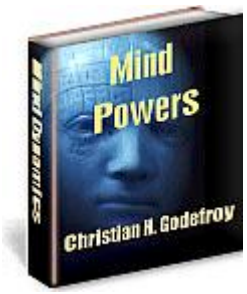

MIND POWERS
How to use and control your unlimited potential

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Introduction

"Doubting everything and believing everything are two equally convenient solutions, both of which stimulate thought."
Poincaré

An amazing experience

I was getting a little impatient. For one thing, I'm used to giving courses, not taking them, so it was kind of strange to be sitting in the audience, rather than standing in front of a podium. Much worse was the fact that the course instructor turned out to have very bad teaching skills, and a less-than-firm grasp of his subject matter. Finding yourself thousands of miles from home, forced to listen to a rank amateur for hours on end, can become unbearable.

"Now if you please, divide yourselves up into groups of two, one instructor and one pupil per group. Pupils please stretch out on your back and concentrate on alpha…" By 'alpha' he meant a special kind of relaxation technique he'd taught us earlier. "Each instructor will choose a subject at random from the pile of files on the table over in the corner. Pupils will then attempt to form a mental image of the subject and diagnose his or her health problem. Instructors should take notes and encourage their pupils, without providing any information, of course."

Diagnosing the health problem of a person you've never met seemed like a ludicrous idea to me. On the other hand, although highly skeptical, I was thrilled to actually be doing something at last. I turned to Sylvie, an acquaintance of mine, who also happened to be taking the course.

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"Want to be my partner?" I said.

"Sure. Who goes first?"

"I think your highly developed sense of feminine intuition makes you a natural candidate for the pupil role. What do you think?"

"Okay," she said. "You go and pick out a file."

People were busy pairing off, making space for themselves in the large, luxurious conference room of the hotel we were staying at, a Hilton. I was the first to pick up a case file, a single typewritten sheet with the name, age and address of a person neither of us knew, and a description of the health problem we were supposed to diagnose.

Sylvie stretched out on the thick carpet.

"Now breathe deeply and relax," I said. She closed her eyes and slowed down her respiration. "Get in touch with your alpha energy. Tell me when you're ready."

She was so still she already seemed far away.

"Ready… " she said.

"I'm going to count to three. On the count of three, you are going to form a mental picture of Mr. Mario Mantella, 55 years old, from Naples, Italy. You will perform a careful and complete examination, and tell me what you find."

I waited, curious to hear what she'd say, convinced she'd be making it all up. Suddenly her breathing speeded up and her eyeballs started fluttering beneath closed lids. "No… no…" she gasped, shivering and breathing even faster. It was when her body began writhing in pain that I started to panic.

Parapsychology and opposition to change

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My first contact with the paranormal goes back to 1962, the year a book called *The Morning of the Magicians* became a best-seller. I found the book's blend of fiction and reality a little hard to swallow, but I had to admit that its collection of data, most of which seemed to support the hypothesis that paranormal phenomena do, in fact, exist, was disconcerting. I felt relieved when a group calling themselves the Rational Union published a refutation entitled *The Evening of the Magicians*, which exposed the inconsistencies and weaknesses of the original work. Once again the bright sun of Logic rose in the sky of Reason, encompassing all, leaving no corner of darkness.

I was reassured – everything could be explained, and what logic could not account for simply did not exist.

This extremely comfortable intellectual position resulted in my rejecting anything that was really new – and therefore incomprehensible. Understanding means 'standing under' – adding a piece to the edifice of our knowledge. If the piece is too new, if it does not quite fit in with all the other pieces, it is promptly rejected.

This kind of fear of anything new can sometimes assume a violent character. There are many instances of great thinkers and men of science taking refuge in madness in order to avoid being persecuted for their ideas: Wells, the inventor of modern anesthesia; Cantor, a mathematician who discovered transfinite or ordinal numbers; Semmelweis who discovered the antiseptic properties of chloride of lime, to name just a few. Others, like Galileo, Pasteur and Einstein, put up a fight.

A publicity campaign launched by IBM in 1972 demonstrates how the scientific community tends to react to new discoveries:

"G. Stephenson's locomotive is a fearful monstrosity, a clear example of criminal madness. We hereby demand that its use be prohibited." (Proclamation issued by the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1829).

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"We must use all our influence to put a stop to the criminal research on blood transfusions. Injecting someone else's blood into a patient's veins causes almost immediate death, or at the very least, insanity." (Published in a journal of medicine and surgery in 1925).

"It is true that Mr. Charles Lindbergh's recent accomplishment deserves recognition. We hope, however, that aviation companies will never be so foolish as to place the lives of their personnel, not to mention passengers, at risk, by attempting to transport them over long distances in machines that are as uncomfortable and unsafe as Mr. Lindbergh's airplane." (Report issued by a scientific organization in 1927).

The list goes on. Similar objections are being raised today, and will continue to be raised in the future. Research into the paranormal, and parapsychology in particular, has become a favorite target of this kind of prejudice. This is not surprising when you consider that various religious groups generally offer so-called miracles as proof of the existence of God. Science, which has been persecuted by powerful religions throughout history, is now in a position of authority, and seems intent on exacting its own form of intellectual revenge, rejecting legitimate paranormal research along with more questionable mystical practices and beliefs.

After all, if we are to admit that such phenomena exist, we must have proof. Like Saint Thomas, we want to touch and feel whatever it is we are investigating. Even better, we want to live the experience for ourselves.

She has known him for a long time…

Five or six curious people have gathered in a group around us. Sylvie's breathing has returned to normal, after the course instructor held her hand and told her to "Relax… calm down and relax…" in a deep, penetrating voice.

I resume the exercise, not without some apprehension. "Tell me what you see."

"I can't … yes, now I see him. God, he's suffering so much…"

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"What does he look like?"

"He's tall, slim. A haughty expression, something aristocratic about his face, a kind of authority. His hair is completely white. He's lying on an metal-framed bed."

"That's good, that's very good." (We were told to encourage each other as much as possible.) "Can you tell me what his problem is?"

"His back, I see his back. He can't move. He's in pain, the poor man. I think he's paralyzed. It's his spine… he had an accident, horseback riding."

I am both astonished and perplexed. On the sheet of paper in front of me, written in black and white, are the words 'spinal paralysis.' Other details like the white hair and the riding accident may have been the fruit of her imagination, but the diagnosis… I'm certain there is no way she could have seen or heard it. Had some kind of telepathic link been established between Sylvie and the patient?

"All right, you can now come out of your alpha state. Remember, when you open your eyes your head and neck will feel completely relaxed, you'll feel alert, full of energy and in complete harmony."

I can feel her body reanimating. She shudders slightly, and after what seems like a very long time, finally opens her eyes.

"So, did you find out what his problem was?" she asks.

"Exactly as you described it," I reply.

She couldn't believe it at first, but she soon became enthusiastic. Her eyes burned with excitement. "You know I couldn't move at all!"

"You were almost shouting in pain. You gave me quite a scare."

We looked for the person who had given us the case history.

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"He's my uncle," she said, "a former cavalry officer."

I felt like I was living a dream, or rather a nightmare, something out of Edgar Allan Poe. She showed me a picture of a tall man with white hair and a serious face, everything that Sylvie had described, right down to the last detail. There was one thing, however, that didn't fit.

"You say he can walk, that he wears a kind of brace?"

"That's right, but not for the time being. He's had a relapse. I got a letter from him yesterday. He's been bedridden for a couple of weeks now."

Sylvie interrupts her, adding details, all too eager to express what she saw. It's almost as if she'd known the man for a very long time, as if she and the other woman were old friends, talking about one of their old school professors.

"Well, I guess it's your turn," Sylvie says. After what she's just gone through I feel somewhat hesitant.

"No, really, it's not worth the trouble," I reply, hoping she'll let me off the hook. But she won't.

"Come on, I don't want you to miss out on the experience," she says, heading for the desk to pick up another case history.

"Find something easy for me!"

I don't feel very comfortable. My emotions seem to vacillate between desire and fear, like a first love affair. I stretch out on the carpet, do some deep breathing to relax. I hear Sylvie's voice. It sounds far away, as if it is being muffled by fog.

"Martine Lebel, thirty-three years old, lives in Paris. One… two… three. Now you can see her, Martine Lebel, thirty-three, living in Paris…"

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"I don't see anything."

"Look harder."

Images run through my mind like a kaleidoscope. Suddenly I see a target made of concentric circles. In the center of the target the silhouette of a person appears. The person seems to have two bullet wounds, both of which emit a kind of red glow.

"I can't," I hear myself say.

"What do you see?"

I describe the image.

"Where are the bullet holes?"

"There's one right in the middle of the stomach… here." I cover the spot with my hand. "The other one's just above the mouth."

"Very good. Try to see more details."

I'm pleased when she says 'very good.' It encourages me to try harder. Tissues and organs appear, as if an operation were being performed. They pulsate rhythmically as blood pumps through them. A horrible ball of flesh detaches itself, all red and bloated.

"That's excellent," Sylvie says. "Now concentrate on her face."

I see a black thread running from her upper lip to her skull …

Consider the situation normal

I'm certain my diagnosis is all wrong, or at least incomplete. But when I emerge from my state of deep relaxation, a surprise awaits me: the woman

has a tumor in her intestines that keeps growing back (she's had seven successive operations) and a kind of black growth on her upper lip (doctors have been unable to diagnose its origin).

Eager to learn more, I decide to observe some of the other groups who are still 'at work.' I hear a young man saying, "Black… it's all black." When questioned further he says, "All black… I feel cold… I want to come back." His case concerned a man suffering from generalized cancer.

I walk over to another group. A woman in her forties is talking up a storm. Her instructor has already filled at least three pages with hastily written notes.

A young woman walks up to me. "I haven't had my turn yet. Do you think you could be my instructor?" I agree. I have to admit that there's something pleasant about watching a pretty young woman relax. It's as if their faces become transfigured. Some become even more beautiful, while others seem to age considerably. I recall a passage from a book in which a man tells his friend to '… look at her mother's face before you marry the girl (his young fiancée).'

The session goes very well, almost as if it were routine. Humans have an extraordinary ability to adapt to new situations - I find myself considering the exercise completely normal, like taking a walk to the corner store!

During a pause we gather in informal groups and discuss our experiences. The atmosphere in the room has changed completely. People who were reserved and skeptical at first have become entirely enthusiastic. Those who insisted that the whole exercise was ridiculous can't wait to describe their incredible visions. They explain, ask questions and listen with the passionate interest of 'those in the know.'

The blackness and cold expressed by the young man earlier on was entirely accurate: the case concerned a woman who had died three months earlier (one of the participants had decided to play a sinister kind of joke by submitting the case history of a dead person). Results of the case I myself had submitted - it concerned my grandfather - were also accurate: heaviness in

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the legs and emphysema, the two problems I had listed, were both diagnosed. The subject even predicted an additional problem - a kidney malfunction - which I knew nothing about, but which I was able to verify later on.

That, word for word, is what happened to me on a November day back in 1972. Since then I've seen hundreds of people experience the same sense of amazement. I have passed over to the other side of the barrier, and now all I want to do is understand. Perhaps you too would like to understand more about what lies beyond the scope of ordinary experience. If so, this book may be of some help.

Developing your paranormal faculties

My son is five years old, right in the middle of his 'why' phase, the period when children discover life and the world around them. Watching him play or carry on with his daily activities, I too often wonder why. Why is it that adults lose their ability to marvel at the world, to seek and understand, to imagine and evolve?

Take any one of your friends. Ask him or her to draw a picture. Chances are the answer you'll get is, "I don't know how to draw."

Ask the same thing of a child and the question of ability won't even arise. For children, drawing is just like breathing - it's a completely natural function.

For us adults, drawing is a gift reserved for a special few. Some people draw, some write, some think, some drive a truck. This kind of specialization, the division of tasks into categories, leads to the fragmentation of human beings. We become limited.

I sometimes think longingly about someone like Leonardo Da Vinci, not because he lived at a time when almost everything was still to be discovered (there are ALWAYS new things to discover) but because he was able to grasp the whole body of knowledge available to mankind at that time.

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Optics, physics, astronomy, physiology, anatomy, philosophy, geography, mathematics, botany, acoustics, ballistics, hydraulics, architecture, sculpture, painting - none of these disciplines held any secrets for him. He discovered the laws of gravitation before Copernicus, the constancy of light emitted by the stars before Kepler. He demonstrated the laws of acceleration of falling bodies before Galileo, and developed plans for instruments and machines that were built long after he died.

Sometimes this truly universal man would leave science behind, close up the laboratory where many of our modern-day inventions were taking form, set aside the lenses he used to study the stars and pick up a lyre, on which he composed songs, or a paint brush with which he painted masterpieces like the Mona Lisa, Saint John the Baptist and the Sistine Chapel frescos.

Today, grasping the totality of human knowledge is no longer possible. We are forced to rely on a number of reference points - facts or assumptions that we can rely on when confronted by situations that are strange or completely out of the ordinary.

Is it possible that these preconceived notions impede our progress? We have already seen how skepticism about parapsychology has slowed down our understanding of its potential applications. Very few people like to admit that they are wrong. Although we sometimes jump to hasty conclusions, and although our preconceived ideas often lack a solid basis in fact, we become their most ardent defenders as soon as someone tries to convince us they may be false. In many cases it isn't the ideas themselves we are defending, but our own love of self.

The same thing applies to negative opinions we hold about ourselves. For a long time I maintained a highly negative self image. Whenever I had trouble with my homework, for example, I would immediately conclude that '… I could never understand, I'd never succeed.' Of course that would only make the work that much more difficult, and I'd often end up in tears, to the alarm of my parents.

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Interestingly enough, drinking a cup of coffee just before an exam changed all that. It was like a revelation! I had never used any drugs or stimulants before, so the caffeine (or the idea I had formed about what caffeine could do) had an extraordinary effect on my mind: in a few seconds I came up with the solution to a difficult math problem. I completed the test in a third of the time allotted to us, and got a brilliant mark and the congratulations of my professor and parents.

From that day on, I began searching for natural ways to recreate that state of mental alertness that had enabled me to instinctively discover the solution to the exam problem. I have found quite a few over the years. What people call creativity, intuition, or extra sensory perception (ESP) are states that seem to me to be very closely linked. All are at the opposite end of the spectrum of what we generally label 'ordinary experience.'

As Alexis Carrel wrote in his book *Man And The Unknown*, 'In modern society, most individuals are occupied with activities that could be categorized as practical. This is done out of ignorance, or because people are tricked into believing they must devote all their time to practical matters. Being weak-minded, they submit to the influences of the environment in which they find themselves.'

Some people, on the other hand, are aware that they are being manipulated by big business, politics, culture mongers, and so on.

Unfortunately, most of us are so preoccupied with taking care of our day-to-day responsibilities that we rarely have an opportunity to make full use of our intelligence and / or imagination. We see young executives fresh out of university, brimming with new and exciting ideas, slowly fade as they are worn down by the rigid demands of the companies they work for. Their natural psychic abilities are soon extinguished by the grinding routine they have to put up with.

Trying to find ways to liberate these latent abilities, or at least those which seem useful and positive, is what this book is all about. I searched through libraries and bookstores for existing material, mostly in vain. Some works

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contained hints of a possible method. None were written in terms that could be easily understood by everyone - the obscure, highly pedagogical language that was used tended to lead the reader into an endless series of sterile conjecture. Most books seemed to be a blend of simplistic ideologies, useless beliefs and unsatisfactory explanations of various phenomena. None were balanced and objective: authors either doubted everything, or believed everything at face value.

Instead of becoming discouraged and abandoning my search, I decided to write the book that I would have liked to find. A book that is not overly critical of our western way of thinking, a book that serves as a bridge between what is familiar and what appears to be strange and unusual. The subject matter would be a description of the methods of personal psychological and parapsychological development that I have discovered and practiced over the years.

As I gained experience teaching one such method - Mental Dynamics - to students, I gained insight into how the integration of intuition and other paranormal faculties in our day-to-day lives could provide the balance that our personalities seemed to lack.

Constantly suppressing parts of ourselves that cannot logically be explained creates tremendous tension on a subconscious level. The self-critical attitudes drilled into us by our rationalistic education system can be counterbalanced by an understanding of these special powers, adding a new dimension to our existence.

As such, developing our paranormal faculties can largely contribute to abolishing the traditional conditioning we have all been subjected to, concerning matters like time, space, language and thought, freeing our mind of its limitations, doubts and anxieties. In that sense, investigating your own paranormal abilities represents a great step towards attaining real freedom.

The voyage is about to begin. Why not come along and discover what lies on the other side of the ocean of your being, at the very heart of your inner self.

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Part One: Sophrology

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Hypnosis

"The human mind is a great worker of miracles."
Montaigne

A Voodoo Ceremony

It might have been a nightclub act. About thirty people, the men dressed in black tie and the women in long evening gowns, are enjoying an exotic meal, their tables arranged around a kind of runway stage. A few younger couples are there, sipping fruit juice instead of alcoholic beverages. There is nothing unusual about the scene, except the atmosphere - these people do not seem to be at ease. It feels like they are waiting for something to happen. The waitresses are also unusual - unlike their customers they seem too relaxed, without the least hint of servility in their behavior. They're more like young black fashion models or dancers, completely unconcerned. The decor is comfortable but very sparse. I must say the whole thing is a little bizarre.

The nightclub itself happens to be the only voodoo temple in Europe. Situated in the heart of Paris, a group of Haitians have created a locale for their cult, in the guise of a private cabaret.

A friend of mine got me an invitation. I was expecting to be brought to a kind of church. Instead, there I was in what appeared to be an old, rather shabby nightclub. I was disappointed, to say the least.

The ceremony begins. It's just past ten o'clock. Three drums carved out of tree trunks are placed at one end of the runway. Two drummers get into position, then start tapping out a rhythm on the tightly stretched skins.

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The drum beat gains in intensity. As it turns out, the drummers will continue playing nonstop for six hours! The pretty waitresses, wearing miniskirts and halter tops, perform a few informal dance steps and sing a kind of chant. A very beautiful black woman dressed in a purple gown appears. She is also singing, but as she walks from table to table, greeting the guests in a language I don't understand, I get the impression she's offering a kind of challenge. She laughs a lot.

After a few minutes all the guests are asked to stand up. I hear a few complaints, mostly from the men (we're here to watch, not perform) but soon everyone is up and clapping hands and dancing in time to the irresistible drum beat. We all do our best. A slim swaying woman with red hair closes her eyes and lets herself flow with the rhythm, while her overweight companion waves his arms around, looking ridiculous. The priestesses, formerly our waitresses, circulate, showing people, most of whom are a little stiff, how to move.

As we dance we are asked to form a circle and hold hands. I feel a current of energy passing through me. Next we're told to lie down on the floor and engage in a weird kind of fight - a bum fight. We have to move backwards until we bump into someone with our bum. Initiates can be distinguished from newcomers by their well-aimed, powerful bum kicks. By this time everyone is hot and sweaty. Shoes, ties and jackets have long since been discarded.

Suddenly the game comes to an abrupt halt.

The beautiful woman in the purple gown - the High Priestess as it turns out - starts talking to us about voodoo.

"The first boatloads of slaves arrived in Haiti around the end of the seventeenth century. They came from Dahomey, Nigeria, Angola and Togo. They spoke a language called 'Fon.' In Fon voodoo means god, spirit or image. Although they brought their own religion with them, they were baptized by force and had to accept religious instruction by catholic missionaries. Voodoo gradually became a strange mix of creeds, with crucifixes, incense burn-

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ers and candles used alongside African drums and possession rituals. Voodoo is an animistic religion which venerates the spirits - or 'loa.' Each loa has its own magical symbol or fetish, which is used to attract it. During voodoo ceremonies, spirits take possession of initiates. Each spirit behaves differently, and each is recognized and worshipped with its own particular ritual."

Next, the High Priestess talks about voodoo temples. Temples belong to everyone. People can visit a temple whenever they want, bring their children to be looked after, or to be treated for various problems. The High Priestess is also a sorcerer, able to exorcise bad spirits, cast spells and prescribe remedies made from medicinal herbs. Many patients seek the help of a sorcerer when conventional medicine is unable to cure them.

"Do you have any questions?" she asks.

Her little speech has everyone spellbound. While she talked, one of her helpers had drawn an extremely complicated pattern on the floor, using powdered flour. This was the spirit's fetish.

I ask if knowing about spells and fetishes gives someone paranormal abilities.

"No," the priestess replies. "Fetishes are like books. All they can do is call up a spirit. Only sages have special powers, which take years of meditation and initiation to develop."

One o'clock in the morning. The ceremony is in full swing. The initiates, or 'hounsi' as they're called, have donned white robes and are dancing to the drums. Suddenly one of them starts shaking. Her eyes close as if she is afraid of something. The shaking becomes more and more violent, her whole body starts convulsing, as if some invisible force were driving her on. Her breathing comes in heaving gasps, her gestures are wild. At one point her body seems to launch itself like a cannon ball, and she is literally propelled from one end of the room to the other. She runs right into me, and as I grab her arms to keep from falling I can feel her muscles hard as steel. Her fists are tightly clenched, and I can see her nails digging into her palms. I wonder if she's going to have a cataleptic fit.

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She starts swaying from side to side. It seems that at any moment she could lose her balance and topple over. The High Priestess comes over and wraps the girl's hair in a green scarf, muttering ritual phrases. The girl swoons and falls to the floor. Other initiates gather round and carry her into a back room, the 'chamber of mysteries' as it's called, where she can rest until she revives.

One by one, three more 'hounsi' are possessed by spirits. The High Priestess offers them each a ritual object, a flag or a baton or a scarf, depending on their rank. The whole atmosphere is charged with violence. In the middle of her convulsions, one hounsi walks up to another, strikes her in the face and rips her white dress.

"She's punishing her," says a woman standing next to me.

I become conscious of an unpleasant odor of sweat and candle smoke filling the room.

But the most astonishing scene is yet to come, as the High Priestess herself is possessed. Because of her rank, only the most powerful of spirits enter her body. Her eyes bulge out of their sockets as she starts to tremble and convulse. She grabs a razor-sharp sword and performs a frenzied dance that has many of us fearing for our lives. The blade swishes this way and that, inches from our faces.

When she moves farther away from where I'm standing I observe that her movements are not at all random, as they seemed at first glance, but precise and controlled, as if she were being guided by an invisible hand. At one point she drops the sword and lifts a drum high over her head. I am told later that the huge drum, carved out of a solid tree trunk, weighs over 250 pounds. My skepticism vanishes when I try to lift the thing myself - I simply cannot get it off the ground!

I am reminded of the same charged atmosphere that I experienced during sessions of primal scream therapy, where patients, given the opportunity

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to vent suppressed feelings of rage, hate, fear and so on, become very animalistic - you can almost see the beast lurking under the thin layer of human civility (the subject was well treated in a film called Dr. Moreau's Island, where a gifted surgeon tries to transform animals into people, only to find that his creations revert to bestiality as nature inevitably intervenes).

In this case, however, the movements of those who are possessed are more refined and graceful, almost cat-like instead of grotesque.

The evening ends over a few glasses of fiery rum. The High Priestess, still in her trance, answers questions put to her by some of the Haitian participants in the 'Fon' language. Although the Priestess is not told what their problems are, she is able to offer advice and solutions that correspond exactly to their situation.

A new term : Sophrology

Sitting in front of the fireplace and staring at the dancing flames… Staring at the dividing lines on a highway, illuminated by your headlights as you drive at night… The steady ticking of a grandfather clock… The bewitching spell of soothing new-age music… The monotonous voice of a professor in a stuffy classroom…

These are a few examples of the kinds of stimuli that tend to induce a state of gentle reverie. And it is this kind of special state of consciousness that has become the object of a new branch of scientific study called sophrology.

According to the official definition, sophrology is… 'the phenomenological study of all states and levels of consciousness, no matter what physical or psychological agent is used to induce them.'

Cult trances like those in the Voodoo ceremony described above, states of ecstasy attained by shamans, hypnotic trances, meditation, chanting, and so on, all fall into its sphere of observation. The word sophrology comes from the Greek 'sos' meaning serenity or equilibrium, 'phren' meaning brain or mind, and 'logos' meaning study or science. Etymologically speaking then,

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sophrology is the study of various methods designed to induce a serene state of mind. Using scientific methods of analysis, sophrology attempts to offer explanations for phenomenon which have long been categorized as mystical, magical or paranormal.

Shamans

Acting as intermediaries between humans and the forces of nature, shamans have existed since prehistoric times. It is now believed that drawings of animals found on the walls of caves in Lascaux, France, were used to perform magical rituals designed to capture the spirits of the animals being hunted. The word shaman is probably derived from the terms 'Samarambi' - to get excited, and 'Sam-dambi' - to dance. Shamans induce states of extreme excitation by dancing to the beat of one or a number of drums. They then enter a trance, during which they seem to be endowed with extraordinary powers. In her study of shamanism, the anthropologist Mircea Eliade presents an exhaustive list of these powers, which include phenomenon like telepathy, premonition, the ability to walk on fire, clairvoyance, etc.

Whether induced by shamans during the course of a voodoo ceremony, or as part of any other cult ritual, it does seem that the trance state has a definite therapeutic effect on the mind, liberating deeply imbedded archaic behaviors that are generated by the rhinencephalon or olfactory brain, the part of the brain associated with emotion. Problems arising from conflicts between the rhinencephalon and the neo-cortex (the part of the brain associated with language and logic) are often resolved in this way. Once the rhinencephalon has had an opportunity to express itself, symptoms of conflict like anxiety, phobias, etc., tend to disappear.

A Brazilian doctor, inspired by a cult similar to voodoo, developed the well known psychotherapeutic method called primal scream therapy, based in this same principle.

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Franz Anton Mesmer

Born in 1734 in Weiler Germany, Mesmer wrote a doctoral thesis on the 'influence of the planets on the human body.' He tried to demonstrate that a kind of energy, which he called animal magnetism, originating in space, penetrates the body and has an impact on our health. The theory resembles that of the oriental concept of vital energy, called Qi by the Chinese and prana by the Hindus. Soviet and Czech researchers studying the phenomenon use the terms bioplasmic and psychotonic energy respectively.

In their book on Soviet parapsychological research, Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder report that a Czech researcher, Robert Pavlita, developed a motion-generating device that can be recharged with mental energy. Dr. Julius Krmessky, a mathematician and physicist, submitted a report about the device to members of the Physics and Science Institute in Trnava Czechoslovakia. In the report he states: "The energy being generated to rotate the device cannot be explained by fluctuations in temperature, static electricity or air flow. The energy can only be coming from the person using the device. In addition, the operator is able to control its output mentally. The energy passes through glass, wood, all kinds of metal, water, paper, etc., without any loss of intensity or deviation in trajectory."

In France, an electrical engineer, L. Turenne, discovered what he called 'form waves,' claiming that certain forms have the ability to focus energy. A team of researchers and doctors in Saclay, France, conducted further studies and obtained interesting results concerning the impact of these waves on health, using a device called a 'cosmic wave charger.' Were the results due to psychological factors? Were subjects in any way predisposed to believe that the device would help cure their health problems? Or were the test results really a confirmation of the existence of psychotronic energy? We'll be taking a closer look at these and other related issues later on.

But first, back to Mesmer. According to him, beneficial 'cosmic fluid' could be transferred from one subject to another. Using hand passes and other gestures, he actually succeeded in curing a number patients, arousing great hostility among many of his colleagues. His detractors seized on one incident to

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create a scandal: a young woman named Maria Theresa Paradies, a pianist at the court of the Empress of Austria, was suffering from partial blindness. While being treated by Mesmer, she became his mistress. After showing some signs of improvement, she suffered a relapse and went completely blind some weeks later. Mesmer was forced to leave Vienna in disgrace.

He returned to Paris where he rented rooms in a hotel (the Louis-le-Grand, still standing today at 16 Place Vendome). Instead of private consultations he began offering group seances (as one doctor later remarked, Mesmer actually initiated the concept of group therapy!). It was here that he began using his famous device - a kind of reservoir filled with bottles of magnetized water. Rods made of iron were inserted into the bottles. Their protruding tips were applied to diseased organs. Subjects were joined together by a wire, in order to 'balance' the flow of the cosmic fluid, while loud music was played on a piano (Mesmer loved music, especially Mozart, and is reputed to have introduced the harmonica to France).

Wearing a purple robe, holding an iron wand in his hand, the 'Master' would walk around the room touching patients at strategic points on their back and stomach. Bailly, an astronomer and member of France's Royal Academy of Science, submitted a report on Mesmer. Here is an excerpt:

"Some subjects feel nothing at all. Others spit and cough, feel local or general heat, and sweat profusely. Others become agitated, and some even go into convulsions. These convulsions are extraordinary, both in their frequency, duration and intensity. I have seen some cases where they continued for three hours. They are characterized by involuntary movements involving all the limbs, and sometimes even the whole body, including tightening of the throat, fluttering of the hypochondria and epigastrium (upper and lower abdomen), bulging eyes, piercing shouts, tears, hiccups and uncontrolled laughter. They are preceded or followed by a state of languid reverie, as if subjects were exhausted or numb.

"I also observed that many more women than men experienced these kinds of reactions; that it took one or two hours for a crisis to reach its peak,

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and that as soon as one subject began convulsing, all the others followed suit, and that in a very short time."

We can easily see how Mesmer's subjects resemble those described in the section on voodoo earlier on.

Immense controversy arose concerning Mesmer's work, largely fuelled by Mesmer himself who, like the Athenian general Alcibiades, knew the value of publicity, whether it was good or bad.

Mesmer's two books, *'Notes On The Discovery Of Animal Magnetism'* (1779) and *'A Precise Account Of Facts Relating To Animal Magnetism'* (1781) ignited a fury of controversy that could not be extinguished even after both the French Academy of Science and the Academy of Medicine issued an outright condemnation of his work in 1784:

"Having demonstrated through conclusive experimentation that pure imagination without magnetism can produce convulsions, and that magnetism without imagination produces none, we can safely say that there is absolutely no proof of the existence of animal magnetism or cosmic fluid."

At the same time there was no lack of support for Mesmer's theories. De Jussieu, a journalist, wrote a personal letter to the Academy of Medicine, in which he claimed to have witnessed a number of incontestable cures. He suggested that the Academy study Mesmer's work more closely in order to learn more about the phenomenon. Delon, one of Mesmer's disciples and principle physician to the Count d'Artois, remarked that… "If medicine of the imagination works best, why not use it?"

The controversy raged on long after the master himself had passed away.

The beginnings of hypnotism

The Marquis de Puységur, a student of Mesmer, is accredited with having discovered a state of induced somnambulism, which later came to be

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known as hypnosis. When he made his discovery public in 1784, Mesmer minimized its importance, claiming that he knew of the phenomenon, but did not consider it worthy of study. This product of the imagination, it seemed to him, would be very difficult, if not impossible to comprehend, and in any case was much less interesting than the study of physiology.

De Puységur, undaunted by the master's criticism, continued to research the phenomenon on his own, and was amazed to find that some persons seemed to develop paranormal faculties while under hypnosis.

In one case, he observed that a hypnotized subject was able to describe the evolution of his own disease, as well as those suffered by others, with extraordinary accuracy. It was de Puységur who first used the term 'clairvoyance' after he demonstrated that hypnotized patients who touched other patients were able to detect which organs were affected with great precision. As one patient said, "It's as if I can actually feel what is happening inside the body of the person I'm touching."

A reference in the Bible (Chronicles Two, Chapter XXXIII) refers to an attempt to harness various paranormal faculties: "He (Manasseh, King of Israel) observed times, and he used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards…"

Three centuries before the birth of Christ, Druids combined hypnosis and music to induce a state which they called the 'magic sleep.'

When de Puységur published his findings he ran up against terrific resistance. But the facts were there for all to see, and disciples soon began spreading this new form of mesmerism, which transformed ordinary persons into living oracles, throughout Europe.

Because of De Puységur's work, people quickly lost interest in convulsive trances as a therapeutic tool. In 1813, Abbot Faria offered a course in magnetism that was open to the public at large. His approach became a precursor to modern techniques of suggestion, and he is credited with coining the phrase 'now you feel sleepy… very sleepy.' Three years later, after a number of embarrassing setbacks, he abandoned his work and sank into obscu-

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rity. Magnetism remained an unreliable therapeutic tool, although it did yield excellent results in the hands of a few, notably Baron du Potet, Dr. John Eliotson, Bertrand, La Fontaine and others. Bertrand discovered that staring at an inanimate object could induce a state of somnolence, but it was James Braid, a surgeon from Manchester England, who is credited with discovering the technique we now refer to as hypnosis in 1840.

Braid was present at a demonstration of magnetism given by La Fontaine, during which he produced various 'effects' and treated sick subjects. Although he had denounced La Fontaine as an imposter, believing neither in cosmic fluids or in paranormal faculties associated with trance states, Braid had to admit that La Fontaine's subjects found it impossible to open their eyes until they were told to do so by the hypnotist. He had always thought that one had to stare directly into a subject's eyes while performing passes. Braid formed his own theory, claiming that although the eyes may be important for inducing a state of somnolence or hypnosis, it was not because of any special power or magnetism, but simply because the eyes represented a shiny object to stare at.

As soon as he got home he began verifying his hypothesis. He asked his maid to stare at the blade of a scalpel. She soon fell into a deep sleep. Encouraged by his success, he asked his wife to repeat the experiment, with the same result.

Braid theorized that it was visual fatigue, resulting from prolonged concentration on a single object, that induced the state of sleep, which is why he called the process hypnosis, after the Greek 'Hypnos,' the name of a sleep-inducing demon. He published his findings in 1843, but they were largely ignored, and his work was soon forgotten.

The Nancy School

In 1859 Dr. A. Liébault, living near the town of Nancy in France, received a letter from a colleague which described how a certain Dr. Broca had been able to perform an operation on a patient under hypnosis. Dr. Liébault, who had expressed a previous interest in hypnotism, decided to pick up where Dr. Braid had left off. His method, which gradually evolved into the type of

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verbal suggestion used today, produced immediate results. He would tell patients to concentrate on an object, and at the same time describe symptoms of somnolence - heavy eyelids, relaxed limbs, dulling of the senses, etc. On one occasion he cured the patient of a colleague, who happened to be a highly respected member of the medical community. The evidence was plain for all to see - hypnosis did, indeed, exist, and could be used to cure people. Liébault became a celebrity in the medical world.

Although Liébault used suggestion to cure patients, he still maintained an interest in Mesmer's theory of magnetic fluids. Another colleague, Dr. Bernheim, refuted the fluid theory altogether. Under his influence, Liébault developed his method of hypnotic suggestion and its application as a way to cure disease, notably by introducing mental images of healing. Bernheim, who felt that results were due solely to the power of these suggestions, did not consider it important to put patients into a deep hypnotic trance - they could be induced to enter a state of mild reverie, or even remain fully awake. Liébault tried to be objective. "There is some truth in both approaches," he wrote. "It is time we stopped accusing each other and let go of our imaginary convictions. Only then can we work together in complete understanding."

The other approach Liébault was referring to was that of the Salpêtriére School.

The Salpêtrière School

In 1878 a neurologist at the height of his career, Dr. Charcot, became interested in hypnosis. Nicknamed the Caesar of Salpêtriére Hospital, Dr. Charcot conducted experiments that he hoped would become the foundation of a new type of psychology, supported by pathological research. Unfortunately, he made a number of errors, one of which was to delegate the task of hypnotizing subjects to other doctors and interns. He would then show up and pontificate in front of crowds of people who knew nothing at all about what he was trying to achieve.

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Nevertheless, his study of hysteria and his attempts at using suggestion to heal various health problems represented a first step in the evolution of modern psychology.

Buoyed by his success, he went on to perform experiments on magnetism and metallic therapy. Bernheim, however, pointed out a number of obvious errors in Charcot's experiments, claiming that the results he obtained were due to suggestion. Towards the end of his life, Charcot himself began doubting the validity of his findings, but did not live long enough to redirect his research toward other areas.

Hypnosis and the paranormal

As we mentioned earlier, the Marquis de Puységur reported that some of his subjects demonstrated remarkable clairvoyance while under hypnosis. If that was really the case - if hypnotism could stimulate extrasensory perception - then why were his findings not confirmed by other cases?

One explanation may be that we see only what we want to see. A classic psychological exercise consists of describing an event to someone, and then having that person describe the same event to someone else, who in turn describes it to someone else, and so on down the line. Invariably, the event described by the last person is very different from the original. For example, a western subject is shown a photograph depicting a black person, dressed in traditional North African clothes, being attacked by a European carrying a knife in a subway station. The subject reports what he or she has seen to a second subject, and so on. By the time the story gets back to the psychologist, the roles have been reversed - the European is the one being attacked by the North African. Why? Because western subjects subconsciously found the initial situation - a black person being attacked by a white person - intolerable, and rejected it.

We can understand how difficult it is for so-called men of science to admit that they may not be seeing all the facts. A good example is the way the French Academy of Medicine reacted to a report submitted by Dr. Husson in 1832. Husson had been asked to head a commission to investigate paranor-

mal phenomena, and spent six years conducting experiments and gathering data before drawing up his report. The Academy reacted to his findings with consternation - the report was not at all what they had expected to hear:

"Husson, who had performed a series of spectacular experiments on clairvoyance and healing over distances, officially confirmed the existence of the hypnotic state, the ability to predict events, the ability to read while blindfolded, and so on."

Fearing ridicule, the Academy refused to publish Husson's report. A new study, led by Dr. Dubois, a virulent adversary of magnetism, was commissioned. Dubois refuted all of Husson's findings, including the existences of an induced state of hypnosis.

Was Husson's original report frivolous and unscientific? Not according to a study of hypnosis commissioned by the British Medical Association in 1953, which confirmed many of his findings, and went so far as to say that … "the conclusions in (Dr. Husson's) report demonstrated remarkable foresight, and are, in large part, still valid today."

In 1850, an English professor of physiology, Dr. Mayo, himself a hypnotist, wrote:

"A hypnotized subject who has been deprived of his own sense of touch, taste or smell, will perceive everything that is felt, tasted or smelled by the hypnotist ."

Mayo's experiments confirmed the findings of another researcher, Dr. Azam, working in France fifteen years earlier. In 1875 Professor U.F. Barret, the great English physician, conducted a series of similar experiments:

"I took a few items out of my pantry and arranged them on a table next to me. Standing behind a young female subject whose eyes were carefully blindfolded, I put a bit of salt on my tongue. The girl spit some saliva and exclaimed, 'Why did you put salt in my mouth?' When I repeated the process with some sugar she said, 'Oh, that's much better.' When I asked her what the taste was, she said, 'It's sugar.' I went on to taste mustard, pepper, ginger,

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and so on. The girl named every one of these substances, and was apparently able to taste them herself when I put them in my mouth. Next, I brought my hand close to a lighted candle, slightly burning my skin. The girl, still sitting with her back to me and blindfolded, cried out in pain, and said that her hand was being burned."

Charcot, although guilty of some errors, also worked with subjects in a state of hypnotic trance, and would begin his lectures by saying, "We will stick to the simple facts, and set aside more complex phenomena like magnetic fluids and second sight, at least for the moment." On the other hand, he did not categorically deny them.

Members of the Nancy School were interested in similar phenomena. On January 9, 1886, Liébault and a colleague, Stanislas de Guaita, submitted a report of the following experiment:

"We, the undersigned, Ambroise Liébault, doctor of medicine, and Stanislas de Guaita, author, both residing in the city of Nancy, do hereby certify having obtained the following results:

1. Miss Louise L., in a state of magnetic sleep, was told that she would have to answer questions which would be communicated to her mentally, without the use of words or gestures. Dr. Liébault placed his hand on the woman's forehead and concentrated on the question 'When will you get better?' After a moment the woman's lips began trembling. 'Soon,' she said, quite distinctly. She was then asked, before all present, to repeat the question that had been mentally communicated to her. This she did, formulating the question exactly.

2. Mr. De Guaita, placing his hand on the woman's forehead, mentally formulated the following question, once again using no words or gestures: 'Will you come back here next week?'

   'Perhaps,' the woman responded. When asked to tell the witnesses present what the question had been she replied, 'I wanted to know if you would be returning next week.' The way she phrased the question, reversing the pronouns 'I' and 'you,' is significant - an indication that she had literally entered the mind of the hypnotist.

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3. Without saying a single word, Dr. Liébault then wrote the following statement on a sheet of paper: 'When Miss L. awakens, she will think her black hat has been transformed into a red hat.'

The sheet of paper was passed around to all the witnesses, after which Dr. Liébault and Mr. De Guaita, in complete silence, placed their hands on Miss L's forehead, concentrating on the message. Before being awakened, the young woman was told that she would see something unusual.

As soon as she was brought out of her trance she stared at her hat and burst out laughing. It wasn't her hat, she said, she didn't want it. Yes, it looked like her hat, but she knew they were just playing a joke on her. She wanted her own hat back.

"What's different about this hat?" someone asked.

"You can see for yourself! You have eyes, don't you?"

"Tell us what it is."

We had to insist for quite some time before she would actually tell us how her hat had changed - she thought we were making fun of her.

"You can see very well that it's red."

Since she absolutely refused to use the hat, we had to put her back into a trance to show her it really was her hat. Dr. Liébault picked it up and blew on it, having told her that it would revert to its original color when he did. Awakened once again, she picked up her hat as if nothing had happened.

We certify that this report is an accurate description of the results obtained during the hypnosis session, conducted without any prior preparation or knowledge on the part of the subject."

Such experiments left little doubt in the minds of enthusiasts that hypnosis would live up to its promise - the ancient age of mysticism and miracles

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was about to dawn once again. Others, however, were more than a little worried by the possibility. One powerful adversary was the Catholic Church, which accused La Fontaine of blasphemy for trying to imitate the miracles of Christ. This was no laughing matter. La Fontaine was actually imprisoned, then released after King Ferdinand of Naples intervened on his behalf, on condition that… "he cease restoring sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf."

La Fontaine eventually managed to obtain a private audience with Pope Pius IX. After a long discussion, the Pope decreed that La Fontaine was not attempting to imitate the miracles of Christ, and encouraged him to continue with his work.

The dawn of the twentieth century saw a marked decline in the development of hypnosis as a therapeutic tool. No more Mesmer, no more Charcot, no more rivalries and scandals. One of Charcot's former students, Sigmund Freud, introduced a new form of treatment for mental disorders, which he called psychoanalysis. Emile Coué, a pharmacist and member of the Nancy School, developed a method of suggestion (the Coué Method) which used the waking rather than the hypnotic state to heal the sick. Since techniques of anesthesia were being perfected, hypnosis was no longer necessary in order to perform operations.

Public opinion did an about-face: people condemned what they had previously found fascinating. A host of detractors attacked practitioners of hypnosis, claiming they were all charlatans. A judge ordered one hypnotist to pay heavy damages for having caused a young woman to develop various problems during a theatrical demonstration. Such theatrical entertainments did much to tarnish the image of hypnotism in general. This is not surprising, considering the kinds of absurd antics subjects were instructed to perform: walking on all fours, howling like a dog, undressing in front of an audience, etc.

Because of the bad publicity directed at hypnotism in general, legitimate practitioners found it increasingly difficult to get subjects to cooperate. It of-

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ten took a number of sessions before a subject was finally able to attain the trance state, and in many instances subjects remained resistant to the end.

Suggestion over distances

Pierre Janet, a young doctor who would later become a Professor at the Medical College of France, assumed the role of defending the legitimacy of hypnosis as a therapeutic tool, emphasizing an approach which he called mental suggestion.

Invited by a colleague, Dr. Gilbert, to investigate the case of a young peasant woman named Léonie, who apparently could be hypnotized from a distance, Janet ended up performing over twenty-two experiments similar to the one described below:

"Here is a list of precautions taken to ensure the validity of the test:

1. The exact time of the intervention is to be drawn at random.

2. Dr. Gibert will be informed of the time only a few minutes beforehand, at which point members of the observing team will proceed to the subject's domicile.

3. Neither the subject or anyone residing within one kilometer of the subject's domicile will have any prior knowledge of the time or type of experiment that is to be carried out. In addition, neither myself nor any member of the observing team are to enter the subject's domicile in order to verify whether she is asleep or not.

"It was decided to repeat an experiment previously conducted by Cagliostro: hypnotize the subject from a distance and have her traverse the city in order to locate Dr. Gibert.

"At eight thirty in the evening, Dr. Gibert consented to perform the test. The exact hour was drawn from a hat: the mental intervention was to begin at five minutes to nine, and continue for fifteen minutes, i.e. until ten after nine. At that time no one was at the subject's domicile excepting Léonie and

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the cook, Madame B., who knew nothing whatsoever of our intentions. Being alone in the house, the two women had decided to get comfortable in the living room, where they amused themselves by playing the piano.

"We reached the vicinity of the subject's domicile shortly after nine o'clock. Outside all was quiet, the street deserted. Without causing any commotion, our party split up into two groups in order to survey the premises more effectively.

"At nine twenty-five I saw the silhouette of a person appear at the door leading to the garden. It was Léonie. I remained hidden in the shadows, where I could watch and hear without being seen. But there was nothing further, either to see or hear - after standing in the doorway for a moment the girl closed the door behind her and disappeared into the garden.

"(At this point Dr. Gibert gave up his efforts to communicate with the girl. Apparently, concentrating so hard for so long had caused him to fall into a faint. It was nine thirty-five when he regained consciousness.)

"At nine thirty the girl reappeared at the door. This time she marched straight out into the street, without any hesitation whatsoever. She appeared to be looking for someone, and seemed in a hurry, as if she were late for an appointment and absolutely had to reach her destination. The group watching from the street had no time to warn either myself or my partner, Dr. Myers. Hearing hurried footsteps approaching, we followed the girl, who seemed not to be aware of her surroundings. In any case, she made no sign of having recognized or even seen us.

"When she reached the rue du Bard she slowed down and seemed to falter. She stopped for a moment, swaying from side to side, as if she was about to fall over. Then she started walking again. The time was nine thirty-five (we learned later that it was precisely at nine thirty-five that Dr. Gibert had regained consciousness and resumed concentrating). The girl walked quickly, taking no notice of her surroundings, or of the group of observers following her.

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"It took about ten minutes for us all to reach Dr. Gibert's house. Thinking the experiment had failed, and surprised that we had not yet returned, Dr. Gibert had just set out to find us when he encountered the sleepwalking girl. She seemed not to recognize him. Completely absorbed in her hypnotic trance, she entered the house and hurried up the stairs, followed closely by us all. Dr. Gibert was about to enter his examining room, but I took his arm and led him to another room across the hall.

"The girl, who now appeared very agitated, was looking everywhere, bumping into objects and observers, feeling nothing. She wandered into the examining room, stumbling into furniture, and repeating in a mournful tone, 'Where is he? Where is Dr. Gibert?'

"During this time Dr. Gibert remained seated in a chair in the room across the hall, without making the slightest movement. The girl entered the room and walked right past him, almost touching him, but in her excitement she did not recognize him. It then occurred to Dr. Gibert to resume his mental communication with her, in order to draw her to him. As soon as he did (this might have been pure coincidence) she turned around, seeming to recognize him all at once, and seized his hands. 'I found you!' she cried. 'Oh, I'm so happy I found you at last!' She was overcome with such joy that she actually jumped up and down on a couch and began clapping her hands."

This report, submitted by Professor Ochorowicz of the University of Lemberg (the excerpt is from his book *'Concerning Mental Suggestion,'* published in 1889) concerns one of the first experiments in which Dr. Janet participated. Janet published his own account in 1885. Sixteen out of a total of twenty-two experiments were considered successful. Janet stated: "Can we believe that the results obtained during these sixteen experiments were due to pure coincidence? That would not be reasonable. Is it possible, then, that involuntary suggestions were made by witnesses or others directly or indirectly involved? All I can say, and this I declare in perfect sincerity, is that we took all possible precautions to prevent that from happening. Our conclusion, therefore, is the following: these phenomena should be reproduced and studied in greater depth."

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And yet, after a couple of years of continued interest, no more was heard about the experiments. Janet himself became more involved in studying hypnosis as part of a larger field which he called 'psychological medicine,' an early attempt to understand and treat what have come to be known as psychosomatic disorders.

A celebrated physiologist and Nobel prize winner, Charles Richet, had been studying suggestion over distances since 1873. He pursued the experiments begun by Janet and Gibert on the young woman Léonie, then abandoned this line of investigation when he developed what was to become the most important research tool in the study of psychology and parapsychology - the application of statistical data and probability curves to paranormal experiments conducted on subjects in a waking state.

Why did he abandon pure hypnosis? No doubt because of the vagaries of the procedure, and the fierce opposition he encountered among members of the medical profession and other men of science towards anything that had to do with the paranormal. This opposition, as John W. Campbell noted, was democratic in nature: society was refusing to admit that all men were, perhaps, not created equal, since only one subject out of a hundred seemed gifted with paranormal abilities while under hypnosis. By studying normal subjects in a waking state, he could avoid wrangling with detractors of hypnosis, and at the same time hopefully offer irrefutable proof of the existence of telepathy and other parapsychological faculties, at least in their latent state, in all individuals.

Richet himself had occasional premonitory dreams, and thought they might represent the first stage in some kind of gradual process of human evolution. With this in mind, he devoted all his efforts to the study of parapsychology.

The decline of hypnosis

Sigmund Freud preferred working with patients in a waking state rather than in an hypnotic state as he attempted to treat mental illness. Emile Coué, carrying on the tradition of the Nancy School, also rejected hypnosis, using

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the power of suggestion on conscious subjects to try and cure physical health problems. Along with Richet (and Rhine working in the United States), more and more researchers interested in parapsychology would abandon hypnosis in favor of gathering statistical data on subjects possessing the ability to manipulate dice and cards, or perform acts of psycho-kinesis (mental displacement of objects) and telepathy (mental communication), all during the waking state.

A new era of paranormal research had begun. Hypnosis came to be perceived more and more as a spectacle rather than a subject worthy of serious scientific study. Hector Durville (who did manage to gain official recognition for his 'school of public magnetism') had himself locked up in a cage of lions and succeeded in putting them all into an hypnotic trance! A few of his students, notably P.C. Jagot, Colonel de Rochas, Doctor Lancelin, and his sons Gaston and Henri Durville, nevertheless managed to keep the flame alive through the first half of the twentieth century.

However, in France between 1920 and 1950, most scientists did not hesitate to deny the very existence of hypnosis, claiming that it was simply the simulation of a trance state by subjects who were, in fact, perfectly awake. Hypnotists themselves were either accomplices or dupes of this chicanery. Fortunately, research did continue in other countries, including the U.S., Germany, England, Russia and Spain.

The study of suggestion over distances, initiated by Janet, was developed to a much more sophisticated degree by the Russian physiologist L.L. Vassiliev. One of Vassiliev's colleagues, Ivan Pavlov, offered a physiological explanation of hypnosis that did much to enhance its credibility among members of the scientific community. In Germany, J.A. Schultz developed a relaxation method that used verbal suggestions to describe the physical effects of hypnosis (I am calm… my arms and legs feel heavy… my right arm feels very warm… etc.). In 1960, a student of Schultz, Alfredo Caycedo, developed a therapeutic method which he called sophrology, using the equivalent of a mild hypnotic trance to treat patients suffering from a variety of disorders.

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The technique, which has been gaining in popularity the world over, is the subject of our next chapter.

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Sophrology

A friend of mine received a brochure in the mail one day. It said:

You can do anything!
- Stay young
- stop smoking, drinking, biting your nails
- have successful relationships
- overcome shyness and anxiety
- develop a strong personality
- predict the future
- become lucky
- succeed in everything you do!

"Center For The Liberation of Mental Energy"

My friend was going to throw the brochure away along with the rest of his junk mail, so I said I'd take it. I was curious, I guess. I called the number on the brochure. A man with a deep voice answered. He didn't ask for any information, just set up an appointment for the following afternoon, almost as if he had been expecting my call.

Next day I found myself in a residential part of town, impressed by the expensive, stately conformity of the houses on the block. I found the address I was looking for and rang the bell. A butler opened the door. He led me to a comfortable looking, luxuriously appointed office - each piece of furniture could have come from a museum, every painting was a masterpiece. Along with the plush carpeting, the decor created an atmosphere of reassuring harmony.

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After half an hour's discussion with the owner of the house, a well known banker who practiced hypnosis in his spare time, I had the answers I was looking for. Here was a man, a highly respected member of his community, alive and well in the middle of the twentieth century, who maintained an unwavering faith in the powers of magnetism, who could have been a disciple of Mesmer himself. I was impressed as he offered an account of his exploits.

"How many persons do you think are practicing hypnosis at this very moment?" he asked. Not waiting for an answer he continued. "Thousands. There are thousands of clandestine hypnotists playing around with people's minds, many using their own versions of occult practices, magic, parallel medicine, amateur psychoanalysis, and so on."

It was in order to purge hypnotism of its ambiguous image, its unfortunate association with charlatanism and the occult, that Alfonso Caycedo had decided to coin the term 'sophrology.'

"Despite the persistent efforts of some doctors to disassociate the study of hypnosis from its mystical origins, the forces of myth and magic proved too strong to overcome. The work of these pioneers of the scientific study of hypnotic phenomena has been completely overshadowed by the often spectacular displays offered by magicians, illusionists and music-hall performers, as well as by some practitioners of the occult sciences and new-age thrill seekers, always on the lookout for the unusual or bizarre.

"We are in favor of the abolition of the word 'hypnosis' from medical terminology, not only because we consider it to be an inaccurate description of these phenomena, but more importantly because the word itself is charged with a whole range of contradictory emotional reactions. This makes it very difficult to use as a therapeutic tool - doctors find themselves constantly having to reassure patients and dispel implied associations with magic and mystery." (Quoted from *Hypnosis, Sophrology and Medicine* by G.R. Rager, Fayard Publishing, 1974).

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Was he telling me that all he'd done was substitute one word for another, without making any changes in method or philosophy? As I soon discovered, that was not the case.

Sophrology is a science

As we said earlier, sophrology is a science, concerned not only with hypnosis, but with all related phenomena - relaxation, yoga, Zen meditation - in fact, all techniques that aim to induce changes in our ordinary state of consciousness. So as you can see, sophrology covers a much broader range of phenomena than hypnosis alone.

Sophrology is a philosophy

The philosophy of sophrology is probably its most interesting aspect. In classical hypnosis, the hypnotist always assumed a dominant role in relation to his or her subject, issuing commands which were sometimes contradictory to the will or desire of the subject in question. I once heard a hypnotist attending a conference on sophrology utter the following statement: "Why waste time teaching subjects to relax? Even if they don't want to, all you have to do is force them - put them under, then suggest that they feel calm and relaxed. It's so easy!"

That is exactly the kind of attitude that sophrology is opposed to. Sophrology is designed to teach and guide people, not subjugate their will. It does not cure people in spite of themselves. Instead, it helps people cure themselves by creating a harmonious 'sophrological' alliance between therapist and patient.

Sophrology is a method

Sophrology uses a number of techniques to help subjects attain a state of deep relaxation. In this state the mind is able to control and alter physical processes, with verbal expression - also called terpnos logos - acting as the intermediary between the two.

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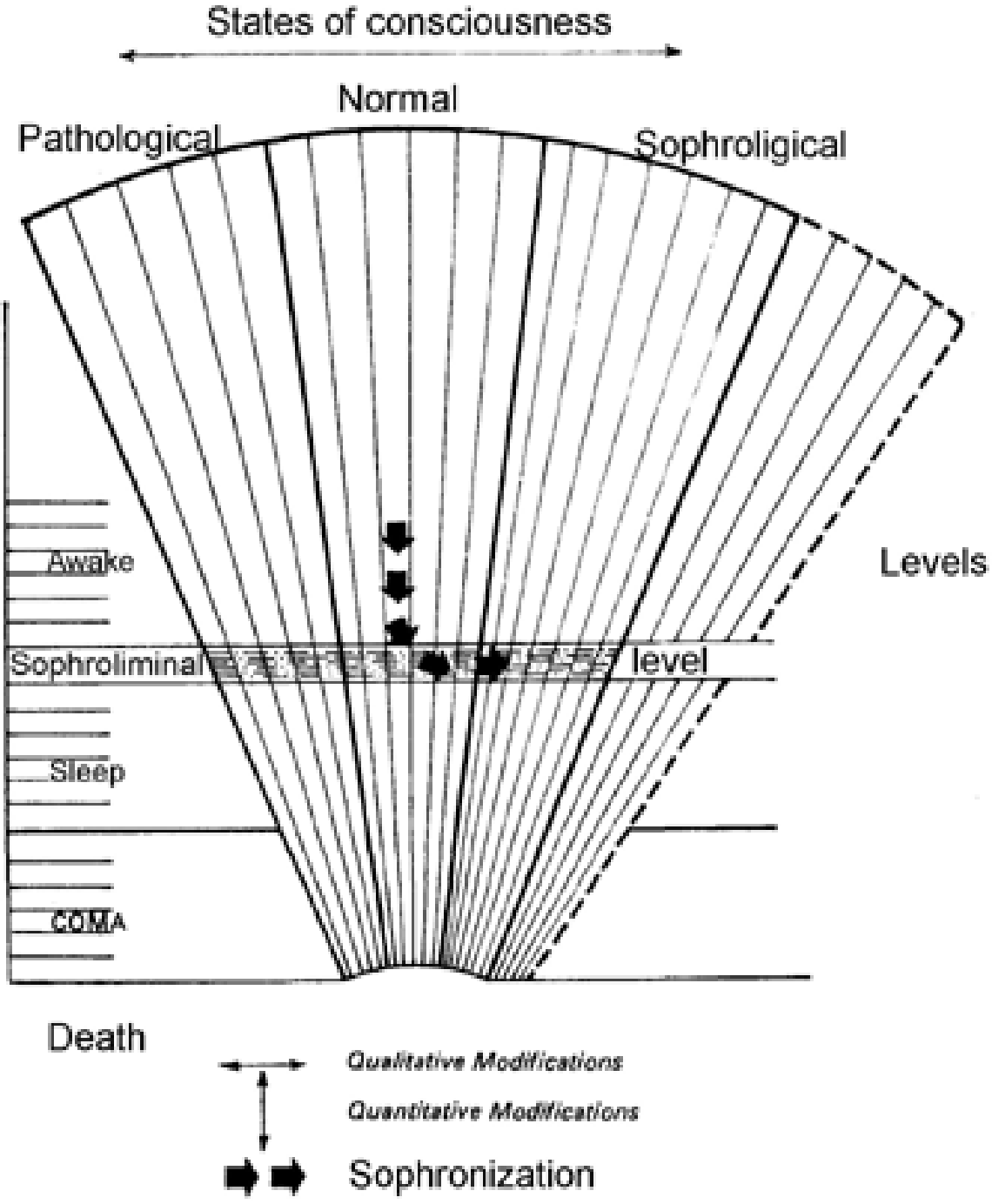

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We'll be taking a close look at one of the techniques used to induce this special state a little further on.

The main difference between sophrology and hypnosis lies in the relationship between therapist and subject. In sophrology, subjects play an active role in attaining the proper mental state by relaxing, both mentally and physically. They are then taught how to regulate their own organic functions, and correct imbalances. In classical hypnosis, on the other hand, subjects are completely passive. The hypnotist does all the work, first by relaxing a subject, and then by substituting his or her own thoughts for those of the subject through suggestion.

We could draw a comparison to teaching methods: hypnosis resembles the classical approach of instruction, which relies heavily on forced memorization and repetition, while sophrology is more akin to the modern approach of learning through participation and free inquiry.

The area designated by dotted lines corresponds to superior levels of awareness attained by skilled practitioners of yoga.

States:
Pathological awareness
Ordinary awareness
Sophrological awareness

Levels:
WAKING
SOPHROLIMINAL LEVEL
SLEEP
COMA
DEATH

Qualitative changes
Quantitative changes
Example of sophronization

Sophrology and parapsychology

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Sophrology, then, incorporates the positive aspects of hypnosis, but develops its application to a much higher degree.

Officially, Doctor Caycedo rejects any connection between sophrology and parapsychology. It is his view that since paranormal phenomena are not commonly observed in all individuals, they are beyond the scope of sophrological study.

Although this explanation, offered at the First International Congress on Sophrology in Barcelona, may have satisfied most of those present, we feel it is still not adequate, for the following reasons:

Firstly, as we will see later on, certain paranormal phenomena can be triggered in all individuals, using sophrological methods. Caycedo's aim was to separate sophrology from parapsychology altogether, in order to ensure greater respectability for the new approach. This was understandable, in light of the fact that many psychiatrists, psychologists and doctors had already expressed hostile opinions about the new discipline, even though they knew hardly anything about it. Getting involved in a debate about paranormal phenomena would only have confused the issue and impede any progress he hoped to achieve. We mustn't forget that, despite the efforts of certain governments and a number of serious researchers, notably in the U.S. and Russia, the view that parapsychology is tainted by association with charlatans and fringe cults predominated among a vast majority of people. Although shortsighted, this kind of skepticism concerning anything even vaguely associated with the paranormal was deeply imbedded and extremely widespread.

The fact remains, however, that many sophrologists have encountered surprising incidents in the course of their practice, incidents that cannot be explained by the existence of ESP alone.

Freud considered telepathy and clairvoyance vestiges of faculties that were indispensable to prehistoric man. Telepathy was necessary in order to communicate, and clairvoyance in order to survive in a generally hostile en-

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vironment. As man's logic and reason developed, these faculties became increasingly atrophied, although they have still remained engraved in our cells, and can therefore be reactivated. To do this, our logical, rational mind, centered in a part of the brain called the cerebral cortex, must be subdued, leaving room for more primitive mental functions, centered in the rhinencephalon or olfactory brain, to operate. Over the course of human evolution, the primitive olfactory brain was covered over by the cerebral cortex. Altered states of consciousness, induced by various means, allow intuitive data to rise to the surface of our awareness.

Here are a few examples:

By developing his faculties of relaxation and concentration, a Russian researcher, Karl Nikolaiev, was able to demonstrate amazing powers of telepathy. Before receiving a telepathic message, Nikolaiev would usually require about half an hour to achieve a state of total relaxation.

Mylan Ryzl, a biochemist who became interested in parapsychology, and more specifically in the development of paranormal faculties, used hypnosis and suggestion to help a colleague, Pavel Stépanek, become one of the greatest mediums of our time.

Home, the celebrated British medium, always relaxed before his demonstrations. Alla Vinogradova, the wife of a Russian physician, used autogenic training (a form of self hypnosis) to develop powers of psychokinesis. Marcotte and Mendez, both specialists in telepathy, also used autogenic training to develop their paranormal faculties.

Thought healers like Edgar Cayce, Isaltina, Arigo, Chapman and others placed themselves in a trance state to effect their cures. And, in fact, the trance state is nothing more than a transition from one state of consciousness to another.

Staring at anything - a crystal, a coffee bean, a pendulum, etc. - will induce a semi-hypnotic state. Oracles of old, like the one at Delphi in ancient Greece, used noxious gas (probably a kind of drug) to achieve the same re-

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sult, while mystics concentrated on their navel or on the blood of a sacrificed animal, and shamans relied on rhythm and dance.

Eugene Caslant, attempting to devise a method for developing supranormal faculties, recommended a state 'between waking and sleep' as ideal.

Since sophrology incorporates all of these approaches, evaluating, reproducing and ultimately applying them for therapeutic purposes, it seems the ideal tool for the exploration of paranormal faculties.

But how to proceed?

Caycedo, a student of Schultz and founder of sophrology, concluded that autogenic training was the best technique for inducing the desired state.

Autogenic Training

The year is 1908. Hypnosis is in decline, as far as its therapeutic use is concerned. Criticism centers around the fact that subjects are completely passive and dependent on the hypnotist, enabling suggestions to be made that may run counter to their better judgement.

J.H. Schultz a young doctor fascinated by a new discipline called psychotherapy, became interested in hypnosis and suggestion, claiming that it is possible for certain gifted and cultivated individuals to enter a state of hypnosis of their own accord, simply through an effort of will (the idea of self hypnosis had originally been proposed by Oscar Vogt).

When questioned about what they saw and felt, subjects would often report an initial impression of chiaroscuro, like a twilit space, which would soon start filling with spots, veils, lines, shadows and shapes. All these images seemed to appear against the backdrop of the eyelids, in so-called visual space, similar to what you see after staring at a bright light and then turning away or closing your eyes.

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Schultz called this first stage the amorphous stage, during which the mind is still oriented outward, towards exterior events.

According to Schultz, the next stage is characterized by the visualization of thoughts. In most cases these images are of past events, arising like sequences in a film, with the subject as spectator. In some cases images are symbolic representations of ideas, rather than actual events. It is also during this phase that remarkable perceptive changes may occur, especially in visually oriented subjects. For example, visual space can shift to an area directly behind, instead of in front of, a subject.

Was Schultz describing some kind of clairvoyant phenomenon? Well, not exactly. But as we'll see later on, this stage, characterized by an increasing interiorization of consciousness, does lend itself to the development of extrasensory perception (ESP) in some subjects.

Next comes the third stage, during which strange images arise in the mind. The images seem extraordinarily real: objects, forms and colors, all linked to the subject's unique personality, unfold in a series of metamorphosing scenes.

Subjects also report experiencing physical sensations, notably heaviness and heat in various parts of the body.

It occurred to Schultz to try and develop a method of self hypnosis where subjects could make suggestions to themselves that would cause these same sensations of heat and heaviness to arise. Why? Because a feeling of heaviness is an indication of muscular relaxation, while heat indicates a dilation of peripheral blood vessels.

Schultz considered these two physiological characteristics to be the basis of the state of 'disassociation' he deemed necessary for the liberation of intuitive, as opposed to rational, thought processes.

He called his method autogenic training or autogenic relaxation, defining it as a system of physiological exercises carefully designed to induce a state of general disassociation from external stimuli in the organism, with the

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resulting state of consciousness facilitating all therapies based on suggestion, autosuggestion, mental conditioning, and so on.

For that reason, autogenic training (A.T.) became the basis for more elaborate therapeutic techniques, including sophrology.

One major benefit of autogenic training is that it enables people who suffer from insomnia to reestablish regular sleep patterns. Another benefit is the elimination of the almost constant nervous and muscular tension - or stress - associated with a modern urban lifestyle, which in turn results in glandular abnormalities, causing disorders like ulcers, cardiac and respiratory disease, etc.

Therefore, in addition to facilitating the development of paranormal faculties, autogenic relaxation improves physical health as it relaxes the body and allows the subconscious mind to express itself with much greater freedom.

How To Relax With A.T.

It takes a few months to master the technique of autogenic training (see Appendix 1) on your own. For that reason, the help of a second person - usually a trained sophrologist or hypnotist - is recommended, in order to speed up the process. With such a person to guide you, results can be obtained almost immediately.

Subjects are told to concentrate on a given object to prevent the mind from wandering, and are then given a series of instructions, resembling the following:

Think: I am completely calm. I - AM - COM - PLETE - LY CALM.
Now focus your mind on your right arm.
You're right arm is starting to feel heavy.
It feels heavier and heavier.
Your right arm feels so heavy.
Think: My right arm feels so heavy.
MY - RIGHT - ARM - IS - SO - HEAVY

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Your right arm is getting heavier and heavier.
It's so heavy, so very heavy.

Now concentrate on your left arm.
Think: my left arm is starting to feel heavier.
It's getting heavier and heavier.
Think: my left arm is so heavy.
It's so very heavy.
Completely, totally heavy.

Now concentrate on your right leg.
Your right leg is starting to feel heavy.
Your thigh, your calf, are getting heavy.
Your right leg is getting heavier and heavier.
Think: MY - RIGHT - LEG - IS - COM - PLETE - LY - HEAVY.
Completely, totally heavy.

Now concentrate on your left leg.
Relax your left leg.
In a moment it's going to start feeling heavy.
Your left thigh and calf will feel heavy, heavier and heavier.
Think: my left leg feels so heavy.
MY - LEFT - LEG - FEELS - SO - HEAVY
Heavier and heavier.
Completely, totally heavy.

Now your entire body feels heavy, like a massive weight, as if mercury were flowing through your veins. You let go of your body completely.

As you focus on your right arm, you feel a wave of heat.
Your right arm is getting warm.
It's getting warmer and warmer.
Think: my right arm feels so warm.
MY - RIGHT - ARM - IS - SO - WARM.
Completely, totally warm.

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Now you feel a gentle wave of heat running through your left arm.
Your left arm feels warmer and warmer.
Think: my left arm feels so warm.
IT - FEELS - SO - WARM
My left arm is completely, totally warm.

Now direct the wave of heat into your right leg.
You feel the hot blood circulating in your right leg.
Your right leg is getting warmer and warmer.
It feels so warm.
Think: my right leg feels so warm.
MY - RIGHT - LEG - IS - SO - WARM.
My right leg is completely, totally warm.

Now shift your focus to your other leg.
You can feel the heat running through it.
Your leg is getting warm.
Your left leg is getting warm.
Think: my left leg is getting warmer and warmer.
My left leg feels so warm.
MY - LEFT - LEG - FEELS - SO - WARM.
Your left leg feels wonderfully warm.
Completely, totally warm.

You can feel the wave of heat running through your entire body. Your heart pumps hot blood through your body. Your entire body is warm, completely warm and relaxed.

You feel so relaxed, more and more relaxed. The marvelous feeling spreads from muscle to muscle, from organ to organ, through your entire body. You are relaxed.

At this point a subject should be in a state of deep relaxation. The state can be deepened even further by continuing with other exercises, such as focussing on breathing or heartbeat, on heat radiating from the solar plexus,

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on causing the forehead to become cold (not recommended for beginners as constriction of blood vessels can sometimes cause headaches), and so on.

There are a number of other methods for inducing the sophronic state, and it is up to individual therapists to chose those which seem to provide best results. For our purposes, however, we can limit ourselves to three:

- Autogenic training (as described above, with the help of a second person);
- Yoga nidra (focussing on parts of the body);
- Alfredo Caycedo's Dynamic relaxation.

Yoga Nidra

Yoga nidra, or the yoga of waking sleep, consists of a complex series of exercises designed to induce the sophronic state. Caycedo developed the technique while studying with some of the greatest yoga masters in India at the time. Which exercises are used depends on the subject. Some, like focussing your awareness on each body part, are extremely pleasurable.

When we are in an active, waking state, our awareness or consciousness is focussed outward, on external stimuli and perceptions. We perceive little of what is going on inside our body, although bodily functions are accompanied by a host of sounds and other sensations. These interior stimuli are generally filtered out by our cerebral cortex.

Yoga nidra helps people tune in to their own body. Here is an example of a yoga nidra exercise, based on an excerpt from Dennis Boyes' excellent work, *'The Yoga Of Waking Sleep:'*

Focus your attention on your forehead.
Now shift your attention down slightly, to your right eye.
Concentrate on your right eye.
Explore it.
Feel the spherical shape of your eyeball.
Try to feel your whole eye, gently, completely, without letting any mental images or thoughts get in the way.

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(Beat)
Now concentrate on your left eye.
(Instructions are repeated)
Now shift your focus to your right cheek.
Feel it, feel it deeply.
You are completely present, completely focussed.
(Repeat with the left cheek)
Now shift your awareness to your right ear.
Feel the flesh of your outer ear.
Now guide your attention inside your ear.
Concentrate on your inner ear, on the auditory canal.
Feel the walls of your inner ear… etc.

All bodily parts, as well as other sensations like blood pulsing through the veins, cellular vibrations, the feeling of clothes in contact with the skin, and so on, are explored in this way.

Subjects who are willing to make the effort can attain the desired state of 'disconnectedness' by concentrating on almost any sensation, whether it be a sound, an image, an odor or an object. You can practice while taking the sun, relaxing in a hammock, steaming in a sauna, or sitting in your favorite easy chair. Just tune in to your inner sensations and let yourself go. You will soon feel yourself floating away in a very pleasant bubble of physical and mental relaxation.

Terpnos Logos

In sophrology the main instrument of suggestion (we should perhaps use the word instruction, since subjects are awake) is called terpnos logos, a term Caycedo revived from the Greek.

Caycedo noticed that a certain quality and rhythm of voice was more effective on subjects than others. As he reread ancient Greek authors, he came across a text that seemed to be an early attempt at verbal therapy. In the Charmides Dialog Plato tells Charmides, one of his disciples, how to cure the mind and body, beginning with the terpnos logos, a kind of gentle monotone

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resembling an incantation, which induces a state of relaxation, total concentration and mental calm required for the verbal treatment of physical or psychological disorders.

Caycedo explains how to adopt the right tone: "Adopt a tone that is as familiar and relaxed as possible. Your voice should reverberate, as if it were coming from inside the subject, as if it were the subject's own voice, resonating deep within himself."

The subject's own voice, resonating deep within himself… If we take the notion one step further, we could say that it really is a subject's own inner voice that is most effective for orienting the mind. Unfortunately, in most cases this inner voice communicates negative messages: 'I'm so stupid… I can't take it any longer… I'm nervous… I'm afraid… I feel sick… I'm fed up…' and so on. The accumulated effects of these negative messages, far from being harmless, can actually result in physical or mental health problems.

There is nothing new about the notion that negative thoughts can have a harmful impact on behavior and health. Korzibski, a Russian researcher, observed that verbal formulations like 'I'm always clumsy with members of the opposite sex…' or 'I knew I could never be successful…' or 'I have a terrible memory…' etc. have a paralyzing effect on the individual.

As Buddha said, 'We are who we think we are.' Our thoughts, formulated as verbal phrases, resonate inside us much like Caycedo's terpnos logos is meant to do, although often with negative results, conditioning our mind without our being aware of it.

Saying 'I don't like this or that…' or 'I am this or that…' stems from a static vision of the self, when in fact the self is in a constant state of evolution. Personal development is a dynamic, rather than a static process, so any opinion you may have about yourself is really only temporary.

A Little Neuropsychology

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To better understand the sophrological process, let's take a look at some rudiments of brain physiology. The main components of the human brain include:

• The neo-cortex: a distinguishing trait of primates, the neo-cortex is the seat of conceptual intelligence and reason.

• The rhinencephalon or olfactory brain acts as a link between the neo-cortex and the more archaic parts of the brain. It controls olfactory functions (from whence its name), is the seat of emotions and instinct, regulates stress, and can facilitate healing or strengthen the body's resistance to disease. It also regulates altered states of consciousness, and is responsible for producing various associated phenomena, including the separation of mind and body (also known as astral travelling), déjà-vu, shifts in time / space perception, hallucinations, extra sensorial perceptions, and so on.

• The thalamus, hypothalamus and corpus striatum comprise the oldest part of the brain, and control innate nervous system functions, metabolism, respiration, and so on.

Using terpnos logos, the persuasive language of sophrology, therapists are able to stimulate the olfactory brain to liberate or condition certain functions under its control. This process can, on occasion, produce spectacular cures. In addition, most research tends to confirm that paranormal faculties originate in the more primitive levels of our being, i.e. those controlled by the olfactory brain.

As we said earlier, terpnos logos (T.L.) is an effective tool for unblocking such intuitive faculties.

Here lies the great difference between sophrology and hypnosis. Consider this definition of hypnotic suggestion: 'The state of having a belief, an idea or a desire, when that belief, idea or desire originates in the conscious mind of another person (the hypnotist) without the subject being aware of the outside influence exerted by the hypnotist.'

In a sense, hypnotism bypasses the neo-cortex completely, leaving subjects stripped of any rational thought, willpower or self control.

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Sophrology, on the other hand, does not attempt to short-circuit the neocortex, since verbal instructions are first perceived and processed by that part of the brain. It is only after the mind has become calm, entering a state between waking and sleep, that subconscious intuitive factors come into play. For that reason, subjects undergoing sophrological therapy always retain their rationality and self control.

Caycedo's Dynamic Relaxation

In order for sophrological therapy to be effective, subjects must first be completely relaxed. The same is true for autogenic training and yoga nidra.

In tribal cults like voodoo or Ubanda, in mesmerism, trance therapy, etc. induction is usually achieved through the repetition of some type of physical activity.

Caycedo had the idea of developing a series of what he called dynamic relaxation exercises. He collected techniques from various eastern sources (yoga, Zen Buddhism, etc.), evaluated their effectiveness by measuring results on an EEG (electroencephalogram) and then organized the best of them into a three-step method. Why did he turn to the east for inspiration? Simply because eastern philosophies seem more oriented towards exploring the workings of the inner mind than those developed here in the west - the separation of mind and body is so deeply engraved in our culture that, despite an overwhelming amount of research showing the fundamental link between the two, many people still cannot understand how physical exercise, for example, can have an impact on the way they think or feel.

Respecting the order in which human faculties evolved, Caycedo has subjects start with a series of physical exercises, based on postures and movements inspired by a form of yoga called raja yoga. This constitutes the first stage in his three-stage method. The second stage is based on various types of Buddhist and Hindu meditations, while the third stage is based on Zen techniques.

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Dynamic relaxation, combining oriental and sophrological methods, is usually taught to groups. Entering a sophronic state greatly enhances the effects of physical movements, and makes them easier to learn. Most sophrological therapists combine autogenic training and dynamic relaxation, sometimes obtaining spectacular results, notably in patients suffering from psychosomatic problems.

Dynamic relaxation is Caycedo's most important contribution to sophrology. During autogenic training, the mind is aware of sensations that are ordinarily very difficult to perceive because the body is in a state of almost total repose. Dynamic relaxation, on the other hand, first stimulates muscles and organs, allowing the mind to concentrate on inner perceptions only during recuperation periods.

From a physiological point of view, it is this recuperation period that is most important. Caycedo was astonished to meet yogis in India who could provide perfect descriptions of their inner organs, without ever having seen an anatomical model or diagram. They could actually feel the inside of their body. And, in fact, the brain contains certain receptors, called proprioceptors, that most people hardly ever use. Yogis, on the other hand, develop these receptors to the point where they can feel, and even modify, physiological functions.

By devising a technique - dynamic relaxation - that provides the same results, Caycedo helped his patients achieve a balance of mind and body, and an awareness of their own physical makeup, enabling them to effectively combat a host of health problems of psychosomatic origin.

American therapists were working along the same lines when they developed an electronic biofeedback device: electrodes attached to a patient's body were used in place of proprioceptors, allowing researchers to detect physiological sensations that could then be transformed into auditory of visual signals.

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Caycedo's approach was much more organic: instead of replacing unused cerebral circuits with a machine, he taught his patients how to develop their own proprioceptive faculties, in harmony with themselves.

Applications of dynamic relaxation

Many pregnant women suffer from so-called morning sickness as their body assumes its new shape. Nausea and vomiting stem from an unconscious rejection of the fetus, which is perceived as a foreign body. Dynamic relaxation helps future mothers become aware of their new corporeal structure, causing morning sickness to disappear.

Athletes can improve their performance by developing an awareness of the physiological effects training has on their body, and by transforming equipment (skis, paddles, balls, javelins, etc.) into extensions of their own body. The process resembles what happens when you buy a new car: at first, unsure of the vehicle's dimensions, you have to be extra careful not to run into anything when you drive. But in only a few weeks the car's structure becomes so deeply engraved in your brain that you can avoid obstacles by only a couple of inches with hardly any thought or effort. In other words, you develop an intuitive awareness of the car as an extension of your body. The same applies to athletes: skiers who do dynamic relaxation exercises while wearing their equipment, for example, can considerably enhance their performance.

In 1967, Dr. Raymond Abrezol was hired to teach dynamic relaxation to the Swiss national ski team, which had done poorly in previous competitions. Peter Baumgartner, who headed the team's technical operations, had heard of Dr. Abrezol's success with other athletes, and placed four of Switzerland's top skiers under his care. At the following winter Olympics held in Grenoble, France, three of Abrezol's four proteges won medals. At the Sapporo games in Japan, the Swiss team dominated the competition.

Since then, Dr. Abrezol has worked with many athletes in various disciplines, with equally positive results. Athletes who use dynamic relaxation are generally in better physical shape, and are better able to handle the in-

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credible stress that goes hand in hand with competitive sport. Result? They win more often.

To train skiers, for example, Dr. Abrezol prescribed a rapid series of stage one dynamic relaxation exercises. First, subjects repeat a positive formulation: "I am confident. I am full of energy. I am concentrated. I am not nervous. I'm not scared. I want to get out there and win!"

They then imagine a perfect performance, visualizing themselves as they complete a perfect run down the course. Not concentrating long enough to reach the finish line, or becoming distracted for any reason, is considered the equivalent of a fall - the subject has to start all over again.

Then, with subjects in a sophronic state, Dr. Abrezol would lead them through the following exercises:

1. Head rotations, six to the left, six to the right. Imagine yourself holding a flashlight between your teeth, tracing circles with the beam of light.
2. Fifteen neck muscle contractions: subjects grimace like characters in a horror movie, pulling the mouth in all directions, bulging neck muscles and folding facial skin.
3. Three sets of rapid abdominal breathing exercises (subjects should stop if pain is felt in the kidney region).
4. Complete exhalation, full inhalation through the mouth, breath retention while pumping the shoulders, forced exhalation through the nose. Three sets.
5. Complete exhalation, full inhalation through the mouth, breath retention while jumping in place, forced exhalation through the nose. Three sets.
6. Complete exhalation, full inhalation through the mouth, breath retention while rotating :
   the right arm
   the left arm
   both arms
   One set each.
7. Complete exhalation, full inhalation through the mouth, breath retention while contracting all muscles in the body; forced exhalation through the

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nose.

8. Complete exhalation, full inhalation through the mouth, breath retention while raising the arms above the head and contracting all muscles; forced exhalation through the nose.

9. Complete exhalation as subjects crouch down, full inhalation as they stand up and start turning in circles, breath retention during three complete turns (done slowly), forced exhalation as they crouch again and hold the position for a few minutes.

10. End session with regular autogenic training technique.

Between exercises subjects should concentrate on their inner sensations during recuperation periods.

In addition to improving athletic performance, these same exercises, based on traditional yoga and other oriental methods, are highly conducive for the development of paranormal faculties. Orientals are familiar with the 'special powers' demonstrated by yogis at various stages in their training, regarding them as signs of progress.

As far as we know, however, no attempts have been made to use dynamic relaxation to develop paranormal faculties here in the west. Dr. Abrezol has conducted parapsychological experiments on subjects trained in dynamic relaxation, but their training program was not conceived for that purpose. In our opinion, there is an enormous potential for adapting dynamic relaxation exercises for such purposes.

The Future Of Sophrology

The description of sophrological techniques provided so far may have given readers the impression that helping subjects attain an altered state of consciousness is easy. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

The key factor is the sophrologist's attitude - if he or she lacks conviction or doubts his abilities, the climate of confidence between therapist and subject, which is crucial to the success of any treatment, is undermined.

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You may be surprised to learn that there are no laws prohibiting anyone from hypnotizing or practicing sophrology on anyone else. On the other hand, unexpected things can and do happen. Amateur hypnotists or sophrologists may find themselves in situations they can't handle. They may even panic. All suggestions, all instructions given to subjects in an altered state, have a tremendous impact. Sometimes results are obtained that seem to indicate success, but turn out to be superficial solutions to some deeper problem which, because it is ignored, may leave patients worse off than before.

For that reason, we must emphasize that the utmost care is required when putting these techniques into practice. Whenever sophrology is used to treat medical problems, a doctor or qualified paramedic should be in charge. Caycedo was well aware of the importance of training qualified personnel, and personally offered regular training sessions to potential sophrologists.

On the other hand, access to sophrology is not limited to a chosen few. For sophrology to be effective, it must be applied as a preventive measure as well as a cure. Caycedo also organized seminars designed for the public at large, in which people were taught how to benefit from sophronic relaxation techniques, and how to make sophrology a part of their day-to-day lives. He tried to help people establish what he called 'a psychological barrier against disease' and labeled this aspect of his work 'social sophrology.'

The method seems to us to be an excellent way to combat many of the ills associated with our modern, fast-paced urban lifestyle. As Caycedo often said to patients, "I have confidence in myself, I place my confidence in others, and I always develop my capacity to hope…"

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Suggestion

The Psychology of Advertising

In sophrology, any suggestions made by a therapist remain under the conscious control of his or her subject. Such is not the case in our daily lives: subtle, sometimes clandestine means of persuasion are commonly used by businesses to advertise their products, by government for propaganda purposes, and even by educators, in order to manipulate students without their knowledge.

"People who are exposed to these influences are totally ignorant of the psychological techniques being used on them - they think they can resist advertising and propaganda, that they are free to form their own opinions, that they can detect when they are being manipulated, and that ideas have no power over them."

To better understand how sophrological suggestion works, let's take a look at how advertising can change our behavior. Psychological laws governing the principles of advertising were formulated in the twentieth century, although many of the techniques had already been used for centuries. These laws helped advertisers influence potential buyers on both a rational, and irrational or intuitive level.

You may think that if you want to sell a product all you have to do is explain what it does. You could ask a few sincere people to list the reasons why they bought the product, and then expand those reasons into a commercial sales pitch.

Well, you would be wrong.

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Selling is a lot more complex than that.

A classic example was reported by Ernst Dichter. A group called the Color Research Institute conducted an experiment on housewives: each housewife received three boxes of a sample detergent, one yellow, one blue, and one blue with yellow dots. They were asked to test the detergents and comment on which was best for delicate washing. Of course, all three boxes contained the same detergent.

A majority of women responded that the detergent in the blue box was too strong, that in some cases it damaged clothes. They said the yellow-box detergent was not as effective, leaving stains on some clothes. The third box - the one with both colors - was the best by far. Women said it was "marvelous" or "extraordinary" for cleaning delicate laundry.

People act for two kinds of reasons:

- *Logical, rational reasons (originating in the neo-cortex);*
- *emotional, seemingly irrational reasons.*

Under hypnosis, an idea or suggestion can be planted directly into a subject's subconscious mind. Subjects can even be told not to act on the suggestion until some later point in time (this is called posthypnotic suggestion).

For example, you could tell a subject to turn off all the lights in the room thirty minutes after he is awakened. Five minutes before the appointed time, the subject will start complaining of a headache, or say that the bright lights are hurting his eyes. He'll then go and turn them all off.

Interestingly enough, the subject has to find a rational reason for doing something irrational, in this case an action that was planted in his subconscious mind by the hypnotist.

To summarize:

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1. The real motivation for our behavior often has nothing to do with the reasons we think are behind our actions, as demonstrated by the women comparing detergents, or the hypnotized subject closing all the lights.

2. These underlying motivations usually originate in the most primitive part of our brain.

3. Why we do things can be inf-luenced through the power of suggestion.

States of consciousness

Ideally, publicists would place target populations in a state of hypnosis in order to ensure that suggested modes of behavior become engraved in their minds, without being blocked by the rational neo-cortex. This is more or less what happens to people who shop in large department stores, supermarkets or malls - soothing musak, the vast array of merchandise to choose from, subliminal odors, free samples, etc., are all designed to make shoppers lose their sense of time, and spend more than they may have intended when they walked in.

The type of mild concentration required to watch TV also places viewers in a state that is very close to hypnosis. Driving a car on the highway can have the same effect: the purring of the engine, the comfortable seats, the monotony of the passing scenery, combine to place you in a state of mind that is very receptive to suggestion. Advertisers take full advantage of the situation, transmitting powerful suggestive messages on billboards, bus and truck panels, car radios, etc.

As people unconsciously slip into a kind of collective trance, the market potential for all kinds of products grows larger and larger. Companies hire and train sales people by the thousands, using the very same advertising methods to convince their own personnel that the products they represent are excellent, and deserve to be sold. In many cases sales people are not simply dupes of the system - they are aware that they are being programmed, but allow themselves to be conditioned, knowing that the best way to sell a product is to believe in its merits.

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Hitler and his advisors mastered the techniques of mass hypnosis perfectly - the huge rallies, with their massive decor and music, as well as the monotonous tone of his speeches, have become models of government propaganda.

In short then, both advertising and propaganda try to induce a semi-hypnotic state in target populations, enabling the suggestions that are made to bypass the critical, conscious part of the mind.

Suggestion

Suggestions are planted in people's minds with the help of images (the term 'image' is here used to include auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory, as well as visual images).

We are bombarded with visual images through various media: TV, movies, magazines, window displays, brochures, billboards, and so on. Since psychoanalysis discovered that our subconscious mind thinks in terms of symbols as well as images, symbols have become an important vehicle for transmitting suggestions: a photograph of a man's hand holding a box of detergent is retouched to accentuate the hairs growing on the back of the hand. Why? In order to enhance its virile symbolism and suggest that the detergent is more powerful.

It is more difficult to alter olfactory, tactile and gustatory images in this way, since they usually take the form of free samples of a given product.

Auditory images, on the other hand, are easily enhanced. Sound effects like the click of a seat belt being fastened, or the glug-glug of wine being poured from a bottle, are powerful suggestions, but the most powerful of all auditory images is language itself.

Animals possess five senses and their mental representations, constituting what Pavlov called the 'primary signaling system.' Man, because of his superior cerebral potential, developed a second signaling system, connected to the first, which greatly facilitates the transmission, manipulation, compila-

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tion, association and abstraction of cerebral images. This second system is language. People can directly transmit their own cerebral images to others, through the power of words and their influence on the mind. It is this same power, called terpnos logos, that sophrologists use to create new associations or unblock inhibited mental processes.

Various factors are used to reinforce the power of a suggestion:

Security

In order to appease and reassure our logical minds, advertisers often offer arguments that are designed to make potential buyers feel secure about a given product: its longstanding track record (established in 1874); its use by well-known personalities; its official recognition (winner of the — prize, approved by the FDA, etc); the brand name itself, which is often formulated to inspire confidence (pure Colombian coffee, Century 21, etc.).

Relaxation

The body and mind are in constant interaction. A tense mind is translated into nervous tension and muscular contractions. If the mind is to be receptive, the body must be relaxed. North African carpet vendors have been aware of this fact for centuries - clients are comfortably seated and offered a cup of mint tea before wares are exhibited. Friendly sales persons who smile a lot put buyers at ease. The same technique is used in TV and print ads, where restful images appearing before the actual sales message are designed to help customers relax.

Concentration

Once our attention is attracted by any aspect of an ad, other elements can be added, since the mind continues storing information unconsciously. In the example of the detergent being held by a manly hand, the symbolism, although not perceived on a conscious level, still has an impact. Subliminal advertising, discovered in 1965, transmits messages which are received on a level below that of ordinary consciousness. Superimposed images pass by so

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quickly that the conscious mind does not have time to perceive them. Nevertheless, they are perceived - tests have clearly shown that consumer behavior is influenced by these subliminal suggestions. The practice is now illegal, but the mechanism is still in place, occurring whenever you concentrate on a given object, but continue to register periphery information (for example while staring at a computer screen).

Repetition

Napoleon once said, 'repetition is the best part of rhetoric.' Fortunately, when we are in a waking state a simple suggestion is not enough to modify our mental structures, and in turn our behavior. Repetition reinforces an initial suggestion and compensates for the weakness of the original signal. If repeated often enough, a new cerebral pathway is formed.

Some brand names have been repeated so often they have become part of our everyday vocabulary (every advertiser's dream!); Kleenex, Frigidaire, Nike, Bic, etc., were all unknown brand names at one time. Through repetition, they have become synonymous with the products they represent. The exact same process is at work during our education and conditioning as children - frequent exhortations to 'be careful!' or 'don't touch!' become so deeply engrained in our minds we cease to question their validity.

Emotional state

Intense emotion, whether it be fear or joy, can rapidly create a new model of behavior when associated with a suggestion. Television advertising exploits the phenomenon by associating products with memorable events (the birth of a child, marriage, graduation, etc.).

Suggestion through example

A suggestion becomes much stronger when people can identify with the person or group making it. Non-verbal communication (smiling faces of people who have used a given product) is often used to provide an added dimension to the message.

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Examples are one of the strongest forms of suggestion in existence. If, on the other hand, the person or group making the suggestion acts differently than intended, the suggestion will be severely weakened, or even neutralized. The power of setting an example goes all the way back to childhood, when our parents acted as models for our developing behavior.

Faith

The greater the faith or confidence we place in a person or object, the more susceptible we become to suggestion. Faith can move mountains, as the saying goes. It can also place people in a state of semi-trance, making them so enthusiastic their normal cerebral functions become inhibited. This is what happens when someone who is ordinarily shy and uncommunicative becomes transformed by his or her belief in a cause into an eloquent orator, capable of stirring up the masses through the power of images and words.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which suggestion influences our daily lives.

How are such suggestions transformed into acts?

Suggestion is a form of cerebral conditioning, but between the suggestion and the act it implies lie a whole series of complex processes. A researcher named Bernheim was the first to discover what he called 'ideo-dynamics' - the theory that all suggestions tend to result in actions, as the subconscious automatically attempts to induce us to act on what it perceives.

Driving a car along the highway, lost in thought, you may suddenly realize you're approaching your exit. It's as if you were driving on automatic pilot. The same type of thing happens when you are trying to solve a problem - unable to find a solution, you concentrate on something else, when suddenly you're hit with an inspiration, as if the mental process had continued on a subconscious level, and guided you to the answer you were seeking.

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We'll be taking a closer look at ideo-dynamics later on.

Research on hypnosis, and later on psychology and psychoanalysis, has enabled us to gain a better understanding of the mechanism of suggestion. In the same way that sophrologists are sometimes able to affect miraculous cures using terpnos logos, other disciplines have been using various techniques to achieve the same result. All however, are based on the principles of suggestion we have just outlined.

How Miracles Happen

Let's start with the Catholic Church, as personified by Jesus and his apostles, and the saints. Overwhelming evangelical testimony through the centuries claims that … 'the blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, the crippled to walk, the lepers to be healed, and even the dead to be brought back to life.'

Saints are still performing miracles as we approach the end of the twentieth century, in various locations like Lourdes Cathedral in France. What seems to characterize most miracles is the fact that they occur instantly. There is nothing mysterious about curing psychologically induced functional disorders over time - suggestions planted in the mind, perhaps enhanced by some degree of trance and a dose of faith, gradually take effect and resolve the problem. The instant cures of organic disorders attributed to miracles, however, remain mysterious.

Professor Robert Tocquet of the Paris School of Anthropology, and a distinguished parapsychologist, offers the following hypothesis:

We know that the ability to regenerate organs exists in some animals. The higher we get on the evolutionary ladder, the more this ability is diminished. In man it has more or less disappeared. Invertebrates have astonishing powers of regeneration. Cut a sponge into tiny pieces and each piece will reconstitute itself entirely. The same is true of worms - when cut into segments, each part become a whole worm. Starfish, a little higher up the ladder, are able to contract themselves when afraid by expelling most of their internal

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organs, which they then regenerate when the source of danger has passed. Fish are able to redintegrate (the process of regenerating limbs or organs) some amputated body parts, including fins, jaws and sexual organs. Salamanders can redintegrate eyes, legs and tail (as can some other lizards).

Under normal conditions, this regenerative ability is absent in humans. But does that mean that it does not exist? Professor Tocquet believes that it does exist, in a latent state, in all people. As we said earlier, man evolved by superimposing a new part of the brain (the neo-cortex) over its more primitive part, at the same time refining and re-organizing its functions.

It seems that the function of redintegration, generally no longer apparent, can be reawakened under certain conditions. There are two ways this can happen:

- *either a person stimulates his or her own latent faculties of redintegration because of a psychological, emotional, or physiological shock (like sudden immersion in cold water, as is the custom at Lourdes);*

- *or a second party, gifted with paranormal faculties, stimulates the latent process.*

Professor Tocquet then calculated the rate at which cells must divide in order to regenerate an organ or cure a physical problem almost instantaneously, determining it to be fifteen to thirty times more rapid than normal, which remains within the realm of acceptable limits. His conclusion:

"Under these conditions, the almost instantaneous regeneration of tissues observed in so-called miraculous cures does not seem to be incompatible with normal cellular division. The metaphysical factor, the existence of which we are postulating here, must in some way accelerate the process to a rate that is not beyond reasonable limits. In addition, paranormal factors not only stimulate and accelerate cellular division, but also organize these divisions according to strict anatomical principles, so that a specific organ or other bodily part is reconstructed."

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As we'll see a little later on, the Russian discovery of bioplasm reinforces this theory.

In most cases then, some type of suggestion is responsible for effecting psychosomatic cures, whether they can be explained or are deemed miraculous. The ancient kings of France, who were believed to rule by divine right, were reportedly able to cure cases of scrofula, characterized by tubercular, purulent abscesses on the skin, by touching affected persons. On specific holy days, following rituals of solemn prayer, they would walk through the streets and perform a laying on of hands that could cure thousands of people at a time. This power was lost during the reign of Louis XVI. Charles X tried to revive it, but in vain - by that time doubt in the institution of divine right had become too strong to overcome.

A demonic spectacle

The Jansenist movement in France had been condemned on a number of occasions by the time Deacon François of Paris, a fervent Jansenist and extremely popular man of the cloth, died on May 1, 1727. His followers prayed at the deceased deacon's tomb, hoping for a miracle that would incite the Church to admit the error of its ways and cease its unjust persecution of the Jansenist movement.

A pauper named Léro, suffering from bleeding ulcers on his left leg which doctors had been unable to cure, spent nine days at the deacon's tomb, praying for a miracle. On the ninth day he rose up, completely cured.

The news spread quickly, and soon a huge crowd had gathered around the tomb, made up of people suffering from all sorts of ailments. Over the next five years, thousands of miraculous cures were reported to have taken place in the cemetery where the deacon lay buried. The scene must have resembled Dante's inferno - imagine one of Mesmer's group sessions, with people going into convulsions, creating an atmosphere akin to mass hysteria, with the added element of torture being administered as penance - beating, burning, stoning, whipping, etc. Strangely enough, in many cases flagella-

tion and other forms of torture actually seemed to improve a patient's condition. By modern standards, of course, the spectacle seems sickening.

The Church, worried about a possible revolt, demanded that King Louis XV put an end to the demonic demonstrations. The king, horrified by accounts of mass hysteria, grotesque convulsions and other bizarre occurrences, closed the cemetery on January 29, 1732.

The people responded by posting a notice on the cemetery gates: *As King Louis decreed, God take heed, miracles no more, beyond this door.*

Faith Healers

Many of the same elements we mentioned in our discussion of advertising were at work in places like Lourdes and the Saint Médard cemetery where deacon François lay buried: encouraging faith and confidence, inducing a semi-trance like state, inciting sudden violent emotions, establishing recognition by, or identification with, well-known personalities, and so on.

The art of faith healing continues to this day. In countries like France, you are more likely to encounter a country healer than a shaman dancing to the beat of drums, although the country healer may seem just as strange, repeating mystic rituals that have been handed down for centuries, accompanied by gestures, incantations, magic formulas, potions, ointments, talismans and the like.

In the *Eye Of The Sorcerer*, a report on sorcery in France by two journalists, P. Alfonsi and P. Pesnot, examples are given of magic formulas used by healers to cure the sick:

" APHONIDA + MALTHEURS + URAT + PUATIA + CONDISA+ FONDEN + ORTOO + NOXIO + APENIS + BOURGASIS + GLAY + VENIA SERCHANI.

"Feel the presence of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin. Holy Saint John has joined them. God says to Saint John: Sit down. I cannot, replies Saint John, my eyes are too painful. Sit down, says God, and I will cure your eyes.

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With this white veil I bind you. With this red veil I caress you. With this black veil I cure you. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Hemorrhaging was stopped with the following incantation: "De latere ejus exivit sanguis et aqua."

"For sprains and broken limbs repeat: May God, our blessed Saint Anne and the holy Saints Cosmos and Damien heal these bones, nerves, and joints..."

The prayers were chanted as the healer made the sign of the cross, and touched or breathed on the injured part of the body.

When analyzed, it was found that the potions, ointments and plants prescribed by such faith healers did sometimes contain active ingredients that might have had a beneficial effect. Modern healers, however, tend to use concoctions with absolutely no medical benefits, often composed of flour, lactose, chalk, talc, distilled water and bitter tasting syrup. Nevertheless these substances can have an extraordinary effect, due no doubt to the power of suggestion, and to the faith patients place in the healer. The medical term for this is the placebo effect, which we'll be talking more about later on.

Talismans, medallions, holy images and symbols, crystals, precious stones, etc. were supposed to have more of a preventive than a curative effect, and often yielded results that were quite spectacular. The bearers of talismans would frequently be lacking confidence in their own intellectual and/or physical abilities. If their faith was strong enough, they could draw strength from the talisman, improve their condition, and attribute the change to divine intervention. It was as if the symbol removed inhibitions and released latent talents and strengths.

In the process of healing through suggestion, the power attributed to the healer already exists in a latent state in the patient. All the healer does is act as a catalyst, releasing the self healing mechanism. Suggestion is not the only means of achieving this - certain paranormal faculties can also have the same effect, as we'll see in the last part of this book.

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In this century, one of the most celebrated healers in Europe discovered his talent almost by accident. Colonel Olcott was a student of the famous medium Madame Blavatsky. Olcott met a man named Cornelius Appu, suffering from paralysis in one arm, and partial paralysis in a leg. Olcott decided to try and help the man by performing a few magnetic passes, after suggesting that the technique could help. The treatment seemed to have no immediate effect, but the man returned the next day saying he felt a little better. He wanted another treatment. Colonel Olcott was surprised, but agreed to try again. In a few days his patient had regained full use of his limbs. Appu reported the incident to the local newspaper, which ran a story about the 'miracle cure,' claiming that Colonel Olcott was an extraordinary healer.

People started showing up at his door, either because they were curious or because they were seeking help. Olcott cured one person, then another and another. His reputation spread like wildfire, and he soon found himself inundated with requests for help from the four corners of the globe.

After his own initial surprise and skepticism had passed, Olcott accepted what seemed to be an undeniable fact: either because of his notoriety, or because of the confidence he inspired in people, he really was able to cure the sick. It was as if the faith people placed in him had reinforced his own talent as a healer.

In modern times, a new breed of faith healers has appeared, notably in the Philippines. Charter companies are booked solid, flying people to group healing sessions, rituals that usually include prodigious amounts of blood and organs, both of which act as visual suggestions, reinforcing the faith of subjects. Here is a report by the wife of a Latin American diplomat who went to Manila for a firsthand look at these so-called miracle workers:

"Suggestion is their main tool. They know that for patients to believe in their power, they have to spread a lot of blood around, creating the impression that they are literally tearing the disease out of a patient's body. It is the patients themselves who beg to be operated on. When a healer refuses for one reason or another, they are greatly disappointed.

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If their demand for help is accepted, they are all the more apt to believe the intervention will work. Based on what I saw with my own eyes, there is no fraud involved. The whole thing is staged to stimulate patients' own psychological powers of self healing." (Olivier Jourdan, Paris Match Magazine, No. 1309).

Spirit healers

This type of healer enters a trance state during which he or she is 'possessed' by the spirit of another, usually a deceased doctor. The healer then operates on the patient's 'subtle body,' a kind of energy body that mirrors the physical body. Once the operation is complete, beneficial effects are supposed to be transferred to the patient's physical body.

One of this century's most renowned healers from the 'world beyond,' Doctor Lang, could be summoned by a certain George Chapman, a fireman by profession. His list of cures was impressive, to say the least. Many members of the medical profession did not hesitate to refer their patients to him when conventional medical interventions failed. As one doctor said, "I believe that spirit healing does truly exist. The only problem is explaining how it works."

The power of suggestion can be just as effective in a negative sense - many people, believing they were afflicted with the plague, developed all the symptoms of the disease, although post-mortem examinations showed that the only way they could have been affected was psychologically. Any doctor knows that telling patients they have nothing to worry about, that a health problem is minor and will soon disappear, will accelerate the healing process, while saying something like, "I'm afraid your condition is serious, there isn't much we can do for you…" will probably make patients even more ill than they already are.

Can the cures produced by Chapman and other spirit healers be attributed solely to the power of suggestion? The list of health problems successfully treated in this manner is astonishing: ulcers, cancer, blindness, schizo-

phrenia, polio, etc. Sometimes patients even develop scars where 'subtle body' operations were supposed to have been carried out.

Spirit healers abound in Brazil, a country that has inherited the cult traditions of its African and Indian populations. José Arigo, who died in 1973, was reported to have performed operations with a kitchen knife, without leaving any scars whatsoever. At present, a woman called Isaltina is the reigning queen of spirit healers. Her inspiration is a certain Doctor Artz Scovsk, a German physician. Isaltina's reputation generated so much controversy that a Brazilian TV station decided to try and produce a live broadcast of her sessions. Isaltina accepted, knowing full well that if she failed she would destroy any confidence people had in spirit healing, as well as her own reputation. The TV journalists were allowed to choose the patient, and the whole procedure was to be witnessed by seven doctors.

On the night of the broadcast every TV in Rio was turned on. Stores stayed open late, restaurants and bars with television sets were packed with customers. In poorer districts, neighbors crowded into homes where a TV was available. Isaltina was introduced, and said a few words to her spectators. Then the patient was wheeled in a wheelchair. He was a well known personality, a doctor and former Secretary of State. Both his legs had been paralyzed for years.

After exchanging a few words with the man in order to gain his confidence, Isaltina told him to relax, and then placed him in a trance. She made a few passes over his torso and legs, under the skeptical scrutiny of the seven doctors present.

After some minutes she said, "It is done."

The camera zoomed in on the patient. He sat up, appearing to be still half asleep. Slowly he placed one foot on the floor, then the other. Then, before the astonished eyes of millions of viewers, he stood up, walked over to Isaltina and embraced her.

The extraordinary Edgar Cayce

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Perhaps the most extraordinary case of paranormal healing ever recorded concerned the amazing Edgar Cayce.

In October, 1910, the Times of London ran the following headline: ILLITERATE BECOME GREAT PHYSICIAN UNDER HYPNOSIS. The strange powers exhibited by Edgar Cayce rocked the very foundations of the medical world. Cayce, who did not need to be possessed by a deceased doctor in order to cure people, seemed to have inherited the paranormal faculties of the Marquis de Puységur who, in a state of hypnosis, was able to diagnose patients' health problems, and then prescribe appropriate remedies.

His story was the subject of endless discussion, and rightly so, since the thirty thousand or so diagnoses made by Cayce were all carefully documented, authenticated and verified by trained physicians. Result: in over 80% of cases Cayce's diagnoses were correct, and the treatments he prescribed effective, even though they often defied any known laws of medicine.

Having mastered the technique of self hypnosis, Cayce would simply lie down and take a few deep breaths. In just a moment or two his eyes would start fluttering and his body would begin twitching, signaling the onset of the trance state. An assistant would recite the following instructions:

"Now you are going to see Mr. —, born on —, living in —. You will perform a complete and detailed examination of this person, and you will tell me what state he is in now, and give me the causes of any problems you find; you will also tell me what measures to take to alleviate his problem. Now you are going to answer the questions I have just asked."

Without being given any more information, Cayce would describe the person, the place he or she lived, and his or her physical condition, along with his recommendations for a cure.

Suggestion entered into Cayce's work in two ways:

- *Firstly, the formula recited to him as he entered a state of hypnosis somehow triggered his powers of clairvoyance;*

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- *Secondly, the prescriptions he offered to patients became doubly effective because of the nature of their source, which acted like a powerful post-hypnotic suggestion.*

Christian Science and Suggestion

Phineas Parkhurst Quimbey, a watchmaker living in New Orleans in the mid 1800's, was well aware of the importance of suggestion. An avid practitioner of what was then still called magnetism (later referred to as hypnosis), Quimbey noticed something unusual: during diagnosis / prescription sessions, his subject seemed to prescribe remedies and treatments which, although often apparently inappropriate, seemed to be just as effective for curing patients.

On one such occasion, his hypnotized subject prescribed a medication that happened to be very expensive. When Quimbey told him that the woman being treated was poor, and asked him if it would be possible to prescribe something that was within her means, the subject / therapist immediately suggested a remedy that, although much less costly, would have the completely opposite effect of the original remedy.

Quimbey could only deduce what he had long suspected was true: it was a patient's faith in the process of consultation, and in the power of the prescribed remedy - *and not the remedy itself* - that was responsible for the cure.

He decided to abandon what he called 'the subterfuge of magnetism' and instead developed a quasi-religious, quasi-philosophical system which would guarantee the health of its followers. He called it Christian Science, or the science of health.

Mrs. Mary-Baker Eddy was one of Quimbey's patients. She was a nervous woman, hot-tempered, highly emotional, uncompromising in her morals to the point of being neurotic, and a passionate believer in spiritualism. She also happened to be bedridden, suffering from paralysis.

After being cured by Phineas Quimbey's new doctrine, she became its most fervent disciple, devouring everything Quimbey had written on the

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subject. Quimbey himself died a short time later, and Mrs. Baker-Eddy took over the reins of the fledgling movement.

Here's what Mark Twain had to say about her character: "She was born with the mind of a businessman, and a great appetite for power. If she found a job as a chef's assistant in a hotel, there is no doubt in my mind that in two years she would own all the hotels in the city, and in twenty years, all the hotels in America. She is the driving force behind the huge fortune amassed by the Christian Science movement."

In half a century, Mrs. Baker-Eddy built a vast occult empire, based on a strictly hierarchical system of management and efficient organization. At present the movement has attracted over two million followers around the world. Members must pay to take courses, pay to be treated, pay to attend ceremonies. If and when they finally graduate as accredited Christian Science healers, they have to pay a monthly fee to retain their license to practice.

The ideological basis of the movement can be summed up as follows: Man, being an emanation of God, is spiritual and eternal. Man never was, and never will be, a material entity. Pain, suffering and disease are all imagined, caused by mistaken beliefs. Restore truth in the minds of patients, and they will be cured.

Although we do not espouse this doctrine, it must be admitted that it has certain benefits:

- *Instead of raising children to fear sickness and suffering (and thereby turning them into anguished adults), Christian Science teaches children that they are basically healthy. This seems to actually strengthen their resistance to disease, at least on a psychological level.*

- *If official testimonials and documented reports can be believed, Christian Science is responsible for thousands of 'miraculous' cures of all kinds, ranging from fractured bones to cancer tumors to mental disorders, effected either by patients themselves, or with the help of a qualified Christian Science healer.*

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- *The movement's positive philosophy seems to benefit believers: like a self-fulfilling prophecy, constant suggestions that followers have the right to health, wealth and happiness through faith in Christian Science actually produce results.*

Unfortunately, like many doctrines, Christian Science is uncompromising as far as its moral dictates and aberrations are concerned, and does not tolerate any resistance or skepticism: followers must place complete faith in the biblical quotes and 'keys' revealed by Mrs. Baker-Eddy, and systematically refuse any form of conventional medical treatment, even under circumstances which are life-threatening.

Coué : an attempt at synthesis

Emile Coué, a member of the Nancy School mentioned earlier, eventually developed his own method of suggestion, to be used on subjects in a waking state rather than under hypnosis. The Coué Method was derided by detractors, who misunderstood its aproach. Coué himself was ridiculed - he wasn't even a doctor, only a simple pharmacist. And yet, the method endured, and Coué's name is inscribed in the annals of psychology for having formulated the laws governing suggestion, described below.

The Law of Inverse Effort

If you think, "I want such and such a thing to happen…" and your inner mind says, "You want this to happen, but it won't…" not only will you not get your wish, you'll get the opposite of what you want.

To illustrate the point, Coué used a story told by the great French scientist Pascal: Take a plank of wood thirty feet long and half a foot wide, put it on the ground and ask people to walk its length. Most people would not have any trouble. Take the same plank, suspend it between two ten-story buildings, and ask people to do the same thing. Chances are, no matter how much of a conscious effort they make, most people would fall, or be too afraid to try.

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The same applies to people suffering from insomnia, for example. The thought: "I'm going to have trouble falling asleep…" inevitably crosses their mind as soon as they get into bed. The more of an effort they make - the harder they try to fall asleep - the more agitated they become. In fact, it is only when they stop wanting to fall asleep that they are able to do so.

Say there's a word on the tip of your tongue - no matter how much of an effort you make, you can't recall what it is. But if you say something like, "It'll come to me…" and then stop trying to remember, you'll probably have a sudden flash a few minutes later and remember the word.

Think about what happens if you say, "I'm going to give it a try…" The word 'try' implies a possibility of failure. A suggestion formulated in this way will have a negative effect because it is accompanied by doubt, and it is the aspect of doubt that your subconscious mind will focus on. Result? The opposite of what you want to happen will happen.

The Law of Dominant Effect

This refers to the ideo-motor aspect of suggestion we talked about earlier: the conscious mind will rationalize ways to transform any idea accepted by the subconscious mind into a reality. In addition, a stronger or dominant suggestion will take precedence over a weaker one.

Our behavior is characterized by the choices we are constantly having to make. We cannot think two things at the same time, nor can we act in two different ways at the same time. If you manage to convince a kleptomaniac that he or she won't steal anymore, then s/he won't steal!

Coué formulated the following laws concerning this aspect of suggestion:

1. When the conscious and subconscious minds are in conflict, the subconscious mind will always - without exception - prevail.

2. When the conscious and subconscious minds are in conflict, the subconscious

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mind exerts a force that is in direct proportion to the square of the conscious mind (the mathematical term is an analogy which we hope will help readers comprehend Coué's approach).

3. When the conscious and subconscious minds are in agreement, they do not work together - each gains force from the other.

4. The subconscious mind can be directed.

Autosuggestion

At first Coué used suggestion in a very specific way: he would suggest that such and such a symptom would disappear. Later he realized that making more general suggestions was just as effective - it was as if the subconscious took over the job of targeting specific problems. He finally came up with the formulation that made him famous:

"Day by day, in every way, I am feeling / getting better and better."

He told patients to repeat the formulation every day, during autosuggestion sessions, claiming its effects would prove to be both preventive and curative.

What is autosuggestion? As far as Coué was concerned, all exterior suggestions are transformed into autosuggestions before being acted on, because only then are they accepted by the subconscious.

"We can define suggestion as 'the action of grafting or imposing an idea onto the brain of another person.' But can we really do that? Strictly speaking, no. Exterior suggestions are useless in and of themselves: they will have absolutely no effect until the subject transforms them into autosuggestions. As for autosuggestion itself, we could define it as… "the implantation of an idea in one's mind, by oneself." You can suggest anything to another person: if that person's subconscious does not accept it, if it is not digested and assimilated, so to speak, and transformed into an autosuggestion, no action or change in behavior will be forthcoming."

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This means that we can formulate and implant suggestions in our own mind.

In fact, that is exactly what we are doing all day long!

We are all conditioned by the way we think. Buddha put it another way: "Everything we are is the result of thought: our present condition is based on thought, it is made of thought. If a person speaks or acts while under the influence of negative or harmful thoughts, pain and suffering will follow, as surely as a cartwheel follows the hooves of an ox."

To compensate for the many negative autosuggestions we make each day, Coué advised his patients to embark on a program of positive programming. Although he refused to use hypnosis per se, he did recommend that patients repeat their formulations under specific conditions:

- *just before falling asleep;*
- *just after waking up;*
- *while listening to the ticking of a clock or metronome.*

As you can see, these conditions, which were designed to help patients become particularly receptive, resemble the relaxation techniques used in sophrology.

The trouble with "it"

I once did a little test: I slipped a couple of Coué's best known formulations, including "Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better…" and "It will pass…" in with some other papers. Without mentioning anything about their origin, I asked a semantics expert to analyze the language and, if possible, improve its structure, in order to make the formulations more suggestive and give them greater emotional impact.

He said there was nothing he could do to improve the formulations. He was especially impressed by Coué's next to best known phrase, "It too will pass…" Here's what he had to say about it:

"According to Freud, the word 'it' represents the part of our subconscious related to our most primitive impulses. We're always talking about that part of ourselves, referring to it simply as 'it:' "Doctor, it hurts…" "It's okay…" "It makes me so upset…" "I feel it's doing me good…" etc.

"In many instances, functional or organic disorders are caused by conflicts between our conditioned conscious mind (restricted by taboos, traditions, moral codes, etc.) and our subconscious impulses.

"It too will pass…" is a suggestion that liberates the subconscious. The 'it' part of ourselves is changing, along with the rest of the world - it can make progress, instead of remaining stagnant and creating corresponding blockages in our body or conscious mind, which in turn result in physical or mental health problems."

I found the concept interesting, perhaps because I had just run into a little problem with the word 'it' myself. After a seminar I gave on developing paranormal faculties, I asked the participants to write a short evaluation of the course. The word it appeared so many times, in reference to so many aspects of the course, that I had to ask a journalist friend of mine to rewrite the testimonials in order to make them easier to understand.

Here's an example. Paul H. wrote: "It made me more aware of these kinds of phenomena… it helped me acquire greater self discipline, and more control over my nervous system and my body in general… it provided a thread of meaning to my life that had been missing before…. It shows people who rely too much on logic and rationality that there are other dimensions to life."

The 'it' Paul was referring to could be described as… 'the part of our subconscious mind that controls paranormal faculties and is receptive to suggestion.' With that in mind, his evaluation made much more sense.

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To get back to Coué… his two best known formulations (Every day, in all ways… and It will pass…) are like Vitamin C for the subconscious mind. They proved to be so effective that thousands of cures were attributed to their effect. As Coué himself said, "The technique of autosuggestion is not meant to replace medical treatment, but to reinforce it. Mental formulations are designed to act as an aid both for patients and doctors."

Unfortunately, Coué himself was idolized by many of his patients, who swore by his method and claimed that no other treatment was worthwhile.

Magic and illusion

When I was a teenager I discovered I had a passion for magic. As I practiced my 'tricks' I learned three important things:

- Firstly, the human mind is very fallible. All kinds of slight-of-hand movements are performed out in the open, right there for everyone to see. The magician is nervous, fearing someone will detect the ruse. But no, everyone's attention is distracted by a diversionary word or a gesture. Although spectators do see what is going on, their mind chooses not to analyze what it perceives.

- Secondly, I observed how simple tricks could become transformed into almost legendary feats, simply by being recounted to others. There was nothing more satisfying than doing an easy trick, and then listening to people tell their friends about it. It's amazing how much information was added or left out in these accounts - in most cases the trick, as it was described later, was so different from the original it would have been impossible to perform, even for the most skilled magician!

- The third thing I noticed is that people love to believe in mystery and deception, even when finding a logical solution is simple. The last thing a magician should do is reveal how his tricks are performed to an audience. No matter how ingenious a trick is, people are always disappointed when

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they find out how it's done, perhaps because they feel stupid for not having figured it out for themselves.

The same applies to the use of terpnos logos in sophrology, and Coué's method of positive formulation. Both techniques are so simple, and yet they work!

Coué's method can be considered a precursor of sophrology. The techniques are similar in many ways: Coué would speak very slowly, using a single rhythmic tone, much like the monotone used in sophrology, when instructing patients. He also told his students that when they made suggestions they should not act like someone ordering a patient to do something. Instead they should act like a friend, a guide, leading patients towards the path to recovery. This is precisely the attitude adopted by sophrologists.

There is an Emile Coué Institute in Paris where his method is still being taught, and where interested persons can obtain a recording of the complete series of formulations, taped by Coué himself (for a transcript see Appendix 2).

The placebo effect

In 1949, the American pharmaceutical industry introduced a new type of medication - antihistamines - designed to combat allergies, asthma and, it was thought, sinusitis and colds.

The publicity went into full swing, announcing that science had finally found a miracle cure for the common cold. Consumers flocked to their local pharmacies to buy the product and, interestingly enough, results were reported to be excellent in most cases.

The American army expressed an interest in the new drug, since a large number of soldiers tended to catch cold during rigorous training exercises. Because sick soldiers can't just take a few days off to rest and recover, colds would often degenerate into bronchitis and other types of respiratory disor-

ders. The army appointed a military doctor, Lieutenant Colonel Hoagland, to undertake a series of test before the order for the medication was actually signed.

To ensure that the antihistamines were effective, Dr. Hoagland divided his subjects into three groups:

- group #1 received no medication at all - colds were left to run their natural course;
- group #2 were given antihistamine tablets;
- group #3 were given tablets that resembled the antihistamine tablets in every way except one - they were made of lactose instead of medication (lactose is a sugar found in milk, and has absolutely no pharmaceutical effect).

Subject were told to report back in two days. When they did, Dr. Hoagland was amazed by what he found:

- members of the first group, which had received no medication, continued to suffer from cold symptoms;
- 35% of the second group - those who were given antihistamines - showed no more cold symptoms;
- 35% of the third group, which had received a benign medication substitute, also showed no more symptoms!

Dr. Hoagland concluded that the only benefits antihistamines had were psychological. Although the army did not place its order for the new medication, Hoagland's research generated a tremendous amount of controversy among scientists, and a host of further experiments were carried out on what came to be known as the placebo effect.

Although placebos look exactly like medications (tablets, capsules, suppositories, syrup, etc.) they are composed of chemically inert substances like

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distilled water, flour, lactose, and so on. The important thing is that subjects are not aware they are being given a substitute - they think it's the real thing.

Placebo is derived from the Latin word 'placere' which means to please. Doctors were already familiar with the term: instead of arguing with patients who demanded some type of medication even though they didn't need it, or even though the medication would do them no good, doctors would simply prescribe a harmless substance in order to 'placate' them.

"It might not help, but it won't do any harm…" was the way doctors looked at it. After Hoagland's discovery, however, doctors actually began using placebos as a therapeutic tool. Experiments showed that a placebo's degree of effectiveness depended to a great extent on the attitude of the doctor prescribing it, and on what the patient believed the supposed medication would accomplish. If a doctor said something like, "This is an excellent medication, perfectly suited to your condition…" its effect would be much more positive than if he said, "We don't know much about this medication. Give it a try and see what happens."

Doctors Kissel and Barrucand reported an interesting experiment in which the same placebo was administered to two groups of patients suffering from bleeding ulcers. The first group was told by their consulting doctor that the placebo was a sensational new medication. The second group was told by a nurse (not a doctor) that the placebo was still in an experimental stage, and that its effects were not fully known. After a period of one year, both groups were examined. In the first group, 70% of patients had improved dramatically, while in the second group only 25% showed any improvement.

Clearly the attitude of the person prescribing the medication has an enormous effect on whether it is effective or not. The same researchers then conducted a double blind study, in which neither the doctor nor the patients knew whether the medication was real or not. The results were strange to say the least - in some cases a placebo was actually more effective than a real medication! Amphetamines, for example, which are designed to stimulate the central nervous system, improved physical endurance by 88%, while a placebo increased endurance by 132%! In 30% to 40% of cases, placebos were

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just as effective as real medications for curing various disorders. The remaining 60% to 70% of subjects were less sensitive to the placebo for various reasons. Some were even diagnosed as being neurotic, and reacted negatively.

The placebo effect has even been used to replace surgery: placebo operations (simple incisions without any real intervention) resulted in an equal number of recoveries for certain types of problems, with the positive or negative attitude of the surgeon being a determining factor for success (another determining factor being the expectation of patients as to whether they would recover or not).

All this should give you some idea of how important suggestion is. As these and other studies show, even therapies that are seemingly based on concrete factors (medications or operations) are impacted by the power of suggestion.

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Part Two: The Alpha Experience

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Mind Control, Biofeedback and Alpha Waves

"In centuries to come, the west will produce its own form of yoga."
Carl Jung

Silva Mind Control

The headline of a large ad in the Herald Tribune caught my eye: *An amazing scientifically based system that liberates the powerful potential of your mind, and develops your concentration, memory, intuition and creativity.*

I was fascinated - it was like reading an exact description of what I was trying to accomplish in my 'alpha seminars' on personal development, which were a synthesis of all the methods I had come across previously. Was this some form of competition? I had to find out more.

The following evening I found myself in a conference room of a downtown hotel. There were about fifty other people there. The host began by pointing to a large graphic.

"The mind has many levels of consciousness, each characterized by a specific type of brain wave. When our mind is focussed on exterior objects, when we are conscious of the world around us and of the passage of time, in other words when our five senses are in full operation, we emit what are called beta waves.

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"When our mind is focussed inward, on spiritual or extra-sensorial matters, and we forget about the ordinary passage of time, we emit alpha or theta waves. And finally, when we are unconscious, our brain emits delta waves."

She mentioned a number of scientific and medical references to back up the theory, and then explained that this course in 'psycho-orientology' developed by José Silva, would teach us how to control our mind by regulating the types of brain waves we emit.

I couldn't help but think about an article I had recently read by a certain Professor Gastaut, a specialist in electroencephalogram technology, who was disturbed by … "… the explosion of mind control businesses, all telling Mr. And Mrs. John Doe to practice their alpha control and electronic yoga exercises in order to attain alpha mastery through an alpha dynamic method which promises to make them smarter and get rid of all kinds of bad habits, as well as stimulate their powers of ESP so they can communicate with long lost loved ones."

He went on to defend the victims of these unscrupulous companies, claiming that… "… clients end up buying all kinds of overpriced and ineffective gadgets which are supposed to stimulate alpha wave activity, or pay large sums of money to learn how to control their alpha rhythms without the help of an apparatus, in courses offered by fly-by-night specialists without any real professional training. Gullible new-age enthusiasts generally pay nothing for an introductory lecture, usually held in some posh hotel, and then sign on for a week's course, complete with a guaranteed alpha mastery diploma, often paying hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars in advance." (From The World of Medicine, August 7, 1974 - a response to this article, which appeared in Psychology Magazine, Vol. 59, is reprinted in Appendix 3 of this book).

I must say the professor sounded like a frustrated movie critic who hates his job because he can't get out there and make movies himself. Whenever I come across a review like that, I make sure to go and see the movie - at least half the time it turns out to be great!

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In any case, I decided to take the course and find out for myself what it was all about.

"On Sunday when the course is over," the host was saying, "you'll be given the name and age of someone you don't know. You'll be able to describe that person fully, and tune in to what he or she is feeling or thinking."

Everyone in the room was incredulous, except for me - I had already taught the same method, based on a technique developed by Edgar Cayce, with great success…

Well, it's Sunday and the seminar is over. It was interesting and disappointing at the same time. Interesting because it gave me an opportunity to practice a lot of exercises, even though I was already familiar with many of them, and because I learned more about José Silva, a living legend for his followers, the father of ten children, a tireless worker who, at the end of each working day, spent his time devouring anything he could find to read on subjects like psychology, hypnosis, occult phenomena and so on, until he couldn't keep his eyes open.

He even did experiments on self hypnosis and clairvoyance with his children and, probably because children are less skeptical and more in touch with their intuition, came up with some amazing results.

For one thing, they were able to 'visualize' people they had never met simply by being told their name, and clearly describe how they looked and felt at any given moment. Then, after conditioning them with currents of positive thought and explaining concepts like the power of prayer, Silva would suggest that they cure their subjects by imagining they were their patients. The things the children were able to accomplish were surprising, to say the least. For example, he asked one of his children to imagine a woman suffering from a number of psychosomatic problems because of her solitude. Eyes closed, the child then mimed the act of dipping some bread in a bowl of soup. When Silva asked what he was doing, the boy replied, "I'm putting her into a bath of love."

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Another case concerned a woman with heart problems. After entering the alpha state, Silva's daughter went through the motions of giving someone a massage. In another room, Silva asked one of his sons to tune into the same patient. "There's something wrong with her heart," the boy said. When Silva asked the boy if he could help her he said, "Someone's already helping her."

On another occasion Silva asked his daughter to create an imaginary person who could give her advice and help with the experiments.

"Ask what his name is," Silva said.

"His name is Thomas, but he says you can call him Tom."

"And what does he think about my idea of inventing him?"

"He wants to know what makes you think it was your idea?" the girl replied.

After winning a large sum of money in a lottery, Silva decided to use the funds to set up an organization that would develop and promote a method based on his personal experiences. He called it the Silva Mind Control Method.

"These exercises are a fascinating collection of classical techniques, including self hypnosis, visualization, sensory awakening, and so on, with the added element of a system of symbolism developed by Silva himself. The method seems to me to be an authentic and valuable contribution to the methodology of consciousness expansion."

Judging by the success of Silva's Mind Control and Psycho-Orientation seminars, the method does provide excellent results. Since 1970, over 300,000 people have taken his course, and the Psycho-Orientation Institute now has over 250 trained instructors in the United States alone.

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Some instructors, after being trained by Silva, have set up organizations of their own, resulting in a phenomenal increase in the number of centers offering course on things like alpha dynamics, mind dynamics, and so on.

Silva's Mind Control method has also been vehemently attacked by a number of scientists, including Professor Gastaut, mentioned earlier. As far as I can see, it is Silva's pragmatic approach, which can be summed up as 'if it works, use it!' that seems to bother persons whose minds have been trained to think only along scientific lines.

In fact, certain aspects of Silva's teaching are extremely difficult to accept, and do much to discredit the method as a whole. Take the following statement, for example: 'Visualize yourself winning a lottery, and you will win.'

This is a gross oversimplification of the mechanism of suggestion which, although it may be effective, still has its limits. In terms of methodology, Silva's psycho-orientation seems to be more of a collection of existing techniques, rather than a synthesis of these techniques into something new and different. Some are difficult to take seriously, while others are embellished with unnecessary esoteric rhetoric. In addition, the kind of unquestioning acceptance demanded of followers is troubling to anyone who tends to think in rational terms.

On the other hand, Silva's method does seem to appeal to the North American mindset, which appreciates simplicity and pragmatism. The emotional testimony of thousands of men and women have helped confirm Silva's theory of the existence of some kind of divine presence which defies rational explanation, and which far exceeds the powers of the rational mind.

Here are a few examples of the kind of formulations students are told to repeat:

- I will develop my mental faculties in order to better serve humanity.
- The only difference between a genius and an ordinary person is that a genius

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uses a larger part of his / her brain for some special purpose. Now I too am capable of using more of my brain potential for any purpose I choose.

- I will never allow my mind or body to develop a disease like … (specify the disease).

- Etc.

People who have taken the course maintain a pragmatic attitude towards these kinds of suggestions. "It doesn't matter what you say, as long as it works."

In her book *The Brain Revolution*, Marilyn Ferguson, a scientific journalist, writes: "The sincere, but perhaps overly critical reaction of many members of the scientific community concerning Mr. Silva's Mind Control method are, in my opinion, exaggerated. Millions of people who never thought to devote a moment of their time to introspection suddenly discover a need to expand their consciousness, to find inner peace, to establish better, more open relations with their friends and family, to learn how to develop self-control, and so on. After completing the course, many report an improvement in their health, more energy, improved memory, etc. Others may lose weight, stop smoking or drinking, or overcome a drug problem."

The great advantage of Silva's method is that it has managed to include a number of widely differing techniques into a single system. Towards the end of the course, students are taught how to develop their faculties of ESP in order to give them firsthand experience of just how powerful their mind can be, sometimes with surprising results.

Based on experiments Silva conducted with his own children, the Mind Control method uses a kind of mental laboratory in which to demonstrate powers of ESP. Two assistants are present, their role being to represent the parts of ourselves which we do not normally express. The process is designed to allow our subconscious mind to transmit information that we would usually censure or block out completely. It is a rather ingenious way to teach people to receive and transmit messages to that part of themselves which

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they are not aware of (we'll be taking a closer look at some of these mental techniques in the last part of this book).

What seems to exasperate scientists the most is Silva's constant references to the different types of brain waves (alpha, beta, theta and delta) and his insistence that students must learn to control their brain frequencies (with or without the help of some kind of device) in order to reach a special state of interiorization. Detractors claim this is simply a way to get people to invest in devices or courses that do not have any scientific basis, and therefore cannot be effective.

What is bio-feedback?

Feedback is a term used by learning theory psychologists to signify 'information received in response to a given behavior.' A good example can be taken from archery: the initial action, aiming and releasing the arrow, is followed by its feedback - the hole made by the arrow in the target. If the arrow is too far to the left, we adjust our initial behavior (aiming and releasing) more to the right.

In very simple terms, we could say that people act for two reasons:

- in order to avoid what is painful;
- in order to seek what is pleasurable.

Pain and pleasure are both basic forms of bio-feedback. A child who burns himself playing with matches will learn, through the feedback of pain, that matches can be dangerous.

Behavior can be modified by positive reinforcement, which is the equivalent of pleasurable feedback, or negative reinforcement, the equivalent of pain, failure, loss, etc.

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Western society is based on this principle, from the spankings and rewards children receive to the prison sentences and awards handed out to adults, depending on how they behave.

Bio-feedback relies on a mechanism of biological information, and is founded on the following theory:

Certain types of physiological processes, which are ordinarily outside the sphere of conscious control, can gradually be mastered if they are transformed into visual or auditory signals. Breathing does not need to be reinforced by a visual or auditory signal because we can control it simply by concentrating and making an effort to do so. Brain waves, or the degree of contraction of our muscles, on the other hand, are normally imperceptible, and need to be reinforced.

In 1968, J. Kamya, a psychiatrist at the University of Chicago, decided to try and get subjects to recognize a particularly interesting type of brain wave - alpha waves.

"I wondered if, after repeated sessions in which subjects learned to detect this type of wave, they could not be taught to enter some special state of awareness."

To his great surprise, not only were subjects able to recognize different types of brain waves with ease, they could also voluntarily switch from one type of wave to another. The process was greatly facilitated by using a device that emitted a beep when the desired frequency of brain wave appeared.

Kamya called the process bio-feedback. The technique was soon being used to treat a wide range of disorders, sometimes with astonishing success, shedding new light on the concept of what is voluntary and involuntary, as far as processes taking place within the human organism are concerned. Its potential applications are so varied that we are still discovering new ways to use it, from curing certain nervous behaviors like involuntary twitching to teaching patients how to control epilepsy, blood pressure, digestive activity, and so on.

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However, since Kamya's first article on bio-feedback appeared in *Psychology Today* in 1968, it has been the use of bio-feedback techniques to control brain wave frequency, and especially to stimulate the emission of alpha waves, that has generated the most controversy.

Brain waves, telepathy and EEG

In 1924 a German psychiatrist, Hans Berger, author of a book on telepathic phenomena, decided to develop his theory of differing brain waves, which he firmly believed in after performing various experiments on paranormal phenomena. He measured the electrical impulses emitted by an accident victim whose skull had been partly removed. His work showed that brain cell activity, far from being random, was organized into distinct patterns, in the form of waves. The first type of wave to be explored were those with an average frequency of 8 to 14 hertz (cycles per second), and an amplitude of around 100 microvolts. Berger, astonished by their regularity, called them alpha waves.

The discovery was ignored for some years. Then, in 1934, two British Scientists, Lord Edgar Adrian and B.C.H. Matthews, confirmed Berger's findings - regular brain activity could also be measured in normal, conscious subjects that was identical to the alpha frequencies detected by Berger. Persons emitting these waves were in a state somewhere between waking and sleep, both physically and mentally relaxed, with all neurons emitting the same frequency of brain wave.

Berger, meanwhile, had discovered beta waves, with a higher frequency (14 hertz) and a lower amplitude (10 to 50 microvolts). These waves corresponded to a state of vigilance, attention and concentration on exterior objects, while alpha waves, as mentioned earlier, correspond to a state of interiorization. The perfection of the electroencephalogram allowed researchers to measure other types of brain waves:

- *theta waves (4 to 7 hertz, 200 microvolts) which are emitted during certain phases of sleep or under certain emotional conditions;*

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- *delta waves (3 hertz or less, 200 microvolts to 1 millivolt amplitude) which characterize deep sleep or a state approaching death.*

EEG's provide us with a very general idea of brain activity. W. Grey Walter, who has been conducting research on EEG measurements for years, compares the information provided by an EEG readout to that of a deaf-mute Martian trying to understand human language by examining the grooves in a record.

Nevertheless, alpha waves have attracted particular attention over the last few years. Over 30 kinds of portable bio-feedback devices have appeared on the market, and various fields of study, including medicine, parapsychology, pediatrics, and pedagogy, have been experimenting with ways to use alpha waves for therapeutic purposes.

The media has also done its part to stir up the controversy over alpha waves. Why are people so interested?

The alpha wave mystery

Persons who practice telepathy prepare themselves psychologically by entering a state in which they are completely relaxed, yet attentive - concentrating on a single point of non-existence, as one expert put it. As it turns out, one characteristic of this state is that the brain emits alpha waves.

"The connection between alpha waves and telepathy is crucial," writes Lyall Watson in his book *'A Natural History of the Supernatural.'*

Doctor Beaumanoir, a student of Professor Gastaut (quoted earlier in this chapter) managed to study, film, and take EEG readings of a group of fire walkers during a ceremony held in Greece. The fact that initiates were able to dance barefoot on burning hot coals is incontestable - it's there for everyone to see, recorded on film. Beaumanoir insists that no protective products were used to coat the soles of the feet - non-initiates who tried to walk on the coals were burned. EEG readings showed that persons who were able to walk and

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dance on the coals emitted a steady stream of alpha waves throughout the experience.

Yogis who are able to withstand cold and even melt snow as they sit naked in the Himalayan mountains also emit alpha waves.

How can you enter the alpha state?

It's very simple: sitting down in a quiet place, staring off into space and not thinking about anything in particular will increase alpha wave emissions. You can also learn some relaxation technique, or practice a method like sophrology.

According to a study conducted at Trinity College in San Antonio, Texas, the state induced by the practice of Silva's Mind Control method also increase alpha wave activity.

Another method: roll your eyes back as far as possible and concentrate on a point in the middle of your forehead.

Repeating the same word or phrase (it could be a prayer or a mantra) or any sound at the same rhythm will eventually produce the same result.

EEG readings show that whenever a subject is distracted by a sudden noise or sensation, alpha wave activity immediately ceases and is replaced by beta waves. If there is no further interference, alpha activity gradually resumes. If the stimulus is repeated regularly, the senses quickly become accustomed to it, allowing alpha activity to predominate, without coming to a halt.

A metronome or the steady beat of a drum are both excellent stimuli for inducing the alpha state. Yoga, Zen meditation and some occult techniques achieve the same effect: concentrating on a point in the body or on a mandala, emptying the mind, adopting a certain breathing rhythm, concentrating on a Zen 'koan' (a kind of spiritual riddle), staring at a tarot card, etc., are all techniques you can use to enter the alpha state.

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It seems, then, that alpha waves form the grid on which all paranormal phenomena appear.

Does that mean that persons who produce an unusually high percentage of alpha waves are special? Not at all. In fact, the opposite is true: "Generally speaking, persons who produce a preponderance of alpha waves in their EEG readings are rather listless, uninteresting, unimaginative and ordinary," claims Barbara Brown, a bio-feedback specialist. Although this seems to contradict what we just said, it doesn't, the reason being that such people are not able to prolong alpha activity by making a conscious effort - a weak, distracted mind cannot control the type of brain waves it produces.

What is the alpha state? Theories abound, but the one that seems most plausible to us reads as follows: Electrodes attached to the skull read only neo-cortex activity. We know very little about activity in the deeper parts of the brain, because they are only accessible through some type of neural surgery. It is probable that alpha waves are a signal of reduced activity in the neo-cortex, and increased activity in the rhinencephalon and other more primitive parts of the brain.

Since paranormal faculties like ESP seem to be centered in these areas, it is not surprising that stimulating alpha wave activity, no matter how it is done, will awaken these latent abilities.

One criticism aimed at the stimulation of alpha activity through bio-feedback is that it does not induce a state of relaxation, as manufacturers of various bio-feedback devices claim. In fact, the opposite is true: relaxation stimulates alpha activity. So why use a machine? Teaching people to relax using a method like autogenic training, sophrology or mind control, should be more than adequate. This has actually been proven by testing bio-feedback devices on skilled yogis - results are always exceptionally positive.

The best we can say about bio-feedback devices is that they may serve to reassure persons who would otherwise be skeptical about their ability to enter the alpha state. People who do use them, however, also make use of one or another of the techniques mentioned above. It is as if the machine helps

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them rediscover the benefits of spiritual practices like meditation or yoga, acting as a bridge between two worlds, that of our modern, technological society, and the world of the ancient sages, with their highly developed understanding of inner processes and the subconscious mind.

We could say that inducing the alpha state is like opening a door and entering the realm of the subconscious. We should also mention that biofeedback devices are much less harmful than other, more controversial methods of alpha induction. As Dr. Brown states, "… substances like marijuana, LSD, heroine, alcohol and other drugs can also be used to increase alpha activity."

Drugs and the alpha state

Many people have found transcendental meditation - a technique that uses the repetition of a simple mantra like 'Om' to focus the mind - to be an excellent replacement for drugs. According to the Stanford Research Institute, 60% to 90% of persons who used drugs at one time or another stopped completely after a few months of this kind of meditation.

On the 24th of May, 1972, the Illinois House of Representatives adopted a resolution which stated that: "Transcendental meditation represents a positive alternative for people who have abused drugs. Studies indicate that it is the most effective way yet discovered to prevent drug abuse."

People generating alpha waves, and more precisely waves that lie somewhere between alpha and theta levels (between 5 and 8 hertz) experience sensations comparable to those produced by various drugs. A number of addicts who have learned to attain the alpha state report feeling much like they did when they took LSD.

Elmer Green, director of the Menninger Foundation, claims that although LSD can induce a state similar to alpha, persons who rely on the drug have no control over their mind. Using one of the consciousness-expanding techniques described earlier, however, does allow people to control their inner state, and stop the experience whenever they want. Green goes on to say that

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the alpha state represents consciousness, while the emission of theta waves characterizes a state of unconsciousness. As long as at least some alpha waves are still being produced, subjects remain clearly aware of their mental imagery, the ultimate goal being to enter a kind of creative trance which facilitates the association of images.

Communicating with the subconscious

One day a physicist named Glaser, who also happened to love good beer, became fascinated by the bubbles moving around in his glass. In a kind of reverie, he conceived the first bubble chamber, now used in all particle accelerator devices.

The structure of the atom appeared to Niels Bohr while lost in a daydream.

A German chemist and engineer, August Kekulé, had the idea to develop a formula for benzene in the same way.

Whenever he was preoccupied by a problem, Sir Isaac Newton would take a light nap and enter the alpha state, although he knew nothing about brain waves or their effects.

Dr. Green and his wife Alyce, a psychologist, trained students to remain in a state of creative trance for one hour each day, with excellent results. Students reported being able to talk to their subconscious, and some began developing paranormal faculties. After some weeks of training, one 22 year old student was able to say who was calling before picking up the phone. He was never wrong, even when the caller was someone he didn't know, or hadn't heard from for a long time. When in the alpha / theta state, he had a number of premonitory visions. One day he saw a fellow student bringing him a letter announcing that he had been accepted by a top university. Things unfolded exactly as he predicted - when he got home he found his friend waiting for him with a letter in hand. The friend had even opened the letter, although it was not addressed to him, exactly as he had done in the dream vision.

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Charles Tart, a psychologist specializing in special states of consciousness, suggests this method for generating and remembering mental images:

"Stretch out on your back as if you were going to sleep, but hold one arm up, slightly bent, in a position that requires a minimum of effort. Maintaining this position will allow you to enter a state of creative imagery, and still remember what you see. As soon as you start falling asleep, your arm will fall and wake you up."

Genius - the rediscovery of childhood

It is interesting to note that children between the ages of 4 to 7 produce an unusually high number of theta waves during the waking state. Children between 7 and puberty produce more alpha waves, while after puberty EEG readings resemble those of adults, i.e. showing a preponderance of beta waves. Is it a coincidence that these changes correspond more or less exactly to a decrease of creativity and visualization ability which is characteristic of the aging process in children? We don't think so. Young children who are given exercises that demand the use of creativity and visualization seem to have no trouble tuning in to their inner imagery. It is only later, as they become young adults, that children start relying more and more on logic, on so-called rational thought processes which become increasingly dependent on verbal expression, and severely limit creativity.

The ability to wonder, so characteristic of our childhood years, the faculty of being able to perceive the world around us as if we were seeing it for the first time, is cultivated by all great artists and inventors. An analysis of Albert Einstein's EEG activity showed that he was often in an alpha state. Even when he was engaged in complex mathematical calculations, his brain wave activity registered no significant changes. It was only when a problem was extremely difficult that beta activity would take over.

In recent years the corporate / industrial world has become increasingly interested in the development of creativity. Management is the power of imagination in action. Creativity sessions generally start with some form of regression exercise - participants are guided back to a childhood state in order to

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break through the barrier of logic and liberate faculties of creativity and imaginative association. Researchers became interested in monitoring EEG activity during these kinds of sessions. You can probably guess the result - creative activity is always characterized by a significant increase in alpha wave production.

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Psychocybernetics

Back in the 1960's, a book was written that has become a classic in the field of personal development. Psychocybernetics by Dr. Maxwell Maltz has been read in its original or translated form by millions of people around the world.

It all started with a failure of a sort.

Maxwell Maltz, a brilliant plastic surgeon practicing in England, France, Germany, Italy and South America, became interested in psychology after noticing how various facial operations affected the personalities of his patients.

He had the impression that as he altered their physical body, he was also, in some way, modifying his patients' minds. In his first book, *'New Faces - New Futures,'* he explained how, by modifying the exterior features of a person, you also changed that person's inner being. Personality, behavior, and ability were transformed to an astonishing extent, as if they were closely linked to the physical intervention.

Problems like a lack of self confidence and other types of complexes disappeared, often in the weeks following an operation, allowing a new, more fulfilled personality to emerge.

And yet, in some cases, no psychological changes were apparent after an operation. The removal of the fault, scar or malformation which the patient was so worried about seemed to have no psychological effect at all. These patients continued living, thinking and feeling much as they had before - as if nothing had changed.

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Maltz found the apparent discrepancy troubling, and tried to find an explanation.

He concluded that some special aspect of a patient's psyche was usually affected by plastic surgery, and that when that special aspect was modified, the patient's personality would change at the same time. On the other hand, when that special aspect was not modified, the patient's behavior remained the same as before, even though his or her appearance had been radically altered. It was as if personality had its own 'face.'

To become a great plastic surgeon, Maltz felt he had to operate on a patient's immaterial face, in the same way as he operated on physical features. He became convinced that people developed a powerful mental or spiritual self image. If he could find some way of modifying this self image, he could radically transform a patient's personality.

He asked a number of psychologists about the concept of self image. How was it formed? What physiological processes were involved? Why was it so important? And most importantly, how could it be modified?

The answers he got were vague, incomplete and disappointing. Strangely enough, a new scientific discipline, exploring the frontiers of physics and mathematics, provided him with the information he was seeking.

Cybernetics

Shortly before the outbreak of World War Two, a group of doctors and scientists began holding weekly debates on various subjects of common interest.

Two of the participants, A. Rosenbluth, a physiology specialist, and Norbert Wiener, a mathematician and designer of electronic systems, developed an entirely new field of study which they called cybernetics. Their theory was based on the observation that communication systems developed by

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animals, and the human nervous system itself, could both be compared to an electronic machine.

As they tried to create what they called 'servo-systems' and synthesize the process of controlled action, they rediscovered the laws governing human reflexive behavior. In-depth studies showed that human behavior and automated systems fit into the same schema.

"Of course we must be careful not to consider humans as nothing more than complex machines. The human brain is vastly more complex than a computer. It is impossible to reproduce all known human biological functions, not to mention those we still don't understand. With that in mind, we could say that the great advantage of cybernetics is that it gives us a clear working model on which to base further research."

Cybernetics attempts to explain how and why machines - and human beings - function, by synthesizing widely varied psychological theories into a single system. Maltz predicted that cybernetics would revolutionize the whole field of psychology, stating that we should not be surprised if answers to questions about the human psyche could be found in other disciplines, namely physics and mathematics. Specialists who think they know everything there is to know about a given subject often have great difficulty coming up with innovative ideas and solutions, limited as they are by the conformity of their acquired knowledge.

The word cybernetics was invented by the ancient Greeks, and is found in a number of Plato's Dialectics. The term refers to the art of directing, controlling or governing. Directing or controlling anything - for example manipulating the rudder of a boat - first requires the choice of an objective or goal.

In his theory of psycho-cybernetics, Maxwell Maltz shows that how human beings make use of an incredible machine - the human brain and nervous system - in order to achieve specific goals. The fact that we are free to choose our goals separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom. This freedom of choice is what gives humanity its grandeur and privileged place on

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the evolutionary scale. On the other hand, we still have to know how to program our brain, once a choice has been made, in order to attain what we desire. When programming is carried out effectively, all our cerebral and nervous functions work together to help us achieve what we have set out to accomplish. In other words our mind becomes a machine geared to success. If, on the other hand, our mental programming is ineffective, then our own mind works against us, forcing us to act in ways that result in failure.

The first law of psycho-cybernetics is that, in order to succeed, we must act in accordance with our own self image. Trying to do things that run counter to our self image will inevitably result in failure.

Experience and self image

As we saw earlier, some form of suggestion or conditioning can alter a person's self image. In his approach, Maltz considered experience a key factor in creating and / or modifying self image. The successes and failures we have experienced in the past condition our future. They are the reference points on which we model our behavior. For example, do you remember the first time you drove a car? You were probably extremely nervous. Each of your actions required a concentrated effort. Why? Because your experience of driving was very limited, you had few if any memories upon which you could model your present actions. Gradually, as you acquired more and more experience, your actions became more accurate and effective, until you finally reached a point where you could break, steer, change gears, make complicated trajectory calculations and turn up the volume on your car stereo, all at the same time, with hardly any effort at all.

At this stage, driving is more or less reflexive - your behavior is being effectively controlled by a servomechanism, made up of your brain and nervous system.

An intellectual understanding is not enough to guide your behavior in an effective way - you also need experience.

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Would you risk your life by allowing a medical student who has never used a scalpel in his life, to operate on you, even though he may have studied the procedure in class?

You'd probably be a little nervous, and rightly so, because in most human activities, the key to success is experience.

There's a saying that says success breeds success. The inverse is also true - we all know people whose lives seem to be a constant series of failures, who go from one crisis to another, who seem to be living under a cloud.

When our self image is positive, forged on memories of success, love, fulfillment, and so on, our behavior will conform to our desires. In other words, our subconscious will work in harmony with our conscious mind, to achieve the goals we set for ourselves.

If, on the other hand, we see ourselves as unworthy, as inferior, without merit or ability, then our behavior will be guided by that negative self image, no matter how positive a goal we set for ourselves. Obstacles, accidents, frustrating situations, emotional upsets and so on, will keep arising to prevent us from exploiting our full potential, and in turn from attaining our goals.

How can a negative self image be changed?

If experience is the best tool for change, why not use it? Well, the problem is, experience is sometimes hard to swallow - the school of life has some hard knocks.

Throwing a non-swimmer into a lake is a dangerous way to teach someone how to swim - the person may survive, but he could also drown. The military is designed to turn boys into men in precisely that manner. Unfortunately it also turns some into dangerous killers.

The ideal situation would be to:

- *condition people gradually, in a laboratory setting, in order to develop new*

modes of behavior;

- *substitute existing negative behavior patterns with stronger positive patterns, by providing people with positive experiences that are stronger than the negative ones they have acquired.*

Any effective behavior-modifying technique should be based on that principle.

The subconscious mind does not differentiate between actual experience and what is intensely imagined

This clinical discovery in the field of psychology has made it a lot easier to put various techniques of image modification into practice.

Our self image is affected just as much by what we vividly imagine as by what we actually experience. Does that seem hard to believe? Well, remember the placebo effect we talked about earlier. If the mind believes that a certain medication, real or not, will be effective, it is able to trigger a process that cures physical or psychological health problems.

Say your spouse receives a letter and refuses to show it to you. You immediately imagine he or she is being unfaithful, and suffer because of it. In actual fact, the letter may be about a sick parent, or a financial problem. What you believe to be true, and not the reality of the situation, is what affects you most.

Another example: a psychologist comes in to test the IQ's of a class of high school students. The psychologist then tells teachers and parents that one student, who did not seem to be particularly gifted, has a very high IQ (this is not true - the student's IQ is really average). A few months later the student's marks have drastically improved, and his self confidence has soared.

Why?

Because teachers began treating him differently, encouraging him to exploit his potential. Their attitude was transferred to the other students, which

boosted his self confidence, resulting in better marks.

The importance of failure does not lie in the experience itself, but in the effect it has on us. Maltz was struck by the way similar types of scars could affect people in very different ways. Take these two cases:

- *A car salesman is partially disfigured in a car accident. Every time he looks in the mirror he thinks people must find him repulsive, because he looks different. His appearance becomes an obsession for him, causing him to lose confidence and become more and more aggressive.*
- *Another man acquires a similar scar while playing hockey. Far from finding himself hideous, he feels proud of the disfigurement, considering it a mark of virility, and a source of self esteem.*

As you can see, the important factor is not the scar, but the psychological effect the disfigurement has on these two people. Similarly, it isn't what people think about you that counts, it's what you think they think. Take this idea one step further and you come up with the following hypothesis: it isn't who you are that counts, it's who you believe you are.

Under hypnosis, any individual can demonstrate almost Herculean strength on command. A shy, introverted person can deliver a brilliant speech, a person who normally stutters can talk perfectly normally, and in some cases persons who are paralyzed regain the use of their limbs. People who are convinced they can't draw create extraordinary works of art when it is suggested that they have the talent of a Renoir or a Van Gogh. Inversely, subjects under hypnosis may no longer be able to write their own names, walk normally or even unclench their own fist. Suggest that a subject is being sought by the police, and he will immediately turn into a harried criminal.

The influence exerted by the people around us, as well as our own thought patterns, can have the same impact on our behavior as that of a skilled hypnotist. Both can help us exploit our enormous potential to its fullest or, when they are negative, create imaginary limitations that prevent us from accomplishing what we would like to achieve, from being the person we would like to be.

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It doesn't matter if the input received by our subconscious mind is true or false - it will react in accordance with that information, and most especially in accordance with the goals we establish for ourselves. The important factor is self image, whether it be formulated as an intellectual concept shaped by language, or as mental imagery. These words, these beliefs or mental images, are what create us, through the power of the mind.

"Man can only discover what he has already imagined," wrote one researcher studying the mechanisms of the brain, in light of the new science of cybernetics.

We are constantly programming ourselves without being aware of it, often to our detriment. When we are preoccupied by worries, when we are afraid of something, when we brood about some failure or think negative thoughts about ourselves, we are actually programming our mind in a way that will influence our future behavior.

As Maxwell Maltz wrote in Psychocybernetics: "Generating your own mental images through visualization is no more difficult than remembering a past event. Acting according to a new model of behavior is no more difficult than deciding to tie your shoelaces in a different way, and then carrying out that decision instead of repeating actions like an automaton, purely out of habit."

Anxiety and the inferiority complex

As I traveled around the world conducting seminars on personal development, I met thousands of people who were suffering from a lack of self confidence. Although they were often not aware of it, this lack of faith in their own abilities, this mutilated self image, undermined their very existence. All had developed an inferiority complex, to some degree. Even people who seemed to be bursting with confidence were often only maintaining a facade, compensating for their inner lack of self esteem by putting up a brave front. They may have fooled others for awhile, but they inevitably suffered from periods of terrible, recurring anxiety.

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As you read these lines, you may be saying "I am not one of those people." Well, take a moment to think about it. There must be certain aspects of your life which you are not comfortable with, areas where you feel you could be doing a lot better than you are, if it weren't for something lacking in your personality.

Modern society imposes a model of success which many people can never hope to attain. The fancy new car, big house, expensive home entertainment system, beautiful kids and secure retirement savings plan, are things everyone wants, but relatively few actually have.

It is very difficult to resist the incessant stream of suggestions imposed on us via the media, and avoid the trap of constantly comparing ourselves to our peers. Even if we feel only partially inferior, we will behave in accordance with that feeling.

In fact, we are all inferior to someone or something: we may not be able to cook or dance or drive as well as another person, we are surely less intelligent than the geniuses we keep hearing about, we are probably not as loving or passionate as the people we see in movies or on TV.

We are all inferior, in one way or another. And yet, not everyone develops an inferiority complex. Why? Because some people know that in certain areas they are superior to others.

Developing a complex about something involves not only knowing but feeling. Because you never learned to dance properly, you may feel inferior every time you step on a dance floor. If you allow yourself to focus on that feeling of inferiority, you will forget about your other qualities and successes, and concentrate only on that negative aspect of your personality: you actually become inferior, simply because you think you don't know how to dance. What you should be thinking is: I never took dancing lessons, so it's perfectly normal for me to feel awkward on the dance floor.

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We allow ourselves to become trapped by our own improperly expressed thoughts, and end up comparing ourselves to some ideal role model for no reason. Every individual is unique - it is impossible to attain any measure of happiness by comparing yourself to others. You are not inferior to me because I happen to know more about mental dynamics than you do! It's all a question of experience. Instead of judging our actions by what we have done in the past, we compare ourselves to others whose situation may be very different from ours. And because we end up believing we are inferior, we actually feel inferior. We start thinking we are not normal, that there is something wrong with us.

The tension and stress we experience on a daily basis is generated by this kind of vicious circle of negative thought patterns. We criticize ourselves incessantly, and this critical attitude is often encouraged by the people around us, who seem to rarely find anything good to say, either about themselves or about anyone else.

The question "Who am I?" triggers a series of negative images - "I am inferior to… I am incapable of … I will never be able to…" etc.

The truth about yourself is this:

You are not inferior.
You are not superior.
You simply are who you are.

You can't compare your personality to anyone else's, simply because there is no one else in the entire world who is exactly like you. You are an individual. You are unique. You are not like anyone else, nor can you ever become like anyone else. You are not supposed to be like anyone else, and no one is supposed to be like you.

How to get rid of your complexes and be yourself

The only way to get rid of your complexes and really be yourself is to imagine yourself as you could be if you exploited your full potential, free

from the limitations that are undermining your self image. Of course the aim here is not to create some kind of inflated, false image that has nothing to do with your real potential. You simply have to see yourself as you could become, and let that image impregnate your subconscious mind for a period of 21 days, which is the time it usually takes to develop any kind of new habit, or become accustomed to a new situation, whether it be to a new hairstyle, house, job, etc.

The question then arises of what to do when negative thoughts or images about yourself do arise, which they inevitably will. Cybernetics has the answer: a servomechanism will attain its objective both by trying - and failing - to do so. Failures are examined and analyzed, and the necessary corrections are made. Negative past experiences, ingrained in our memory, do not necessarily inhibit the functioning of this servomechanism, but can actually contribute to the process of learning.

Errors should be seen as stages on the road to success. Once they are properly analyzed, mistakes can be used to help us. Once they have served their purpose, you can forget them. The worst thing you can allow yourself to do is think, "I failed in the past, therefore I will fail in the future."

F.M.H. Myers, a well known psychologist, explained how persons who were ordinarily shy and withdrawn could be transformed into brilliant orators under hypnosis by being purged of memories of past failures. In fact, the same effect can also be achieved on conscious subjects.

When he was young, Doctor Alfred Adler, a friend of Maltz, did poorly in arithmetic at school. His teacher soon became convinced that little Alfred did not have a mathematical mind. He told the boy's parents, who immediately accepted the verdict, claiming that since the family tended to be more literary-minded, they were not surprised their son was not interested in math. Influenced by this negative feedback, the boys math grades began steadily dropping.

One day, however, the teacher presented the class with a difficult math problem, and said anyone who could find the solution would get the highest

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mark in the class. Only one arm was raised - by little Alfred. The entire class burst out laughing.

"Well Alfred, show us your solution," the teacher said, hardly managing to hide the derision in his voice.

When he looked at Alfred's paper he was shocked - the boy, in a flash of insight, had managed to come up with the solution to a problem that would have taken college students hours to figure out.

The incident had a profound effect on the boy - instead of accepting the suggestion that he didn't have a head for math, he became convinced that he was somehow gifted in mathematics. His marks soared, and he went on to forge a career in science.

When we use our mind to modify our self image, thoughts must be accompanied by emotions. The event that marked young Alfred Adler did so because it had a powerful emotional impact on him.

Doctor Wilder Penfield, a neurosurgeon at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, showed that persons could be made to relive past events simply by electrically stimulating certain brain cells. The scenes were so vivid, subjects actually thought they were happening all over again.

"Subjects feel the same emotions that were generated by the original event, and are aware of forming the same opinions and interpretations, whether true or false, as they did when they first had the experience. Thus the memory evoked by the stimulation of brain cells is not simply a visual or auditory representation of a past event, but an integral reproduction of everything the subject saw, heard, felt and understood at the time."

This is exactly what happens when we modify our self image: if we imagine details, colors, odors, sensations and emotions with enough sharpness and clarity, they can actually replace previous images which are detrimental to our progress.

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Analyzing the things that make us worry or preoccupy us in the right way can provide us with a clear notion of how to proceed in order to change our objectives.

When we worry, we start by thinking about some unpleasant incident that is likely to recur in the near future. It could be an event like the loss of a loved one, or being laid off at work, a letter we received containing bad news, an interview which did not go well, etc.

The more we think about the event, the more details it evokes, and the more real the event becomes. We soon start feeling the negative emotions associated with it - tension, disappointment, anguish, and so on. As Maltz remarked, there is no effort of will involved - the cause of our anxiety is simply the result of our uncontrolled imagination.

Willpower and imagination

Caycedo, in his theory of sophrology, claimed that by forming a positive image of themselves, by imagining themselves as being happy and fulfilled, people actually create the possibility of their own happiness by triggering positive reactions in their organism.

Sick people who can visualize themselves being healed, who really want to break out of the cycle of illness, recover more quickly than others. The important thing is that they get better not because they want to, but because they can actually see themselves as healthy, happy individuals. It is this intense imagery that stimulates their hope and their will to recover.

Willpower… some people don't seem to have any, while others seem almost superhuman in what they can accomplish through sheer will. For years I believed that willpower was the result of effort, of an ability to exceed one's limits through conscious action, often under very difficult circumstances. Like many people, my definition of willpower was based on a cliche that seemed inaccessible - with their jaw thrust forward and their muscles taught, the fortunate few endowed with tremendous willpower could overcome any obstacles, through sheer effort. However, as I read biographies of famous people,

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I realized that this energy, this force, is not produced by effort at all, but originates in having a clear image of the objectives you are trying to achieve.

The best salesman I ever met is considered by everyone who knows him to have tremendous willpower. A former director of marketing for a multinational corporation, he decided to give up his job at the age of 30 and get involved in sales. Being a rather weak negotiator, he didn't do too well for the first six months or so. Then he started making steady progress. He soon became the top salesman for a company employing over 500 people, selling financial products. Today, at the age of 35, he is the company's sales director. He seems able to succeed at anything he tries. Where, I wondered, does he get all that willpower?

My friend happens to belong to an occult group which teaches a secret technique that has been preserved for centuries: the art of mental imagery. He motivates himself by visualizing exactly what he wants to achieve. It is this technique that has enabled him to succeed where so many others have failed.

Napoleon practiced the art of war in his mind for years before actually commanding an army. That is why he was successful. Later, by becoming more and more afraid of failure, he programmed his own downfall. A careful analysis of the last part of his life clearly shows how his mind became increasingly obsessed with thoughts of failure.

When a servomechanism like the human mind loses sight of its objective, it will adjust its trajectory according to errors that are made, in order to get itself back on track. Even though we have programmed ourselves for failure, we may inadvertently lose sight of our underlying objective from time to time, and encounter some minor successes, by mistake so to speak. However, if our subconscious objective is to fail, we will be inexorably drawn towards that goal. This is the basis of the ancient Greek concept of fate - man's destiny is decided by the gods, and no matter how much of a conscious effort we make to avoid our fate, we are ultimately powerless to prevent it.

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How to resolve problems

Maxwell Maltz saw life as a series of problems that must be resolved. Types of problems range from the relatively simple, like how to hit a tennis ball, to the extremely complex - new situations for which we are totally unprepared, lacking any experience on which to base our decisions.

Here again a comparison with computers is appropriate. A simple problem requires a simple set of instructions : chase the ball and hit it back over the net. The physical operations required to achieve this goal are governed by the subconscious mind (a servomechanism).

Resolving complex problems requires a more sophisticated set of instructions. Like a computer programmer writing a new program, you have to make a conscious effort to analyze and understand the problem at hand, accumulate data, and load all that information into the processor - your brain. Only then can the servomechanism come up with results.

Creativity works in much the same way - after considering a problem from all possible angles you have to relax and let it simmer for awhile, until a solution appears. Artists, inventors and other creative people talk about something called inspiration - new ideas are always there, all you need is some kind of mechanism to help you tune into them. Musicians often claim that they simply hear a new tune while walking along the street or daydreaming on a park bench. Mathematicians have flashes of inspiration that allow them to see the solution to a complex problem in their mind, almost as if it were written out in front of them.

Modern man, on the other hand, tends to rely solely on rational thought to solve problems. The myth of reason and logic is so strong, so overwhelming, it has all but buried our faculties of intuition and creativity. We become anxious when we can't find an immediate solution to a problem, when our rational mind seems to let us down. The old adage 'ask and ye shall receive' sounds childishly naive. Placing our faith in some form of irrational inspiration seems completely unacceptable in a world governed by science. We find ourselves living in a constant state of tension, our creativity stifled, our en-

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ergy wasted as we desperately seek rational solutions to problems that often cannot be solved with a direct, logical approach.

Creating is remembering

When you can't remember a word or a name, all you have to do is occupy your mind with something else - in a short time the word or name will come to you automatically. Solutions to problems often arise in the same way.

The great classical composer Franz Schubert once told a friend that composing was simply a matter of remembering a melody, and then writing it down.

To do that, you have to be convinced that what you are seeking already exists, and it is here that psychocybernetics and paranormal phenomena start to overlap.

Is creativity a parapsychological phenomenon?

The servomechanism that is our mind works with data drawn from experience, knowledge and memory. The question may be raised whether it is capable of using other, paranormal data as well.

Arthur Koestler, in his book *The Roots of Chance*, includes the following quote on the subject: "If paranormal awareness and paranormal causality are facts, it is probable that they are not limited to those rare, sporadic occasions where they manifest themselves in some spectacular way, nor to very special conditions under which we can prove their presence through experimentation. What is probable is that they are in constant operation, acting behind the scenes so to speak, during the course of our day to day lives. Our awareness of what other people are thinking or feeling, our sense of humor on certain occasions, the way ideas seem to arise out of nowhere, for no obvious reason, our immediate and inexplicable emotional reactions to certain people… all these phenomena may be partially determined by paranormal cognition, and influenced by paranormal causality."

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If, as we will be explaining later on, it would be possible for you to acquire information from any brain in the world, from some kind of universal mind or collective unconscious, and if, in addition, you could exert a mental influence on the people around you, resolving almost any problem would become mere child's play. Luck or chance would no longer be an arbitrary, capricious phenomenon, but would depend on the way you program your objectives.

Imagine that your servomechanism is programmed for success. It would gather an idea here, a fact there, combine them with a series of past experiences and associations, and organize them into an elaborate structure which will provide you with the tools you need to deal with any given situation, in order to solve the problems at hand and achieve the success you are aiming for.

When solutions arise spontaneously in your conscious mind, often during moments of inattention, while you are thinking about something else, or in a dream, when your conscious mind is at rest, something is triggered that immediately lets you know you have found the solution you've been looking for. It's almost like the radar equipment on a plane detecting another object in the sky.

There is so much to say about psychocybernetics we could not hope to provide an in-depth study of the subject within the context of this book. The important thing is to try it out for yourself, and see what it can do for you in practical terms. You may find your life becoming a series of amazing 'coincidences,' all of which seem to be working towards attaining your goals, bringing you into contact with the people and resources you need to achieve your objectives.

I have often found myself perplexed after analyzing a series of fortuitous events (normally attributed to pure luck) which helped me attain what I was aiming for, which transformed the mental image I had formed of myself beforehand into a reality.

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There is always something magical about the way things seem to fall into place. How can we not marvel at the power of the mind, especially when we see the results it can produce. It's almost like witnessing some sort of amazing conjuring trick!

The constant effort and long years of learning required to attain a goal are not apparent after the fact. Looking back, everything seems so easy, as if it had been predestined, as if a magician had waved a wand and made our dreams come true. In fact, it is the power of the mind that has served as the primary tool for all great sages and leaders throughout the history of mankind.

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The Alpha Seminar

Mental Dynamics : In Search of a Unified Theory

I first heard about psychocybernetics in 1969, while travelling to Sydney Australia. The method was being used by a sales organization, to help executives develop their personality. Apparently, the results were amazing, and when I heard about them I decided to try using the method when I returned home.

I would have occasion to see the same kind of positive results in the United States and Japan. In 1970 I was teaching psychocybernetics to teams of sales representatives. In 1972, after attending a series of psychology workshops in the U.S., Jean-Claude Gimet, a cybernetics specialist who hosted seminars on management and planning, suggested that we work together on personal development seminars which would be offered to corporate clients. With the help of Phillip Lecomte, a psychologist and director of a large mining concern, who happened to be interested in the same techniques, I came up with a plan for a three day seminar. A short time later the three of us conducted our first seminar, which we called the Personal Achievement Seminar - a course on personal development based on the psychology of self image. The results we obtained led to our being hired by a number of large industrial and commercial corporations. We conducted seminars for their sales and technical staff. Since then, Personal Achievement Seminars have become the main product of Sodiac Training Incorporated, the company we founded together.

Although psychocybernetic techniques are usually practiced in a state of ordinary relaxation, I was convinced that the same techniques could be doubly effective if applied to persons in an altered state of consciousness. For that reason I became interested in self-hypnosis, biofeedback and sophrology. It was while attending a seminar based on Silva's Mind Control technique

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that we decided to try and come up with a unified method that would incorporate all the techniques we had encountered to date.

We began experimenting with the alpha state and integrating techniques borrowed from sophrology and parapsychology during our personal development courses. Based on the results of these experiments, the concept of an alpha seminar began to take shape.

The first prototype was developed with a group of friends in January, 1974. News of the extraordinary results we obtained spread quickly, both by word of mouth and through the media. Since then, over 1000 people have benefited from the seminar, which we called Mental Dynamics.

The average person uses about two billion, out of a total of about ten billion brain cells. Stimulating mental faculties through the techniques which comprise the mental dynamics method helps people exploit more of their mental and physical capacities. All the techniques described in this book up to now have been incorporated into the method.

The hard part was organizing them into some kind of coherent system. Based on a model of forty-five minute sessions, we came up with a series of fifteen complimentary exercises which, together, comprise what came to known as the Alpha Seminar.

The Alpha Seminar

The first objective of the alpha seminar is relaxation - teaching participants how to enter the alpha state.

I was surprised to hear from a number of people who, after reading this book, made the following objection: “You say that all we have to do to attain the alpha state is listen to a calm voice or focus on some part of our body. That can’t be true, it sounds too easy. You must be holding something back.”

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Their concern reminded me of similar objections I heard about hypnosis: "It sound so easy to hypnotize someone. There must be a trick to it, some kind of special power involved."

Until you have experienced these phenomena for yourself, it is difficult to accept how incredibly simple they are. We're not used to simplicity, it seems, and anything that appears to be simple raises our suspicions. "How can this be really effective if it's so easy?"

It's a little like visiting someone for the first time. You have to watch where you're going, check all the street names, look for the number of the house, in order not to get lost. The second or third time you pay the person a visit, you have much less trouble reaching your destination. If you keep going back to the same house, you soon don't have to think about where you're going at all.

The first time you try to practice alpha relaxation you may encounter problems, especially if you're tense or nervous about something. On the other hand, tense, nervous people are most in need of learning how to attain the alpha state. So in the first part of the seminar, we included the most effective techniques for inducing the alpha state that we had come across. Whereas it took almost forty-five minutes to get participants into the alpha state at the start of the seminar, it took a maximum of two minutes to attain the same level of consciousness at the end. How was that possible? Well, read on.

The Signpost Effect

A signpost is any other gesture or word that is automatically associated with a certain state or activity. It could be a snap of the fingers or the raising of an arm for a couple of seconds. Like a uniform, which immediately elicits a reflexive reaction of respect or fear, or a red traffic light which causes you to step on the breaks, any gesture can become a signal that will induce the alpha state.

The only drawback with this technique is its rapidity. If a subject passes from a state of stress to a state of deep mental and muscular relaxation too

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suddenly, problems can arise. For that reason, an effective signpost should be one that a subject can evoke him or herself, and which takes effect gradually.

A very effective signpost is the countdown, either from 10 to 1, or 3 to 1. As they count, subjects imagine themselves descending deeper and deeper towards the center of their being. They could visualize themselves descending a flight of stairs, or riding down an elevator while counting, or having someone else count for them, suggesting that they are becoming more and more relaxed the lower they get.

At first, subjects are helped along by being led through a complete relaxation session, muscle by muscle, limb by limb (as described on page —). In subsequent sessions, the relaxation period is progressively shortened, until a signpost is all it takes to induce a state of complete relaxation.

Imagine someone who has lost his memory. The only thing he can do is talk and listen. Using words to describe a simple act like lighting a cigarette would be extremely difficult. You'd first have to explain what matches are, what they look like, how to separate one from the rest of the pack, how to hold it, scratch it on the special paper so it will light, being careful not to get burned, how to hold it close to one end of the cigarette while inhaling on the other end, etc. In other words, the process would take a lot of time and concentration.

Once the person has learned how to light a cigarette, the whole series of steps becomes automatic.

The same applies to relaxation. After a few sessions, during which step-by-step instructions are provided, the process becomes automatic - all you have to do to enter the alpha state of deep relaxation is count down from 10 to 1.

The choice of a signpost is important. A signpost image or technique should be both gradual and relaxing. I remember one man who attended one of our seminars who was incapable of relaxing using the countdown sign-

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post because he was an airline pilot. Counting down from 10 to 1 was always associated with stress in his mind.

For that reason, we generally recommend using the colors of the rainbow as a signpost, colors being a universal symbol.

Color symbolism

As we mentioned earlier, colors have a definite psychological effect (remember the example of how different colored detergent packages had a different impact on consumers). Advertisers and marketing experts have conducted in-depth studies on the effects of colors on consumers. Some colors are hot, some are cold, some are stimulating, others are relaxing, some are heavy, some are light. Max Luscher, a German psychologist, perfected a personality test based solely on a subject's color preferences. You can even test yourself and measure changes in your temperament by comparing them to changes in your taste for color. The more you test yourself, the more you realize that you don't simply like one color more than another, but that your preference for various colors changes along with the rest of your personality, depending on the situation you happen to find yourself in. In other words, your taste evolves along with your mind.

The color of an object depends on the wavelength of light that it reflects. When an object reflect the entire range of visible colors, it appears to be white. When it absorbs all visible colors, it appears to be black. The spectrum of colors found in the rainbow is composed of the range of electromagnetic waves which can be perceived by the human eye.

At the upper end of the spectrum the human eye perceives red (with a wavelength of about 7000 angstroms). Infrared light, with a higher wavelength, is invisible to most humans. Hot colors are those which are closest to the infrared wavelength. Although from a physiological point of view these colors cause no actual temperature changes in the body, they do stimulate nervous and glandular systems, affecting functions like respiration, heartbeat, blood pressure, and so on.

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Let's take a look at the separate colors of the rainbow and their effects.

Red: Symbol of fire, blood, conquest and virility, red has a stimulating effect. In photography labs, workers who spent long hours under red light developed psychological problems which disappeared when the red light was replaced with its complimentary color, green. Red is often a favorite color of children, very active persons, and people living in primitive cultures.

Orange: Linked to emotion, orange is less mentally stimulating than red. Being a gentler color, it is more intimate and inviting.

Yellow: The warm luminosity of yellow invokes light and wealth, both spiritual and material. It symbolizes daily activity - body and mind are active, but not inflamed as is the case with red.

Green: Green can be warm or cold, depending on whether it contains more yellow or blue. Situated in the middle of the spectrum, it is the color of balance, and symbolizes peace. Green has a soothing effect on the nervous system, and more green and blue are found in nature than any other color. In the Islamic faith green is the symbol of spiritual awareness, and is used extensively to decorate flags, tiles, drapery, etc.

At the other end of the spectrum are the so-called cold colors, which have a soothing, balancing effect on the organism. Closest to ultraviolet light are purple, blue and blue-green, all of which slow down heartbeat and reduce blood pressure. As the physical body relaxes, it becomes easier for the mind to concentrate or meditate.

Blue: Being the coldest color, blue suggests a state of calm, rest and relaxation. Therapists use blue, associated with night and sleep, to alleviate hyperactivity.

Purple: When composed primarily of blue, purple symbolizes the union of man with the divine. A lot of purple is used by the Catholic church (for vestments, images, statues, etc.) and by other mystical orders.

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If red is the predominant color, purple symbolizes earthly power, and is often used for royal vestments and accoutrements.

Purple's combined calming and stimulating effect tends to induce an almost hypnotic state of mind which is appropriate for spiritual endeavors. Interestingly enough, 75% of adolescents claim that purple is their favorite color, perhaps because purple is also associated with imagination, which most teenagers have a lot of.

So as you can see, the spectrum of colors starting with red and moving towards purple have an increasingly relaxing, calming effect on the mind. This makes the rainbow image an excellent signpost. In addition, colors are easy to visualize - all you have to do is remember any object for a given color - a banana for yellow, a tomato for red, etc.

How colors affect children

Because their visual faculties are still relatively fresh and unencumbered by words, children make excellent subjects - simply getting them to visualize the spectrum of colors from red to violet is usually enough to induce a state of alpha relaxation.

Here's what some fifth grade students had to say in answer to the following questions, after they experimented with visualizing colors:

- *At what point did you start to feel the effects of the colors?*
- *Which colors were easiest to visualize?*
- *Did any of the colors trigger a sensation or a visual image?*
- *How did you feel during the experiment?*
- *Which moment do you remember the best?*

Student #1: "Red was a little hard to see. By the time I got to blue I was completely concentrated. I didn't hear the voice of the instructor, and I felt myself sinking down and getting very relaxed. This exercise is very good for the body because it lets you relax completely, so you feel rested afterwards. I

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felt like I was in a thick forest, with the sky a very deep blue overhead. During the session I felt like I was falling through infinite empty space."

Student #2: "I didn't feel like myself during the experiment. I remember the colors red and violet the most. Then I saw my physical body, and at the same time I thought about death - the two extremes, the two opposites. I saw images of fields, fruit, leaves of all colors. I felt like I was gliding through the air in a plane, or on a boat in a storm. There was a lot of turbulence, and an earthquake when I concentrated on the color purple. A bunch of cruel thoughts also. Happy thoughts with the color red though…"

Student #3: "I had trouble getting into the exercise at first, I just wasn't in the mood. But when the instructor got to green, in the middle of the spectrum, I closed my eyes and saw a kind of green glow getting closer and then moving farther away, like a pulsing light. Blue made me feel sleepy. For purple I saw clouds floating across the sky."

Student #4: "Red: I am resting, my body is relaxed, my feet are very heavy. I can't hold my head up any longer. I hear my heart beating, my abdomen feels heavy…

"Orange: I am feeling more and more relaxed, my legs, my hands and my head feel so heavy…

"Yellow: I can't remember anything…

"Green: I feel happy, I'm thinking about going on vacation. I close my eyes because my eyelids feel so heavy…

"Purple: I can hardly hear anything, the sounds I hear are all mixed together…

"Violet: I can't hear your voice clearly. I feel like I'm ready to fall asleep."

Student #5: "Moving from yellow to green was hard because the two colors are so different."

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Student #6: "I felt like I was floating in the air at night."

Student #7: "When I got to orange I started feeling really good, like I wanted to wake up but couldn't, like it was time to get up in the morning but I still felt like sleeping and I was allowed to. Then with yellow I felt warm and really good."

Student #8: "By the time I got to purple I wasn't thinking about anything anymore. I felt like I was somewhere between being awake and being asleep."

Student #9: "I found the whole experience very interesting. I felt attracted to the color orange, and I saw myself falling down a tunnel, with the walls gradually changing color as I fell."

Student #10: "Each color had a different sensation. For me red stood for cherries and strawberries, all sorts of red fruit, and red balloons flying in the air. Orange was the sun and the wind, with the rays of the sun spreading out and surrounding me with bright color. By the time I got to yellow I didn't see anything at all anymore, everything was just black. Green stood for a forest, leaves falling from the trees and landing at my feet. Blue was like a river or the ocean, like I was swimming underwater…"

Student #11: "It was like when I saw certain colors, especially blue and orange I became so tiny, so miniscule. I was like this dot on the surface of the earth. And then I was flying upwards, and my head started expanding, bigger and bigger like it was going to burst. When I got to blue I saw very clearly that it was night time, and I felt like a little star lighting up a small corner of the night sky. Orange made me think about a crackling fire, like I was watching the fire, which made my face glow and warmed up my whole body. Then, all of a sudden it was like I fell down and I was almost dead. I felt like I wasn't me anymore, as if I had changed into another person…"

Student #12: "I felt a wave of orange, a torrent of orange, a violent flash that blinded me, then an expanse of green, and the blue and indigo and violet put me into a kind of trance. It was the purple colors that I felt the most. I

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couldn't hear anything, I felt completely surrounded by color. I had trouble coming back."

Visualizing colors in their reverse order is a good way to gradually emerge from the alpha state:

"I felt like I had just been sleeping for hours."

"After it was over I felt totally relaxed."

"I came out of it slowly and gently."

"When I got back to the surface I felt completely relaxed."

"I started coming back up slowly, moving faster and faster."

"I can hear and see better than before."

"I felt like a diver coming up from the ocean floor at a thousand miles an hour."

"I feel great, but I don't feel like running around or doing anything special, just being quiet."

To achieve similar results, normal adults would probably need a few training sessions, unless they happen to be very much in touch with their emotions (people working in the arts, for example). Teaching Mental Dynamics to high school or college students will produce better and faster results than teaching the same techniques to adults. And, in fact, all attempts to teach students how to relax and enter the alpha state have produced extremely positive results. Our traditional education system constantly demands that students concentrate and remember things, without teaching them how to concentrate, how to be more attentive and how to remember what they need to know. Instead of stimulating their faculties of visualization and concentration, which would be of great help no matter what subjects they happen to be

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studying, they are left to find their own solutions, through a process of trial and error.

We also know that certain cerebral centers, like the one that controls language, remain atrophied if they are not developed in time. In other words, if children are not taught to speak by a certain age, they will remain more or less mute for the rest of their lives. Imagine if the same applied to that part of our brain which is responsible for paranormal faculties.

But to get back to the alpha seminar…

Participants first learn to visualize colors in order to attain a state of complete mental and physical relaxation. They then learn to use the alpha state to make changes in their personality and behavior. They learn how to change their self image, erase negative modes of behavior and substitute them with positive experiences. They then apply the same methods to attain specific goals like developing their intuition or a paranormal faculty like ESP, in order to acquire firsthand proof of the effectiveness of the technique.

What happens during an alpha seminar?

What actually takes place during an alpha seminar?

Imagine a carpeted room large enough to accommodate about fifty people with ease. About a third of the participants are there for the second or third time, since they can come back as often as they like without paying. You are a first-time participant. An instructor tells the group that they will be led through a series of exercises (described below) after being provided with a theoretical explanation of each one (corresponding to each of the chapters of this book), and followed by suggestions on how they can be applied in practical ways.

Everyone is told to stand up, then stretch out on the carpet, using the pillows and blankets provided to make themselves comfortable. When everyone has settled down, the instructor begins talking in a deep, slow sophronic monotone:

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"Get ready to explore your inner levels of consciousness… start by visualizing the color red…" etc.

The first exercise is designed to help participants enter the alpha state. You visualize colors, and feel your body getting heavier and heavier. You count down from 10 to 1, feeling an increasing sense of well being. Your mind remains aware while your body is completely relaxed and calm. You learn to control your inner monologue, the thoughts that are constantly running through your mind, often to your own detriment, thoughts like "I'm so stupid…" or "I know I'll screw things up again…" or "I'll never be able to…" and so on. You'll learn how to condition your inner monologue so that it can work for your benefit, replacing negative subconscious programming with positive thoughts like "I am attaining my goals…" or "My concentration is improving…" Since the subconscious is particularly receptive while you are in the alpha state, the process of replacing negative conditioning with positive conditioning takes much less time, and is doubly effective.

Next come the actual mental dynamics exercises. You learn to focus on some goal you hope to attain, or on some memory that evokes the person you would like to become, or develop a signpost that will immediately bring your goal to mind.

After the mental dynamics exercises, the instructor helps you emerge gradually from the alpha state. You slowly become conscious of your body, regaining control of your movements until you are back in your ordinary state of consciousness. You feel wonderfully relaxed, in harmony with yourself, and with life.

After a short break, those who want to talk about their experiences while in the alpha state are given an opportunity to do so. A dialog is set up between the instructor, and the new and former participants. Then a second instructor takes over and leads the group through another set of exercises, the whole process being repeated fifteen times over the course of the weekend.

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Here is an outline of activities for a typical alpha seminar lasting three days:

Day 1 (usually Friday evening) :

- *introduction, initial relaxation session;*
- *total relaxation exercise;*
- *learning to remain in the alpha state under difficult circumstances (noise, light, etc.);*
- *constructing a mental screen, the first step in the process of visualization.*

Day 2 (all day Saturday) :

- *developing an awareness of self image;*
- *modifying your self image;*
- *how to develop self control (stop smoking, lose weight, accelerate healing, etc.) and improve your memory;*
- *how to develop your creativity, how to remember your dreams and practice lucid dreaming any time you like;*
- *how to recharge your energy.*

All these exercise are based on a synthesis of the various techniques we have been discussing in this book, allowing anyone to develop and / or transform their personality on their own, without getting involved in a costly, lengthy and sometimes destructive process of psychotherapy.

Purely medical applications, which generally fall into the category of sophrology, are avoided. Over time, we have been able to perfect those techniques which are most effective for inducing the alpha state, even under conditions that are far from ideal. After all, what would be the use of learning how to enter the alpha state while you are stretched out in a dark comfortable room, designed specifically for that purpose, if you are not able to relax during the course of your day to day life? Participants learn how to use noise, light and posture to help them relax, even under very difficult circumstances.

Day 3 (Sunday) : these exercises, designed to improve concentration and develop intuition, will be described in the last part of this book.

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Individual and group therapy

Courses on mental dynamics are always taught to groups of people, and only rarely to individuals. The techniques are much easier to put into practice in a group context, rather than on your own, using an instruction manual, no matter how detailed and well written it may be. After experimenting with all kinds of communication techniques (video, printed material, computer networking, etc.) I am convinced that the best approach by far is that of personal, hands-on instruction in a group setting.

For example, I worked as a consultant for the first worldwide producer of training programs. The courses, which were very well conceived, were taped on audio and video cassettes, designed for home use by individuals.

After a short time, however, I gave up on the technique. No matter how motivated people who bought the courses were, they were not able to fully exploit them on their own. It's a little like a family investing in an expensive set of encyclopedias - after some initial interest the books, which are crammed with fascinating material, sit on the shelf gathering dust. The only thing they provide their owners with is a sense of security! Maybe you have some books lying around the house that you've never read. And even if you have read them, how practical have they been? How often have you found yourself applying what you learned in books to your day to day life?

I hope that some readers do succeed in practicing some of the exercises described in this book on their own. They will, however, be exceptions to the rule. Mental dynamics cannot be effectively taught outside of a group setting. Audio or video cassettes, although useful for reviewing material and techniques, cannot replace what you learn as part of a group.

As the Chinese proverb says, "The lantern of experience illuminates only the person carrying it."

Transmitting experience outside of a group setting, where the intimate atmosphere, personal contact and potential for emulation all combine to facilitate teaching, is a very difficult thing to do. In the field of psychotherapy,

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for example, the group setting has all but replaced individual therapy. The same applies to personal development.

Mental Dynamics - the discovery of self

For many scientists, the rapid application of recent discoveries is a new phenomenon. Until now, it has generally taken about twenty years before a discovery became widely used. Fortunately times have changed. By working together, people who have come into contact with mental dynamics are helping us reach an ever wider audience. Some have even begun teaching the technique themselves.

The task ahead - making mental dynamics an integral part of our education system - is arduous. We have to train as many instructors as we can, and increase the number of alpha seminars we offer each year. We believe the effort is worthwhile, as it will help society achieve a new balance. Mental dynamics can act as a counterweight to the stress and tension that are undermining both the mental and physical health of so many people, and help those same people get in touch with the happiness and tranquillity that already exists in their inner selves. An ancient Hindu legend provides us with a good illustration of what lies ahead:

"There was a time when all people were gods. But they abused their divine status so much that Brahma, supreme among all the gods, decided to deprive them of their divine power and hide it in a place where they'd never be able to find it. The problem was deciding where to hide it.

"The minor divinities were assembled to find a solution. 'Let us bury man's divinity deep in the earth,' they suggested. But Brahma replied, 'No, that will not work. Man, being ingenious, will dig until he finds it again.'

"The gods thought some more and then said, 'Why not throw into the deepest ocean?' But once again Brahma rejected the idea. 'No, sooner or later man will explore the depths of all the oceans and will be certain to find the power once again.'

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The minor divinities were at a loss. 'We don't know where to hide it, since it seems that man will look everywhere on land and in the sea, and be sure to find it one day.'

"Then Brahma said, 'Here is what we will do with man's divinity: we'll hide it in the deepest part of his own self, since that is the place he will never think of looking.'

"Since then, says the legend, man has explored the entire world, from the highest mountains to the deepest oceans, in search of something that can be found only in the self." (Adapted from Eric Butterworth's *Discovering The Power of Self*).

Faith healers, pendulums, amulets, fetishes… all are merely crutches. The real secret lies buried in your own self. Teaching this truth to as many people as possible, and giving them the means to experience their own divine nature firsthand, is the primary objective of mental dynamics.

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Part Three: Parapsychology

"Parapsychology is the demonstration and experimental study of psychological functions that have not yet been incorporated into the present system of scientific psychology, with the aim of eventually enlarging the scope of the present system to incorporate these phenomena."

Robert Amadou

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Caslant's Method of Developing Paranormal Faculties

"In order to fly at the speed of thought to any destination you choose, you have to start by believing that you have already arrived."
Richard Bach

How to develop paranormal faculties

The question of how to develop paranormal faculties has preoccupied mankind since the dawn of time. It has acquired an added urgency in light of the gradual awakening of man's awareness that has taken place over the last few years.

The New Scientist, a British scientific journal, questioned its readers - the elite of the scientific and intellectual community - on whether or not they believed in the existence of extra sensorial perception (ESP). To the editor's great surprise, 70% of those who were surveyed claimed that they believed ESP does, in fact, exist. This trend was amplified by the publication in the 1960's of the work of Leonid L. Vassiliev on suggestion over distances. After some initial resistance on the part of Soviet officials, a scientific commission under the directorship of A.S. Popov (called the 'bio-information section of the scientific and technical inter-union society of radio technology and electro-

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communication,' referred to as the Popov Commission for short) was officially established to pursue the study of telepathy and related subjects.

Between 1966 and 1969, extensive research on ESP was carried out in many eastern European countries. Two American journalists published the findings of these studies in a book entitled *'Amazing Parapsychological Discoveries in the USSR.'* The book became the center of a storm of controversy in the U.S. NASA, which was already studying what it called 'electromagnetic communication between living organisms,' redoubled its efforts to outdo the Soviets, the rivalry between the two super powers serving to accelerate further research. About twenty universities established departments for the study of parapsychology. The Maimonides Medical Center in New York set up a dream laboratory where parapsychological phenomena occurring during sleep or under hypnosis were studied. The Advanced Research Projects Agency, a branch of the Pentagon, was granted a research contract in collaboration with Stanford University to study paranormal phenomena.

Since then the United States has slowly but surely caught up to the Russians in the area of paranormal research, leaving other countries far behind. In France, for example, the International Metaphysical Institute, for many years the only officially recognized public organization set up to study paranormal phenomena, now subsists on donations from an American foundation.

Most studies on the subject of parapsychology set out to prove that paranormal faculties do indeed exist. Rhine, working at Duke University, spent 40 years of his life trying to do just that. Scientists have been fascinated by exceptional persons like Uri Geller and Pavel Stepaneck, and have subjected them to an endless series of tests an attempt to find answers to the questions 'How could ESP information be transmitted?' and 'How is extra sensorial perception possible?'

Most researchers have come up with a blank when trying to find a scientific basis for this type of transmission. According to Vassiliev, and based on 30 years of study, ESP information does not take the form of electromagnetic waves. What form does it take then? As Warren Weaver, a mathematician

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remarked, "I find this subject so intellectually uncomfortable it's almost painful to discuss!"

Focussing on the question of how ESP works, researchers all but ignored another, equally important aspect of the issue - how can we develop our paranormal faculties?

Pavel Stepaneck was taught to develop his innate powers by his teacher, Milan Ryzl. Uri Geller shrugs off insinuations of contact with some sort of extraterrestrial force, and explains clearly how he proceeds when using his paranormal faculties. A number of other persons have been able to develop their own paranormal faculties by following his instructions.

Interestingly enough, the methods used today are more or less the same as those which were being discussed at the turn of the century, described by people like P.C. Jagot and E. Caslant.

Extra-sensorial communication

First let's take a look at the various ways extra-sensorial communication could be established between two brains (see the diagram below).

Since there is, as yet, no terminology to describe the possible modes of extra-sensorial communication, the best we can do is offer a description of each of the diagrams.

Figure 1 - Simple communication from subconscious to subconscious.
Proof of the existence of this type of communication was obtained by studying sets of twins: two sets of twins were able to mutually induce the alpha state - as soon as one twin closed his eyes and began emitting alpha readings on an EEG, the other twin's readings became identical. This is particularly interesting, since emitting alpha waves with your eyes open is very difficult to do.

Figure 2 - Communication with feedback from subconscious to subconscious

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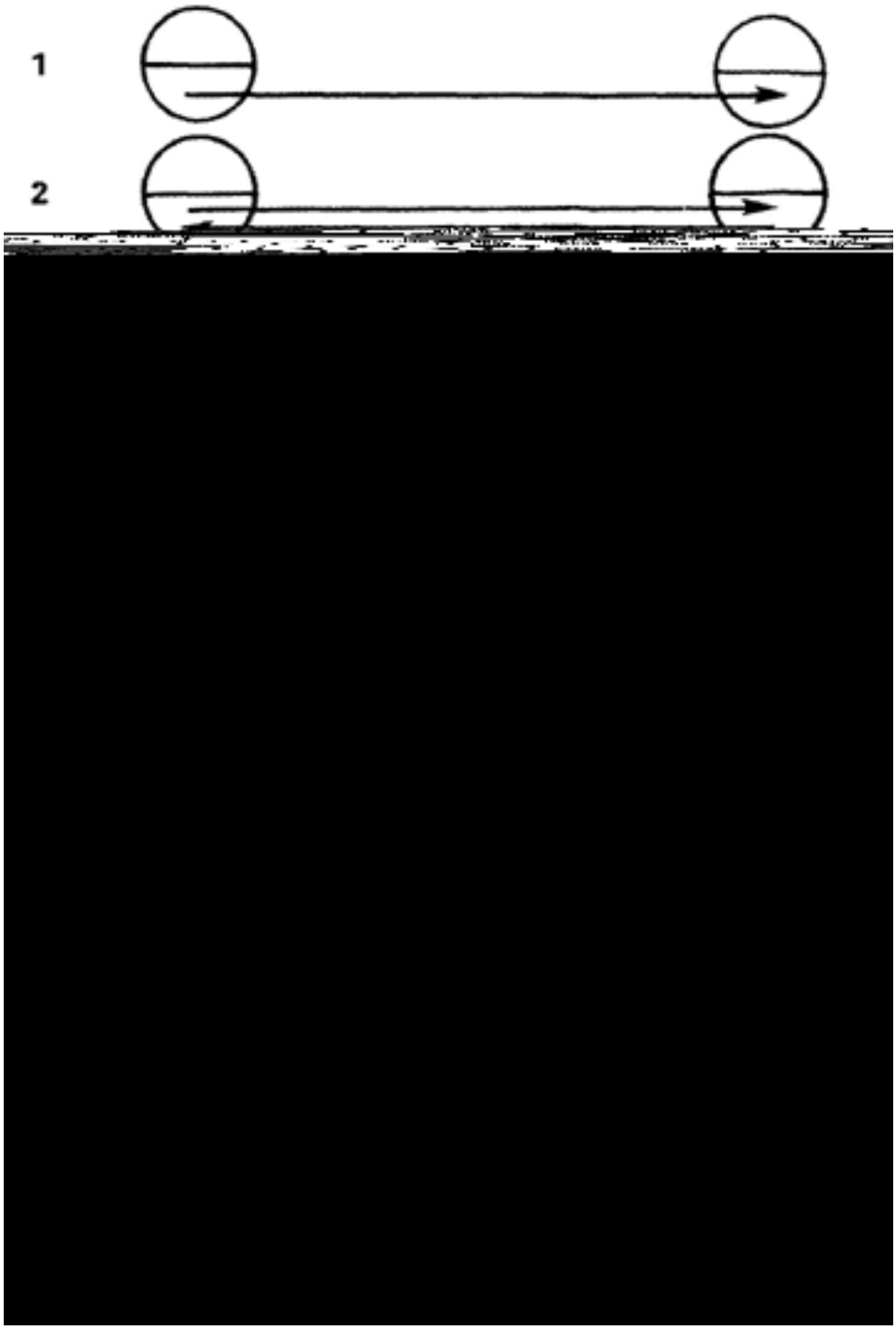

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were unable to see before. Writing your dreams down is essential, if you are to gain the necessary perspective to be able to comprehend them.

Thirdly, you may be unable to interpret one or two recurring elements in your dreams. If this happens, all you have to do is put yourself in the alpha state, and wait for an answer to arise in your mind. Caslant spoke about descending through various levels of consciousness. The upper levels provide you with symbolic images, while the lower levels provide explanations, often in verbal form, of those symbols. Descending means moving from objective to subjective awareness, from the image itself to what it means for you.

Occult rituals rely on a multitude of symbols which are supposed to change our state of mind, and help us attain altered states of consciousness. Tarot cards, for example, are a collection of symbols designed to modify our subconscious associations.

Unfortunately, symbolism changes as humans evolve. Many of the symbols used by ancient occult masters like the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, founder of the so-called hermetic sciences, or Hebrew Cabalists, are no longer comprehensible to us. Instead of trying to unlock the mysteries of ancient symbols and recreate rituals that originated hundreds of years ago, we should be using our own symbols to stimulate our consciousness and help us reach out, beyond the limitations of our own minds.

The mental laboratory

Think of the mental laboratory as a room, existing in your mind. It has a table, a couch, two chairs, all kinds of audiovisual equipment including a telephone, television, sophisticated speaker system, giant wall screen, etc. There's also a large calendar, a large clock, a computer, a bookshelf, an elevator, a door, a medicine cabinet, and shelves for various tools, musical instruments, and devices.

The room can be located wherever you want, out in the countryside surrounded by nature, or on top of a tall building in the middle of a bustling metropolis. What is important is that you feel totally secure, relaxed, ready to

concentrate, whenever you are in that room. All the techniques and exercises you perform while in the alpha state can be carried out in this room.

The following examples suggest how you could use your mental laboratory for practical purposes.

Example 1: I wake up one day and discover that I've lost my wallet. I check my pockets, my briefcase, but I can't find it. I concentrate, trying to recall where I last used it. I can't be sure. I put myself in the alpha state, visualize myself entering my mental laboratory. I change the date on the calendar and the time on the clock to correspond to when I think I lost my wallet, in this case the previous day. Then I sit down on the couch and relive what I was doing at that time. I had a number of meetings that day. First meeting, I still had the wallet. Second meeting… yes, I still had it. Third meeting… when it was over I gathered up my papers, put my wallet on the table, intending to pick it up later and then… I got into a conversation with someone and left the room with him… That's it! That's when I lost it.

Instead of getting all upset and running around searching frantically for the wallet, a few minutes of alpha concentration tells me exactly where to find it. I emerge from the alpha state, call the company where I had the meeting and…Yes, they found the wallet, they were going to call me…

Example 2 : I usually find it very difficult to summon up a mental image of someone close to me. I don't know why, but the image is always blurred and imprecise. The harder I try, the more the image tends to fade.

When I started using my mental laboratory, I was surprised to see the faces of persons I know appear on the room's TV screen. The images were extremely precise, I could see the color of their eyes, the texture of their skin. I had never been able to do that before.

Creating some kind of imaginary support mechanism for our mental functions, and making use of the symbols common to our own century - symbols representing communication, knowledge, action, and so on - seem to short-circuit inhibited cerebral pathways and create new, more effective ones in

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their stead. And of course the mental laboratory can also be used for developing paranormal faculties like telepathy, double vision, premonition, postcognition, and so forth.

I have never encountered two mental laboratories that were exactly the same. Some people like to bury their special room underground. Others construct their lab on another planet. The materials people choose are also interesting: steel, wood, stone, glass, plastic, carpets, leather, luxurious or ascetic, antique or futuristic, etc. These choices always seem to correspond to the deepest, most heartfelt aspirations of their creators, providing them with the peace and harmony that is so often lacking in their day to day lives, where they find themselves besieged by colleagues, clients, secretaries, ringing telephones, TV, radio, traffic, children, etc. It is only while relaxing in their dream laboratory, gazing out at the scenery of their choice, that they feel completely secure. This feeling leads to increased self confidence, which is extremely important for preventing inhibiting reflexes from blocking out subconscious imaging.

Doctor Lozanov, who created a Center for Autosuggestion in Sophia, Bulgaria (supported by the Ministry of Education of that country) developed a unique way to teach languages. Upon entering the center, students had to set aside all their personal belongings, and imagine that they had become the person they always wanted to be. They could change their name and imagine that they were someone else entirely for the duration of the course. Classes were conducted with students in the alpha state. The results were absolutely amazing - students were able to master university level English in only three short months!

Unfortunately, we cannot check into an autosuggestion center whenever we want to liberate our mental faculties. On the other hand, creating your own mental laboratory is just as effective, and permanently at your disposal.

Your lab assistants

Imagine two assistants, one man and one woman, sitting on the chairs in your mental laboratory. The idea of using imaginary assistants to help de-

velop your intuitive faculties is not new. In 1937, Napoleon Hill, in his book *Think And Get Rich* explains how he had the idea of gathering together a group of illustrious personages in his imagination, in order to acquire some of their qualities for himself.

What started off as a simple exercise in autosuggestion took a strange turn. Each of his imagined personalities began to develop their own habits. Abraham Lincoln, for example, would always arrive late, and Hill sometimes had trouble preventing the others from arguing with him about his lack of punctuality!

"For the last few years, the experiment has taken a completely unexpected turn. I now consult my group of imaginary councilors whenever I am faced with a difficult problem. The results are often quite amazing."

John C. Lilly, the celebrated neurologist, who studied the human mind using various techniques, including meditation, LSD, hypnosis, Gestalt therapy and sensory deprivation, had firsthand experience of death after a couple of near-fatal accidents.

"Each time I was very close to death, each time I really thought I was going to die, two persons - I can only describe them as mentors - appeared in my mind. Now, whenever I have a difficult decision to make, these same mentors come to me and advise me what to do."

When asked if his mentors were projections of his own imagination, Lily replied, "It is possible that my guides are aspects of my own subconscious or super-conscious mind… I really don't know."

Carlos Castaneda, initiated into the mystical practices of the Hopi Indians in New Mexico, often talks about his 'allies' as he calls them. For centuries the Catholic Church has encouraged believers to pray to guardian angels and saints.

The idea of imagining two assistants, a man and a woman, originated with José Silva, and corresponds to the concept of animus and anima pro-

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posed by Jung. In men, the anima, or feminine, intuitive, artistic part of the self, is repressed, for obvious cultural reasons (a man should not seem to be effeminate, but always appear virile and strong).

The opposite is true for women. The animus, the logical, rational, conceptual part of the mind, is repressed, because women should not appear to be too masculine.

"It is because we do not make conscious, intentional use of both aspects, considering them to be normal functions of our being, that the anima and animus tend to create personality problems. As long as the repression continues, the two aspects manifest themselves as relatively independent parts of our personality. They cannot be fully integrated as long as we continue to ignore one or the other."

Creating symbols for the animus and anima allow us to express parts of ourselves that would otherwise be repressed.

Neuro-physiology has recently added a new stone to the edifice of our understanding of the mind: it seems that our two cerebral hemispheres control very distinct types of activity. The right brain corresponds to the anima and to spatial perception, while the left brain corresponds to the animus, and controls language functions.

Robert E. Ornstein, who discovered the distinction between right and left brain functions, regrets the latent cultural conflict that exist between these two modes of thinking - the linear, logical, verbal, left brain type of thinking glorified by science and technology, as opposed to the intuitive, emotional right brain way of thinking, related to the arts, spirituality, and creativity in general. In fact, our culture has been built by persons using both logical and intuitive thought, and to say that one is better than the other is a mistake.

On the contrary, people have to balance their right and left brain functions in order to become complete human beings, just as each twenty-four hour cycle is a balance between day and night. The right brain's powers of imagination, intuition and dreaming should be taken into consideration, and

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not be ignored as a futile waste of time and energy, as so many people tend to do. Ornstein goes so far as to say that developing right brain functions is an essential factor for our individual and cultural survival.

I have often found myself in conversation with theosophists or spiritualists who say, "You talk about guides or assistants, but why are you hiding who they really are? Why not admit that they are guardian angels, sent from above to help you?"

I have no doubt that people who believe strongly enough in spirits will encounter them. I, on the other hand, prefer to maintain my own vision of the way things are. As John Lily said, "Everything we believe to be true is true, or at least becomes true in our mind. Of course there are certain limits that have to be determined experimentally and individually. These limits, in turn, represent new beliefs, which must eventually be transcended."

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Lucid Dreaming

Images unfold before my eyes, as if I were watching an animated movie. The scenes are carefully drawn in very bright colors. I read the captions with amazement - the plot is clear, the dialog very lifelike.

I am dreaming.

I am dreaming, but I am lucidly aware that I am dreaming. I feel like a spectator watching my own creation. How is this possible? I draw very badly. It never occurred to me to make an animated film or write a cartoon. How can I be dreaming up this amazing spectacle?

I look at the details of the images and analyze them: absolutely incredible. Since I am the creator, I suppose I can change an image if I want to. I can change the way the story is going, can't I? I try, but in vain. The best I can do is reframe an existing image, make it larger or smaller. So what is happening? Am I really creating all this?

One night, visiting a friend and colleague, Philip Lecomte, at his country house, I began talking about my experiences with lucid dreaming.

"I started having spontaneous lucid dreams about a year ago. It was like having my very own dream laboratory. I was fascinated by the potential applications. What if I could have a lucid dream whenever I wanted to? I tried repeating positive formulations before falling asleep. "I can and will be conscious while I dream. Whenever I have a lucid dream I will feel perfectly relaxed. I can modify my dreams whenever I want."

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The more I practiced, the more I realized that making a conscious effort to overcome obstacles in my dreams was changing my behavior during my waking hours, in a positive way, as if I were undergoing some form of therapy.

I became so enthusiastic I started telling everyone about my new technique, which I called LDT - Lucid Dream Therapy. I felt I had discovered something important and unique.

When I got home I noticed a book on my bookshelf entitled *Dreams And How To Control Them* by a fellow called Saint-Denis. It had been given to me a year before, as a birthday present. I'd never opened it.

The book was all about lucid dreaming, including its potential for therapeutic application. What I thought I had discovered turned out to be more or less common knowledge way back in 1867, when the book was written!

The book described lucid dreaming in much the same way as Carlos Castaneda, a modern day mystic, describes his method of dream control, which he learned from his Amerindian guide, Don Juan:

"This technique consists of forcing images to stay in the mind long enough to observe them carefully. To develop this ability you first have to chose an object in advance, and practice looking for it in your dreams. Don Juan suggested I use my hands as a reference - whenever I became aware I was dreaming I should look at my hands, and then at the scene before me. This would immobilize the scene long enough for me to study it. After some months I became adept at gazing at my hands while sleeping, and could thus immobilize images in my dreams. I was so fascinated I couldn't wait to get to sleep at night!"

One of my alpha seminar students wrote me the following letter:

"If I'm in good shape (not overtired or too preoccupied with some problem or other) I can program myself while I'm in the alpha state to be at least partially conscious during my dreams. I often ask myself whether I should be writing the dream down or not while it's still happening. Sometimes I interpret certain events or

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images, also while they're still happening. At first, the subject of my dreams was usually connected to events that happened in my waking life, one or two days before. But after about a month of writing my dreams down and then reading them over, I began developing a new, more sophisticated understanding of their symbolism. The process of remembering and writing my dreams down became easier and easier. I remember one night when I wrote down seven consecutive dreams (my record so far!)."

Déjà-vu

One of the main reasons people are so interested in lucid dreaming, aside from its potential therapeutic application, is the opportunity it offers to verify some of our theories concerning the waking and sleeping states. Because we have trouble remembering them, and because they are often mysterious, dreams have been given a rather bizarre, fantastic significance.

Lobsang Rampa, a mystic westerner who claims to be the reincarnation of a Tibetan lama, talked about the separation of body and mind that occurred in his dreams, the two entities being attached only by a thin silver string. As we will see later, the phenomenon does exist, but to say that it occurs regularly in the dream state is to refute the facts as reported by lucid dreamers.

Saint-Denis writes about having a similar kind of dream:

"I am walking in Brussels, a city I had never been to. This is strange, I think. How can my imagination create a whole city in such detail? Suppose, as the Orientals believe, that the mind can travel on its own, while the body is asleep? That may be so, but it still doesn't explain how this happens. I've never been to Brussels in my life, and yet there is that famous cathedral I've seen in paintings. This street I'm walking on, I have no recollection of ever having been near it before. One thing is certain - if my memory can retain such detailed impressions without my even being aware of it, some phenomenon is at work that merits further investigation. The important thing is to base my theories on positive, verifiable facts, and to observe things very carefully."

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Saint-Denis' dream was filled with remarkable detail: shopkeepers' signs, street names, numbers, colors, and so on. One day he decided to take a trip to Brussels and verify for himself if what he had dreamed was real. The cathedral seemed very familiar, but it was not surrounded by narrow streets full of shops, as it had been in his dream.

"The truth is, I would have been more worried than pleased had my dream turned out to be entirely accurate. The fact that there were inconsistencies allowed me to refute the theory that dreams occur in some kind of fantastic parallel world."

But the story doesn't end there. The narrow street lined with shops did exist, and all the details Saint-Denis dreamed were accurate. The only difference was that the street was in another city - Frankfurt - which Saint-Denis had not visited for over ten years.

"You can imagine my astonishment when I found myself strolling down a street that was similar in every detail to the one I had dreamed. I felt like I had stepped back in time, and that I had never really woken up."

This does not mean that the phenomena of clairvoyance experienced in dreams, which would explain occurrences of déjà-vu, do not exist. Saint-Denis' subconscious mind was like a closed circuit, forming dream imagery based on amazingly precise mental images drawn from his memory.

Readers can see why the study of lucid dreaming is so important for understanding phenomena like telepathy or premonition. While most scientists still claim that people do not dream outside of REM phases, Saint-Denis wrote in 1867:

"No matter when I was awakened from sleep I always felt like a dream had been interrupted. Passing from the waking to the sleeping state happens gradually, without a complete suspension of the thought process."

Conditions for lucid dreaming

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Saint-Denis suggested three essential conditions for the act of lucid dreaming:

1. Developing the habit of writing dreams down immediately after waking up, which will eventually result in your remaining conscious while dreaming.
2. Creating a signaling system for yourself: associating a certain memory with a certain sensorial perception (looking at your hands, picking up a glass, drinking water, etc.) will trigger the act of lucid dreaming while you are asleep.
3. These signal images should be incorporated in the scenes you dream about, allowing your conscious mind to take an active part in the dream process (this will inevitably occur as soon as you become aware that you are dreaming) so that you can guide and develop your dreams through an exercise of will, the principle being that as soon as you think of something, it will appear in your dream."

Lucid dreaming is an ongoing experience for me - I still have a lot to learn about it. I have run into problems trying to master the technique, although thanks to mental dynamics I was able to experience my first lucid dream after only fifteen days of practice (it took Saint-Denis two hundred and seven days). At one point I felt I had to stop because the exercise was disturbing my sleep. I overcame that obstacle a couple of months later by developing a second formulation (I will awaken from my lucid dream refreshed and completely rested).

I then had some trouble controlling my dreams, and had to be content with playing the role of lucid spectator. At present I am continuing my research into the phenomenon.

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Telepathic Training

The year is 1960. Henry Marcotte, an ophthalmology therapist, is so busy he has no time for leisure activities. He is fascinated by a technique called visual reeducation, notably something called the 'flash' method.

A short-sighted subject, eyes closed, imagines an object that he wants to see. He opens and closes his eyes very rapidly, until he obtains a clear flash of the object he has imagined. The flash is then extended to coincide with the opening and closing of his eyes - the longer they remain open, the longer the image remains clearly formed in his field of vision.

Another aspect of the method is to become conscious of the organic sensations that accompany the process of image creation, after subjects are able to maintain their images more or less at will (this part of the technique closely resembles the biofeedback and dynamic relaxation techniques described earlier).

During the reeducation process, Marcotte frequently notes the characteristic distortion of images produced by each of his subjects.

One day, while reading a book about telepathy, he was amazed to discover that persons practicing telepathy experienced the same type of distortion, a little like a short-sighted person trying to recreate a drawing placed at the limit of his field of vision.

If the same kind of problem occurs during telepathic transmission, why not try to apply the same method of visual reeducation to improve it?

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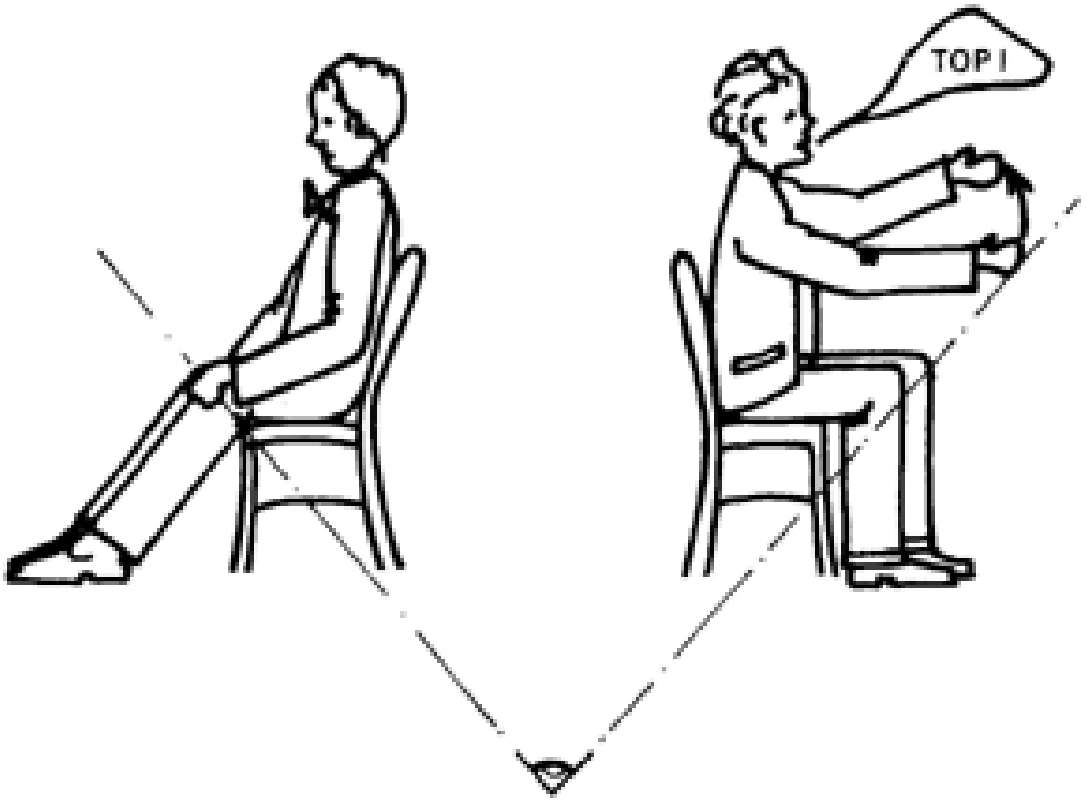

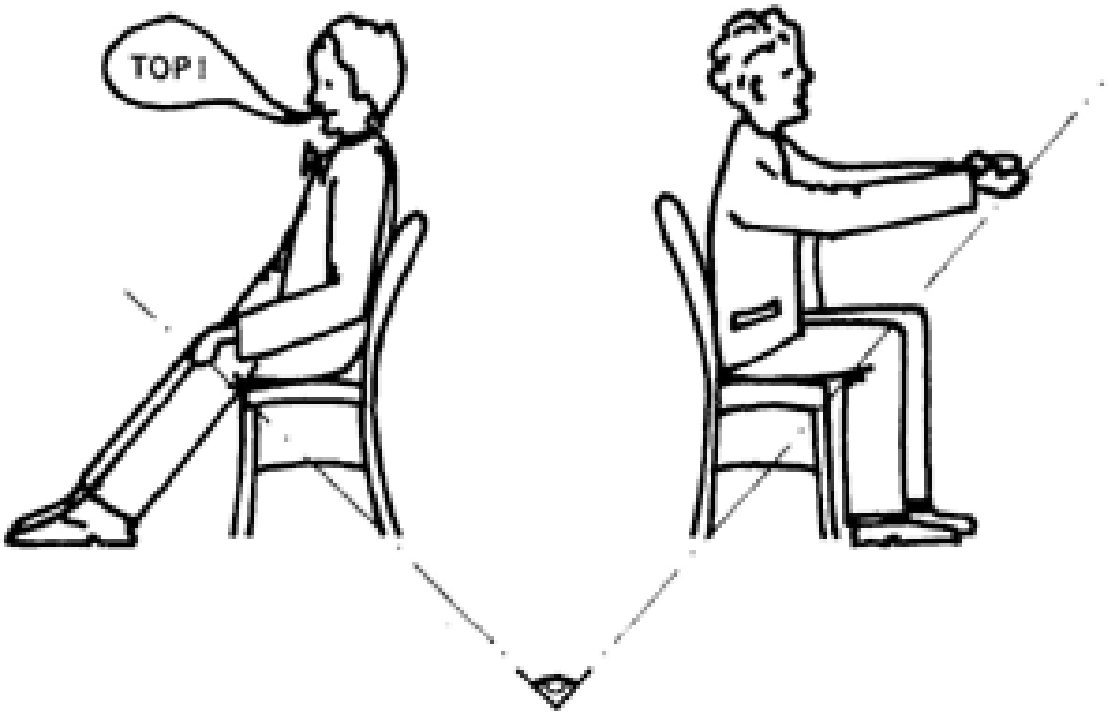

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In 1964 he approached an international funding organization with a proposal to conduct further experiments. The proposal was accepted, and Marcotte formed his team of researchers. After a period of some trial and error experimentation, they made their first discovery: the 'start / stop' method.

Become telepathic in a few minutes

In one experiment, subjects tried to telepathically communicate the number of lines drawn on a piece of paper. In order to do this, researchers established the following procedure : the person sending the message would draw lines on a sheet of paper; the person receiving the message would say 'stop' when the right number of lines had been drawn.

With this procedure in place, positive scores rose dramatically. Marcotte understood this to mean that movements, and the sensations they produce, are more easily perceived telepathically than images. He perfected the technique, calling it 'telesthesia' - a new kind of sensory telepathy.

The sender and receiver sit face to face, separated by a large screen so that both are completely isolated.

DIAGRAM: 1. Initial position (start)
Observer
2. Stop position

The sender performs a slow, regular movement, as if he were drawing a straight line, using his finger as a marker. As he begins the movement he says 'start', thinking ahead of time of where he wants to stop, which he tries to communicate to the receiver. The receiver says 'stop' when he or she feels the movement has been completed. The exercise requires an observer, who knows ahead of time where the sender wants to stop. If the exercise is repeated with a number of senders, the receiver will soon find it easier to tune in to the response. Researchers also found that different senders emit varying degrees of mental energy, and that the strength of emitted messages increases with practice.

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Receivers try to feel the movement, and the point where it is supposed to stop, and at the same time try to repeat it. The observer is there to verify the accuracy of the receiver's predictions, and provide help when necessary (indications like 'that's a little too fast…" are more frequently required at the start of a session).

If a screen is not available, the exercise can be carried out with the two chairs facing back to back. Or it could be done over the telephone, with the two participants thousands of miles apart (the role of the observer would become a little more complicated, as gestures would have to be seen over closed circuit TV).

After some practice, the two participants should attain 100% synchronicity. Both participants should be familiar with techniques that allow them to relax and concentrate on their inner self. They must also be fully focussed on their own sensations, and those of the other person involved. In addition, there should be no hesitation or change in the movement once it is initiated, since the very first intention of the sender is what will be perceived by the receiver.

The fact that gestures are easier to transmit and receive telepathically than words or images was discovered by Marcotte and his team of researchers. This is in keeping with the basic hierarchy of communication systems - the more primitive they are, the easier they are to perceive.

Have you ever tried staring at the back of someone's head?

It often happens that the person will feel that they are being watched, and turn around. Soviet researchers conducted experiments which proved that this type of innate survival reaction does indeed exist in humans. One Soviet researcher, Kuni, tried combining images and tactile sensations in his experiments on telepathy. In one experiment he attempted to transmit the image and the sensation of a hot cup of tea to 17 persons in a state of hypnosis. All the subjects experienced a sensation of heat, to a greater or lesser degree. In another experiment he pricked himself with a needle. Once again all 17 subjects reacted, most of them by crying out in pain.

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We can see how the classic test of telepathy - asking subjects to guess which card has been pulled from a deck - is one of the worst ways to obtain a telepathic connection, since playing cards are composed of images and a verbal symbol (the King of hearts, for example).

Marcotte's other discovery was based on a combination of the 'start / stop 'and 'flash' techniques.

Both sender and receiver would close their eyes; the sender would open his eyes suddenly, then close them again, at which point the receiver would 'see' a very faint light, accompanied by a sensation in the eyes.

Next came the idea of adding a drawing or photograph to the flash technique. This method yielded excellent results, if the following conditions were met:

1. Both participants had succeeded in the eye synchronization exercise (if they hadn't this experiment would fail).
2. The sender had to concentrate not on the drawing or photograph itself, but on its after-image (for example, if you stare at a light bulb for a few seconds and then close your eyes, what you see is the after-image, a kind of negative impression of the light bulb that stays on your retina for some seconds).
3. Pinpoint timing is essential. In these kinds of experiments, telepathy, premonition and post-cognition can sometimes become confused. Some system of exact timing (usually controlled by a third party) should be put in place.

Over the years Marcotte and his team have worked on refining the techniques they discovered. When asked what practical use his work might have, Marcotte responded that enhancing people's telepathic powers helps them communicate better, and gain a better comprehension of themselves and the world around them. On the other hand, he is hostile to the idea of adding emotions to the list of sensations that can be communicated telepathically. He insists that the process should be cold, mechanical, and as objective as possible. Is this the best way to get results? Many people would not agree, as we will see in the next chapter.

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Telepathy and Emotion

Ask a question and they both say almost the same thing at the same time. She thinks of something, he starts talking about it. She starts a sentence, he finishes it. She is in pain, he suffers along with her. They often find themselves thinking about the same thing, and each knows exactly how the other feels.

Of course, we're talking about two people in love.

When you share feelings with someone you love, you develop a degree of 'emotional communication' with that person. Mothers get up in the middle of the night, feeling their infant's need for comfort or nourishment. A husband wakes up in a cold sweat just as his beloved wife dies in a car crash thousands of miles away.

This type of telepathy occurs frequently. The works of Warcollier, Rhine and Vassiliev provide ample documentation of incidences of telepathy between person involved in a loving relationship. Parapsychologists proposed the existence of what they called an emotional field as a possible explanation of the phenomenon.

Any skilled researcher of telepathic transmission is aware of how important emotional fields are. In order to create the best possible conditions for success, various methods have been devised to bring the emotional aspect into play (passionate interest, rivalry, mutual love, music, mood, etc.).

The smallest emotional field concerns that of the ego itself. The largest is the feeling generated by a sense of communion with the universe. The kinds of emotions generated - sympathy, love, altruism, compassion - correspond

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to the different types of telepathic relationships. William James considered paranormal phenomena proof of the existence of spirituality.

If you want to develop your paranormal faculties, you have to enlarge the scope of your emotional field. You have to try and live in harmony, not only with your immediate family and circle of friends, but with all people. In other words, you have to feel at one with the universe. We are all parts of a whole, in the same way that the billions of brain cells in your head constitute a single brain. Every individual represents a single element in a vast communication system called the collective unconscious (experiments on animals and plants have shown that they too feel, which means the vast communication system that links all humans should perhaps be extended to include all life). Imagine billions of human brains, linked through their subconscious, forming what some have called 'infinite intelligence.'

But being in harmony with others is only possible when you have achieved inner harmony. All the great spiritual masters - Lao Tzu, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed - had the same message: they all said "Love thy neighbor AS thyself…" not "Love they neighbor MORE THAN thyself."

To do that you first have to accept yourself the way you are, and come to appreciate and love yourself.

We stand at the frontier of a new era. In former times, mysticism, parapsychology, and human relations seemed to be in conflict with each other. Now, scientifically documented paranormal phenomena help prove that people really are psychically linked, rather than isolated individuals wandering around in a strange hostile world. There will come a time when what has been considered mystical or mysterious will, like paranormal phenomena, seem commonplace. There is nothing to prevent us from crossing over to the other side. In the same way that the mysticism of the past has become the paranormal of today, what is considered paranormal today will become the psychology of tomorrow.

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Aura

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
Genesis 2, Verse 7

Man has been wondering about the mystery of life since the dawn of time. Once all the chemical components are in place, how do you 'breathe the breath of life' into your creation? How do you transform matter into a living soul?

In Latin the word aura referred to breath. To mystics, aura represents a kind of halo of light, enveloping the body, visible only to those who have been taught how to see it. Others explain that aura is an emanation of the energy field that gives us life, and call it the subtle or astral body.

During solar eclipses we can see rays of energy, like huge sheaths of flame, emanating from the surface of the sun, while its center is masked by the moon. In the same way, our subtle, etheric body is masked by our physical body - all we can see of it are the rays of its aura.

There is an amazing resemblance in the various descriptions of the human aura. Yogis, theosophists, clairvoyants and mystics all describe more or less the same phenomenon. On the other hand, their observations are by no means scientific, so we cannot conclude that the human aura does, indeed, exist, simply because so many people claim it does.

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The Kirlian Effect

A Russian researcher, S.D. Kirlian, aided by his wife Valentina, finally managed to convince the extremely conservative scientific community of the existence of what he called an 'energy body' composed of bioplasm.

Scientists around the world were amazed by Kirlian's discovery, and especially by its proposed practical application - the early detection of both physical and mental diseases through an analysis of the colors of a patient's aura, which Kirlian referred to as 'bioluminescence.' Hospitals soon began equipping themselves with devices designed to measure the Kirlian effect. Here's how one observer described an image produced by a Kirlian device:

"… fireworks exploding against a dark blue background, sheaths of multicolored sparks in the midst of flames and dazzling flashes. Some light patterns had the regular glow of candles, while others were explosions of blinding light, which gradually faded. Some flew by like flaming meteors. In some areas we could see dark filaments of vapor floating in space. Random flashes outlined a sparkling, labyrinth-like structure resembling a spacecraft in search of new galaxies."

This was no dream imagery, or the product of some poet's unbridled imagination, but the report of a Russian academic after witnessing the bioplasmic aura produced by a human hand, as seen through a Kirlian photographic device.

The year is 1939. A technician in the city of Krasnodar is called in to repair a high frequency machine used for electrotherapy. He notices a brilliant glare between the patient's skin and an electrode linked to the machine. He tries to photograph the phenomenon, which turns out to be a variation of something called the corona effect, an occurrence that is well known in the field of electronics.

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First discovery: the corona photographed in this way varies in accordance with the level of vital energy of the body emitting it. Kirlian could actually see the energy stored in plants and animals. He soon realized that diseased plants and animals emitted less light, while dead plants and animals emitted no light at all. Intense bioluminescent activity surrounds every living entity, while dead entities produce no bioluminescence whatsoever.

Second discovery: the existence of a kind of energy body, composed of bioplasm, which is closely linked to the physical body. If you take a leaf and cut away a small part, the energy image emitted by the leaf remains intact, although the part that was amputated become less bright. This phantom image of the missing part of the leaf confirms the theory of an energy body, and may explain why many amputees continue to experience perceptions from missing limbs, as if they had a phantom limb (no other satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon has been offered to date).

Third discovery: Examining two leaves picked from the same species of tree at the same time, Kirlian noticed a difference between them. One leaf emitted small points of flame, a shape he had never seen before.

He learned that although both leaves came from the same type of tree, one of the trees had been inoculated against a serious form of disease.

His conclusion: Long before the disease manifested itself in the body of the tree, it showed up as a clear pattern in the tree's energy field.

Further research showed that the phenomenon was applicable to humans as well as plants, paving the way for the medical application of the Kirlian technique as a diagnostic tool.

After examining a series of Kirlian photographs, a surgeon in Leningrad, M.K. Gaikine, wondered if it would be possible to relate the photographic images to the 700 or so acupuncture points used by practitioners of Chinese medicine and its variations. His suggestion turned out to be very useful, especially for practitioners of acupuncture, who were finally able to offer scientific proof of the effectiveness of their technique. As it turned out, the energy

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centers designated in acupuncture diagrams correspond more or less exactly to the dense areas of light, called 'sunspots,' visible in Kirlian photographs.

Using Kirlian's procedure, Dr. Gaikine and a Leningrad engineer were able to develop a device that could detect the location of acupuncture points to within a tenth of a millimeter (the device was included as one of the official Russian exhibits at the 1967 World's Fair held in Montreal, Canada).

Research in the United States

While serving in the Korean war, Kendall L. Johnson was disturbed by a series of premonitory dreams he had about the death of a number of soldiers in his platoon. When he returned home after the war, he decided to take a course in parapsychology at UCLA.

One day his teacher, Doctor Thelma Moss, spoke to the class about the Kirlian device. She said she had acquired a set of plans while on a trip to Russia, but so far no one had been able to reproduce the Kirlian effect. Johnson, although he was an insurance salesman by profession, decided he would give it a try.

His initial attempts proved to be positive enough for the university to allot him space to set up a laboratory, and for the CIA and NASA to send representatives to examine possible applications of the technique.

Moss and Johnson copied Kirlian's device (even though it was protected by fourteen international patents) and oriented their research towards the paranormal.

One of their experiments concerned persons who claimed to be able to reproduce the effects of magnetism, discussed earlier in this book. They discovered that before the imposition of hands and magnetic passes, the aura of so-called magnetic healers was very strong (much stronger than that of an ordinary person), but that after a session the aura would weaken, while that of the patient would grow larger and clearer. They wondered if that could

explain the prickling sensation, accompanied by heat, that patients generally reported feeling during a session of magnetic therapy.

They also tried to reproduce Kirlian's phantom leaf experiment, but failed. Perhaps their equipment was not as sensitive as Kirlian's own device. Professor E. Douglas Dean, using a Kirlian device manufactured in Czechoslovakia, was able to reproduce Kirlian's findings exactly, while Richard M. Szumski, director of the photo lab at San Jose State University, tried hundreds of times to achieve the same result, with no success, and eventually gave up. Two other researchers, William Tiller and David Boyers, considered their results too inconclusive to lead to any practical applications.

Reading thoughts through colors

People's auras seems to be just as closely related to their psychological state of mind as to their physical condition. An unbalanced, nervous person will have a narrow, jagged aura, while a person who is well balanced and relaxed will emit a bright, broad aura.

An aura's color is an indication of a person's emotional state. Blue signifies a state of calm, concentrated relaxation. Red is an indication of violent emotions. Red and blue are the two basic color that comprise all auras. Distractions, worries or fears that arise after a period of calm will appear as red splotches mixed with the predominant blue. Anger will produce a large red aura (the expression 'to see red' is appropriate in this context). Red is also indicative of some imbalance in the organism, or of a physical wound. It is interesting to note that clairvoyants often perceive psychological problems as a reddish glow.

Auras are also linked to parapsychological phenomena. It seems that telepathic messages are initially perceived by the subtle or energy body. Experiments conducted in the former Soviet Union show that auras react before consciousness. By modifying a person's energy body using acupuncture, paranormal faculties can be stimulated.

Interacting auras

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When you caress someone's face or hold someone's hand, two auras interact, and an exchange of energy takes place. Therapists often describe how they are able to alleviate pain through massage, and how, after a session is over, they actually feel some of the patient's pain themselves.

Two researchers, Johnson and Mors, called this phenomenon the 'transfer effect.' Johnson claimed that what he found most interesting about his work with auras was that it showed that our beings extend beyond the limits of our skin, that we all possess another body made of pure energy, which is in constant interaction with our environment, and the people we come in contact with.

Will the Kirlian device prove to be an important scientific discovery? Indications are that it will. Although its potential applications have not been fully explored even today, forty years after its discovery, there has been renewed interest in the technique of late. On the other hand, perhaps the greatest impact of Kirlian's invention will turn out to be symbolic - for the first time in the history of humanity, science and mysticism seem to be in accord.

Concerning the subtle or energy body, all mystics, from Zoroaster to Heraclitus, from the Hebrew cabalists to Saint Paul, are in agreement. The idea is the same in all their writings: "The vibrant substance that the Creator referred to as the 'breath of life' takes on a subtle form in the nervous system of all living beings. It is transmitted through all our limbs, and its sensations are perceived by the brain. This subtle substance forms a living organism which is just as real as our material body." (Quoted from *The Great Initiates* by E. Shuré, written in 1889).

Although we have not yet seen a complete fusion of scientific and religious thought, we can certainly expect to achieve a better understanding between the two modes of thought as we approach the millennium.

Auras and ghosts

Except for a few kids movies like Casper The Friendly Ghost and Ghostbusters, ghosts are not very fashionable these days. But at the turn of

the century things were quite different. Famous mediums were renowned for the bizarre ectoplasmic apparitions they were able to produce during their seances. Witnesses included some of the greatest thinkers of the time, including Pierre and Marie Curie, and the philosopher Bergson.

I once had the pleasure of visiting Robert Tocquet, whom I have already talked about in an earlier chapter. Tocquet was very familiar with these kinds of experiments. Being a rationalist, he refused to fall into the trap of enthusiastic credulity. At the same time, he was convinced of the reality of a number of apparitions produced by people like Kluski or Rudi Schneider, both well known mediums.

I asked him how he explained these kinds of highly unusual phenomena. Here's what he had to say:

"To my mind, the apparitions are emanations of the medium himself. They are representations of his subconscious. When a medium produces a familiar face, he does so be delving into the subconscious mind of someone who is present at the seance. I take as proof of the material reality of these apparitions the fact that mediums clearly experience a loss of weight during their representations. Perhaps the phenomenon is caused by an unknown aspect of their aura emanations. Perhaps physical manifestations of their power, like the twisting of cutlery or the displacement of objects from a distance, can also be caused by this same energy field, once it is focussed and controlled."

Since science has still not been able to offer a satisfactory explanation for these phenomena, we can assume, at least for the time being, that Professor Tocquet may very well be right. Only time will tell.

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Out-of-Body Experiences

As we have seen, most mediums separate themselves from their own personality when using their paranormal faculties. Why? Because in their ordinary state of consciousness they are often fearful of their own powers, and astonished by the things they are able to 'see.' When they enter the trance state, they tend to assume someone else's personality, often the 'spirit' of a deceased doctor. This endows them with new faculties, like the ability to perform an on-the-spot operation without anesthesia, using the crudest of instruments (see the case of José Arigo), or diagnose a health problem and prescribe an effective cure (as Edgar Cayce did on hundreds of occasions).

If they are asked, while still in the trance state, how they are able to diagnose a health problem, they reply that they can see the patient's subtle body or aura, and interpret its constantly changing colors and movements to determine whether various organs are healthy or diseased. Doctor Lang suggests that mediums are able to operate on a patient's subtle body, and that the healing that takes place in the subtle body is then gradually transferred to the patient's corresponding organs. To perform such an operation, the subtle body must first be separated from the physical body.

There are thousands of people who claim to have experienced a separation from their physical body at some time or other. The phenomenon often occurs while patients are being anesthetized prior to surgery. Here is a typical example of this type of experience:

Mrs. J: "I suddenly had the feeling that I was being freed from my body, but that I was still completely myself. I studied my body, stretched out below me on the bed. My two sisters and my mother-in-law were there in the room. One of my sisters was sitting on the bed, warming my hands, while my other

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sister sat on the other side of the bed, not moving, just staring at me. Although I didn't feel the slightest desire to re-enter my body, I felt compelled to do so against my will…

"But the most amazing part of the whole thing was this: as soon as I woke up I said, 'Where's Mrs. K?' (the patient's mother-in-law). Now, Mrs. K was not there when they gave me the anesthesia. She arrived after they had put me under. When she asked me how I knew she was there I said I saw her come in."

The word anesthesia is derived from the Greek 'an' meaning cessation and 'aisthesis' meaning senses. The phenomenon of body separation (or astral travelling as some call it) only occurs when ordinary consciousness - and its corresponding sense perceptions - have been altered. It is as if the exteriorization of awareness can only take place when ordinary sensations are no longer being transmitted along their usual pathways.

Let's go back to the simplest form of extrasensory perception, referred to as double vision. Strangely enough, clairvoyants who use this technique can only 'see' with their eyes closed. One of the greatest mediums of this century, Vanga Dimitrova, received a grant from the Bulgarian government that enabled her to carry on with her work, even though she was blind. Persons who lose their physical sight often develop an extra-retinal sense of color (i.e. they perceive colors, but not with their eyes).

Numerous parapsychological experiments were conducted on deaf mutes in the USSR, because they were found to be the best subjects - they were much more tuned in to paranormal perceptions than people with all five senses functioning properly.

Through paranormal sense projection, subjects under hypnosis can actually feel whatever the hypnotist feels. Extrasensory perception usually only works when ordinary sense perceptions have been interrupted, or severely limited.

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Hypnosis, certain drugs and certain states of consciousness can cause ordinary sense perceptions to be projected over distances. In one experiment a subject had no trouble hearing an intimate conversation that was taking place three hundred yards away. The complete exteriorization of the senses is only one among many possibilities.

"Subjects feel as if they are outside their body, able to move around in space, but limited to the confines of their ordinary sense perceptions (which can sometimes be quite extensive).

"The phenomenon could be considered to be a paranormal illusion, since the source of the perception is too far away to be perceived normally, necessitating the displacement of the subject's subtle body through paranormal means. In fact there is no separate entity outside the body, but merely an enlargement, or intensifying of sensory perception."

A number of laboratory experiments were conducted by the American Society for Psychic Research. One subject, Ingo Swann, a writer and artist, was able to leave his body at will. He would describe objects and drawings placed in a completely isolated, locked room with regular success. He could also locate objects randomly placed in another room with a fair amount of accuracy. The difficulty lay in determining what type of paranormal phenomenon was involved. Was it clairvoyance? Telepathy? Double vision? There was no way of telling.

Throughout the experiments Swann continued talking and responding to people, describing in detail the various sensations he experienced. Most of the time he described visual perceptions. Tactile, olfactory and gustatory sensations were almost never mentioned.

How to develop your faculties of sensory exteriorization and astral travelling

There are three theories that attempt to explain the phenomenon of astral travelling:

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1. *Exteriorization of sensory perceptions creating an illusion of astral travelling.*
2. *Illusory astral travelling - consciousness is somehow projected to a location where the senses perceive it to be.*

3. *The subtle body actually separates from the physical body, which remains where it is, in a state of complete unconsciousness.*

My own personal experience tends to confirm the first theory. During sessions when I practiced mental projection, I have seen objects or people whom I wanted to touch or grasp, disappear. These objects or persons were obviously mental constructions, created by my own mind, based on paranormal sensory information.

Whatever the explanation (it could be a combination of all three theories), the ability to project your consciousness outside of your body is a faculty that can be developed.

What conditions are required to produce the phenomenon?

1. Entering the alpha state. *Reports are conclusive: a state between waking and sleep is highly conducive to astral travelling. Here's what one astral traveler has to say:*

Mrs. S.: "Usually when I leave my body I'm in a state of semi-consciousness, somewhere between being awake and being asleep. Sometimes I get the feeling I'm living in two worlds at the same time. I can see my body stretched out on the bed, and hear voices both in the real world, and in the world my subtle body is inhabiting."

2. Gradual exteriorization of the senses. *Yoga provides an excellent method for doing this. You start by concentrating on your feet and calves, focussing on the sensations in these parts of your body. Then you direct your awareness upward, imagining that your energy body is able to separate itself from your physical body and float above it. As you do this you no longer feel any sensations in your feet or calves. Repeat the process, focussing on other parts of your body, until you reach your neck, at which point you will feel your energy body*

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flooding into your head, like a torrent racing through the narrow opening of your throat. You will then feel your consciousness escaping out the top of your head. When it is completely free, it can be sent anywhere you desire.

Communicating and explaining this kind of purely subjective process is difficult - you have to experience a mental voyage firsthand in order to really understand what it's like.

The yoga technique seems to be similar to the natural mechanism which triggers the phenomenon of astral travelling, since descriptions of spontaneous occurrences begin in more or less the same way.

"First my feet, then my legs became numb, as if the life had gone out of them. I felt like I was being pulled upward, head first."

3. Positive formulations. *Some preparation using positive formulations can be very helpful. Astral travelling is more difficult to achieve than clairvoyance, where only one of the senses is exteriorized (while astral travelling, all the senses are exteriorized).*

Jose Silva suggests the following formulation:

"I am learning to develop my five senses and project my mind anywhere in the universe."

Personally, I prefer this formulation:

"I am developing my faculties of concentration and mental projection. I am learning to project my awareness and all my senses wherever I want. I can project my senses anywhere in the entire universe."

It's actually a mistake to talk about only five senses. In fact, we have more than twenty senses, including a sense of direction, balance, weight, and so on.

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You have to exteriorize all your senses in order to be fully aware while astral travelling.

Trial experiment

During the alpha seminar, we conduct a trial experiment on complete sensory exteriorization. Many participants are unable to achieve full separation of their subtle and physical bodies, while others seem to be natural astral travelers. A number of conclusions have been drawn from these experiments.

1. The reality of the experience. Details observed while astral travelling generally turn out to be accurate. Contrary to what Saint-Denis reported, data collected while persons are separated from their body is not produced by some kind of short circuit in the mind while it is cut off from exterior reality. Take the case of M.T., who paid an astral visit to his wife's parents' house, where his young daughter was being looked after. He saw his daughter trip and fall to the ground, and start crying. When he returned to his normal state of consciousness he insisted that his wife call her parents to find out if their daughter was all right. To her astonishment, his wife was told that her daughter had hurt herself (this occurred while her husband was astral travelling) but that she was not seriously injured.

Of course it does often happen that people's imaginations remain active even while they are outside their body, adding information that might not be based on fact.

2. Sensations are expressed physically. This occurs quite frequently, as in the case of Edgar Cayce. Some subjects start smiling or laughing to express their joy, others exhibit muscular contractions to indicate movement and other sensations.

It is as if brain centers are being directly stimulated by sensations perceived while having an out-of-body experience, and are then transferred by the brain to various parts of the body.

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During the course of all our experiments, it has never happened that an astral traveler has been 'seen' while separated from his or her physical body. There have been reports of people 'feeling' a presence, and subjects have sometimes received phone calls the next day, from people asking if they had tried to get in touch with them. Questions like "Were you thinking about me yesterday?" or "Did you dream about me last night?" are common. On the other hand, there have been reports of a subject's physical body being seen in two locations at the same time, a phenomenon referred to as 'bilocation'.

One of the most famous cases of bilocation concerns a certain Major Tudor Pole, an industrialist, archeologist and writer. Major Pole spent part of World War 2 living on a houseboat on the Nile River. One day he suddenly came down with a high fever. He was so weak he couldn't even tell his servants to stop at the next village so he could see a doctor. He was lying in his room when he heard a knock at the door. He thought is was one of his servants, but when the door opened he saw a man, carrying a doctor's bag, dressed in an overcoat, which was very unusual attire for a hot country like Egypt.

The man walked in, greeted Major Pole in a friendly manner and sat down on the edge of his bed. The Major thought the man had been sent by colleagues in the underground resistance movement to help him. The doctor said he didn't have the necessary medication with him, and told Major Pole to send one of his servants to a pharmacy in the next town to get a special herbal remedy. He wrote out a prescription and handed it over.

At that moment the major realized that he could see right through the doctor's hat, which he had removed and placed on the bedstead. With characteristic British indignation, the major demanded that the visitor explain who he was, and who had sent him.

The man said he was a doctor, and that he had gotten into the habit of closing his office early in the evening so that he could pray for guidance and ask to be sent wherever he was most needed. After giving the major assurances that he would soon get better, he wished him a good day and took his leave.

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The major did, indeed, recover. When he got back to England he tried every possible means to get in touch with the doctor who had helped him. He even persuaded the BBC to broadcast his story internationally, asking that the doctor in question make himself known. A short time later a Scottish physician got in touch with Major Pole, who recognized him at once. The doctor said that he had had a number of similar experiences. His only worry was that the Medical College might get wind of what he was doing and start asking questions.

It seems rather strange that in Major Pole's account, the astral travelling doctor was wearing a full suit of clothes. For that reason, I would suggest that another type of paranormal phenomenon was at work, perhaps a form of telepathy that was so strong it created a perfect sensory hallucination, which led the major to believe he had actually seen someone in his room.

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Edgar Cayce

Now that we have more or less come full circle in our exploration of paranormal phenomena, I'd like to return to the aspect that got me interested in the first place: the faculty of diagnosing health problems over distances. One year after deciding to conduct our alpha seminars, a year spent in testing and perfecting various techniques, we announced our first seminar. It went very well. Most of the participants were friends or relations. All had been fascinated by what we had to say about the alpha experience.

The only exception was my mother. Confident and enthusiastic at first, she began to have more and more doubts as the weekend continued. By the time we got around to Edgar Cayce's diagnosis technique, she was totally unable to relax.

She seemed very nervous, as if she were worried about something. I tried my best to reassure her, and asked to see the 'case history' that she had been given to diagnose. At the top of the page I read, 'Internal cataract of the right eye.' Further down I noted that the patient was a ten year old girl.

"Relax… try and relax…" I said. The soothing tone of my voice seemed to help. My mother closed her eyes and began breathing deeply.

"What do you see?"

"I can't see anything. Everything's blurred."

Then, suddenly, she started talking. It was like a dam had burst inside her. She talked for a full forty minutes, about a young girl she had never met. She seemed very emotional, as if she were experiencing the girl's joy and

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suffering herself. Towards the end of her discourse she described in detail what the girl would have to do to regain her health.

It's pretty strange to see someone you know so well - in this case my own mother - transformed into a medium. I could actually feel the intensity of her emotions, as well as the seriousness of the girl's situation. It was quite a shock, I must admit. Here is a transcript of some of what my mother said while in her trance:

"She's a slim brown-haired girl, her hair is cut short, just above her neck. It's her right eye. It's bad. I can't do anything for her. She has to develop her other senses, she has to want to live again. She needs to be out in the fresh air, out in nature. She needs to play. Her other eye isn't so bad, she should force herself to use it more. She has a small mouth, and fine thin lips. She loves to learn things, she wants to study. Somebody should teach her music. She needs a lot of affection. She feels so alone now, so abandoned. She needs animals, a dog would be wonderful, she could walk and run with it, she could love it and be loved in return. She should be doing things with her hands, she needs to feel useful. She should be doing something for other people. Her parents don't give her enough attention. They should treat her like a normal child, instead of making her feel handicapped…"

I couldn't stop her. She went on and on, describing the girl's home life, the house she lived in, her character, her parents. A small group of people had formed around the prostrate figure of my mother, as she kept talking a mile a minute. All that information, I thought, some of it has to be wrong. We found the person who had written up the case history. When he saw my notes he was absolutely astonished - everything my mother said was completely accurate.

"It's perfect," he exclaimed, "perfect in every detail."

Another case comes to mind from among the hundreds I have witnessed since then. This one concerned a businessman, Mr. R., who had been persuaded to attend the seminar by his wife. He was extremely skeptical about

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everything that went on, which made his conversion all the more meaningful.

Mr. R. submitted his father's case history to be diagnosed by another participant. Here's a part of what was the subject said while in the alpha state:

"This man doesn't actually live in L. No, he lives in a suburb of the city. He lost his wife some years ago, and has never gotten over her death. He suffers from melancholy, especially since his son never comes to see him. He takes homeopathic pills. He's corpulent, suffers from severe headaches. He needs his son's affection."

Mr. R was close to tears - everything was true. He had been neglecting his father, hadn't been to see him in months. It was touching to see a man, hardened by years in the world of business, become so emotional.

I remember another young female subject who had this to say about her patient: "There's absolutely nothing wrong with her. She just complains so people will pay attention to her. She moans and groans, never sits still…"

You have to be very sure of yourself to say something like that, especially in a situation where everyone is expecting you to be sympathetic to the patient's health problem. Nevertheless, the diagnosis was entirely accurate, down to the last detail.

A diagnosis can also be influenced by the character of the person making it. In this case, the subject seemed to be describing herself rather than the patient:

"I see a man, short, fat, round face, wearing a dark suit. He shows no exterior signs of being sick. Maybe the disease is still developing, or maybe it has just been cured. I suggest losing some weight. He should go on a diet, even though he isn't too thrilled about the idea. He should be informed that obesity is dangerous. He needs to be pushed, scared into doing something. He doesn't seem to care about his health, but at the same time he's good

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natured, enjoys life. It's just that he's a bit of a glutton! He should find other ways to compensate. Sex maybe?"

Then there are the tragic-comic cases: "Old bachelor, gripes at all the nurses, irascible. He even tried to hit someone with his cane. Almost deaf, doesn't like company because he says people keep repeating themselves…"

And the purely tragic: "She needs some kind of placebo medication so she can keep believing her health problem is serious. Her real problem is solitude. She's afraid of dying alone."

"She keeps on living because she has to, not because she wants to."

"This person doesn't seem to have a life. And yet she's not that old. She might as well be dead." (The woman did die a few months later).

Here's an unusual one: "This person seems to be playing a role in some kind of dangerous game, like James Bond…" The case history did, in fact, concern a man who worked as a spy.

In some cases a subject may simply refuse to make a diagnosis: "I don't want to explore this man's body, I detest this individual, he is evil."

Or: "I want to get out of here, quickly. I feel uneasy, anguished…"

Seeing a person who was smiling and relaxed one minute start writhing around, overcome with emotion, experiencing physical sensations that are sometimes extremely painful, is very strange indeed.

Of course not everyone can attain this degree of intensity on their first try - only 30% to 40% of subjects succeed in doing so. 20% to 30% fail altogether, while the remaining 20% to 30% have some degree of success, with information being drawn both from their active and passive imagination. Almost everyone succeeds on their second or third try, which is why participants are encouraged to attend alpha seminars as often as they want.

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Diagnosed diseases include most of the common diseases of our time, the most prevalent being cancer, ulcers, circulation problems and bone diseases like arthritis and rheumatism. The causes are often psychological. It is both surprising and saddening to see the number of sick persons suffering from solitude and a complete lack of tenderness and affection.

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Healing Over Distances

When you communicate with people who are suffering, when you actually inhabit someone's body and live the experience, feel what they are feeling, there's nothing more normal than wanting to help.

We have seen how the power of suggestion impacts our organism. Pioneers like Janet and Richer demonstrated that suggestion can be effective over distances. Why, then, would it not be possible to help a sick person, even though that person was far away, by concentrating on a mental image of healing?

Although practiced for centuries, the concept of healing over distances tends to arouse a certain amount of skepticism. Perhaps people are averse to the idea of healing someone without their knowing it. Many of the ceremonies surrounding the practice (dipping a photograph of the patient in magnetized water, lighting candles, etc.) are associated with magic, and viewed as some kind of obscure form of mysticism.

But once again, we should be careful not to jump to conclusions. Why not simplify the technique instead of discarding it. Get rid of all the trappings, and develop a method of healing over distances that has nothing to do with the occult or the divine. A parapsychological method of healing, possibly based on the aura phenomenon, which seems to be connected both to telepathic communication and physiological well being.

Since the work is carried out on a subconscious level, the use of symbols is appropriate. In his mental laboratory, Jose Silva included a variety of medical instruments and remedies that could be used for healing the sick.

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In the same way that a hypnotist, using the technique of suggestion over distances, 'sees' his subject in a trance, our 'healer' would be able to see the treatment at work, and in time, help a patient fully recover.

Experiments tend to show that a healer's intention or desire to help find a solution is more important than the procedure itself. On the other hand, attempts to heal which are carried out without any procedure, i.e. without any mental preparation, are almost certain to fail. As Oscar Wilde said, 'Good intentions alone are like checks that bounce!'

All of us get a glimpse of our own healing powers at some point. You may know someone who is going through a difficult period and say something like, "I'll be thinking about you."

Well, thinking about someone is fine, but concentrating on the person while in an altered state of consciousness can be of real help.

Extraordinary results, all documented in a laboratory setting, have been obtained treating problems like recurring headaches, accelerating the healing of wounds, alleviating certain types of pain, and so on.

It often happens that participants who use the technique to help a family member during an alpha seminar, return home to find their loved one has unexpectedly recovered, or is experiencing much less discomfort.

"My sister Irene and I were really able to improve the health of our mother, who was suffering from —. From that day on she stopped having pains."

In my opinion, the only limits of the procedure are related to the healer's own telepathic prowess, or lack of thereof, which may explain why some cases succeed while others don't.

There is one other obstacle - time. Like sophrology treatments, sessions devoted to healing over distances have to last for at least forty to sixty minutes, in order to enable a healer to relax completely and be of real help. As we know, people are more and more pressed for time these days. Being easy-

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going has gone out of fashion, as the monetary value of our time keeps steadily rising.

What conditions are necessary to practice healing over distances?

- *Being in the alpha state.*
- *Being able to visualize the symbolic healing process, which varies depending on the case, and is generally revealed to the healer by his or her subconscious.*
- *Knowing how to use positive formulations like the following: "I am learning how to transmute an imperfection or malfunction of the body or mind into perfect balance and health."*

Here is an outline of what takes place on the third and final day of an alpha seminar. The various exercises correspond to the chapters of the third part of this book, and are designed to train participants to use their paranormal faculties:

Day 3 (all day Sunday):

- creation of a mental laboratory;
- *training assistants;*
- *simple exteriorization exercises, followed by more complex ones, culminating in participants' ability to intuitively perceive one another's thoughts, and establish some kind of verifiable telepathic dialog;*
- *diagnosis over distance exercise (based on Edgar Cayce's technique);*
- *an attempt at healing over distances;*
- *exteriorization experiment.*

The aim of these exercises is not to turn all the participants into mediums, but to demonstrate that they all possess some degree of paranormal ability, which can be developed if they choose, through regular practice.

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The Dangers of Parapsychology

Psychology Magazine published the following letter-to-the-editor in its January, 1975 issue: "I was very interested by an article that appeared in your magazine (No. 56, January 1974) entitled *'I attended an alpha seminar.'* I decided to find out for myself what really takes place during this kind of conference.

"I mentioned my intention to a number of friends. Some were open to the idea of parapsychology and encouraged me, while others were obviously skeptical and poked fun at me. There were quite a few cynics actually. One friend, a psychiatrist by profession, and someone I had known since childhood, made no effort to hide his aversion for anything that even hinted of the paranormal. He felt it was important to take the time to explain, very patiently, why this kind of attraction for the paranormal was actually a manifestation of a schizoid personality.

"He tried to get me to change my mind, saying that the people who attended such seminars were all borderline mental cases - middle aged women who had nothing better to do than pay to have their fortunes read every week, imbeciles who believed aliens were planning to invade Earth, fanatics who tried to read the future in teacups, and so on. He said they were all more or less hysterical, and that all the mumbo-jumbo somehow compensated for whatever was lacking in their sad lives.

"I didn't let my friend and his condescending attitude dissuade me. I would embark on the adventure, and find out for myself, which is exactly what happened two weeks later."

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The letter went on to describe the author's experience with mental diagnosis and healing. She insisted that the phenomenon could not have been caused by direct transmission of thoughts because certain details, which were unknown to the persons present at the session, were shown to be accurate later on.

"However," the writer added, "the most important aspect of the seminar for me is kind of hard to talk about because it concerns my own personal experience rather than some objectively verifiable phenomenon like healing. What I'm trying to explain is what the seminar did for me, in terms of developing my personality. Call it whatever you want - the power of suggestion, self hypnosis, it doesn't matter. The fact is, I came out of the seminar with the feeling that I have this amazing tool at my disposal, something that can really help me change the things I believe are wrong with me. I can make use of this newly discovered aspect of my mind to attain whatever goals I set for myself, and get results even without making any special effort. I wouldn't go so far as to say that my life has been transformed, but I would say that both my private and professional life, my relations with other people, and especially the way I see myself, underwent a drastic change, almost from one day to the next. I believe this change is very positive.

"There is one thing I feel I should warn your readers about. It's so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the seminar is going to endow you with some kind of special mysterious power, that it gives you the right to do whatever you want. It's also easy to start feeling superior to other people, since you come out with a heightened awareness of the power of dreams and of your subconscious.

"But as I said, the aspect that was most important for me turned out to be something much simpler than that. What the seminar did for me was show me how to exercise greater control over myself, and develop my own potential. It may not sound like much, but in my opinion it has made all the difference in the world, as far as my personal happiness is concerned."

Mrs. M.M.

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Mrs. M's warning is important. Courses that teach people how to develop their paranormal faculties always seem to attract one or two weirdoes who are trying to find some justification for their aberrant behavior. Dr. Hubert Larcher, one of the founders of the International Metapsychic Institute, told me that he had received a flood of demands from people who wanted medical certificates condoning their mental instability, on the grounds that they were under the influence of some sort of parapsychological phenomena.

Predisposition

When people who are mentally unbalanced become attracted to parapsychology, the practices they engage in cannot be considered the cause of their problem, since the problem already existed before.

On the other hand, persons who are predisposed to madness may become mentally unstable after being introduced to various paranormal phenomena. This was not unusual at the turn of the century, during the so-called golden age of occultism, when all kinds fantastic theories were jumbled together without any thought to order or validity. People who could not make their own distinctions as to what was authentic and what was pure fancy, sometimes did go insane.

"I remember one particularly striking case concerning a young military officer who had exhibited schizophrenic tendencies since childhood. His psychosis exploded into full-blown schizophrenia during a seance where the participants were trying to levitate a table."

Pondering whether there might or might not be life after death will not drive someone insane. However, taking part in magic rituals, appealing to superhuman forces or believing in a spirit world can produce hallucinations and lead to madness. It is as if some people become possessed, the victims of their own fantasies.

Weak minded persons seek situations which allow them to act out their mental imbalances. In other words, being predisposed to madness, they look for ways to fulfill their potential for insanity. They may find acceptable ways

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to channel their unbalanced energy, at least for awhile, by joining an extremist organization or a mystical sect like the Church of Scientology. But in the long run, such people are likely to lose touch with reality altogether.

That is one of the reasons why followers of the occult sciences considered it necessary to disguise their teachings by using highly esoteric terminology, inaccessible to the common person. Only after a long process of initiation, during which those who were found lacking were weeded out, would masters impart their knowledge to disciples whom they deemed ready.

All parapsychology does is displace the normally accepted boundaries between what is considered real and imaginary. By applying a scientific method to the study of the irrational, it tries to shed new light on a number of phenomena which mankind has not yet been able to comprehend.

Parapsychology is gaining in popularity at a time when the general level of education of the population as a whole is rising dramatically, the result of an increased awareness of the importance of education, better teaching facilities and methods, and the explosion of mass communication technology.

Nevertheless, people who tend to be highly emotional or generally unstable should exercise great prudence in their approach to the study of parapsychology. Such persons should learn to control their own emotions before trying to master any of the paranormal techniques outlined in this book.

Magic and behavior

When people get involved with the occult, they tend to minimize the importance of logic and interpret events in light of certain symbols, often giving them divine significance. B.F. Skinner, the world renowned American psychologist offers this explanation:

In one of his experiments, Skinner kept a number of hungry pigeons locked up in a cage for twelve hours. An automated device dropped a few grains of food into the cage at regular intervals. At the end of the twelve hour period, Skinner noticed that most of the pigeons were behaving strangely. Some kept

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raising one foot off the ground, others beat the air with only one wing, and so on. Skinner wondered what the cause might be.

He theorized that at the start of the experiment, food must have dropped into the cage when each bird was making a specific movement. Forming a simple cause-and-effect connection, the birds kept repeating the 'magic' movement, hoping for more food. Because food fell at regular intervals, they were convinced that their particular technique worked.

Skinner called the experiment 'the birth of superstition.'

People often act much like the pigeons in Skinner's laboratory. Events happen that are thought to have special significance, even though they may be the result of pure coincidence, giving rise to all kinds of taboos and rituals, from avoiding the cracks on the sidewalk to not opening an umbrella indoors to praying to the gods to intervene on one's behalf.

If you can't solve a problem yourself, why not ask the spirits or someone who reads cards for guidance?

There is an obvious fault in reasoning here. An effect is mistakenly linked to a cause, while the real cause is ignored or misunderstood. Allowing oneself to be convinced by appearances and led astray by subconscious fears or desires means losing control over your mind.

Before being allowed to participate in an alpha seminar, all potential participants have to fill out a questionnaire, designed to weed out any pathological personalities.

In addition, the relaxation and self-control exercises which are taught before any actual paranormal phenomena are introduced, help prepare participants for the mind-altering states they encounter later on. Unlike cult rituals and other mystical practices, the seminar is intentionally structured to proceed slowly and gradually. Rational functions may be inhibited, but they never become totally inactive, resulting in at least some measure of self control being exercised at all times.

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The aim is not to allow the intuitive, irrational part of our mind to dominate our reason, but rather to create a balance, by reviving our sensibility to aspects of reality that cold logic and reason tend to overlook.

The power to do harm

Some people are worried about developing their paranormal faculties. Isn't it dangerous to have the power to read other people's intimate thoughts, to be able to influence them any way you want?

Developing paranormal faculties does not require taking any kind of vow to be good, to avoid doing anything that could be harmful or run counter to your principles. In any case, since paranormal powers are drawn from the subconscious, whatever principles you consciously uphold won't have much of an influence anyway.

Then there's the question of what is harmful and what isn't. We could say that harming people means doing something that causes pain or unhappiness, that makes people's lives more difficult.

On the other hand, everyone has their own notion of what harm is. Something that is harmful in the short term might be beneficial over the long term. What is harmful for one person could be beneficial for another.

Doing harm means entering into conflict with established rules that we have been conditioned to accept since childhood. This conditioning lies behind the law of 'karma' - the notion that any harm you do will irrevocably return to haunt you. Why? Because doing harm will create a strong sense of subconscious guilt, which will in turn force you to do things that harm yourself, as a way of expiating your guilt.

To be on the safe side, it's a good idea to reinforce your conscious surveillance by repeating a positive formulation like: "As I develop my paranormal faculties I cannot harm others or myself; the more I try the less I will succeed."

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This injunction will take effect if, by any chance, a subconscious desire arises to develop your paranormal abilities to harm someone. It will also protect you against the negative consequences of that kind of action.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that people who really want to use their paranormal faculties for immoral purposes can do so. Whether they use autosuggestion, hypnosis or mental dynamics to do so makes no difference at all. They will find a way if that is what they really want.

You can find books about black magic in any library or bookstore (so many people are interested in the so-called black arts that some stores carry only that type of material). The internet offers hundreds of sites dedicated to the occult.

Hypnotists are careful to propagate the myth that people under hypnosis cannot be forced to do anything that goes against their will or better judgement. In fact a skilled and determined hypnotist can make his subjects do more or less whatever he wants. Jules Liegeois, a professor of law in France, and a friend of Bernheim (a famous hypnotist), suggested a series of experiments to test that very theory.

Here is an excerpt from his report:

Intending to see just how much the power of suggestion could affect a subject we will refer to as C., Bernheim set up the following, highly dramatic situation: C. was told that a person who was standing in front of the door (in fact there was no one there) had gravely insulted him. A pseudo weapon was placed in his hand (a letter opener) and he was ordered to kill the man. C. immediately rushed forward, raised the weapon and resolutely planted it in the door. He stood there, trembling, with a wild look in his eye. "What have you done!" Berhneim cried. "You've killed him! Look, his blood is pouring out of the wound. The police are on their way." C. just stood there, terrified. We took him into another room and introduced him to his lawyer (actually Bernheim's assistant).

"Why did you kill this man?" the lawyer asked.

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"He insulted me."

"You don't kill someone just because they insulted you. You should have gone to the police. Did anyone tell you to kill him?"

"It was Mr. Bernheim."

Bernheim turned to him and said, "You killed the man. I didn't tell you to do it. You did it on your own! You're going to have to appear before a judge."

We led C. into another room where a colleague of Bernheim's played the role of judge.

"Why did you kill this man?"

"Because he insulted me."

"That's strange. You don't knife someone to death just because they insulted you. Were you on some kind of drug? I have been told that you have mental problems. Is that true?"

"No, Your Honor!"

"Were you in full possession of your faculties at the time? Maybe you were sleepwalking. Or maybe someone else forced you to do it?"

"No, I did it on my own, because he insulted me."

"Think about what you're saying. Your life is at stake here. Tell me who put you up to this. It's in your own best interest. You told your lawyer that Mr. Bernheim forced you to commit the murder. Is that true?"

"No, Your Honor, I acted on my own."

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"You know who Mr. Bernheim is, don't you? You go to his office at the hospital, and he hypnotizes you, doesn't he?"

"I only know Mr. Bernheim because he gives me my shock treatments at the hospital. I have a problem with my nerves, and he treats me for it. Other than that I don't know anything about him. I can't say that he told me to kill the man, because he didn't."

It was impossible for the judge to get the truth out of the subject because of the last suggestion Bernheim had made, i.e. that he had acted on his own. The significance of this experiment, both from a legal and medical point of view, is fascinating.

Other experiments conducted by Bernheim (involving poisoning, the signing of false documents, and so on) provided similar results. Some might object that this all happened a long time ago (before the turn of the century), and that it could not possibly happen today.

Well, consider the case of Wolf Messing, a modern day telepathist living in Russia, who was able to escape from prison simply by suggesting that his guards lock themselves in his cell!

It is also possible to create emotional situations that force subjects under hypnosis to override their moral principles (saving a child, for example, or avenging the murder of a spouse). This disproves the notion that hypnotized persons cannot commit acts that run contrary to their conscience.

Police organizations around the world have files on people who have committed crimes while under hypnosis. Like nuclear energy, the power of suggestion and other paranormal faculties can be used for good or for evil. Should we, then, refuse to use them altogether? Some types of medication can become poison when taken in overly large doses. Should we prohibit their use because someone might not follow the prescription? The same question can be applied to all areas of scientific research. As one scientist put it, 'Science without conscience is the downfall of the soul."

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Conclusion

"Jonathan, and these were his last words, said he was continuing his study of love."
Richard Bach

Mylan Ryzl once said, "Most parapsychological research being carried out in the Soviet Union concerns either the transmission of impulses and attitudes, or the subliminal control of behavior."

In the United States, most important parapsychological research is considered top secret military information.

Mao Tze Tong ordered his scientists to make a 'great leap forward' in the area of paranormal research.

One may well wonder whether the next world war will be carried out on a psychological or parapsychological level.

Our modern lifestyle has become increasingly disruptive as far as our inner peace, mental stability and sense of individual freedom is concerned.

Understanding the way your mind works, learning to get back in touch with yourself and develop your paranormal faculties in a harmonious and positive way is, in my opinion, the only way to attain true freedom.

Some people are fearful of the future, of the tremendous possibilities that lie ahead, both in areas of technological progress and self realization. Ignoring these possibilities will not put a stop to their development.

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Paranormal faculties do exist. If we don't develop them ourselves, someone else will, to their advantage.

Modern methods of communication were used as weapons during recent wars. Today they have become instruments of peace, bringing the millions upon millions of inhabitants of this precious planet closer together.

Paranormal faculties are the super-communication tool of the future. They may have been used as weapons in the past. Perhaps some groups are still secretly engaged in doing so. All we can hope is that they eventually become a source of rapprochement between individuals, generating a new kind of universal consciousness.

The interdependence of living beings on the planet - perhaps in the entire universe - is proof of our common essence. An awareness of that bond may one day lead, if not to universal love, then at least to a better understanding among humans, and to the peace that has been the dream of so many for so long.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1 : Autogenic Training

Here is a description of the beginner's level autogenic training method (the advanced level is an in-depth psychoanalytic technique that cannot be covered within the context of this book).

Environmental conditions (these are the same for all types of mind-altering exercises):

- *a quiet room, insulated against noise and other sources of distraction;*
- *a comfortable ambient temperature, neither too hot nor too cold;*
- *semi-darkness.*

Position : Initially it's best to assume a prone position, stretched out on your back. Place a small pillow under the nape of your neck. Arms should be loosely extended by your sides, palms facing downward. Feet should be allowed to fall to the sides (Figure 1).

You can also sit on a comfortable easy chair. Ideally your arms should form a 135 angle with your shoulders as they rest on the arms of the chair (this position being the most conducive to relaxation). Your feet should be completely flat on the floor, your neck and head well supported (use a cushion if necessary). Knees should be spread apart to allow the thigh muscles to relax (Figure 2).

If you can't lie on the floor, and if you don't have the right kind of chair, you can sit on a stool, allowing your body to slump forward. Rest your arms on your knees, and let your knees spread apart (Figure 3).

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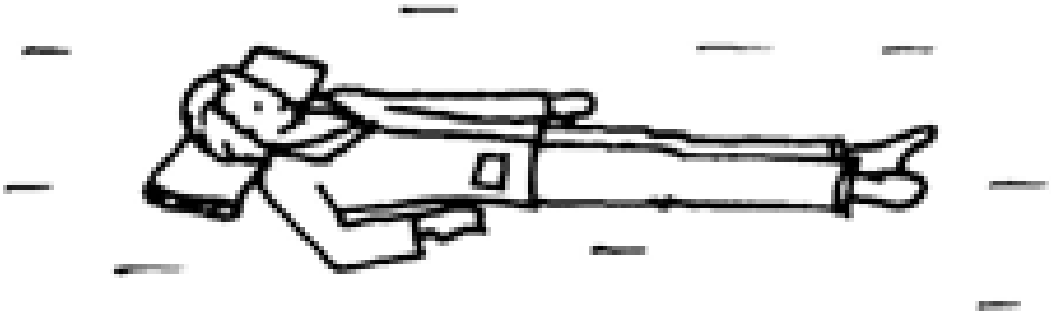

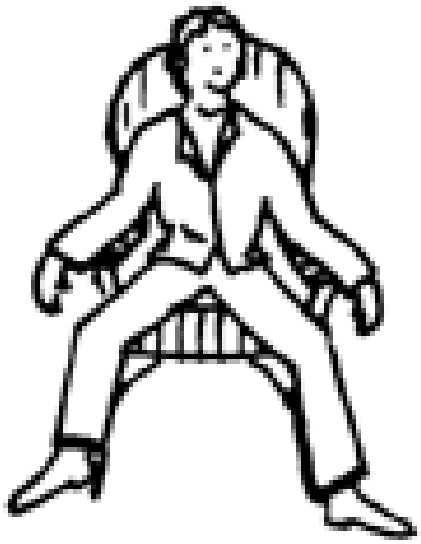

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Exercise # 1:

a. *Close your eyes.*
b. *Mentally repeat the following formulation: "I am calm, I am completely calm." As you repeat the formulation, try to form a mental picture of some peaceful scene out in nature - a country field, a beach, a mountain valley, etc. Try to make the visualization as real as possible by including as much sensory information as you can. Use all five senses: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile.*
c. *Now continue with the second formulation: "My right arm (start with your left arm if you are left-handed) feels very heavy." In a few moments you should actually feel the sensation of heaviness in your arm.*
d. *Resurface as follows:*
    1. *Flex and extend your arm a number of times.*
    2. *Take a few deep breaths.*
    3. *Open your eyes.*
e. *In subsequent sessions, start adding more formulations: "Both arms feel very heavy. Now my arms and legs feel heavy… my entire body feels so heavy."*

Exercise # 2

Repeat the formulations in exercise 1 and add the following:

a. *I am completely calm.*
b. *My arms and legs feel very heavy.*
c. *Now my right arm (left arm if you're left-handed) is starting to feel warm. It's getting warmer and warmer (in subsequent exercises add both arms and legs).*

As you gain more experience you can shorten the formulations. Simply say:

a. *calm*
b. *heavy*
c. *heat*

Exercise # 3

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After repeating all previous exercises add: “My heartbeat is strong and calm.”

Exercise # 4

Once again, repeat all previous exercises. Add: “I am breathing calmly.” 0r even better: “I am breath.”

Exercise # 5

Concentrate on your solar plexus (approximately halfway between your navel and sternum) and repeat: “My abdomen is getting warmer and warmer.”

Exercise # 6

Concentrate on your forehead, and imagine a sensation of coolness, as if a fresh breeze were gently cooling your forehead. Say: “My forehead feels wonderfully cool.”

Notes:

- *Each exercise should be practiced for at least fifteen days (in succession, if possible) before moving on to the next.*
- *Always resurface gradually (see Exercise 1 for instructions).*
- *If you have a health problem, make sure you are under medical supervision before starting the second exercise. Even if you don’t have a health problem, it might be a good idea to ask a doctor to monitor your progress.*
- *Try to do two exercise sessions per day. If you are a beginner, keep your sessions very short (about 1 minute to start with) and then gradually extend their duration.*

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Appendix II :

Emile Coué's Formulation (complete version)

Maintain a calm, soothing tone of voice as you read the formulations. When you are familiar with the text, you might want to record it so it can be played back while you are in the alpha state.

Get comfortable, either sitting down or lying on your back, and close your eyes. I don't want you to try and fall asleep. I am telling you to close your eyes so you can concentrate without being distracted by anything you might see. Now tell yourself that everything I am going to say will be recorded by your brain, engraved in your mind. And that, without your knowing it, without any effort on your part, your organism and your entire being will obey what your subconscious mind tells you to do.

The first thing I am going to tell you is that every day, three times a day, morning, noon and evening, at mealtimes, you will feel hungry. You will experience the pleasant sensation of feeling slightly hungry and think, "Mm, I'd love to have something to eat!" And you will eat, savoring every mouthful, enjoying your food immensely, without eating too much. You'll be careful to chew your food well, transforming it into a soft paste in your mouth before you swallow. This will help you digest well, so that you will feel absolutely no discomfort in your stomach or intestines afterwards, no pain or heartburn, no discomfort at all. Your body will digest and assimilate the food you ingest perfectly, using all the nutrients it contains to renew your supply of blood, muscles, energy - in short, to regenerate life.

Because you digest your food well, your intestines will function normally and effectively. Every morning, shortly after you wake up, you will feel the

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need to go to the bathroom. Your bowel movements will be normal and satisfying, and you won't need the help of any kind of medication or artificial stimulant.

Every night, from the moment you want to go to sleep to the moment you wake up in the morning, you will be able to sleep deeply and calmly, without having any bad dreams. When you wake up in the morning you will feel fresh and fully rested, ready to enjoy the day.

If you sometimes feel sad or depressed, if you sometimes get bored or worry too much, you can rest assured that you won't have those kinds of feelings any more. Instead of feeling sad or depressed, instead of worrying, you will feel happy, very happy, for no reason at all, in the same way that you may have felt sad for no reason from time to time. From now on you'll feel happy and joyous inside. And even if you have real cause to worry or feel sad, you won't fall into depression. You will do what has to be done, nourished by the joy and happiness of being alive.

If you sometimes became impatient or angry in the past, you won't any more. From now on you will have infinite patience, you'll always be able to control your anger. You will no longer be bothered by the things that used to irritate or upset you in the past.

If you sometimes find yourself thinking terrible things, things that are unhealthy for you, fears, phobias, temptations, hateful thoughts, rest assured that these kinds of thoughts will arise less and less frequently in your mind. And whenever they do, they will melt away, like clouds dissolving in a clear sky, until they disappear completely. All your useless, harmful thoughts will simply vanish, just like a dream when you awaken.

All your bodily organs are functioning well. Your heart is beating normally, blood is circulating freely through your body, nourishing all your cells. Your lungs are functioning normally, as are your stomach, liver, gall bladder, kidneys, and bladder. If one of your organs happens to be functioning abnormally at the moment, rest assured that the problem will get better day by day,

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and in the very near future, disappear altogether, so that all your organs can function normally.

And if any of your organs have developed lesions, the lesions will start healing as of now. They will get better day by day, until very soon they will have disappeared completely.

I also have this to say, and it is very important: if, in the past, you felt there was something wrong with you, if there was something you didn't like about yourself, rest assured that from now on whatever was bothering you about yourself will gradually start to disappear, and will be replaced by a strong sense of self confidence, based on the strength you draw from that immeasurable force that exists in each and every one of us. You should know that this unshakable confidence in yourself is absolutely indispensable for all human beings. Without self confidence you'll never amount to anything, with it you can do anything you want, within reason. Your self confidence will get stronger day by day. It will provide you with the certitude that, not only are you able to do things well, you are able to do whatever you want - and whatever it is your duty to do - extremely well, on condition, of course, that what you want is within the bounds of reason.

So whenever you want to do something, or when you have some duty to fulfil, always remember that the task will be easy for you. Words like *difficult, impossible, can't, too much, not good enough …* and so on, will disappear from your vocabulary, and be replaced by words like *I can, it's so easy, I will…* If you think something is easy, then it becomes easy for you, although it might seem difficult to others. Whatever you do will be done quickly and effectively, without fatigue, almost without effort. But if you consider something difficult or impossible, then it will become difficult or impossible for you, just because of the way you think.

(Coué suggests that specific formulations pertaining to individual cases be introduced at this point.)

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Rest assured that in all ways, both physically and mentally, you will enjoy excellent health. You will start feeling much healthier than you've ever felt before.

Now I'm going to count to three, and when I say 'three' you'll open your eyes and emerge from the state you're in, slowly, gradually. As you resurface you won't feel at all tired. On the contrary, you'll feel strong, vigorous, alert, refreshed, bursting with energy. You'll also feel happy and joyous, both in yourself and in all your relations with others. One… two… three.

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Appendix III : The Alpha Controversy

Most people are aware of the harmful effects of stress. Prolonged stress causes the nervous system to become hyperactive, and eventually break down or 'burn out.' Most so-called psychosomatic illnesses are the result of stress-induced tension and anxiety.

We could assume that learning to control stress by being able to induce a certain hypo-metabolic state (as opposed to a hyper-metabolic state) would be beneficial for both a person's physical health and mental stability.

As Professor Gastaut, an expert in electroencephalogram technology (and a highly publicized detractor of the alpha seminar concept) stated himself, "… a hypo-metabolic state is always characterized by modifications in electroencephalogram readings, notably by an increased incidence of alpha waves."

It should not be surprising that researchers became interested in alpha waves, as a possible way of teaching people how to relax. Various approaches and devices were tried, including biofeedback machines, techniques based on existing relaxation and meditation methods, drugs, etc.

Of course the idea has led to some exploitation, especially in the United States, where all kinds of biofeedback and alpha-wave-generating devices have begun popping up in local pharmacies. But that does not mean the whole alpha wave theory should be thrown out the window. Professor Gastaut may remember how opposed people were to the idea of blood transfusions, when doctors first started performing them back in the 1920's.

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There is a long list of discoveries that have been violently opposed by some of the greatest figures in the history of science and government. We can understand why the professor may think that alpha waves are his private domain, and that no one else has the right to use them for purposes which he may find unusual.

He may justify this kind of emotional reaction by saying that it is impossible for people to attain, in just a few alpha sessions, what practitioners of more traditional methods took years to achieve. He may overlook the fact that the slowing down of metabolism associated with the emission of alpha brain waves allows people to attain the same state in a very short time. The partial cessation of neo-cortex functions makes subjects extremely open to suggestion, allowing them to influence and control parts of their subconscious that would otherwise remain inaccessible. This is exactly what the Mind Control technique, which has become so popular in the U.S., is designed to do.

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In France alone, over 1500 therapists practice sophrology. Is Professor Gastaut of the opinion that they are all charlatans?

Should we wait another twenty or thirty years before we start exploring the potential of paranormal phenomena and the discovery of alpha waves, as happened with other, equally important, discoveries in the past?

Needless to say, the alpha theory should not be used to exploit a credulous and hopeful public. The alpha state is a tool, not an end in itself. Claiming that devices can perform miracles simply by teaching people to enter the alpha state is exploitation, pure and simple. But to say that alpha waves are useless, that the exploration of unknown mental faculties is a waste of time, is just as harmful.

We may deplore people who try to 'make a fast buck' out of anything the public finds new or interesting. Professor Gastaut may be indignant that his beloved electroencephalogram is being used to generate more profit for others than for himself. But the world is changing. Those who will form the new elite are those who are enthusiastic about developing new ideas and perfecting old ones. In short, those who encourage progress. They are not victims, or overly credulous, or naive. They come from all fields of endeavor - psychologists, executives, doctors, researchers, students, mothers of families. And they often approach us after seeing what mental dynamics has done do for someone they know. They feel they can place their trust in us, that we can be their friends. We get letters every day from people who have benefited by learning to control their alpha rhythms and exploit their vast potential for well being while in the alpha state. We can only hope that their numbers keep growing.

C.H. Godefroy
Alpha Seminar Instructor

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Appendix IV : Practical Exercises in Psychocybernetics

The mental screen

The first thing you should do is develop your concentration and visualization skills by practicing the mental screen exercise. To induce the alpha state, you can tape the text on pg. — of this book, or order a pre-taped cassette from the publisher.

Step 1 : visual concentration

Get comfortable, either siting in a chair or cross-legged on the floor. Cut out the black rectangle on the opposite page and set it in front of you, at heart level, about 20 inches from your eyes. You can glue the rectangle to a white sheet of cardboard and then lean it against something so it will stand on its own (on a table or stool to get the right height).

Start by relaxing. Breath slowly and deeply. Make sure to relax all the small muscles around your eyes, as well as your jaw and your tongue.

When you feel relaxed, concentrate on the black rectangle for ten breaths. If your eyes start to water or itch, close them for the rest of the ten breath cycle.

Look only at the rectangle, and don't let your vision get blurred.

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Repeat the ten breath cycle four times.

Do the exercise once a day. After a few days, when you have mastered the technique of visual concentration, move on to the next step.

Step 2: Visual concentration without blinking

Get comfortable in the same position you were in for the previous exercise. Start by relaxing. Do some deep breathing, making sure to breath from your abdomen.

Relax the muscles around your eyes and in your eyelids, as well as your jaw and tongue muscles. (Whenever you feel tense, try to relax your tongue, and not let it press against your upper palate.)

Now concentrate on the black rectangle and try not to blink for ten full breaths. If your eyes start to get tired or itchy, close them until the end of the ten breath cycle. Keep staring at the black rectangle, and don't let your vision blur.

Repeat the ten breath cycle five times (make sure to rest your eyes between each cycle).

Do the exercise once a day. When you have mastered it, move on to the next step.

Step 3 : Concentrated thinking

An untrained mind is like a wild horse. It runs this way and that, and resists all attempts to be tamed. This exercise will help you learn to control your mind. You have already improved your concentration by practicing the visual exercises described above. Now it's time to control your mental activity.

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Get comfortable and relax, as before. This time, as you stare at the black rectangle, try to prevent your thoughts as well as your line of vision, from wandering. Concentrate on every detail of the rectangle, the way the black background seems to assume different colors, the exact shape of the rectangle, the kind if paper it's on, the ink that forms the rectangle, and so on.

Be careful not to let your mind start wandering off in a series of associations (for example, rectangle - geometry - school - children - vacation - sun - beach, etc.). Just stay focussed on the rectangle, and if thoughts arise, let them go instead of clinging to them.

Continue concentrating for ten full breaths, and repeat five times a day. When you feel you have mastered the technique, move on to the next exercise.

Step 4 : visualizing a rectangle

Visualizing means using the power of thought to create a mental image (some people equate this kind of inner vision with the mystical third eye).

When you imagine what your next vacation will be like, or when you recall scenes from memory, you are visualizing.

Everyone has the ability to visualize. The key is to develop that ability and apply it in interesting and beneficial ways.

To do that, you are going to repeat the previous exercise, and then, at the end of each ten breath cycle, you are going to close your eyes and imagine that the rectangle is still there in front of you. Hold the image in your mind for as long as you can.

Important: if you stare at a light bulb for a couple of seconds and then close your eyes, an image of the light bulb remains engraved on your retina, so that you keep seeing it for some seconds. This occurs because of something called the phosphene effect on your retina.

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Visualizing is different. Don't stare at the after image of the black rectangle after closing your eyes. Instead, let your mind reproduce the image, locating it about an inch and a half above your eyelids, in a medium close-up frame.

Don't be alarmed if the rectangle becomes distorted or starts to disappear - that is perfectly normal. Be patient and keep trying until you can visualize the rectangle easily, and hold it for at least two full breaths.

Step 5: transforming the rectangle into a mental screen

Repeat the previous exercise, and this time try to transform the rectangle into a giant movie or TV screen. Make it as big as possible. Repeat two or three times.

Whenever you visualize the screen, get into the habit of moving your index finger, as if you were changing channels on a remote control (the conditioned reflex will help you visualize better).

How to visualize the colors of the rainbow

Visualize a series of colored objects, one by one, holding each object on your mental screen for two full breaths. For red you could visualize a tomato; for orange, an orange; for yellow, a lemon; for green, a field of grass; for blue, the sky; for indigo (dark purple), a plum, and for violet, an amethyst.

Try to concentrate on the color violet for a longer period of time.

How to use your mental screen to induce the alpha state

Summon up a pleasant and relaxing scene from your past. Everyone has experienced moments of complete relaxation and harmony at some time in their life. Choose a scene from your past that evokes a feeling of peace and tranquillity, and picture it in your mind, in as much detail as possible.

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It could be a day spent at the seaside, for example. Picture the clear blue sky, the palm fronds wafting in the warm gentle breeze, the foaming breakers rolling towards the sandy beach. Can you hear the sound of the gulls? The gentle roar of the sea? Do you feel the heat of the sun on your skin? The warm sand supporting your body? Bask in the sensation of well-being the image evokes and hold the visualization for at least one full minute.

Modifying your self image

Start by visualizing yourself on your mental screen. Imagine yourself in as much detail as possible. The important thing is to create an image that is lifelike and precise. See yourself as a person who is evolving. Every day, spend thirty minutes visualizing yourself as you engage in positive activities, succeeding at the things you want to accomplish.

What you did yesterday has no bearing on who you are today. Nor is it necessary to pretend that you will become some kind of perfect super being tomorrow. Your subconscious will take care of your progress on its own, as long as you keep practicing the exercise.

Visualize yourself in action, visualize yourself feeling various emotions, visualize yourself being the person you want to be. Don't say, "I'm going to behave in such and such a way tomorrow." Simply say, "For the next thirty minutes I am going to imagine myself behaving in such and such a way."

Imagine that you already are the personality you want to become. If you were timid and fearful in the past, visualize yourself at ease, interacting with people, feeling relaxed and good about yourself.

If you were anxious or tense in certain situations, visualize yourself in the same situations, feeling calm, confident and courageous. In time, you will start to feel that way all the time.

This exercise is designed to create new, positive experiences on which you can base your future behavior.

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It takes about 21 days of regular practice before you start seeing results. As the 21 day period draws to an end, you will find yourself acting differently in various situations, without having to make any effort whatsoever. In fact, you should not try to change at all. Just let it happen.

For example, if you want to stop smoking, visualize yourself relaxing, without a cigarette, feeling fine. Imagine yourself refusing when someone offers you a cigarette, without feeling the need to smoke at all.

Proceed in stages when your objective is difficult. And remember, bring all your senses into play. The more sensory input your subconscious receives, the more real your visualization will appear, and the faster you'll obtain results.

Work on those aspects of your behavior which your conscious mind cannot seem to control. And don't feel you haven't accomplished anything just because the changes that do eventually occur do not require any effort. Concentrate on the visualization process, not on the results.

How to get rid of allergies, alleviate pain, overcome fear, etc.

You can use visualizations to re-program the way your brain associates the various types of input it receives. If, for example, the sight of an insect or animal produces an allergic reaction because of some traumatic experience you had as a child, all you have to do is replace the negative association with a positive one.

The process may be a little difficult at first. Concentrate on the sensation of well being you want to evoke. Think about the love you had for a dog, for example, and then associate that image with the image of the insect or animal you react adversely to. The more you repeat the visualization, the more the positive association will replace the negative one.

For pain, replace the sensation with one of cold or numbness.

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First imagine a sensation of cold or numbness in your right hand, then transfer the sensation to the part of your body that is experiencing pain. The technique, based on sophrology, is called sensory substitution (it is often used by dentists).

It you were traumatized by a past event and want to erase it from your memory, relive the event in your mind and visualize it unfolding as you would have wanted it to unfold. Repeat the visualization as many times as is necessary in order to replace the negative memory with a positive one.

All these psychocybernetic exercises will be of no use unless you answer the following question first: WHAT DO I WANT? Very few people take the time to really think about what they want, what their goals in life are. And yet, knowing what you want is the first, indispensable step in changing your life. Take a sheet of paper and write the following question at the top of the page: WHAT DO I WANT?

Make a list of your goals, then choose two or three which are most important to you, which you can see yourself attaining. Then work on them during your sessions.

Whenever you emerge from the alpha state, use a positive formulation like the following: "In a couple of moments I will return to my ordinary state of consciousness, and open my eyes. When I do I will feel completely alert, my head and neck will feel relaxed, I will feel full of energy and in harmony with life."

Continue practicing and you will gradually break out of your shell, shed the cliches and acquired beliefs that are hindering your progress, and become the real you, the person you have always known you could be, living a life of harmony and happiness.

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Glossary

(Only terms that were not explained in the text are included)

Agent : In telepathy, the person who sends information to a receiver.

Bilocation: Projecting a body double. Subjective bilocation refers to a double appearing and being perceived at some distance from the body. Objective bilocation refers to the double appearing in another location entirely.

Bioluminescence: Visual representation of bioplasm.

Bioplasm: Biological plasma composed of ionized particles, part of the body's magnetic field.

Catalepsy: Complete suspension of voluntary movement, often accompanied by general muscular contractions.

Clairvoyance: Extra sensorial perception of objects, people or events without a telepathic agent.

Cognition: Understanding.

Collective consciousness: sophrology is based on the principle of the existence of a consciousness with universal characteristics, common to all human beings. It is this consciousness which allows people to communicate and understand each other.

Creativity: The faculty of creation.

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Desophronization: Surfacing to an ordinary state of conscious alertness at the end of a sophrological session. It can be self directed, or directed by another person.

Disassociation: Separation of a part of the mind, which then functions independently.

Disconnectedness: When awareness shifts from exterior to interior, from waking to sleep. Characteristic of the sophrological state.

Double vision: Extra sensorial perception of objects, clairvoyance in the present.

Extra sensory perception: Paranormal perception beyond the scope of normal, sensory perception; includes telepathy, clairvoyance, double vision, pre and post cognition.

Hypnagogic state: The state immediately preceding or following sleep.

Inhibition: Prevention or modification of a mental faculty.

Maieutic: Socratic method of stimulating latent ideas or memories.

Medium: An intermediary capable of communicating with spirits: can be used to refer to anyone with paranormal abilities.

Misoneism: Hatred of innovation or change.

Percipient: A person who receives information through telepathic transmission, sent by an agent.

Post-cognition: Paranormal awareness of past events.

Premonition (or pre-cognition): Paranormal awareness of future events.

Psyche: The collection of faculties that make up the human personality.

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Redintegration: In psychology, the tendency to respond to a later stimulus in the same way as to an earlier, complex stimulus of which the latter was a part.

Schizoid: A predisposition to schizophrenia.

Schizophrenic: Someone suffering from schizophrenia, characterized by indifference, withdrawal, hallucinations, delusions of persecution or omnipotence, often with unimpaired intelligence.

Scream therapy: A form of group therapy where participants are encouraged to express suppressed emotions.

Semantics: The study of language.

Servo-mechanism: A system that seeks to maintain a balance between stimulus and response no matter what variations or disturbances are imposed.

Sophronozation: The process which modifies consciousness and induces a sophronic state.

Subconscious: The part of our unconscious mind that can surface and influence our conscious behavior.

Symbol: A word or object that represents something else through association.

Telepathy: A special kind of direct communication between living beings, without the participation of the sense organs.

Telesthesia: Sensory awareness beyond the scope of the five senses.

Trance: Passage from one mental state to another, implying altered sensory activity and awareness, occurring either simultaneously or separately.

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Zener cards: A set of cards used in parapsychological experiments; composed of five cards, each with a different symbol (circle, cross, wave, star and square).

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