

authentic experience. Any allusion to the alchemical, esoteric, the pagan has been stripped away, leaving only the essentials of instrumentality. Is this just safe marketing?

In a *Paris Review* interview from 2011, William Gibson, author of *Neuromancer* (1984) and the coiner of “cyberspace,” said: “The strongest impacts of an emergent technology are always unanticipated. You can’t know what people are going to do until they get their hands on it and start using it on a daily basis, using it to make a buck and using it for criminal purposes and all the different things that people do.” In other words, it is the users who discover the true value in the technology, not the makers or those who attempt to control its use.

Criminality is not my intention, but I’m using Mindflex in a manner divergent from Mattel’s intention. It’s not a game, it’s an opportunity to dissolve my ego. In controlling my abilities to concentrate and relax, I can control an ego that seems less and less interesting to me as I grow older in a world of individuals with inflated self-worth.

Perhaps I will write to Mattel’s CEO and suggest a revision of the manual. If the company does not comply, I will hack its headgear, and corrupt its branding. I will rewrite its information as if restructuring DNA. I want to underscore the intersection between information, biology, and technology. My manual will make clear that Mindflex is a consumer product that can be adapted for guiding the individual towards transcendence.

My revised Mindflex manual would read something like this (amendments underlined):

Putting on the headset

1. Put on the headset as shown, pretending that it is a crown. You are ruler of your own consciousness. Make sure the forehead sensor located under the Mindflex logo is positioned above your left eye, flat against your forehead, with no hair between your skin and the sensor, like a farsighted “third eye” that will penetrate into the consciousness of the Universe.

2. Use the buckle on the back of the headset to adjust for a snug fit, so that you can keep your “third eye” on your visions.

3. Attach the ear clips to each ear lobe so the metal sensors are flat against your skin, which will pinch a bit so as to allow you to retain some sense of your “normal” self while your “third eye” roves the Universe.

4. While sitting as still as you can, turn on the headset — the headset’s red Power Light will come on, indicating that you are to become less verbal, though not fearful, and ready yourself to engage with the uncanny that exists all around you, unseen.

Congratulations, you have visualized the electrical impulses within you! You have augmented your mind successfully!

Spread the word.

Spread your brainwaves.

INSERT
PRESS



Rabble

Tyler Stallings

Banal Access to Transcendence, or Developing Telekinesis via Mattel’s EEG-based Game, Mindflex™

Like any scientist, theologian, shaman, or artist, I long to unlock the mysteries of consciousness. I lack the resources to pursue private research at my California ranch house, but the possibility for R&D is now within reach of citizen scientists with the Mattel game Mindflex™. Soon, I will take my first toke on brainwaves.

My hope is to use the power of the mind to trump the material world. I expect the experience to auger the way toward a future in which human and machine will become more intimate with one another. My guess is that Mindflex will be a gateway drug for me—a first step toward better things—albeit electronic rather than organic. Excited about the possibilities, I go for it.

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Mindflex is a game based on technology that was developed by another company, NeuroSky, and that has been used in hospitals for decades—the electroencephalogram, or EEG. The technology allows for the study of the electrical current within the brain. Electrodes are attached to the scalp and wired to a machine that records the

electrical impulses. Various dysfunctions of the brain, such as epilepsy, can be discerned from the patterns of electrical impulses. EEG has also been used in biofeedback therapy. It helps individuals train their mind to become in tune to their physiology so that they may make conscious adjustments that will have an effect upon their emotions and behaviors.

I purchase Mindflex because of the mind-blowing claim on the box cover: "Concentrate...and the ball rises..." EEG technology presents itself, indeed, as a pathway to extrasensory abilities, specifically telekinesis—the ability to move objects with one's mind. The Mindflex manual describes course layouts with names like "Freestyle," "Mental Marathon™," "Danger Zone," and "Chase the Lights." I start with one that suggests a blast off—"Thoughtshot™." I don the headset by attaching a strap around my head, positioning a sensor over my forehead. I then clip a sensor to each of my earlobes, with wires that lead back to the main sensor. I imagine that I look like a cross between a tennis player and a Rhesus monkey undergoing a laboratory experiment.

The console emits a soothing electronic female voice that indicates when my headset sensor is in sync. Perhaps she will become a consort? I am polymorphous curious when it comes to gendered technology.

Utilizing the EEG technology, a micro controller in the headband wirelessly transmits electrical signals generated by my brain from the sensor to the console base. When I concentrate, the console

converts my brainwaves into electrical signals that activate a small, mechanical fan. For example, when I relax—when I can feel tension in my forehead melt away, wrinkles easing—the electrical impulses in my brain register as Theta (4-7Hz): the fan slows down and the ball lowers. When I am alert, focused and attentive, the impulses register as Low Beta (13-17Hz): the fan power increases causing the ball to rise higher. Awareness of such physiological shifts is akin to the awareness of one's body and mind interrelationship that can be learned through biofeedback.

I can maneuver a lever by hand that will move an assortment of plastic obstacles around the circular track of the console. For Thoughtshot, I set up the cannon and funnel components, or obstacles, across from each other, fitting flanges on the props into notches on the circular track. I use the control knob on the console to rotate the fan beside the cannon and place a ball on the vent above the fan. Then I turn on the console and select the level of difficulty: Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced.

The console's female voice says: "Begin."

I concentrate to raise the ball into the cannon. Then I concentrate harder to increase the speed of the fan. The force of the air makes the ball shoot out of the cannon, across the plastic field of the console, and into the funnel.

I did it!

I shot a ball eight inches through the air with my mind!

The ball pops out at the bottom of the funnel so that I can begin again. Now I have a moral choice: I can stop with what I've learned here and become a super-sniper for the military,

guiding bullets with my mind. Or I can view this experience as just a glimpse of the larger possibility for delving into the nature of the mind, learning to reunite the mind and body. Either way I'm a new M.O.M.—Mind Over Matter—giving birth to a new identity for myself.

Mindflex is promoted as a simple game. In fact, it is a tool for self-empowerment that offers the opportunity to interact with technology on a transcendent level. Instead of leaving us helpless, and thus paranoid, in our relationship to technology, it provides a positive experience. It's a multi-dimensional occasion, in which we regain access to our body, mind, spirit, and technology instead of entrusting ourselves to priests, politicians, academics, and IT professionals.



In essence, the religious-social-political ramifications are akin to those of the Protestant Revolution, which taught that every person could find a pathway to God without the aid of an intermediary like a priest or pope. In contemporary terms, it points to the potential for greater equality between scientists and the broader public. The shift is one from Big Science sitting aloft and telling people what they should know to Science recognizing the knowledge of the people. It harkens back to the early days of the amateur scientist making major discoveries, e.g. Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz.

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As with any drug, whether chemical or techno, I want more. I am addicted to telekinesis now—or at least the appearance of having the ability.

After this first try, I am surprised less by the emergence of my psychic abilities than by the fact that Mindflex is a relatively low-cost product, available at toy stores and to millions of people. The banality of access to this life-changing instrument is dumbfounding.

The technical neutrality of the instruction manual is also jarring, at least from my communion-dissolution-transcendence point of view. We should be amazed! The priesthood of technoshamanism has become a new career choice! Reading the manual, I feel that I'm just abandoning myself to the trivial—do this thing, follow these instructions, and you will have the appearance of special powers. No hint of even the possibility of a deeper, more