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March 15, 1985

By introducing the concept of mental imagery cultivation and its application to shamanism Richard Noll has performed a useful service. The distinction between enhancing vividness and controlledness in the process of shamanistic training should be helpful not only in guiding our reading of the extant descriptions, but more importantly, indirecting our attention to new information to be gathered.

The large literature on dreams allows us to distinguish between societies or groups that consider dreaming important—and as a result not only enhance memory of dreams but also influence style and content of dreams—and those that consider dreams merely private and negligible. A similar distinction appears to exist with reference to mental imagery.

"Visualization" or "imaging" are processes used in various contemporary American religious movements as well as in some forms of secular alternative healing. Csordas (1983:337) describes the process in the Healing of Memories ritual among Catholic charismatics, where "the supplicant may be asked to visualize, i.e., to induce a mental image or picture.
The healer may have a relevant vision as well. Warner (1983) notes "visualization" or "programming" among the activities of the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship, a "new religion." In contrast to the Catholic Charismatics, who use visualization for healing, the SFF visualize desired states, ranging from healing to weather control, from weight loss to interpersonal events.

The type of visualization, (static pictures or moving scenes, observations or participation by subject), and the methods used to obtain them need to be investigated in relationship to the group's mythology and specifically its concept of power.

Although visions are often discussed in the context of psychedelic drugs, other methods, including sensory deprivation, are of importance. (cf. Henney 1974/for a comparison between experimentally and ritually induced visions/hallucinations linked to sensory deprivation). That enhanced mental imagery need not be linked to ASC is suggested by its very important role in the plastic and graphic arts and in literature and of analogous processes in other sensory modalities (auditory, tactile, kinesthetic) in other art forms. Concerning prehistory, it is evident that the prehistoric painters and sculptors of the Upper Paleolithic caves supplemented whatever sketches they may have had with very vivid visual recollections and imagery. Through art, mental imagery as a mnemonic device can be given associational shape.

References
