

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. ("Hypnotism in Scientific Perspective," *Scientific Monthly*, August, 1929.) 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." (Margaret Goldsmith, *Franz Anton Mesmer*, Doubleday Doran, New York, 1934, p. 172.) 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 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 defilement; his glance, profanation. Against this insidious taint, there is no protection for the passively-receptive subject. The healer holds him under his power, spellbound 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. (*Isis Unveiled* I, 217.)

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 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, metallotherapeuty 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 seance.

("Hypnotism and Theosophy," *Theosophy* XXVII, 58-61. See also, "Hypnotism," *Theosophy* XXV, 311-16.)

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

[From p. 12-17 of the pamphlet "Hypnotism: A Psychic Malpractice"

published by Theosophy Company, Los Angeles]