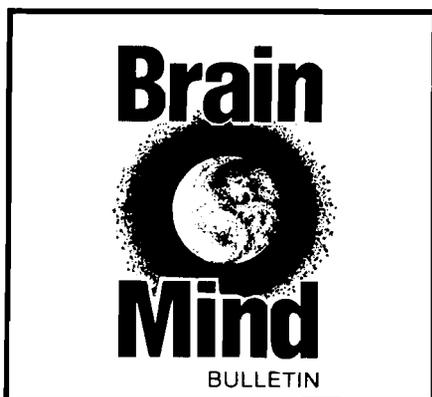


New model sees imagination as faculty of inward-turning senses



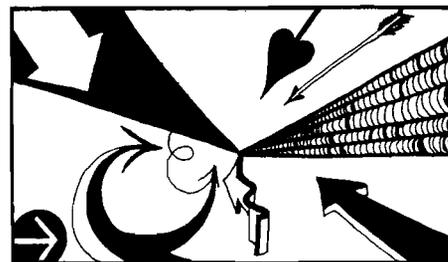
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A New York psychiatrist proposes that imagination is a sense, a realm not subject to the laws of time and space. The content of imagination cannot be quantified, Gerald Epstein says, and it is not scientific to study subjective phenomena using a method established for studying objects.

For the past 10 years Epstein has taught and supervised the clinical use of imagination as an active process for healing. In a recent article in *Advances* he presented three "vignettes" (see page 2), then discussed a possible model for how imagery could so powerfully affect healing.

Imagery, in this context, is not metaphorical but concrete, directly apprehended



by the senses. These are our external senses "turned inward through an act of will for the purpose of exploring inner life."

Imagery is not subject to the same laws as physical reality, Epstein maintained. Physicality happens in time and as an unfoldment of time. The image happens in "no time." Time stands still or disappears. That is, the image has no past and no future. Having no fixed locality in a three-dimensional spatial context, it is therefore not timebound. *No physicality equals no time.*

"We are considering the effects of an event mentally participated in, subjectively experienced and operating by means of laws that do not obtain in physical life."

Healing means "coming into order," the opposite of entropy or disorder.

Physical laws pertain to objects with volume, mass and substance. But image cannot be weighed or measured.

Therefore Epstein proposes a set of

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Psychiatrist Scott Peck's bestseller came by 'The Road Less Traveled'

The rising tide of interest in psychologically oriented religion is evident in the amazing success of psychiatrist Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*. Moving almost entirely via an underground, the book emerged from its feeble beginnings to a reign of almost two years in the Number 1 position in the *New York Times* trade bestseller list.

To date the book has sold some 1.7 million copies. Simon and Schuster recently reissued the book as a gift hardcover for \$17.95.

The book itself took a "road less traveled." It was published in spring 1978—and, according to the author, "programmed for extinction." Its editor had left six months before. When the first 5,000 copies were exhausted, Peck told *B/MB*, the book

was reprinted in "drips and drabs—2,500 at a time."

Reissued as a trade paperback in January 1980, it slowly began moving. Word spread first through the self-help movement and psychotherapists, then through the "church grapevine" attracted by the book's blend of psychology and religion. Peck went on the road, speaking to church groups, primarily in the South and Midwest.

The book sold 30,000 in 1980, then doubled and redoubled in the next two years. By 1983 *The Road Less Traveled* had begun its gradual climb up the bestseller lists and has hovered near the top since summer 1984.

"By the intensity of the reactions, I knew

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In this issue

Model of imagination as timelessness... Rest/activity cycles trigger 'everyday trance'... Psychologists urged to apply tools of biology to study subjective experience... Reviews of reissued religious classics and three books on New Age phobia.

Rossi: hot on the trail of the everyday trance

One of the blind spots of our consciousness, according to a Los Angeles psychologist, is our inability to recognize the periodic alteration of our state. Most of us are unaware of the state Ernest Rossi calls "everyday trance."

The apparent continuity that exists in everyday awareness, Rossi says, is "a precarious illusion" made possible by cues—conversations, task orientation and the like.

Rossi, a longtime collaborator of the late Milton Erickson, points out that recent research confirms Erickson's idea (based on behavior clues) that people enter a natural trance periodically throughout the day.

The mind wanders, memories flow easily. Some people catch musing, fleeting glimpses of the "big picture." Others become so entranced that they neither see nor hear. Others may feel discom-

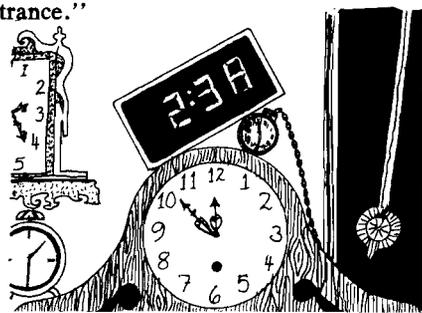
fort and suppress "personal truths that come unbidden during these naturally unguarded periods."

The Basic Rest and Activity Cycle (BRAC) is an ultradian rhythm—a shift that occurs about every 90 minutes, comparable to the cycle of rapid-eye-movement periodicity in sleep. Researchers have reported a left- to right-hemisphere shift as breathing changes from the right nasal passage to the left.

The crossover period lasts roughly 10 minutes. Among the visible cues of the shift toward right-hemisphere and parasympathetic dominance: relaxation, pulse movements of arteries, reduced blinking, pupil dilation, reddening of the eyes, tearing, respiratory slowdown, sweating.

The nasal cycle "may prove to be the Rosetta Stone of research in this area." It is a window of cerebral hemisphere dominance and can be brought under voluntary control.

Rossi lists "64 projects in search of a graduate student" in his report on everyday trances in a comprehensive new 672-page volume of current research and theory, *Handbook of States of Consciousness*, edited by Benjamin Wolman and Montague Ullman (\$54.50 from Van Nostrand, 115 Fifth Ave., NYC 10003). Rossi: 11980 San Vicente #901, Los Angeles 90049.



Imagination. . .

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equations: Time equals limits. Timelessness equals no limits. No limits equals no entropy. No entropy equals no breakdown. Building up equals no breakdown. Building up equals coming into order. Coming into order equals healing.

"Healing requires an instant when time, which is ineluctably tied to entropy, is stilled or reversed. That instant occurs in the imagination when an individual makes use of visual imagery, which exists only in the present." People have "the power consciously to will an instant of freedom."

If we fail to understand this view of the image, Epstein said, current investigations are destined to trivialize and demean the imaginal process "in much the same way that investigations of the dream after Freud's glorious predictions for it trivialized the dream." Applying the objectively contrived scientific method to a fundamentally non-logical, subjective experience like imagination or dreaming "is like comparing birds to camels."

Epstein suggests that a study of imagination might prove more productive than research on meditation because it is more ordinary and widespread.

"Skeptics will claim that what is being said is 'only' the result of clinical experience and perhaps even deep study, but that it does not meet the criteria of scientific proof." Imagination itself, as a common lived experience, is proof. "The preconceived idea that all reality is a matter of cause and effect robs events of meaning."

We do not 'have' dreams or images, Epstein suggests. They are not the same as our psychological constructs or metaphors. We live them or dwell in them.

Epstein also shows how healing can be viewed through a holographic model. His article appeared in *Advances* 3 (1): 22-31. Single copies of the issue are \$10 from Institute for the Advancement of Health, 16 East 53rd St., NYC 10022. Epstein: 23 East 93rd St., NYC 10128.

Peck: 'The Road Less Traveled' . . .

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within a month after publication that I had something going," Peck said. "One alcoholic wrote, 'You must have been an alcoholic.' That was the pattern—the book spoke to personal experience."

He has described it as "the first really sophisticated self-help book" with no pat answers and a willingness to question cultural values. Readers typically say Peck didn't say anything new. "I wrote what they'd been thinking and were afraid to express."

The book encouraged those "already embarked on an isolated journey. There have always been people who transcended their culture. They're a minority but a

Imagination: claiming a new tool for healing, self knowledge and science

"I was trained as a Freudian psychoanalyst," Gerald Epstein (see article, page 1) told *B/MB*. "My involvement with imagery was a radical shift of world view."

He said that various ancient writings helped contextualize his clinical experiences of the healing image. Among the sources: Seventh Century Sufi imagery techniques, the concept of time and healing in the Hebraic culture and the Egyptian model of the body as temple.

"The Egyptians had a remarkable understanding about ratios in bodies and in buildings. They were supremely mathematical. They knew you had to keep the body in focus. Whereas in our science the subject attempts to know itself by studying the object, in theirs the subject used the senses to study the senses."

Imagination is closer to biology than is psychology, Epstein maintained, because it can tie the body, via the "inward-turning senses," to its conscious experience. "People have to see that the mind, using imagery, can repair the body."

Epstein included three clinical "vignettes" in the *Advances* article. While using imagery, all three patients had discontinued medication (required of all except cancer patients).

- A man with chronic eczema was told to imagine his fingers becoming palm leaves, which he put on his face. "Feel a flow of water and milk becoming a river of honey that heals the area. Leave a drop of oil on the healed area after finishing, seeing your face becoming all clear."

He was to do the exercise with eyes closed three times a day for 21 days. The eczema moved from his face to his body after a week; an additional exercise cleared the final stages of itching.

- A woman with longstanding arthritis had an eight-inch rheumatoid nodule in her right knee.



Three times daily for one to three minutes she had imagined her limbs like octopus tentacles, undulating and very long, or saw sand and water cleanse her skin and dissolve deposits. After three months the nodule had shrunk by three and one-half inches.

- A man facing prostate surgery had a normal prostate after doing a simple imagery twice daily for six months.

The senses are marvelously constructed to turn toward any subjective experience we wish them to examine . . . What most of us do not realize is that we have yet another sense, one that is especially apt for exploring subjective life on its own power, one that does not rely on being asleep to either waking or sleeping reality—namely, the imagination. This great sensory gift is a faculty of mind, a sense perception and a subjective reality all in one.

Unfortunately for us, we are most often asleep to imagination when we are most "awake." It might peep through from time to time, usually when we are engaged in creative activities, but most of us are unaware of the potency of the imagination as a sensory force that is as useful as seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and the like.

It is different from the other senses in that it is not passive but can be brought into play by an effort of attention.

Imagination is unique in offering a new way of thinking about things. Unlike the habitual perceptions of the world that we achieve with our ordinary faculties, imagination establishes unfamiliar, fresh and novel ways of discerning our life circumstances.

Scientists who dismiss the significance and veracity of subjective phenomena until they can be established by objective criteria display a distinctly non-scientific stance. Until they can accept the genuineness of such non-material realities, they are likely to miss the richness of life experience, to misunderstand subjective events and to trivialize one of the most truly profound possibilities for self knowledge.

—Gerald Epstein