

CONSENSUS TRANCE

- Each of us is in a profound trance, *consensus consciousness*, a state of partly suspended animation, of stupor, of inability to function at our maximum level. Automatized and conditioned patterns of perception, thinking, feeling, and behaving dominate our lives.
- Consensus trance involves a loss of much of our essential vitality. It is also a state of profound abstraction, a great retreat from immediate sensory/instinctual reality to abstractions about reality.
- Just as people vary in their hypnotizability, we vary in how deep our consensus trance is.

CULTURE

- Culture: a group of people who share basic beliefs about the world and practices for coping with it. They interact with each other in a way that ensures the survival of the group, as well as a reinforcement and perpetuation of their basic beliefs.
- Much that we hold to be obvious about the world, much that we consider sacred truths, could and should be called into question.

ENCULTURATION

- Each of us is born into a culture, a group of people with a shared belief system, a consensus about how things are and how they ought to be.
- As soon as we are born, the culture, primarily through the agency of the parents, begins to pick and choose among our potentials.

"Normalcy" and Membership in Your Culture

- Becoming "normal," becoming a full-fledged member of your culture, involves a selective shaping, a development of approved potentials, and inhibition of disapproved ones.
- From a culture's point of view, it is far better if your everyday mind, the habitual, automatized way you think and feel, is shaped to reflect the culture's consensus beliefs and values.
- Cultures almost never encourage their members to question them.

ESSENCE

- Essence is your genuine, deepest self, your desires, tastes, likes and dislikes, potentials, inherent in you before the consensus trance induction process has begun to change it.
- Essence is who we really were when we came into this world.
- Consensus trance induction is a process of shaping the behavior and the consciousness of the baby, the subject, to be "normal," to ensure that there is a high level of standardization of behavior and consciousness in all people so they fit social norms.

- We sincerely think of what we do with children as "education," as teaching them skills that they must have to live a happy life.
- What happens to essence, the basic and essential you, in the induction of consensus trance?
- If you are very lucky, and most of the characteristics of your essence are ones that happen to be valued in your culture, the induction of consensus trance is very smooth and free of conflict.

SETTING AND PRELIMINARIES FOR CULTURAL HYPNOSIS

Constraints on Ordinary Hypnotic Induction

- Although they may not be explicitly discussed, there are clear constraints on the hypnosis. For example:
 - a. It is time-limited, usually an hour or two.
 - b. The subject does not expect to be bullied, threatened, or harmed in any real way by the hypnotist.
 - c. If the hypnosis does not work very well, the hypnotist will not blame the subject.
 - d. The hypnosis may work well, producing a deep "trance," but the subject expects that the effects will only be temporary, and he will not be basically changed by his experience.

- Consensus trance induction starts in conditions that give far more power and influence to the cultural hypnotists than is ever given in ordinary hypnosis induction.

Involuntary Nature of Consensus Trance Induction

- Consensus trance induction does not begin as a voluntary and limited relationship between two consenting and knowledgeable adults. It begins with birth.

Unlimited Time for Consensus Trance Induction

- Consensus trance induction involves years of repeated inductions and reinforcement of the effects of previous inductions. Consensus trance is intended to last for a lifetime.

Use of Physical Force

- Ordinary hypnotists cannot use force to persuade their subjects to cooperate in the process of being hypnotized. Cultural hypnotists, on the contrary, can use physical threats as needed.

Use of Emotional Force

- Since the parents are the major source of love and self-esteem for the subject, they may threaten to withhold love and approval from the subject, or actually withhold it until compliance is achieved.

Love and Validation as Rewards for Conformity

- Cultural hypnotists can offer love and personal validation as a reward for compliant behavior.
- We all have a "social instinct," a desire to be accepted by others, to have friends, to have a place in our social world, to be respected, to be "normal."

Guilt

- The subject, the child, is clearly at fault for failing to act in the culturally desired way.

Dissociation

- The mental state of a young child is similar to that of the deeply hypnotized subject whose CRO has faded into relative inactivity.
- Much of our early enculturation and conditioning occurs before we have acquired much language.

Instinctive Trust in Parents

- Children have a deep trust in their parents. The parent often seems omniscient and omnipotent to the child, so this deep trust has magical qualities, and further opens the subject/child to further suggestions.

Expectations of Permanency

- Consensus trance is expected to be *permanent*.
- Many of these habits are not just learned but conditioned.
- You no longer have to work at maintaining consensus trance: it is automatic.

INDUCTION OF CONSENSUS TRANCE

- We begin the induction of consensus trance with far more power, knowledge, resources, and sophistication on the part of the cultural hypnotist than the ordinary hypnotist can ever hope to have.
- The cultural hypnotist also possesses the "power of innocence": he is unconscious of the consensus trance he himself is in and simply sees himself as acting "naturally."
- The child, the subject, knows little and is genuinely dependent on the cultural hypnotists for survival, love, happiness, and validation.
- It is no wonder that the process induces a lifelong trance.

- Cultural trance induction consists of several major groups of suggestions. Each group is repeated over and over, in a variety of forms.
- Punishment is given for failure to comply, as well as suggestions that you will be able to comply if you really try, if you are good.
- Love, pleasure, and validation are given as rewards for compliance.

Standards for "Goodness"

- One major group of suggestions is concerned with developing potentials that the local culture considers good.
- There are immediate rewards for developing potentials the culture values.
- The culture implicitly and explicitly promises that everything a person could want, all happiness, is attainable by developing these potentials, by becoming normal.

Suppressing Deviant Thought and Behavior

- A second major group of suggestions is focused on suppressing first the behavioral manifestation and then the internal experiencing of thoughts and feelings that the culture considers bad.
- Many consensus trance suggestions are intended to suppress disapproved or unknown types of internal experiences from occurring at all.

Creating a Sense of Duty

- A third major group of suggestions is focused on creating a sense of duty to cultural norms.
- The culture gets credit for making life safe, meaningful, and worthwhile. In return you must come to believe and accept its positive values and its prejudices.
- Our culture tends to think the universe is a cold, hostile place. Then culture becomes the thing that protects us from this hostile universe, our only hope.
- We then have a quite natural-seeming duty to protect the culture.
- And we are taught, of course, that we are the best. When you are the best, other cultures may be dismissed as quaint at best and inhuman or evil at the worst, especially when their actions might make you question your cultural givens.

Everything Not Permitted Is Forbidden

- ... Everything permitted is compulsory!"
- Luckily for us, there are possibilities the culture never thought of forbidding because it doesn't know about them, and there are both misfits and truly mature people who keep trying out alternative ways of living and experiencing in spite of the fact that they are forbidden.
- Essence, also, wants to live and grow, and will try to grow in spite of the constraints of culture.
- Add to this the fact that our culture is full of inconsistencies and contradictions in this time of rapid change, and there are many "cracks" for the prepared mind to find ways out.

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