

**THE  
RATIONAL EDUCATION  
OF THE WILL**

**ITS THERAPEUTIC VALUE**

**BY**

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**(OF PARIS)**

**WITH PREFACE BY PROFESSOR BERNHEIM**

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## PREFACE

THERE is a popular saying, that it is only necessary to will anything to be able to do it. But this is only true on two specific conditions: the first is that we must will only that which is possible, and the second that we must know how to will. To be really effective, the act of willing must not be a simple effort put forth by the mind, a sort of spontaneous nervous tension, as this kind of will is liable to exhaust its energy and defeat its own object.

To accomplish that object, the act of will must be determined by ideas, must be suggested by psychic impressions, and be, in a word, the effect of a suggestion.

To take an example drawn from medical experiences: a person is tormented by the most obstinate insomnia. The patient may have the best will in the world to sleep; may think of nothing else; may say "I will sleep, I

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absolutely will sleep." But the more the patient wills, the less is the power at his command. In such cases I say to him, "Go to bed in peace; don't let your mind be troubled; you will feel a very great calm, and sleep will come of itself." It is possible that this simple idea put before his mind, this suggestion of confidence gently imposed upon him, is sufficient to induce sleep. What have I done? I have substituted a calm and suggestive faith for the nervous militant will, producing a reaction in the inverse sense. I have educated the will rationally; I have made a suggestion.

Here, however, it is the doctor who has directed the mind of the patient and has insinuated the idea, which was accepted and carried out. The suggestion came from outside. It was *hetero-suggestion*.

Dr. Paul Emile Lévy has shown, and therein lies the originality of this work, that the subject can himself direct his will, educate it by connecting it with suggestive ideas which set in motion the psychic cellule and place it at the service of the desired act. The idea comes from the subject: this is *auto-suggestion*. It must be borne in mind, however, that the

term "auto-suggestion" cannot be defined as an idea born of our own volition. We cannot produce ideas at will. It is in vain that we suggest to ourselves palpitations of the heart, or certain definite pains, or paralysis; the idea of such symptoms cannot be imposed upon the brain and transmitted into action. But assume an impression arising in the organism and imparting a morbid idea to the sense-faculties; suppose, for instance, that a young medical student, or even a seasoned practitioner of an impressionable temperament, should feel pain in the region of the heart or in any member, the idea of angina pectoris or of tabes might take rise in his imagination, with the result that in the former he would experience a pseudo-angina of the chest, with pain in the region of the heart, while in the latter he would feel a pseudo-locomotor ataxy accompanied by acute suffering and loss of power. In this case, an impression is conceived in the organism itself, in the inward world, and it awakens spontaneously in the psychic centre the idea of functional symptoms; in other words, auto-suggestion has taken place.

But, as a matter of fact, there is little differ-

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ence between hetero-suggestion and auto-suggestion; the one is of necessity connected with the other.

The same idea suggested to different persons will give rise to different acts. Every brain conceives an idea and reacts after its own fashion; elaborates the idea according to its own psychic individuality; adds to it other ideas which transform themselves into sensations, emotions, organic acts, producing a complex and variable dynamism in every psychic entity which individualises the impression received. It may be said *that hetero-suggestion brings the germ, while auto-suggestion fertilises it.*

On the other hand, the one does not exist without the other; no idea is born spontaneously in the brain. *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.* Every idea comes to us through the senses from the exterior world, and can be revived by an internal impression. The medical student who, by means of auto-suggestion, transformed precordial suffering into angina pectoris, a stabbing pain into locomotor ataxy, knew—through having learned or observed it in the exterior world—that the symptoms

he experienced might be met with in angina pectoris or in ataxy; thus an auto-suggestive impression becomes, if I may say so, a hetero-suggestive idea.

A sufferer who, in order to relieve a pain, a feeling of weakness, a spasm of the eyelids, &c., assumes an attitude of calm reflection, concentrates his mind on the idea that the evil is non-existent, seeks a psychic or physical derivative, tries intellectual study, friction or exercise, &c., in order to divert the pain from his sensorium, obeys, in so doing, the idea that such course of action can heal or relieve his pain. This idea results from the observation of others, confirmed by his personal experience. It is thus as if I had suggested to him, "Think that you have no pain, think that you can walk, and that your eyelids are no longer contracted: if you fix your attention on this idea, you will find the pain disappear." It is then, in reality, a *hetero-suggestion presiding over an auto-suggestion*.

These brief reflections establish the fact that psychotherapy is the science of therapeutics by idea, whatever may be its source. But, in order to be curative, this idea must be

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moulded into form, disciplined and adapted to the morbid individuality; it must be frequently materialised and brought into action. The will may be employed usefully in therapeutics if it is directed by an idea, by an active suggestion which will incite the cerebral cell to induce dynamisation of nerve-force or curative inhibition. So it is with reason that the author of this book has given it the name of *The Rational Education of the Will: Its Therapeutic Use*.

I do not wish to reduce its appeal by premature analysis; I would rather leave to the reader the pleasure of its study, and the appreciation of its high medical and philosophic aim. He will recognise it as the work of a clinician and a thinker, and will find therein singularly suggestive food for moral reflection.

**DR. BERNHEIM,**

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## FOREWORD

THE lay and even the medical public are still very little familiarised with the idea of healing in the absence of medicaments. Everyone can cite cases of cures obtained without the aid of any remedy but that of simple moral influence ; but these cures are regarded as absolutely exceptional, and only possible with certain subjects of the nervous type. The very name of psychotherapeutics—which of itself suggests a scientific idea, viz. the rational application of the laws of thought to therapeutics—is rarely employed. Nevertheless there is no therapeutic method more worthy of attention, for there is none which is based on principles more certain and of greater general application. If the usefulness of psychotherapeutics is often disputed or misunderstood, this is because its mode of action is not thoroughly grasped ; there is thus, and above all, only an imperfect idea

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of the rôle played by the mind-element in a large number of morbid manifestations. The idea of psychic therapeutics and psychic pathogeny are connected inseparably. Now, it is curious to see—and examples will be given later on—how many phenomena for which the most banal, insufficient, and erroneous explanations are, as a rule, offered, apart from all therapeutic significance, will be found capable of simpler elucidation when psychology is brought to bear on the subject. There will then be no longer any cause for surprise that in dealing with manifestations of an essentially psychic character, the treatment to be employed should be, above all, psychic.

The application to ourselves by ourselves of a psychotherapeutic method is the subject of the present work. Such psychic auto-therapy cannot aspire to the results attained by current psychotherapy. Yet, little as it is now known, it is a subject of pre-eminent interest; for it serves as the basis of a Rational Education of the Will.

The first intention was to confine myself within the limits of pure medicine—of medicine which would, it is true, go beyond

the word in its usual definition, because it would embrace the functions of mind as well as those of the body. It would be somewhat special, too, in its method of application, not being employed by the doctor, but by the patient himself, who thus becomes his own doctor. This will explain why, although I desire that my book should be essentially scientific in character, I have sought to make its style easily understandable by the lay mind, employing the fewest possible technical terms.

It occurred to me subsequently that the undertaking might be extended far beyond the limits I had previously assigned to it, that it might assume a philosophical and moral aspect, which I myself had but imperfectly grasped at first, and which it was necessary to develop. The chapter entitled "Observations" will demonstrate fully that my prevailing idea was to make the work practical essentially. But it will be seen—at least I venture to hope so—that the ideas illustrated in the latter part of the book are indispensable to its due appreciation, that they form its natural and logical conclusion. I have confined myself, however, to gene-

ralities, leaving the reader to develop by careful reflection that which I have touched upon lightly. It will be understood also that certain pages, owing to the nature of the ideas expressed therein, have assumed of necessity something of a literary guise; nevertheless I have taken the greatest care to maintain precision of thought as well as simplicity of language.

I hope, in conclusion, that some of my readers may derive from this book a little of the pleasure and profit which I have found in its conception.

**PART I**  
**THEORETICAL STUDY**

**A**





## CHAPTER I

### STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT—PSYCHIC THERAPEUTICS

I PROPOSE to show in this work that it is quite possible to protect ourselves, morally and physically, from many ills, and, should any disease assail our minds or bodies, to find within ourselves the means of mitigating or healing that disease. This aim may seem ambitious, but it will appear less difficult to realise when it is found to be based on a study of the laws governing our minds—laws which may be very simply stated, but which are assuredly fruitful in happy results for those who care to apply them intelligently and methodically. To study these laws and grasp their importance by attentive thought, to strengthen our conviction by a few preliminary trials, seeking afterwards to maintain and develop gradually this form of moral and physical discipline, these, in my belief, are the conditions which are necessary and sufficient to attain to the highly desirable state of self-control.

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It is, in short, a question of educating the will, on the assumption that the will should and can influence the ills of the body as well as those of the mind. To speak of the influence of the mind on the body is a commonplace; but this idea, which might be rich in beneficial results, remains almost barren for want of precision in form and because we do not give it that vigilant and whole-hearted attention which is necessary for it to bear fruit. The doctor himself too often forgets that he is required as much to cure the mind as the body. He prescribes, for the depressed and neurasthenic patient, all the reputed tonics of the nervous system, such as quinquina, kola, preparations of phosphorus, &c., without reflecting that a kind word<sup>4</sup> said at the right moment is often the most stimulating of tonics. This, it might be said, is a question of the moral influence, to put it plainly, of the doctor on the patient. But in the following case, psychic action is revealed more clearly and as more susceptible to methodical control. Let us suppose a case of purely dynamic paralysis, that is to say, of paralysis in which there is no definite material lesion of the nerve system. What is the usual procedure? A course of douches, massage, electricity, all are applied in their turn, and remain without result, at least for a long period. The reason is

that the treatment does not attack—or only attacks indirectly—the cause of the trouble. The obstacle does not lie in the marrow, nor in the nerves which remain healthy, nor in the muscles which retain their normal power of contraction, but in the brain which has lost its regulating power. If the power of movement, of walking, is not recovered, it is because the said act postulates the “intelligent” co-ordination of the contraction of different muscles; the patient finds himself in a position similar to that of a child trying to walk. And even as an infant is taught how to walk, cure will be effected here by the education of the paralysed limb, that is to say, by again teaching the brain, which has forgotten, to combine intelligently the movements of the different groups of muscles. In other words, the initial treatment must always be of a psychical character.

Does not this double example demonstrate not only the possibility, but also the importance of treating the body by the mind, or, in other words, of psychic therapeutics? But if the man whose profession it is to care for the sick, and if possible to cure them, has too frequently an insufficient idea of this, how should the ordinary man think of ascertaining personally whether he could not derive some benefit from it?

Care of the body is doubtless a good thing ;

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but it is quite as essential to formulate a rational system of hygiene and therapeutics for our minds. It will not be denied that our success or failure in life primarily depends on character, with its defects or capacities. What enormous importance, therefore, should we attach to developing these, and diminishing or eliminating those? Are not mental sufferings as keen, if not keener, than the purely physical? Further, and what is more important, do they not react too often and too keenly on the body? Fear, surprise, anger, uneasiness, trouble, in a word emotive thoughts of all kinds, these are usually found to be the starting-point whence proceed hysteria, neurasthenia, and all those more or less definite nervous disorders which are nothing more nor less than the history at large of the action of the movements of the soul on our organism. Fear is accompanied by trembling and palpitation of the heart, sometimes by diarrhoea; shocks by momentary paralysis (to quote the popular saying, we are "struck all of a heap"); grief induces the secretion of tears, lack of appetite, indigestion, and languor of the whole body; anxiety produces a contraction of the stomach, pallor, drawn features, insomnia, &c. Is not all this an epitomised presentment of the regular symptoms of nervous subjects? And it does not end here—the functional dis-

turbance will cause a material lesion, which is less easily cured. Then the lesion being once caused, the attention, turning ever more readily in the accustomed direction, will lie in wait for each sensation in order to exaggerate it still more, and being constantly and involuntarily occupied in this way will stimulate and aggravate the morbid activity. A vicious circle is thus described, from which any escape is difficult, for the evil feeds on itself.<sup>1</sup>

All this is enough, surely, to show that moral therapeutics is equally as important as physical. What the patient expects from the doctor, even when he knows he is dangerously ill, and does not believe in the possibility of being cured, is a little hope and faith and comfort. Let not such encouragement be considered only as a momentary illusion, though, after all, this would still be beneficial by its action on simple imagination, a name so often misused to mask prevailing ignorance of the real causes. Surely, it is quite natural, since depressing emotions induce such varied and sometimes such deep-seated disorders in the organism, that pleasant emotions may bring about a definite improvement, and even, when possible, achieve a cure?

“Let us learn to treat ourselves,” writes

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Thérapeutique Suggestive*.

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Feuchtersleben,<sup>1</sup> "as it is said that Reil treated his patients. Under his care, one might lose one's life but not lose hope." But hope by no means covers the ground. It depends upon ourselves to find within ourselves, not only comfort and moral support, but also a real alleviation and even a complete cure for soul as well as for body. And to achieve this, all that is necessary is to employ intelligently and assiduously the resources offered by a real knowledge of ourselves.

<sup>1</sup> Feuchtersleben, *Hygiène de l'âme*. "Since I am speaking of beneficial nervous influences," writes Professor Bouchard, "I affirm that the doctor should be a source of healthy nervous reaction. Quiet, contentment, and confidence are powerful auxiliaries in fighting against sickness. It is confidence which, thanks to an encouraging word, inspires hope, and then the certainty of cure. Now it is just this confidence which the doctor should know how to inspire in his patient. To be able to do this, he needs neither an imposing appearance nor celebrity. If he be informed, attentive, and kind, it will suffice" (Preface to the *Manuel de Thérapeutique*, of Berlioz).

## CHAPTER II

### THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF PSYCHOTHERAPY; EVERY IDEA IS ACTION IN A NASCENT STATE

THERE is one essential principle which may be said to serve as keystone to the whole edifice of psychotherapeutics. To Professor Bernheim belongs the honour of having lucidly formulated this principle, and of having clearly demonstrated the many results which spring from it. It is this: Every idea accepted by the brain tends to corresponding action; every cerebral cell energised by an idea,<sup>1</sup> energises in its turn the nerve fibres which are to realise this idea. Setchenoff wrote even in his day:<sup>2</sup> "There is no thought without expression. Thought is act in the nascent stage—the beginning of activity."

Here a distinction must be drawn. The transformation of an idea into action can

<sup>1</sup> This expression has been criticised, wrongly, I think (see the beginning of chapter iii.); the facts are as stated.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Ribot, *Psychologie de l'Attention*.

be accomplished in two different ways. Either the idea becomes a *positive* action—that is to say, sentiment, volition, sensation, movement (*dynamogenic* action), or else it becomes negative action—in other words, it neutralises the act; it checks the sentiment, volition, sensation, and movement (*inhibitive* action). In dynamogeny and inhibition we have two aspects of the same process. The following examples will serve to establish this fundamental law and demonstrate its twofold method of action:—

1. In the *domain of morals*, in the world of ideas, feelings, volitions, it is not difficult to find cases to support this theory.

A. *Ideas*.—Such are the facts of imitation. Our first education begins with the imitation of those around us. The little child blindly accepts the ideas of others, those of his play-fellows older than himself, and, later on, those of his teachers. Only by degrees is the individual personality built up by the fusion of these sometimes contradictory ideas and the restraint they exercise mutually. Even the adult man, with mind fully formed, imbibes the ideas which constitute his immediate atmosphere. Liébault very justly says, among humanity are to be found imitative thoughts, which, however ridiculous they may be, become ingrained in men, and are



transmitted from generation to generation in the same way as an instinct.

There are ideas which we begin by affirming without believing in them, and in which we finally believe by dint of repetition. Thus the liar finishes by himself believing the fictions of his own invention. The sceptic, who, to be in the fashion, scoffs at his inward convictions, is caught in his own trap. Finally, he will lose confidence in himself and end in a condition of complete discouragement.

B. *Feelings*.—A psychologist has remarked that it is impossible to read the word Sadness without experiencing the emotion thereby signified in a greater or less degree. Speaking generally, we may say that the notion of any feeling whatever, fear, anger, pleasure, love, envy, &c., however little it transcends the mere verbal form, cannot pass through the mind without awakening in us an echo of such feeling. This is proved by the well-known fact that when a fit of temper is at its height, if a thought of calm suddenly enters the mind, straightway all our rage vanishes as if by magic.

It is within everyone's experience how a play will charm or weary us, according as we had a preconceived idea of finding pleasure or boredom in it.

Again, it is well known how moods are

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irresistibly communicated from one to another. We allow ourselves unconsciously to be affected by the joy, sadness, or anxiety of those surrounding us. The most morose of men soon ceases to frown when beholding a picture of laughing gaiety. So also, if we sympathise with our fellow-creatures, it is because we share their troubles: we suffer and sorrow with them; their griefs become our griefs. Our pity for them, therefore, is made up of pity for ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

C. *Volitions*.—The sight of good actions incites to right-doing. Inversely, crime is contagious. There are cases on record of murders which, down to small details, have been copied from those in certain novels. And in this connection we may mention also the exploits of anarchists, the throwing of vitriol, &c., while, perhaps, cases of suicide by imitation are of even more frequent occurrence.

To sum up, while the idea of a feeling

<sup>1</sup> Lest this statement should seem too arbitrary, it will be as well to qualify it by saying that sympathy has various stages. The first of these is the power to feel in ourselves the feeling experienced by another, the outward manifestation of which we perceive. At a more advanced stage not only do we identify ourselves with the emotion of the person who excites our sympathy, but also with his wishes, his character, &c.; in one word, with all that goes to make up his ego, so that the feelings we are experiencing sympathetically no longer seem to belong to ourselves, but to him.

brings with it more or less complete realisation, the mere thinking of an act involves, to a certain extent, the idea of accomplishing it, even, indeed, a conception of the means to be employed. For this reason, crime may justly be said to lie entirely in the intention.

Inversely, an idea is capable of neutralising an act of will. "I knew of a man," says Christison, "who was incapable of executing the actions that he desired to perform. Sometimes, while in the act of undressing himself, he would remain for two hours without being able to take off his clothes. On one occasion his servant was offering him a glass of water for which he had asked. Though wishing to do so, he was unable to take it from the man, who was compelled to wait at his side a full half-hour, until his master's power of action returned to him." Cases of this kind are frequent, though in a less marked degree, among those suffering from neurasthenia, melancholia, and nervous diseases generally.

2. *The Idea becomes Feeling*.—"I cannot think," says Herbert Spencer,<sup>1</sup> "that I see a slate being rubbed, without experiencing the same shudder that I should feel if it were actually being done."

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bernheim, *Hypnotisme, Suggestion, Psychothérapie*.

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The simple idea of itching is sufficient to produce real itching. Again, it is not uncommon to see a violent rash continue long after its cause has disappeared. We find neuropaths suffering with pains of an analogous origin, which are often prolonged as a consequence of arthritis long since cured, or of wounds completely healed. The itching and the pain exist only in the idea, and the proof of this is that they can be rapidly cured by suggestion.

Many persons witnessing an operation suffer with the patient. "The sight of a person affected with a continual cough," said Montaigne, "irritates my lungs and my throat. The anguish of others causes me absolute physical suffering."

Hack Tuke mentions a doctor who can at any moment, and in any part of his body, produce pains of varying intensity. "It is in the palm of the hand," he says, "that the will is able to create the most marked sensations. In every other part of the body the pain disappears as soon as the predisposing cause is removed; but, in the hands, it persists for a long time, is even very keen, and the patient needs some violent distraction in order to get rid of it quickly."

*The Idea neutralises the Feeling.*—The following case came under my notice: A

patient complained of a sharp pain as the result of a violent blow in the chest. His temperature was taken, and after the thermometer was removed he declared that "it had greatly relieved him." Other writers have recorded cases absolutely similar.

"Before the invention of chloroform," said Carpenter,<sup>1</sup> "patients would sometimes endure the gravest operations without giving any sign of suffering, and afterwards declared that through concentrating their thoughts by a strong effort of attention on some subject which completely engrossed them, they had felt nothing.

"Many martyrs have suffered torture with a calm which, by their own confession, they had no difficulty in maintaining. Their attention was so occupied by beatific visions which presented themselves to their enraptured gaze, that bodily tortures gave them no pain."

3. *The Idea becomes a Sensation of Hearing or Sight.*—Everyone knows that it is quite enough to be expecting a friend's visit, to hear in advance the ring of the bell. "If two children," says Hack Tuke, "are listening to the ringing of bells, and one is told that they are chiming 'Long live the King,' and the other 'Never, forever,' each child will hear the peal produce the sounds he or she

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Ribot, *Psychologie de l'Attention*.

expects."<sup>1</sup> Again, many people can distinguish in the monotonous rumbling of omnibus or railway-carriage wheels, the air they wish to hear.

Galton has published a book on the faculty some people have of visualising perceptible forms, especially numbers. It is this faculty which is specially developed in certain famous calculators, and also found in varying degrees among quite a number of people, about one in thirty.

Many people can reproduce in their minds, with all the characteristics of reality, objects of which they are thinking. Thus, certain painters see their picture complete in their minds, before having drawn a single line on the canvas; and certain composers have the power of hearing symphonies by merely thinking of them.<sup>2</sup>

One of my teachers in the hospitals confided to me that in this way he had the power of calling up visual hallucinations, and thus contrived to induce sleep when rest came with difficulty. He conjures up at will various figures before his eyes, and invests them with life and movement. By degrees these images created by his mind in their turn obtain the mastery, and, leading him in their wake far from the world

<sup>1</sup> Hack Tuke, *Le Corps et l'Esprit*.

<sup>2</sup> Liébault, *Sommeil provoqué*.

of reality, at length bring the desired sleep.

4. *The Idea becomes Visceral Sensation.*—Durand (de Gros) recounts an experiment made on a number of patients in a hospital. An innocuous dose, sugared water in fact, had been administered to these subjects. Immediately after, the staff pretended to be very anxious and said that inadvertently a mistake had been made, an emetic having been given instead of a sweet syrup. Four-fifths of the patients were seized with vomiting.

Simple bread pills, administered by physicians able to make an intelligent use of them, have often had as searching an effect on the intestines as the most drastic purgatives.

An incident related by Van Swieten as happening to himself is often quoted. One day he happened to pass a dead dog in such an advanced state of decomposition that the stench caused him to vomit. A few years afterwards he again passed the same spot, and so keen was his recollection of the circumstance that he was seized with sickness again. Analogous facts are observable everywhere.

*The Idea neutralises Visceral Sensation.*—In this class I would mention the knotted cord which induced momentary genital im-

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potence.<sup>1</sup> Doctors are often consulted about cases of impotence of this nature—that is to say, of a purely psychic origin.

“Cases of prolonged fasts,” says Bernheim, “should be included in this class. Melancholy or hysterical subjects have been known to endure for weeks a total absence of nourishment: the man who dies after a few days of fasting does not die of inanition, but of nervous hunger, a real nervous malady which ends in stupor and collapse. Men who fast voluntarily are able to endure the fast because the idea neutralises the sensation of hunger. Succi, for example, is a firm believer in the power of his cordial, a fanatic in his belief in its efficacy. Thus he neutralises the feeling of hunger by the conviction that this cordial has nourished him.”<sup>2</sup>

5. *The Idea becomes Movement.*—A cyclist often dashes on to the very obstacle he is seeking to avoid. Again, people sometimes plunge into a chasm through fear of falling into it, and cut themselves with their razors through fear of cutting themselves.

Chevreul's experiment with the pendulum is well known. He had noticed that a pendulum

<sup>1</sup> This practice consisted in making three knots in the cord, while reciting certain magical formulæ. They only acted, of course, through the fear which they induced in the person who was the object of them.

<sup>2</sup> Bernheim, *op. cit.*



made of a flexible wire with a weight attached, when held in the hand, oscillated above certain bodies, mercury for example, though the hand remained steady and motionless. He put a sheet of glass between the pendulum and the mercury, and saw that the oscillations became at first gradually and regularly slower, and finally ceased altogether. Understanding that the mercury could not cause the movements of the pendulum, he kept the hand which held the latter more firmly steadied than before, instead of merely maintaining his arm in a fixed position. The result was that the pendulum ceased to oscillate, whether the sheet of glass was placed between it and the mercury or not. Chevreul reasonably concluded that the oscillations which had so puzzled him were produced by unconscious muscular movement, and that if the pendulum moved it was because the operator expected it to do so.

The experiments of thought-reading can be similarly explained. One of the most typical, which I saw performed several years ago by Dr. Gley,<sup>1</sup> a Professor and Graduate of the Faculty of Medicine, is as follows: The

<sup>1</sup> This passage was already written when M. Gley, whom I had asked for permission to use his name, was kind enough to call my attention to an article he had published in *La Revue Philosophique*, dealing exclusively with such cases. After having shown that the experiment is more successful if the eyes of the subject are not fixed on what he is writing, but

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operator invites a person holding a pencil or pen to concentrate his thoughts on a word or a number. He holds his hand resting on that of the subject of the experiment, attentively noting the movements transmitted unconsciously to the latter; the subject soon afterwards is found to have involuntarily written the word or number thought of.

There are other still more complicated experiments. A person chooses a certain spot and puts in it an object as yet unknown to the thought-reader, who comes into the room with his eyes bandaged or not. He then goes quickly round the room with this person, who, unaware that he is speaking at this moment not by voice but by muscular action, communicates to the thought-reader's hand a more or less vigorous grasp, or

either shut or fixed on another object (*cf.* p. 34), he adds : "I have successfully performed this experiment on a great number of persons of different ages and sexes, and various, but generally very good, social position. I mean that there is no need to presuppose a more or less morbid state of the nervous system (for example, hysteria). In the majority of cases the action of writing is absolutely unconscious; in some cases, at the end of a varying but always appreciable lapse of time, the subject perceives that he is executing movements which consequently cease to be unconscious and become merely involuntary. Up to the present time I have always been successful at the first attempt with persons who can draw a little, and in a greater degree with painters, sculptors, &c." (*Revue Philosophique*, 1889. *Expérience relative au pouvoir moteur des images ou représentations mentales*).

presses on his forehead with more or less force, according as they withdraw from or approach the hidden object. In this case then, muscular movements are really read. The thought-reader, if his eyes are not bandaged or are only imperfectly covered, is further assisted by the unconscious expression of the subject's face when approaching the hidden object. Bishop and Cumberland won great reputation by performances of this kind.

*The Idea neutralises Action.*—In intense fear we are rooted to the spot; the idea that we cannot escape danger makes flight absolutely impossible.

Nervous paralysis is usually only an exaggerated reproduction of these facts. One man is struck by paralysis on seeing a person afflicted with it. Another receives a blow on his arm; the idea of possible paralysis goes through his mind, either when he is awake or asleep, and soon the arm is really paralysed.

6. *The Idea becomes Visceral Movement, Secretion, &c.*—The action of the thought on the salivary glands is remarkable, according to Hack Tuke. In fact, the mere idea of food is enough to stimulate the secretion of these glands. Experiments made on subjects suffering from fistula of the stomach have proved that this idea produces the same effect on the secretion of gastric juice.

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Certain persons can localise the action of their thought, impress their ideas on one or more muscles of organic life. This action often takes place by the intervention of the sensations; we have already given examples.

There are men who are able at will to increase or lessen the number of the pulsations of their heart. Hack Tuke mentions the case, which came under his own examination, of a Mr. Fox who could increase it by ten to twenty a minute; in two minutes the number rose from sixty-two to eighty-two. Colonel Townsend, he says also, could at will so suspend cardiac pulsation as to appear dead. Others can cause the pupils of their eyes to contract or dilate at pleasure. Darwin speaks of a person who, by an effort of the will, was so successful in producing the peristaltic movement of the intestines as to be able to make them act in less than half an hour. Bichat, Romberg tells us, had the power of vomiting when he wished, and I personally know a man endowed with the same power.

To resume: the preceding facts, the list of which might be made considerably larger, seem to me sufficient confirmation of the law enunciated at the beginning of this chapter: every idea contains in itself the seed of realisation; every idea is a seed of action. Some few of the cases cited are of rare occurrence;

the majority have been intentionally taken from the events of everyday life—their value is due to this fact. The law enunciated is therefore not an exceptional law, but is verified every moment for each one of us.

Let us now turn to the one point of view which alone is interesting to us—the therapeutic, namely. We affirm as follows: the idea of cure, so far as the latter is possible, carries with it the real cure. Is not this the reason why doctors are the people in whose case drugs produce least effect? They dwell too much on the effects of the remedy, and thus lose the chances of cure arising from firm trust therein. On the other hand, these same drugs often cure or relieve the ignorant by the very fact of the faith reposed in them. Again, supposing an invalid is convinced that a certain prescription will be beneficial to him, if there is no evidence to the contrary, the doctor should unhesitatingly fall in with his idea, and the result, as I have many times proved, will justify the treatment. And so, contrary to the practice of some doctors who cannot duly appreciate the importance of moral remedies, let us avoid thwarting the therapeutic wishes of our patients. Have not amulets, relics, talismans, all those magical practices which now seem out of date and ridiculous, effected a number of cures by the powerful moral

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influence they exerted? An author of the sixteenth century, Pietro Pomponazzi, said even then: "The cures ascribed to certain relics are the result of imagination and faith. Unbelievers and philosophers know that if the bones of another skeleton were substituted for those of the saint, the sick would no less be restored to health if they thought they were approaching real relics."

We cannot assuredly inspire in ourselves so blind a faith. But instead of contemptuously dismissing the stories of such cures, we shall do well to look into such things more deeply. Let us study the method of action of the so-called miraculous cures effected yearly at certain famous places of pilgrimage, and let us reflect on the marvellous work of certain healers. We shall always find the same fundamental postulate: the notion of a probable cure brings with it the cure itself.<sup>1</sup> To establish the scientific basis of moral therapeutics as applied to ourselves, we must now draw from this postulate its rational conclusions.

<sup>1</sup> Strengthened, it is true, in the preceding examples, by the emotional element, which is especially powerful when it assumes the guise of religion. But in all cases, emotion acts only by the intervention of the idea.

## CHAPTER III

### AUTO-SUGGESTION

RIBOT, in *The Psychology of Attention*, speaking of the reciprocal influence of soul and body, protests against the traditional dualism in which, he says, psychology is still steeped, and from which it still finds great difficulty in freeing itself. A similar remark is applicable to medicine. We have been accustomed to see, as it were, two entirely distinct worlds in body and mind; the reaction of the one on the other always retains a mysterious character. In any case, we find it difficult to believe that this reaction can be of any other than a remote and fleeting nature.

In reality, there is no barrier set up between mind and body; the one acts on the other, if the expression may be permitted, on the same level, and the formula given by M. Bernheim: "The idea becomes sensation or movement," remains perfectly correct and legitimate. Thought is not an event happening "in an etherealised, super-sensible, intangible world;" its exhibition and

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reaction are constant through our whole organism. If we insist on these postulates, it is because familiarity with them is most important in order rightly to understand the possibility and extent of the action which we can exercise on ourselves, simply by the direction given to our ideas. Moreover, as the philosopher proved movement by walking, these notions will best be elucidated by the facts themselves, by those which have been stated already, and by those which we shall proceed to recite.

A patient complains of fatigue or insomnia; I declare to him that the weariness will vanish, that he is already feeling fresher and more energetic, and that he will sleep capitally. Another has pains in his head, stomach, or limbs; I insist that the pain is going to diminish, that, in fact, it will cease completely. Again, another is afflicted with paralysis of the arm; I affirm that the power of movement is about to return, that he will be able to make use of his arm as before. Assuredly, if an organic lesion exists, all the moral current that I shall have thus set in motion will be stopped short by an impassable barrier. But, if it is a question of a purely functional disturbance of the nervous system, or if, though there is definite material injury, the symptom I am seeking to combat is not directly caused by that injury, the case will



be altered. Since every idea tends to its effective realisation, if I earnestly and frequently repeat my statement, I shall thus awaken favourable tendencies which, after gaining sufficient strength, will be able to neutralise the morbid phenomenon. The ideas of vigour or sleep will end by neutralising weariness or insomnia, and will be converted into real strength and sleep. The idea of freedom from pain will calm the paroxysms of pain. The idea that movements are possible will restore mobility and put an end to paralysis. Such, in its essential features, is the doctrine of suggestion. This doctrine, in spite of, or perhaps because of its great simplicity, has opened up to therapeutics, especially to the therapeutics of the varied disturbances of the nervous system, a method completely new and one most fruitful in results. The very generality of the formula on which they depend shows at once that these therapeutics are not exceptional, but applicable to all subjects.

There is still one more stage to traverse. What prevents us from using to our own advantage the beneficial action that we can exercise on others? If we suffer, why not seek our relief in ourselves by the same means? Such is the principle of reasoned and conscious auto-suggestion. On this rests the possibility of applying psychic thera-

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peutics to ourselves. Therefore it is necessary to insist upon it at somewhat greater length, and to give the psychological definition more clearly.

In the world of states of consciousness, ideas, feelings and volitions stirring within us, the victory, as in all other cases, falls to those who are stronger and better armed for the struggle. Unfortunately, everyone knows by experience that the victory does not always come to those whom we desire to see triumph. We idle when the need for work is urgent; we allow passions to prevail which may be injurious to our future and our health; we give way to discouragement, when we most need all our energy. Now, it is in our power, if we have the will and know how to use it, to endow all these ideas of energy, calm, courage, &c., with the force requisite to obtain that victory for which we dare scarcely to hope, because the qualities in question are almost banished from our consciousness by the opposite ideas of diffidence and timidity. What then is the agent which will effect this change? Our vigilance, which is to a great extent under our own control. If we affirm an idea and repeat the affirmation to ourselves, by thus concentrating attention on it, keeping it voluntarily in our mind, we give it the vitality that enables it to come forth from the inner depths, where it was slumber-

ing, to the full light of consciousness. Thus the barren assent we gave to it will be changed to a firm and fruitful belief. So also it will gain such a power of expansion that it will go on, as if predestined, to its effective realisation.

In the same way, there is no fundamental difference between the ideas of sensation and movement and between sensation and movement themselves; it is only a question of degree. To suggest a sensation to oneself, is to make this nascent sensation clearly perceptible by means of the attention thus directed to it. "Let us suppose," says Hack Tuke, "that twenty people fix their attention for a minute on their little finger; something of the following kind will happen. Some will have no consciousness of any sensation; others will experience marked sensations, suffering, pain, throbbing of the arteries. The majority will have a slight impression of heaviness and tingling." Similarly, if on a rather dark night we look up at the sky, at first we distinguish no luminous point there; then, if we gaze more attentively at one point, we perceive in the background, which had seemed of a uniform darkness, a few sparkling stars. By the attention directed to it, this originally sub-conscious sensation has freed itself from the mass of perceived sensation.

Inversely, to suggest to oneself the cessation

of a pain, is to withdraw from it the attention which nourished it, and thus cause it to die for lack of food. It is a generally accepted belief that the anticipation of the pain which will result from an expected blow increases its intensity. On the contrary, the pain is scarcely, if at all, felt if the attention is completely distracted.

Thus the mechanism hidden under the simple formula of auto-suggestion is the setting in activity of our attention, which, according to its flow or ebb, magnifies or diminishes, creates or destroys.

It is a fact worthy of remark that, after being long misunderstood or despised, the use of auto-suggestion for therapeutical purposes has at length won the position lawfully due to it, but its personal application to ourselves is still almost totally ignored; and this notwithstanding that auto-suggestive therapeutics has had noteworthy champions in the past.

Pascal wrote in his day: "The will is one of the principal organs of belief, not because it forms belief, but because things are true or false according to the point of view from which they are considered. The will which takes pleasure in one point of view rather than the other, diverts the mind from the consideration of that which it dislikes, and thus the mind, proceeding uniformly with the will, fixes its attention on the point pre-

ferred by the will, and so judges by what it sees."

Leibnitz said to the same effect: "We can make ourselves believe what we wish, by diverting our attention from an unpleasant object in order to devote ourselves to another which is pleasing to us, so that by giving more consideration to the reasons for the favoured course of action, we end by believing it the more favourable."

So far, mention has only been made of action on our moral being. Zimmermann, writing in 1776, goes further: "I can certify," he says, "from my own experience, that, in the most exhausting crises, if we can distract our attention, we can not only mitigate the pain, but sometimes, even, end it altogether."

"The celebrated philosopher, Kant, who was subject to palpitations and difficulty in breathing, triumphed over all the morbid symptoms which affected him by fixing his attention on absorbing mental labour. He quickly induced a sort of sleep which, by concentrating his mind, caused him to forget his bodily ills."<sup>1</sup>

Cabanis writes in his *Rapports du Physique et du Moral*: "We know with certainty that the attention can modify directly the local state of the organs, for, if it is elsewhere directed, the most serious injuries do not

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Thérapeutique Suggestive*.

cause either the pain or the inflammation which is usually their direct result, while, on the contrary, an attentive observation of the most fleeting impressions can give them very great importance, or even call vivid impressions into existence without any real external origin or cause to produce them." Unfortunately, Cabanis contented himself with the bare statement of these facts, and did not trouble to establish them by experimental proof.<sup>1</sup>

Feuchtersleben recounts of himself that owing to his weak constitution he was only able to endure life by the help of unceasing moral struggle. In his remarkable study on *l'Hygiène de l'Âme*, he says: "One might even say that in certain cases one has only to will to be cured in order to be so. In case of a fire, we have seen people, bed-ridden for years, able to find sufficient strength to save themselves from threatening death." Elsewhere he makes this explicit proposition: "Since the imagination can inflict on men so many perils and sufferings, why should it not have also the power of making them happy? If, by thinking myself ill, I become ill in reality, why should I not be able to keep well by firmly persuading myself that I am well?" Let us quote another thought: "We reach our aim by directing

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Thérapeutique Suggestive*.

to it all our efforts, since desire is nothing but an expression of the needs of our nature. How many ambitious men succeed in the search for honour and riches? Will not the same law apply in the case of our health?"

It was Liébault who, amid the confusion of the empirical methods prevalent till then, succeeded in defining the essential part of suggestion, and to whom, at the same time, we owe the establishment of the fundamental laws of therapeutics grounded on auto-suggestion.

He says: "My most absolute conviction is this. It is the art of causing the moral nature to react on the physical, not only in others, but also in ourselves, without the intervention of a hypnotist, without manual passes, cabalistic formulæ, or fetishes—in fact, without any visible aids, solely by concentrating the attention on the idea of being cured. Every man has within himself the power of acquiring energy and precision in results more effectually than by any other method. Not that I wish to deny the properties and usefulness of drugs (I desire rather to increase than destroy any of the resources of therapeutics); but a simple negation of the disease will meet with a ready response in the organism and is alone sufficient to induce a remarkable cure, for moral treatment is the least empirical in

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the world. In the simple concentration of our thought with the intention of being cured there is already a science of the medical art, so far as that science is applied to the production of curative results. I have myself twice succeeded in getting rid of a headache, within the space of a few minutes, merely by expressing a wish to do so, while I fixed my attention on a given object."<sup>1</sup> These words, written in 1866, did not excite the attention they deserved. There are only a few isolated cases of the kind to chronicle since that date, among others a very interesting one personally observed by M. Coste de Lagrave.<sup>2</sup> M. Payot's book, *l'Education de la Volonté*, is also worth mention. The author, a philosopher and not a doctor, endeavours to show that our habits and conduct should be directed by enlightened and firm will. The word suggestion is never mentioned. The last remark in no way reduces the value and influence of this estimable work.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, auto-suggestive therapeutics

<sup>1</sup> It is true that here is a case which can scarcely be regarded as simple auto-suggestion, the fixing of the eyes (a method employed also by many hypnotisers) inducing a state of mind resembling that with which I shall deal later under the name of contemplation or sleep.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue de l'Hypnotisme*, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> I should also like to draw attention to an article by M. Blech, *Revue de l'Hypnotisme*, 1897, which mentions various essays on the question published in America.



dates from a long time back, but in order to its resuscitation it requires to be separated from certain extra-scientific practices at which many intelligent people are satisfied to smile, without asking themselves whether, underlying these, is not hidden the truth which, even in such cases, is worth knowing. Magnetisers, who use suggestion unconsciously, observed long ago that we can act on ourselves as on others, and by the same methods. This power they called by the name of *auto-magnetism*. Here, for example, is what we read in a *Manual of Magnetism* by Crémieux: "We can magnetise ourselves with efficacious results in cases of local pains, slight feverish attacks, and consequences of excessive mental strain. In serious cases, magnetism conveyed by another person is to be preferred, but auto-magnetism can do good service." Auto-magnetism is nothing more or less than auto-suggestion materialised by certain manual movements or magnetic passes.

In this domain of facts the Stoic school in ancient times supplied us with a most startling demonstration of the power which we may acquire by assiduous practice. The teachings of Zeno formed an admirable school wherein calm, strong wills were slowly developed. The mistake we make is in thinking of the Stoics as hardening themselves, so to speak, in a perpetual struggle

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against physical and moral suffering. As a matter of fact, by learning to despise pain, they abolished the very conditions essential to its existence. Suffering that one refuses to perceive dries up at its source and disappears of its own accord.

At the present day we no longer regard formation of character as important; but we have only to look around us to see what influence a more or less finely tempered moral character can have on the organism. On the one hand, we see that timid and shrinking people, with little power of resistance, those, in a word, who need most to learn how to will, are profoundly shaken by the least shock to the nervous system; the least indisposition affects them strongly, is persistent, and is followed by a condition of languor and lack of tone in the whole system. Others, on the contrary, are armed with a sort of fixed determination to make themselves invulnerable to disease, and it would truly seem that thus they lessen its hold over them; even sharp attacks of illness are mitigated in their case; they are less lasting and the convalescence is more rapid. Should there be an epidemic, such persons are less frequently and less seriously attacked, while in the former class the fear of disease opens wide the door for it to enter. Some of the privileged people base their relative

immunity on "the reasoned egoism it is their pleasure to assume, which keeps at a distance all that might affect the mind. Their fixed idea is not to be moved by anything, and by this means they obtain what they desire."<sup>1</sup> Others, persistent workers, find in their daily occupations a powerful antidote. A person who had to endure hard trials, and was only slightly affected by them, once said to me: "If I had not had the pre-occupation of my business, I should certainly have made myself much more seriously ill." Others, again, find security and support in the contemplation of a noble and serene ideal, in religion or charity, or the disinterested pursuit of scientific truth.

Next to these well-defined types, daily life affords us a number of instances at least as instructive, for it is made plain by them that at intervals we all have a more or less clear consciousness of the control we can assume over ourselves.

Thus, if we are suffering the keenest anxiety at a given time, we are able, momentarily, at any rate, to look cheerful and put on a smile when a stranger arrives. In like manner, we can resist for a time attempts made by anyone to cause us to blink or the effects of tickling the sole of the foot; we can check a cough, refrain from

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Thérapeutique Suggestive*.

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tears, or control a pressing desire for the relief of nature, more especially when prompted by a feeling of modesty or self-respect. But these are everyday occurrences; there are others more exceptional. Hack Tuke relates of himself that while having a tooth extracted he succeeded in feeling scarcely any pain at all, by dint of fixing his thoughts on amusing ideas. A medical student, while on a short sail, avoided sea-sickness by continually telling himself that he was quite comfortable and did not feel the slightest inconvenience. A lady of my acquaintance is also able to ward off the same trouble during the greater part of a sail by the same means. A hasty inquiry has convinced me that there is scarcely anyone who cannot recall to their remembrance similar facts.

But our daily experience unfolds a whole category of other cases, which, though they may appear commonplace, are nevertheless hedged about with a certain air of mystery, and never fail to surprise us when they make their appearance. Of such a nature is the following. We seek a word which has been forgotten, and in spite of the most determined efforts cannot recall it. "Never mind," we say, "I am tired of this useless search, I shall remember it presently." We begin doing something else, and after a few minutes the desired word suggests itself, as if of its own

accord. This simple fact carries with it a twofold lesson. First of all, it teaches that the best means of enabling the will to accomplish its end does not always lie in an effort of will, and that such effort is sometimes even harmful. Secondly, it leads us to recognise a law of the first importance, *i.e.* that our brain can act intelligently without our being conscious of the manner in which it works. The suggestion made to ourselves has been enough to set in motion our mental activity. The idea thus communicated to the mind continues on its way unknown to us, with the regularity and precision of an automaton, and finally reappears in the consciousness with the missing word, while our thought, at the actual time, seemed occupied with other subjects.

Again, many persons can wake at any time they desire, and find that, for this purpose, they need only fix their attention on the hour determined for a few moments before going to sleep. "In the morning, should we be tempted to prolong our slumber, it is much easier to rise by an automatic action than to will the performance of the act and make the muscles work. We wake up, we have every intention of rising, our reason strongly urges us to do so, but the will is wanting, and not one of our muscles acts. But if we cease wishing to command

the movement by an act of volition, and turn our attention to another subject, we shall find ourselves out of bed while we are thinking of something else.”<sup>1</sup> A young man told me, as a matter of personal experience, that, should he anticipate a restless night, through worry, he can at his will avoid troublesome dreams and induce calm sleep just by impressing on himself in the evening that so it will be. I should also mention one of my patients at Beaujon hospital, who, on the eve of an operation, fearing lest she might reveal secrets when under the influence of chloroform, commanded herself for two or three minutes during the morning not to say a single word while being anæsthetised; and the desired result was brought about.

We have, therefore, all, or nearly all of us, intermittently the accidental, but none the less exact, apprehension of the real and profound modifications which we can produce in ourselves by simply affirming what we desire, that is to say, by auto-suggestion in its double form: auto-suggestion with regard to phenomena actually existing; and auto-suggestion focussed on things more or less remote. Unfortunately, these cases remain exceptional, and we see in them only happy accidents at which we are the first to be

<sup>1</sup> Hack Tuke.

surprised. Let us learn to measure their importance better and to make better use of the teaching we can derive from them. These simple facts conceal a law of general application which is now known to us in its formation and consequences. Let us take it clearly into account. Do not let us wait to make use of it until the idea suggests itself. Instead of leaving it to chance to prompt us on rare occasions to profit by the resources contained within ourselves, let us keep them constantly in mind, in order that we may widen their field of action, and may, thanks to them, to a great extent preserve, relieve, and improve our physical and moral being.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEANS OF STRENGTHENING AUTO-SUGGESTION—CONTEMPLATION

A SYSTEM of auto-suggestive therapeutics has now been formulated and established. We have next to consider whether, by making use of more favourable conditions, it is not possible to intensify its power of action. Here, again, the study of ordinary suggestion (or hetero-suggestion, *i.e.* suggestion to others) and of the results within our daily experience will afford us most valuable indications.

Hetero-suggestion is practised under two different forms; either in a waking state (of which I have spoken briefly) or in a state of sleep. The method of procedure in the second case is as follows: the operator commands the subject to go to sleep. If necessary, he will employ as aids the shutting of the eyes and a description of the different symptoms characteristic of sleep, heaviness of the eyelids, torpor of the mind and of the whole body, calm and regular respiration, &c. Once



sleep has supervened (or a certain degree of sleep, which will vary with different subjects), he will proceed to therapeutic suggestion. Such is suggestion during sleep or *hypnosis*. The patient's suggestibility, that is to say, the power of converting a received idea into action, usually varies according to the degree of sleep induced. The latter may range from a state of slight torpor, scarcely differing from the normal state, to deep sleep with complete oblivion on waking. But suggestibility exists in every case, since it is already evident in the waking state.

Here, again, as with suggestion in a waking state, there is nothing which is not in accordance with normal phenomena. Every idea received tends to corresponding action; the idea of sleep communicated by the operator has therefore as corollary the production of sleep, which for this very reason in no way differs from ordinary sleep. In ordinary sleep, as in sleep which has been artificially induced, there exist varying degrees: simple torpor, light sleep accompanied by remembrance of dreams on waking, and deep sleep with partial or complete oblivion. If the suggestibility is greater during sleep artificially induced, the case is exactly the same in normal sleep. We are too apt to regard sleep as a state of complete inertia of the

body and mind; nothing is further from the truth; even in this condition the brain is capable of intelligent work. Further, it can then imagine, reason, make deductions, with greater quickness and precision than in a waking state. Who has not been surprised to find that certain memories have been revived during sleep which he had thought effaced completely? In the same way, who cannot recall that in certain dreams he possessed a keener and more subtle intellect than in the normal state?

Such cases, which at first appear singular, can be nevertheless explained quite naturally if we analyse the phenomena of the production of ordinary sleep. What does a person do when he seeks repose in sleep? He has recourse to darkness and silence, shuts his eyes to cut off all visual impressions, stretches himself out comfortably in order to relax his muscles completely, and covers himself over more or less to protect himself from cold or heat. Lastly, he tries to dismiss from his mind all disturbing thoughts. In a word, he isolates himself where nothing can distract his senses or excite his intellectual faculties. Now, in so doing, he releases all that attention which had been employed previously in producing different sensations, movements, and ideas. Should this attention, thus made available, be directed to an idea upon which

it can concentrate itself, then the latter thus strengthened will find its power of realisation increased to a very considerable extent.

If, ordinarily, we lose sight of this fact, it is because repose is the only idea upon which the mind concentrates itself—in fact, sleep and repose are synonymous terms for us. Let me point out at once that they are nothing of the kind. Neurasthenic subjects may sleep for hours and wake more fatigued and exhausted than when they went to sleep. The reason is that at the moment of falling asleep the predominant idea was one of fatigue, which is increased still further by the concentration of mind engendered in sleep. This explanation, which has not, I believe, been given before, appears to me, at least, a very probable one. The inference is that long sleep is not always synonymous with complete rest.

Let us now suppose that, in place of concentrating, as we do almost instinctively every night, on the idea of repose, we should, of our own free will, keep a particular thought vividly in our minds just at the moment of going to sleep. Once sleep has supervened, this idea will continue to develop and unfold itself without effort, and what is more, will often, thanks to the state of mental concentration, do so with more

logical precision than would have been the case in a waking state. This is why, after a night's rest, we can see more clearly the probable consequences of resolutions which we were on the point of making. There is a good deal of truth in the proverb: "The night brings counsel." We go to sleep trying to solve a problem and wake up quite astonished to have found its solution. Many pupils know, too, that if they read their lessons over once or twice at night, they can repeat them fluently the following day.

Better still, sleep has power to calm a morbid symptom, a pain, for example, by the use of auto-suggestion as we compose ourselves. We are suffering from neuralgia, headache, or a violent toothache, and we say: "Let me go to sleep and it will pass off." We sleep, and on waking we have, actually, no trace of the pain. The concentration of mind during sleep on the idea of the ceasing of the pain has had the effect of making the symptoms disappear.

Having established these data, I will now proceed to show how they can be used to the best advantage.

A quiet room is needed, secure from disturbance, noise, and light. One should lay oneself down with the body comfortably stretched out and quite at ease, so that

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nothing may disturb the attention ; in a word, we should reproduce the conditions which we find favourable to our nightly sleep. Then, shutting the eyes, we must concentrate on the idea of sleep. As an aid at need to realise the suggestion, we should withdraw, without effort, our attention from surrounding objects, from our bodies and thoughts, and bring it to bear entirely upon the idea of sleep. Or again, we should have recourse to those varying means which we all invent for obtaining sleep that will not be wooed easily—reciting numbers or monotonous formulæ, imagining scenery, regulating the breathing, &c. At a given moment we shall feel a condition of slight torpor, accompanied by a calmness of mind and body: our ideas and sensations will seem to be deadened and obscured. Then the symptoms which we are fighting will already have lost a little of their first keenness. Now is the moment to make the suitable suggestions to ourselves; they should last so long as we think it necessary, and should be made sometimes mentally, but, better still, in a loud or low tone, the better to command attention. At intervals we may even use gesture as a means, by touching or lightly rubbing the afflicted part, as if to materialise our suggestion and to point out to ourselves the spot upon which our intention of being cured

should be concentrated. Indeed, is not this what we instinctively do if we receive a blow, or if we are suffering from headache? Our first action is to apply the hand to the injured part, as if, by this means, to afford a momentary relief. The suggestion being finished, we have only to open our eyes again. The transition is so slight that one can scarcely speak of waking up.

It will be seen that the procedure is simple. To sum up, we must create a condition of sleep, which, though light, is sufficient to give an adequate suggestibility—but everyone will be able to judge by his own personal experience, and make his sleep as sound as he deems useful. However light it may be, the mind will always be capable of a greater degree of concentration than in the waking state. The degree of sleep here described is a condition similar to the half-sleep or drowsiness at the beginning of our night's rest, or in the morning before our complete awakening. These are the hours, provided only they can be utilised in this way, which will be assuredly the most propitious, and, moreover, will need no preliminary preparation for auto-suggestion. Have not many of us remarked how favourable this evening or morning drowsiness is to the inception and maturing of our ideas? The mind, still drowsy, is yet capable of sufficient concentra-

tion to afford our ideas the means of spontaneously evolving themselves, and, on the other hand, it has resumed enough control over itself to prevent them from straying, as happens during profound sleep.

If only my readers will practise these exercises of light sleep and auto-suggestion for a few days, this is what they will find: soon the mind will become accustomed to concentrate itself more easily; by then simply closing the eyes, even when completely awake, in any place and at any moment, in the midst of a crowd or during a walk, it will succeed in isolating itself sufficiently to give to the suggestions a far greater efficacy than before. Auto-suggestion becomes, as we advance, both more efficacious and easier. I must point out, furthermore, that here also individual predispositions must be carefully considered; for example, walking, other movements, or accentuated gesture have the effect with many persons of assisting attention, reflection, and rapid thought. To sum up: having postulated the general principles, each one, after having examined or "sounded" himself, will know best how to correct or adapt them to his particular temperament, and to the existing conditions of the moment.

But I must insist upon this point: auto-suggestion does not require (or very rarely so) any tension whatever of the will, nor any

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effort of the will.<sup>1</sup> To say "I will" is even rather harmful, for it implies a desire, and consequently the possibility of its non-realisation. Therefore we should not say: "I will be strong, well," &c. But we should use a simple affirmation: "I am well, strong, calm, I do not suffer," &c. These formulæ, even if at first in no way accepted, will by constant repetition end in gradually bringing in their train the ideas they represent. Then we shall take an interest in trying to make this idea more precise, to give it a more definite outline, and a more concrete living form. We shall think of and see ourselves as we would wish to be, vigorous, robust, and overflowing with health. The more precision and distinctness the idea acquires, the more

<sup>1</sup> It will perhaps be more exact to say that auto-suggestion does not of necessity demand that sudden tension which corresponds to what is usually called an effort of the will. There is certainly effort, since work is accomplished; but here the effort is slower, more gradual, hence less felt, less conscious; and besides, it is differently directed. It comprehends in reality a series of successive gradations, which may be grouped as follows: (1) Conception, and then maintenance of a more or less complete state of emptiness of mind; (2) the introduction into the mind of the ideas which one wishes to suggest to oneself (to fix one's attention, says Ribot, is to allow a certain state of consciousness to exist and predominate), and, as a result, the natural and scarcely conscious (then, as required, the active and conscious) convergence of the attention which is now at liberty, on these ideas.



vividly it will be embodied and the more certain will be its realisation. That which we conceive well in the mind is realised easily.

It will be possible—and not infrequently—to make a curious observation. Suppose, for example, that we desire to get rid of some painful symptom or other. The auto-suggestion has just been made, but the pain is still as acute as ever; it appears as if there were no result. Some little time after, chance recalls the attention to it again, and one is surprised to find that the pain is gone.<sup>1</sup> One would be tempted to believe in a mere coincidence, if one did not recall vividly the intensity of the original pain, and if, a more convincing reason still, the same circumstance did not recur very frequently. What then has happened? Once introduced into the mind, though conscious attention was diverted subsequently therefrom, the idea nevertheless continued on its own path unperceived; by degrees it began to work upon the symptom we wished to combat, and finally completely overcame it.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact,

<sup>1</sup> The same remark applies naturally to suggestions made in advance. Suppose, for example, we have suggested a calm sleep for the following night. It does not, however, seem that the idea took a precise enough form to bring about the desired result. The following day, however, one finds that sleep has been perfectly calm.

<sup>2</sup> Compare with this certain examples given in the preceding chapter.

the pain had been so well subdued that even the remembrance of it had been effaced; which is another proof, if proof were necessary, that the idea of a pain and that pain itself become confused. Let us now suppose that the thought had not by chance been brought back to the suggestion which had been made. We should have remained convinced that the auto-suggestion had been a failure. Herein lies, it will be understood, a stumbling-block, and these facts should be well studied and carefully adapted to the occasion by the person who desires to determine the reality and the efficacy of auto-suggestion.

Such, then, is auto-suggestion reinforced by a condition of slight sleep. It is, in a word, a condition analogous to Liébault's state of "charm," and Payot's state of "meditative reflection." We will choose for it the name of *Contemplation*. Contemplation, indeed, fitly describes the condition of the mind which withdraws itself from everything, from all feeling and thought, to concentrate entirely on a portion of itself, which, without tension or effort or fatigue, gives life to and fertilises certain previously chosen ideas by concentrating on them a purely peaceful and quiet attention.

We must point out also what a powerful auxiliary in arresting the attention on the

idea and facilitating its transformation into action, is to be found in the emotional element skilfully employed. In the so-called miraculous cures, those which take place as the result of keen emotion, joy, fear, &c., we have feeling reinforcing the idea to such an extent, that the action results quasi-automatically, with the vigour and precision of a reflex movement.

True, it is not within our power to work ourselves up at will to such heights of emotion. Yet these are signs which should not be lost sight of; they can and must be used for our advantage. It is quite true that the idea of being cured implies invariably at the same time a certain co-existent desire in that direction.<sup>1</sup> But that is not enough. We must learn to give colour and warmth to the idea, by picturing to ourselves the pleasure we shall find in self-control, the use that can be made of recovered health, &c. Still less should we content ourselves with a pure and simple negation, when we have set ourselves the task of uprooting some passion or trouble-

<sup>1</sup> This statement seems to me of especial importance. As a rule, a far too categorical distinction is drawn between the part played by the idea and the emotional element. In emotion, as in the idea, many degrees separate the unconscious and the fully conscious state. As a fact, following the very law of suggestion, there is no idea of action (that is, no broad idea of being cured), which does not also carry with it a tendency to action, and therefore a certain desire to act.

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some habit, such as gambling, dissipation, idleness, &c. We must vividly picture to ourselves the happiness and peace that work brings with it, the advantages to be derived from leading a regular and harmonious life, the satisfaction that those nearest to us will have in our success, &c. All these sentiments, brought gradually from the shadow into full light by the attention paid to them, will diminish by degrees the glamour of the opposite sentiments, and will, at last, efface them completely.

Better still: if a favourable emotion arises within us, whatever it may be, let us hasten, if possible, to utilise the passing stimulus received by the mind to make the auto-suggestion more effective. Every affective state, whether it be one of feeling, emotion, or passion, is a sort of accumulation of nervous force, of energy, which must find an outlet. If its customary passage is blocked, it will instinctively seek another issue. In this way, rejected love easily becomes hatred. Again, a nascent passion, that is to say, one yet unsatisfied, seems to impart more lightness and vivacity to our whole being; the mind acts more promptly and incisively, the limbs more briskly; in a word, all the organic functions certainly work more readily, and with a feeling of joy and vigour. So also, any person in a great rage, and unable at the time

being to vent it upon its object, tries every means of exhausting the emotion surging within him. He will take long strides, and abuse those about him, even when they sympathise with him; he has a feeling that any sort of violence would calm him, even that directed against inanimate objects. Very well! That which we thus do by instinct, we should learn to do scientifically, and this with an aim deliberately chosen by us. Instead of allowing the sum of energy, which every emotion represents, to wear itself out and be entirely lost, let us accustom ourselves to make a channel for at least the greater part of it, and use it to reinforce the ideas which we desire to sustain in ourselves; if need be, let us forcibly evoke these favourable emotions. By studying ourselves carefully, we shall soon be struck by the ease which even a slight emotional impulse will impart to the work of auto-suggestion.

There are physical agents which will exert over us a perfectly analogous influence. Such are certain drugs—alcohol, kola, coffee. Such, again, are certain external remedies—hydrotherapy, massage, &c. These are therapeutic methods, themselves founded on a law of general application which may be stated thus: every agreeable, and still more, every stimulating sensation can be utilised in an

emotional way for auto-suggestion. In this way, we can employ the feelings which flow from the sense organs; the satisfaction enjoyed in the contemplation of beautiful scenery, of a work of art, in listening to pleasant harmonies; the sensations issuing from the internal organs; the feeling of satisfaction and comfort imparted by the digestion of a good dinner—the pleasures of sex, and those arising from such muscular activity as walking, cycling, fencing, &c. In a word, whether it is a question of feeling or sentiment, the mechanism is the same; the point of departure consists in one case of an idea, in the other of a physical impression; but both have an identical result, both awaken or increase the elasticity of mind, and thus supply a richer and more malleable material for auto-suggestion. Besides, in many cases, feeling and sentiment are so closely allied that it is difficult to distinguish the part played by each. Thus, at a friendly dinner, feelings and sentiments mutually intensify one another. Again, the pleasure caused by hearing a piece of music is the result of agreeable sensations produced by the sweetness or loudness of sounds, and also of an entirely æsthetic sentiment born of musical ideas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All the preceding relates to the case in which auto-suggestion is rendered difficult by a state of depression or asthenia.

We can go even farther, and say that there is no painful emotion or sensation which a clever system of tactics cannot convert into valuable allies. The method is here as follows: we school ourselves to bring under the control of our reason every unfavourable sensation or emotion, with the firm intention of disciplining these inimical forces until they can be made profitable to us, and we can adapt them to our own ends. With this object we shall strive to change the feeling of envy which irritates and enervates us into loyal and productive emulation. Again, the natural tendency which makes us desire to see other folks conform to our ideas, one which is called presumption and self-sufficiency in the man who does not take pains to reflect on his own character, may become in the intellectual man a virtue manifesting itself in active efforts. Once more, the thought of the shortness of life which, in so many people, is the cause of unreasonable fear, might be made helpful if it taught us to make good use of our time, and to exaggerate neither our pleasures nor our pains. Further, our rage

In the case of difficulty arising from excitement, the means to be employed will naturally be the opposite to those indicated—to arouse calmer, not more stimulating emotions; not to employ kola or coffee, but valerian, bromide, &c.; warm baths, &c.

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against a fellow-creature will become a feeling of indulgence or even of kindness for him. For, if he has offended us, perhaps it is the result of natural inclinations, about which he is himself not sufficiently enlightened, and which, besides, he cannot modify in a moment. Moreover, what does it matter? Will there not be a certain measure of nobility in rising superior to him? Lastly, there may even be pleasure in physical suffering, if by it we can prove to ourselves that we have made a certain amount of progress in the art of mastering it, and that we are no longer entirely subjugated thereby.

Assuredly, it is a long and difficult undertaking to subordinate the moral or physical emotional element to the intellectual element. Do not let us forget it. The task is rendered still more arduous by the singular but real pleasure of giving rein to our passions, the bad equally with the good; indeed, the unresisting abandonment of ourselves to the desires and weaknesses of the flesh, even to physical pain, has a certain charm for us; we find pleasure in dwelling on our miseries, and even in exaggerating them to ourselves. It is well to recognise these imperfections of our lower nature, so that we may combat them energetically in the hope of one day triumphing over them. As an



offset to the too facile enjoyment derived from the cowardly gratification of our natural tendencies, we must learn step by step to set up the intellectual enjoyment resulting from the triumph within us of ideas of reason. The latter are assuredly more hard to acquire; but they are calmer, more serene, and more wholesome; they are as far superior to the former as intelligence is superior to instinct. It is no small thing to concede the possibility of establishing the pre-eminence of intelligence and reason in ourselves. The end we must aim at is to impregnate our minds ceaselessly and profoundly with this conception, so that every day, in spite of passing weaknesses and momentary lapses, we may be conscious of increasing progress towards this idea of health, of intellectual and moral beauty.

## CHAPTER V

### PSYCHIC GYMNASTICS, OR AUTO- SUGGESTION IN ACTION

IF the reader has paid some attention to the preceding pages, and if he will reflect on the universal application of their directing principle he will, I think, have a clear conception of the command which can be exercised over ourselves by means of auto-suggestion, either in a state of waking or in a state of contemplation. Auto-suggestion as here described is, nevertheless, not the only weapon at the disposal of psychic therapeutics. We shall now see the treatment completing and transforming itself in order to carry out a new method of action on ourselves, one quite as fertile in successful results. This method does not aspire to displace the former; but it is the necessary complement thereof. We shall call it by the name of *Psychic Gymnastics, or Auto-suggestion in Action*. Psychic gymnastics represent the counterpart, if I may say so, in psycho-

therapeutics on ourselves, of that method upon which M. Bernheim has laid such special stress in current suggestive therapeutics under the name of *active training in a waking state*.

What then is active training? A very interesting case, cited by M. Bernheim as occurring in his practice, will enlighten us as to this better than all descriptions. I will reproduce the main outlines as follows:—

“On the 1st of January 1895, happening to be in Paris, I was called in to see a young married lady of about twenty-five years of age, who for nearly two years had been suffering from neurasthenia. She was the mother of two children, was strong, of good constitution, with no hereditary weakness except nervous trouble, derived from a nervous father and mother. She had been treated for two years without result by two doctors, in consultation with whom I saw her. The diverse symptoms included cerebral discomfort and inability to sew, read, or work. When she tried to read her ideas became confused, and she could not fix her attention. She suffered from general hyperæsthesia, and especially from a sharp pain in the precordial region, produced both spontaneously and by the touch, and from a feeling of painful weariness in the limbs. She walked with difficulty, and while walking

felt sharp pains in her calves. She digested her food with difficulty, and her nights were restless. There was, above all, a condition of general physical and moral torpor, which usually obliged her to remain in bed. She had spent most of the summer at Vésinet lying in an invalid chair, and since the beginning of the winter had not left her room. After having tried in vain stomachic remedies and also bromide, baths, hydrotherapy and anti-spasmodic treatment, she remained in the same state of prostration. She was subjected to a strict course of hygiene, isolated from all possible excitement, and forbidden to take any exercise or follow any occupation, which, moreover, seemed quite beyond her powers.

"I assured myself that this lady's symptoms were purely nervous, that there was no organic lesion. I proposed to my colleague to try on the invalid a course of massage, which, according to our idea, was to be entirely suggestive. I declared to Madame X. that this massage, acting on the nerves, would calm the painful sensitiveness, and allow her in a fortnight or three weeks to come to Nancy, where the change of air and the treatment would restore her.

"I saw her again at Paris in the Easter vacation. The massage had been tried without result, the nervous depression remained the same, the invalid could hardly walk at all. She remained a prisoner in the in-

valid chair or in bed, inert, anxious, and demoralised. A Professor of the Faculty had been consulted, who had advised strict isolation for several weeks or months in a hydrotherapeutic establishment, during which period she was to be forbidden to see any member of her family, and at first even to receive letters. She could not make up her mind to this. Then I proposed that she should come with me to Nancy, not alone, but with her husband, her children, and all her household. She was pleased with the idea, but she feared she could not take the journey; that she was too weak, and would break down on the way. I assured her that she had nothing to apprehend, since I should be travelling with her. To show her that she could walk, I made her get out of bed and take a turn in the room with me. She did this, though feeling much anxiety and many pains in her limbs. Eventually she and her family decided to go. Her husband hired a country house in the neighbourhood of Nancy. She was taken to the railway station, travelled in a sleeping compartment, and arrived at Nancy, whence she and all her family were driven to her country house.

“The day after her arrival I went to see her. My only treatment was to tell her to get up and to walk about a little with me without any fear. Taking her by the hand and encouraging her, I made her walk for several minutes; she was very anxious, and

complained of oppression in the chest, of pains in the heart, and sharp pains otherwise, especially in the soles of her feet. I declared to her that all this would cease gradually, and I tried to inspire her with confidence by laughing and showing her that I considered her sufferings of no importance. After a few minutes she asked permission to sit down, being terribly tired; I allowed her to do so, and when she had rested for a few minutes, I again made her walk for five minutes. I prescribed nothing, simply allowing her to eat and to live as she liked, to see her children all day if she desired, and to suspend all medical treatment. The next day I repeated the same thing. I persuaded her to walk for twenty minutes. The nervous anxiety had much diminished, but the pains in the heart and the soles of the feet were still very severe. I made her walk much more quickly; moreover, I ordered her to walk on several occasions in the day as much as she could. On the third day, she walked with me for more than half an hour; I made her run with all her might, in spite of the pain, and, continuing this training. I succeeded easily at the end of four weeks in making her walk four and a half miles. The pains in the heart disappeared after eight or nine days, and those in the soles of the feet at the end of a fortnight or three weeks.

"I proceeded in the same way to make the

invalid read. After a few days' treatment she still complained that she could not understand what she was reading; then I made her read aloud before me, declaring that she was going to understand a few lines. She only understood their meaning vaguely at first. I said to her: 'Read again; you are going to understand quite well.' She understood, in fact, and I taught her to fix her attention thus. After three such reading lessons the purpose was achieved.

"Persevering in the walking training, accompanied by active suggestion in the waking state, the invalid soon underwent a complete physical and moral transformation, to the amazement of her family. After a month's stay at Nancy she returned to Paris, and, full of life, activity, and happiness, resumed the management of her household. She continued to walk for two hours daily, eating well, with good digestion, living an ordinary life, going and coming, paying no attention to occasional nervous and neuralgic pains and headaches, which returned at intervals. The cure is, so far, permanent."

M. Bernheim adds to this account the following reflections: "What did I do in this case? I did not use hypnotism. It is probable that hypnotism, that is to say, passive sleep artificially induced, would not have cured her. Besides, she was not a hypnotic subject; I tried later, without success, to put

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her to sleep. I made use of *Suggestive Training*, I made use of *Psychic dynamogeny*, adapted to the individuality of the subject; for it must not be supposed that all neurasthenia is of the same kind, and amenable to the same suggestive therapeutics."

The next case is one of a young married woman who had nervous pains and a feeling of general physical and moral discomfort, for which a too violent and depressing hygiene had been employed. "I adopted precisely the opposite treatment to that used previously. I made her get up, I made her walk, I subjected her to an active training, and thus I produced at the same time a real cerebro-motrix dynamogeny, a psychic derivation. The invalid, seeing and feeling herself walk, recovered confidence. She ceased to indulge in sad introspection. I taught her to read by making her read, as I had taught her to walk by making her walk, and by this very simple method I cured persistent neurasthenia which for two years had been the despair of the invalid and her doctors."<sup>1</sup>

These clear and precise reflections enable us to understand the function and importance of psychic gymnastics in moral therapeutics applied to ourselves. The only difference in this case is that the "trainer" will be the actual patient. It is important, however, to

<sup>1</sup> Aimé, *Dynamisme Nerveux Psychique*.



insist upon it, to analyse its method of action more exactly, by comparing it with that of auto-suggestion acting by the idea, or *ideative* auto-suggestion, the only kind studied until now.

The principle of ideative auto-suggestion is as follows: to suggest to oneself an idea, and in this way concentrate the attention on it in such a manner that realisation may ensue. In psychic gymnastics the initial suggestion exists, but its position is of secondary importance; it is not to this end that the chief force of the thought is directed. Let us take as an example that well-known proverb, the truth of which we have all been able to verify: "Appetite comes with eating." Here we have a typical case of auto-suggestion in action. The person reasoning thus with himself honestly believes, when he begins to eat, that he has no appetite. But, if we thoroughly think matters out, we shall see it is not so. If this person had not, however remote it may be, or whatever the assignable cause (such as force of habit, necessity to keep up his strength), a certain desire to eat, and hence a certain appetite, it follows as a matter of course that he would not entertain the idea of beginning to take food, but would rather reject all nourishment.

Therefore the original idea has an existence. But it is not on this directly that we

are acting. In making the movements which arise ordinarily from the idea of appetite, we concentrate our attention on again accustoming this scarcely formulated idea to engender the corresponding action, to link up the broken chain between the two. But this is not all, and the essential fact is as follows: there exists between the idea and its physical expression so constant and intimate a connection, that it is impossible to act on one of the elements without acting on the other. The accomplished action, therefore, will, by a force of rebound or repercussion, reinforce the generating idea. Every suggested idea tends, as we have seen, to its translation into action, but here we have the reverse; by feigning the external translation of the idea, the idea itself, till then so weak as not to be aware of its own existence, will be awakened, strengthened, and more and more clearly defined.<sup>1</sup>

To sum up the theory of psychic gymnastics, we find this in conclusion: on the one hand, the therapeutic idea which always exists, but on which attention does not concentrate its chief efforts; on the other hand, attempts to reassociate this idea with its habitual physical embodiment; finally and especially, the repercussion of this external

<sup>1</sup> And by the idea, naturally, the sensations, sentiments, and tendencies that it represents.

translation of the idea on the idea itself. From the standpoint of practical application, this is epitomised in the following simple formula: *to behave as if we were such as we wish to be.*

This is a formula which we apply instinctively in numerous circumstances; but, here again, the true secret is to understand our own resources thoroughly, so as to keep ever present in our mind the possibility of making good use of them. We have been sitting, by example, for a long time with our thighs crossed or pressed against the edge of our chair. When we wish to get up, we feel a painful numbness below the point of pressure, a sharp tingling due to the compression of the sciatic nerves. If we remain in the same position we know well that all these phenomena will be intensified. What then do we do? We decide to attempt a few movements, cautiously at first, then to take a few steps. After some moments, all these troubles have disappeared. Again, it may happen that after a full meal we proceed to fall asleep immediately—only to wake up more heavy and tired than before. On the contrary, if we decide to take a walk, without heeding the heaviness of our head and limbs, then we end gradually by feeling more fresh and energetic. Once more, the neurasthenic, who lingers in bed after he has been once

awakened, knows quite well that his morning fatigue will go on increasing. Let him determine to shake off his musings and get up without further delay; the occupations to which he must attend gradually effect a beneficial diversion in his mind, and at the same time the sensations of physical and intellectual weariness and torpor, by which he was ensnared, will be diminished and dispersed. As the day advances, his education is perfected. Thus, this apparently paradoxical fact is explained: the subject feels more rested in body and mind after the fatigues of the day, than after the so-called rest of the night.

In phenomena of a moral kind, the repercussion exercised on them by their external manifestation has been long on record. "It is related," says Liébault, "that Campanella, when he wished to know what was passing in a man's mind, imitated to the best of his ability this person's facial expression and attitude, at the same time concentrating his thoughts on his own emotions."<sup>1</sup> "The most profound practical psychologists, Ignatius Loyola and Pascal, recommend external acts of faith, as being eminently suited to bring the soul into the corresponding emotional state. In a state of hypnotic sleep, the attitude corresponding to an emotion is the

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Thérapeutique Suggestive*.

sovereign means of suggesting that emotion. Whatever the passion that a patient's attitude is required to express, when the muscles necessary to the passion are brought into play the latter itself is aroused suddenly, and the whole organisation responds. Dugald Stewart tells how Burke assured him that he had often felt anger kindled within him in proportion as he imitated the external signs of that passion. Do not dogs, children, and even adults who struggle in play end by getting angry in good earnest? Are not laughter and tears contagious? Was not Chinese ceremonial, so well suited to suggest a lofty idea of authority, deliberately established by Confucius, who, like Loyola, thought that gestures tend to suggest corresponding feelings? Is not Catholic ritual, with its profoundly psychological ceremonial, singularly well suited to make a great impression even on souls by no means inclined to belief? It is quite needless to multiply examples; they can easily be found when sought."<sup>1</sup>

We shall endow psychic gymnastics with their greatest power by acting simultaneously on the point of departure and on the point of arrival, by combining with active auto-suggestion the auto-suggestion of the idea. While we give to the idea, which we wish to suggest to ourselves, its translation into

<sup>1</sup> Payot, *Education de la Volonté*.

action, we shall give it the highest possible value. At one time this will be done by simply concentrating on the idea without any very apparent effort. An example is given by Feuchtersleben in his own case: "To get rid of the black spots which dim my sight, it is enough to fix my gaze firmly on moving objects." Similarly, in the case of pains in the lower limbs, we shall begin to walk, repeating to ourselves that these pains have no existence. At another time—and more frequently—it will be done by vigorously questioning, stimulating, and rousing ourselves, scolding ourselves for our weakness, excessive sensitiveness, &c. Herein lies suggestive training, properly so called. The therapeutic idea, thus stimulated by this oft-repeated suggestive stimulation, will more and more easily find its realisation. By degrees the action will become less painful to accomplish; and that which we did originally against our will, shall in time be done without repugnance, and soon even with pleasure.

In certain interesting cases, active auto-suggestion may even be combined with contemplation. Let us suppose, for example, a weakness or pain in the arms. Once in the contemplative state, I constrain my suffering limbs to make different movements, while I repeat to myself that such movements are made without fatigue or pain. Or let us

imagine cramp in the muscles of the hand. As soon as I am in the contemplative state, I imitate the movements of writing, while I concentrate on this idea, that the muscles are free and that all feeling of cramp has disappeared. Auto-suggestion carried out in this form, when possible, will often give most excellent results; in fact, the theory offers its own demonstration.

In some of the facts quoted above, we have obtained glimpses, in the *modus operandi* of psychic gymnastics, of an element upon which we have laid little stress, but which, nevertheless, possesses a capital importance. I allude to the fact that they force the mind into a different channel and rouse it gradually from the morbid concentration by which it was possessed, and in which it took pleasure. *Distraction*, this well-known and powerful remedy, is a form of active auto-suggestion. To distract oneself is to inhibit a trouble, of which we wish to be quit, by pretending to ignore it, or by treating it with indifference. It is, in a word, *to behave as if it did not exist*. Pascal relates of himself that, suffering one day a horrible toothache, he applied his mind to solving a problem, that of the cycloid curve or roulette. When he had done it, he found that his pain had gone.<sup>1</sup> Each of us has had analogous

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Thérapeutique Suggestive*.

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experiences in his own case; we all know that if the mind will consent to distraction, not only are our moral sufferings lightened and dispersed, but even those which are physical—a headache in one case, in another, neuralgia, &c. In the same way, the man affected with a cough no longer thinks of coughing. When it is a question of a phenomenon deeply rooted in us, this indirect struggle will often be more efficacious than the direct attack. "If I apply my mind vigorously to make abstraction of object A or B," says Feuchtersleben, "and keep this object in my thought, I fail in my purpose. But if I fix my mind on the object C, then A and B will spontaneously disappear." Should our attention be captivated gradually by hearing a stirring passage read, by a problem whose solution we desire to reach, or by an emotion which we have purposely excited, it will by degrees be diverted from the moral and physical trouble which direct suggestion was powerless to combat, and which will die down insensibly of itself. So also, in opposition to those cares which overwhelm us, let us stir up others (material cares, the necessity of thinking of those around us, &c.), which will show that we still have need of our energy and still have useful duties to fulfil.

Certain examples of psychic gymnastics



have been so far enumerated. I must, in conclusion, again draw attention to the powerful source of action offered by this active method of suggestion for the reformation of our ideas, our feelings, our inclinations, in a word, our whole character.

Our moral being manifests itself in three ways: by our attitude (in which is included facial expression and gesture), by our words, and by our acts. By means of this triple series of manifestations, we can exercise a real and profound, if indirect, influence on our manner of thinking, feeling, and willing. Thus, if we are impressionable, we may learn to impart an expression of calm to our features, and to moderate at all times the vivacity of our movements; if we are timid, we can carry ourselves bravely, can speak in a loud and distinct voice, and meet frankly the gaze of those to whom we are speaking. In like manner, those of impulsive nature can train themselves to walk and write and eat slowly; while the undecided man may force himself to act promptly. Let the dreamer strive to occupy himself with the thousand little daily cares of existence. The neuropath, who has difficulty in concentrating his attention, should apply himself to such exercises as gymnastics, fencing, cycling, all of which will oblige him to be alert and precise in his movements. Are

we sad or preoccupied? Then a tune, which at first we may hum against our will, shall arouse insensibly a little gaiety within us; if we are invited to a party or a play, let us control ourselves so far as to accept, in spite of instinctive repugnance, and, without even being aware of it, brighter ideas will gradually take possession of our minds. Often, the most efficient method of changing ourselves is to place ourselves in such conditions that we are compelled to acquire certain habits, or in such situations that we are compelled to action. The important thing is to make a beginning, the rest will follow of its own accord. What matters it whether we like what we are doing? The essential thing is to do it, and by dint of so doing, we shall finish by liking to do it.

Lastly, and this is by no means the least important point, let us resolve to describe ourselves such as we desire to be,<sup>1</sup> gifted with energy, will, kindness, &c.; or again, overflowing with vigour, physical health, and almost, or entirely, recovered from the indisposition, of which, however, the traces are still pretty evident. The liar finishes by believing in his own boasting; many persons make themselves ill by talking of their little ailments. By similar methods we can exer-

<sup>1</sup> "To begin with, a man speaks as he thinks, but later he thinks as he speaks" (Maine de Biran).

cise a real, modifying influence on ourselves, but this time, in full consciousness and with greatest profit to our minds and bodies. Such intentional deceits will find their excuse in the fact that by degrees they will become true. Doubtless, we shall find it painful to make the first affirmation, for it will be in direct opposition to that which we think and feel. The second repetition will already cost us less, and soon it will seem to grow out of the very nature of things. No, I am mistaken, it will really grow out of the facts themselves. For these affirmations and suggestions of will, vigour, &c., which we have made to ourselves in this manner, will transform themselves into a very real increase of our will and our strength. And what will give these suggestions an ever greater power of realisation is that, having been made publicly, they will be helped by our self-respect; we shall feel it a point of honour to carry out engagements thus entered into before all.

## CHAPTER VI

### HETERO-SUGGESTION: ITS RELATION TO AUTO-SUGGESTION

**IDEATIVE** auto-suggestion, active auto-suggestion; on these two formulæ is condensed the whole of psychic auto-therapeutics. There is no mode of action on ourselves which is not contained therein, and no phenomenon to which they cannot be adapted.

But here a very serious objection presents itself. "Does that which you call therapeutics applied to ourselves really deserve the name? Is it not you who make the initial suggestion, you who, with your ideas and your will, are present in the mind of him who makes auto-suggestions to himself? Is not auto-suggestion nothing more or less than a thinly disguised form of hetero-suggestion?"

This objection has been made to me over and over again; even I myself was not free from the suspicion at the start.

In expressing my view thereon, I will begin

by granting the fact; auto-suggestion does imply a first impulsion coming from others. That impulsion arises from data furnished either by authors whom I have quoted, or by myself, and they will henceforth be found underlying every attempt at moral auto-therapeutics. All this is irrefutable. But I will carry it further, and ask if a similar reasoning could not be applied to all our ideas? Judged in this way, there would not be a single one which we could claim as really personal to ourselves. Nothing is born of nothing; spontaneous generation exists nowhere in nature—in the world of ideas or elsewhere. If we reflect well on the matter, we shall find that all ideas have sprung originally from impressions and suggestions, some of which have been received from different parts of our bodies, but the greater number from the external world through our different senses. In this respect there are two of these senses which play a particularly important part, because they convey ideas which are already elaborate and complex. These are the auditory sense, which transmits to us the ideas of the persons around us—those of our comrades or of our teachers—and the visual sense, which makes us acquainted with the ideas contained in books. The greater number of such ideas have never been checked by us:

accepted just as they were given to us, sometimes even mutually contradictory, they stay with us as "passing guests,"<sup>1</sup> and can hardly be considered as our own. Let us single out only a few and reflect upon them, correcting or supporting them by new observations and by other ideas which memory has accumulated, and forcing them to become, in a measure, more clearly conscious of their vitality by giving them opportunities of practical application. Shall we not from that moment have constructed a new work out of foreign materials? These ideas, thus digested by our minds, thus moulded upon our particular inclinations, become an integral and living part of our moral being, in much the same way as our food, after the mysterious work of assimilation is accomplished in the system, becomes an integral and living part of our body. It is the same thing with auto-suggestion. The first idea comes to us from others. But what of this? Does it not become ours if, out of our own resources, we provide it with the means of subsistence and of practical development?

It is self-evident; we could at need use the weapons of our adversaries and reply in our turn: hetero-suggestion in reality cannot act without auto-suggestion as intermediary. A somewhat too simple theory

<sup>1</sup> Payot, *Education de la Volonté*.

looks upon the subject under suggestive influence as merely a passive instrument in the hands of the operator, fit only to register and execute mechanically the orders which the latter thinks fit to impose on him. It is no such thing. The subject who receives suggestion, in the state of sleep as in that of waking, preserves his individuality fully; and in order that the suggestion shall have its full chance of success, it must conform to his peculiar way of thinking and feeling. One man will obey unresistingly suggestions expressed in the form of imperative orders. Another (or the same subject on a different occasion) will require to be treated gently, to be watched and guided rather than commanded; he may even prefer to be under the illusion that he himself is carrying out his cure. A third, perhaps, will be always accessible to suggestion embodied in material treatment (drugs, massage, &c.), and so on. As there are many different brains, so there are many different tendencies and many varying degrees of "suggestibility" to identical impressions.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the idea communicated by the operator can work only through the conception which it forms in the mind of the subject, and it is precisely in this task of adapting the thought of the invalid to his own thought that the doctor making the

<sup>1</sup> Bernheim, *op. cit.*

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suggestion will need to employ all his tact and skill.

But let us abandon these sterile theoretical discussions and adhere to the domain of facts. There exists a system of suggestive therapeutics which is capable of being applied in a twofold manner, either to others or to ourselves: this is what experience teaches us. We must grasp this thoroughly and strengthen it by those data which are of high importance from the practical point of view; both can, and should, lend mutual support to one another. Where auto-suggestion shows itself to be insufficient, hetero-suggestion will serve as an auxiliary, at least momentarily. And reciprocally, auto-suggestion will support and enlarge the results attained by hetero-suggestion.

There is one accusation which has always been brought against suggestive therapeutics, and which would be of importance, if it were well founded. It is as follows: "The suggestion that you make, even did it seem to be followed by successful results, is disastrous, for it subordinates the will of the subject to your own will; it makes the latter a mere automaton, which is manipulated according to your goodwill and pleasure. Perhaps you may cure him, but is it not too big a price to pay for the cure if, in order to obtain it, you are



obliged to attack the very foundations of the man's existence, his individuality, his will, and freedom of judgment?"

Such is the accusation, and through constant repetition it has passed, or very nearly so, into the region of things loosely regarded as true, and hence useless to submit to the least criticism. I must add that the mistrust thus created is still further increased by the confusion too easily induced between the extravagances of experimental hypnotism and the simplicity of therapeutic suggestion. Taking all this into consideration, it will be understood readily why so many minds continue to resist the very real benefits that may be derived from psychotherapy. Now, although at first sight appearances seem to support this accusation, those capable of subjecting it to observation and reasoning will see that it is entirely false.

The assertion may appear paradoxical, but it is nevertheless true that, far from being weakened, the will is strengthened by suggestion. I have been much struck by the fact among the patients whom I have treated by this method. Many of them, once they have for a certain time been subjected to suggestive influence, feel the possibility of acting on themselves, and without having the idea put into their minds try to practise auto-suggestion. What can this be if not

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that a reinforcement of will-power has been brought about?

And the theory supplies us with the demonstration in full. Every act of will really comprises two phases: (1) the idea of the act to be accomplished; (2) the realisation of this idea. Individuals whose will is weak, neurasthenics for example, have a very clear conception of what they ought to do. But within themselves they feel something holding them back; they have the sensation of an insurmountable obstacle, interposing between the idea and its execution, an obstacle the existence of which surprises themselves. The most insignificant action, the writing of a letter, the paying of a visit, the giving of an order, becomes a labour to them; twenty times they set about doing it, but always with the same want of success. What does suggestion do? It increases, as we have seen, the ideo-reflex power, that is to say, the power of transforming the idea into action. The patient subjected to suggestion therefore regains little by little the ability to turn his ideas into acts; suggestion has again taught him to will.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reproach levelled at psychotherapy of violating moral liberty should, moreover, rather be turned against education. And yet who would dream of depriving his children of the latter benefits? Who would dream of depriving himself?

I entirely agree then with the conclusions laid down by Valentin: "What better means are there than psychotherapy for measuring and increasing by degrees the patient's share of responsibility, for forcing him to occupy himself and to exercise his will? In proportion as his mental inattention and depression diminish, the power of control will be seen to increase, the mental activity, both sensory and motor, to be augmented, and the functional equilibrium of the organs to be restored. In short, the facts compel me to assert that suggestion constitutes the surest and most rational means of strengthening the psychic reaction of invalids, and of restoring to them all the attention, judgment, and will of which their constitution is capable." It is necessary to impregnate the minds of patients with these notions; we must fight against the erroneous ideas which give rise in their minds to mistrust and fear, and show them that their individuality, far from being compromised by suggestion, re-emerges stronger than before, and, in short, teach them to practise auto-suggestion on themselves. Auto-suggestion

Remember, in this connection, that the education we derive from contact with others continues in reality all our lives. The important thing is to choose our master and our models well. If inexperienced or ignorant, we allow our inexperience or ignorance to be remedied. When sick, should we not be willing to be taught how to get better?

will thus become the natural and necessary complement of all psychic treatment.

Such are the services that the two kinds of suggestive therapeutics can mutually render one another. But this is only one side of the question. Quite apart from hetero-suggestion thus disciplined, applied of set purpose, and with an object determined by the physician, there is a suggestion—though spontaneous and less precise—which exercises itself on us perpetually. It is that which emanates from our immediate environment, from our associates, in a word, from all the persons with whom we are brought in contact, whether it be occasionally or continuously. We are thus enveloped by a kind of suggestive atmosphere, which we breathe constantly, and with which unconsciously we impregnate our whole being. Now, we can affirm, without exaggeration, that on the whole the influence thus exercised is a pernicious one. If there is a self-evident law, it is this, that every man finds himself obliged to act according to his natural tendencies, unless his reason intervenes and puts a stop to his doing so. What is the result? It is that instinctively we seek to make surroundings for ourselves, in which our tendencies may grow and flourish at their ease. Thereby our defects are exaggerated; our

qualities are exaggerated also, and, indeed, run the risk of becoming faults in their turn.

Thus the nervous subject with a feeble will, the neurasthenic, unconsciously avoids every opportunity of exercising that will, and thus giving it the strength which it lacks. He tends to surround himself with nervous subjects like himself, who describe, and to him at the same time suggest, all their own sufferings. In a word, he places his neurasthenia in the midst of the soil most suitable for its growth. Take, on the other hand, the case of an active individual, with a restless mind always ready to enter into new undertakings. He is one, let us say, who will be readily accorded the honourable title of a man of energy and will. As a matter of fact, he also is a nervous subject, but of a type definitely opposed to the preceding one. In him, nervousness betrays itself by the excessive ease with which he passes from the idea to the action. He will avoid the society of calm and steady minds who could temper his enthusiasm and teach him to reflect. Indeed, as time passes, this natural predisposition to impulse will continue to increase. Again, imagine a subject with a firm will sufficiently guided by reason; at most, this will may sometimes be found too ready to seek an opportunity to display

itself. If this individual does not watch himself carefully, he also will instinctively seek to place himself in those conditions where his domineering tendencies, as yet scarcely defined, will have free play; he will seek the society of gentle, malleable characters, carefully avoiding those rather independent spirits who might give him offence. Thereby his personality, his ego, will continually grow more aggressive. That which was will formerly, as age advances, will become tyranny.

One might say, reversing the words of the well-known proverb: "Tell me who you are and I will tell you what society you frequent." Here we have a vicious circle. Whoever aims at correcting and improving his mind, rendering his will sane and strong, keeping his mind and consequently his body healthy, ought above all things to watch carefully the influence of others on himself, that he may use it to his own profit. He should flee from the society of men who can only suggest to him their own weaknesses of mind and body, and on the contrary seek, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, of an effort painful to himself, the companionship of those whose character, while opposing, may improve and perfect his own, those whom he feels capable of giving him moral support, of inciting him

to action by the suggestion of their example, of kindling his energy or, on the contrary, of exercising a wholesome restraint.

The above are rules for general conduct. But the same principles can be applied, if it is a question of combating some momentary trouble which our own forces left to themselves are not strong enough to attack. Then it will be desirable to seek a refuge from ourselves in the society of others, and by coming in contact with their energy to strengthen our own. Once we have succeeded in getting back this energy and storing it up in ourselves, we can, as we may desire, cause it to flow out and direct it to any particular difficulty we may have, whether it be a question of moral phenomena, sadness, obsessing ideas, &c., or physical troubles, pains, nausea, cramp, palpitation, anguish, &c.<sup>1</sup>

Even in the absence of certain persons whom we envy for their moral and intellectual qualities, whose great vitality, or perhaps serenity of character and absolute tranquillity of soul, we admire, our thoughts may find comfort by merely calling them to remembrance. Besides, we ourselves can

<sup>1</sup> I must beg to be excused for reverting so often to the point, already made thoroughly clear, that the same treatment can be applied to psychic and physical phenomena; the reason is that I am well aware how many minds have a difficulty in assimilating this idea.

practise a sort of hetero-suggestion on ourselves, by registering certain observations drawn from ourselves or from others. By reading over what we have thought formerly, by seeing how, at other times, we have succeeded in mastering ourselves, our ideas will tend to readjust themselves and we shall feel better armed against ourselves. Our past "ego," by its better qualities, will thus fashion in its own image our present "ego." With regard to this, I can quote my own personal experience; on going over past notes on auto-suggestive therapeutics I have often strengthened my confidence in this system, while at the same time I have been reminded in a more precise and detailed manner of the method which I ought to pursue.

Lastly, even in solitude, there are friends and counsellors whom we have always within call. "The companionship of books," says Montaigne, "is more sure and more completely ours. Its special recommendation is that it is constantly and easily at our service. It is beside us in all our ways. It blunts the edge of pain when not so extreme as to master us. I know of nothing better to distract a troublesome imagination, than to have recourse to books. In fact, they are the best provision I have found in the course of this human voyage."



Educational books, books that interest or distract the mind, one and all can be laid under contribution according to the need of the moment. But above all, we should be careful to have always within reach a few of those books of calm and practical philosophy in which the great thinkers of all time have left us the best fruit of their reflection and experience, those books which we have only to open almost at random, to find a certain community of thought between ourselves and the author, to feel ourselves immediately more enlightened and more determined to control ourselves. Henceforth, our mind, having found in this companionship the impetus it required, will be able more successfully to make suggestions to itself.

To sum up: auto-suggestion can and ought to find a constant support in hetero-suggestion. In case of need, it can and ought to seek provisional help from suggestive therapeutics, the most perfect form of suggestion by others, having an efficiency greatly superior to that of auto-suggestion. Auto- and hetero-suggestion are, moreover, linked to one another by the closest bonds, and it is assuredly most difficult to trace the line of demarcation between them.

These data are sufficient from the point of view of practical application. But it may be asked, whence arises this intimate relation of

the two modes of suggestion? How can so simple a formula contain within itself such real power? This is the question which it is our next task to answer.

Let us imagine an individual momentarily depressed in body and mind, whether by bad news, trouble, or physical ills. What does he do instinctively? Sometimes he makes a violent effort to rouse himself; he says and vigorously repeats to himself, sometimes even aloud, the better to impress his wishes on his mind, that he will not allow himself to be depressed, that he must shake it off and get new courage. Immediately, and herein lies a curious fact proving once more the constant parallelism between phenomena of the body and of the mind, this self-suggestion shows itself simultaneously in the renewed vigour of his moral state and the more confident bearing of his head and whole body. At other times, he will seek solitude, silence, and obscurity, hoping that the atmosphere of calm thus obtained will allow the mind to recover itself to collect its thoughts, or, in other words, to ensure its natural reaction by assembling, gently and without effort, all its forces to combat the ideas and feelings which had been troubling it.<sup>1</sup> As a fact, in these two cases, he has spon-

<sup>1</sup> Such is, indeed, the etymological signification of the word *recueillement* (contemplation).

taneously carried out auto-suggestion ; it has been active in the first, and meditative in the second, and this auto-suggestion expresses itself in both cases by an identical mechanism ; the concentration of the subject on one single thought. But should this personal reaction not suffice, then he will have recourse to others ; he will confide in a friend in the hope that from him he will obtain comfort. Better still, he will sometimes indicate the line of reasoning that his friend ought to take with him, and those same arguments which, coming a short while ago from his own inner being, left him almost uninfluenced, are now successful in bringing conviction to his mind. Auto-suggestion, finding itself impotent, has invoked the help of hetero-suggestion.

Here is the commonplace fact which we all know. Let us now take particular note of it. We find this desire for outside suggestion everywhere at each step we take in life. The child who has just fallen down and is weeping and screaming, stops suddenly, if his mother, softly rubbing the bruised spot, tells him that it is nothing. Do we not all, every one of us, become children once more as soon as we are hurt? Who will deny that when he has been suffering or troubled, the soft pressure of a beloved hand upon his forehead has suddenly comforted him, or that it has sometimes seemed that its continued applica-

tion would cure his pain altogether? Does not a doctor, let him be sceptical as he may on the subject of therapeutics, if he falls ill, willingly allow himself to be tended and treated in his turn? Is it not this same innate desire which prompts the most intelligent men to consult quacks and bone-setters? And what is more singular still, is, that they often receive relief from these men, a fact which almost makes them blush. They are cured, but their reason refuses to acknowledge the fact. For how, in truth, can their cure have been effected by practices which they themselves have a hundred times declared to be absurd?

It is useless here to argue from the case of a few strong-minded persons, who flatter themselves that they are always self-sufficient. Wait until some trial overwhelms them, or some illness; when in trouble, the most determined characters do not hesitate to unbosom themselves to others of their miseries and sufferings; after a more or less lengthy resistance, the most highly-tempered courage will give way, and the sufferer, in his turn, will seek consoling and fortifying words. The most startling proof of this need, which is part of our very nature, will be found in the fact, that it is precisely the most domineering minds who seek to set up a guide and a fount of constant sug-

gestion to direct them: such a case was that of Prince Bismarck, who was known at the most urgent moments of his political life to seek the advice of his doctor, which he followed with the most perfect docility.

I shall confine myself to these facts, although there are many others which might be cited, and shall conclude by saying: that which gives its value and force to suggestive therapeutics is that the system is founded on laws which have formed part of our nature from the beginning. All that it does is to bring into the full light of consciousness the most hidden and most powerful tendencies which animate our being. In a word, it thus utilises for the benefit, and under the control, of our noblest part, I mean, our intelligence and reason, those forces which were scarcely aware of their own existence. Auto-suggestive therapeutics is the conscious and intelligent regulation of that tendency to reaction which constitutes the basis in each of us, which is called the will to live, "the effort to maintain our being;"<sup>1</sup> in other words, the spirit of self-preservation. Suggestive therapeutics applied by others is the manifestation of a tendency of still wider scope: the individual remembers that he is a member of society; and in virtue thereof he

<sup>1</sup> Spinoza.

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reacts in the name of society and by its means. The first testifies to the close solidarity of the different parts of our being; the second to the solidarity existing between a man and his fellow-men.

## CHAPTER VII

### MORAL HYGIENE

IF each one of our thoughts and feelings, each one of our sentiments, movements, and actions were but a fleeting fact, nothing but a response of the organism to a call from without, and disappeared with the cause which gave it being, then life would be nothing but an eternal new beginning; or perhaps it is nearer the truth to say that, in these conditions, life would be hardly possible, for man would remain as ignorant of his surroundings, as incompetent to direct his course, as he is on the actual day of his birth. It is a matter of fact that there is not a single phenomenon which we produce or suffer which entirely dies. Every physical or psychic fact, however trifling it may seem, impresses its mark upon us, and leaves a residuum within us. This residuum constitutes a tendency to revive the impression hereafter with less stimulus from outside. It is, in truth, the beginning of *habit* originated already by this first fact. If the

same fact be repeated, the tendency of the experience to recur is thereby accentuated. But, at the same time, and by a perfectly natural sequence, since the phenomenon needs less effort and a less amount of attention for its production, it loses its vividness and becomes gradually more obscure in the consciousness. At last, in the highest degree, the habit grows so strong, and takes such deep root in the individual, that henceforward, unknown to him, it becomes part of his individuality. Not only does the action tend to produce itself spontaneously, but whereas, previously, an effort was necessary to perform it, that effort would be necessary now to prevent it. The habit has become a *want* which insists upon satisfaction, a sort of unconscious and imperious instinct, after the fashion of those instincts implanted in us by heredity.

It is due to habit that the phenomena of consciousness, once they have had birth, remain stored up in us unknown to ourselves, but ever ready, under the influence of some favourable circumstance, of a more powerful effort of the attention, to spring up and supply our intelligence with the materials which it will dispose of, combine, or elaborate in its own way. Memory, that fundamental condition of intellectual progress, is nothing but a particular instance of



habit. It is thanks to memory, again, that the muscles succeed little by little, through exercise, in combining their contractions harmoniously. Thus the pianist who knows a piece by heart, plays it without even being conscious of the movements that he is executing; further, the intervention of the will would only disturb the automatic action of the fingers on the instrument. In the same way, walking, fencing, swimming, &c., become so many habits formed by our organs,<sup>1</sup> all tending gradually from the conscious in the direction of the unconscious. Let these few examples of physiological habits suffice. But here are cases of pathological or morbid habits.

The subject who overcomes the first nausea produced by tobacco creates in himself the habit of smoking. Henceforth, he gradually substitutes enjoyment for the painful sensations originally experienced, such enjoyment being the result of the satisfaction conferred by the habit created, not of the tobacco itself. Later, this habit will become a need of smoking, a craving from which all pleasure is banished. At all events, does not this pleasure, unconscious when possessed, only become conscious, and cruelly so, if there is deprivation thereof? Again, the pleasure enjoyed by the drinker grows ever less keen;

<sup>1</sup> Or, more exactly, by the nervous centres which direct them, and in the first instance, by the brain.

but the desire to drink is strengthened more and more, until, finally, the taste for drink has become dipsomania. The morphinomaniac goes through the same phases; at first he injects the morphia from necessity, but later for the pleasure which it gives him. Soon the pleasure exists no longer, but the need of morphia becomes keener and more exacting.

There exist furthermore a number of morbid manifestations which can be explained quite naturally in the light of this theory, if we can once realise how entirely general it is. Take palpitations, syncope, cramp in the stomach, an attack of diarrhoea, a tic, trembling, spasms, &c. These phenomena have arisen under the influence of a violent moral or physical shock. Later on, it will need progressively less perturbation to ensure a recurrence of the symptoms. Lastly, they will be produced so easily that they will seem to take place spontaneously, the predisposing cause having become so weak that it is not even perceived. If we reflect on these points a little, shall we not find herein, condensed in a few lines, the history of most nervous troubles?

Such is the great law controlling our whole being and governing all our lives. Physical or psychic habits,<sup>1</sup> good or bad, thus con-

<sup>1</sup> I must repeat that there is no integral difference between these two classes of habit. Psychic habit is synony-

tracted, come, so to speak, and establish themselves on the hereditary basis, and from this superposition of acquired habits on the habits transmitted by heredity, there results the constitution of our body and of our mind—the physical *temperament* and the moral *character*.

This being so, we shall next see auto-suggestive therapeutics adapted to the same law. But while obeying it, this system so appropriates the law as to make it subservient to its ends, in order to substitute for habits too often acquired to our injury, by unconscious and unreasoned auto-suggestion, other and chosen habits, regarded as profitable by the intelligence, which will be strengthened in us by reasoning and conscious auto-suggestion. In proportion as we multiply the suggestion to ourselves, the following results are, in fact, observed. A first suggestion is laborious to utter and difficult to execute; for it runs counter to all our present habits of feeling, thought, and action. Soon, however, we are

mous with cerebral habit. Inversely, every physiological habit is susceptible of a psychic interpretation. Is there not as much—and more—intelligence in the regulation of the heartbeats, the respiratory movements, the contractions of the intestines, &c., as in the most complex, conscious intellectual operations? Even further, does it not seem by the very law of habit that what is unconscious in us is precisely what is supremely intelligent, and that which no longer needs to be conscious?

amazed to see the idea that it contains becoming more familiar to us, more easy to realise, while, at the same time, the trouble it is intended to combat loses its importance gradually. A step further: the healing habit counterbalances, then supplants the morbid habit. Henceforward we have made our conquest permanent; the continuous operation of self-correction has resulted in natural and definite rectitude. For the future the work of auto-suggestion will be done spontaneously, as if without our knowledge. Should there be an aggressive return of the morbid phenomenon, our mind, directly it appears, will strive instinctively to repel it before it has made good its entrance. The consequences are obvious: the sum of energy which we used to expend in this direction will henceforward, to a certain extent, be available in our hands for new and stronger efforts.

The establishment in our organism, by suggestion, of healthy physical and psychic habits—such is the definition of moral hygiene, considered especially in its method of action. If in moral therapeutics, brought to bear on isolated troubles, hetero-suggestion shows incomparable superiority, moral hygiene, on the other hand, belongs above all to the domain of auto-suggestion. The latter, as a fact, remains within our reach at all times

and in all places, as a friend and a support; it has, moreover, in its favour the great advantage of raising us in our own eyes, leading us to examine more closely our inward nature, and making us every day more clearly conscious of our power over ourselves. I will also add that moral therapeutics, unquestionably so much more powerful at the outset than we should be tempted to imagine, can also aim at the most important results, but on one condition — that it is fortified by constant practice, in other words, by taking as its basis, moral hygiene.

Considered with regard to its aim, moral hygiene may be defined as the art of assuring the health of the body and mind by the strict and careful observance of rules previously studied. Its part is that of conservation and preservation: on the one hand, it must keep intact, and even increase, the power of reaction in the organism; on the other, by careful supervision it must strive to dispel every possible cause of injury at its very first appearance. Charcot has made the following very accurate remark on the evolution of hysterical and neurasthenic phenomena: "Most invalids," he says, "recall a moment when they, so to speak, were hesitating and wavering between the condition of health and that of disease, when they felt that it depended on themselves to ensure their own

recovery, and, by an effort of will, to make the balance dip on the right side. Unfortunately, they were not able to make this effort in due time, and henceforth they found themselves ever more inevitably carried away. This observation in reality is of general application. In moral medicine, two ancient axioms remain as accurate as ever: Prevention is better than cure; If an ill arises, root it out at once (*obstare principiis*)."

I must insist on this point: moral hygiene is hygiene applied by the mind, and is occupied no less with the body than with the mind itself. It must therefore be used in conjunction with a carefully established bodily hygiene. We must guard ourselves equally against two dangers—excessive devotion to the development of bodily strength, and too exclusive satisfaction in the domain of pure thought. These reflections, though possibly somewhat trite, may not be unserviceable at the present time, when, influenced by an unreflecting admiration for all methods imported from abroad, we are too easily attracted by dangerous exclusiveness. For many years it has been our object not to form, but to furnish the intelligence. The reaction against intellectual overstrain is now leading to physical overstrain. Till recently it all was infatuation for the "German schoolmaster." To-day the fashion is Anglo-Saxon athleticism. For

my part, if I were forced at all hazards to choose an ideal, I would rather seek it in ancient Greece, which did not separate physical beauty and health from intellectual and, above all, moral beauty and health. Admiration was there given to the man who was at once beautiful and good, *καλὸς κἀγαθός*—that is to say, perfectly healthy and strong in body and mind. Whatever idea may be entertained about their real nature, body and mind being inseparably fused to form our personality, are, on this account, both worthy of our care and our respect. However, their claim is assuredly not equal and a reservation must be made, for in the case of the man who is free from defects, the exercise made necessary by his daily occupation, with the addition of a few simple hygienic precautions, remains fully sufficient. The chief care is to give a good direction to thought, for thought alone, by the influence thus exercised over the whole organism, can at one and the same time maintain and develop both moral and physical robustness.

I will now sketch in broad outline the conception which I have formed of moral hygiene. We shall see that it is a question of extending the principles of moral therapeutics, that is to say, of the laws of suggestion, to all our being and to our entire existence.

1. In the first place, we must strive to examine and know ourselves well, to form for ourselves as clear and honest a conception as possible of our strength and of our weakness, of our physical and moral qualities and imperfections.

*Knowledge of our Physical State.*—Many of the troubles which arise in us reveal themselves by grievous or painful sensations. But those superficial notions that every man can form about himself will generally need, as their necessary complement, the examination of the doctor, who alone, in most cases, will be able to distinguish whether or not these sensations correspond to some injury, get a clear idea of the state of the organs, point out the weak spots, indicate what is, or is not, susceptible to psychic treatment, and give the rules of hygiene to be followed in order to check harmful tendencies as far as possible.

A clear knowledge of one's moral state is perhaps more important still, and here especially, the first condition of a cure is the knowledge that we are ill. By seeking a clear understanding of our passions, do we not make them lose a great part of their violence? In the same way we shall often vainly struggle against a physical pain or ailment if we hide from ourselves, sometimes half voluntarily, the moral cause which is its origin.



This is assuredly a delicate task, and one which cannot be accomplished in a day. But, to say the truth, there is none more important and none more worthy of our attention and care: yet, strange to say, that which most men least trouble to know about is themselves. It must not be imagined, however, that to produce the desired end it is necessary to be initiated in all the refinements of psychology. The greatest philosophers are not those who have studied deeply all the subtleties of metaphysics. Similarly, many people are very good practical psychologists who have never opened a book on psychology. Every individual, believe me, can attain to a sufficiently exact and complete knowledge of himself if he is willing at any moment to direct on himself a modest but constant observation; if, above all, he consents to examine himself frankly and to tell himself quite sincerely all the good and all the evil that he must acknowledge concerning himself.

But, however far it may be carried, this work of personal analysis, by itself, necessarily remains incomplete. Our defects, in truth, are often so profoundly identified with ourselves that they become invisible to our own eyes; it is we who are most ignorant about them. Therefore, so far from being angry at the opinion of others on the subject, we should

ask for it and should examine it with the utmost possible impartiality, so as to derive from it all possible instruction and advantage. Here, again, and I must be excused for returning to the point, the part of the doctor, if he knows how to be a psychologist at the same time as a doctor, seems to me of especial importance. Better than anyone else, he will have the power of putting us on our guard against the harmful influence of certain mental tendencies. He will be able to gauge incipient neurosis and establish the relation, too often unknown to the invalid himself, between mental troubles, annoyances, pre-occupations, overstrain, &c., and physical disorders, sometimes so clearly localised at so remote a point and with such great intensity that the suspicion of a moral cause which, moreover, in many cases, has long ago disappeared, is the very last idea which will present itself to our own thoughts.

2. In proportion as we know ourselves more intimately, there will, without effort, be evolved from *what we are* the notion of *what we can be*, of what we should strive to be. Thus, there will be spontaneously traced in our mind the moral and physical "type" which ought to serve as our model. Thus, we shall feel gradually arising within us the conception of an ideal "ego," free from our physical and moral imperfections,

healthy, robust, equipped with all qualities of body, heart, and mind, which we desire to see pre-eminent in ourselves. We shall be able to make this conception more concrete and vital by embodying it in some one of our acquaintance, and, better still, by making it, in a sense, the synthesis of all the best qualities we have observed around us.

3. This general conception which we wish to realise in ourselves, confused at first, then gradually more defined in its details and outlines, will be, as it were, the point of light towards which we shall steer our whole being and all our life, notwithstanding the obstacles which men, events, passions, or illness may set up around and within us. When checked for a time, we shall resume our journey, satisfied at having overcome temptation, and supported by the contemplation of the end to be attained. Our whole existence will thus be dominated by a sort of constant suggestion hovering over it and attracting it, which, every moment, will regulate our ideas, our judgments, our way of feeling — finally, our decisions, resolutions, and actions.

This is the last stage of moral hygiene, at least in the description of it, which is obliged to separate artificially that which, in actual fact, remains most closely fused. From what

we are, from what we ought to be, will be evolved simultaneously the conception of *what we can do*. Our daily observations, modest but constantly repeated, will, little by little, be condensed spontaneously into ever more clear and insistent formulæ, which will constitute the *directing principles* of our conduct.

Thus, our thought and our inward life will fashion in its own image our external life as men of action. Thus, the aim at which our life's effort should, and can, be legitimately directed, will manifest to us with growing clearness; it is an aim requiring all our qualities and forces to attain it, but, nevertheless, it will be found not so far beyond our powers as to prove a cause of deception and regret in the future. Henceforward, we shall no longer be moved so profoundly by our ailments, or even our illnesses, by the checks we receive in life, or by the trials which we must all expect, however cruel and even sudden they may be. We shall look upon them as so many incidents which, painful though they may prove, will nevertheless not mar the harmony of the whole. From this time forth, all our acts, the most insignificant as well as the most important, will assume a totally different meaning in our eyes: for they will no longer appear isolated from those which precede or follow them, but as

the logical realisation, the natural development of a plan of general conduct, which we have consciously conceived and decided upon.

Such is the programme to be carried out. Doubtless, we must not reckon on realising it immediately, or even rapidly and easily. But, on the other hand, we must not exaggerate the difficulties of the task. The important thing is to look them well in the face and to search resolutely for conditions under which they can be overcome. Now, in order to accomplish such an undertaking, great endeavours, brilliant actions, or violent applications of energy, brought into play at long intervals of time, are not especially needed; what is required is a moderate but prolonged tension of the will, united with a clever and wisely renewed strategy. Thus we must convert every day, every hour, every moment, into opportunities for partial victories, which will be insignificant only in appearance; for they will be slowly but surely building up in us the habit of triumphing over ourselves with a constantly growing sense of strength. Here, as elsewhere, the strong will be those who are patient, and who will be able to understand the necessity of watching over their work, always fragile and weak in its foundations, as well as incomplete, with untiring vigilance. However ceaselessly man

may strive to improve himself, there remains always something fresh to accomplish, some detail in his line of conduct which may be open to correction.

Thus every sufferer aspiring to discipline his life according to the rules of modern hygiene, to realise in himself, more or less perfectly, the ideal plan which has just been laid down, must be imbued thoroughly at the outset with the idea that he can only advance step by step, and stage by stage. But let him not be discouraged by this fact; it is precisely this feeling of constant improvement which will lead him to find a particular pleasure and charm in the work he has undertaken, while providing him with the force necessary to pursue it. So also, little by little, even out of the repetition of daily suggestions, the conception will be born—and with it the practice—growing gradually more perfect, of this ideal plan of constant and general suggestion. I shall now try to indicate how this evolution can be carried out in detail.

1. To begin with, let him do what he may, his former habits remain predominant; the subject usually allows himself to be carried away by the force of outward events, by his own thoughts, his impressions, and his passions. Occasionally, however, it occurs to him to observe himself and to practise

auto-suggestion. The early results obtained suffice to awaken his attention and inspire him with confidence. But as a general rule, even in the presence of phenomena which are perfectly amenable to suggestion, he *never thinks* of having recourse to it.

Now, here is the essential point: the subject must accustom himself to think of auto-suggestion. This task will be facilitated if he will rigorously observe the following most important rule of moral hygiene: it is to practise regularly, from the first day forward, two auto-suggestions, one in the morning on waking, the other at night just before sleeping. These two suggestions will serve as a sort of mark; they must not be neglected under any pretext whatsoever, whether we feel their necessity or not, and however much we may be in haste to rise or go to sleep. This doing of daily violence to our natural idleness, this imposing a check on all our other thoughts, on all that might preoccupy our minds, is already a most excellent exercise of our will. We must begin with a sort of "examination of conscience," both physical and moral, a criticism of the day that is past, a preparation for the day about to begin, a recapitulation of the changes which we desire to bring about in our present manner of living, of the qualities we

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wish to implant, maintain, or develop in ourselves. Auto-suggestion properly so called will follow next; this will be carried out in the form of contemplation, while we apply ourselves carefully to conforming to the rules laid down. It must be, as far as possible, continued until the words pronounced are enunciated in all sincerity—in other terms, have evoked completely the corresponding ideas. But even when the thought seems to have remained uninfluenced, or nearly so, do not let us imagine that our work has been fruitless. The suggestions made, unknown even to the subject, will have made a more or less deep impression on the mind. Imperfect as they seemed at the outset, it may, perhaps, be noticed a little later on (and indeed this happens frequently), that they have none the less attained their object.<sup>1</sup> In any case we may rest assured that they have affected us to some small extent, and that they have in advance given greater efficacy to the suggestions that will follow.

These auto-suggestions, these dealings with ourselves, with or without contemplation, must be repeated frequently during the day. We must not imagine that much time need be given to them. We can make suggestions to ourselves at any minute, in any place; we may accustom ourselves to devote to this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chap. IV.



practice the minutes which we too often employ in letting our thoughts drift idly, in dreaming, in "thinking of nothing at all." They will be, as it were, short intervals between the acts, halts called for pure thought, in the course of our daily occupations.

The latter, on the other hand, will assist us to complete our auto-suggestive education. They will afford us ever recurring opportunities to turn our thoughts rapidly into actions, and reciprocally, to make our actions influence our thoughts. We shall thus accustom ourselves to practise the second method of working on ourselves—which is to carry out active auto-suggestion or psychic gymnastics.

2. The habit of self-suggestion is strengthened gradually. The subject learns even by his failures; for they show him how necessary it is that he should imbue his mind with several methods of procedure, such as will allow him to vary or reinforce the action of auto-suggestion. In this way he becomes more expert in the art of self-suggestion. He allows himself to be influenced less easily by his feelings and passions; he even learns occasionally to turn them into precious auxiliaries. Further, he studies the influence exercised by others on himself, and tries to make it favourable in result. These are all a series

of imperceptible gradations—which each one can imagine for himself—and they will bring him to the third period.

3. The thought of regulating his conduct by the rules of moral hygiene, in other words, the desire for moral and physical improvement, the wish to direct his life according to a concerted plan and with a rational aim in view, has now definitely taken possession of his mind, and henceforth is its sovereign mistress. It is true that this idea may be obscured momentarily, or disturbed from time to time by some serious shock, but, even then, it will never be completely effaced. It is rooted in the depths of our being, and remains ready, so soon as the storm has passed, to retake its place in the foreground.

The subject who has arrived at this degree of perfection will necessarily submit from their inception all his ideas, feelings, emotions, decisions, and actions to a sort of instinctive criticism which will approve or blame, encourage or restrain them. Every phenomenon manifested or suffered, while it corresponds to present necessity, will resemble a sort of satisfaction afforded to the directing intelligence, to which it will thus give an extra supply of power. In a word, beside the short moments which will, as before, be assigned to conscious auto-suggestion, the habit of auto-suggestion will remain con-

stantly present in us as a want, even a natural tendency which will govern every moment of our life and will develop it, so to speak, more and more easily from the ideal conception we have set before us as a model, so that from day to day we shall become more intimately and perfectly identified therewith.

It is obvious that moral hygiene, thus conceived, leads us finally to a practical philosophy of life; it becomes the art of disciplining our mind and body, in fact our entire existence, by the laws of intelligence and reason. It will be the part of our intelligence, developed and enlarged more and more by its unceasing use, to discriminate between good and bad, to tell us what we should desire or avoid. Suggestion, assiduously practised, will endeavour to turn into reality these desires thus formulated by the intelligence. Truly, we know beforehand that to many persons nothing in the world seems more useless than meditating on themselves, and creating for themselves a rule of life. The great word philosophy makes them smile contemptuously. But let me tell these persons whose minds are so full of self-confidence that even they, without being aware of it, have a philosophy. Not to have a philosophy, is it not really to have one, and the worst of all, since, without any fixed aim, we become the unconscious playthings of

external events and of our own impulses, lucky, if Fate will have it so, but more often assuredly destined to bitter disillusion?

Nevertheless, let us anticipate yet another objection. "Will not the conception that you have just formulated," I shall be told, "by habituating a person to think unceasingly about himself tend to turn him into a dreamer, and to weaken in him the inclination for action?" It appears to me that those who reason thus allow themselves to be diverted from the real issue by the power of words; they do not distinguish sufficiently between action and ill-regulated agitation, which is often sterile. The object of the two methods of suggestion, which are the complement and necessary corrective of each other, is to make of us at once men of thought and men of action, but of action that is conscious and reasoned. The ideal aimed at in their conscious association is to convert every thought into an act, and every act into a thought. The essential thing, undoubtedly, is not to act much but to act well. On the other hand, to reflect before acting—which means, to prepare the action and thus make it more prompt and easy—is not this really beginning to take action? My entire work is nothing but a confirmation of this argument. I say that we are active whensoever we form a definite aim in our thoughts. On

this basis even sleeping is an action, if, when we fall asleep, we do not do so in spite of ourselves, unknowingly, or taken unawares by fatigue, but with our full consent and clear consciousness of the repose that we intend to take, seeking the necessary strength to continue our task.

Here I shall conclude the exposition of the principles of moral therapeutics and hygiene. I have done nothing but give a general outline on canvas, as it were, but on this canvas each one will be able easily to embroider his personal variations according to his own temperament. In current suggestive therapeutics, as I have already said,<sup>1</sup> the doctor must study carefully the adaptation of his own individuality to that of his patient. When it is a question of auto-suggestive therapeutics, in which the patient becomes his own doctor, this precaution is equally valuable. In one case energy will be required more especially; another man, or the same at a different moment, will find it better to temporise, to act gently and use persuasion, to insinuate the suggestion into his thought. One again will find it more profitable if he have recourse to meditative auto-suggestion, while another will try psychic gymnastics. But these different methods, capable of infinite variation, must never-

<sup>1</sup> Chap. VI.

theless bring into broad daylight the existence of common rules which are more or less applicable to all cases. Now it seems to me that in the two methods of psychotherapy, and more especially perhaps in the one of which I have made a study, there are two considerations which should be present continually to the mind. The first is the profound realisation of the weakness which is inherent in man's very nature; and the second is the confidence of being able to cope successfully with this natural weakness if we employ, perseveringly and cleverly, the resources we have within ourselves. These two feelings, which will be more and more strengthened by dwelling on them, will almost of themselves suffice to regulate our conduct to ourselves. They will accustom us to calm, impartial, and sincere self-study, apart from unfounded fears or presumptuous conceit. If we are unceasingly disquieted about our health, are we not in reality, though unconsciously, using self-suggestion to our greatest injury, thereby making ourselves really ill, or lending greater keenness to our sufferings? On the other hand, if we have too much confidence in our own strength, do we not blind ourselves wilfully, and thus negligently expose ourselves to danger? There is a mean that we must strike between these two extremes. Let us see ourselves

as beings of feeble and delicate health, as indeed we are all in reality, but let us at the same time be conscious fully of the ever-increasing empire that we can acquire over ourselves. Thus we shall become kind and indulgent to ourselves, but at the same time patient and strong.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WILL.—CONCLUSIONS: 1. MEDICAL; 2. PHILOSOPHICAL AND MORAL

WEAKNESS of the will is the great failing of our age. It is a commonplace to say so. All thinking minds unite in deploring this general deficiency. There is scarcely anyone who does not own to a certain degree of neurasthenia. Now, does not everyone agree that the distinguishing characteristic of neurasthenia is a slackening of will-power?

These facts are undeniable. But if we contented ourselves with superficial explanations, if we imagined that this disease of the will, this *aboulia*, is of recent date, and that our generation has been the first to be attacked by it, we should run the risk of being completely mistaken as to the cause and the remedies which must be sought. The evil is of older date; and to discover its real causes we must, in my opinion, go back to the great crisis which marked the close of the last century. With this crisis began,



indeed, an evolution, which is far from being finished at the present moment, and from which we are still suffering. Till then, man had hardly heard anything talked of but his duty. But now all the grandeur of his rights was suddenly unveiled before his eyes, and he was called upon henceforth to govern himself. Was he prepared for this task? And, if not, what has been done since then to fit him for it?

Let us notice, too, that the conception which had been formed at that time of moral liberty and of the will, was the same which is still accepted unfortunately above all others. The will was looked upon as an autonomous faculty and sovereign mistress, as a kind of mysterious power by means of which man disposes of himself as he pleases. But, unknown to him, this so-called independent force found itself dominated, it is true, but at the same time firmly supported by powerful suggestions, those of authority and, above all, those of religion, which were sufficient to direct conscience and life firmly. Therefore, true or erroneous, the theory mattered little. The majority of minds scarcely thought of being astonished when their will, this so-called supreme will, frequently met with a check; for in spite of these passing incidents they felt it strong and capable of recovering itself quickly.

Henceforth they cared no longer to examine thoroughly whether this strength came to the will from its own resources, or whether it was derived from an external cause.

Since then authority has gradually lost its influence. To-day it no longer controls us; for it is divided among us all. Doubt has cast its blight on religious beliefs; we are speaking of those beliefs which are not only shown in words and attitudes, but which are so deeply implanted in the mind as to impregnate and fertilise the whole life. Now, nothing has come to take the place of this twofold control which has gradually fallen into decay. We no longer have anything to respect; we no longer feel ourselves ruled; and no one has taught us to respect or to rule ourselves. Anxious above all to instruct, modern education has not taken sufficient care to strengthen the character by a foundation of firm principles and strong convictions. Finally, the very discoveries of science, which are the glory of our age, have had the serious result of rendering self-knowledge still more and more remote; by making us believe too exclusively that happiness was to be found outside, they have really done nothing but increase our wants and our desires. Deeply imbued with the doctrines bequeathed to us by tradition, we continue to proclaim the

omnipotence of the will. But this supreme will no longer responds to our call. It had never sought to fathom the secret of its power. The supports which upheld it formerly have been withdrawn, and to its great amazement it has now fallen back exhausted on itself, while its fall is the heavier in proportion as it was totally unexpected. 1

Hence arises that general depression of spirits, and also that ill-regulated agitation which too often conceals but imperfectly the void of thought. Hence also comes that weariness, that discouragement, a form of pessimism, of distaste for life, which weighs so heavily on the present generation, and which arises from the disproportion between what we have been taught about the power of our will, and our perception of its too real weakness.

Hence too come that barren scepticism, those excuses too readily made for the supremacy of the passions, the general disease of over-sensitiveness, at once dulled and excessively refined, which exhausts for its own benefit the living forces of our being, a disease only too faithfully reflected and aggravated by contemporary literature. Hence, again, the prevalence of neurosis; hence, in fine, the ever increasing frequency of suicide, that supreme form of lack of will, since it goes so far as the loss of the will to live.

Assuredly energy is not dead; we will say more—it is not even benumbed. It is only used wrongly and diverted from its real aim. Having started on a wrong track, it still remembers and regrets the right course that it has lost. Given a sufficiently keen stimulus, it recovers easily its original direction, and feels happy at having done so. Precisely what it lacks is a permanent stimulus and direction, a regular discipline to keep it surely in the right course; for only prolonged and sustained effort deserves really the name of will. All this it seeks outside itself, and seeks in vain. Now, it is within itself that it should seek and find that which it needs. Everyone goes about repeating that the most urgent task imposed on us at this day is the education of the will. Nothing is more correct; but it is only the first step. What must be understood is that this work is self-sufficient, bringing with it its own satisfaction and justification, its object and its sanction.

What then is willing? Having arrived at the conclusion of this work dedicated to the will, it has been remarked in all probability that I have spoken much of suggestion and very little of will. It is precisely because I wish to go from the simple to the complex, from the elements of the will to the will itself, so as to put the reader on his guard against the unconscious suggestion exercised

by this word, and so bring him spontaneously to conceive all that is implied under its apparent simplicity. In proportion as the facts have been displayed, this conviction will, I hope, have been outlined little by little, and then impressed on the reader's mind; I mean, the conviction that it is not so simple to will as we may have thought, but that we can and should learn to will. The will is not that one and indivisible power which we imagine commonly; it is the result of numerous factors, ideas, sensations,<sup>1</sup> and sentiments of all kinds. Now what do we see too often? Of these different elements only a small number are perceived clearly, all the rest remain unconscious or subconscious; so much so that even in the case of serious matters this work of elaboration is accomplished, so to speak, outside us and without our knowledge. After some

<sup>1</sup> Books of current psychology do not pay sufficient attention to this element, and yet, is it not evident, without speaking of extreme cases, that a keen pain, a headache, a gastric disturbance, &c., may impede the exercise of the will just as much as the sentiments or passions, love, anger, &c.

The same observation can be made about chronic weakening of the will: thus neurasthenia—the characteristic of which is aboulia—supervenes indifferently as the result of worries and anxieties, or of organic diseases, such as typhoid fever, influenza, &c. I will therefore once more remark that physiological and psychological phenomena are indissolubly connected, and that it is indispensable to carry on the study of both simultaneously.

given action, who has not asked himself by what considerations he could have been influenced, and then, by an analysis which came too late unfortunately, who has not discovered the ideas and feelings which, though unconsciously, had determined his course. So again, we may perceive clearly what we ought to do, but feel at the same time only too painfully our inability to act.<sup>1</sup>

I affirm that to will is to make fully conscious by means of *reflection* (which is only a form of attention) the various elements of the conflict which is being waged within us. It is to judge them in their entirety, calmly, as an impartial spectator, and thus to put ourselves in the most favourable conditions to make a well-considered determination; and, once we have reached this, to support the resolution by supplying it with sufficient force drawn from the *attention* concentrated thereon,<sup>2</sup> to enable it to take possession of the mind and realise itself in action. To learn how to will is then to learn how to discipline attention, to put attention at the service of the intelligence.

<sup>1</sup> This is expressed by these oft-quoted verses :

“ Video meliora proboque.

Deteriora sequor.”

<sup>2</sup> That which in ordinary descriptions is designated under the name of voluntary *effort* is a *sudden* concentration of the attention. That the whole will is not comprised herein has been made evident by all that has preceded. (See note on p. 50.)

The proof is that, like attention, and even intelligence, far from being an identical faculty in all persons, the will is an apparatus of improvement, a product of civilisation. Entirely or almost non-existent in animals, it becomes more manifest and more complex in man in proportion as he advances from his primitive state. Similarly, the very young child has no will; it only grows little by little under the influence of education, whether it be from men or things.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it is easy to understand how its dominion is always in reality precarious and vacillating, even when it seems most firmly established, and that it needs to be supported and strengthened unceasingly.

Now, what is the work of suggestive therapeutics? The system takes as its basis this primary axiom: Every idea contains the germ of the phenomenon which it expresses; every idea, however weak it may be considered, is a beginning of action. At the centre of the voluntary act, so to speak, my system places the idea or ideas, which have been thought good by the intelligence, in those simple cases wherein the two terms of the alternative are defined clearly, or where the solution to be chosen admits of no possible discussion (*e.g.*, pain or not pain). Then, having chosen these ideas,<sup>2</sup> it teaches us to give them the power

<sup>1</sup> Ribot, *Psychologie de l'attention*.

<sup>2</sup> Positive or negative ideas, whence arises the dual power

of realisation, either by dwelling on them in our consciousness for a longer or shorter time, or by concentrating on them all the forces which we accumulate within ourselves, either by our own efforts<sup>1</sup> or thanks to outside influences. It teaches us, in a word, to discipline our attention—at first, it is true, with the sole object of increasing or restraining the “dynamogenic” power of the idea. But, thus disciplined and strengthened by its very exercise, our power of attention, or auto-suggestion—these two words are synonymous<sup>2</sup>—will seek of its own accord to assert itself in more complex cases. In these it will intervene, no longer only in the last phase, in order to induce or prevent the transformation of the idea into action, but in the work of internal deliberation, of reflection preceding the decision, so as to evoke, compare, and determine in full consciousness the different motives for action or abstention

of realisation and decision, inhibition and dynamogeny (see Chap. II). “The will is sometimes power and sometimes resistance. While it enables man to produce so much and such great things, it enables him also to resist pain ; it is a faculty representing a lever in our hands, which uplifts on the one hand and resists on the other” (Biliot, *Maladies mentales et nerveuses*).

<sup>1</sup> Here must be included the sensations and sentiments resulting from the expression given to the idea, a definition comprising active auto-suggestion.

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. III.



from action, and to prevent some powerful feeling from carrying the citadel by surprise. In a word, it will enable us to determine our actions as much as possible knowingly and of set purpose.

To learn how to will is then to learn how to manipulate auto-suggestion, and the suggestion of others to ourselves. But if, even by the persevering and intelligent use of the methods laid down, the will does not succeed in obtaining the mastery, it must not think that the battle is lost; it must and should then make appeal to hetero-suggestive therapeutics. The latter, contrary to current prejudices, does not impose on it the will of others. It teaches it to discipline itself and to co-ordinate afresh its scattered forces; it is only a guide and a teacher, yet the guide will be sure, the teacher most powerful and most rational.

Thus the will loses that great confidence in itself on which it reposed without seeking to probe its source. Limited by the laws which govern the mind and the action of the mind on the body, it will only be able to free itself and rule as mistress by submitting itself to these laws. Its apparent liberty concealed an only too real servitude; now it is apparently subject, but in reality free, and free within widely extended limits; for, in virtue of the generality and the strictness of

the formula on which it is grounded, there is no physical or psychical phenomenon, no part of the organism with which it cannot aspire to deal with the most perfect accuracy.

Such is the theory of this book. There are two important conclusions, both intimately united in fact, which are deduced therefrom.

1. *A Medical Conclusion.*—This is the possibility, henceforth well established, of a psychic treatment to be applied by ourselves to ourselves. By disciplining our will we can, in a large measure, become masters of our organism. Even those who do not go so far as to subject themselves to this constant discipline, will still find in the temporary application of the simple laws of auto-suggestion a means of delivering themselves from many troubles and many ailments. The Stoics were not then such very exceptional beings, especially if we remember that their moral force was being strengthened continually by the teachings of the master and by discussion among the disciples themselves. If we were thus backed up, many of us might assuredly become perfect Stoics, and perhaps even with greater facility, since we have to-day the doctrine of suggestion to define for us in the most luminous manner possible the method in which thought acts.

But this is one point only: the will, by

generating within us, through its repeated exercise, favourable habits of willing, may uproot undesirable habits, which bad education, imitation, &c., may have developed in us. In contradiction to the common saying, it is then possible to reform ourselves not only in our physical temperament, but, above all, in our moral character. What, indeed, is character? In this case, again, the simplicity of the name does not imply simplicity of the thing. Character is not an immovable, homogeneous mass; it is a result, not only of heredity, but also of environment, of education, both of which modify it unceasingly. How, then, can we assume that it is not possible to change that which in reality changes daily?

Still more: we may even aspire, if not to destroy, at least to modify, more or less deeply, the habits transmitted by heredity. It is not my intention to discuss this important question of heredity. But I do think it necessary to enter a protest here against the discouraging suggestion, emanating from two arbitrary theories too easily accepted, which bears heavily on the minds of to-day. In order to escape from one's heredity, the first and most necessary condition is to believe "evasion"<sup>1</sup> possible. If one cannot attain

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that this is the title of a very interesting play by M. Brieux, in which he develops exactly this thesis.

to this belief of oneself, somebody else may implant it in one. True, there are certain deformities, physical, intellectual, and moral, which would resist all efforts to cure them. But all heredity is not fatal. The son of a tuberculous subject is not necessarily tuberculous, but only liable to tuberculosis. Similarly, in the offspring of a nervous subject, neurasthenia, hysteria, and even epilepsy will await a favourable occasion to appear, or at least to be developed in a pronounced manner. A careful system of hygiene can avert or diminish the causes that produce them, and will consequently lessen the chances of their reproduction. But if, in spite of everything, accidents happen, a well-based system of therapeutics will often be able to counteract them successfully, or in any case to limit their seriousness.

2. *A Conclusion on Practical Morals.*—Things only become pleasure or pain to us by means of the impressions which they excite within us; they furnish only the material of blessings or troubles, the elements from which good or evil will be produced by our personal reaction. Now, by learning to handle our will, we shall learn to govern our method of reaction, consequently to keep painful emotions or sensations far from our consciousness, and, on the contrary, to extract from pleasant emotions, or sensations, all the joy

that they can give us. It is therefore accurate to say that our entire happiness depends on the education of the will.

But here I am met by a serious objection: "Are you not thus teaching man," it will be said, "to identify his happiness with his pleasure, to subordinate everything to the consideration of his personal gratification? Is not your so-called moral conclusion, therefore, immoral in the highest degree, since it aims at nothing less than making us utilitarians and egoists?"

Let me say at once that I allot to man not only the right, but the duty of making his contentment the aim of his existence. A certain egoism is necessary; life unaccompanied by any joy in living would be beyond endurance. Everything depends on knowing in what such contentment consists, and how this egoism is to be understood. Now—and it is on this point that I must insist finally—far from alluring us to search for mean and common utility, I believe that the education of the will, by the regular practice of auto-suggestion, must have as its necessary result, by the simple logical development of the laws of thought, the raising of our moral level, and the constant and definite strengthening of moral doctrine in our mind.

I have pointed out already the imperceptible gradations which will mark this

evolution. According to the law of suggestibility (or of habit), in proportion as suggestions are repeated, they implant in the subject's mind, apart from conscious knowledge, the idea of submitting himself entirely to a wider and more comprehensive suggestion, embracing his entire being and existence. It remains to be known how this suggestion will be conceived. Now what will take place in this respect is as follows:

In the beginning the subject sees in auto-suggestion a means only; he seeks merely by its help to get rid of certain ailments, pains, vexations, mental tendencies, &c. However, without his perceiving it, these first suggestions, which seem to aim only at a goal of practical utility, contain implicitly within them a nobler element—the thought of introducing within oneself a certain order, and, as a result,<sup>1</sup> an aspiration, though still a very confused one, towards a rational ideal. Suppressing a pain by the will is, in fact, to a certain extent, making an effort to substitute what ought to be for what is, and thus aiming at a certain ideal; it is in itself the performance of a moral work.

The suggestions are repeated. At first unconsciously, according to the same law of habit, then by the help of this power of attention and reflection developed in us by

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 52.

auto-suggestion, leading us to the better observance of ourselves and others, and to better use of our observations, this thought, so far barely outlined, barely tinged by emotion, becomes concrete and definite. At the same time the emotional element, the desire contained within the thought, is by degrees set free and strengthened. It sees its power of expansion and attraction increase. It touches our sensitiveness more keenly; it attracts our ideas more vigorously; it strives to display itself in our actions. We grow accustomed, in this manner, to establish a sort of hierarchy among our different inclinations and pleasures. Above the likings and enjoyments of the senses and passions, which are keener, but are for that very reason more transient and followed too often by exhaustion, we learn to place intellectual joys, that is to say, the gratification of developing and informing our minds. We have trained ourselves to better knowledge and appreciation of this pleasure, in proportion as we have acquired the taste for a more intimate contact with ourselves, for more complete self-knowledge, and for practising this work of personal analysis required by auto-suggestion. The satisfaction attached to this work must be exceedingly keen, for many neuropaths find a sort of compensation therein for their complaint,

and forget, so to speak, even their desire for a cure. In short, we begin to understand that knowledge can be only a first step towards a higher work, that only action which turns to account acquired knowledge—conscious, intelligent, reasoned action—can give us the complete sensation of living. Thus, above purely intellectual, speculative joys we place moral joy, stimulated by the feeling of well-regulated activity, and employed ever in transcending itself, that joy which we experience in satisfying the real objects of our nature, in devoting ourselves above all to assuring the preservation and constant development to the highest possible pitch of perfection and harmony<sup>1</sup> of our entire physical, intellectual, and moral being; in identifying, to put it briefly, the search for pleasure with the search for goodness. This joy, calm, austere and serious, but healthy and consoling beyond all others, will attract us more to itself in proportion as we experience it more often. We shall feel that this joy alone is wide and alone constant enough to be spread over a whole life without the risk of painful morrows.

Finally, still following the usual law, habit becomes necessity for action; it is trans-

<sup>1</sup> Which means that each of our faculties or functions ought to be maintained and developed in proportion to its importance.



formed into an obligation ever more pressing, more imperative, more exclusive of all other ideas. This obligation invests thought and the rational will with the supreme direction of life; it assigns to our life, as the end and aim of existence, the progressive endeavour and expansion of our personality towards a rational ideal, so that we may find our advantage, pleasure, and happiness in the more and more perfect comprehension and realisation of the good within us. At the same time, the belief in our perfectibility becomes an increasingly firm confidence, an optimism, not blind and ready to give way at the slightest trial, but reasoned, persistent, and active. In this connection, it is well to point out that habit will engender neither unconsciousness nor satiety, for our possibilities of improvement are boundless; and for that very reason our task will become more obviously conscious and more thoroughly desirable from day to day.

This is only a first step. It is popularly said that it is difficult to get away from one's character. Our character, in fact, as we have already seen, acts on us as a constant suggestion, fashioning, after its own image, all our impressions and all our thoughts; every man, of necessity, sees other men and Nature itself through the prism of his own individuality. Thus the

miser and the wicked man believe in the avarice and the wickedness of others; the pessimist is convinced deeply that evil is everywhere, when it is, above all, in himself. So also, in proportion as it assumes definite shape, the conception which we form of ourselves will tend to be projected outwards. Little by little the feeling of our personal perfectibility will be extended to other men. Here again it is at first a dim impression, realised in part only, then a timidly expressed idea, effaced quickly by other thoughts, a hypothesis which does not even seek to be verified. But our mind grows accustomed thereto in proportion as it is repeated more frequently; the idea strengthens in the mind; it becomes a centre of attraction, and groups round it the proofs which will establish it more firmly within us. Finally it is changed into an increasingly deep and thoughtful belief in the progressive establishment of order and harmony among men, as in ourselves, a belief in the unceasing progress of humanity towards an ever better and more lofty ideal. At the same time our individual ideal has been widened; it appears isolated no longer but as a part of the ideal common to all humanity.

Thus, without losing sight of our individual good, we have succeeded in getting beyond

ourselves. Our so-called egoism allows that which lies implicit within it to become manifest, and this is love not of the individual but of human nature. Henceforth our conduct towards others will reflect our conduct towards ourselves; we shall learn to respect ourselves in others; being conscious of our weakness, kind and often indulgent to ourselves, we shall use the same indulgence and kindness towards other men; we shall understand that it is better to correct and improve than to criticise and get angry. Thus we shall tend to realise gradually in ourselves that pregnant saying of Kant: "Act in such a way as to deal with humanity in yourself," as also that other saying of an ancient philosopher: "You ask what I have gained? I have become a friend to myself. Such a man, be sure, is the friend of all men."<sup>1</sup>

One step more and our mind projects the conception which it has formed of itself, not only on humanity, but on entire nature. We feel implanted gradually within us the persuasion and then the faith, in an evolution of all things towards good, in the unceasing control of the Universe by a reasonable Suggestion. The world, like ourselves, seems to have fashioned for itself an ideal towards which it strives and aspires incessantly with slow and unrelaxing effort. Reciprocally,

<sup>1</sup> Seneca, *Letter to Lucilius*.

this conviction is gradually impressed on our mind, that by working to assure the triumph of the ideal within ourselves we are contributing our small share to the realisation of the aims of the Universe. Our personal morality will appear to us as derived from universal morality.

For my part I think (and there is assuredly no one who does not at some time reach a more or less clear perception of this) that moral doctrine is necessary to man. It is as indispensable to his mind as oxygen to his blood: it alone can give him life, alone raise him above his present condition, ennoble daily monotony in his eyes, and make him endure patiently the bitterness and mortification which life has in store for him. I believe also in the necessity of a religion, that is to say, a constant and never satisfied aspiration towards that which lies beyond, an ideal, an aspiration founded on the intimate and profound conviction that our existence is not an accident, that it has its place and part in the harmony of creation. I think, in a word, that man cannot live without justifying his existence to himself. Now ideal and will are two inseparable terms. Is not every age of feeble will an age of the absence or decay of ideals? Inversely, we cannot will "into the void"; we cannot cultivate the will without creating

the missing ideal. We see therefore how the education of the will by auto-suggestion spontaneously directs us towards this moral doctrine and this natural religion. Their seed being contained in the first suggestions, they gain consciousness of themselves in proportion as these are repeated, as they awaken and increase suggestibility.

I must be permitted to cite here my own observation, and I think that I can do so in all sincerity, for there is a real distance, as I have said often already, between the simple conception of the idea and the more or less complete impregnation of our being thereby. The evolution I have described is that which has been partially produced in us without our knowledge. It has only become clearly perceptible little by little, and quite recently. Having thus ascertained its existence, we have thought naturally of connecting it with the first suggestions; reflection has indicated clearly the unconscious relation of ideas which had taken place within us. This evolution is therefore contained in the very law of auto-suggestion, so it is accurate to say that each of us has within himself a reflection, or, to speak more exactly, a portion of infinity, for our reason cannot become conscious of itself without tending at the same time to become conscious of the reason of all things.

By the radiant light of this ideal which it creates for itself, the will, which is reason in action, will run no risk of weakening its energy and exhausting itself in barren contemplation, or of merging individuality in the universal will. On the contrary, it will draw from the latter, with an ever clearer consciousness of itself, a growing power and ardour; what is more, it will strengthen thereby its tendency to practical development. The very manner in which the will has been formed is the sure pledge of this. It is, in fact, by taking personal observation as its basis, including the slightest facts of such observation, and at the same time by continuous and persevering effort, that it has risen to the conception of moral truth. Henceforth we shall have no difficulty in keeping exalted and alive within us the feeling of our personality and what is due thereto. We shall accustom ourselves to find the value of life—independently of sufferings and enjoyment—in the very efforts and incessant struggles that it demands. We shall establish in ourselves the deepening conviction that there is no one of our functions, nor one of our actions, however contemptible it may appear, which has not its own duty and its place in the common ideal. We shall exercise every care never to lose contact with facts; we shall struggle incessantly to

deduce possible reality from present reality, to establish a perfect and constant harmony between aspiration and effort, and to pursue the Good in an unwearying progress towards the Best.

**K**





**PART II**  
**PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**



## SOME OBSERVATIONS

AMONG the following examples some are personal to myself; for others I am indebted to different persons, young people of from twenty-five to thirty years of age whom I have asked to practise auto-suggestion on themselves. I shall distinguish them by the initials A, B, C, D, E, F.<sup>1</sup>

### MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCES

*Worries and Anxieties, &c.*—B.—Last evening, being invited to a dinner party, while dressing I felt much worried at going, and was afraid, above all, of being horribly bored. The length of the walk there obliged me to think, and I determined to try the experiment of casting away the idea of boredom, and raising an expectation of pleasure, by which, after many trials, I at length succeeded in dominat-

<sup>1</sup> In many of the following cases I know the objection can be made, that they are cases of pure coincidence. The answer is : (1) that the repetition of the same facts must necessarily produce belief in a relation of causality ; (2) that the subject, as each will certify independently, is perfectly aware how he would have been without the suggestion, and is perfectly satisfied that the change effected in him is not the result of any natural development, but of the suggestion which he made to himself.

ing the first idea and triumphing over it. In fact, I conversed a great deal and pleasantly, and spent a very agreeable evening.

1. This is a case of auto-suggestion at a distance, made in the waking state, which was none the less followed by a happy result. Auto-suggestion can sometimes be facilitated by movements and gestures; in the observation just quoted, walking, perhaps, acted in this way.

2. The subject does not appear to have thought at first of using self-suggestion. I have already noted that the habit itself would gradually make this idea more and more present to the mind.

E.—A memorandum of two instances, without other details:

Almost unconscious tranquillity of mind arising from an effort of will made on the preceding evening.

An annoyance entirely of a moral nature, of which I had thought the evening before, has completely disappeared. I felt at times during the day fragments, so to speak, of this thought slowly approaching my mind, but not succeeding in establishing themselves there. My thought alone made them disappear. The impression returned at times vaguely as if making fresh attempts, which definitely disappeared towards the end of the day.

In these cases there is well brought out a principle of first-class importance, which

those who practise auto-suggestion will certainly find true in their own case. Although I have already insisted on it, I think it may be useful to revert to it again. A suggestion has been made; it seems not to have succeeded, or only to have given a very imperfect result. The reason is simply that it has not had time to complete its development in the mind. It will pursue its course therein when the subject has his thoughts occupied elsewhere, thus gradually effacing little by little, and without his suspecting it, both the trouble against which it was directed and even the memory of this trouble: the suggestion has succeeded, but the subject remains ignorant of the victory he has won.

These facts, I repeat, ought to be carefully verified, for they will assist us, under all circumstances, to gain confidence in auto-suggestion. In many cases, moreover, the unconsciousness is only temporary. At the end of a certain time the memory of the morbid phenomenon and of the curative suggestion comes back to the thought; and by an effort of memory we can clearly estimate the importance of the result which has been obtained.

One more word on the recurrence of the morbid phenomenon to our thoughts. I have ascribed, as will be seen, to chance alone the reawakening of attention thereto. On re-

flection, this explanation seems insufficient. What really happens is as follows: The suggestion made loses little by little its original strength. Henceforth it can no longer completely conceal the morbid phenomenon; it allows the latter to reappear, or, to speak more correctly, to afford a glimpse of itself, but in a weaker and less defined shape. A much smaller effort is sufficient to master it; and this effort will diminish on each subsequent occasion—say, two, three, or more times—until the phenomenon is definitely eliminated.

F.—Feeling tired and out of sorts in the course of the day, I fear to make a bad impression at an evening party to which I am invited. I make suggestions to myself for about twenty minutes, striving little by little to picture myself as gay, lively, and conversing easily. In the evening I am surprised to perceive that I am, in fact, very gay, with a natural gaiety, and that most surely appears to me due to the suggestion I made to myself. For one moment only I felt a sort of uneasiness which I readily and almost immediately mastered by a simple effort of thought.

I may add that I have had the opportunity several times of making similar experiments in my own case.

D.—Suggestion used against worrying ideas from which I cannot free myself. I absorb myself in contemplation as deeply as possible, trying to lull both myself and these ideas to

sleep. I have difficulty in succeeding, for, in spite of myself, my thought incessantly returns to the same preoccupations; and at last I am even prompted to abandon the attempt of self-suggestion. However, after repeated trials, I notice that I am succeeding in concentrating my thought for a little longer, and this encourages me to persevere. When once I feel that I have reached a state of relative mental calm, I picture to myself these ideas as being gradually more effaced and disappearing in the distance. Finally, in spite of the repugnance I feel, I force myself to say, first in a whisper, then half aloud, and finally to express loudly and freely the idea that I no longer even think of these worries. In reality, I feel my spirits rising little by little. At the end of a certain time, I ascertained that since that moment I had no longer given any thought to all that. The suggestion lasted for about half an hour.

This experience describes in an exact manner the different processes of so-called *ideative* auto-suggestion. The latter comprises, in fact, either united or separate; firstly, *contemplation*; secondly, contemplative or, more correctly, *representative* auto-suggestion. Thus, in the case which has just been described, the subject strove to *see himself* gay, joyous, such as he desired to be. In the same way, for a pain, we shall picture to ourselves the afflicted part as freeing itself little by little, and then as absolutely free from pain, enjoying full power of movement, &c. Thirdly, there is auto-sug-

gestion by words or *verbal* auto-suggestion. And by knowing how to vary these methods at the right time, by training oneself to speak at first half-aloud, then quite aloud, a subject may succeed in definitely introducing, so to speak, by main force into his thoughts the suggestion which he seeks to implant.

I will add one remark which is important, at least from the theoretical point of view. There is no definite line of demarcation between the two methods of auto-suggestion. All active auto-suggestion contains implicitly in itself a suggestion of the idea; this has already been seen. The converse is true for ideative suggestion. It is thus that representative auto-suggestion, if it acts at first directly on the idea, also exerts an indirect action on it, as by recoil, when it has succeeded by imagination in giving it a more concrete form, in making an image of this idea. From this ideal representation, in fact, the idea will derive additional strength, just as it would from its real representation. As to verbal auto-suggestion, it might, with just as good reason, be attached to active auto-suggestion, speech being only one of the ways of expressing thought. If it deserves a separate place, it is only because this method of expression is the most perfect, the most complex, and also the most easily managed of all.



To resume: according to the first law of suggestion, the idea and the representation of the idea are inseparable from one another. Therefore there is not and there cannot be any fundamental difference between the two varieties of auto-suggestion.

One single state deserves a distinct place as being clearly opposed to all the preceding; this is contemplation. Whilst in all the others, in fact, thought is actively manifest, here, on the contrary, the subject seeks solely to establish and maintain a more or less complete state of void in the mind, by keeping away from it all active thought. It is therefore essentially a state of repose for the mind. In its highest perfection contemplation will end in a deep sleep, free from thoughts or dreams.

The following experience, taken from E., gives us an example of pure contemplative auto-suggestion without suggestion by speech:

One of my friends, having acted wrongfully towards me, this thought has incessantly tormented me for several hours. To get rid of it, after assuming a recumbent posture, I first will myself to sleep, but sleep does not come because of the persistence of the dominant idea. To divert myself therefrom I try to count my respiratory movements, and to regulate them as far as possible; afterwards I seek a more agreeable idea on which to concentrate myself. At a given moment I feel that a little calm is being produced; I try then

to picture to myself quietly the person who has offended me; next I strive to efface and, so/ to speak, gradually to confuse his image before my eyes. By various successive suggestions made in the same way, I succeeded finally in completely dissipating my preoccupation. The memory of it only returned a little later on, when I had occasion to meet the person in question again

We see here, at the same time, an example of psychic derivation. As the phenomenon to be combated controlled the mind too strongly to be attacked directly, the subject strove to turn his thoughts in another direction. Henceforth the said phenomenon diminished spontaneously and naturally, contemplation was made possible, and lastly, the direct struggle could be resumed with better chances of success.

*Discouragement.*—D.—Cast down and discouraged for several days as the result of a strong emotion I had experienced, I made several efforts to lift myself out of this condition. The first attempt seemed to me to be vain. Nevertheless, two days later I remarked that since then I had had more animation and spirit; these had arisen in me without my being aware of it.

*Anger.*—C. observes that by means of repeated auto-suggestion he has succeeded in a general way in becoming much calmer and more self-controlled.

*Timidity—Self-Distrust.*—The same subject also says that, suffering from embarrassments

of this kind, he has been able, to a great extent, "to overcome this timidity and to assume more assurance and self-possession."

*Personal Experience.*—I made analogous observations on myself at the time of my final examination. The preceding night I made a suggestion to myself, compelling myself to visualise my suggestions—that is to say, to picture myself before the examination table, replying quietly and deliberately to my examiners. The following morning I was astonished at my perfect calmness. Once, however, I only obtained a partial success.

B.—By auto-suggestion I have often been able to drive away the feeling of petty annoyance which I anticipated would ensue from the need to see certain people, to fulfil wearisome duties, such as an indispensable visit, &c.

A.—Feeling that I was habitually cold and reserved with certain people, and being the first to regret my coldness, I have often had recourse to auto-suggestion when I was going to meet these people, in order to make myself more amiable and expansive with them. These suggestions have succeeded so often and so naturally, that at first I asked myself whether they could really have caused the change which I had noticed.

*Feelings of Regret, of Love.*—C. has succeeded by frequently repeated suggestions in conquering the regret he felt at the loss of a relative, a regret which, by absorbing his whole mind, threatened to detach him from every other interest.

D.—In this case there is an analogous experience, through the grief felt at the departure of a young lady to whom the subject was much attached. "The suggestions were very difficult for a fairly long time, and often I had to exercise the strongest self-command. I concentrated especially on marshalling before me, by dint of continuous suggestion, all discoverable reasons opposed to regret, while, at the same time, I compelled myself not to see those which might nourish this regret. By never relaxing these efforts for a single moment, I succeeded in making my recollection confused, indistinct, and as though wrapped in a fog. As soon as it appeared, a much less energetic suggestion sufficed to drive it away. Later on, I remarked that, even when I tried to fix all my attention on it, I could no longer succeed in grasping it again, or visualising it with any precision. There seemed to be a barrier, an obstacle within me, another will setting itself up in opposition to mine."

This will is the habit acquired and fixed gradually by repeated suggestions.

To sum up, all feelings, inclinations, tendencies, emotions, and passions are amenable without distinction to a common system of therapeutics, and this system itself follows from the general laws which have been established. Sometimes it will be found better to choose the indirect road, to apply the different processes which I have included under the denomination of active auto-suggestion. The

outward manifestations of the feeling which is to be combated must be put down, or, even better, the opposite feeling must be expressed in demeanour, in acting and talking. Alternatively, little by little, the quantity of energy represented by this feeling may be used by diverting it to more favourable feelings, by employing it in intellectual occupations, or even in physical exercises (walking, &c.). At other times it may be preferable, on the contrary, to use auto-suggestion properly so-called: "contemplation" of the feeling which it is desired to awaken within us, verbal auto-suggestion with or without contemplation. Far be it from me to pretend that the task is always an easy one; nevertheless it is so far more often than would be at first supposed, and in many cases it is astonishing how, by methods in the main very simple, such profound transformations can be produced.

The difficulty that auto-suggestion meets with here is one that it will find everywhere else; if it is more clearly perceptible in the present case, it is only because the phenomena of the mind are more directly open to our observation. This difficulty is, that in proportion as passion increases it masters the will little by little and converts it into an ever more docile accomplice. Henceforth it has inscribed itself in the mind after the fashion

of a habit, of a tendency, which seeks to satisfy itself and finds its pleasure in its very satisfaction. Thus, in order to make any suggestion to ourselves, we shall have to fight against our own will and even our pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

If our will were, according to the common belief, an indivisible whole, the situation would, in fact, be hopeless. In certain cases, it is true, passion is so strong that it completely overpowers the will; but happily these episodes are exceptional and of short duration by reason of their very violence. It is not habitually so. The will, I cannot repeat it too often, is not a homogeneous force. Two opposing wills can exist in one mind at the same time. Each of us has only to recall his own experiences. Even when it seemed to him that passion alone and uncontested

<sup>1</sup> The same observation applies to nervous disorders which are, as we have said before, only the amplified history of the passions. Neuropaths are, at the same time and above all, psychopaths. Some of them will not even allow that they are ill: at any rate, they declare in good faith and believe that they can be cured directly they wish it. Or, at least, they ardently desire a cure, but there is within them another self, so to speak, which makes them cling to their complaint and would make them avoid a cure. In the treatment of these patients it will often be remarked that cure is effected in two stages—(1) Cure in fact; (2) cure in idea: the patient, even when he is cured or his state is at least improved, still thinks himself as ill as he was in the past; he must then be convinced and must be made to realise for himself the progress really accomplished.

was governing him, and that there was only one will in him, entirely in agreement with this passion, has he not often—very often—felt in his innermost being the existence of another contrary will which desired to resist and re-establish calm and reason within him? This will is obscured for the moment, and scarcely conscious, yet is ready to assert itself when passion shall have spent its first fury. Now, this favourable will suffices, feeble as we may think it; for a system of tactics carried out with skill and persistently can strengthen it to so great an extent that it will end by counterbalancing the dominating passion, and finally by triumphing in its turn.

As a corollary to these theoretical remarks, I will lay down these few practical rules:

1. We must watch over our feelings attentively, over our emotions and passions, however legitimate they may appear, and whensoever they seem to attain a certain degree of intensity, we must at once strive to repress them. We take pleasure in dwelling on remembrances and regrets. We think that we can stop doing so when we like; but a moment comes imperceptibly when we can master these thoughts no longer, and are therefore carried away. As a general rule, our intention cannot be too soon.

2. We must never abandon the struggle,

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even when it seems impossible ; we must never despair, even when we have hope no more.

However, if an immediate and energetic reaction seems impossible let the passion have free course for a little while—as short a time as possible—so that it may lose part of its first violence. We need not consider this as a cowardly submission on our part, but rather as a prudent retreat which will enable us to concentrate our forces, to think out and prepare our plan of attack. We must resign ourselves to allow what we cannot prevent, while we determine to protest inwardly and to react, at first timidly, against the constraint which has been imposed on us, resolved to intervene more overtly when the chances seem less unequal. Even if we are fated to succumb, our defeat will not have been so complete ; we shall have been led away by passion less quickly and less far ; we shall have drawn from our resistance the hope of an early revenge.

3. We must, however, take care that these apparent abandonments of the struggle do not lead up to real renunciation. We must beware of compromises and the many devices by which we are prone to impose on ourselves. There are, for example, the lazy, who in order to find an excuse for ending work at the moment, make believe that they will do better to-morrow, knowing full well in



their innermost selves that they will do no more to-morrow than to-day.

4. Again, though to analyse our feelings is often to weaken their intensity, to chill them, so to speak, by bringing them in contact with reason, we must take care at the same time that examination of conscience does not become a more or less avowed pretext to keep our attention fixed on something from which it should be distracted. Therefore in many cases the best plan to pursue will be to avoid any sort of examination or any discussion with ourselves, employing the pure and simple negation of the feeling from which we desire to be freed, and affirming that which we wish to implant—in a word, plain, frank, imperative, even brutal suggestion. The course of conduct, therefore, will vary according to circumstances; it will be a question of tact, of personal self-knowledge, and each of us, once he has been warned, will acquire it by habit.

The results obtained by auto-suggestion in this therapeutics of passion are otherwise but a very faint echo of those obtained by hetero-suggestion. If much unbelief still exists regarding the treatment of the body

<sup>1</sup> All the foregoing may be applied equally well to any other moral or physical phenomenon. The reader will adapt it for himself.

by the mind, it is acknowledged by everyone that mental affections can only be treated by psychic therapeutics.

But here there is another difficulty in our path. Men's minds are as yet scarcely adapted to the idea of such a system of therapeutics; the common belief is that the passions ought to be reasoned with and corrected little by little; the possibility and lawfulness of more direct and powerful action is little understood. And yet if in our inner consciousness we deliberately decide that a certain sentiment or passion is pernicious in our case, what more just and natural than that we should try to get rid of it by the most rapid means? What happens, however, too often? As long as he feels capable of resistance, slight as it may be, the subject clings obstinately to that unreasonable modesty which restrains him from confiding in a stranger, from permitting "the profanation of his moral sanctuary!" It is only when he feels himself at an end of his strength that the instinct of preservation reappears; he understands that all passion (even according to the etymology of the word<sup>1</sup>) is a real disease of the soul, and can and must be treated as such. I have had occasion to treat two subjects suffering from the "disease of love,"

<sup>1</sup> From *pati*, to suffer.

which in one of them had even given birth to ideas of murder and suicide. In one case, a fact only paradoxical in appearance, recovery was effected more rapidly—in a week. The other, after about a fortnight, began to feel sufficiently strengthened to finish his cure himself.

*Will.*—Habitual will is naturally increased, in every case, by the fact of auto-suggestion. This is, however, a fact which I have already established sufficiently.

It is interesting nevertheless to remark that the mere suggestion of will, whether made to oneself or received from others, is manifested by a real augmentation in the power of willing. Are there not among the words which we most frequently employ many, the meaning of which we understand perfectly, but of which, nevertheless, we should find it very difficult to give the exact definition? In like manner, in the present case, it is not necessary in order to interpret the suggestion that the mind should be able to analyse the psychological mechanism of the will.

*Work, &c.*—D.—I try to concentrate my thought entirely on my work, and to be isolated from all external life. I notice at the end of the afternoon that my time has been far better employed than ordinarily.

This is an example of auto-suggestion

which might seem almost commonplace; for it is evident that every distraction, every mistrust of oneself, must render work less fruitful. Nevertheless, if the subject thinks it worth recording, it is no doubt because he wishes to show that before being initiated into auto-suggestion he would not have thought of directing his attention thus, and would not have directed it so well.

*Personal Observation.*—For myself, I have often made the following observation. I have suggested to myself that I would work easily and with confidence; that I would concentrate my attention thereon; and that I would find my ideas and my deductions without difficulty, &c. I have set to work accordingly, forgetting (as has been said) the suggestion made. At the end of a certain time (during which the suggestion in question had produced its effect on the mind) I found it recurring to my memory, and ascertained that my time had accordingly been better employed than before making the suggestion.

The results have been so striking and repeated so frequently that it has been necessary to admit the relation of cause to effect, upon which, in my first attempts, I had certain doubts. I do not indeed claim to succeed invariably; but when this is the case I tell myself that the question of obtaining a sufficient *quantity* of suggestion is involved alone. I make a point of repeating it sufficiently until, at a given moment, I feel the

resistance beginning to yield and the mind allowing the suggestion to encroach thereon. Having attained this first result, I do not arrest my efforts, and notwithstanding my impatience to resume work forthwith, feeling that I am better prepared, I constrain myself to continue suggestion until it is even better defined, convinced that it will result in better work and unquestionable economy of time.

C. de Lagrave quotes observations of the same kind made on himself:—

“The auto-suggestion that I use most often is that of writing and finding ideas. It is the most conclusive in my case. If I sit down at my desk without having given myself this auto-suggestion, at the end of ten minutes my ideas are exhausted, and I am obliged to do something else. When it has been made efficiently, I have been able to accomplish a piece of work which I have verified as its result. It is not a question of value in the work accomplished, but the fact that the work was done.”

One of my patients, a business man, has suggested repeatedly to himself, before calling upon his clients, that he would be successful in the business he was going to negotiate with them. He acknowledges that frequently this suggestion was followed by the desired result.

Summed up in this way, this experience may appear singular. Yet it is only quite natural. When a suggestion, of whatever

kind it may be, has been lodged in the mind, the organism adapts itself as well as it can to ensure realisation. In the foregoing case, the suggestion that the subject would succeed inspired him unconsciously with confidence—and is not confidence already the half-way house to success?—while it also made him more clever and more persuasive. Why be surprised if in these conditions the desired success followed?

*Personal Observation.*—I have been able to influence my *memory*, and, by suggestion in advance to myself, have retained better that which I wished to learn.

Observation of Coste de Lagrave: "I am a bad singer; I practise auto-suggestion that I may sing tastefully and give pleasure to those who listen. For the first time in my life, I am complimented on my performance."

A., B., F.—These subjects suggested to themselves that they would appear gay, animated, be able to converse agreeably, find subjects of conversation, make humorous remarks easily, &c.

These observations, which may be good matter for easy ridicule, have, I repeat, nothing extraordinary about them—at least for those who know and understand the laws of auto-suggestion. Still less will they seem strange if we consider the results obtained by hetero-suggestion. Everyone who has used psychotherapy in more or less severe

cases of hysteria and neurasthenia, accompanied by mental depression, phobias of all kinds, troubles of the memory and understanding, of whatever kind they may be (confusion of ideas, difficulty or impossibility of reading, writing, forgetfulness of spelling, &c.), has been struck by the improvements obtained, sometimes with extreme rapidity, and obtained, contrary to current prejudice, without any subsequent troublesome reaction. Persons who are not nervous, but who find that their power of work is momentarily weakened, may be assured that they also, and even in a higher degree, will derive great benefit from suggestive treatment.

#### TOBACCO HABIT

*Personal Observation.* — Having suffered several times consecutively from angina, I had tried to rid myself of the habit of smoking, but with no result. By disciplining my will by the regular practice of auto-suggestion, I met with rapid success, a success which lasted for several months. At the present moment I never have (or, if so, only instantaneously, and it passes) a desire to smoke. I should add that the wish to provide an observation which I thought interesting for this book may have had something to do with this prompt success.

If I make this remark, it is because it affords me the opportunity of replying to

an objection which has sometimes been made concerning the value of my personal experience. It was advanced that because of the existence of this desire my will was "perverted" and could not be taken into consideration. This objection proves only how erroneous are current ideas on the will. He who would learn how to will has not only the right, but is under the obligation, to learn to turn to account every emotional state of whatever nature it may be, his sentiments, emotions, &c.

Side by side with this experience I shall place observations on dipsomania, tobacco, and habits treated by suggestion.

#### INSOMNIA

This is one of the troubles which the doctor is most often called upon to combat; it is, indeed, an extremely painful phenomenon for those suffering therefrom. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of sleep in order that our organism may function well; the place which it occupies in our existence (a third of it, at least, in the case of most people) is a sufficient proof of this.

But, again here, the simplicity of the word is deceptive. Under the common denomination of insomnia, all kinds of troubles, differing greatly one from the other, are catalogued.

Thus there are subjects whose average



duration of sleep is perceptibly less than the normal: they never sleep in reality more than three, four, or five hours a night. But, nevertheless, this shortened sleep affords them amply sufficient repose. These are usually individuals of an exaggerated activity, and insomnia is nothing but a symptom of this hyper-activity. Their minds cannot stand a too extended inaction; but, on the other hand, accustomed to transform the idea into act rapidly, they know how to take a great deal of rest in a short time; we might say that they know how to *sleep quickly*.

These are by no means the most frequent cases; as a rule, sleep which has been of too short duration leaves behind it a more or less keen and persistent sense of fatigue.

In many cases the trouble is not one of deprivation, but rather the disturbance of sleep. Here it may be a difficulty in getting off to sleep; the patient has his thoughts occupied with a hundred different things; he turns himself about in every direction, changes his position unceasingly, lights his candle to read a wearisome book; in a word, employs all artifices to provoke sleep which obstinately evades his efforts. Or, again, sleep may be obtained the whole night through; but the patient awakens at short, frequently recurring intervals which give him the idea that he is not sleeping; according to his evidence, he

hears the clock strike all the hours every night. There may be dreams incessantly occurring, and of a painful or terrifying nature. "Dreams," says Levillain,<sup>1</sup> in this connection, and very justly, "seem to constitute of themselves a pathological form of sleep. Certain vigorous and healthy persons of a good constitution, and many peasants, never dream. This is assuredly the ideal state of sleep, that is to say, entire forgetfulness and cerebral inactivity." Another patient, again, will complain of insomnia although those around him will assure him he has had most excellent sleep; and both statements are correct: he does, indeed, sleep, but that sleep is incomplete, unquiet, and gives him no feeling of repose. In neurasthenics, a contradiction of the same kind will often be noticed. If you make a superficial inquiry, they will tell you that they have slept very well; their sleep is, indeed, so profound that they have no remembrance of their dreams. But, inquire a little further; you will learn that it gives them no rest; they are astonished to find on waking that they are much more tired than when they went to bed the night before. If they sleep well, they rest badly.

We are accustomed to treat these varied troubles by a uniform system of therapeutics, and, in the first place, by so-called calming or

<sup>1</sup> Levillain, *La Neurasthénie*.

hypnotic drugs, such as opium, chloral, sulphonal, chloralose, &c. The efficacy of these drugs is incontestable, but they have drawbacks which are not less grave. To begin with, they do more than act on the phenomenon of sleep, so that if they dissipate or diminish insomnia, they often leave in their train, as compensation, various forms of uneasiness, headache, confusion of ideas, heaviness, and so forth. In the case of patients suffering from an affection of the heart they may have a dangerous effect on this organ, &c. For the same reasons, and also for fear of their use becoming a habit, they cannot be continued long without danger. Among neuropaths, and generally in the case of habitual insomnia, the gravest reproach which can be made against these drugs is that their efficacy is often extremely uncertain or entirely ephemeral. "The sleeping difficulties of neurasthenics," says the author already quoted, "are often most refractory, particularly as to the effects of so-called hypnotic drugs."

Here the superiority of the suggestive method seems to me to be undeniable. It may be summed up in one single phrase: it is an *intelligent* treatment. It may be regulated, directed, rigorously measured out, according to the liking of the doctor and the patient. It localises its action directly

on the single symptom, insomnia, and incurs no risk of reacting harmfully on any other part of the organism. Better still: it knows not only how to induce sleep, but also how to give this sleep the desired characteristics: the troubles attending the falling off to sleep disappear, dreams cease or are modified, awakening during the night is at an end, as are also agitation and fatigue, while mind and body are perfectly rested in the morning.

I must add that in nearly all the cases in which I employed it, a rapid improvement was observable, and, more often than not, was maintained long after the treatment ceased. To obtain these results it is not necessary to induce profound hypnosis with the suggestion, and this is, besides, usually impossible or very difficult to bring about in neuropaths or neurasthenics. Suggestion can be made just as well during a state of light drowsiness, or even when the subject is completely awake. Besides, with a patient complaining of insomnia, it frequently suffices for the doctor to throw out naturally and negligently the word sleep in the course of conversation, and the desired sleep will be induced. Such suggestion is often the more efficacious because the patient is in no way suspicious, is not on his guard, and has not the slightest idea that anyone intends

to influence him. That is a fact that I have often verified, and of which the correctness can be tested easily.

The necessary complement of this system of therapeutics will be a hygiene of preparation for sleep. This hygiene will naturally keep watch, and will be particularly on the alert during the hours preceding bedtime, that is to say, at the evening repast and in the hours that follow it. It should, as it seems to me, be inspired by two essential principles:—

1. To arrange so that when the moment of going to sleep is come, the mind can concentrate sufficiently to suggest sleep to itself without any trouble. To avoid, in consequence, both the causes of debility and the causes of exaggerated excitement, each of which, by opposite mechanisms, would concur in producing an identical result—being difficulty or impossibility of psychic concentration. Given the same cause, it would then exert a good or bad influence, according to temperament. Thus I have noticed that tea and coffee, which are usually looked upon and justly so as conducive to insomnia, may sometimes, nevertheless, taken in moderate doses, exercise a favourable influence on sleep in subjects whose minds are a little limp and wavering. Thanks to these aids, the mind regains the tonic it lacked, and succeeds in throwing off a multiplicity of

ideas and impressions which were distracting it, without any attempt to react, from the thought of sleep.

2. To arrange so that the idea or impression ruling in the mind (they are one and the same thing, an impression being nothing but an idea imperfectly defined) at the moment of falling asleep should not be of a sad, disagreeable, or painful kind. On returning from a walk or prolonged excursion we give in to fatigue straight away; in consequence, we are more fatigued when we wake than when we went to sleep. Let us try resting for a little before going to sleep, and we shall find the latter will then afford us perfect rest. Thus it is not a good thing to go to sleep when the evening meal is finished, and with the feeling of heaviness which it produces. If necessary, in the case of persons with delicate digestions, it should be ensured that this repast is an extremely light one. In the case of invalids who are excited easily, a walk of longer or shorter duration may be prescribed; it will serve in a way as a counterpoise to such excitement and will lead up quite naturally to the idea of repose. Another person may derive benefit from distractions like evening parties, theatres, &c., whereas with yet another these same distractions, while they afford him keen pleasure, will, for this very reason, be a

cause of fatigue and exaggerated enervation which will have a bad effect on his sleep. For him, one would advise less stimulating and more quiet pleasures, readings, discussions, &c., which will give the mind at once the sedative and the light stimulant of which it feels the want.

The following are some facts about insomnia treated by auto-suggestion.

A.—On the first occasion I try isolating my thought, contemplation. For some time I have had great difficulty in falling asleep, my mind has been uneasy and preoccupied. This evening, by means of the exercise, all uneasiness disappears promptly; I seem to be surrounded by a sort of confused buzzing, a vague noise composed of nothing, and I fall asleep very quickly.

The following day, same observation. I go to sleep again much more easily than usual; the state of contemplation induced has led me, without my noticing it, to complete sleep. From this time I have succeeded in keeping up the improvement obtained. Nevertheless, after some very keen troubles, I have another period of difficult or troubled sleep, lasting two or three weeks.

Auto-suggestion, at first ineffectual, has since re-established, by degrees, sleep in a satisfactory manner.

As the subject himself indicates, his first auto-suggestions were made almost as soon

M

as he had received from me general explanations as to the method of procedure. Therefore, some part of the success may be attributed to hetero-suggestion, at all events so far as the initial results are concerned. Auto-suggestion can always claim the merit of knowing how to localise a general suggestion with which it has been supplied.

B.—Being in some preoccupation one night, I am nevertheless able to sleep, but I wake up at three o'clock in the morning, when the trouble recurs to my mind forthwith, and so agitates me that sleep seems really impossible. I at first try to expel my anxiety by denying its existence, and suggesting sleep to myself. But I cannot long concentrate on this thought of calm and repose, and my mind immediately returns to its trouble. By degrees, however, continuing my efforts untiringly, I begin to feel more calm. I do not sleep, but I am in that condition of somnolence and of quiet in which I do not find much trouble in driving anxiety away, and I feel that I am resting very well. At last, I end by falling asleep completely, though I cannot say at what time, and do not wake till morning.

D.—As a result of anxiety, I had painful dreams for some time, in which all that had passed was reproduced unceasingly. By making a suggestion at night, and telling myself that my night's sleep would not be troubled by dreams, I succeeded, in fact, in



getting rid of them, and without a great deal of trouble.

I have already set down elsewhere (Chap. III) an observation of analogous auto-suggestion, but on that occasion made instinctively.

F.—Following on a slight attack of influenza, I was always a long time before I could go to sleep, and woke two or three times every night. This trouble had lasted about a week, and it took me about the same time to get rid of it by means of auto-suggestion.

Facts analogous to those related in the foregoing observations are very frequent. We have seen in Chapter VII the importance of this general law—that every nervous phenomenon has a tendency to survive the cause which created it. This law finds its definite application in the present case. One or another cause gives rise to insomnia; it may be over-work, dissipation, anxiety, or again, some bad illness, such as bronchitis, influenza, typhoid fever, &c. The cause of the insomnia disappears, but the habit of not sleeping persists. Suggestion will take effect in creating gradually, by its repetition, a habit which will replace the morbid habit.

*Personal Observation.*—As regards myself, I have often, though not always, succeeded, when suffering from passing insomnia, in pro-

ducing sleep. I have brought it about either by suggestion made at the moment, or, when possible, by suggestion at a distance, made in the morning for example, for that night's sleep. The latter mode of action has been generally more easily effective, which may be readily understood; for in such a case the suggestion acts, so to speak, on free territory: it does not come under the influence of the phenomenon which it proposes to combat. Again, often in concentrating on developing the idea of repose, I have been able to maintain a condition of contemplation or very slight drowsiness which, none the less, procured me good repose. I have remarked already that the repose resulting from sleep is far from being in proportion to its duration and profundity. It is important to make the suggestion of sleep to oneself, but still more that of repose.

I could, however, quote several people who are strangers to auto-suggestion, yet who have had of themselves the idea of practising it to discipline rebellious sleep. One of these told me his method of procedure thus: "I send away gently, patiently, all the ideas, remembrances, and feelings which assail me; in this way, by degrees, I make a clear space in my mind, and succeed at last in inducing calm and then sleep." Is not this the same description as I have given? Each and all, we employ, to encourage sleep, methods which show well

that we are conscious of the preponderating influence of thought thereon. "The tiresome book, recitation of formulæ of which the brain is weary, all those artifices which everyone knows how to employ, have for their object, by imposing an unattractive food on the mind, to encourage the attention to fix itself on the more habitual and agreeable idea of going to sleep?"<sup>1</sup> Hack Tuke also emphasises the part played by expectation: "We know," he says, "that it is quite sufficient for many persons to expect sleep and it will come; that for others it is enough for them to be penetrated with the idea that sleep will not come, and they will be awake through long hours."

Again, all who have taken chloral, sulphonal, &c., know how in a similar case the action of the mind unites itself usefully to the action of the drug. With an equal dose sleep will come more certainly and more quickly if one tries oneself to go to sleep, if, by a real auto-suggestion, one represents to oneself little by little the signs of sleep, so that it may be produced in reality.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Liébault, *Sommeil*.

<sup>2</sup> These reflections on the help which the action of the mind may afford to hypnotic drugs are of general application. The doctor must try to inspire the patient with confidence in the drugs he prescribes for him. But, on his

C. de Lagrave writes thus: "The first exercise to be made in auto-suggestion is to learn how to wake and go to sleep at will. We can arrive at going to sleep and waking again three times in an hour easily."

It has been already sufficiently shown that auto-suggestion is possible, and gives results, whatever may be the degree of sleep, and even in a state of complete waking. I must add that neither in the subjects who came under my observation, nor in myself, have I noticed this facility in a state of slumber induced artificially. This is not to say that it does not exist in many others. M. de Lagrave has only made the mistake, it seems to me, of generalising his personal observation. This, however, in no way diminishes its interest, for it shows us how, while incessantly drawing its inspiration from the same principles, auto-suggestion can adapt itself, with numberless variations, to different temperaments. The following passage from Liébault is applicable here.

side, the patient may and ought to meet the doctor half-way. To act thus is neither to let oneself be deceived nor to deceive oneself. It is simply to know exactly the nature of our mind—even its weakness, if you like—and wisely adapt to it our method of action. Have we not all noticed, besides, those unconscious auto-suggestionists who, rebelling against all prescribed remedies, are cured only by those that they have heard of from other sufferers, or have imagined on their own part?

"There are many people," says this author, "who are able to induce ordinary sleep when they wish and at any moment of the day, without even having any need of sleep. In this they resemble artificial sleepers, the only difference being that the former make the suggestion of sleeping to themselves, instead of receiving it from some one else."

To sum up, then, all these facts and the earlier discussion: A therapeutics of sleep ought to be a psychic therapeutics. In this respect auto-suggestion exercises the same influence as hetero-suggestion, although less forcibly and less constantly; contemplation, for the rest, is a more or less advanced stage of sleep. We can educate ourselves to sleep; but the point is, not only to sleep, but to know how to sleep well.

### CONTEMPLATION

I tried in Chapter IV to give as general and impersonal a description of contemplation as possible. As everyone has his own way of going to sleep, so the manner in which we induce contemplation will present more or less important variations. I shall only cite the experiences of two of my subjects as regards this point.

C.—I practise auto-suggestion either in the morning or the evening before going to sleep,

these being the times which seem to me most favourable. Closing my eyes, I allow myself to fall gently into a state of half-sleep, of drowsiness, eliminating little by little all thought and reflection of every kind. Then, allowing an idea to come into my mind which a little while ago made a painful impression on me but now does not affect me, I recognise that this is the psychological moment to practise auto-suggestion.

A.—With me contemplation works in the following manner: At night (this seems to me the most favourable time), when I am just in bed, with my legs and arms slightly extended, as completely relaxed as my mind itself, I try to forget that I am thinking. Little by little all noise around me is hushed. I have a vague consciousness that my thoughts are disappearing. This lasts for several minutes. Then I feel a sort of void surrounding me; this absolute silence changes to a sort of indefinite, vague, and lulling humming. Real sleep is not far from this condition.

Now, this is the precise moment at which I suddenly pull myself up, directing my whole thought (which I feel that I am able to command) to an idea which I wish to suggest to myself. It is my custom to help concentration of thought by applying one hand to my forehead and eyes.

**SLEEP AS A MEANS OF HEALING**

We are now acquainted with simple auto-suggestion (contemplative or verbal); contemplation followed by auto-suggestion. But I should like here to call attention in a few words to a connected procedure which must not be confounded with these, and which has, up till now, been scarcely indicated. This is suggestion made briefly, followed by contemplation or sleep.

We know perfectly well how to proceed in this process. Examples are numerous, and I have quoted some of them. Thus one falls asleep with the idea of a lesson to be learned, a pain to be quieted or a problem to be solved, &c. The night's sleep succeeds to this suggestion, and on waking one is surprised to find it realised to the extent of one's desire. That which we thus do involuntarily it is now a question of doing by fixed intent. Therefore when, in spite of our efforts, the suggestion seems to encounter too powerful a resistance, it will often be more practical to abandon a really active contest and fall back on some new tactics. Without further insistence on the actual suggestion, we must try only to fall into a state of contemplation; or better, if we can manage it, to sleep

profoundly—in a word, to induce calm and relaxation throughout our being, maintaining this condition for some time. The results obtained by this procedure are often most satisfactory.<sup>1</sup>

The method of action now remains to be explained. In thus trying to sleep, or, in other words, to think of nothing, to make the most perfect void possible in our minds, we are in reality weakening little by little the unconscious auto-suggestion which maintained the morbid phenomenon, and we are

<sup>1</sup> When a morbid phenomenon is very predominant, direct suggestion, far from abating it, often only increases its intensity by calling the attention to it more vigorously. This is a fact which must never be lost sight of in current suggestive therapeutics as in auto-suggestive therapeutics, for the treatment to be followed arises out of it. The rule then should be to make use of those processes which act as diversions to the attention; that is to say, indifference, distraction (see page 73), contemplation, or sleep. I will quote the example of a person whom I was treating lately for neurasthenic phenomena and who, in spite of repeated suggestions, woke regularly every morning at four o'clock. Seeing the uselessness of direct suggestion, I decided to employ the opposite method; I told her that "all would go well by itself," without further insistence, and not only did I cease making any suggestions in this respect, but I forbore even to question her about her sleeping difficulty. At the end of several days the patient told me incidentally of her own accord that she was sleeping every day until 6 o'clock or 6.30. Naturally, I took good care not to show the least surprise at this announcement.

Compare with this, however, as a corrective, what I have said on page 162.



overthrowing the resistance which hindered the development of curative suggestion. Henceforth the latter is able to continue its route more easily along the levelled ground, and arrives unconsciously, or almost unconsciously, at its complete realisation.

I will add to these facts the following observation which was given to me by a medical friend; it will demonstrate the same process applied this time to auto-suggestion in action. "When I find myself," he said, "in a condition of fatigue or uneasiness, I have often noticed that my best plan is not to try to react (which only increases the trouble), but to let myself talk, walk, or work, while distracting my attention from these acts—in a word, to leave the brain to carry on its work automatically." Auto-suggestion being essentially the act of manipulating the attention, here, if we reflect, we shall find a case of auto-suggestion indeed, but it is negative—that is to say, it acts by withdrawing the attention. As the pianist whose fingers wander unconsciously over the piano, or the cyclist who, in order to make his pace more regular, allows his thoughts to float idly in space, so here the subject realises within himself, to some extent, in a waking state, the condition of partial sleep. Having induced the first impulse, he converts himself with deliberate intent into a real automaton,

obeying the said impulse, as the hypnotised subject obeys the orders given by the hypnotiser.

#### VARIOUS TROUBLES

*Drowsiness.* — F. — Disappearance, after a week's time, of a frequently recurring desire to sleep which came on at any moment of the day, and always lasted for about the same length of time.

Here is a neurasthenic phenomenon which may be observed very commonly, and is due to the insufficiency of repose obtained from the night's sleep. It can easily be seen that it is only the exaggerated reproduction of an ordinary phenomenon. The hysterical subject often suffers from troubles of the same kind, but of much greater intensity; they are real *attacks* of sleep or nervous apoplexy.

*Swooning.*—A neurasthenic lady whom I had treated by suggestion, and who was subject to attacks often of a severe nature (fainting, giddiness, &c.), told me she had been able to avert them on several occasions by remembering in time to employ auto-suggestion.

"I can testify by my own experience," says Feuchtersleben, "that a man can prevent a swoon which is imminent, if, finding himself alone and cut off from all help, he realises

that he must not fail himself, and that he must call up all his energy in order to conquer his state of weakness."

*State of Enervation.*—E. and F., troubled with fits of nerves and agitation as a result of moral emotion, succeed in calming them by means of contemplation or auto-suggestion.

*Fatigue, Lumbago.*—A.—After a bad night and a tiring day, I feel great lassitude in the evening, accompanied by a feeling of sickness, a desire to vomit, and fatigue in the legs. I make a suggestion to myself, proposing a walk to a certain fixed spot, and suggest that on arriving at this goal I shall be cured. I succeed in carrying this into effect.

This observation is interesting, as showing that the fatigue seems to be accompanied by a well-defined morbid condition of the stomach.

B.—On going to bed, I am assailed by horrible pains in the joints of the shoulders and knees, possibly the result of an excess of work or fatigue which I am unable to identify exactly. At the moment of going to sleep I try to make them disappear. For some minutes I slowly rub the affected parts with my fingers; after this operation has been repeated several times the pain goes away. From being sharp it becomes dull and undefined. I search in vain for the exact place; it seems to recede in proportion as my fingers approach it, and I fall asleep almost cured. Before sleeping, I pledged myself to be completely cured on the following

morning. As a fact, during the next day all the symptoms had vanished. Only now and again I experienced a vague feeling of pain when I moved my arms a little, but it disappeared almost immediately.

This is an example of auto-suggestion materialised by rubbing, combined with contemplation. It is a case of one of those states of painful fatigue which are so common among neurasthenics, but which do also occur accidentally among people who are customarily healthy.

E.—My sleep was much disturbed last night. On waking, I feel myself very tired in mind and stiff in body. I try auto-suggestion several times in succession, but, by reason of the fatigued state of the mind, it proves very difficult. Nevertheless, I begin by degrees to be conscious of a time when I can make the suggestion more easily: I succeed in diminishing the fatigue, the mind becomes clearer, yet it is only a diminishing of the symptoms, and all day the trouble, though less acute, continues.

C. de Lagrave.—After an attack of dysentery, I am only able to walk a kilometre without fatigue. By means of auto-suggestion I am able next day to walk eight kilometres. It was the first time for a year that I had accomplished so long a distance.

If auto-suggestion furnishes results which are sometimes very good, and sometimes

incomplete or even almost null, those wrought by hetero-suggestion are always extremely favourable, whether it be in a case of real fatigue following on work or dissipation, of nervous fatigue induced by difficulty in sleeping, of moral emotion, or again of that condition of painful and permanent fatigue common to neurasthenics. One of my clearest observations in this connection was made some while ago on one of my medical friends, who up to that time had never been subjected to suggestion. Having been severely overworked for some days, he felt wearied in mind and body, and in a very poor condition to carry on his daily work. Ten minutes of suggestion without sleep sufficed to make him lively and alert for the whole of the rest of the day. There is not one of the subjects who have submitted thereto who will not bear testimony to the profoundly calming and beneficial rest conferred by suggestion. According to the happy expression which has been applied to it, it is a sort of "concentrated essence" of sleep.

*Paresis.*—B.—Since the morning I have felt my right arm extremely tired and weak. It hurts me to raise it, and when I move it I have a kind of twitching therein. I suggest to myself the disappearance of this weakness, at the same time passing my other hand several times over the whole of the arm. Later,

when I feel that it has grown a little stronger, I practise moving it about in all directions, telling myself the while to think no more of this pain. Soon after I notice that all sign of it is gone.

These phenomena of incomplete paralysis localised in one or more limbs are often seen in neurasthenics. They never extend to complete paralysis. And yet between this more or less defined "paresis" and the total paralysis of hysterical subjects, there is but a difference of modality and intensity. On both sides the primordial element is psychic, and the muscular troubles are only a reflection of this.

*Failure of Power in the Legs.*—C.—For three months I felt a weakness in the right leg; I did not know how to explain it, and it caused me a good deal of inconvenience, as well as a certain amount of uneasiness. One day when I was walking I felt this leg suddenly double up under me, which made me stumble. I cured myself in a few days by auto-suggestion, and from that moment the trouble has never recurred.

This loss of power in the legs is of frequent occurrence in nervous subjects, and I have often noticed that it is a cause of acute fear in patients, giving rise in their minds immediately to the thought of possible paralysis. The instance which has just been quoted

is the more interesting on this account. In reality there is no more paralysis in such cases than in the corresponding hysterical phenomena, an amplified reproduction of those in question, and which are commonly classed, since the appearance of the work by P. Blocq, under the name of *astasia-abasia*. It is an affection characterised, as its name indicates, by an impossibility to stand upright or to walk, though all other movements are possible. This convenient appellation has, however, the disadvantage of begetting belief in an univocal affection, and most subsequent authors have given too much time to describing different varieties of the pure form, which have nothing but a subsidiary interest; various paralytic, choreic, ataxic, jumping varieties, &c. . . . To be satisfied with the diagnosis *astasia-abasia* is to be satisfied with words. The diagnosis to be applied in such a case is, above all, a psychic diagnosis. Thus in one case, it will be a matter of nervous pains, purely psychic, which prevent the movements employed in walking;—"he remarked that walking and standing both induce painful feelings, and therefore to avoid them he decided not to walk for a year."<sup>1</sup> In another it will be "the continual fear he has of not being able to walk"; and M. Huchard relates in this connection the following interesting observation

<sup>1</sup> Axenfeld et Huchard, *Traité des névroses*.

which shows us the same symptoms, but diminished, so to speak. It was the case of a patient who could not walk unless he had some support, however slight it might be. This was a sort of moral assurance against the possibility of a fall, as is done with little children just beginning to walk.<sup>1</sup> In other cases it may be real weakness induced by a more or less lengthy stay in bed, but exaggerated by the impressionability of the patient, sometimes again by the fears unthinkingly expressed by those around him, or even by the doctor.<sup>2</sup>

The capital point, I repeat, is study of the psychic mechanism, which varies with each case, and is the only foundation upon which a really rational treatment can be instituted—suggestion to dissipate the pains, weakness, &c.; active training in a waking state which will give the patient confidence and teach him once more how to walk and stand up. In this way a cure will often be obtained, and sometimes quite rapidly.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the hospitals I have had occasion to observe a fact of the same kind among subjects accustomed to carry heavy loads (market-porters, &c.). They have a habit of encircling the wrist with a strong leather bracelet, several centimetres wide, which affords support to the joints and the muscles. Now, in the case of a good many of them, this wide bracelet is replaced by a narrow lace, which simply affords moral support.

<sup>2</sup> See again *Thèse de Aimé*, obs. xxx. (due to Bernheim).

<sup>3</sup> See the case related in Chapter V.



*Cramps. — Personal Observation.* — Being often liable to painful cramp in the right hand, located in the muscles which make the little finger work, I have succeeded in dissipating or diminishing this affection by auto-suggestion, whether simple, in a state of contemplation, or active, made at the moment I began to write. Speaking generally, I have gradually reduced the cramp, both in frequency and acuteness.

B.—For two days I have had acute cramp in the calves of my legs, which makes it painful to walk. I try auto-suggestion for the first time, with contemplation to the best of my ability, making at the same time several passes with my right hand over the painful places. The pain abates, but it reappears at the end of half an hour. Being obliged to go out, I suggest to myself that I am not suffering, that I do not feel any cramp, and I try to think of something else. After some time, as a fact, I feel myself much better. Nevertheless, I still have a numbness in the calves, and something that feels like a bar in that on the right side. The following morning everything has disappeared, and I experience nothing further.

*Spasms of the Eyelids.* — D. — For about thirty-six hours I had a trembling of the right eyelid which made it difficult for me to keep the eye open, and increased when I wanted to look fixedly on anything or see an object in a strong light. I tried auto-suggestion five or six times in the day, at the same time passing the fingers of my right

hand softly over the eyelid. By the evening the cure was complete.

This is a case of one of those "local spasms of the muscles" (Beard), consisting of "more or less frequent violent contractions of a portion of muscle or an isolated muscle. They occur frequently in the orbicularis of the eyelids. They may be also observed in the face, where they might be taken for real tics; finally, they are met with in the different members or even in the viscera. Certain palpitations of the heart and certain spasms of the stomach are of the same order."<sup>1</sup>

*Trembling.*—F.—Trembling of the right hand. It had lasted for about two months when the subject thought of treating it by auto-suggestion. It soon yielded to repeated efforts, and was then definitely cured in a period of time, the precise duration of which is not given.

Neuropathic tremblings are only an exaggeration of phenomena common to all subjects. Trembling may be induced by keen emotion in any individual; but in a nervous subject it would have a tendency to become a more or less habitual state.

Suggestion will often have a very good effect on such tremblings, which are often extremely obstinate to treatment by ordinary drugs. But, here again, it must be known

<sup>1</sup> Levillain, *Neurasthénie*.

how to vary the process. One case may be treated by verbal suggestion, pure and simple. Another will be more benefited by suggestion embodied in a physical form — by massage, or a bandage encircling the wrist or the forearm, &c. Again, the patient may be made to write in the presence of the operator, who will endeavour to calm and give him confidence, telling him that he will be able to write perfectly well without trembling. In certain cases it may even be good to make him close his eyes and put him into a condition of more or less deep sleep before proceeding with this exercise. I remember having seen M. Bernheim operate in this way with a case of trembling of a particularly intense character, in which the suggestion made the diagnosis at the same time.

### PAINS

*Headache.*—B.—Extremely violent pain in the head, confined to the temples and forehead, accompanied by throbbing. Extremely rapid cure by auto-suggestion.

The same subject makes a note some days later :

Headache since the morning, but quite a different pain ; head heavy, confused ideas ; impossibility of concentrating entire attention on any subject whatever ; pain specially behind the head. By employing auto-sugges-

tion I obtain an intermittent cure, the pain returning every half hour, and it is impossible to rid myself of it completely. At seven o'clock at night I feel better, but my head is still heavy.

Here, as in many cases, auto-suggestion, although persevered in, has not given absolute results, but has, nevertheless, induced a decided amelioration and undoubtedly diminished the duration of the pain. We find, besides, in this second observation, all the characteristics of typical neurasthenic headache. Now, the intellectual condition which accompanies such headache explains easily the difficulties and the slowness of action of auto-suggestion in such a case. Hetero-suggestion, on the contrary, usually calms or attenuates these phenomena with the greatest ease.

As a rule the classical type of neurasthenic headache is termed headache *en casque*, following the ordinary comparison used by patients. I agree with M. Bernheim in thinking that this type occurs less frequently than is supposed. I have very rarely heard the expression employed by patients who have not yet been treated. It is frequent, on the other hand, among patients already treated. This is quite intelligible; too often, indeed, it is the doctor who has unknowingly created or at least localised the

symptom by unconscious suggestion. The point is important, and can be formulated as a general rule. The doctor should beware, especially in the case of nervous subjects, of this involuntary and profoundly pernicious suggestion which he can exercise; he should not press the patient too closely in his questions; it is better to let him talk himself rather than ask him too definitely if he has not one or another symptom, if he does not suffer in this or that part, &c. What happens, indeed, in such a case? The mind of the subject "works" unconsciously on the data which have thus been supplied to him; the smallest impressions are gathered up and amplified by the attention directed to them, till in the end the doctor will find that he has created new symptoms or augmented troubles which hitherto had been hardly felt at all.

The same course should be pursued with a patient already under treatment; the doctor should carefully refrain from recalling to the patient's mind symptoms already cured or, in a fair way to be so; otherwise there will be risk of their recrudescence, or of giving them a new intensity.

C.—About two o'clock, having had bad news, I feel a pain in my head, very marked in the region of the forehead, with lassitude in my legs and arms, an obscure pain in my whole body, and a vagueness in my ideas.

After repeated efforts these symptoms disappear towards the end of the afternoon.

Here, again, we can see from the characteristics presented that it is indeed a case of neurasthenic headache, notwithstanding that the forehead is the seat of the pain.

D.—Having risen very early this morning and tired myself more than customarily, at about 11 o'clock I become much fatigued; my head seems heavy and hot, my mind empty, and I feel pains in the back and shoulders. At midday I eat without appetite. After the meal all my uneasy sensations increase. I do not find any trouble in preparing myself for sleep, but am not able to concentrate my attention. I then simply endeavour to rest myself, to drive away all thought, and little by little to relax my limbs, my body, and even my head. At the expiration of about twenty minutes, feeling more rested, I begin to make suggestions to myself, at first in the same position, later on taking a few steps and making efforts to brace myself up. Lastly, I set about my work, and try to concentrate myself entirely on it. A few moments later I notice that the headache and fatigue have both disappeared. I still feel a pain in my back, but it is much less acute.

Here we must notice (1) the employment, for the purpose of concentration, of the tendency to sleep following on the ingestion of food; (2) the succession, exceedingly well

recorded, of the different stages of suggestion: contemplation pure and simple, ideative auto-suggestion, combination of the latter with active auto-suggestion. In proportion as we progress in the study of auto-suggestion, we shall learn to vary its processes, and we shall understand better the necessity of so doing. Just as the organism accustoms itself to drugs, so will the mind accustom itself to methods employed persistently. By knowing how to change methods at the right moment, the attention will be awakened by an attraction arising from novelty. During this period familiarity with the first method will be effaced or enfeebled, and we may then return to its use with new chances of success.

E.—For about two hours I have had a painful and heated spot on the top of my head; even my hair seemed sensitive when I touched it. It required only a quarter of an hour's auto-suggestion to dispel this pain and at the same time to brighten up my ideas, which had been a good deal confused.

The cause here is not indicated. This kind of headache is found very commonly among neurasthenics, but is also frequent among naturally healthy people, following on intellectual overstrain, dissipation, &c.

F.—Complete neuralgia of the face, but of a peculiar kind, preventing me from talking as I desired; the jaw seemed paralysed. I attribute it to the keen cold which prevailed that morning. It came on suddenly when I was paying a visit, and I was perfectly aware that I was making grimaces when I spoke. I could not succeed in uttering one phrase without taking breath. When I left the house the pain became more acute. I began to feel uneasy; and I then thought of making a suggestion to myself. When a little time had elapsed I noticed a considerable improvement. After the space of half an hour the pain began again; I made another suggestion, which was not less successful than the first. Again the pain returned, but less acutely this time, and after I had made four or five auto-suggestions I succeeded at length in completely ridding myself of this trouble.

In the case of a neurasthenic subject, or one temporarily neurasthenic, every sensation which would not be perceived, or scarcely so, by a healthy person becomes easily a feeling of pain. In the foregoing observation the cold seems to have had this effect. It is thus, too, I think, that a special form of headache observed in neurasthenia may be explained; it is the pressure of the hat which gives rise to those varied sensations of which patients complain, such as the circular vice, the band of iron, the helmet, the cap of lead. Again, I have sometimes



noticed serious gastric troubles following the simple pressure on the epigastrium of a button, of garments which are too tight, or of the edge of a table during work, &c.

In a word, when the subject is in a condition of low psychic resistance, every impression is susceptible of enormous extension by unconscious auto-suggestion. According as the pain localises itself more or less definitely in a joint, in the muscles, in the nerves, or in this or that organ, every variety of suffering will be conjured up to himself by the subject—rheumatism or arthritis, muscular pains or myalgia, nervous or neuralgic affections, gastralgia, pleurodynia, &c. But in these cases, everywhere and always, the essential element generating the pain will be found to be the psychic element.

These data being thoroughly established, we shall be less astonished at the action, sometimes so marvellously efficacious and rapid, of suggestive treatment in the case of pains like neuralgia, which have been continuous for weeks and have resisted all drugs. Here again, evidently, we shall be confronted with much unbelief. The facts remain notwithstanding, and are testified to daily by those who employ suggestion. The theory, moreover, shows that these successful results are perfectly reasonable; in such a

case, psychic treatment does not attack the symptom, but the cause thereof.

I will add further that it is not only the pains of so-called nervous subjects which are amenable to psychotherapy.<sup>1</sup> A subject, not the least nervous in appearance, may have local nervousness—a weak spot, as the common expression runs. In this case, too, suggestion can be employed successfully, even better and, contrary to the general opinion, with more success than in the former instance. In a thoroughly nervous subject the mind is ready to manufacture, if one may use the term, all kinds of new pains, and it is no longer an isolated symptom but the fundamental disposition of the mind, which suggestion must undertake to modify.

*Various Pains.*—A.—Has pain and irritation in the lower lip, with a feeling as if there were a pimple about to burst; the patient is somewhat subject to this symptom; but it disappears in an hour by auto-suggestion reiterated several times.

C.—I have an extremely painful spot on the left side which exhausts me seriously; I do all I can to drive it away, and succeed after a few efforts. The trouble returns quickly. I notice that when I think of driving it away

<sup>1</sup> P. E. Lévy, "Sur la délimitation du nervosisme, à propos de l'élément douleur."—*Communication à la Soc. de Psychol.*, Juillet 1901.

it disappears, but comes back as soon as my mind is diverted, and stays for at least a quarter of an hour. I then set about my work with all the ardour I can command, and some time after I notice that the pain has disappeared completely.

This account gives no opportunity to identify the cause of the pain in the side; but, on the other hand, it testifies very clearly to the part played by curative suggestion.

D.—Acute pain in the left side, lasting several hours, disappears quickly after I affirm several times that I am no longer suffering, and apply, in so doing, my right hand to the affected spot.

I have succeeded personally several times in driving away pains in the side which have occasionally been fairly acute, even when they seemed in certain cases to be allied definitely with a condition of distension of the stomach.

B.—A pain between the shoulders is completely dispersed by auto-suggestion.

I feel an acute pain behind the left shoulder on waking; it increases a good deal when I breathe and move. In spite of the suffering I make a suggestion to myself while concentrating as much as possible on the idea that I am no longer in pain; I try to imagine the pain spreading out and dispersing itself in surrounding parts of the body. As a fact,

suffering is diminished; thus reduced it continues nearly the whole morning, but finally disappears completely.

D.—For nearly two weeks I had suffered with a pain above the right wrist which gave me some difficulty in writing. Only at the end of this period did it occur to me to treat myself by suggestion; a cure was effected in a few days.

A pain in the back, the result of a strain, was also cured rapidly.

E.—Disappearance of a feeling of tightness in the upper part of the arm; the subject particularly suggested to himself "not to think about it any more."

This would be, in many cases, the best method assuredly. We are never cured of any trouble, physical pain or moral passion, &c., until it is completely forgotten.

F.—A dull pain accompanied by fatigue at the back of the right thigh felt on waking. Almost instantaneous disappearance.

Pain in the right knee lasting for about two hours. Thereafter rapid disappearance.

These nervous pains located in the muscles, tendons, and joints resemble what is usually designated under the name of rheumatic pains. While more frequent in subjects no longer young, they may be observed at every age; their chief characteristic is that they "travel" unceasingly from one part to another, and

also that they are extremely sensitive to atmospheric changes, patients thus becoming absolute barometers, able to predict fine weather, rain, or snow. There is no distinction of kind between them. "Ought one," says M. Huchard, "to diagnose neurasthenia as a form of rheumatism which may be called vague or nervous rheumatism? Such diagnosis becomes rather a parallel. For I am persuaded that these two complaints are nearly always confounded, and are in reality but one and the same morbid condition."

Even in chronic rheumatism properly so called, accompanied by articular and periarticular lesions, cracklings in the joints, &c., suggestion and most probably auto-suggestion will not be without their use. "Assuredly," says M. Bernheim, in speaking of a patient thus treated, "I did not suggest to the particular swelling that it should dissolve, nor to the cartilaginous capsules that they should return to their normal condition, nor to the fibrous tissue that it should resume its elasticity, nor to the capillaries that they should empty themselves. I suggested to the patient that he should feel no more pain, and that he should be able to move his joints in all directions. The pain being thus suppressed, the power of articular movement which had been paralysed thereby returned gradually;

the fibrous ligaments, as a consequence of this movement, regained their elasticity; the synovial membrane being once more subjected to alternate tension and relaxation, regained its flexibility and secreted a normal amount of synovia; the cartilaginous surfaces, their soft friction restored, recovered their smooth and polished aspect; the capillary stases and the blocking up of the tissues, due to immobilisation, were set free by the mechanical action inducing circulation; the weakened muscles were reconstituted by renewed contraction; and thus, in a few weeks, functional restoration resulted in the restoration of the organ."

*Toothache.*—Elsewhere I have quoted an interesting observation that Hack Tuke made in his own person. The same author says again in this connection: "Everyone knows that fear and imagination can cause the disappearance, temporary or permanent, of a very ordinary and painful affliction, that of toothache. The effect is well known, not only to the dentist but to everyone who has occasion to visit this dreaded person. We persuade ourselves fondly that an operation is unnecessary; we question whether the pain is quite so acute, after all; and finally, when we arrive at the dentist's door, we feel that it has gone altogether. And it is so, indeed, at least for some time." Two

of my subjects and another person as well. whom I did not include in my list, as he contributed nothing to the evidence, were able on several occasions to ease tooth-ache by auto-suggestion, and have even by suggestion at the moment, or better in advance, much diminished the pain resulting from dental operations. Under various circumstances I have succeeded with myself in the most definite manner. The instance which seemed to me most characteristic is as follows :

Suffering from an extremely acute pain in the region of a tooth previously stopped, with sympathetic pain in the neighbouring teeth and congestion and heaviness in the head, and not knowing whether it was a case of real lesion or of simple neuralgia, I decided to try auto-suggestion, fixing my faith, with all the conviction I could summon, on the most favourable hypothesis. Notwithstanding the intensity of the pain, I succeeded in easing it noticeably, and then making it disappear altogether. At the end of about an hour it returned ; from the first moment of recurrence I endeavoured to soothe it again, not allowing it, so to speak, any time in which to develop. This was repeated several times. At night, having contrived to sleep, I was awakened by a pain about one o'clock in the morning. I contrived to rid myself of it by degrees and to induce, if not sleep with loss of conscious-

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ness, at least a condition of repose and calm which I maintained fairly easily, and which was followed, about five o'clock, by complete sleep. Next day the dentist, after removing the stopping, found inflammation of the dental pulp.

*Tinglings.*—D.—By auto-suggestion I succeeded after four or five days in getting rid of an itching in three fingers of the right hand which had lasted for a week, had compelled me to scratch myself frequently, and woke me several times during the night.

“Feelings of tingling, pricking, burning and itching are very frequent symptoms of the neurasthenic skin. Feelings of numbness and tingling are more particularly noticed in the extremities; they may, in certain cases, be mistaken for the warning symptoms of a cerebral lesion, and induce fear of a paralytic attack.”<sup>1</sup> I have sometimes seen them, in conjunction with a feeling of “dead finger,” with headache, buzzing in the ears, imperfect sight, &c., in subjects with hardened arteries, rendering diagnosis difficult when conjoined with an interstitial lesion of the kidney, and even more so when accompanied by a certain degree of nervous light polyuria. In these difficult cases suggestion will serve at once as a means of diagnosis and treatment.

<sup>1</sup> Levillain, *Neurasthénie*.



## OCULAR TROUBLES

F.—My sight having often been dim and fatigued quickly, I have several times obtained a very definite improvement by suggestion repeated more or less. I noticed the change was accomplished so well by itself that it was only after a certain time that I remembered the influence I had exercised over myself. Having noticed that the difficulty with my sight was much increased by nervous anticipation, I directed suggestion more particularly to this point, and here, it seemed to me, I had the best results.

Feuchtersleben writes: "I have made this observation myself. To dispel flying spots which impede my sight, and to prevent the trembling of letters on paper, it proved sufficient to fix my eyes steadfastly on vacillating objects."<sup>1</sup>

These are common phenomena, both in neurasthenia and, in its absence, as a result of local fatigue, but people, most unfortunately, never think of employing psychic treatment, notwithstanding that it has undoubted influence in such cases. I have also used suggestion with success in the case of two nervous subjects suffering from various difficulties of hearing, over-excitability, buzzing in the ear, and imaginary noises to a

<sup>1</sup> Already quoted in Chapter VI.

pronounced extent. One of these had, indeed, been for a long time under general and local treatment with no result.

#### CIRCULATORY AND RESPIRATORY TROUBLES

*Palpitations.*—C.—I have occasionally succeeded by suggestion, with contemplation and manual friction, in reducing persistent palpitations resulting from emotional trouble. I was also able to influence those which occurred after meals, but less easily and quickly.

It is not implied that we can act directly, at least by auto-suggestion, on the cardiac beatings; but it is possible to soothe the painful feelings which result from them and which themselves, by rebound, increase the palpitations. It is otherwise fairly common to hear nervous or chlorotic subjects complain of palpitations of the heart, although the heart-beats are not appreciably increased either in frequency or intensity. The essential fact in such cases is the hyperæsthesia of the thoracic coat.

*Personal Observation.*—In cases of affections of the head accompanied by feverishness of the forehead, I have been able by auto-suggestion not only to stop the pain but to reduce the local temperature. Similarly, I have in-

fluenced sensations of heat (with real heat) in the hands and feet.

C. de Lagrave quotes an analogous observation :

*Attacks of Sneezing.*—A.—A cold in the head makes me sneeze for ten minutes. I am, besides, very subject to this, and sometimes an attack will last for more than half an hour. I will to make it disappear immediately, and, indeed, as soon as I make the effort, it does disappear.

What the subject calls cold in the head is doubtless only one of those sneezing attacks induced by atmospheric coldness, even when slight, by dust, &c., in persons of general or local neuropathic disposition. The immediate result of an energetic effort of will is none the less very interesting to note.

*Cough.*—B.—For two days I have had, each night, attacks of coughing at the moment of falling asleep. To-night I tried to fight against this obstinate cough and almost succeeded. After several minutes' preparation, I passed one hand very slowly over my throat, and then with a single idea firmly fixed in my mind, that of thinking myself cured, I invited sleep. I felt the cough rising up in my throat every few minutes; but the moment this movement began, I made a great effort to restrain it, not wishing to allow the pain to rise up as far as my throat. For a few instants I had an acute

feeling of coming and going. But by continuing the effort of will I contrived, nevertheless, to suppress every fresh attempt. Two or three times I renewed my efforts, with the result that I was able to sleep and passed the whole night without any violent fit of coughing, although the two preceding nights I had been troubled by the cough. The following morning I began to cough again.

I relate this observation just as it was given to me, and naturally without any pretension of making auto-suggestion the primordial treatment for a cough.

It is nevertheless certain that psychic conditions have a very real influence on a cough. Coughing by imitation is of frequent occurrence. Again, a subject whose mind is powerfully distracted forgets to cough. Everyone knows by experience that an imminent fit of coughing may often be restrained, or at least postponed. And this is true, not only of the so-called nervous cough, but also of the cough accompanied by inflammation of the trachea or bronchi, and even in the case of tuberculous cough. For example, this is what Dr. Lemoine says in his *Manuel de Thérapeutique*: "The violent cough of tuberculous patients, unaccompanied by expectoration, may be restrained when the sufferer makes an effort not to cough. Habit plays a great part in the etiology of this irritant cough."

It is therefore not surprising that suggestion can act on a cough. I have verified its action (1) in the case of one of my friends suffering from influenza with slight bronchitis: the result was very favourable; (2) in the case of a tuberculous subject (he died four months later). Here, again, the temporary relief obtained was of a pronounced kind.

#### TROUBLES OF DIGESTION

*Want of Appetite.*—C. de Lagrave.—Suffering from dyspepsia and never being hungry, I suggest to myself that I shall feel hunger. As a result I eat my next meal with a very good appetite.

There is nothing astonishing in suggestion being able to stimulate appetite in nervous or non-nervous subjects as well as quinine, nux vomica, &c. Do we not all know how easily we are influenced by the sight of a well-served table, the joy of finding ourselves in agreeable company, or even by the mere thought of a favourite dish, &c.?

*Angina.*—*Personal Observation.*—Suffering from an acute angina, accompanied by a temperature of 39 degrees of fever, I had the curiosity to try and calm the pain by auto-suggestion. I succeeded, in fact, in diminishing the pain in throat and glands to a very remarkable extent.

I must, of course, remind my readers of the reservations made in preceding pages; they will apply more especially perhaps to the above observation.

*Gastralgia.*—C.—Acute pain in the pit of the stomach, accompanied with eructations, which came on about four o'clock in the afternoon. The latter continue, but the pain yields in a few minutes to auto-suggestion and passing the hands over the sensitive part.

In my own case I have overcome pains or cramp in the stomach fairly easily, even when the distension of the stomach, slight difficulty in digesting, and whiteness of the tongue indicated a condition of real suffering of the organ. The digestive troubles themselves seemed to me, after the lapse of a longer time, to be influenced favourably by auto-suggestion.

C. de Lagrave.—I make a suggestion to myself not to have the stomach-ache; this pain had lasted for an hour and prevented me from working. Disappearance in twenty minutes.

*Colic.*—F.—After partaking of a somewhat indigestible meal, I go out into the cold and feel suddenly a very painful colic with urgent need to evacuate. Although suffering considerably, I think all at once of trying auto-suggestion. I make a violent effort of will, affirming that I have neither pain nor need, and I repeat this several times. The pain ceases almost immediately, and I am able to walk quietly for another twenty minutes.

As soon as I reach home I have an abundant liquid evacuation.

*Constipation.*—A.—Being constipated for several days (which is one of my recurring conditions), and having a great difficulty in evacuating, I decide on an experiment, for, physically speaking, it is one of my greatest daily troubles. Strongly concentrating my thought at night, I suggest to myself that I will have an evacuation at half-past eight o'clock the next day.

The following morning I rise at eight. Have the same constipation, and my last night's effort does not appear to have succeeded. But at half-past eight exactly, at the very moment when I am preparing to leave the house, a pressing need obliges me to go at once to stool; and I am very glad of this unhopd-for result.

The same evening I renew my efforts, ordering myself another evacuation for the following day at nine o'clock. The next morning—is it an accident or really suggestion?—I go to stool exactly at nine o'clock, quite astonished at this result, which, if not accidental, appears to be surprisingly easy. But why should it be accidental, for my trouble was a matter of long duration?

A fortnight later constipation returns. With the exception of the time at the beginning when I was carrying out my suggestions, I had no longer thought of it. Perhaps this was the cause of its return. In any case I recur to auto-suggestion.

It is followed by success, not, indeed, on

the following morning but at the end of the day.

Since then (a period of several months) the subject has succeeded in keeping up the regularity of his stools, generally in the morning from eight to half-past, by dint of suggestion continued at intervals of more or less long duration.

When this observation was communicated to me I was no less surprised than the subject himself; but, on thinking it over, astonishment was less at the result obtained than from its taking place at the fixed hour. Nevertheless, the incident of precision in time recurs in two other observations:

C.—Constipation since the day before yesterday. I make a suggestion to myself that I will go to stool the following day at a particular time. Perfect result obtained at the desired hour.

Another person with whom I had discussed auto-suggestion and who was habitually constipated, always employing laxatives, thought, after our conversation, of making suggestion to himself. The following day at the hour fixed this person was conscious of urgent occasion and had an abundant evacuation.

It is therefore quite possible that action, thus timed precisely, may be obtained more often than I had supposed. But whether pre-



cision is attained or not, it seems probable in every way that the regular use of auto-suggestion may in many cases overcome constipation easily, even when of an obstinate character.

Let us turn now to the results afforded by hetero-suggestion, and to the precepts formulated by ordinary therapeutics.

As regards the first point, I will quote the words of Liébault: "It sufficed," says this author, "for me to suggest once only to one of my subjects that he should have always his intestines free, for constipation to cease. Six weeks passed and he had no return of inconvenience. It was this fact which prompted me later to suggest to my sleeping patients that they should go to stool every day, regularly at the same hour, and a great many of them obeyed my orders."

With regard to ordinary therapeutics, does it not advocate, as far more important than the action of drugs, the observance of certain rules of hygiene which clearly reflect the theory of auto-suggestion? Are not sufferers from constipation warned never to resist the desire for an evacuation when it makes itself felt? Many persons, indeed, only suffer from constipation because of this resistance they offer, for every sort of reason: from laziness from their time being so much occupied, from

fear of a difficult stool (in the case of hæmorrhoids, for instance), &c. . . . Following the known mechanism, this resistance, which is at first conscious, becomes later unconscious resistance or constipation. Is it not expressly prescribed for them that they should go every day to stool at a fixed hour whether they feel the want or not? And does not this very act constitute in truth a real auto-suggestion which the patient is thus advised to make daily to himself?

I will conclude with a quotation from Professor Trousseau. "The will," wrote this illustrious doctor, "patiently and perseveringly applied, may overcome constipation in most cases."<sup>1</sup> Hetero- or auto-suggestive therapeutics is but the art of learning to will.

### SEXUAL TROUBLES

*Seminal Losses.*—I find here two interesting observations :

B.—Had frequent seminal losses, lasting for several years, and for which he had consulted a doctor without success. He tried auto-suggestions for a fortnight. The complaint disappeared completely. Since then he has only repeated the suggestion at long intervals, or whenever some special excite-

<sup>1</sup> Feuchtersleben had written already : "Hufeland advises the regulation of daily evacuations by the will."

ment causes him to apprehend a return of his trouble on the following night. If, in spite of the suggestion made not to have erotic dreams, these dreams recur, he wakes up just in time to prevent their fruition.

D.—A similar observation, with the same details and the same result, relating to seminal losses which had lasted for several years.

The rapidity with which in these two cases the phenomena were overcome, although of long standing, seems to me very remarkable. The treatment which is usually applied—hydrotherapy, various kinds of drugs, bromide, camphor, &c.—has often but little effect on this complaint, and there is no reason to be surprised. If we are dissatisfied with ordinary explanations and analyse more closely the mechanism of these occurrences, we see that the occasional causes may be many, but that there is one of a determining kind which will invariably be found as the staple element, and this cause is of a psychic nature. “Nocturnal emissions,” says Jules Janet<sup>1</sup> most justly, “invariably accompany an erotic dream. In extremely continent individuals the repletion of the seminal vesicles and sexual ardour induce erotic dreams during the night, and the natural result follows therefrom; but in the case of many persons the erotic dream, in

<sup>1</sup> J. Janet, *Troubles psychopathiques de la miction*.

consequence of the adoption of bad habits, is primitive, and consequently condemns the patient to an experience which he was far from desiring." The notion that sometimes emissions occur without dreams is because "the dream which precedes it only remains in the patient's memory if he wakes up immediately after the event. Otherwise it is completely forgotten." The psychic mechanism of the complaint being thoroughly understood, it follows quite simply that a psychic treatment is the one to adopt for it.

An affection which is closely connected with the preceding one is incontinence of urine. The process is identical. "Nocturnal incontinence of psychic origin is," says the author already quoted, "a phenomenon exactly similar to nocturnal emissions. It is also the consequence of a dream, and may therefore be unperceived by the sleeper through the profoundness of his sleep." Now, the analogy of nature is completed by the analogy of therapeutic results. It is remarkable to note, and all doctors who employ suggestion can confirm the fact, how often this complaint, so obstinate sometimes to every other treatment, will yield frequently and quickly to psychic treatment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In other cases the mechanism is a little different. Thus certain children will wet their beds at night and their clothes

To return to seminal losses, it is interesting to observe that in the treatment of this particular affection, the possibility and efficacy of auto-suggestive therapeutics had already been understood and indicated by certain authors. By a lucky chance I came upon this passage in the *Treatise of Diday*, the famous venereal specialist of Lyons: "Before going to sleep promise faithfully to awake if an erotic dream should occur, and impose the moral obligation with such a force of will that its remembrance will survive in spite of sleep, and will be able to exercise a preventive influence should need arise.

"I do not recommend herein anything which is not perfectly possible or may not be easily carried out by subjects possessing a fair amount of moral force. The patient, thus fortified and determined to struggle against himself, should be warned of the snare which is laid by Nature herself.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes he is sufficiently awake to feel that the emission is about to take place. But, from laziness, or perhaps from a sensual instinct which only seeks a compromise, he persuades

during the day from laziness and disinclination to get up or ask for the chamber. Here again, naturally, psychotherapy should be applied. At other times incontinence, like spermatorrhoea, arises from a real lesion and is naturally amenable to quite another kind of therapeutics. But assuredly these cases are of far less frequent occurrence.

<sup>1</sup> Compare with what I have said on pages 162, 163.

himself that it is too late, that the act is so far advanced that his awakening will not check it, and he lets things take their course! . . . I repeat, this is a snare. From the moment one is conscious of what is about to happen, it is never too late to try and prevent it, and in most cases, although previously one may have thought exactly the contrary, one is perfectly in time to do so."

Nevertheless this description needs completion on one point and rectification on another. (1) Psychic action can and should be exerted, not only to produce a timely awakening, but also to modify dreams; (2) A strong effort of will is not always necessary. I have, however, sufficiently explained myself on this point when speaking of ideative auto-suggestion.

*Genital Weakness.*—D.—It often happened that the sexual act was accomplished with the organ in a half flaccid condition; and sometimes, too, the emission of the seminal liquid took place prematurely. By making auto-suggestion regularly I succeeded in entirely ridding myself of these infirmities.

This is a case of partial and momentary impotence, of simple genital weakness. In the case of impotence properly so called (a word which, however, comprises many varieties) hetero-suggestive treatment has achieved numerous successes. We shall not be surprised at this if we reflect seriously, which

is not usually done, on the capital importance of the psychic element. Here, again, I will invoke the authority of the author already quoted: "Impotence from *moral collapse*," he says, "is not the only kind, but it is the commonest and complicates all the other kinds." The most usual predisposing cause is a fundamental psychic condition, nervousness, neurasthenia, intellectual overstrain, or, again, moral trouble of all sorts, the memory of a first repulse, coldness of the feelings, or, on the contrary, excess of love, worry, distraction, fear, timidity, &c. Would douches, electricity, strychnine or other drugs be able to exercise any favourable influence in these cases?

"If I had to choose," continues Diday, "I would assuredly abandon aphrodisiacs in favour of a quarter of an hour's explanatory conversation with the patient." It is therefore all the more reasonable to understand the efficacy of scientifically directed psychic treatment. By means of it every one of the causes above quoted can be attacked with method and precision; and thus the inhibition which was preventing the normal reflex action will be removed.

## VARIOUS REFLECTIONS

### INDICATIONS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

1. *Conditions under which these Observations have been taken.*—The observations which have just been given have been collected by seven subjects, of whom I am one. We have related them quite simply, without the addition of any preliminary details as to the habitual condition or antecedents of any person concerned. I have followed this course from motives of propriety, which can be easily understood, and because a knowledge of such details was in no wise indispensable. It was quite sufficient, indeed, to label each phenomenon as far as possible. It is of little importance whether the various nervous troubles described have occurred episodically in subjects not at all, or very slightly, given to habitual nervous suffering, or whether these persons have been subject to a state of fundamental nervousness. Other conditions being equal, they will have found themselves more easily curable in the first case than in the second, and that is all.



These observations have, for the most part, been made during the four months following the first conception of this work. So also I was only able to give to the various subjects, and had only myself, very summary indications as to the method of procedure. These indications, which occupied ten or fifteen minutes' conversation with each one of them, were practically confined to the mere formulæ of ideative auto-suggestion in a waking condition and of contemplation. I did not mention to them the possibility of utilising the emotions, alien suggestions, &c., or various kinds of active auto-suggestion. It was on their own initiative that they sometimes had recourse to these; little by little, and spontaneously, they advanced their education more or less completely and more or less consciously. As a matter of fact, each of them was provided only with the first principles of auto-suggestion, and those who may desire to practise it after having read this book will, I venture to think, have the advantage of much more favourable conditions.

I will add that I made a point, once this first explanation had been given, of not reverting to it later on, so as to minimise, as far as possible, the amount of initial suggestion exercised by myself. This precaution was perhaps superfluous, for auto-suggestion has not only the right, but it is

its duty, to make hetero-suggestion its stay and support.

Two subjects were unable to practise auto-suggestion, and gave it up after the first attempt; I did not insist any further, or attempt to persuade them to continue. For reasons already given, I do not consider these failures very significant. I do not claim that every person can make suggestions to themselves, or, at least, arrive by auto-suggestion at identical results. But, in the two cases in question, I believe that I was not fully understood. Perhaps I ought, by practising preliminary suggestion at a few sittings, to have explained what contemplation actually means.

2. *Criticism of the Observations.*—Among the observations quoted there is a certain number which will, I hope, be of interest. Nevertheless, in the form in which they have been given, they can only afford a very imperfect idea of what auto-suggestion is, and of what may be expected from it.

To begin with, I have not published all the observations made. Many of them would be repetitions. A great many also were not recorded, either from negligence or from forgetfulness, after the success of the curative suggestion.<sup>1</sup> Or, again, the sub-

<sup>1</sup> As was said on pp. 51 and 151.

ject was conscious of having obtained a very material modification of his condition; but it would have been difficult to make this modification understood without long descriptions and wandering into personal details which might prove dull to the reader. Others were of too intimate a character for publication, or they would have had to be summed up in a few lines so dry and lifeless that they would have been merely the skeleton of observations experienced and felt in detail by the subject.

Similarly it has been difficult, or almost impossible, to induce a proper appreciation of changes brought about in the character and in the intellectual, moral, and physical habits. Yet auto-suggestion includes in its province psychic hygiene even more than psychic therapeutics.

With these reservations, it seemed to me useful to publish the preceding observations in spite of their inevitable imperfection, firstly, as proofs of the action of auto-suggestion, but, above all, as examples of the diversity of the troubles to which it can be applied.

3. It will be remarked doubtless that I have noted very few failures; but from this it must not be concluded that they have been few only. The subjects, in their notes, have themselves only described very few. It may

be thought that this is due either to their consideration for myself or to the fear of exercising a baneful suggestion on themselves by recording a failure. I must not refuse to admit that both causes may have entered into their calculations, but after mature reflection another explanation is found which agrees very well with all that has been said elsewhere: this is that auto-suggestion, even when it miscarries, does not produce a sensation of absolute want of success in a subject who has already somewhat accustomed himself to its use. It leaves invariably a certain feeling of renewed confidence, which is, in itself, a step towards cure. This may appear rather subtle, but here again I leave it to the experience of everyone who will conscientiously train himself in auto-suggestion.

I must add, however, that one of my subjects was obliged to have recourse to ordinary suggestion for nervous troubles over which auto-suggestion had not sufficient power.

4. All my subjects illustrated one fact—that there are periods when auto-suggestion is both easy and profitable, but that there are others when it is more difficult and slower in acting. These differences in its action were attributed to causes which they

were unable adequately to estimate and control, not being (at that time) sufficiently enlightened, but which are now perfectly clear. They are: the depressing or stimulating influence of the emotions, foreign suggestions, and good or bad condition of physical health.

5. In my own case I have realised another cause of failure; and this is that there were moments when the theory of auto-suggestion was no longer sufficiently present in my mind. Therefore I had to fall back on the habitual effort of the will; I was no longer able to discipline my will according to the rule of auto-suggestion and contemplation. By reflecting on this for a certain time, and, when necessary, re-reading my notes, I was, however, able to recover the lost habit and succeed once more. Thus I was able to convince myself that, so far as concerns the loss of suggestion after it has been once realised, this cause of failure was shared in common with other subjects.

6. Does the practice of auto-suggestion, according to the rules here laid down, offer any risks or disadvantages? Absolutely none. All my observations go to prove this, and theoretically it is easy to understand, since

these rules are immediately deduced from known facts drawn from daily observation.

But, like ordinary suggestion, or again, like the will which it merely regulates, it is clear that auto-suggestion can be employed perniciously; it is therefore capable of producing good or ill according as it restricts itself firmly or not to an exclusively therapeutic aim. C. de Lagrave quotes the following personal observations:

I suggest wrong ideas to myself. The following day I have nothing but erroneous ideas, and I am obliged to leave off working.

I induce hallucinations, which, at a given moment, make me fear that I really have hallucinations. Then I give myself the inverse auto-suggestion—not to have hallucinations—and I obtain the desired result in the space of two minutes.

I do not know whether these suggestions could be equally easily realised by a number of persons. My own opinion is that, even by way of a trial, they should not be attempted. The line of conduct to be followed with reference hereto is indicated by the general precept already established—namely, that education of the will should be the work of every moment; that with regard to the will there is no act, however insignificant it may appear, which we can afford to disdain,

for it constitutes in itself a beginning of habit.

I will borrow these further observations from the same author :

Being dyspeptic and never hungry, I suggest appetite to myself. I did well at the next meal, and my hunger continuing after the sweet course, I eat another crust of bread to satisfy it.

I suggest to myself to hate a person who has done me an injury. The result is positive; I detest that person. This auto-suggestion arouses in me a condition of mind in which I am now unable to endure certain people to whom I was formerly quite indifferent. I have given up this kind of auto-suggestion.

Would it be said in the same circumstances that auto-suggestion was at the bottom of it? These observations simply indicate a too keen suggestibility, and the rôle of suggestive therapeutics should be precisely to regulate as much as possible this suggestibility. Moreover, do not let us forget that auto-suggestion always carries its own remedy within itself; the author himself, as will have been seen, has remarked this with reference to a preceding case.

To sum up: we must preserve a sound and clear judgment, must keep our critical faculties always on the alert; only at the moment of suggestion properly so called must

we blind ourselves temporarily and of set purpose to every difficulty. In order to concentrate all our resources on its realisation we must hope even for the impossible, *we must have faith*; but we must hold ourselves in readiness to resume immediately our calm attitude, our rôle of methodical and impartial observer. Such are the qualifications (though contradictory in appearance, custom will thoroughly harmonise them) which are necessary to practise suggestion on oneself profitably, even as hetero-suggestion. Furthermore, does not this alliance between the controlling spirit and the power of impulsion towards action constitute the best condition of success in any enterprise of whatever kind it may be?

. . . . .

7. The following observation of one of my subjects will show us what can be scarcely called a danger, but rather a pitfall which it is useful to point out as occurring in the practice of auto-suggestion.

B.—Yesterday I ordered myself to wake at half-past six. I did not wake, but I noticed that two days later I did so without knowing why, exactly at this hour, and so after for several days in succession. I have observed also that in the case of many other suggestions my will often responded to the call thirty-six or forty-eight hours later.



The explanation of this fact, so singular in appearance, is, in my opinion, as follows. The suggestion had no result at the time indicated, but it reappeared in the mind of the subject during the following night's sleep, after which it took effect as a new suggestion. The subject, having lost on waking the memory of this reappearance, naturally attributed the fact recorded to the suggestion made two days before. Hence (1) an impression of astonishment which during the following days kept up the suggestion in his mind and caused the awakening daily at the hour fixed originally; (2) erroneous interpretation of the fact observed by the subject, and a belief in a particular modality of mind which would only allow the realisation of suggestions at the expiration of thirty-six or forty-eight hours, a belief which, after the manner of all suggestion, conscious or not conscious, naturally influenced suggestions made later on.

I have likewise been told by a "suggestioner" (non-medical) that, for reasons which he could not explain, it happened, as a rule, that he cured his patients at "intervals of nine days," and I have been able myself to verify the truth of his statement. As in the preceding case, though apparently mysterious, it was quite simple in reality, and was merely a case of his

belief, based, no doubt, on certain facts which he had observed correctly but interpreted wrongly; this belief he had conveyed unconsciously to his subjects, and in following out the law of all suggestion, it took its effect on them accordingly.

Here again we have only another proof of the necessity for observation free from all prejudices, cold, impartial, and strictly scientific in character.

. . . . .

8. This study calls to be completed by instances of improvements in health or cures obtained by means of hetero-suggestion. But to do this would be to exceed the plan which I marked out for myself. It would have to include not only observations on nervous subjects but also on affections of every kind. According to the definition of will which has been given, every psychic treatment, no matter to what phenomenon it may be applied, is an attempt on the part of the will to rectify itself, since it moulds the mind of the subject to express in act a desire formulated previously by him.

I shall content myself with summing up very concisely the indications of suggestive therapeutics:

1. The domain proper of psychotherapy is in

the purely *dynamic* troubles of the nervous system.

It comprises psychic troubles, troubles of the character, of understanding, of sensibility, of will, whatever they may be: confusion, difficulty in elaborating ideas, weakness of memory, impressionability, passions of all kinds, indecision, &c.

It comprises neuroses, hysteria, neurasthenia, phobias, obsessions, the various forms of nervousness, as well as many troubles of the stomach, intestines, &c., closely connected with neurosis. I have studied at length in another work<sup>1</sup> the therapeutics of nervous and juxta-nervous diseases, and I have shown that, through re-education and psychic treatment, properly managed, it is possible to guide them, notwithstanding their rebellious character, in a steady and unfailing manner to a definite and complete cure, I mean, without any ulterior relapse. I have also demonstrated that the isolating method, till now classically prescribed in such a singular way, is not based, in fact, upon any serious reason, but is on the contrary a frequent cause of relapses, happening in some cases almost as soon as the patient returns to his ordinary mode of life. The treatment in "free cure," such as I have

<sup>1</sup> Dr. P. E. Lévy, *Neurasthénie et Névroses. Leur guérison définitive en cure libre.* (F. Alcan, Paris.)

extolled and described it, is practicable in ordinary life. It will make the education of the nervous a practical and effective training, and will ensure every guarantee of soundness and durability to the cure.

2. Next to the chief neuroses come nervous troubles of every kind, which show themselves in an isolated state: insomnia, sick headache, trembling, tics, vague uneasiness, palpitations, suffocations, neuralgia, pains which give rise to the supposition that a lesion of some organ exists, whereas the nervous system is at fault (ovaralgia, gastralgia, &c.). It is impossible to give here even a simple enumeration, the more so because it would be necessary to add to it a whole series of affections or phenomena in which the action of psychic treatment, which at first seems singular, is none the less most potent. Of such are incontinence of urine, impotence, seminal losses, certain kinds of rheumatism, anæmia, some pains and irregularity in menstruation, &c.

3. What rôle does suggestion play in acute or chronic diseases *with lesion*? It does not aspire to act directly on the organic injuries or the microbic agents from which they spring. Neither does it aim to be a substitute for the acknowledged treatment of these diseases. We must not ask from it more than it can give. But, assuming these

necessary restrictions, the part it plays is none the less very important, and its field of application is not a less widely extended one.

A.—In all circumstances it remains a symptomatic treatment of the highest order. Thus in the ataxic subject, although it will certainly not cure medullary or nervous lesions, yet it will make walking easier, will calm lightning pains as well as and often better than any other treatment. It cannot modify the quantity of sugar eliminated by the diabetic patient, but it can combat the depression, the intellectual inertia, the pains, the insomnia, and make it easier for the patient to observe the prescribed régime, &c. In the case of the dyspeptic it can restore appetite, reduce nausea and vomiting, and improve the nervous condition which is so often the origin of dyspepsia. Are such results to be counted as nothing? And have we, indeed, many drugs which do better? “How many specific drugs,” asks Bernheim, “are there in existence? What course do we pursue in the majority of cases? Do we endeavour to deal with the morbid entity? No, we try modestly to heal the elements, that is to say, we use a symptomatic treatment. We give opium to ease a cough, pain, and insomnia, antithermic drugs to combat fevers, astringents for diarrhœa,

and tonics for debility. The disease itself escapes us; we attack it in its functional elements when we are able." Besides, are there not cases, says the same author very justly, "in which the lesion is nothing but the functional reaction everything? Here, for example, is a *retroversio uteri* which in no wise hinders the vesical and rectal functions, but which by the mechanism of reflex action excites a whole pathology, neuralgia, suffocations, beating of the heart, vomiting, dyspepsia, vertigo, hypochondriasis, convulsions. What does it matter that I cannot heal the lesion, if suggestion can appeal to the psychic organ so as to inhibit all these secondary symptomatic manifestations—if it can control all these nervous transmissions?"

B.—But is this purely symptomatic treatment all that one has a right to expect from psychotherapy?

By no means. In the same way that injury to the function results in injury to the organ, functional restoration can lead to organic restoration. I have already shown, in connection with rheumatoid arthritis, how suggestion, by acting on the pain, on the motility, exercises an indirect action, yet at the same time strong and real, on the arthritis itself, and a like reasoning will apply to many other cases. Here is one in point. Let us imagine an acute general

malady, such as typhoid fever, influenza, or one of chronic character, such as tuberculosis. Suggestion will evidently have no immediate action on the febrile evolution or on the tubercle; nevertheless, it can render great service, for by modifying such symptoms as insomnia, cough, want of appetite, vomiting, &c., or even by correcting the patient's dislike for his medicine, or by raising his moral and physical strength, it will increase the defensive power of the organism, and allow it to battle more vigorously with the morbid processes.

I confine myself to this abridged account of the characteristics of psychic treatment, and will conclude by saying: Psychotherapy certainly does not claim to be the whole of therapeutics, but there are cases where nothing can replace it, and others in which it acts better than any alternate treatment. There is no case in which it cannot be employed usefully.

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