Psychonetics:
a methodology to work with mind and perception

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Contents

About this book

Psychonetics is a methodology for accessing mental and perceptual resources in their basic forms, free from ideological bias.

The conscious ability to access these resources in a predictable manner creates the potential for developing new technologies that leverage the unique properties of the human mind.

Psychonetics can also assist in exploring deeper subjects, such as the mind, perception, consciousness, and the nature of existence.

This book provides an introduction to the history, principles, practices, educational approaches, and current applications of psychonetics.

CAUTION:

Any practice that has noticeable effects on a practitioner's mind poses risks of misuse, excesses and undesirable side effects. Such practices are not recommended for individuals with mental issues or individuals prone to irresponsible behavior.

Readers of this book must be fully aware that the practices, guidelines and safety norms in this book are provided as-is and without a warranty of any kind.

The author of this book assumes no liability for unwise or unsafe actions by readers of this book.

Introduction

The term "*psychonetics*" was introduced by the Japanese businessman, innovator and futurologist Tateisi Kazuma, who originally mentioned this term at the international futurologist conference in Kyoto in 1970 [1].

Tateisi Kazuma suggested that information technology ("*cybernetics*") would eventually be replaced by biotechnology ("*bionetics*") and that the latter would eventually be replaced by "*psychonetics*", which is a technology that relies on the exclusive properties of the human mind in addressing technological goals [25].

In the late 1990s, the term "*psychonetics*" was selected [1] by Oleg Bakhtiyarov, an ex-USSR scientist, as the best term to name the terminology, methodology and group of practices of the research in which he was involved.

Oleg Bakhtiyarov described *psychonetics* as *"an aggregate of psychotechnologies, based on the unified methodological foundation, directed towards resolving tasks defined in a constructive manner, using exclusive properties of mind".* [3]

Bakhtiyarov wrote several books on the subject [1, 2, 3] and created a few organizations (such as the University of Efficient Development) [9, 10, 11] to provide training in psychonetics to the public.

Despite these activities, however, the openly available publications on psychonetics are surprisingly sparse, particularly with respect to introductory and beginner's material.

This book attempts to address some of this gap by providing a simplified overview of the history, concepts, practices, educational process and applications of psychonetics.

Kiev Institute of Psychology and its 1980s research

The terminology, practices and methodology of Bakhtiyarov's psychonetics originated from the research conducted at the Kiev Institute of Psychology, USSR, in the 1980s [1, 17, 16, 19].

Oleg Bakhtiyarov, Russia, 2012, http://wikipedia.org (see Credits)

Oleg Bakhtiyarov was part of the original team of researchers of this institute. He was involved in developing the majority of the techniques discussed in this book. For example, Bakhtiyarov originally presented the concepts that were later summarized as the "*deconcentration of attention*" at the 6th All-Soviet Union Congress of Psychologists Society of the in 1983 in his thesis titled *"On methods of regulation of an operator's psycho-physiologic condition"*.

One group of tasks that the Kiev Institute of Psychology was addressing was enabling the human mind to efficiently address the challenges of operating new technological equipment.

An example of such a challenge was the task to enable nuclear power plant operators to monitor many indicators simultaneously in an efficient manner [2].

A Nuclear Power Plant Control Board, http://wikipedia.org (see Credits)

There was also a task to resolve the problem of monitoring radar screens for a long time. Most individuals monitoring a radar screen continuously for more than 30 minutes start to see things

that are not there or start to ignore real targets. There was a requirement to develop techniques to monitor a radar screen for hours without undesirable side effects [2].

According to Bakhtiyarov, the greatest and also the last achievement of the mentioned research team as a government organization was developing *"the methods of retaining self-control and performance in altered states of consciousness caused by an unknown factor".* [19]

The *"unknown factor"* in their research was a hypothetical mind-affecting weapon. The idea for such a weapon was based on an assumption that the human part is the weakest component of any complex system. Therefore, both the USSR and the USA invested resources in developing a weapon that would affect the human mind while having little to no effect on equipment. Although there is currently no proof of whether such a weapon was successfully developed, the task was set to preemptively develop psychological techniques that would enable an individual to resist such a weapon [19].

Another exotic example in which such *"methods of retaining self-control"* were supposedly applied is situations in which Soviet cosmonauts experienced occasional hallucinations during early space flights.

According to Tatiyana Kovalyova, a lecturer from the University of Efficient Development [9], there were incidents in which cosmonauts reported seeing their relatives visiting them on the space station or a dog running around. Such hallucinations were attributed to the new and unknown factors associated with space travel such as extreme accelerations and zero gravity.

The task of the Kiev Institute of Psychology team was to develop psychological techniques to enable cosmonauts to remain calm and continue to perform their duties regardless of any hallucinations they might be experiencing.

USSR cosmonauts on the 1977 postage stamp, http://wikipedia.org (see Credits)

Separating technology from ideology

According to the information provided by Bakhtiyarov [1, 16, 17] and the lecturers of the University of Efficient Development [9], the team in which Bakhtiyarov worked studied any technique or area that appeared to be mind-affecting in an attempt to accomplish their tasks. Studied subjects included hypnosis and self-hypnosis, the use of biofeedback devices, traditional Buddhist and yogic texts and practices as well as books of mystic writers (such as Carlos Castaneda[51]).

An important factor that influenced the research was the competition caused by the Cold War. This competition was strong and thus allowed the removal of all artificial barriers, including social, ideological and even traditional science barriers [19]. The only factor that mattered was the results. This period was likely the most notable historical period in which the question of psychological human possibilities was addressed with such energy, resources and dedication by the strongest governments in the world.

"All ideological barriers were removed for us," Oleg Bakhtiyarov says [16] concerning his time as a researcher at the Kiev Institute of Psychology in the 1980s. *"When we once had an ideological conflict with the management of our institute, a military admiral arrived from the Section of Practical Problems, Academy of Science, who was supervising our research and forced the director to sign the required papers."*

Admiral cap, USSR, (c) http://shapki-furagki.ru/ (see Credits)

Although the researchers themselves were shielded from the USSR's official ideology, the resulting practices were not. These practices were supposed to be delivered to the end-users, including cosmonauts, military special forces and operators of important equipment. Therefore, all potential ideological conflicts had to be avoided.

The philosophical part of the USSR's official ideology was *dialectical materialism* [37], which claimed the primacy of matter over consciousness and generally denied religious and mystical subjects as being "opium for the people".

The problem that the researchers faced was that most of the original practices that they studied were ideologically biased; in many cases, they were based on a religious or mystic ideology. According to Bakhtiyarov, the main part of their work was to **separate working technology from an ideology** to which it was connected [19].

Although the task of extracting unbiased technology from ideologically biased practices was difficult, the resulting techniques gained unmatched flexibility and their area of applicability significantly increased.

Psychonetics as a technological approach in psychology

"We developed practices that enabled individuals to act under the model of some unwanted influence," Bakhtiyarov says about his work on "*the methods of retaining self-control and performance in altered states of consciousness caused by an unknown factor*" [19].

"The model was simple. An individual performs some arithmetic calculation, such as subtracting 17 from 10000. Then, 17 again from the result and again."

"At some point, he is administered nitrous oxide and sees a hallucinatory image. His task is to continue the calculation. However, he does not have means to continue the calculation because there is no logic anymore; thinking does not work."

Although the individual loses regular consciousness, special training enables him or her to continue the original task regardless of the altered mental state.

"The individual leaves this state [of mind] after 3-4 minutes. During this period, he performs 2-3 calculations. The speed clearly drops, but it still fits in the proper sequence."

It might not be easy to explain how it is possible for a mind to continue consciously performing arithmetic tasks when it is officially unconscious. However, that team of researchers was seeking solutions to their tasks rather than explanations concerning the observed phenomena. The researchers' approach could be called "**technological**".

A **technological** approach differs from a **scientific** approach in the sense that the former does not claim to develop explanations as long as there are reproducible steps that can be followed to reach a predictable result.

In the case of psychological and cognitive research, the technological approach has its benefits because a human mind seems to be capable of producing many more experiences than it is capable of explaining.

Explanations tend to assume the role of a censor, thus preventing experiencing phenomena that do not fit these particular explanations. Explanations could also conflict with existing ideologies such as governmental, cultural, individual or religious ideologies as well as with dominating scientific theories. Strict avoidance of unnecessary ideological (or rather, ontological) constructs allows such conflicts to be avoided.

* * *

The collapse of the USSR in 1991 caused the described research (and many others) to stop because of a nearly four-fold drop in scientific funding in the region [35].

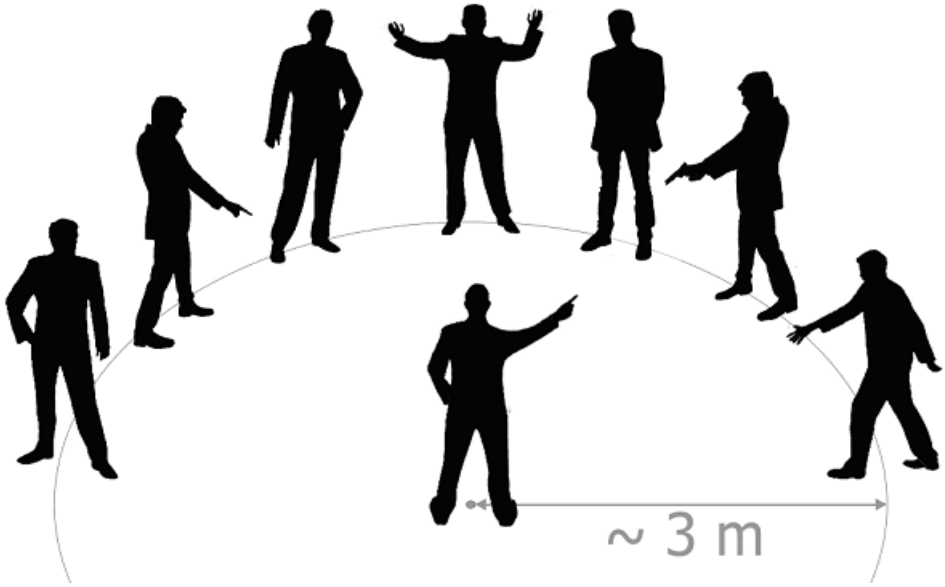
After the collapse, *psychonetics* was developed, maintained and popularized by enthusiasts such as Oleg Bakhtiyarov outside of a strict academic environment and apparent government interests (at least until recently [24]).

Psychonetical concepts and practices

An illustration of a psychonetical technique

A good illustration of a psychonetical technique is an exercise from a combat shooting course, which is related to confronting a group of armed individuals.

Originally, this exercise was used to train advanced military personnel of the GRU (the foreign military intelligence directorate of the USSR). Currently, it is available as part of sportive and recreational courses (the exercise was demonstrated by a retired GRU officer Arthur Mitiniani [26]).



Deconcentration of attention exercise in combat shooting

One man stands in the center, and others form a half circle that is approximately 3 meters in radius and covers the whole field of vision of the individual in the center. Each individual in the half circle has an unloaded handgun in a holster and is capable of quickly drawing it to simulate two shots toward the individual in the center. A trained individual can draw a handgun from a holster, unlock the safety lock, pull the slide, aim the handgun at a target and begin firing it in one movement taking less than one second. Therefore, this movement is dangerous and must be recognized as quickly as possible.

In this basic exercise, the task of the individual in the center is to point toward the individual who is firing with an index finger. The task of the individuals forming the half circle is to distract the individual in the center by various means, such as by making random moves and sounds.

Simultaneously, only one of them makes a firing move toward the individual in the center, followed by another one, and then another one. The individual in the center must identify and point toward these moves as quickly as possible.

This exercise is impossible to perform if someone attempts to identify the threat by concentrating attention on separate individuals facing him or her. Although the number of individuals to monitor remains relatively tolerable for normal perception to handle (5-9 individuals), most of these individuals are located in the area of peripheral vision, thus giving the peripheral area the same significance as the central visual area.

The technique that enables efficient performance of this exercise is to look in the direction of the middle area of the half circle without focusing on anything in particular and then to spread attention equally among all the individuals in the field of view. Although this is not a traditional method of using attention, such an approach makes this exercise easy to perform.

This exercise demonstrates the following key concepts:

- **Deconcentration of attention** is a technique opposed to concentration, during which attention covers the entire visual perceptual area. Either forming figures is stopped completely, or figures continue to be formed but are perceived all at the same time without any individual figure getting special attention.
- **Working with distractions** is a technique to continue performing the original task regardless of external or internal distractions.
- **Pure meanings**: In a combat situation, the mind can operate in a manner that might appear unusual to some people. This experience can be perceived as the "normal" mind turning off and another mind awakening. This "other mind" does not think serially with words. Instead, it thinks dimensionally, with mental sensations of *pure meanings*. In this altered mental state, complex solutions are discovered in one single step (in a manner in which a quantum computer is supposed to operate) and not in multiple steps by following a serial algorithm.
- **Extreme situations**: Certain perceptual phenomena, such as the *deconcentration of attention* or the experience of *pure meanings*, although less common or seemingly non-existent in regular life, could manifest themselves spontaneously in extreme situations such as facing a mortal threat.

  Gaining access to such unusual perceptual and mental capabilities might be the factor affecting war veterans, who long for these
  sensations and thus seek life-threatening situations deliberately.

  It also appears that this factor has fueled martial arts for centuries.

The sensations provided by this exercise can be familiar to individuals who have experienced them elsewhere.

In my case, I have noticed a similarity with the sensations that the mind produces when it resolves complex tasks in software engineering. Similar to how a military specialist deconcentrates attention in sensory space to notice subtle traces of a potential threat, a software specialist deconcentrates attention in mental space to discover subtle traces of a potential solution.

Basic principles of psychonetics

Psychonetics originated from **academic research** [1] and appears to employ scientific criteria and methodology (such as [27, 28]) in many aspects.

Psychonetics, like science, is **agnostic**. This implies that there is no ultimate truth to believe in. Each new practitioner must validate all psychonetical statements experimentally and personally, without the need to conform to anyone else's opinion.

Psychonetics makes a few **assumptions**, such as assuming the existence (or at least subjective existence) of a practitioner, of perceptual modalities (visual, auditory and somatic) and the ability of a practitioner to command his or her perception in mentioned modalities.

Based on its assumptions, psychonetics provides **unbiased descriptions** of various perceptual phenomena together with practices to experience them. Although some phenomena are relatively easy to experience and thus validate their existence, other phenomena might take time and effort to achieve and thus validate.

Here are the basic principles that define psychonetics:

- **Perception-driven**: psychonetics operates with phenomena that are *perceived directly*, such as "concentrated attention", "visual modality" and "imaginary space". With practice, the list of such directly perceived phenomena increases.

  All subjects that cannot be *perceived directly* (initially or through practice) are avoided in psychonetics.
- **Empirical (practice-driven)**: psychonetics is studied through *practice* and not through *abstract thinking*.

  The reason for this approach is that abstract thinking cannot substitute for the personal experience of perceptual phenomena that psychonetical practices provide.

  Abstract thinking typically operates through verbal interpretations; in the case of new experiences, it can assume the role of a censor, thus limiting perceptual capabilities.

  However, abstract thinking can be a good tool to store, summarize and communicate the acquired knowledge.
- **Technological (practice-oriented)**: psychonetics seeks *reproducible practical results* and not verbal explanations or interpretations of why these results occur.

  The reason for this approach is that the human mind appears to be capable of producing many more experiences than it is capable of explaining.

  Psychonetics suggests that a verbal explanation of a perceptual phenomenon *is not required* for its practical usage. In some cases a verbally inexplicable phenomenon can be used practically through *pure meanings* (see below).

  However, *pure meanings* appear improper for the tasks of storing and communicating knowledge, in which a verbal description is a better tool.

- **Unbiased**: strict avoidance of unnecessary or one-sided interpretations makes psychonetics ideologically (ontologically) *unbiased*.

  Psychonetics does not deny or confront ideologies, interpretations or explanations, which many people consider important in their lives. However, ideologies, interpretations or explanations are either considered *a personal choice of a practitioner* that is outside of the scope of psychonetics or *their role is reduced*.

  "Psychonetics is an engineering discipline and therefore it is not tied to paradigms (that is the lot of science) or ontologies. All psychonetical ontologies are operational ontologies [suited to resolve particular tasks]. *Psychonetics is well aware that any ontology (including its own) is always partial."* [48]
- **Sober and discreet**: psychonetics promotes a sober, non-emotional, discreet and (in a certain way) humble attitude toward itself and toward the experiences that psychonetics produce.

  This attitude comes from the deliberate avoidance of "*the ultimate interpretation*" of what psychonetical experiences truly are. There is also no ultimate interpretation of what is the true purpose of psychonetics.

  Such an attitude helps to avoid certain misuses of psychonetics, such as overrating one-sided interpretations and overrating alternative aspects of the world.
- **Precise**: psychonetics struggles to be as *precise* in its statements as possible. For this reason, Bakhtiyarov promoted the use of an artificial language Ithkuil [33, 34], which appears to be potentially superior to a regular language in both *expressive capabilities* and *precision*.

A phrase in Ithkuil, http://wikipedia.org (see Credits)

- **Extensible**: psychonetical practices are *customizable* and *extensible*, which enables creating new practices and/or adapting existing practices for different purposes.

Concepts

The core psychonetical concepts include

- Will
- Perceptual modalities
- Attention
- Pure meanings (pure semantics)

Psychonetical concept: Will

Psychonetics relies on an assumption that an individual has the ability to command his or her perception. This ability is proposed to be named "**will**".

A broader definition of will is *"a goal-oriented activity unrelated to any motivation or external stimuli"* [3, 15]. Although an individual can perceive will as his or her "self", it stands completely independent from both physiological and psychological bodies and their manifestations.

Psychonetics assumes that true will is independent from seemingly everything, which makes will an ideal monitoring and controlling authority of mind. In Russian, the word "will" ("воля") is a synonym of "freedom", which makes it an accurate term for describing the underlying experience.

It appears that the concept of will occasionally became discredited through history, apparently in cases when some individuals associated will with a physiological or a psychological function. For example, the Nietzschean "*will to power*" [38] concept is often confused by its followers with the animal instinct to dominate.

Will need not be associated with such things. More appropriate subjects that can be associated with will include *personal freedom* and *creativity*.

Psychonetical concept: Perceptual modalities

"**Modality**" in psychonetics is a space in which each of the human senses operates. Basic psychonetics operates with 3 modalities: *visual*, *auditory* and *somatic*.

Visual modality determines the perception of a 3D space. It is typically the most practically used modality.

Auditory modality provides perception of sounds and can contribute to perceiving 3D space, but its most distinguishing quality is the perception of time.

Somatic modality provides perception of body sensations. Psychonetics picked the "*somatic*" term over "*tactile/kinesthetic*" because the former addresses both body surface sensations together with body internal sensations.

There are also **imaginary modalities** – simulations that a mind can produce for each of its senses.

Psychonetical concept: Attention

"**Attention**" in psychonetics is the main perceptual resource with which a human consciousness operates.

This resource has *functional* and *substantial* aspects.

The **functional aspect** of attention includes such functions as *forming figures, concentration* and *deconcentration* of attention.

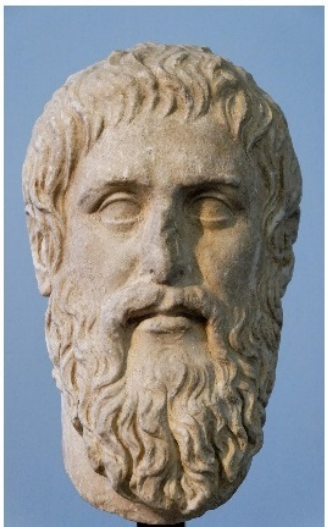
The **substantial aspect** of attention manifests in practices in which attention fills a volume, such as *local volume of attention* exercises or *volumetric deconcentration.*

Psychonetical concept: Pure meanings (pure semantics)

"**Pure meanings**" is a mental area that contains knowledge without words, symbols or any sensorial simulation (imagination). The *pure meanings* area has its specific mental sensations, but they are unrelated to any sensorial sensations and are typically ignored by normal attention.

"*Pure meanings*" ("*чистые смыслы*", Russian) can also be translated as "*pure semantics*" [15]. Both terms are accurate, so an arguably simpler term is used in this book.

The concept of *pure meanings* is well known in philosophy, with one of its most notable examples being Plato's "*Theory of Ideas*" [50]. It is also described in religious and mystical disciplines; for instance, Carlos Castaneda referred to it as "*silent knowledge*" [51].



Plato, http://wikipedia.org (see Credits)

The concept of "*pure meanings*" and "*pure meanings theory of consciousness*" was developed from scientific perspective by several Russian scientists, such as Vasiliy Nalimov [4], Andrew Agafonov [6] and Andrew Smirnov [8].

While the subject of *pure meanings* is relatively well-known in philosophy, it is often regarded as a theoretical concept or philosophical abstraction with limited practical application. Psychonetics, however, asserts that *pure meanings* are likely the most fundamental elements of consciousness — perceived by everyone, even if this perception is not consciously acknowledged.

It appears that most individuals have experienced *pure meanings* sensations – that is, when they have a feeling of knowing something, but the words do not appear for some reason. This experience could occur in situations of being very tired, situations of being sick or in extreme situations. This experience also occurs when a person tries to use a language with which he or she is not comfortable ("code switching problem" [45]).

Another area in which *pure meanings* are easier to track is art. Music, for example, enables some individuals to experience diverse pure meanings, which are not easy (or not even possible) to

transform into words. In the case of art, however, it is important to be able to isolate *pure meanings* from emotions.

Yet another hint concerning where to seek *pure meanings* sensations is childhood. These sensations are obvious for children, but the same sensations are typically ignored in adulthood.

Approaching the *pure meanings* mental area consciously via practices reveals that it contains not only meanings of anything an individual knows but also a multitude of unknown meanings for which there are no words or descriptions.

Although it is difficult to understand and explain what *pure meanings* really are, using them for practical purposes appears much easier.

Pure meanings enable practical usage of some perceptual phenomena that are either difficult or impossible to explain verbally.

Practices

Psychonetics includes the following groups of practices:

- Will meditation
- Working with perceptual uncertainties
- Working with attention in visual, auditory and somatic modalities
- Working with pure meanings

Group of practices (WM): Will meditation

(WM.1) Will meditation

The practice of associating the sensation of self with the mental position of will is called "**will meditation**". This practice is of the utmost importance to approaching all of the other practices for the following two reasons:

1. Conscious control of attention in any non-traditional manner (essentially, any operation with attention besides concentration) is initially difficult for most individuals. *Will meditation* seems to facilitate the process by serving as an "**operation position**" from which to approach all other practices.
2. *Will meditation* provides a "**ground state calibration**" for the psychophysiological state of a practitioner thus serving as the main protection from any undesirable side effects of other techniques. Any practice that has noticeable effects on a practitioner's mind poses a risk of excess and undesirable side effects. *Will meditation* provides the ability to normalize mental state in many situations.

Here is a simplified description of this practice [3]:

Will meditation is performed in a relaxed seated position with a straight back. The eyes are closed. The practitioner repeats two statements to himself or herself in his or her mind. The first statement is, "*I am*" (in the sense of "*I exist*"; "*Я есмь*", Russian). The second statement is, "*I am will*" ("*Я есть воля*", Russian). The basic *will meditation* consists of three phases that are used in turn as the practitioner considers necessary.

During the **first phase** of *will meditation*, a practitioner can feel the vocal muscles moving, hear the imaginary sound of the words and try to *experience* the meaning of each statement.

During the **second phase** of *will meditation*, the vocal muscle movements are suppressed and the practitioner only hears the imaginary sound of the words and tries to catch the purely mental, non-verbal sensation of the meaning of each statement.

During the **third phase** of *will meditation*, the imaginary sound of the words is also suppressed and the practitioner only *experiences* the pure mental sensations, the *pure meanings* of the two statements without verbalizing or imagining them in any manner.

The third phase can be a challenge for beginners. With practice, however, experiencing *pure meanings* becomes easier and more natural.

When performing *will meditation*, a practitioner cultivates a feeling that **nothing is an excuse to stop *will meditation***. For example, a phone rings, someone knocks on the door, the house ignites on fire, aliens arrive, the apocalypse begins, or the sun becomes a supernova. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is an excuse to stop *will meditation*.

External distractions, such as sharp noises, are welcomed in *will meditation*. A practitioner notices how his or her attention extends toward that source of distraction, "grabs" that attention and pulls it back into the process of performing *will meditation*. The same technique applies to internal distractions caused by psychological mental processes.

When performing *will meditation*, various body sensations and various psychological body structures tend to replace the proper experience of will. Thus, a practitioner always verifies the following two criteria on any incoming sensation:

1. *"Could this sensation be treated as a physiological body sensation (for example a sensation of feeling strong, energetic, relaxed or powerful) or associated with any particular body part?"*
2. *"Could this sensation be treated as a psychological body sensation (for example, a sensation of being tough, cool or unbreakable)?"*

If either of the above criteria is true, the experience is yet another distraction that must be addressed in the same manner as other distractions – that is, by pulling associated attention (associated energy) from them and placing this attention back into *will meditation*.

During *will meditation*, all body sensations are treated as distractions, with the exception of pronouncing the *will meditation* phrases (in phases one and two) and keeping the back straight (which is required to maintain a sitting position).

A practitioner can keep the *will meditation* sitting position for most of the other practices, which are described below.

Group of practices (PU): Working with perceptual uncertainties

One of the goals of psychonetics is to attain conscious control of perceptual habits.

An example of such a perceptual habit is how perception reacts when there are two or more equally valid ways to perceive something. This situation is called "a perceptual uncertainty".

In the case of a perceptual uncertainty, the typical perceptual habit is to switch between available options spontaneously after some time. "*Individual rhythm of switching alternative images vary within wide limits – from several dozens to 1-2 times per minute*" [1].

Psychonetics converts perceptual uncertainty phenomena into exercises and focuses primarily on two particular cases because of their versatility: a 2D image of a 3D cube (also called a Necker cube) and two colored circles.

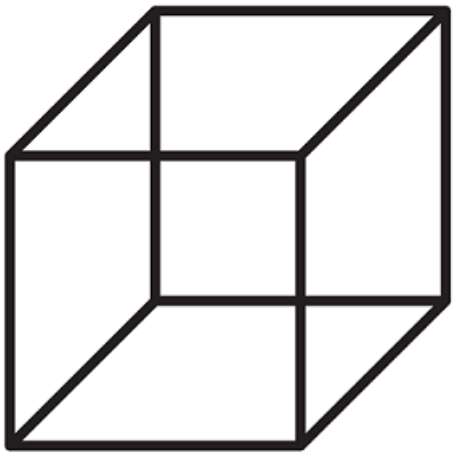


Figure PU.NC.1: The Necker cube

Necker cube: a Necker cube can be viewed as having either the left-bottom side in front or the right-top side in front. When normally observed, a cube flips spontaneously every once in a while; one side comes in front, and then the other side becomes the front.

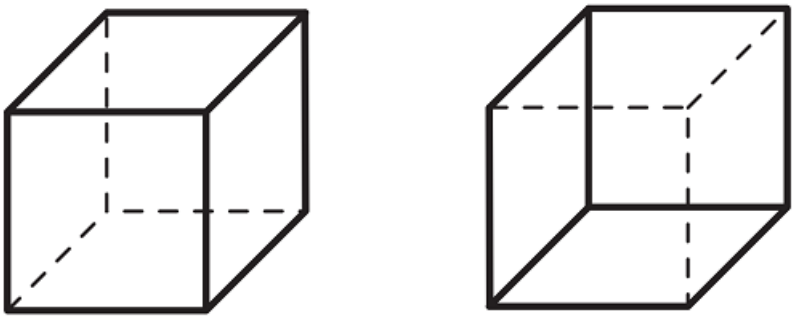


Figure PU.NC.2: Two ways to see the Necker cube

Two colored circles: the circles include one red and one blue circle. A practitioner shifts eyes focus (by focusing either before the surface or behind the surface on which the circles are displayed) until 3 circles appear with the central circle combining both red and blue circles. In this case, the central circle starts changing colors spontaneously (from red to blue and then back from blue to red).

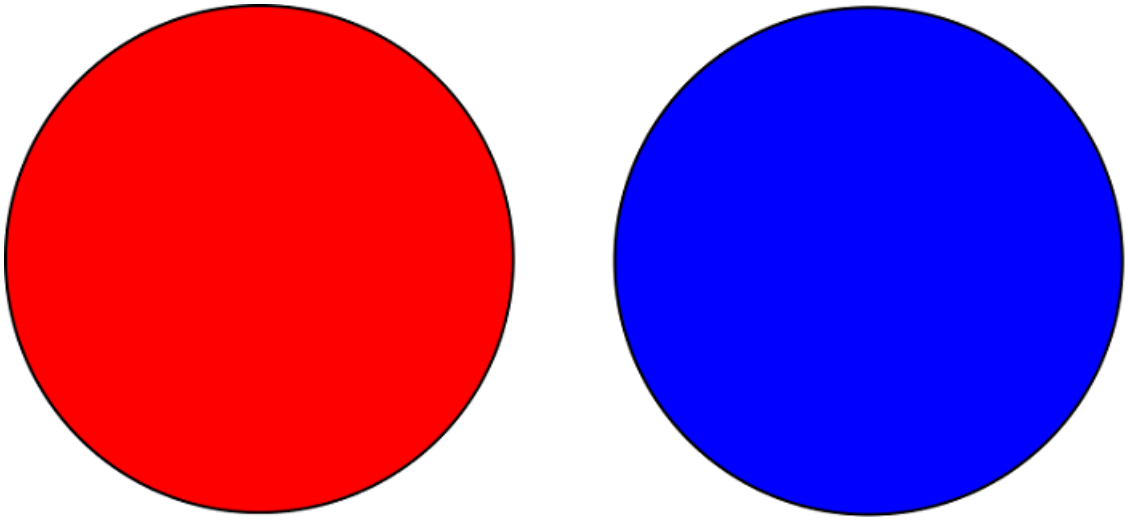


Figure PU.CC.1: Red- and blue-colored circles

(PU.NC) Necker Cube

(PU.NC.1) Holding one option of a perceptual uncertainty (Necker Cube)

A practitioner volitionally holds one side of the Necker cube in front for 1-2 minutes without letting it switch to another one. Then, a practitioner relaxes for some time and attempts the exercise again and repeats such a cycle until the total exercise time is over.

(PU.NC.2.ADV) (Advanced) Holding multiple perceptual uncertainties (Necker Cube)

A practitioner observes two or more Necker cubes and volitionally prevents them from flipping spontaneously. The cubes could have the same or opposite sides in front.

(PU.NC.3.ADV) (Advanced) Speeding up switching between perceptual options (Necker Cube)

A practitioner attempts to increase the speed of switching between perceptual options to be as fast as possible.

(PU.NC.4.ADV) (Advanced) Attempt to see both perceptual options at the same time (Necker Cube)

Both sides of a Necker cube are perceived as either front sides or back sides.

This practice produces a perception of an "impossible" object that cannot exist in the regular world.

(PU.NC.5) Perceive Necker cube as a flat 2D figure

A practitioner volitionally perceives the Necker cube as a flat (2D) figure without depth.

(PU.CC) Colored circles

(PU.CC.1) Holding one option of a perceptual uncertainty (Colored circles)

Similarly to the Necker cube exercise, a practitioner volitionally perceives the central circle as either blue or red for 1-2 minutes. Then, a practitioner relaxes for some time and attempts the exercise again and repeats such a cycle until the total exercise time is over.

(PU.CC.2.ADV) (Advanced) Holding multiple perceptual uncertainties (Colored circles)

A practitioner observes two or more pairs of colored circles (or other shapes, potentially with other color combinations) and holds their perceptual options either in the same or in opposite states.

(PU.CC.3.ADV) (Advanced) Speeding up switching between perceptual options (Colored circles)

A practitioner attempts to increase the speed of switching between perceptual options to be as fast as possible.

(PU.CC.4.ADV) (Advanced) Attempt to see both perceptual options at the same time (Colored circles)

In the case of the colored circles, visual perception splits into two perceptions and the central circle is perceived as both red and blue at the same time.

(PU.CC.5.ADV) (Advanced) Splitting colors in a perceptual uncertainty

A practitioner forces the perception to see half of the circle as red and half as blue. Once this perception is achieved, a practitioner splits the circle into four slices of varying red/blue, and then into potentially even more slices.

(PU.CC.6.ADV) (Advanced) Creating a figure in a perceptual uncertainty

A practitioner forces the perception to see any arbitrary red figure appear on the blue surface (or blue figure on the red surface).

* * *

Exercises to control *perceptual uncertainties* lead to better and more conscious control over perception in general.

These exercises can be viewed as "**perceptual weight lifting**", because performing them properly may require significant increase in attention intensity.

Bakhtiyarov mentioned in a seminar that "*exercises on controlling perceptual uncertainties lead to a glance that has the abilities of a hand*". Although this statement can be interpreted in different ways, these practices indeed produce a specific type of visual perception with a subjective sensation as though a glance "grabs" an object while providing some type of tactile input.

Controlling perceptual uncertainties practices open a large area of creativity. A practitioner can review optical illusion images available on the internet (such as [47]), select any one that appears interesting, notice a perceptual habit that this particular optical illusion invokes and then try to control it.

There are also perceptual uncertainties in auditory and somatic modalities that can be explored and practiced.

Group of practices (VM): Working with attention in visual modality

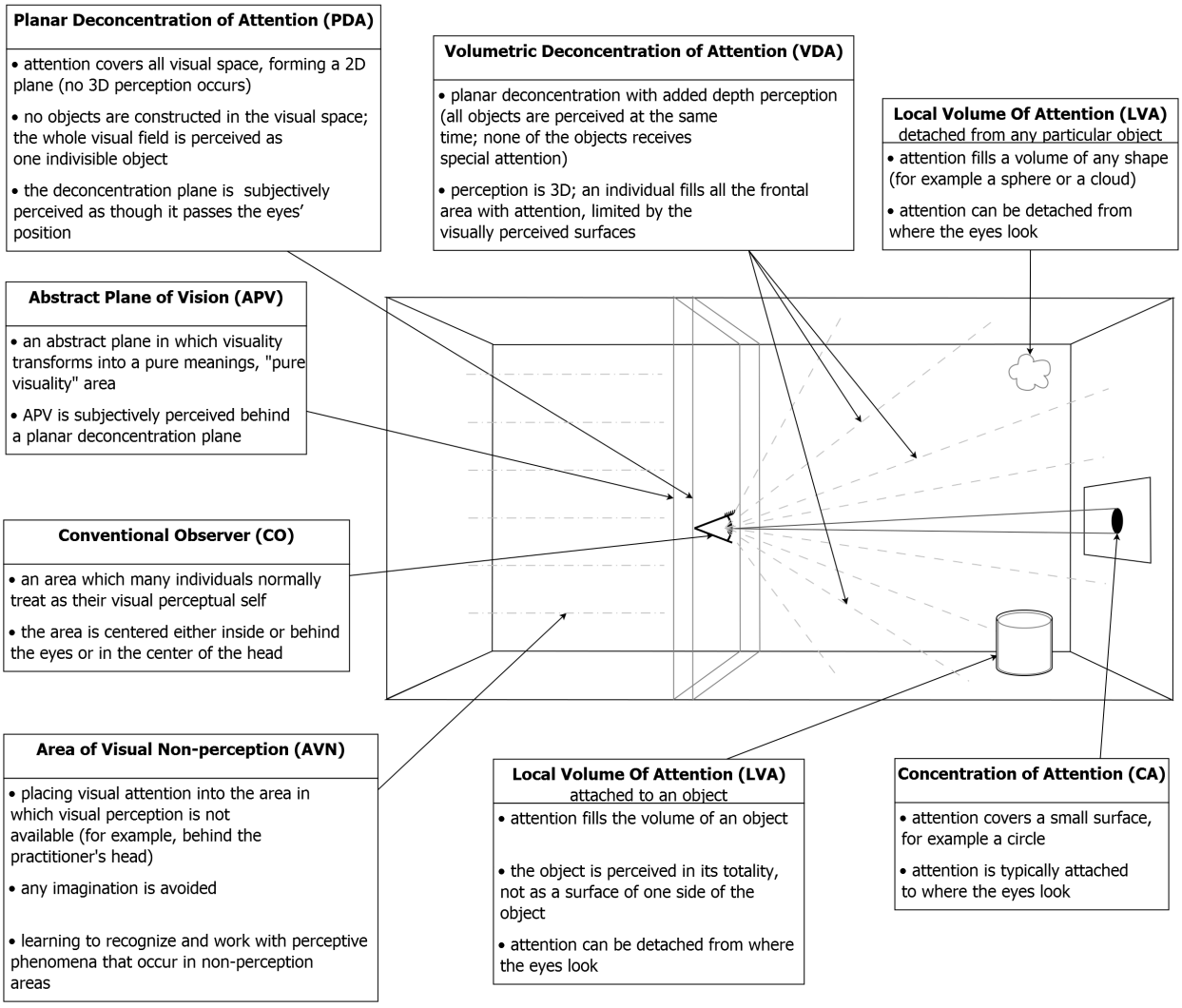


Figure VM.1: Psychonetical practices in visual modality

(VM.AA) Becoming aware of attention

Initially, it is important for a practitioner to become aware of attention. In other words, to pay attention to attention itself.

For example, in visual space, the focus of eyesight and the locus of attention are typically tied together by a perceptual habit. Here is the simplest exercise to make these factors independent.

(VM.AA.1.INT) (Introductory) Separate the focus of eyesight and the locus of attention

A practitioner keeps the attention on some object within peripheral vision without watching it directly. A practitioner can then start moving the focus of eyesight in different directions or turning the head while still keeping attention on the selected object and without watching it directly.

(VM.CA) Concentration of attention (CA)

(VM.CA.1.INT) (Introductory) Concentration

A practitioner watches a single black circle and focuses all attention on it.

(VM.CA.2) Deep concentration

A deeper concentration can be achieved by using 2 black circles. A practitioner shifts eyes focus (by focusing either before the surface or behind the surface on which the circles are displayed) until 3 circles appear then concentrates attention on the central circle. A criterion indicating that concentration still occurs is that the central circle remains solid and does not split into 2 original circles.

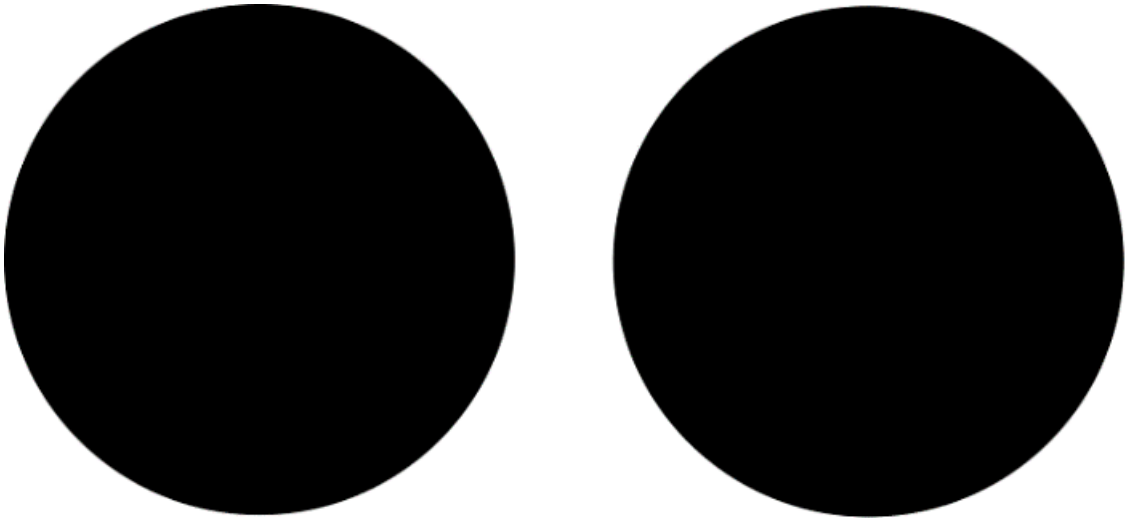


Figure VM.CA.1: Two black circles for deep concentration

(VM.PDA) Planar Deconcentration of Attention (PDA)

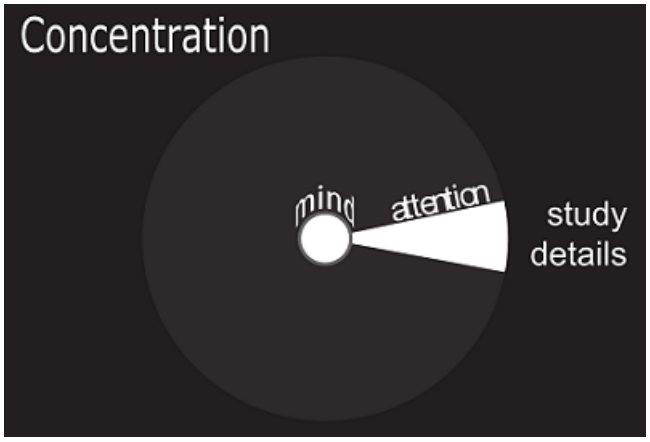


Figure VM.PDA.1: Concentration of attention

Figure VM.PDA.2: Deconcentration of attention

"*Deconcentration of attention is opposite to concentration and can be interpreted as a process of dismantling of the figures in the field of perception and transformation of the perceptual field into a uniform (in the sense that no individual elements could be construed as a perceptual figure) background*" [1].

With *planar deconcentration* of attention, the visual world is perceived as an indivisible, flat background with the figure-forming function of attention stopped.

* * *

While *deconcentration* can be used to address some tasks in an efficient manner, Bakhtiyarov considers that this technique has a deeper value. He thinks that *deconcentration* is one of the key elements of attaining true existential freedom.

Normally, various objects of the environment force human perception to form them. This process of forming objects is usually predetermined and uncontrollable. *Deconcentration*, however, gives an individual the ability to control this process consciously.

"After all, deconcentration is not only about the fact that attention is extended, expanded, the desired picture is achieved and then some perception happens. Deconcentration is a rejection of controlling influences from the organized factors of the environment." [49]

(VM.PDA.1) Planar deconcentration of attention

1. The eyes look forward without focusing on anything. The eyes stay this way throughout the entire exercise.
2. Attention locates the left-most object in the peripheral field of view. If there is no object there, then the attention covers only the left-most spot. An individual can trick attention to go to this direction by imagining that something important is occurring there.
3. The right-most peripheral spot is added in the same way. Now, attention is tracking two areas, which is already a form of *deconcentration*.
4. The top-most and bottom-most spots are added so that the attention is tracking four points.
5. The entire peripheral borderline becomes covered with attention. The attention now forms an ellipse.
6. The attention spreads over the entire field of view, moving from the edges to the center. This direction – from the periphery to the center – ensures that peripheral visual areas have the same significance as the central visual area.

It can take time to achieve and deepen the *deconcentration* state. At the beginning, attention will keep creating individual objects, which is normal. A practitioner must keep trying to stop attention from creating objects and deconcentrate it volitionally for at least 10 minutes.

Once the *deconcentration* state is achieved, a group of specific phenomena can be experienced. Various visual effects might occur, such as seeing the world as a chaotic set of colors, or the whole visual field might become covered in white or gray fog. These phenomena are normal because there should be no perception of any objects; what is perceived is rather the overall "state" of the visual field.

(VM.PDA.2) Finding numbers with planar deconcentration

Psychonetics proposes an exercise with the *Schulte table* [39] as a means of experiencing how to apply *deconcentration* to a practical task.

Figure VM.PDA.2: Schulte table

1. A practitioner looks at the area in the center of the table without focusing on anything in particular. The eyes might even become unfocused, looking nowhere but in the general direction of the table.
2. While looking as described, a practitioner focuses the attention on the top-left corner of the table. The attention is separated from where the eyes look. The eyes should keep looking in the direction of the table center in a relaxed and unfocused way during the entire exercise.
3. While keeping attention on the top-left corner of the table, a practitioner adds attention to the top-right corner, bottom-left and bottom-right corners of the table. Now, the attention highlights the 4 corners of the table.
4. A practitioner spreads attention over the outermost row of the table. Now, the attention forms a frame of a square.
5. A practitioner covers the entire table area with attention, starting from the outside frame and going toward the center.
6. When the entire table area is covered with attention, a practitioner maintains this state for some time. The eyes remain unfocused on anything and are looking somewhere in the direction of the center of the table. At this time, the table might look blurry or even visually disappear, and various visual effects can occur.
7. Next, a practitioner tries to search for a colored number, without moving eyes to look for it. A practitioner just makes himself or herself very interested and very concerned with finding, say, 24 red. Deconcentrated attention can pinpoint the number instantaneously – it pops up immediately from the table.
8. When the number pops up, a practitioner does not move eyes to see it. A practitioner just notices it with peripheral vision. Then, a practitioner relaxes for a moment and looks for the next number in the same way.

9. For example, a practitioner can find all numbers in ascending sort order: 1 black, 1 red, 2 black, 2 red, 3 black, 3 red, etc.
10. Another way to do this exercise it to find all cases of the same number in different colors at the same time. For example, attention highlights all cases of 1, then all cases of 2, then all cases of 3, etc.