

Naturally changing

Trance as our natural changing mode - reforming and naturalising trancework

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Abstract

The major controversial themes, for theoreticians as well as for clinical hypnotherapists are less about practical applications of hypnosis and more about the nature of trance, the nature of hypnosis. This article will present trance as a natural change-mode, the capacity for flexibility of our reality-mode. Trance is the process whereupon our flexibility is enhanced and our susceptibility to internal changes is heightened. Trance will be explained as the prerequisite state for any internal change that we make throughout our lives. When trance is established as a generic phenomenon, hypnotherapy would be defined as a professional facilitation of a natural change mode, and the concept of hypnotisability will no longer be needed.

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1. Introduction

The debate about hypnosis is less focused on the practicality of applying it - although methods of trance work vary, the major controversial themes are about the nature of trance, the nature of hypnosis.

Defining trace or hypnosis is a slippery task. There are numerous theories, explaining the way hypnosis works, possibly as many as there are hypnotherapists, and then some more. Consequently, this article will not pretend to cover all the theories and approaches. Instead, I chose to present a more personal point of view on the subject. The second, shorter section, of this article (formative theories about trance and hypnosis) will briefly describe some theories that had a significant part in creating the third section, the body of this article, an innovative perspective on hypnosis. The later section will therefore focus on the Trance state, which seems to be the basic working-state for change making and, therefore - for hypnosis.

2. Formative theories about trance and hypnosis

Knowledge is usually accumulative by nature, and indeed - the following theoreticians and clinicians formed their ideas and practice as a consequence of studying former theories and the experience of yet others. The discussed approaches, are those from which I took the skeleton to build my own perspective, as it is presented in sections 3. It is therefore not an exhaustive account of their work but rather skimming relevant points to the article's topic.

I - The Neo-Dissociation theory - Ernest Hilgard

Hilgard's theory of Neo-dissociation (1977) is an important 'state' theory¹. It naturalises the dissociation between conscious and unconscious processes, as well as provides a substantial place for trance and trancework.

According to Hilgard, our mind is hierarchically arranged by several cognitive systems. Crossing over from one cognitive system to another is normally impossible, due to amnesic barriers. However, during trance the subconscious is gaining more autonomy than in 'normal' states, and so enabling access to various sub-systems. Hypnosis has the effect of dissociating the systems from one another (this explains, pain management, for example). This concept led to further research of the trance - the dissociated state - accessing 'the hidden observer', the parts of the mind that kept registering information, even when it was apparently dissociated. An important note needs to be made to the fact that Hilgard believed that it is possible to affect these cognitive systems by other, non-hypnotic procedures as well (Hayes, 1994; Rowley, 1986; Yapko, 1990).

Hilgard's theory, which is in accord with other 'state' theories, can formulate trance as a bridging tool, accessing formerly subconscious processes. Modern Ericksonian hypnotherapy, as well as various body-psychotherapy approaches, use the assumptions of this bridging device as a working-tool.

II - Milton Erickson

Erickson changed the concept of hypnotherapy, by turning it to a natural process, rather than focusing on the mechanical and formal aspects of it (as Bandler and Grinder did later on). Erickson saw the subconscious not only as an ally but also as holding infinite possibilities and realities (for example, Erickson, 1961).

Unlike the Psychoanalytic approach, and the various Psychodynamic psychotherapies that stressed insight as a necessary component for health, Erickson totally trusted the subconscious, respecting it to react and to initiate desired changes in better ways than conscious processes. As a consequence, most of his work was done on subconscious

¹ One way of categorising hypnosis theoreticians, is the issue of trance as a specific, altered state of consciousness. Although I find this division somewhat simplistic, it is still useful for our discussion.

levels, often incorporating conscious awareness only to a minute extent (Yapko, 1990).

The structure of trance-induction lost its clear-cut boundaries in Erickson's work, and aroused many questions about hypnosis and trance - is hypnosis really necessary for trancework? Is trance necessary to deliver effective change? This unclarity frightened (and still frightens) many therapists, who require simple answers and repeatable procedures. NLP was formed partly due to the inability to comprehend the natural and yet complex way of communicating change, and the need to formalise its essence. Although NLP provides many efficient tools to the therapist, I believe it fails in modelling the essence of Erickson's effective communication.

Erickson was an effective therapist because he lived in trance, he was capable of changing and adjusting, and did it naturally and skilfully. When working with subconscious processes, there is nothing more powerful than using your own subconscious - which works a thousand times better than your consciousness (for example, Erickson, 1961).

'When I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me... then whatever I do seems to be full of healing' Carl Rogers, (Rogers, 1986).

III - NLP

NLP brought a systematic utilisation set of tools into hypnosis. There are many NLP premises with which I disagree, and the most important is the view of syntactic processes as all-important. For Neuro-Linguistic-Programming, modelling the structure of communication will supply the essence of it, and I think it is an utterly wrong assumption. However, in forming NLP, Bandler and Grinder created useful metaphor for changework that helped me to form my own perspectives about trance.

According to NLP - the only way we receive information is through our senses, using it to create a reality map. This reality map corresponds to the world as we perceive it and we interact with the world through it. We therefore communicate with the world indirectly (Alder, 1994; Bandler and Grinder, 1979).

Hypnosis is an opening to the reprogramming of our current reality map (or model of the world). It operates by working on a programmer, syntactic level - it is an amplifier to elicit more intense response from people (Bandler and Grinder, 1979; Grinder and Bandler, 1981). Trance is, therefore, an entering to a flexible - studying map. In these processes, NLP stresses the importance of *Rapport*: the meeting of the person in his own reality model, and of *Pacing and Leading*: a bridge to lead clients to new models of reality, through identifying with their old one (O'Connor and McDermott, 1996).

The Importance of NLP is in its simplicity - the ability to understand things at their abstract level enables a thorough understanding of trancework as changing metaphor-systems (or models) in our minds. The danger of NLP is also its simplicity, and it is important to remember that it is merely an artefact-metaphor, rather than 'the ultimate truth'.

IV - Trancework - Michael Yapko

Michael Yapko did not revise a new theoretical concept of hypnosis and trance. However, in his book *Trancework* (1990), he formulated a coherent understanding of the practicality of trance and hypnosis.

For Yapko, trancework is a continuous process of adjusting and readjusting to each other (therapist and client), and it requires a continuous feedback loop to succeed. The incorporation of relationship factors (mainly therapy-client) with the natural capacity for entering trance made it easier to explain various phenomena. For Yapko, hypnosis was a process of influential communication (Yapko, 1990), and its efficacy drew its powers both from the nature of the communication (i.e. rapport, congruency etc) and from the profound characteristics of the trance state.

Yapko identified trance with the following elements; none of them was exclusive: selective attention, dissociation, higher responsiveness to suggestions, literal interpretation, trance-logic, lethargy and relaxation. Trance was a state that enabled therapy, change-work. This was the working state of hypnosis (Yapko, 1990). As Yapko recognised, every psychotherapy involved hypnosis inasmuch as it influenced

a troubled person through communication (Yapko, 1990). It is for this reason that Yapko identified, and rightly so, hypnosis as a tool for effective influence rather than a therapy. By doing so, he enabled the widening of the concept of hypnosis and trance, as will be presented in section 3.

V - The System/Mathematical model - Dylan Morgan²

Dylan Morgan elucidates trancework by using mathematical models, and observing hypnosis through the eyes of system-theory.

As he claimed, all organic systems are self-regulating, using paired systems or a complex network of interrelated subsystems to reciprocally influence each other. Morgan described the hypnotic process as working with feedback loops and self-regulating systems. There were many systems that were involved in these regulations (and therefore, could be worked with through hypnosis): the voluntary and involuntary muscles; the sensory systems; habitual systems; emotional system; relationships; immune system and mental system (Morgan, 1996).

The hypnotic procedure thus used a natural phenomenon to utilise (by amplifying - similar to NLP concepts of amplifications, or Ericksonian use of accumulative effects) desired changes. By using a mathematical model, Morgan succeeded in adding many factors to the equation of hypnosis, among which expectations, role play, fear, success, without arguing for the non-existence of hypnosis or limiting its applicability (Morgan, 1996).

As it will be seen in section 3, looking at trance as a natural 'change-mode' is in perfect accord with Morgan's view (as well as with the views of Yapko, Erickson, and to some extent with those of NLP and Hilgard). As a consequence, the Trance-state and hypnosis indeed lose their unique stamp of the unique 'magical Svangelì'. Nevertheless, the therapeutic arena becomes a professional context to help facilitate natural change-modes in a goal-oriented manner.

² Based on Morgan's book: *The Principles of Hypnotherapy* (1996)

VI - Body-mind Influences

Through my studies, I have been immensely influenced by Body-mind approaches to therapy and research, and my formation of the trance concept is also evolving from these realms of knowledge. Although some of the succeeding theories may not directly recognise change-work as trance, I found incredible similarities and parallel processes between hypnotherapy and bodymind approaches and hence I chose to concisely present some of these ideas.

a. Bioenergetics

Bioenergetics is a body-psychotherapy method, formed by the psychiatrist Alexander Lowen after the ideas and practice of Wilhelm Reich (a scholar of Freud)³.

Bioenergetics regards consciousness as a continuum of self-forming and reforming: *'The awake body is our consciousness'* (Keleman, 1975). Bioenergetics aims at self-awareness, self-expression and freedom of movement. When one reaches a change, expands from the former limitations or allow more life - one feels more grounded but also focused, being in the body and outside it - a similar experience to a profound trance, or to Jung's oceanic feeling.

The processes of body-psychotherapy very often parallel those of regression, induction, reframing, abreactions and other hypnotic procedures (Lowen, 1975). Approaching changes from the body processes perspective does not make a substantial difference but rather adds an additional opportunity for changework - this is trance, and trancework.

b. Psychopharmacology

Psychopharmacology is the connecting link between psychotherapy and body processes. As discussed by Candace Pert (1987, 1997), there is a strong connection between neuropeptides and mental processes. By observing the physiological

³ Reich's 'Character structure' theory and Lowen's revision are discussed in: Reich, 1972; Lowen, 1958.

manifestation of mental processes, it was possible to determine that mind and body were one system. Sub-systems in our mindbody were constantly communicating with each other.

The importance of the limbic system, the close relationship between the nervous system and the immune system, and the influence of the autonomic-nervous-system were all physiologically explained and researched (and still are) in psychopharmacology and psychoneuropharmacology.

Furthermore, Pert has demonstrated the possibility of influencing body processes and emotions by accessing subconscious processes (Pert, 1997). Pert explained the mechanics of the psychosomatic networks and acknowledges the power of trance (or meditation, or Chakra work) in healing and bringing about change. Although there is still a long way ahead, I found the physiological aspects of mind-body connection reassuring in the quest for understanding trancework (see also, Rolef Ben-Shahar, 1999a).

c. Ultradian Rhythms, Ideodynamic hypnosis and State-bound memory⁴

The Work of Ernest Rossi is of extreme importance in trying to bridge the gap between hypnotherapy, psychotherapy and body therapies.

Rossi viewed trance as a natural consequence of the Ultradian cycles, the biological cycles of alternations between attentiveness and relaxation that physiologically occurred every 90-150 minutes (Rossi, 1986; Yapko, 1990).

The Ultradian rhythms were the biological basis of the common everyday trance, and hypnosis utilised these rhythms to bring change and healing, by encouraging their activity or deliberately inducing them (Rossi 1986; Rossi and Cheek, 1988).

Whereas Rossi's ultradian rhythms theory encountered strong criticism, his practical applications of Ideodynamic hypnosis were highly praised by clinicians. The connection between Ideodynamic (ID) hypnosis and the ultradian rhythms tapped into the mind-body regulation and connection. ID hypnosis was the facilitation of

⁴ After Rossi (1986) and Rossi and Cheek (1988).

subconscious, involuntary movements for psychotherapy. By bypassing the voluntary muscular system and conscious control, ID hypnosis acted directly on subconscious processes and was regarded highly effective (Rossi and Cheek, 1988). Whereas ID hypnosis did not explain all trance phenomena, it established the nature of trance as basically bypassing consciousness and working with subconscious levels.

Rossi's and Cheek's study into State-Bound Memory and State Bound Learning (1988), is closely related to the concept of trance as a change-mode, where different situations register both subconsciously and physiologically (or, as Candace pert phrased it: '*the body is the unconscious mind*' (Pert, 1997)). If we formulate trance as a natural change mode, then seeing trance as a state where time-perception and duration can vary is perfectly reasonable⁵.

3. Trance - our natural changing mode

'Might not, may not. In a painting these would be two very similar shades of the same colour, the colour 'to be' to be precise. A verb is a colour, a noun a symbol'. José Saramago (Saramago, 1973).

I - Introduction and Definition

Some practitioners choose a narrow definition of trance and hypnosis, confining it to the rigid hypnotic process of induction - changework - disengagement; others define it in a broader way. For me, ***Hypnosis is communication with subconscious processes,*** and ***Trance is the context from whence this communication is done.*** Looking at hypnosis from this angle, trancework is a widely spread phenomenon, that can be found in many areas, beginning with education, through most relationships and communications, to dreams, fantasies and most kinds of creative activities (and more).

However, even when holding a narrower definition of hypnosis, trance is a common phenomenon in the everyday life, and a very dominant element in most kinds of therapies. When Freud abandoned formal hypnosis he turned to methods of free

⁵ Section 3 will expand on the issue of time alteration during trance and trauma.

association (Freud, 1925) - which utilises subconscious changework much better than his authoritarian rigid induction. He failed to recognise the vast use of hypnosis in his later practice, though. Freud's free-association is trancework⁶, and so are Gestalt, TA⁷, psychodrama and numerous other approaches. Hypnotherapy as a separate realm dedicated to bring change through subconscious vehicles, is thus an approach practised not only by those who call themselves hypnotherapists, but also by many other effective communicators and therapists.

There are indeed some 'non-state' theoreticians, such as Theodore Barber and Brian Fellows, who assert that trance is neither necessary nor sufficient in hypnosis (Fellows, 1986). However, by doing so they limit the arena of hypnosis to a great extent, whereupon hypnosis and trance become, so I believe, merely theoretical constructs with little practical applications.

Since communication is a form of information processing, and due to the fact that all information is primarily processed in subconscious levels, all communication - interpersonal and intrapersonal as well - can be regarded as subconscious to some extent. However, there are times when information is mostly subconsciously processed with little or no interference of conscious agents. An example for this is when the critical faculty stops serving as a relay station for information (Dave Elman regarded it as a prerequisite for trance - (Elman, 1964)). In trance we accept suggestions even when they are not 'logical' or 'rational', as long as they are appropriate for us - the critical faculty, which uses 'common-sense logic', becomes weaker then (Yapko, 1990).

II - Flexibility, Change and Trance

*There are no more unknown islands, they're all on the maps [said the king].
Only the known islands are on the maps [replied the man].* José Saramago
(Saramago, 1999)

⁶ Although, due to its indirectness, it can be a rather slow process.

⁷ Transactional Analysis.

We experience trance whenever we shift from our primary perception mode to another. When we experience our reality in a slightly different way to the way we are used to, we are entering a powerful yet vulnerable stance. Its power, as well as its vulnerability is derived from the fact that we are then more flexible than usual. What is so powerful about being flexible? What is so vulnerable about being flexible?

Being flexible is a virtue up to a point. An equation with no variables ($12=5+7$) is static and boring (dead?), yet stable and without risks. On the other hand - an equation with nothing but variables and no constants ($Y=R+Z$) is flexible and infinite but also inapplicable and confusing. Us humans are the most flexible of animals: we can adapt and readjust ourselves to many situations, yet basically, we aspire to have some constants, some consistency; we need some security and stability. The dynamic balancing between rigidity and over-flexibility is the movement between reality-fixation and fantasy. **This is why trance is so powerful: it is an opening to spheres of changework.** Trance, for Milton Erickson, was the state where learning and openness to change were most likely to occur (Rosen, 1991). In trance, we get to see the world through wider lens, where things that we thought of as impossible or unreal, can become our new reality.

Trancework is vulnerable because in trance we question and change our basic assumptions about reality; it can be frightening because it is bringing change, and we fear change. I believe that the fear from change has contributed to the mythical fear of hypnosis, since changes occur so readily in hypnosis.

III Subconscious resources⁸

The Strength of doing trancework comes from undefinable sources within each human being... there is a remarkable potential in each person that surfaces during those states of absorption called trance. Michael D Yapko (Yapko, 1990)

⁸ 'Subconscious resources' is a much-loved phrase by hypnotherapists. The following paragraphs will relate it to the power of trancework.

In trancework the world loses its clear-cut, sharp boundaries, and turns into a flexible changeable space. Naturally, we need to use some practical assumptions about the nature of the world. It is usually pragmatic to assume that this black thing under our feet is solid and safe to walk on; that our legs are capable of moving; that the seemingly small house there is in-fact distant and will get bigger as we get close to it. All these assumptions are necessary for our everyday functioning. These premises are not inevitably true though - there are realities where other assumptions rule: being in love, for example, is a reality with utterly different rules, we don't see our loved one through regular lenses; dreaming is another example where other laws dictate dream logic and reality. Everybody has constants in his life-equations, and most of us even share common rules. It is only when we have enough constants in our lives, that we can begin and explore the variables. Ground is a prerequisite for trance.

By accessing subconscious modes of operating, we open a door to a world of infinite possibilities; or to put it even more accurately - we open doors to infinite worlds of endless possibilities. **When a client is changing his way of looking at his reality through trancework, his reality changes.** When an anxious person stops perceiving everything as a threat, the world suddenly becomes a nicer place to live in. Milton Erickson, for example, had 'inserted' himself inside his clients' history, supporting them throughout their lives and supplying them with needed resources (Haley, 1986).

The first characteristic of this organismic subconscious wisdom is its flexibility and its wealth of choices. The second characteristic is the following axiomatic assumption about the human nature: when given more choices, when the gate to more realities open, our organism will choose the best possible option. Both humanistic psychology and modern hypnotherapy share this assumption (for example - Maslow, 1968; O'Connor and McDermott, 1996). It is not to say that there is an objective **best** reality, quite the contrary - the client and the client alone can choose a reality that is best for her.

Our **Self** - and you may call it by the numerous names it has (for example: subconscious, intuition, higher self, our body, soul, god, love, light, the third eye, Buddha's face and many more), is yet wiser than our egos, wiser than our educated

consciousness. *'My total organismic sensing of a situation is more trustworthy than my intellect'*, claimed Carl Rogers (Rogers, 1961).

Typically, when the development is normal and healthy, a person has some access to this place of 'reality-building', of meta-reality (which I simply call: trance), so when his reality is not useful, or when there are more useful realities - he can shift to another world. For example, upon realising that whereas smoking was a needed social strategy in your teens, it is a no longer useful (in this case - healthy) approach: you stop. However, we all tend to fixate some aspects of our reality and become stagnant in some ways. **Stagnancy is blocking the access to changework and trance, getting a reality-bound fixation.** This is why smoke cessation, in our example, is not that easy for some people. This is where hypnosis as a therapy is needed.

IV Naturalising trance

Trance can be seen as a required state for adjustment in our lives and as we earlier mentioned - it is a state we experience daily.

When is it that we experience a need to change? When is it that we need to question our reality and to be extremely adaptable? The answer is plain: it is when our surrounding changes. When our 'automatic pilot' of fixative-reality identifies an unknown territory, it calls upon trances: it brings forth possibilities of change. When we read a well-written novel, we create a parallel reality and drift into the book. A totally different example is trauma. The traumatised person nearly always enters a trance, expanding time (to allow a better reaction?) and altering perception (see Greaves, 1998; Levine, 1997; Rossi and Cheek, 1988; Stossel, 1998). An external change calls upon an internal shift. But it is not only when we are blasted by multiple new stimuli that we enter trances; when our consciousness gets 'bored', we also drift into trance.

'For in every adult there lurks a child - an eternal child... calls for unceasing care, attention, and education. That is the part of the human personality which wants to develop and become a whole' Carl Gustav Jung (Jung, 1934)

When a baby is being constantly (and safely) touched it is secure and confident; it is capable of exploring the world and gradually expanding its boundaries. When the baby is safe and supported - it doesn't need to fight for its survival - and is therefore free to move forward (Lowen, 1957). **This infantile curiosity**, when combined with safety, is the most important mode of studying and experimenting realities (see also Rolef Ben-Shahar, 2000a). **It is the basic trance of change and learning.**

V Therapeutics

There are infinite ways to induce trance. Since trance is our natural mode for changework, and we are constantly making changes in our lives, the difference between the therapeutic trance and normal functioning state is of quantity and initiation, rather than of a qualitative difference. **All behaviours have a trance component in them; all our living-equations have some variables in them (trance states). Every trance, too, has a constant, a reality-fixated aspect in it:** this is what binds us to the shared reality (and why people are afraid of using hypnotherapy with psychotics, who have different 'shared reality' to ours, often with much less 'constants')⁹. **Every naturalistic induction is therefore a slow movement from an equation with many constants and few variables - to an equation with many variables and fewer constants.**

One of the easiest ways to create this movement is to watch it¹⁰. When you suffer from pain, concentrating on the pain will reveal an amazing fact: it is changing, it would never stay the same. However, in order to grasp these changes, we need to invest energy in focusing on it. Erich Fromm (1957) argued that: *'A concentration is a necessary condition for the mastery of an art... one cannot learn to concentrate without becoming sensitive to oneself.*

Throughout our normal life, our attention is outwardly focused - and as a consequence, we perceive ourselves as relatively static and/or constant. When shifting our attention from the changing world inside - it is harder to focus on the external (unless it is an uptime trance, but this is another story), while a whole new wealth of

⁹ I suspect that this is also the root of the fear of getting immersed in a fantasy, and not 'waking up'.

¹⁰ This is how meditation works, and also some inductions, such as the *minimal cue induction*.

changes is unveiled inside. Erickson thought that all hypnotic techniques focus on directing the patient's attentions inwards (Erickson, 1965).

When a person is in a need for growth, for changing a reality into a better, more useful one, she would willingly accept any efficient metaphor that would assist her in doing so - our organism aspires to have better realities thus usually finds trancework pleasant¹¹.

One of the distinctive characteristics of deep trancework is its somewhat childish quality. Every hypnotherapist notices that very often clients regress spontaneously, especially when deeper levels of trance are achieved. Should we observe it from the point of view of the 'supported-experimenting' phase, it seems only natural that regression to childhood (or even to infancy) will be such a readily occurred phenomenon (this was a place of greatest flexibility, of greatest adaptability).

When an unconditional positive regard is given to a client in a regressive state, it is my belief that the love is registered in the past-memory, rather than in the present, reformulating the personality - perpetuating trance.

"Never fight, reject or try to contradict whatever behaviour the patient brings" Milton Erickson (Erickson, 1958)

The concept of pacing and leading (coined for this context in NLP) is an active projection of the natural process of using oneself as a feedback machine. Effective therapists have long recognised that when you accept the reality of the other, regardless of what it is - and communicate this acceptance (pacing), you can thereafter utilise this reality to alter behaviour, to bring about change (leading) (for example O'Connor and McDermott, 1996; Yapko, 1990).

Some people are naturally better in accepting and utilising, while others find it extremely hard to accept that others may have a totally different reality to theirs'.

¹¹ There are exceptions, such as traumatised people who associate deep trance with their trauma.

Why? I believe that it has a lot to do with rigidity of personality and reality-fixation¹². As numerous researches have shown in the past, one of the hardest thing for people is facing ambiguities and dealing with uncertainties (for example, the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance as discussed in Atkinson et al, 1996). In an animalistic world there was indeed no place for doubt: what you perceived to be - was, and unless accepted and utilised, you would have died. But once our cortex developed and understanding followed it, we have become aware of the relativist nature of our perception. We now know that reality is expressed in us (and to us) as a metaphor; this metaphor is constantly changing - altering the world with it (the grass is green in the morning and grey at night; people outside us are real and inside us - in dreams - are fantasies).

We then need to make a choice - often an subconscious one - will we change our perceived reality to adapt to the new information, or will we bend the information to meet the reality that we already have (our own perceived reality)? It is a difference of corresponding directions: which one would bend - the information or our perceived reality?¹³

Rigid personalities¹⁴ usually refer to the world through a very strong prescriptive modality: they know what's right, they know what's 'real': other realities would have to adapt to the reality as they see it (because they are distorted). No wonder how this attitude creates a fixation of a reality, where the flexible nature of information loses its most important characteristic - its flexibility. Insofar as we all carry rigid elements in our personalities, trancework is of value to us. Teaching rigid personalities to access trance and utilise it, is helping them to better adjust - to change.

It is a relief to know, from direct experience, that no one is doomed to suffer because of his past. **It is possible to supply infantile positive regard and unconditional love even to an adult.** Indeed, sometimes it might be a long process, but it is a worthwhile

¹² However, reality-fixation is not an inborn trait but rather an acquired defence mechanism that can be worked through.

¹³ For philosophical discussion around the issue of matching directions (descriptive and prescriptive), see Hare, 1952.

¹⁴ I discuss rigid personality here in the common sense, rather than in the Reichian Character-Structure format.

investment. **Corrective regression is the re-initiation of the most powerful trance, the infantile primal trance** (also see Rolef Ben-Shahar, 2000b)

VI Summary

Trance, as I came to form my understanding, is a natural state of flexibility and change; it is the necessary condition for change. Every activity involves a degree of trance, inasmuch as it requires changes and adaptation. The therapeutic trance is an utilisation for this very capacity to change and readjust; to reprogram subconscious patterns. Accessing trance can be done in many ways - by drawing the focus internally (downtime trance) or externally (uptime trance), through bypassing conscious processes (IMR's and confusion techniques) or by occupying the conscious while working on subconscious levels (relaxation, visualisation). The hypnotherapist is supplying a safe context for the client to explore his boundaries and reform himself, transcending his belief systems and many of his limitations.

4. Conclusion

Hypnotherapists help people. There is no argument about that - there are thousands of testimonies, there are plenty of happier people who benefited from hypnosis. As a clinician, the debate around the nature of trance and the nature of hypnosis is a secondary one - as long as it works we use it. However, forming a comprehensive theoretical understanding of both the nature of hypnosis, trance and the utilisation of it is a great asset, and even more important in our times.

Today, there are probably as many approaches to therapy as there are therapists, there are many theories about hypnosis, about trance. While serving well for pluralism and individualism, this fact creates a genuine difficulty for both the prospective client and the authorities: both need a frame of reference to be able to consider efficacy and referrals. A theory that excludes many others might be more acute, but is necessarily less likely to be adopted by others.

For this reason, and for others, I tried to present trance as a generic phenomenon, whereupon hypnotherapy is being established as a professional facilitation of a natural change mode. According to this view there is no question of hypnotisability - we are all capable of getting in the change-mode; we vary in the degree of flexibility or rigidity, in the degree of stagnancy of our reality-model.

I believe that this view is easy to work with, simple and elegant and can envelope - without exclusion, most of the serious theories about trance and hypnosis.

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