed again; once more up went his legs, but he did not carry out my commands. I rehypnotized him, and this time I strongly and authoritatively commanded him he should carry out my post-hypnotic suggestion, taking care to suggest to him he should forget everything that passed during the hypnotic trance. He was awakened, felt well, conversed with his friends. While he was engaged in conversation I went behind his chair and coughed. Up he jumped, opened the umbrella, and walked in the room three times. When he was through with the suggested promenade the umbrella dropped from his hands on the floor, and, without picking it up, he sat down on a chair and smiled. He remembered very clearly the umbrella affair, and it seemed to him queer and comical. I asked him whether he knew what he was going to do when he heard me cough. "Yes, I knew I must do something—in a general way, though. When I took the umbrella, I do not know how it happened, but I opened it and began to walk." I asked him whether he knew how many times he had to walk, to which he answered: "No, I did not know, but I kept on walking; and when it came to the end of the third turn, the umbrella dropped from my hands."

I could easily bring many more instances of the same type, but I think that those given will suffice for our purpose.

What we find in all these cases is the uncritical acceptance of the ideas or actions suggested, and also the motor automatism with which these ideas or actions are realized. In short, mental and motor automatism constitute the prominent elements of suggestion.

There is, however, one more element in suggestion

—an element which must be taken into account, and without which our definition of suggestion will be incomplete. This factor, or element, is the overcoming or circumventing of the subject's opposition. The suggested idea is *forced* on the stream of consciousness; it is a stranger, an unwelcome guest, a parasite, which the subject's consciousness seeks to get rid of. The stream of the individual's consciousness combats suggested ideas as the organism does bacteria and bacilli that tend to disturb the stability of its equilibrium. It is this opposition element that Dr. J. Grossmann has in mind when he defines suggestion as "der Vorgang, bei dem eine Vorstellung sich einem Gehirn aufzuzwingen versucht." *

My friend would not have rolled up his paper, nor would Mr. A. have taken the glass and sipped the water, nor would Mr. P. have whistled his airs, nor would the crowd have bought the articles of the huckster or voted for certain political candidates had they been openly commanded to do so. They would have opposed strenuously the suggestion given to them. It was required to devise means in order to circumvent this opposition. The same necessity for circumvention of opposition we find in post-hypnotic suggestion. At first the subject F. opposed the idea of walking with the umbrella. When I rehypnotized him I asked him, "Why did not you carry out my command?" The reply was, "I wanted to see whether I could resist." That this was actually the case we can see from the fact that, while his legs started at the signal and went up to fulfil the order, Mr. F. exclaimed, "I know what you want me to do, but I will not do

* Zeitschrift für Hypnotismus, August, 1893.

it." This opposition was overcome only after repeated and insistent injunctions that he must obey my command.

The first stages of hypnosis are especially characterized by this spirit of opposition, which, however, gradually slackens as the subject falls into a deeper state of hypnosis, and completely disappears with the advent of somnambulism. To watch the struggle of the mind in its opposition to the engrafted suggested idea is of intense interest to the psychologist, and of great value to a clearer comprehension of suggestion itself.

I hypnotized Mr. J. F. With one resolute command I made him cataleptic. "Rise!" I commanded him. He rose. "Walk!" He walked. "You can not walk forward!" He tried to walk, but he could not. "You can only walk backward!" He began to move backward. At the very first sitting he seemed to have fallen completely under my control and to carry out without any opposition all the motor suggestions given to him. This, however, was not really the case. Opposition was there, only it was ineffective. As we continued our sittings (and we had many of them) Mr. J. F. became more and more intractable, my control over him grew less and less, and now it is only after great exertion and repeated imperative commands that I am enabled to bring him into any cataleptic condition at all. The opposition or inhibition kept in abeyance during the first *séance* asserted itself as the subject became more familiar with the hypnotic condition.

The following experiments are still more interesting, as revealing to us in the clearest way possible the internal struggle—the great opposition which the consciousness of the subject shows to the parasitic suggested idea:

Mr. L. falls into a slight hypnotic condition—into the first degree of hypnosis; he can open his eyes if I challenge him that he is unable to do it. Although his hypnosis is but slight, I still tried on him post-hypnotic suggestions. While he was in the hypnotic condition I suggested to him that after awakening, when he will hear a knock, he will go to the table, take a cigarette, and light it. I suggested to him he should forget everything that passed during the hypnosis.

On awakening he remembered everything. I gave a few knocks in quick succession. He rose from his chair, but immediately sat down again, and laughingly exclaimed, "No, I shall not do it!" "Do what?" I asked. "Light the cigarette—nonsense!" "Had you a strong desire to do it?" I asked him, putting the desire in the past, although it was plain he was still struggling with it. He did not answer. "Did you wish very much to do it?" I asked again. "Not very much," he answered curtly and evasively.

On another occasion I hypnotized Mr. L. by the method of fascination.* He seemed to have fallen into a slightly deeper hypnotic condition than usual. The post-hypnotic suggestion was to light the gas, and also complete amnesia. On awakening he remembered everything that passed during hypnosis. He ridiculed the post-hypnotic suggestions I gave him. After a few minutes' conversation, without my giving the suggestion signal, which was to be a knock, I left the room for a few moments—for five or ten seconds. When I returned I found him lighting the gas. "What are you doing that for, Mr. L.?" I asked.

* Ordinarily I use the method of Nancy; it is the most convenient and pleasant way of hypnotization, as it requires no strain on the side of the subject.

"To feel easier," he answered; "I felt somewhat uneasy." Evidently the post-hypnotic suggestion took deep root in his mind. He struggled hard against it, to put it down, to suppress it; and it was due to this fact that he attempted to counteract the suggested idea by ridiculing it. As long as I was in the room he wanted to show the energy of his will, and he struggled hard against the insistent idea, keeping it at bay; but when I left the room one of the motives of resisting the suggestion was removed, and the struggle became an unequal one. The insistent parasitic idea asserted itself with greater force than before, and this time, not meeting with such a strenuous opposition, it gained the upper hand and realized itself completely.

To take one more instance of the many sittings I had with Mr. L. I hypnotized him once in the presence of two acquaintances of mine, and gave him a post-hypnotic suggestion to take from the table a box of matches and light the gas. This he had to do when hearing me cough. I woke him up, and as soon as he heard me cough he started up from his chair, looked hard at the box of matches, but did not take it. He went up to the window, put his head against the window pane, and seemed to be engaged in a severe struggle against the insistent suggested idea. Now and then one could perceive a slight shudder passing over his entire body, thus making almost palpably evident the inner, restless, contentious state of his consciousness. Again and again the suggested idea cropped up in his mind, and again and again it was suppressed; now the suggestion gained ground, and now once more it was beaten and driven back into the obscure regions from which it came. I then rehypnotized him, strongly emphasized my suggestion, and then awakened him. I slightly

coughed. This time the suggested idea got a stronger hold of his mind. Mr. L. rose from his chair, took the box of matches, kept it in his hand for a second or two, and threw it resolutely on the table. "No," he exclaimed, "I will not do it!"

Such cases might be multiplied by the hundreds, but I think that the hypnotic experiments made on my subjects L. and J. F. will suffice for our purpose. They show most clearly that the trait of opposition is an ingredient of suggestion. This opposition element varies with the state of mind of the individual. What the nature of this variation is we shall see later on; meanwhile the present stage of our discussion fully enables us to formulate a definition of suggestion and suggestibility.

By suggestion is meant the intrusion into the mind of an idea; met with more or less opposition by the person; accepted uncritically at last; and realized unreflectively, almost automatically.

By suggestibility is meant that peculiar state of mind which is favourable to suggestion.*

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* The psycho-physiological state of suggestion I term suggestibility. By "*suggestibility of a factor*" is meant the power of the factor to induce the psycho-physiological state of suggestion of a certain degree of intensity, the suggestiveness of the factor being measured by the degree of suggestibility induced.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF SUGGESTION AND SUGGESTIBILITY.

Once the subject-matter under investigation is defined, we must proceed to a further subdivision of it; we must define and classify the different species of suggestion and suggestibility. Already in our last chapter, in adducing different cases of suggestion, suggestibility in the normal state was tacitly implied. We have now reached a stage in our discussion in which we must state this fact more explicitly. The soil favourable for the seeds of suggestion exists also in what we call the normal individual. Suggestibility is present in what we call the normal state, and in order to reveal it we must only know how to tap it. The suggestible element is a constituent of our nature; it never leaves us; it is always present in us. Before Janet, Binet, and many other investigators undertook the study of hysterical subjects, no one suspected the existence of those remarkable phenomena of double consciousness that opened for us new regions in the psychical life of man. These phenomena were merely not noticed, although present all the while; and when at times they rose from their obscurity, came to light, and obtruded themselves on the attention of people, they were either put down as sorcery, witchcraft, or classed contemptuously with lying, cheating, and deception. The same is true with regard

to normal suggestibility. It rarely attracts our attention, as it manifests itself in but trifling things. When, however, it rises to the surface and with the savage fury of a hurricane cripples and maims on its way everything it can not destroy, menaces life, and throws social order into the wildest confusion possible, we put it down as mobs. We do not in the least suspect that the awful, destructive, automatic spirit of the mob moves in the bosom of the peaceful crowd, reposes in the heart of the quiet assembly, and slumbers in the breast of the law-abiding citizen. We do not suspect that the spirit of suggestibility lies hidden even in the best of men; like the evil jinnee of the Arabian tales is corked up in the innocent-looking bottle. Deep down in the nature of man we find hidden the spirit of suggestibility. Every one of us is more or less suggestible. Man is often defined as a social animal. This definition is no doubt true, but it conveys little information as to the psychical state of each individual within society. There exists another definition which claims to give an insight into the nature of man, and that is the well-known ancient view that man is a rational animal; but this definition breaks down as soon as we come to test it by facts of life, for it scarcely holds true of the vast multitudes of mankind. Not sociality, not rationality, but suggestibility is what characterizes the average specimen of humanity, for *man is a suggestible animal.*

The fact of suggestibility existing in the normal individual is of the highest importance in the theoretical field of knowledge, in psychology, sociology, ethics, history, as well as in practical life, in education, politics, and economics; and since this fact of suggestibility may be subject to doubt on account of its seeming paradoxicalness, it must therefore be established on a firm basis

by a rigorous experimentation, and I have taken great pains to prove this fact satisfactorily. The evidence for the existence of normal suggestibility I shall adduce later on in our discussion; meanwhile I ask the reader to take it on trust, sincerely hoping that he will at the end be perfectly satisfied with the demonstration of its truth.

The presence of suggestibility in such states as the hysterical and the hypnotic is a fact well proved and attested, and I think there is no need to say a word in its defence. Since the hysterical, the hypnotic, the somnambulic states do not belong to the routine of our experience; since they are but rare and occur under special peculiar conditions; since they unfit one for social life, disable in the struggle for existence, I think the reader will not quarrel with me for naming such states abnormal.

Thus it becomes quite clear that suggestibility must be classed under two heads: (1) Suggestibility in the normal state, or normal suggestibility, and (2) suggestibility in the abnormal state, or abnormal suggestibility.

Turning now to suggestion, we find that it can be easily subdivided and classified according to the mode it is effected in consciousness. Concrete examples will best illustrate my meaning. The hypnotizer commands his subject to walk; the latter walks. He raises the hand of the patient, and it remains uplifted in a contracted cataleptic condition. The hypnotizer tells the subject that after awakening, when he will hear a knock, he will take off his coat and dance a polka, and the subject, on awakening and perceiving the signal, fulfils the order most faithfully. In cases like these the experimenter gives his orders or suggestions *directly*, without beating round the bush, without any circumlocution, without any evasions. In a plain and brusque manner

by screens. The ring of a bell indicated that the series came to an end, and it also served as a signal for the subjects to write down *immediately* on paper which they kept ready in their hands anything that came into their mind at that particular moment—letters, numerals, words, phrases, etc.

While looking for evidence for normal suggestibility, an opportunity was also taken to arrange the experiments according to different factors, so that should it be proved that suggestion in the normal state is an indubitable fact, we should be enabled to know what kind of factors are the more impressive and suggestive.

The series of letters and figures were arranged according to the following factors and their combinations:

1. Repetition.
2. Frequency.
3. Coexistence.
4. Last impression.

Great care, of course, was taken not to repeat the same series of letters or figures. As I had many slips at my disposal the series could be easily changed both by permutation and insertion of new slips. The subjects did not and could not possibly suspect the suggested letter or figure, first, because there were so many of them in each series; second, because the factors studied were constantly varied; and, third, because sham series, such as inverted or coloured letters, etc., were introduced so as to baffle the subjects.

I had twelve subjects at my disposal, and experimented with three or four at a time. Recently I made experiments of this kind with thirteen subjects more, so that the total number of subjects is twenty-five.

The results are as follows:

1. Repetition.—In the middle of the series a letter or numeral was shown three times in succession—e. g.:

B		3
E		6
K		8
M		5
M	or	5
M		5
N		7
O		2
P		9

Of 300 experiments made, 53 succeeded—that is, the subject wrote the letter or numeral suggested by the factor of repetition.

The factor of repetition gives a suggestibility of 17·6 per cent.

2. Frequency.—A letter or numeral was shown three times in the series, and each time with an interruption—e. g.:

B		5
K		3
E		7
K		3
M	or	9
K		3
C		4
R		8
D		6

Of 300 experiments made, 128 succeeded.

The factor of frequency gives a suggestibility of 42·6 per cent.

3. Coexistence.—A letter or numeral was shown repeatedly; not, however, in succession, as it was in the

case of the factor of repetition, also not with interruptions as it was in the case of frequency, but at the same time—e. g.:

B		4
E		1
C		2
D		6
R R R	or	7 7 7
M		5
L		3
A		9
F		8

Of 300 experiments made, only 20 succeeded.

The factor of coexistence gives as its power of suggestion 6·6 per cent.

4. Last Impression.—Here was studied the suggestibility effected by the last impression, by the last letter or figure. In all our experiments unnecessary repetition was carefully avoided. It is plain that the nature of these experiments of last impression required that not one letter or figure should be repeated twice in the series—e. g.:

A		7
K		9
F		5
L		8
D	or	6
R		2
B		4
E		1
M		3

Of 300 experiments made, 190 succeeded.

The factor of last impression gives a suggestibility of 63·3 per cent.

5. Coexistence and Last Impression.—In these experiments a slip with three identical characters pasted on it appeared at the end of the series, thus combining in one the factor of coexistence with that of last impression—e. g.:

E		2
N		5
C		7
K		1
B	or	9
M		8
Q		4
Z		6
A A A		3 3 3

Of 300 experiments made, 55 succeeded.

The combined effect of coexistence and last impression gives a suggestibility of 18·3 per cent.

6. Frequency and Last Impression.—The letter or numeral repeated with interruptions was also shown at the end of the series—e. g.:

M		5
C		2
B		8
C		2
K	or	4
C		2
P		9
N		6
C		2

Of 150 experiments made, 113 succeeded.

The combined effect of the two factors gives a suggestibility of 75·2 per cent.

Arranging now the factors in the order of their rate of effected suggestibility, we have the following table:

	Per cent.
Frequency and last impression....	75·2
Last impression.....	63·3
Frequency.....	42·6
Coexistence and last impression...	18·3
Repetition.....	17·6
Coexistence.....	6·6

Comparing now the suggestibility effected by different factors,* that of the last impression stands out most prominently. *The "last impression" is the most impressive.* Our daily life teems with facts that illustrate this rule: The child is influenced by the last impression it receives. In a debate he, as a rule, gains the victory in the eyes of the public who has the last word. In a crowd he moves and stirs the citizens to action who makes the last inciting speech. In a mob he who last sets an example becomes the hero and the leader.

Frequency comes next to last impression and precedes repetition. This may be explained by the fact that in repetition the suggestion is too grossly obvious, lying almost on the surface; the mind, therefore, is aroused to opposition, and a counter-suggestion is formed; while in frequency the suggestion, on account of the interruption, is not so tangibly obvious, the opposition therefore is considerably less, and the suggestion is left to run its course.

Coexistence is a still poorer mode of suggestion than repetition; it only arouses opposition. Coexistence is in reality of the nature of repetition, for it is repetition in space; it is a poor form of repetition.

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* Let me add here that the figures bring out rather the *relative* than the absolute suggestiveness of the factors studied.

On the whole, we may say that in the normal state temporal or spatial repetition is the most unfortunate mode of suggestion, while the best, the most successful of all the particular factors, is that of the last impression—that is, the mode of bringing the idea intended for suggestion at the very end. This rule is observed by influential orators and widely read popular writers; it is known in rhetoric as bringing the composition to a climax. *Of all the modes of suggestion, however, the most powerful, the most effective, and the most successful is a skilful combination of frequency and last impression.* This rule is observed by Shakespeare in the speech of Antony. Be these rules of the particular factors what they may, one thing is clear and sure: these experiments unquestionably prove the reality of normal suggestibility; they prove the presence of suggestibility in the average normal individual.

From suggestion of ideas I turned to suggestion of movements, of acts. The first set of experiments was rather crude in form, but not without its peculiar interest and value.

The experiments were carried on in the following way: On a little table I put a few objects, screened from the subject by a sheet of white cardboard. The subject was asked to concentrate his attention on a certain spot of the screen for about twenty seconds. On the sudden removal of the screen the subject had immediately to do something—anything he liked. It was, of course, also understood that the subject should keep his mind a blank as much as it was in his power, and, at any rate, that he should not beforehand make up his mind what to do. The subjects, I must add, were perfectly trustworthy people—coworkers in the Psychological Laboratory.

PART III.

SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOCIAL SUGGESTIBILITY.

Suggestibility is a fundamental attribute of man's nature. We must therefore expect that man, in his social capacity, will display this general property; and so do we actually find the case to be. What is required is only the condition to bring about a disaggregation in the social consciousness. This disaggregation may either be fleeting, unstable—then the type of suggestibility is that of the normal one; or it may become stable —then the suggestibility is of the abnormal type. *The one is the suggestibility of the crowd, the other that of the mob.* In the mob direct suggestion is effective, in the crowd indirect suggestion. The clever stump orator, the politician, the preacher, fix the attention of their listeners on themselves, interesting them in the "subject." They as a rule distract the attention of the crowd by their stories, frequently giving the suggestion in some indirect and striking way, winding up the long yarn by a climax requiring the *immediate execution* of the suggested act. Out of the infinite number of cases, I take the first that comes to my hand:

In August 11, 1895, at Old Orchard, Me., a camp meeting was held. The purpose was to raise a collection for the evangelization of the world. The preacher gave his suggestions in the following way:

"The most impressive memory I have of foreign lands is the crowds, the billows of lost humanity dashing ceaselessly on the shores of eternity. . . . How desperate and unloved they are—no joy, no spring, no song in their religion! I once heard a Chinaman tell why he was a Christian. It seemed to him that he was down in a deep pit, with no means to get out. [Story.] Have you wept on a lost world as Jesus wept? If not, woe unto you. Your religion is but a dream and a fancy. We find Christ testing his disciples. Shall he make them his partners? Beloved, he is testing you to-day. [Indirect suggestion.] He could convert one thousand millionaires, but he is giving us a chance. [Suggestion more direct than before.] Have we faith enough? [A discourse on faith follows here.] God can not bring about great things without faith. I believe the coming of Jesus will be brought about by one who believes strongly in it. . . . Beloved, if you are going to give grandly for God you have got faith. [The suggestion is still more direct.] The lad with the five loaves and the two small fishes [story]—when it was over the little fellow did not lose his buns; there were twelve baskets over. . . . Oh, beloved, how it will come back! . . . Some day the King of kings will call you and give you a kingdom of glory, and just for trusting him a little! What you give to-day is a great investment. . . . Some day God will let us know how much better he can invest our treasures than we ourselves." The suggestion was effective. Money poured in from all sides, contributions ran from hundreds

into thousands, into tens of thousands. The crowd contributed as much as seventy thousand dollars.

A disaggregation of consciousness is easily effected in the crowd. Some of the conditions of suggestibility work in the crowd with great power and on a large scale. The social psychical scalpels are big, powerful; their edges are extremely keen, and they cut sure and deep. If anything gives us a strong sense of our individuality, it is surely our voluntary movements. We may say that the individual self grows and expands with the increase of variety and intensity of its voluntary activity; and conversely, the life of the individual self sinks, shrinks with the decrease of variety and intensity of voluntary movements. We find, accordingly, that the condition of limitation of voluntary movements is of great importance in suggestibility in general, and this condition is of the more importance since it, in fact, can bring about a narrowing down of the field of consciousness with the conditions consequent on that contraction—all favourable to suggestibility. Now nowhere else, except perhaps in solitary confinement, are the voluntary movements of men so limited as they are in the crowd; and the larger the crowd is the greater is this limitation, the lower sinks the individual self. *Intensity of personality is in inverse proportion to the number of aggregated men.* This law holds true not only in the case of crowds, but also in the case of highly organized masses. Large, massive social organisms produce, as a rule, very small persons. Great men are not to be found in ancient Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, but rather in the diminutive communities of ancient Greece and Judea.

This condition of limitation of voluntary move-

ments is one of the prime conditions that help to bring about a deep, a more or less lasting dissociation in the consciousness of the crowd—the crowd passes into the mob-state. A large gathering on account of the cramping of voluntary movements easily falls into a state of abnormal suggestibility, and is easily moved by a ringleader or hero. Large assemblies carry within themselves the germs of the possible mob. The crowd contains within itself all the elements and conditions favourable to a disaggregation of consciousness. What is required is only that an interesting object, or that some sudden violent impressions should strongly fix the attention of the crowd, and plunge it into that state in which the waking personality is shorn of its dignity and power, and the naked subwaking self alone remains face to face with the external environment.

Besides limitation of voluntary movements and contraction of the field of consciousness, there are also present in the crowd, the matrix of the mob, the conditions of monotony and inhibition. When the preacher, the politician, the stump orator, the ringleader, the hero, gains the ear of the crowd, an ominous silence sets in, a silence frequently characterized as "awful." The crowd is in a state of overstrained expectation; with suspended breath it watches the hero or the interesting, all-absorbing object. Disturbing impressions are excluded, put down, driven away by main force. So great is the silence induced in the fascinated crowd, that very frequently the buzzing of a fly, or even the drop of a pin, can be distinctly heard. All interfering impressions and ideas are inhibited. The crowd is entranced, and rapidly merges into the mob-state.

The great novelist Count Tolstoy gives the following characteristic description of a crowd passing into

the entranced condition of the mob: "The crowd remained silent, and pressed on one another closer and closer. To bear the pressure of one another, to breathe in this stifling, contagious atmosphere, not to have the power to stir, and to expect something unknown, incomprehensible, and terrible, became intolerable. Those who were in the front, who saw and heard everything that took place, all those stood with eyes full of fright, widely dilated, with open mouths; and straining their whole strength, they kept on their backs the pressure of those behind them." *

The following concrete cases taken from American life will perhaps show clearly the factors that work in the entrancement of the crowd, and will also disclose the disaggregation of consciousness effected in the popular mind.

One of the American newspapers gives the following sensational but interesting account of feminine crowds entranced by Paderewski: "There is a chatter, a rustling of programmes, a waving of fans, a nodding of feathers, a general air of expectancy, and the lights are lowered. A hush. All eyes are turned to a small door leading on to the stage; it is opened. Paderewski enters. . . . A storm of applause greets him, . . . but after it comes a tremulous hush and a prolonged sigh, . . . created by the long, deep inhalation of upward of three thousand women. . . . Paderewski is at the piano. . . . Thousands of eyes watch every commonplace movement [of his] through opera glasses with an intensity painful to observe. He the idol, they the idolators. . . . Toward the end of the performance the most decorous women seem to abandon themselves

* Voina i Mir. (War and Peace.)

to the influence. . . . There are sighs, sobs, the tight clinching of the palms, the bowing of the head. Fervid exclamations: 'He is my master!' are heard in the feminine mob." In this highly sensational report the paper unconsciously describes all the conditions requisite to effect a disaggregation of consciousness.

The conditions of crowd entrancement are clearly revealed in the following case:

In 1895 a "modern Messiah," a "Man-Christ" by name of Francis Schlatter, appeared in this country. He worked miracles. People believed in his divine, supernatural power. Men, women, and children flocked to him from all sides, and Schlatter did cure many of them of "the ills of the flesh" by "mere laying on of hands," as the hypnotizer treats the entranced subject or the one he intends to entrance. A disaggregation of consciousness was easily effected in the manipulated crowd of believers, the subwaking reflex self emerged, and Schlatter's suggestions took effect. A reporter describes the scene as follows:

"Men, women, and children with the imprint of mental illness upon their faces were on all sides. . . . Every moment the crowd was augmented, . . . and soon the place was a sea of heads as far as the eye could see. [Limitation of voluntary movements.] . . . Then a sudden movement went through the assemblage, and even the faintest whisper was hushed. [Monotony, inhibition.] . . . Schlatter had come." [Concentration of attention]. The reporter, as the individual of the crowd, fell into the trance condition characteristic of the person in the mob. "As I approached him," writes the reporter, "I became possessed of a certain *supernatural fear, which it was difficult to analyze. My faith in the man grew in spite of my reason.*"

The waking, controlling, thinking, reasoning self began to waver, to lose its power, and the reflex, subwaking consciousness began to assert itself. "As he released my hands my soul acknowledged some power in this man that my mind and my brain (?) seemed to fight against. When he unclasped my hands I felt as though I could *kneel at his feet and call him master*."

The suggestion given to the entranced crowd by the "master" spreads like wildfire. The given suggestion reverberates from individual to individual, gathers strength, and becomes so overwhelming as to drive the crowd into a fury of activity, into a frenzy of excitement. As the suggestions are taken by the mob and executed the wave of excitement rises higher and higher. Each fulfilled suggestion increases the emotion of the mob in volume and intensity. Each new attack is followed by a more violent paroxysm of furious demoniac frenzy. The mob is like an avalanche: the more it rolls the more menacing and dangerous it grows. The suggestion given by the hero, by the ringleader, by the master of the moment, is taken up by the crowd and is reflected and reverberated from man to man, until every soul is dizzied and every person is stunned. In the entranced crowd, in the mob; every one influences and is influenced in his turn; every one suggests and is suggested to, and the surging billow of suggestion swells and rises until it reaches a formidable height.

Suppose that the number of individuals in the crowd is 1,000, that the energy of the suggested idea in the "master" himself be represented by 50, and that only one half of it can be awakened in others; then the hero awakens an energy of 25 in every individual, who again in his or her turn awakens in every one an

energy of 12·5. The total energy aroused by the hero is equal to 25 × 1,000 = 25,000. The total energy of suggestion awakened by each individual in the crowd is equal to 12·5 × 1,000, or 12,500 (the hero being included, as he is, after all, but a part of the crowd). Since the number of individuals in the crowd is 1,000, we have the energy rising to as much as 12,500 × 1,000; adding to it the 25,000 produced by the ringleader, we have the total energy of suggestion amounting to 12,525,000! *

The mob energy grows faster than the increase of numbers. The mob spirit grows and expands with each fresh human increment. Like a cannibal it feeds on human beings. In my article A Study of the Mob † I point out that the mob has a self of its own; that the personal self is suppressed, swallowed up by it, so much so that when the latter comes once more to the light of day it is frequently horrified at the work, the crime, the mob self had committed; and that once the mob self is generated, or, truer to say, brought to the surface, it possesses a strong attractive power and a great capacity of assimilation. It attracts fresh individuals, breaks down their personal life, and quickly assimilates them; it effects in them a disaggregation of consciousness and assimilates the subwaking selves. *Out of the subwaking selves the mob-self springs into being.* The assimilated individual expresses nothing but the energy suggestion, the will of the entranced crowd; he enters fully into the spirit of the mob. This can be well illustrated by a curious incident describing the riots of the military colonists in Russia in 1831, taken from the memoirs of Panaev:

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* See Appendix I. † Atlantic Monthly, February, 1895.

"While Sokolov was fighting hard for his life I saw a corporal lying on the piazza and crying bitterly. On my question, 'Why do you cry?' he pointed in the direction of the mob and exclaimed, 'Oh, they do not kill a commander, but a father!' I told him that instead of it he should rather go to Sokolov's aid. He rose at once and ran to the help of his commander. A little later when I came with a few soldiers to Sokolov's help, I found the same corporal striking Sokolov with a club. 'Wretch, what are you doing? Have you not told me he was to you like a father?' To which he answered: 'It is such a time, your honor; all the people strike him; why should I keep quiet?'"

To take another interesting example: During the Russian anti-Jewish riots in 1881 the city of Berditchev, consisting mainly of Jewish inhabitants, suffered from Jewish mobs. One day a Jewish mob of about fifteen thousand men, armed with clubs, butchers' knives, and revolvers, marched through the streets to the railway station to meet the Katzapi.* To the surprise of intelligent observers, many Christians were found to participate in this Jewish mob.

An interesting case of this kind is brought by the Rev. H. C. Fish in his Handbook of Revivals:

"While a revival was in progress in a certain village a profane tavern keeper swore he would never be found among the fools who were running to the meetings. On hearing, however, of the pleasing mode of singing his curiosity was excited, and he said he did not know but he might go and hear the singing, but with an imprecation that he would never hear a word of the

* A Malo-Russian term for Veliko-Russians. In all anti-Jewish riots Veliko-Russians were the ringleaders.

sermon. As soon as the hymn before the sermon was sung he leaned forward and secured both ears against the sermon with his forefingers. Happening to withdraw one of his forefingers, the words, 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear,' pronounced with great solemnity, entered the ear that was open and struck him with irresistible force. He kept his hand from returning to the ear, and, feeling an impression he had never known before, presently withdrew the other finger and hearkened with deep attention to the discourse which followed." The tavern keeper was fascinated, drawn into the mob of true believers, was converted, and, in the words of the Rev. H. C. Fish, "became truly pious."

The power of suggestion possessed by the revival meeting is well brought out in another case related by the Rev. H. C. Fish: *

"An actress in one of the English provincial theatres was one day passing through the streets of the town when her attention was attracted by the sound of voices. Curiosity prompted her to look in at an open door. It was a social (revival) meeting, and at the moment of her observation they were singing:

> Depth of mercy ! can there be
> Mercy still reserved for me ?

She stood motionless during a prayer which was offered. . . . The words of the hymn followed her. . . . The manager of the theatre called upon her one morning and requested her to sustain the principal character in a new play which was to be performed the next week. . . . She promised to appear. The char-

* Handbook of Revivals.

acter she assumed required her on her first entrance to sing a song, and when the curtain was drawn up the orchestra immediately began the accompaniment. But she stood as if lost in thought (she seemed to have fallen into a trance), and as one forgetting all around her and her own situation. The music ceased, but she did not sing, and, supposing her to be overcome by embarrassment, the band again commenced. A second time they paused for her to begin, but still she did not open her lips. A third time the air was played, and then with clasped hand and eyes suffused with tears she sang not the words of the song," but the verses suggested to her at the revival meeting :

> Depth of mercy ! can there be
> Mercy still reserved for me ?

" The performance," the Rev. H. C. Fish naïvely adds, " was suddenly ended."

The extreme impulsiveness of the mob self is notorious. No sooner is a suggestion accepted, no matter how criminal, how inhuman it might be, than it is immediately realized, unless another suggestion more in accord with the general nature of suggestions in which the mob self was trained, interferes and deflects the energy of the mob in another direction. The following interesting case will perhaps best illustrate my meaning :

On February 26, 1896, at Wichita Falls, Texas, a mob of several thousand men attacked the jail where two bank robbers were confined. The mob battered the jail doors and forcibly took possession of the two prisoners. The two men were taken to the bank which they attempted to rob the day before. An improvised scaffold was erected. The first impulse of the

mob was to *burn the prisoners. Roasting was the programme.* This inquisitorial mode of execution "without shedding human blood" was by suggestion changed to hanging, the way of execution commonly in use in this country to inflict capital punishment, the way of murder common to all American lynching mobs.

The consciousness of the mob is reflex in its nature. In the entranced crowd, in the mob, social consciousness is disaggregated, thus exposing to the direct influence of the environment the reflex consciousness of the social subwaking self. The subwaking mob self slumbers within the bosom of society.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOCIETY AND EPIDEMICS.

When animals, on account of the great dangers that threaten them, begin to rove about in groups, in companies, in herds, and thus become social, such animals, on pain of extinction, must vary in the direction of suggestibility; they must become more and more susceptible to the emotional expression of their comrades, and reproduce it instantaneously at the first impression. When danger is drawing near, and one of the herd detects it and gives vent to his muscular expression of fear, attempting to escape, those of his comrades who are most susceptible reproduce the movements, experience the same emotions that agitate their companion, and are thus alone able to survive in the struggle for existence. A delicate susceptibility to the movements of his fellows is a question of life and death to the individual in the herd. Suggestibility is of vital importance to the group, to society, for it is the only way of rapid communication social brutes can possibly possess. Natural selection seizes on this variation and develops it to its highest degree. Individuals having a more delicate susceptibility to suggestions survive, and leave a greater progeny which more or less inherit the characteristics of their parents. In the new generation, again, natural selection resumes its merciless work, mak-

ing the useful trait of suggestibility still more prominent, and the sifting process goes on thus for generations, endlessly. A highly developed suggestibility, an extreme, keen susceptibility to the sensori-motor suggestions, coming from its companions, and immediately realizing those suggestions by passing through the motor processes it witnesses, is the only way by which the social brute can become conscious of the emotions that agitate its fellows. The sentinel posted by the wasps becomes agitated at the sight of danger, flies into the interior of the nest buzzing violently, the whole nestful of wasps raises a buzzing, and is thus put into the same state of emotion which the sentinel experiences.

Suggestibility is the cement of the herd, the very soul of the primitive social group. A herd of sheep stands packed close together, looking abstractedly, stupidly, into vacant space. Frighten one of them; if the animal begins to run, frantic with terror, a stampede ensues. Each sheep passes through the movements of its neighbour. The herd acts like one body animated by one soul. Social life presupposes suggestion. No society without suggestibility. Man is a social animal, no doubt; but *he is social because he is suggestible.* Suggestibility, however, requires disaggregation of consciousness; hence, society presupposes a cleavage of the mind, it presupposes a plane of cleavage between the differentiated individuality and the undifferentiated reflex consciousness, the indifferent subwaking self. *Society and mental epidemics are intimately related; for the social gregarious self is the suggestible subconsciates self.*

The very organization of society keeps up the disaggregation of consciousness. The rules, the customs, the laws of society are categorical, imperative, absolute.

One must obey them on pain of death. Blind obedience is a social virtue.* But blind obedience is the very essence of suggestibility, the constitution of the disaggregated subwaking self. Society by its nature, by its organization, tends to run riot in mobs, manias, crazes, and all kinds of mental epidemics.

With the development of society the economical, political, and religious institutions become more and more differentiated; their rules, laws, by-laws, and regulations become more and more detailed, and tend to cramp the individual, to limit, to constrain his voluntary movements, to contract his field of consciousness, to inhibit all extraneous ideas—in short, to create conditions requisite for a disaggregation of consciousness. If, now, something striking fixes the attention of the public—a brilliant campaign, a glittering holy image, or a bright "silver dollar"—the subwaking social self, the demon of the demos, emerges, and society is agitated with crazes, manias, panics, and mental plagues of all sorts.

With the growth and civilization of society, institutions become more stable, laws more rigid, individuality is more and more crushed out, and the poor, barren subwaking self is exposed in all its nakedness to the vicissitudes of the external world. In civilized society laws and regulations press on the individual from all sides. Whenever one attempts to rise above the dead level of commonplace life, instantly the social screw begins to work, and down is brought upon him the

* "The vast majority of persons," writes F. Galton, "of our race have a natural tendency to shrink from the responsibility of standing and acting alone; they exalt the *vox populi*, even when they know it to be the utterance of a mob of nobodies, into the *vox Dei*, and they are willing slaves to tradition, authority, and custom."