

EXPERIMENTAL USES OF CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS

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The possible usefulness of pharmacological substances in paranormal research is a topic which naturally arouses the curiosity of psychical researchers. For three-quarters of a century, psychical research has been unsuccessful in the attempt to unravel the fundamental nature of the paranormal process through the use of psychological techniques. The question with which we turn for aid to the pharmacological experts is this: Do any of the new mind-changing substances offer hope of a breakthrough in releasing and controlling the expression of psychic impression?

In order that the psychological problem of psychical research may be focused more precisely, we should like to indicate briefly some implications of research findings in parapsychology.

First of all, *conscious seeking* for psi impressions is seldom successful. We must frankly face the fact that the level of success in literally millions of experimental card-tests is either nonexistent or so low as to bear little affinity with those psi manifestations of mediumship and spontaneous cases upon which this field was founded. Even with the *best* of experimental subjects, well over ninety per cent of the trials are a sheer waste of time. And with regard to the general run of experiments, it is safe to say that something like ninety-five per cent of them end up with a grim affirmation of the null hypothesis. For such reasons as these, the aid of other sciences, including pharmacology, is most urgently required.

In contrast with card-testing results, the most striking evidence for psi seems to emerge under the following conditions:

1. Mediumship. The outstanding characteristic of the sensitive is complete lack of self-awareness. This condition reaches its most advanced form in trance states where the medium's sense of individuality or self identity is completely in abeyance. In trance the medium's conscious mind is inoperative.

2. Automatism. Psi emerges while the conscious mind is deliberately occupied with other tasks or, when by training or predisposition, it is able to remain detached from the automatic production.

3. Dreams or Semi-waking states. Veridical impressions seem to occur with extraordinary frequency in dreams or semi-waking states wherein consciousness of self is relatively weak or inoperative.

4. Spontaneous Waking Experiences. Analysis of these suggests that psychic experiences emerge at times when the individual's conscious mind is so absorbed in other matters that a sense of self awareness is at a particularly low level.

All of these findings strongly imply that the conscious mind inhibits and distorts the expression of psychic impulses. It may be that those weighing, judging, criticizing activities habitually involved in evaluating sensory stimuli are inimical to psi expression. Or it may be that these conscious activities serve to increase a quality of self-awareness that in itself impedes reception of psi impressions.

If Myers' conception of the subliminal as the source of paranormal powers is valid, then we must seek for ways to block out the participation and interference of the conscious mind. It is at this point that we look to the pharmacologists for aid.

The subjective experiences generated by some of the new drugs are characteristically described with such phrases as: high degree of empathy, sense of solidarity with fellow beings, self-transcendence, exquisite awareness, suspension of critical faculty, new dimensions of consciousness, along with mystical and spiritual experiences of an almost indescribable nature. A number of these qualities seem peculiarly relevant to psychical experiences.

Some of the questions for which we seek answers are: (1) Are these substances which can allay the critical, rational aspects of mind in such a way as to permit the unimpeded emergence of psi impressions to consciousness? (2) Do substances which create the experience of depersonalization and self-transcendence facilitate psychic expression? (3) Does the drug-produced feeling of insight into the feelings of others really provide veridical information about those fellow beings? If pharmacological substances could remove the obstacles to psi expression, the results would be breathtaking.

A number of thinkers have speculated that within the subconscious depths of every mind there lies a psychic awareness which is only rarely permitted to reach consciousness. Such a view may be too optimistic. Even if it were true, there is still the possibility that there may be vast individual differences in basic psychic capacity. From a practical research point of view, the search for suitable drugs might be shortened if the experiments were concentrated upon persons who are known to have had veridical experiences of a psychic nature.

The experimental attack may be slow and laborious, but if we can find substances to facilitate psi on demand in just a few subjects, we shall have taken a giant step forward.