

# **AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

*University of  
California.*

**BY**

**L. L. BERNARD**

*Author of "INSTINCT: A Study in Social Psychology"*

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## CHAPTER XIX

### SUGGESTION AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

**DEFINITIONS**—Suggestion exists when any relatively uncritical and immediate response occurs to a stimulus by means of behavior mechanisms which have already been prepared. A suggested response is conditioned ordinarily to a symbol or cue and not to the perception of a total situation, although the term suggestion is also sometimes used to indicate the skillful organization and presentation by another person of stimuli which will compel or induce logically or emotionally the response desired. Since it is a concept adopted for the description of phenomena of a social character, its use is ordinarily limited to behavior in social situations, and especially to behavior in response to symbolic or cue stimuli coming from another person. The cue itself may be either a concrete perceptual or an abstract stimulus. In any case the stimulus is in the nature of an object, act, or symbol which is ordinarily perceived concretely and immediately.

A suggested response may be either imitative or nonimitative, according as it does or does not reproduce the behavior which originally served as the stimulus and which the symbolic or foreshortened cue now represents. If the response has been conditioned to a total stimulus situation which it does not reproduce or resemble, or if it has been conditioned to a symbolic stimulus merely by association of stimuli it is not imitative. In such a case it is even possible for the response to resemble the behavior of another, some part of which behavior serves as the cue to the response, without its being an imitated response. Such resemblance between the behavior of the two persons is accidental, and is likely to be confused with true imitation.

SUGGESTED AND RATIONAL BEHAVIOR DISTINGUISHED—

The suggested response may occur consciously or unconsciously. As a matter of fact most suggested behavior, in the sense in which we are here considering it, is only partly conscious. The greater the degree of the interruption of the suggested behavior, the more conscious the response is, and the more critical or analytical we are of it. Hence the less immediate and more rational the response is, the less truly suggested is the behavior. Purely suggested behavior would be wholly unconscious, or at least unpremeditated and immediate. But there are all degrees of modification of the suggested response from that which is purely automatic and is conditioned to an abbreviated or symbolic cue to that which is in the nature of a rational response. The characteristic of suggested behavior is that it approaches the automatic, while rational behavior is ordinarily highly conscious and is controlled by abstract psychic mechanisms. In suggestion the stimulus situation is ordinarily reduced to a symbolic cue, while in rational behavior the stimulus situation may take on a succession of forms, sometimes even contradictory, and be highly differentiated and spread out over a considerable period of time. Also the suggested response, in its purest form, comes almost immediately after the stimulus is given. Delay in the response means either that thought is entering in to elaborate the response on a more or less critical or rational basis or that there is some hidden unconscious conflict which will not allow the impulses normally arising from the stimulus to go over into immediate action.

Suggestion occurs in the realm of ideas and attitudes or neuro-psychic behavior as well as in that of overt behavior, but the purest forms of suggestion go over immediately into overt responses. Psychic responses to suggestion are never rational in character, for by becoming rational they would cease to have the characteristics of suggested behavior, such as immediacy, automaticity, and unconsciousness. Suggested psychic responses are stereotyped responses, such as conventional beliefs, emotions, desires, opinions, and expressions of polite intercourse. The mechanism for the psychic response is already present, and all that is necessary to put the mechanism into effect is to present the appropriate cue or abbreviated stimulus. The essential characteristic of suggestion is that the stimulus,

usually in the form of a cue or a symbol of the total stimulus, is conditioned definitely to the response, with the result that the conditioned response occurs immediately upon the occurrence of the stimulus or cue.

**THREE ASPECTS OF SUGGESTION**—Suggestion, as Allport says, may be considered from three standpoints. In the first place, it may be treated as the building up in the individual of those stimulus-response mechanisms which predispose him to behave in particular ways. Such dispositions to activity are usually organized around more or less native drives or prepotent impulses, such as those concerned with food, sex, fear, gregariousness, and the like. However, behavior dispositions of unusual strength may also be organized around acquired tendencies or habits, such as political beliefs, religious loyalties, gardening, golf, reading, or even our food, friendship, esthetic and courtship preferences, or any other activity or attitude. It is possible, if enough attention is given to the matter, to organize a disposition to behavior of any sort which functions with the automaticity and readiness of a suggested response.

The second and most common use of the term suggestion is to consider it as the "signal (social stimulus) which releases the attitude already established." Objectively we know this situation by observing the immediate and complete response in people when certain cues or stimuli are presented to them. When people are highly suggestible or strongly conditioned to any particular stimulus we say they are "quick on the trigger," meaning by the "trigger" their disposition to respond. The thing which pulls the trigger is the stimulus or cue. Subjectively we may recognize the stimulus as something highly desirable or towards which we are very antagonistic. Even if we have no positive attitude of seeking or avoiding the stimulus, we cannot be emotionally indifferent to it. It excites us.

The third sense in which we use the term suggestion is to indicate a stimulus which increases or augments a response to a releasing or suggesting stimulus or cue already operating. This intensification of response is sought by advertisers and propagandists generally. This third aspect of suggestion is

closely allied in form to the first, but comes farther along in the behavior process. All three aspects are essential to the complete definition of suggestion, but we ordinarily have in mind primarily the second aspect of suggestion, or the highly automatic and relatively immediate response to a preconditioned stimulus. The first aspect is not essentially different from any other type of conditioning of response. In such a sense, any stimulus could be said to "suggest" its conditioned response. The same may be said of the third form. The second usage is preferable because it defines suggestion in terms of its most essential characteristics, the strength of the conditioning, the automaticity and the relative immediacy of the response.

**INSTINCTIVE AND ACQUIRED ELEMENTS IN SUGGESTION—** Considered from the standpoint of the behavior pattern, suggested behavior is always a conditioned response, unless we may assume that there is an instinctive connection between particular responses and corresponding stimuli. We find many cases in which reflex or instinctive processes are set off automatically by suggestion. But it is not an instinctive release which serves as the suggestion cue. Thus the pin prick causes an automatic, although not a well controlled or coöordinated, movement of the body. Light causes the eyes to wink, at least within a short period after birth. The patellar reflex, swallowing, sneezing, coughing, vomiting, etc., all seem to be definite instinctive or reflex responses to definite and specific stimuli. Yet we would scarcely call any of these reflex responses suggested unless they have been conditioned by association to some cue or stimulus which did not originally have the power to release them. And this, of course, frequently occurs, as in the case of yawning. It is the perception of some one else, or even ourselves, performing the act which releases the instinctive mechanism. Or it may be some other stimulus of a non-personal and non-behavior sort, not originally adequate to release the response, which has become an adequate cue to the act through the process of conditioning. In the case where the perception of the other person performing the act becomes the effective cue we have suggestion imitation; in other cases, merely suggestion. The usage appears to be to reserve the term suggestion or suggested behavior for those automatic and

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immediate responses, whether instinctive or acquired, which have been conditioned to particular specific stimuli or cues by association rather than by inheritance.

**ABBREVIATED OR SYMBOLIC CONDITIONING OF THE RESPONSE IN SUGGESTED BEHAVIOR**—The response may or may not have some similarity to the stimulus. If it is similar to it, the chances are strong that the response was at one time consciously imitative, and that it has now been transformed into suggested behavior by becoming relatively automatic and perhaps by dispensing with the necessity for a perception or recognition of the total behavior stimulus. In such cases of substitution of suggestion imitation for conscious or rational imitation, some conspicuous portion of the total behavior stimulus will ordinarily be singled out to serve as a cue and will condition the response as a whole to itself. This specific portion of the original complete stimulus is now sufficient to produce the total response. Perhaps in the organism's attempt to economize attention no more than this particular selected portion of the stimulus is any longer perceived or recognized. Yet, in real life, such an isolated or selected portion of the original stimulus-giving behavior is not likely to operate alone, unless it be artificially isolated by the subject's attention. In most cases the original total behavior stimulus continues to function, and to the uncritical or unanalytical observer it appears to be necessary to set off the response. Therefore, even if the observer has made the delimitation of the stimulus which we have set forth above, he is likely to mistake such a response for a conscious act of imitation.

This is as true of psychic as of overt responses in suggestion imitation. For example, the mere sight of a certain book or picture or the oral or visual presentation of its title, may be sufficient to set up the habitual or stereotyped line of thinking which we have previously established through abstract imitation of it. It is not necessary actually to reread the book in order to recall the contents which have become conditioned to the title or to the image of the book through their constant association with these symbols. Much also that we do of a similar nature when in the presence of others, although it was originally consciously imitated behavior, is no longer such.

We have the mechanisms of response already fixed or stereotyped and it is merely necessary to receive the selected conditioning stimulus of the presence of the other person or of the perception of some article belonging to him or associated with him to put the behavior in operation. Thus the mere presence of people in a crowd looking toward the top of a building will cause us to look up, expecting to see a man climbing the wall or smoke issuing from the windows. A picture of people at a football game in the attitude of cheering or singing will call up in the inner or attitudinal behavior of the subject the words of a cheer or of a song, which may or may not be the one which these people are shouting or singing. Acting under the influence of the selected stimulus or cue he responds with the behavior pattern which is preconditioned in him. Such a response is still truly imitative, but it is suggestion imitation, and is not rational or even necessarily conscious imitation. However, non-imitative suggested behavior operates by the same partial or substitute mechanism.

**STEREOTYPING THE SYMBOLS CONDITIONING SUGGESTED RESPONSES**—Thus the stimulus which sets off a suggested response is nearly always a symbol which has come by substitution or by selective elimination to condition the original response. In the type of cases just described, where suggestion imitation behavior is substituted for conscious imitation behavior, selection of an outstanding portion of the original total behavior stimulus by means of elimination is the method ordinarily used. The effective stimulus is here a selected partial stimulus. But in many, perhaps in most, other cases the stimulus is a complete substitution, depending wholly upon similarity or association in time or spacial contiguity for its chance to condition the original response. In such cases there may be no recognizable similarity of the stimulus to the response which is conditioned to it. In fact the stimulus or cue may not even be a part of the behavior of another person. This substitute conditioning of the response occurs especially in connection with language symbols. Any word or phrase or gesture or facial or other expression may become associated with any response and thereafter call forth the response by suggestion, although it may have nothing to do with the situation in which

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the behavior was originally learned or imitated. Thus the word "eventually" has come to have the power of suggesting Gold Medal flour to millions of people. Likewise such conditioning symbols as commands, prohibitions, words or gestures denoting things, qualities, action, etc., must at some time in human history have come to be associated with behavior which they conditioned for the first time in this manner. Consequently in the life of each child they are made, as a part of his training, to condition his behavior through such arbitrary association. Words and gestures as language symbols are also associated with our ideas and attitudes in exactly the same manner and become capable of calling up any sentiment, belief, judgment or train of thought which has become stereotyped and has been conditioned to these stimuli. This is in fact the method of the origin of language and shows how meaning is conveyed through language from one generation or age to another. This fact will explain why certain stock phrases, shibboleths, proverbs, and the like are so effective in gaining the desired response through advertising, propaganda literature, newspapers, the oratorical efforts of revivalists, political spell-binders, and the like.

**THE CONTINUITY OF MEANING AND STEREOTYPED SYMBOLS**—A very large portion of the symbols which serve as suggestion stimuli for the release of conditioned responses are of this long time stereotyped character. That is, they remain the same or almost the same from year to year and from generation to generation. Each child does not create them for himself, but acquires them or learns them from others. They are a part of his social heritage. This is true not only of words and phrases and sentences and systems of knowledge, such as sciences and philosophies, but it is also true of those symbolized personal and social values which condition our behavior with reference to men, groups, and things. It is as true of emotional as of intellectual symbols. The esthetic values in art are transmitted from one generation to another and from one individual or group to other units of the same character. Although we do not always fully realize it, pictures, statuary, music, ritual, poetry, have meanings which are dependent primarily upon this continuity in transmission, just as is the case with meaning which reposes in intellectual symbols. The

meaning of art and of science is not a function of the symbols which represent or condition them to us, but it resides in the persons whose responses, overt and internal or attitudinal, are conditioned to the symbols. The symbols are merely the communicative media which carry the meaning from one person to another through the process of conditioning by association. Once the chain of conditioned responses is broken by omitting a generation of men thus conditioned to respond psychically and overtly to these symbols, their meaning is gone. Such has actually happened at times in history, where whole systems of symbols, like the languages and the writing and culture of the Hittites and the Philistines and the Minoans have been lost because the chain of conditioned responses which preserved the meaning of their writings was broken. As yet no one has been able to recondition his responses to these symbols in the same way in which these ancient peoples had conditioned theirs and thus to interpret their meaning. Consequently their cultures are to us sealed books and their symbols have lost completely their original power of suggestion.

**CONTRASUGGESTION**—In contrasuggestion, in suggestion by negation, and in partial suggestion and inference, the same principle of the conditioning of responses by cues or symbols obtains. Contrasuggestion is a pathological phenomenon arising ordinarily in people who are attempting to compensate for a feeling of inferiority. Believing, however unconsciously or subconsciously, in the necessity of self-assertion as a method of hiding a weakness of personality, they develop the habit of responding with the directly opposite form of behavior from that which is indicated to most people by the symbol or cue which they receive. Such tendencies to contrasuggested behavior are particularly likely to develop in too much hectored children, henpecked husbands, and overdominated wives, also in employees who feel that they have been mistreated. Occasionally voters, too long maneuvered by a political boss or a machine which they have come to mistrust, develop the habit of voting by opposites. The writer has heard a number of people say, apparently with more seriousness than humor, that they determined how they would vote by ascertaining whom certain newspapers would support and then deciding to cast their

ballots for the opposing candidates. Sometimes people decide questions of policy in a very similar manner by putting themselves in opposition to the choices or advice of particular religious or propaganda organizations which they fear or dislike.

SUGGESTION BY NEGATION is particularly effective when employed with discretion. It is a form of contrasuggestion used for the purpose of emphasis. The method is to state the opposite of what one means and of what he intends others to understand he means, in such a way as to leave no doubt as to his own belief or attitude. This can be done in such a manner as to ridicule the view which the speaker opposes. Its most common and striking forms are sarcasm and irony. For example, some one may say of a man in public life, "He is a very public-spirited man." The answer to this statement, meant to suggest skepticism or ridicule, might be, "Oh, without doubt!" with an inflection on "doubt." Or the ridicule might be made more intense by saying, "What wonderful discernment of motives! I had never suspected it, really." Mark Antony's famous expression that Cæsar's enemies were "all, all honorable men," made with an implied sneer, was well calculated to suggest just the opposite belief in his hearers. Another way of suggesting the opposite of the thing stated or indicated is to give the statement a pathetic turn which carries ethical doubt or may even imply that to believe the opposite is too terrible to be entertained. Such an effect may be produced by answering the first statement recorded above, to the effect that the public man has a public spirit, by saying hesitatingly, "Y-e-s, one would suppose so," or "One certainly would not wish to believe otherwise," or "Whom *can* we trust if not him? Let us believe in him as long as we *can*." Iago made striking use of this negative form of suggestion in inciting Othello to suspicion of Desdemona. Skilled political orators and partisan newspapers are frequently past masters of this technique. Mr. Dooley has shown us some good examples of its use in a telling, humorous, rather than in a biting, sarcastic, manner.

PARTIAL SUGGESTION is often employed in connection with negative suggestion. In fact, some of our examples in the preceding paragraph illustrate both types of suggestion. Partial

suggestion is especially effective where the suggester wishes to give the appearance of exercising care and restraint in pronouncing a judgment. He may seem to be uncertain himself. In such a case he is likely to state the argument both for and against the proposition, possibly with more emphasis upon the side to which he inclines than upon the other side. This method may be used to suggest a condemnation of the views held by another whom it is not expedient to oppose obviously, or to support one's own views which one does not feel it safe to state openly and frankly. Affirming the viewpoint of the other side, perhaps with an air of suppressed doubt, and then stating the opposite, as if in all fairness, as others might be expected to see it, will often plant the seeds of doubt in the mind of another person who never before knew there was more than one side to the question, to sprout there and later to bear fruit. This can be done all the more easily with people who are highly suggestible. Thus one may say of the supposedly public-spirited politician referred to above, "Yes, he has always given his best energies to the service of the people" (following with examples). Then it may be added, "But while we understand this," etc., or, to be a little more strenuous in the suggestion, "Yet it must be admitted that he has never satisfied his enemies regarding . . . (certain deals)," or "It certainly is to be regretted that he never cleared up that — affair. Although his friends will stand by him, it will never cease to be something of a blemish on the reputation of a man of wonderful power and achievement, and may in the end spoil his place in history."

If the words of praise can be aside from the point as urged by the one who is the object of suggestion, as in the last statement above, where his personal success rather than his public service is commended, and the words of implied criticism are directed toward the issue under discussion, the partial suggestion is more effective. An example of supporting one's own cause by partial suggestion may be cited as follows: "Yes, I know I was to blame in the situation and I won't try to make any excuse. I only wish I had understood the danger better," or: "I realize there is nothing to be said in his favor, yet I feel sure that he is good at heart and if he could have had

better training and a happy home this thing would not have happened." The advantage of such a method lies largely in the fact that the opponent is conciliated by agreement and the suggestion in favor of the other side is introduced under cover of a benevolent emotion or attitude.

**WIT AND HUMOR** are also forms of suggestion. When a newly associated verbal stimulus unexpectedly releases an idea or emotion which is taboo we speak of the expression as witty. The inhibition or censorship is covertly removed without the removal being made obvious. "Brevity is the soul of wit" because the witty cue or expression must be merely suggestive. It must not be detailed or it may cross the line of social acceptability. Humor is not so much the releasing of an inhibited response in all cases, as the releasing of an unexpected or incongruous and illogical one by suggestion. Humor, like wit, must be trenchant and brief. If one attempts to explain the point of a joke it loses its cogency. The response is no longer unexpected or suggestive and it ceases to be funny. Mellow humor, so-called, is characterized by sentimentality. A situation which gives us an opportunity to feel superior to another is likely to be considered funny. Situations in which we can make fun of people, or see them in positions of outraged dignity, are funny because they release responses which are usually inhibited but satisfying to us. Humor of this type resembles, in a measure, the nature of wit. One's sense of humor depends upon the type of response which is released or suggested. Thus we speak of coarse and refined humor, rough and gentle, malevolent and kindly humor, etc. What appears humorous to one depends to a large degree upon his training. Wit also may be sharp and biting, spicy, keen, scintillating, etc. Wit and humor may use any of the forms of suggestion described above.

**AUTO-SUGGESTION** is a process by which something in the subject—a memory or other complex or set or derivative sensory process—sets off responses, overt or psychic, without the apparent intervention of peripheral stimuli. Or, if there are peripheral stimuli, they are merely incidental to or in the nature of releases for the internal sets or drives. Of course all suggestion is in a certain sense auto-suggestion, because the

essence of suggestion is in the fact that the response occurs on the basis of an inner impulsive mechanism which is released by a mere cue or symbol. In ordinary suggestion this cue operates from the outside, while in auto-suggestion so-called the cue exists in the inner or neuro-psychic behavior. Sometimes the internal releases are isolated and merely touch off a particular kind of overt or psychic response which terminates when it has run its course, without repetition. In other cases the process of auto-suggestion is circular or serial. In cases of circular auto-suggestion the response to the internal release mechanism or cue reinstates the stimulus or release in the psychic mechanism, while in the serial type the response either acts as the release to another conditioned response or sets up such a release mechanism for another response. Auto-suggestion, at least in its milder and non-pathological forms of circular responses, is a frequent form of behavior. Some overt or symbolical act or some memory apparently unconnected with any immediate external stimulus or condition suddenly calls forth an exclamation or an overt response or a train of thought. In the last case the train of thought may go on indefinitely through a chain process of auto-suggestion, one thought or image releasing another, as in reverie, until one has reviewed a considerable portion of his past history or has built a multitude of castles in Spain. Much thinking of a functional sort, aiming at external adjustment, consists largely of auto-suggestion, although of course not wholly of such.

In overt behavior also auto-suggestion operates to a considerable extent by the chain method. Some internal stimulus or cue, such as a memory image, perception, or idea, or some overt response or symbolic act of the person, releases an exclamation or a movement, which in turn releases another movement, or perhaps a conversation with one's self. Such a conversation or even response of movements to other movements may go on for some considerable time without ceasing or coming under the dominance of external control stimuli. Autonomous conversations in particular are likely to occur in certain people, particularly in pathological cases. The verbal and sentence forms are of course largely stereotyped, as indeed the overt muscular responses are also. They are conversations or

responses which have been learned and practiced so often that each successive expression or movement is strongly conditioned to the one which preceded it. In abnormal cases such series of language or motor behavior are fairly frequent and once started or released they will continue automatically until the conditioned series is completed, unless terminated by a conflicting external or internal stimulus or set of stimuli or some other psychic complex.

It is the same or much the same with circular responses in auto-suggestion. Pathological persons often repeat a word or phrase or a train of imagery or a series of overt behavior over and over again, the last word or act having become the release for the initial stage in the series. In cases of dementia praecox this process sometimes appears to go on almost endlessly or ceaselessly. The normal child or adult may also repeat words or phrases as if for enjoyment for minutes or even an hour at a time when in a solitary situation. Most audible conversation with one's self seems to be largely automatic and stereotyped and of this circular or serial type or of both types combined.

**AUTO-SUGGESTION AND HETERO-SUGGESTION COMPARED—**  
It is difficult sometimes to distinguish auto-suggestion from hetero-suggestion; for, although no external stimulus or release may be observed by the subject or by another, there may still be such a release. Ideas and images scarcely arise spontaneously in the mind. They, like all other types of behavior, are conditioned to some sort of antecedent stimulus or process, internal or external. Sometimes this antecedent stimulus or release may be in the sensory-motor system or it may arise in the metabolic process itself. Or it may come from without in the form of some imperceptible, or almost imperceptible, stimulus from the clothing, the wind, temperature of the room, the light, the rustle of a curtain or a paper, a gleam of color, a word spoken or printed, even the recurrence of the same time of day or night, or week or year, or anything else seemingly trivial. Such slight stimuli have their power of release, not in their volume or intensity, but in the fact that the behavior responses have been previously conditioned to them. Their seeming complete automaticity is therefore illusional, for in

most, perhaps all, cases of auto-suggestion there is some external stimulus, or at least internal organic stimulus, however slight, which sets up the process. However, the major part of the suggestion may still be auto-suggestion, for the train of thought or action which goes on probably depends more upon its inner organization and conditioning for its completeness or automaticity than upon the initial external or internal stimulus which releases it. But this internal conditioned mechanism for release by suggestion depends primarily or wholly upon past experience and practice and is therefore social and external in its origin. Consequently we may say that auto-suggestion is as much a social or collective process as is any other form of suggestion, but less directly so.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SUGGESTION differ primarily in the extent to which the ultimate stimulus is recognized as the source of our suggested behavior and the purpose of the manipulator of the suggestion is perceived. In direct suggestion the manipulator relies upon the strength of the conditioning of the response to the stimulus and does not hesitate to bring himself out clearly into the foreground and issue commands or statements which he expects the other person or persons to accept and act upon. This method of suggestion is most effective when used by people who have prestige with the subject. Thus parents, teachers, ministers and priests, officials, employers, and others with authority or who are our recognized superiors, can afford to employ direct suggestion and may secure effective results from its use. They save time and energy simply by giving directions or commands or making descriptive and positive statements. But even when used by persons in authority this method of suggestion must be employed with tact and consideration for others. If the directly suggested person gets the impression that he is being manipulated contrary to his advantage and for the selfish purposes of another person, or if he feels that the suggestions are given harshly and without sympathy, or that they are commandments merely and not "suggestions," or advice, as that term is sometimes understood by induction, they are likely to lose their moral effect, although they may continue to be obeyed as a matter of policy. Many a parent has lost his or her moral prestige with a child by

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employing direct suggestion too baldly and with too much show of authority. Employers and superintendents or foremen are more often hated because of the brutal directness and unsympathetic character of their suggestions or commands to laborers than for being hard taskmasters.

**SUPERIORITY OF INDIRECT SUGGESTION**—Indirect suggestion is usually better in every way except for the lack of economy of time and energy involved in using it and sometimes in the lack of clearness of the instructions. Sometimes there is even a saving of time and energy in the long run as the result of the use of indirect suggestion. Ministers perhaps should always employ it and teachers usually, parents and employers at least frequently. The public lecturer and the newspaper and periodical almost invariably make use of indirect suggestion. Its method is merely that of selecting by chance or intention some type of stimulus which calls forth the desired response in the subject without revealing the motive, or perhaps even the source, or the identity of the suggester. Thus one may say to a child who objects to taking his medicine that the medicine looks like honey, or some other substance which appeals to the child. Perhaps even this method is too direct and is likely to lead to suspicion or detection of ulterior motives on the part of the suggester. It may be better to ask the child what he thinks it looks like before offering it or if *he* doesn't think it looks like honey. Or it may sometimes be advisable for some one else to sample the substance and declare it tastes very much like honey. The child's eating responses are sufficiently closely conditioned to the stimulus of honey that he will take the medicine unless he suspects the purpose or content of the indirect suggestion.

**METHODS AND EXAMPLES OF INDIRECT SUGGESTION**—Indirect suggestions are best made by means of an incidental appeal to the appetites or interests and close associations of the subject. Indeed, no indirect suggestion can be very effective unless thus made. An indirect appeal to vanity is almost invariably successful. People will decide as if of their own initiative to do almost anything if the suggester has succeeded in conditioning the response to the stimulus of his approval of their personal appearance or conduct. The best way for lovers

or married people to make up after quarrels is for the offender, or at least the one who must assume the rôle of the offender, to become enraptured with the attractiveness of the other or to speak appreciatively of her many virtues, skillfully conditioning the desired response to the imputed qualities, which will readily be accepted and approved by the subject. This method does not always work so well with marital parties as with lovers, because the element of suspicion of motives or the lack of novelty of the device may have entered into the equation. Tom Sawyer's method of getting his fence whitewashed is a classic example of the employment of the method of indirect suggestion. The political orator's flattery of the reputed wisdom of the people, which he has skillfully associated with the response of voting for his candidate, affords another excellent illustration. The successful insurance salesman or book agent is a master of indirect suggestion. He tells you of all the élite who are his patrons and of the large amount of insurance they carry through his company or of the fine bindings they have purchased.

**DANGERS OF INDIRECT SUGGESTION**—But indirect suggestion is not without its faults and dangers. It can be employed for socially bad as well as for socially good ends even more effectively than direct suggestion. Direct suggestion brings the moral issue more clearly into view and if a choice is permitted more opportunity is provided for a rational decision on the merits of the proposition. The act or belief desired by the suggester is called by its own name and it is not hidden behind a simile or a compliment. But in the case of indirect suggestion the chief art is to cover up or lessen the direct adjustment significance of the response and to condition it to a motive or an attitude which is really extrinsic to the situation. One is induced to take medicine because it tastes or looks like honey, not because it cures an ill. Another yields to a lover because he thinks she is beautiful. A third votes for a bad candidate because he has been told that he (the voter) is a patriotic American Citizen. A fourth purchases insurance of an agent because he is told that a railway president did likewise. There is always the danger that a decision may be a wrong one when made for extrinsic reasons. Certainly it is

not good moral training to be coddled and teased into doing things only on the basis of a personal selfish appeal to vanity or to the sense of approbation of superiors or to personal pleasure. It is better for one's moral fiber and self-respect, especially for his social and ethical outlook, to face propositions on their own merits. Perhaps there has been too much indirect suggestion used to control the younger generation. It is possible that they have come to feel that they must be wheedled into meeting their obligations to themselves and society. It sometimes looks as if they felt they were doing others a favor in living up to the best social and personal ideals. It is a difficult question to decide in any particular case, whether to use direct or indirect suggestion.

INNUENDO is a complex sort of suggestion which may make use of indirect, partial, or negative suggestion, or of any combination of these types. Its purpose is to convey a meaning which is not explicitly stated. It is sometimes also called insinuation. Some one wishes a window closed. He remarks that there is quite a draft or that it is becoming chilly in the room. This is sometimes called "hinting." If another person present can "take the hint" that person may close the window. Or it may be that some one wishes to be left alone or left with a third person. The suggestion may be conveyed in some relatively indirect or partial manner. An article of value may have been lost and some one present may be suspected of having taken it. Remarks employing indirect or negative suggestion may be made which are intended to convey the fact to the suspected person that he is under suspicion. This would be called innuendo or insinuation. Innuendo, insinuation, hinting, are very frequently used, sometimes because the suggester does not feel sufficiently confident of his impressions to make a direct statement, and sometimes because it would seem to the suggester to be impolite to deal frankly and "brutally" with the object personality involved. Thus politeness as a system is built largely upon suggestion. Sometimes innuendo is used as a method for the detection of guilt. The person who is suspected, realizing that he is under suspicion, betrays himself by his perturbation. However, the emotional response in such a case may easily be mistaken. Innuendo is a relatively poor

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detective method. A more subtle method of arriving at the same result is the use of the word association test made familiar in this country some years ago by Professor Münsterberg in his book, *On the Witness Stand*.

Most people with a considerable development of self-feeling resent being subjected to innuendo or being the object of hints and insinuations. There is a strong trend in our present-day civilization, at least where democracy is best developed, to deal directly and frankly with others. Excessive politeness, which has been called a system of covert lying, is less valued than it was formerly. Among equals and in a situation where good will and good fellowship exist, such indirections as those here described are not necessary to oil the machinery of intercourse. They are more likely to block it. Apparently those civilizations, peoples, and classes in which there is least equality and safety and where status is least related to merit and service are the ones in which artificial politeness and indirection are most highly developed.

### MATERIALS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Allport, F. H., *Social Psychology*, pp. 242-258  
Baldwin, J. M., *Mental Development in the Child and the Race*, Ch. VI  
Baudouin, C., *Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion*  
Bogardus, E. S., *Fundamentals of Social Psychology*, Chs. VII, XI  
Cooley, C. H., *Human Nature and the Social Order*, Ch. II  
Follett, M. P., *Creative Experience*, Ch. III  
Gault, R. H., *Social Psychology*, Ch. VI  
Lumley, F. E., *Means of Social Control*  
McDougall, W., *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, pp. 96-102  
Martin, E. D., *The Behavior of Crowds*  
Park and Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, pp. 408-420  
Patrick, G. T. W., *The Psychology of Relaxation*, Chs. III, IV  
Ross, E. A., *Social Control*, Chs. IX, XXIII  
Sidis, B., *The Psychology of Suggestion*  
Stern, W., *Psychology of Early Childhood*, Ch. XXXII

## CHAPTER XX

### THE CONDITIONS OF SUGGESTIBILITY

After what has been said in the previous chapter about the kinds of suggestion, the meaning of suggestibility will be sufficiently clear. [One is suggestible in the degree to which (1) he has ready made stimulus-response mechanisms which are effectively conditioned to definite stimuli, (2) in the degree to which interrupting and inhibiting stimulus-response mechanisms or psychic behavior patterns are absent, and (3) the immediacy and unreflectiveness with which the response follows the stimulus.] This is a general statement of the conditions of suggestibility or of the effectiveness of the conditioning of stimuli to suggested responses. These conditions may be stated in more detail under two general headings: the external and internal conditions of suggestibility. The external conditions will be discussed first. Conditions (1) and (3) have already been considered.

II. THE EXTERNAL CONDITIONS OF SUGGESTIBILITY—It is not enough to state the internal conditions favorable to the effectiveness of suggestion in the purely negative manner of freedom from the outside interference which tends to stimulate internal conflicts. There are also certain positive external conditions which increase suggestion.

*A*. *Monotony and rhythm*—The two types which are most closely associated with the negative condition just stated are monotony and rhythm in the stimulus. Monotony of sound, as in speaking or reading, invariability of the form or position of a visual object, repetition of caresses, continuous motion, all tend to favor concentration of the attention or relaxation of the attention altogether. This brings about a condition of temporary dissociation of the psychic processes which is very favorable to that undue dominance over behavior of some one stimulus which we call suggestion. Rhythm is either monotony regularly interrupted, a regularly recurring series of stimuli—

monotonous variation,—or the regular recurrence of the same number of units of stimuli variously organized. Examples of the first of these types of rhythm are the flapping of a loose chain on the wheel of an automobile, repetition of a note in the same key in vocal practice, the recurrence of some visual irregularity, such as a nut, on a uniformly revolving wheel, the tactual stimulation of knots made at equal distances on a rope or string passed through the hand at a uniform speed. Examples of the second type of rhythm, which is more complex, are walking, breathing, the sound of another person breathing, riding, the recurrence of the scale or of parts of the scale in musical practice. This is perhaps the most frequent form of rhythm in nature. The third type may be illustrated by a symphony (which is a very complex type of rhythm) or any other form of musical composition, most dancing, diurnal activities as a whole, riding several times around a scenic railway, or watching a moving picture program repeat itself (the last two constitute a combination of types two and three). Quite obviously not all of these examples of rhythm would contribute equally, if at all, to suggestion. If the rhythm involves a repetition of a startling stimulus, such as a loud or harsh sound, or a pain sensation, or a shock, concentration and dissociation will be prevented. Also, there must not be so much change or variation in the units of types two and three as to interfere with dissociation, and the recurring stimuli must be sufficiently close together to establish a clearly evident repetition or monotony according to expectancy.

*B Duration and repetition of the stimulus* are other important external conditions of suggestibility. But they are more important in establishing a strongly conditioned relationship between a stimulus and a response than they are in releasing the response. Ordinarily any considerable duration of stimulus is not necessary to the release of a response which is already thoroughly conditioned to that stimulus. Duration usually means repetition of the stimulus, and this repetition is especially important in all situations where a well fixed habit is to be broken, that is, where a response is to be conditioned away from an old stimulus which is acceptable and attached to a new one which is not particularly grateful to our apprehension. Such

conditioning through duration and repetition of course goes on at unconscious as well as at conscious levels of psychic behavior. Duration and repetition are made use of in all "educational" campaigns, such as political or religious propaganda, the advertising of commercial products, reform movements, and formal education or training itself. Persistence wins the convert to any cause. "At first we endure, then we tolerate, and next we embrace," is another way of saying that we condition a favorable response through constant operation of some stimulus which formerly was ineffective.

C *Volume of stimuli* is closely allied in method and results to duration and repetition. The latter attributes in fact, when taken consecutively, constitute volume. The propagandist and the advertiser and the proselytizer know well the uses of volume. What one hears or sees or tastes constantly, if it is at all tolerable, becomes essential to one's comfort. Thus men learn to use narcotics and intoxicants, develop habits of labor, or fall into the dissipations of vice. Volume of suggestion works negatively as well as positively. It cuts off former stimuli from operation and concentrates attention upon new ones which thereby are afforded a clear field for the conditioning of responses. There is no particular reason why we should eat K's cornflakes instead of A's, except that we see them advertised more persistently and with greater frequency. If we hear of nothing but the lost condition of our soul we will eventually save it according to the method prescribed by the particular religious propaganda which we have the good fortune to hear. We are Protestants or Catholics, Jews or Christians, Republicans or Democrats, not because each system of belief or interests is superior to all the rest—a contradiction in itself—but because the volume of suggestion in that direction has been overwhelming. We establish our conditioning of responses almost unconsciously (some people erroneously say, instinctively) and thereafter we respond readily to Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Christian, Republican, or Democratic stimuli, according as we have been conditioned to respond. If the other side challenges us, we learn, that is, condition, arguments with which to confound them. Since they have done the same, and since the whole argument is a contest of suggestion instead of

reason, neither side wins, unless one side is more suggestible, or there is greater vitality or volume or prestige on the one side than the other. Volume is perhaps not so exclusively limited to the conditioning of responses as are duration and repetition. The greater the volume the greater, within limits, is the opportunity for the suggesting or conditioning stimuli to be effective, that is, to cross the threshold of stimulation.

*D* *Prestige* in the stimulating object, usually a personality, group of personalities, or a theory or a system of thought, or belief, conditions a strong readiness to respond to this object. This readiness is due to the fact that the responses of the subject are conditioned strongly through previous experience by certain attributes or powers possessed by the object. Thus prestige as an external factor means simply power to give suggestion and relates primarily to the power of the object to release a ready made response and secondarily to its power to condition such a response to itself as stimulus. Prestige is the prime external essential condition of suggestibility. If it exists, volume, duration and repetition are not necessary in order to make the suggestion effective. Prestige is effective conditioning plus a strong affective evaluation of the stimulus. There are many qualities in the object which, because they have already conditioned favorable responses, give to the object suggestive power. Some of the most important of these may be mentioned. Superiority in strength, intellectual ability, management, cunning, etc., are especially likely to have conditioned in us responses of acquiescence and subordination. The same is true of any other signs of power which are concrete and objective and which may therefore readily be apprehended. Those in authority over us, such as parents, guardians, officials, or those in positions of public trust or strategy, such as bankers, teachers, ministers, usually have conditioned in us attitudes of respect and partial subordination, even before we have come to recognize the fact. Other qualities, separate from or overlapping the above, which give prestige to their possessors for the same or similar reasons as were mentioned above, are age, experience, wealth, learning, birth, moral integrity, success, religious sanctity, piety, authority, relative length of establishment, splendor and show, reputation for power, intelli-

gence, mystery, self-confidence, inscrutability, dramatic capacity, strong emotions, personal reserve, uniqueness, antiquity, modernity, universality, numbers, logicality, specialization, membership in the élite, beauty, awesomeness, sanity, sanctity. Men and institutions or organizations and propaganda possessing these attributes can secure followers and hold them as long as they preserve their qualities. For the most part our allegiances, personal and social, are not so much based on principles or rational choice as they are suggested or conditioned by the qualities in leaders here mentioned. We respond largely automatically and immediately to those who possess such stimuli in their personalities or in the social organization, and we rationalize our behavior into principles later on. Such people are leaders, and institutions with such qualities are almost certain to dominate society. Such qualities or persons possess prestige because we recognize them as sources or conveyors of satisfactions. A favorable response to them is associated with pleasant feeling which gives us our affective or emotionally sanctioning attitude toward them.

III THE INTERNAL CONDITIONS OF SUGGESTIBILITY are both negative and positive. The positive condition is, as has already been stated, the existence of a strongly conditioned association between stimuli and response mechanisms. The negative internal condition is the absence of any conflicting or inhibiting psychic processes or competing stimulus-response mechanisms. This absence of inhibiting mechanisms may arise either from the fact that such competing tendencies or psychic behavior organizations have never been introduced into the psychic personality or from the fact that dissociation of conditioned overt response or inner behavior processes has been effected. These two negative conditions are very similar, except that the former is simpler and more negative than the latter. In such cases the mind or inner behavior organization has never been filled with inhibiting dispositions, with the result that there is little chance for inner conflicts or interruptions to occur. In the second case the development of conflicting conditioned responses may have occurred, but the conflict is prevented by isolating the inner behavior mechanisms either by means of concentrating the attention upon certain stimuli to the exclusion of others or

by developing some internal control over psychic content which leads to dissociation of inner mechanisms, such as occurs typically in auto-suggestion. This inner control is probably effected by fixing the attention upon some external or, more frequently, psychic or mnemonic symbol or cue which organizes the psychic and overt responses in the desired manner as preconditioned. Thus concentration of the attention upon external involuntary stimuli or voluntary fixation upon an external object, as in crystal gazing, or upon an internal symbol, as in automatic trance, is essential to that degree of dissociation of psychic processes which renders one readily suggestible in a unilateral direction.

Where one is suggestible to a large number of stimuli at the same time we say he is excited. He is as truly suggestible or suggested in this as in other cases of suggestion where the behavior is more direct and unified, but since we have associated the term suggestion with a fairly well integrated and isolated type of response which excludes other types we do not speak of response by general excitement as suggested behavior. Of course, excitement may also be due to conflicts in imitation or of some other form of stimulation. The more intense and concentrated or isolated the relatively automatic and uncritical conditioned responses are, the purer and more profound the type of suggestion, according to conventional usage.

#### **IV THE UNFILLED MIND AS A CONDITION OF SUGGESTIBILITY**

—The unfilled mind operates as a favorable factor in suggestibility in a great many types of cases. But it can thus operate only if there are certain behavior mechanisms in the mind which are effectively conditioned to stimuli. This condition is likely always to exist, even in those of the lowest intelligence quotient or with the least training. Because all animals, human or otherwise, have certain natural drives or prepotent dispositions, such as the need for food, and the desire for sex satisfaction—to which they soon add other and acquired drives for at least shelter, protection from enemies, and possibly for association with their kind, as a minimum requirement for existence—certain habits of response grow up to supplement whatever instinctive behavior processes there may be for the effective realization of such drives. These responses, native

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and acquired, become conditioned to appropriate stimuli and render the subject suggestible to these stimuli which call for the satisfaction of his native and acquired interests by whatever means he has learned or inherited. What we really mean when we speak of a mind unfilled by inhibiting behavior mechanisms is that the higher and more socialized, esthetic and ethical, behavior patterns which we find in cultivated or civilized man have not yet been, or cannot be, added to our behavior complexes to serve as restraints upon the relatively irrational satisfaction of our wants and desires under the dominance of suggestion. Certain classes of animals and human beings are particularly suggestible because of this fact.

- A *The animals below man* are highly suggestible in the direction of their instinctive and simple acquired interests or needs. Only the most rigorous training or substitute conditioning of responses can prevent the hungry dog from eating his master's food when his back is turned. Male work horses are made into geldings because it is difficult or impossible otherwise to train them not to respond to sex stimuli from females. But a dog carefully trained to point, or to hunt only certain types of game, will usually hold that training unless stimulated by his master (to whose suggestions he responds preferentially) to break it. Monkeys and apes are highly suggestible along certain limited natural lines, as is the case with some other animals, and they will hold careful training for a considerable period of time. They, together with elephants and dogs and horses, can be conditioned to respond with a very large number of simple learned behavior mechanisms to appropriate cue or symbolic stimuli which have become conditioning factors through association. These responses, however, are all in the field of suggestion. They are not able to imitate, except in the case of apes who do so in a rudimentary manner, because they cannot easily perceive or recognize the total behavior stimulus. Suggestion is of a lower order of adaptive control than imitation.
- B *Feeble-minded persons*, like lower animals, are highly suggestible in line with their fundamental drives, but find it very difficult or impossible to condition their responses effectively to cultural or social stimuli of a high order, especially when a

considerable degree of intelligence is involved. The higher grades of the feeble-minded can be successfully conditioned to stimuli to sympathetic response, acquiescence and loyalty and tenderness of a high degree of concentration in simple relationships, and are thus made highly suggestible to some of the finest simple emotional values in our culture. But, without constant reënforcement of the suggestion through the presence of the stimulus or even some supplementary stimulus, the cultural and more complex and abstract acquired conditionings give way before the more nearly instinctive and appetitive. Sometimes the lapse from the artificial to the natural control in this respect is very striking and even shocking, as in cases where carefully regimented morons suddenly yield to the stimulus to commit some sex delinquency or some act of violence in anger. Because the feeble-minded are relatively so wanting in inhibiting psychic behavior mechanisms, especially of the intellectual or rational type, they are highly suggestible in those directions in which they have built up conditioned responses and in the direction of their native drives. They pour their energies without reserve into any line of activities which they have learned to perform, but they are fickle and can be suggested with surprising facility into other, even contradictory, types of behavior, in which they are equally violent and expressive. We are accustomed to say that the feeble-minded have strong emotions, but weak characters. The trouble is that they are not able to build up sufficient rational or intellectual content for their psychic personalities and consequently develop little power of inhibition of contrary suggestion. They may not even have the intelligence to perceive the illogicality of their own behavior, or if they have they are unable to inhibit suggestions and control their conduct. The feeble-minded often suffer acute remorse, if they have been conditioned by ethical stimuli, but the remorse is easily wiped out of consciousness by the appearance of some other suggestion. It does not become a permanent mode of response.

*The young*, like the feeble-minded and lower animals, are highly suggestible in the direction of their relatively few pre-conditioned responses. But unlike the feeble-minded and animals, they can build up a rational psychic content or rival con-

ditioned responses, which inhibit the more appetitive responses to suggestion. The conditioning of rival responses is in effect a process of rendering the subject responsive to new and more cultural or more highly socialized stimuli to which he was not before subject or sensitive. This process of acquiring a sensitivity to a broader range of stimuli which serve to condition responses away from the more appetitive stimuli and thus to sublimate and intellectualize and socialize behavior is, in the broadest sense, the process of education, whether it be in schools or elsewhere. Childhood is the period preëminently of heterosuggestibility. Home and school and playgroup give him conditioning stimuli of great volume in a continuous stream, until the new associations of stimuli and responses take the place of the old. Here also the adults with whom he comes in contact have such prestige as no other persons probably ever will possess. Consequently their suggestions or stimuli—their commands, wishes, preferences, which he perceives—take effect with great force upon the behavior of the child. As the child's experience grows he begins to develop rational imitation at the expense of suggestion and he may even develop a considerable degree of original thinking. But as age advances and as life becomes more highly stereotyped for him, in those ways indicated in the following chapter, he begins again to act on the basis of suggestion and probably ends his natural life period with as large a proportion of his behavior controlled by auto-suggestion or the repetition of his own responses as in childhood was controlled by hetero-suggestion.

D *The uneducated and those inexperienced* in the problems of life adjustment are much like children both in their lack of the development of susceptibility to rival stimuli of a cultural character to condition or inhibit their prepotent or previously conditioned responses and in their capacity to develop a high degree of susceptibility under proper circumstances. The same is also true of *backward races and peoples*. In fact, there is a very close social analogy between the backward peoples of all races, whether they come from isolated districts in the midst of a highly cultivated civilization, as from mountainous regions, or from the slums of great cities, or from larger geographical units of isolation in the midst of a world civilization.

The types of stimuli to which the untutored mountaineer and the south sea islander will react are not essentially different from those to which the denizen of the slum responds, although the latter may have developed more variety and faddism in the method of his response. All alike may be conditioned to new cultural stimuli and given new responses under proper conditions of training. These people are easily suggestible in the direction of their previous habits of acting and thinking, but it is very difficult to suggest to them behavior contrary to their experience, even when the suggestion comes from some one with much prestige. The backwoodsman may be sold "green goods" or a "gold brick" or be conditioned to an intolerance of the theory of evolution; the savage may be convinced that the civilized man has a wonderful magic superior to his own; and the slum dweller may accept the statement that farmers "pick" potatoes and "dig" cabbages without question. But it is not possible to "put over" on the first any "nonsense" about methods of trapping "varmints"; or the second, with regard to stalking game; or the last, about the location of "moonshine joints" or the economic condition of the poor.

*F* Men and women of culture are also highly suggestible, by skilled manipulators, in those fields in which they lack experience or scientific data with which to check stimuli. Insurance agents, book agents, and other persistent salesmen, usually find women easier prey than men, and a pretty woman can sell some men almost anything in spite of their experience with agents. In the one case, the woman's responses are conditioned to the glowing words of idealism and day-dreamy promises, which her experience or knowledge is not able to contradict. Living a more or less repressed and inexperienced life, she consequently responds to the stimuli of hope or to the suggestion that all the other women of intelligence and fashion have purchased the article, instead of to the actual merits of the object which is before her. In the second case, the average man responds by previous conditioning to the artfully manipulated sex stimuli, while he thinks he is rationally considering the value of the books or other articles. Thus in reality women sell sex appeal while the men frequently buy this stimulus and pay for books they never open. It is not possible, how-

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ever, under normal stimuli conditions, to suggest a social false step to a well-trained woman of fashion or the purchase of worthless oil stock or submerged real estate to a keen business man. In their own fields men and women are "hard boiled," unless their responses are conditioned by analogy and unconsciously to stimuli that release other responses which are ordinarily censored and kept in the background. This is what happens in the case of the man buying books for which he has no use because the saleswoman appealed to his unconscious admiration for a pretty woman while his critical financial judgment was in temporary abeyance. On the whole, it may be said that women of good intelligence are more likely to be suggested contrary to reason where a matter of lack of experience is involved. Both men and women are likely to be suggested contrary to interest where the suggester can make a covert and unrecognized appeal by conditioning a substitute stimulus which operates strongly in the subconsciousness of the one being manipulated, but is carefully kept out of the argument.

V

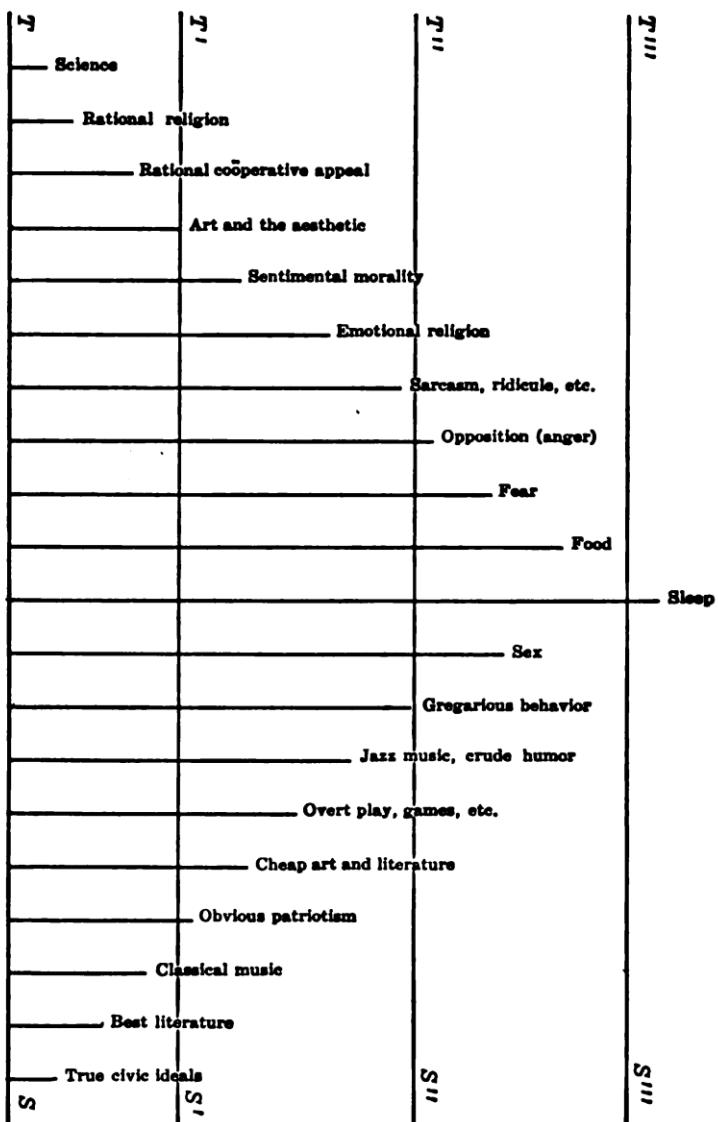
DISSOCIATION of stimulus-response processes facilitates suggestion by removing competing response mechanisms which may be conditioned as a whole or in part to the same stimuli and by eliminating or making of no effect rival stimuli which condition effective responses. The manner of the operation of dissociation has already been shown with sufficient clearness. The competing psychic processes do not cease to exist in dissociation. They are still in the nervous system, but dormant because not stimulated to active response, either through inhibitions, or lack of stimuli. Various subjective conditions, organic and psychic, facilitate this dissociation. People with abnormal psychological traits, the hystericals and psychopaths generally, dissociate their psychic behavior mechanisms more easily than the psychiatrically normal individuals. Hysteria and all types of schizophrenia, from absent-mindedness to actual division of personality and chronic functional amnesia, are cases of dissociation. But temporary and intermittent dissociation, resulting in "queer" and sometimes contradictory behavior, is probably more frequent than the layman suspects. Practically all people vary considerably in the degree and types of their suggestibility according to environmental circum-

stances and organic and mental condition. During illness, or when the body's resistance is lowered through fatigue or strain, or during any great emotional stress, one is much more suggestible than at other times, because these conditions facilitate dissociation and render the connection between conditioned response and stimulus more readily open. Some of the typical subjective conditions producing dissociation and therefore facilitating suggestion will be explained in the following paragraphs.

**I** FATIGUE, FASTING, INTOXICATION, and like conditions have a tendency to raise the threshold of stimulation because of their toxic effects upon the nervous system. This probably causes the weaker synaptic connections to cease functioning, thereby dissociating the behavior patterns of the weaker from the stronger impulses. The impulses which are strongest are likely, other things being equal, to be those dispositions in which the stimulus-response organizations have the largest number of instinctive connections, or in which the acquired connections have been made most effective through conditioning. Some habits frequently practiced become in this way as firmly rooted as the instincts themselves. In fact all of the behavior complexes, including those which contain strong instinctive elements, are habitual or acquired. Through the raising of the threshold of stimulation, due to fatigue, fasting, intoxication, or any sort of tissue poisoning or interference with the synapses, the weaker impulses, which are usually the more cultural and the more recent, drop out of operation, and leave the stronger impulses operative and easily subject to uninterrupted suggestion. The diagram on page 312 serves to illustrate this principle.

**II** ABNORMAL ASPECTS OF THIS TYPE OF SUGGESTION—It is under such conditions as these that much of the unconventional or brutal and apparently inexplicable conduct of otherwise conventional people occurs. People are more frequently irritable when fatigued or ill or intoxicated than at other times, and they will respond to stimulation with violence as they would not if their more rational and cultural complexes were functioning as inhibitory mechanisms. It is often said that when drunk or tired one's true nature shows up, and this is in large measure correct, for the usual cultural inhibitions are then re-

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The base line, TS, represents the hypothetical and theoretical normal threshold of stimulation, at which all of the behavior complexes represented by perpendicular lines are susceptible of stimulation or release by appropriate stimuli. The height of the perpendicular lines indicates the synaptic or impulsive strength of these several complexes for which they stand. As fatigue or other toxic producing conditions occur the threshold of stimulation is raised to T'S'. The result is that the weaker or cultural impulses can no longer be stimulated or pass through the synapses and they drop out

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as inhibiting factors. If the threshold is not raised too greatly and if the dissociation of the cultural from the appetitive stimuli is not too thorough-going, there will be no remarkable change in the character of the type of suggestion to which one is subject. But if the threshold of stimulation is raised, say to T"S", the dissociation of behavior patterns is very marked, practically all of the cultural inhibiting processes having disappeared, with the result that the more appetitive behavior complexes remain in possession of the organism. The organism may become quiescent or "go to sleep" in extreme cases (when the threshold has been raised to T""S""), or it may, if properly stimulated, seek the satisfaction of one or more of the other dominant drives. No attempt has been made to include all of the interests or impulses of the organism in this chart.

moved. If it is not the true nature, it is at least the deepest rooted nature which is thus made apparent. Intoxicated people commit more sex delinquencies and acts of violence, and evidence less control generally, including indulgence in undignified conduct and buffoonery, than people who are not intoxicated. It is not, however, always easy here to distinguish between cause and effect. Possibly intoxication is in part the result, as well as the cause, of inadequate inhibitory controls. People who have fasted are in a sense toxic, through the lack of adequate replenishment of broken down tissues and elimination of waste matter. Because of this fact, and because there are lacking adequate chemical stimuli or metabolism for the nervous processes, the threshold of stimulation is raised or the synaptic connections of the weaker behavior sets cease to operate effectively, and inhibition of suggestion in the direction of dominant interests or impulses is lessened.

This will explain why religious beliefs are much more evident to those who have fasted than to the fleshly. It also explains in part why they see visions as real objects and have phantasies which are counterparts of their waking meditations. Delirium in fever appears under conditions of marked auto-intoxication and slight inhibition of dominant impulses. In all of these cases of the raising of the threshold of stimulation and the consequent dissociation of behavior complexes, it is the more firmly fixed or deeply rooted interests which are susceptible to suggestion. These are not necessarily the more nearly instinctive complexes. They may be wholly acquired interests, as in the case of religion, which is fostered by suggestion. People also develop phobias of various sorts which show up

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during intoxication or extreme fatigue or hunger, and especially in deliriums from fevers or in delirium tremens. Other people are "hipped" on politics, art, or in fact, on anything. Any interest whatever may become the dominant set in one's character, showing up with surprising susceptibility to suggestion under proper conditions for suggestibility.

VIII

**FIXED IDEAS, MANIAS, AND PHOBIAS**—When this dissociation is for any cause relatively permanent and the subject is rendered particularly and constantly suggestible along the line of a dominant interest we speak of fixed ideas or manias. These may range in intensity all the way from mild peculiarities, foibles, hobbies, nuisances, and the like, up to distinct and recognized types of insanities. The causes of such dissociation and consequent suggestibility are not merely fatigue, fasting, intoxication, narcosis, and autointoxication. These are normally temporary and transient. But occasionally they assume relatively permanent forms, as in the case of chronic neurasthenia or chronic toxemia from drug addiction or glandular infections, such as goiter. In such cases the inhibiting cultural or rational interests may disappear practically completely and leave the affected person the victim of fear hallucinations, or subject to unrelieved and uninterrupted suggestions of any preconditioned type whatever. In their extreme form these conditioned susceptibilities to suggestion render the subject psychotic and true insanities develop. The condition of radical dissociation known as hysteria may grow out of such organic conditions, or it may develop as a functional type of schizophrenia due to the subject's inability to handle difficult adjustment situations. Hysteria and radical schizophrenia, or true dissociated personality, show the greatest degrees of suggestibility along these lines.

The hysterical person is suggestible along the lines of the major conditionings of his responses to the degree of being unable to see any situation in true perspective or in a rational light. In the dissociated personality suggestion masses wholly along certain lines and cleavages, with the result that the conditioning of responses to stimuli across those cleavages cannot take place at all. The illusions of dementia præcox and paranoia, and of similar or other functional personality dis-

tortions, are due primarily to dissociation of behavior complexes which leaves the dominant set or system of conditioned responses uninhibited by the opposite or corrective tendencies. In psychoanalytic literature these dissociated corrective processes are said to be censored. As a consequence suggestion is uninterrupted and all-powerful in the direction of the psychotic imagery.

**TX PREJUDICES AND OTHER MILD FORMS OF FIXED IDEAS—**

These are relatively extreme cases of suggestibility due to dissociation. They are recognized everywhere as being abnormal and sometimes require highly specialized and insistent treatment. But there are many milder forms which for the most part escape any but the most casual notice by laymen. We dismiss them ordinarily with the explanation that the subject is "queer." Dr. Samuel Johnson, it is said, could not pass a lamp post without yielding to the suggestion to touch it. Old maids are supposed each night to look under their beds to discover a man in hiding. It is recorded that Bulwer-Lytton could not write well except in evening clothes. The flow of ideas of another writer is said to be conditioned to the use of a goose quill pen. These habits of response are in fact not different in kind from many other mild types of suggestibility which we do not regard as queer or unconventional. The conventions of chivalry belong in this class, some of which still remain. Within our own memories the near approach of a lady acquaintance irresistibly conditioned the lifting of the hat and bowing by the male. Even now no one can resist, at parting from a reception, however boresome, the temptation to say, "It has been a delightful evening, Mrs. \_\_\_\_."

Somewhat more radical is the dissociation in the case of what we call prejudices. A prejudice arises from the strong conditioning of certain psychic behavior or attitudes to certain corresponding stimuli and the dissociation of inhibiting tendencies, with the result that the inhibiting processes are not adequate to break these conditionings. As a consequence the prejudiced person has a fixed idea or is radically suggestible in the direction of his belief or allegiance. Such prejudices are particularly liable to form in connection with religion, politics, sex matters, one's kin or property, art, or any other objects

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which call from us strong emotional responses. It is very difficult to be rational and objective, or unprejudiced about things which are close to us or for which we have made sacrifices or which we have molded to our own liking, that is, things to which our responses have become strongly conditioned. We are strongly suggestible in favor of our friends, family, party, creed, property, and the like, and just as strongly suggestible against our enemies and the friends, families, and property of our rivals. A "good" Republican or Democrat will believe almost anything he reads or hears in favor of his own party or in opposition to the rival parties. It is only recently that we have persuaded ourselves not to consign the adherents of rival religious creeds to the flames in the world to come or as surely to expect to meet all of those who profess our own faith, regardless of their morals, in the realms of bliss. Prejudices, from which no one is free, are the result of a mild form of dissociation. Nevertheless they cause a vast amount of distortion of functional adjustment in our world.

HYPNOTISM is an artificially produced dissociation so complete as to render the isolated and remaining behavior patterns extremely suggestible. Although the dissociation connected with hypnotism occurs in the mind of the subject it usually requires the coöperation or direction of some external agency to be effected. Self-hypnosis does occur, as in the trance, but ordinarily there is involved both an operator and a subject in hypnotic phenomena. The "operator" may be passive, such as a bright object, the sound of the ticking of a clock, upon which the attention of the subject becomes fixed mechanically. But such spontaneous fixation upon a passive object, with resulting dissociation, is not ordinarily sufficiently complete to produce hypnosis, unless there has previously been a repeated experience of hypnosis through the agency of a director employing this object, and thus conditioning the hypnotic response to this stimulus. The director serves the double function of assisting the subject in selecting an object of attention and of keeping the attention centered on the object until dissociation occurs, and of directing suggestive stimuli after the subject is dissociated or hypnotized. This second function of the director or operator is very important. In self-hypnosis or automatic hyp-

nosis the direction of suggestion will either come from dominant unconscious sets within or will arise from random occurrences or impacts from without. For most persons such direction of suggestion is not very effective. It will be seen, however, that the psychic mechanism of self-hypnotism with direction of suggestion from internal sets or complexes is very similar to that of certain psychotic states, such as illusions and hallucinations in dementia præcox and paranoia, and the phobias. In the latter there is a permanent dissociation not unlike that in hypnosis in respect to its completeness. The result is that in psychotic cases the subject is rarely or never free from the dominance of the internal sets, whose responses are conditioned to almost all types of stimuli of which he takes cognizance. This internal dominance twists the stimuli into interpreted phenomena which support his own mental derangement or illusions.

THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN HYPNOSIS—The prestige of the operator has much to do with his success in securing concentration upon objects and consequent dissociation, also in securing the ready acceptance of his suggestions by the subject. But there is always a limit to what suggestions the subject will accept, and this limit is fixed by a number of factors in addition to the prestige of the operator. Some of these are the completeness of the dissociation, the mental level of the subject, his poise, the circumstances and surroundings under which hypnosis occurs, the familiarity and acceptability of the suggested behavior to the subject. Subjects can be suggested only towards behavior with which they are reasonably familiar. This fact follows from the nature of the mechanism of suggestion already explained. It is necessary that the response shall have been previously conditioned by the stimuli which are manipulated by the operator before they can take effect with such celerity and momentum and so without modification of the process as to warrant the application of the term suggestion to the behavior process. Likewise, unless the behavior suggested has the approval of the subject or at least is sufficiently indifferent as not to cause shock, its suggestion will meet opposition and criticism or produce conflict rather than secure acceptance. For example, it is rarely possible to suggest effec-

tively to any one in hypnosis to shoot another person, even his enemy, or to commit any other serious crime. Such suggestions may produce sufficient inner conflict as to remove the dissociation and "wake up" the subject. Only the feeble-minded or hysterical or morally perverted (those who already have mechanisms or desires for such behavior) are likely to be suggested in such directions during hypnosis. Neither can one ordinarily be suggested to commit suicide in a hypnotic condition.

It is not necessary for the subject to be convinced of the truth of what he is told by the operator or of the entire reasonableness of what he is commanded to do. Dissociation is of varying degrees of completeness in different subjects, and some cannot be sufficiently dissociated as to produce true hypnosis. But the condition of hypnosis is one of suspension of judgment rather than of positive judgment in favor of the statements and commands of the operator. If the dissociation is profound the lapse of critical judgment is also profound and the subject will do within limits whatever he is told, even if it is unconventional. But in milder forms or degrees of dissociation the performer often is vaguely aware of the incongruity of the situation or of the statements and commands. He accepts them or performs them in somewhat the same spirit that he plays a game. He sees no reason why he should not. Indeed he does not reach a positive judgment that they are untrue or ridiculous. Another feature of hypnosis is that the dissociation often releases the inhibitions over certain tendencies to response or drives which are now more easily suggested than formerly. Thus tears and acts of sentiment, sex impulses (if not of such a character as to be deeply shocking), mild fears, interest in satisfaction of the appetites, are more easily suggested in hypnosis than out of it. Cultural inhibitions are to a certain extent removed and the subject goes back towards a more or less primitive type of personality.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF SUGGESTION—**  
These various types of suggestion have various degrees of significance in collective adjustment situations. In those types which depend upon negative dissociation, or where the associations have not yet been or cannot be organized as inhibition

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processes, the significance for adjustment is fairly patent. The suggestion is relatively direct and copious. Children, the uneducated, primitive peoples, those of isolated experience and lower mentality, are in many or most respects easily suggested. They become rational personalities by virtue of developing more associations which serve as inhibitions upon random or manipulated suggestions. Suggestion due to fatigue, fasting, toxic conditions, intoxication, or drug addiction, is fairly frequent in the lives of many people and probably determines a considerable part of social behavior, particularly in domestic situations and in crowds. While suggestion due to fixed ideas or chronic dissociation is operative, at least in an extreme manner, upon relatively few people, it not infrequently plays a considerable rôle in human affairs because of its violence and the dogmatic character of the beliefs and behavior of those who are victims of such suggestion. Prejudices are especially prevalent and are very largely determinative of human relationships. Their bad effects socially and individually can scarcely be overestimated. Hypnosis is mainly an artificial condition and occurs primarily in situations where the subject and operator have little chance to influence collective relationships generally. But there are undoubtedly many milder cases of hypnotic dissociation occurring under the conscious or unconscious direction of some dominating personality or as self-hypnosis. These probably determine collective relationships to a vast extent. Such mild hypnotic suggestion phenomena are probably operative in mobs, in strong friendships, in conjugal relationships and infatuations, and in various other relationships in life. In this mild form they are not necessarily harmful, but may be of positive use in organizing behavior on a fairly automatic basis and in thus conserving energy and in regularizing conduct.

It will be seen from our discussion of the conditions of suggestibility that these various types of suggestion are not wholly separate and distinct. They merge into one another imperceptibly. It is only when we select outstanding cases in isolation that they appear as wholly distinct types. Perhaps more than one relative type is operative in practically every situation involving suggestibility.

THE UBIQUITOUSNESS OF SUGGESTION—Suggestion operates in almost every sphere and aspect of life. It is a short cut method of controlling effectively conditioned behavior. It is in itself quite devoid of moral character and may be used indifferently for ethical, non-ethical, or anti-ethical ends. It is frequently said that rationally directed conduct is of a higher type socially than suggested behavior. This is of course true, but it is not possible to be self or socially conscious about everything. Short cut controls in behavior are inevitable. The greater volume of suggestion occurs in the direction of everyday contacts, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, where it is ordinarily unmanipulated by some supervising agency. But there is also a vast amount of manipulated suggestion. This comes especially through the family, the school, the church, politics, the stage, the newspaper and periodical, and advertising. The newspaper, through its news articles, editorials, and advertisements, does much to control public opinion. Commercial advertisements to a large extent determine consumption, at least with reference to brands and styles, if not with regard to the contents and quality of the articles themselves.

Through the home, school, church, movie, theater, radio, and newspaper and press generally, we are told what to think or believe in almost all relationships in life. Sometimes this suggestion is direct and sometimes it is indirect, according to the degree of resistance which the person or public offers to the suggestion. The control of propaganda suggestion for proper social ends has become one of the serious problems of our day and must be attained by some method or other if society is not to be increasingly manipulated for selfish or partisan purposes. Controlled by suggestion we probably shall be, but this control should be for legitimate social purposes. It is not the function of this work on the principles of social psychology to go into details regarding either the methods of suggestion employed in concrete cases or types or the methods of controlling such propaganda. This belongs to the applications of social psychology, especially to the subjects of social organization, social control, and social ethics.

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### MATERIALS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

- Davenport, F. M., *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*  
Gault, R. H., *Social Psychology*, Ch. VI  
Hocking, W. E., *Morale and Its Enemies*  
Hollingworth, H. L., *Advertising and Selling*  
Kitson, H. D., *The Mind of the Buyer*  
Leopold, L., *Prestige: A Psychological Study of Social Estimates*  
McDougall, W., *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, pp. 96-102  
Moll, A., *Hypnotism*  
Patrick, G. T. W., *The Psychology of Relaxation*  
Ross, E. A., *Social Control*, Chs. XIII, XIV  
—, *Social Psychology*, Ch. II  
Sidis, B., *The Psychology of Suggestion*  
Starch, D., *Principles of Advertising*  
Stratton, G. M., *Experimental Psychology and Its Bearing upon Culture*,  
Ch. XI  
Sumner, W. G., *Folkways*, Ch. V, pp. 22-24