

Chapter XIX - Induced Imagination

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There is a form of suggestion which tends to arouse activities in the imaginative regions of the minds of people. Of course, the imagination plays a part in all manifestations of suggestion, but in this particular form its action is especially apparent. I call this class of phenomena "Induced Imagination." The term "imagination," you know, means "the power of the mind to create mental images of objects of Sense; the power to reconstruct or recombine the materials furnished by experience, memory or fancy; a mental image formed by the faculty of imagination," etc., etc. The word is derived from the English word "image," which in turn has for its root the Latin word "imatari," meaning "to imitate."

The imagination is creative in its nature and works with the plastic material of the mind. The writers usually make a distinction between what is called "imagination proper," on the one hand, and what is called "fancy" on the other. By "imagination proper" is meant the higher forms of activity of the image-creating faculty, such as is manifested in the creation of literature, art, music, philosophical theory, scientific hypothesis, etc. By "fancy" is meant the lighter forms of the manifestation of the image-creating faculty, such as the ideal fancies and day-dreams of people; the arbitrary and capricious imaginings; fantasy, etc. "Imagination proper" may be considered as a positive phase, and "fancy" as the negative phase, of the image-creating faculty. Imagination in its positive phase is a most important faculty of the human being. It lies at the basis of active mental manifestations. One must form a mental image of a thing before he can manifest it in objective form. It is distinctly creative in its nature, and really forms the mould in which deeds and actions are cast—it forms the architect's plan, which we use to build our life of action and deeds. And, mind you this, it is the faculty used in "Visualization," which is spoken of in other chapters. Positive imagination is very far from being the fanciful, capricious, light, whimsical thing that many suppose it to be. It is one of the most positive manifestations of the mind. Not only does it precede, and is necessary to, the performance of objective acts, and the producing of material things—but it is also the faculty by which we impress our mental-images upon the minds of others by mentative induction, and by the uses of desire and will. Positive imagination is the mother of "ideas." An "idea" is but "an image formed in the mind"; and the imagination is the faculty in which the "image" (or "idea") is formed. And in proportion to the activity of the imagination, so is the strength of the image or idea. And as is the strength of the image or idea, so is the degree of its power to impress itself upon the minds of others. So you see, imagination, in its positive phase is a strong, real thing. But it is largely with its negative phase that we shall have to deal with here.

You know that your negative imagination, or fancy, may be aroused by outward persons or things. You hear a piece of music, and before you know it your fancy is running along painting all sorts of pictures in your mind, and inducing all sorts of feelings. A picture may affect you in the same way. A piece of poetry, or poem, may lift you out of yourself on the wings of fancy. A book may carry you along in a world of fantasy and unreality, until you forget the actual world around you—have you not had this experience? And, more marked than any of the above mentioned cases, is the effect of a perfect stage performance, in which the world and characters of the play take such a hold upon you as to seem reality itself, and you laugh and cry with the characters of the play. You scowl at the villain, and tremble at the danger of the heroine. You glory in the hero's success, and shed tears at the sorrows and trials of the suffering characters. And you feel these things in proportion that your negative imagination or fancy is called into activity by induction. But remember this—the actors, poet, writer, composer, or artist created his effect by the exercise of his or her positive imagination; while the effect upon you is induced in your negative imagination. The first is an act of positive creation, while the second is merely a reflection impressed upon your mind, by either the suggestion; or the mentative energy of the actor.

In your consideration of the above, remember what I have said about suggestion, in an earlier chapter. Suggestion is merely the presentation of the outward symbol of the inner feeling.

The radical wing of the school of suggestionists pooh-pooh at the idea of mentative energy having anything to do with the phenomena which we are now considering. They claim that "suggestion" is sufficient to

account for it all. Without going deeply into a discussion of this matter, I would ask these gentlemen: Why is it that the same words, uttered in the same tone, by two different suggestors, produce widely different degrees of effect? Also: What is that peculiar personal force that we feel when certain persons suggest, that is absent in the suggestions of others? My answer is that the difference lies in the degree of feeling called into activity in the mind of the suggestor—the degree of mentative energy released by him. And I think that any careful investigator will agree with me in this, if he will open his mind to all the impressions received during his investigations, instead of tying himself to a previously conceived theory.

The theories of suggestion are not contrary to those of mentative energy and induction, when properly understood. The facts of the suggestionists are undoubted, but they make the mistake of ignoring the mental states of the suggestionist.

They think that their effects are produced by suggestion alone, and forget the mental state behind the suggestion which is the real motive force. If their theories be true, why is it that two men using the same words of suggestion, upon the same subject, produce varying degrees of effect? It is because the mental states or dynamic mentation of the two men vary in quality and degree.

In connection with this subject of negative imagination or fancy, I would call your attention to a class of phenomena, along the same general lines, in which certain states of imagination, or fancy, are self-induced. Nearly all races of men have discovered that there are means possible to people whereby they may produce in themselves abnormal conditions, known as the “trance,” “dream-states”; “transcendental condition”; etc. And men, from the dim past to the present time, have seen fit to indulge in these deplorable practices. The means by which these states are obtained are various, the favorite methods being the gazing at a bright object; fixing the gaze at the root of the nose; staring at the umbilicus, staring at a drop of ink; inhaling vapors; listening to weird music, etc., etc. Much mock-occultism, which is really “psychism,” depends upon these methods for its results, manifestation and phenomena. The Hindu fakirs and the Arab dervishes indulge freely in these methods, and produce results which while highly esteemed by themselves, are viewed with disgust, horror and repulsion by true occultists of all lands, who regard these practices as harmful, and the phenomena resulting therefrom as bogus and misleading.

And much of the latter-day western psychism is also based upon the same practices, and brings about like results. In this connection I would say that some of the practices adopted by some of the “New Thought” people belong to this class. I have seen certain methods advised for “Going into the Silence,” in which the student is advised to focus his gaze on the root of his nose, etc., which is the identical method used by Braid to produce hypnotic conditions, and which is also used by the Hindu fakirs to produce “trance” conditions. Is it not time that the truth regarding these things should be known? This “trance” phenomena, whether produced by mesmeric processes or by other means, are abnormal, unhealthy, and undesirable phases of mental condition. I cannot speak too strongly against the encouragement of, and instruction in, the development (I had almost said the “Devil-oment”) of these abnormal states, either by self-practice or by means of hypnotic or mesmeric methods. It is high time that someone should call the attention of the public to the dangers of this so-called “psychism.” I know positively that this kind of “psychism” is not the desirable thing that it is supposed to be. I know, also, that it is very far from true occult development. This kind of “psychism,” when compared with true occultism, is but as the baleful glare of the moon, as contrasted with the bright, warm, life-giving rays of the sun. This false occultism, which is not occultism at all, but merely a negative form of “psychism,” has deluded many into its folds, and has led its followers on to planes which are akin to mental quagmires and swamps, following the ignis fatuus, or “will-o’-the-wisp” of this pseudo-spirituality which is but a negative form of psychism.

These self-induced abnormal conditions may be produced by hypnotic methods, by leading the subject into the “deeper stages,” which some authorities speak of as if they were “highly spiritual,” but which are nothing more than the miserable, abnormal, deplorable “trance” conditions just referred to. These conditions may be produced by hypnotic methods, simply because any mental state may be so produced, and not because of any mystic process, or knowledge, or connection. They resemble the so-called “sleep-conditions” of hypnotism. The only difference is that the operator induces the condition by mental influence,

and suggestion, just as he would induce any other mental stateâ€”instead of the subject inducing it in himself. It is the same old abnormal, harmful practice, in another guise. And anything that is said against the self-induced condition is equally applicable to the operator-induced one. They are the same thing! It is all hypnosis, or auto-hypnosis. I shall not describe the conditions at further length, nor shall I give any instructions in the production of them. I consider them essentially harmful, and my object in speaking of them here is to warn off and caution people not to allow themselves to be placed in this condition by experimenters. The practice is weakening to the will, for the reason that it depends upon the tiring of the attention by straining the eyes or other organs of sense. Practitioners of mental influence in all ages have recognized this fact and have employed objects calculated to tire out the attention. Bright objects to stare at and thus tire out the sense of sight have been employed; monotonous sounds ending in â€œum-m-m-m-mâ€” are used by the Orientals to tire out the sense of hearing by its monotonous and soothing sound; vapors and perfumes and incense are used to overcome the sense of smellâ€”all tending to tire out the will, and to reduce it to a passive, non-resisting stage. Then when the will has been rendered passive, or tired, the mind becomes receptive and impressionable, and, in extreme cases, becomes as wax in the hands of the operator.

Let me urge upon you to avoid this abnormal â€œpsychismâ€” put it away from you as you would a poisonous cobra, for it seeks to strike at the heart of your will, and would thus paralyze your mentality. Beware of all that tends to make you weak. Beware of the claims of â€œsoul-developmentâ€” or â€œspiritual-unfoldmentâ€” that are accompanied by these methods, for they are but psychism masquerading as occultism or spiritual development. Remember my test: â€œDoes this, make me strong?â€” Apply the touch-stone, and then govern yourself accordingly.

Concluding this, part of the subject, I would say that if any of you are disposed to question the correctness of my above statement, then you have but to examine the types of â€œpsychicsâ€” seen on all sides. Are they not all hyper-impressionable; excessively sensitive; neurotic; hysterical; passive; negative people? Do they not become as mere psychic harps, upon which the passing mental breezes play, producing weird sounds? Remember, now, I am speaking of genuine psychics, not the bogus psychics, who â€œare out for the money,â€” and who are a shrewd, cunning lot, far from being impressionable, and in reality using their mesmeric power to impress and influence the credulous persons coming under their influence. I am not alluding to these people, but to the poor, frail-willed, negative sensitives, who are as impressionable as the photographerâ€™s â€œnegativeâ€”and to whom also the â€œdevelopmentâ€” means but the bringing out of impression from outside. I pray you, be a human positive, not a human negative.