

Émile Coué and his *Method* (II): Hypnotism, Suggestion, Ego-Strengthening, and Autosuggestion

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Abstract

The Coué *method* is routinely dismissed and universally trivialised as nothing more than a hand-clasp, unwarranted optimism, and a ‘mantra’. Rather than relying on incorrect, inadequate, misleading, and otherwise unreliable accounts, Coué’s own descriptions are exhumed, presented, examined, and employed to reveal the rational, systematic structure of top-down theories, concepts, explanations, terminology, and representations embedded within the complex aggregate of efficacious ego-strengthening activities called the Coué *method*. Consistent with Coué’s emphasis on orthopraxia, simple explanatory models are presented to facilitate a clearer, realistic, and far more productive understanding of the intricacies of the intellectual mechanism underpinning the remarkable approach that Coué conceived, meticulously developed, and incrementally refined over more than two decades of intense daily hypnotic and hypnotherapeutic experiences with a large population of subjects (severally and collectively) – and, further, as lecturer, teacher and demonstrator of his work to audiences of, often, many more than a thousand individuals.

KEY WORDS: autosuggestion, dominant ideas, history of hypnotism, hypnotherapy, hypnotic suggestion, self-hypnosis

NOTE to the Reader

A small number of textual errors and omissions in the final published version of this paper have been corrected.

Otherwise, the original paper’s content remains unchanged.

[Also, please note that, for the reader’s convenience, the original paper’s pagination is indicated as {1}, etc.]

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[Continued from Part I]

Having examined the history of Coué's *méthod* in Part I (Yeates, 2016a), we now move to the representations embedded within the method itself, before examining the clinical delivery of the entire process in Part III (Yeates, 2016c).

1. Preliminary

1.1 *Orthopraxia vs. Orthodoxia*

According to Sokal and Sneath (1963, p.20) the preference for 'top-down' taxonomies over those constructed 'bottom-up' from 'commonsense' (rather than 'scientific') criteria, comes from Darwin's stress on descent from common ancestors (e.g., Darwin, 1859, pp.111-126). Whilst Coué *constructed* his accounts 'bottom-up', he *presented* them as 'top-down' theory-driven practices in order to instill {29} confidence and ensure the highest level of *orthopraxia*, 'correctness of behaviour' (whilst ignoring issues of *orthodoxia*, 'correctness of thought').

2. Reference and Ambiguity

2.1 *Homonymy and Equivocation*

Most ambiguity comes from unintentional *equivocation* ('calling two different things by the same name') or *homonymy* ('different words with the same spelling'). For example, with *scale* ('John *scales* a fish', 'Michael plays *scales* on his tuba', 'John uses *scales* to weigh a fish', 'the *scale* of a disaster', etc.) on its own, one can't identify *scale*'s intended referent – one must know the context in which it is used.

Some examples of equivocation due to lexical ambiguity are:

- *the French teacher*: 'a teacher from France', or 'a person that teaches French'?
- *mind-cure*: 'using *the power of the mind* to cure a real disorder' (see Bucknill, 1855, p.161) or, as some might have it, '*curing a deviant mind*'?
- *psychotherapy*: 'using *the psyche* as a tool to *therapise* a real disorder' (see Dendy, 1853) or, as some might have it, '*therapising a deviant psyche*'?
- *cognitive therapy*: 'using *the cognitions* as a tool to *therapise* a real disorder' (see Frank, 1959, p.3) or, as some might have it, '*therapising deviant cognitions*'?, etc.

2.2 *Polysemy and Ambiguity*

With homonymy (*un-related* meanings: bank = 'riparian boundary', 'financial institution') or *polysemy* (*related* meanings: bank = 'financial institution', 'a building', 'rely upon'), although listeners can't identify a term's unique referent without additional information, many *do* identify a referent – but, unfortunately, the *wrong* referent – and interpret the utterance in the wrong way.

2.3 “Hypnosis”

A technical term has precision only to the extent that it has a unique *referent*. Confusion reigns if the same term is used to denote different referents. Ignoring the medico-Latin *hypnosis*, ‘natural sleep’, Bernheim’s grossly inappropriate term ‘*hypnosis*’ (never used in English before Kingsbury, 1891, pp.160-162), is variously, misleadingly and indiscriminately applied throughout the current literature to, at least, the following substantially different referents:

- (a) an act of hypnotisation: viz., Braid’s *hypnotise*;
 - (b) ‘a hypnotic state’ (one of an infinite number of distinctly different ‘hypnotic states’): viz., Braid’s *hypnotism* (a consequence of being *hypnotised* by a *hypnotist*);
 - (c) ‘the (one-size-fits-all) hypnotic state’ (a non-Braid, non-Moll notion);
 - (d) any non-therapeutic hypnotism-centred activity;
 - (e) any therapeutic hypnotism-centred activity;
- {30}
- (f) ‘hypnotherapy’ in general: viz., Braid’s *psycho-physiology* (“the whole of [those] phenomena which result from the reciprocal actions of mind and matter upon each other”);
 - (g) an entire discipline: viz., Braid’s *neurypnology* (“the doctrine of the influence of dominant ideas in controlling mental and physical action”). (See Braid, 1843, pp.12-13, 1855, p.855; and Moll, 1890, pp.209-213)

3. The Mind

3.1 Metaphor

Given that there’s no agreement on the precise physical location, constituent structure, or functional capacity of ‘*the mind*’, it’s best to treat ‘*the mind*’ as a somewhat capacious hold-all metaphor, and as a *natural kind* (Quine, 1970) that has as many members as there are individual human beings. This theory-neutral approach of treating ‘the mind’ as an abstract metaphor also allows us to avoid the diverting questions of whether explanatory divisions, such as unconscious, subconscious, etc., *actually exist* in some substantial way, or *only exist conceptually in our thoughts about them*. When contrasted with ‘artificial concepts’ like ‘time zones’, however, it’s obvious that ‘the mind’ is a ‘*natural concept*’, like ‘trees’ and ‘cats’; and, because ‘natural concepts’ are readily and universally understood they demand no unique, coherent set of *defining features* (Kihlstrom, 1992, p.304).

3.2 Mind & Brain

Although the physico-chemical engine (‘*the brain*’) and the entity through which we experience mental events (‘*the mind*’) are inextricably linked, no precise set of correlations between the brain’s structures and the gross mental aspects of what goes on inside our heads is ever likely to emerge. Prochaska’s experiments in the 1780s demonstrated that voluntary action was brain-based; whilst reflex action was spine-based. In 1842, by analogy with the stomach-based process of “digestion”, Engledue spoke of brain-based “cerebration” (pp.7-17); and, a little later, Braid asserted:

I look upon the brain simply as the organ of the mind, and the bodily organs as the instruments for upholding the integrity of the bodily frame, and for acquiring and extending its communion with external nature in our present state of existence.

[And, moreover, it is my view] that the mind acts on matter, and is acted on by matter, according to the quality and quantity, and relative disposition of cerebral development.

(Braid, 1843, p.81)

For Carpenter, hypnotic phenomena were due to the mind being fully occupied by operator-suggested ideas, and were generated by means of an “*ideo-motor principle of action*” (1852, p.153). Carpenter (later) spoke of “*unconscious cerebration*” (1853a, pp.818-829) to identify other hidden “reasoning processes” (e.g., suddenly recalling forgotten names). Following Noble’s suggestion, Braid spoke of a *mono-ideo-dynamic principle* being responsible for hypnotic phenomena. The German proto-psychiatrist, Johann Heinroth (c.1818) extended the philosophical concept of *akrasia* (‘weakness of will’) to acting in certain ways (e.g., eating chocolate) despite explicit intentions not to do so; and another German proto-psychiatrist, Rudolf Leubuscher (c.1838) spoke of *aboulia* (‘inability to act’), where one’s body failed to respond to mental commands (such as moving one’s arm).

So, different people, with different theories, applied terms in different ways, to different sets of ‘facts’, to make different distinctions between aspects of ‘the mind’ for different reasons.

4. Dominant Ideas

4.1 Thomas Brown, M.D.

A physician renowned for his structured thinking, diagnostic skills, and prodigious memory, Thomas Brown (1778-1820), held the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University from 1810 until his death in 1820 (see Welsh, 1825). Rather than pronouncing how he found things to be, he taught *how to go about thinking about things*.

Braid studied with Brown, and it was from Brown that he adopted the term “*suggestion*” in the sense applied by hypnotists today (see Yeates, 2013). A confused version of Brown’s work was posthumously published in 1820 (a condensed version in 1827). A fully corrected edition was published in 1851 (Brown, 1851). In one form or another, it was the most popular philosophy text in the English-speaking world for almost 50 years.

4.2 Mental Physiology

Brown’s enterprise of “analyz[ing] the whole into parts, classif[y]ing those parts, and describ[ing] the dynamics of their interaction” (Dixon, 2001, p.299), was to establish a ‘science of mind’, which Brown denoted “*mental physiology*” – “the physiology of the mind, considered as a substance capable of the various modifications, or states, which constitute, as they succeed each other, the phenomena of thought and feeling” (1851, §.II, p.5).

4.3 Suggestion and the Philosopher

Asserting that ‘the mind’ could not exist in more than one arrangement (“*state*”) at any one time, Brown examined trains of thought, and the way that later ideas were systematically suggested by earlier ideas, from two perspectives:

- (a) *mental chemistry*: scientific analysis and reduction of the complex mental states into their simpler components – by an “*intellectual analyst*” (§.XI, p.64) – thus, “*intellectual chemistry*”; and;
- (b) *mental physics*: discovery of regularities and consistencies through which mental states succeeded one another through “the observation and arrangement of the sequences of phenomena, as respectively antecedent and consequent” (§.IX, p.53), thus, “*intellectual physics*”.

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4.4 Emergent Properties

Anticipating Mill’s “heteropathic laws of causation” (Mill, 1882, III.X4, pp.315-317) and Lewes’s “emergent properties” (Lewes, 1875, p.412), Brown noted that, as in chemistry – where compounds have properties that can’t be predicted from their constituent ingredients, and where certain compounds, once constructed, are indivisible – certain mental ‘states’, consequent upon complex changes in mental physiology, are irreversible (§.XI, p.64).

4.5 Suggestion and the Physician

Brown studied the conditions we now call *psychosomatic disorders*, especially the “Swiss Disease” phenomenon (denoted *nostalgia*, ‘homesickness’, by Johannes Hofner in 1688) – a deep melancholy afflicting the Vatican’s mercenary Swiss Guard, the only known cure for which was a permanent return to the soldier’s home village (see Anspach, 1934; Rosen, 1975; Nikelly, 2004; and Sedikides, et al., 2004). He was just as interested in *somato-psychic* influences on the mind as he was in psycho-somatic influences on the body: “Certain states of our bodily organs are directly followed by certain states or affections of our mind; certain states or affections of our mind are directly followed by certain states of our bodily organs” (Brown, 1851, §.XVII, p.106).

4.6 Suggestion and the Poet

Displaying an enthusiasm for poetry far beyond his talent, Brown published many works (1804; 1808; 1814; 1815; 1816; 1817; 1818; 1819); but, apart from one incomplete item (1820), he published no philosophical works in his lifetime. Given his brilliance as a philosopher, many were greatly upset that he wasted so much time, over so many years, producing what many of his contemporaries considered to be such second-rate verse, when he could have been writing detailed accounts of his philosophy:

The frequency with which the poetical works of Dr. Brown succeeded each other began to excite remark.

And while the devotion of his mind to poetry, to the neglect, as was supposed, of philosophy, was objected to him by his enemies almost as a moral defect in his character, even those who were inclined to judge more favourably, regretted it as a weakness that materially injured his reputation.

(Welsh, 1825, p.393)

Given the evocative characteristics of poetry it seems inevitable that Brown, the *poet manqué*, would become so deeply interested, as a philosopher, in the regularities with which ideas presented to the mind (“suggesting ideas”) became *dominant* and, then, via the “suggesting principle”, suggested others (“suggested ideas”).

4.7 Braid's Position

In 1855, Braid explained the “*mono-ideo-dynamic*, or unconscious muscular action from a dominant idea possessing the mind” to the *British Association for the Advancement of Science*:

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... when the attention of man or animal is deeply engrossed or absorbed by a given idea associated with movement, a current of nervous force is sent into the muscles which produces a corresponding motion, not only *without* any conscious effort of volition, but even in *opposition* to volition, in many instances; and hence they seem to be irresistibly drawn, or spellbound, according to the purport of the dominant idea or impression in the mind of each at the time. The volition is prostrate; the individual is so completely *mono-ideised*, or under the influence of the dominant idea, as to be incapable of exerting an efficient restraining or opposing power to the dominant idea ...

(Braid, 1856, p.120)

5. Regularities, and “*hypothesis non fingo*”

5.1 Isaac Newton

In 1713, remarking “*hypothesis non fingo*” (lit. ‘I feign no hypothesis [as to its mechanism]’), Isaac Newton wrote that, despite having described law-like regularities of gravity at considerable length, he would not speculate on their underlying cause (Cohen, 1962; 1999, pp.274-277).

5.2 Thomas Brown

In Brown’s account of trains of thought, he said that, whilst he had detailed the “antecedents and consequents which succeed[ed] each other in regular series” and, while an analogous set of mental forces were obviously behind those regularities, he would adopt Newton’s *hypothesis non fingo*, and refuse to speculate on the forces’ structures (1851, §.IX, p.52).

5.3 James Braid

In 1843, Braid remarked that hypnotic phenomena ensued from ‘hypnotic states’ because that’s just how things were: “it is a law of the animal economy that such effects should follow such [a] condition of mind and body”. And, asserting that “this is a *fact* which cannot be controverted”, he refused to speculate further on underlying mechanisms:

As to the *modus operandi* we may never be able to account for that in a manner so as to satisfy all objections; but neither can we tell why the law of gravitation should act as experience has taught us it *does* act.

Still, as our ignorance of the cause of gravitation acting as it is known to do, does not prevent us profiting by an accumulation of the facts known as to its results, so ought not our ignorance of the *whole* laws of the hypnotic state to prevent our studying it practically, and applying it beneficially, when we have the power of doing so.

(Braid, 1843, p.32)

5.4 William Carpenter

For Carpenter, Braid's hypnotic phenomena were produced by 'dominant ideas':

[they] consist in the occupation of the mind by the ideas which have been suggested to it, and in the influence which these ideas exert upon {34} the actions of the body ... It is not really the will of the operator which controls the sensations of the subject; but the suggestion of the operator which excites a corresponding idea ... [Such ideas] not only [produce nonvolitional] muscular movements, but other bodily changes [as well] ...
(Carpenter, 1852, p.148)

To reconcile the hypnotic phenomena "with the known laws of nervous action" and, without elaborating on mechanism (*hypothesis non fingo!*), Carpenter offered a metaphorical "*ideo-motor* principle of action" to explain "the whole class of purely emotional movements [that] depend upon the excitation of certain states of mind by external impressions" (Carpenter, 1852, p.151).

Maintaining his central, 'dominant idea' position – "I endeavour to rid the mind at once of all ideas but one, and to fix that one in the mind *even after passing into the hypnotic state*" (Braid, 1843, p.50) – Braid adopted Carpenter's metaphor, and began speaking of a *mono-ideo-motor principle of action*.

5.5 Daniel Noble

In 1853, Noble suggested that *ideo-motor* was too narrow a term, and that *ideo-dynamic* "was applicable to a wider range of phenomena" (Noble, 1853, p.71; 1854, p.642). Both Carpenter and Braid agreed; and from that time, Braid spoke of a *mono-ideo-dynamic principle of action* generating hypnotic phenomena (e.g., Braid, 1855, p.852).

5.6 Hippolyte Bernheim

In 1891, Bernheim offered a "*law of ideodynamism*" (Sandor, 1980, pp.22-32): "every suggested idea which is accepted becomes an action, that is, a sensation, an image, or a movement". No-one knows the "organization [of the] laborious unconscious cerebration work [that takes place] without our awareness", said Bernheim; or how "unconscious cerebration [actually generates] a visible and tangible product of the mind". All we know is "the idea or initial sensation (the port of entry [*'la porte d'entrée'*]) and the definitive conception (the result, the port of exit [*'la porte de sortie'*])". A suggestion "is made"; "the impression becomes an idea"; "the idea is accepted by the brain" in an inwardly directed "*centripetal*" process ("*phénomène centripète*"); "as the result of the suggestion", it converts into an outwardly directed "*centrifugal*" process ("*phénomène centrifuge*") and is realised by "the exteriorization of the idea" (*hypothesis non fingo!*). Bernheim offered four examples (Sandor, 1980, pp.29-32):

- (a) *The idea becomes a sensation*: "the idea that one has fleas produces a real itching".
- (b) *The idea becomes an image or visual sensation*: "a true hallucination".
- (c) *The idea becomes a visceral sensation*: e.g., vomiting after ingesting water that one has been told is an emetic.
- (d) *The idea becomes movement*: e.g., the movement of a hand-held pendulum (see Chevreul, 1854; Spitz and Marcuard, 2001).

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5.7 *Émile Coué and Charles Baudouin*

Sporadically, all throughout his work, Coué would refer (indirectly) to an *auto-suggestive* agency through which ‘dominant’ ideas were realised – e.g., “Every thought entirely filling our mind becomes true for us and tends to transform itself into action” (1922a, p.15) – and Baudouin chose to speak (specifically) of an “*ideoreflex power*” (1920, p.26).

6. Scientific Hypnotism

By definition (see Weitzenhoffer, 2000, *passim*), *scientific hypnotism* centres on the delivery of ‘suggestions’ to hypnotised subjects, intended to elicit:

- (a) the further stimulation of partially active mental states/physiological processes;
- (b) the awakening of dormant mental states/physiological processes;
- (c) the activation of latent mental states/physiological processes;
- (d) alterations in existing perceptions/thoughts/feelings/behaviours; and or
- (e) entirely new perceptions/thoughts/feelings/behaviours.

6.1 *Pre-Induction Preparation*

Prior to inducing hypnotism (especially an initial hypnotisation) the hypnotist must:

- (a) establish a strong rapport with the subject (‘rapport’, once established, increases the hypnotist’s ‘prestige’, and, thus, the ‘prestige’ of their suggestions);
- (b) ensure that all queries, issues, fears, superstitions, and misconceptions have been articulated, clearly understood, and satisfactorily dealt with;
- (c) create a positive attitude to the subject’s choice of hypnotherapy; and
- (d) confirm the efficacy and appropriateness of the chosen procedure.

Obviously, anyone voluntarily presenting for treatment already has a significant level of *response expectancy* (see Kirsch, 1997), and is far more likely to respond to suggestion:

When a patient comes for treatment, and is really in search of health, no matter how little he may appear to be in harmony with the suggestions given, his very search for health creates a sympathy for suggestions, since he would really like to believe and accept them.
(Parkyn, 1900, p.15)

6.2 *Hypnotic Suggestion*

One is only a ‘hypnotist’ if one induces ‘hypnotism’; and an idea is only a ‘suggestion’ if it ‘suggests’ something. We can stipulate (i) that ‘suggestions’ are goal-directed communications (e.g., Freud, 1891/1966, p.111), (ii) that ‘suggestion’ is the ideodynamic means through which ‘suggestions’ are realised (e.g., Baudouin, 1920, p.26), and (iii) that, as Janet (1920, pp.284-285) noted, the critical feature is not the *making* of a ‘suggestion’, it’s the *taking* of the ‘suggestion’. Furthermore, ‘suggestions’ have four temporal dimensions:

- (a) *pre-hypnotic suggestions*, delivered prior to the formal induction;
 - (b) *suggestions for within-hypnotic influence*, to elicit specific within-session outcomes;
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- (c) *suggestions for post-hypnotic influence*, to elicit specific post-session outcomes:
 - (i) *immediate influence* (“and, on leaving here today, you’ll...”);
 - (ii) *shorter-term influence* (“and, each time you’re...”);
 - (iii) *longer-term influence* (“and, as time passes, you’ll increasingly...”); or
 - (iv) *specific-moment influence* (Bernheim’s *suggestions à longue échéance*, ‘suggestions to be realised after a long interval’), which are (i) intended “to produce a particular effect at a designated later hour”, (ii) have “no influence before the appointed hour”, (iii) nor “after it had expired” (Barrows, 1896, pp.22-23), or
 - (d) *post-hypnotic suggestions*, delivered to dehypnotised-but-not-yet-completely-reoriented subjects.
- There is a strong tradition that these suggestions are the most efficacious.

7. Explanatory Models

7.1 The “Imaginarium”

From the decision to remain theory-neutral – and the further, productive decision to treat ‘*the mind*’ as an abstract, metaphorical concept – we can graphically represent ‘*the mind*’ and its inter-connections as displayed in Fig.1; and then, from that understanding, and by actively employing one of Lakoff and Johnston’s “container metaphors” (1980, pp.29-32) we can also conceptualise a dedicated, metaphorical “*container of ideation*”, situated deep within ‘*the mind*’, which we will designate “*the Imaginarium*”, as represented in Fig.2.

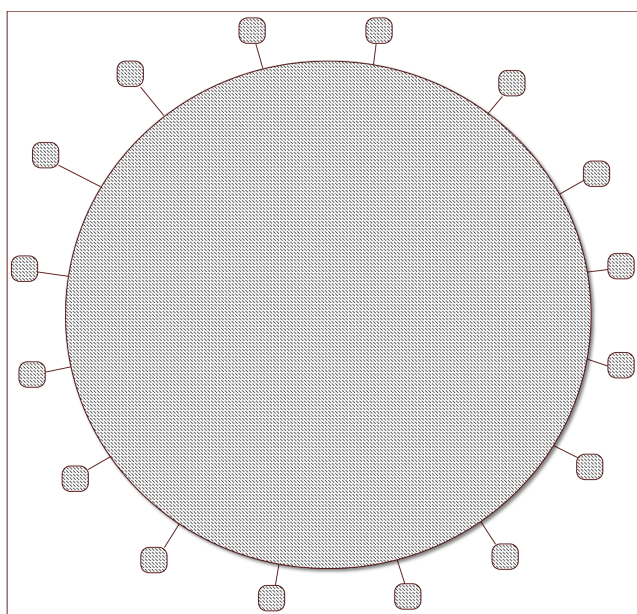


Fig.1. The mind, and the peripheral two-way linkages between the mind and the structural, cognitive, attitudinal, emotional, biochemical, physiological, behavioural, etc. functions.

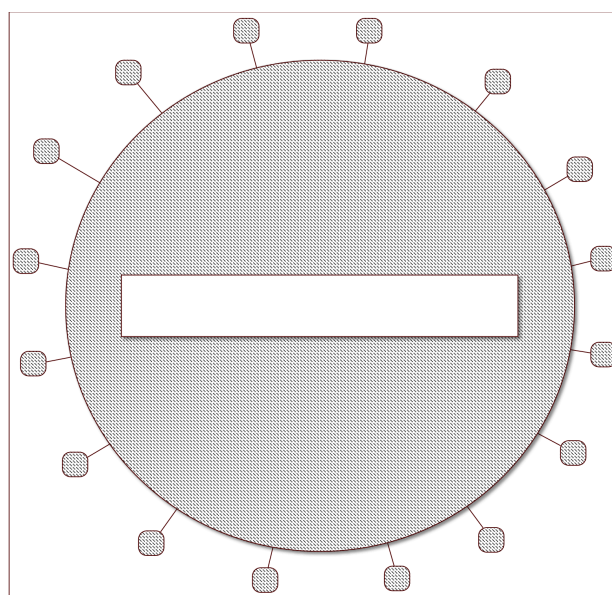


Fig.2. The *Imaginarium*: the container of *ideation*.

...
...

7.2 Dominant Ideas

We can now represent the ‘*the mind*’ in its normal ‘state’ – with the Imaginarium replete with all sorts of random ideas, directed at the functions in all sorts of ways – as shown in Fig.3. This move, in its turn, allows us to represent the special situation of the *Imaginarium* holding one, single, ‘dominant idea’ (‘dominant’ because it has *saturated the cognitive environment of the mind*) that influences all of the functions in some symmetrical way, as shown in Fig.4.

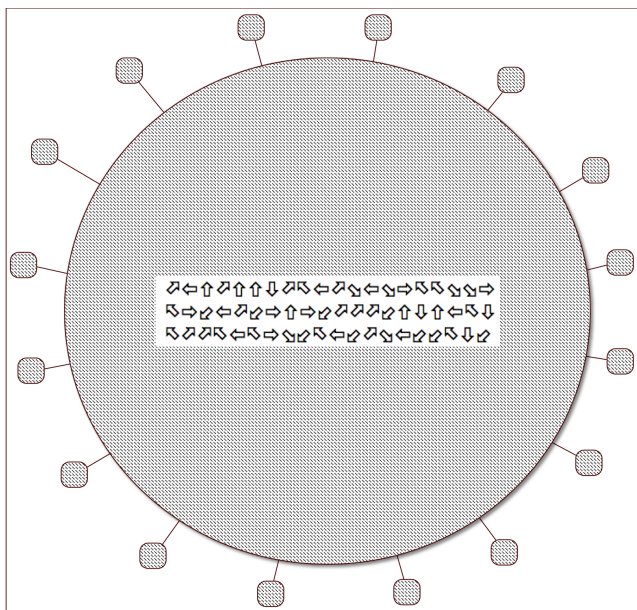


Fig.3. The *Imaginarium*: as the container of everyday random ideation.

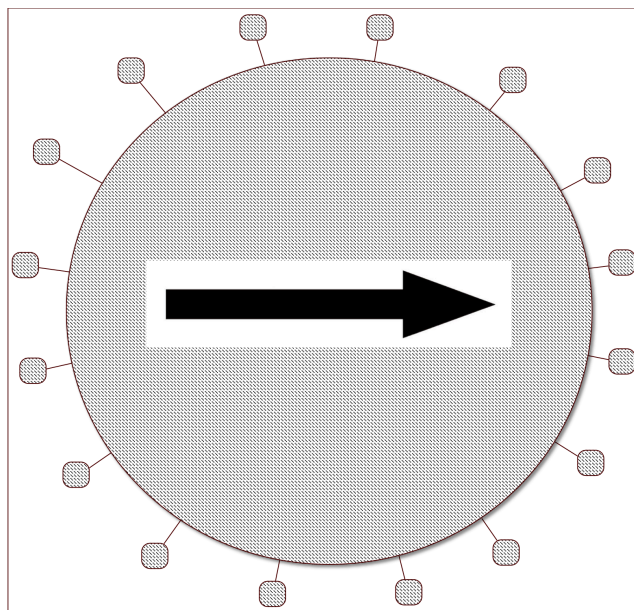


Fig.4. The *Imaginarium*: the container of a ‘dominant idea’.

The representation in Fig.4 highlights the similarity between different sorts of ‘dominant idea’ – the negative/bizarre ideation of depression and schizophrenia; the notion “I must save myself ” on hearing “Fire!” in a crowded theatre; the immersion in listening to music; the recall of long-forgotten things on seeing an old snapshot; the hope that the champion’s now-airborne shot will score the winning goal with only three seconds left in the match, etc.

7.3 The Act of Hypnotisation

Hypnotism significantly increases the closeness between psychological and physiological processes and brings many (otherwise) non-volitional physiological processes under volitional control. Given that an idea is “the mind existing in a certain state” (Brown, 1851, §.XXV, p.157), successful hypnotisation increases the potency of particular ideas in two mutually interactive ways: (i) subjects attend more to their current ideation, and (ii) attend less to other impressions/stimuli/sensations.

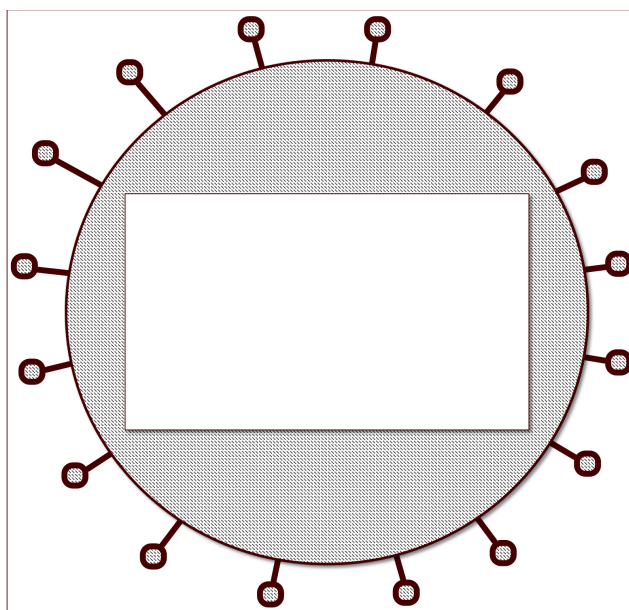


Fig.5. The volume of the *Imaginarium*, and the interactive strength of the mind's connections with all the various functions, are significantly increased as a consequence of hypnotisation.

A major goal (if not *the* major goal) of hypnotisation is the deliberate, intentional creation of an *Imaginarium* that is of such size, robustness, and impermeability that whatever ideation it contains is immune from outside influence; and, moreover, an *Imaginarium* of such volume that subsequent hypnotism-centred intervention can proceed with minimum cognitive effort and maximum efficacy. The cognitive and physiological consequences of the ‘*the mind*’ being in the ‘hypnotic state’, is represented in Fig.5 – a much larger *Imaginarium*, and a far stronger and far more active connectivity between ‘the mind’ and the various functions/processes.

7.4 Consequences of Hypnotisation

With a larger *Imaginarium*, random thoughts become more intense (which explains why hypnotism is contraindicated in schizophrenia), as shown in Fig.6; and a ‘dominant idea’ has a much stronger presence in a hypnotised subject, as shown in Fig.7.

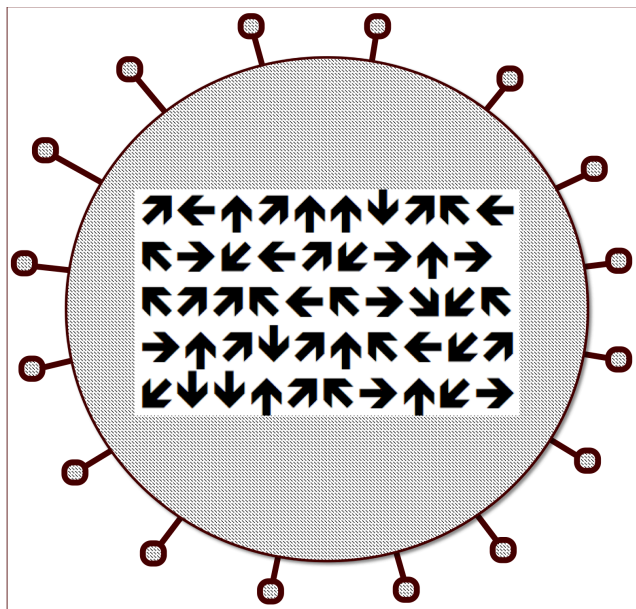


Fig.6. Random ideas occupying the entire *Imaginarium* subsequent to hypnotisation.

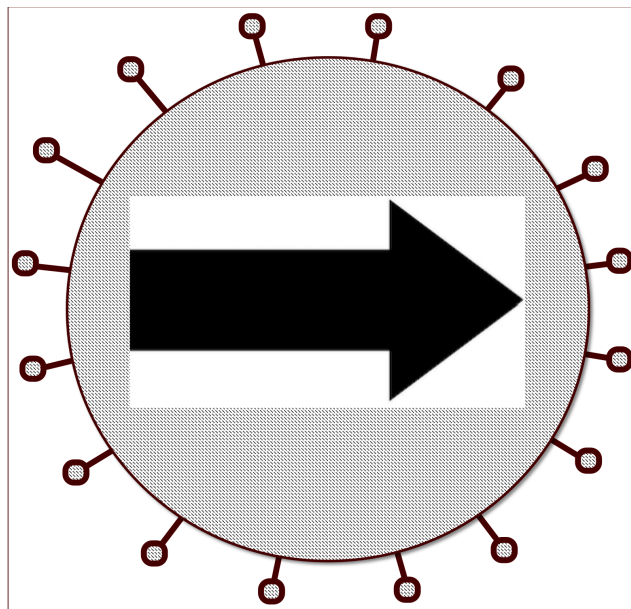


Fig.7. A dominant idea occupying the entire *Imaginarium* subsequent to hypnotisation.

The extent to which particular *ideation* is of such unequivocal clarity, intensity, and in occupation of such a proportion of the *Imaginarium's* volume, is the extent to which it is dominant, and the extent to which a particular idea saturates the microcognitive environment of ‘the mind’ (i.e., is ‘dominant’) is a product of four mutually potentiating factors:

- (a) *Imaginarium volume*: comparatively larger *Imaginarium* volumes are produced by more-appropriate-to-task hypnotisation processes;
- (b) *linguistic clarity and cognitive simplicity*: an idea’s simple, unequivocal clarity eliminates mind-diverting criticism/analysis (Yeates, 2002, 2014a, 2014b);
- (c) *proportion of Imaginarium occupied*: the extent to which the *making* of the suggestion has resulted in the subsequent *taking* of the suggestion; and;
- (d) *extent to which the idea is expressed in positive terms*: (“be still” vs. “don’t move”, etc.) promotes the *misattribution of the source of the suggestion to the subject’s own ideation* – again, significantly reducing mind-diverting criticism/analysis.

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7.5 The Ideodynamic Principle of Action

The *ideodynamic principle of action* displayed in Fig.8 is consistent with the parenthetical comment made in 1923, by Coué, when directing a subject's hand-clasp experience:

[In this case] it is not what I shall say which will take place, but what the [subject] will think. [If they think what I ask them to think,] it will take place.

If they think the contrary, the contrary will take place.

I don't try to oblige people to make these experiments. *It is no hypnotism, it is no suggestion on my part, it is only autosuggestion on the part of the person ...*

(Coué, 1923a, p.120, emphasis added)

In order for something to be 'a stimulus' or 'a suggestion', it must be perceived and interpreted by the subject: *the stimulus must have created a percept*. Then, according to Brown (§.XXXIV, p.217, etc.), this "suggestive idea" is transformed into a "suggested idea" by an (otherwise unexplained) "suggestive principle" (*hypothesis non fingo!*); and, then, the "suggested idea" is converted into a corresponding ideomotor, ideosensory, or ideoaffective action, by the *ideodynamic principle of action*—a process which then, in its turn, generates the response. All these activities are a consequence of the *ideation* held in the *Imaginarium*.

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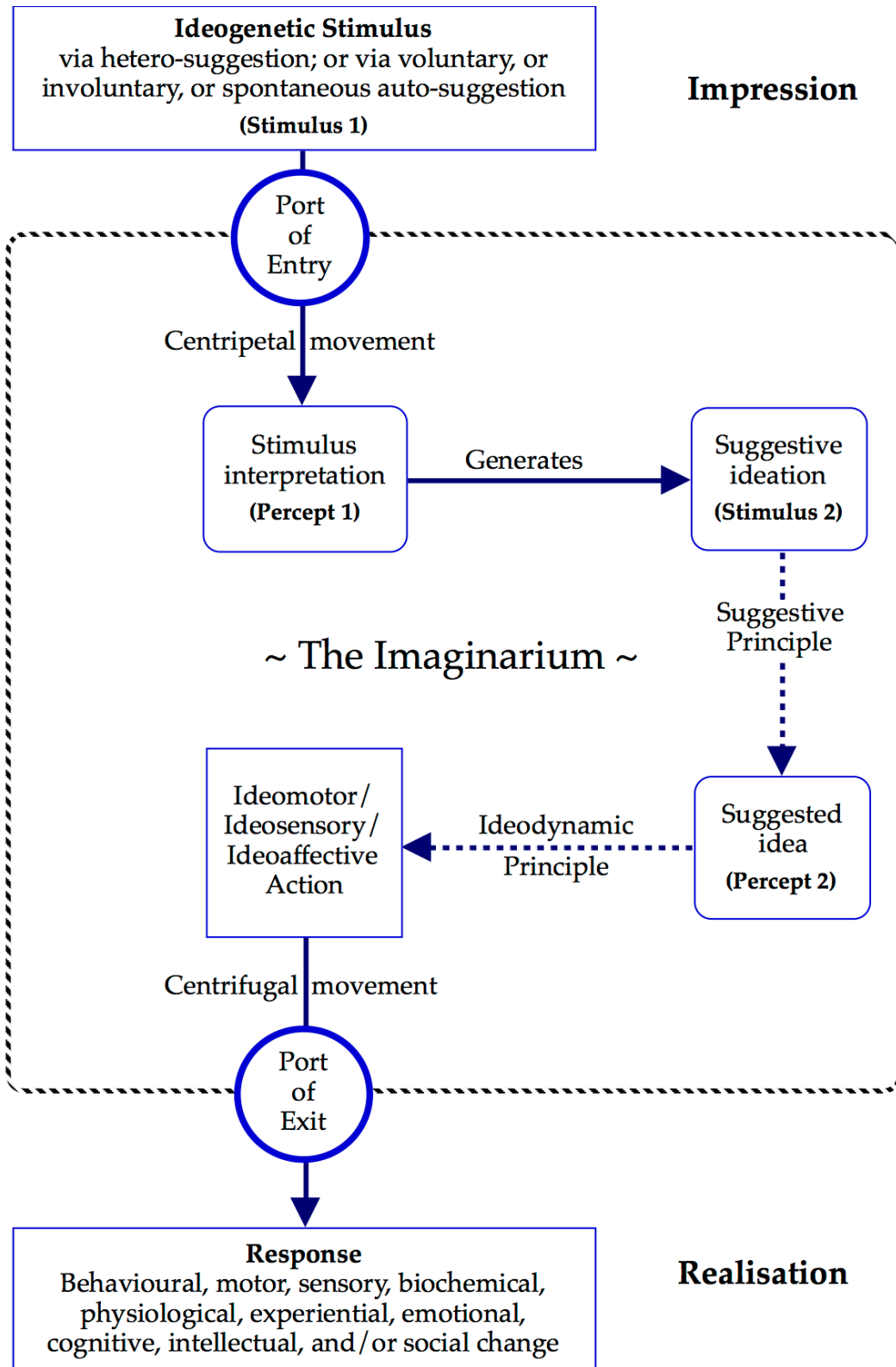


Fig.8. The ideodynamic principle of action.

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Coué identified two types of self-suggestion: (i) intentional, “*reflective auto-suggestion*” made by deliberate and conscious effort, and (ii) involuntary “*spontaneous auto-suggestion*”, a “natural phenomenon of our mental life ... which takes place without conscious effort [and has its effect] with an intensity proportional to the keenness of [our] attention” (Baudouin, 1920, pp.33-34). Baudouin identified three different sources of spontaneous suggestion:

- A. Instances belonging to the representative domain (sensations, mental images, dreams, visions, memories, opinions, and all intellectual phenomena);
- B. Instances belonging to the affective domain (joy or sorrow, emotions, sentiments, tendencies, passions);
- C. Instances belonging to the active or motor domain (actions, volitions, desires, gestures, movements at the periphery or in the interior of the body, functional or organic modifications).

(Baudouin, 1920, p.41)

From Fig.8, the continuously misrepresented and generally misinterpreted (but entirely correct) claim, that *all ‘suggested’ things are ultimately self-suggested*, can now be clearly and unequivocally understood in the way it was intended – e.g., according to William Brown:

Hetero-suggestion [is] suggestion implanted in a patient by another person [and] auto-suggestion [is] a suggestion implanted in a patient by himself.
In so far as all forms of suggestion must be *accepted* by the patient himself in order to take effect, all suggestion may be called auto-suggestion.

(Brown, 1922, p.103)

8. The Selves, Will, and Imagination

Created to impose order on randomness and enhance a subject’s *orthopraxia*, Coué’s simple explanations were not designed to expound speculative theories to an academic audience.

Coué shared the theoretical position that Hudson had expressed in his *Law of Psychic Phenomena* (1893) – a significant and important work based upon Hudson’s extensive study of hypnotic phenomena, the hypnotic state, and mental therapeutics (which had greatly influenced the representations featured in the American correspondence course) – that our “mental organization” was such that it seemed as if we had “two minds, each endowed with separate and distinct attributes and powers; [with] each capable, under certain conditions, of independent action” (p.25); and, for explanatory purposes, it was entirely irrelevant, argued Hudson, whether *we actually had* “two distinct minds”, whether we *only seemed to be* “endowed with a dual mental organization”, or whether *we actually had* “one mind [possessed of] certain attributes and powers under some conditions, and certain other attributes and powers under other conditions” (pp.25-26).

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8.1 *Conscious vs. Unconscious Self*

Coué had no time for Freud or his theories (Rapp, 1987, p.27). He consistently used *conscious* and *unconscious* in their everyday sense of something done with alert awareness (or not). Often referring to ‘the mind’ and ‘the state of mind of a person’, he distinguished between a ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious self’ within all of us. Later, he was prone to speak of ‘the unconscious’ in preference to Baudouin’s ‘the subconscious’, from a view that his subjects might imply that the ‘*sub-*’ in *subconscious* indicated a somewhat lesser entity.

Others, with different goals, made other distinctions: e.g., Hudson spoke of “objective” and “subjective minds” (1893, p. 26); Parkyn spoke of “voluntary” and “involuntary minds” (1900, p.14); Quackenbos spoke of “objective” and “subjective selves” (1900, p.5); Atkinson spoke of “conscious” and “sub-conscious minds” (1909, p.180); and so on.

8.2 *The Will vs. The Imagination*

Given the universal misrepresentation of Coué’s terminology, it must be emphatically stressed that, when Coué spoke of “*the will*” and “*the imagination*”, he used the term ‘will’ in the sense of it being a trait, rather than a virtue (see Kugelmann, 2013, *passim*, on the concept of ‘*willpower*’), and used the term ‘imagination’ in the simpler, vernacular sense of how one generally supposes that things are (‘how I imagine things to be’), and not in the far more scientific sense of the capacity to form internal ideas (or images) of situations (or objects) that are not physically present. Baudouin (1920, pp.274-275), who studied with Henri Bergson, thought the relation between Coué’s concepts of “*imagination*” and “*will*” was the same as that which existed between Bergson’s concepts of “*intuition*” and “*intelligence*”, respectively.

8.3 *Coué’s Representation*

Given that his typical audience could easily distinguish between alert activities, such as counting goats, and unconscious, non-volitional activities, such as digesting food, Coué spoke of four significant dimensions of human performance:

- (a) *awareness*: some processes were ‘conscious’; others were ‘unconscious’;
- (b) *causation*: some actions were ‘volitional’; others were ‘non-volitional’;
- (c) *agency*: the ‘conscious self’ performed volitional acts; the ‘unconscious self’ performed non-volitional acts; and
- (d) *faculties*: “*the will*” and “*the imagination*” (he used these expansive terms (i) to distinguish the conscious process that directs our voluntary movements from that which (unconsciously) directs our involuntary movements; or, in other contexts, and in a far more abstract way, (ii) to distinguish between rational knowledge and one’s unconsciously-held beliefs, self-evaluations, non-negotiable values, etc.).

8.4 Coué's Approach

Self-suggestion clearly existed, Coué said, but it was more than just asserting something. An idea had to be unconsciously 'taken', and converted into an {44} autosuggestion, before it could have an effect. It wasn't just asserting, "I want X to happen"; the 'unconscious self' would respond, "You want it, but you won't get it!". With such an assertion vs. counter-assertion clash, not only would you fail to obtain whatever was demanded, but, due to the strength of the abrupt (unconscious) rejoinder, you would obtain the exact opposite (1912, p.31-32).

This crucial observation was precisely why, he said, all efforts to treat "moral affections" by "rehabilitating the will" were useless; instead, one had to "train the imagination". His consistent success, where others consistently failed, he said, was entirely due to this subtle difference. Therefore, just as one must be taught to read, or write, or play the piano, one must be taught how to practise efficacious conscious autosuggestion.

In summary, his position was based on the following principles:

- (a) one's mind can't hold two contradictory thoughts at the same time;
- (b) only one idea could be 'dominant' at any one time;
- (c) an idea, once 'dominant', is transformed into an actual physical or mental state;
- (d) "the imagination" is more powerful than rational knowledge;
- (e) any effort to conquer an idea by exerting "the will" only makes that idea more powerful; and
- (f) once a 'dominant' idea occupies the *Imaginarium*, it remains there unchanged until it is replaced by another.

8.5 Coué's Four Observations

In his first lecture (1912, p.31), Coué articulated four central principles concerning the relation between *consciously suggested* and *unconsciously held ideas*:

- (a) Whenever "the will" and "the imagination" are antagonistic, "the imagination" always wins out, without exception.
- (b) (By analogy with the *inverse square law*) whenever there's a conflict between "the will" and "the imagination", the power of "the imagination" is always (metaphorically) in direct proportion to the square of "the will".
- (c) (By analogy with *arithmetic* and *geometric progressions*) whenever there's an agreement between "the will" and "the imagination", rather than (metaphorically) adding to one another, the two of them (metaphorically) multiply each other.
- (d) "The imagination" can be directed.

9. Baudouin's "Laws"

9.1 Charles Baudouin

Charles Baudouin (1893-1963), a Nancy-born psychoanalyst, and a sometime student of Henri Bergson, Edouard Claparède (and Pierre Bouvet), Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and Sigmund Freud, established the *International Institute of Psychagogy and Psychotherapy* in 1924. Coué had treated Baudouin's mother on at least one {45} occasion (Orton, 1935, p.94); and, before leaving to study in Geneva (c.1912), Baudouin spent 18-months observing and studying with Coué at his Nancy clinic. He was a member of Coué's Lorraine Society of Applied Psychology for several decades.

9.2 "Suggestion and Autosuggestion"

In 1920, Baudouin was awarded a Ph.D. by Geneva University for his dissertation, *Suggestion and Autosuggestion*. Parts of that dissertation, plus copious material from his own lectures, and accounts of his post-Coué theories and practices (e.g., Baudouin's use of a pendulum, pp.208-217), were published in French and English. Originally, the English translation sold few copies; finally, based on good reviews, it continued to sell well for the next fifty years (Unwin, 1976, p.216).

While slightly modified versions of his 1912 lecture, plus case studies, snippets from lectures, demonstrations, and interactions with individuals (1922a, 1922b, 1922e, 1923a, etc.), or 'ghost-written' newspaper articles (1923b), were published in his name, Coué wrote nothing, and left that task to others. Fortunately, buried deep within Baudouin's (*otherwise entirely Coué-irrelevant*) ponderous tome are several 'nuggets' containing valuable and important observations about Coué's work (viz., 1920, pp.114-118, 153-164, and 257-258).

9.3 "Laws"

Baudouin was convinced that Coué's approach embodied six principles (of such systematic regularity that he called four of them "Laws"). His account of these principles, which have been extensively disseminated over the years (mostly in truncated, incomplete, inaccurate, or imprecise versions), continues to influence hypnotherapeutic theory and practice today.

9.3.1 First Principle

The Law of Concentrated Attention (*loi de l'attention concentrée*): whenever one's attention is concentrated on a particular idea over and over again, the idea tends to spontaneously realise itself (p.114) – once again, Thomas Brown's 'dominant idea'.

9.3.2 Second Principle

The Law of Auxiliary Emotion (*loi de l'émotion auxiliaire*): one's attention is far more intensely concentrated on an idea that is associated with a strong emotion: "When, for one reason or other, an idea is enveloped in a powerful emotion, there is more likelihood that this idea will be suggestively realized" (p.114). Baudouin offers "stage fright", and the amnesia of examination candidates as examples:

A candidate who knows his subject perfectly well may suddenly be stricken with suggestive amnesia.

In essence there is no difference between this and the forgetfulness of a proper name in ordinary conversation; but the examinee's amnesia is far more intense, its higher degree corresponding with the greater intensity of the emotion.

Violent emotion appears to heighten the force of suggestions of any kind.

Intense fear may thus have two very different results, the divergence {46} depending on the nature of the idea present in the mind.

Fear may glue the feet to the ground. A motor dashes round the corner when you are walking in the middle of the road; you are afraid you will not be able to get out of the way in time, and consequently you cannot move a step.

On the other hand, fear may restore the use of his legs to a paralytic. In 1915, in one of the air-raids on Paris, a paralyzed woman living on the fifth storey found herself in the porter's lodge on the ground floor, without knowing how she had got there; a bomb had exploded close at hand, and she had fled downstairs in a moment; the idea of flight at all hazards had seized her mind, and under the influence of the violent emotion this idea had been transformed into action.

Emotion, it might be said, instantaneously raises an idea to the boiling point, intensifies it to the degree when it can become an effective force.

(1920, pp.115-116)

This "Law" also (implicitly) states that, whenever two ideas co-exist, (i) an idea linked to an emotion will 'outrank' any other, and (ii) an idea linked to a 'stronger' emotion, such as fear, will always 'outrank' ideas linked to 'weaker' emotions, such as pleasure. As a matter of interest, Weitzenhoffer (1989) suggested that three additional "Laws" applied to clashes between mutually antagonistic and, yet, otherwise equal suggestions:

- (i) **The Law of Temporal Precedence:** the first suggestion given "will have precedence over the others [involved in the clash]" (p.77).
- (ii) **The Law of Impressional Precedence:** "the suggestion being impressed the most strongly has precedence. 'Impressed' means the extent, complexity, stability, and permanence of the associations that are formed between a suggestion and already existing determinants of the suggested effect" (pp.77-78).
- (iii) **The Law of Depth Precedence:** "the suggestion associated with the greater depth of hypnosis ... will have precedence over the others" (pp.78).

9.3.3 Third Principle

The Law of Reverse Effort (*loi de l'effort converti*): explained as follows:

When an idea imposes itself on the mind to such an extent as to give rise to a suggestion, all the conscious efforts which the subject makes in order to counteract this suggestion are not merely without the desired effect, but they actually run counter to the subject's conscious wishes and tend to intensify the suggestion.

The efforts are spontaneously reversed so as to reinforce the effect of the dominant idea. Whenever anyone is in the state of mind, "I should like to, but I cannot", he may wish as much as he pleases; but the harder he tries, the less he is able.

(1920, p.116, emphasis in original).

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The more you try to stop thinking about some thing, the more it will persist (Wegner, 1989, p.64). To verify you're no longer thinking of "it", you must think of "it" once again (activating the "Law of Concentrated Attention"). This "Law" reminds us that, "conscious efforts to counteract a suggestion only serve to intensify its action [which is, of course,] the principle behind such Ericksonian-like utterances as: 'The more you try to resist entering hypnosis, the more relaxed you become'" (Edmonston, 1986, p.181). It also strongly warns against making conscious effort to realise suggestions; and – from the self-evident fact that often-realised noxious autosuggestions are only realised "because they are made without effort" – Coué stipulated that, "when you make conscious autosuggestions, do it naturally, simply, with conviction, and above all *without any effort*" (1922b, p.36):

I cannot too strongly insist that in the practice of auto-suggestion the exercise of will must be strictly avoided, *except in the initial phase of directing or guiding the imagination along the desired lines.*

This is absolutely the only manifestation of will necessary, or even desirable.

Any other voluntary effort is positively harmful, and will most certainly have an effect contrary to the one desired.

(Coue, 1923b, p.14, emphasis added)

9.3.4 Fourth Principle

The Law of Subconscious Teleology (*loi de la finalité subconsciente*): in relation to hypnotic suggestion and, even, mental imagery, the most important of all: "*When the end has been suggested the subconscious finds a means for its realization*" (1920, p.117). Once a suggestion has 'taken', the mind engages in *goal-directed behaviour* to realise the goal. The physical, physiological, or biochemical means through which goals are to be reached must never be suggested. An outcome is suggested; and, then, it's left entirely to the subject's 'unconscious self' to select the most efficient, effective, appropriate, and permanent way to attain that end.

9.3.5 Fifth Principle

Spontaneous autosuggestion is a phenomenon of everyday occurrence ... [and is, at least, as significant as] the classic form of hypnotic suggestion.

Often, indeed, the results of spontaneous autosuggestion are far more intense and far more lasting than those of hypnotic suggestion.

(1920, pp.117-118)

9.3.6 Sixth Principle

Precisely because they are so powerful, "[we must] keep watch on our spontaneous autosuggestions"; and, particularly, we must avoid mediums and clairvoyants – for their "fantastic prophecies will germinate in our minds into veritable suggestions, and will tend to realize themselves" – and actually generate the events that were prophesied (1920, p.118).

Noting that it *could* be used 'against' a subject by accident or design, Baudouin emphasised that it was a *subject-centred power*, and not an index of *subject impotence* or *subject inferiority* (1920, p.27). He also noted the pernicious influence of 'self-talk':

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When we have occasion to refer to our habitual ailments, we should be careful always to employ the past tense, saying "I have slept badly of late"; instead of the customary present, "I am a bad sleeper", which condenses the present and the future, and involves the future just as much as if we were to say "I shall sleep badly tonight". Furthermore, we should make it a rule to talk as little as possible about our ailments.

(1920, p.118)

10. Suggestions

The following random comments present important aspects of Coué's extremely simple (*non-complex*), but not simple (*easily understood*) process from one useful perspective:

- (a) As a scientist, Coué knew that humans were dynamic, self-regulating organisms with a natural propensity for self-healing (a view that underpins vaccination).
- (b) He directed subjects to do certain (mutually exclusive) things; i.e., rather than directing them to refrain from doing others.
- (c) His process, aimed at *saturating the cognitive microenvironment of the mind*, was based on four non-controversial principles:
 - (i) suggestion can produce somatic phenomena;
 - (ii) *specific* suggestions generate specific somatic outcomes;
 - (iii) suggestions are just as efficacious in the treatment of physical or organic conditions as they are for functional or emotional conditions; and
 - (iv) a successful suggestion-based intervention for a physical condition does not indicate that the original complaint was in any way imaginary.
- (d) Given that most of their operative functioning was beyond their conscious control, Coué sought to saturate each subject's mind with ideas that would naturally generate the desired changes, *through that subject's own, inbuilt ideodynamic 'realising mechanism'*.
- (e) Only one idea can occupy the mind at any one time; so, whenever a 'new' idea was introduced, an already pre-existing idea could be:
 - (i) *magnified*, if the two were in accord with one another;
 - (ii) *nullified*, if the two were equal and opposite; or
 - (iii) *replaced*, if the two were mutually exclusive and the second stronger than the first.
- (f) Each biochemical, physiological, behavioural, motor, emotional, cognitive, intellectual, sensory, experiential or social function is directly connected in some unique fashion to a specific, unique aspect of the mind; and each dedicated *mind-to-target connecting channel* can only transmit a single message in one direction at one time.
- (g) Each dysfunction, abnormality, or impairment is due to a dysfunctional message; or, with absent function, no message at all.

- (h) Coué never attempted to silence a ‘*transmitter*’, and never {49} attempted to block a ‘*channel*’; instead, he earnestly strove to:
- (i) keep all channels open, flowing, and unimpeded;
 - (ii) keep the transmitter broadcasting;
 - (iii) fully saturate the mind’s cognitive microenvironment with the *ideal message*; and
 - (iv) impel that ideal message with *maximum force* along the channel’s pathway with such speed and efficiency that it met the *least resistance* at its target destination.
- (i) Given the proliferation of mind-to-function channels, the transmitter’s power, the appropriateness of the goal-specific function(s) selected, and the accuracy of the mind-to-function targetting involved – and given the need for (i) (hypnotisation maintaining) zero subject arousal, (ii) subject attribution of the message’s source to themselves, and (iii) maximum information transfer with minimum cognitive effort – the message had to be simple (i.e. non-complex), unequivocally precise, and clearly expressed in terms of presence (‘be relaxed’), rather than absence (‘don’t be tense’).

11. Coué’s Formula

It is important to recognise that Coué’s approach was unique. It concentrated on engaging and activating all of a subject’s natural curative mechanisms; and, in doing so, it was just as concerned with removing stasis, congestion, and other real and metaphorical impediments to the natural healing processes (*vis conservatrix naturæ*), as it was to motivating the transforming and natural self-healing processes themselves (*vis medicatrix naturæ*).

11.1 Non-Specificity

Coué’s “*Every day, in every way, I’m getting better and better*” did not specify the means by which its goal was to be achieved, nor the manner in which that process was to take place (Brooks & Charles, 1923, p.115). Recognising that his subjects confused *wants* with *needs*, and weren’t “wise enough” (p.116) to know what goals to seek, what means to specify, and what processes to demand in order to attenuate their distress, Coué said that they must not make “diverse suggestions” (such as, for example, ‘*Every day, in every way, my ovarian cancer is getting better and better*’), on the grounds that his formula “covered everything” (p.105).

11.2 Comments & Remarks

There are certain matters that require special mention:

- (a) To a large extent, the initial impact of the formula’s self-administration was dictated by the suggestions made to the subject during the ego-strengthening session.
- (b) The fact that, in performing the self-administration ritual twice a day, subjects were acting in a controlled way in order to gain self-mastery meant that the ritual, itself, had immense symbolic value as a *metonymical act* (Topley, 1976, p.254).

- (c) The formula, 'covered everything', and was not to be varied or embellished in any way.
- (d) Every morning and evening, subjects recited the formula 20 times in a monotonously droning voice, without any attention being paid to the wording, without any emotion, without any thoughts of the dysfunction to be remedied, and without any imagery.
- (e) To avoid awareness-demanding distraction, repetitions were counted on a 20-knot string.
- (f) The *subconscious teleological process*, once engaged, selected and activated psychophysical resources to effect the goal of 'getting better'; and the ritual's on-going performance generated more positive, goal-directed, incremental changes.
- (g) By definition, the 'unconscious self' really knew *what* was 'non-better' in a particular case; and *how*, and *through which process*, what was currently 'non-better' could be made 'better'.
- (h) The instruction to convert 'non-better' into 'better' in every way implicitly demanded that:
 - (i) the *vis conservatrix naturæ* and *vis medicatrix naturæ* operate at their optimum level and promote positive long-term robust health (rather than a dysfunction-free state);
 - (ii) all 'non-betterness' was removed;
 - (iii) 'betterness' was to be achieved synergistically, through every possible avenue, with every necessary resource, in every possible combination; and, most significantly,
 - (iv) no time was to be wasted on 'the impossible'.
- (i) The daily ritual implicitly reinforced the 'dominant idea' that many on-going (but not yet evident) changes were already being effected far below the conscious levels of awareness.
- (j) Due to the responses (unconsciously) generated by the ritual and formula, one was, indeed, getting 'better' *each and every day*; not just 'better', but '*increasingly better*'; and not just 'increasingly better', but '*increasingly better in every possible way*'.
- (k) A subject's perceptions were strongly oriented to transformation; and they began to notice changes and improvements that they consequently (and automatically) processed as being self-evident proof that hidden work was being done, far below their conscious awareness, on all of those things that were previously 'non-better'.
- (l) This perceived transformation of previously 'non-better' things to 'better', in its turn, would go on to generate other equally important changes (which were, in themselves, the inevitable consequence of earlier 'non-better-to-better' transformations).

To be continued in Part III.

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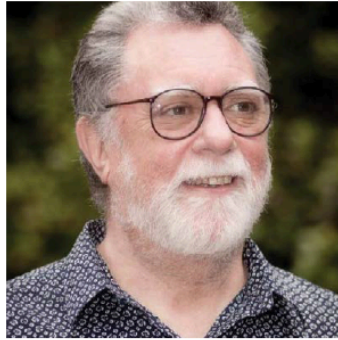
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Following the award of MA for his interdisciplinary cognitive science studies in 2002, and a Graduate Diploma in Arts for his research into the mechanism of thought experiments in 2004, Lindsay was awarded a scholarship to undertake extensive post-graduate research into the events surrounding James Braid's discovery of hypnotism in Manchester in 1841. His acclaimed, groundbreaking doctoral dissertation, *James Braid: Surgeon, Gentleman Scientist, and Hypnotist*, was accepted by the examiners without correction. He was awarded a PhD in 2013.

Driven by a life-long interest in scientific hypnotism and suggestion—in particular, the nature, form, and content of efficacious hypnotic suggestion—Lindsay's professional career reflects his view that a major obligation of any scholar is not only to actively engage in the prolonged studies demanded for both knowledge creation, and the distillation and the refinement of the knowledge so created, but also, to diffuse and disseminate that knowledge. Lindsay's on-going studies, the refinement of his personal understandings, and the non-commercial sharing of his research, form a significant part of that long-term endeavour.

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