

FOREWORD TO THE 2ND EDITION BY ANDRÉ WEITZENHOFFER

Although I am not a practitioner of the Ericksonian approach, nor a strategic therapist, and hold different opinions on aspects of hypnotism from Michael Yapko, I believe I can correctly state that *Trancework* is an excellent exposition of current teachings on Ericksonian therapy or, as the author prefers to say, of the naturalistic approach originated by Milton H. Erickson.

The naturalistic approach to therapy and to hypnotism can be summed up in a few words: It is the “utilization,” that is, the use by the therapist of whatever capacities and kinds of responses the patient has and is capable of giving at any particular moment; even his or her symptoms can be used.

Trancework is also an excellent introduction to strategic therapy, which is an outgrowth of this naturalistic approach. Strategic therapy was originally defined quite broadly by Jay Haley (as a result of his study of Erickson’s therapeutic work) as any therapy in which the therapist takes the responsibility of directly influencing the patient according to a plan of treatment determined by the presenting problem. But to be a true reflection of Erickson’s approach, as it was intended to be, this definition should have added that the plan is also determined by what can be utilized out of what is offered by the patient at any given moment, a plan that is both fluid and unique for each patient. It is in this sense that I see *Trancework* as an exposition of strategic therapy.

However, *Trancework* is not just an exposition of Ericksonian methods or of strategic therapy. It is more; it is a reflection of Michael Yapko’s personal understandings, skills, and experience as a psychotherapist and psychologist. One way of summing up Erickson’s approach to psychotherapy is to say that it is an integration of hypnotic and nonhypnotic phenomena brought about naturalistically for therapeutic purposes. It is to Yapko’s credit that he not only has been able to capture the essence of this approach, but he has also been able to make it available in a practical way.

While the author’s subject matter is primarily clinical hypnotism as viewed from within a naturalistic framework, he does not ignore matters pertaining to traditional hypnotism and introduces the reader to its principal concepts and methods. With fairness, he points out the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches as he sees them, although clearly giving his overall preference to the naturalistic approach.

There is considerable didactic material in *Trancework*, but the book remains above all a practical work aiming not only to teach the reader the art of doing hypnotherapy but, more importantly, the art of doing effective psychotherapy. For, as already intimated, it is in the nature of the Ericksonian approach not to separate the use of hypnotic patterns of communication from therapeutic communications in general. For both Erickson and Yapko, effective communication is the key to both the skilled use of hypnotic phenomena and to effective psychotherapy. One may not necessarily agree with the author that all influencing communications constitute hypnosis—which seems to be his position—but there is no question that readers who practice the communication techniques he details will be well on their way to becoming skilled clinical hypnotists and therapists.

A valuable pedagogical feature of the work that should not be overlooked are the lists of topics for discussion and the assignments with which each chapter terminates. Readers would be well advised to give them their attention.

Trancework will be a good starting point for beginners, and a good review for more advanced workers. It brings together a great deal of material, and should be particularly instructive for practitioners who have thus far limited themselves strictly to the traditional approach.

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