

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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heretofore used, but which is in accord with that of the group in which he is now dancing. Although it is true that in most cases such innovations are copied intentionally, that is, imitatively, there are nevertheless these distinct cases in which there has been no intention of adopting the movement or attitude, and no ideational process of considering that detail of the behavior of others. In such cases it frequently happens that one's first deliberate attention to the type of behavior comes in noticing that one has made an innovation in his dancing; and, second, in recalling that it is the similitude of what others have been doing. That the acts of the others have nevertheless been perceived is evidenced by the possibility of remembering them. In any case, the action must have been *learned* previously. The reactor must have built up, by previous reactions, the neural integration which results from the stimulus pattern in question.

In *imitation*, the stimulus pattern afforded by the act of another person produces, not the reaction of doing the act, but a perceptual reaction of some other type; and this first reaction, (the perception), produces an idea, (an ideational reaction), which includes the act. This ideational reaction may be produced immediately by the perception; or it may be produced mediately, by an intervening ideational reaction, or by a series of such. The distinguishing characteristic of the imitation reaction, in short, is the intervention of an *idea*, or a series of ideas, between the stimulus pattern of perception and the act which resembles that stimulus pattern.

The social effects of imitation are enormous, and are most conspicuous in the carrying out of the tendency to *conform*. Social customs, manners of speech, and details of dress are adopted from others mainly through deliberate imitation. No woman copies the type of costume of another woman except in so far as she has ideas that the costume represents a type which is to be worn by the group to whom she wishes to conform. Selective adoption of action is not impossible in the level of similitude reactions, but selection is vastly extended and facilitated by deliberation.

Ideas are simulated and imitated, along with other activities. Simply, or deliberately, we adopt the religious, political, scientific, and other notions of others by repeating them. The expression of the idea by another person is the stimulus pattern; the thinking of the same idea is our imitative reaction. Although this is only one of the types of promulgation of ideas, and has been overemphasized in the

theories of the past, it is important. All forms of the promulgation of ideas, including imitation, involve language, which is the most important of mental instruments, both socially and individually.

Neither similitude reaction nor imitation, therefore, is a means or method of learning, so far as specific acts are concerned. The reactor must have learned to perform the acts, or he cannot reproduce them. He cannot imitate the methods of speech of another person unless he has already learned to make the inflections and sounds involved, any more than he can imitate the starting of a motor car unless he has learned how to start it.

In another way, however, imitation may be an important method of learning; that is, in the synthesis of acts already learned as individual acts. One might learn to start an automobile by imitating the successive acts of a driver, provided one is already able to perform these successive acts. These acts being called forth in a certain order by successive imitation, may then become fixed in that order, in accordance with the laws of association, and the total reaction, comprising the series of previously learned acts, becomes learned.

In the simulation and imitation responses, the final act resembles the act of the other person which serves as the stimulus pattern; or else, the situation resulting from the act resembles the situation which constitutes the stimulus pattern. When one person's clapping his hands together causes another person to clap his hands, or when an American imitates a Britisher's drawl, we have illustrations of the first type. When the shop girl clothes herself, as nearly as skill and finances will allow, like my lady of the limousine, we have an illustration of the second type.

There is, however, another type of communication which is like imitation in that the ultimate act is the expression of an idea, not of a perception, but differs in that the idea does not result from a perception of an act or situation similar to the act or situation ultimately produced. This type of communication is properly called *suggestion*, and should be distinguished from imitation.²

² The confusion of the two types of action which has led to a fallacious explanation of all social behavior as "imitation" is due in part to the fact that we have the verb *to imitate* for the reproduction of a model; but we have no verb expressing the influence of the model on the imitator; while, on the other hand, we have the verb *to suggest* for the influence which one man may have on another in this second way, but no convenient verb for the act of the person on whom the suggestion is made effective.

Suggestion is exhibited in a startling way in many of the phenomena of hypnosis; but it is no less present in normal life. On the other hand, neither hypnosis nor the social activities of normal life can be fully accounted for in terms of suggestion. If the hypnotist makes a bow to a properly prepared subject, the subject will bow in return; that is obviously imitation or else mere similitude reaction. If the hypnotist says "You will now greet politely Miss Blank, who is speaking to you," the subject again will bow. This is not imitation, but suggestion.

In both suggestion and imitation we are dealing with the same process, absent in similitude reaction, namely, "the tendency for an idea to express itself in action;" or more strictly, the tendency for the idea reactions to become strong and definite enough to produce outward effects of importance.

In normal life, suggestion and imitation contribute only part of the springs of social action. Many other factors contribute to the determination of the actions of man upon the stimulation furnished by other men, so that suggestion and imitation may be inhibited, accentuated, or reversed. Among these other factors, the influence of desires, and the process of associative recall of ideas are the most important. In hypnosis, both of these factors are reduced, so that the "suggestion" of a course of action fails to bring up associatively conflicting ideas, and the desires have less effect in impelling to or against the suggested acts. The effect of suggestion in normal life however, is very large.

§4. Language and culture

Language may be broadly defined as a type of stimulation which produces ideational responses rather than perceptual responses. Actually, the distinction between perceptual and ideational reactions is not so sharp as this definition would imply. There are types of responses which are purely perceptual and types which are purely ideational. There are also responses which are both perceptual and ideational in their nature; and stimulus patterns which produce this "mixed" type of reaction are properly designated as *language*, along with the patterns which produce purely ideational responses.

The above definition applies to language in a wide sense of the term, although a perfectly proper sense. In many instances, how-