



HYPNOTIC ASPECTS
DZOGCHEN
MEDITATION

By TRADITIONS



Hypnotic-like Aspects of the Tibetan Tradition of Dzogchen Meditation

Ian E. Wickramasekera II

Mindfulness Based Transpersonal Counseling, Naropa University, Boulder, Colorado, USA

ABSTRACT

Dzogchen meditation has been practiced by Bonpo and Buddhist yogis for at least 1,200 years. Dzogchen utilizes methods of meditation and yogic exercises that are said to help one fully awaken from *illusions of self and reality* that cause suffering in life. The philosophy and experiential practice of Dzogchen is very similar to hypnosis. Dzogchen techniques utilize hypnotic-like practices of selective attention, visualization, and posthypnotic suggestion to help yogis experience advanced insights into the nature of mind. The experience of Dzogchen can be likened to the experience of hypnosis in terms of their phenomenological and psychophysiological effects. Finally, there are also many theoretical similarities between aspects of the ego state therapy, neo-dissociation, socio-cognitive, and Ericksonian theories of hypnosis with the tradition of Dzogchen meditation.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received June 4, 2019
Accepted September 9, 2019

Men always deem their knowledge superior to that of men from previous or future times; but those who have cast off their pride and sounded the depth of their own wisdom are not ashamed to admit that, while one is capable of much learning, one will never leave the abyss of ignorance. Man's inalienable lot is to experience a combination of few truths and many errors.
Jose Custodio de Faria (1819, from Carrer, 2006)

Hypnosis and Dzogchen

The tradition of hypnosis has been around in the Western world for over 2 centuries. It began with the accidental discovery of Franz Anton Mesmer, who utilized a phenomenon that he initially hypothesized was due to the bio-magnetic powers of the hypnotist to cause alterations in consciousness and healing within other people (Forrest, 1999). Later, other pioneers of hypnosis, such as Abbé Faria (Carrer, 2006), were the first to correctly theorize that the real power of hypnosis came not from the magnetism of the hypnotist but from the way people utilize their own psychological and psychophysiological mind/body abilities when they are invited to experience hypnosis (Wickramasekera, 2013). In the past 200 years, we've made great strides toward establishing the scientific reality of the power of hypnotic phenomena to help people with a wide variety of psychological, psychophysiological, and physical forms of suffering. However, many debates still remain about the nature of hypnotic phenomena that

have even impeded our ability to offer a universally agreed upon definition of hypnosis (Kirsch & Lynn, 1995; Pekala & Kumar, 2005; Wickramasekera, 2015b).

It would probably seem to us in the West that 200 years of clinical and experimental research in hypnosis is a pretty impressive amount of time to be investigating hypnotic phenomena. However, in this paper I will be arguing that we can greatly benefit from learning about how earlier cultures such as the yogis of Tibet viewed and utilized hypnotic-like phenomena for at least a thousand years before Mesmer ever picked up a magnet or Abbé Faria tried to hypnotize a canary (Forrest, 1999; Wickramasekera, 2013, 2014). In this paper, we will discuss the contemplative Tibetan tradition of Dzogchen meditation and examine its *hypnotic-like* (Krippner, 2004) aspects. We can gain a number of interesting insights into the nature of hypnotic phenomena, some of which are still debated today, by examining the practices, research methods, and theories of hypnotic-like phenomena that these yogis developed over hundreds of years of disciplined inquiry and phenomenological investigation.

We will start our inquiry into the hypnotic-like nature of Dzogchen by first discussing the definition, history, and methods of the tradition of Dzogchen. Next, we will examine the similarities between the clinical and experimental methods of hypnosis and Dzogchen. We will also discuss the psychological and psychophysiological similarities between hypnosis and Dzogchen in this section. Finally, we will examine the theoretical similarities between hypnosis and Dzogchen regarding consciousness and theories of the mind. We shall see that the yogis of Dzogchen foresaw some of the most startling conclusions about the nature of human potential many hundreds of years before the tradition of hypnosis began investigating the illusory nature of identity and reality (Wickramasekera, 2013, 2014, 2015a).

What is Dzogchen Meditation?

The tradition of Dzogchen began over 1,200 years ago (Brown, 2006; Hatchell, 2014; Reynolds, 2005) with a group of people, known as yogis or Dzogchenpas, who utilized highly advanced contemplative techniques that we would generally think of today as forms of meditation and yoga in the Bonpo and Buddhist traditions of Tibet. The Tibetan word Dzogchen means “the great self-perfection” and refers to the boundless nature of wisdom and love that all sentient beings are said to possess innately. The contemplative practices of Dzogchen were developed over hundreds of years of experimentation to help yogis attain direct experiential insights that allowed them to transcend psychological, psychophysiological, and physical forms of suffering. In particular, yogis developed the practices of Dzogchen to experience *embodied* insights (Lutz & Thompson, 2003; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991) into the illusory nature of how we experience ourselves and the world in which we appear to live. The tradition of Dzogchen tells us that underneath our everyday illusory experiences of self and reality lies a much greater field of potential wisdom called the *Natural State of the Mind*, which is not conditioned or limited by who we think we are and/or how we perceive our illusory worldviews. For the purposes of this paper, I will be defining Dzogchen as a contemplative tradition that uses practices of meditation and yoga to help one to experience their innately existing wisdom and compassion.

The tradition of Dzogchen asserts that human beings already have within them a great self-perfected and natural state of the mind, which is omnipresent even when they are caught up in confusion, anger, and other negative emotions. Thus, we need not change something about ourselves or develop something new in order to transcend our

suffering in life. Rather, we need to develop direct insights into the powerful natural state of the mind that has never suffered and which has always transcended all our difficulties in life. The tradition asserts that the chief barriers to our experiencing the boundless potential of the natural state of the mind is our tendency to instead cling to *believed-in imaginings* (Sarbin, 1998) of the self and reality (Wickramasekera, 2015a, 2016) that we falsely assert are real and stable, although they are actually quite dream-like in their nature even from a scientific point of view, as we shall review later. Dzogchen philosophy states that it is our tendency to cling to an illusion of possessing a self that is unchanging and unitary in its nature that causes us to fail to see our real boundless potential in life. The word *illusion* is used here to connote the sense of projection, attachment, and the dream-like nature of our experience of self and the world we appear to live in. It is as if we cannot stand the existential emptiness of this situation, and so we fail to see the wisdom and beauty of what it would mean to live without rigid fixations on our experiences of the self and the world. Most of the time we fixate on these illusions rather than embrace the greater boundless potential that lies within our innate and boundless potential. Reynolds (1996) summarizes the traditional view of what Dzogchen is in stating:

Dzogchen refers to the direct introduction to and abiding in this Primordial state of enlightenment or Buddhahood that has been ever-present from the very beginning like the sun in the sky, even though its radiant face has been obscured by the clouds of ignorance (Reynolds, 1996, pp. 21–22)

The tradition of Dzogchen created a quite a number of contemplative practices and methodologies to help yogis develop direct insights into the natural state of their mind. One of these practices is well known to most people in the West as mindfulness meditation (Tibetan: *Zhiné*), a practice that yogis develop in part to help them attain enough stability in their experience of meditation to be able to realize the illusory nature of our experiences. Treckcho and Togyal are two advanced techniques of meditation that are taught to yogis once they have learned to stabilize their experience through *Zhiné*. Let us now briefly discuss these two techniques of Dzogchen, which have seldom been discussed in the literature of hypnosis and psychology (Wickramasekera, 2015a).

In Treckcho, the yogi is first introduced to the underlying *nature of mind* through a powerful kind of meditative induction procedure known as the *direct introduction to the nature of mind, pointing to the direct experience of the nature of mind, and/or pointing out instructions* (Reynolds, 2005). Pointing out instructions are usually given to a yogi by a close teacher with whom they have already been studying Dzogchen and/or other contemplative practices. Yogis in the tradition of Dzogchen have a special relationship with their teacher who is known as their guru. The role of a guru toward their student is similar to the role of a psychotherapist with their client (Wickramasekera, 2004) in that both traditions have established empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence as core conditions that should exist within the relationship (Rogers, 1957). However, quite a number of important cultural differences exist between the role of being a guru and a psychotherapist as well (Wickramasekera, 2004). A yogi is ready to begin Treckcho practice once they have received pointing out instructions. The core practice of Treckcho is to simply abide in the nature of mind that they have been introduced to by their guru.

A yogi is generally said to be ready for the Togyal stage of Dzogchen practice after having learned to abide in the nature of mind (Reynolds, 2005; Vyner, 2007). Togyal practice consists of a combination of meditative and yogic exercises that take place during meditation on the nature of mind (Treckcho). The meditative elements are commonly structured around activities such as sky gazing and other experiences such as sensory deprivation (Reynolds, 2005). The yogic elements have to do with how the yogi will alter the energy system of their body (Wangyal, 2011) to engage subtle libidinal forces in the body to strengthen their *embodiment* (Lutz & Thompson, 2003; Varela et al., 1991) of the natural state of their mind. A sign of progress during Togyal practice is said to be the experience of unusual visual phenomena that have a hallucinatory-like nature called Tigné (Hatchell, 2014; Reynolds, 2005) and other sensory experiences. Tigné are said to be related to the non-dual experience of transcending the illusion of reality. It is said that Tigné are only normally visible when we are abiding in the natural state of the mind and have purified the illusions of self and realized the dream-like nature of the world in which we live.

It is important to emphasize here that the contemplative practices of Dzogchen are not thought to create the real insights and benefits that yogis experience from doing these practices. Rather it is thought that these insights and benefits arise spontaneously from the deep potential of our mind (Reynolds, 1996, 2005). Therefore, in a sense, Dzogchen is not a practice that produces effects upon the mind like hypnosis can be said to produce hypnotic analgesia and other phenomena. Dzogchen is tradition with practices that are employed to help one get familiar with our *boundless nature* rather than to try and transform ourselves the way that we generally think about how hypnosis works. In this way, Dzogchen is not a practice being done to strengthen the mind but is a tradition that uses practices to connect with our innate potential, which does not need to be transformed or developed at all (Wangyal, 2011). Our true nature is said to be spontaneously perfect and the source of all we experience whether we recognize this or not. The times when we experience our boundless nature are said to be like when we see the sun emerging from behind the clouds of our ignorance about our potential as was pointed out in the preceding quote (Reynolds, 1996, 2005).

Treckcho and Togyal make up two of the most well-known practices of Dzogchen, but many others, such as lucid dreaming, exist as well (Wangyal, 1998). All yogis must undergo an intensive period of purification practice called Ngondro prior to taking up the advanced practices of Treckcho, Togyal, and lucid dreaming. Ngondro practice in the Bon tradition consists of nine different practices, which each must be performed 100,000 times for a total of 900,000 repetitions. A number of these Ngondro practices involve the repetition of mantras, which are sacred sounds that are repeated to help one connect with a spiritual practice at a deeper level (Wickramasekera, 2013). For example, the Bon mantra *OM-MA-TRI-MU-YE-SA-LE-DU* has eight different sound elements to it. Each of these eight sound elements stands for a concept of wisdom that one can connect with when engaging in the practice of repeating the mantra. For instance, the *DU* sound is meant to invoke the deep experience of compassion and unconditional love, which helps one to transcend the experience of anger (Wangyal, 2005). In this way, each of these eight individual sounds has a particular meaning. The rapid repetition of the entire mantra is meant to invoke the special power of these contemplative insights within the mind of the yogi to experience a state of wisdom and compassion beyond their ordinary experience.

A number of scholars of hypnosis have previously written about the hypnotic-like (Krippner, 2004) nature of the experience of meditation and yoga (Barber, 1970; Holroyd, 2003; Krippner, 2004; Spiegel, White, & Waelde, 2010; Wickramasekera, 2010, 2015a, 2016). I use Krippner's

(2004) terminology *hypnotic-like* here deliberately. Krippner (2004) asserts that it is important to note that we are not meaning to say that a different experience or phenomena of consciousness is actually hypnosis when calling it hypnotic-like. Rather, we are simply stating that there is something similar enough about the experience of another phenomena to hypnosis to make it interesting to examine through the lens of research and theory regarding hypnosis. Krippner (2004) describes his use of the term hypnotic-like well in stating:

I prefer to use the description “hypnotic-like procedures” because native practitioners and their societies have constructed an assortment of terms to describe activities that resemble what Western practitioners refer to as “hypnosis.” To indiscriminately use the term “hypnosis” to describe exorcisms, the laying-on of hands, dream incubation, and similar procedures does an injustice to the varieties of cultural experience and their historic roots. (Krippner, 2004, p. 101)

To be absolutely clear, the point of this paper is not to state that Dzogchen meditation is *merely* hypnosis. Rather, the main point here is to state that there are enough similarities between Dzogchen and hypnosis that the two traditions should be examined together in the light of their research, practice, and theory. In this way, we can build bridges of understanding (Wickramasekera, 2004) between the ancient tradition of Dzogchen and our relatively modern tradition of clinical and experimental hypnosis. Let us first begin by examining the hypnotic-like elements of the practice of Dzogchen. Later we will pursue the hypnotic-like elements of the theory of mind underlying Dzogchen practice.

Hypnotic-like Aspects of the Experience of Dzogchen Practice

One of the most striking hypnotic-like elements of the practice of Dzogchen meditation is its reliance upon a special relationship between a yogi and their guru (Wickramasekera, 2004). The guru guides their student into advanced forms of meditation and yoga practice that are designed to lead them into an experience of their own natural state of the mind through pointing-out instructions and other contemplative practices like sky gazing. Similar to hypnosis, the Guru guides the student to alter their state of arousal to relax, utilize processes of selective attention to normally involuntary phenomena like breathing, and to engage in complex patterns of visual imagery to experience hallucinatory-like experiences. It has been my experience that gurus teaching Dzogchen often employ a vocal style of leading practices that can be very hypnotic-like. However, I am not aware of anything written in the tradition’s many hundreds of practice manuals that asks the teacher to do this as a deliberate strategy the way it is done in hypnosis. The nature of the relationship in both Dzogchen and hypnosis can be said to be very empathic (Wickramasekera, 2007, 2015a; Wickramasekera & Szlyk, 2003) and interpersonally intense (Bányai, 1998; Lynn et al., 1991; Nash & Spinler, 1989). There is a common quality of focus and *interpersonal absorption* (Roche & McConkey, 1990; Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974; Wickramasekera, 2007) within both the Dzogchenpa and hypnotic relationship that is often written about and researched in both traditions (Reynolds, 2005; Wickramasekera, 2004, 2015a).

Another interesting parallel between hypnosis and Dzogchen is the way in which both traditions utilize sounds and words to reestablish and rapidly attain trance-like experiences. In the tradition of hypnosis, *posthypnotic suggestions* are commonly used to help people rapidly reestablish trance-like insights and conditions that will help them with some challenge

(Wickramasekera, 2010, 2013). For example, I often assign the phrase *calm-relaxed-free* to my clients as a posthypnotic suggestion that they can use anytime as a form of rapid self-hypnosis to establish feelings of well-being that can help them to cope with challenges like anxiety, anger, and/or physical pain. Mantras like OM-MA-TRI-MU-YE-SA-LE-DU may function in a hypnotic-like way that is similar to how posthypnotic suggestions aid people in self-hypnosis through helping yogis to rapidly alter their consciousness and connect with higher levels of wisdom and compassion than they ordinarily experience.

Finally, many researchers have examined the psychological and psychophysiological similarities between hypnosis, mindfulness meditation (Zhiné), and yoga, which are foundational practices and aspects of Dzogchen (Barber, 1970; Holroyd, 2003; Krippner, 2004; Shapiro & Walsh, 2003; Spiegel et al., 2010; Wickramasekera, 2010, 2015a, 2016). Both hypnosis and Zhiné help people gain familiarity with normally *involuntary* (Kihlstrom, 1987) aspects of their mind/body relationship that allows them to alter their heart rate, heart rate variability, breathing, EEG, immune system, and endocrine activity in a way that is widely applicable to helping people with numerous psychological, psychophysiological, and medical disorders (Bryant, Hung, Guastella, & Mitchell, 2012; Harris, Porges, Clemenson, & Vincenz, 1993; Wickramasekera, 2013, 2015a). Of particular interest to this topic are a number of neural imaging studies using positron emission tomography and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) that have already indicated that the experience of both mindfulness meditation and hypnosis occur through the embodied actions of the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC; Rainville, Carrier, Hofbauer, Bushnell, & Duncan, 1999) and the default mode network (DMN) in the brain (Demertzi et al., 2011; Diamond, Davis, & Howe, 2008; McGeown, Mazzoni, Venneri, & Kirsch, 2009; Wickramasekera, 2015a). The experience of Dzogchen and hypnosis is most commonly described as a kind of relaxed state, although both traditions also make use of higher patterns of arousal on occasion and thus relaxation cannot be described as an essential element of either practice. Scant research has been done on more advanced forms of Dzogchen practice. However, there are some initial findings on Dzogchen that demonstrate that these more advanced practices do also help people to connect with feelings of well-being and to cope with psychological and medical problems (Chaoul et al., 2018) just as numerous studies of hypnosis have shown (Wickramasekera, 2013). More studies are needed to examine the question of whether of the similarities that have been observed between foundational aspects of Dzogchen and hypnosis will also continue to be seen with additional research of more advanced forms of Dzogchen practice.

Hypnotic-like Aspects of the Dzogchen Theory of Mind

One of the more intriguing aspects of researching and practicing hypnosis is how often I hear my clients and participants in research reporting that they have gained insights into the fundamentally illusory nature of the self and reality (Wickramasekera, 2013, 2015a, 2016; Woodard, 2017). Clients and research participants commonly report being able to change powerful aspects of their identity such as their behaviors, affect, sensations, and knowledge (BASK: Braun, 1988) using hypnosis (Wickramasekera, 2013) in ways that often make them report feeling like a new person. Clients with depression and anxiety can transform their experiences with negative emotions, behaviors, and beliefs of suffering into experiences of well-being. Even my clients who experience chronic physical sensations of pain with a known pathophysiological origin can learn to diminish or eliminate those sensations in ways that can

be detected through the alteration of the ACC and somatosensory cortex within the DMN (Rainville et al., 1999). Research has shown that people with high hypnotic ability (high hypnotizables) can even alter their normal experience of self so effectively that they demonstrate diminished signs of self-recognition to their own image in a mirror (Barnier, Cox, Connors, Langdon, & Coltheart, 2010).

Similarly, research has also repeatedly demonstrated that hypnosis can alter peoples' sensory perceptions of the world around them (Wickramasekera, 2013, 2015a) to experience hypnotic hallucinations of sound, colors, forms, taste, scent, imagery and even distortions of memory (Barber, 2000; Kosslyn, Thompson, Costantini-Ferrando, Alpert, & Spiegel, 2000; Laurence & Perry, 1983; Sarbin, 1998; Wickramasekera, 2013, 2015a). In one study, people experiencing hypnosis demonstrated similar patterns of brain activity when using hypnosis to hallucinate visual imagery as they did when actually looking at the target images of that imagery outside of hypnosis (Kosslyn et al., 2000). These results and others have given rise to the often-quoted statement in the realm of hypnosis that "fantasy is as real as reality," at least when it comes to hypnotic hallucinations. Indeed, the scientific study of the phenomena of hypnosis can be said to be excellent evidence for the illusory and mutable nature of both how we experience the self and reality. In a very "real" sense, we do not live in the "real world" or even experience our "selves" directly. We live in a dream-like experience of the self and reality and hypnosis is but one of many different tools that we can use to alter these experiences when we would like to.

The tradition of Dzogchen built a theory of the dream-like nature of the self and reality (Wangyal, 1998) many hundreds of years ago based upon very similar hypnotic-like experiences that yogis have reported experiencing during Dzogchen practice. Yogis of the tradition of Dzogchen report that fixation on these illusions causes us to experience suffering in our lives and that the realization of the dream-like nature of self and reality is the key to transcending this suffering. For example, many clients of mine often come to psychotherapy with fixed beliefs about themselves that they are "not good enough" in some way that causes them symptoms like depression and anxiety consistent with cognitive behavioral theory. Sometimes these clients also have frequent illusory beliefs about the world such that they feel that they have no chance to experience happiness in their lives. These are exactly the types of illusions of self and reality that the yogis of Dzogchen have been talking about for hundreds of years. Yogis engage in Dzogchen meditation practices like Treckcho and Togyal to gain direct experiences into the illusory nature of the self and reality so that they can come to transcend the suffering that comes when we get too fixated on believing that these concepts are fixed and immutable. These yogis also report experiencing increased feelings of well-being, compassion, and wisdom just like the clients that come to me for help with hypnosis for a wide range of psychological, psychophysiological, and medical challenges. Thus, we can say that one hypnotic-like element of the theory of mind posited by the tradition of Dzogchen is that both traditions maintain that experiences of the self and reality are often illusory and dream-like in nature.

The view of the self and the boundless nature of the wisdom and compassion contained within the natural state of the mind (Reynolds, 2005) in Dzogchen is also quite similar to the clinical models of mind within the ego states therapy (Barabasz & Watkins, 2005; Watkins & Watkins, 1997) and Ericksonian (Lankton, 2012) traditions of clinical hypnosis (Wickramasekera, 2013). The ego states model of clinical hypnosis (Barabasz & Watkins, 2005; Watkins & Watkins, 1997) posits that we do not generally have just one state of identity within our experience of the self, but instead have a continuum of selves or *ego-states* that each

can have unique and/or shared aspects of behavior, affect, sensation, and knowledge (BASK: Braun, 1988). The model of self within the ego state therapy community is sometimes known as a *polypsychic* model (Frederick, 2005) due to the fact that it posits that we generally have more than one ego state within our experience of self.

Interestingly, this polypsychic model of the self has been supported by hypnosis research done by proponents of the neo-dissociation theory of hypnosis (Hilgard, 1977, p. 1994). Hilgard was able to demonstrate the polypsychic nature of identity through an interesting series of experiments utilizing phenomena like hypnotic pain analgesia. In these experiments, people experiencing hypnotic pain analgesia would not experience pain to noxious stimuli while at the same time another part of them could be contacted that was able to provide realistic accounts of the pain that they were experiencing called the *hidden observer*. Hilgard theorized that the different parts of people that were revealed in the hidden observer experiments were normally under the control of an *executive ego* whose task it was to integrate, activate, and/or dissociate the different parts that were observed in the experiment. Hilgard used the evidence of the dissociation between these parts to conclude that “the concept of a totally unified consciousness is an attractive one but does not hold up under examination” (Hilgard, 1994, p. 38).

My clients in clinical practice often come to me when conflicts have arisen between these “parts” of themselves or ego states. For example, I often have clients come to me wishing to resolve a dispute between themselves about whether they should stay within a committed relationship. One part of them seems to want them to stay with their partner and yet somehow another part of them just as desperately seems to want to leave the relationship. People can often learn to integrate these conflictual ego states if we rely on another clinical concept from the Ericksonian tradition of clinical hypnosis that tends to draw upon the “wisdom of the unconscious mind” in its clinical approach to helping clients. The psychiatrist Milton Erickson taught that each client had within them an unconscious aspect of their mind that could be relied upon to help them with any challenge that they might experience in life. He utilized hypnosis with his clients to help them access the “wisdom of their unconscious mind” in a way that reminds one of the boundless wisdom and compassion that the tradition of Dzogchen states exists within the natural state of the mind. For instance, Erickson was often quoted as saying: “It is very important for people to know that their unconscious mind is smarter than they are. There is a greater wealth of stored material in the unconscious”.

The Dzogchen model of mind could also be said to be hypnotic-like in that it discusses the polypsychic and illusory nature of identity while also positing that we have within us something like the wisdom of the unconscious mind that Milton Erickson wrote about. The Dzogchen model of mind asserts that our experience of the illusion of self arises from the dualistic action of a psychic structure in our mind known as the *kunzhi-namshi* (Wangyal, 1998, p. 2006). The *kunzhi-namshi* is said to create all the parts of our self through dividing the seamless flow of our experience into illusory and dichotomous categories such as good versus bad, happy versus sad, etc. Over time, these categories are even applied to the self-narratives that we use to create our illusions of self so that we have good and bad, happy versus sad, conservative versus liberal parts to ourselves. The action of the *kunzhi-namshi* is said to distort our perception of the seamless flow of experience into concrete illusions of selfhood to help us attain a false sense of a stable and enduring self. This is similar to the way in which proponents of neo-dissociation theory have speculated that an executive ego integrates the parts of ourselves as well (Hilgard, 1994) into an “attractive” but false hypothesis that we have a “totally unified consciousness.” The Dzogchen model asserts that we often cling to illusions

of self and reality to cope with the many existential fears and uncertainties of life such as the fear of death and change in general (Reynolds, 2005; Vyner, 2007).

Curiously, there is a competing hypothesis regarding the hidden observer experiments within the sociocognitive tradition of hypnosis research (Kirsch & Lynn, 1995; Sarbin, 1998) that also tends to support some of the views of the Dzogchen model regarding the illusory nature of self and reality. The sociocognitive explanation of the hidden observer phenomena is that participants do not necessarily have previously existing ego states or hidden observers within them prior to receiving instructions for participation in the experiment. Instead, the participants create and enact the role of experiencing hypnosis and also the role of having a hidden observer in accordance with the response expectancies that they have already developed about being hypnotized and/or along the lines of the roles which have been communicated to them through the instructions of the investigator. Other contextual cues about the demand characteristics of the situation may also influence the participants' creation of a polypsychic identity as well. Interestingly, the sociocognitive tradition points the way to a similar view of the illusory nature self and reality as is seen in Dzogchen. Lynn and *Rhue (1994) describes the creation of self-states as a kind of narrative process in which we create an identity state by the nature of our self-talk and that "identity is constructed, role-governed, and performed" (Lynn & *Rhue, 1994, p. 137) as a kind of *believed-in-imagining* (Sarbin, 1998) Similarly we also create our experience of reality as a believed-in-imagining through the narrative that we tell ourselves about what we are experiencing. Sarbin describes the illusory aspects of reality that Dzogchen also critiques so well in saying: "We cannot get away from the premise that reality is a social construction ... These imaginings may be as real as the demons, dragons, gods, faeries, and elves that filled the universe when civilizations were young" (Sarbin, 1998, pp. 307–308). Thus, we can say that the view of the self and reality as believed-in-imaginings is a very hypnotic-like aspect of the theory of mind within the tradition of Dzogchen even from the perspective of the sociocognitive tradition of hypnosis.

Summary and Implications for Future Research

We have reviewed a number of hypnotic-like aspects of the tradition of Dzogchen meditation in this paper. Teachers of Dzogchen often engage their students in a hypnotic-like relationship utilizing practices involving processes of selective attention, mental imagery, and alterations of normally involuntary aspects of their mind/body relationship. The use of mantras in the tradition can also be compared with how post-hypnotic suggestions are employed in hypnosis. The psychological and psychophysiological effects of foundational practices in Dzogchen practice are also quite similar to the effects seen in hypnosis. Hypnosis and Dzogchen also share a similar view of the illusory nature of the experience of self and reality as "believed-in-imaginings," which can be seen across a variety of hypnotic experiments and also discussed overtly in the sociocognitive tradition of hypnosis. The traditions also generally share an acceptance of the polypsychic nature of identity, which is particularly seen in the ego state therapy, neo-dissociation, and the Ericksonian traditions of hypnosis. The Ericksonian tradition of hypnosis shares a similar view about the "wisdom of the unconscious mind," which corresponds to some extent with the Dzogchen view of the "natural state of the mind." The neo-dissociation tradition of hypnosis has proposed a model of the management of illusory selves using an executive ego that resembles the Dzogchen model of the role of the *kunzhi-namshe*.

There are, of course, many important differences between the two traditions (Wickramasekera, 2004) involving their culture, history, and religious points of view. Dzogchen may be a hypnotic-like tradition, but it is not merely hypnosis. One key difference between the traditions of hypnosis and Dzogchen is that yogis have had to build their theories of the nature of mind entirely using an epistemology that emphasizes phenomenology and personal experiences in Dzogchen practice. Dzogchenpas had to develop their practices and theories of mind without the scientific technology that we have today to validate the psychophysiological effects of hypnotic-like practices upon the body using PET and fMRI. Meanwhile, the scientific tradition of hypnosis has tended to flourish using empiricism to cut through many of the false assumptions that people have held around hypnotic phenomena such as the mistaken idea that hypnosis is caused by biomagnetism in some way. However, more recent developments in the field of neuroscience have tended to emphasize that we will need to combine the results of disciplined phenomenological and empirical investigation to make more progress on understanding the nature of mind utilizing a new discipline called *neurophenomenology* (Lutz & Thompson, 2003; Moustakas, 1990; Pekala & Kumar, 2000; Varela et al., 1991; Wickramasekera, 2015a).

The traditions of hypnosis and Dzogchen have traveled radically different epistemological paths in terms of seeking validation for their methods and theories of mind. So, in this way they are actually quite complementary in terms of being able to help build bridges of understanding between them. The tradition of hypnosis offers the yogis of Dzogchen an example of how they could benefit by opening up their methods and theories of mind to scientific inquiry, which in fact many teachers of Dzogchen are already espousing today (Vyner, 2007). The research tradition of hypnosis can offer Dzogchenpas excellent empirical evidence for their assertion of the dream-like nature of the self and reality as well as empirical methods of investigating the phenomena of Dzogchen. For instance, Dzogchenpas might be interested in researching whether the practice of Ngondro increases the mind/body potential of yogis in similar ways that research in hypnosis has shown that a number of practices can increase hypnotic ability (Wickramasekera, 2013)? The yogis of Dzogchen can offer the clinical and experimental traditions of hypnosis entirely new hypnotic-like practices and theories of mind to research such as Treckcho and Togyal. The study of these practices might help expand the potential domain of hypnosis and our understanding of what Dzogchen asserts about the natural state of the mind. For instance, we might wonder about how the yogi's visual experience of Tigelé in the Togyal practice of sky gazing is similar to and/or different from visual hypnotic hallucinations. How are the neurophenomenological correlates of yogis meditating on the natural state of the mind similar to people's experiences in hypnosis contacting the wisdom of their unconscious? Is the deep wisdom said to exist with the natural state and the unconscious mind actually less dualistic as the tradition of Dzogchen asserts? The yogis of Dzogchen also challenge us to become more phenomenologically based in our personal embodiment of hypnosis in a way that could inspire us to become better clinicians and researchers capable of embracing the new neurophenomenological paradigm that is emerging in consciousness studies (Lutz & Thompson, 2003; Varela et al., 1991; Wickramasekera, 2015a).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References

- Bányai, É. (1998). The interactive nature of hypnosis: Research evidence for a social psychobiological model. *Contemporary Hypnosis*, 15(1), 52–63. doi:10.1002/(ISSN)1557-0711
- Barabasz, A., & Watkins, J. (2005). *Hypnotherapeutic techniques* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Barber, T. X. (1970). *LSD, marihuana, yoga, and hypnosis*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Barber, T. X. (2000). A deeper understanding of hypnosis: Its secrets, its nature, its essence. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 42(3–4), 208–272. doi:10.1080/00029157.2000.10734361
- Barnier, A. J., Cox, R., Connors, M., Langdon, R., & Coltheart, M. (2010). A stranger in the looking glass: Developing and challenging a hypnotic mirrored-self misidentification delusion. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 59(1), 1–26. doi:10.1080/00207144.2011.522863
- Braun, B. G. (1988). The BASK model of dissociation. *Dissociation: Progress in the Dissociative Disorders*, 1(1), 4–23.
- Brown, D. P. (2006). *Pointing out the great way: The stages of meditation in the Mahamudratradition*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Bryant, R. A., Hung, L., Guastella, A. J., & Mitchell, P. B. (2012). Oxytocin as a moderator of hypnotizability. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 37(1), 162–166. doi:10.1016/j.psyneuen.2011.05.010
- Carrer, L. (2006). *Jose Custodio de Faria: Hypnotist, priest and revolutionary*. Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publisher.
- Chaoul, A., Milbury, K., Spelman, A., Basen-Engquist, K., Hall, M. H., Wei, Q., & Cohen, L. (2018). Randomized trial of Tibetan yoga in patients with breast cancer undergoing chemotherapy. *Cancer*, 124(1), 36–45. doi:10.1002/cncr.v124.1
- Demertzi, A., Soddu, A., Faymonville, M. E., Bahri, M. A., Gosseries, O., Vanhaudenhuyse, A., ... Laureys, S. (2011). Hypnotic modulation of resting state fMRI default mode and extrinsic network connectivity. *Progress in Brain Research*, 193, 309–322. doi:10.1016/B978-0-444-53839-0.00020-X
- Diamond, S. G., Davis, O. C., & Howe, R. D. (2008). Heart-rate variability as a quantitative measure of hypnotic depth. *International Journal of Clinical & Experimental Hypnosis*, 56(1), 1–18. doi:10.1080/00207140701672961
- Forrest, D. (1999). *Hypnotism: A history*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Frederick, C. (2005). Selected topics in ego state therapy. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 53(4), 339–429. doi:10.1080/00207140591007518
- Harris, R. M., Porges, S. W., Clemenson, M. E., & Vincenz, L. M. (1993). Hypnotic susceptibility, mood state, and cardiovascular reactivity. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 36(1), 15–25. doi:10.1080/00029157.1993.10403035
- Hatchell, C. (2014). *Naked seeing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hilgard, E. R. (1977). *Divided consciousness: Multiple controls in human thought and action*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hilgard, E. R. (1994). Neodissociation theory. In S. J. Lynn & J. W. Rhue (Eds.), *Dissociation: Clinical and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 32–51). Guilford Press.
- Holroyd, J. (2003). The science of meditation and the state of hypnosis. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 46(2), 109–128. doi:10.1080/00029157.2003.10403582
- Kihlstrom, J. F. (1987). The cognitive unconscious. *Science*, 237, 1445–1452. doi:10.1126/science.3629249
- Kirsch, I., & Lynn, S. J. (1995). The altered state of hypnosis. *American Psychologist*, 50(10), 846–858. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.50.10.846
- Kosslyn, S. M., Thompson, W. L., Costantini-Ferrando, M. F., Alpert, N. M., & Spiegel, D. (2000). Hypnotic visual illusion alters color processing in the brain. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 157(8), 1279–1284. doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.157.8.1279
- Krippner, S. (2004). Trance and the trickster: Hypnosis as a liminal phenomenon. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 53(1), 97–118. doi:10.1080/00207140590927608
- Lankton, S. (2012). Ericksonian approaches to hypnosis and therapy. In D. Barrett (Ed.), *Hypnosis and hypnotherapy* (Vol. 2, pp. 1–48). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

- Laurence, J.-R., & Perry, C. (1983). Hypnotically created memory amongst high hypnotizable subjects. *Science*, 222(4623), 523–524. doi:10.1126/science.6623094
- Lutz, A., & Thompson, E. (2003). Neurophenomenology: Integrating subjective experience and brain dynamics in the neuroscience of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 10(9–10), 31–52.
- Lynn, S. J., Weekes, J. R., Neufield, V., Zivney, O., Brentar, J., & Weiss, F. (1991). Interpersonal climate and hypnotizability level effects on hypnotic performance, rapport, and archaic involvement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(5), 739–743. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.60.5.739
- Lynn, S. J., & Rhue, J. (1994). Dissociation and dissociative disorders in perspective. In S. J. Lynn, & J. Rhue (Eds.), *Dissociation: Clinical and theoretical perspectives*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- McGeown, W. J., Mazzoni, G., Venneri, A., & Kirsch, I. (2009). Hypnotic induction decreases anterior default mode activity. *Consciousness & Cognition*, 18(4), 848–855. doi:10.1016/j.concog.2009.09.001
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. London, UK: Sage.
- Nash, M. R., & Spinler, D. (1989). Hypnosis and transference: A measure of archaic involvement. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 37(1), 29–144. doi:10.1080/00207148908410542
- Pekala, R. J., & Kumar, V. K. (2000). Operationalizing “trance” I: Rationale and research using a psychophenomenological approach. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 43(2), 107–135. doi:10.1080/00029157.2000.10404265
- Pekala, R. J., & Kumar, V. K. (2005). States, traits, and provocative debates: The state/nonstate controversy with particular reference to operationalizing “hypnotism”. *Psychological Hypnosis*, 14(1), 13–18.
- Rainville, P., Carrier, B., Hofbauer, R. K., Bushnell, M. C., & Duncan, G. H. (1999). Dissociation of sensory and affective dimensions of pain using hypnotic modulation. *Pain*, 82(2), 159–171. doi:10.1016/S0304-3959(99)00048-2
- Reynolds, J. M. (1996). *The golden letters*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Reynolds, J. M. (2005). *The oral tradition from Zhang Zhung: An introduction to the Bonpo Dzogchen teachings of the oral tradition from Zhang Zhung known as the Zhang-Zhung snyan-rgyud*. Thamel, Kathmandu: Vajra Publications.
- Roche, S. M., & McConkey, K. M. (1990). Absorption: Nature, assessment, and correlates. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(1), 91–101. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.59.1.91
- Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21(2), 95–103. doi:10.1037/h0045357
- Sarbin, T. R. (1998). Believed-in imaginings: A narrative approach. In J. de Rivera & T. R. Sarbin (Eds.), *Believed-in imaginings: The narrative construction of reality* (pp. 15–30). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Shapiro, S., & Walsh, R. (2003). An analysis of recent meditation research and suggestions for future directions. *Humanistic Psychologist*, 31(2–3), 86–114. doi:10.1080/08873267.2003.9986927
- Spiegel, D., White, M., & Waelde, L. C. (2010). Hypnosis, mindfulness meditation, and brain imaging. In D. Barrett (Ed.), *Hypnosis and hypnotherapy* (pp. 37–52). Boston, MA: Praeger.
- Tellegen, A., & Atkinson, G. (1974). Openness to absorbing and self-altering experiences (“absorption”), a trait related to hypnotic susceptibility. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 83(3), 268–277. doi:10.1037/h0036681
- Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1991). *The embodied mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vyner, H. M. (2007). *The healthy mind interviews*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Vajra Publications.
- Wangyal, T. (1998). *The Tibetan yogas of dream and sleep*. New York, NY: Snow Lion.
- Wangyal, T. (2005, July). *The six realms of the wheel of existence*. Unpublished transcript of a 3-week retreat conducted at the Ligmincha Institute in Charlottesville, VA.
- Wangyal, T. (2011). *Tibetan yogas of body, speech, and mind*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion.
- Watkins, J. G., & Watkins, H. H. (1997). *Ego states: Theory and therapy*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2004). The kalyanamitra and the three necessary and sufficient conditions of client-centered psychotherapy. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 44(4), 485–493. doi:10.1177/0022167804269140
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2007). Empathic aspects of absorption and incongruence. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 50(1), 59–69. doi:10.1080/00029157.2007.10401598
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2010). Pedagogical perspectives on teaching hypnosis. In D. Barrett (Ed.), *Hypnosis and hypnotherapy* (pp. 145–160). Boston, MA: Praeger.
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2013). Hypnosis and transpersonal psychology: Answering the call within. In H. Friedman & G. Hartelius (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of transpersonal psychology* (pp. 492–511). Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2014). Early psychological knowledge. In T. Leahey, S. Greer, G. Lefrançois, T. Reiner, J. Spencer, I. Wickramasekera II, & E. Willmarth (Eds.), *History of psychology* (pp. 15–42). San Diego, CA: Constellation.
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2015a). Mysteries of hypnosis and the self are revealed by the psychology and neuroscience of empathy. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 57(3), 330–348. doi:10.1080/00029157.2014.978495
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2015b). The elephant, the blind men, and hypnosis. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 57(4), 452–455. doi:10.1080/00029157.2015.1011501
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II. (2016). Oracle of the ultimate: Contemplative practice & mind/body assessment in transpersonal counseling. In F. Kaklauskas, C. Clements, D. Hocoy, & L. Hoffman (Eds.), *Shadows and light* (pp. 93–118). Boulder, CO: University Professors Press.
- Wickramasekera, I. E., II, & Szlyk, J. (2003). Could empathy be a predictor of hypnotic ability? *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 51(4), 390–399. doi:10.1076/iceh.51.4.390.16413
- Woodard, F. W. (2017). *Perceptual hypnosis*. Atglen, PA: Red Feather.

Hypnose-artige Aspekte der Tibetischen Tradition der Dzogchen Meditation

IAN E. WICKRAMASEKERA II

Abstract : Die Dzogchen Meditation wurde von Bonpo und Buddhistischen Yogis über mindestens 1.200 Jahre praktiziert. Dzogchen verwendet Methoden der Meditation und Yogaübungen, von denen gesagt wird, daß sie dabei helfen, vollständig von Selbstillusion und Eigen-Realität zu erwachen, die das Leiden in der Welt verursachen. Die Philosophie und erfahrende Praxis von Dzogchen sind der Hypnose sehr ähnlich. Dzogchen-Techniken benutzen Hypnose-artige Praktiken selektiver Aufmerksamkeit, Visualisierung und posthypnotischer Suggestion, um den Yogis zu helfen, fortgeschrittene Einsichten in die Natur des Verstandes zu erfahren. Die Erfahrung von Dzogchen kann mit der Erfahrung von Hypnose in Bezug auf ihre phänomenologischen und psychophysiologischen Effekte verglichen werden. Schlußendlich gibt es auch viele theoretische Ähnlichkeiten zwischen Aspekten der Ego State-Therapie, Neo-Dissoziation, soziokognitiver und Erickson'scher Theorien von Hypnose und der Tradition der Dzogchen Meditation.

STEPHANIE RIEGEL, M.D.

Les aspects s'apparentant à l'hypnose dans la tradition tibétaine de la méditation dzogchen

IAN E. WICKRAMASEKERA II

Résumé : La méditation dzogchen est pratiquée par les yogis bönpö et bouddhistes depuis au moins 1 200 ans. Le Dzogchen utilise des méthodes de méditation et des

exercices de yoga censés aider l'être à se débarrasser de ses *illusions sur soi et la réalité* qui causent la souffrance. La philosophie et la pratique expérientielle du Dzogchen sont très similaires à celles de l'hypnose. Le Dzogchen utilise des pratiques hypnotiques d'attention sélective, de visualisation et de suggestion posthypnotique pour aider les yogis à découvrir des connaissances avancées sur la nature de l'esprit. L'expérience du Dzogchen peut être comparée à celle de l'hypnose en ce qui a trait à leurs effets phénoménologiques et psychophysiologiques. Enfin, il existe également de nombreuses similitudes théoriques entre les aspects des théories de l'hypnose néo-dissociative, sociocognitive, ericksonienne et thérapeutique de l'état du moi et la tradition de la méditation dzogchen.

JOHANNE RAYNAULT

C. TR. (STIBC)

Aspectos de la tradición tibetana de la meditación Dzogchen parecidos a la hipnosis.

IAN E. WICKRAMASEKERA II

Resumen: La meditación Dzogchen ha sido practicada por yoguis bonpo y budistas desde hace 1,200 años, por lo menos. El Dzogchen utiliza métodos de meditación y ejercicios yogui que dicen ayudan a liberarnos plenamente de las *ilusiones del self* y la *realidad*, que causan sufrimiento en la vida. La filosofía y la práctica experiencial del Dzogchen es muy similar a la hipnosis. Las técnicas Dzogchen utilizan prácticas similares a la hipnosis de atención selectiva, visualización y sugerencias poshipnóticas para ayudar a los yoguis a experimentar insights avanzados sobre la naturaleza de la mente. La experiencia del Dzogchen puede relacionarse con la experiencia de la hipnosis en términos de los efectos fenomenológicos y psicofisiológicos. Finalmente, también hay muchas similitudes teóricas entre aspectos de la terapia de los estados del yo, las teorías de la neo-disociación, socio-cognitiva y Ericksoniana de la hipnosis con la tradición de la meditación Dzogchen.

OMAR SÁNCHEZ-ARMÁSS CAPPELLO

Autonomous University of San Luis Potosi, Mexico