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1925

676TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W., ON MONDAY, APRIL 6TH, 1925,  
AT 4.30 P.M.

DR. JAMES W. THIRTLE, M.R.A.S., F.R.G.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the Election of B. W. Matthews, Esq., as an Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced Dr. Edwin L. Ash, to read his paper on "Psychotherapy."

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PSYCHOTHERAPY.

By EDWIN L. ASH, Esq., M.D.

THE human Self results from the persistent action and interaction of various forces, including—

The primal CREATIVE IMPULSE ;  
The inherent impulse of GROWTH ;  
The influence of MIND ;  
The inertia of MATTER ;  
HEAT ;  
LIGHT ;  
ELECTRICITY ;  
Undefined PSYCHIC INFLUENCES ;  
Undefined PHYSICAL INFLUENCES acting on our Planet.

There is a balance of these forces set up, so that some uniformity of vibration is secured within fairly wide limits. When the balance is such that there is *harmony* of vibration, *the individual* usually "*feels well.*" When there is disharmony, *the individual* may "*feel ill.*"

The experience of Self at any moment depends on consciousness and various impressions coming to consciousness from (1) the body, (2) sub-consciousness. Nevertheless, however much we appear as Mind-Body combinations in the everyday world of physical relationships, *our entire experience is essentially mental.*

It is the translation of physical impressions into ideas and "thoughts" about things that gives us all our knowledge of what is going on.

But the Self is not, or need not be, a passive soul meekly registering impressions and accepting fate.

The individual has certain active mental powers, among them "*will.*"

You and I are not only able to say "*I am*"; we can say "*I will,*" and by means of the mental and physical machinery evolution has placed at our disposal, we are also able to say "*I can.*"

To put it the other way round, the Self finds itself not only possessed of certain *means*, commonly called mind and body, *but* finds itself in possession of *an active agent for their use—will.*

The whole question of using mind-power *turns on the ability to use the will.* *It is by "will" that one turns one's attention this way or that.*

You use your *will* to direct your thoughts to whatever end you desire.

Even if you want to bring *imagination* into play, you do so by an effort of *will* to give the process of imagining a start. When you wish to stop *imagining*, you use *will* to do so.

It is, of course, a bad thing to let your imagination run outside the *control* of your *will.* Directed by *will*, imagination can be a useful servant; uncontrolled, it is apt to cause trouble.

By exercise of *will* to direct thought in particular ways, we are able to overcome many disabilities; obtain poise and peace of mind; become more efficient in our work and so more successful; improve our nerve-power and mental strength; prevent a host of nervous troubles; cast out fear; secure better health; be happier, and more comfortably adjusted to life.

The infant is conscious of *I will* before *I am*; the adult is commonly conscious of *I am* before *I will.* The infant comes into full consciousness as if awakening out of ordinary sleep; it is aware of things outside itself before it is aware of itself as

a separate being. It wants to touch things outside itself; it mentally says "*I will*" to them before it is conscious of its individual existence.

*I will* and *I am* are the foundation of our whole human mind-life. As a child grows up its sense of *I will* and *I am* both develop. Where strength and vitality are prominent, then *I will* dominates individual mentality.

*I will* and *I am* together are the basis of *Self*.

Too great a sense of *I am* with weakness in the sense of *I will* is a foundation for nervous breakdown and mental disorder. Too great a sense of *I will* may lead to physical breakdown. Harmony in the balance between the two makes for health, peace of mind, and success.

*Will* is the moving force in human activity; it can be trained and developed to a remarkable degree.

The methods in use for exercising the Human Mind curatively are: SUGGESTION, AUTO-SUGGESTION, PSYCHO-ANALYSIS, the general term PSYCHOTHERAPY conveniently covering the whole field of Mind-Cure.

At first sight the very idea of such a thing as Psychotherapy or Mind-Healing seems to controvert all common sense and the familiar scientific principles.

There seems no reasonable connection between *what one person is thinking and what another person is suffering*. Can it be possible that whilst *you* are suffering from influenza, mental depression, rheumatism, appendicitis or indigestion, or anything else, someone else can really influence your bodily condition for better or for worse by any process of thought unaided by physical remedies? Yet this is the claim of Psychotherapy, in effect! Mind-Cure either can exert an influence, or it cannot. This issue cannot be shirked.

#### *Nature of Mind-Body Action.*

The inquiry necessitates an early consideration of Mind-Body action in any form—that is, of *physical results following mental action*. Whenever we translate our sense of *I will* into physical action, we illustrate a definite Mind-Body effect.

Thus, I hold out my hand. My sense of *I will* has come into play and translated the wish to hold out my hand into action; and to do this, changes of a chemical, physical, and electrical nature have been carried out in a number of brain cells, spinal cord cells, nerve cells, and muscle cells.

Every voluntary action of daily life represents a mental conception translated by *will* into physical result and change. It is a definite Mind-Body result ; it illustrates *thought* influencing *matter*.

### *Mind-Body Action.*

And what is the point of contact between *Mind* and *Body* in these examples ? One can answer—*Brain*. It is as certain as anything we know in Physiology that the point of action of Mind and Body is to be found in the cells of the Brain.

It is not difficult then to find a reasonable basis for understanding something of the nature of Mind-Body action in ourselves. And it is not a big step on to imagine that such an effect may not occur only in regard to simple voluntary action, but that by *will* one may perhaps influence physical conditions in favour of health. Thus it might have been supposed that *Mental Self-Treatment* would have been the first step in Psychotherapy.

The ready demonstration of individual *will* over bodily processes might well have led quickly to the idea that one might readily use the same mental power to influence one's health. But history shows that this has not been the case. On the contrary, we know that what has most forcibly struck men's imagination in the past in the matter of mental healing has been the influence exerted by the mind of someone else over sick people. In the records of Mind-Healing one finds very little about self-help until comparatively recently ; most of the story is concerned with the remarkable way in which particular persons have used their mental powers to heal those who have come to them in trust and confidence.

Self-healing methods are almost entirely of modern production. But for some three thousand years there has been a continuous record of the marvellous things accomplished by the exponents of various schools of mental-healing. And it is interesting to note that there never seems to have been a time in which the claims of Mind-Cure have not been put forward by someone.

One can trace the course of mental-healing from the times of ancient Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages down to our own period. It is even said that in some of the oldest Egyptian scrolls there are figures representing the work of the psychotherapist of that remote time.

*The Sub-Conscious Mind.*

Two circumstances finally brought the whole question of Psychotherapy within the boundaries of modern science : (1) the conception of the Sub-Conscious Mind ; (2) the discovery of Suggestion as an important mental process.

During the last twenty-five years or so there have been developments which have thrown a great deal of light upon the problems of psychology, and have come near to an understanding of some of the phases of the active mind of man. Thus we know for certain that our waking consciousness, which tells us that we are living and thinking beings, is but a small part of the whole field of mental-life. We know that there is a sub-conscious mental-life, the workings of which can profoundly affect not only the psychic but the organic functions. This *Sub-Conscious Mind*, as it has been called, is revealed by the phenomena of somnambulism and double personality, as well as by various processes of thought that we know to have been carried out without our having had any conscious knowledge of them. On the one hand, this sub-conscious part of mental-life—this subliminal thought-action—touches the ordinary waking consciousness ; on the other, it seems to reach away to regions and contacts of which we have no sure knowledge.

Dreams may also be taken as evidence of sub-conscious mental action ; also the memorizing of scenes, quotations, speeches, and so forth to which we have never paid any conscious attention. Whilst when the waking consciousness is hushed into abeyance by the processes of hypnotism, sub-consciousness reveals itself as a storehouse of memories and impressions that have become lost to conscious memory.

I could easily digress into the fascinating fields of speculation opened up by the theory of the Sub-Conscious Mind, and touch upon questions of psychic phenomena, multiple-personality, hysteria and telepathy for example : but all these, although relevant to my subject, are far from the main issue to which I must necessarily confine myself. So let me say at once that from the point of view of Psychotherapy interest in sub-consciousness mainly centres in two things :

- (1) Its capacity for storing lost memories.
- (2) Its ready acceptance of Suggestion.

It is sub-consciousness, not conscious thought, which we have to reach in successful Psychotherapy whether we use Suggestion, Auto-Suggestion, or Psycho-Analysis.

*Suggestion*.—Briefly, one may define *Suggestion* as that process by which thoughts and ideas are presented to and accepted by the human mind, irrespective of reasoning or conscious attention.

The condition which makes it possible for *Suggestion* to take effect is conveniently known as *Suggestibility*, and it is important to note that *Suggestibility* is a normal characteristic of the normal individual. It varies in degree very much, of course, but the important point is *that we all quite normally exhibit some degree of "Suggestibility."*

The demonstration of *Suggestion* and *Suggestibility* made it easy to understand how the influence of a strong personality might be used as a curative agent, because it indicated a way in which the curative influence could be transferred, namely, by *ideas*.

No longer was it necessary to postulate "magnetic fluids" such as Mesmer and his school had claimed to use; no longer was it meet to believe in any kind of mysterious hypnotic influence: it became clear that the crux of all mind-healing was to be found in the bringing about of a change in the thought of the sick person to be cured.

Considered from the simplest point of view, *Suggestion* may best be defined as the insinuation of an idea into the mind; and it is obvious that of many ways in which an idea can be implanted in anyone's mind, the most powerful is by the direct method of verbal expression.

Thus, a man might glance out of a window and note that the sky was overcast; this would give rise to the idea that possibly it was going to rain, that is, it would act as a "suggestion" of a possible storm. But this new idea would be of little intensity and would quickly vanish under ordinary circumstances. Suppose now that a friend enters and says, "It is going to rain, the sky looks very black"; then the idea of an oncoming storm becomes much more potent, and definitely arrests the attention of the individual addressed. Again, a person for some reason may have the idea that he is going to be ill—possibly this has been suggested to him by a feeling of lassitude; but he may dismiss it from his thoughts, and occupy himself with other things. On the other hand, suppose he has met a friend who has remarked with emphasis, "Hello! you *do* look ill." Then the ideas of actual illness would have become much more intense, so that the associated idea of treatment or of consulting a doctor would soon present itself.

Certainly in everyday life the influence of Suggestion, both direct and indirect, makes itself felt to an enormous extent. And, chiefly because no idea of any intensity will exist alone, it of necessity in turn "suggests" other ideas which are said to be "associated" in reference to the original idea. Thus at certain times a feeling of hunger suggests the necessity of a meal; a similar idea may be originated by the sight or smell of palatable food, and in turn these ideas start in the mind a host of other ideas associated with them. It is well known how individuals associate certain ideas; for example, many people object to the smell of certain flowers because they associate them with funerals. Indeed, the very basis of memory itself appears to be the power of associating ideas.

The key-note of a diplomatic triumph is usually, if not always, Suggestion. Gradually leading up to a desired objective by an association of ideas in the mind of his opponent, one man tries to get the better of another. The one who is most adroit in the methods of insinuating the necessary ideas is the victor in the mental struggle. This is what is popularly known as a contest of "wills."

In particular conditions Suggestion acts very much more strongly than at other times; thus one very *important difference between a person in hypnosis and the same person in the normal state is that he is peculiarly responsive to Suggestion*. He may be quite conscious of his surroundings and of all that is going on, but he will respond to Suggestion in a way that he does not at ordinary times. One says to a friend, suddenly: "You cannot move your left arm!" He laughs, and shows that he can. If he be hypnotized and the same statement made, it will be found that *he cannot move his arm*. And so much does this increased response to Suggestion distinguish hypnosis from the normal, that Bernheim proposed to indicate the condition by the expression "a state of Suggestibility."

In a word, the mental mechanism of the action of direct Suggestion is as follows: In the usual way ideas keep running through the human mind, crowding each other out, and, of course, drowning any idea suggested from without unless the latter happens to be presented with exceptional force. But when one is soothed and quieted by appropriate means there are fewer intrinsic ideas to interfere with the suggestions given, and the latter may be made to take up a dominant position. Just as an orator is unable to make much impression on a gathering of

talkative people, whose voices drown his and prevent his remarks from having any weight, but when the audience is quieted his words and ideas gradually become dominant, and duly impress those who hear them. For the purpose of comparison we may consider the psychological doctor to be the orator and the talkative audience to represent the restless, active thoughts of his patients, which tend to prevent him implanting the requisite curative suggestions in the minds of the latter.

The scope of Suggestion is extremely wide, and I certainly agree with Bernheim's expression of opinion that Suggestion is always beneficial, even where it cannot cure. I am confident that it is Suggestion that has turned the scale in favour of many cases that would otherwise have died or lost their reason.

Medical men who have realized the importance of this principle have been astonished at the greater benefits they have obtained from routine treatment, from acting up to this knowledge; astonished to see how nervous symptoms retarding recovery have cleared up; how aches and pains have disappeared; and how weight has been put on even in apparently hopeless cases of wasting disease—all because *tactful suggestion has helped the weakened brain and nerve centres to resume activity, and send out the all-powerful nerve-force that tones up and nourishes the tissues and organs.*

Suggestion is the only hope of thousands of people broken down by worry or born with unstable nervous systems; it can save thousands from the asylum; it can turn the scale in favour of life in diseases as deadly as consumption; it can unquestionably prolong life in some cases of advanced cancer, and other insidious disorders. Suggestion will by itself in many cases remove dangerous conditions threatening middle age, and it will act as a balm to the jaded worker on the threshold of serious mental or nervous breakdown, by giving him sleep, soothing his tired nerves and restoring his confidence in himself.

This is the action of Suggestion from the purely material point of view, regarded as the acceptance of one mind of a definite idea presented to it by the conversation of another person.

But the fact that Suggestion can be used on a purely mental plane, without reference to spiritual influences, does not negative the possibility of what we understand as extraneous psychical or spiritual intervention in the case of disease. A possible explanation of many so-called "miracles" is to be found in Suggestion,

though may it not at times represent the medium through which a Higher Mind influences the bodily health of suffering mankind ?

Clearly, there are great possibilities in the theory of Suggestion of explaining many phenomena which appear at first sight to have a spiritual significance ; particularly as it has been shown that not only may suggestion come from the conscious mind of one person to the sub-conscious mind of another, but that suggestion from the conscious mind of any individual may be made to and accepted by his own sub-consciousness, as just pointed out. In this latter phenomenon we see the process of *Self-Suggestion*, commonly called Auto-Suggestion. If such a process is common, we may be able to explain a whole series of hitherto mysterious circumstances on the basis of a materialistic psychology. Thus, visions seen and voices heard by saints or mystics may be explained as being due to certain ideas which have been long dwelt on in full consciousness, having been driven into the sub-conscious depths of the mind and subsequently reproduced as a form of illusion or hallucination at some future time, when the subject of the experiences is in such rapt condition that his conscious mind is more or less asleep. Certainly such an explanation *may* be given of the experiences in question. But that is not to say it has ever been successfully shown that it solves the whole problem.

Certainly when it is a question of experimental evidence, the psychologists of the materialistic school have it very much in their own way. They can perform many experiments to substantiate the action and far-reaching influences of Suggestion and Self-Suggestion, which will provide them with innumerable facts which will be accepted in any scientific court of inquiry. They can then turn to those who have idealistic views, and say : " Let us now see your evidence, first, that there is a spiritual world at all, and, secondly, that we have any possibility of getting into relation with it."

*So far as medical and allied investigations have been directed to the circumstances of " faith " or other psychic factors as healing or invigorating influences, the official conclusions have been distinctly materialistic. Thus reference to the Report on Spiritual Healing, which was drawn up during July, 1911, by the Special Investigation Committee of the British Medical Association just mentioned, tells us that :—*

*" After carefully considering the various definitions submitted to it, and the evidence afforded by its investigations, the Sub-*

Committee is of opinion that there is no difference in kind between 'Spiritual Healing,' 'Faith Healing,' 'Mental Healing,' and 'Psychic Healing.' All these forms seem to depend for their effect on what is known as Mental Suggestion."

Are we to consider that this finally settles the question as to psychic healing of all kinds being a manifestation of brain-action which is entirely material? *As a matter of fact it does not.* But it is no doubt a great advance to have been able to reduce the results of various phenomena of Psychotherapy to a common principle, and in the present state of our knowledge it is both wise and highly convenient to use the term "Suggestion" to indicate that principle.

There evidently resides in each one of us a force or agent which is capable of energizing our physical bodies and remedying our ailments to an extent that is but seldom realized. Indeed, when one has watched the working of this natural healing power for some little time, one begins to doubt if there are any limits to its possibilities. And this force is inevitably bound up with that principle which one may variously call Ego, Soul, Spirit, or Sub-Conscious Self, according to preference; it either originates in this or acts through it.

Evidently any process that conveys "Suggestion" may set in motion that natural curative mechanism. Evidently "faith" may do likewise.

It is noteworthy that eminent scientists, including Sir Wm. Barrett, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir Wm. Crookes, have no hesitation in admitting the possibility of there being outside influences—"forces"—capable of playing a part in our lives. Professor J. S. Macdonald, in a presidential address to the Physiological Section of the British Association at Portsmouth some years ago, pointed out that:—

"There was no scientific evidence to support or rebut the doctrine that, whilst the brain was possibly affected by influences other than those which reached it from the sense organs and from the different surfaces of the body, *it was still possible that it was an instrument traversed freely by an unknown influence which found resonance within it*; and it is clear that an instrument, shaped in the embryo by a certain set of conditions, might in course of time respond to the play of some new influence which had taken no immediate part in fashioning it."

The "unknown influence" referred to would, of course, be psychic or spiritual force. Dr. Macdonald's remarks are

interesting as showing the tendency of modern scientific thought. Those who wish to satisfy themselves as to the weaknesses of materialistic views in this connection should read Dr. Wm. McDougall's work on *Body and Mind*, in which it is shown that after every argument for and against has been exhausted, there appear to be "overwhelmingly strong reasons" for believing in the existence of the soul of man.

Moreover, surely in regard to spiritual (psychic) things we cannot neglect the intuitive evidences concerning great principles as recorded, century after century, by successive generations of the human race, such principles having been reasserted and returned to in their essentials by successive prophets and teachers.

*Auto-Suggestion.*—Now as to *Auto-Suggestion*, which has lately come to the front as an important and highly useful method of setting mind into curative action. Here is made use of the fact that whilst in ordinary Suggestion treatment—sometimes named Hetero-Suggestion for distinction—the suggestion is transmitted from the conscious thought of one person to sub-consciousness for another; in *Auto-Suggestion*, one gives one's own suggestions to sub-consciousness—one suggests to oneself; yes, but not to one's conscious thought. The secret of success in *Auto-Suggestion* is to set the curative force working through some process that reaches sub-consciousness. The object of the various methods in use is not to appeal to one's own reason, not to think something out, but to send a message of healing, as it were, to sub-consciousness right past one's own critical faculties. And when used scientifically and carefully the process of *Auto-Suggestion* is astonishingly useful and successful. Doubtless there has been some over-enthusiasm in the cause; nevertheless, when the subject is viewed dispassionately and due allowances made, it is seen that in *Auto-Suggestion* we have a really helpful aid to Psychotherapy, and a method that may well be developed even more successfully in the future.

*Psycho-Analysis.*—Having considered Suggestion and *Auto-Suggestion*, I come to *Psycho-Analysis*, the practice of which is based on the theory that in the course of our experiences since early childhood many persons, if not all, have repressed thoughts and emotions that have, as it were, festered in the unconscious levels of their minds and by no means disappeared altogether. It is supposed that such repressed emotional ideas are tending persistently to return to consciousness, and that what with the psychic pressure thus exerted and the mental

irritation thus set up, a serious disturbance of conscious thought and nerve-tone results. Such a repressed and irritating set of thoughts and emotions has been termed, for purposes of convenience, a *Complex*.

The art of the psycho-analyst consists, first of all, in discovering the "complex" at the basis of any particular nervous or emotional trouble; secondly, in so altering its value for the sufferer when it has been discovered, that it no longer irritates and harms.

In the achievement of these ends a variety of very complicated technical procedures has to be followed out, and it is important to note that not only have hidden memories to be probed, but dreams to be investigated as well, for the latter are often found to throw a light on the problems under consideration, such as indicating directions in which the mental analysis may be successfully carried out.

Now to what end does all this lead us?

We can understand that the human mind is a development suited to the requirements of this life closely inter-related with the health and growth of the brain, and gives us much knowledge of things around us. But this does not say that there can be no other *form* of knowledge, or wisdom, open to us. Indeed, it is admitted *that there are forms of spiritual knowledge, and ways of spiritual knowing, that far transcend ordinary mental knowing, and are sometimes available to us in this phase of existence.* This is well-known to many whose spiritual experiences are of greater value to them than anything which purely physical experience has to offer. *There are, indeed, far more people fortunate enough to "feel" their contact with the Great Unseen than the average person who has no confidence in the spiritual realm has any idea.* It is not always those who are silent who have nothing to say.

Psychology working on the best lines of pure science has been of inestimable value in showing us something of the way in which the principles of Suggestion, Hypnotism and Psycho-Analysis produce effects on mental life that are reflected in physical changes. Psychology has been immensely helpful to everyone who has studied the subject of Psychotherapy from the rational point of view, thus enabling scientific systems of suggestive therapeutics to be built up, to the great advantage of thousands of nervous and other sufferers in all parts of the world. But

psychology has not told us one whit more about the spiritual world than priests, poets and prophets.

Thus, it will be a thousand pities if the psychologists of any school attempt to undo the good work this science has done already, by claiming that psychology has disproved the spiritual and shown that the Spiritual Ego is but a poetic dream. Psychology has done nothing of the kind.

A better understanding of my meaning will, no doubt, be gained if I review the following points. Suggestion works its effects through the conscious and sub-conscious strata of the mind, and thence through the medium of the Brain, through which it may control the organic functions of the body; and thus it may be brought into play without any reference to the spiritual life. The same may be said of Suggestion in the hypnotic state; for under this condition the essential point is the abeyance of the conscious Mind, allowing suggested ideas to obtain control to a greater or less degree of the whole mental field. Nevertheless, *although Suggestion explains many things in physical experience, it is questionable if it explains everything that it has been asked to do in this connection.* Not so long ago, I habitually wrote and believed that most psychical phenomena could be explained by the law of Suggestion, materialistically considered; but, in spite of this, in view of the fact that certain experiences shook my firmness in this respect, I have since taken a wider view of the problem. *The sort of difficulty one meets with in trying to explain everything by Suggestion from that point of view is: Does it explain why one individual can soothe and convey manifest benefits whilst another cannot? Does it explain certain mental effects which are at times brought about by Psychotherapy in the instance of sceptical individuals? Does it explain the renewed energy, the feeling of vitality and strength, which thousands of people are accustomed to obtain through the medium of prayer, meditation, contemplation of scenes of great beauty, charitable actions, and so forth? If it does not, then we must look for the cause of certain conditions of augmented powers of mind and body on a plane higher than the mental, and that plane necessarily appears to be one which we know as the spiritual plane.* It seems that under certain favourable circumstances—under which mental attitude unquestionably plays an important part—“psychic force” from a higher level can influence the whole human organization to an exceptional degree. When this occurs the results are always for the good of the individual concerned,

and not infrequently remarkable enough. On the mental plane such effects are usually concerned with the moral outlook of the individual, consisting in some cases of readjustment of surroundings ; in others to an inward strengthening which enables them to bear more readily the burdens of this life. Conversion from a bad career to a good one, from a policy of selfishness to one in which the interests of others take a leading part, from vice to virtue, appears to be effected by this same influence. Seen at its best, this particular psychic effect brings peace to many a tortured wanderer, solace and conviction to many restless souls.

And even on the physical plane, this psychic influence is able at times to bring about astounding changes, the most notable of which is the restoration of health. Such restoration does sometimes occur.

It seems to me that, whilst Suggestion certainly has an important part to play in life, both in health and ill-health (acting primarily *on the mental planes*), *yet there is a far higher plane than the mental, and it is from that higher psychic plane that we can look for the greatest benefits in the regeneration of mankind, either mentally or physically.* It is quite possible that if such psychic or spiritual force can ever by any means be made manifest in physical experiment, it would be found that Suggestion may have some what I may term "directing influence" in focussing its effects on particular parts of the body.

#### *Conclusion.*

One cannot well conclude an address on Psychotherapy without reference to that Great Idea that has in some form or other the basis of many philosophies, the idea that there is at our disposal a vast reservoir of psychic (spiritual) power. And this idea to-day is assuming a more practical form than ever to many thinkers, in that they realize that the spiritual sphere whence this vast power takes origin, or wherein it is contained, can be approached by ourselves whenever we like—that under ordinary circumstances we probably largely depend (from the spiritual point of view) on sustenance derived therefrom. Moreover, that the encouragement of certain types of thought, and the wilful maintenance of an outlook that can conveniently be termed "bad" may actually shut out this energizing influence from without. And that by the assumption of a definite will-attitude—by an attunement in fact—we can obtain increased

stores of psychic energy—of life-force, indeed—for our strengthening and mental uplifting, and for the preservation of health. Such a wonderful fountain of life, health and well-being as thus postulated would need only to be reached to bring about benefits to ourselves that have as yet not been dreamed of as possibilities. And the theory provides a reasonable explanation of the greater benefits of some forms of psychic treatment, and the results of religious faith, that have previously been noted.

There may be some who possess a natural ability for uplifting others so as to harmonize them readily with the Great Unseen. Their ministrations would therefore more quickly let in the new strength and energy from the higher planes than would those of others, successful as those latter might be in the practices of Suggestion on a purely mental plane. And there are those who possess an inherent power of getting into touch quickly with the source of spiritual strength. With them certain mental activities, which we have been inclined to consider as simple Self-Suggestions on a mental, may speedily bring help and sustenance even to restoration of health. And such exercise as that of prayer would naturally be expected to act as a process of attunement to the spiritual beyond. Similarly with the attitude of a sublime Faith.

The secret of our possibilities for entering into practical communion for good or evil with a spiritual world is indeed the secret of our sub-conscious mind. To-day there are not a few who believe that through the medium of sub-consciousness we can and do enter into such relations.

Although the practical physical demonstration of psychic or spiritual force has not been attained, we cannot but feel that the experiences of every believer who prays to a Divine Power, of every one who maintains faith in the spiritual kingdom, of every mystic and of every true worshipper—that such experiences offer internal psychic or spiritual evidences of realities which the science which deals with appearances only cannot hope to demonstrate. It is a matter of everyday experience that prayer and faith bring strength and peace to millions of people—a strength and outlook that no theory of a simple process of Self-Suggestion on a material or mental plane can adequately explain. The prayer-attitude is after all only a more active form of the faith-attitude, and it is certain that both result in great works being done for good. As William James well put it :—

“The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into

an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely understandable world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you choose. So far as our ideal impulses originate in this region (and most of them do originate in it, for we find them possessing us in a way for which we cannot articulately account), we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong. Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change. But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal."

William James also made an attempt to bring together the apparently opposed standpoints of religion and psychology when, referring to the spiritual meaning of certain mystical experience, when he wrote :—

" But if you, being orthodox Christians, ask me as a psychologist whether the reference of a phenomenon to a subliminal self does not exclude the notion of the direct presence of the Deity altogether, I have to say frankly that as a psychologist I do not see why it necessarily should. The lower manifestations of the subliminal, indeed, fall within the resources of the personal subject : his ordinary sense-material, inattentively taken in and sub-consciously remembered, and combined, will account for all his usual automatisms. But just as our primary wide-awake consciousness throws open our senses to the touch of things material, so it is logically conceivable that *if there be* higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so *might be* our possession of a sub-conscious region which alone would yield access to them. The hubbub of the waking life might close a door which in the dreamy subliminal might remain able to impress us ; they may get access to us only through the subliminal door."

And again :—

" If the Grace of God miraculously operates, it probably operates through the subliminal door, then. But just *how* anything operates in that region is still unexplained. . . ."

## DISCUSSION.

Mr. THEODORE ROBERTS appreciated the learning displayed in the paper so far as he understood it, and would comment on it from the point of view of a Bible student. He hoped the lecturer did not mean by characterising the power of getting into touch with the source of spiritual strength as "inherent" (p. 60) to deny the necessity of the new birth, without which men could know nothing of things spiritual (John iii, 3).

He agreed with the lecturer that suggestion was a possible explanation of many so-called "miracles" (p. 153), but pointed out that this would not explain most of those set forth by the Beloved Physician (Luke vii, 21, 22) as witnesses to our Lord's Messiahship. There was too a difference in kind and not merely in degree between His miracles and those of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, as was shown by their having to pray before raising the dead, and by His being able to heal at a distance, which proved that He possessed Divine power in a way they did not.

With reference to what the lecturer said as to the visions of religious people (p. 154), he would point out that this could not be applied to that seen by Saul of Tarsus, which produced his conversion, as it was entirely contrary to his previous experience or the thoughts of his mind, and was therefore an objective reality. He regretted that the Dean of the cathedral which took that apostle's name dared in an essay some time ago to account for the apostle's conversion by an epileptic fit.

Mr. WILLIAM C. EDWARDS said : I have much enjoyed the lecture to which we have just listened, and what I specially appreciated is its modesty, and it happily lacks that arrogant "cocksureness" (if I may be allowed to use such a vulgar word) of most speculative pronouncements of so-called scientific essayists.

If I understand the argument, it is this : we have each a mysterious something which we call the will. What is the will ? Jonathan Edwards defines it as "that which decides." That is a *reply* but not an *answer*. He then enquires : What decides the will ? and writes "the strongest motive," which strikes me as the most complete and satisfactory answer I have ever met with on the subject.

How does the will operate upon the body whose servant it is, or ought to be ?

I am sitting down, I want to rise and I *will* to do so ; an infinite number of orders are instantly passed to and through an infinite number of nerves and cells, and these, co-ordinating, enable me to stand up.

Now, in our wonderful bodies there is something which I will call a healing or repairing department. Is that involuntary or is it capable of coming under the control or influence of the will ? I cut my hand, the blood oozes out, then the red corpuscles cease to flow, and pure serum comes that hardens in the atmosphere and forms what we call a "scab," under which the repairing department of our bodies works to replace the loss and re-grow skin, etc. Can I will to accelerate or strengthen that wonderful recuperative department ? Why not ? If my will to rise can affect an uncountable number of muscles and cells, why shall we assume that in this department the "writs of the will" do not run ? I feel sure that, unknown to us, these recuperative processes go on all our lives, and, indeed, to their beneficial work we often owe the preservation of our lives. When this department closes down the person dies.

I could wish that our learned lecturer had given us some examples from his long years of experience and practice. May I do so ? I will only give you two instances.

In the year 1851—the year of the first great Exhibition of which the Crystal Palace is a part and a relic—my mother, then a girl of fourteen years, was lying ill in bed with what they called a bad sick headache or bilious attack. Her aunt, living in a town eleven miles away, one Friday wrote to my grandmother something like this : "Mary and I are going Monday morning to London to see the Exhibition and shall stay at Aunt Watson's. As soon as you get this letter, let your Mary come on by the carrier and stay with us over Sunday and be ready for the train early Monday morning." My grandmother exclaimed : "What a pity ! Of course she is too ill to go." She read the letter to my mother, but my mother said, "I will go !" and got up, washed, and dressed, and went off as merry as a cricket about an hour later. Surely it was a case of will or mind cure !

May I also give you a personal instance ?

More than twenty years ago I was abroad. Cholera had broken out in the country, and I was suddenly taken very ill—apparently with that dread disease. I remember—oh! how well I remember it!—everyone seemed to shrink from me as from the plague itself. “You’ve got it,” said one of the men. I thought what “it” meant—going off to a hospital, etc.—and, pulling myself together, I said, emphatically, “No, I have not got it.” From that moment I got better, the distressing symptoms passed off, and within an hour I felt myself again. I may be mistaken, but it has always seemed to me that had I succumbed to the sensations I should have had “it,” but my will conquered and saved me in some wonderful way from a dreadful malady.

Lieut.-Col. G. MACKINLAY said: How little we know on this subject, which contains so many undefined influences (p. 146), and yet we have been surrounded by them for thousands of years! It is very satisfactory to find that nothing contrary to the teaching of Scripture has been brought forward; on the other hand, it is noteworthy that the present modern treatment of kindness to the mentally afflicted originated with the Quakers acting on Scriptural principles, and not with mental specialists.

It may be that we are on the eve of real advance, and we may expect progress in faith (p. 160). With all our modern methods of Suggestion, Auto-Suggestion, Drill, and Discipline, it is doubtful if we have advanced beyond the treatment accorded to Nebuchadnezzar when he was turned into the fields to lead the simple life.

The present age has witnessed wonderful progress in science in many fields, but the treatment of the brain and of its diseases has lagged terribly. It may be that we are on the eve of great discoveries in this direction. May investigators like our gifted lecturer be abundantly encouraged; there is plenty of room for a scientific worker to immensely benefit humanity!

Mr. H. O. WELLER writes: I much regret my absence from the reading of this paper, as it forms a basis for what must have been an interesting discussion. The author has given a useful account of the whole subject; may I be allowed to join in the congratulations he has doubtless received. But I am disappointed that he has not dealt more closely with Psycho-Analysis; and I am yet more disappointed with his summing-up and conclusion.

He appears to lump together all kinds of spiritual experience—pagan, Christian, and neo-pagan (spiritist)—referring sympathetically to “a vast reservoir of psychic (spiritual) power” from which we draw spiritual sustenance by “the assumption of a definite will-attitude,” and so on. This theory, he thinks, “provides a reasonable explanation of . . . the results of religious faith . . . ,” among other things.

Now, I cannot claim much space, so I will come straight to the point and assert that psycho-analysis is a dangerous practice, especially when it is successful in giving apparent relief, because it does so by application of what St. Paul calls “the law of sin” (Rom. vii, 23 and 25). The truth appears to be that there are two laws—the law of God and the law of sin—and that there is bodily and mental health in obeying either. It is the clash of the two in his soul that makes a man wretched: Paul says, “Unhappy man that I am . . . ,” psycho-analysts talk of an anxiety neurosis. So far there is agreement. But Paul points out how deliverance may be obtained: “Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”; while the psycho-analyst delivers by surrender to sin. That is where the difference begins. It begins there: it ends with a separation as far as Heaven is from Hell.

“What we need,” says one, and not the worst by any means, “is to be freed from the oppressive burden of religious, ethical, and social inhibitions”; and, if we have studied the subject, and kept our eyes open, we must agree that physical and mental happiness will be found in such freedom. Paul, however, calls that sort of freedom being led “captive to the law which is everywhere at work in my body—the law of sin. He also says that “abandonment to earthly things is a state of enmity to God.” In short, the freedom given by psycho-analysts is not true liberty at all, but obedience to the rule of “nature red in tooth and claw.”

Nevertheless, there is truth in psycho-analytic teaching: the man in mental conflict—anxiety neurosis, a guilty conscience, or whatever you call his state—can find no rest half-way. He must either, by psycho-analysis, be freed downwards into his lower nature, or upwards into the liberty which is in Christ Jesus.

Dr. SCHOFIELD writes: It is with great regret that I find myself unable to be in London on the 6th; but I have greatly enjoyed

Dr. Ash's very able paper, and I should like, on behalf of the Victoria Institute, to contribute my share in thanking the doctor for bringing his difficult subject so clearly before us.

As a fellow-student, I will venture a few remarks. On page 147 the observations on infant consciousness are not only profoundly true, but seem to me quite original. I think the reason why Auto-Suggestion is both difficult and unpopular, and often futile, is because patients are generally asked to learn to use it when their own minds are not normal. Page 150, "*The Sub-Conscious Mind.*" Why "sub"? There is a sub-conscious or sub-liminal mind immediately below consciousness that can by effort be brought into consciousness by forced introspection, but it is very limited in extent, and corresponds to the tideway in an island. Here the island (really a mountain top) represents what is seen and known, or consciousness; the vast part always beneath the ocean, the Unconscious Mind; and the tideway between, sometimes visible and sometimes hidden, the Sub-Conscious or Sub-Liminal.

But from Dr. Ash's paper it is clearly not the Sub-Conscious of which he speaks, but the Unconscious; and I would suggest that this is the better name.

Page 153: That "suggestion is always beneficial" is a statement that requires most careful guarding. Only of "good" suggestion can this be said; but there are in the medical profession evil suggestions of all sorts, quite innocently broadcast, that are very harmful. From this Dr. Ash distinguishes between the mental and spiritual "A purely mental plane, without reference to spiritual influences" (p. 153). "Spiritual knowing far transcending ordinary mental knowing" (p. 157). "Certain conditions . . . on a plane higher than the mental," and so on.

Now, Dr. Ash distinctly calls the spiritual plane the higher "psychic plane" (p. 159). May I suggest that the material is the *physical* plane, the mental—the *psychic*, and the spiritual—the *pneumatic*, a word which, in spite of its unfamiliar sound, emphasises the impassable gulf between "psuche," the psychic or mental, and "pneuma," the pneumatic or spiritual.

I feel quite sure Dr. Ash will take these suggestions in the appreciative spirit in which they are written.