

PSI AND THE PSYCHEDELIC MOVEMENT

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OSMOND: Not everyone present here today will recall that it was in October, 1958, in New York, that the Parapsychology Foundation held the first meeting ever (as far as I know) in which psychopharmacology and parapsychology were discussed together. This remarkable occasion, a timely accomplishment of Mrs. Garrett's, did not produce the immediate results some of us may have hoped for; but then, immediate is a relative word. What the meeting did achieve was to establish a frame of reference.

In looking back, it is odd to think that many of those who later concerned themselves with and participated in the "psychedelic" movement had never heard of the word at that time. Then, as now, I was concerned with combining research in psychopharmacology and parapsychology to develop the means for focusing the enlarged experience produced by psychedelics because I believed, as I still do, that the sensitive person combines these two almost contradictory abilities. In Gerald Heard's words, "they can change the focal length of the mind, while at the same time aiming it in some particular direction." Many other people possess this same skill sporadically, usually under stressful and often unpleasant conditions.

In November, 1960, when the Presidential election was in progress, Aldous Huxley and I met Timothy Leary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We advised him to do good stealthfully and to hasten slowly. I recall that

as we wended our way back to Aldous' little apartment where he was staying to give a series of lectures at M.I.T., we congratulated ourselves upon having found so steady and sensible a scientist to undertake this work in such respectable surroundings, close by William James's own department. When we got back Aldous read me that notable chapter on the Moxa medicine from his vast and—in my view—most important novel, *Island*, in which he describes a culture that used these substances as appropriate tools in a remarkable form of education.

Unknown to either of us and to Timothy Leary, just about this time it became possible to grow *Claviceps purpurea* (the rye rust fungus) in large-scale cultures. Up to that time there had been no real likelihood that LSD-25 would be widely available in the foreseeable future. It had, therefore, seemed to us that we had plenty of time to learn about these important tools, to discover their value and limitations, and to incorporate them into modern society in an orderly manner that would cause as little disruption as possible.

It was about this time, too, that Abram Hoffer and I devised the HOD test.¹ This apparently very crude instrument was to be the forerunner of far more sophisticated tests, and it also triggered the hypnosis work on time and space. Fogel and Hoffer's² early explorations aiming at controlling and recreating LSD states by hypnotic suggestion were supported by the Foundation and in recent years have been expanded, extended, and hugely enriched by Bernard Aaronson's work. I shall return to the hypnosis work later, because I believe that directly or indirectly some of our most valuable clues will be derived from it.

By 1962, it had become evident that the psychedelic movement was beginning to gain momentum. Mrs. Garrett, Aldous Huxley, and I began to have apprehensions, and we urged Timothy Leary to be cautious and to hasten more slowly than he was doing. But our joint urgings were of little avail. Definite and fairly well-authenticated news of home-made LSD started to filter through, and at the same time there came reports of some misfortunes. It was toward the end of this year that Timothy Leary first broached to me his ideas of what I have called psychic omnipotence. At that time, if I understood him rightly, his view was that given the right attitude and viewpoint of the taker, the purity or even the nature of the chemical taken was of little importance and the dangers of misuse were very small. I did not agree with him then, and I do not agree with this point of view today, but I have reason to suppose that Timothy may have well changed his mind on this particular matter.

By the middle of 1963, Harvard University had become increasingly jittery about Leary and Alpert and eventually dismissed them. At this time the two were discussing setting up their own sources of LSD manufacture. During the same year I was able to discuss these matters with Aldous Huxley and with Dr. Albert Hofmann, who is with us today, while all three of us were in Stockholm at the meeting of the World Academy of Arts and Science. None of us was very happy about the way things were going, for we considered that psychedelics were far too important to become either the monopoly of medicine or the weaponry of an underground movement. Aldous planned to take up this matter in the forthcoming volume of the World Academy of Arts and Science. I have pictures of him writing his brilliant essay; a few months later he was dead. At that time, to my recollection, Albert Hofmann did not foresee large-scale clandestine production of LSD and other psychedelics as being particularly likely.

If the press was interested in psychedelics in 1963, by 1964 it had become positively obsessed with LSD-25. This obsession played a large part in drawing people's attention to psychedelics and thus did exactly what I imagine Timothy Leary wished. People heard about LSD everywhere, and young people were constantly warned about it by their worried elders; nothing could make it more interesting to the young or ensure more certainly that they could find out more about it and, most likely, obtain it. Indeed, this is exactly what happened.

Meanwhile, I tried to conjecture what Leary's intentions might be. It appeared to me that Timothy, with his knowledge of social psychology, would develop an insurgent or maquislike movement based upon psychedelics. It seemed to me that, provided he had the weaponry (that is, suitable supplies of psychedelics), he had a very good chance of winning an energetic army of young supporters. They would be the young and the very young, spread like a net across the country and later the world, and they would evolve new social forms. They would be incomprehensible to an older generation, whose ideas derived from democratic or communistic centralized bureaucratic systems. When I was later able to ask Timothy whether this was indeed what he had in mind, he confirmed my views. Today's evidence rather supports this notion.

I then asked myself about the supply problem: competent chemists told me that given lysergic acid, LSD-25 of a moderate degree of purity could be made fairly easily. I concluded, then, that if I were Timothy Leary, or anyone with a point of view similar to his, I would use a series of

temporary and mobile laboratories, possibly housed in trailers. Likely sources of lysergic acid were the various antimigraine preparations, particularly those made by Sandoz because of their very high purity and quality and their ready accessibility. Migraine being a condition with very few objective signs, a relatively small number of people with prescriptions for ergot derivatives could have obtained enough of these substances to keep the psychedelic movement going. Later I learned that lysergic acid had been commercially available from Italy for some time. The question of countermoves naturally arose, and Abram Hoffer and I continued to press for psychedelic study centers at universities and for the support of work on creativity, such as Willis Harman's. Our suggestions were met with unconcern by the authorities in Washington and Ottawa. Failing to see what was a cloud a good deal bigger than a man's hand on the horizon, they seemed to feel that regulations, combined with a few brisk prosecutions, would solve these vexing matters. However, by 1965 it seemed less and less likely that the "father knows best" attitude would work at all. Information seeped through to me suggesting that the supply problem facing the LSD-25 maquis was being solved, at least to some extent. The press continued to supply many millions of dollars worth of free publicity, and the psychedelic movement was clearly being launched much more quickly than I had expected. Many reports of bad trips began to come in, and once again these were ways of telling people about LSD-25.

Early in 1966, Timothy Leary was arrested and it seemed that the authorities were evolving some kind of policy. The bones of this seemed to be to chop off the monster's head and to force Sandoz to stop making LSD. The authorities rather naively seemed to believe that the problem was that Sandoz was distributing LSD to the psychedelic people. Nothing, of course, could have been further from the truth. Sandoz have behaved in an exemplary manner, supplying LSD since its discovery at no cost to qualified investigators only. Responsible officials at the very highest levels of government seemed to know exactly what to do. They thought if they extended the FDA's control powers and pushed up the penalties, all would be well. In May, 1966, I sent a memo to Senator Robert Kennedy's Committee at their request and suggested that the matter might not be as simple as it sounded. So far it has not proved to be simple at all: up to the present moment the psychedelic movement has been spreading rapidly all over the United States and seems to be gaining, rather than losing, momentum. The FDA has neither had great success in

stopping the movement, nor does it seem to have done better at infiltrating it. There is some evidence that the reverse may be happening, and it will certainly be attempted. If the FDA is to get inside the drug culture, it needs very young agents for this work. Yet these same agents are very vulnerable to the call of psychedelic people.

During 1966, there was a rash of illnesses attributed to psychedelics, causing serious concern to many psychiatrists. So far there have been few papers about these new illnesses, and meanwhile the psychedelic people themselves have become interested in setting up rescue operations, some of which seem to have been successful.

Early this year (1967) I became aware of a series of new trends within the movement. Attempts are being made to find new psychedelics; gifted amateurs are making a variety of new substances, which are being tried conscientiously. In these matters young Americans are very able and businesslike. It appears that even teenagers have set up their own small and legal drug companies as fronts. These amateur chemists seem to be moving ahead of the professionals like a screen of skirmishers, determined to maintain their supply lines. It has been rumored that several million doses of a new psychedelic (STP), a tryptamine derivative, allegedly very long lasting, will be released this summer.

The psychedelic movement is becoming political. People are emerging who wish to change the society, not to drop out from it. They are not communists, nor are they anarchists. They plan a society of a different kind, based on psychedelics; they are much opposed to the current political climate. I don't believe that they are financed or supported by criminal or foreign interests. They are an indigenous movement, using psychedelic experiences as their central point for recruiting new adepts, for maintaining their interest, and for deriving not only policies, but also an important organizational scheme. There is evidence that this political movement already exists and is not hypothetical: it has its press and will doubtless develop radio and other means of communication; it has already many excellent songs, which are a rich source for creating converts. The movement appears to attract both young and very young people, as few political movements have done here for years. At least one of its leaders to whom I have spoken is well aware of what is happening. I don't think that Timothy Leary has anything much to do with this. He is considered too old and too vague.

From these new people I continually hear reports of both spontaneous and contrived paranormal phenomena. The interest in these phenomena

has increased enormously. The young people are open to them, are not afraid of them; they have lots of time and energy, they believe in the existence of extrasensory communication, and they actually seek it. Our latest news suggests that groups are establishing themselves who are particularly interested in these matters. Such groups could represent excellent sources of material for field research.

In conclusion, it seems that quite apart from the formal work the Foundation has backed so steadily in this field, parapsychology and psychedelics have come much closer together during this last decade, thanks to the new generation's unbiased attitude. Ahead of us lies the possibility, and indeed the probability, that from combined psychopharmacological and parapsychological research new techniques will emerge, and that we shall soon have a much clearer idea of how to devise appropriate experimental situations. Owing to crude and defective theories, we have greatly underestimated the difficulty of this work. What we are attempting to do in parapsychology, what some people can do almost at will, what happens to many people a few times during their lives, is an overlapping of *Umwelts* (of their experiential worlds), of which time and space are major dimensions. It may be that by using the concept of *Umwelt* and the typology that Dr. H. Mann, Mrs. M. Siegler, Dr. B. Aaronson, Dr. M. El-Meligi, and I are working on, combined with Dr. Aaronson's work with hypnosis which aims at providing specific changes in spatiotemporal experience, we may be able to learn how to do this. Psychedelic substances, as well as the experience of natural sensitives and the employment of those whose *Umwelts* are already very much alike, such as identical twins, should greatly facilitate this kind of work. From the recent excellent work on dreams and from other carefully contrived situations there is increasing evidence that objectively observable phenomena can be produced. However, until the last few years, the social climate has been one of nonacceptance and incomprehension, which has prevented academic people from observing the phenomena and learning about them. In addition, misleading analogies, such as "mental radio," have not helped. It may well be that, as Marshall MacLuhan suggests, radio, T.V., etc., should be seen rather as being a sort of physical ESP. By looking at our inventions the wrong way round we can very easily be misled. The telephone, radio, and T.V. are substitutes for our ability to experience each other's *Umwelts*, for this is possible only among those whose worlds have many similarities derived from likenesses in genetical, cultural, mythical, or empathic traits (except, of course, when very highly gifted people are involved). However, in the

hypertribal society Carpenter, MacLuhan, and others see emerging, ESP may well become—as it once was—an absolute necessity for survival. If this is true, ESP will have to be taught to those who have no natural gift for it.

It will become necessary for people to know their capacity for this important social skill, as it is now for them to know the reach of their intelligence, or their physical characteristics. I think we are getting to the point where we can begin to see how to tackle this daunting prospect and can also recognize why it is essential to do so. With psychedelics and their hypnotic equivalents, we have the tools for exploring *Umwelts* and for changing them in a variety of ways; so we can hope to slowly discover the laws governing these phenomena. Mankind's isolation and alienation, so widely discussed today, in my opinion arise mainly because a variety of technological changes—some undoubtedly beneficial—have made men and women increasingly unsure whether this overlapping of *Umwelts* can occur at all. Although it has been suggested that this merging of experiential worlds is the goal of highly successful sexual and love relationships, the two are far from identical. One can make love to someone and or love them very dearly, while remaining extremely ignorant about their experiential world. One might equally well experience another's *Umwelt* without being in love with that person at all and might find this puzzling, frightening, or embarrassing.

I hope that scientists will give thought to the feasibility of constructing an arbitrary space-time system for use in experiments. When I raised this question three years ago at Le Piol, some of those present looked at me as if I were crazy. Yet I do not think I am; nor do I believe that the idea is crazy. Such an arbitrary space-time system could be shared by people without damaging impingements upon their *Umwelts* and without those fears of possession or loss of identity this is liable to generate in all but the most resolute explorers who use special techniques such as those employed by sensitives. I believe that this arbitrary space-time can be constructed in a mirror space, which will insulate it, as it were, from everyday affairs until we are familiar with the rules of *Umwelt* exploration which may lie sometime ahead.

Meanwhile, a two-way discourse ought to be established with responsible and cooperative members of the psychedelic movement (and I am sure there are several), in order to arrive at planning joint investigations on the real nature and conditioning of paranormal phenomena allegedly occurring among members of this new drug subculture. If we are aware

that these young people not only seek enlightenment, but also communion and sharing of experiential worlds, we ought to be able to give a vigorous push in the right direction to parapsychological research in the psychedelic context. The timing for this operation is just right, it would be foolish to let it go unnoticed.

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