

A case of multiple personality

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Multiple Personality disorder, commonly known today as Dissociative identity disorder.

Often consisting of two or more personalities within one person. It is not related in any way to Schizophrenia, where a person might experience hallucinations. The purpose of this review is to analyse the journal article, 'A Case of Multiple Personality' written by Thigpen and Cleckley (1954). Also known for writing the book 'The Three Faces of Eve' in which later became a very successful film, both earned them, vast amounts of money.

The article leads to a varied and interesting case study of 'Eve White' real name (Christine Sizemore) who was diagnosed and treated by the author and psychologist 'Thigpen,' and who later identified her three personalities. Eve experienced emotional problems from quite an early age.

She was physically punished when she misbehaved and witnessed childhood trauma's. These included horrendous accidents that occurred before the age of three. One incident involved her mother badly cutting her arm. This was thought to be the trigger point of her illness, and the development of her personalities.

Later in life she suffered personal frustrations and marital conflicts.

She sought medical advice because she was experiencing headaches and at times suffered from amnesia. When diagnosed by Thigpen, Eve's personalities would change under hypnosis from Eve White, a shy, withdrawn character, in contrast to Eve Black a relaxed and confident person with no inhibitions, and more erotic tendencies. Later came the discovery of Jane

who seem to hover around the two personalities. Jane seemed to appear when under hypnosis with Eve black, when apparently faced with a difficult question about Eve White.

The Psychometric and projective testing, was a mixture of interviews, patient and family observation, hypnosis, EEG tests, memory tests, ink blot tests and intelligence tests. The procedure, showed some support for Thigpen's case study, such as the EEG tracing, showed signs of one of her character's ' Eve black' as between border line normal and slightly fast.

This sometimes can indicate a psychopathic personality (Manter 1953) However her other two personalities tracings, appeared to be completely normal. The use of family members for circumstantial evidence and interviews, also helped supply reliable data to support the case study.

However, some psychologists and psychiatrists have showed concerns that MPD might be diagnosed too often, and could be influenced by suggestion and expectation, to achieve a diagnosis. It was suggested that Thigpen might have had expectations of a third personality, and under suggestion ' Jane' was created. The question of the reliability of the hypnosis used on Eve could indeed be problematic if this was the case. Ross Norton and Wezney (1989) indicated that, some people readily make things up during hypnosis and have difficulties distinguishing between hypnotic confabulations and real names.

Or taking another view, it could be a case of sheer manipulation, for example, Eve could of developed the personalities to seek attention from the therapist or held a fascination for him. However lets not assume that

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Thigpen, s diagnosis is wrong, Eve could have unconsciously, created these personalities to hide herself from the pain. The incidence of past childhood trauma in its extremity could itself cause a child to dissociate oneself from pain, she found to extreme to cope with . The creation of these different identities was surely some sort of escapism, that seems to be a self protecting natural occurrence.

Thigpen was the person to correctly diagnose Eve, with Multiple personality disorder. However he did not cure her, and hardly asked nothing of Eve, for example, ‘ if she thought she was cured.

‘ To Eve her distress was still apparent and she was still experiencing episodes of MPD. She went on to experience further personalities, a total of twenty two altogether. Over years of continued therapy, Eve eventually sort help with a Dr Tony Tsitos (1970). Tsitos, chose not to prompt Eve for her personalities under hypnosis. In contrast, Thigpen readily used hypnosis on Eve, Tsitos feared he use of suggestion might reinforce her different personalities.

Each time a personality appeared, Tsitos ignored it and encouraged Eve to take responsibility for her personalities. It is said that this treatment eventually cured her. Another interesting case study of MPD, was a art student named ‘ Sybil’ real name (Shirley Mason) who experienced sixteen separate personalities. Sybil it was alleged, had previously experienced, sadistic childhood ‘ sexual abuse,’ by the hands of her mother. This had left her with extreme psychological scars.

The case study also attracted a high degree of media coverage, in comparison with Eve's case, the therapist and author also earned them huge amounts of money. In 1998 the case study of Sybil, was reinvestigated by a 'Robert Rieber' who later listened to some of the tapes recorded in therapy with a Dr Milber, (Freudian psychoanalyst). Rieber thought that the psychoanalyst had, had some influence over Sybil and seemed to reinforce her personalities. Sybil also said, that she was encouraged to be one of her personalities, who was ' Helen' by the psychiatrist.

Sybil said ' she was not happy about this, has she was more happy being herself.

'(Sybil 1998). In comparison, could Thigpen have been looking for a case of MPD in Eve, and if so was she a prime example of it. For example, how reliable was the hypnosis and Eve's memory ? can we at times over estimate how own thoughts, and if so could this have a effect on the data evidence, if so how reliable was it. Finally, looking at the study from a ethical point of view, was the case study reliable at all, when ' Thigpen and Cleckly' ask us to decide on the outcome of it ?.

In conclusion, to critically analyse the role of Thigpen in the diagnosis of Eves ' multi personality disorder,' is to determine whether he unconsciously created MPD in Eve.

And if so could this have influenced her in anyway, into believing she had the disorder. Eve indeed could have been exploited by the therapists, however, this remains to be seen. Certainly when Eve White was under an hypnotic

trance, more personalities appeared. The fact that suggestion could have made an impact on the diagnosis of another personality within Eve.

Thigpen hardly looked in to the causes of Eves disorder, in her past history.

When Eve was under hypnosis, and prompted with a question, she found hard to deal with, another personality seemed to appear. In fact the clues could have been there all along, without hypnosis. The psychological pain she suffered from childhood, and Eve' s apparent dissociation from the pain, was her coping mechanism that she had learned to adapt to, in some sort of bizarre way. She hid from the horrendous disturbances, and images from her childhood, like a child that would haunt her into adulthood.

Eve's final therapist Dr Tony Tsitos accounted for 22 personalities however ignored them, to eventually see, what seems to be her eventual cure. Eve had finally come to terms with the fact that she was creating her own personalities.

And the Therapist had helped her to see that