

# SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

**FLOYD HENRY ALLPORT**

*Professor of Social and Political Psychology  
School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University*



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or non-social.<sup>1</sup> It is the satisfaction of these needs and the adaptation of the individual to his whole environment which constitute the guiding principles of his interactions with his fellow men.

**Social Psychology as a Science of the Individual. The Group Fallacy.** Impressed by the closely knit and reciprocal nature of social behavior, some writers have been led to postulate a kind of 'collective mind' or 'group consciousness' as separate from the minds of the individuals of whom the group is composed. No fallacy is more subtle and misleading than this. It has appeared in the literature under numerous guises; but has everywhere left the reader in a state of mystical confusion. Several forms of this theory will be examined presently. The standpoint of this book may be concisely stated as follows. There is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals. Social psychology must not be placed in contradistinction to the psychology of the individual; *it is a part of the psychology of the individual*, whose behavior it studies in relation to that sector of his environment comprised by his fellows. His biological needs are the ends toward which his social behavior is a developed means. Within his organism are provided all the mechanisms by which social behavior is explained. There is likewise no consciousness except that belonging to individuals. Psychology in all its branches is a science of the individual. To extend its principles to larger units is to destroy their meaning.

**Psychological Forms of the Group Fallacy. 1. The 'Crowd Mind.'** The most flagrant form of the group fallacy is the notion of 'crowd consciousness.' It has long been observed that persons in an excited mob seem to lose control of themselves, and to be swept along by tempestuous emotions and impelling ideas. It is therefore alleged that there is a lapse of personal consciousness and a rise of a common or 'crowd' consciousness. The objections to this view are fairly obvious. Psychologists agree in regarding

<sup>1</sup> An interesting point of difference, however, exists in the social as distinguished from other environmental relations. In the social sphere the environment not only stimulates the individual, but is stimulated *by* him. Other persons not only cause us to react; they also react in turn to stimulations produced by us. A circular character is thus present in social behavior which is wanting in the simpler non-social adjustments.

consciousness as dependent upon the functioning of neural structure. Nervous systems are possessed by individuals; but there is no nervous system of the crowd. Secondly, the passing emotion or impulse common to the members of a crowd is not to be isolated, introspectively from the sensations and feelings peculiar to the individual himself.

Another argument for crowd mind proceeds as follows. The turbulent and riotous deeds of a mob point to the existence of a 'mob consciousness,' for such behavior would be quite unthinkable for men in their right minds taken separately and in isolation. There is an element of absurdity in this argument: we are asked to explain the nature of crowd action by considering the individuals in isolation; that is, when there is no crowd at all. The mere adding up of the reactions of isolated individuals has no meaning whatsoever beyond mere enumeration. But *given the situation of the crowd* — that is, of a number of persons within stimulating distance of one another — we shall find that the actions of all are nothing more than the sum of the actions of each taken separately. When we say that the crowd is excited, impulsive, and irrational, we mean that the individuals in it are excited, impulsive, and irrational. It is true that they would probably not be in this state if they were in isolation from one another; but that means that only in the close group each is so stimulated by the emotional behavior of others that he becomes excited to an unusual degree. The failure to take note of these interstimulations and reactions between individuals has given rise to the illusion that a 'crowd mind' suddenly descends upon the individuals and takes possession of them. The crowd as a whole has been attended to rather than the individual members. Spectacular mob action has thus combined with loose terminology to draw attention away from the true source of crowd explanation, namely, the individual.

2. The 'Collective, or Class, Mind.' Another sense in which the group is sometimes said to possess a consciousness and behavior of its own is in the *sameness* of thought and action among the members of such a body as an army, a political party, or a trade union. In these groupings the uniformities of mind are considered as elevated to the position of a separate entity participated in by all. One

*is not established by imitation, nor is the skill necessary for performing the suggested action acquired by that process.*

On the whole we may dispense with the conception of imitation in other senses than mere description of uniformities of behavior. The fact that the reaction of one individual resembles that of another is of course of vast social importance. In order to understand these uniformities, however, we must seek for deeper explanations than that afforded by the assuming of a tendency to imitate.

### SUGGESTION

**Various Definitions of Suggestion.** The term 'suggestion,' like sympathy and imitation, denotes a certain relation of stimulus and response operative between individuals. Like sympathy it will be seen to involve no unique type of process, and like imitation it is a collective term embracing a number of distinct elementary mechanisms. When we accept an opinion uncritically, using it as a basis for our belief or action, we may be said to respond to a suggestion. Thus Professor McDougall considers suggestion as a process resulting in the acceptance of a proposition in the absence of logically adequate grounds. Professor Stern defines it as "the imitative assumption of a mental attitude under the illusion of assuming it spontaneously." Both these statements indicate the relatively unconscious nature of the process; but the latter broadens the notion from a matter of mere belief to a mental 'attitude,' thus implying some action or readiness to act. Professor Baldwin introduces an explanatory element in his definition, and includes, like Stern, a motor factor. He regards the process as a mechanism of attention which narrows the consciousness and motor impulses to restricted lines, and inhibits attitudes of discrimination and selection. It is here justly recognized that suggestion has a negative aspect, namely, the inhibiting of consciousness and action of a nature antagonistic to the suggested proposition. Finally, Münsterberg conceived the process entirely in the behavioristic terms of action and inhibition. A suggestion, according to him, is "a proposition to action which overcomes antagonistic impulses" in the subject. The only criticism one can apply to these definitions is that, while each suggests an important aspect of response

to suggestion, each is too limited to do justice to all the types and phases of the process.

**The Potency of Spoken Language in Bodily Control.** Before attempting a complete analysis of suggestion, it will be profitable to consider the capabilities of the mechanism through which the suggestion is generally brought to bear, namely, the response of bodily effectors to language stimuli. The spoken word has a more profound effect upon the human organism than is commonly recognized. This effect is shown in two ways: (1) in the automatic and unconscious nature of language controls, and (2) in the far-reaching and complete character of the bodily changes produced.

The first aspect is illustrated by the circular speech reflexes, in which the sound of a word directly stimulates the response of pronouncing it. As adults we unconsciously employ these mechanisms in the reiteration of phrases spoken by others with whose opinions we are in perfect agreement. Echolalia is an abnormal extreme of the same phenomenon. Aphasia presents similar features in that spoken words, which the patient through his disorder has lost all means of understanding, may be written mechanically by him from dictation. 'Psychopathic obedience' is a condition in which the patient immediately executes every action proposed to him. Perfectly normal individuals also show at times an immediate and undeliberated response to commands. These effects are based upon deeply fixed habits of association between word sounds and the bodily movements which they signify. It is convenient to regard them as sub-cortical or 'short-circuited' modes of response, having their centers at a lower level of the nervous system than the portions concerned with thought and meaning. While this explanation is still a hypothesis, it fits well with the description of the suggestion consciousness as an unreasoned and immediate acceptance of a proposal.

The influence of language not only approaches an immediate reflex; it is also remarkably thorough and far reaching. Hypnosis, which is essentially a state of heightened suggestibility, presents the clearest examples. By repeated suggestion the operator gains absolute control of all the mechanisms of the body. The resistance being broken down, the statement "You cannot open your

eyes" takes immediate effect, and the subject actually cannot move his lids. The auditory impulse enters the central nervous system and goes immediately out to the effectors. It is as though one were talking directly to the muscles of the subject. Even perceptual and thought mechanisms may be controlled in deeper hypnotic states. The subject will actually fail to see a person standing nearby if told he has left the room. The flow of tears, and other glandular and visceral changes not even under the control of the subject himself, may be brought about through language suggestion. Among primitive tribes the magic formulæ of the *shaman* have, under conditions of fear, produced wasting illness, and, as some travelers allege, death. Such cases illustrate the profound integration which exists between the afferent mechanism for receiving language stimuli and the entire reaction system of the body. Though shown here in extreme form, the same general organization of neurons underlies the responses to all language suggestion, and gives to the social environment a possibility of the most intricate control of the individual through the spoken word.

**Suggestion Defined as a Control of Attitude.** This then is the type of physiological effect produced by verbal suggestion. An example of post-hypnotic suggestion will lead us to a still closer view of the normal mechanism. It is suggested under hypnosis that at six o'clock the subject will go to the telephone and call up a certain friend. A motor setting is thus prepared to perform this act at a certain signal, the approach of the hour of six; and when the time comes the subject, though now no longer under hypnosis, automatically performs the act. The motor set thus built up by suggestion we may call an *attitude*. In everyday life attitudes are built up in similar fashion. We talk over with our friend the feasibility of some civic project, or the merits of the new minister; and quite without knowing it we become set to react in accordance with this discussion when suitable occasion arises. We accept the words of 'an expert' on any subject and repeat them to our friends as spontaneously as if they were our own. A suggestion from a friend regarding our appearance, manners, or habits may determine in us a fixed attitude to react in the direction suggested. A refractory child may with tact be talked into an attitude of yielding

graciously to suggestions regarding his conduct. An enemy may often be handled in the same manner. All examples of this sort involve a preparatory setting of the synapses at the motor centers and possibly increases in tonicity of the muscles to be employed in carrying out the line of behavior suggested.

Suggestion is concerned with the control of bodily attitudes in three possible ways. First, it serves to build up or prepare the setting for a definite response when the releasing signal is given. The examples just mentioned belong to this category. Secondly, it may serve as the signal (social stimulus) which releases the attitude already established. And thirdly, suggestion may augment the released response as it is being carried out. These three effects of suggestion will be illustrated in the following sections.

**1. Suggestion in the Formation of Attitudes.** There is a great power in the spoken word; but it is not a magic power. Every normal suggestion builds up its attitude upon some deep-lying reaction tendency already present. Interests, emotions, sentiments, derived drives, and innate prepotent reactions (see Chapter III) serve as bases. A classic example is the jealousy and suspicion of Othello wrought upon by the persistent artifices of Iago until an attitude of infuriated vengeance toward Desdemona was developed. Advertisers notoriously exploit human drives in building up an attitude to purchase their products. Here also *repeated* suggestion is used in the attitude-forming process. Quality, good value, and the satisfaction of every form of human need are associated persistently with the particular trade name.

The following story, at the writer's expense, gives a clear picture of this phase of suggestion. One day the writer joined a rather apathetic audience upon whom an auctioneer of jewelry and silverware was endeavoring to make an impression. Little interest was felt by any of the group until the auctioneer (who knew what he was about) announced that a magnificent manicure outfit which he displayed would be given free to the first person to raise an existing bid to six dollars. A lady at once raised the bid and carried off article and bonus joyfully. At once the writer's economic and bargaining interests were aroused. He drew mechanically nearer, all critical and discriminating tendencies abolished, and his con-



sciousness filled with the realization that things were being given away and that he must bid without restraint upon the very next article. This he did — and carried home for an extreme price a 'nickel silver' sugar bowl which he didn't want! A clearer case of the formation of an attitude for response through suggestion could not be desired.

**2. Suggestion in the Release of Attitudes.** There are situations in which previous events *have already* given rise to a motor setting, and in which the suggestion serves merely to release the act for which the body is prepared. Persons deprived of loved ones by the late war have developed an attitude of yearning expectancy concerning some future contact with the souls of the dead. Spiritualistic mediums and *ouija* boards have provided suggestions for the release of these tendencies; and an international craze for things 'psychic' has been the result. Yawning when others yawn is not sheer imitation. It occurs principally when we are tired and on the point of yawning ourselves. With this preparation the sight of the act serves as a release of the act in question. We have long standing attitudes of respect and obedience to age, prestige, and expert opinion. Hence any language suggestion from sources of this character liberates the response suggested.

The release of motor settings often involves the principle of allied and antagonistic responses (see p. 37). Suppose one is starting from home on a cloudy morning. The appearance of the sky is a stimulus which tends to evoke the response of getting an umbrella. Thoughts of inconvenience and of the chance that it may *not* rain represent a neural setting of an antagonistic sort, that is, leaving the umbrella behind. A friend suggests that the sky indicates rain, and immediately an allied stimulus is added to the attitude for taking the umbrella, and the antagonistic setting for leaving it is inhibited. The allied stimulus of the suggestion in this case is the deciding factor.

Both the formation and the release of attitudes are illustrated by familiar instances of suggestion. The art of the salesman is to build up a setting to purchase his product in the neuromuscular system of the prospect. When such a setting is developed and strengthened through argument and demonstration, the 'psycho-

logical moment' must be grasped and the contract blank produced or the direct suggestion to purchase delivered. The attitude is therewith released. Professor F. M. Davenport narrates an amusing instance of suggestion comprising these two phases, and vouches for its truth.<sup>1</sup> It is quoted in slightly abridged form below.

In a little town between Cleveland, Tennessee, and Chattanooga, it was the purpose to give a donation to the colored minister. One of the brethren in the church volunteered to make a collection from the various homes, and an old colored woman loaned this brother her cart and a pair of steers for the purpose. After he had been throughout the neighborhood and had secured a load of provisions and clothing, he drove off to Chattanooga and sold everything, including the cart and the steers, pocketed the proceeds and departed on a visit to Atlanta. Consternation and indignation reigned in the community when the affair became known. After some time the culprit drifted back, in deep contrition, but having spent all. Indignation once more arose to a white heat, and it was determined to give him a church trial at once. The meeting was crowded; and the preacher, after stating the charges, announced that the accused would be given a chance to be heard. He went forward and took the place of the preacher on the platform.

"I ain't got nuffin to say fo' myse'f," he began in a penitent voice, "I'se a po' mis'able sinner. But, bredren, so is we all mis'able sinners. An' de good book says we must fergib. How many times, bredren? Till seven times? No, till seventy times seven. An' I ain't sinned no seventy times seven, and I'm jes' go' to sugges' dat we turn dis into a fergibness meetin', an' ebrybody in dis great comp'ny dat is willin' to fergib me, come up now, while we sing one of our deah ole hymns, and shake ma hand."

He started one of the powerful revival tunes, and they began to come, first those who hadn't given anything to the donation and were not much interested in the matter, then those who hadn't lost much, and then the others. Finally all had passed before him except one, and she stuck to her seat. "Dar's one po' mis'able sinner lef'," said he, "dat won't fergib." (She was the old lady who had lost the steers.) "Now I sugges' dat we hab a season ob prayer, an' gib dis po' ole sinner one mo' chance." And after they had prayed and sung a hymn, the old lady came up, too!

**3. Suggestion in the Increase of Responses already Released.** The third effect of suggestion is related to the second. We have just seen that social influences help to discharge motor settings

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 52 f. Copyright, 1905, Quoted under special arrangement with the publishers, The Macmillan Company, New York.

already prepared, as in going up to shake hands with the forgiven darky and in feeling an emotion of tenderness toward him. After these responses have been set off they may be *intensified* by a continuance of the same social stimuli that brought them about. Thus one would go forward *more quickly*, and his emotion would reach a *higher pitch*, because he continued to see others doing the same act. The social stimulus thus serves as a suggestion not only for releasing the reaction but for augmenting it as it is being carried out. In both cases it serves as an allied stimulus and is contributory (see p. 37) to a motor setting already existing. The term *social facilitation* may be used to include both these effects (releasing and intensifying)

In the old-fashioned religious revival we find all three effects of suggestion upon attitude and response. First, through the preaching of 'hell fire' and 'conviction of sin,' the attitude of penitence is built up. Secondly, this setting is released by the invitation-hymn and the call to come forward. And thirdly, the acts bespeaking self-surrender and the cries of religious ecstasy from others increase the ardor of the emotional reaction of each convert. Situations of this sort will be more closely analyzed in the two following chapters. It is sufficient here to recognize them as forms of response to suggestion.

**Conditioned Response in Suggestion.** In the story of the penitent negro the singing of the revival hymn operated as a suggestion to come forward. This was because the members of the congregation had so often before heard it while they were coming forward or watching others do so. Many suggestions not involving language are based on the same principle, namely, the use of acts and objects usually accompanying a response as conditioning stimuli for bringing about the response at the will of the suggester. Boys, for example, enjoy the prank of sucking a lemon in front of the trombone player in a band in order to harass his performance by the conditioned puckerings of his mouth. The eccentric who goes hatless and gloveless in zero weather probably derives satisfaction in the knowledge that his habits are causing others to shiver. Hurrying to complete his lecture at the close of the hour, the professor is often distracted by the youth who leans forward

and sits on the edge of his seat in order to produce a conditioning suggestion for bringing the remarks to a close.

**The Conditions of Suggestibility.** The main conditions favoring suggestion, like those for sympathy, represent the 'openness' of the organism to the stimulating suggestion, and are based, in particular, upon an attitude of submissiveness toward the suggester. High self-expression in personality traits, physical strength, superior social position, and prestige through power or knowledge place their possessors in an ascendant relation to those with whom they come in contact, thus giving their behavior a suggestive influence. Sex is sometimes a determinant of a suggestible attitude, females usually standing in the submissive rôle toward males, and hence susceptible to suggestions from them. Difference of age is also a strong factor in responsiveness to suggestion. Since most of the child's knowledge comes from his elders, and also because he feels his physical weakness before them, he has formed the attitude of accepting all their suggestions without question. Where, as in childish ignorance, conviction is based entirely upon the authority of the speaker, suggestion shades imperceptibly into simple belief. Poverty of ideas and extreme submissiveness are thus the causes of the notorious suggestibility of childhood.<sup>1</sup>

A situation which speedily places one in an attitude of submissive suggestibility is the presence of a group, or indeed the mere allusion to large numbers. We bow before the will of the majority. We rise irresistibly when the congregation rises, clap when the audience claps, and express disapproval in unison with the throng. Adherence to style and custom is based in part upon the attitude of submission to suggestion from great numbers. The mere fact of *being in a crowd* places one in this setting, and so prepares for the release of specific actions suggested by the behavior of the others.

Advertisers play freely upon suggestibility toward both prestige and large numbers. Placards announce that a certain remedy is endorsed by *eminent physicians* (a picture representing one of them often accompanies), or that *thousands* have been cured by it and

<sup>1</sup> The same considerations apply to the unusual suggestibility of ignorant adults, and to the widespread belief in the *Middle Ages* in miraculous events backed by the authority of the clergy.

are ready to extol its virtues. Professor H. T. Moore has measured the susceptibility of individuals to these forms of suggestion by having them pass judgment upon the seriousness of grammatical errors and moral faults, and upon the æsthetic value of musical cadences. A set of judgments was first obtained without any suggestive influence; and another set was taken later after telling the subjects (1) the opinion of the majority and (2) the opinion of 'experts' in regard to each of the items to be evaluated. The tendency to change their previous judgments to accord with the majority opinion on speech and morals was found to be almost five times as great as the change which might be expected by mere chance. The effect of suggestion in the case of expert opinion was slightly less, but still substantially large, the subjects altering almost half of their former judgments which were at variance with the stated opinion of experts.<sup>1</sup>

The two extremes in susceptibility to suggestion are represented by the hypnotized person, who is absolutely submissive and responsive to the command of the operator, and the *negatively suggestible* person who is so thoroughly on his guard against yielding that he believes or acts in the manner opposite from that suggested. This is not mere passing stubbornness, but a trait of personality. It is a resistance against domination by the social environment, and is so strong that some persons of this type will not admit seeing the ordinary optical illusions, because they do not wish to be tricked by a clever draughtsman or a joking friend. A temporary period of negative suggestibility occurs at the age of two or three years. It marks the transition from helpless infancy to assertive childhood.

To complete our account we may mention a number of devices and special conditions for rendering suggestions effective. 1. It is useful closely to concentrate the subject's attention by instruction or artifice so that the suggested proposal alone is received

<sup>1</sup> The effect of both classes of suggestion upon judgments of musical preference was much lower. Evidently we are most susceptible to social influences in regard to matters which are likely to affect our social standing, as in this case, our speech and conduct. In regard to standards of language the majority opinion was found to have somewhat more weight than that of experts. See reference at the end of this chapter.

2. Monotony and rhythm, as in the chants of the medicine man or the passes of the hypnotist, relax and soothe the subject, and place him in a drowsy state of non-resistance. 3. Indirect suggestion takes the recipient off guard by avoiding the direct issue at first until a suitable attitude can be prepared for its acceptance. This method was employed in the story of the negro penitent. 4. A similar distraction of attention is produced by the interesting motions made by the conjurer with his right hand while his left unobtrusively performs the trick. 5. Fatigue and intoxicants sometimes increase suggestibility. 6. It is important, finally, to word a suggestion in a positive rather than a negative manner. We have no response attitude for "thou shalt not"; therefore we often translate the phrase for purposes of action into "thou shalt." The skilled publicity agent never prints the slogan that "the cause cannot fail." He assures the public instead that "the cause is *certain to succeed!*"

**Final Definition of Suggestion.** Throughout the preceding discussion we have spoken of 'response to suggestion' rather than of suggestion as a form of response in itself. There are two senses in which the word may be used: namely, as stimulus, and as the behavior process of the response. The former use is rather more distinctive than the latter. 'A suggestion' is always a very definite thing; whereas the *process* of suggestion contains little that is unique. The attitude, for instance, of the runner crouching on the mark, and the release as he springs forward at the pistol shot, differ in no essential way from the physiological processes operative in cases that we would more appropriately term 'suggestion.' It might be stated that the suggestion process is characteristically, though not invariably, a response to a *social* form of stimulation, and that it implies a relation of ascendance and submission, that is, the control of one person by another (cf. Münsterberg's definition). If we add that the neural pathways used are more immediate and less accompanied by thought consciousness than in other responses to language, the picture is fairly complete. The following somewhat cumbersome definition will serve to summarize the nature of suggestion, both as process and as stimulus.

*Suggestion is a process involving elementary behavior mechanisms*

*in response to a social stimulus; the nature of the process being that the one who gives the stimulus controls the behavior and consciousness of the recipient in an immediate manner, relatively uninfluenced by thought, and through the method of building up motor attitudes, releasing them, or augmenting the released response as it is being carried out.*

*'A suggestion' is a social stimulus producing the effect just described.*

## LAUGHTER

**Genetic Origin of Laughter. The Incongruous.** Laughter, which is preëminently a response to social stimulation, has been a subject of speculation among philosophers of all ages. The greatest obstacle to a satisfactory explanation has been that, unlike other basic forms of behavior, laughing does not serve any known biological purpose. Another drawback has been that scientists have attempted to explain the full-fledged humor of the adult as a kind of innate quality without going back to its beginnings in infancy. The genetic approach is the soundest one, for children are the greatest laughers. In later years their free and boisterous humor becomes restrained and 'intellectualized' into the witticism and the satire.

The elemental joke consists in being tickled. Laughter is the innate response to the stimulation of the sensitive or ticklish zones of the body (see p. 67). While the act of laughing is inborn, the range of things that come to be *laughed at* is extended by experience (p. 68). Let us trace this expansion of the sense of humor in some of its details.

The most obvious thing about tickling is that it represents a great fuss about nothing. It is the light touches and pokes that evoke laughter. But it is also true that the ticklish zones overlie some of the most vital organs of the body. Hence there is something terrible in a thrust at these parts which throws into relief the antagonistic pleasant emotion aroused by the playful outcome of the thrust. The tickler moreover does not miss the opportunity of making the feint as sudden and terrifying as possible in order to get the heartiest peal of laughter from the child when the latter finds he is only being tickled. This is precisely the situation in