

PSYCHOLOGY OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO HYPNOSIS

After all the reading I've done (and that I continue to do) regarding the history of hypnosis, I have come to the conclusion that psychology and psychotherapy in ALL forms, as we know it, would NOT exist today apart from the experimentation, usage and development of hypnosis by medical doctors. In the late 1800s, the idea of psychology and the word hypnosis were often used synonymously.

The first striking example of this was by Hugo Munsterberg, M.D. He was originally from Germany, but he eventually was invited by William James to be the head of the psychology laboratory at Harvard. He received his undergraduate degree in physiological psychology and was the research assistant to Wilhelm Wundt. Dr. Munsterberg was very influential in the following fields of psychology: applied, clinical, forensic and industrial. In 1898, he became the president of the American Psychological Association.

He often used the word “psychotherapeutical” as a general term, when referring to working with the mind. He thus interchanged the idea of psychology and psychotherapy with hypnosis. In the Preface of his book Psychotherapy, 1909 he says, “In my first years as docent in a German University [*University of Freiburg*] twenty years ago, [1889] I gave throughout the winter semester before several hundred students a course on **hypnotism** and its medical application. It was probably the first university course on hypnotism given anywhere. Since that time I have never ceased to work **psychotherapeutically** in the psychological laboratory.” (p.15)

Dr. Munsterberg helps us to further see that the movement away from hypnotism had already begun. In the same book, he clearly states, “**Psychotherapy** became in such hands essentially **a study of hypnotism**, with especial interest in its relation to hysteria and similar diseases. The much more essential relation of psychotherapy to the normal mental life, the relation of suggestion and hypnotism to the normal functions seemed too often neglected.”

A.A. Lindsay, M.D. agreed with Dr. Munsterberg when he said, “Whatever advancement has been made in placing psychology on a practical basis **is due to the study of that science through hypnotic demonstrations. Hypnosis** bears the same relationship to psychology that dissecting the physical body does

to the science of anatomy" New Psychology, its basic principles and practical formulas, 1908.

Freud's mentor Josef Breuer held on to the teachings of the MD's in France (namely Charcot, Leibeault & Bernheim). In his 1917 book The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement, Freud recounted a story, "In the year 1909, when I was first privileged to speak publicly on psychoanalysis in an American University, fired by this momentous occasion for my endeavors, I declared that it was not myself who brought psychoanalysis into existence. I said that it was Josef Breuer." Although he did take full credit a few pages later, he never rejected hypnosis' part in his development of psychoanalysis.

So, what WAS Breuer's discovery early in 1880? In Freud's own words, "Its fundamental fact is that the symptoms of hysterical patients depend upon impressive but forgotten scenes in their lives (traumata). The therapy founded thereon was to cause the patients to recall and reproduce these experiences under hypnosis (catharsis), and the fragmentary theory, deduced from it was that these symptoms corresponded to an abnormal use of undischarged sums of excitement (conversion)." ~ The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement

Poul Carl Bjerre in his book The History and Practice of Psychoanalysis, 1916 regarding the "hysterical" patient whom Breuer treated, "She herself, noticed that the symptoms disappeared as soon as their hidden causal connection was brought into consciousness. This patient is thus the true discoverer of the psychanalytical method."

At one time Freud actually said, "If psychoanalysis is ever to be made available to the greatest number of people it can only be with the aid of hypnosis as a shortcut.....Hypnosis is the poor man's psychotherapy."

Every psychological "camp" finds its genesis in Freud's teaching and then ultimately in hypnosis. Basically each philosophy of psychology starts with the goal to bring the unconscious to the conscious. Carl Jung said, "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

Even Albert Einstein acknowledged this and understood this when he said, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

A bit later in his career, Freud said, "The treatment by suggestion in deep hypnosis seemed to offer me at that time sufficient compensation for the lost electrical therapy. I learned this treatment through the extremely impressive demonstrations of Liebault and Bernheim. But the investigation under hypnosis with which I became acquainted through Breuer, I found, owing to its automatic manner of working and the simultaneous gratification of one's eagerness for knowledge, much more attractive than the monotonous and violent suggestive command which was devoid of every possibility of inquiry. As one of the latest achievements of psychoanalysis, we have lately been admonished to put the actual conflict and the cause of the illness into the foreground of analysis. This is exactly what Breuer and I did in the beginning of our work with the cathartic method. We guided the patient's attention directly to the traumatic scene during which the symptom had arisen, tried to find therein the psychic conflict and to free the repressed affect. We thus discovered the procedure characteristic of the psychic processes of the neuroses which I later named regression....It was proved that psychoanalysis could not clear up anything actual, except by going back to something in the past. It even proved that every pathological experience presupposes an earlier one which, though not in itself pathological, lent a pathological quality to the later occurrence." The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement

Even though Freud said this, Poul Carl Bjerre reminds us in his book The History and Practice of Psychoanalysis, pg 265, says, "To silence all talk about suggestion playing any part in psychanalysis, Freud has banished the word itself from all the literature inspired by him. For all those psychological conditions which are brought to light by means of the study of suggestion, he uses his own designations."

I am writing this to motivate and stimulate us all in to realizing how wonderful is this profession we find ourselves in. It seems we have simply come full circle back to the origin of effective therapy - HYPNOSIS!

"The subconscious mind can be likened to a genius three year old....It has incredible processing power, but likes to be spoken to in simple, single syllable words which paint vivid images and inspire deep emotions."

~ Gerald Kein