

## DOES HYPNOTISM HAVE A PLACE IN HOMŒOPATHIC PRACTICE?

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Hypnotism most certainly does have a place in homœopathic practice. Samuel Hahnemann, himself, saw the therapeutic value of this phenomenon, and devotes some three pages to discussing it in relationship to homœopathy in the fifth edition of the *Organon* as translated by C. Wesselhoeft in 1879. This is the last *Organon* that was written and edited by Hahnemann while he lived.

Hypnotism in its various forms pre-dates the Christian Era by many years. The Far Eastern Countries of India, Arabia, Persia and Greece used it considerably for medical, surgical, and religious purposes with many remarkable cures being performed. It seems quite likely that Dr. Hahnemann, who was able to translate many languages, including Greek and Arabic, may have read about this phenomenon, and was prepared to see its value when his contemporary, Franz Anton Mesmer, began his work on "animal magnetism" generally referred to as mesmerism.

Franz Mesmer graduated from the University of Vienna as a doctor of medicine in 1766. Samuel Hahnemann received his medical degree from Erlangen University in 1779. These two contemporary doctors have several other parallels in their lives, yet I find no evidence that they ever met. Both were brilliant medical students. Both were dissatisfied with the limitations of medicine as they saw it practiced. Both broke with orthodox medical profession and discovered something that answered their quest for a better way to help sick people. Both were villified and ostracized for their advanced thinking; both had courage to carry on in spite of strong opposition. It is rather interesting to see two people with such diverse personalities, attacking the same problem of painlessly healing the sick in such diverse ways. Let us give Hahnemann great credit for his deep vision in seeing the therapeutic good in this neuro-psychical approach to healing. Especially in a

century where the general thinking tended to be that medical treatment had to be drastic to be effective.

In spite of the exhibitionism and superfluous paraphernalia used by Mesmer, he was sincere, and the results of his work did bring about a break-through in medical thinking toward the part the mind plays in sickness and health. This did not come about overnight. It started with a doctor here and a doctor there, who were more curious and courageous than their fellows, doing more work on the power of mind over matter. Slowly a new path for the use of these neuro-psychical forces in the curative treatment of many kinds of disease became established.

By 1784 the hostility and distaste of the Paris physicians reached the point where King Louis XVI appointed a Royal Commission composed of the famous scientists of the day to investigate the existence of "animal magnetism." Among the scientists included were Lavoisier and Benjamin Franklin. The Royal Commission followed the king's orders to the letter and in their verdict were unable to find any scientific proof of the existence of "animal magnetism." In their considered opinion Mesmer's cures were due to the over-stimulation of the patient's imagination. Since a large part of Mesmer's practice came from the wealthy classes whose jaded tastes needed stimulation, it is not surprising that some of his group seances under magnetized oak trees did not give the Royal Commission a very scientific outlook on "animal magnetism."

Following this denouncement and the subsequent prohibition of the practice of "animal magnetism," Mesmer's shining star began to dim, and he finally went to England where he inspired many other disciples to carry on his work.

In contrast to the wealthy Paris patients, there was in the town of Nancy, France, a country doctor, A. A. Tiebeault, who practised mesmerism on his rough farmer patients for some 25 years. Eventually some of the more curious doctors heard of his work and sought him out to see how he accomplished so much in his quiet, retiring way. Among those who came and witnessed his remarkable cures was Dr. Sigmund Freud. Later, Freud wrote an article called *Hypnotism and Suggestion*. In this article he reviewed the work of Bernheim, Charcot, and some others con-

cerning what they thought hypnotism was. Later on, Freud developed his own ideas about the "unconscious" and its relation to illness and discarded hypnosis.

In spite of the crudeness of the methods used by the early disciples of Mesmer, it is amazing the amount of medical cures and surgery done under its influence. In England, Dr. John Eliotson began in 1834 to use this method in many medical and surgical cases with the help of a Frenchman, Dupotet. By 1837 he had lost his position as head of the hospital, and founded another infirmary, and started a publication called *Zoist, a Journal of Cerebral Physiology, Mesmerism, and Their Application to Human Welfare*, which lasted 12 years till 1855.

Another strange chapter in the history of mesmerism came when the United States Congress offered, in 1853, the large sum of \$100,000 to the person to be declared the true discoverer of the anaesthetic property of ether.

Doctor James Esdaile, a doctor in Perth, Scotland, took issue with the U. S. Congress and sent them in 1853 a formal petition and protest stating that painless surgery was available and used long before ether anaesthesia was discovered, that painless surgery by means of mesmerism was common practice in his hospital, and that he had performed nearly 300 major mesmeric operations while he was located at the Hooghly Hospital in India. Some of his operations included amputations, cataracts, scrotal tumors, and dental extractions.

The successful use of ether and chloroform in surgery did a great deal to bring about the discontinuance of mesmerism for surgery in America and Europe. This was because ether could be counted upon to anaesthetize nearly every patient, whereas mesmeric surgical cases needed to be carefully selected, and treated for several sessions before surgery.

Freud had an interesting comparison to make between the use of chloroform and hypnosis, using a point often made by those who were hostile to hypnosis:

Evidence that hypnosis leads to injurious results in a few cases would be no more against its general usefulness, than the occurrence of isolated instances of death under chloroform

narcosis, and thus forbid its general use for surgical anaesthesia. Furthermore, the largest number of chloroform narcoses are experienced by surgeons who carry out the largest number of operations. But the majority of reports of the injurious effects of hypnosis are derived from observers who have worked very little with hypnosis or not at all. Whereas all those research workers who have had a large amount of hypnotic experience are united in their belief in the harmlessness of the procedure.

I feel this is in line with Hahnemann's thinking in the *Organon* when he says, "This remedial power, the existence of which is often denied, is imparted to the patient by the touch of a *well disposed person*, exercising the full strength of his will." I wish that I knew the exact German words that Hahnemann used for "well disposed," but I would like to think he meant well trained, or experienced. Used in this sense it is in agreement with Freud's remarks that the more experienced the hypnotist the better the results.

In 1841 a finely educated surgeon, Dr. James Braid, skeptically decided to attend several seances of "animal magnetism." He felt the whole thing was a system of collusion and delusion of the excited imagination. After witnessing further surgical cases, he decided to study the phenomenon as scientifically as possible and see why it worked. Thanks to Dr. Braid's objective study more of the mental and psychological sides of hypnosis were developed. A new vocabulary was started, and the word Hypnosis was born. In contrast to the devoted followers of Mesmer, he considered hypnosis to be an impression made on the nervous centers of the body without any need for the magnetic rods, "mystical universal fluid," or influences passing from the operator to the patient. These external trappings had been considered very essential to mesmerists.

Dr. Braid was very emphatic in saying that this phenomenon was no cure-all or panacea for all diseases, but rather a valuable therapeutic addition to the present curative means. Apart from its use in surgery, he felt it would be useful in disorders of a functional nature. In spite of his fine surgical reputation and

scientific approach to hypnosis, Dr. Braid's work never found favour in English medical circles. Hahnemann also saw in this phenomenon a tool for good in medicine, and not a universal cure-all. Referring to the mesmerism of his day, Hahnemann says:

Although this process of supplying a deficiency of vital power, repeated from time to time, can never accomplish a permanent cure where a general internal evil lies at the bottom of the chronic local disease; nevertheless this positive mode of strengthening and sustaining the organism with vital power (which is no more palliative than food or drink is in satisfying hunger and thirst) is a great adjuvant to homœopathic medicines in the actual treatment of the entire disease. . . .

. . . It is capable of imparting vital power to a single debilitated part or to the entire organism. This objective is not to be reached with the same degree of safety and certainty by any power except that of mesmerism, which obviates the disturbances arising from other kinds of medical treatment.

Today in England there is a homœopathic physician who practices both Homœopathy and hypnosis. He was asked to speak to the London Homœopathic Society. His paper was entitled, *The Similarity and Synergistic Action Observed Between Hypnosis and Homœopathy*. Dr. Andrew Strigner so ably presented his thesis that several doctors, in the discussion period that followed, urged that he should be invited for a return talk on this subject.

Dr. Strigner's thinking on hypnosis is stated so simply that I should like to quote him:

Hypnosis is a state of a person's own mind, and once one has been taught how to make the approach, to establish this state within himself, then he can see that each and every one of us is capable of going into this state. It is a natural state into which we all of us pass several times a day, on the way to and from sleep, in day dreaming, and so on. Medical hypnosis is a deliberate attempt to organize this natural state into a valuable therapeutic tool. How do we obtain this state? For ease of working, it is usual to dim or cut out strong light in

order to avoid distraction. The patient is asked to close his eyes for the same reason, so that he is not going to spend his time admiring the pattern of your wall paper. By closing his eyes the patient cuts out an enormous wealth of visual detail which is distracting. A relatively quiet room should be chosen. It is usual to have the patient lying down, and covered with a blanket against cold and draughts. Such things are not essential, but all are helpful. The doctor deliberately attempts to get the patient relaxed. In a relaxed state, in its final degree, the patient is using a minimum of energy, and he is hereby enabled to link up the conscious with the sub-conscious.

There is a curious thing about the sub-conscious. It has no will. The will is a conscious function. We know from neuro-anatomy and neurophysiology that the larger part of the brain is linked by motor nerves to every part of the body, or in other words controls every part. Through the sensory nervous system, the sub-conscious knows what is going on in every part of the body, and if anything is wrong knows how to correct it. The reason why it does not do so is that if it is outside the automatic range of function, it has no initiative; no will. By linking up the two parts of the mind the sub-conscious can be directed.

Dr. Strigner then presents several cases in which he used both homœopathic remedies and hypnosis. He found over the years several similarities between the two schools. When using low potencies he found the results tended to be more transient and not as long lasting as when higher potencies were used. In hypnosis he found that when direct suggestions were given the patient the results also tended to be temporary. But when he used the indirect suggestive approach, a short period of aggravation was followed by improvement that held for years. If the person had no aggravation during hypnotic treatment he might improve and be symptom free for several months to a year and then get a return of his old symptoms. Another similarity is that he treated the whole person, not just the specific complaint that may have brought the patient to his office. He also found that in treating patients by hypnosis many of the complaints of which he was

completely unaware cleared up along with the original trouble. I know this often happens in homœopathic prescribing when we give a remedy that is the patient's similimum.

The high rating which homœopathy gives to the mental symptoms of each patient would indicate there may be a closer relationship between these two schools of thought than has been realized. Here is a therapeutic tool whose merit has been tested by many physicians over many years, but like Homœopathy, it has never received the acclaim or credit to which it is duly entitled.

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