

WILL, HABIT, AND AUTOSUGGESTION

From a Rosicrucian Manuscript

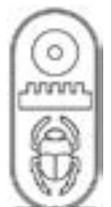


The knowledge that Rosicrucians possess in the area of human consciousness is very precise, despite the complexity of the concepts involved. That is because Rosicrucian Masters have always been deeply interested in the subject and because they have endeavored to treat it as simply as possible. Moreover, as they are fully aware that the conscious activity of human beings results from their possession of a soul, they have given to their explanations a philosophical and mystical perspective that transcends any purely psychological analysis.

This article is devoted to the study of three mental processes – namely, will, habit, and autosuggestion – that involve our objective and subjective faculties as well as our subconscious faculties. Such a study will allow you to determine how to

act on the self so that you can give your life a direction in keeping with your aspirations. Indeed, contrary to what we might think at first, it is always possible to exert an influence on our mental attitude and to correct those errors of behavior that are harmful to us over a period of time. This simply requires a good understanding of the laws involved and the sincere desire to put this understanding into practice.

SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS: From the beginning of a person's affiliation with the Rosicrucian Order, we often stress the importance of cosmic harmony as part of spiritual assistance or meditation. As its name indicates, such harmonization consists of attuning with Cosmic Consciousness so as to receive support, healing, inspiration, and, ultimately,



Illumination. However, we can only achieve this harmonization by using our subconscious as an intermediary, since it is the subconscious that constitutes the symbolic portal providing access to the spiritual world. Apart from our psychic consciousness, the subconscious is, of all the aspects of our consciousness, the one most closely connected to the soul. Thus, to place yourself in perfect harmony with the higher planes of the Cosmic, you need to elevate yourself from the purely objective aspect of your being to the higher levels of your subconscious. When these levels are reached, we are then in a subconscious and psychic state where Cosmic Communion occurs on its own, along with all the resulting positive effects.

WILL: Psychologists define will as the faculty of willing and often designate it by the term volition. This definition is basically correct, but it is insufficient for a perfect understanding of the origin, nature, and functioning of this faculty. From a mystical point of view, will corresponds first and foremost to the impulse motivating an individual to be active or passive in a given situation. Such an impulse is dual in nature for, however strange this may seem, it is at the same time voluntary and involuntary.

Let us explain. Any act of will, as you know, is the result of an objective decision taken consciously that consequently calls upon our different types of reasoning. For instance, if you study this article attentively, it is because you have decided to do so. However, the decision was necessarily influenced by your subconscious, for the latter always urges us to do things that are positive and useful for our physical and mental well-being, mysticism being one of the most favorable elements for this well-being. Yet, at no time were you conscious of that subconscious influence, thus proving that the will corresponds to the conscious

application of an unconscious impulse. It is therefore not a purely objective faculty.

These preceding explanations will help you to understand why certain people lack will. Indeed, if one admits that this faculty originates in an unconscious impulse, it may happen that the impulse is not strong enough to cross the threshold of the objective mind. In that case, it does not succeed in stimulating the thought processes and, consequently, cannot give rise to any voluntary decision on our part. Sometimes, it is the reverse that occurs. In other words, the impulse transmitted by the subconscious is sufficiently strong but the objective mind opposes it more or less firmly, judging that there is no reason to take that urge into account. Returning to our preceding example, you may have felt the desire to study a monograph but have not done so even when the opportunity arose. In this case, you were the one who, for more or less valid reasons, decided voluntarily not to undertake that study, which is like saying that you placed yourself in opposition to your inner self.

The best way to cultivate our will consists of two steps: first, by paying attention to the impulses conveyed to you by your subconscious when it deems it necessary to prompt you to act in a certain way; and second, by submitting such impulses to your reflection in order to activate them by corresponding words or deeds. In order to succeed, you should acquire the habit of listening to your inner voice and place all your reasoning processes at the service of this voice. Moreover, it is also important to define the goals you wish to attain, since the will, when applied objectively, must be directed to specific and constructive ends. If it is not, it is spread too thin and thus leads us into error. This can then turn into obstinacy, tenacity, or temerity, which

prompts us to act in inconsiderate and often harmful ways.

HABIT: We have just used the term habit in connection with the will because a psychological link exists between these two mental processes. A habit, by definition, corresponds to a physical or mental behavior we repeat without being aware of it. However, before becoming unconscious, that behavior required the intervention of our will.

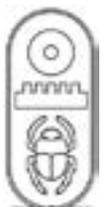
To illustrate this, let us use the example of a smoker. Any individual who smokes does so because of an acquired bad habit and because of an addiction to tobacco. Usually, the first cigarette provided an illusory pleasure or the equally illusory satisfaction of a psychological need. That is why this first cigarette was followed by a second, a third, and so on. Initially, then, the act of smoking corresponded to a voluntary and deliberate action – that is, to a choice made objectively and with full awareness. When this choice was made concrete the first time, the subconscious was ordered to carry out the act, as is the case for all our acts and for all the desires we satisfy. This order was renewed for the second cigarette, the third one, etc., until its execution finally became a law for the subconscious. That is how habits are formed. They correspond to unconscious automatisms designed to satisfy what initially was only a conscious desire based on an arbitrary and unjustified choice.

We must now stress the fact that automatisms produced by habits are all the more pronounced when they are associated with other habits. Using again the example of tobacco, you have undoubtedly noticed that many persons systematically smoke after each meal, while drinking coffee, during a break, or whenever reflecting on a problem. This occurs because the subconscious works by an association of

ideas and makes this association a law that it then applies independently of objective consciousness. You will thus notice that a person who lights a cigarette once a meal is over does so almost unconsciously. In other words, that person has acquired the habit of associating the idea of smoking with that of digestion, and the subconscious automatically ensures that the habit is satisfied. Over time, a form of habit and addiction is created, and what was only a desire becomes a physiological need that the body strongly demands and requires.

What we have just explained about tobacco might apply to many other habits we acquire regarding what we drink, eat, and do. However, there also exist what we might call mental habits that can likewise be negative and destructive. For example, the acts of systematically judging, condemning, contradicting, mistrusting, being intolerant, pessimistic, etc., reflect corresponding attitudes which, with time and repetition, may become bad habits and constitute a second nature within ourselves. Thus, when people cannot refrain from criticizing everything they see and hear, it is because they have formed the habit of doing so and because their subconscious responds automatically to that mental need. The same applies to individuals who spend their time gossiping, slandering, intriguing, and, in general, damaging human relations.

Although the subconscious, by virtue of its exclusively deductive reasoning, is always ready to obey objective consciousness, it is much more inclined to carry out an order that is in keeping with its constructive work than any order opposing it. It is this precise characteristic that gives us the power to transform our bad habits into good ones. In doing so, we only need to order our subconscious to substitute a positive law for the negative law it had been obeying.



Returning to our previous example, smokers may overcome a dependency on tobacco if they truly have the desire. Whenever they feel the need for a cigarette, they must transmute that need into a constructive act, such as drinking a glass of water. With time and voluntary repetition, their subconscious will, on its own, replace the law consisting of smoking with one encouraging them to drink a glass of water. This transmutation process applies to bad mental habits as well. To transform such habits, we only need to become conscious of them, to want to lose them, and to act in such a way that inverse or constructive habits may become the new law obeyed by the subconscious. Thus, pessimistic individuals can truly work on themselves and, with time and will power, become more optimistic in their judgments and behavior.

From all preceding observations, it is easy to understand that all habits, both good and bad, acquired over months and years, obey the same process. To begin with, we consciously order our subconscious to do such and such a thing to satisfy some desire. Through repetition, this order becomes a law that the subconscious obeys, and what in the beginning was only a conscious desire becomes an unconscious need. Thus, we see that all habits originate in the objective consciousness. The best proof of this is that a baby, for example, has no negative habits concerning what she eats, drinks, or does. Such is the case because the infant is virtually under the sole control of her subconscious which, we repeat, is fundamentally constructive. When growing up, the child's reasoning powers develop over the years and with her appears the freedom to act more or less in harmony with natural laws. It is on the level of this freedom of action and reaction that human free will resides.

AUTOSUGGESTION: Having examined the origin and nature of habits, we can now define the meaning that mystics attribute to autosuggestion, a term often used in psychology but generally misunderstood. In fact, since our subconscious is always ready to carry out orders transmitted through our objective consciousness – notably those contributing to our physical and mental well-being – all we have to do is use this transmission deliberately to obtain the desired results and give our life a direction better suited to our expectations. It is precisely at this level that autosuggestion intervenes, because it constitutes the technique required to exert a direct influence upon our inner self. Before presenting the technique you should follow for practicing the art of autosuggestion successfully, we must stress a very important point. It is imperative that the order be transmitted to our subconscious by means of an affirmation, not a negation, because its innate tendency is to make or construct, and not to undo or destroy. Therefore, if you wish to practice autosuggestion so as to remember something to be done, the request you will need to express to your subconscious should take this form: “Subconscious, remind me of such and such a thing!” and not: “Subconscious, do not forget to remind me of such and such a thing!” The negative wording suggests that the subconscious can forget, which is not true because it possesses a perfect memory.

To take another example, if your autosuggestion aims at making it your habit to be more humble in deed and intent, your request would not be worded as follows: “Subconscious, help me to be proud no longer!” but by using the following affirmation: “Subconscious, show me how to be humble!” In the first instance, the autosuggestion makes pride a

reality that needs to be fought, whereas it is only the absence of its opposite quality, a quality emphasized by the affirmative form. By analogy, the only way we can dispel the darkness in a room is for us to allow the light to come in, since darkness is only the absence of light and has no real existence in itself.

EXPERIMENT: The following experiment constitutes the technique that you must follow so as to make efficient use of the art of autosuggestion. Thus, you can use it to remember something or another; to wake up at a precise time without using an alarm clock; to treat certain minor illnesses; to give a certain direction to your mystical quest; and, naturally, to replace a bad habit with a good one. In fact, it will be entirely up to you to determine when such an exercise can be useful. Thus, as soon as you have the opportunity, follow these instructions:

Sit down in the usual position for meditation, close your eyes, and clearly determine the goal you wish to attain by means of autosuggestion. After having done this, make your autosuggestion take the form of a precise and affirmative order.

Once you have fully defined this order, take a deep breath and then, while exhaling, transmit it mentally to your subconscious, visualizing the latter as a double of yourself.

Repeat your autosuggestion three times following the same procedure, then say mentally: "If it pleases my subconscious, it is done!"

Then forget the autosuggestion completely, and resume your activities. If, later in the day, you wish to repeat it, wait at least one hour before doing so.

As you will readily understand, such an experiment is most effective in the evening,

just before going to sleep. This time of day brings with it an intermediate state corresponding to the transfer operating gradually between the objective phase of our consciousness and its subconscious phase. Accordingly, any autosuggestion expressed during this intermediate state automatically benefits from such a transfer and necessarily meets its objective. To convince yourself of this, we propose the following experiment when you have the opportunity: Just before going to sleep, suggest to yourself that you will wake up the next morning at a specific time, without using an alarm clock. If you follow the indicated procedure, you will be pleasantly surprised by the results. You may also avail yourself of this practice to condition yourself to have mystical dreams and to remember them when you wake up.

It is important to remind you that all of these processes are attributes of our soul consciousness. Accordingly, all faculties at our disposal – whether objective, subjective, or subconscious – result from the presence of a soul within us and have no other purpose than contributing to its evolution.

It is precisely on this point that Rosicrucian philosophy generally differs from psychology, as the latter often tends to consider such faculties as being the exclusive product of our brain activity. However, as we already explained, the brain is an organ limited to two major functions: first, objectifying the impulses transmitted through the subconscious from our inner self, and, second, interpreting the impressions reaching us from our earthly environment. At the time of death, this organ ceases to function, although this cessation only causes the annihilation of our objective self and not at all the dissolution of all phases of our consciousness.

