

**THE FREETHINKER
LONDON, ENGLAND
25 FEBRUARY 1934
(pages 116-117)**

Views and Opinions.

Applied Psychology

Hypnotism—The Friend of Man: An Aid to Health, Efficiency and Happiness. By J. Louis Orton. (London : Thorsons; 5s.).

Like all forms of therapeutics, hypnotism has been immorally and illegally "adopted" by the supernaturalists. Every account that they cannot meet mentally is put down to the credit of God and Ids family and friends.

Mind, so little understood in all its opulent possibilities, is a barren theory-sowing ground for the moony-minded; but all the crops that they raise are tares. Your religionist is always a mental profligate, who sows nothing but quaker oats in the hope of raising the wind.

To attribute the misunderstood to "The Supernatural" is merely to confess that one does not understand the meaning of the word "nature"; and, at the same stroke, to add to one's stock of misunderstandings.

Hypnotism, as Mr. Orton expounds it, is merely a natural method of curing mankind of physical, mental, moral—and even "spiritual"—ills. There is no trace of superstition in this lucid and exhaustive treatise; God, and his alleged religious activities and preoccupations, are absent from this book's index; an index that, unlike the Roman "Index," contains those names and references that will serve the student, and are here not forbidden, but encouraged.

One of the earliest known notions of the cause of disease was that an evil spirit or demon entered and possessed the body of the person affected, and there wrought various ills—a belief still prevalent among savage tribes. The mode of treatment consistent with that conception was to lure out the evil spirit by means of sacrifices and specious promises, or to eject it by means of exorcisms, or by the beating of tom-toms, or by

pummelling the body of the sufferer. Until comparatively recent times the theory of demoniacal possession has been acted upon in reference to the insane.

That is a nasty one for the supernaturalists, who still insist, despite libraries of evidence to the contrary, that the savage interpretation of facts is the true one. Religion always leads to savagery. This is the lesson taught invariably and inevitably by history. It is as true to-day as it has always been true, that is the moral to be drawn from the quoted paragraph; as from the whole book. You can no more serve science and superstition under the same hat than you can run a Commune on Fascist lines.

Mr. Orton gives many instances of the danger of confusing mental and "supernatural" issues; the "supernatural" that cannot be reduced to the natural is insanity; and insanity is neither more nor less than mental dis-ease. Hitherto insanity has ruled the world almost unchecked; it is the cause of very nearly all our moral and social ills.

Mr. Orton, in a well-written, complete, and really serviceable work, has proved the inestimable value to mankind of soundly-practised hypnotism. Here is a book that neither the good alienist nor the wise Psychologist can afford to leave unread. The author is to be congratulated upon a noble and largely-original contribution to our stock of practical psychology.

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