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*An Open Mind in an Open Body*

Behind the grotesquely oversimplified teachings of Coué I find deeply buried a priceless technique of tapping energies. Once or twice Coué came within an inch of uncovering the treasure; yet, after a careful reading of his brief essays on autosuggestion, I am convinced that he missed the greatest truth of all.

"Do not rely upon the will. Use only your imagination," is the gist of his advice to people who seek health or more power. "Never say to yourself: 'I *will* become stronger and better.' Say only: 'Every day in every way I *am* becoming better and better.'" The trouble with the will is that it sets up violent efforts which serve rather to block the appropriate action than to reinforce it. It is more effective to take the attitude that you are whatever you would like to be; for then you rise above all the struggle and striving of an act of will.

Many critics poke fun at Coué. I do not. On the contrary, I think he comes amazingly close to one of the fundamentals of self-energizing. When he errs, it is because he fails

to push his analysis far enough and, in all too human fashion, he leaps to the airless peaks of whopping generalities. He is entirely correct in his discrediting of the kind of will about which he talks. To set up strong tensions of body is a poor way of accomplishing anything. As we have shown elsewhere, we must first learn exactly which acts carry us forward to our goal most smoothly; *and during this stage we must be compliant toward the situation. We must not be aggressive and self-assertive for the simple reason that we thereby increase the chances of making the wrong moves at the wrong tempo and in the wrong directions.*

Here is the huge advantage of will-less imagining. *We rid our bodies of muscle strains of all sorts. We relax utterly. And in this state our muscles are left free to be guided by the demands of the total situation. They are no longer driven by our organs nor by a segment of the brain.*

It is not to be denied that absolute relaxation is the beginning of the swiftest cures of mind and body alike. But it cannot be attained if the craving which we call a wish is permitted to dominate the muscles. *The correct readjustment of most human ills begins with a curious sort of learning process in which the body as a whole finds itself and sets about its own recovery.* Any good physician will tell you that nine ailments out of ten cure themselves without medicine. What you cannot learn from most physicians,

however, is that the first step in such a self-cure is to give the body a fair chance by opening all channels of recuperative activity. Take this literally. The channels are the blood stream and the special organic tissues; all must be brought to the condition most favorable for unblocked activity. Secretions must be free to flow wherever needed; and they cannot do this if some muscles go tense and thereby block the flood of blood or the movement of air in the lungs or the currents that run through the nerves.

It is only *after* the straight line toward recovery has been learned by body and mind that the muscles may advantageously be set in the direction indicated as best. Even then, it is important to alternate freely between action and relaxation. The will is a menace at the first stage of adaptation. Its place is in carrying out a lesson well learned.