

ON AESTHETICS OF PLEASANT STATES

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Anyone who has tried Eastern techniques of meditation will be acquainted with inherent pitfalls the Western mind is particularly subject to. One finally succeeds in silencing the inner monologue and rejoices — "Now I've got it!" and there you are again, right at the beginning. Similar experiences occur with other methods, for example autogenous training. Too often, at least by the novice, an assertion "I am completely calm", triggers an antithesis — "Damn it, I am anything but calm".

Well then; one could object that relaxation is worth toiling over and of necessity requires painstaking efforts. Yoga becomes a fulltime job and whichever technique of autosuggestion one subscribes to, a frequent inner dialogue causes the dilemma — "Who's telling who?"

The advantage of Mind Machines is that one avoids the rudimentary stages and traps of his particular limitations. The machine's effect takes place in what may be termed "real time" as opposed to the distortion of the same by chemical aids. I have exclusively employed audiovisual equipment: machines which directly control cerebral waves through electrical impulses are, at this point, reserved by licensed men of medicine.

It would initially appear to be a contradiction in terms to define a pleasant state. Freud supplied a negative definition in stating that the ego is not the master in its own home. How then is one's desire to be applied? Buddha stated: "My mind rises, is calmed, solidifies and is liberated ... I know; it is empty of what there is not, but what has remained is here. "

In principle the mind machine produces a greatly reduced (as compared to normal life) but highly structured input. The reduction is not an aim in itself nor does it aim at sensory deprivation. Rather, what is intended is to rhythmize and geometricize the sensory data.

Patterns are given to the mind that it would itself produce provided it were unhampered by its aforementioned limitations and self-defeating properties. The inner dialogue is hushed and the dilemma of who's telling who is silenced.

Although the FOCUS 101 is a computer it is closely related to a musical instrument, the CHAKRAPHON, which together with Arnold Keyserling, I constructed in 1972. It is, to be precise, an instrument for musicalization. It furthers the identification of specific points of the vertebral column responding to frequencies of the machine's oscillations. The first engineers of Mind Machines were in the USA and, like Grey Walter, did not have music in mind at all. They were satisfied with the brain responding to an induced oscillation in the alpha-range. In contrast to this, the FOCUS 101 was conceived with regard to the European musical tradition based on the Pythagorean scale. The machine was constructed in accordance to the human body and the preference of at least two and a half millenia for integer ratios of oscillation.

Strangely enough, this approach resulted in a machine which could just as well have evolved from the binary system of the computer. The FOCUS 101 claims aesthetics in the sense that man and machine are in actual unison.

The FOCUS 101 features light-emitting diodes which are individually selectable. There is not only one luminous spot before each eye; the diagonal, for example, can also be selected. As a result of the five-unit array before each eye and all the possible combinations contained therein, an enormous potential is available for creating an inner space. Centering and /or alignment of the axis of the body is provided through this space: it is integral to concentration without tension.

My intention with the FOCUS 101 is that its design is true to its possibilities and its function. It is obvious in so far as acoustic and optical elements have both been incorporated into one audiovisual mask. Perhaps not quite as obvious is the unusual and novel arrangement of the controller keyboard in an equilateral triangle. Its meaning is: simplicity is a prerequisite for pleasant states.