

ARE HYPNOTIC HALLUCINATIONS SIMULATIONS?

BY BORIS SIDIS, PH.D.

FROM the candid review of my paper, "Are There Hypnotic Hallucinations?"¹ by Dr. Morton Prince,² as well as from letters received by me, there seems to be an impression that hypnotic hallucinations are regarded by me as simulations. It is certainly of importance to correct this impression. I wish to have it understood that I do not maintain that hypnotic hallucinations are simulations. While there may be some hallucinations where simulation enters as an element, it certainly does not hold true generally of most of the hypnotic hallucinations. What I claim both from observation and experiment is the fact that hypnotic hallucinations should not be regarded as sensory experience, but as purely ideational states. The hypnotic subject, when a suggestion of an hallucination is given to him, does not really experience a sensation of sight, a sensation of hearing, or a sensation of smell, but he *believes* that he actually experiences them, the belief being greater in proportion as the hypnotic state is deeper. In other words, the hypnotic hallucination is not genuine in the sense of being *sensory* but it is *genuine in the sense of belief in reality*. The hypnotic hallucination is a delusion, a *genuine delusion*.

It is wrong to facts to regard the hypnotic state as one of simulation. The hypnotic subject, especially the somnambulist, rarely if ever simulates. What I insist on is the fact that mental states induced by suggestion are not qualitatively sensory in character. As far as facts go we can only say that suggestion can only induce belief. Suggestion cannot give rise to sensory experience, to hallucinations. Suggestion can only *affect belief* and can give rise to delusions. Hypnotic hallucinations are delusions in the true sense of that word. Delusions, however, are not simulations and, as mental states, are as important as hallucinations. Hypnotic hallucinations are essentially

¹ *Psychological Review*, July, 1906.

² *JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY*, August, 1906.

states of belief, they are delusions of external reality, they are delusions of sensory experience shorn of all sensory elements; in other words, hypnotic hallucinations are delusions of perceptual experience.

The whole bearing of my communication on hypnotic hallucinations is not to deny them as such, but to point out the fact that mental states induced by suggestion are not of a sensory character and that hypnotic hallucinations, the stronghold, the marvel of hypnosis, are essentially of a delusional character. The upshot is that mental states induced by suggestion, whether hypnotic, post-hypnotic, or non-hypnotic, are only so many modifications effected in the subject's states of belief. We should, therefore, study such states not from the standpoint of sensation in terms of which the suggestion is originally given, but from the standpoint of delusion, which is the actual experience present to the subject's mind.

It is certainly a great pity that this point has not yet been recognized and that competent observers should cling tenaciously to the face value of hallucinations induced by suggestion. The more I work on the subject of hypnosis the more do the facts force upon me the conviction of my position. The whole chapter of hallucinations induced by suggestion is one of the richest in abnormal psychology on the nature of belief. One clearly realizes the importance of such a study. Many of the "facts" that go under the name of hallucinations must certainly be re-examined. Religious hallucinations, crystal gazing, shell hearing, etc., must be submitted to a thorough searching examination before any conclusion as to their sensory character can be accepted. A sifting process of experimental investigation will no doubt show that they belong to widely different categories. "Facts" in psychology in general and in abnormal psychology in particular cannot be accepted on their face value, but must first be rigorously sifted and tested. Now I claim as the result of such a process that "SUGGESTED" HALLUCINATIONS *are neither sensory experiences, nor simulations, but are GENUINE DELUSIONS.*