



The Law of Psychic Phenomena

Thomas Jay Hudson

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Excerpt: In point of fact, that which, for convenience, I have chosen to designate as the subjective mind, appears to be a separate and distinct entity; and the real distinctive difference between the two minds seems to consist in the fact that the "objective mind" is merely the function of the physical brain, while the "subjective mind" is a distinct entity, possessing independent powers and functions, having a mental organization of its own, and being capable of sustaining an existence independently of the body. In other words, it is the soul. The reader would do well to bear this distinction clearly in mind as we proceed. One of the most important, as well as one of the most striking, points of difference between the two minds, relates to the subject of suggestion. It is in this that the researches of the modern hypnotists give us the most important aid. Whether we agree with the Paris school in giving to suggestion a secondary place among the causes of hypnotic phenomena, or with the Nancy school in ascribing all the phenomena to the potentiality of suggestion, there can be no doubt of the fact that when suggestion is actively and intelligently employed, it is always effective. The following propositions, therefore, will not be disputed by any intelligent student of hypnotism: 1. That the objective mind, or, let us say, man in his normal condition, is not controllable, against reason, positive knowledge, or the evidence of his senses, by the suggestions of another. 2. That the subjective mind, or man in the hypnotic state, is unqualifiedly and constantly amenable to the power of suggestion. That is to say, the subjective mind accepts, without hesitation or doubt, every statement that is made to it, no matter how absurd or incongruous or contrary to the objective experience of the individual. If a subject is told that he is a dog, he will instantly accept the suggestion, and, to the limit of physical possibility, act the part suggested. If he is told that he is the President of the United States, he will act the part with wonderful fidelity to life. If he is told that he is in the presence of angels, he will be profoundly moved to acts of devotion. If the presence of devils is suggested, his terror will be instant, and painful to behold. He may be thrown into a state of intoxication by being caused to drink a glass of water under the impression that it is brandy; or he may be restored to sobriety by the administration of brandy, under the guise of an antidote to drunkenness. If told that he is in a high fever, his pulse will become rapid, his face flushed, and his temperature increased. In short, he may be made to see, hear, feel, smell, or taste anything, in obedience to suggestion. He may be raised to the highest degree of mental or physical exaltation by the same power, or be plunged by it into the lethargic or cataleptic condition, simulating death. These are fundamental facts, known and acknowledged by every student of the science of hypnotism. There is another principle, however, which must be mentioned in this connection, which is apparently not so well understood by hypnotists generally. I refer to the phenomenon of auto-suggestion. Professor Bernheim and others have recognized its existence, and its power to modify the results of experiments in one class of hypnotic phenomena, but apparently have failed to appreciate its full significance. It is, in fact, of coextensive importance with the general principle, or law, of suggestion, and is an essential part of it. It modifies every phenomenon, and sometimes seems to form an exception to the general law. Properly understood, however, it will be seen, not only to emphasize that law, but to harmonize all the facts which form apparent exceptions to it.

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