



## Suggestion and Its Role in Social Life

*V. M. Bekhterev*

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Vladimir Mikhailovitch Bekhterev was a pioneering Russian neurologist, psychiatrist, and psychologist. A highly esteemed rival of Ivan Pavlov, his achievements in the areas of personality, clinical psychology, and political and social psychology were recognized and acclaimed throughout the world. However, when his version of reflexological doctrine ran afoul of official Soviet ideology in the 1920s his work was banned and his influence suppressed through the dispersal of his many colleagues and disciples. Bekhterev himself died in 1927 under mysterious circumstances. This translation of *Suggestion and Its Role in Social Life* is a significant instance of intellectual and cultural restoration. It marks a starting point of Bekhterev's lifelong endeavor to relate his clinical observations and philosophy of science to problems of the social world.

Bekhterev's investigation reviews and explains the many conflicting positions in the social and scientific thought concerning the nature and power of suggestion. He takes pains to differentiate the process from persuasion and hypnosis, and discusses suggestion and autosuggestion in the waking state, examining their effectiveness on feeling, thought, and behavior. He then discusses the destructive consequences of the process—violent crime, suicide, witchcraft, and devil-possession hysteria—in a wide variety of contexts important in the Russia, Europe and North America of the period.

Bekhterev presents a structural model of the mind, including both conscious and unconscious realms, and the phenomena of suggestion without awareness; in doing so he anticipated much present-day work on preconscious influence. *Suggestion and Its Role in Social Life* is a landmark study in collective psychological research that may lead to revisions in histories of social psychology. It will be read by psychologists, sociologists, and social historians.

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