

COMMENTARY

Regarding “Hypnosis Reconsidered, Resituated, and Redefined”: A Commentary on Crabtree

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As I prepare to make comments about Crabtree’s paper, I find it difficult to know exactly where to begin. It is hard to decide whether this paper has said a lot or has, in fact, said nothing other than the most obvious, or simply used different language to state what others have said. On the other hand, perhaps my struggle is indicative of something more. Since I am struggling to figure this out and am unclear in my thinking, does this indicate Crabtree has presented something new and significant? Despite this quandary, there are a number of specific points I would like to address, and, then, later return to considering the larger questions raised by my struggles.

I would like to frame the context for my Commentary. I was trained in hypnosis and hypnotherapy in 1968. I have done active clinical practice for forty years and used hypnosis in various clinical ways. For 10 years, I taught doctoral students a course in hypnotherapy. I am a practitioner and not a researcher or theorist of hypnosis. I have published a fair amount in the areas of dissociation and have a background in philosophy, in particular phenomenological philosophy. In my comments I want to be fair and balanced, but I want to address what was problematic from my point of view since in the long run that might be most useful.

I would like first to applaud Crabtree’s creative and theoretical tour de force: He defines hypnosis from the inside, from the perspective of mental phenomena and not from the operational definitions of hypnotically emitted actions (his list of hypnotic phenomena) or of the behaviors of hypnotists. He has created an overarching theory that explains a range of phenomena and answers important questions. How is it that we can observe hypnosis-like behavior in people who are not in a hypnotic state? How is it possible for people in a hypnotic state to engage in hypnotic behavior? What happens when someone goes into hypnosis? What is the link between hypnosis, group trances, and other rituals seen worldwide, rituals that evoke

trance-like states similar to hypnotic states? How does experience seem to flow connectedly from thing to thing? His theory answers these questions and brings them together seamlessly. Unfortunately, I believe he generalizes too broadly and has established concepts which founder when examined closely.

Is there something unique about hypnosis? There must be, otherwise a unique word would not label it. Alternatively this statement has been questioned by those who assert hypnosis is not a unique state but a social enactment, having no independent reality as a state. Crabtree adequately critiques this dismissal of hypnosis being a unique state. Crabtree is clearly a scholar of the history of hypnosis and conversant with current theory and research. His paper describes attempts by current theorists, practitioners, and researchers to more clearly define and specify what hypnosis is. Psychology has struggled with the dilemma he describes: How can a researcher or theorist empirically measure a mental phenomenon? How do we define a mental phenomenon so others can know what that is? This difficulty led to defining mental phenomena as a function either of specific behaviors, brain activities, or of particular measurement activities called operational definitions. I am reminded of my own initial foray into this dilemma in the 1960s when, as a graduate student, I concluded that psychology had “lost its mind.” All psychological phenomena were defined by behaviors, and mind or consciousness did not exist. When dreams were finally connected to REM sleep, psychology as a discipline, constrained by its methods and assumptions, had to acknowledge mental phenomena—in this case, dreams. In an analogous fashion, were specific brainwave activities linked to hypnosis, then this research result might lead to a different conceptual and experimental approach. I believe I have read about this specific research result in the past five years (unfortunately I cannot find the reference), and, although I am not an expert, such data would suggest an empirical way to specify what hypnosis links to experimentally. If this is correct, I do not know the implications for Crabtree’s theory.

Before addressing specific issues, as I have reflected on Crabtree’s theory, I would like to consider what I have called the *domain of hypnosis*. He has attempted to globally explain all hypnosis-like phenomena. I wonder, however, whether he has been too inclusive or uncritical by including all historical reports of hypnosis. How does one evaluate the quality of those reports? Given the present-day dilemma in knowing what is hypnotic and what is not, how can he be assured those reports are accurate and also that they are hypnotic? From another perspective, there are phenomena in the hypnotic domain not addressed by his theory. Although he refers to individuals who cannot be hypnotized because of difficulties

with attention, he does not consider differences in hypnotizability or the possibility that some individuals might not be hypnotizable at all. A non-hypnotizable individual does not accord with how Crabtree later describes everyday trance experience or how those individuals seem to experience, in particular how they focus. I will return to this later when addressing focused attention. Another issue pertains to the distinction between the process of being hypnotized and the state of being in hypnosis. As an individual enters into hypnosis, the state deepens over time. There is a transition from a non-hypnotic to a hypnotic state. When does that transition occur? What happens when it does? Finally, Crabtree does not consider post-hypnotic suggestion. The previously hypnotized person, no longer hypnotized, enacts the suggestion. How does that take place according to his theory?

I repeatedly struggled with Crabtree's definitions and meanings. In particular, the cornerstone definition on which *hypnosis* rests is *trance*. His theory must rest firmly on that concept; if it does not, it is not supportable. Colloquially and professionally individuals use *trance* interchangeably with *hypnosis*, or use the phrase *hypnotic trance*. As I have been writing this Commentary, I frequently find myself intending to write *trance* as a substitute for *hypnosis*. Crabtree, for example, refers to Erickson's use of *trance* as a synonym for the *hypnotic state*. An online dictionary provided the following definitions:

1. a half-conscious state, seemingly between sleeping and waking, in which ability to function voluntarily may be suspended.
2. a dazed or bewildered condition.
3. a state of complete mental absorption or deep musing.
4. an unconscious, cataleptic, or hypnotic condition.
5. Spiritualism. A temporary state in which a medium, with suspension of personal consciousness, is controlled by an intelligence from without and used as a means of communication, as from the dead.

Trance as a core definition for hypnosis, is confounded by its identification with hypnosis. In this regard, I found myself sometimes asking, "How is trance different from hypnosis?"

Crabtree addresses this in his definition of trance and hypnosis:

a state of intense focus on something, accompanied by a diminished awareness of everything else, which evokes appropriate subliminal resources. My definition of hypnosis is: an inner-mind trance characterized by rapport. (Crabtree 2012:312)

Striking about these two definitions (*trance* and *hypnosis*) is what I consider the unusual use of the term *trance* by Crabtree. *Trance* per dictionary definition includes hypnosis (as mentioned above) but also bewilderment, half-consciousness, daze, unconsciousness, and catalepsy. Crabtree describes *trance* as consciously intended, an “intense focus on something,” a state described in only one of the five definitions—“complete mental absorption or musing.” His use of the term does not include being dazed, half-conscious, or unconscious—clearly not intentional states. Likewise, one would be hard-pressed to describe a state between waking and sleeping as “intense focus.” Some uses of the term *trance*, such as “zoning out,” involves being unresponsive to the environment (subjectively blocking out everything else, as per Crabtree’s definition) yet does not involve an intense focus on anything at all. From my perspective, then, one problem with using the word *trance* is its unusual use, a use which leads others (in this case me) to understand it in a fashion different from that intended by Crabtree.

Not surprisingly, given the preceding discussion, one of the difficulties that I have is Crabtree’s use of language: Does it add conceptual clarity to use the word *trance* and not the word *hypnosis*? Is this simply a linguistic substitution or is there a substantial and significant reconceptualization embedded in his language? I assume Crabtree would choose the second option; I am not sure. A similar difficulty involves Crabtree’s notion of accessing subliminal capacities. Is this different from activating “unconscious responses via hypnotic procedures”—the latter being language one might use? Once again, does his language add something that extends and clarifies? This issue will be addressed later.

A second difficulty from my perspective is that everyday phenomena do not accord well with Crabtree’s definition of *trance*. Later in his paper, for example, he asserts that everyday experience is a series of trances.

This everyday-life constellation is made up of elements of all four types of trance. These trances are experienced as “ordinary” and “normal.” (Crabtree 2012:321)

Using his language, then, everyday experience is a series of states “of intense focus on something, accompanied by a diminished awareness of everything else, which evokes appropriate subliminal resources.” Granted, elsewhere in the paper, he adds that intensity of focus can be more or less, leading to different subjective experiences. On the other hand, in terms of everyday experience, do these words accurately describe day-to-day experience? As I go about my day-to-day activities, though I focus on various things, I would hardly say my focus is consistently intense.

In this past moment, for example, I am mulling on my Commentary as I look across the room. I am aware of a diffuse internal question relating to how my experience relates to intense focusing. I have not had clear and focused thoughts but rather a generalized wondering. My attention shifts from inside to outside and I slowly become aware that I have been seeing, as I have been mulling, the wall and furniture across the room on which a plate rests on a stand. My seeing the room has been present all along and now I notice it, once again in a diffuse way, realizing I could focus on the plate or not. And I then wonder, "If I focus on the plate, would that be trance?" According to Crabtree, I would then be in trance. And, according to my own subjective state, I would not have been in trance previously. From my experiential perspective, focusing on the plate would not be trance. I will later address his notion of focus in the context of figure-ground perception.

But let me continue. The doorbell rings, intruding into my attention. I rise, still diffusely reflecting on my Commentary as I walk to the door. A person's dark outline shifts on the opaque glass in the door and then disappears. I open the door and a package sits there. A delivery person walks away toward the street.

My focus, during this 30-second event, is hardly intense or sharp. I would describe it as floating and diffuse, evoked as much by the outside as by my intention. My attention has been "pulled" by the "outside." It would seem to me that the progression of experience is not that of sequences of intense focuses. That simply does not accord with what happened. Were Crabtree to assert, in disagreement, that I was, in fact, in trance and focusing, just less intensely, I would rejoin that he is establishing this by assertion and not argument or evidence.

Crabtree's description of designing a wooden bed is an example of what he means about everyday trance. The fabric of our experience is, as he describes it, a series of perceptions, first this and then that, which continue on and on, linked together in some kind of meaningful fashion, guided by implicit meanings at the fringe. What is added to our understanding by labeling this trance? He also never states whether any everyday experience (as I previously described) is not trance. If such a distinction is the case according to Crabtree, then what distinguishes non-trance from trance experiences? I assume that any time someone focuses on anything, that focusing leads to trance. According to Crabtree, is this correct? And if it is, does it add to our understanding to describe such experiences as trance?

Crabtree vacillates in his presentation between asserting that everyday experience is mostly trance to characterizing everyday experience as sometimes or partly trance. See the following quotation from Crabtree (my italics).

Trances are part of everyday life. By this I mean that the notion of trance I am proposing provides a perspective on the entire range of human experience. Everyone is susceptible to trance, except for individuals whose mental state, temporarily or long term, precludes focusing. In the conduct of our affairs, we are constantly shifting from one center of focus to another as we move from one activity to another or one concern to another. (Crabtree 2012:313)

Let us grant, for the sake of this argument, that hypnosis is trance and that hypnosis is an inner-mind trance that can include all possible everyday experience. Based on this set of assertions, can we then conclude that everyday experience is also trance? I would answer that “No, we cannot draw that conclusion.” Crabtree does not present his theory in this fashion: Rather, he begins by defining trance in a way that allows him to assert trance characterizes everyday experience and then defines *inner-mind trance*. The point I am making, however, is that hypnosis can be trance without the requirement or implication that everyday experience also be trance. From my point of view this is an important observation, since it would allow Crabtree to keep trance as a central concept vis à vis hypnosis without complicating his exposition by making everyday experience trance. If, by analogy, we equate trance with dreaming, all possible everyday experience can be dreamed. That does not imply that everyday experience is a dream. It seems to me that dreaming has some special and different quality, distinct from everyday waking experience. The same can be claimed about hypnosis—hypnosis has some special and different quality, distinct from everyday experience, yet can include all possible everyday experiences.

From the opposite perspective and in contradistinction to the prior discussion, Crabtree might need to have everyday experience characterized as trance for his theory to “work.” Here is why I have concluded this. Based on his theoretical exposition of everyday trance, I infer that the crucial issue underlying his theorizing is how to explain the evoking of appropriate subliminal resources. Crabtree writes,

To add further to the difficulty, they [hypnotic phenomena] all occur in some form or other in everyday life. It is possible to identify examples of everything from amnesia and anesthesia to positive and negative hallucination in ordinary human experience. (Crabtree 2012:308)

Though we discover hypnotic phenomena in everyday life, the phenomena do not occur frequently. Most people would react to their occurrence as unusual, and, though occurring in the midst of everyday experience, hardly an “everyday occurrence.” This suggests to me that there must be something in the everyday circumstances that evoke the

"hypnotic response." The railway worker who is not aware of his pain or severed foot is in an extreme situation that is not "everyday." Given these comments, I conclude that Crabtree needs to explain why these hypnotic phenomena occur and he does so by "making everyday experience trance." My reconstruction of the possible underlying logic is as follows: Since, according to his exposition, hypnosis is a trance state in which subliminal resources are evoked, and since hypnosis also entails all possible everyday experiences, then evoking those resources must occur during everyday experience, and, since evoking resources requires trance, everyday experience must also be trance. Should my analysis be correct, I would question the necessity for these logical connections.

In a later portion of my comments I will address evoking subliminal resources, but, in this context, might it be possible to theorize that hypnosis by its nature allows for subliminal resources to be evoked? Might there be something different about the evocation of resources during hypnosis than for their evocation during everyday experience? Returning to "designing a bed," an equally viable model to understand what is evoked for him at each step is the "elicitation of memory." What he describes are not skills (like increased strength, sharper visual perception, or heightened tactile sensitivity) but recall of relevant information or procedures. And, I would note, the elicitation of memory associations occur without conscious intention—they simply appear in mind.

Crabtree distinguishes hypnosis from everyday experience by the object of focus, "inner mind trance" as opposed to "everyday trance," and the presence of a hypnotist with whom there is rapport. As I try to untangle these terms and ideas, I seem to find myself caught in definitions that point back and forth to themselves such that they explain, by fiat, the phenomena and are exempt from further consideration. Consider *trance* which is defined to mean an intense focus on some object with accompanying diminished awareness of everything else. Is this different from figure-ground distinctions in perception? When one perceives a figure, for example, it pops out from the ground which recedes and becomes less prominent than the figure. In other words, the object of focus, the figure, becomes central and what is not the object of focus, the ground, recedes and awareness of it diminishes. Does this not seem to capture the phenomena Crabtree describes as "trance"? In other words, the way perception seems to operate, shifting from figure to figure with accompanying shifts in perception of the ground, seems similar to what Crabtree defines as trance. Why use the term *trance*? To ask this differently, does the word *trance* add anything? And, from another point of view, does it confuse and complicate? Clearly my own struggle to understand the theory suggests that "trance" confuses

and complicates. Later I will discuss the “background,” similar to James’ “fringe” in the context of focusing.

Continuing to consider “trance” in terms of everyday experience, Crabtree considers everyday experience to be a continuous series of trances which shift or flow, the one to the next. The significant variable seems to be intensity of focus, with the most intense focus leading to the greatest loss of awareness of everything else. Crabtree uses intensity as a variable, a deeper or more absorbed to a less absorbed state linked to depth of trance. He comments on trance as “a state that involves **absorption** in something and abstraction from, or obliviousness to, other things [emphasis added]” (Crabtree 2012:312)

Absorption has been used for decades as an explanatory intervening variable for hypnosis, significantly so by Josephine Hilgard. Although I am not an expert on current research, I believe that there is equivocal evidence supporting its central role in hypnosis as currently defined. Absorption has not adequately “explained” the phenomena. If current research on a narrow definition of hypnosis, conceptually a subset of the universe of possible definitions, has not obtained support, then this variable is also equivocal for a larger and more inclusive definition. Yet this is what Crabtree does; he makes absorption a central concept. Absorption, as I understand it, is a capacity that allows for hypnosis to occur. In its absence hypnosis would not occur. In this regard, Crabtree’s definition of *absorption* is reminiscent of precisely the kind of state my clients need to enter on the way to trance. But the question that arises for me is the utility of adding trance as a concept that includes absorption. Does this add to our understanding? Clearly I am not sure.

Another issue vis à vis hypnosis is his phrase *inner-mind trance* which would suggest that the absorption is to the “inner-mind.” He does not define what *inner-* or *outer-mind* mean. I find myself puzzled about what outer-mind might be. Rather than I making a conjecture, Crabtree, it would seem, should clarify the distinction. In the following quotation, he implies that “inner-mind” is the “subject’s inner mental world.”

The state of hypnosis is specifically identifiable, not because it manifests conventionally agreed-upon phenomena, but because it exhibits a state of focus, the object of which is the subject’s inner mental world, which temporarily includes the hypnotist, accompanied by a diminished awareness of everything else. (Crabtree 2012:314)

I find focusing on the “inner-mind” particularly problematic in relation to usual hypnotic procedures. For example, a standard procedure involves staring at a dot or a point on the wall. In this situation, trance is induced while

focusing on the external world. Furthermore, there are usually words the hypnotist says that also "come from the outside," such as "You are listening to my voice." If Crabtree were to counter that at first focus is outside but then inside, then he acknowledges that the hypnotic induction is done with outside focus. That would imply that outside focus somehow establishes hypnosis, in conflict with his theory.

The subsequent paragraphs in which Crabtree links intensity of focus to diminished awareness of everything else jives directly with my experience of what is involved in depth of trance. In this regard, his description matches precisely my clinical experience. From another perspective, however, it would seem trance is being substituted for hypnosis. Once again, I ask: Does the word *trance* add to our understanding?

Crabtree continues by developing an explanation for hypnotic phenomena by asserting that the "evocation of appropriate subliminal resources, occurs automatically (Crabtree 2012:312)" when trance occurs. He continues, "Focus on something calls for action in regard to that thing. . . . In trance whatever is needed for the action is made available" (Crabtree 2012:312). This occurs in deep trance when a suggestion has been responded to by the subject, for example a hallucination, anesthesia, or amnesia. In this regard, I believe Crabtree has not addressed one of the most distinctive features of hypnosis: Hypnotic suggestions occur on their own, without conscious intention on the part of the subject, and are usually not within the intentional control of the subject. In this regard, we know that hallucination, anesthesia, and amnesia occur for some (though not all) individuals during everyday experience. But most non-hypnotized people cannot hallucinate or be amnesic or anesthetic at will. Hypnotize the individual and that person can hallucinate or become anesthetic or amnesic. And that person, after the fact, will frequently be surprised or shocked about this having happened because it is NOT part of their everyday experience and not something consistent with what the person can do intentionally.

Another way in which Crabtree understands hypnosis to be like everyday experience can be seen in the following quotation.

. . . trance states are a normal part of life, that they are in play in every type of human experience. This means that all of us are familiar with them in practice, even though we may not have explicitly recognized their place in our lives. That is why deliberately induced trances, such as hypnosis, are ordinarily not experienced by the subject as particularly alien or strange. (Crabtree 2012:320)

I disagree with Crabtree's conclusion. His example of the railway worker who does not experience pain is not everyday and could be construed

as alien or strange. Moreover, when a person acts like a chicken on stage during a hypnosis act, most would construe the behavior as strange. And I would further note that these observations make clear that hypnotic phenomena are not everyday experiences at all.

Considering hallucinations further, they are experienced as outside, in the world and not in the mind. Many hypnotic phenomena relate to how the individual experiences and responds to the world. This, it would seem, conflicts with the concept “inner-mind” trance. I would posit further that one of the conceptual difficulties leading to this conflict is that Crabtree’s theory assumes a mind–body dichotomy, a distinction which characterizes Western philosophy.

Let me add another observation about being hypnotized. When an individual is in a hypnotic state, that person shifts perception from object to object, listening to the hypnotist, performing actions, or reacting to the environment. All of these shifts in focus occur while the individual is hypnotized. Hypnosis, therefore, cannot be the shifting of perception or the shifting of focus—but must be considered a meta-state, a context or something experientially more inclusive within which these shifts in focus take place.

There are other issues associated with Crabtree’s concept of intensity of focus. My clinical experience is that individuals who focus too intensely or too “tightly” are not hypnotizable, in contrast to Crabtree’s theory. These are individuals who are intellectualized, compulsive, rigid, or too reality-focused. They seem to focus too well. To allow themselves to go into a hypnotic state requires their relaxing or loosening their intense focus and becoming receptive or allowing—being less intentional and more passive. My clinical experience is that intense focus, as Crabtree defines it, interferes with hypnosis. Hypnosis most frequently requires relaxed receptivity.

There is another aspect of “intense focus” that jars with my experience of hypnosis. Apparently, Crabtree takes “intense focus” to imply “intentional” or “intended” focus on the part of the individual. I conclude this from the way he describes intense focus.

The object of focus may be a person, place, thing, situation, idea, feeling, etc.—anything that a person may **direct** his or her attention to. (Crabtree 2012:312)

I have bolded the significant word, *direct*, to emphasize the intentional aspect of focusing. As a result, focusing would be intentional on the part of the individual and, in this way, actively involve the subject or the sense of self. Most notable about hypnotic experience is that the individual

observes what occurs but does not intend it, and, when challenged, cannot stop the hypnotic suggestion from happening. As a result, there is a marked shift in how a hypnotized person's sense of agency operates—that is, it changes from agent to observer. This is a profound alteration in how the individual functions. Crabtree does not address how this shift occurs and, I would claim, that "intentionally focusing intensely" strengthens agency. This brings me again to note that hypnosis alters a larger context or frame within which self, mind, body, memory, and perception arise such that they function differently.

Linked to these observations is auto-hypnosis and the necessity for rapport with the hypnotist. Years ago when I was first learning about hypnosis, I taperecorded various inductions and listened to them. Moreover, I read inductions and found myself going into a hypnotic state. In both of these situations, I never imagined a hypnotist, either myself or another. My memory of this is that I followed the directions or suggestions, either heard or read. And then I observed that certain hypnotic experiences followed. Obviously I knew that I had recorded the induction or was reading the words. But does that imply I was in rapport with myself as an outside hypnotist with whom I was absorbed? That was not my experience. The suggestions were directions I followed or heard but did not consciously experience them as from another person either in fact or imagined. My experience was simply following instructions set down by the induction. It would seem that the necessity of having an external hypnotist limits what is possible and constrains self-hypnosis.

Rapport as Crabtree defines it, experiencing the hypnotist as not different from oneself or as a part of oneself, does not accord with how I experience hypnosis. I have inferred from his concept of "rapport" that this is an attempt to understand why suggestion works. In other words, since the hypnotist is an extension of my self, suggestions are not self-discrepant, and therefore, I do them. If I am correct, this is an intriguing analysis; although I consider it problematic.

As with hypnotizability, suggestibility lies along a continuum. In other words, people are more and less suggestible. This is the case independent of hypnosis or the individual being hypnotized. I doubt that non-hypnotized individuals who respond to a suggestion from another experience it as coming from someone with whom they have rapport. Of course, if I feel a connection with another, I might be more likely to go along with the suggestion—partially supporting Crabtree's idea in this context.

I would like, however, to explore this in a different fashion. When Erickson describes inducing a trance, he engages the subject in such a way that the individual becomes receptive, open to what might follow, and at

that point begins to make suggestions. In other words, my understanding of Erickson's approach is to foster open receptivity which then allows for suggestions to work. Although this accords with how I facilitate hypnosis, this analysis does not accord with Crabtree's. Crabtree would argue that these conditions are not sufficient for hypnosis; rapport is required in addition. He might argue that for a suggestion to "work" rapport is necessary. But to simply assert this is not a persuasive counterargument. From my perspective, this argument clarifies some of the confusion about rapport. For example, when Crabtree writes "that the subject has incorporated the hypnotizer into that focus (is in a state of rapport)" (Crabtree 2012:315), he does not clarify what *incorporate* means. Does he mean "take into one's body" implying that the hypnotizer and the subject become indistinguishable? That the hypnotizer is not different from my self?

Furthermore, when I am doing hypnotic work with a client, I note that when I am attuned to my client's process, such as subtle nonverbal cues, this facilitates the deepening of trance. I would say I am "in synch" with my client. When I am not attuned or when I miss what is going on, my client does not respond. I would assert however that my client is not experiencing me as an extension of self. When the client does not respond, the client has remained in a hypnotic state. Yet my suggestion does not lead to a response. Given Crabtree's view of rapport, the suggestion should work. How does one explain this dilemma from Crabtree's theoretical perspective?

Furthermore, I know of various ceremonies performed in Western and non-Western cultures (drumming, spinning, chanting, and so on) which lead to trances in which hypnosis-like behaviors occur. These are clearly explainable via Crabtree's group trance definition. Yet these group or situational activities seem to generate states very similar to hypnosis. This puts into question, again, the necessity of having a hypnotist for a hypnotic state.

Continuing to consider the evocation of appropriate subliminal resources when in trance, does this evocation imply that cure should naturally follow from focusing on a problem in trance? See the following quotation.

The response to the object of focus is *appropriate*, in the sense of fitting. Appropriateness is determined by the responsive mechanisms of the individual. To the onlooker the response may seem inappropriate, but for the entranced individual considered as a whole organism, the response will be the one that is judged appropriate. The judgment is made on many levels, and the process of making that determination is to a great extent unavailable to consciousness. (Crabtree 2012:312–313)

I have some difficulty with this, not that it does not fit, but rather with the

necessity of trance for it to occur. To be fair to Crabtree, he never discusses the possibility that subliminal resources might be evoked in a non-trance state. If that is the case, however, would this not put into question how they are evoked during hypnosis? Assuming, however, that Crabtree agrees that trance is necessary to automatically evoke resources, it is important in theory not to fall victim to circular reasoning: That is, if appropriate responses occur, then that occurrence means the individual was in trance. Rather, there would need to be some kind of trance-like state clearly defined before that happens. I recently had a training experience in which I simply thought about what might have happened between ages 3 and 4, diffusely focused on my body, and discovered various sensations and other processes arising, which, as I continued attending, changed, brought up pictures that seemed to fit that age span, brought up emotions and bodily sensations, and then it all seemed to eventually fade. This sequence clearly mirrors what Crabtree has described, fitting responses associated with a specific focus. But I would argue that I did not need to be in trance for this to happen: Rather, I thought about a young age and then openly attended to what might occur experientially. I did not continue to focus. I simply observed receptively. Sensations, emotions, fragmentary pictures, and symbols came and went and eventually faded away. As mentioned in a prior section, memory or associations are as viable an explanatory mechanism for this as trance is.

Another difficulty I have with Crabtree's notion of trance comes from my experience of doing EMDR. For readers who are unfamiliar with EMDR, the process is as follows. The client brings to mind something of concern by thinking about a picture, an emotion, and a negative belief in relation to the issue. The client brings to awareness these aspects of the issue, some might be clear and intense, others might be hazy and almost unnoticeable. The client then lets that awareness go and notices whatever occurs in experience while the therapist provides bilateral stimulation (moving the eyes, listening to sounds, or feeling taps) which the client follows either with eyes, with ears, or by sensory awareness. The client's instructions are to let happen whatever happens: to track whatever arises internally whether a thought, sensation, emotion, memory, insight, or nothing. The result, according to an EMDR model, is the evocation of memory traces that lead to a resolution of distress and negative beliefs.

What seems significant about this process in relation to Crabtree's theory is that the evocation of a response could be memory traces or associative networks. There is, in this regard, a match between this EMDR model and Crabtree's theory, although the explanation for the response is the activation of memory and emotion. The precipitating situation is not one of trance or of intense focus. In fact clients are asked not to focus intensely on their issue

but rather to focus briefly and then to let it go and allow whatever happens.

One of the omissions in Crabtree's discussion of hypnosis is the relationship between hypnosis and dissociation. The phenomena associated with dissociation are almost identical to those in hypnosis. Dell (2009) argues that dissociation and hypnosis have not been adequately distinguished, that neither have been clearly defined, and there is some kind of yet-to-be articulated connection between them. Interestingly, Dell (2009) observes that dissociation is involved with every kind of human experience, an observation Crabtree makes about hypnosis. Two important conceptual issues derive from this connection. Dissociation occurs apparently in the absence of two significant variables Crabtree emphasizes as necessary for hypnosis: the interpersonal nature of hypnosis and the role of social expectations or context in guiding the hypnotic response.

One of the important reasons to emphasize dissociation is the similarity of dissociative and hypnotic phenomena. Dissociation occurs spontaneously and without the intent of either the subject or somebody else creating the dissociative state. This implies that self-hypnosis might have nothing to do with the person or another, but rather provides a context within which this responsive capacity is activated.

In my own research and theory on dissociation (Beere 1995), I developed a phenomenologically based theory that is similar to what Crabtree describes as necessary for hypnosis. According to my theory, dissociation occurs by focusing on a specific perceptual figure and blocking out aspects of the "background," a technical term to be described shortly. Crabtree refers to figure and fringe as informing his own theory. I believe that *fringe* as he uses it is equivalent to *background* as I have used it. *Background* is the experiential container for figure-ground experience. Every perception occurs in a larger context which includes the experience of time, the world, the body, the sense of having a mind, and a self or identity who perceives. These background phenomena are constants yet in the background for every perceptual experience. The background seems similar to fringe phenomena.

Dissociation, according to my theory, arises when someone attends with such intensity that background features are blocked out and thus experienced dissociatively. Body or object size could change. One could observe the body from outside. Time could change. All of these experiences are also those that occur in hypnosis. Consequently, to develop an adequate theory, the connection between hypnosis and dissociation needs to be made.

In one of my research studies (Beere & Pica 1995) we looked at distractibility and the capacity to attend in relation to dissociation. The capacity to attend correlated significantly with distractibility but not with dissociation. In other words, attending and not being distractible was

not associated with dissociation. If, as Dell is asserting, dissociation and hypnosis are connected, then, based on my research results, hypnosis also is not associated with not being distractible and the capacity to attend. This does not support Crabtree's foundational definition of *trance* which underpins his definition of *hypnosis*.

Reflecting on the preceding comments clarifies the struggle described at the beginning. Crabtree has created a comprehensive theory that attempts to solve various problems with prior theories and approaches. Clearly I have been impressed. Unfortunately, as I considered various elements of his theory, almost every one had a practical, theoretical, or logical flaw. My conclusion is that his theory requires additional refinement. My wish is that my comments can assist in furthering his theory, a task well worth the endeavor.

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