

## HISTORY OF REGRESSIVE HYPNOSIS

Regressions to the past, to understand and to assimilate the present, are the essence and the base of the regressive hypnosis as a hypnotherapy. During the process, hypnotists try to investigate by different means and hypnotic trances if all or many of the situations that we have lived in the past (whether during our childhood or in a past life) are still affecting our lives in the present in different ways.

Nobody knows with certainty where or when the hypnotic regression began to be used by the first time. However there are many references to many ancient civilisations

(Beginning with the Lemuria and Atlantida, as Edgar Cayce tells us) which used, believed in and practised different states of altered consciousness or trance states in which people could reach experiences from past lives, death, spaces between life and death and different discoveries about humanity's ancient history. In these states of trance information that could never be got through logic and reason could be got in a fully conscious state. We know, for instance, that since we have written historical knowledge there have been civilisations, mostly eastern, as Hindus and Tibetans that make reference to the ability to recount experiences of past lives through these hypnotic processes or through astral projections. These processes, in an altered state, close to the supra-consciousness, led people to remember past moments, either positive or negative with extreme clarity. Edgar Cayce, also known as the sleeping prophet, is a good example of the effect of these methods. In an altered conscious state, Cayce could recover experiences, his own and from other people, in lost continents such as Atlantida and Lemuria, and also in the ancient Egypt.

There are also many historic references that say that the historic Buddha Gautama Siddharta told people about the fact that it was possible to remember past lives and transcend the karma that those lives left to the present life.

In Greece, in the times of Pythagoras, the god Hypnos was venerated. Hypnos was known as the "sleep god", and his many adventures and the changes he produced in mortals' lives - favouring them with pleasant experiences during the trance or the daily life (especially those who venerated him) - were highly relevant.

People believed that those who venerated Hypnos had special capacities that allowed them to influence other people's minds. People also thought that many among the ones who were in contact with the god had a strong will and resources that not many people could have, such as knowledge of the past and the future. During Greece's golden age, in the schools of mysteries Hypnos had great acceptance and importance.

Let's go now to modern history. Paris, during the years previous to the French Revolution, was the privileged place where scientific wonders appeared. In that

time, nothing could be compared with the wonderful healings made by Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer.

Paris' medical brotherhood hated this Viennese foreigner, with his new and brilliant theory about animal magnetism that showed such strength. Despite of these bad feelings, Paris' citizens, of many social ranks, filled the therapy room of their new "miraculous healer". The room where they met was richly decorated and had lots of mirrors everywhere.

The group sat down surrounding an apparatus known as the "baguette" – a tube made out of an oak-tree that contained water with lead filling - and a good number of bottles filled with the so called 'magnetised water'. Many iron rods and metal cords were connected to the "baguette", and patients put the other sides of the rods and cords around the affected parts of their bodies. Soft music from wind instruments was played, and the famous "crystal harmonica" accompanied it from Mesmer.

Gradually the music's rhythm accelerated and the patients shouted or fell unconscious due to the excitement. In the pinnacle of the session, Mesmer entered the room as a dominant figure, with clothes made of purple silk. He passed from patient to patient, looking them directly in the eyes with his penetrating glance and touching them with his elegant iron rod. Most of the patients entered in a trance, and when they regained consciousness, most realised that were cured.

Contemporary stories tell us about healings of strong headaches, asthma, paralysis, blindness, deafness, depression and a great variety of inner disorders. An official named Chevalier de Haussay was one of the people who told his healing's story. He had been suffering for many years since he was in a frost in Hanover and after that he got a malign fever in Martinique. When he went to see Mesmer, he had giddiness, he could hardly speak, and he laughed without any reason and suffered continuous shivering. Mesmer's treatment produced a series of drastic changes and re-adjustments: "ice was coming out of my thighs, followed by a great heat and stinky sweating", he said. "Now after 4 months I'm finally healthy, concluded".

### **Mesmer and the magnets.**

Mesmer was a sincere and honest man, he believed that he healed people with a form of magnetic-energetic healing. In those days the magnetism was a discomposing phenomenon, as was the electricity and many other wonders in those days. Some scientists began to think about the electricity as an energetic universal force that had influence over water, plants, animals and people. In his thesis, written in Vienna 20 years before Mesmer said that the sun and the stars could influence over human beings through a magnetic fluid that filled the entire universe with its energy. If the flow of this fluid was altered in the body (the etheric field of vital energy) the result was the illness. Health could only be restored, restoring the flow.

In his beginnings in Vienna, Mesmer touched his patients with magnets, but gradually he discovered that he could stop using them without losing

effectiveness. For a long time he replaced the magnets with his own hands. Finally he realised that he could create a "*rapport*" as he called him (or inner energetic connection) looking them deeply to the eyes. He could also transfer energy 'prana' with his breath to the affected parts to heal them. After that he concluded that certain people could, as he did, concentrate the flow of the 'universal magnetic energy' and make it flow to other people in different ways. He called this energetic power 'animal magnetism'.

In 1784, Louis XVI, the famous "King Sun" from Versailles, established a commission to examine Mesmer's affirmations and postulates. Its members included Benjamin Franklin, who was an assigned ambassador in France at that time, and certain doctor named Josep Guillotin – who would gain immortality in the times of the revolution as the inventor of a 'painless head-cutting machine' the guillotine. The commission investigated Mesmer's magnetic tubes, and drank from the vases of magnetised water (similar to the Reiki-treated water used for healing nowadays).

The non-unanimous verdict was that his instruments were useless, a conclusion that doesn't surprise anybody taking into account that they forgot the 'detail' of Dr. Mesmer's presence in the treatments that was an essential part.

Neither Mesmer nor his critics could ever understand the real meaning of his system. The commission informed deprecatorily that '*imagination played a great part in the healing effects produced by the energy of the animal magnetism*'. They never considered what excited that imagination or how it was excited.

One of the members of the commission, who was not against the technique, Jean Silvain Baille - who lately became Paris' Major, during Napoleon's dominion - commented the different reactions of the patients to the energetic magnetism. He was surprised to see that '*some were excessively excited while others were deeply quiet*'. This was so curious because '*all the patients were under the influence of the same magnetiser*'. Baille, as Mesmer, thought about the magnetic force as something that could pass in equal amounts from one person to another. They didn't realise that the mesmerism, as it was called later, was an intangible energetic power of the spirit.

Mesmer died in 1815 and he continued believing until that date in his energetic magnetic fluid. Others developed the implications of his investigations. Mikao Usui discovered Reiki 107 years later. That technique was rapidly extended all over the world during the following centuries. Hypnotherapy and Reiki contain techniques that Mesmer used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Under the magnetised elm-tree**

Two French aristocrats were the first ones to observe that a mesmerised patient obeyed all the instructions from his mesmeriser. The marquis of Puy Segur and his brother the count Masime became themselves enthusiastic mesmerisers in Paris. When they returned to their summerhouse in Buzancy, close to Soissons, they tried to cure local people. They magnetised a big elm-tree of the town and hung metal cords from his branches. '*Under that mysterious tree* – said a witness

*– many stone-seats had been placed, the ill people sat on them and tied the cords to the affected parts of their bodies. Then the sessions began. Patients touched each other's hands so that the energetic magnetic fluid could flow around freely...* In such a natural environment the emotional crisis that happened in Mesmer's hall didn't appear.

There was an achievement that the Puy Segur brothers never even imagined. A 23 year old local man, Victor Race, went to the brothers to get a treatment because he was suffering a severe lung inflammation. *'I was so surprised – wrote the marquis – when I saw that after a few seconds this man fell asleep in my arms, calmed and without any convulsion or sign of pain. I went on with the magnetising session and he began to shiver and speak out loud about his problems. As he looked stressed I stopped him and tried to inspire him with happier things. This was very easy to do, almost immediately he showed signs to be extremely happy, jumping on his chair and humming a song that I asked him to sing out loud. The next day he could not remember the previous afternoon's session, however he told me that he had never felt better.'*

The marquis mesmerised Victor again. Normally he was a shy and slow speaker, but under the trance he spoke with absolute freedom and very eloquently. He also stood up and walked around obeying the orders from the marquis. Evidently – thought Puy Segur– the way the magnetic fluid worked was through the people's mind and by suggestion's power. Victor also showed another amazing ability. When he was mesmerised, he could diagnose the illnesses of his mates who sat around the elm-tree and he could also suggest the correct treatment. Quickly other mesmeric circles in France were showing similar clairvoyant powers. One of Puy Segur's disciples taught the hypnotic techniques to Phineas P. Quimby, and he taught them to Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christic Science.

In 1920, Faria, a Portuguese abbot, came to the conclusion that the magnetic fluids - if they existed in any way - played a non-relevant role in the healings. In his healing practise in Paris, where he widely used the 'mesmerism', he realised that the essential factor to succeed was a receptive attitude from the patient. This information helped until certain point, it allowed to abandon the metal cords and the magnetised trees. Science, however, was not even close to find out what made the patients receptive to the suggestions of his 'mesmeriser'. The abbot only had to tell his patients to go to sleep and they fell asleep immediately.

### **More phenomenons**

Another phenomenon discovered at that time, that uncovered a lot of questions, was the nowadays known as 'post-hypnotic suggestions'. This happens when a hypnotised person is instructed to do a task in a determined moment after recognising certain signal, even a lot of time after being awaked from the trance. For example a person can be told to take off his shoes when he hears the 'mesmeriser' blows his nose for a second time. Once he is taken out of the trance he doesn't remember the instructions anymore. Half an hour later the 'mesmeriser' blows his nose twice. Immediately the person feels uncomfortable, changes positions, stares at the floor, and finally, unable to

stand more tension he leans and takes off his shoes. Sometimes the person will use the ingenious trick to give explanations about the strange conduct, saying for instance that he felt a strong itching in his both feet's toes.

A 'mesmeriser' - or hypnotist as they were called later - can also alter the power of perception in a person. A person under a hypnotic trance can be given a book and told that he's holding nothing in his hands, and he won't be able to feel it or read it. By any reason his conscious is closed to the fact that he is holding a book. His mind will also accept false information. To give a common example, you can give a hypnotised person an uncooked potato telling him that it is a delicious ripe apple, and he will eat it happily tasting the apple's delicious flavour.

Other parts of the body's nervous system can be affected by hypnotic suggestions. A person can be told that he'll be touched with a red hot iron, and when he's touched with a cool iron he'll scream in pain and, what is more interesting, his skin will turn red and show a water bubble where the iron was placed. This interruption of the sensorial perceptions was the next great discovering of the 'mesmerism'.

Unfortunately, this happened in England, where most of the doctors had even more reluctance to non-orthodox healing methods than his French colleagues did. John Elliotson was the first English who used the stethoscope, and he was hardly criticised for that reason. One of the doctors told him that he didn't understand the use of that "hocus pocus" that was not going to help in the healing. Despite of those adversities hypnosis is gaining a new prestige as an effective healing technique.

### **Recent clinic applications**

After witnessing a mesmeric session in 1837 Elliotson noticed that there was the answer to the eternal problem of the pain in the surgeries. He began to mesmerise his own patients and made a lot of painless amputations of thighs, arms, legs and breasts. Some of his old colleagues who observed the operations stubbornly said that the patients had been trained so as to not express the pain.

The Scottish surgeon John Esdaile was luckier than Elliotson in this investigations because he practised his first mesmeric experiments in India, when he was working at the native hospital in Hooghly. His success with amputations was so impressive that in 1846 the government of Bengala made him director of a small hospital in Calcuta (renamed as Mesmeric Hospital). Five years later he had practised thousands of painless operations to extirpate big scrotum tumours. That was a very common disease at that time in India, but surgeons thought that it was too dangerous to extirpate them so just few of them tried to do so. One of the tumours Esdaile extirpated weighed 103 pounds, just as heavy as the whole body of the patient. To operate him, the tumour had to be held over a beam with a strong cord.

Esdaile was convinced that the mesmerism worked thanks to the energetic magnetic fluid that could be transferred from one person to another. However, James Braid, another Scottish, was convinced that the mesmeric trance was a

mere subjective phenomenon. He said: 'the subject is not put to sleep, he sleeps'.

Braid used a new term 'neuro - hypnosis' or 'sleeping nerves', he described this condition as '*a particular condition of the nervous system produced by artificial means*'. To shorten it, the name was reduced to the one we use nowadays: hypnotism that comes from the Greek word 'hypnos' that means sleep.

The concept of the unconscious mind didn't exist at Braid's time, but he managed to explain what he named 'dual consciousness' of the mind. While his patients were under hypnosis he taught them fragments of foreign languages. They forgot the new words when they were asleep but they could remember them during the trance.

Unfortunately for Esdaile and Braid ether and chloroform were discovered at that time as anaesthetics. Doctors preferred those physical agents as anaesthetics instead of the hypnosis, because they were substances whose actions could be understood. Hypnosis could not be understood so they ignored it completely. If Braid wouldn't have prepared a document about his work and had sent it to one of his colleagues in Paris before his death (1860), his work had died with him. Anyway it was hidden in England for 30 years.

### **Free hypnosis**

Braid's Parisian colleague read his documents to the members of the French Academy in 1860. Among the audience there was a hard-working doctor from a small village, who would be destined to be the pioneer of the hypnotherapy. He was Dr. Ambroise -Auguste Liébeault. After listening carefully to Braid's theories he went back home, in Nancy, where he added hypnosis as one of the forms of treatment that he used with his patients. He trusted his patients and knew how to persuade them to make them co-operate with him in the treatments.

'If you want me to treat you with drugs – he told them – I will, but you will have to pay me. However if you let me treat you with hypnosis I'll do it for free. "

An eye witness informed that Dr. Liébeault's clinic was always full, and it consisted only of 2 rooms and a garden. Dr. Liébeault asked the patient to sit on a comfortable couch and asked him to close his eyes and then he told him that he was going to sleep. 'Your eyes are becoming heavier, your limbs feel relaxed and you're becoming more and more sleepy' This form of hypnotic induction is, in essence, the same as the one that is used nowadays. When his patients were hypnotised, Dr. Liébeault realised that he could suggest them to make their nervous disorders disappear.

Liébeault wrote a book about his cases, in 1866, and it is said that only one copy was sold. Twenty years later, his work was known broadly outside Nancy. It was discovered in 1882 by Hypolite Bernheim, a famous doctor who had heard that Liébeault had cured a sciatica case in which he himself had worked vainly for 6 months. Bernheim went to Nancy, ready to unmask Liébeault and show him as a cheater. But he observed him working and immediately he became his disciple.

Many years later Sigmund Freud remembered the visit he made to Nancy as a youngster. He wrote: *'I observed the animated show of the old Liébeault working between poor women and children from the working class, and I was the witness of the amazing experiments of Bernheim with his patients at the hospital. I received the deepest impression of the possibility to find powerful mental processes that were hidden to humanity's conscious mind...'*

Freud had come from France, on a trip with his classmates, under the supervision of the great neurologist Jean Martin Charcot. Charcot's interest - opposite to Liébeault's and Bernheim's who wanted to cure the ill ones - was centred in the demonstration of different phenomenons: particularly the phenomenon of the hysteria. There had been confusion and wrong ideas for centuries. Most of the people of that time thought that the hysteria was a condition suffered almost exclusively by women, and for a long time it was said that the cause of the hysteria was the separation of the uterus from its place and its moving to another part of the body. Hysteria comes from the Greek word 'ilystera' that means womb.

The extirpation of an ovary was the prescribed treatment until 1882. From Charcot's point of view, hypnosis was an abnormal state associated with the hysteria. He studied its physic and neurological effects in 12 hysteric patients, all of them women. His discovering was interesting, but the experiments were necessarily limited because they didn't take into account other mental effects.

Charcot also introduced once again the magnets and many of his students achieved healings putting their patients with their backs touching the hysterics' backs and trying to transfer the illnesses from one to the other using the magnetic influence. Techniques like these ones inspired Liébeault, who during the course of his long life didn't treat 12 but 12,000 patients.

### **Freud's influence**

Freud had a picture of Charcot on his desk as a tribute, but some years later Freud has surpassed his teacher. After he figured out that his neurotic patients were related with 'scenes imprinted emotionally but forgotten in their lives'. He decided to use the hypnosis as a mean to help them talk about those scenes. A century before, the Puy Segur marquis had heard his neighbour Victor speaking about his personal problems during a trance. Freud developed the achievement of the hypnotic trance later to bring their patients back to the past events in their lives until they could make contact with forgotten incidents and fantasies that still - unconsciously - worried their minds. Freud believed that the neurotic symptoms could be eradicated this way.

As the time passed, Freud abandoned the hypnosis and replaced it with the free association, in which the patients were encouraged to talk about anything that came to their minds. As one thought drives to another Freud expected the repressed memories to come to the conscious mind - sooner or later. The technique of free association marks the birth of psychoanalysis.

Hypnosis seemed to have completed a circle from Mesmer to Freud, in approximately one hundred years, although in popular imagination it had passed through many states.

A common belief nowadays is that people, under a hypnotic trance can't be forced to do things that normally they would reject doing. This idea was probably originated in an incident that happened in Charcot's reading room. Charcot was called urgently out of the room, and he left a woman under a hypnotic trance. A student, anxious for practising his abilities suggested her to lift her skirt. Immediately she ended the trance slapped him and went away.

The possibility to influence people's actions with hypnosis was well shown in a case published in the book 'Fringe Medicine' by Brian Inglis (1964). A golf player who thought that was in a bad condition went to see the British professional player S.L. King to get a lesson. After that he went to a hypnotist who suggested him that the next time he played golf he was going to play just as King had shown him, except in 4 of the 18 holes. In those 4 holes the hypnotist told him that he must try to remember by himself all the teachings of King as any other golf player would do after a lesson. The player left the consulting room, unconscious of the received instructions. His game was excellent, except in the assigned 4 holes.

### **Applications in therapies**

The comprehension of the hypnotic trance is still far to be reached completely, however it is well known that it produces clear physiologic alterations, including changes in the amount of sugar in the blood and the stomach's acid fluids. The theories about how this phenomenon occurs inside the mind had advanced very little. It has not got far from the obvious explanation that it isolates an area of the mental system from the rest of the brain.

An amazing healing that caused sensation among the dermatologists happened in England, at East Grinstead hospital in 1951. It was a case of congenital ichthyosis; a disease considered non curable, where a black and spiky layer extends over the skin. The patient was a 16 year old child. The layer covered all his body, except the chest, neck and face. This hard layer constantly cracked with the consequent infections. The boy was forced to leave school because his teachers and classmates could not stand the stink from his skin. A piece of skin from the chest had been transplanted to a hand, but in a month it was as the rest of the affected skin. The boy had practically lost all hopes of recovering.

On February 10, 1951 he was hypnotised and he received the suggestion that his left arm was going to be cleaned. Five days later the thick layer softened and finally it fell. The skin that was under turned pink and soft and at the end of the tenth day the arm was clean from the shoulder to the wrist. Then his right arm was treated in the same way, and then the rest of the body. Some areas were cleaned only in a 70%, but the difference that it made was enough to turn a shy and desperate boy into a boy who was described as his doctor as 'happy and normal'. Eight months later the boy got a job as assistant of an



electrician. Doctor A. Mason, who treated him, showed the extreme weirdness of the cure, and from then on hypnosis was used with psychotherapy.

There is a risk when the hypnosis is used alone to treat neurotic symptoms. The symptoms could be eradicated, but the psychic cause behind the symptoms must be eradicated too with the hypnotherapy. A qualified hypnotherapist can use the hypnosis to accelerate the emerging of traumatic memories and help reducing the resistance of the mind to self-knowledge. Nowadays hypnosis has become a modern and effective alternative to psychotherapy, and the role of the hypnosis is still spreading. Mesmer was more prophetic when he wrote in his doctoral thesis a verse from the roman poet Horace: *'Much of what during a long time has been buried will emerge, and much of what is considered honourably will be buried'*

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as the years passed, the regressions were gaining more respect. From the 50's decade more hypnotists began to use the hypnotic regression, mostly the regression to childhood. Famous American hypnotists, such as Rossi (one of the most famous hypnotists nowadays author of many books about the different trance techniques) had been great supporters of the hypnotic regression. Doctors such as Raymond Moody and many others had proved in the last 50 years through hypnotic regressions the connection between past lives and the present in familiar groups and also in sentimental relationships of people who met in past lives.

One of those meaningful cases is Dr. Bernstein one. He got into the hypnotic regressions by accident. While he was treating one of his patients, Ms. Tighe, he tried to make her go back to her childhood, and accidentally he transported her to a past life as an Irish woman named Bridey Murphy. This woman could give a lot of details in different regressions about her life in Ireland, more that 80 years before Dr. Bernstein's regression.

A book written by Dr. Rogo named 'The search for yesterday' had great success among the public opinion and specially favoured the hypnotic regressive experience as a therapy. The hypnotist Bloxham, who worked exclusively with regressive therapy with his patients, he amazed and excited British people and colleagues in the 70's decade with his numerous therapies with the regressions to past lives.

The eminent psychiatrist and writer, Dr. Brian Weiss with his many books such as "Many lives, many masters" and 'Only love is true', international best sellers, helped in a great way to promote the regressive technique.

The Spanish Alliance of Hypnosis and NLP invited Dr. Brian Weiss in 1995 to give many courses of hypnotic regressions in Madrid, and he made also appearances in t.v. programmes – in Telemadrid and Tele 5. This helped the introduction of this form of therapy in Spain. The Alliance has also invited the eminent hypnotists Rossi and Ormond MacGil during their visits to Spain in 1997 and 1998.

### **The purpose and different functions of hypnotherapy**

Traditionally, and until recent times in different countries, the teaching of hypnotherapy at universities had not been developed, because it was not considered as independent of the traditional psychological therapy, it was known only as a tool used by clinic psychologists and psychiatrists. Further more, the teaching at universities begins with the theories and basis of the Freudian psychoanalysis, that doesn't accept the hypnosis.

Many American and European universities had recently offered post-degree studies of hypnosis, given by psychiatrists and clinic psychologists related to those universities. Those hypnotherapy teachers restrict the attendants to their courses to dentists, allopathic doctors and psychologists. They also forbid the students to write books where their techniques and methodology are taught.

## **HOW WAS DEVELOPED THE NECESSITY FOR HYPNOTHERAPY**

Everything began in 1977 in the US when the Job Department, after a series of public conferences, decided to define the professional title of 'Master in Hypnosis and Hypnotherapist' as legal operative jobs and published it in the fourth edition of the Occupational Titles Dictionary.

Hypnotherapy is now taught in special schools that operate in the private sector. In California and Florida, where this trend's been stronger, these schools are called 'Post-highschool Private School', and they offer professional training to people that had finished their studies in a superior school, and want to keep on with studies of occupations that are not taught at universities. Nowadays only in California there are 18 Hypnotherapy Schools, and approximately 700 new hypnotherapists are trained each year.

The treatment with hypnosis has gone further from the exclusive application that dentists, doctors and clinic psychologists used with their patients. Hypnosis is used in different treatments in the fields of athletic motivation, education, judicial system, public speaking, weight control, smoking control, stuttering control and any other areas that are out of the traditional treatments. The Hypnosis Institute of Los Angeles has trained 125 police officers to make them be able to help the prisoners through hypnosis treatments.

The demand of a formal training that began in California has extended all over America and Europe in the last years. The security standards are improving and people formed in legal centres can work professionally, with their titles as a back up, not only in North America, Europe and Australia.

In U.S.A. only there are more than 15,000 hypnotherapists, 5,000 in England and approximately 1,500 in Spain where the need for hypnotherapy and regressive hypnosis has been growing fast. There is also a new necessity for specialised consulting, because many people, who used to go to a psychiatrist or a clinic psychologist consulting room, now go to see a professional hypnotherapist.

