


# HYPNOTISM

*A Psychic  
Malpractice*

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*Among the Objects of the Theosophical Movement is "the investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man." Hypnotism, as a misuse of one of man's psychical powers, comes within the purview of such investigation. This pamphlet examines the theories of modern hypnotists, and the claims made in their behalf, in the light of the Theosophical philosophy. All statements offered in explanation of hypnotic phenomena or in criticism of the practices of hypnotists are based upon the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge, co-founders of the Theosophical Movement and authors of the source-literature of the Theosophical Teachings. Inquirers desiring to carry their investigation further will find suggestions for additional reading in the selected book list facing page 28.*

## HYPNOTISM: A PSYCHIC MALPRACTICE

**A**FTER more than a century of devious and precarious existence beyond the pale of scientific orthodoxy, Hypnotism, that psychic changeling substituted by modern Materialism in place of Mesmer's beneficent art, is coming into its dubious "own." During the past ten years, dozens of articles on the wonders of hypnotism have appeared in the picture magazines, digests, and organs of popular science. With few exceptions, these discussions have had the unmistakable purpose of persuading the reading public that no possible harm can come to anyone who allows himself to be hypnotized, that the practitioners of hypnotism are a long-suffering group of devoted humanitarians engaged in a determined struggle against the forces of superstition and ignorance, and that, once the opposition to hypnotism has been overcome, vast benefits will at once become available to everyone.

Fortified by the encouragement of scientific specialists, the campaign conducted by popular writers is slowly wearing away the distaste of the average man for becoming a helpless subject of some modern Svengali. By dint of sheer repetition of these claims, which are met by the desire of many to appear "modern" and sophisticated in their acceptance of the latest scientific "truth," hypnotism now threatens to invade modern medicine in force, while those who raise even a feeble objection are placed in the position of having challenged the authority of scientific research. It is time, therefore, for renewed investigation of the nature of hypnotism, of the scientific theories connected with its practice; and, in contrast, for a review of the Theosophical teaching on the subject.

Search for a brief, unequivocal definition of hypnotism in scientific sources is unrewarding. In his voluminous *Hypnosis and Suggestibility*, Prof. Clark L. Hull, professor of psychology at the Yale University Institute of Human Relations, devotes a few concluding pages to "Interpretations," largely critical of all definitions. He admits "the fundamental elusiveness of the phenomena" and finally, with obvious reluctance, offers the following positive statement: "The only thing which seems to characterize hypnosis as such and which gives any justification for the practice of calling it a 'state' is its generalized hypersuggestibility." He quickly adds that the only difference between the normal state and the hypnotic

is one of degree in susceptibility to suggestion, and that "the essence of hypnosis thus lies in the fact of *change* in suggestibility."

In a summary of the scientific literature on the subject, Paul Campbell Young of Louisiana State University gives at least eight distinct theories of hypnotism. Braid, to whom psychologists owe the name "Hypnotism" (from the Greek *hypnos*, meaning sleep), spoke of it as a "derangement of the cerebrospinal centers." Hypnosis is described by some as "dissociation," either a "vertical" or a "horizontal" cleavage in the structure of the personality—the latter type of split being adopted for the reason that the hypnotic state is in some sense subconscious. McDougall and others regard hypnosis as an expression of a specific instinct, involving "gregariousness" and "submission." Freud held that it is an "unconscious fixation of the *libido* on the person of the hypnotizer." Sidis claimed that hypnosis and sleep are "two differentiated conditions arising out of a primitive rest-state," and Pavlov distinguished between sleep and hypnosis by saying that "more of the brain action is inhibited in sleep."

In 1890, when asked if Science was "entirely wrong" in its definition of hypnotic phenomena, H. P. Blavatsky replied: "It has no definition, so far."<sup>3</sup> This seems still to be generally true, and probably the best contemporary scientific statement is that of Dr. Milton H. Erickson, a practicing psychiatrist, who has said that hypnotism "is a psychological phenomenon, as little understood as most psychological phenomena," adding that "any understanding of hypnosis beyond the descriptive phase is purely speculative."<sup>4</sup>

There is of course some excuse for the uncertainty of psychologists. The scope of hypnotic phenomena includes areas which are *terra incognita* to the average research worker, and the forces invoked are veritably protean in nature. What cannot be forgiven, however, in the face of admitted ignorance, is the bland dismissal by modern hypnotists of the terrible dangers inherent in their practices. The attempt to win popular approval for hypnotism today is symptomatic of an extensive cycle of unconscious or semi-conscious *sorcery*. The fact that modern man supposes that the "black arts" were long ago exposed as mere superstitions of the Dark Ages will

<sup>1</sup>*Hypnosis and Suggestibility*, D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1933, pp. 391-92.

<sup>2</sup>*Psychological Bulletin*, September, 1926, p. 517.

<sup>3</sup>"Hypnotism," *Lucifer*, December, 1890 (reprinted in *THEOSOPHY* XXXI, 4-11). Further quotations from H. P. Blavatsky, unless otherwise identified, are from this article and from another discussion of Hypnotism, reprinted in *THEOSOPHY* XXX, 491-592.

<sup>4</sup>*Medical Record*, Dec. 5, 1934.

not protect him from their rebirth in the guise of "science," nor can "good motives" alone, on the part of many of the present hypnotizers, forestall very much the spread of psychic and moral weakness to which the processes of hypnosis naturally contribute. While there will undoubtedly be cases in which substantial help seems to have been gained from hypnotism by individuals, the factors of egoic affinity and special karmic conditions must here be counted as all-important, leaving the final Theosophical judgment of modern hypnotism without significant change. Even in instances where it appears that only good has been obtained by submitting to hypnosis, there is always the possibility of some deep-lying suggestion or psychic infection, introduced while the subject was in a passive state, which will manifest after many years, and then without revealing any obvious connection with the earlier experience of hypnotism. Certainly no theosophist would ever allow himself to be hypnotized, whatever the intentions of the operator; nor would any student dream of imposing his will on another by this means. The advantages to be gained, if any, are few and dubious at best, while the dangers, known and unknown, are immeasurable.

Although Theosophy offers occult knowledge in explanation of hypnotic phenomena, it must not be imagined that these things constitute a "simple" subject for study. There are obstacles to be overcome, difficulties to be encompassed, but while the obstacles confronting the scientific investigator arise from his ignorance of the principles involved, and the various levels of psychic action in the human constitution, together with the multiplicity of the phenomena and the inadequacy of available theories to account for them, the theosophist finds his problem to lie in tracing the action of a single fundamental force or principle through all the subtleties of man's sevenfold nature, and in the interrelation of one being with another in terms of this force. "One common vital principle pervades all things," wrote H. P. Blavatsky, describing the cornerstone of what the ancients named *Magic*; and this Principle, she added, "is controllable by the perfected human will."<sup>5</sup> Understanding of the whole category of psychic or occult phenomena, including hypnotism and Mesmerism, depends entirely upon a grasp of the implications of this single sentence. Otherwise, there can be only ignorance, followed by its follies, its mistakes, its tragedies. In Theosophy, the study of hypnotism is nothing more than an elaboration of this one idea.

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<sup>5</sup>*Isis Unveiled* II, 590.

What, then, is Hypnotism?

The Adepts and Sages of antiquity gave particular names to the one great Force, according to the plane and manner of its expression. As the vital energy directed by the will of the magnetic healer or adept, the Greeks called it the "breath of Cybele," the creative and life-giving force obtained from the *Great Mother*, who was the personification and type of the vital essence in all things. In India, it was known as *Akasa Tattwa*—"the one chief agent, and it underlay the so-called 'miracles' and 'super-natural' phenomena in all ages, as in every clime. As the parent-root or essence is universal, so are its effects innumerable. Even the greatest adepts can hardly say where its possibilities must stop."

In her discussion of this force, Madame Blavatsky observes: "As stated repeatedly before, the blossoms of magic, whether white or black, divine or infernal, spring all from one root," which means, in practical terms, that the morality of its use depends entirely upon *the motive, the purity, and the knowledge of the practitioner*. That is why, in one place, H.P.B. wrote that "every Hypnotist, every man of Science, however well-meaning and honorable, once he has allowed himself to become the unconscious instructor of one who learns but to abuse the sacred science, becomes, of course, morally the confederate of every crime committed by this means," while saying elsewhere that Hypnotism "is naught but the *Trataka* of the Yogi, the act of concentrating his mind on the tip of the nose, or on the spot between the eyebrows," through which ascetics obtained "temporary deliverance of the soul from the body; a complete disenthralment of the spiritual man from the slavery of the physical with its gross senses."<sup>6</sup>

From these considerations, it should be evident that the only intelligent approach to the modern practice of hypnotism lies in an examination of its general background in scientific theory, the framework of motive and method of its application, and a comparison of scientific claims with the Theosophical teachings on the subject. Of equal importance will be a review of the *popular* version of hypnotic phenomena, as reflected in the mass circulation periodicals which shape public opinion.

For the purposes of this examination, eight "Facts about Hypnosis," drawn from a recent text, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* (1941), by Maslow and Mittelman, will serve as the basis for comparison of scientific and Theosophical ideas. (The "Facts" will be reprinted in italics, followed by comment and discussion.)

<sup>6</sup>*A Modern Panarion*, p. 366.

1. *Hypnosis is a perfectly normal phenomenon which is manifested in a mild form in everyday life without attracting any particular attention.*

If hypnotism, as in Prof. Hull's definition, is regarded as simply a state of "suggestibility," this is a true statement. But in normal life the individual has the capacity to subject all suggestions to discriminative judgment; not so under hypnosis. Witness to the intellectual and moral helplessness of the hypnotic subject is Dr. J. Luys, who was, during the closing years of the last century, physician to La Charité Hospital of Paris. The following passage is quoted from Dr. Luys by an English writer on hypnotism:

From the social point of view these new states of instantaneous loss of consciousness into which hypnotic or merely fascinated subjects may be made to pass deserve to be considered with lively interest . . . the individual in these conditions no longer belongs to himself; he is surrendered, an inert being, to the enterprise of those who surround him. At one moment in the passive stage of this condition of lethargy or of catalepsy, he is absolutely defenseless, and exposed to any criminal attempt on the part of those who surround him. He can be poisoned and mutilated. Where a woman is concerned she may be violated and even infected with syphilis, of which I have recently observed a painful example in my practice. She may become a mother without any trace existing of a criminal assault, and without the patient having the smallest recollection of what has passed after she has awakened. Sometimes, in the active condition, the state of lucid somnambulism, and even in the condition of simple fascination, the subject may be exposed to the influence of suggestions of the most varied kind on the part of the person directing his actions. He may be induced to become a homicide, an incendiary, or suicide, and all these impulses deposited in his brain during sleep become forces silently stored up, which will burst forth at a given moment with the precision, accuracy of performance and automatic impetuosity of acts performed by the really insane.<sup>7</sup>

These warnings from one who made hypnotism his career are simply a repetition and illustration of what has been said by H. P. Blavatsky.

2. *Theoretically, anyone can hypnotize. Hypnosis consists in creating conditions that encourage the appearance of a tendency which inheres not in the hypnotist, but in the person being hypnotized. No special qualifications are required except confidence, a certain amount of prestige, and a knowledge of the procedure.*

<sup>7</sup>Ernest Hart, *Hypnotism, Mesmerism and the New Witchcraft*, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1896, pp. 137-38.

According to Theosophy, any healthy man or woman can bring about mesmeric phenomena, through the flow of magnetic fluid from the operator to the subject. The state of trance, however, or even a healing effect, may be induced with or without such direct influence, the necessary condition being either "faith in the patient, or robust health united with a strong will, in the operator."<sup>8</sup> The "tendency" in the subject, spoken of by Maslow and Mittelman, is the tendency to passivity or mediumship; in cases of healing, it is the patient's unconscious will.

3. *A Hypnotist does not have any supernatural power, nor animal magnetism. He is in no way different from ordinary men.*

There is no "supernatural power"; therefore, the hypnotist cannot use it, and he is the same as ordinary men except in his exercise of a dangerous power over which he has gained a degree of control without understanding it at all. He may use what is called "animal magnetism," or he may not, depending upon his methods; but he, like every other human being, *has* animal magnetism. No form of life is without it.

The doctrine of animal magnetism as the fluid communicated by the operator or healer was first taught by Mesmer. The idea itself, of course, did not originate with him, for this method of healing had been applied for ages.<sup>9</sup> It was accepted by the followers of Mesmer and became the foundation of the practice developed by such healers as Elliotson, Esdaile, the Marquis de Puységur, the Baron Du Potet, and others. In 1841, an English surgeon, James Braid, found that the hypnotic trance could be induced by having the subject gaze fixedly at some bright object, eliminating entirely the so-called "mesmeric passes." This method was usually accompanied by verbal suggestion. Braid performed many operations on patients thus made insensible to pain. To Braid, therefore, is attributed the "great discovery" that the theory of animal magnetism is "false"! Later, in France (Nancy), H. Bernheim performed an experiment which he believed disproved the "magnetic" theories of the Paris school of hypnotism, headed by Charcot, and since that time, for scientific investigators, "animal magnetism" has been synonymous with superstition.

Despite the claims of Braid and Bernheim, and their successors, Theosophy asserts that Animal Magnetism is a reality, and that it operates to produce what are called hypnotic effects by modern psychologists. In all cases where mesmeric passes are used, there

<sup>8</sup>*Isis Unveiled* I, 216.

<sup>9</sup>See Ennemoser's *History of Magic*, Bohn's Library, and throughout *Isis Unveiled*.



is a passage of animal magnetism from the operator to the subject. The fluid creeps over the body of the subject, changing the polarity of the cells in every part and thus disconnecting the outer from the inner man. When this process is complete, the astral, or inner, psychic, man is almost disconnected from the body. Many hypnotic phenomena are explained by the fact that the magnetic fluid wakes up certain inner and non-physical divisions of the subject, causing a change of relation between the various sheaths surrounding the inner man, and making possible different degrees of intelligence, clairvoyance and the like. On the nature of the magnetic fluid, H. P. Blavatsky has written:

That which is transmitted has no name in European languages, and if we simply describe it as *will*, it loses all its meaning. The old and very much tabooed words, "enchantment," "fascination," "glamor," and "spell," and especially the verb "to bewitch," expressed far more suggestively the real action that took place during the process of such a *transmission*, than the modern and meaningless terms "psychologize" and "biologize." Occultism calls the force transmitted, the "*auric fluid*," to distinguish it from the "*auric light*"; the "fluid" being a correlation of *atoms* on a higher plane, and a descent to this lower one, in the shape of impalpable and invisible plastic Substances, generated and directed by the potential Will. . . .

In hypnosis by means of mesmeric passes, it is the will of the operator himself that acts upon the nervous system of the patient, whether the operator is aware of the process or not. The "will vibrations" so induced are "atomic" and absolutely distinct from the molecular vibrations produced by the mechanical method developed by Braid, in which the subject fixes his eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. In the latter case,

It is the *eye*—the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body—which, by serving as a medium between that bit of metal or crystal and the brain, *attunes* the molecular vibrations of the nervous centers of the latter into *unison* (*i. e.*, equality in the number of their respective oscillations) with the vibrations of the bright object held.

And, it is this unison which produces the hypnotic state.

The discovery that a trance condition could be produced without the direct influence of the operator caused the rejection of the doctrine of animal magnetism, or the magnetic fluid, but it was not realized that even so-called "inanimate" objects have also their magnetic qualities and rates of vibration. According to H.P.B.:

In the case of gazing, it is the eye—the chief agent of the Will of the active operator, but a slave and a traitor when this Will is dormant—that, unconsciously to the patient or *subject*, attunes the oscillations of his cerebral nervous centers to the rate of the vibra-

tions of the object gazed at by catching the rhythm of the latter and passing it on to the brain. But in the case of direct passes, it is the Will of the operator radiating through his eye that produces the required unison between his will and the will of the person operated upon. For, out of two objects attuned in unison—as two chords, for instance—one will always be weaker than the other, and thus have mastery over the other and even the potentiality of destroying its weaker “co-respondent.” . . .

Though the difference between hypnosis produced by mechanical means, and that induced by the direct gaze of the operator, *plus* his will, depends on the plane on which the same phenomenon is produced, still the “fascinating” or subduing agent is created by the same force at work. In the physical world and its material planes, it is called MOTION; in the worlds of mentality and metaphysics it is known as WILL—the many-faced magician throughout all Nature.

Thus there is an *occult* force or power, not “supernatural,” which is fundamental in all hypnotic phenomena. It operates on various planes and is invoked by the hypnotist in various ways, affecting the subject accordingly.

4. *Hypnosis has nothing to do directly with will power. If anything, it is the people with somewhat stronger wills who are most hypnotizable. Even long continued trances need have no effect on this quality. Some subjects have been hypnotized more than a thousand times without any perceptible effect on their will power.*

Psychologists know so little about the will—being unable, in the first place, to provide an adequate definition of this faculty—that such statements about “will power” have virtually no meaning. What is commonly called “will” in modern parlance is simply concentrated desire which takes the form of great determination in the personal man. Strong desire need be no obstacle to hypnosis, unless it is directed against the process of subjection attempted by the operator. As to the effects of continued submission to hypnosis, Dr. Sandor Lorand, chief of the Mental Health Clinic of Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, is on record as saying that hypnotism “makes the patient dependent upon the physician, whereas the mentally ill should be made independent and self-reliant.”<sup>10</sup> He calls for laws to control the practice of hypnotism and points out that most European countries forbid any but accredited physicians to hypnotize. “The hypnotist,” he says, “tries to suspend the critical faculties of the subject.” Is this “harmless”?

J. M. Charcot, famous French hypnotist, in an article written for the American *Forum* of April, 1890, provided a serious warning

<sup>10</sup>New York *Herald Tribune*, Sept. 6, 1936.

to all those attracted by the hypnotizer's appeals. At that time a wave of interest in hypnotism was sweeping Europe, spread by practitioners who gave performances in local theaters. These "showmen," he said, could be traced by the victims they left behind. Subjects of the experiments became nervous and irritable. "Some of them," he wrote, "fall of their own accord into a deep sleep, out of which it is not easy to awaken them; thereafter they are unfitted for the performance of the duties of everyday life. Others, and they are the majority, are seized with convulsions resembling the crises of confirmed hysteria." Dr. James L. McCartney, a psychiatrist connected with the New York State Reformatory at Elmira, reports that once a patient has been hypnotized, the control of the operator over the subject may be resumed with ease, even though the two are separated by a thousand miles. All that is needed is a pre-arranged signal, communicated by letter, telephone, telegram, or radio. Dr. McCartney is also of the opinion that "sensitized persons suffering from certain atomic changes in their tissue may . . . tune their special senses or brain cells into a specific radio frequency and so become sensitive to suggestions that are known to be always passing through the ether. . . . These 'radio' suggestions planted in the brain of the patient may set up auto-suggestion and so lead to compulsions, just as suggestions given to a patient under hypnosis may direct his action after he awakens."<sup>11</sup> Dr. H. H. Hart of Columbia University, director of the neurological clinic of the Vanderbilt Institute, points out that hypnotism tends to increase suggestibility, and that those who possess this feature (suggestibility) most abundantly are just as prone to accept unfavorable as favorable suggestions. He adds: "If they are not controlled by constructive suggestion and the authority of the physician, they are just as apt to fall a prey to destructive suggestion on the part of relatives, friends and popular nostrums of the day."<sup>12</sup>

If these are the possibilities, who can say with any certainty that repeated hypnosis does not weaken the will, or more accurately, the self-control, of the subject? In contrast to such claims is an English physician's statement, supported by years of clinical experience, that "the confirmed and trained hypnotic subject is a maimed individual in mind and body, and is likely at any time to be dangerous to himself and to society."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Los Angeles *Daily News*, April 9, 1938; New York *Herald Tribune*, May 7, 1936.

<sup>12</sup>*Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases*, November, 1931.

<sup>13</sup>*Hypnotism, Mesmerism and the New Witchcraft*, p. 69.

5. *In the hands of a skilled technician who uses it for scientific or therapeutic purposes, it [hypnosis], is a powerful instrument for good. No harmful effects have ever been confirmed in the literature.*

Who is to say which are the "skilled technicians," in a field where so much ignorance prevails? The fact is that hypnotic parlors and "schools" are springing up in every large city in the United States. The medical profession and the general public are both receiving frequent appeals to learn the secrets of hypnotism. The classified advertising columns of the daily newspapers abound with offers of hypnotic treatments for all manner of ills—one such proposal, signed by the self-styled "president" of a "Hypnotic Research Association," suggests that "help" can be gained, with or without the knowledge of the person to be hypnotized! In this case, where does "help" end, and voodoo begin?

If the scientific literature on hypnotism provides no evidence of harm done to patients through hypnotism, then that literature is either biased, incomplete, or dishonest. The extreme caution in the use of hypnotism advocated by physicians of long experience is itself evidence of the known hazards of the practice. Theosophists regard the manifest irresponsibility of the popularizers of hypnotism as sufficient reason for prohibiting it entirely, by law, in the present age.

6. *The ability to be hypnotized is positively correlated with intelligence.*

This is not surprising. Intelligence is the mark of progressive mental individuality, and psychic sensitivity develops naturally with increased intelligence. Theosophy teaches that at the present time, the human race, particularly in the United States, is undergoing a cycle of rapid psychic unfoldment.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the dangers of hypnotism are a special menace in this country, and at this time.

7. *Theoretically, any normal person can be hypnotized—some much more easily than others. Psychotics are the only group generally reported to be "immune" to it, and even a few of them have been hypnotized.*

In the case of the insane, there is already an alien force in possession of the demented person's body; the ego has lost its control over the organism and over the inner, psychic apparatus, so that the

<sup>14</sup>See *Five Messages from H. P. Blavatsky to the American Theosophists*, pp. 25-26, 29.

connection between the higher and the lower man—temporarily broken by the hypnotist in the case of normal subjects—no longer exists. If the hypnotist were also an adept, skilled in the art of the exorcist, another result might be obtained. Modern psychiatry could learn a great deal from the teachings of Theosophy, if psychiatrists would undertake an impartial study of the sevenfold constitution of man.

8. *The person in a trance will do nothing that he does not want to do and that he would not do in the waking state. If anything, experiments along these lines show that people are much more suspicious of immoral or criminal suggestions in a trance than in a waking state.*

We hear this again and again of hypnosis, and there is much truth in it. But it is not the whole truth. There is nothing in this statement to indicate how a subject of unscrupulous character might be used by an equally unscrupulous hypnotist, or by an operator filled with passionate hate for a personal enemy. There is no warning of the way in which resistance to immoral or criminal suggestion might be overcome by specious persuasion or by the general weakening of the subject's moral stamina through repeated suggestion. Further, when we are told that no crimes can be instigated through hypnotism, it is because the hypnotists want the general public to believe that the practice of their art does not threaten society. But when there is the possibility of public approval of the sinister side of hypnotism, these scientists have quite another story to unfold.

It is often claimed that no one can be hypnotized unless he wishes it; that full cooperation with the operator is necessary. On the whole, this is true. The self-possessed individual, of positive nature, and unwilling to submit to hypnosis, cannot be hypnotized by any ordinary operator, least of all if he knows that an attempt to do so is being made. Dr. George H. Estabrooks, however, in his recent book, *Hypnotism* (1943), maintains that it is far from impossible to hypnotize some subjects against their will. There are means, he says, by which the operator may shift a sleepwalker or sleeptalker (somnambulist) directly over into hypnosis without either his knowledge or consent. He also describes several deceptive devices by which fully awake subjects can be hypnotized without knowing what is happening. Once this control is established, future trances can be arranged for by post-hypnotic suggestion.

## HYPNOTISM AND MESMERISM

**A** NATURAL question concerns the difference, if any, between Hypnotism and Mesmerism. Certainly, a wide abyss separates the curative methods of Anton Mesmer from the trance condition obtained by the modern hypnotist. "Mesmer," Prof. Clark Hull points out, "did not hypnotize his subjects," and the sleeping trance identified with the hypnosis of today was first obtained by the Marquis de Puységur, apparently by accident, in 1784.<sup>1</sup> Mesmer's patients, therefore, did not lose their consciousness in the way that the subjects of hypnotism do when fascinated by a bright object, or by the operator's eye. Mesmer himself disapproved Puységur's methods as showing "a lack of understanding."<sup>2</sup> Of the two, Mesmerism and Hypnotism, H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

One is beneficent, the other maleficent, as it evidently must be; since, according to both Occultism and modern Psychology, *hypnotism is produced by the withdrawal of the nervous fluid from the capillary nerves*. The latter being, so to say, the sentries that keep the doors of our senses opened, they become anaesthetized under hypnotic conditions, and allow these doors to get closed.

She amplifies the comparison by quoting from a French authority of the Du Potet school, A. H. Simonin:

He shows that while "in Magnetism (mesmerism) there occurs in the *subject* a great development of moral faculties"; that his thoughts and feelings "become loftier, and the senses acquire an abnormal acuteness"; in hypnotism, on the contrary, "the subject becomes a *simple mirror*." It is Suggestion which is the true motor of every action in the hypnotic; and if, occasionally, "seemingly marvelous actions are produced, these are due to the hypnotizer, not to the subject." Again. . . . "In hypnotism instinct, *i. e.*, the *animal*, reaches its greatest development; so much so, indeed, that the aphorism 'extremes meet' can never receive a better application than to magnetism and hypnotism." How true these words, also, as to the difference between the mesmerized and the hypnotized subjects: "In one, his ideal nature, his moral self—the reflection of his divine nature—are carried to their extreme limits, and the subject becomes almost a celestial being (*un ange*). In the other, it is his *instincts* which develop in a most surprising fashion. The hypnotic lowers

<sup>1</sup>"Hypnotism in Scientific Perspective," *Scientific Monthly*, August, 1929.

<sup>2</sup>Margaret Goldsmith, *Franz Anton Mesmer*, Doubleday Doran, New York, 1934, p. 172.

himself to the level of the animal. From a physiological viewpoint, magnetism (mesmerism) is comforting and curative, and hypnotism, which is but the result of an unbalanced state, is—most dangerous.

There are, however, some important qualifications to be applied to this high praise of mesmerism. Perhaps it should be said that the elevated state described is a *possible* effect of mesmerism. If the mesmerist is himself diseased, he may, in imparting his vital essence to the patient, infect the latter and rob him of what strength he has. Discussing mesmeric healing, H.P.B. warns in *Isis Unveiled*:

If a diseased person—medium or not—attempts to heal, his force may be sufficiently robust to displace the disease, to disturb it in the present place, and cause it to shift to another, where shortly it will appear; the patient, meanwhile, thinking himself cured.

But, what if the healer be morally diseased? The consequences may be infinitely more mischievous; for it is easier to cure a bodily disease than cleanse a constitution infected with moral turpitude. . . . If the gift of prophecy, as well as hysteria and convulsions, can be imparted by “infection,” why not every vice? The healer, in such a case, conveys to his patient—who is now his victim—the moral poison that infects his own mind and heart. His magnetic touch is deflement; his glance, profanation. Against this insidious taint, there is no protection for the passively-receptive subject. The healer holds him under his power, spell-bound and powerless, as the serpent holds a poor, weak bird. The evil that one such “healing medium” can effect is incalculably great; and such healers there are by the hundred.\*

The supposition that there is no such thing as “magnetic fluid,” and that all hypnotic or mesmeric phenomena are due to “suggestion,” or simply “mental” influence, makes it logical for modern psychologists to disregard the possibility of moral contagion of this sort. But no man who has learned the secret of mesmeric healing—and there are many who have—can doubt the reality of this vital essence. When a healthy operator mesmerizes a patient, with a determined desire to relieve and cure him, the exhaustion felt by the former is proportionate to the relief given: a process of *endosmosis* has taken place, the healer having parted with a portion of his vital aura to benefit the sick man. The process may be reversed, also, in which case the operator “vampirizes” the subject by *exosmosis* of the latter’s vitality. In both cases, Madame Blavatsky states, “the agent of transmission is a magnetic and attractive faculty, terrestrial and physiological in its results, yet

\**Isis Unveiled* I, 217.

generated and produced on the four-dimensional plane—the realm of atoms.” Further: “The healthy vital fluid imparted by the physician who mesmerizes his patient, can and does cure; but too much of it will kill.” Good intentions, obviously, are not enough to prevent the amateur mesmerist from doing great harm. Not only should he have a clear idea of the occult laws and processes invoked by the practice, but also, he must be absolutely sure of his motive and psychic and moral purity; otherwise, he may seem to give help on the physical plane, while actually spreading the subtle taints of his own inner nature among all who come under his influence.

Many real and God-like healers are described in *Isis Unveiled*, men who have lightened the burden of human pain from disease in every century. But these, when not adepts, have always felt within themselves the conviction of high calling, and their lives reveal the ineffaceable marks of a great altruistic mission. Such healers are instructed by intuition, the voice of the higher Ego, and though often lacking in culture and medical learning—as in the case of Valentine Greatrakes, a poor and ignorant Irishman—their capacity to accomplish well-nigh “miraculous” cures is beyond any doubt. Greatrakes, for example, was endorsed by Robert Boyle, the famous seventeenth-century chemist, and several eminent physicians of the time testified to the reality of his cures.

Questioned as to the difference between hypnosis produced by mechanical means, such as revolving mirrors, and that caused by the direct gaze of the operator, H. P. Blavatsky replied:

The gaze of the operator is more potent, hence more dangerous, than the simple mechanical passes of the Hypnotizer, who, in nine cases out of ten, does not know how, and therefore *cannot* will. The students of Esoteric Science must be aware by the very laws of the occult correspondences that the latter action is performed on the first plane of matter (the lowest), while the former, which necessitates a well-concentrated will, has to be enacted, if the operator is a profane novice, on the *fourth*, and if he is anything of an occultist on the *fifth* plane.

The principle involved in all forms of hypnotism is that of sympathetic correspondence between rates of vibration. The objection that a galvanometer fails to show the presence of these vibrations, or of any electric or magnetic fluid (the two are really identical), thereby disproving the “fluid” theory, may be met by pointing out that the fluids “*are due in their essence and origin to . . . molecular motion, now transformed into atomic energy,*” and having passed to a higher plane of action, the instrument “can no



longer be affected by the energy displayed on a plane with which it is entirely disconnected."

Unless the nervous cells of the subject become attuned to the vibratory rate of the hypnotic influence, whatever its point of origin, no hypnotic condition will ensue. H.P.B. writes in summary:

To ensure success in a hypnotic experiment, two conditions are requisite: (a) as every organic or "inorganic" body in nature is distinguished by its fixed molecular oscillations, it is necessary to find out which are those bodies which *will* act in unison with one or another human nervous system; and (b) to remember that the molecular oscillations of the former can influence the nervous action of the latter, only when the rhythms of their respective vibrations coincide, *i. e.*, when the number of their oscillations is made identical; which, in the case of hypnotism induced by mechanical means, is achieved through the medium of the eye. . . . The nature of the Force transmitted from one man or object to another man or object, whether in hypnotism, electricity, metallotherapy or "fascination," is the same in essence, varying only in degree, and modified according to the sub-plane of matter it is acting on; of which sub-planes, as every Occultist knows, there are seven on our terrestrial plane as there are on every other.

Wm. Q. Judge distinguishes between Mesmerism and Hypnotism by describing the difference in the effects of these two practices. Of Hypnotism by mechanical means, he says:

The real rock of offense is this, and well known to theosophical students, that as the force and power of hypnotism are better known, it will be seen that whatever the influence is, the process going on in hypnotism is the contracting of the cells of the body and brain from the periphery to the center. This process is actually a phenomenon of the death state, and is the opposite of the mesmeric effect; and this point is not known to the medical profession, nor will it be, as they now proceed, because *post mortem* examinations never reveal the action of a living cell. Magnetism by human influence starts from within and proceeds to the outer surface, thus exhibiting a phenomenon of life the very opposite of hypnotism. And the use of magnetism is not objectionable, yet it should be limited in practice to competent members of the medical profession. . . . In all its anaesthetic phases it [hypnotism] can be duplicated by mesmerism without any bad effects. Dr. Esdaile has abundantly shown this. Laws ought to be passed making it a misdemeanor to have a public or private hypnotic séance.<sup>4</sup>

The inability of hypnotic subjects to recall what has happened to them while in a trance state is explained by the existence of

<sup>4</sup>"Hypnotism and Theosophy," THEOSOPHY XXVII, 58-61. See also, "Hypnotism," THEOSOPHY XXV, 311-16.

several states and sub-states of consciousness into any one of which the subject may be forced by the hypnotizer. The localization of the subject's consciousness in one or another sub-field of action results in behavior or conduct which is almost entirely automatic—an effect largely due to the specific contractile action of the hypnotic process. "This," writes Mr. Judge, "will always prevent the *Ego* from educating itself to remember from state to state and field to field the experience of each, which education, however, is possible in the mesmerized or magnetized state, and of course in the normal waking life." Elsewhere he says:

Body, soul, and astral man properly in relation give us a sane man; hypnotized, the relation is broken and we have a person who is not for the time wholly sane. Acute maniacs are those in whom the disjunction between astral man and soul is complete. Where the hypnotized one remains for months in that state, the astral man has become the slave of the body and its recollections, but as the soul is not concerned no real memory is present and no recollection of the period is retained. . . .

I go still further and say that many persons are already in a half-hypnotized state, easily influenced by the unprincipled or the immoral; that the power to hypnotize and to be sensitive to it are both progressive stages of our racial evolution; that it can and will be used for selfish, wicked, and degrading purposes unless the race, and especially the occidental portion of it, understands and practices true ethics based on the brotherhood of man. Ethics of the purest are found in the words of Jesus, but are universally negated by Church, State, and individual. The Theosophical doctrines of man and nature give a true and necessary basis and enforcement to ethics, devoid of favoritism or illogical schemes of eternal damnation. And only through those doctrines can the dangers of hypnotism be averted, since legislation, while affixing penalties, will not alter or curtail private acts of selfishness and greed.

The following passages are condensed from H. P. Blavatsky's "Black Magic in Science":

The amateur hypnotists of Science dig with their own hands the graves of many a man's and woman's intellect; they enslave and paralyze freewill in their "subjects," turn immortal men into soulless, irresponsible automata, and vivisect *their souls* with as much unconcern as they vivisect the bodies of rabbits and dogs. In short, they are fast blooming into "sorcerers," and are turning science into a vast field of black magic. The minority of learned physicians and other scientists experiment in "hypnotism" because they have come to see something in it, while the majority still deny the actuality of animal magnetism in its mesmeric form, even under

its modern mask—hypnotism. The former—entirely ignorant of the fundamental laws of animal magnetism—experiment at hap-hazard, almost blindly. Hence they interfere with, and awaken to action the most dangerous forces of nature, without being aware of it. Instead of healing diseases—the only use to which animal magnetism under its new name can be *legitimately* applied—they often inoculate the *subjects* with their own physical as well as mental ills and vices. . . .

By trying the *magic* effect of the human will on weaker wills; by deriding the existence of *occult* forces in Nature—forces whose name is legion—and yet calling out these, under the pretext that they are *no* independent forces, not even psychic, in their nature, but “connected with known *physical* laws,” men in authority are virtually responsible for all the dire effects that are and will be following their dangerous public experiments. Verily Karma—the terrible but just Retributive Law—will visit all those who develop the most awful results in the future, generated at those public exhibitions for the amusement of the profane. Let them only think of the dangers bred, of new forms of diseases, mental and physical, begotten by such insane handling of the psychic will! They laugh at the occult sciences and deride Mesmerism? They may learn that the idea of a crime suggested for experiment’s sake is not removed by a reversed current of the will as easily as it is inspired; that if the outward expression of the idea of a misdeed “suggested” may fade out at the will of the operator, the *active living germ* artificially implanted does not disappear with it; that once dropped into the seat of the human—or rather, animal—passions, it may lie dormant there for years sometimes, to become suddenly awakened by some unforeseen circumstance into realization.

Men of undeniable scientific education who experiment on Hypnotism in public, lend thereby the sanction of their names to such performances. And then every unworthy speculator acute enough to understand the process may, by developing by practice and perseverance the same force in himself, apply it to his own selfish, often criminal, ends. *Result on Karmic Lines*: every Hypnotist, every man of Science, however well-meaning and honorable, once he has allowed himself to become the unconscious instructor of one who learns but to abuse the sacred science, becomes, of course, morally, the confederate of every crime committed by this means.

Such is the consequence of public “Hypnotic” experiments which thus lead to, and virtually are, BLACK MAGIC.

## THE MENACE OF HYPNOTISM

WHAT You Should Know about Hypnotism," an article in the magazine, *Life Story*, is typical of current attempts to deny, minimize or explain away the dangers of Hypnotism, while dramatizing its present-day applications in psychological medicine. The writer, Marie Beynon Ray, is introduced as the author of *Doctors of the Mind*, "known for her meticulous research and careful analytical writing."

Beginning with the case of a girl stricken by amnesia, whose memory was restored through hypnotism, and describing how the veterans of the first great war were helped to regain their speech or hearing by hypnotic treatment, the article continues with a superficial survey of its wide use today, ending with direct instructions to the reader on how to find a medical hypnotist to consult. Accepting without question the assertions of the hypnotists themselves, the writer identifies the familiar objections to hypnotism as mere "delusions." She says:

We fear, most of us, that if we are hypnotized—

1. We are weak-willed.
2. We may never wake up.
3. We can be forced to commit immoral or criminal acts.
4. We will remain permanently in the power of the hypnotist.

These fears, all of them, the doctors assure us, are pure delusions, without foundation in fact. There is not the slightest danger of not coming out of hypnosis any more than of not waking from a normal sleep. Nor is hypnotism a battle of wills, since no one can be hypnotized if he does not wish to be. Anyone, the strong-willed equally with the weak-willed, can be hypnotized. If anything, it is the more intelligent person, rather than the less intelligent one, who is the more easily hypnotized. Certainly no one can be forced to commit an immoral act against his will and nature. And finally, the power of the hypnotist is of short duration. That, so far as its therapeutic value goes, is its chief limitation.<sup>1</sup>

This article administers a polite scolding to all those reluctant for any reason to submit to hypnotism, ridiculing the idea that it is a "sinister power" and urging: "It is a very simple, harmless procedure, as easy and unafrightening as taking a pill." The popular appeal is insidious:

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<sup>1</sup>*Life Story*. September, 1945. See also, for a similar denial of the dangers of Hypnotism, "Hypnotism Comes of Age," *Reader's Digest*, October, 1943.

Is it worth trying? For that insomnia perhaps? For the compulsion to toss five or six cocktails into your astounded stomach every night before dinner and wait for them to explode? For that séance at the dentist's? For that pain for which the doctors can find no organic cause? For that abnormal shyness? For any illness or condition that has been pronounced a nervous disorder?

No harm, even conservative medical men assure us, can come of trying it—and if you put yourself into the hands of a competent psychiatrist, a great deal of good may come of it.

Early in his career, Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytical movement, experimented with hypnotism of the Charcot school in Paris, but decided against its use in the methods of psychotherapy he was developing. Today, largely as a result of the stimulus of wartime necessity, psychiatry and psychoanalysis are returning to hypnotism as a technique which assists in exposing the causes of neuroses. Publicity given to the hypnotic methods of Army psychiatrists in treating battle neuroses—called “shell shock” during the last war—has done much to weaken popular opposition to hypnotism. Reports of startling recoveries are frequent, and in almost every case some form of hypnotism has played a part. A summary of the procedure appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* for November, 1945:

Psychotherapy under sedation—variously termed narcosynthesis, narcoanalysis, abreaction, and hypnoanalysis—was used initially almost entirely for combat soldiers and flyers. Subsequently, it was used more widely and proved itself of tremendous value in competent hands because it was simple, produced results quickly, and had no serious complications. It was effective probably because a great majority of combat soldiers, even though they became quite ill, were essentially normal personalities prior to their combat experience.

The psychic pressures of war become acute in prolonged combat, as was demonstrated by the wave of neuroses which struck the British Army after Dunkerque. American troops were exposed to the same sort of ordeal on Guadalcanal, where the Marines defended a six-mile by three-mile beachhead for months. They had landed expecting to be relieved soon after, but help did not come. Lt. Com. E. Rogers Smith, Mare Island psychiatrist, pointing out that never had healthy, trained men been subjected to such conditions, has written: “The strain and stress experienced by these men produced a group neurosis that has not been seen before and may never be seen again.” Among the symptoms were “headaches, lower thresholds to sharp noises, periods of amnesia, of panic, psychosomatic complaints, generalized or limited tremors, func-

tional palsies." Commander Smith said of these victims of war who became his patients that they suffered primarily from "a disturbance of the whole organism—a disorder of thinking and living—of even wanting to live."<sup>2</sup>

Types of mental crackups and emotional disorders caused by the war have been described from time to time in the periodicals and the press. One account reports the experiences on the North African front of Lt. Col. Roy L. Grinker and Maj. John P. Spiegel, psychiatrists who there introduced the use of hypnotic drugs as the initial step in emergency psychotherapy. At first, their work was with flyers, of whom these are typical cases:

Before an important mission, a squadron leader lost confidence, dreaded the thought of deserting his men and had to be grounded. . . . A turret gunner with a strong aversion for killing anything developed hysterical paralysis of his right hand. . . . A beribboned ace, brought home for a triumphant swing around the country, remembered his friends at the battle front and screamed: "A hell of a war we're fighting!"<sup>3</sup>

The treatment developed by Grinker and Spiegel, called "narcosynthesis," begins with intravenous injection of a relaxing drug, often sodium pentathol, which induces a sort of "twilight sleep." This drug, a derivative of barbituric acid, has the advantage of acting quickly, although there are other less desirable effects.

The psychiatrist then attempts to draw out "the terrors buried deep in the patient's subconscious mind." Sometimes hypnosis is used to produce the relaxed state, without the aid of drugs. But in either case, the patient is reduced to a passive condition similar to or identical with light hypnosis, and is then subjected to the probing questions of the analyst, who attempts to get at the experience which caused the mental disorder. In a recent *Life*, John Hersey reported almost verbatim the session of an Army psychiatrist with a veteran who had this diagnosis: "Anxiety state, severe, with hysterical conversion symptoms manifested by paralysis of right leg." In the course of the interview, the patient was helped to understand the psychic cause of his paralysis and to overcome it.<sup>4</sup>

More than 40 per cent of all Army medical discharges, *Life* reports, were neuropsychiatric cases, and a total of 1,000,000 such cases have been admitted to Army Hospitals for treatment. These men are in various stages of psychosomatic disorder, a common

<sup>2</sup>"The Psychiatric Toll of Warfare," *Fortune*, December, 1943.

<sup>3</sup>*Newsweek*, May 29, 1944.

<sup>4</sup>*Life*, Oct. 29, 1945.

form being the "hysterical conversion symptom"—a paralyzed limb, a heavy tic or twitch, loss of speech, or "a digestive disturbance or some other physical failing for which there is absolutely no physical basis."

What can be said about the plight of these men, and how can the emergency methods of treating them be questioned, even though hypnotism is involved? The use of hypnotic techniques and drugs arose from the urgent need of treating large numbers of men without delay. A psychoanalyst, it has been pointed out, can usually obtain the same results without hypnosis, but his treatment may require many interviews over a long period before the patient responds without resistance. Hypnosis or a hypnotic drug often eliminates this resistance in a few seconds. A delay in the treatment of combat neurosis may mean that the symptoms become "fixed" and chronic, making the cure much more difficult. This happened in the case of the Marines from Guadalcanal, who actually broke down only after months of constant fighting. When they reached other islands or home, "the golden time for therapy had passed."

First, it should be noted that there was one group of Marines on Guadalcanal which suffered virtually no psychiatric casualties—the "Raider" battalion of Lt. Col. Carlson. Wise treatment of his men and the absence of military etiquette, together with conduct that inspired complete confidence in the commander seem to be the explanation. "Carlson also encouraged his men to paint or write or compose if they had any desire to do so." According to the account in *Fortune*, most of them did. But despite Carlson's astonishing record, he was "kicked upstairs" to a desk job on the Pacific Coast. *Fortune* concludes with the comment: "There would seem to be no field command for an officer with Evans Carlson's proven qualities of leadership and with his respect for the dignity of man."

Thus intelligent preventive measures are themselves an important alternative to narcohypnosis, and such measures might be applied in civilian life as well as in the armed forces. The difficulty, of course, lies in the difference between the loose organization of the civilian population and the close control and observation of men's lives in the Army. It is hardly possible for psychiatrists to prescribe preventive measures for psychoneurosis among civilians except in the very broad terms of large scale social reforms. Also, such reforms would have to be carried out as the result of general enlightenment, more or less voluntarily; otherwise, some sort of benevolent dictatorship would be needed to make them effectual,

and that would constitute a terrible national neurosis in itself. The fact is that the social evils which involve modern man in war have the same deep-rooted causes as the defects in therapeutic practice, so that criticism, in this case, must be fundamental rather than specific.

A second comment to be made on narcohypnosis may be drawn from a statement by Dr. Sandor Lorand, a psychoanalyst previously quoted on hypnotism. He says :

Hypnosis is most valuable for the acute neuroses, those of fairly recent origin, where we usually know the immediate cause of the symptom. But if the symptom is based on a neurotic personality, then the cure would not be permanent, other symptoms would develop later, and we would have to use psychoanalysis to unearth the underlying complexes.

We still don't know, for example, whether the men at the front who have been treated by hypnosis or narcohypnosis will remain well on their return home. No doubt many of them are fundamentally normal men in whom extraordinary mental and physical strains have produced exhaustion. Such men should have no recurrences. But those who were already somewhat unstable personalities before they entered the service may break again. They should be watched and guarded. Some of them will need further treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Elsewhere, Dr. Lorand has said that hypnotism is not considered effective in ordinary cases of amnesia, "because, to get the memories of the victim from the unconscious, he must be put in a cataleptic state. It is not therapeutic because too deep a hypnosis is necessary." He adds, "In psychiatry, we never use so deep a hypnosis as would be necessary here, because it changes a personality."<sup>6</sup> He regards hypnotism as only an "auxiliary" treatment in such cases, to prepare the patient for analysis.

These are the questions raised by experienced physicians. What, in addition, might the theosophist say?

The most obvious criticism is to call into question the ethical foundations of a culture which, in the extremity of modern war, finds itself compelled to resort to hypnotism as a means of relieving the extraordinary pressures imposed upon its youth. The victims are in such a disordered psychic state, under emergency conditions, and in such numbers, that medical men must reduce them to virtual automata in order to help them at all. For that is what narcohypnosis does. The agonized *psyche* of the war-torn neurotic

<sup>5</sup>*Life Story*, September, 1945.

<sup>6</sup>*New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 6, 1936.



is drugged into submission to the analyst's quest for facts, and then, helpless as a child, he is led to see how "foolish" he has been. Or, how foolish the psychiatrist *says* he has been, for there may be a difference in the validity of the suggestions given. A man who fears returning to the obligations of civilian life, and who develops a nervous paralysis in his leg as a subconscious means of assuring himself care without responsibility, may be helped to overcome this weakness by intelligent suggestion. On the other hand, it seems an unjustified intrusion for a psychotherapist, however well-intentioned, to use plausible persuasion on a man who is overcome by revulsion for killing his fellow beings. Drugged into indiscriminating acceptance of suggestion, the patient may be made to gain a pseudo-adjustment that will last a few years, and after that, when his sense of wrong-doing returns, the neurosis will attack him with added fury. If the reconciliation of the individual with his terrible memories can be achieved without devices of suggestion, or actual deception, when he is in full possession of his faculties and able to choose for himself, then the conduct of the psychiatrist is entirely moral; but often, there may not be time for this conscientious treatment. When suggestion, good or bad, is *imposed* on the plastic psychic nature of a dazed and defenseless man, the integrity of the individual has been assailed and Karma will exact its penalty, late or soon.

Other medical uses of hypnosis are in the treatment of deleterious habits. It is used to overcome alcoholism, insomnia, nail-biting, excesses of diet, fear phobias and like afflictions. But in all these instances, the subject exchanges the weakness of the habit for the weakness of dependence on the hypnotist. He does not become stronger. The only possible value of overcoming bad habits by hypnosis would be in cases where the victims are so lacking in moral stamina that they are literally unable to check the weakness without help from the outside. And obviously, here, the subject must regain his own self-control during the interval of release from the habit which hypnosis has provided; otherwise, he will have to face the same temptations again, to which will have been added the weakness of increased suggestibility. This objection to hypnotism is clearly indicated by Dr. D. Ross Diefendorf, in his text on clinical psychiatry:

Hypnotism is of limited value, because those susceptible to hypnotic suggestion are apt to be influenced by any powerful suggestion that happens to be presented. Furthermore, hypnotic experience brings about an undesirable dependency of the patients upon the physician,

which makes impossible an effective subjugation of their own wills in the strife with morbid influences.

The greater the influence exerted, the more easily auto-suggestions arise, and the quicker the efficacy of the hypnotic suggestion is nullified by other and opposing ideas.<sup>7</sup>

More stringent is the warning of Prof. Wesley Raymond Wells, of Syracuse University. He is convinced from experimental research that hypnotism can be used to make innocent persons perform acts which would ordinarily be repulsive to them. Reporting on his experiments, he writes:

This investigation has been devoted to the problem whether a hypnotized subject, who is noncriminal in character, can be made to commit real crime. The answer, on the basis of actual experimental results, is emphatically in the affirmative.<sup>8</sup>

These conclusions were reached through experiments on the men and women students of Syracuse University. Prof. Wells succeeded, by using "new methods" of hypnotism, in turning persons of the highest moral integrity into "real thieves." One must wish that there could be a rule at Syracuse, as at many other universities, forbidding hypnotic experiments. It is horrifying to think that these university students are being exposed to criminal suggestion, as a matter of "experiment," when the operators, however "expert," may be unable to remove the effects of such suggestions.

The uses proposed for Hypnotism in war illustrate various criminal applications. In *Hypnotism*, Dr. Estabrooks, a recognized authority, details several ways in which hypnotism might have been used to win the recent war. One involves hypnotizing enemy prisoners to learn their secrets, and suggesting to them while entranced that their own country is the real "enemy," adding post-hypnotic direction in accord with this idea. An enemy officer could be provided with false information while under hypnosis, resulting in disaster to his side when guided by his report. The possibilities of a hypnotized espionage service are suggestively outlined, and the creation of self-saboteurs out of hypnotized prisoners is another inspired idea. Dr. Estabrooks says that "a hypnotist who really wished a murder could almost certainly get it"—a conclusion somewhat different from the pious denials so common in the publicity spread on behalf of hypnotism.

Of course, things done for victory in a war are seldom counted as crimes; only when the men return home with the habits acquired in battle are the latter recognized as "criminal" tendencies. And

<sup>7</sup>*Clinical Psychiatry*, 1923, p. 474.

<sup>8</sup>*Los Angeles Examiner*, March 5, 1941.

then it is deemed too late for anything but punishment. But whatever can be done to win a war can be done for private ends as well. Dr. Estabrooks' book makes clear the enormous possibilities for successful crime in the practice of hypnotism, and it convicts the hypnotists of evasion, if not actual deception, in their pretense that no evil may be accomplished by hypnotic means.

In recent years one experimenter in hypnotism has developed a method which appears to circumvent the usual objection to being hypnotized—the surrender of the subject's will to another. Andrew Salter contributed to the April, 1941, issue of the *Journal of General Psychology* an article on "Three Techniques of Autohypnosis," in which he detailed his technique of teaching people to hypnotize themselves, to cure bad habits and overcome weaknesses. He wrote:

In autohypnosis not only does the "subject" hypnotize himself, but he also has complete control of the trance state at all times. To use a word that should be obsolete, the only person with *rapport* is the subject, and that *rapport* with himself.

However, before the subject can learn to hypnotize himself, Salter explains, "I find out if the person who wishes to learn autohypnosis is a good hypnotic subject in the first place." The person must then be "developed" into "as good a hypnotic subject as possible," after which Salter tells him "that if he wishes, he can be taught to put himself into a trance wherein he can give himself suggestions as I would give them, and with the same effect, if not better."

There may be some advantage in turning the power of suggestion over to the subject himself, but the "development" has already taken place, and this must increase his suggestibility or passivity. Actually, autohypnosis is nothing more than a psychological trick, and in the long run can accomplish no particular good. The only real recovery from bad habits results from the arousal of the will. A person ought to be able to overcome his habits without throwing himself into a trance. Such means may be successful for a while, but relapses can always occur, with the possibility that the individual will then resort to another hypnotist for help. Certainly, from the moral viewpoint, there is little difference between autohypnosis and the ignorant affirmations of "mental healing," and in the case of the former there is the added hazard of the morbid passivity of the hypnotic state.

Popular accounts of autohypnosis have appeared in *Time*, *Life*, *Magazine Digest*, and the *New York Times*, all thoroughly approv-

ing.<sup>9</sup> Original publication of Salter's work in the erudite *Journal of General Psychology* was sponsored by Prof. Clark L. Hull of Yale, who describes autohypnosis as "quite sound." It is certainly "sound" for Mr. Salter, who charges \$500 to \$750 per treatment.

Worst of all the abuses of hypnotic practice are the various forms of stage and parlor entertainment by this means which are now becoming quite common. In 1940, a Los Angeles cultist, Manly P. Hall, gained notoriety by hypnotizing the actor, Bela Lugosi, on a movie set, in order to create "realistic" terror for a scene in a horror picture. Hall was to suggest that the actor was suffocating to death. He did, and the entranced Lugosi experienced so deep a terror that he broke the strongly braced wall of the set in trying to escape. Then he collapsed on the floor. A doctor found his pulse had reached 160.<sup>10</sup>

The possibilities of mass hypnotism were demonstrated recently in connection with a radio program. The operator was Howard Klein, an entertainer who during the war performed hypnotic experiments in Army camps, using soldiers for subjects. In the case of the radio program, Klein

appeared to observers to hypnotize more than half of a group of volunteers in a closed room out of sight. His voice was carried to them over a loud-speaker but did not go on the air. The success of this experiment inspired a plan for Klein to try to hypnotize an entire radio audience, but it was stopped by horrified executives who pointed out that if Klein hypnotized 100,000 listeners, probably 10,000 would sue for damages. Men driving cars might be put into a trance and their cars wrecked, invalids might have relapses, and almost every crime committed while Klein was on the air would be blamed on him.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the obvious hazards of hypnotism, the writer who reported this description of Klein's exploit ended his article by telling the readers of *American Magazine* that there is hope for "enormous good" from hypnotism because "the younger generation is coming out of colleges with no prejudice against hypnotism and with a real curiosity as to its practical possibilities."

Apparently Klein, like some other modern hypnotists, sometimes relies on his voice to induce hypnosis in his subjects, without causing them to gaze at a bright object. This method, while different from that introduced by Braid, also employs the principle of vibration,

<sup>9</sup>Respectively, issues of June 6, 1941; Nov. 11, 1941; January, 1942; June 8, 1941.

<sup>10</sup>New York *World-Telegram*, Jan. 19, 1940.

<sup>11</sup>"Can You Be Hypnotized?" *American Magazine*, May, 1942.

and doubtless reaches and affects the brain through the sense of hearing instead of through the eye.

A popular account of mass hypnotism appeared recently in *Liberty*, describing the capacity of a white man to hypnotize 100 Zulus. The elderly Norwegian storekeeper, Pedar Titlestad, of Qudeni, Zululand, is pictured standing among the massed bodies of the Zulus, who lay all about on the ground, in deep trance. He had predicted that they would be healed of all ailments when they awoke. "I use my power only for good," he told the *Liberty* writer.<sup>12</sup> Hypnotic experiments on children in the public schools, ending disastrously, have been reported in the press. In 1939 an NEA feature described the hypnotization over the radio of a boy of seventeen. In the latter case the operator was an eleven-year-old girl who broadcast her hypnotic instructions while the subject sat before a receiver in his home, "concentrating" on them. Later, the girl went to the boy's house to restore him to consciousness. A psychologist, it is said, watched the demonstration "with interest."

The *Life* article cited earlier describes and illustrates parlor hypnotism as a "periodic fad," which is said to be "safe enough when conducted by experienced hypnotists." Amateurs, however, may fail to bring subjects out of a trance. On some occasions, *Life* reports, the current of influence may be reversed, the subject hypnotizing the operator, but this happens only when the operator is "extraordinarily inept!"<sup>13</sup> *Look*, another picture magazine, devotes several pages to the "near miracles" of Ralph Slater, in this article the emphasis being on the medical applications of hypnotism. "Long scorned as a kind of black magic," the *Look* editors say, Hypnotism "is recognized today as a growing science."<sup>14</sup> Slater recently demonstrated hypnotic techniques in Carnegie Hall, New York, before an audience of Army, Navy, and civilian physicians and psychiatrists. He told the press that "Slaterism"—his method of hypnosis—is "the swiftest possible approach to the subconscious mind." Volunteer subjects for the exhibition were soldiers and sailors suffering from battle fatigue.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the editors and popular writers about hypnotism say about the "value" and promise of Hypnotism, however they attack

<sup>12</sup>*Liberty*, May 8, 1937; see also Los Angeles *Herald-Express*, Feb. 17, 1939. A chapter in Prof. Estabrooks' *Hypnotism*, condensed in *Science Digest* for October, 1943, described other possibilities of mass hypnosis.

<sup>13</sup>*Life*, Nov. 10, 1941.

<sup>14</sup>*Look*, July 28, 1942.

<sup>15</sup>New York *Daily News*, May 13, 1945.

its critics as deluded by superstition, the fact will remain that it is *both* "a kind of black magic" and a "growing science," although modern knowledge of its scientific aspects is still extremely fragmentary. Theosophical warnings against these practices cannot be too urgent, nor can the grounding of students in the teaching on this important subject be too thorough, in view of the increasing practice of hypnotism, and the spreading idea that it is, after all, "harmless." Theosophists alone have the opportunity to provide an understanding of the dangers of hypnotism, based on occult law, with knowledge to back up their warnings. It is not, as some others are, a subject which students may find much pleasure in studying, nor is the task of controverting popular misconceptions and perversions enjoyable for those who prefer to emphasize areas of agreement between Theosophy and modern science; but the task must be undertaken. For, as H. P. Blavatsky wrote in her charge to the American theosophists:

The experiments made in Hypnotism and Mesmerism are experiments of unconscious, when not of conscious Black Magic. The road is wide and broad which leads to such destruction; and it is but too easy to find; and only too many go ignorantly along it to their own destruction. . . .

Whenever the healer interferes, consciously or unconsciously—with the free mental action of the person he treats, it is—Black Magic. Already these so-called sciences of "Healing" are being used to gain a livelihood. Soon some sharp person will find out that by the same process the minds of others can be influenced in many directions, and the selfish motive of personal gain and money-getting having been once allowed to creep in, the one-time "healer" may be insensibly led on to use his power to acquire wealth or some other object of his desire.

This is one of the dangers of the new cycle, aggravated enormously by the pressure of competition and the struggle for existence. . . .

In your hands, brothers, is placed in trust the welfare of the coming century; and great as is the trust, so great is also the responsibility.

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