

Mesmerism and Galvanism

ABSTRACT: *Mesmerism is a Healing art based on the idea of animal magnetism. Living bodies contain magnetic fluid and by manipulating this fluid into a state of balance within the body, physical health could be restored. Galvanism is a form of treatment involving application of pulses of electric current to body tissues provoking the contraction of muscles.*

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Organon text book in Aphorism 286-291, under various ancillary modes of treatment, mentions both Mesmerism and Galvanism briefly. Here I have gone to depths.

INTRODUCED BY

Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1733-1815)

Mesmer was born in the village of Izang, on Lake Constance in Swabia, Germany. After Jesuit Universities of Dillingen and Ingolstadt, he took up the study of medicine at the University of Vienna in 1759. In 1766 he published a doctoral dissertation with the Latin title "De planetarum influxu in corpus humanum" (On the Influence of the Planets on the Human Body), which discussed the influence of the Moon and planets on the human body and on disease. In January 1768, Mesmer married a wealthy widow and established himself as a Physician in the Austrian capital Vienna.

MESMERISM

It is a Healing technique based on the idea of animal magnetism. He said all animated bodies including man were affected by a magnetic force which also was mutually influenced by the celestial bodies and earth.

Living bodies contained a magnetic fluid and by manipulating this fluid into a state of balance within the body, physical health is restored.

He called his system "Animal Magnetism" and brought it to Paris in 1778.



METHOD

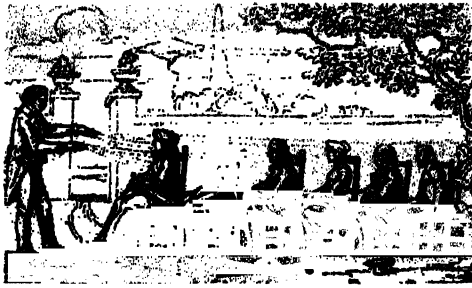
Mesmer treated patients both individually and in groups. He would sit opposite the patient with knees touching the patient's knees, pressing the patient's thumbs in his hands, looking fixedly into the patient's eyes. Mesmer made "passes", moving his hands from patients' shoulders down along their arms. He then pressed his fingers on the patient's hypochondria

region (the area below the diaphragm), sometimes holding his hands there for hours. Many patients felt peculiar sensations or had convulsions that were regarded as crises and supposed to bring about the cure. Mesmer would conclude by playing music on a glass harmonica.

By 1780 Mesmer had more patients than he could treat individually and he established a collective treatment known as the "baquet".

An English physician who observed Mesmer described the treatment as follows:

In the middle of the room is placed a vessel of about a foot and a half high called a "baquet", large enough to seat 20 people round it; near the edge of the lid which covers it, there are holes pierced corresponding to the number of persons who surround it; into these holes are introduced iron rods, bent at right angles outwards and of different heights, so as to answer to the part of the body to which they are to be applied. Besides these rods, there is a rope which communicates between the



baquet and one patient from thence to another and so on the whole round. The most sensible effects are

produced on the approach of Mesmer, who is said to convey the fluid by certain motions of his hands or eyes, without touching the person. I have talked with several who have witnessed these effects, who have convulsions occasionally and removed by a movement of the hand.

Next step was the discarding of the 'baquet' and magnetizing objects such as trees. Soon different states of 'rappot' developed between the patients, the operators or therapists and the objects. Patients began seeing shafts of lights coming from the operators and trees.

Cures were also noticed when patients were tied to trees. One invalid patient fell asleep in an operator's arms and began speaking normally which he did not remember when waking up. The phenomena began to be called magnetic effluence.

Some substances were good conductors while others were not; water and milk certainly were. Soon a type of somnambulism or transposition of the senses developed when a female patient walked through a town with her eyes tightly closed claiming to see from the pit of her stomach. This led to the phenomena being labeled "Animal electricity" thinking it was electrical in nature. Soon the phenomena was thought of as supernormal or a trance.

Mesmerism had been emphasized by astrology for centuries since it studies the positions and movements of astronomical or celestial bodies, especially the sun, moon and planets and their effect upon the life and events on earth.

The origins of astrology are credited to the Chaldeans of Babylonia about 3,000 BC. The study was also known to the ancient Etruscans, Hindus, Chinese and Egyptians who also believed the celestial bodies, particularly the significance of the sun, determined

the seasons and crops as well as the fate of man. Astrology was studied in Greece around the 4th Century BC and gradually its companion study astronomy developed.

Presently astrology is still ardently studied among occultists who strongly believe that locations and movements of planets do affect personal temperaments and events.

Mesmer was driven into exile soon after the investigations on animal magnetism. His exact activities during the last twenty years of his life are largely unknown. He died in 1815.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MESMERISM (§ 289)

All the above-mentioned methods of practicing mesmerism depend upon influx of more or less vital force into the patient, and hence are termed **positive mesmerism**.

An opposite mode of employing mesmerism, however, as it produces just the contrary effect, deserves to be termed **negative mesmerism**.

Positive mesmerism is useful in the treatment of uterine haemorrhage, rush of blood to the head, old ulcers, insomnia and restlessness from anxiety, amaurosis, paralysis of certain limbs etc.

To this belong the passes which are used to rouse from the somnambulant sleep. This discharge by means of negative mesmerism of the vital force accumulated to excess in individual parts of the system of un-debilitated persons is most surely and simply performed by making a very rapid motion or the flat extended hand, held parallel to and about an inch distant from the body, from the top of the head to the tips of the toes. It is a well known rule that a **person who is either to be positively or negatively mesmerised, should not wear silk on any part of the body.**

The more rapidly this pass is made, the more effectually will the discharge be effected. For example, in the case where a previously healthy woman suddenly develops suppression of menstruation by



a violent mental shock, lies to all appearing dead, whose vital force is probably accumulated in the precordial region, by such a rapid negative pass, her equilibrium throughout the whole organism can be restored. So, resuscitation generally follows immediately. In like manner, a gentle, less rapid, negative pass diminishes the excessive restlessness and sleeplessness accompanied with anxiety sometimes produced in very irritable persons by a too powerful positive pass, etc.



It is not advisable to perform repeated passes of positive mesmerism, continued for half an hour or a whole hour at a time and even day after day, performed on weak, nervous patients, the monstrous revolution of the whole human system is effected which is termed somnambulism, wherein the human being is ravished from the world of sense and seems to belong more to the world of spirits - a highly unnatural and dangerous state. **A negative pass, especially if it be very rapid, is extremely injurious to a delicate person affected with a chronic ailment and deficient in vital force.**

GALVANISM

In medicine, Galvanism refers to any form of medical treatment involving the application of pulses of electric current to body tissues provoking the contraction muscles that are stimulated by the electric current.

This effect was named by Alessandro Volta after his contemporary, the scientist Luigi Galvani, who investigated the effect of electricity on dissected animals in the 1780's and 1790's. Galvani himself referred to the phenomenon as animal electricity, believing that he had discovered a distinct form of electricity.

VOLTAGE EFFECTS ON HUMANS

Previously, Isaac Newton had theorized a link between the 'animal spirits' described in antiquity and the subtle electrical fluid hypothesized by physicists.

Caldini and Fontana had realized that merely bringing an electrified rod within their close proximity

would stimulate frogs.

However, it was Galvani who determined that electricity was present within the animal itself. Based on his frog experiments he deduced that contractions were caused by the flow of electricity and when one occurred a nervo-electric fluid was conducted from the nerves to the muscle.

In an application of his theory of animal electricity in 1791, Luigi Galvani suggested that an electrical fluid emanates from the human brain. Identifying life with electricity that has an organic source.

Johann Wilhelm Ritter followed by equating animal and metallic electricity. The analogy of the cerebral cortex with the galvanic battery was then pursued by Paul Traugott Meissner, who argued that blood in the lungs becomes electrically charged through breathing, transmits its charge up the nerves to the spinal cord and brain, is used by the brain to electrically control the will, and then carries the charge to the limbs.

By 1854 a treatise by Emil Huschke included a chapter entitled, "The brain, an electric organ".

"Thomas Edison believed there would be less resistance to electrocution if administered through the hands of the condemned than if passed through the calf and skull. His recommendation resulted in the mishandled execution of Charles McElvaine in 1892, after which the state of New York returned to using the calf and skull.

In 1920 Edison told an interviewer, "I am working on the theory that our personality exists after what we call life leaves our present material bodies." He reasoned that there would be no value to the hereafter if we did not survive as unique individuals. According to Edison, we consist of "swarms" of extremely small "life units," so small they can pass through walls of stone.

The modern study of galvanic effects is called electrophysiology, the term Galvanism being used only in historical contexts. However, people still speak of being 'galvanized into action'.