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## PSYCHEDELIC REVIEW

# On Programming Psychedelic Experiences

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*The development of scientific understanding of consciousness depends on programmed internal explorations. Programming strategies are explained with examples from Tantric psychology and the peyote ceremony.*

A psychedelic experience is a period of intensely heightened reactivity to sensory stimuli from within and without. A "programmed" psychedelic experience is one in which the sequence and patterning of stimuli are not left to chance but are arranged in a predetermined manner. Using programming we try to control the content of a psychedelic experience in specific desired directions. The program is a voyage chart, a series of signals, which, like the pilot's radio, provides the basic orienting information required for the "trip". The program need not be followed exactly, but it can be of great help in orienting oneself in unfamiliar territory or finding one's way if lost in rough weather.

The idea of programming a psychedelic experience is based on a theory about the nature of the psychedelic effect. The hypothesis, which was first put forward by Leary in the Harvard Psilocybin Project<sup>1</sup> and has since been widely accepted by scientists working in the field of psychedelic research<sup>2</sup>, is that the content of a psychedelic experience is chiefly determined by the two factors of *set* and *setting*. "*Set*" refers to the internal state of the person having the experience — his mood, expectations, fears, wishes; "*setting*" refers to the external con-

ditions of the experience — the physical and emotional climate of the room, the relations of the voyager to others present, and particularly the attitude of the drug-giving person. It is by now a well-known fact that psychedelic drugs may produce religious, aesthetic, therapeutic or other kinds of experiences depending on the set and setting. This hypothesis accounts for the great variety of psychedelic experiences reported by investigators using different models (psychotomimetic, therapeutic, religious, aesthetic, etc.) and correspondingly different settings.

One may object to the idea of programming a psychedelic experience on the grounds that it would tend to limit or restrict the experience. To this the answer is that one can of course include as much "free" time on the program as desired. For example, a minimum program might consist of a half-hour of re-entry instructions, with the rest of the time left open. Furthermore it should be remembered that the psychedelic experience, because of the extreme suggestibility of the voyager, is "programmed" anyway, by the stimuli to which he is exposed during the session. In the majority of sessions the stimuli are either arranged by the drug-giving person or left to chance. We propose a third alternative: that the

sequence of stimuli is worked out ahead of time collaboratively between drug-giver and drug-taker or by all the participants. Such a procedure will tend to minimize the occurrence of paranoia induced by unexpected activities or manipulations. The program also provides a series of anchor points for memory, so that the detailed sequence of the experience (which often goes beyond our usual memory mechanisms) can be reconstructed. "During the Mozart piano concerto I relived an event from my childhood".

In the last analysis the programming of sessions is entirely a function of experience and training. Just as experienced pilots flying over familiar territory may not need radio information, so someone who through repeated experience and training has gained some control over the movements of consciousness may need less programming. The psychedelic novice is whirled confusedly through neurological energy systems he cannot decode. His mind is imposing primitive hit-or-miss interpretations, pleasant or fearful, on these new levels of perception. The experienced voyager, trained to recognize non-symbolic patterns, is better able to recognize and direct his awareness and better able to deal with the flow of stimuli, whether planned or accidental.

#### Preparation

It is an easily confirmable observation that the most successful, i.e. liberating and educational psychedelic experiences are those preceded by a period of withdrawal from external games and commitments. The time immediately before the ingestion of the drug is particularly crucial from

the point of view of internal preparation. The content of consciousness at that time will dominate the subsequent experience. Our studies have shown that if one feels depressed, anxious or irritable, these negative emotions will be felt with great intensity during the session. If one feels serene, trusting and detached from everyday concerns, the voyage will more likely be free and illuminating<sup>3</sup>.

The importance of preparing for a psychedelic experience, in both body and mind, can hardly be overestimated. Physiologically, the most intense part of the session is when the chemical first begins to take effect. If the voyager is not prepared for this moment of "take-off", much of the initial thrust will be dissipated in getting clear of the imprinted programs hooking us to externals (the Hindu *sanskaras*). Therefore the "higher" one can get before the session starts the better one is able to deal with the new powerful energies. Quiet reading, relaxation, withdrawal, listening to music, meditation (with or without marijuana), walking, bathing — whatever methods are most effective should be used to produce a state of serene preparedness.

If the session involves more than one person, the participants might plan the voyage together. They would make selections of music to be listened to, they would record readings on tape, they would establish simple basic codes for contacting each other during the session. These shared activities will build rapport and reduce tendencies towards isolation and paranoia. It is sometimes helpful to prepare a kind of time-

sheet of the sequence of tape-recorded messages or musical selections. The reason for such apparently naive procedure will be obvious to anyone who has tried to manipulate equipment while in the midst of an intense LSD experience: it is simpler to merely look up what to do next, than to get involved in decision-making, which can lead to interminable distracting deliberations.

In most psychedelic sessions there is one person who acts as guide. This should be the person with the most experience. He will assume responsibility for the sending of the various messages, whether verbal, musical or visual, which have been agreed upon. If there is not one person with more experience than the others, it is probably better to have a "ground-control", that is one person who does not take the psychedelic and takes care of the mechanics of changing records, keeping off distractions etc.

The importance of specifying such roles clearly and explicitly is recognized by the Indians of the Native American Church, who in the several centuries of their use of the peyote cactus have developed a ritual which is followed essentially unchanged in all peyote ceremonies. The following quotation is taken from a description of the Navajo Peyote ritual given in testimony before the Navajo Tribal Council<sup>4</sup>:

"To run a Peyote meeting they need four people. The first one and the man in charge of the whole thing they call the Road Chief. The second man is Drummer Chief, who does a lot of drumming. The third man is the Cedar chief, and he is in charge of taking powdered

cedar and sprinkling it in the fire during the meeting. The fourth man is Fire Chief, and he takes care of the fire at night and watches the people as they come and go and takes care of the door."

#### Audio-Visual Aids (mantra and yantra)

The two predominant sources of sensory stimulation are vision and hearing, and it is therefore not surprising that oriental psychological schools of consciousness-expansion have developed powerful and elaborate techniques for controlling and channelling sensory awareness in these two spheres.

The yantra is a visual map of the path of consciousness. The literal Sanskrit meaning is "instrument" or "engine". We have mentioned the preparation of an outline of the psychedelic program, which is a primitive form of yantra. At our present level of ignorance about states of consciousness it would probably be premature to devise more complex yantras, but in the Hindu and Buddhist (especially Mahayana) systems they play an important role. There are maps representing in great detail the various focal points of consciousness (*cakras*) in the body. According to Mircea Eliade, "the yantra is an expression, in terms of linear symbolism, of the cosmic manifestations, beginning with the primordial unity."<sup>5</sup>

The Peyote Indians also have their form of yantra. Before the meeting a crescent-shaped altar (called "moon" by the Indians) is prepared of sand or clay. "A shallow groove, extending from tip to tip along its crest, represents the

"peyote road" over which thoughts and visions travel to and from God."<sup>4</sup>

A special form of yantra, the most commonly used, is the mandala (literally "circle"). A mandala is a machine for exploring inner space; its purposes are cartographic, linguistic, not aesthetic. Its usual form is a rectangle enclosing a circle or series of concentric circles. Basically, the mandala is a device for centering visual consciousness, thereby protecting it against distractions, making it "one-pointed". The process is to fixate the center, keeping one's attention on the whole field, and then stage by stage to bring attention more and more towards the central point. If awareness remains one-pointed during this process of centering, all mental energy is finally focused on the central spot, and one can then pass through that to the next dimension. The various symbolic figures on the mandala, with letters, colors etc., serve as additional anchoring points of associations. The idea is to get as much of the mental contents on to the two-dimensional surface, so they can then be transcended through the central point. "By mentally entering the mandala, the yogin approaches his own "center", and this spiritual exercise can be understood in two senses: (1) to reach the center the yogin re-enacts and masters the cosmic process, for the mandala is an image of the world; (2) but since he is engaged in meditation and not in ritual, the yogin, starting from this iconographic support, can find the mandala in his own body."<sup>5</sup>

The mechanism of the mandala can also be

understood in terms of the neurophysiology of the eye. Gerald Oster, in his recently published study of the effect of LSD on perceived Moiré patterns<sup>7</sup>, concluded that

"all vision has a circular pattern superposed on it and LSD reveals the presence of this screen via the moiré effect. . . . Histological studies of the human fovea (the point of fixation on the retina) reveal that it consists entirely of cones . . . each of which is connected by individual nerves which lead to the optic nerve via the "blind spot" of the eyeball. The nerves lie in front of the cones, i.e. the light received is intercepted by a layer of nerve fibers. These nerve fibers would be expected to curve out and around the fovea to produce a screen consisting of curved lines which can be approximated as a figure consisting of concentric circles".

In other words, the mandala is a depiction of the structure of the eye, the center of the mandala corresponding to the foveal "blind spot". Since this "blind spot" is the exit from the eye to the visual system of the brain, by going "out" through the center you are going in to the brain. The yogin finds the mandala in his own body. The mandala is an instrument for transcending the world of visually-perceived phenomena by first centering them and then turning perception inward. The use of the mandala during a psychedelic session depends of course entirely on the subject's previous familiarity with it from prior meditation and visualization. Buddhist adepts do not hesitate to spend years mastering the content of a single elaborate mandala.



MANDALA

Photo: Allen Atwell

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The use of mantra, or sound vibrations, plays an analogous role in the auditory sphere, and similarly depends on previous acquaintance. The use of mantra is the most widespread psychedelic method in present-day Hinduism and Buddhism. Usually the spiritual teacher (guru) gives his disciple a mantra to work with. This may be the name of a particular chosen deity, a complex formula or incantation analogous to Christian prayer, or simply a syllable (sometimes call bija-mantra or seed syllable) chosen for its quality of sound vibration rather than its meaning. Thus the famous universal mantra OM has no "meaning", as a word, but it is the word, or Logos, or vibration which lies at the root of everything and can be used to tune into the common cosmic energy process.

The mantra has through previous practice a network of associations — emotional, intellectual, spiritual — connected to it, which are invoked when the mantra is repeated. It is a way of centering consciousness on one stream designed to lead you out of the conceptual maze. In a psychedelic session with an European-born initiate into one of the Tibetan Buddhist orders, we had the opportunity of observing the efficacy of mantric practice. This man, in spite of his lengthy and excellent preparation through the Buddhist practice, was overwhelmed by the power of the LSD experience and got caught in terror and confusion. He remembered his mantra, given him by his guru, but could not speak it, having lost contact with his vocal apparatus. His wife, who was present, spoke the mantra repeatedly into his ear, whereupon, after a few

minutes, he regained his composure. Thereafter, he toppled once or twice again, but each time was able to pull himself back to central focus using the mantric safety-cord.

The Peyote Indians also know the use of sound to guide their ceremonies. "The Road Chief sings the opening song which is always the same and three others which he chooses for himself. Then the Drummer Chief sings and the Road Chief drums and then the Cedar Chief sings and the Road Chief drums. Now the drum and rattle, staff and sage go around the room and people sing and drum in pairs."<sup>4</sup>

It is obviously inappropriate for the Westerner to adopt Eastern mantras as they are; if they are used, they would have to be modified. Here again we stand on the threshold of the scientific re-discovery of the relationship of sound to consciousness. Psychedelic voyagers have to develop their own mantras in a pragmatic, experimental way, using sounds, rhythms, words or phrases that are meaningful and that work.

The use of visual and sound patterns to program consciousness may seem esoteric and far removed from our everyday experience. Actually, every person brought up in any tribal culture (including our own) has been taught a wide variety of such techniques for programming his consciousness. The American flag, the Christian cross, the Star of David are familiar yantra-like symbols. The Lord's Prayer, the words "I love you" are mantric incantations. The sad fact is that most of the consciousness-directing devices

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we routinely use are ineffective as true yantras or mantras because they tie us to externals, materials, to self-centered artificial game-consciousness. Effective spiritual or psychedelic yantras and mantras are those which release us from the local games, direct and guide our consciousness to meta-cultural, meta-self levels.

### Other Sense Modalities

The use of incense to direct consciousness is an almost universal practice in all forms of religion and all systems of meditation. The Peyote Indians pass sage around and people smell it and rub it on themselves. The organ of smell and associated brain areas are probably among the oldest in the evolutionary sense. Smells trigger off very basic, instinctual, pre-cultural impressions, and are therefore well suited for psychedelic programming.

Taste and touch sensations can also be explored during a psychedelic session in a more or less systematic fashion. The chemically "tuned" receptors will reveal undreamed of dimensions of sensory communication. One might prepare a series of different textures and foods. The so-called "left-handed" path of the Tantric system of yoga was based in part on the systematic exploration and mapping of sensory experience in all modalities, including the sexual.

Kinesthetic programming is the basis of the concept of mudra, or gesture. The mudra, which is particularly important in Japanese Buddhism, conveys a basic emotional-devotional attitude which can be very powerful in centering, calm-

ing the flow of experience both in oneself and in others. For example we may mention the mudra indicating "fear not", which is made by the right hand facing palm outward at the level of the breast. Similarly, the right hand turned palm outward, fingers pointing down, signifies the granting of wishes, compassion, benevolence. The hands resting in one another is the classic gesture of meditative repose and inner peace. Of course, Westerners may prefer to develop their own mudras; particular groups of explorers may have their own special code.

### Some Illustrations of Programming

It is best to discuss the details of psychedelic session programming by way of specific examples. The content of the program will depend on the purpose or goal of the session. We will consider six examples — diagnosis, therapy, intellectual understanding, aesthetic appreciation, interpersonal communication, self-understanding or self-development.

(1) The purpose of the experience may be diagnosis. Among the Indians of Mexico and South America who use psychedelic mushrooms, vines or cactuses, this is usually the paramount reason. R. Gordon Wasson, in his excellent paper on "Ololiuhqui and the Other Hallucinogens of Mexico"<sup>5</sup>, gives a transcription of a verbatim account of the ritual using morning-glory seeds. In the Zapotec villages the ritual centers around the Blessed Virgin, indeed the seeds are called "seed of the Virgin", and the beverage is administered by a young girl of seven or eight years if the patient is a man, a boy if the patient



Great Buddha of Nara, Japan, making with his right hand the mudra of fearlessness and with his left the mudra of giving.

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is a woman. The ritual is very simple: the child simply stays with the person to hear what he will say. The patient remains on the bed. "He should not talk until the next day. And so everything is revealed. You are told whether the trouble is an act of malice or whether it is illness."<sup>8</sup>. In modern terms, the experience is used to diagnose whether the illness is psychosomatic or organic.

Diagnosis could also be more general than simply medical. A person may wish to diagnose his life situation. In this case he would write down or tape-record before the session a series of questions that he would like to have answered, and arrange to have them read some time in the re-entry phase of the session. The disadvantage of such verbal formulations is that they come from the pre-psychedelic mind, and hence often do not touch the significant points. Frequently a person in the psychedelic session will laugh at the ridiculous questions he thought so important beforehand. If the patient is in psychotherapy, then of course the therapist would be at hand to ask questions, as described for example in Constance Newland's book *Myself and I*<sup>9</sup>.

The Mexican *curandera*'s account quoted above contains the very valuable piece of advice to abstain from talking during the next day. One of the prime sources of confusion in psychedelic sessions is the premature attempt to rationalize or "explain" the experience. Often a person will settle for some theoretical formulation that temporarily allays his "cognitive anxiety", but effectively shuts him off from further direct confrontation of the new impressions received.

Ideally, the voyager should have at least a whole day more or less alone, or at least in a relatively game-free environment, to thoroughly absorb and assimilate the experience.

(2) Closely linked with the first type of session is one whose purpose is therapy or behavior change. In our own research we have based the technique of behavior change on the game model of human behavior<sup>10,11</sup>. Following this model the two key concepts in changing behavior are coaching and feedback. Suppose a convict wants to learn to stay out of prison. We try to have him coached by an ex-convict who has stayed out of prison. We give him back any information we get on his progress. For example, in a project run at the Concord Reformatory in Massachusetts, prisoners took psychological tests of "normal adjustment" and were told what the results were. A few weeks later they would take the test again, to see if they could "improve" their score. David McClelland and George Litwin of Harvard University have shown that scores on a test of "need for achievement" can be raised through coaching and feed-back, and that actual achievement (academic, sensory-motor) also increases following such change<sup>12</sup>. Using similar techniques, Frank Barron and Timothy Leary<sup>13</sup> have shown how art-students can be made more creative. Synanon and Alcoholics Anonymous are based on the same principles.

The psychedelic experience can help one to change thinking and attitudes underlying certain games. This is a necessary first step. But the new game-patterns then have to be learned, like

anything, through practice. One can use the process of re-imprinting to prepare oneself for new game-patterns. Suppose you were entering a new and strange occupation, or a country with different customs requiring changes in habitual behavior. You might have in the session objects or symbols from this new game which would serve as anchoring points for the new imprints. Learning a new language is an example of this. You would take into the session language records which, listened to for hours in the hypersensitive state of the psychedelic experience, would imprint you on the sounds and patterns of that language. Bernard Roseman, in his book *LSD-The Age of Mind*<sup>14</sup>, has described an analogous technique for learning to touch-type in two LSD sessions.

(3) A third type of session program is designed for intellectual understanding, for a person who wishes to deepen his understanding of religious, philosophical or scientific concepts. A frequently reported reaction to LSD is the feeling of experiencing with one's whole being concepts which had only been grasped intellectually before. How many people, even among professional physicists, for example, are able to grasp experientially the concepts called for by the mathematical equations of modern physics, such as the space-time continuum, or the double nature, both particle and wave, of light? Similarly the symbolism of Vajrayana Buddhism, as exemplified in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, are meaningless to a mind brought up in Western rationalist tradition, but come vividly to life with a psyche-

delic session. Indeed it is clear that these symbols and concepts are based on controlled psychedelic experimentation and an enormous wealth of theoretical and practical teachings.

Here, programming would consist in recording on tape beforehand relevant selections from the literature on the subject. It is better to have a small amount of carefully chosen material than a great deal. Too much symbolic material can become overwhelming because the mind in the psychedelic state responds with a much wider and faster network of associations than normally. Passages of readings should be interspersed with periods of quiet or music. It is often useful to repeat the same passage several times at different points in the session. Care should be taken not to read heavy intellectual material in the early trans-ego phases of the experience, since it will tend to bring the experience down to the level of conceptual thinking.

(4) Fourth, one may program the experience for aesthetic appreciation. There is no doubt that psychedelic plants and drugs can open up areas of aesthetic perception that are staggering in their complexity and intensity. Aldous Huxley's mescaline sessions, described in *The Doors of Perception*, were predominantly in this aesthetic mode. One becomes aware, with repeated listening or viewing, that certain artistic products have definite effects on consciousness in the sense of expanding or going beyond self, whereas others seem merely to trigger off particular stereotyped emotional reactions. The Hindu musical tradition has preserved forms and modes of musical com-

munication that have precise "psychedelic" effects on consciousness. This explains in part the extraordinary popularity of musicians such as Ravi Shankar or Ali Akbar Khan among people involved in consciousness expansion. We see the beginnings of systematic research on the effects of different sounds, colors, forms etc., which would enable "artists" to communicate with greater precision and effectiveness. The Gothic cathedrals provide instructive examples of the conscious use of artistic media — space, form, light, sound, smell — to produce religious-mystical, i.e. psychedelic, experiences. You enter the church, the darkness dilates your pupils; the soaring arches draw your gaze upwards, the stained-glass windows bathe your visual field in kaleidoscopic colors, the rose-window-mandala makes your visual awareness one-pointed. The sounds of the organ, the choir and the priest's bells, as well as the incense, are all designed to lead your attention away from worldly, everyday concerns into higher levels of contemplation and ecstatic worship.

(5) Perhaps the most important application of the psychedelic experience in modern life is in the area of interpersonal relationships. The model of imprinting is particularly useful in understanding this area of research. The hypothesis that psychedelic drugs temporarily suspend imprints and permit re-imprinting (re-entry), accounts for the often-observed intense attachment, even "love" of the drug-taker for the drug-giver (and vice-versa if both take it). The well-known psychotherapeutic transference is in-

tensified and telescoped into the space of a few hours. Often the guide is somehow held responsible for the liberation or revelation the voyager has received (in negative experiences, of course, the guide becomes the devil or monster). Whether positive or negative, it may be taken as axiomatic that someone undergoing a psychedelic experience will take a very powerful imprint of the person with him. Now if the person with him also takes the drug, you have a situation of enormous potential in interpersonal relationships. Marriage partners can examine relationships that have become cold and mechanical and attempt to establish a new basis for interaction. Sometimes a psychedelic session will simply bring out the basic incompatibility of the partners, exposing the superficial relationship which had been superposed on it, and the partners will separate.

In sessions involving more than one person the problem of communication becomes vitally important. A mutually agreed upon sequence of programmed stimuli (auditory or visual) is helpful, since these stimuli will provide a kind of link between the two flights. In addition the participants should have some agreed upon code for making contact in case one or the other gets lost. This need not be more than a gesture of some kind, a basic mudra, or a touch of the hand.

There are simple ways of ensuring that the joint psychedelic session will in fact be a shared experience, and not the separate voyages of two individuals. At agreed upon times during the session one or the other of the participants

may take over the role of guide, and bring the attention of the other voyager to a particular object — a piece of fruit, a picture, a flower, a stone, a piece of music, a poem — which they will then explore together.

Physical contact is of course another means of communicating. Since the sense of touch, like the other senses, is made incredibly more sensitive, worlds of meaning can be communicated through a simple touch of the finger-tips. A well-known London psychiatrist uses a kind of hand-dance to communicate with the psychedelic patient. The two participants let their finger-tips or palms touch lightly, and then explore through subtle and delicate movements a whole range of expressive gestures, which can convey shades of emotion unknown to our clumsy verbal machinery.

Married couples who agree to explore the sexual basis of their marriage through LSD or another psychedelic will find that these are the most powerful aphrodisiacs ever known, in the sense of heightening sensitivity as well as capacity to respond. It is of course a requirement that both partners feel completely comfortable with the situation since any crude or seductive action is very easily perceived and may be reacted to with heightened anxiety or paranoia. The effect of psychedelics on sexual experience is primarily an enhancement of all sensory components, and thus a kind of diffusion of the erotic sensations over the whole body, away from the exclusively genital urgency of the normal sex game. A

simple caress can have the orgasmic intensity normally experienced only in genital discharge. Thus the psychedelic sexual experience tends to assume the kind of timeless pan-erotic quality described by such Eastern texts as the Kama Sutra.

There is another aspect to the psychedelic sexual experience that deserves to be noted. Since psychedelics induce experiences that go beyond the ego, the partners are likely to feel that they are no longer themselves, no longer John and Mary, but instead simply two beings in complete union. They may feel themselves to be gods, as indeed at that moment they are. Here again we see a confirmation through psychedelics of the ancient Tantric teachings that the lovers have to become gods in order to go beyond the normal spheres of awareness and reach transcendent union. The husband looking at his wife may see her as all the women he has ever known, or wished he had known, or fantasied, as all women of all races and times, as the One First Woman who is all. Sequences of this kind, which are by no means uncommon in a psychedelic session may seem like crass hallucination or illusion. Actually, there is nothing mysterious about such a perception, although it is unusual in our common experience. It is a neurological, bio-genetic fact that each current member of a species carries the history of thousands of predecessors, encoded in the DNA molecule in the nuclei of his cells. In other words, perception breaks through to that pre-symbolic, pre-mental level which is in fact common to all.

Levels and durations of ecstasy can be reached that go beyond the wildest imagination. At the same time it should be remembered that the psychedelic state is one of extremely delicate vulnerability and suggestibility, so that paranoid or anxious elements in one or the other partner's approach can easily be magnified and trap both partners in unhappy realms for a while. It is for this reason that, in general, persons should have one or more experiences by themselves (guided, of course) before attempting the vastly more difficult two-person session. A pilot has to learn to fly solo before he can attempt to fly in formation with another plane.

There are several simple aids that a two-person session can incorporate. One of these is a little two-way mirror, which when held up in front of the other person's face will give a composite picture made up of your own reflection and that of the other person, a blending perhaps not unlike that which the genetic code brings about in the remarkable process known as "conception".

(6) Finally we come to perhaps the most important application of session programming — that of learning to control one's own nervous system. The process of being brought up and educated in a particular culture is a process of having the nervous system imprinted with a few thousand tribal concepts and symbols. This process of tribal imprinting probably had survival value at some stage in the evolution of the human race. Basic food, shelter and defense games can be played more efficiently if the enormous respon-

siveness of the nervous system in its pristine, infantile state is contracted to a few simple approach-avoidance strategies. But we pay a terrible price for this efficiency which has helped us survive. The price is complete and blind addiction to external symbols. Put a man in a so-called "sensory-deprivation" chamber and within a few hours he will show all the symptoms of junk withdrawal: hallucinating, sweating, anxiety, pleading to be let out. Actually these experiments do not deprive one of sensory stimulation, they merely remove external symbolic perception. The inner universe lies open to vision, free now from the distractions of the outside. But only a trained observer would know how to make use of this condition. Yogins deliberately withdraw from external stimulation precisely because they seek internal perception. In order to become free of the crippling neurological addiction to imprinted external symbols one must begin by learning to decode the languages of the body. "Know thyself" is one of the oldest teachings known to mankind; it was inscribed over the entrance to the oracle at Delphi. It points to the fact that in order to become free of the fetters imposed by accidental cultural conditioning one has to begin by observing and trying to understand one's own organism, physical, emotional, mental.

The remarkable psychological system known as Tantra teaches that the development of self-understanding has to start with the physical body. For us the body is simply a machine which performs its functions automatically and with

which we have very little conscious contact. On the other hand, the possibility of such contact exists and with it the possibility of greater control, as evidenced for example by the yogin's ability to affect his own autonomic functioning. Tantra does not advocate the pursuit of such control, in fact warns against it, but regards it merely as a sign of increasing awareness. Only when we have gained some understanding of the machinery of the body can we attempt to perceive the world outside our body realistically.

The body is organized on different levels of energy-functioning: physical, chemical, electrical. The cakras system of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantra is an attempt to map out these different levels, based on experiences of guided inner exploration, whether through meditation or chemicals. We have recently worked on session programs using the cakras system in which the psychedelic voyager is taken step by step through five or seven body centers — eliminative, reproductive, digestive, circulatory, respiratory. These centers are in no sense primitive or alternate version of what we know as the "physiology" of the body. The cakras are focal points of sensation-awareness, which undoubtedly relate to the neural and hormonal integrative systems of the body. Such a programmed exploration of the inner universes may be thought of as the first halting steps in learning a new language — the incredibly complex energy codes of the human body.

The human nervous system is like a musical

instrument of great antiquity, complexity and perfection. LSD is a tuning device — with its help we see for the first time some of the wonders this instrument is capable of. To be able to use and enjoy it properly to its full capacity we must train ourselves and each other. The programming of LSD experiences is such a training method.

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Tantric map of body-consciousness showing cakras

