

# THE MIND OF THE BUYER

## A PSYCHOLOGY OF SELLING

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## PREFACE

This book is written for the progressive salesman, advertiser, sales correspondent—for every one who is engaged in influencing men to buy. It does not deal with the *technique* of selling; each form of selling has its own technique which must be separately acquired. Rather it deals with principles. It recognizes that certain elements are common to all forms of selling. These elements are certain occurrences within the mind of the buyer. Whether directed by word of mouth, by pen or by picture, the mind must perforce pass through certain stages *en route* to the act of purchase. It is to describe these mental processes that the book is written.

Such a work must necessarily deal with profound psychological questions. Such mental processes as attention, interest, desire, and confidence require voluminous treatment in the literature of theoretical psychology. The author has endeavored in this presentation, however, to rob them of their forbidding



**dryness** by stripping away technical terms and substituting words of current business usage.

Two outstanding ideals have governed the preparation of the work: (1) To show the reader how to take the psychological point of view toward the business of selling; (2) to teach that in investigating the sale psychologically we must employ the methods of scientific measurement. By repetition and example the author has emphasized these two ideals. If he shall have made them clear he will have accomplished his chief aim whether he teaches a great amount of psychological fact or not.

The psychologist-reader will discern a studied avoidance of the spiritistic conception of mind. The mind is here conceived as an organic unity. Though exposition of this point of view is withheld, as unseemly in a book of this kind, still the phraseology will be found to fit it, without at the same time affrighting the non-psychological reader unfamiliar with the controversies about the mind-body relation. This avoidance of metaphysical disputations is further helped by the consistent emphasis upon the buyer's behavior. Objective descriptions are largely

used. And since our objective psychological nomenclature is not cluttered with spiritistic connotations, the aim of being scientific and at the same time understandable is more easily achieved.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to J. B. Lippincott Company for permission to use certain passages and cuts from the author's "Manual for the Study of the Psychology of Advertising and Selling," with which this may be used as a text; to the editor of *The Scientific Monthly* for permission to reprint portions of Chapter XIII; to the editor of *Western Advertising* for permission to reprint portions of Chapter V; to Professor W. F. Book for reading the manuscript and making helpful suggestions; and to the many students at The University of Chicago and at Indiana University, who by their keen interest and their scientific zeal have stimulated the author to prosecute his quest towards a scientific approach to the mind of the buyer.

H. D. K.

June, 1921.



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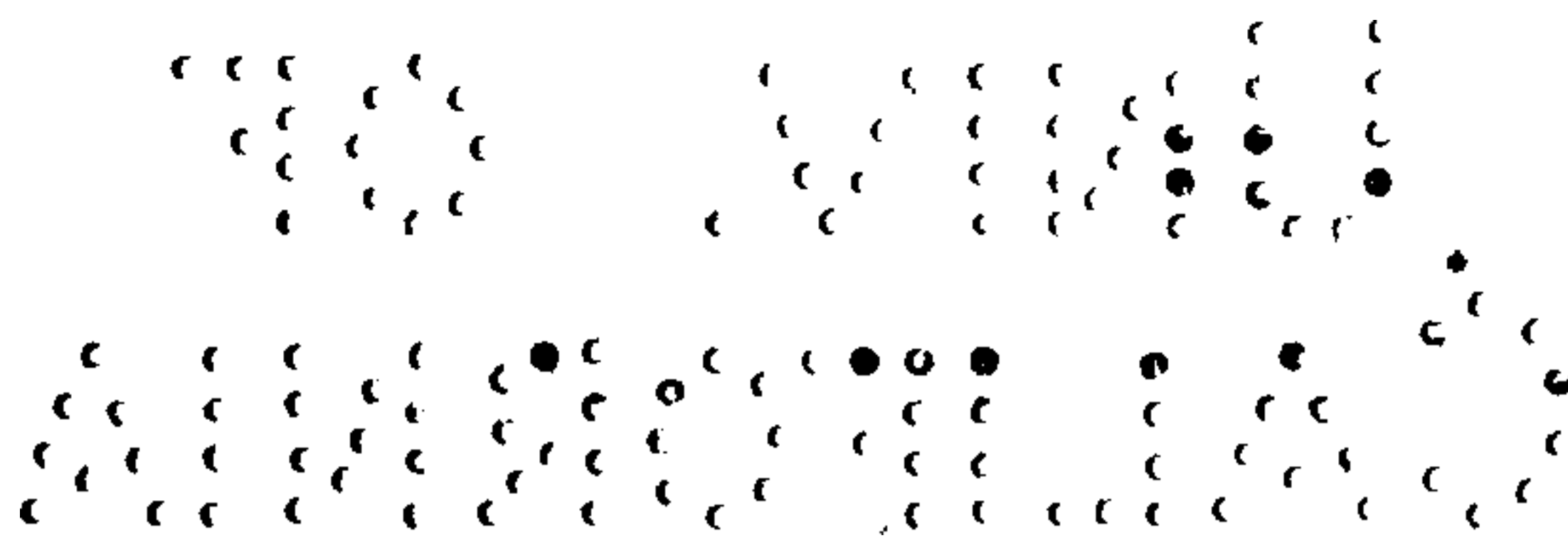
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# INTRODUCTION



# CHAPTER ONE

## THE STREAM OF THOUGHT IN THE SALE

**Successful selling demands psychological point of view. A sale is an interaction between two people who are exchanging economic goods. This interaction consists of a series of changes occurring in both buyer and seller. The latter makes certain moves which call forth responsive movements from the former.**

**The moves made by the seller may consist of various things: display of goods; verbal descriptions; pictures; even the proffer of a friendly cigar. The responses of the buyer may be equally variable: entering a store for a box of candy displayed in the window; reaching into the pocket for a coin; sending for a catalog; dispatching a written order.**

**In the light of such variable conditions we must recognize as forms of selling: advertising, window display, sales correspondence, and personal salesmanship. Although each of these modes of selling has its peculiar problems and methods, all have one aim in**

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common—to influence the mind of the buyer. Any seller, then, who wishes to be successful, must study the mind of the buyer—in other words, must take the psychological point of view.

**The mind a stream.** In discussing the mind of the buyer we may profitably use James's figure of speech and picture it as a stream, consisting of the sum-total of mental processes going on within the individual: ideas, sensations, feelings, volitions and actions. There are two characteristics of the stream which deserve special notice:

### **Characteristics of the mental stream.**

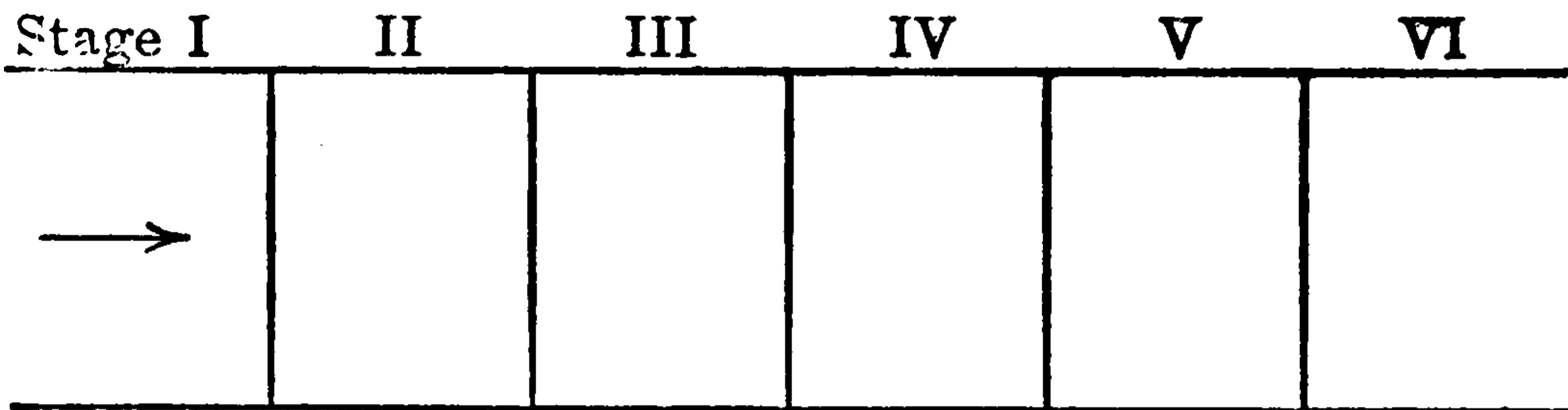
1. The mind never stands still. It is in constant motion. The thoughts of one moment are quickly replaced by others. The mind of the buyer in a sale consists of a procession of sensations, feelings, and willings. From the beginning to the conclusion of the sale these flow along like a stream.

2. The mind is complex. It is not a simple thing that we are dealing with, but an organism of many qualities and powers. It will be our task in this book to describe this stream; to slow it up and examine its contents. We shall analyze it in two directions—longitudinally and cross-sectionally. In the

first case we shall divide it into several rather well-defined stages, each of which we shall study separately. In the second, we shall cut cross-sections at critical points and examine the contents minutely under our psychological microscope.

**The stages in a sale.** The mental stream of the buyer may be divided into six stages:

- I Attention
- II Interest
- III Desire
- IV Confidence
- V Decision and Action
- VI Satisfaction



**FIG. 1. The stream of thought in a sale.**

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The order just mentioned may not be strictly adhered to in every sale. For instance, confidence may precede desire and even interest; interest may come simultaneously with attention. Generally speaking,



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