



Deprivation, Meditation, Psychedelics, and Hypnosis

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“No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche

My approach to trance work grew from my interest in having new experiences and my questions about learning. From this outline you may see how our views compare.

Deprivation

Before psychedelics, I was a mountaineer. I went to the mountains for excitement but got more

discomfort than elation. My dominant memories are of uncomfortable situations a few of which, with the benefit of hindsight, could be called exciting. My memory of many climbs is just one of toil. To allay the discomfort, I found myself learning the art of altering my state of mind.

Mastering discomfort makes a person different in subtle ways. Learning to prevail through suffering requires the same skills that I now teach my hypnosis clients who deal with chronic pain. Most of my mountaineering scars have faded, but it's taken more than 40 years.

During my schooling years I felt social and academically odd, but spiritually I had a bead on what was important. I was empathetic without knowing the word, and this separated me from the college crowd. I couldn't understand the origin of my feelings and figured that I was simply interested in other things. I couldn't relate to most people's materialist fixations.

Each of us has personal problems that form the basis of our personality. Much like large stones that form the best foundation for building, large problems form a good foundation for a person's identity. In both cases, they don't shift and you can't get around them. Stability is more important than comfort. People need stability to predict, arrange, and control.

Happiness takes a back seat. Our minds are designed to generate safety, and safety results in comfort, not pleasure. Happiness is not something you generate with intention. You can generate comfort, pleasure, and distraction but happiness is an ingredient you add. You can endure unhappiness and discomfort, but discontinuity and danger will drive you crazy.

Physical challenges are exercises in control that force you to create a stable state of mind. Once you stabilize your focus and your direction, you can build a new state of mind. You need a foundation. I needed to build an emotional stability that was missing from my childhood.



Cogitation

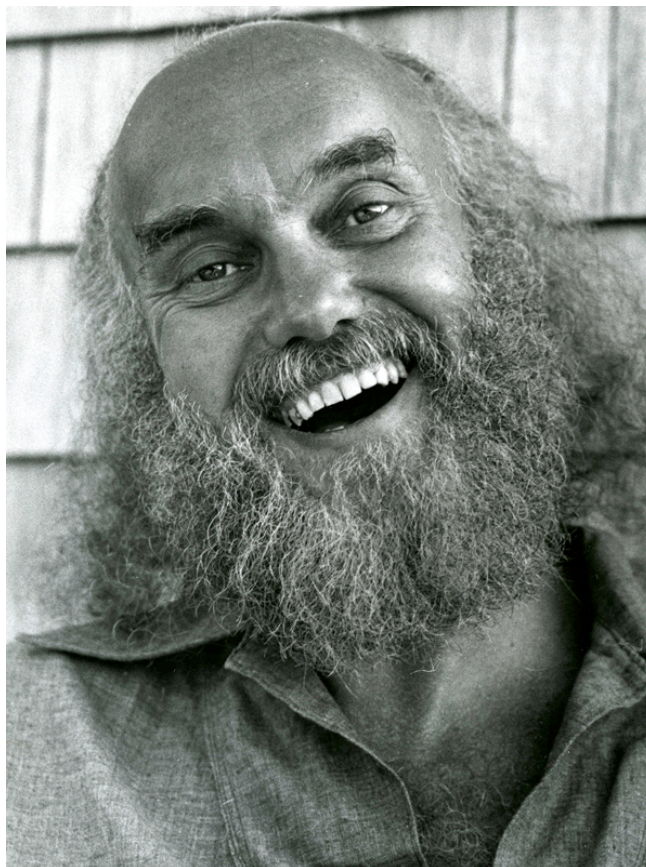
I began focusing on science in high school, and I was interested in the abilities of one's mind, a topic few science students were interested in. Modern science has lost touch with philosophy, epistemology, psychology, and metaphysics. These are no longer taught in any science curriculum and thinking about these issues is discouraged. You see this in the emphasis on STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—and in the utilitarian way these subjects are taught.

My physics dissertation advisor upbraided me for suggesting science is corrupted by social pressures. One of my committee members abandoned me when I suggested sexuality might play a role in the social behavior of scientists. And these were the liberal-minded faculty!

Current-day science overlooks the role of self-awareness in science. Don't be fooled by the few public voices who espouse the integration of science and spirit. People like Deepak Chopra, Gregg Bradon, Joe Dispenza, and those affiliated with them are pundits. They are not considered scientists, they do not produce science, and most of them never did.

I don't know if the rigid materialism that underlies mainstream science is taught or selected but it

wasn't always the case. Today's utilitarian science has drifted far from its metaphysical roots. Francis Bacon was a philosopher, Newton a theologian, Einstein and his cohorts seriously discussed physical reality, but today's physicists don't care. The prevailing attitude is that it doesn't matter, which really means that no one's interested.



Yoga, or So They Say

It was hard to stomach the mystical kool-aid that percolated through colleges in the 1970s. This has now become a staple of yoga-ism, massage-oil therapy, and internet junk. Eastern philosophy in the West has grown more like an invasive weed than native wisdom.

Buddhism had not yet become commercial and the yogi cults were in ascendance. The beatific smile of Baba Ram Dass ran on the fumes of adulation. I remember standing next to him in a book store when he mused that his narcissism might obscure his spirituality. I found the commodity shamanism of Carlos Castenada and Oscar Ichazo more palatable because it didn't pretend to have answers.

Decades before I made psychedelic exploration a serious project, I held my nose and jumped into Oscar Ichazo's 40-day spiritual training called Arica. Arica was an early precursor to Amway

spirituality following the multi-level marketing approach of Werner Erhard's EST and L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology.

The thinly veiled profit motive bothered me at the time, but I've come to appreciate that there's got to be some strategy to cover expenses. That being said, and with all the generosity I can find, the facilitators were unskilled and the program was poor. Arica was one of those post-hippie crazes making its way through college campuses.

This 40-day training culminated in a 2-day silent, solitary, meditation retreat. That was the only exercise that I found had value. For at least a decade after I discarded Arica's pop psychology, I performed these retreats annually.

With the addition of fasting and sensory deprivation, I turned these vision quests into mind-bending experiences. I would bushwhack to the top of some wooded mountain, set up my tent, burrow into my sleeping back with eyeshades on, and hibernate for 48 to 72 hours. The results were as extreme as I've generated using any psychedelic. Both my mind and body were transported to other realities.



Psychedelics

In the 90s I joined my first ayahuasca ceremony at a small retreat center in Northern New Jersey. As with mountaineering which changed my reality in ways that separated me from my college mates, my years of vision quests separated me from my ayahuasca mates. What common ground there was I held with the shamans.

I had the same nausea from drinking the sacrament as everyone else, but the psychedelic territory was familiar. In fact, ayahuasca was more comfortable because I was more present and my personality was intact. I had already traversed the nightmarish and ego-dissolving territory. I have never had any negative experience with any psychedelic substance.

We're experiencing a resurgence of interest in mind-altering drugs. Their legal release, a resurgence of psychological research, and an empty void from 50 years of commodity spirituality has again unlocked the doors of perception.

I'm not sure what's on sale. In the 60s, enlightenment was advertized. Through the illegal decades it was entertainment and exploration. Now it's therapy and healing.

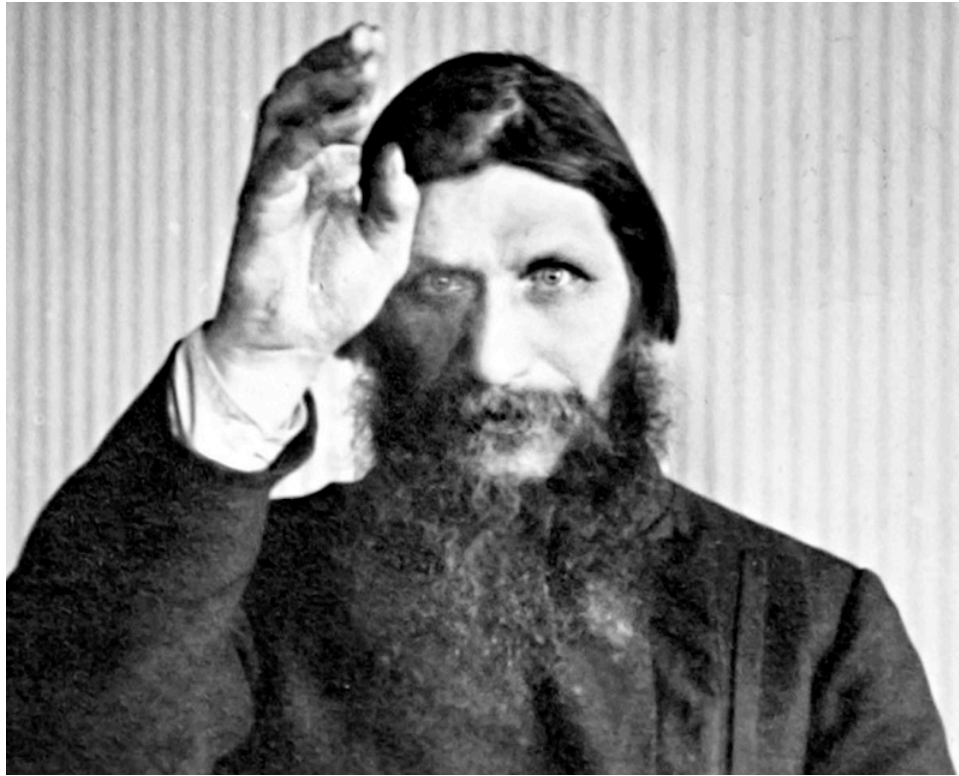
The indigenous peoples, who established a place for psychedelics in their cultures, use psychedelics for a purpose that doesn't match any of our uses. They have a deeper connection with culture, nature, and themselves. For them, psychedelics take them to a higher world that is different and real. The integration done by indigenous people is not limited to individuals; it heals, entertains, and enlightens their culture.

Entertainment trivializes the territory. Therapy pathologizes spirit. Enlightenment puts a sugar coating on personal work. My feeling is that you only find what you're looking for, and if you come to psychedelics with certain questions, those are the answers you'll find.

Psychedelics are not a doorway to enlightenment, healing, or entertainment because you won't understand what they offer unless you're unless you're already enlightened, healed, and entertained. They are a doorway to a wider awareness but culture limits how far we can go. If you are prepared for more, then you can find it.

In larger awareness reside other understandings of deeper issues. What you conceive as illness may be enlightening rather than healing. What you expect to entertain you may take you apart. The transcendent state of bliss you've been looking for may entail nothing more than dropping your needs and attachments, and nothing else.

There are three steps in taking psychedelics: pointing yourself in a direction, stepping out, and then figuring what to make of it. As a culture, we're completely inexperienced in all these steps.



Hypnosis

That's pretty much all I have to say, but it bears repeating that the territory of psychedelics is a reality you construct. You are constructing this every minute that you are awake or asleep. As long as you're alive, you're building your reality. Psychedelics offer a mental playground with jungle gyms, slides, and obstacles courses. The object is not to stay in the playground, the object is to go out and be part of the world.

To me, hypnosis is not a thing, it's a catalog of places your mind can go. Like psychedelics, hypnosis is not well understood. It's been turned into a commodity and packaged for trivial purposes: past life regression for enlightenment, suggestions for healing, and spectacle for entertainment. This is more a reflection of what we buy than what can be done with hypnosis.

Both hypnosis and psychedelics tour similar territory, or they can. If we put them together, we can double the map, extend the guidance, and go twice the distance.

"Difficult roads always lead to beautiful destinations."

— **Zig Ziglar**

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