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Summary

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9. SUMMARY

Present-day hypnology is characterized by three main streams of research. The first of these deals with hypnosis as a therapeutic method and as such carries on the longest tradition, the second employs hypnosis as a method applied in the inquiry into mental states and processes (helping thus to mould them), and the third investigates hypnosis as a phenomenon sui generis. A modern inquiry into hypnosis is further characterized by the emphasis laid upon methodological problems, which represents the only possible way of arriving at pregnant conclusions free from uncontrolled mistakes.

Interpersonal and motivational theories form the basis of one large group of the interpretations of hypnosis, while other interpretations treat hypnosis as a state. These different attitudes are, however, marked by a shift towards multifactorial conceptions of hypnosis, whose rendering of a broad range of hypnotic phenomena appears, in view of the current level of knowledge, to be the most adequate.

Suggestibility, too, is conceived either as the ability of an individual to react to suggestions or as a social process. Eysenck's classical division of suggestibility into primary, secondary and tertiary is being replaced by motor suggestibility, "challenge" suggestibility and "imagery" suggestibility.

A key-position in the inquiry into hypnosis and in hypnotherapeutic practice as well is occupied by problems concerning hypnotic susceptibility. Again, it is defined either as an ability, or as a relationship. In recent years, owing to the existence of high-quality measuring instruments, attention has been paid to the distribution of hypnotic susceptibility in the population. Since no modern data are available in Czechoslovakia, these questions come to the forefront of our attention. We give an overview of the latest hypnotizability scales, their characteristics and interrelations. These are accompanied by a shift from purely psychometric scales towards measuring instruments more clinically oriented and utilizable not only in a laboratory but also in a surgery. In this way experimental and therapeutic hypnosis are beginning to get nearer each other again; in the years following World War II they became more and more differentiated and the conclusions valid for one of them often applied to the other variant only to a limited degree. For the purpose of our inquiry into the distribution of hypnotic susceptibility in two samples of our population, we made use of the standard Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility and compared our findings with the original norms and with the conclusions ar-

rived at in investigations carried out abroad. In the set of high school students on average a higher degree of hypnotic susceptibility was achieved as compared to the set of university graduates, who were participants in the courses in hypnosis. We interpret the difference as the influence of age and different motivational factors. The analysis of the item difficulty yields the following gamut of degrees, starting with the most difficult (the least frequent) and ending with the least difficult (the most frequent) items: cognitive dissociation suggestions, "challenge" suggestions and ideomotor suggestions.

The characteristics of hypnotized persons, involving not only their relatively permanent personality traits, but also attitudinal behaviour determinants, gain in importance. An emotional aspect of the attitudes is, in connection with hypnosis, labelled by us expectation; preconception is characterized by cognitive processes. We define preconception as the individual's set of ideas, knowledge and opinions relating to hypnosis. In the formation of preconception more factors are in operation: e. g., mass media, exerting a considerable effect, and seeing a model situation. Preconception influences not only the degree of the subject's hypnotizability, but also his/her hypnotic behaviour and the realization of certain hypnotic phenomena. The question concerning the interrelation of preconception with situational factors, especially with the induction technique used, is also being discussed.

By means of questionnaires we subjected to investigation 120 high school female students, asking what the sources of their information about hypnosis were, what they imagined under the term, what qualities they ascribed to it, and, finally, what personality traits the hypnotist and the hypnotized person should have. The conclusions of the investigation proved the insufficient level of knowledge and absence of reliable sources of information about the points at issue. On the other hand, we found out that persons with adequate and realistic opinions were more susceptible to hypnosis and that there were more possibilities of applying it therapeutically with them.

Hypnosis represents such a heterogeneous phenomenon that the need for its typology is of early date. We concentrated upon the division of hypnosis according to the criterion of its similarity with sleep or waking (sleep and waking types of hypnosis), and according to that of hypnotic behaviour activity (active and passive types of hypnosis). Traditional theories relating hypnosis to inhibition and sleep were corrected by encephalographic studies, which provide EEG patterns similar to waking state, and by the observable behaviour of the hypnotized persons as well. There are reported experiments that proved the existence of hypnosis free from the manifestation of inhibition.

An inquiry into active-waking hypnosis is of theoretical importance for general psychology and psychopathology, and also of practical importance for therapeutic practice. Experiments using hypnosis for learning and concentration training, and the reduction and elimination of depressive symptoms, represent only a few examples of the applicability of active-waking hypnosis. The type of hypnotic behaviour is influenced by hypnotic preconception, hypnotic induction, hypnotizability of the subject and his/her personality traits, implicit demand characteristics of individual suggestions, and by intentional training.

We examined the effect preconception had upon observable hypnotic behaviour. As earlier multifactorial experiments failed in yielding unambiguous results, we made use of a simple classical project with one independent and one dependent variable, the others being under control. The methodological structure of the experiment excluded the influence of the experimenter's bias towards the results.

Of 234 students, 31 who were to take part in the experiment were selected on the basis of waking suggestibility tests. Half of the persons were given instruction in terms of active waking state, the other half in terms of inhibition and sleep.

Both the groups were administered a hypnotic induction by means of a neutral induction technique. The subjects' hypnotic behaviour (evoked by a standard set of suggestions) was evaluated by two independent observers. After the termination of hypnosis the subjects evaluated their behaviour on rating scales.

We testified to the influence that preconception exerts upon the type of hypnotic behaviour. The summation of our conclusions with the results of experiments examining the effect of situational variables on hypnotic behaviour discloses a tentative observation, namely that in hypnotic induction as well as in hypnotic behaviour preconception plays a more significant part than the other variables. This finding is of practical consequence for therapeutic practice.

A correspondence not only between self-evaluation and the objective evaluation of waking suggestibility, but also between individual kinds of hypnotic behaviour evaluation, was ascertained. The ability of the subjects to evaluate their hypnotic behaviour on account of their inner experience as well as on account of "how an external observer could see it" testifies to hypnotic dissociated processes. The conclusions fit in with Hilgard's conception. As far as the factors effecting hypnotic behaviour are concerned, it would be advisable, for the sake of completeness, to submit an induction procedure to a separate examination, without inference from other variables. It is, however, only the summation of individual experimental conclusions that will help to finish mapping out one aspect of such a many-sided phenomenon as is represented by hypnosis.

