

The theory-based chapters served a useful function in presenting diverse perspectives on Ericksonian theory. With the exception of Matthews' chapter, however, the authors provide a less than critical or scholarly evaluation of the concepts and constructs central to their arguments. In several of the chapters, the line between what hypnosis is and what it is not is so fuzzy, that the word loses its descriptive and denotative value. For example, we read about parents hypnotizing children and about children hypnotizing parents, with no demarcation between hypnosis and numerous other forms of social influence.

In addition, a number of chapters render as "fact," what are debatable points about which serious questions have been raised: (a) whether hypnosis is usefully conceptualized as an altered or "special" state of consciousness; (b) whether hypnosis permits the hypnotist to communicate directly with the unconscious or whether such *direct* communication with the unconscious is a therapeutic metaphor or fiction; (c) whether hypnosis is characterized by an "exact reception of ideas without an elaboration of them in terms of implied or associated meanings [Erickson in Lankton, p. 24]" or whether response to suggestion may involve creative and constructive elaborations of ideas (e.g., Sheehan & McConkey, 1982); and finally, (d) whether indirect suggestions are superior to direct suggestions (Lynn, Neufeld, & Matyi, 1987). Furthermore, the elaboration of the "elements and dimension of an Ericksonian approach" would benefit from attempts to locate the major concepts and constructs within the broader skein of contemporary psychology, including social and cognitive psychology.

In order to lend a greater sense of perspective and balance to future issues, the series could include an integrative commentary that draws together common themes, highlights critical issues, and delineates directions for future work. On a final note, permit me to return to my music analogy: While this work may not be a symphony complete; it has some interesting, if not moving, passages.

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O'HANLON, WILLIAM HUDSON *Taproots: Underlying Principles of Milton Erickson's Therapy and Hypnosis*. New York: Norton, 1987. Pp. xii + 180. \$19.95 U.S.

The author tells us in his Preface that this book is not about hypnosis. It is about Ericksonian therapy in general and covers both hypnotic and nonhypnotic techniques. The book jacket touts the book as "destined to become the recommended 'first book' on Erickson" and claims that it "will blow away the smoky confusion that often surrounds the work of this master clinician." *Taproots* is probably as good a short review of Erickson as we are going to find. As a "first book," however, it faces some stiff competition. There also does seem to be enough "smoky confusion" left to keep the rest of us thinking a while longer.

Dr. O'Hanlon studied with Erickson in 1977 and is now in private practice in Omaha, Nebraska. He lectures on hypnosis and therapy and is editor of the *Milton H. Erickson Foundation Newsletter*. He began his private practice a few years ago, he tells us, and finding that he had a lot of spare time on his hands he read everything that had been written about Erickson. He has catalogued dozens of Erickson's cases, and in addition there are

cases from Zeig, Madanes, and O'Hanlon. The Erickson cases have appeared in print before, as have the ideas. O'Hanlon's contribution has been to condense and organize this material.

In an appendix-like chapter (Chapter 10), the author lists in outline form the various frameworks of Ericksonian therapy that have been offered by authors such as Haley, Rossi, Zeig, etc. No master plan is constructed from which we might view these frameworks. The author simply lists them without criticism. In fact, the book reads like a series of lists. I do not mean that quite as negatively as it sounds. Some of the lists are quite valuable, such as the list of empirical investigations of Erickson's hypotheses, and the list of the differences between Ericksonian and traditional thought (in psychoanalysis and social learning theory). There is, however, an inbred quality to the discussion. O'Hanlon does not mention the similarities between Ericksonian therapy and behavior therapy, and his remark that Erickson "almost certainly was the first to bring a future orientation to psychotherapy [p. 12]" shows that he is not familiar with this aspect of Jung's (1916) work.

The author's stated intention is "to be as descriptive and as atheoretical as possible [p. xi]." In this he succeeds, but the atheoretical approach leaves some questions unanswered (and unasked), such as why these interventions work as well as they do, when to introduce an intervention, and how to choose which one to use with which particular client.

Hypnosis is mentioned several times. O'Hanlon writes, "The main point of using hypnosis was to bypass conscious, limiting beliefs [p. 112]." This remark is consistent with the author's emphasis on the role of cognitive rigidity in the etiology of human problems. He discusses also the naturalistic orientation, verbal and nonverbal "matching," and authoritarian versus permissive approaches in hypnosis. Beyond that, he makes little attempt to explain what hypnosis is or how to use it. In fact, hypnosis appears in his narrative rather like the *deus ex machina* in drama: The hero calls forth the magic of hypnosis and the case is solved.

Taproots seems to be aimed at beginning therapists, but beginners should beware. The case reports have been pruned to the extreme, which creates the illusion that psychotherapy is simple and straightforward. For example, Chapter 2 contains 31 case summaries and is only 31 pages long. The presentations are too brief to give the reader time to become acquainted with these people. Also, in his enthusiasm for his subject, O'Hanlon has not mentioned the dangers that exist with some of these interventions. When Erickson lifted the skirt of a hypnotized 18-year-old girl in the presence of her mother (described on p. 105), it might have been a therapeutic maneuver. But beginning therapists would be well served by mention of the legal and ethical problems that existed at that point.

As a short review of a complex subject, *Taproots* fulfills its purpose. As an introduction to Erickson, however, I still prefer *Uncommon therapy* (Haley, 1973), which is longer and more digressive than *Taproots* but has a theoretical position and lengthy case material that enable deeper levels of understanding. For hypnotists seeking an introduction to Ericksonian methods, I prefer *Hypnotherapy: An exploratory casebook* (Erickson & Rossi, 1979) or *Patterns*, Volume I (Bandler & Grinder, 1975), which present the hypnotic techniques in such detail that practitioners can begin using them. Perhaps *Taproots* will find its audience, but as it does, the title may prove to have an unintended irony.

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