

Le Grand Livre de l'Hypnothérapie: Applications en Santé Mentale et Physique

(The Big Book of Hypnotherapy)

Edited by Evelyne Josse, 2024

Foreword: English Version

The Cooperative Nature of Exploration in Hypnosis

By Roxanna Erickson-Klein and Dan Short

We open this volume, *The Big Book of Hypnotherapy*, with expectations that its contents make a lasting contribution to the professional community's understanding of how much can be achieved with hypnosis. Each of us, Roxanna Erickson-Klein and Dan Short, is an experienced clinician for whom hypnosis has played an integral role in our own successful careers. Through individual and collaborative efforts, we have each gained recognition in international forums for our modest achievements in clinical work, teaching fellow professionals, and our written contributions.

We, the authors of this foreword, have been significantly influenced, both personally and professionally, by Milton H. Erickson (1901-1980). Roxanna, one of Erickson's eight children, initially absorbed her father's teachings through casual, informal, and indirect means, later supplemented by his individual formal education sessions with her. Dan, who served for two years as an archivist at the Milton H. Erickson Foundation in Phoenix Arizona, similarly gleaned insights directly from Erickson. He had the opportunity to immerse himself in fifteen hundred hours of Erickson's recorded teachings during a phase of his career where he possessed ample professional experience to critically analyze and constructively engage with the material. Our dual perspectives offer both similarities and differences, creating a holographic representation of the perspectives explored within this volume.

Sometimes referred to as "the Father of Modern Hypnosis," Erickson's ground-breaking studies extended over half a century. During this time, Erickson engineered a pivotal shift—redirecting hypnosis from the 19th century mindset of mechanistic, unilateral influence to more modern concepts of co-creativity. His approach emphasizes the dynamic and iterative nature of hypnotic communication and use of permissive suggestion as a foundation for self-organizing change. Unquestionably, his innovative influence has extended far and wide and through time (Erickson-Klein & Short, 2024).

As we have stated elsewhere, "Some of Erickson's most striking contributions to the practice of hypnosis continue to germinate beneath the field's collective awareness. While most who study Ericksonian

hypnosis are familiar with the concept of seeding (gradual exposure and subsequent elaboration of new ideas in advance of utilizing them for therapeutic purposes), few fully appreciate the value of incubation – the strategic practice of patiently waiting for ideas to grow outside of conscious awareness. Both constructs relate to the element of time, an essential component of growth and maturity” (Erickson-Klein & Short, 2024, p. 64). Accordingly, the collection of works in this volume, patiently awaited by the hypnosis community’s clinicians and scholars, reflects the growth of ideas seeded not only by Erickson but also by other legendary figures. Ideas and approaches incubated over the last century, over the last decades are now expressed by the contributors to this volume. Their ideas now clarify what wasn’t previously understood as they seed future explorations in our shared longitudinal quest to understand hypnosis.

The *Big Book of Hypnotherapy* stands out as a vital compendium, showcasing various perspectives brought together through collaborative efforts. Differing ideas present material for deep discussions and lively debates. Spearheaded by the editor Evelyne Josse, supported by the publisher Dunod, and enriched by the diverse contributions within, this book embodies leadership in the field. It aligns the interests and commitments of all involved towards the progress of clinical practice, education, and research in hypnosis. By bringing together diverse viewpoints, this work serves as a rich source of knowledge for both seasoned experts and those eager to learn.

The variety of viewpoints presented herein are predominantly from French-speaking Europeans -- a fact we wish to recognize. Patrick Bellet, a contributor to this volume, once shared his insights with Dan, who at the time was early in his own clinical career. With a playful remark, Bellet emphasized France's pivotal role in the developments of hypnosis, “You know...our past is your future.” This sentiment of France cultivating hypnosis in its modern infancy resonates and holds significance.

We now enter an age in which shared ideas can be heard around the world. As we endeavor to grasp and enhance the rich wealth of wisdom nurtured here, we recognize that arts, ideas, and sciences do not emerge in isolation, but within a zeitgeist of culture. Thinkers and educators of centuries past inhabited a vastly different cultural milieu compared to now. By delving into the philosophical and mystical roots stretching back millennia, along with nascent notions of hypnosis, we discern how these early strands of thought continue to inform our appreciation of hypnosis today.

To better understand the current context, we note that over a century ago French culture greatly contributed to the advancement of understandings in many fields including the study of hypnosis. The receptive intellectual environment brought inspiring figures to Paris. Franz Mesmer, Abbe Faria, Sigmund Freud, and others sought to study in France where they met and sometimes worked with native French including Ambroise-Auguste Liébeault, Hippolyte Bernheim, Jean-Martin Charcot, Alfred Binet, Émile Coué, and Pierre Janet. Those historical encounters drew forth key concepts that we continue to explore today. Included is Janet’s, pioneering the use of regression and memory reconsolidation in the treatment of trauma, the use of indirect suggestion, and many other hypnotherapeutic innovations (Short, 2021). Many of their ideas, questions and disagreements continue to be debated.

France’s nurturing environment offered a safe haven, a cradle where a fledgling methodology could flourish. Despite criticism and controversy, each of these luminaries, alongside numerous others, delved into the intricacies of hypnosis with their unique approaches. All these great individuals, and others, were essential to the evolution of hypnosis as we know it today. It is both commonalities in thinking and diverging perspectives that promote a deeper understanding of any field of study.

The International Society of Hypnosis (ISH) traces its roots to the first *International Congress for Experimental and Therapeutic Hypnotism* held in Paris in 1889. Among the notable attendees were Bernheim, Freud, and Liébeault (Linden, 2013). The differing perspectives of Liébeault, Bernheim, and Charcot stand tall in the history of modern hypnosis, highlighting the significant divides that can exist even among brilliant individuals dedicated to understanding hypnosis. Schisms among scholars persist to this day and are likely to continue in the future.

Organizers in Paris hosted a second international congress ten years later in 1900. Then, in 1964, Jean Lassner MD, a Paris anesthesiologist, undertook the year of planning to hold a third major international congress. His vision leaned on the cooperation and support of various international professional societies. In preparation for the Paris congress, months of mailed correspondence between Lassner and Erickson reflected shared hopes and strategic planning. In a private letter to Erickson, Lasner comments “The attempt to hold a meeting on hypnosis in Paris under the present circumstances is somewhat of a wager. Should the venture prove successful, it would help hypnosis to regain its status as a legitimate medical tool, not only in France but in most of continental Europe as well (Lassner, 1964). Further correspondence between those two key planners detailed the importance of international participation while “keeping outlines flexible to promote the advantageous exchange of ideas.” Erickson accepted the role as Chairman of the panel on Pain and Hypnosis, which served as a catalyst for his burgeoning international leadership in promoting the study of hypnosis.

The 1965 *International Congress of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine* was successful in drawing together over 100 individual presentations and panels many of which are outlined in the proceeds (Lassner, 1967/2012). It has been fifty-nine years since France hosted the congress which gave birth to a series of international gatherings. Under the guidance of ISH, such international meetings continue to take place every few years in major cities across the globe.

While advancements in digital technology have greatly enhanced international communication, certain elements have scarcely advanced. Today’s leaders still grapple with certain issues, which have hardly changed from the disputes among earlier leaders. The methodology of hypnosis can vary in substantial ways as clinicians creatively seek to meet individual client needs. Despite ongoing efforts to establish a universal and precise definition of hypnosis there remains no consensus. In recent times, the prevailing perspective is that hypnosis is more akin to a skill set—a process that evokes latent abilities in ways that are not fully understood. To capture the dynamic nature of today’s hypnotherapy, Hill and colleagues (2024), broadly define hypnosis as the practice of an art and science aimed at triggering innate healing processes that are generative in nature.

As collaborative endeavors converge, we progress towards the realm of a mature science. *The Big Book of Hypnotherapy* and its contributors have collectively taken a big step, a monumental stride, towards establishing hypnosis as a respected tool for improving healthcare. This achievement is truly remarkable!

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