

## Book Reviews

Chertok, L. *Sense and Nonsense in Psychotherapy: The Challenge of Hypnosis*. (Translated by R. H. Ahrenfeldt.) New York: Pergamon Press, 1981.

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In the prologue to his latest book, Léon Chertok writes that the time has come "to draw up a balance sheet of what we know and what we do not know." Unfortunately, he seems to have attempted this unwieldy task in a short book. The result is a loosely woven commentary that is rich in the author's opinions but which covers few topics in depth.

Inevitably the book does focus, but more out of limitations of size and perspective than out of a unifying theme. The first chapters contain excellent, scholarly reviews of the hypnotic phenomena of analgesia and blistering in response to direct suggestion. These reviews provide nineteenth century references which may have been missed by American readers. His emphasis on direct suggestion (in analgesia, blistering, control of bleeding during surgery, and treatment of amnesia) is a most healthy reminder of the occasionally remarkable potency of direct suggestion, especially in this post-Ericksonian period of literature which would warn us against being too direct.

The later chapters provide a multifaceted look at psychoanalysis as it has evolved in Europe, America and the Soviet Union. Chertok's interest and proficiency in the Slavic languages makes available much of the Soviet literature, which again may have been missed by the American audience. On the topic of psychoanalysis Chertok assumes the roles of advocate, historian and critic. His scathing criticisms of psychoanalysis may surprise some readers, but

he notes that in France the criticisms of psychoanalysis have come from inside the fold. Above all, he writes as a man who seeks to heal the rift that has separated hypnosis from the mainstream of psychoanalytic respectability. He emphasizes the similarities between hypnosis and psychoanalysis and writes that suggestion is central to all forms of therapy.

Chertok does not hesitate to state opinions on large theoretical issues. The writing tends toward dogma, not argument, so that his opinions are pleasing if you agree, but they are not persuasive if you do not. According to him, hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness which he calls the "fourth organismic state", adding it to waking, sleeping, and dreaming. He stresses the role of dissociation in hypnotic induction and writes that dissociation is proof the hypnosis is an altered state. He believes that hypnosis can create durable personality change and not mere symptom removal and that the trance state can be a healing and restoring experience even without delimited suggestions. He provides case material and anecdotes which demonstrate his points and enliven his writing. One anecdote, with an element of comedy that will appeal to many hypnotists and brief therapists, concerns a young analyst who had to seek treatment herself after resolving a case of sexual dysfunction in only six hypnotic sessions.

Some of his criticisms leveled at French psychotherapists might have been directed to their American contemporaries instead. For example, he criticizes any therapeutic school which would de-emphasize the central role of affect and replace it with a dispassionate analysis of linguistic structures or other phenomena. He writes, "This objectification is the permanent danger of hypnosis." (p. 139)

The book contains much that will be of value to certain readers, especially those interested in psychoanalysis, European and Soviet

## BOOK REVIEWS

psychotherapy, hypnotic analgesia, and the hypnotic phenomenon of blistering. The book will refine your sense of the plasticity of human flesh in response to verbal suggestion, an understanding which lies at the very heart of modern hypnotic practice.