THE PRACTICE OF CONSTRUCTING HYPNOTIC REALITIES

by

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To my participants, for their willingness to explore the magical world of perception.

To my friends, without who's nagging and support this dissertation would never be completed.

To David Fourie, for teaching me how to construct realities without illusion and without fear.

DEDICATION

To Michelle Beneke with bittersweet remembrance. I know now that what we create in our words and actions become realities - realities that are much more difficult to unmake than create. It is the fool that treats this lightly, and an even greater fool that chooses the nightmare over the magic. I have been both.

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SUMMARY

This dissertation presents a constructivist discussion of the experiences of the author in doing hypnosis. It explores the practice of hypnosis as a progression of behavioral changes by the hypnotist in facilitating the initiation, expansion and coherence of the hypnotic domain. These changes include punctuating and redefining everyday experiences and environmental events as hypnotic, and engaging participants in discussions based on the hypnotic logic. Hypnosis is defined as social and cognitive domain that is specified in language, and maintained by the embodied descriptions of participants. It is described how the hypnotic system evolves in terms of complexity, distinctness and functional integrity, and how this reflects the structurally determined fit between its members. In this system the hypnotist facilitates the development of the hypnotic description as a viable domain of existence that is experienced as real and all-inclusive. In conclusion some constructivist ideas for research, treatment and training are presented before constructivist thinking is used to contextualize the dissertation itself.

KEYWORDS

Hypnosis

Epistemology

Constructivism

Embodied

Autopoiesis

Autonomy

Redefinition

Language

Structural determinism

Consensual

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This text is the culmination of a desire to demystify hypnosis for myself. The desire to write this text arose at the beginning of my studies in psychology. My interest in hypnosis led me to books and articles, many of which provided detailed explanations of induction methods and techniques to bring about hypnotic phenomena. Yet these descriptions did not satisfy my desire for understanding the actual process involved, the actual art of bringing about hypnosis. It was only later, being exposed to systemic and constructivist thinking, that the process started to make sense. In this dissertation I have attempted to provide a description of this process. This description is offered as one of many possible descriptions, yet one that has been useful to me.

An invitation

> "[A]ll that we can do in a conversation [...] is to seduce our interlocutor to accept as valid the implicit premise that define[s] the domain in which our argument is operationally valid" (Maturana, 1988, p.43).

All texts and research are done within a specific epistemology. An epistemology is a theory of knowledge, or more accurately, a theory of knowing. It refers to the specific process by which we build up what we know. It is our idiosyncratic way of organizing our involvement in the world in order to make sense of it. As such, to understand any text, the text has to be considered against the background of implicit assumptions and premises on which it is based. If the reader does not contextualize a text in such a way, he/she may find that it does not make sense, or does not fit with what he/she has read elsewhere. This dissertation is written within a constructivist epistemology, and I would like to invite the reader to accept the assumptions on which statements are based as valid, even if only for the time it takes to read.

Aim

The aim of this dissertation is to present the reader with an organization of my experiences in constructing hypnotic realities in a way that is understandable and accessible. The emphasis in this construction, and also in this presentation, is on the changes in the behavior of the hypnotist. As was said, this presentation and organization is embedded in a specific epistemology and will only make sense if this epistemology is accepted as valid. By making the statements that are made in this text I do not suggest that this is the only possible way of describing hypnosis. Given the ideas of constructivism, I am perfectly aware that many different descriptions exist and are useful. I will not, however, attempt to draw comparisons between such approaches and the one presented here, whether it is on the level of praxis or epistemology. For this, the reader is referred elsewhere (Fourie, 1991b, 1991c, 1995, 1996b, 1998a; Fourie & Lifschitz, 1985, 1988).

Constructivist research

The aim of constructivist research is not to discover underlying principles or facts, but rather to make sense (Fourie, 1996c). This dissertation represents that process of making sense. Making sense does not mean that the researcher attempts to control and manipulate variables, nor to arrive at objective facts and statements. Constructivist research is a process of consensually developing "results" or descriptions that are useful in one way or another. The constructivist researcher is aware that his/her research is his/her contribution in constructing a specific set of ideas. As such it is not a process of objective discovery, but of invested creation. This does not disqualify the findings, especially since the findings will only be validated if they make sense within the larger context in which the research takes place. Instead, it allows for a more active role of the researcher in that the process of research is a process of making sense and validating ideas. It is not a process taken lightly because, as in research embedded in other epistemologies, findings are consensual realities and as such have real implications for those involved in the research.

The aim of this dissertation is to arrive at a complex description of the construction of hypnosis in terms of the actions and distinctions of the hypnotist. In developing an experiential basis for this description I made use of a variety of hypnosis sessions and subjects. In these sessions the emphasis was on my own descriptive behaviors in interaction with the participants. The motivation for this emphasis being that, given a constructivist epistemology, I am only capable of changing my own behaviors. The approach was one of immersion, of seeking out diverse settings and subjects that posed me with complex sets of variables. Within these settings I experimented, improvising with changing my own behavior in various ways. No attempt was made to control the behaviors of participants. Instead, emphasis was on making specific contributions to the context and being curious to see which parts of my contribution were selected by the participant(s) in elaborating the hypnotic description.

Subjects and participants

My subjects or participants in constructing hypnotic realities were selected using the criteria that they must present with variables, in the form of ideas, needs, etc, that pose a challenge. The challenge was to find novel ways of changing my own behaviors in establishing a fit with them. This fit is what is required in establishing a consensual domain (see Chapter 3). Participants were also selected on the grounds of availability and willingness to participate. As said, I aimed at including as many differences as possible. Participants ranged in age from seven to fifty-eight, came from diverse cultural and national backgrounds, socio-economic groups and professional fields. They furthermore differed in their expectations and past experience of hypnosis. Participants also differed in their relation to myself, ranging from relatives and friends to clients. Throughout this dissertation reference will be made to various interactions with subjects. Given the emphasis on the descriptive behaviors of the hypnotist, as discussed in the previous section, a detailed presentation and introduction of the subjects is not considered relevant and is hence omitted.

Conceptual roots

The process of developing ideas continually evolves. Looking back at the development of my own ideas as preparation for writing this text, I see many influences in the form of lectures, discussions and books. These ideas may not be directly related to what is written here, yet they constitute the conceptual roots upon which current ideas are based. Most of these ideas, and the authors from which they came, are not referred to in this text. Not to include them will claim for myself that which belongs to others. Some of these authors were Keeney (1979, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1988, 1990), Bateson (1972, 1979), Haley (1963, 1984), Minuchin (1974), Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) as well as Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin and Prata (1975). The ideas of these authors played a central role in the development of my thinking about the complexities of social realities. They all present, in one way or another, a way of looking at the world that deviates from an epistemology of realism (Fourie, 1996c) and seek to arrive at a more complex understanding of who we are with others in the world. It is this way of looking for the social and cognitive complexities of phenomena that underlies this dissertation.

Overview of discussion

This dissertation describes the praxis of constructing hypnotic realities as embodied descriptions, based on my own explorations in the field. These explorations were directed and organized by the epistemological assumption that the only components of interaction that we have some degree of control over are our own actions and distinctions. The practice of constructing hypnotic realities described here hence reflects my own attempts at immersing myself in complex situations and then trying to develop flexibility, complexity and spontaneity within those settings. This dissertation describes the ideas that I found useful in making sense of my own immersion. These ideas are useful in organizing the thoughts, but also the actions, of the hypnotist.

Constructivist thinking

Chapter 2 introduces and explains the epistemology underlying not only this text, but also the behaviors of the hypnotist, in constructing hypnotic realities. It introduces the idea of reality as one of many possible descriptions. This description is a shared reality that comes into being through our interaction, especially in language. It is functional in that it allows us to conserve our identity and group membership. A description as such is not a cognitive artifact but an embodied set of ideas, inclinations, dispositions and habits with which we organize our place and participation in the world.

Setting up the hypnotic reality

Chapter 3 applies the idea of reality as description. This idea is used to explore how hypnosis, as a different description, is introduced and defined. This is done through conversation that consensually defines, especially in terms of ideas, what the nature of the hypnotic description will be. Emphasis is on the process by which the hypnotist manages his/her own behavior in describing and organizing the attributes of the hypnotic situation. These attributes include the physical setting, ideas and expectations of participants. This organization, especially in terms of distinctions, aims to disrupt the subject's habitual way of organizing perceptions and present a new description of events and experiences.

Expanding the hypnotic reality

Chapter 4 builds on the actions and distinctions described in Chapter 3. Emphasis is now on the expansion, or filling, of the hypnotic situation. This is done, firstly, by developing a repertoire of behaviors and, secondly, by means of creative hypnotic dialogues. The hypnotic repertoire is not limited to behaviors traditionally known as hypnotic, but can include any behavior that is defined and/or accepted by participants as hypnotic. In developing this repertoire emphasis is on including the totality of the participants. Hypnotic

dialogues are created through engaging subjects in creative conversations that draw on the logic of the hypnotic description.

Facilitating coherence of the hypnotic reality

Chapter 5 focuses on the evolving nature of the hypnotic description and the subject's acquisition of the ability to make hypnotic distinctions. It describes how the hypnotic description emerges as a complex interconnected social system in which its participants are invested. The coherent hypnotic system is characterized by being embodied in the emotions, actions, movements, ideas and dialogues of its participants. Coherence is hence about establishing a veritable reality defined in language as hypnosis.

Conclusion

Chapter 6 presents some recommendations for training, treatment and research. The remainder of the chapter contextualizes the dissertation, hypnosis and constructivist thinking by applying constructivist thinking to the dissertation itself.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTIVIST THINKING

"We are perceivers. We are an awareness; we are not objects; we have no solidity. We are boundless. The world of objects and solidity is a way of making our passage on earth convenient. It is only a description that was created to help us. We, or rather our *reason*, forget that the description is only a description and thus we entrap the totality of ourselves in a vicious circle from which we rarely emerge in our lifetime" (Castaneda, 1974, p.95, italics in original).

"This is the beauty, and the frustration, of constructivism. What we qualify and define becomes really 'real', not only to ourselves, but to all people concerned" (Fourie, 1998a, p.119).

The above two quotes capture the essence of the thinking that underlies this dissertation. This can be condensed into four ideas. Firstly, that what we know as reality is a complex description that we create through our actions. Secondly, that this description is embodied in our totality, and is constituted by every part of what we call human. Thirdly, that this description is shared and forms the basis of what we understand as social life. Finally, that the knowledge of all of the above is an opportunity to construct a different description, if that is what we want. These ideas or statements will be used in organizing this chapter.

Reality is a description

What we know is a description of the world

That which we believe to be reality is a description of the world. Saying this does not invalidate what we call "real", but rather contextualizes the

certainties of our daily existence. It is with certainty that we meet our world. We do not doubt that there are things that are right and wrong, better and worse, common and strange. We may be able to point out what other people say and think and see their one-sided certainty in themselves, but very rarely do we catch a glimpse of the more subtle certainties that constitute our own description of the world. When it comes to ideas, emotions, convictions, the way we walk, the way we don't like coffee, the way we call ourselves by our name and *know* what that means - about this there is no doubt, it is real. To us. And maybe to a large group of people. But it still is a description.

There are many possible descriptions of the world

That there are many descriptions of the world is no secret. The "clear evidence of the irreducible pluralism" (Chiari & Nuzzo, 1988, p.91) of the world surrounds us. It used to be fashionable to speak of the world as a multiverse (Maturana, 1988) to convey this idea. Our world is richer and more complex than what we usually acknowledge since it is constituted by numerous intersecting descriptions. Knowing that our certainties are just a description helps to contextualize our world. This is done by placing it on equal footing with all the other descriptions. This can be said in a different way: A description is a specific way of making sense of the world, or organizing it so that we can find a way of relating to it. Saying there are many descriptions implies that there are different ways of making sense of the world, of ascribing ideas and meanings to events, of establishing certainties (Fourie, 1993, 1997).

We usually don't want to know that there are many possible descriptions

It is usually not easy to deal with the idea that there are many possible descriptions. The idea erodes the certainty with which we hold our convictions, theories, and "psychotheologies" (Keeney in Cecchin, Lane & Ray, 1992, p.x), in different domains of our everyday life. To acknowledge that what we take as real as being just one of many possible perceptions, threatens our way of being in the world. At the same time the only solace is

that, if we were to change our idea of the world, we will just be substituting one description for another. The "real" is beyond our reach.

A description is a way of organizing the world

Our ideas about the world are resistant to change because we have difficulty dealing with the notion that our certainties are only relative descriptions. Our descriptions are functional and serve as a metaphor with which we organize our world and our experiences (Cecchin et al., 1993). This organization, in turn, provides us with, and constitutes, the logical implications for how we should interact with this world. Our description can therefore be seen as an interface, such as we find on computers, which serves as a manageable way of dealing with otherwise overwhelming and incomprehensible information.

> "Knowledge can now be seen as something that the organism builds up in the attempt to order the as such amorphous flow of experience by establishing repeatable experiences and relatively reliable relations between them" (Von Glasersfeld, 1984, p.34).

Descriptions reduce the world and ourselves

Whenever anything is organized, it is at an expense. The actions of organizing, explaining, categorizing, etc slowly make the world smaller and less complex. We make it more understandable, familiar and predictable. At the same time we also reduce ourselves and our possible ways of thinking, feeling and expressing. The way in which we experience and can possibly interact with others and the world becomes limited. What we gain is the ability to say "I" and know what it means. In order to say that, though, we have already reduced it in terms of what it could possibly be.

We maintain our description by repeating it to ourselves

Castaneda (1968, 1974) speaks about the internal dialogue and how the world appears to us as it does, only because we are constantly talking to

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ourselves about it being that way. Hence, we keep our description in place through constantly generating descriptions that confirm our descriptions, and we do this by our continual flow of self-talk and the ideas that we use to make sense of events. In the same way we can provide reasons, examples, arguments and quotes to prove to others and ourselves that the world fits our description. As such, we are extremely efficient at maintaining our description as our organization of the world and in turn our certainty of who we are and what we should do.

A description selects our behaviors and vice versa

Descriptions are not only mental constructs or abstractions (this will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). All descriptions play a crucial role in selecting or setting the stage for certain behaviors to occur. Another way of saying this is that a description can be understood as a complex matrix of ideas, words, emotions, actions, etc. This means that any description, by virtue of the above statement, will include and exclude certain behaviors. Let me provide a practical everyday example. A description that there is a deity that governs the world will include certain emotions in certain contexts (church, synagogue, temple, etc), certain interactions (with the priest, minister, pastor, etc), certain behaviors (prayer, devotions, reading religious texts). At the same time certain behaviors are excluded. All these components are connected in a specific way on an individual level. Hence the presence of one (a religious relic) may trigger certain thoughts, feelings and bodily dispositions, as well as sequences of actions and interactions.

A description builds up an experiential world

A description hence serves as an interface or blueprint in organizing our behavior by making certain behaviors more or less likely. On a larger scale all these behaviors, in their everyday enactment and selection, build up an experiential world. It is a world because, over time, these experiences become what we refer to as our all-encompassing certainty. They are the enactment of a description of the world, and are constituted by all our

interactions (Maturana, 1980b). Our description is therefore our complete and exhaustive experiential world. Yet, the person engaged in this world does not necessarily realize that his/her world is different (and no better or worse) than someone else's world.

One needs irreverence to deal with the idea of many descriptions

As long as we try and validate or disqualify any description of the world, we are still engaged in the same process that sets up distinctions as certainties. Such a process maintains a specific description but fails to acknowledge, and deal with, the complexity of the world. By acting with irreverence (Cecchin et al., 1992) for any specific description it is possible to take descriptions less seriously and not become engaged in a process of either qualifying or disqualifying them. Irreverence implies seeing descriptions for what they are, descriptions. It also means that one realizes that all descriptions are organizational tools and hence potentially useful.

Acting irreverently but employing temporary certainties

The attitude that is proposed in this text is a disregard for descriptions as "truths" coupled with an awareness of their functional value. In interacting with the world a description is hence considered pragmatically and may be used as a "temporary certainty" (Cecchin et al., 1993). This means that a person will act "as if" he/she holds a specific description of the world, and he/she will do so because enacting a description will effect how the world will appear. The attitude proposed is that of treating descriptions as pragmatic devices for attaining certain actions and descriptions of the world, rather than succumbing to the illusion of any description's inherent realness. Such an attitude allows for an appreciation of the role of descriptions without the emotional pull and investment to validate any specific one.

A description is not passively received, but actively constructed

The implication of the attitude of irreverence described above, is that we actively select our description, yet we do not always realize our own

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participation in doing so. A description is neither something that we passively receive through our senses (Von Glasersfeld, 1988), nor is it "[...] a passively received set of experiences from a stable world" (Goolishian & Winderman, 1988, p.131). Descriptions or knowledge are not beyond our organisms, but are determined by us. And as organizing metaphors they determine how the world appears to us (Maturana & Varela, 1992). We are not merely imprinted on, or instilled, with ideas, desires, wishes and identity. These are all constructed through our being in the world. The process that determines this being in the world will be discussed later. It is through our engagement with the world, our active participation in it, that we build up a history and repertoire of experiences. These experiences constitute what we tell ourselves when we say we "know" something. What we "know" is therefore an act of engagement rather than a distinct piece of information that is obtained. This is "active knowing" (Von Glasersfeld, 1988).

We like to think that our description is "out there"

It is through being immersed in the world and our experience of the world that we arrive at our description, or our knowledge, of the world. And our description is the matrix of thoughts, ideas, convictions, habits, interactions, emotions, gestures, etc connected through complex sequences and developed in interaction with the world. Yet in talking about these we talk as if this knowledge is out there. We say we know something as if we grasped something distinct and separate from us, and now have a firm hold on it. Knowledge has nothing to do with what we think we are holding, and everything with the holding itself. Yet we prefer to separate the act of knowing or making sense from that which we know or are making sense of. This happens not only in our everyday life, but also in the domain of science, as Von Glasersfeld and Varela (1987) point out:

"nearly all thinkers who have pondered problems of epistemology have explicitly or implicitly adopted the view that the activity of "knowing" begins with a cut between the cognizing subject and the object to be known" (p. 36, 37).

We define our description by making distinctions

Reference has been made to a process whereby some behaviors are selected and others not. In order for this selection to take place, the behavior, whether it is an idea, emotion, movement, etc, first has to be brought into existence. It was said earlier that what we know as reality does not exist independently of us describing it as such. It is through making distinctions that we indicate something from an otherwise random background (Bateson, 1972). Distinctions are made through constructing ideas of difference. By making a distinction, something becomes possible. This can also be said by saying that we bring ideas, objects, emotions etc into existence by pointing them out, by punctuating some type of difference that sets them apart from the background. In the words of Maturana (1980a), "existence is always the result of an operation of distinction performed by an observer" (p.50).

The description combines the described and the describer in one

By now it should be clear that we live our knowing or description, or as Dell (1985) puts it, "every biological entity both has and *is* a way of knowing" (p.5, italics in original). What has been called a description here, and can be called our way of knowing, is the process of making moment to moment distinctions that brings forth a world (Maturana & Varela, 1992). This is a world of experience that is actively constructed and confirmed through our continual engagement in describing the world. This describing therefore rolls the describer and the described into an inseparable unity. A unity where it can no longer be determined at what time the describer brings forth a description, or the description brings forth the describer. Describing is hence a circuit of mutual definition and validation, but also of entrapment and restriction.

What happens when the description changes?

Our description of the world is our way of being and as such involves the totality of ourselves. Through the active process by which we build up this description, we inevitably reduce the world and ourselves by making it manageable, predictable and consistent. We usually do not know this, nor want to hear it. This having been said, the reader may ask what happens if our description, our way of knowing, is interrupted. What happens is the core intent of the praxis described in this text, and Castaneda (1974) formulates this both beautifully and dramatically:

> "Whenever the dialogue stops, the world collapses and
> extraordinary facets of ourselves surface, as though they
> had been kept heavily guarded by our words" (p.38).

A description is how we specify and conserve ourselves

In the preceding section the idea of the world as description was introduced. This idea was expanded by explaining how our descriptions are functional in bringing forth a complete experiential world. The following section will introduce a specific description of how and why the latter is done.

We define ourselves

A person "continuously generates and specifies [his/her] own organization through [his/her] operation as a system of production of [his/her] own components" (Maturana & Varela, 1980, p.81). This process is also known as *autopoiesis*, or self-creation. Another way of stating the same thought is that we are who and what we are because we specify, organize and conserve ourselves in that way. What we therefore do when we realize our autopoiesis is to specify and maintain our ability to construct our organization through determining the components that constitute that organization. This means that all our actions as human beings have as their aim the realization of our autopoiesis, and hence whatever we do is an act of generating and specifying who we are.

Nothing we do is trivial

Autopoiesis, or the continual definition of ourselves, is invariant. All our behavior is the active statement of our autopoiesis (Maturana, 1975). We never engage in behaviors that are not functional in specifying and conserving our identity. Nothing that we do, whether it is actions, thoughts, emotions or dialogue, is trivial. All behavior, and hence all change, is determined by our conservation of ourselves as self-determining entities (Maturana & Varela, 1980). No part of the world that we call "reality" is trivial. Every part, whether it is considered an objective reality outside of us, or our personal experience, forms part of the continual process by which we define ourselves.

Everything that we do is internally determined

It follows from the above that, just as no part of our description is trivial, every part is functional. This function relates to our constitution as autopoietic beings. Hence everything we do is determined by our autopoiesis and as such is internally determined. This is called *structural determinism*. Every behavior is determined by our structure and, at any specific moment, by the specific interaction of the properties that constitute our structure (Maturana, 1987a). A person selects certain behaviors and others not. Such a selection is completely determined by the properties of the components that constitute the person's organization. It can therefore be said that the choices a person make are solely determined by the criteria that they are functional in conserving the specific organization of the person.

We define our invariant organization through flexible structure

A living system is actively engaged in the process of realizing its organization that constitutes it as a particular system - this has been defined as autopoiesis. Should the system be unable to realize its organization, it will cease to exist as a system of that particular class. Although the organization, which is the relations between different parts, is invariant, the same is not true

for its structure. The organization of a system is realized through its structure, and this occurs through continuous structural changes. Hence, the *way* in which a system is realized may vary, but not the *act of being realized* or the *specific relations between structural parts* that are conserved. Organization can be defined as the relations that are necessary in order for a system to exist, viz., that define it as a particular system or as having a specific class identity. The structure of a system refers to the actual relations and components that realize the organization, viz., the relations that constitute the system in the present and as such are invariant (Maturana, 1980b; Maturana & Varela, 1992). An example often used to describe the above is that of the tight-rope walker. The walker has to make continual small changes in order to maintain his/her balance. Hence he/she changes (by means of little balancing moves) in order to stay the same (to remain on the rope).

We draw distinctions as a way of generating and specifying our organization

Now we get back to the section about descriptions. I have said that the realization of our autopoiesis, or the act of specifying our own organization, is an invariant process to which all behavioral changes are in service. This process of specifying our own organization takes place through making distinctions. Distinctions are punctuations of difference that bring realities into existence. Our distinctions all combine to form a description of the world. Our distinctions are not, as has been made clear, determined by the outside world, since "information has no existence or meaning apart from that given to it by the system with which it interacts" (Dell, 1985). A description can therefore be defined as a complex functional matrix consisting of a multitude of distinctions. These distinctions are changes in behavior that conserve active self-determination.

Our descriptions are the active realization of ourselves

We are used to thinking about ourselves as having many ideas, preferences, opinions and beliefs. These are all distinctions comprising our description of the world. We do not typically think of these distinctions as functional, yet they

all constitute the active realization of our autopoiesis. Every act of noticing one thing and not another, by making one statement instead of another, is how we specify and conserve ourselves. We are continually and completely engaged in realizing our autonomy. We are autonomous because all changes that we undergo are subordinate to our conserving our organization (Maturana & Varela, 1980). Everything that we do works towards realizing our autopoiesis in the present (Maturana, 1975). We are purposeful, even when we are just talking about football, or commenting on something on the television.

Realization means we are constantly reproducing the blueprint of who we are

We each have a specific organization. This organization is a complex set of relations. And these refer to the specific way in which all the parts fit together to make us who we are, or constitute our organization. Who we are in terms of our organization is not defined by specific behaviors, but by the way all these behaviors fit together into a unity or a whole. The specific behaviors or components are the actual manifestations of these governing relations. When we say we are constantly realizing our own organization it means that everything we do actively keeps these relations intact. We are not only constantly specifying who we are, but also reproducing that process of specifying ourselves.

Our description selects what part of the world we notice and interact with

Any interaction with the world involves change and all such change is determined by our structure at that instant (Maturana, 1987a). Furthermore, every behavior is a distinction and, as such, forms part of our description. Our description's function, as has been said, is to specify our organization or realize our autopoiesis. The implication of this is that the world is not a vast number of possibilities, since our structure "determines with which structural configurations of the medium it may interact" (Maturana, 1987a, p.336). Hence the world appears different to us all and we interact differently with it.

And this interaction is always governed by our structure, as the active way by which our self-definition is realized.

Our descriptions create and specify the boundaries of our existence

Our descriptions are constantly, through realizing our organization, constituting, specifying and maintaining its boundaries (Maturana, 1980a). By saying that we are constantly defining and maintaining our organization, viz., the unique set of relations that constitute us, we are also defining ourselves as a distinct entity. As we are constantly specifying and conserving our identity as a unique organization, we are also specifying that which is "not us" and hence create a boundary.

Our descriptions conserve our adaptation

Though we are completely determined by our own process of self-organization, we also need to maintain our fit with the world. We need to conserve our adaptation, even though our structure will determine how this is done. We cannot exist independently of the world in which we live. Our adaptation takes place through structural changes that establishes a unique fit with the properties of the world. When we conserve our adaptation, we conserve this structure determined fit that is invariant since we cannot exist independently of the world.

We are continually changing

Our organization is conserved through structural changes that are determined, in the moment, by the unique properties of our structural components. This makes us structurally plastic. A "structurally plastic system is [a system that] undergoes structural changes as a result of interacting with itself, its environment, or other structurally plastic systems" (Dell, 1985, p.13). As we are continually changing, we are also continually increasing in complexity. It is through change that we conserve our self-determined or autonomous organization and adaptation. What we conserve is invariant, but the way in which our autonomy is conserved, is through undergoing structural

changes. Our autonomy remains invariant, and is conserved as invariant through structural changes such as changes in ideas, actions, and what we do and do not notice in our daily living.

Our description reflects our individuality and how that individuality is realized

As mentioned above, we conserve our organization through structural changes. It is therefore possible to think of a series of structural changes that a system has undergone over time. This progression, or history, of structural changes, without loss of organization, is referred to as ontogeny (Maturana & Varela, 1992).

> "[O]ntogeny is both a statement of the individuality of living systems and the way through which this individuality is realized. As a process, ontogeny, then, is the statement of the becoming system that at each moment is the unity in its fullness, and does not constitute a transit from an incomplete [...] state to a more complete or final one" (Maturana & Varela, 1980, p.87).

Our description involves the totality of ourselves

Where the first section explained how our description defines what we experience as real, this section explains that our description is the specific way that we conserve ourselves. It was also said that every change is in conservation of our autonomy. By now it may be clear that we are talking about a process that involves the totality of our organism, everything we are. It may also be clear why it was said in the previous section that we *live* our description. We *are* the embodied act of specifying and conserving ourselves through our distinctions. Our behavior is a complex circuit of continual specification that involves not only every part of ourselves, but which connects every part into a interactive functional unit.

Our descriptions are embodied in our languaging, bodyhood and emotioning

Our descriptions, as the conservation of our autonomy, are inseparable from what Maturana (1988) calls our languaging, bodyhood and emotioning. Our descriptions are not only constituted by ideas and words, but also by specific physiological experiences, bodily postures, emotions, as well as by internal and external discourses or conversations. Every part of who we are in our daily existence constitutes our description, and it does so as a complex interconnected and interactive matrix that conserves our autonomy through the specific relations realized.

> "Human life is involved upon itself in the flow of the recursive dynamic coupling of language, emotioning and bodyhood; whatever we language as we flow in our emotioning becomes our bodyhood and the world as we live as human beings, and our recursive consensual co-ordinations of actions in the flow of our emotioning as we live the world we live, constitutes our languaging" (Maturana, 1988, p.81).

The components of our descriptions are interconnected in sequences

It follows from the above that the parts of our description or experience of the world are interconnected. A change in one part or component affects the rest of our embodied description. These interconnections are not random but highly structured, as well as highly individual. What may therefore appear as the same input or stimulus will elicit completely different responses from different people. A certain idea may be connected with a specific physiological state and emotion. These form complex connections and sequences by which we make sense of the world and organize our behavior in it. Castaneda (1971, 1977) utilizes an understanding of these sequences by deliberately changing his physical gestures and thereby not only effecting a change in his actual appearance, but activating a whole sequence of thoughts and perceptions. What we take as an objective response to the

world is, in fact, a specific sequence by which we organize ourselves. These sequences organize our behavior in that they specify how we will act. Whatever we do is hence an action determined and "cued" by such a sequence of interconnected ideas, thoughts, feelings and sensations:

> "[...] that which we distinguish when we distinguish unique emotions in daily life are dynamic body dispositions for actions [...] that specify at any moment the domains of actions in which the organisms move. Thus, all [...] behavior takes place in a domain of actions supported and specified at any moment by some emotion or mood" (Maturana, 1988, p.49).

Social realities are the product of intersecting descriptions

<u>Our embodied descriptions are social realities</u>

We do not usually conceive of our thoughts, emotions and bodily events as functional in any way. And perhaps even less than that do we think of this functionality in terms of conserving our fit with others. Our embodied descriptions are social realities in that they maintain the adaptation with the social world, as it does with the physical and other domains of which we are members. This coherence with the people and contexts with which we interact is maintained invariantly (Maturana, 1987b). As such our descriptions exist in interaction with others. A description is, therefore, a social reality that is also the intersection of different descriptions. This does not change that it is structurally determined. Descriptions conserve our membership of the domains in which we exist. As such it provides predictability in how we interact with others by constituting a specific identity with those people. This identity can also be described as a specific set of sequences. These sequences are connected with the sequences of conservation of the other.

The changes that take place in social settings are structurally determined

It follows from the above that our social interactions, like all other behavior, is structurally determined. The multitude of gestures, conversations, emotions and actions that we engage in with others are still conservative behaviors. They are behavioral changes that are structurally determined in order to preserve our autonomy. As such there is no exchange of ideas or information and mutual influencing taking place. What we experience in interaction are perceptions constructed autonomously and do not reflect realities "out there" (Fourie, 1995). Our behaviors are essentially changes undertaken from one moment to another. They are not determined by the person(s) we interact with, even though we tell ourselves that they are. The sense that we make of interactions is functional and helps us to conserve ideas about both ourselves and them. And these ideas, in turn, conserve our autonomy.

Recurrent interactions lead to structural congruence between people

When people interact over time a structural congruence emerges between the changes they undergo individually. A pattern emerges of the type of structural changes that they undergo when they are with that person. Such a pattern is specified and conserved as a reality between people and is constituted by individually determined changes on the part of each participant. This process is called *structural coupling* (Maturana & Varela, 1992), the pattern of changes that each undergoes in interaction with the other. These changes are also influenced by the history of interacting with the other person, which is called *co-ontogenic structural coupling* (Maturana, 1987a). The history of changes in interaction determines what future changes of state can take place and are possible with that person, as each becomes a medium for the realization of the other (Maturana, 1978).

Structural congruence leads to the creation of consensual domains

Over time, the interactions between people give rise to co-ontogenic structural coupling. This coupling involves "mutual operative restrictions" (Maturana, 1975, p. 321) that take place between them without loss of their

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separate organizations. The domain that arises through this process of mutual restrictions is called a consensual domain. A consensual domain can be described as a "a network of sequences of mutually triggering interlocked conducts [or behaviors]" (Maturana, 1978, p.47). This means that the structural changes that take place between people "correspond to each other in interlocked sequences" (Maturana, 1975, p.326). A consensual domain is a domain of interlocked sequences of structural change. Each person, through his/her autonomy, interacts selectively with certain structural components of the other. As such they select and restrict the possible changes of each other within that relationship. A consensual domain, in returning to its origin, is distinguished on the grounds of the ontogeny that constitutes it (Maturana, 1987a).

Over time a way of coordinating behaviors evolve between people

From the interaction between people there arises consensual behavior. This behavior is the result of their mutual perturbations and results in structurally determined changes of state. When such consensual behavior becomes sequential and coordinated, it is called linguistic behavior (Kenny, 1989; Maturana, 1975). A linguistic domain is a domain of consensual co-ordinations of behavior. These co-ordinations specify what should take place in interactions in relation to the environment and in relation to the participants (Maturana, 1987a). The result of this is described by Maturana (1978): "an established linguistic domain is a system of communication that reflects a behavioral homomorphism resulting from structural coupling" (p.54).

Language arises as the co-ordination of co-ordinative behaviors

Linguistic behavior is the consensual co-ordination of behavior. When this is a recurrent process, language arises as linguistic behavior about linguistic behavior (Kenny, 1989). "Language appears when the operations in a linguistic domain result in co-ordinations of actions about actions that pertain to the linguistic domain *itself*" (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p.209-210, italics in original). Language is therefore a consensual domain of co-ordinations of co-

ordinations of actions and distinctions that is constituted through the recurrent co-ontogenic structural coupling of people. It is a "domain of mutual coherences" (Maturana, 1987b, p.81) where people change together and consensually create meanings and attributions.

Language is how we co-exist with others

Language, as a consensual domain of co-ordinations of co-ordinations of behaviors, arises "as a manner of coexistence of living systems" (Maturana, 1987a, p.360). Language is therefore not about communicating information, or whatever other ideas we have about it: it is functional, as is every other part of our behavior and being in the world. We understand each other and can share a life space due to the way in which we organize our shared world with language. Language, as such, is an action that performs a specific set of co-ordinations. Language is also "the transformation of experience into the public domain and, as such, contains an important metaphor relationship to the connection between public and private experience" (Goolishian & Winderman, 1988, p.140). Hence through language we establish a fit between our internal dialogues and ideas, and the ideas of others. Not as exchange, but as a fit and way of conserving such ideas. What is real is made real through our interactions in language. Descriptions are social phenomena and it is in language that we see how the intersection of descriptions co-construct language (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1990).

Objects are the products of making distinctions between people

Perhaps the most difficult assumption of a constructivist epistemology is that objects, too, are "linguistic distinctions of linguistic distinctions that obscure the actions they coordinate" (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p.210). This means that their existence independent of the actions that specify and distinguish them are not accessible to us. As such they are linguistic distinctions, the co-ordination of behavior. Hence, by talking about the object, it has, inherent in our distinction of it as object, a co-ordination for how we should behave towards it. It was said that the behaviors that are coordinated are obscured.

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We believe in the realness of the things that make up our perceptual world, forgetting that the only function is one that relates to our interaction with it. Objects are the tokens of the consensually formulated co-ordinations of co-ordinations of behaviors (Maturana, 1987a).

> "Each configuration of operations of distinctions that the observer performs specifies a domain of reality as a domain of operational coherences of his or her praxis of living in which he or she brings forth particular kinds of objects through their application" (Maturana, 1988, p.31).

Describing descriptions is useful in making new descriptions

<u>Everything that has been said so far is just another description</u>

So far it has been said that, everything that we take as real is a description. This description is consensually constructed and specified in language, but also exists as embodied in our emotions, thoughts and physical experiences. If the epistemology of constructivism is applied consistently, it also has to be assumed that this description is just another description. It is a description made by the observer.

<u>Knowing that descriptions are descriptions is useful</u>

Making descriptions, or becoming an observer, is a useful position. I have referred to irreverence and temporary certainty earlier in this text. By viewing behavior and interaction as the enactment of specific descriptions allows the observer the opportunity to modify his/her own behavior that will serve to select different descriptions in others. Descriptions are considered for their usefulness and treated with irreverence. In this regard I view constructivist thinking as a useful description given the aims of this dissertation. I temporarily embrace its assumptions "as if" I believe them and by doing so am capable of specifying, generating and validating a specific range of ideas, actions, and conversations.

Conclusion

Constructivist thinking was introduced by means of four ideas. The first was that reality is a description constructed by us as a way of organizing our world of experience. It is an idea that is difficult to accept because it subverts the certainties by which we live. These certainties allow us to believe that what we see and experience is "out there", and not a reflection of our participation in the world. The second idea was that these descriptions are embodied in the totality of our emotions, ideas and physical existence, and are functional in conserving our identity and fit with the world. It was said that this conservation is invariant and is achieved through structurally determined changes. The third idea was that our descriptions are social realities that exist as a fit between people. The intersection of different descriptions leads to the organization of autonomous behaviors in the form of linguistic and language behaviors, as well as distinctions that bring forth the physical world as we know it. The last idea was that it is possible to describe descriptions, which is the position of the observer. This position requires irreverence towards descriptions as certainties, and consideration of descriptions as useful devices in bringing about new descriptions. The following three chapters will present hypnosis as one such description. The following quote by Castaneda (1972) will be used as introduction and useful metaphor to these chapters in order to point out three stages in developing a hypnotic description:

> "He [Don Juan] pointed out that everyone who comes
> into contact with a child is a teacher who incessantly
> describes the world to him, until the moment when the
> child is capable of perceiving the world as it is described.
> [...] From that moment on, however, the child is a
> *member*. He knows the description of the world; and his
> *membership* becomes full-fledged [...] when he is
> capable of making all the proper perceptual
> interpretations which, by conforming to that description,
> validate it" (Castaneda,1972, p.8-9, italics in original).

CHAPTER 3

SETTING UP THE HYPNOTIC REALITY

> "He [Don Juan] pointed out that **everyone who comes into contact with a child is a teacher who incessantly describes the world to him**, until the moment when the child is capable of perceiving the world as it is described. [...] From that moment on, however, the child is a *member*. He knows the description of the world; and his *membership* becomes full-fledged [...] when he is capable of making all the proper perceptual interpretations which, by conforming to that description, validate it" (Castaneda,1972, p.8-9, author's emphasis, italics in original).

In the preceding chapter constructivist thinking was presented. It was said that what we call reality is a description of the world that is generated both *in* and *as* our praxis of living. The same process is applied to understanding hypnosis and the construction of the hypnotic reality. That is to say that hypnosis is viewed as yet another social description that is brought forth through the same consensual behaviors by which we construct our everyday world. This chapter focuses specifically on the part of the hypnotic process concerned with initiating, or setting up, the hypnotic reality or description. The chapters to follow will discuss how this description, once defined, is expanded to become a veritable reality.

Hypnosis has been defined as a consensual reality brought forth through the behavioral congruence that evolves between participants. This sets it apart as a distinct domain of interaction. This domain of interaction is made possible because it serves as a medium in which participants can conserve their autonomy. Hypnosis is therefore functional to all participants. As a consensual domain it is also characterized by specific linguistic and language

behaviors. The complex pattern that evolves and governs these behaviors also determines what actions and distinctions are made within hypnosis.

This chapter emphasizes the distinctions and actions of the hypnotist in setting up the hypnotic reality through organizing his/her descriptions of the situation. It focuses on drawing distinctions that disrupt the subject's habitual description of the world and redefine events and experiences as hypnotic. This is done with reference to my own development in learning to create hypnotic descriptions.

Using conversation to construct a consensual domain

A key activity for me during hypnotic sessions is engaging the subject in different types of conversation. As discussed, nothing that we do is trivial. All our behaviors are directly related to the conservation of our autonomy. Conversation should therefore be seen in the same way. This section explores the value of engaging subjects in seemingly content-centered conversations in order to set subjects at ease. These conversations include discussions of the subjects' beliefs, previous experiences, fears and expectations. Such discussions are often useful in helping the novice hypnotist to overcome his/her own anxiety with the idea of "doing hypnosis".

A conversation about hypnosis constructs a consensual domain

The process of hypnosis begins prior to the event that punctuates or marks that interaction as hypnosis. The co-creation of the idea of hypnosis is nothing other than the process by which we construct a consensual domain. The reader may recall that consensual domains impose "mutual operative restrictions" (Maturana, 1975, p. 321) on all participants. The implication of this is that the hypnotic reality is a social reality in which certain behaviors are permitted and others are not. In the process of evolving this domain we are acquiring roles within which we will act. Even though these roles are autonomously created, they also serve as medium for the realization of the other.

Hypnosis as consensual domain is mutually restrictive

Both the hypnotist and the subject enter the conversational domain with their unique ways of making distinctions. The conversation that takes place reflects the process of structural coupling. On the one hand it shows how those involved go through various structural changes in response to the perturbations they present to each other. On the other hand it lays down the foundation, at every moment, for further structural changes. That is to say, the conversation delineates what is possible and what is not, and constructs a language of distinctions that are, and will be, spoken. In short, it structures the *how* of the hypnotic reality and therefore the content is irrelevant.

In the hypnotic domain different members make different distinctions

Both the hypnotist and the subject agree about who can make what type of distinctions, although this agreement is not verbalized but takes place as part of the linguistic coordination of behaviors. For example, the hypnotist can make the complementary distinction of someone being in a light or deep trance. The subject can make the distinction of confirming such distinctions by saying afterwards that indeed, he/she felt it was very different from before, etc. These are the implicit parts that comprise the consensual domain and indicate how the hypnotic description as a consensual domain is a negotiation of coordinative behaviors. Talking can hence be seen as a linguistic anchor of coordinations. An informal conversation as part of the "preparation" for hypnosis can therefore be understood as a complex dialogue of co-ordinations that establish a consensual domain. This consensual domain restricts the behaviors of everyone involved, and co-ordinates roles and corresponding behavioral repertoires. At the same time these roles and repertoires also serve the realization of the autonomy of all the participants.

Co-constructing the hypnotic idea

The idea of hypnosis as the root of the hypnotic reality

The hypnotic reality, as it evolves towards coherence and the all-inclusiveness of the totality of the person, is not merely an idea. A consensually constructed idea, such as hypnosis, also impacts on how our specific conservation of our autonomy will include our emotions and physiology. The idea of hypnosis therefore sets the stage for the nature of the hypnotic reality that will evolve. Every hypnotic reality is unique since it is the unrepeatable structural coupling between people. The ideas held about hypnosis will influence the nature of the hypnotic reality that will evolve. As such it forms the starting point for the construction of an increasingly embodied description.

All ideas are equally valid

The hypnotist is not concerned when confronted by the variety of ideas about hypnosis presented by subjects. His/her own conceptualization does not adhere to or believe in any set of ideas, except that hypnosis is a co-constructed reality. As such his/her actions are aimed at establishing a social reality rather than validating a reified idea. As Fourie (1996b) points out, "[...] there are no "misconceptions" of hypnosis. All client conceptions are seen as equally valid and usable" (p.124). This stance means that the hypnotist does not see any use in "educating" the subject about what hypnosis "really" is. Instead, the hypnotist meets the subject's ideas with similar or fitting ideas that expand what is given and tie it into a useful hypnotic description. Ideas are the building blocks for the hypnotic description. The idiosyncrasy of the ideas that people bring to hypnosis means that every hypnotic description will be unique, reflecting the unique dialogue of ideas between subject and hypnotist.

Using ideas subjects bring about hypnosis

"While the ideas of the participating parties can change in
the course of the hypnotic session, it is a given fact that
everybody enters the situation with particular, often
idiosyncratic ideas about hypnosis and about his/her
connection with hypnosis" (Fourie, 1996b, p.123).

Subjects bring different and, as said in the above quote, idiosyncratic ideas to
the hypnotic context. These ideas are connected to the actions and
distinctions by which they conserve themselves. The ideas people have are,
as all other ideas and behavior, part of their conservation of their autonomy.
The fact that the context is defined as hypnosis does not change this. It is,
hence, important that these ideas are not rejected or ignored. Ideas can be
seen as the subject's bid for autonomy. If the idea or set of ideas can be
conserved, it means that the subject can conserve his/her autonomy in the
hypnotic description and can learn to make hypnotic distinctions. This is the
aim of the hypnotist - to facilitate the construction of a description that serves
as a medium for the conservation of autonomy. As such the participants
(including the hypnotist) will be invested in the description.

Ideas change through the course of hypnosis

Implicit in the preceding discussion about the hypnotist's approach and use of
ideas is that these ideas will continue to change as all participants undergo
changes in establishing a consensual domain. Ideas form part of our structure
that conserves our invariant organization, yet these ideas continue to change
and evolve. It has been said previously that the ideas with which we enter the
hypnotic situation are not trivial. The hypnotist treats all ideas as valid and
functional. This does not mean that these ideas don't change - because they
do. The changing of ideas can be seen as one of the structural changes that
we undergo in order to conserve our autonomy. The constructivist hypnotist
therefore neither reifies an idea, nor does he/she treat it as fixed and
unchanging. Instead he/she sees it as a useful building block and attempts to

find a way of incorporating it into the hypnotic description. At the same time he/she knows that, once acknowledged, it is likely to change. It is because of his/her understanding of continual change that he/she does not attempt to fix meanings and ideas.

The idea of hypnosis is a cooperative venture

> "This evolution of new ideas from original ideas is a cooperative, reciprocal venture involving everybody who partakes in the dialogue. Thus the dialogue can be viewed as a coevolutionary process through which a new "reality" is cooperatively constructed in and for that system" (Fourie, 1993, p.230).

The above quote emphasizes that though everyone involved brings different ideas about what hypnosis is, these ideas undergo change over time. It is with ideas, among other processes, that the participants establish a fit with each other and with the hypnotic context. The uniqueness in a constructivist approach is that the hypnotist brings ideas that allow him/her to deliberately incorporate and utilize the ideas of the other participants. It remains, however, a process where neither participant determines the behavior (and specifically the distinctions) of the other, nor the idea that evolves. By selecting his/her own contribution to the dialogue the hypnotist does, however, determine which ideas from his/her side are available. He/she cannot determine the outcome, but he/she can determine his/her contribution.

The hypnotist meets and contributes ideas with conviction

The idea of relativity may be conceptually useful, but does not reflect the hypnotist's interactions with the subject regarding ideas. The hypnotist acts with conviction when talking to the subject about his/her ideas - going out of his/her way to validate and confirm (or add detail to) these ideas to enable a better fit with the hypnotic description. As such the interaction between participants takes the appearance of "evolving complex webs of meaning

within which [participants] then act *as if* [their] ascribed meanings were ontologically true" (Goolishian & Winderman, 1988, p.134, italics in original). The constructivist hypnotist does no homage to any reified idea of hypnosis. His/her actions of conviction are solely aimed at establishing a powerful and consensual idea.

Previous experiences as accounts of past structural changes in hypnosis

Offering of information about previous experiences with hypnosis is one of many ways in which ideas about hypnosis are brought into the hypnotic domain. An example of this came from my work with Chris. During our conversation about hypnosis he told me about his experience with two hypnotists who attempted hypnosis with him in a therapeutic setting. He described how their approach to him was disqualifying and underestimated his artistic abilities. He also stated that the hypnosis was terminated after a few sessions since it proved to be "unsuccessful".

From the above it may be clear that what could be understood as a casual comment by Chris is an important bid for autonomy. He is making the appeal that the hypnotic reality, and especially the hypnotist, should be a medium through which he can conserve certain ideas about himself. These ideas included being a creative and artistic person that should not be hypnotized using a standard procedure. By offering this information, he was also giving an account of the type of structural changes he underwent. This is valuable to the hypnotist in organizing his/her own behavior in a way that will conserve certain ideas by interacting with the subject in a specific way, making certain structural changes unnecessary. In other words, the hypnotist should act in a way that confirms the subject and does not make it necessary for him to disqualify the hypnotist and the hypnosis.

Using expectations about hypnosis

Asking about the expectations that people bring to the hypnotic situation is useful. It provides a glimpse at the type of ideas that, if only on an intellectual

level, must help the person to conserve his/her adaptation and organization in one way or another. Such expectations are also useful to describe to the subject what will happen throughout the session. As such they are ideas about specific actions and distinctions by participants that may become possible. Needless to say this can be understood as a tentative bid to conserve their autonomy by means of such distinctions or behaviors. As has been said before, ideas change and become part of the dialogue of ideas. Nevertheless, using the expectations of the subject as a starting point validates those ideas and what they conserve. It also allows for the introduction of ideas from the hypnotist that are linked to that expectation, especially if it is a desirable expectation.

Fourie (1991a) gives an example of using expectations that are not desirable. When the subject may be afraid or very reluctant to engage in hypnosis for whatever reason, an opening is there for the hypnotist to withhold hypnosis. This validates the negative ideas and expectations by the subject, but joins with it in a way that makes the other option more likely to be accepted. This example shows how the idea of hypnosis itself can be used as a powerful tool to both "link with the presented ideas and to perturb them" (Fourie, 1996b, p.124). This type of work is only possible if the hypnotist does not reify hypnosis.

Using the challenges of the subject

Just as every behavior, whether it is an idea, action or emotion, of the subject reflects the conservation of his/her autonomy, so all such behaviors are also resources to the hypnotist. With Judy I had the opportunity to learn how being challenged is just another variation of the subject's bid for autonomy. She asked me what would happen if she tried to "block" the hypnosis. My response was that she should try it and see what happens. In this way a possible challenge was reframed as something we could explore together, as opposed to engaging in a power struggle about it. In the next session we set out to explore her "blocking". I started by telling her to think of walking on a path in a dark forest. I would alternate this with requests that she should think

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of her right foot where she is in the room. I continued in this way, switching between the imagery of walking in the forest and the sensation in her foot. The idea was that she should focus only on my story of the forest and should try and "block" my comments about her right foot. As we progressed I established a connection between her walking on the path and her right foot. The sensation in her foot was equated to the sensation of her right foot walking on the path. It became impossible for her to keep the two stories separate, yet her ability to move between the two dialogues was reframed as a "skill". Her idea of "blocking" was therefore both conserved and perturbed, and became an asset to the hypnotic repertoire.

Using the ordinary to constitute and initiate the hypnotic description

The hypnotist is a pirate. I make this statement because hypnosis, per se, is not a state or entity, as was traditionally thought, and has no "content" - there are no "hypnotic" behaviors that we can collect to make up what we understand as hypnosis. Hypnosis is a constructed reality that is made up from the events, distinctions, behaviors, etc of our everyday world. In setting up hypnosis the hypnotist is actively participating in a conversation about ideas of hypnosis that will set the rules or agreement of the new description. The ideas and mutual behavioral restrictions that emerge from the interactions of the participants form the abstract shape of the hypnotic description. The body is made up by redefining ordinary events and behaviors as hypnotic. As such the hypnotist takes from the natural occurrences of everyday life to make up what comes to be known as "trance" and "trance behavior". Hypnotic behavior is therefore nothing other than normal, ordinary behaviors redefined.

Looking at the obvious in building up the hypnotic description

One of the most significant things that my supervisor taught me in defining people's behavior as hypnotic, is to look at the obvious. Looking at what is right there in front of you - the things you cannot go wrong with. For example, the subject is sitting in a chair with his/her eyes closed. Already there is a wealth of information to describe and incorporate into the hypnotic

description. There is some sensation of the feet touching the ground, of sitting on the seat, of his/her arms touching the arm rests. The hypnotist does not know what these sensations are, but by bringing them to the attention of the subject knows that some perception will be formed of a sensation. Once a sensation is defined, the next logical step is deciding if those sensations become more or less intense, move or stay where they are. This is a beginning point for a multitude of possible distinctions without the risk of being "wrong". As such, the hypnotist states the obvious but in doing so includes the obvious into the hypnotic description.

Including all possible variations

"Suggestions" are tentative distinctions made that the subject can either validate or reject. In view of what has been said about the construction of descriptions, it may be evident to the reader that suggestions can be modified to increase the likelihood of them being validated. This is not done by being authoritative, but by offering a range of options. When I say to the subject, "some people find it more relaxing to close their eyes, although others needn't do that to experience the calm of hypnosis" it is not necessary for me to keep my fingers crossed that he/she will close his/her eyes. By offering a range of possibilities the hypnotist does not set him/herself up for disappointment. At the same time, no matter what behavior is selected by the subject (whose behaviors are not determined by the hypnotist), the selected behavior has been defined as hypnotic. For the constructivist hypnotist there are no inherently hypnotic behaviors (this will be discussed in Chapter 4) and hence his/her emphasis is on defining *any* behavior as hypnotic, rather than looking for specific behaviors. This makes it easier to construct the hypnotic repertoire since the hypnotist does not have ideas about some behaviors *not* being hypnotic. It allows him/her to make use of everything he/she can possibly punctuate.

Creating an undefined expectation

Another use of language is making the subject aware of something that is not defined. This creates the expectation, yet at the same time leaves it open and defines it in a way that, no matter what the person actually experiences, is qualified as part of the hypnotic task. Castaneda (1972), in retelling his encounters with the shaman Don Juan, gives one such example:

> "Don Juan broke the silence. He said in a whisper that we had to act as if nothing was out of the ordinary. I asked if there was something in particular that I should do. He said that I should get busy writing and do it in such a way that it would be as if I were at my desk with no worries in the world except writing. At a given moment he was going to nudge me and then I should look where he was pointing with his eyes. He warned me that no matter what I saw I should not utter a single word" (p.140).

This quotation provides the beautiful example of creating an expectation, yet not running the risk of specifying ideas. Hence it is *easier* for the subject to establish a functional fit with the description because *any* response will be hypnotic. The quotation shows how Don Juan conserves the subject's ordinary behavior by prescribing him to act as if nothing was going on.

Talking about "more" or "less", rather than "yes" or "no"

Hypnosis, as a social reality, is constructed in language. The way that language is used influences the unfolding of this reality. One aspect of the use of language is talking in terms of variation instead of absolute statements. For example, if I ask Catherine to tell me about the sensation of warmth in her hand that we have established as a replacement for her pain, I ask questions like "Is it a warmth that is tolerable?", "Will it become more or less through the day?", "Will it stay where it is or move?". These questions invite her to qualify

and specify the hypnotic description, yet, in whichever way she qualifies it, it will already be part of the hypnotic experience. This type of questioning and qualification is not limited to "setting up" the hypnotic reality, but is especially useful in giving the hypnotist some leverage in making distinctions that will be validated. Our experiences are constantly changing since we perceive through difference. The constructivist hypnotist capitalizes on this by prescribing this difference or variation.

Using simple behaviors

In structuring the hypnotic reality the hypnotist can also make use of simple behavioral options, one of which is eye closure. As an inexperienced hypnotist, I associated eye closure with one's competence as a hypnotist, perhaps because it is often seen as one of the earliest criteria for a light trance (Erickson et al, 1990). I was fortunate to have learned not to place emphasis on eye closure during inductions, as this is an easy way of setting oneself up for pointless power struggles. I nevertheless initially preferred it if my subjects closed their eyes, simply because it made me uncomfortable when they looked at me. In time, I started to use eye closure and similar behaviors in different ways. It is useful to juxtapose certain simple behaviors, such as eye closure, with the initiation of the hypnotic description and, later on, the validation of the hypnotic description. For example, I told Judy during our first session that it is possible to open her eyes when she is hypnotized (her eyes were closed). At that stage she couldn't believe it. Some sessions later she was able to open her eyes "while hypnotized". This shows how a simple behavior that we do hundreds of times per day, can be used to build up the hypnotic experience. Hypnosis is the exploitation of the ordinary.

Incorporating natural behaviors

People behave within the hypnotic context as they do outside of it. A large part of the work of the hypnotist, as has been pointed out, is to use these behaviors by defining them as part of the hypnotic process. He/she can predict, with fair certainty, that people will find their thoughts wandering and

that they will engage in an internal dialogue about whether they are hypnotized or not, about what they will do next, about how they are feeling, about the fact that their neck is sore. The subject, if not convinced otherwise, will use his/her ordinary or habitual description of the world to make sense of these experiences. It is therefore essential for the hypnotist to be proactive in anticipating these natural behaviors to occur. For example, in working with Sharon and Charlene, I can anticipate an internal dialogue that includes doubts about the hypnosis. By prescribing those experiences they are incorporated and the relational context in which they are embedded is changed. By continually making distinctions about these, and other events and experiences, the hypnotist ensures that whatever is experienced is perceived to be part of the hypnotic domain. In addition, the incorporation of different parts of the totality of the person lays the foundation of what will later be discussed as extending the hypnotic description to the totality of the person.

Acknowledging environmental disturbances allows us to gain control of our experience of them

Early in my training I was taught that it is more useful to acknowledge environmental disturbances when inducing hypnosis than trying to suggest that there is, for example, no noise going on next door. In this sense Bateson's (1972) comment that we observe by noticing difference is valuable. When the noise is no longer something separate from the induction procedure we spontaneously cease to perceive it. The attention usually engaged in perceiving slight differences and variations around us becomes focused on noticing differences related to the hypnotic situation in terms of bodily sensations, etc. I found this helpful since my sessions were usually conducted in whatever space was available. With Judy, for example, the hypnosis was done in the sitting room of a commune that was also a passage to another part of the house. Apart from this there were church bells ringing and the neighbors' dogs barking, etc in the background. By acknowledging these noises and suggesting that it is not necessary to pay attention to them I found that they will either be blotted out completely or subjects will report that they

experience the noises in a detached manner. We do not determine how the person will behave. Setting up hypnosis is, rather, about the hypnotist behaving in a way that makes everything that happens, even the barking of the dogs, seem to be part of the hypnosis. This is a much more useful approach than trying to find a quiet room in our frantic and noisy world.

Environmental disturbances are useful in structuring the move into the hypnotic description

As has already been said, acknowledging the obvious makes it part of the hypnotic domain in that, for one, the subject need not worry about whether he/she can be hypnotized with the noise and whether he/she is supposed to hear it at all. By including environmental disturbances in our conversation with the subject we define their place, so to speak, and hence it is no longer necessary to pay attention to them or attempt to make sense of them in relation to the hypnosis. In my own experience I found that these annoying environmental disturbances cannot only be modified in terms of their impact on the subject, but also be put to good use. In learning to set up the hypnotic description the novice hypnotist often finds him/herself at a loss for what distinctions to make in initiating the hypnotic description. Environmental disturbance often poses an answer and opportunity in that regard.

An example of the above was with Chris. His apartment was located very close to the railway line. At the beginning of one of our sessions it so happened that the train was just passing by. Instead of waiting for it to pass I asked him to focus on the train and constructed a metaphor of him going into a trance as the train passed by. This is what Erickson (Erickson, Rossi & Rossi, 1976) referred to as coupling a suggestion with some type of inevitability. It was available and seemed a better way to punctuate the beginning of the hypnotic description than waiting for it to pass and then using some other method. This approach is in line with the thinking that treats not only ideas, but also all other behaviors and events, as useful resources. It is the hypnotist who has to develop the skill to incorporate these events as they

arise, and to do so with grace. Through repeating this process the hypnotic description becomes "seamless" and "smooth".

One environmental disturbance can block out many others

In some situations there may be more than one environmental disturbance present. An example of this was with Andy. We decided to do hypnosis at her workplace during her lunch break. Due to this environment there were voices in the background, some light traffic, people moving into and out of the room, etc. I asked her to become aware of all the sounds and noises and to select the one that she thought was most prominent. There was a fan in the background that she commented on as being most noticeable. From here I used the fan to initiate and expand the hypnotic description. I asked her what she noticed about it most and she answered that it was the rhythmical quality of its sound. We expanded on this by linking the noise to bodily sensations, yet occasionally returning to other sounds and her experience of them. There was, however, no intent to block out environmental stimuli. The hypnotist focuses on organizing the environment and such organization includes determining what is attended to and what not. The environment is rearranged according to the logic of the hypnotic description, just as our experience of the world is otherwise organized according to the logic of our ordinary description.

Recall of previous hypnosis

The above discussion has focused on using various attributes of the environment and/or subject in constituting and/or initiating the hypnotic description. Another way of initiating the hypnotic description, especially with subjects who have been hypnotized by the hypnotist before, is the recall of such experience. In the act of remembering we organize thoughts (this will be discussed in Chapter 4). In this setting that organization is in line with the hypnotic description and hence interrupts the ordinary description. To explain, it was during a conversation about hypnosis with Ruth and Catherine that we were talking about Ruth's previous hypnotic experience in a restaurant. We

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had produced a very distinct ideosensory experience that included a positive visual hallucination. I asked her to recall what she had experienced and to describe it in detail. From there I asked her if she was able to feel the same sensation when she thought back to it. She could. I proceeded to expand on that in generating similar experiences where she moved the sensations to different parts of her body and eventually was able to produce limb anesthesia. Erickson (Rossi, 1980) also mentions the effectiveness of using kinesthetic memories and images as induction techniques. In this example, recounting a previous hypnotic experience was a sufficient punctuation to define subsequent behaviors as hypnotic.

Hypnosis in public places

There is no rule that stipulates that hypnosis should verge on boredom. It was from spending a lot of time in restaurants and coffee shops talking about hypnosis and having a willing subject that my experimentation in the "public domain" began. I initially thought that it would be very difficult because it would be challenging to shut out the amount of stimuli around us. To my surprise, I discovered that the highly stimulating environment is just as effective, if not more so, than the tranquility of the traditional hypnotic setting.

In the hypnotic situation the hypnotist attempts to define the experience of the subject within the hypnotic description. At the same time he/she needs to be proactive in anticipating behaviors such as wandering thoughts, being distracted, etc. In an extremely stimulating environment such as a restaurant or pub a different process takes place. We all know how, when it is so busy, we have to concentrate very hard on what the other person is saying to stay focused on the conversation. This is exactly what the hypnotist tries to achieve - the undivided attention of his/her subject. In a restaurant there is the waiter, the music, the people walking by, the curious people in the booth next to you, the waiters singing for a child whose birthday it is, a balloon bursting next to your ear, etc. In the same way that the environment in a restaurant is "happening to you" the stage is set for hypnosis to do the same. The subject spontaneously does the work, so to speak, of shutting these stimuli out. At the

same time much less attention is available to think of other things. It may also be extremely difficult for the subject to make sense of the situation and one way of solving the juxtaposition of two conflicting descriptions is to become completely absorbed in one.

Punctuating the boundaries

Fourie (1988) makes the statement that "[...] a punctuating event is necessary. Traditionally, an induction process served as an event which carried the connotation for everybody present that subject behaviors following on induction would be hypnotic" (p.144). Much of the preceding discussion on setting up the hypnotic reality has discussed how the hypnotic description is co-constructed through various interchanges by which participants conserve their autonomy. Yet in most cases a punctuating event is necessary. This does not mean that any of the above descriptions and processes are not punctuating events. What is necessary is that a line be drawn in the sand, so to speak, where the subject can know that at such and such a point "I am hypnotized", which means, "now I conserve myself with the hypnotic description". In a similar fashion Castaneda (1983, 1998) speaks about using physical contact, such as a slap on the back, to signify the shift into another description of the world. Such an event or cue is in itself meaningless and powerless apart from the meaning ascribed to it as signifying a change of description. Hence closing the eyes, or sitting down, or concentrating on a specific sensation may all serve as such punctuations. This consensually clarifies the description of the world that is in effect.

Such punctuating events define the boundaries, signifying when the hypnotic description begins, as well as when and where it ends. This makes it clear at what point in time the subject is no longer hypnotized, or when the hypnotic description is no longer in effect. Such punctuations usually involve a complex combination of tone, posture, language, eye contact, etc on the part of all participants. These are all linguistic behaviors by which we tell each other, without necessarily using words, that we agree that we have reverted to the ordinary description. Hence the hypnotist may count to five for the subject in

"coming out of the trance" and then at five asks the subject to open his/her eyes. At five the subject may open his/her eyes, sit upright in the chair again, etc. These are consensual linguistic interchanges by which we punctuate boundaries and establish and validate either the ordinary or the hypnotic description.

Moving towards engagement of totality of the person

Setting up the hypnotic reality has as its focus punctuating the context as hypnotic, co-creating the boundaries of the hypnotic description, disrupting habitual descriptions of behavior, and replacing these descriptions with hypnotic descriptions. In the chapters to follow the emphasis will be on expanding the hypnotic repertoire and gradually moving towards coherence. An important feature of both these processes will be the engagement of the totality of the person. This means that hypnosis is not only experienced in dialogue and words, but also established as a physical and emotional reality.

Although this chapter does not focus on this process of moving towards engaging the totality of the person, there are many ways in which the foundation can be laid. In doing so the hypnotic description is rooted, so to speak, from the start as an all-encompassing reality. Along with establishing the hypnotic description as combined physical, emotional, and languaged reality, is the facilitation of active participation on the part of the subject. It is my experience that the more active the subject is in the beginning stages of hypnosis, the more flexible he/she becomes in initiating and validating the hypnotic description in diverse settings. The implications for practice are to structure one's own activity to allow enough room for the subject to take the initiative. A few examples of the above two processes are discussed.

Physical manipulation

A large part of the hypnotic description is built up through language between the participants. In the same way, if the specific relationship allows, the body of the subject can be physically sculpted. This can be explained with

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reference to hypnosis with Maggie. At the beginning of the hypnosis I noticed her potentially uncomfortable posture. However, instead of just commenting on it in one way or another, I proceeded to sculpt her body into a more comfortable position by moving her arms into a position that would allow for better circulation. At the same time I was giving suggestions about this being a more relaxing position, etc. This proved to be a useful behavior on my part since she reported it being a positive experience. Furthermore the act of being moved is involuntary in a much more pronounced way. Instead of indirectly speculating about her comfort, I was making her comfortable. There is much less room for uncertainty, and sensations of relaxation are directly linked to bodily sensations.

Using emotions

The hypnotic description is not restricted to language and ideas. It involves the totality of our being. And it does so even if we sit still throughout the hypnotic session. Our bodies and emotions are just as useful resources as are our ideas and visualizations. What is more, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, our emotions form part of an interconnected unit. This means that a shift in any part of the unit, our totality, will affect the rest. Just as the idea of lightness or warmth in my hand can lead to the actual physical sensation, so also may my experience of being frightened or sad be valuable in leading to different perceptions. Castaneda (1968) makes the bold statement that "there is nothing wrong with being afraid. When you fear, you see things in a different way" (p.49). This became very evident in my first session with Catherine.

I made use of guided imagery in setting up the hypnotic description. She had the idea that it is not possible to speak while hypnotized. She became scared by the imagery used but was unable to speak or open her eyes. It was from her facial expressions that I could detect that something was amiss and hence drew a punctuation to end the hypnosis. This experience made me realize that there are many emotions relating to hypnosis that may be used in bringing about changes in description. Castaneda (1974) describes the

teachings of Don Juan as emphasizing that our specific view of the world is kept in place by certain emotions. In his tasks Don Juan would often bring about shifts of perception by setting up the context for Castaneda to experience emotions of fear, confusion, etc. We conserve our autonomy not only through ideas and behaviors, but through our emotioning as well.

Our emotions can be understood as cues or markers therein that they select the types of discourses we engage in. Maturana (1988) states that our emotions determine the domain in which our rational arguments take place. The way we reason or make sense of the world is hence selected partially by our emotions. Certain actions and distinctions are more likely to occur when we are experiencing a specific emotion. Emotions are functional and act not only to select the description used, but also to keep that description in place. It may therefore be of value to facilitate a specific emotion in shifting a set of physiological experiences or thoughts.

The use of complex practical tasks and rituals

> "The manoeuvre of altering the context of my ordinary world by taking me for hikes and hunting was another instance of his system that had bypassed me. Context disarrangement meant that I did not know the ropes and my attention had to be focused on everything don Juan did" (Castaneda, 1974, p.233).

Many small ways of shifting attention and drawing hypnotic distinctions have been described. In this section the focus was briefly on the body and emotions as forming part of our totality and being equally useful in shifting our description of the world. In setting up hypnotic descriptions involving the totality of the person, the use of complex practical tasks and rituals seems most effective. They not only require consensus and description in language, but enactment and, due to the novel and unfamiliar nature thereof, often also emotions like fear and anxiety.

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Sybil was a student nurse whom I briefly met during my internship. Through our conversation we spoke about hypnosis and she volunteered to be hypnotized. Prior to the hypnosis Sybil, her friend, two psychology interns and myself were engaged in an informal conversation. When hypnosis as topic was raised I suggested that we do the hypnosis right there. She had been slightly apprehensive and I consequently suggested that her friend, as well as the rest of the people in the room, stay to witness. I arranged everyone in a half circle with her chair slightly removed. I presented her with a detailed sequence of actions that she had to perform, moving from one person to the next, feeling their left hand with her right hand and paying attention to the sensation when doing so. When she had completed this task with everyone, she was to sit down in the chair allocated to her and go into a trance. All of this she did.

This ritual, if one can call it such, was the first thing that came up in my mind. My aim was to involve Sybil's totality in setting up the hypnotic description, capturing her attention and not allowing the opportunity for using her habitual description of the world. This meant she had to perform a complex set of tasks that required her moving around and interacting with people whose very presence qualified what she was doing as hypnosis. The idea of this elaborate sequence as not being hypnosis was not created in any way.

Don Juan makes the statement that "ritual can trap our attention better than anything" (Castaneda, 1983, p.204). He also teaches the usefulness of "uncommon, elaborate tactics that require [...] discipline and concentration" (Castaneda, 1984, p.66). By devising inherently meaningless and even absurd practical tasks and rituals we can effectively disrupt the subject's habitual description. At the same time we engage him/her on a level of thought, language, movement and emotions. The above example shows my initial attempt at using ritual in shifting the pervading description of the context. Elaborate tactics capture the attention of the person and engage him/her in a series of behaviors that, apart from engaging his/her totality, are completely described within the hypnotic description. This type of experience

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builds up the hypnotic description as a veritable reality or domain of experience.

Modifying the behavior of the hypnotist

Most of what has been described concerns ways in which the hypnotist facilitates certain contexts by changing or modifying his/her own behavior. This is what this dissertation is concerned with. Such modifications vary in the extent to which they are embodied by the totality of the hypnotist. Sometimes he/she may make use of facial expressions, posture, tone of voice, speed of speech, eye contact, etc. Sometimes he/she may sit upright, leaning slightly forward while within the hypnotic description, and then punctuate the ordinary description by leaning back and using a more casual tone of voice. Such modifications serve both as continual cues and punctuations - modifications to which the subject becomes just as sensitive as the hypnotist to the subject's slowing of speech and sinking into the chair. As has been described in Chapter 2, these are linguistic behaviors by which participants coordinate each others' and their own behaviors.

Another useful punctuation in using the hypnotist's behavior is removing the hypnotist from the situation temporarily. Margaret and myself had had a few sessions previously and she had been asking for another on more than one occasion. This prolonged expectancy proved useful in that when the opportunity arose (which was in a restaurant) the implicit meaning was that if we didn't do it then, we probably wouldn't get around to it. The "induction" entailed that I needed to go to the bathroom and used that as punctuation. I got up telling her that, by the time I got back, she should be in a trance. No other instructions were given to her or to the observer that was present. After a few minutes I was back and she exclaimed that she was in a trance even before I disappeared around the corner. I did not express doubt or question her about what she did, but immediately started talking to her as if she was hypnotized. From her side she was more passive, receptive and drowsy: her way of defining what was happening as hypnosis.

Using observers to qualify subject behaviors as hypnotic

In my work with many of my subjects I made use of observers. The example with Sybil was just mentioned. Observers are not passive but actively participate in punctuating events and behaviors as hypnotic. Hence, when the observers said nothing and watched silently the antics performed by Sybil, they were qualifying that what was taking place was hypnosis. They did not, for example, engage Sybil in conversation, nor did they talk to each other except by glances. Observers are a powerful resource and can be used in many ways. With Charlene I engaged an observer in conversations about what was taking place, thereby offering not only descriptions that defined her behavior as hypnotic, but also using an observer to validate my descriptions. We all know how difficult it is to extricate ourselves from ideas about our behaviors once they are shared between people. The easiest way to deal with this situation is often to accept it. This is what the hypnotist attempts to facilitate.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described how hypnosis is co-constructed by participants in language and other linguistic behaviors. The constructivist hypnotist was described as someone who considers how to incorporate all behaviors and environmental events into the hypnotic description. In doing so he/she validates the subject's conservation of his/her autonomy in being able to specify his/her own behavior. In setting up the hypnotic description the hypnotist describes this new description to the subject. It is new and unfamiliar to the subject, and the subject is not yet invested in it. The hypnotist uses tactics to capture the attention of the subject and present the new description by making the subject aware of unusual parts of his/her ordinary experience. He/she redefines all these experiences as hypnotic. Although hypnosis starts with ideas and language, the hypnotist actively works towards incorporating the totality of the person.

In the next chapter the ideas presented here will be continued, although there will be a shift in emphasis. The same processes are involved in expanding the hypnotic reality and the reader will find many similarities. Whereas this chapter discussed the actions and distinctions required to establish a new description, the next chapter focuses on behaviors that provide the subject with the opportunity to validate the hypnotic description. At the same time a repertoire of behaviors is developed that are defined as hypnotic. These serve to validate and embody the hypnotic description in developing a veritable reality.

CHAPTER 4

EXPANDING THE HYPNOTIC REALITY

"He [Don Juan] pointed out that everyone who comes
into contact with a child is a teacher who incessantly
describes the world to him, **until the moment when the
child is capable of perceiving the world as it is
described. [...] From that moment on, however, the
child is a** *member.* He knows the description of the
world; and his *membership* becomes full-fledged [...]
when he is capable of making all the proper perceptual
interpretations which, by conforming to that description,
validate it" (Castaneda,1972, p.8-9, author's emphasis,
italics in original).

In the previous chapter the process by which the hypnotist "incessantly
describes" the hypnotic description to the subject was presented. The
emphasis was on setting up this description. This was done through
establishing a consensual conversational domain in which ideas about
hypnosis were exchanged. This exchange lead to a co-constructed definition
that was functional in coordinating, but also restricting, the further actions and
distinctions of participants. Emphasis was placed on the behavior of the
hypnotist. The hypnotist operates from the epistemological foundation that
behavior is structurally determined and hence knows that all he/she can do, is
to change his/her own behavior. In setting up the hypnotic description the
hypnotist uses his/her own distinctions in redefining the subject's behaviors,
environmental events, and all other contextual givens as hypnotic. This
chapter is not separate from the above and should be understood as a
continuation of the same principles. What should be evident is a shift of
emphasis from defining to expanding the hypnotic description. The hypnotic
description is expanded by developing a set of behaviors mutually defined as
hypnotic, and by engaging in dialogues that reflect the hypnotic logic or way
of thinking.

Defining expansion

In setting up the hypnotic reality a domain of knowing, or description, is delineated. The starting point for this is creating a consensual conversational domain that is characterized by being grounded in verbal and linguistic co-ordinations. This sets up hypnosis as a languaged reality, but is not enough to make it a domain where participants can conserve the totality of themselves. It does not yet simulate our everyday experiential world in terms of the extent of its involvement of our thoughts, feelings, sensations, movement and interactional sequences. In other words, it is not "big enough" for us to conserve ourselves within. Expanding the hypnotic domain is about "filling it out" in terms of the components of our everyday experience. Initially the hypnotic domain consists of ideas, verbal exchanges, and some rudimentary bodily sensations. As it develops, it expands in terms of the extent and inclusiveness of the parts of our total experience of being in the world.

Everything that we do can be understood as the active conservation of our autonomy. As the hypnotic domain expands as part of a consensual dialogue between subject and hypnotist, it becomes a domain in which both are autopoietically invested. This investment lies therein that the hypnotic domain actively realizes the autopoiesis of the participants. The more extensive the hypnotic domain becomes in terms of its involvement of the totality of the participants, the more invested they will be in it. The hypnotic encounter can therefore be understood as a world within which the subject can conserve certain ideas, thoughts, emotions, actions, dreams, aspirations, etc that in turn conserve his/her identity. Hypnosis as such has the potential of being a domain for self-realization. The constructivist hypnotist works towards making it an all-inclusive domain of experience that will facilitate this process. This is done by developing a range of behaviors defined as hypnotic, or the hypnotic repertoire.

By developing a hypnotic repertoire, and every repertoire will be unique, the actions and interactions that are to take place within the hypnotic domain are defined. As such, a set of actions and distinctions, on the part of both the

hypnotist and subject, organizes the hypnotic encounter in prescribing the type of changes each is to undergo in relation to the other. This set of changes is the hypnotic repertoire. The hypnotic repertoire not only defines and restricts the structural changes each may undergo during hypnosis, but also the changes they may undergo in relation to the changes of the other. An apt metaphor to describe the above may be to compare the development of the hypnotic repertoire to learning a dance. It is not only about learning and mastering a specific range of moves and turns, but more importantly, learning and mastering these moves in relation to the moves and turns of the other.

Hypnotic behavior, in order to become an option for enactment, needs to be familiar. In continuation of the metaphor of dancing it can therefore be said, that when the dancers have experiential familiarity and confidence with dancing, the chances of them engaging spontaneously in it is increased. Applied to hypnosis this means that the subject needs to become familiar with being within the hypnotic description. This familiarity is established by expanding the hypnotic repertoire and continually engaging the subject in participating in it. Through repeated experience the subject learns the new description. The hypnotic repertoire can therefore be understood as a set of behaviors within a different (hypnotic) cognitive domain. Through constant engagement of the behaviors that constitute this, the subject becomes confident in organizing his/her world by using the cognitive principles of the hypnotic domain.

This chapter presents the expansion of the hypnotic domain in two parts. The first considers some examples of hypnotic behaviors, including analgesia, anaesthesia, hallucinations, amnesia, etc. These are all specific behaviors by which the hypnotic domain is filled out. These behaviors are also more traditional hypnotic behaviors. The second part of the chapter presents examples of hypnotic dialogues. The examples presented here can more accurately be referred to as generic processes of interaction within the hypnotic description, rather than being specific behaviors.

Examples of hypnotic behaviors

So far, repeated reference has been made to developing a hypnotic repertoire. What has not been said, however, is what makes a behavior hypnotic and hence part of this repertoire. A behavior is hypnotic when it is consensually described or defined as such. There is nothing inherently hypnotic in behaviors such as anaesthesia, analgesia, hallucinations and amnesia, except that they may be described as such. This description or attribution of meaning may be either verbal, linguistic, contextual, or most likely, a combination of all three. Hence the same behavior will not be hypnotic in a different context or when it is defined in a different way.

Sensory alterations

Expanding the hypnotic repertoire is about establishing a set of behaviors and experiences that are defined as hypnotic. These behaviors and experiences are obtained by the vigilance of the hypnotist in looking for ordinary everyday events, usually ones that are not attended to or are disregarded, and then redefining their occurrence as hypnotic. An example of this is eye closure that was discussed in Chapter 3. A simple action is redefined not only to become the punctuating or transitional event for a different cognitive domain (the hypnotic description), but also defined as a significant behavioral accomplishment. The hypnotist finds an arbitrary sensory event as a starting point, and from there expands the experience in juxtaposition with the hypnotic definition. Hence, closing the eyes is taken as a starting point and all consequent behaviors, generalized from the eyes to the rest of the body, are observations that are "explained" by using the hypnotic description. It may be clear now why our explanations for the things that happen to us in everyday life have nothing to do with finding causal links and everything with organizing our participation in the world.

The above process can be explained with reference to my work with Candice. Starting our session I would ask her to lift both her arms quickly, put them down, and then establish which one is heavier. Typically the subject will point

out one of his/her arms, which is also what Candice did. Once this sensation has been established further alterations, such as increasing, decreasing, shifting and transforming this experience, can be introduced. It will be clear to the reader that there is nothing inherently hypnotic in either lifting one's arms or experiencing a difference in their weight. Yet what is elicited is an unusual behavior in an unusual context. A small validation that one arm is heavier or lighter than the other validates the hypnotic logic or way of thinking. It is furthermore set up as an "objective observation" - the subject merely has to notice something, as opposed to an overt request for a specific behavior being made. The way the hypnotist presents these experiences and definitions to the subject, as described in Chapter 3, is to minimize possible disqualification and maximize the opportunity for the subject to contribute in his/her idiosyncratic way.

Our experience of our bodies and the world continually changes. The hypnotist capitalizes on this by defining a natural change or variation as being hypnotic. The subject contributes in the process by validating this definition. In my work with Peggy it was her experience of her breathing that was linked to the experience of heaviness. All that the hypnotist is trying to achieve is the proverbial foot in the door - a validation of a definition. In this case, that validation will be Peggy nodding in agreement that she feels heavier every time she exhales. It will make sense to say that what is unusual about hypnosis is not *what* is described, but rather *that* it is described and *how* it is described.

Fourie (1990) comments on how a behavior such as hand levitation is often qualified as hypnotic behavior even though there is nothing inherently hypnotic about it. It is interesting, however, to observe how something so trivial can be imbued with so much attention as to become something out of the ordinary. This is, once again, a simplistic ideosensory behavior that is developed and can be ideal in punctuating the hypnotic description or forming the basis for further developments. Simple behaviors are used to establish an embodied idea. Once the idea is consensually validated, it allows for further, more complex ideas to become embodied.

Analgesia

Analgesia, or the relief of pain, can only be understood in terms of pain and how pain is defined. Pain is not an objective experience. The needle does not cause the pain, nor is the actual burn wound the only aspect of the patient's suffering. Pain is an embodied idea. It is embedded in a matrix of meanings, attributions, emotions, relationships, etc and does not exist independently of what we say or think about it. Pain reflects how our bodies re-organize our participation in, and interaction with, the world. It does so because that is the only viable structural change at the time. However, just as lifting our arms carries with it the potential of being redefined as heavy, so the organization of our experience in relation to some bodily event has the potential for variation. In other words, pain, and the way in which it is experienced cognitively, is just one of many possible experiences.

The first example of the above process comes from my work with Catherine. She had been suffering from severe headaches for many years and, to a large extent, had become dependent on daily doses of relatively strong analgesics. The aim of the hypnosis was the relief of a specific headache. Pain, like many other experiences, is largely nonverbal, undifferentiated and generalized. The first step is therefore to bring it into language through a conversation that specifies the exact location and sensation of the pain. This is already a reorganization of the experience and consequently of the behaviors that flow from it. The second step is to introduce the idea, but not the intention, of mastering the pain. In this regard I would make comments to Catherine about the possibility, that even as we spoke, the pain may undergo changes. This introduces the idea that change may occur, but disrupts our ordinary notion that we have to or should control it. From here we could explore how the pain may become a little bit more intense. This is paradoxical since it contradicts the assumed intention of alleviating the pain. It is functional, however, since it introduces the idea of change and, once the idea of change for the worse is established, the idea of change for the better is the logical complementary behavior.

Two further processes in the transformation of the pain experience can be explained with reference to a later session with Catherine. In this session Catherine had a complaint of pain in her joints due to her osteoporosis. We made use of guided imagery in creating a distinct visual representation of the pain. This is a further step in making pain more specific, in this instance by making it visual. The idea of change that had been established was extended to include control at the desire or will of the subject. Hence she could allow her visual representation (a ball) of the pain to change in terms of its size. The newly created visualization of the pain was expanded to include a sense of warmth, and with the idea of warmth was introduced the idea of it being tolerable. Catherine left the session with a sense of warmth that replaced the previous pain experience. She was able to notice how the warmth gradually faded towards the end of the day.

In the above example the hypnotic description became an alternative to Catherine for organizing her experience. The experience of warmth that was pleasant, localized and controllable replaced generalized discomfort and pain. Prior to the above session Catherine had walked with marked difficulty due to the pain in her joints. Although no mention was made of walking with greater ease, I noticed afterwards how she walked with more ease and vigor. We experience the world with our totality, and we embody this totality. Catherine is an example of how a change in the way she languaged her experience affected the rest of her embodiment.

In my very limited work with patients suffering from burn injuries, I had the opportunity to make use of analgesia with subjects who were in constant pain. An example of this was with Olivia. She had burn wounds over a large part of her body and refused to allow nursing staff to change her dressing and clean her wounds, a procedure that caused her excruciating pain. We only had one session, yet she proved to respond extremely well. The interaction with her taught me the practical implications of our organization of our experience in time and how time can be used to introduce variation in experience. Our conversation started with the details of the pain she was experiencing at present. I then asked her how much worse the pain was when she had just

arrived in hospital. She stated that it was much worse when she first arrived. I also offered the idea that the pain became less intense when she thought of her son, who she missed while in hospital. We proceeded in this way, speaking about the difference in pain between the first week and the second week, this week and last week, the beginning of this week and now, yesterday and today, this morning and now, a few minutes ago and now. In this way, the difference of experience over time was used to create an experiential reality that the pain was becoming more tolerable from one moment to another. She was able to validate that, even while we were speaking, she felt less pain than she did before we started. Unfortunately we could not continue with this work. It shows, however, how remarkable our perception is when mobilized. Just as we organize time and our existence within it to feel pain, we can also learn to do the opposite.

Limb anaesthesia

When we wake up after having slept on our side and are unable to feel anything in our arm, we do not see it as unusual. Our bodies know how not to feel just as well as they know how to feel. We just never think of our experiences in such a way. The ability not to feel our leg, for example, has nothing to do with hypnosis. It is a structural ability that we have. It is a behavior, and the art of the hypnotist is to find the context of ideas and experiences that will allow such a behavior to be performed. This was done with Ruth. We made use of her recall of a previous hypnotic experience where she had a significant sensation of lightness to initiate the hypnotic description. This recalled feeling of lightness was transformed in this session into a feeling of heaviness that was described as a dull feeling. Continuing descriptions building on the preceding defined the experience in her leg as a lack of sensation and control. When asked to walk, she walked with difficulty due to the decreased sensation in her leg. She reported that it felt as if her leg was "asleep". In developing this type of hypnotic behavior, the hypnotist is like a choreographer who facilitates the dance of perception to unfold. What is experienced is determined completely by the structure of the subject, yet the

hypnotist, like a good salesperson, increases the likelihood of some experiences being selected above others.

Visual hallucinations

The hypnotic description brings the attention of the subject to unusual aspects of experience. These aspects are not externally imposed but are structural changes that are already within the repertoire of the subject. In Chapter 2, it was said that what we perceive as objects are also descriptions or obscured linguistic behaviors. With this in mind it makes sense that it is possible to "see" things that are not there, in other words, to describe objects that do not exist in the ordinary description of the world. This is not as unusual as it seems. Have we not all experienced someone calling our name when no one did? Or were convinced that we saw something in a specific place that turned out to be in another place? Or felt something crawling on our head when we heard people talking about head lice? We have ways of disqualifying these experiences, yet they are real. And the hypnotic description builds on this "realness" that always seems to border on our ordinary description.

Ruth provided an opportunity to develop a visual hallucination in accordance with the above. We had been exploring her ability to alter at will a sensation that had started off as the experience of difference in the weight of her arms. She was able to consciously move the experience to different parts of her body. At the same time she could change the sensory modality through which she was experiencing it until she could see a transparent purple ball resting on her hand.

Time distortion

Time is relative. Yes, one can discuss all sorts of theories about time and our experience of it, but on a day-to-day basis we all have the tacit knowledge that time is a relative experience. We may be watching a good movie and it seems unbelievable, that when the credits start rolling, two hours have passed. We start daydreaming while driving somewhere and miss an exit because we did not realize we had traveled so far (and so long) already. Yet

these experiences of time-distortion are not typically considered trance or hypnotic phenomena. We punctuate them as a part of life. The hypnotist, on the other hand, punctuates these as hypnotic phenomena. Not because they are, but because they lend themselves to it. In this way a part of everyday life becomes a hypnotic behavior. A completely ordinary occurrence becomes the achievement of the subject. In this way, as in the other redefinitions of behaviors described here, the hypnotist is active in expanding the hypnotic repertoire by including through redefinition the ignored, ordinary and undifferentiated parts of our everyday experience.

A more specific example of time distortion came from my hypnosis with Chris. During one of our sessions at Chris's home there was the sound of a garden sprinkler in the background. I noticed a change in the sound it was making and, as was my habit, included it in my description of his possible sensory experiences. After the session he commented with amazement that he did not know how I was able to predict the change. His report of the sequence of events stated that I made the suggestion and that the sound only changed afterwards. He had distorted the sequence of events. This not only qualified the process as hypnosis (because this was not possible otherwise), but also attributed to me the power to alter his sensory experiences. We organize time, not the other way around. Knowing (or assuming) this opens up a valuable resource to the hypnotist.

Amnesia and recall

It was said in the above section that we organize our experience of time. This, along with memories, is a powerful part of how we conserve ourselves. Memories, as a combination of "assumed facts" and time, are powerful tools in conserving our identity. Both are relative, but we live as if they are cast in stone. Castaneda (1974) writes about the importance of our memories in keeping our ordinary description of the world intact, and hence highlights the functionality, as opposed to the factuality, of our memories. We specify our behavior, and our memories are not excluded from that. In this light it is not in any way unusual that someone may be able to recover lost memories. Such

recovery can perhaps be understood more accurately as a reorganization that serves a different purpose in terms of the subject's identity and adaptation. One part of this reorganization may be that the person can conserve the idea of themselves as competent hypnotic subjects. When the context within which our ideas and experiences are edited is changed, the logical consequence will be that our recall will also change.

My hypnosis with Judy started around the theme of recovering a lost family heirloom. Although we were not able to recover the lost object (partly because we both became more interested in exploring hypnosis per se), she was able to recover memories of the day she lost the object. She was able to recollect the specific effect the sun made as it was shining through the trees, as well as her bodily experience of it. She reported this to be an unusual experience because she felt like she was at the same place again, going through the same experience.

On another occasion in my work with both Catherine and Candice, I made use of the suggestion that they may find, at the end of the session, that there are parts of the experience that they would not be able to remember. In our daily activities we are always forgetting little details. Most of us definitely do not have verbatim recall of most (if any) of our conversations with others. Yet we never seem to think of describing this experience as amnesia. However, in broadening the hypnotic repertoire, these experiences provide the hypnotist with yet another opportunity to introduce and/or expand the hypnotic description.

Following from the above the implication is that the way we organize our memories has nothing to do with being factual. It is functional. In a similar way Fourie (1998b) illustrates how the "false memory of molestation" (p. 537) may be functional or useful. The constructivist hypnotist is always aware that every behavior, including our memories and experience of time, is subservient to our conservation of our identity and adaptation.

Examples of hypnotic dialogues

The following section presents processes of engaging the subject in the hypnotic description where the aim is not to elicit specific behaviors. The focus is on creating a conversation that disrupts the ordinary description of the world by drawing on the hypnotic logic. Such dialogues are fluid since the end result is not predetermined as some specific behavior. It requires more on the part of the hypnotist in terms of flexibility and continual adjustment to the autonomous behaviors of the subject. In my experience, developing these dialogues is more effective in establishing a unique fit with the subject, and also allows for filling the hypnotic space in a much more natural manner.

<u>Parallel activity</u>

I started my work with Lindy by asking her to write a list of words. This was a random activity. I would use the content of her lists to construct a theme and would ask her to make another list of words relating to the theme. I then commented on the connection between the content of her lists and her physical experience. I also commented on the change in her physical experience over the course of making the different lists. I then asked her to make a story, using some of the words from one of her lists that had been defined as having a pleasant emotional connotation. As she was concentrating on making up the story, I asked her to place her hands on the table, lift them, and comment on the difference she experienced. Throughout the session we would alternate between what she was experiencing in her limbs and the story, about which I would ask her extensive questions to help her elaborate. For a significant part of the session I kept the story and bodily experience separate. Then, as in the case with Judy discussed earlier, I moved towards establishing a link between what was happening in her body and with her story. Her responses to questions and suggestions relating to her body became more rapid and compliant and she could produce some significant sensory experiences. This is the same process that was described in Chapter 3 with Judy. Using a parallel process captures the subject's attention without allowing them to predict the outcome in any way. No matter

what part of the process he/she responds to, his/her behavior is eventually defined as hypnotic.

Enactment of scenarios

Our bodyhood is a powerful tool in keeping our perceptions in place, and perhaps that is why it is always the same people volunteering for roleplays at workshops, and the same ones looking at the carpet instead. Apart from being an extremely valuable therapeutic tool, the use of the body is valuable in shifting perceptions. It is also useful with someone who is not comfortable with the idea of having unusual experiences. With Charlene I made use of the enactment of short scenarios as hypnotic behavior. I would start speaking to her without warning saying "Quick, there is someone at the door, go...yes, go, go open it. I think it is a package, what's in it?". She proceeded to participate while I watched and gave a few prompts, at the same time making comments about her appearance to an observer. What was a quiet hypnotic session a minute ago became a stage with drama. She was able to enact and respond to cues for her contribution, as well as to make spontaneous additions. It was also possible to make distinctions since her embodiment was so visibly different from what it usually was, something she could comment on afterwards.

Chapter 3 introduced the use of rituals in setting up the hypnotic reality. Providing different scenarios serves to trap the attention of the subject. It also engages him/her more completely, triggering many experiences that are related to the body in movement. The bodyhood and emoting of someone enacting a scenario undergoes a significant shift and one much more noticeable than had he/she remained in his/her seat with hands clasped. If we are trying to expand the hypnotic idea into a full-fledged reality we have to remember that our ordinary lives do not happen while we sit passively with our eyes closed in a chair. Our everyday reality involves our totality, as has been pointed out. Although I by no means want to criticize a more passive approach to hypnosis, my personal interest is in developing more encompassing descriptions. To find ways of establishing such complex

descriptions I take our everyday experience in the world as a good starting point.

Facilitating certain emotions

It follows from the above that manipulating the subject's body shifts his/her way of describing what is going on. An area that is often not spoken about is the wide range of emotions experienced by the subject. It has been said in Chapter 3 that the subject comes to hypnosis with feelings ranging from fear and nervousness to excitement, and these offer themselves as useful tools. In starting out with hypnosis I recall one or two sessions where the subject would start to giggle or laugh. This was an ideal opportunity for defining such behavior as typical hypnotic behavior. Hence I could say to the subject that he/she shouldn't worry about laughing since laughter is one way of allowing oneself to feel the looseness and relaxed atmosphere of hypnosis. This was usually an effective way of not only dealing with a wider range of emotions and affect, but also of being responsive to the person's bid for autonomy. Any behavior can be defined as hypnotic. It is just not always easy for the hypnotist to adjust his/her behaviors at the drop of a hat.

Telling a story and magical solutions

In my work with Christi I had told her a story about an old witch with all sorts of powers. The story trapped her attention and she was absolutely amazed by it. It became something that we shared - something she believed in. Some months later (although there had been a few other references to the witch) Christi had an earache that I had reason to believe was psychosomatic, given her history. I told her that the old witch had once told me that for an earache you should put your finger in the opposite ear and hold it there for five minutes. Initially I had just told her to put her finger in her ear, but this she could not accept. When I made reference to the witch, she complied and the pain was gone within a few minutes. As such, the story became a resource - the creation of a fictional character that, even though told by me, gave whatever I said "as coming from the witch" more acceptability.

Shifting the behavior of the hypnotist into the absurd

In our interactions with each other we enact little dramas that are all too familiar and of which we all know the endings. Yet there are moments when we are caught by surprise. In my work with Christi there was an incident where she was very upset, climbing onto and walking on furniture and threatening people. The typical scenario would be that everyone, including myself, would attempt to de-escalate her behavior by talking to her. However, on this occasion I walked towards her and suddenly started walking slowly, like someone would do in a film that is played in slow motion. I came closer to her and eventually stopped, the movement of my arms transforming to become the branches of a tree swaying in the wind. In short, my behavior shifted from the predictable into the absurd and unexpected. Christi stopped her behavior the moment she realized what I was doing. Where she had been crying and assaultive, she started laughing, jumped into my arms, and allowed herself to be nurtured.

Punctuating a period of time

I have described how the hypnotist is always looking for behaviors or events that can be defined as hypnotic. However, this is sometimes easier said than done, especially if you are an inexperienced hypnotist and unaccustomed to making distinctions around subtle variations. Punctuating and describing a period of time that has elapsed as hypnotic is often useful. It is much more vague, but for the same reason, much more difficult to disqualify. An example of this comes from my hypnosis with Charlene. Initially she was very uncomfortable in executing tasks that involved movement and was clearly somewhat uncomfortable with her body. After she had performed some enactments it was evident that she was more spontaneous and fluid in her movements. I proceeded to punctuate a period of time in which her behavior had different qualities. She validated this and thereby also validated being hypnotized during that time. This allowed me to define her behavior as hypnotic without really having to define any specific action as hypnotic.

Creating a time-line of change

Earlier in this chapter a session with Olivia was described. The change in perception achieved was through a process of creating a time-line of change. This process makes use of the subject's memory and the fact that all experiences constantly change. In the session I started off by comparing her experience of pain a few weeks ago, her experience now, and how her experience will be different in a few weeks from now. The time process was gradually brought closer until we could speak about her pain a minute ago, now, and in a little while. She was able to relax and allow herself to experience, with the help of thinking about her son, how her perception of pain had changed. Creating a time-line capitalizes on the inevitable process of change and turns it into a practical device for punctuating difference.

The fictional explanation

Hypnosis is often a strange experience for the subject and most of the time, if not always, leaves him/her with several questions. Questions can be responded to in various ways, depending on the epistemological departure point of the hypnotist. If the hypnotist holds the idea that hypnosis is a distinct state with distinct behaviors that make it hypnotic, his/her responses will be significantly different from those of someone seeing hypnosis as a consensually constructed domain of experience. The former position will imply that the hypnotist believes certain facts about hypnosis and may attempt to explain these to the subject. He/she may also be convinced that certain behaviors, as opposed to others, are hypnotic and may therefore disqualify, not notice, or be unsure in dealing with behaviors that do not fit the textbook description.

A constructivist approach, however, is essentially a position where the hypnotist knows that his/her role is that of facilitating the qualification of the experiences of the subject as hypnotic. The emphasis is, as has been discussed in previous chapters, on the givens of the situation, on the unique qualities and contributions of all involved. As such the hypnotist is not bound

by the idea of the "right" answers to questions that may arise during hypnosis. The guiding principle is rather that of usefulness. And hence the hypnotist may make up fictional explanations and arguments in pursuit of expanding the hypnotic description.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the expansion of the hypnotic description as a process of filling out the hypnotic space, done by developing a repertoire of behaviors mutually defined as hypnotic and facilitating dialogues that reflect the hypnotic logic. Hypnotic behaviors tend to have a clear goal (a specific behavior) in mind that the hypnotist works towards. Hypnotic dialogues, on the other hand, are more open-ended processes that emphasize hypnotic thinking rather than any specific description. Both specific behaviors and dialogues are useful, though, in expanding the hypnotic repertoire and engagement.

In the following chapter the hypnotic description as a continually evolving system will be discussed. It will be shown how the behaviors that were developed and defined as hypnotic, and the ideas and conversational domain described in Chapter 3, all fit together as a functional and coherent whole. The focus will be on the subject's mastery of the hypnotic description and the emerging ability to initiate and make hypnotic distinctions.

CHAPTER 5

FACILITATING THE COHERENCE OF THE HYPNOTIC REALITY

"He [Don Juan] pointed out that everyone who comes
into contact with a child is a teacher who incessantly
describes the world to him, until the moment when the
child is capable of perceiving the world as it is described.
[...] From that moment on, however, the child is a
member. **He knows the description of the world; and
his *membership* becomes full-fledged [...] when he is
capable of making all the proper perceptual
interpretations which, by conforming to that
description, validate it**" (Castaneda,1972, p.8-9,
author's emphasis, italics in original).

In the preceding two chapters the process was presented by which the
subject is exposed to, and becomes familiar with, the hypnotic description. In
setting up the hypnotic reality the hypnotist introduces the subject to a
different way or logic for making sense of the world. This is done in a way that
prevents him/her from making sense of events in the way that he/she is used
to. In other words, his/her habitual description of the world is disrupted and a
new one is offered. In expanding the hypnotic reality the same process is
used, although the emphasis shifts towards filling out the hypnotic domain.
This is done by developing a repertoire of behaviors that are consensually
defined as hypnotic, and by engaging in dialogues based on the hypnotic
logic. These two processes facilitate the acquisition of the hypnotic
description by the subject. In this chapter the hypnotic description is
presented as a system that conserves its own organization and fit with other
systems. This organization is described as the internal coherence of the
hypnotic system, which is the way it systematically and functionally fits
together (Dell, 1982). The fit with other systems is discussed in terms of the
system's coherence as it intersects with other systems.

Defining coherence

Coherence is neither something that someone does, nor is it an objective quality that can be measured in some way. It is a descriptive device that I find useful in making sense of the way the hypnotic domain fits together as a system, and to understand how the hypnotic system intersects with other cognitive domains and social settings. The concept of coherence is useful, firstly to assess the extent to which the hypnotic encounter has evolved into a domain of reality, and secondly, to establish the extent to which the subject has mastered the description in being able to initiate, validate, and conserve it as a domain of existence.

Some qualities of a coherent hypnotic system

Participation in validating and expanding the hypnotic description

In the introductory quotation by Castaneda it was said that membership is achieved through learning to make the proper perceptual interpretations. In other words, the subject has learned how to make sense of the world by using "hypnotic lenses", so to speak, as opposed to the lenses of everyday life. In expanding the hypnotic reality the subject was assisted in validating hypnotic distinctions made by the hypnotist. The emphasis now shifts towards eliciting hypnotic distinctions from the subject. An example of simple validation will be with Andrea when I say "I notice that you are looking much more relaxed and at ease" and she only needs to nod in agreement as validation. Facilitating her actually making the hypnotic distinction will require a more open-ended question, such as "what has changed in this room since you've gone into a trance?". Her response that the room "seems warmer and more comfortable" illustrates her ability to make perceptual interpretations within the new description.

In accepting, making and initiating hypnotic descriptions of experiences and events the subject's membership also implies that he/she participates in expanding the hypnotic description. Formerly the hypnotist carried a large

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part of the responsibility for finding ways of expanding the idea and reality of hypnosis. As the subject acquires both actual mastery of the description, as well as a sense of mastery in making hypnotic distinctions, he/she may start to qualify his/her own behaviors as hypnotic. At this stage it will be possible for the hypnotist to ask the subject "do you think you are hypnotized?" and the subject, as with Judy, will respond that she knows she is hypnotized because of the sensation of lightness in her stomach. This is an example of the subject having learned to validate his/her own behavior as hypnotic. An example of the subject expanding his/her behavior may be him/her saying, like Andrea did, that he/she knows that he/she will be able to perform a specific behavior, without this behavior actually being requested. Hence the subject takes the initiative to expand their hypnotic repertoire without being prompted to do so.

Ability to initiate perceptual interpretations within the new description

The coherent hypnotic system is characterized by the subject's role becoming more active and spontaneous. An example of this will be when the subject starts to initiate perceptual interpretations within the hypnotic description without prompting. This indicates that the subject has learned the new description and is able to realize his/her autopoiesis within it. An example of this is when Catherine experienced an auditory hallucination prior to undergoing a medical procedure. She was experiencing significant fear and the auditory hallucination helped her to calm down. Apart from showing her mastery of the hypnotic description, this shows that the hypnotic description has become a viable behavioral option (or structural change) as a way of conserving her autonomy. In this way she initiated a hypnotic behavior as a way of organizing her experience of the operation.

Changing roles of subject and hypnotist

As the subject masters the hypnotic description or logic he/she becomes an equal member in constructing the hypnotic reality. This does not mean that he/she was passive in former stages, but rather that he/she fulfilled a different role. The implication is that the hypnotist's role changes and becomes more facilitative and co-operative in terms of the content of the hypnotic domain.

The hypnotist's emphasis shifts from validating hypnotic behaviors to validating the hypnotic descriptions of the subject. Throughout the process the hypnotist does not "hypnotize" anyone, but merely organizes what is already present in the situation (Fourie & Lifschitz, 1985).

Over the course of time the organizational behaviors of all participants change. Initially my participation in hypnosis with Judy, for example, can be described as active, structuring and leading. I was the stage manager and director, and prompted the script. Over time this role changed to become more cooperative as she learned the text of the hypnotic setting. And still later, she became the one that actively defined where she wanted to move into the hypnotic description. In complementing this change, my role became more responsive, facilitative and validating.

Independent functioning of the hypnotic description

A further characteristic of a coherent hypnotic description is its ability to stay intact. Castaneda (1981) speaks about the importance of the attention staying fixed once shifted. As a social reality this is not a quality of any specific participant, but the ability of all involved to interact consistently and repeatedly within the hypnotic description without recourse to the ordinary description. Initially hypnosis as dialogue between the subject and the hypnotist is not established. This becomes evident in the initial stages of hypnosis when the subject attempts to engage the hypnotist in an ordinary conversation about events and experiences. As the hypnosis progresses the subject learns to stay in the hypnotic description, performing perceptions from within the description, as opposed to trying to make sense of experiences by explaining them as ordinary events.

Clarity of the hypnotic description

Castaneda (1993) says "we know it by the clarity of our perception. The clearer the view [...] the greater the cohesion" (p.70). In the same way coherence of the hypnotic system is marked by clarity of it as a domain of

reality. This can best be explained with reference to our everyday experience. We experience our bodies, surroundings, emotions, thoughts and interactions with a certain thoughtless trust and confidence. In Chapter 2 it was said that we take our description of the world as being real and as disconnected from our own role in making it so. The same quality, perhaps to a limited extent, is found with the coherent system. Hence, as Judy masters the hypnotic description, there is a certain trust in her experiences. She is hypnotized and what she is experiencing is completely real in hypnosis. This quality of being in an experience without excessive scrutiny or questioning, is what is meant by clarity. It is the ease with which we experience our perceptions without doubt, as if we are merely passive receivers of information.

Continual and independent evolution

The hypnotic description evolves within, and becomes, a social system. It is a consensual venture between participants and as such can be understood as being a relationship. Every hypnotic description is unique because it constitutes a unique relationship. As such, the hypnotic description is a shared reality and is made up, as are all social realities, through interaction. This interaction has been described in Chapter 2 as co-ontogenic structural coupling. What this really says, is that those involved in the hypnotic description as a social system are going through individual structural changes that are connected to the structural changes of each other. Just as hypnosis with one person is completely different from hypnosis with another, so hypnosis with the same person is always new and different. Hypnosis is not a static entity or state, but a relationship that is fluid. Hypnosis as such continues to evolve as a distinct plastic system that cannot be pinned down.

Conservation of the hypnotic system

The hypnotic description as system is a higher order functional unit that conserves its members in being both the medium and the manifestation of their autopoiesis. As a way of knowing, the hypnotic description organizes itself by becoming ordered, repeatable and reliable (Von Glasersfeld, 1984). It

is this internal coherence that provides each hypnotic system with its unique identity. The hypnotic system conserves certain relations between its members, and hence the system can be understood as a being a relationship itself. In the previous paragraph it was said that the hypnotic system continually changes and evolves. This is complemented by the system conserving the relations between its members. Hence the system conserves its organization by continually undergoing changes in terms of the actual behaviors by members that constitute it. The changes in behavior, taking place over time, conserve the identity of the system as being hypnotic. Should the hypnotic system no longer conserve its organization, that which makes it "hypnotic", it will cease to exist as such. In this sense a hypnotic system may be constituted as consisting of the role of "hypnotist" and the role of "subject". These roles are necessary for it to exist as hypnotic system. This may not, however, be true of all hypnotic systems.

<u>Dealing with perturbations</u>

The hypnotic description is conservative, which means it is, like all descriptions, resistant to change and therefore attempts to eliminate perturbations (Von Glasersfeld, 1988). A perturbation is anything that poses a potential threat to the conservation of the hypnotic system. Hence the subject opening his/her eyes in the middle of the session may be seen as a perturbation. In itself, such a behavior or event carries no meaning, but it is the way the system reorganizes around the behavior that will define it. When this happened with Andrea I commented that it is fine if she wants to open her eyes while she is in a trance, and that people often want to see how different their surroundings will look when hypnotized. This was my dealing with a perturbation as hypnotist.

As the hypnotic description becomes coherent the subject becomes capable of dealing with perturbations without reverting to the ordinary description. One example of this took place when someone walked into the room when I was doing hypnosis with Judy. The person did not know what we were doing. I got up, went to him, and explained to him in a lowered voice that Judy was

hypnotized. Judy had remained in her position when the person walked in. In this way she dealt with the perturbation by not responding from within her ordinary description. Remaining on the couch is hence an action of dealing with a perturbation.

Another example comes from my hypnosis with Sharon. After our session I discussed what had happened with her with an observer. The observer stated that she did not think that Sharon was hypnotized. Sharon responded that although she only seemed to be lying on the couch with her eyes closed, she actually couldn't move when she tried to. In this way the subject dealt with the perturbation. As the hypnotic description evolves the subject becomes confident in validating the experience, not only to him/herself, but also to others.

Ability to move between different descriptions

With the subject's mastery of the hypnotic description comes the ability to move with greater ease between different descriptions. In traditional language this means that he/she can more rapidly switch between being in a "trance" and being in ordinary awareness. Less time and fewer punctuations are necessary in demarcating a context or specific interaction as hypnotic. Hence I can have a conversation with Ruth and ask her to experience what she experienced several months before, during hypnosis. The completeness of her experience then allows her to use my prompt and the idea of what she experienced to shift her whole embodiment back to that experience. With some subjects it may be necessary to use an agreed-on prompt to punctuate the context, such as a phrase or a tap on the shoulder.

As subjects master the hypnotic description they may spontaneously initiate such a switch from one description to the other. After a session with Judy I phoned her to follow up on how she was doing. She was talking about how easy she found switching between the two descriptions after our session where we explored her "blocking" (discussed in Chapter 3). She commented that she would probably be able to experience the same things she was

experiencing earlier if she wanted to. In this way she could allow herself to switch to the hypnotic description while on the phone and without requiring any other punctuation.

Interconnected system of behaviors

In setting up the hypnotic reality the hypnotist uses whatever is given in luring the subject to the hypnotic description, so to speak. This may mean using an idea, such as a child that is missed, or the desire to get rid of a headache, or the pleasant memory of a visit to a cathedral. These are all possible starting points from which the hypnotist expands the experience in developing an interconnected system of behaviors. These may include ideas, perceptions, actions, etc, all of which are connected into a functional unit.

Independence from initial spatial contextual boundaries

In setting up the context for the unfolding of the hypnotic description space is often used as a handy and basic marker of the hypnotic domain. Hence the subject knows that in that position, or seat, or that room, he/she experiences hypnosis. Not only does this serve to punctuate the commencement of the hypnotic context, but it also provides a clear boundary from the ordinary activities and descriptions. As the subject learns the hypnotic description he/she needs fewer and often less concrete cues to punctuate or indicate the hypnotic domain. Hence there is less dependence on the spatial contextual boundaries that may initially have been necessary. This means that with minimal cues participants can shift to the hypnotic description in different spatial contexts. An example of this is Margaret's ability to enter the hypnotic description in different settings with minimal cues. She learned how to create her own behavioral markers that will help recreate the hypnotic description in whichever setting she finds herself.

Independence from initial relational context

Following from the above is that the hypnotic description can also be shifted into different relational contexts. Although initial interaction may therefore

have been restricted to hypnotist and subject, the hypnotic description can be initiated in other social settings. This is a challenge to the subject since he/she must find a way of dealing with the presence of others without reverting to his/her ordinary description. In my experience this is something that is easier with the more coherent hypnotic system. An example of this is with Judy. During most of our sessions it was just the two of us present. As she became competent at making and validating the hypnotic description I asked her to move into the hypnotic description in a setting that has not been defined previously as hypnotic and with a group of people with who she had never manifested her hypnotic behaviors. She was able to do this with great proficiency.

Intersection and fit with other descriptions and contexts

Dell (1985) points out that, in order for something to exist, it has to be structurally coupled to the world in which it exists. In the same way the hypnotic system needs to fit into the rest of the subject's world. He/she has to be able to integrate the idea of the hypnotic description with his/her ordinary descriptions without it posing a threat. There is no way of prescribing how this will be done, neither by the hypnotist nor by the subject. Every subject lives in different descriptions and these descriptions, as the hypnotic descriptions, serve differently but uniquely in conserving his/her autonomy. The subject's mastery of the hypnotic system allows him/her to fit the hypnotic description with these other descriptions.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the evolving coherence of the hypnotic system as being its functional and structural interconnectedness, and distinctness, as social system. It was described how coherence also refers to the subject's acquisition of membership to the hypnotic description. This membership is manifested in his/her ability to initiate, make and validate hypnotic descriptions. This goes hand-in-hand with the changing role of the hypnotist, who becomes more facilitative. The hypnotic system exists as a veritable

reality or description that is less bound to spatial and relational contexts, can intersect with other descriptions and contexts, and effectively deals with perturbations. Lastly it incorporates the totality of the participants, especially the subject, and as such exists as a veritable reality in which he/she conserves his/her autonomy. This is the ideal of the work of the constructivist hypnotist.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation presented the praxis of hypnosis in terms of the behaviors of the hypnotist in facilitating an embodied description mutually qualified as hypnosis. This process was described with reference to my own experiences with hypnosis. This chapter will provide a brief overview of my ideas of possible implications for research, treatment and training when approaching hypnosis from a constructivist epistemology. The remainder of the chapter will contextualize this dissertation, my position as author, hypnosis and constructivism.

Implications

Implications and recommendations for research

The hypnotist as researcher can be described as an artist that selects and organizes pieces of glass and ceramic to create a mosaic. We do not look at the product, art, as distinct from the artist, but see it as an statement of the artist. Just as art reflects the artist, so research, from a constructivist perspective, reflects the researcher's idiosyncratic way of researching, of selecting and combining materials into a pattern or organization that makes sense to those who look at it. It can therefore be said that *research both reflects and is the manifestation of the researcher's autopoiesis*. Research does not discover facts, ideas or patterns, but is a construction. This construction is a human behavior, and as was discussed in Chapter 2, all human behaviors are autopoietic. Constructivist research hence places the emphasis on the descriptive and participatory behaviors of the researcher in the research process. The researcher is not only viewed as an inseparable part of the research process, but the research itself is seen as reflecting the description of the researcher in the way actions and ideas are specified, described and organized. The implication for research is that research findings are unique and inseparable from the autopoietic discourse from

which they arise, and attempts to duplicate research findings, whether successful or not, reflects an inability to appreciate this.

Research exists both in, and as part of, the social intersection of autonomous individuals in language. Research is a social reality and is only valid when it is defined as adequate by those defined as capable of making such distinctions of adequacy. In other words, research, like all other behaviors, is autopoietic therein that it allows the person (the researcher) to specify and conserve his/her identity. This is done in intersection with other autopoietic beings. Research reflects both the researcher's conservation of his/her identity, as well as his/her fit with other people and ideas within the research domain. The research community's validation of the researcher indicates that his/her membership to that community is being conserved. And research will only be validated if the ideas and descriptions that it contains in turn allow the research community to conserve their idiosyncratic behaviors as members and autopoietic entities. *As such research conserves not only the identity and membership of the researcher, but also that of the larger community in which it is defined as adequate.* Research, like all other consensual cognitive domains, conserves the invested interests of the researcher, subject and consumer.

The usefulness of research lies therein that all research reflects a selection, organization and description of events and ideas into patterns, and these patterns are useful in turn to other researchers and hypnotists in making sense of events and ideas. Hence research findings should be considered for their usefulness rather than "truthfulness". What we do when we publish research "findings" is to communicate our idiosyncratic ways of making sense. This "making sense" is in turn validated by the larger hypnosis and/or research community as adequate action. When it is validated as such, it becomes part of the repertoire of what is considered acceptable research practice, in the same way that a new behavior is consensually defined as hypnotic. This means that other researchers and hypnotists can "make sense" in a similar way. Research findings hence add towards the "research repertoire". What is communicated and validated through research findings is

not objective facts or discoveries, but processes of making sense or describing reality. Every research report can therefore be understood as communicating an implicit, and usually unacknowledged, description of the world. To understand the explicit research content without the implicit epistemological assumptions is ignorant and more likely to lead to the reification of findings as if they were disconnected from the process that found them, or the finder (or, from the research and the researcher).

Human beings are all structurally determined, and the idea of one person (the researcher) unilaterally controlling the behavior of another (the subject) is not accepted. For the same reason no attempt was made in the research preceding this dissertation at establishing unilateral control over subject behaviors. The researcher, as with the hypnotist, can only change his/her own behaviors. Constructivist research will therefore emphasize the importance of the behavior of the researcher. There will be no attempts at controlling the research situation, since it is assumed that behavior is internally and structurally defined, and as such is not the direct result of the environment. Research can hence be defined as the curious observation by the researcher of both his/her own behavioral changes, and those of the participants, as forming part of an inseparable circuit and existing within a specified domain of actions, ideas and distinctions. *Constructivist research is the curious participation of the researcher in an evolving reality where facts and findings are consensual artifacts that exist in language.*

In summarizing the ideas described above I will provide an image of the constructivist researcher. The constructivist researcher presents as somewhat of a paradox. He/she is irreverent about facts and findings since they are seen as consensual and autopoietic descriptions. In communicating his/her ideas he/she is aware that they reflect him/herself and hence he/she does not aim to convince others of their "realness", but rather attempts to portray circumstances of their usefulness. At the same time he/she can appreciate the ideas of others as equally valid descriptions. In balancing his/her irreverence the constructivist researcher takes his/her descriptions very serious and does not believe that "everything goes". He/she knows that

all descriptions have implications for future actions and distinctions, and is therefore careful in deciding which behavior to describe. The constructivist researcher adopts an attitude of curious experimentation and a willingness to define him/herself as participant of the research process. He/she creates a domain of distinction and description where he/she organizes ideas to construct a pattern between distinctions. The fact that this pattern reflects the researcher does not invalidate it, but merely provides a qualifying context. The pattern or organization in turn allows others to conserve parts of themselves through the process of interacting with the organization.

Implications for treatment

All behaviors are active organizational events. The implication is that "someone suffering from a severe migraine" should be rephrased to read "someone organizing his/her current identity and adaptation to his/her context (including bodily events) by means of pain that allows him/her to conserve some part of a description". Applying a constructivist perspective thereby removes the ideas of linear cause and of symptoms as "things that happen to us". The hypnotist and therapist operating from a constructivist epistemology therefore see symptoms and other behavior as forming part of a complex web of relations where the symptom is an active and functional behavior.

The type of interventions decided on during treatment is based on the epistemology used in making sense of behaviors. Within a constructivist mindset the hypnotist views all behavior as functional in conserving the identity and adaptation of the person. To change a specific behavior, the context of ideas, interactions, events, etc in which the behavior is functionally embedded, needs to be disrupted and reorganized. At the same time the hypnotist has to assist the person in continuing to conserve the ideas and relations that are conserved through the symptom, but to do this in a different way by means of different actions and distinctions.

In treating problematic behaviors, such as pain, the hypnotist explores these behaviors in terms of location, intensity, etc. It would to inconsistent with

constructivist thinking to assume that he/she discovers these bits of information or facts. The act of dialoguing about anything (in this case the experience of pain) expands and develops that which is dialogued about. In this sense any enquiry into someone's experience in itself constitutes a change. Change is therefore an ongoing process. The constructivist hypnotist and therapist know this and facilitate change by changing the way he/she asks questions.

The constructivist hypnotist assumes that all realities are continually in flux since the entities that constitute them, and the relations between them, are continually changing and evolving. Change and stability are hence inherent in our condition as humans, and the hypnotist/therapist is aware of this. He/she attempts to draw distinctions to make this change part of the dialogue as process that is already present, rather than as something that still needs to be achieved. Pragmatically this is useful since change is explored, rather than requested, and it is much more difficult to disqualify change since it is defined as part of the person's current repertoire.

The constructivist hypnotist is not an agent of linear change. His/her role in disrupting the subject's ordinary description is active, but how the subject will deal with the perturbation is determined by his/her structure. The hypnotist therefore does not adhere to set techniques in achieving therapeutic goals, but experiment with a variety of ideas in an attempt to find a fit with the subject that will allow a change in the desired area. As such he/she is flexible and can adjust to different and unique situations with greater ease.

Constructivist hypnosis redefines parts of the subject's current established behavioral repertoire as hypnotic skills and competence. This is achieved by redefining everyday behaviors as hypnotic achievements. In itself, this is an empowering reframing of the subject's daily actions. The hypnotist does not see the subject as the passive recipient of experiences. Communicating in this way redefines the subject's role in his/her life to one that is more active and effective. And such a redefinition allows the subject more opportunity and validation for growth and development.

What emerges from the hypnotic encounter is a co-constructed reality. It is not a series of facts. The hypnotist/therapist has to be careful, though, since such functional information is expressed in a context that he/she is part of and he/she has to be careful of what he/she validates as "real". He/she also has to be selective of what is brought into the conversational domain since all distinctions will not be equally useful in working towards therapeutic goals.

Hypnosis is a useful device for treatment, but not treatment in itself. It is a specific conversational domain. For some people the reorganization of ideas and expectations may carry the connotation that, within the hypnotic context, they can perform different behaviors and still conserve a certain identity. Hence someone can change a behavior and then qualify what happened by saying "it was the hypnosis". In this way a person can undergo a change (for whichever reason), but ascribe it to the hypnosis and hence disqualify him/herself as the agent of change. In hypnosis the "rules" are different - and sometimes all people need is a change of rules to make changes that they really want to make, but cannot make otherwise because of the implications that will go with such change.

Hypnosis is a useful idea. In treatment this idea is sometimes a powerful enough tool, without even engaging in the interactions known as hypnosis. At the same time the idea of hypnosis will be different in every situation. Since the constructivist hypnotist does not have a reified idea of what hypnosis is or should be, and what not, this does not create a problem, but rather a resource and opportunity. He/she realizes that with the divergent ideas about hypnosis that people bring, they also bring divergent ideas about alternate conditions for change. He/she capitalizes and expands on these ideas of change in achieving treatment goals.

Implications for training

I was fortunate to be trained to think about hypnosis from a constructivist perspective. My interest in hypnosis pushed me to experiment and build up confidence in constructing hypnotic descriptions. In speaking to my peers, however, I often find reluctance to make use of hypnosis, even though they

underwent the same amount of theoretical training as I did. The key reason for this seems to be that they do not know what the hypnotist actually does during hypnosis. This also reflects my own initial experience and is what led me to start conceptualizing this dissertation in an attempt to delineate the actual praxis involved. Hypnosis seems to have about it an aura of obscurity that maintains the association of it being something esoteric from medieval times. This is completely unnecessary. The process involved in hypnosis is simple, but not easy. It is simple in terms of what needs to be done, but difficult in terms of the changes required on the part of the hypnotist.

This dissertation has emphasized that a large part of hypnosis is about the changes the hypnotist has to produce in his/her own behavior in constructing the hypnotic description. The experience for making these changes can only be obtained through the actual process of doing so. In the same way that the subject needs to gain experiential knowledge of the new description, the hypnotist needs to do the same. For training, the recommendation will therefore be an approach that emphasizes both theory and practice. The theory of constructivist thinking will allow the student to learn to conceptualize in the way discussed in this text. The practical component will include coaching and guidance in actually doing hypnosis, from start to finish. Training that does not persist until students have the confidence to do hypnosis at the drop of the hat is, in my opinion as student, more likely than not, to result in them not seeing it is a possible resource in their work. In other words, they will not see it as a viable behavior in their therapeutic repertoire since they have not learned to conserve their identity as therapists within it.

Contextualization

<u>This dissertation is a secondary description</u>

> "We discover that our experience is that we find
> ourselves observing, talking or acting, and that any
> explanation or description of what we do is secondary to
> our experience of finding ourselves in the doing of what
> we do" (Maturana, 1988, p.26).

The preceding chapters are a summary of my description of facilitating different hypnotic discourses. This description is, however, a secondary description and does not reflect the same description that was involved when I was engaged in the said discourses. A description is a functional moment-to-moment interface through which we conserve ourselves by organizing our world of experiences. This means that any description offered afterwards is not the same as the description embodied and embedded in the unique relational context at the time.

Does the above invalidate the descriptions made in this text? No. Every description is valid and functional within the context in which it consensually arises. What is not valid, though, is to assume that the former description is "factually" conveyed by this dissertation. The statement of this text is that such a "factual" report will never be possible since what we "know" is constructed in language as a functional organizational event between people. This is merely about reminding ourselves that all descriptions are functional - even this one. An epistemological stance can only be taken seriously if it is taken to its logical consequences as applied to the actions that embody it. These are my actions.

The dissertation as secondary description

> "[...] cognitive domains are closed operational domains:
> an observer cannot get out of a cognitive domain by
> operating in it. Similarly, an observer cannot observe a
> cognitive domain by operating in it. An observer can get
> out of a cognitive domain, and observe it, only through
> the recursive consensuality of language by consensually
> specifying another cognitive domain in which the first is
> an object of consensual distinctions" (Maturana, 1988,
> p.61).

Every description exists, and is functional within, a specific interactional and time-spatial context. While I was therefore involved in doing the hypnosis described in this dissertation, I was operating from a specific description. In writing this dissertation, however, I created another description. Although the content may seem to be the same, it is a different description that takes place in a different domain. My actual embodied description in doing hypnosis, and the one embodied in creating this text, are different and belong to different consensual domains. However, as Maturana's quote points out, it is useful and necessary to specify a different cognitive domain in which the first can be described. In doing so I am, as author, able to describe my own description without staying within the cognitive recursiveness that constitutes it. In other words, writing a dissertation allows me to organize the reality of my hypnosis in a different way since I no longer have to perform the behaviors necessary to remain viable within that immediate setting.

The dissertation as conservation by the author

I used the metaphor of an artist creating a mosaic. In the same way I am, as author and researcher, the one who selects and combine ideas, experiences, thoughts and discussions into the description that is presented here. These are all organized and presented in a way that must make sense to the reader, but more important, make sense to me. As such it reflects my own

conservation of ideas, not only about hypnosis, but about my totality. The dissertation is therefore not an objective end-product, but an active construction, organization and communication of ideas that both reflect and is my own act of conservation. "[A]ll actions by a human system can [...] be seen as the verbal or nonverbal statement of ideas aimed at the conservation of its autonomy" (Fourie, 1993, p.226). In doing hypnosis, and in writing this dissertation, I am conserving my autonomy.

The dissertation as adaptation by the author

There are many ways for me to describe my experiences. I know, however, that this text must reflect adequacy or effectiveness (Maturana, 1987b; Zeleny, 1996) to those who will read it. It is a text written within the context of academia where it forms part of the requirements of a master's degree. The text is written with that in mind. It should show certain skills such as the use of references, presenting a logical argument, etc. As such the experiences themselves are perhaps even less important than the way in which they are described, and specifically described in relation to other literature on the subject. This does not disqualify the text. Once again, it is merely a statement about the context of the description that influences and restricts what is said and how it is said. I need to show my ability to comply, to a reasonable degree, with the requirements set out. This is one area in which this dissertation specifies and conserves my identity as competent academic, and my membership to the academic community. In the same manner this text must reflect certain distinctions, comments, statements, etc that will be qualified as adequate by the psychology community in order for me to conserve my identity as psychologist and establish my membership to that community.

The dissertation must also fit with a larger consensual community

"All realities are *not* equally valid or equally useful. Their usefulness or validity is determined, however, not by any "objective" norm, but by the ways they fit with the wishes, attributions, ideas, and conceptions of the people partaking in their construction. And this does not refer only to the people physically present in the particular context. Any constructed reality must fit with ideas from many sources, such as cultural and religious norms, folk wisdom, novels, the media *and* ideas from other cases as well as research reports" (Fourie, 1996c, p.17).

This dissertation must illustrate my ability to make certain distinctions that are considered adequate action by the consensual communities of academia and psychology. In the same way it must fit within a larger community - it must make sense in terms of the ideas, thoughts and beliefs about hypnosis in general. As author I must be careful in my selection of "facts". All realities are not equally valid. There are many possible experiences that I may describe here. Yet, some may sound "strange" and hence I exclude it. And in doing so I illustrate my ability to act within the specific cognitive domain of those who read this text, or, I write in a way that make sense to people.

Hypnosis is also *just* a definition

Just as all realities are consensually constructed, so hypnosis, too, "is the definition of a constructed reality" (Fourie, 1995, p.303). In this dissertation the idea of hypnosis was used as an organizational metaphor, or description, to make sense of what I did. Does this mean what I did was not really hypnosis? No. My actions were consensually defined as hypnotic and, as such, the idea or definition of hypnosis forms an integral part of the description.

However, in several of the cases referred to in this text the word "hypnosis" was never used. Yet, within this secondary description they become part of the group of subjects, viz. those with whom I uttered the word. What makes something hypnotic is, in part, that it fits certain consensual criteria of the hypnotic community. But even if it manifested those criteria, without the definition, it is not hypnosis. Hypnosis is a conceptual reality that only exists in language. What are the implications of all of the above?

Consensually defining a setting and behavior with the subject as hypnotic is one level at which the definition can be made. As the ideas of the hypnotic community have evolved, we can also make the definition amongst each other. That is to say, in our secondary description we define what happened as hypnosis. And we use explanations to validate the latter. Whichever way it is done, it becomes hypnosis through being defined as such. This can take place consensually with the subject, or consensually within the larger hypnotic community. What is clear, however, is that defining phenomena as hypnotic, no matter within which consensual domain, is still the attribution of such meaning.

Constructivism is one of many realist ideas

In introducing this text it was made clear that everything said here was said, and only made sense, if the reader temporarily assumed as valid the epistemological assumptions in which it is embedded. Constructivism is an epistemology, and was presented as being one of many epistemologies. Ideas about the conservation of autonomy are just ideas that I, as observer, selected as organizing principle (Fourie, 1993). Constructivism is an idea held by myself and other authors. Although it is an epistemology, it also contains elements of realism, or ontological claims. Structural determinism is such a claim. It is because I am aware that constructivism contains ontological claims, that I did not present criticism of other epistemological stances in this text. Constructivism is just another idea, and I have neither need nor desire to reify it as anything more than what it is.

Final remark

In setting out to write this dissertation my hope was to arrive at a formulation of the practice of constructing hypnotic realities. The process of conceptualization and description, and of responding to feedback when people did not know what I meant, has been useful in clarifying for myself the praxis of hypnosis. It is a praxis that is simple yet intricate, and something that can take many forms depending on the epistemology in which it is rooted. Yet I am left preferring an epistemology that leaves me both empowered and humble. Empowered in the awareness and responsibility of my contribution to the construction of domains of reality, but humble in knowing that my best hypnotic achievements means nothing if they are not validated by another.

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