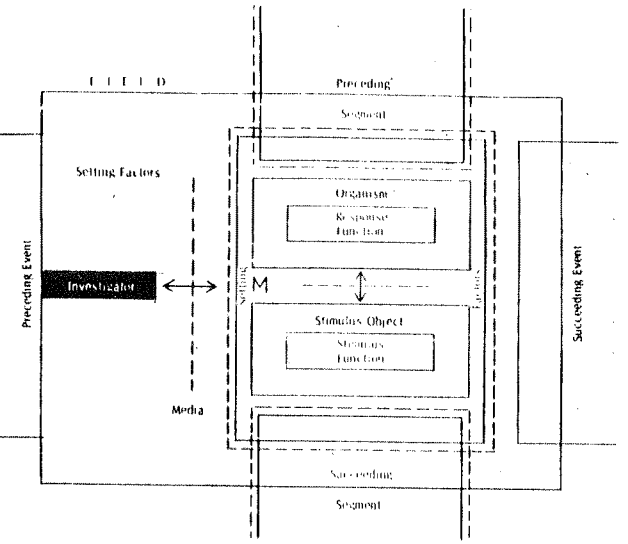
THE Interbehaviorist



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Within this framework, then, behavior viewed psychologically is interactional or relational in nature; its specification or identification at the referential level requires the specification of a particular context and a set of relationships thereto. Our definition of psychology, therefore, excludes the study of organisms or physical environments per se, and behavior may not be referred to either alone . . . . Some objection may be raised to the relational or transdermal character of the definition in that there is provided no palpable locus for a psychologically defined behavior. Those who raise such a query seem to be operating within what Woodger picturesquely describes as a "finger and thumb" philosophy of metaphysics, i.e., the notion that a thing is real or exists only if it can in principle be picked up between the finger and thumb. Interactions or relations, though not simple physical objects, are nevertheless real and concrete and can be precisely specified by the conditions and course of their occurrence.

R. Jessor, 1958. The problem of reductionism in psychology. Psychological Review, 1958, 65, p. 173.

The Agora

With this issue, The Interbehaviorist begins its ninth volume. As before, our goal in this publication year will be to provide a forum for the promotion of a naturalistic psychology unencumbered by the "spooks" of its past, yet appropriately appreciative of the organism's awesome complexity. Notes, news, reactions, and articles for the three further issues of Volume 9 (to appear in late summer, fall, and winter) will be happily received. The editor would enjoy the luxury of having a backlog of quality contributions.

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Robert Lundin sends word that the second edition of his Theories and Systems of Psychology (D.C. Heath) is "hot off the press." In his undergraduate History and Systems course, the editor has found that the nine-page section on interbehaviorism is particularly effective when assigned in conjunction with primary source material during a three-session consideration of interbehaviorism.

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Some publications of possible interest to those who are interbehaviorally inclined:

Peter Holmes recommends Duncan, S. & Fiske, D. W., "Dynamic patterning in conversation" (American Scientist, 1979, 67, 90-98) for its systems analysis of conversational behavior. Their work reminds him of Roger Ray's systems approach (The Psychological Record, Volumes 25, 26, and 27).

Dennis Delprato recommends two publications to interbehaviorists. One is Biology as a Social Weapon (The Ann Arbor Science for the People Collective, Burgess Publishing Co., 1977), an interactionally-oriented reaction to biological determinism. The other is an article by John M. Grossberg, about which Delprato writes: "Grossberg (Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 1972, 3, 245-251) addresses brain wave feedback research from an interbehavioral perspective and once again demonstrates the infusion of spiritism into "scientific" laboratories . . . . Grossberg cites Kantor's Problems of Physiological Psychology (1947) for a review of the cultural tradition that endowed the brain with magical properties and notes that the basic assumptions of researchers such as Kamiya are contemporary versions of Cartesian mind-body dualism."

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Two June meetings may be of interest to readers:

The 11th annual meeting of the Cheiron Society for the History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences will be held this year at the Archives of the History of American Psychology, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, on June 8-10. Information on registration and reservations may be obtained from John Popplestone, director of the Archives.

The Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA) will have its convention at the Hyatt-Regency Hotel, Dearborn, Michigan, on June 15-19. Of particular note is that there will be a Special Interest Group Meeting for interbehaviorists co-chaired by Paul Mountjoy and Linda Parrott. Further information may be obtained from Linda Parrott, 5-828 W. South St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

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Few behavioral phenomena have been as lost in a sea of mentalistic verbiage as those associated with the "state" of "hypnosis". This issue's feature article presents two early attempts to describe and explain hypnosis naturalistically and parsimoniously.

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JAMES AND KANTOR ON HYPNOSIS:

TWO EARLY NATURALISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Deborah Barfield*

Prior to Barber's attempts to demystify the events constituting "hypnosis" (e.g., Barber, 1973), most analyses of hypnosis had been steeped in the dualism that Kantor has so often decried (e.g., Kantor, 1959). That is, they referred to mysterious processes of the mind of the subject and hypnotist and sometimes even vaguely to the occult (e.g., Pai, 1946). Notable exceptions to this generalization about early views of hypnosis are the views of William James (1890) and J. R. Kantor (1926). This paper examines their two different attempts to "de-spook" the phenomena of hypnosis.

JAMES ON HYPNOSIS

James, writing as he did in the pre-behavioristic era of mentalism, might be expected to have presented mystical ideas about hypnosis. However, this was not the case. In fact, Kantor, the quintessential naturalist, could easily have based his writings on hypnosis upon James' account. James, at his best, was quite as naturalistic as Kantor.

James offered three theories of hypnosis. The first was animal magnetism theory, which suggested that there was " . . . a direct passage of force from the operator to the subject, whereby the latter becomes the former's puppet."[1] The second theory discussed was neurosis theory, which states that hypnosis is a "pathological condition into which certain predisposed patients fall and in which special physical agents have the power of provoking special symptoms quite apart from the subjects mentally expecting the effect."[2] Charcot felt this was an atypical form of hypnotism which he called le grand hypnotisme. James discarded both of these theories

* Editor's note -- The author of this paper is a former student of one of the Associate Editors. The student's whereabouts are currently unknown. In light of this unusual circumstance, the Editor has taken the liberty of revising the paper more substantially than would be done in the normal process of copy editing. In particular, a number of transitional statements have been added, as well as several references, and the paper has been reorganized. The Editor believes that the revisions do not materially modify the thesis of the original author.

[1] James, William, Principles of Psychology (Vol. II). New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890, p. 596.

[2] Ibid.

due to their mystical references. Neither appeared to him to account for the role that expectancy plays in hypnosis. If the patient expects to be hypnotized, he usually is. For the best results, then the operator must be very competent and authoritative. He must also be good at interpreting the physiognomy of the subject so as to give the right commands at the right time. The role of expectancy plays an important part throughout the entire hypnotic trance. As James stated, "Anything will awaken a patient who expects to be awakened by that thing."[3]

These phenomena of hypnosis led James to accept and expound upon a third theory, the theory of suggestion, in which hypnotism was described as " . . . yielding assent to outward suggestion, of affirming what we strongly conceive and of acting in accordance with what we are made to expect."[4] James' interpretation of the trance was strikingly naturalistic, making reference to what would now be called "operant conditioning" and "modeling" processes: "The first patients accidentally did certain things which their doctors thought typical and caused to be repeated. The subsequent subjects caught on and followed the established tradition."[5] James also invoked what might now be called the "placebo effect" when he said: "Even that sleepy and inert condition, the advent of which seems to be the prime condition of farther symptoms being developed, is said to be merely due to the fact that the mind expects it to come."[6] James removed more of the mysterious associations traditionally surrounding hypnotism by analogizing the trance to sleep or half-sleep: " . . . and one might most naturally describe the usual relation of operator and subject by saying that the former keeps the latter suspended between waking and sleeping by talking to him enough to keep his slumber from growing profound, and yet not in such a way as to wake him up."[7] To so succinctly and parsimoniously ascribe the trance to a natural process was indeed a contrast to traditional dualism and mysticism.

James' discussion of several of the symptoms of the trance also reflected a naturalistic orientation: 1) Amnesia. He stated that the amnesia connected with hypnosis is similar to the one experienced by the sleeper who is abruptly awakened from dreams. Because the amnesia associated with an abrupt awakening can be overcome by external promptings, James believed that the same would be true for hypnosis, and he provided evidence that

[3] Ibid., p. 58.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 599.

when prompted, the subject can remember parts of his trance. James stated that "One cause of the forgetfulness seems to be the disconnection of the trance performance with the system of waking ideas."[8] 2) Suggestibility. James noted (much as Barber and others were to do much later) that a hypnotized individual would not follow every command of the operator. He pointed out that "if the thing suggested be too intimately repugnant, the subject may strenuously resist and get nervously excited in consequence even to the point of having an hysterical attack."[9] 3) Post-hypnotic suggestions. The operator may suggest a behavior to occur in the future, after the trance is over. Again, James cited the role of expectancy to explain this phenomenon; the subject expects to act a certain way; therefore, he does.

Although James' belief in the use of the term "mind" in his discussion of hypnosis reflects his indebtedness to spiritualism and dualism, a naturalist must admire him for his acknowledgement of the role of the entire body during the hypnotic trance and the interaction between the subject and operator.

KANTOR ON HYPNOSIS

Kantor's general description and interpretation of hypnosis (1926) was very similar to James'. As did James, Kantor began by analogizing the trance to sleeping, although he was more interested than James in the distinctions between the two: "During hypnosis, however, in contradistinction to the sleeping condition, the person is not dissociated from his stimuli but uniquely and unusually in contact with them."[10] He further noted that the subject is so much in contact with certain stimuli that he is out of contact with others. Thus, whereas James might have led one to believe that the hypnotized subject was completely out of touch with his environment, Kantor gave an explicit account of the stimulus conditions surrounding the trance.

Kantor defined hypnosis as an " . . . action performed by an individual as a result of transferring himself to a particular behavior environment,"[11] thereby stressing (in characteristic Kantorian fashion) the role of "setting factors" in the psychological event. A naturalistic emphasis upon the stimulus environment surrounding the hypnotized subject likewise permeated Kantor's descriptions of the phenomena of hypnosis. For example, on the topic of anaesthesia, he stated that "So closely

[8] Ibid., p. 602.

[9] Ibid., p. 605.

[10] Kantor, J. R., Principles of Psychology (Vol. II). New York: Knopf, 1926, p. 392.

[11] Ibid., p. 393.

associated may the person be with the stimuli centering in the operator that the everyday objects surrounding the patient do not perform their ordinary stimulational functions."[12] Of hyperanaesthesia, Kantor said " . . . the individual merely performs responses in his equipment on the basis of substitute stimulation."[13] These substitute stimuli are the suggestions of the operator. This is also the basis for hallucinations and delusions: the subject is responding to substitute stimuli provided by the operator.

Kantor's wholistic approach to the organism was clearly revealed in his description of the hypnotized individual. For example, Kantor wrote of the involvement in the trance of the whole body when he discussed the phenomenon of performing actions while hypnotized that are not performed under ordinary circumstances. He stated that " . . . persons are deprived of their inhibiting functions and thus are capable of doing various activities which they usually prevent themselves from executing."[14] He added, however, as James did, that a hypnotized person will not perform an action that he ordinarily couldn't or wouldn't execute. Kantor also treated the topic of post-hypnotic suggestion, stating that an " . . . individual attachment to a stimulus situation involves the performance of an action at a time removed from the original contact with the operator."[15] Thus, Kantor clearly wiped out any mystery concerning the post-hypnotic suggestion. The key to its understanding was to recognize the substitute stimulus responsible for intiating the action of the subject. Kantor summed up the post-hypnotic action as being " . . . not different from ordinary memorial conduct and as such involves no different problem."[16]

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO VIEWS

Upon close inspection, Kantor's explanations for the symptoms of hypnosis were extremely similar to James' theory of suggestion. Although James was somewhat more organocentric than Kantor, both James and Kantor spoke plainly of the stimuli provided by the operator affecting the subject. Likewise, both descriptions of hypnosis noted the effect of the trance on the entire body. Also, both Kantor and James removed the mystery surrounding post-hypnotic suggestion. Even though James' "expectancy" explanation implicated the unconscious mind, he agreed with Kantor that no

[12] Ibid., p. 394.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 395.

[15] Ibid., p. 399.

[16] Ibid.

paranormal processes need be invoked: the suggestion of the operator stays with the subject and initiates the later action simply because of the subject's expectancy that it will.

In summary, there appear to be many similarities between Kantor's and James' treatment of hypnosis. Given that James was writing in the pre-behavioristic era of psychology, his theory was remarkably free of mentalism. He was still a victim of the long dualistic tradition, as evidenced by his continual references to the mind with all of its spiritistic components. Present in his theory of hypnosis, however, was the entire organism, not just organismic components, and he also stressed the importance of the interaction between the subject and the operator (or stimulating object in Kantor's terms). Kantor, of course, had the more naturalistic description of hypnosis. He eliminated all mystical and dualistic elements in stating that the subject is so much in contact with the operator that he loses contact with other stimulating objects in the environment. Kantor's concept of substitute stimuli, though similar to James' concept of suggestibility, was more parsimonious, thus more effectively "de-spooking" the hypnotic trance. One might wonder, however, how closely James would approach the naturalism of Kantor if he were theorizing today.

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