

BOOK REVIEW

Emanuel Tanay,¹ M.D.

A Review of *Forensic Hypnosis*

REFERENCE: Kline, M. V., *Forensic Hypnosis*, Charles C Thomas, 2600 South First, Springfield, IL 62717, \$24.75.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in forensic hypnosis in connection with memory enhancement and restoration of witnesses.

The capacity of a human being to recall past events has fascinated the lay public and the scientific community. The capacity to remember and the ability to forget are important adaptive mechanisms of human beings.

Modern science recognizes that memory is a creative process of reproducing past images. The end product of this effort is a mixture of reality and distortion. Therefore, eyewitness accounts by truthful observers vary and are not highly reliable.

The problem of eyewitness unreliability has been of concern to criminal investigators throughout the ages. The search for a magic tool which would perfect memory never stops. Hypnotic memory enhancement has been a technique that has attracted considerable attention in the recent past.

Empirical evidence has shown that hypnosis does enhance the recollection process. The problem is that it also increases inaccurate recollections and strengthens the level of confidence of the subject in their reality of confabulated memories.

Eyewitness accounts are often inaccurate. Descriptions of hypnotized witnesses may be more complete but are even less accurate. Unfortunately these fascinating issues are not adequately addressed by Kline in the volume entitled *Forensic Hypnosis*. This book has neither coherent structure nor goal directed orientation. It is difficult to understand whom the author had in mind as an audience when writing it.

Forensic psychiatrists and psychologists unfamiliar with hypnosis would be disappointed in reading this book. This is not an introductory text to the fascinating subject of hypnosis.

Hypnotherapists who have interest in expanding their work into the forensic science arena will not receive much help in these 154 pages. They may be interested or dismayed by the author's controversial advocacy of the use of hypnosis for treatment or evaluation of psychotics. They will receive, however, very little help in understanding the complexities of the criminal justice system in relation to hypnosis.

The first chapter is entitled "Judicial Perspectives." It offers a series of disjointed comments about the failure of the law to give hypnosis proper recognition and acceptance. The author emphasizes that hypnosis is a valid therapeutic and investigative tool and, therefore, the hypnotist should be permitted to give expert testimony as a hypnotherapist.

¹Clinical professor of psychiatry, Wayne State University, 2400 Fisher Bldg., Detroit, MI 48202.

The author does not demonstrate and I am not aware of any rejection by the courts of hypnotherapy or hypnotherapists. The courts have primarily addressed themselves to the testimony of witnesses and victims whose memory has been restored or enhanced by hypnosis. (See the California Shirley decision and the Tate decision in Michigan).

A witness who had no recollection about an assailant but had his memory restored or enhanced by psychoanalytic therapy would be equally suspect in the eyes of the law. Both psychoanalysis and hypnotherapy are effective in restoring repressed memories. However, the courts and science have recognized that the restorative process introduces an unacceptable risk of distortion. (See position statement on the use of hypnosis in courts by the American Medical Association).

In the chapter entitled "Defending the Mentally Ill" the reader is given a potpourri of remarks made by a variety of writers on the subject of criminal responsibility. The author then gives his comments. Three short case histories complete this rather confusing venture into the area of insanity defense.

Chapter 3 has the promising title "The Psychodynamics of Hypnotic Induction." The reader is however treated to a demonstration that the author uses a superior induction technique of hypnosis than the hypnotist who was employed by the prosecution in hypnotizing one of the witnesses against Ted Bundy.

The following chapter, "The Nature of Hypnotic Process" is a short seven pages and never touches on the nature of hypnotic process. It is obvious that the titles of various chapters like the title of the whole book promise much more than they deliver.

The book is written in a heavy impenetrable style. There is an extensive bibliography which has great emphasis upon the author's contributions. For example, there are 27 references to Kline but the author never mentions Freud who certainly made significant contributions to hypnosis. The index of the book has one reference to Freud directing the reader to page 11 of the introduction written by Dr. Kroger. One finds, however, no mention of Freud on page 11 which raises questions about the editorial quality of this less than mediocre contribution to the extensive literature of hypnosis.