

The Map Making Game

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One of the most familiar postmodern strategies for bringing a fresh perspective to a familiar situation is that of “making strange.” Making strange strips off the veneer of familiarity readers have come to expect, and presents those readers with something they have to discover anew outside of whatever context they would, hitherto, have relied upon to provide pat answers.

This paper proposes that other well-documented avenues for this type of strange making exist and deserve examination. Specifically, there exists a body of interpersonal psychobiology studies describing human society in game structure terms that remain largely unexplored in the cartographic literature. This paper introduces this psychedelic analysis, and proposes its application to contemporary explorations of the nature of maps and cartographic practice.

What is proposed is a strategy and toolbox of tactics that can, properly employed, take any or all existing conceptualizations of maps, map making, map use, or the informed practice of cartography and “make them strange” so they can be dispassionately examined and evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

IT SEEMS THAT HARDLY A DAY GOES BY WITHOUT someone or other raising an issue with the nature, activity, ethics, validity, or even the existence, of the informed practice of mapmaking we call cartography. Critiques have multiplied—ostensibly postmodernist, postuniversalist, postgenderedist, postcolonialist, postimperialist, post-normativist, post<insert negative term here>; and/or feminist, processualist, queer, indigenous, <insert positive term here>—but, while many of these critiques provide valid and pertinent analyses, they have ultimately proven every bit as narrow and problematic—in one way or another—as has any of the more traditional modern, default definitions of the nature of, and activity of making, maps. I have argued (Denil 2022, 2024) that this is because almost all these critiques (traditional and otherwise) have been grounded on comparative judgments of quality. That is to say, they are focused on matters of connoisseurship—“contingent knowledge about maps and their use”—rather than on abstract theory—“a juxtaposition between an artifact and what one thinks maps are” (Denil 2024, 47).

Postmodern critiques of cartography—grounded on the writings of figures such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Paul-Michel Foucault—were among the earliest of the current critical crop; notably the historian Brian Harley’s (2001) not-always-quite-accurate application of these French sources to maps (Belyea 1992).

One of the most familiar postmodern strategies for bringing a fresh perspective to a familiar situation is that of “making strange.” Making strange strips off the veneer of familiarity readers have come to expect, and instead presents readers with something they have to discover anew—outside of whatever context they would, hitherto, have relied upon to provide pat answers. Both Derrida’s tactic of “deconstructing” and Foucault’s of “problematizing” employed means that made no claims to fundamental or moral truth, and proposed no explicit ideals, but instead sought to expose ambiguities and contradictions in order to open up new, unspecified, social paths.



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While most applications of postmodern analysis have met with a somewhat uneven and contentious reception in cartographic circles, that history does not itself discredit the value of strange-making analytical tactics. This paper proposes that other well-documented avenues for this type of strange making exist and deserve examination. Specifically, there exists a body of interpersonal

psychobiology studies describing human society in game structure terms that remain largely unexplored in the cartographic literature. This paper introduces this psychedelic analysis—one that frames map communication as a game—and proposes its application to contemporary explorations of the nature of maps and cartographic practice.

BACKGROUND

IN THE 1960S AND 1970S THE THEN-ASCENDANT cartographic positivists latched onto the so-called basic communication model of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1949) (Figure 1) as central to their conception of cartography as the scientific exploration of a communication channel. Over the years various writers—Anton Koláčý (1969, 41) and Karl-Heinz Meine (1977, 75), among others—employed it as the key element in their sometimes astonishingly elaborate diagrams. Unfortunately, neither Shannon’s (1948) original “A Mathematical Theory of Communication,” nor Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) popularization, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*—while significant for the then-new field of information theory—get beyond a purely technical/mechanical description of the transmission of orders. In adopting

Shannon and Weaver’s model, none of those positivist thinkers were able to—or, it seems clear, even suspected it would be desirable to—go beyond such a purely technical conception; even those that eventually decorated that core model with ornaments like “abilities and properties,” or “knowledge and experience” were simply adding epicycles to the basically mechanical core.

Interestingly, there is a part of the communication transaction that Shannon and Weaver wrote about but did *not* diagram—the so-called effectiveness problem: did the message recipient do as they were told? This action-result is, after all, as they both admit, the end goal of communication. Adding an action-result to the diagram changes everything (Figure 2).

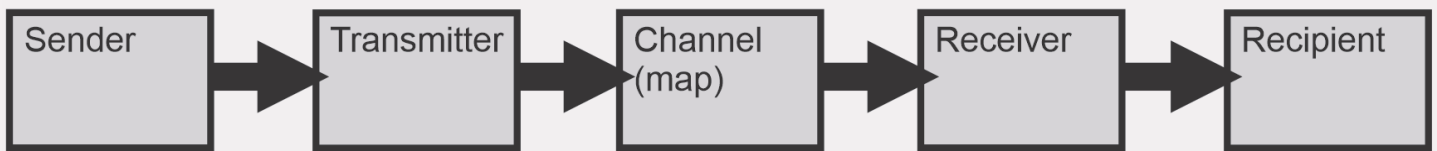


Figure 1. A version of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver's 1949 communication diagram.

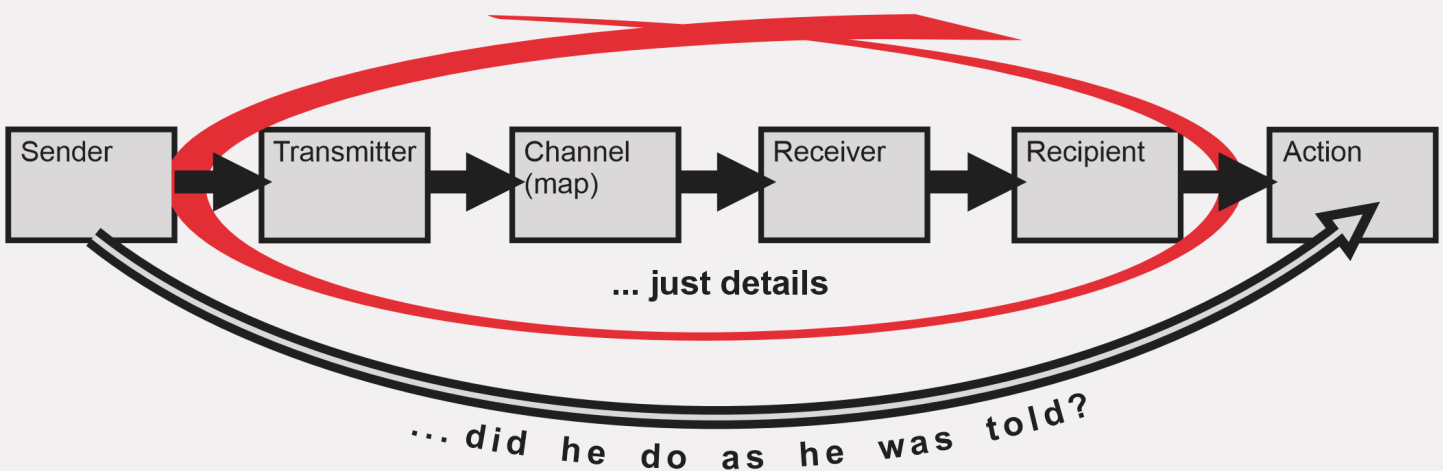


Figure 2. An expansion of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver's 1949 diagram.

From this more complete diagram, it is clear that the transmitted message itself can be treated as largely irrelevant to the model and to the sender: as long as the performed

action is more or less what was desired, the meaning of the message the receiver actually heard and understood is (as far as the sender is concerned) basically immaterial.

A DEMONSTRATION

LET US CONSIDER A REAL-WORLD INSTRUCTION/RESULT pair: an instruction that was relayed from Captain Ernest Medina to Lieutenant William Calley Jr. on 16 March 1968, and what subsequently transpired.

The recipient in this extended model, instead of being the end point of the process, is just another element. This element or actor is more or less predictable within certain parameters and limits—he has been trained—and can deliver desired results if properly played. It may be helpful to step through this using the Panofskian / three strata interpretation model (Panofsky 1955, 33–35; Denil 2016, 9–11).

At stratum one—the stratum that Panofsky terms a pre-iconographic description, restricted as it is to factual and expressional elements within the limits of whatever motifs are present—the recipient recognizes the signal as an instruction: *pacify the village of My Lai 4*.

At stratum two—consisting of conventional or iconographic meanings—the reader decodes the signal using what are, for them, standard conventions of language and professional practice: *you must pacify the village of My Lai 4*.

Then, at stratum three—the stage Panofsky called intrinsic meaning, reached through what he termed iconological interpretation—the recipient finds a way of applying the instruction to the world. At this third stratum, the recipient draws on information clearly external to the message and to the conventional understanding of the words that make it up to arrive at a fuller, implicit, meaning (Panofsky 1955, 30–32; Denil 2017, 10). That is how the recipient knows how to interpret the message: an example might be seeing a painting of a group of men around a dinner table and understanding that it depicts the Last Supper.

And when, going back to our expanded Shannon and Weaver model, we ask *did the recipient do as instructed?*, we learn that

at least 347 and up to 504 civilians, almost all women, children, and elderly men, were murdered by U.S. Army soldiers from C Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade and B Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd (Americal) Division (organized as part of Task Force Barker). Some of the women were gang-raped and their bodies mutilated, and some soldiers mutilated and raped children as young as 12.^{1,2} The incident was the largest confirmed massacre of civilians by U.S. forces in the 20th century.³ (Wikipedia 2025a, *footnotes in original*.)

Thus, we can say: *Yes, the village of My Lai 4 was rendered pacific.*

Of course, this does not imply that all communication is meant to elicit an action, although eliciting directed action certainly was the goal foremost in Shannon and Weaver's minds—and presumably in the mind of the entire 1968 US Army chain of command in South Vietnam. We know that the end goal of all map communication is persuasion—to convince someone of something—and therefore “*doing as they were told*” becomes, when we are discussing maps, “*believing what they are told*.” The point of the My Lai example is to show how a recipient—who likely may have had some level of training, who likely may be operating under a variety of constraints, who likely comes preset with a range of predilections and presumptions—must be understood by the sender to at least the extent required to allow that sender to create a message that will, shall we say, *push the right buttons*. Communication, then, can be understood as a sort of a button-pushing game, a game played by the sender and the receiver.

1. Brownmiller, Susan. 1975. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 103–105. ISBN 978-0-671-22062-4.

2. “Murder in the name of war: My Lai.” *BBC News*. 20 July 1998.

3. Rozman, Gilbert. 2010. *U.S. Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 56.

MAKING A GAME OF IT

IT MAY SEEM A BIT OF A STRETCH TO CALL COMMUNICATION a game, but I would propose that it is not: a game is, after all, simply “a learned cultural sequence characterized by Roles, Rules, Goals, Rituals, Language, and Values” (Leary 1982, 48). Essentially, *all* social activity is a game of one sort or another.

I am certainly not the first to point this out. Thomas Kuhn (1970) shows us that even something as dour and self-serious as “proper” science can usefully be conceived as a game with roles, rules, etcetera. Leary points out that “Kuhn describes how scientific activities are determined by paradigm—a distinctive world view, defining the problems and methods of any era. Science cannot go beyond the paradigm’s limits without risking being seen as eccentric and ‘unscientific’” (1982, 64). Bishop George Berkeley and Ludwig Wittgenstein have also pointed out the pervasiveness of game rule structures, as did the Marquis de Sade. The situation is described in Plato’s Cave and in the parable of the Blind Men and the Elephant. Culture itself is a game made up of other games.

Playing a game requires the participants to accept, internalize, and work within the roles, rules, goals, rituals, language, and values that define the game. For example, writing and submitting a paper to a professional journal is a game: if a submitted paper ignores the rules, rituals, and language considered pertinent and customary—and that define what qualifies as a legitimate professional journal paper—it will be turned down out of hand.

ACHIEVING MASTERY

NOW, THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO GO ABOUT MASTERING a game. One is to work within it, and the other is to stand outside. To work within the game it is necessary to immerse oneself in it, and to allow the game to define the sphere of understanding: the bounds of acceptability, the nature of the goals, and the value of the rewards. In effect the player drinks the Kool-Aid and accepts the game’s predicate universality.

These games, however, are *not* pointless: there is no way to achieve the game goal *without* playing the game. For example, it is *the mapping game itself* that makes map communication possible; it is *the game* that allows a map artifact to be recognized as bearing meaning, and it is *the game* that permits mapped meanings to be recognized and assimilated—and map readers persuaded. Both the map maker and map reader play the mapping game (each in their own roles). Mapicity—the adherence of a map’s outward attributes to paradigmatic norms, traditions, principles, etcetera, which in turn make a map believable, professional, and convincing, thus allowing a map to be recognized and leveraged (Denil 2012)—is, in this sense, the conceptualization of how the mapping game is played. The maker has to know what buttons to push on *that* reader, and that reader has to *agree* to having those buttons pushed—or at least to letting the maker try.

Learning to play a wide range of social games, the shape and characteristics of which may evolve over time through intersection with countless other games operating within various circles of autonomy, is clearly a critical imperative. Those unable to learn to play can be faced with consequences ranging from social or professional snubs, to ridicule, marginalization, ostracization, or even to incarceration in jails or in lunatic asylums.

So much for the stick: on the carrot side someone may actually want to obtain the potential goal—in this case to persuade the recipient to adopt a desired belief. Thus, to achieve the game’s goals, the game itself cannot be ignored. It behooves all the players to master it.

The game itself determines how this immersion plays out. There are games, like chess or go, that have not changed in centuries, but there are others—an extreme example is what we might call hipster-ism or dandy-ism—where ever changing currents must be ridden like a wave. In every case, the game roles, rules, goals, rituals, language, and values not only structure the game and allow the moves: they define the world from horizon to horizon. In fact, the entire universe of someone immersed in a game becomes something of a **Klein bottle** (Figure 3).⁴

4. The Klein bottle is a mathematical figure in multi-dimensional space with only one side. Unlike the Möbius strip—which also has only one side—the Klein bottle is boundary-less, like a sphere or torus, but it cannot exist in three dimensional space without self-intersection. A game, like a Klein bottle, is self contained. There is no path away from the surface of a Klein bottle: you just travel around and around.

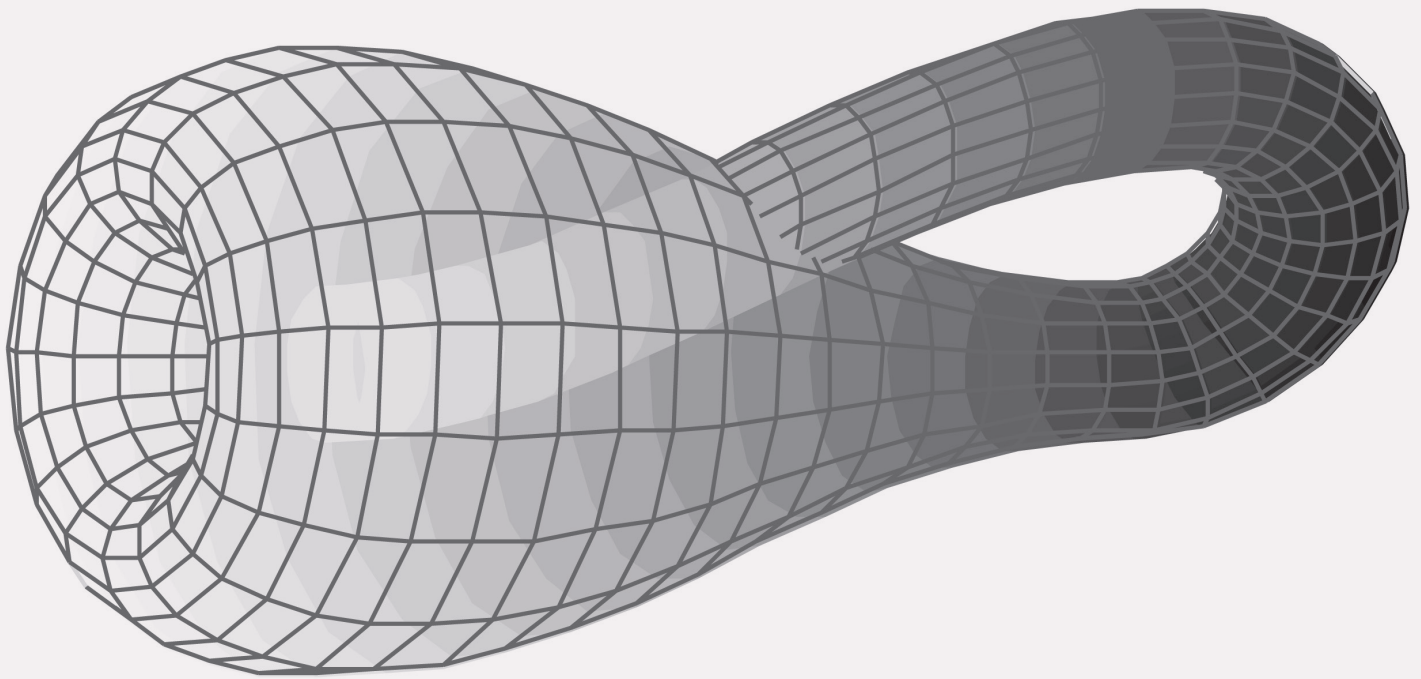


Figure 3. The Klein bottle: first described in 1882 by the mathematician Felix Klein. Source: Wikipedia user [Tttrung](#).

TESTIMONY FOR AND AGAINST STANDING OUTSIDE

SOME PEOPLE MAINTAIN THAT THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE to the games of society. For the historian Georg Hegel (d. 1831), for example, each individual's self is inherently social and cannot exist outside the games, because outside social culture is just a vacuum. In other words, to be a person at all one must be defined in the terms set by the games.

Other writers, however, maintain that such games must be evaluated on grounds that are not simply the ones provided, but must be framed and validated independently. In this regard, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Stuart Mill, and Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1882, 1873, and 1900, respectively) all agree with Bob Dylan, who, in 1966, wrote that "To live outside the law, you must be honest" (*Absolutely Sweet Marie*).

Outside the law, without positions and possessions to prop up the ego, persons are vulnerable, and relationships can be destructive as well as liberating. When outlaws deceive or exploit each other, there's no social structure, no comforting illusion (such as blame) in the background (perhaps this is why the song ends "in the ruins" of Marie's balcony). The gain from leaving the precincts of the

law is the possibility of achieving a certain independence of thought; the risk is vulnerability. . . . If one is a law unto oneself, no other law provides guidance, support, justification. (Brake 2006, 88)

Standing outside the game provides the advantage of placing game events in a richer context—a recognition that "there is an inside to experience as well as an outside," (Huxley 1954, 14)—and taking account of both permits each to inform the other in a sophisticated manner. Nonetheless, there are hazards in trying to stand outside a game. One is susceptible, for example, to fallacies of motivation: judging a chess game by the rules of lacrosse, or failing to see value in a game's rewards. On the other hand, the game, by its very nature, serves to restrict legitimate discourse and to constrict the field of action. For example, you are not allowed to stab your opponents on a soccer pitch: if you do, you are *no longer playing* soccer.

One recalls the failures of a Square, hero of Edwin Abbott's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, first published in 1884 (Abbott 1952), to convince the king of Lineland of the existence of two dimensions; or his Flatland neighbors of the existence of three; or even his friend a Sphere of the potential for four. None of the beings to whom a Square

spoke could conceive of a viewpoint outside the one their game vocabulary afforded. Yet, *we* recognize the superior position conferred by a Square's outside view, and share his frustration.

Does this still seem strange to you? Then put yourself in a similar position. Suppose a person of the Fourth Dimension, condescending to visit you, were to say, "Whenever you open your eyes, you see a Plane (which is of Two Dimensions) and you infer a Solid (which is of Three); but in reality you also see (though you do not recognize) a Fourth Dimension, which is not colour nor brightness nor anything of the kind, but a true Dimension, although I cannot point out to you its direction, nor can you possibly measure it." What would you say to such a visitor? Would not you have him locked up? Well, that is my fate: and it is as natural for us Flatlanders to lock up a Square for preaching the Third Dimension, as it is for you Spacelanders to lock up a Cube for preaching the Fourth. (Abbott 1952, *Preface to the Second and Revised Edition*)

A USEFUL TACTIC

BEGINNING AROUND 1960, DR. TIMOTHY LEARY published several papers on interpersonal psychobiology studies that described human society in just these game structure terms. His central interest was how the mind adopted game structures to frame evaluation and understanding of the tsunami of input we each face every moment of every day.

Leary wrote that "...we are coming to realize that the brain is ... perfectly designed to *fabricate any reality we program it to construct*." (Leary 1982, 62, *emphasis in original*) He went on to remark that "It is useful to see all cultural institutions as expressions of the epoch's basic mythos; each discipline simply reorchestrating underlying themes of the age" (Leary 1982, 64). That is, colonizing the game for its own ends.

While other writers have seen the games structure as a paradox, or as a prison escapable only by faith (faith in religion or faith in philosophers), Leary had available useful psychedelic tools that, employed properly and with

Aldous Huxley has also noted how our language tends to keep us in the tracks of convention.

Every individual is at once the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition into which he has been born—the beneficiary inasmuch as language gives access to the accumulated records of other people's experience, the victim in so far as it confirms him in the belief that reduced awareness is the only awareness and as it bedevils his sense of reality, so that he is all too apt to take his concepts for data, his words for actual things (Huxley 1954, 23).

How can we usefully get around these barriers without surrendering all advantages afforded by the structure? How can we stand on a hilltop, like Alice in *Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll 1976, 163), and see the game board for what it is?

reasonable preparations of *Set* and *Setting*,⁵ allowed anyone to actually see, recognize, and explore the consequences and ramifications inherent in the learned game sequences and to dispassionately examine the roles, rules, goals, rituals, language, and values that come with the games of society and culture.

He also pointed out, however, that:

From the standpoint of established values, the psychedelic process is dangerous and insane—a deliberate psychotization, a suicidal undoing of the equilibrium man should be striving for. *With its internal, invisible, indescribable phenomena, the psychedelic experience is incomprehensible to a rational, achievement-oriented, conformist philosophy*. But to one ready to experience the exponential view of the universe, psychedelic experience is exquisitely effective preparation for the inundation of data and problems to come. (Leary 1982, 65 *emphasis in original*)

5. "Set refers to what the subject brings to the situation, his earlier imprinting, learning, emotional and rational predilections, and, perhaps most important, his immediate expectations about the drug experience. Setting refers to the social, physical, emotional milieu of the session" (Leary 1982, 67 *emphasis in original*).

Richard Alpert (Ram Dass) tells us that Leary was reluctant to impose a model on the psychedelic experience. He tells us that Leary said:

We don't know what this is about yet and there are many models, but it would be best not to impose a model too soon, because a model that exists in the west for these states is pathological, and the model

that exists in [. . . the east] is mystical and religious and it's better we keep wide open. . . (1971, unpaginated: fourth page of "Turning On").

I, myself, take this as recognition of the danger of stepping back from one game only to observe it from another game: this trap has been uncovered by critical anthropology.

CONSIDERATIONS

THIS PAPER IS PROPOSING THE EMPLOYMENT OF PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS—specifically LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), mescaline (3,4,5-trimethoxyphenethylamine), and psilocybin (4-phosphoryloxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine)—to examine the game rules surrounding maps, map making, map use, and cartography. Despite decades of loose and ill-informed opinion to the contrary, none of these consciousness-expanding substances are addictive—they create no physiological attachment.

These drugs are physiologically safe. Over two thousand studies have been published, and as of 1968 despite the rumors there is no evidence of somatic or physical side effects. But they are dangerous; the sociopolitical dangers are there. We have incontrovertible evidence that these drugs cause panic, poor judgment, and irrational behavior on the part of some college deans, psychiatrists and government administrators *who have not taken them*. (Leary 1968, 250, *emphasis in original*)

Nonetheless, like any tool, these must be used carefully.

If [the user] is psychologically prepared and if the setting is voluntary and pleasant, then a whole new world of experience opens up. But if the initial experience occurs with inadequate preparation or fearful expectation and if the experience is involuntary and the setting impersonal, then a most distasteful reaction is inevitable. (Leary 1968, 78)

These substances will strip off veneers most people go through life believing are solid realities. This can be alarming, as it challenges an individual's consciousness of ego. Generally speaking, every individual's ego consciousness is anchored by a deep-seated commitment to their social and professional games, and ingesting these substances shows the user that the user's ego—and the games the ego is built upon—are rather less solid than they had been led to believe.

Sensory chaos, somatic inundation, cellular revelation. The plastic-doll nature of social reality and social ego is glaringly obvious. In a word, ego discovers that ego is a fraudulent actor in a fake show. Rubber stamp and tinsel. (Leary 1968, 37)

The impact of LSD is exactly this brutal answer to the question, who is ego? The LSD revelation is the clear perspective. The LSD panic is the terror that ego is lost forever. The LSD ecstasy is the joyful discovery that ego, with its pitiful shams and strivings, is only a fraction of my identity. (Leary 1968, 37)

This can be disturbing or liberating, primarily dependent upon "the set of the subject and the environmental context. If both are supportive of self-discovery and aesthetic-philosophic inquiry, a life-changing experience results. If both are negative, a hellish encounter can ensue" (Leary 1982, 50).

A GRATUITOUS GRACE

NOW, I AM NOT BY ANY STRETCH ADVOCATING THE *necessity* of the psychedelic experience, but rather identifying the value of its often neglected and denigrated

revelations in establishing an objective approach to understanding how to engage with the composition of meaning bearing cartographic artifacts. In this, I, myself, tend to

agree with Aldous Huxley, when he wrote that: “All I am suggesting is that the mescaline experience is what Catholic theologians call ‘a gratuitous grace,’ not necessary to salvation, but potentially helpful and to be accepted thankfully, if available” (Huxley 1954, 73).

Again, in speaking about the value of standing outside the game, I am not denigrating the value of the game, but only pointing out the power that comes from knowing it is a game. “Thinking outside the box” is a stock platitude normally mouthed without context, but, unlike a box, a game is a dynamic entity, existing in actions and interactions. If we step outside the game, we can step out of the roles, critique the rules and rituals, deconstruct the language, weigh the values, and judge the goals. Is a given rule a valuable convention, or simply an old habit? Is the game really worth the candle? Is it ever? Is the payoff in

coin of actual value, or is it paid out in shadows that melt in sunlight?

All this stuff is important, because while a game structures and legitimizes play, it can offer no justifications beyond itself. Ethics, for example, cannot be found in cartography because ethics are not found in, but are brought to, cartography—a “cartographic” ethics would be nothing but an adherence to the game rules, however defined. In the same way that you can choose to pack your ethical bags with discretion, or to just pick your ethics up from the side of the road, so too you can choose to play the cartographic game with a broad, sophisticated, well-informed skill, or, you can play it according to the rules printed inside the lid of the box. I would suggest that the rules in the lid are, at best, only a starting point.

AN ANALOGOUS GAME

IN HERMANN HESSE’S NOVEL, *The Glass Bead Game* (1943),

the rules of the game are only alluded to—they are so sophisticated that they are not easy to imagine. Playing the game well requires years of hard study of music, mathematics, and cultural history. The game is essentially an abstract synthesis of all

arts and sciences. It proceeds by players making deep connections between seemingly unrelated topics. (Wikipedia 2025b)

This strikes me a pretty good description of the cartographic game as well; both are grounded in their persuasive, rhetorical natures, and both serve as nexus for a tremendous range and variety of concerns.

RECAPITULATION

THE CONVENTIONS OF THE CARTOGRAPHIC GAME ARE varied and complex,

but once these [have] been recognized and assimilated, the [map maker has] complete freedom within the system, and when he [has] mastered the various processes he [can] use them to express his own feelings and ideas without any loss of sincerity. Far from hindering originality or talent, the restrictions [enable] very subtle, polished effects to be produced. (adapted by the author from Marrou [1964], as he was quoted in Vickers [1988, 49])

It is the forms and frameworks provided by the cartographic game itself that allow the map maker to produce what Cicero (2018) called “fluent arguments, brilliant

reflections, refined and colorful description” in order to effect the desired persuasion and elicit the desired actions.

There is, then, clear utility in viewing cartography as a game. But, to once again quote Doctor Leary:

the problem is always just how much structure the . . . game should have. If there are no overall goals or rules, we have ever-increasing specialization and dispersion, breakdown in communication, a Babel of cultures, multiple constrictions of the range in favor of deepening the specialized field. [. . . But,] if there is too much structure or overinvestment in the game goals, we have dogmatism, stifling conformity, ever-increasing triviality of concerns, adulation of sheer techniques, virtuosity

at the expense of understanding. Psychoanalysis.
(Leary and Metzner 1963, 178)

Seeing cartography as a game allows us to observe it from outside its self-defined infrastructure of technique and virtuosity; to examine mapicity from a high ground not otherwise accessible. Although this strategy, by itself, guarantees nothing, it may afford us understandings allowing rewards ranging from implementation of true cartographic radicality (Denil 2011) to simply making better maps. As Leary wrote in 1962: “if the game contract is made explicit, behavior will change drastically in the direction that roles and goals demand. . . . people also automatically shift rituals, adjust new rules, and employ appropriate language once the commitment is made” (1982, 58). In the end, one can only game a system one understands as a game, and the game of playing is an integral part of mastering the game.

Social game based psychedelic studies from the early 1960s—before politically-motivated hysteria brought research to a halt—had a proven track record of significant success in bringing insightful understanding to demographic groups from right across the social spectrum: from the most to least affluent, and from the supposedly well-adjusted to the marginalized—“scholars, artists, medical doctors, professional intellectuals . . . nonprofessional normals [*sic*] . . . drug addicts (psychological or physical) . . . [to] inmates of a state prison” (Leary 1982, 50). In one very broad study, Leary reports that:

Many of the 167 subjects in our study were already involved in rewarding games to which they could return with renewed vision and energy. But many of our subjects came through the psilocybin experience with the knowledge that they were involved in nonrewarding games, caught in routines they disliked. Many of them moved quickly to change their life games. (Leary 1982, 51)

CONCLUSION

THIS NOTION OF A MAP MAKING GAME MESHES SEAMLESSLY with the conception of cartography I have discussed elsewhere; in particular, where I was “investigating how a map reader decides that a given artifact is a map, and what that decision means for the user’s relationship with the artifact” (Denil 2022, 42). There, and in the 2024 follow-up

Too, not *everyone* concluded that their life games needed to be changed. Leary notes that for some, “the ‘therapeutic’ effect of the experience did not last. They were left with pleasant memories of their visionary journey and nothing more” (Leary 1982, 51). This is because it is possible for the challenging experience to be affirming too. Huxley, for one, suggested that:

Under a more realistic, a less exclusively verbal system of education than ours, [. . . everyone] would be urged and even, if necessary, compelled to take an occasional trip through some chemical Door [of Perception] in the Wall into the world of transcendental experience. If it terrified him, it would be unfortunate but probably salutary. If it brought him a brief but timeless illumination, so much the better. (Huxley 1954, 78)

I, however, am *not* suggesting that these avenues of investigation are for everyone—or that *anyone* should be *compelled* to undertake them—but I *am* suggesting that it represents a valuable resource for investigation of ideas about maps, cartography, map making and map use: both those ideas considered contentious or controversial and those considered normative. That said, I *am* suggesting that anyone responsibly exploring these avenues of investigation will gain by it.

. . . the man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same as the man who went out. He will be wiser but less cocksure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance yet better equipped to understand the relationship of words to things, of systematic reasoning to the unfathomable Mystery which it tries, forever vainly, to comprehend. (Huxley 1954, 79)

article, “Is it a Map? The Map / Not Map Question,” I maintained that map artifacts only become maps when the artifact is transfigured in the mind of the map reader into a meaning-bearing, conceptual, map entity. This I maintain yet; the only difference here is that the map making game encompasses both the map maker and the map user,

and foregrounds the maker's intent. My larger, rigorously abstract, theory recognizes that the map artifact maker must have some sort of understanding of the map reader's concept of mapicity (Denil 2012, 77), but, due to the necessary abstractness of theory, the contingent details of any particular maker-user relationship are irrelevant. The map making game is thus proposed as a vehicle for exploring that relationship without predetermining the outcome with in-game assumptions.

No one *has* to play the map making game; but, however, if one or the other of the players—map maker or map reader—does *not* play, or insists on playing by rules that the other player does not recognize, then any number of things can transpire; but what is generally considered “map communication” becomes both problematic and unlikely. This situation is not unknown, and is commonly

called misreading. It is usually the maker that is most immediately invested in wanting to understand how to “press the reader's buttons”; but the reader, too, wants, and needs, to be reasonably certain they want to allow their buttons to be pushed.

Ultimately, this proposal to view cartography as a game, and to employ psychedelic tools and methods to explore the nature of that game, cannot, and does not pretend to, provide a whole and entire explanation of the nature and practice of map making. Rather, what is proposed here is a strategy and toolbox of tactics that can, properly employed, take any or all existing conceptualizations of maps, map making, map use, or the informed practice of cartography and “make them strange” so they can be dispassionately examined and evaluated.

CODA

One eyed jacks and the deuces are wild
And the aces are crawling up and down your sleeve
Come back here, baby Louise
And tell me the name of the game that you play.

(Robert Hunter, 1969, *Doin' That Rag*)

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