



Suggestion by Movement

Philosophy, Psychology, Mysticism: The Sufi Message,

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Every movement has a greater significance than one can imagine. The ancient people, recognizing this fact, knew the psychology of movement, and it is a great pity that the science of movement and of its psychological effect seems to be so little known today. Movement is life; its absence is like death. All that gives proof to life in whatever form is movement; all that shows any sign of death in whatever form is the absence of movement.

Movements can be considered from different points of view, and there are several kinds of movements. There is a natural spontaneous movement, which is mostly seen by noticing the movements of an innocent child who has not yet learned them from anywhere, who is not influenced by having seen someone else making these movements, but just makes them naturally, expressing its feelings that words can never express. When feelings of astonishment, of fear, of joy, of fancy, of affection, or of appreciation are expressed naturally, they reveal much more than words can ever say.

Then there are the movements that can be regarded as a language of people belonging to a certain community, a certain family, a certain country, or a certain race. The members of that particular community alone know that language; others are quite ignorant of it. These movements which have become expressions of language are not understood by the people of another country, but they are not the natural and spontaneous movements mentioned above which are like a language for all.

For instance the Eastern way of beckoning a person is with all one's fingers; it suggests, 'I call you from my whole heart', and when a person calls somebody with only finger it is not considered right. In Italy and other Mediterranean countries there is the same way of beckoning someone. In all the countries of the East the movements may differ, and there may also be some movements that are like those of southern Europeans; there are psychological reasons why these movements should be alike.

There are also individual movements, the movements an individual makes, showing thereby his particular state of health and his particular mental condition; for one can read a person's condition by the movements he makes. And if one has insight into movements one can perceive by the movements of a person whether his eyes and ears are in good order, or whether he has any-thing wrong with any part of his body; his movements will convey it.

Movements also show the characteristics of a person, his attitude, his point of view, his outlook on life. The fineness or crudeness of a person's character can be traced in his movements, and his deep characteristics such as pride and humility can also be discovered from a person's natural movements. Is it right to make movements? All is right, movements or no movements, because everything has its uses, everything has its meaning. It is the right use of all things that is right, and the wrong use of everything that is wrong.

No doubt there is also a meaning in controlling the movements. If a person is allowed to go on with his movements we do not know where it will end, but at the same time by repressing movements one can turn into a rock; and so there are many people who, with beautiful feelings and fine thoughts, turn into a rock because they control their movements too much. Every day a greater stiffness comes over them, and this works against their original character. They may not be stiff by nature, but they become stiff because they are taught to control their movements too much, even to the extent of turning into a stone. One sees this happen frequently.

By repressing a movement a person may have buried a thought or feeling inside him, but if it is an undesirable thought or feeling it is just as well that by these movements it should be thrown out instead of being kept inside him; it is better that it is extirpated than buried in the heart. No doubt there is another way of looking at it, and that is from the point of view of self-control; but this belongs to asceticism, which is another subject altogether.

Then there are the more refined movements that belong to art. This art, the art of movements, can be divided into three different classes. To the first belong the grace and fineness of movements executed with skill and subtlety, the harmony that they express and the music that they have of their own. The next is the movements that convey the meaning of what one says more fully. When the art of speech and singing is separated from the art of movement, this certainly takes away a great beauty and charm, for speech, reciting, and singing go together with movements. And the third class of movements is to illustrate the feeling that is in music, to express or interpret music in the form of movements.

But the most essential aspect of movement is that movement does not only suggest the meaning for which it is intended, but that a movement, according to its nature and character, can make an impression on the person who sees it or on the one who makes it, an effect which can automatically work to form a destiny in their lives.

In ancient times every movement the priest made during the service or ceremony had a significance, a psychological significance, and accordingly it made an impression on those who attended the services. In the ceremonies and rituals of ancient peoples every movement had a psychological significance. Thus we do not only attach a meaning to a movement, but a movement very often has a meaning in itself, and that meaning has an effect; a person can even harm himself or others, not knowing the significance of the movement he makes.

How can we know which movements are good or which have a destructive effect? All we want to know we can know and will know. Often we do not know things because we do not care to know them. The field of knowledge is so vast and yet so near that once we are interested in a subject it is not only we that go towards it, but the subject comes to us.

To begin to discover the significance of movements, their character, their nature, their mystery, we have only to watch, and our sense of right proportion, our sense of beauty and harmony, will begin to show us what suggests destruction and what suggests to us harmony, sympathy, love, beauty, or fineness. We have only to give our attention to it and it will all come; but to describe which movement is constructive and which is destructive would take volumes. It is perhaps as difficult and as subtle as making out which word is destructive and which word is constructive, and what hidden psychological significance each word has besides its common meaning.

Furthermore our life as it is just now, so busy and occupied with material things, gives us little opportunity to look into the deeper significance of life. It keeps our mind occupied on the surface all day long, so that we have become ignorant of what is behind the veil of the life itself we are living, of the movements around us and of the movements we make. It is a kind of intoxication, and it keeps us floating on the surface, ignorant of the depths of life, for we have no time to think of these things. Nevertheless, these things have their meaning, their significance, and their effect just the same, whether we know them or not.

The blessings given by the sages, the good wishes and prayers of the masters, were always connected with movement. The movements made the prayer alive; they insured that the blessings were granted. No doubt if movement is without silent thought and deep feeling it is less than thought and feeling, it is almost nothing; but when a movement is made with a living and sincere thought, and with deep feeling, it will make the thought and feeling a thousand times more effective.