

# BOOK REVIEW

## ***The Beginner's Mind*** ***The Complete Works of Milton H. Erickson***

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### **Volume 7 – Mind-Body Healing and Rehabilitation**

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In the first half of this volume, Erickson explores a phenomenon he calls *controlled physiological functioning*. The mechanism of this mind-to-body shift is not clearly understood by Erickson in the mid-20th century. The second half of the volume contains papers written in the 21st century by Ernest Rossi (and associates) that open our understanding to the mechanisms of physiology in our inner world. Rossi calls this *psychosocial genomics*. These papers, written in two different centuries, are exciting dynamics in the ongoing efforts to understand what it is that we do -- and how it works.

The opening sentences of Chapter 1, written by Erickson in 1942, talk of "...psychosomatic interrelationships and interdependence..." (p.5). Several reports of "...coincidental phenomena..." are presented to show "...the interrelationship of hypnotically induced behavior and conditions." (p.5) The nature of the coincidence varied between individuals. One subject with hypnotically induced deafness also found it difficult to focus visually. Another experienced nausea and vertigo. Erickson speculates that the "...seemingly different symptoms may be but various aspects of a single manifestation..." (p.17). This idea is prescient of the more recent thinking that the brain is a dynamic, non-linear system, rather than a linear, computer-like processor. Rossi describes the system nature of psychotherapy in his 1996 book, *The Symptom Path to Enlightenment*, but it is only recently becoming more widely understood.

In Chapter 2, Erickson explores hypnotically induced amnesia. He observed the subject's confusion when responding with hypnotically induced amnesia. He noted that when items "...lose their conscious identity...they combine with other items to form a more complicated unit." (p.31) "This patient was unaware of what was missing..." and was unable to construct a coherent experience because the subject just knew that "...something wasn't right." Erickson felt that "...apparently very large chains of neurons were thrown out of action." (p.31) Today, the belief might be that the confusion and delusions were unsatisfying attempts by the patient's system to find a stable state and some coherence. In Chapter 3, we see a similar exploration in relation to hypnotic regression. Subsequent chapters discuss altering the nature of a variety of physiological processes, from blood flow to infertility and even breast development. These are all fascinating examples of mind-body healing. But is it through "controlled physiological functioning?"

Today, the "control" is seen as having more to do with changes to the subject's biological system made by implicit self-organizing activity. Our usual perception of control is a cognitively directed and consciously organized action. Erickson admitted, "How I did it, I don't know. Neither does she. We are all ignorant on that subject." (p.57) The conscious control of physiology has been shown through biofeedback. Erickson describes the difference: "Waking responsiveness tends to be goal directed towards an integration with objective reality in some form, while hypnotic responsiveness tends to be its own goal, complete in itself and without need for integration into objective reality." (p.62) Hypnotic *realities* (dealt with in-depth in Volume 10) are shown to be different than conscious realities. In hypnosis it is possible to "...withdraw from objective reality and create and 'experiential reality'..." (p.67), which is a key concept when reading this volume.

Part II continues this frame of investigation to explore pain resolution. Erickson was no stranger to pain. In the 1940s, he was well aware that pain was a necessary stimulus to prompt exploration of the body for a cause, but pain also involved the mind: "Pain is a complex, a construct, composed of past remembered

pain, of present pain experience and of anticipated pain in the future." (p.96) The chapters in Part II show various ways in which Erickson interrupted the patterns, disrupted the flow, used time distortion, and changed the way the patient experienced pain, even to the degree that there was no pain at all. Erickson reminds us that "...hypnosis is a state of intensified attention and receptiveness and an increased responsiveness to an idea or a set of ideas." (p.117) This *ideodynamic process* is an important aspect of understanding the nature of mind-body healing -- a subject thoroughly explored in the book, *Mind-Body Therapy*, by Rossi and Cheek (1988).

In Part III, we progress to cases of rehabilitation -- something of which Erickson was familiar. At 17, he suffered a near fatal bout of polio and could not walk or move for nearly a year; as an adult he had post-polio syndrome. During both these periods, Erickson worked to self-rehabilitate. In this part, Erickson works with brain injuries, brain disease, and other conditions. Motivation is elicited in different ways for different patients, which, again, highlight the Ericksonian idea that every client is an individual field experiment -- a learning opportunity for future work.

Part IV takes us to the 21st century, where Ernest Rossi leads us deep within, providing an understanding of why and how the case studies in this volume are possible. Each chapter is a separate paper published in recent years. They include the unique experiments by the International Psychosocial Genomics Research Group to measure the actual gene expression that is triggered during a hypnotic process. This mind-to-body activity is measured with DNA microarray analysis, which is carefully explained. Chapter 27 takes us through the dreams of Ernest Rossi during the time he was healing from a stroke. Dreams trigger, and are triggered by gene expression. Some dreams almost seem to be what the deeper, microscopic biology was doing when Rossi was working through his recovery, healing, and rehabilitation.

By the end of Part IV, readers will have an awareness of the magic within and feel the numinosum -- fascination, mysteriousness, tremendousness -- of their very being. Healing processes can begin when a mindset and mental activity triggers one's extraordinary, self-organizing system to begin activating genes that make the proteins that become the necessary biological material. This volume shows how mind-body healing is not so much a process of control, but of an engagement in the natural cycle and system of creating beneficial change.

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