
ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND PSI*

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Since I have no new staggering experimental data to produce concerning psi and ASC, I thought I might seize the opportunity to make a few unconfidential confessions to you about the way I see this question, hoping that they might be of some use in future research.

Off and on, as analysts, we observe the occurrence of cases of indisputable telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition with one or the other of our analysands. Trained in parapsychology, our observation is supposed to be both sensitive and accurate. Furthermore, we routinely take precaution to have everything carefully documented. In this way, a good many convincing cases have been gathered and some of them have been published by our friends Servadio¹ and Ehrenwald.² Telepathic or precognitive phenomena, however, occur all the time in everyday life, but in most cases they escape our attention. What I want to say is that they are much more frequent than we notice. When we find ourselves in such a close personal relationship with the subject, as we usually do with our analysands, such events, however, will not escape our attention so easily. But to draw the inference that under analytical conditions psi phenomena occur more frequently than under so-called normal conditions would be unwarranted. We have in these cases only a better understanding of the subject's motivation for illegitimately penetrating into our own, as yet un-lived life (in the case of precognition) or in the case of telepathy into our own conscious, yet unknown to them, pre-occupations. In either case we usually take refuge in our beloved hypothesis of the Unconscious, knowledge of which we grant the subject to be sufficiently motivated to want to have (e.g. our more or less secret hopes or wishes to cure them). But this is far from explaining the mechanism of *how* they get access to such knowledge, knowledge of facts neither we nor they could possibly possess, as for instance in the case of true precognition.

* Dr. Meier's paper was read in his absence by Dr. Emilio Servadio; all questions and observations were sent to Dr. Meier.

Whenever such a case occurs and it is dramatic enough and seemingly beyond any doubt, I am always not only duly impressed but really smashed. I feel confronted with a real *tremendum*. I begin to be fully superstitious. One such case—and I have witnessed quite a number of them—suffices to convince me thoroughly of the reality of psi, as long as it is beyond any legitimate doubt of being merely coincidental, statistically speaking. But that is beside the point. What I want to stress more vigorously is this: when we come to consider such occurrences seriously, we are immediately at a complete loss, scientifically speaking, since time and space parameters are here totally out of joint, as we have to admit in old-fashioned physical terminology. Causal connections in such cases are unthinkable and purely psychological investigation of all the possible conditions could only give one an inkling of conditioning circumstances without telling a thing as to *how* it was at all possible.

Now, experimental research of all sorts has tried to isolate one or another possibly relevant factor facilitating (or inhibiting) the occurrence of psi, or, as it is now called psi-conducive conditions, or states. I once had a tête-à-tête with our unforgettable Eileen Garrett, complaining to her about our having only insignificant results in thousands of card-guessing experiments with hundreds of subjects. Her answer was: "But you must get your subjects excited, highly excited!" This sounded familiar to me, and I will try to explain to you in which way. As you may know, Jung³ was always deeply impressed by ESP-phenomena. His impression was that they occurred more frequently under conditions of what might today be called stress, i.e. when suffering from an acute problem. This is simply another way of saying when finding oneself in an *archetypal* situation. Jung's experience was that at such times a patient would produce particularly significant dreams, so-called archetypal dreams. The content of such dreams seemed to symbolically sum up the problem in question and to possibly include a suggestion as to its solution. He thought that at such moments particularly, he more frequently had observed the occurrence of parapsychological phenomena, and he also observed that they then were connected with the problem in question in a peculiarly "meaningful" way. This is why he speaks of "meaningful coincidence" or "synchronicity." I tried to call your attention to this Jungian concept in more detail at our First International Convention at Utrecht in 1953, with no noticeable success. Only lately, however, Lila L. Gatlin has emphasized its usefulness.⁴ The concept of "synchronicity" means nothing less than that, for such phenomena, we should simply relinquish or do away with our

scientific prejudice of causality, even if only for the fact that in such cases the time-space parameters no longer seem to work. They, therefore, have to be considered as "acausal coincidences or connections." This would simply amount to the fact that, in parapsychology, we are totally outside of the range of causality or natural science *tout court*. I should like to remind you of the fact that the original choice of the term "parapsychology," probably quite unconsciously, hints at something of this kind, since the Greek preposition "para" has as one of its connotations the meaning of something "more than" or "beyond." "Dem Zufall eine Absicht unterzulegen ist ein Gedanke der, je nach dem man ihn versteht, der absurdeste oder der tiefstinnigste sein kann" as Schopenhauer would have it.⁵ (To attribute to chance an intention is an idea which, depending only on how it is understood, can be either most absurd or very deep.) We are too timid to openly admit that in our field we are hopelessly outside of science as it is understood today and continue to be greatly concerned about finally becoming acceptable to the scientific community. And, moreover, we are so conditioned by our Western tradition and education, that it is healthier to forget it altogether.

In the Graeco-Roman tradition, however, of which our selfsame science is a legitimate offspring, miracles of this and all other kinds did not seem to contradict the otherwise strictly scientific approach which had so convincingly and successfully become part of its spirit. Oracles, e.g., as is well known, played a decisive part in their politics, which otherwise were undoubtedly extremely rationalistic and realistic. With the Greeks the rational and the irrational had still been happily married, as has been masterly described by our old friend E. R. Dodds,⁶ as you know. And the temple-cures of Asklepios or Scrapis and others, which were always performed with the help of healing dreams, were extremely popular, so much so that the pupils of Hippocrates, the father of scientific medicine, after their master's death, re-established the cult of Asklepios at Kos. In other words they reverted as fast as possible to theurgy and faith-healing. They seem to have been able to produce "meaningful coincidences" between dreams and bodily processes. Those medical men cum priests seem still to have known how to bring about such phenomena. We, on the other hand, seem to have lost that "*tertium quid*" and our laboratories are of course far from being temples (not even "temples of science" unless we use computers!). Fortunately, there seem to have been places of "grace" at certain periods of time, like Duke University, or special persons being gifted with a charisma conducive to psi.

What I really mean to say is simply that we have almost all lost access to psi conducive conditions. In antiquity they played a prominent part in that culture and were firmly established and rooted in their religion and philosophy. At the present time, however, there seems to be little or no interest or concern on the part of philosophy or religion in what we are here to discuss. We start from the other end, but lose sight of the former. There always are two ends to a spectrum, and I propose that we should never lose sight of the opposite end while we work on the other. So our scientific approach in the laboratory should always be compensated for by our para-scientific point of view. We should have the courage to harbor unadulteratedly fantastic theories and still not take refuge in pseudo-scientific alternatives like psychedelic drugs or trance. It is highly questionable whether any of the possible lines in the spectrum of consciousness is particularly conducive to psi. Dreams are only one of those lines, as they seem to happen at only one of the five possible stages of sleep. I am, however, personally convinced that this is a *non liquet*. All that can be said without bias is that the REM-state is the one sleep- or dream-state out of which we can *remember* dreams more easily. But the unconscious activity is certainly not interrupted by sleep stages one to four. The unconscious activity is rather a continuum of images and represents a spontaneous and gratuitous imagery that coexists with our process of living and accompanies it as another primary or secondary continuum. So far, only general anesthesia seems to interrupt this parallelism (this would be a true parallelism over against that psycho-physical one still lingering). For the rest of our lives we seem to be constantly dreaming, wherefor the question of whether we are only dreaming, that we are conscious of who we are has to be taken rather seriously. The continuum from total to near-total unconsciousness (deep sleep, coma, general anesthesia) to other altered states of consciousness like REM-sleep, hypnosis, tiredness and utter distraction and finally to the allegedly highest state of attention, awareness or vigilance or whatever you may call it, namely Samadhi or Satori are all one and the same thing, i.e. various degrees of consciousness or unconsciousness.

I think it might be useful to remark here that it is highly questionable to naively accept the Eastern contention that Samadhi or Satori or any kind of dhyana equals a higher state of consciousness in our Western sense. For us, it is rather close to auto-hypnosis, since the ego is supposed to disappear in union with Atman. In this sense, it is hardly distinguishable from the experiences of our Western mystics. Whether any of these states is more "con-

ductive" to psi, we simply don't know. Deep meditation may serve to lead to deep levels of the unconscious, nay, into the collective unconscious, where we all are equal if not identical. Participating in that realm may indeed be conducive to psi phenomena, which is explicitly stated in Yoga texts and would be in full agreement with Jung's theory of synchronicity as explained earlier. Should you empty your mind (your consciousness) completely as demanded by most Yoga texts, you might arrive at pure physiology on the other hand or then at manifestations of the pure spirit on the other. But here, to us, metaphysics becomes psychology of the unconscious. In Hindu philosophy there exists a "state of consciousness," during which all sorts of ESP phenomena may occur, so that you would be able to produce them intentionally (rope trick!), but you are always strongly discouraged against bringing them about. They are regarded as unfortunate side effects, having the tendency of luring you back into *sangsaara*, i.e. into a further illusion instead of experiencing the reality of the Self.

While our consciousness has its periodic ups and downs (circadian rhythms), the unconscious seems to be relentless, as are most of the physiological oscillators (heart-beat, breathing, etc.). Whenever the level of consciousness goes down (physiologically or pathologically), the unconscious has automatically a higher potential and gets a chance of showing its imagery (e.g. dreams) and of being clearly perceived. These messages may, to an extent, consist of day residues i.e. elements from previous waking experience or of actual facts of the present and perhaps also of future elements, occurring in the next day or two. The latter elements may still be purely coincidental. Some few of them, however, may be so specific and so different from all inference or altogether contrary to hopes, wishes or fantasies, and yet may appear in outer reality before too long. So they already confront us with a veridical or precognitive element and time and space are violated. It is always rather precarious to isolate certain specific items out of the more embracing content of a dream. In my own laboratory we have had little luck with Hall and Van der Castle's⁷ method when we wanted to isolate specific data.

In the early thirties, when I was still in analysis with C. G. Jung, I kept a very careful record of my dreams. In two instances, they definitely contained precognitive motives. From then on, I used to go through the whole record regularly one and two and three days later, a week later, and a month later. From the elements identifiable in them, I computed that about 50 percent stemmed from the past and the other 50 percent from the future. The latter 50 percent may have

been trivia or inferences, but certainly not all of them. The method, of course, was very crude, although I don't see how we could do better nowadays for, methodologically, we seem to be confronted here with an aporia. The result, however, seems to point to a fact I have mentioned before: that the unconscious seems not to pay attention to space/time limits; that, in fact, it is ubiquitous and omniscient. This is, of course, blasphemous. But then, as we are in our conscious mind invariably tied to time and space, this is responsible for the fact that the temporal and spatial location of any such paranormally or rather unconsciously received message is impossible. But there are always rare exceptions which offer such minutiae that we feel obliged to try to interfere with facts. In a few cases I happened to witness, such intentions were deleterious in that the whole system broke down, so that it looked as if the unconscious had only been kidding.

I said earlier that genuinely paranormal experiences were always numinous, in short a *tremendum*. It is worth noting that throughout the history of humanity they were always carefully kept either strictly secret (mysteries) or within a carefully observed (religious) ritual as e.g. in the Asklepieia or at the oracle of Delphi. Here I should like to call your attention to the fact that we now know for certain that the Pythia in Delphi was always a very carefully selected medium. We even know the method for her selection. We also know that she always used to be in a trance-like condition whenever she acted. But we know equally well that drugs were never used for that purpose. As psychologists we then simply draw the inference that, in order to make "the lot spring" as they say, she got into a trance whereby she was capable of producing PK-phenomena and that she must have been a woman permeable to the unconscious or more specifically to the collective unconscious. Those were the psi conducive conditions, when men still knew about their reality and they will very probably remain as mysterious as they always were.

Are we thus operating or trying to operate in a secularized religious realm? If so, how are we going to reconstruct those conditions the ancients had such apparently fool-proof methods for producing? Or does parapsychology have to become a substitute for religiousness, *horrible dictu*? I am afraid that survivalism and spiritualism definitely smack of such an unappetizing mixture, but *we* must make every effort to keep on the safe side and leave it to them to abide by Goethe's⁸ statement that "Das Wunder ist des Glaubens liebstes Kind" (the miracle is faith's most beloved child).

To keep on the safe side for the medical man means to stick to clinical experience. Neurosis and psychosis are undoubtedly altered states of consciousness. Do they produce more psi? According to my experience, they don't. But on the other hand, clinical experience has taught us to look at normal psychological phenomena in the light of their pathological equivalent, e.g. at dreams compared to hallucinations, and vice versa. In this way we have also learned something about normal madness, namely moments when we are *possessed* by a complex. Complexes are normal elements of our system, but they tend to produce an "abaissement du niveau mental" (P. Janet).⁹ In sleep, our level of consciousness is naturally lowered and our complexes then are, therefore, acted out quite freely, which accounts for an analogy between emotional waking states and dreaming. In view of Jung's concept of synchronicity and its more regular occurrence with highly emotional states (stress, problems, impressive dreams) it might be expected that the vicinity of such conditions may be psi-conductive. But I am afraid I must leave it to the younger generation of researchers to devise methods and find means to tackle this question experimentally and to verify or falsify it.

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DISCUSSION

HONORTON: I'm delighted with the last sentence in Professor Meier's paper because earlier in the paper I got the impression that he might be suggesting that we're dealing with phenomena here that are intrinsically outside the realm of empirical investigation. There's a certain sense of delight and mystery (and in the retention of mystery) which I think is not going to further our understanding of these phenomena. There's a certain thread here that is reminiscent of some other comments that have occurred in earlier presentations and it's really reminiscent of the old debate between qualitative and quantitative approaches to parapsychological phenomena. My own bias is quantification and it is important not to merely prove something is happening, but to be able to build on it, to be able to develop it and to be able to compare it under different conditions. I firmly believe—one of the few things I can say without adding a qualification, since I'm not talking about an empirical finding per se here—is that the only limitation of the empirical method is the ingenuity of the investigator.

MEIER: I couldn't agree more with what Mr. Honorton says and am pleased to make a statement that his phrase is practically synonymous with the one I wound up with in my paper.

SARGENT: I am very pleased to see that Dr. Meier does indeed want to see this synchronistic model tackled experimentally and verified or falsified. The classic problem that people who advocate such a model do come up against is that they can't suggest how it should be done, and so leave it to others. And in this context he quotes Lila Gatlin's paper in the *Journal of the ASPR*. The ideas in that

paper are rather strange and John Beloff has a letter soon to be published in that *Journal* criticizing them, so I won't deal with that. But I would like to point out that the thing of major interest in that paper is the proposed synchronicity test, which, in fact, isn't. And if her proposed tests prove positive, it would basically be a variance of a stacking effect due to long randomness of responses. Therefore, the proposed synchronicity test isn't one at all, and there's the critical problem. We cannot find a way to test this method and I feel that while this is a beautifully written paper and I enjoyed it immensely, that critical problem still remains to be got to grips with.

MEIER: Once more, I am in perfect agreement with what Mr. Sargent is saying, for it may well be that experimentation won't get us any wiser, since the thing with *synchronicity* just is that it cannot be reproduced! Please understand that the term itself offers no explanation in terms of determinism, nor does causality, as that goes, explain *how* the phenomena are produced and only make the statement that B occurs after A with a statistically relevant probability. The same is the case with Beloff's random number generator, which gets biased each time a gifted "agent" is present. This is equal to the natural law "when A then B," but the question as to how this effect can be explained or understood still remains a riddle, although it may be regarded as being "causal."

EHRENWALD: I think that Dr. Meier's very impressive paper is a good illustration of a point which I tried to make before. My point is that an approach geared to a purely need-determined interpretation of psi events is only suited to spontaneous, emotionally charged, highly dramatic, numinous events. But it is applicable to most experimental data of the old, card-calling type. When you try to squeeze such random, micropsychological, statistically treatable data into the numinous, *mysterium tremendum* type of mold, you come to a stalemate. The fact is that a new breed of experimenters (whom Dr. Meier mentioned today) have managed to bring the statistical method into harmony with the Freudian or Jungian psychodynamic approach. In my opinion, it is the ultimate integration of the two approaches which will bring about a better understanding of psi phenomena. It will do so within a vastly expanded scientific frame of reference—not outside it.

MEIER: Perhaps experimental situations are not that "wholly inapplicable" since, e.g., in the Duke experiments as such, the subject

finds himself or herself confronted with an impossible situation, where only "numinous" effects could help, which will be exactly synonymous to synchronistic events. I wonder if Jan Ehrenwald's "vastly expanded scientific frame of reference" would not amount to the inclusion of synchronicity as something equivalent or opposite to so-called "causality."

DIERKENS: I should like to get some more information about one sentence: "But we know equally well that drugs were never used for that purpose in Delphi." In fact, I think that real drugs were not used. I think that Pythagoras advised abstinence and said that trance or ecstasy should not be really obtained through hallucinogenic drugs or seeds, but I think that in Delphi they used laurel infusion and very strong incense. There were sulphur emanations. They had to fast during most of the day. I do not understand that very categorical sentence: "Drugs were never used. . . ."

SERVADIO: Yes, I think you are right. As far as I know, something of that kind was used. I remember many years ago I came across a Hungarian writer who had made a deep study of Delphi, and he was particularly interested in hallucinogenic drugs, just because he thought of the use of such drugs or other stimuli of the same kind for this kind of phenomena. So perhaps Dr. Meier was not well informed about that?

MEIER: As concerns Dr. Dierkens and Emilio Servadio, I should like, in all humility, to make the statement that I am indeed informed about Delphi as best as one can and that I never make a "categorical statement" without being sufficiently informed. One has, of course, to read the contemporary testimonies, and when I did so, I came to conclusions identical with those given by our friend Professor E. R. Dodds, the world-famous classical scholar of Oxford. It was exactly the intention of my paper to remind the parapsychologists of our day of what we know for sure nowadays about Delphi. Fortunately, it is easy to inform yourself, even if you shy away from reading the source material, since we have Professor Dodd's book *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley 1956, as well as his comprehensive article in the *Proceedings of the SPR*, 1971, vol. 55, particularly p. 525-528. Concerning laurel and incense, they may easily be psi-conductive, but they are not drugs and are still widely in use with all kinds of rituals. The so-called "sulphur emanations" are a relatively late rationalistic invention which has been thoughtlessly copied untold times through the centuries, but they

never existed at Delphi as can be shown by the sheer geology of the place. And furthermore, you only have to ask Plutarch, who was a priest at Delphi for some years and gives us all the details.

TART: Just a further comment on this question of using drugs. In my systems approach to altered states of consciousness that I went over all too briefly yesterday, an important empirical question is specifying the number of stabilizing factors which stabilize one's ordinary state of consciousness. There are clearly enormous individual differences here. Some people have just a very few psychological processes going on that stabilize their ordinary state, and they can enter an altered state very easily because there are very few stabilizing processes that must be disrupted in order to induce an altered state. Other people have far more stabilizing processes, and for those people more drastic physiological or psychological techniques or drug techniques are necessary. I don't think it really means a lot in the long run to say whether drugs are used or drugs are not used to induce an altered state. You really have to understand the individual person you're talking about, and what is uniquely necessary to finally destabilize their ordinary state and construct an altered state.

MEIER: I should only like to add that the Pythiai in Delphi always were carefully selected mediumistic personalities who therefore did not need to have recourse to drugs (cf. Plutarch).

SERVADIO: Well, I quite agree with what Dr. Sargent and Dr. Ehrenwald said about synchronicity because I have made some objections to the synchronicity theory many times.