

SUMMARY

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BELOFF: I have no intention of summarizing the proceedings of this conference. I intend to concentrate on the practical implications of what we've been hearing about the research work in parapsychology, and I will ask you in your discussion following my remarks to try and enter into this spirit.

Three main topics have been treated at this conference: drugs, hypnosis, and dreams. Our problem is to decide how we can exploit these new techniques (new from the parapsychological point of view) as such or in various combinations, to generate the kind of psi phenomena that lend themselves to objective study.

First of all, what are the grounds for supposing that any of these techniques leading to an altered state of consciousness are in fact relevant to parapsychology? They are first, a certain amount of anecdotal informal evidence stemming from the use of these techniques, and secondly, the strictly experimental evidence. What will the practical problems be in attempting to apply such techniques in the laboratory? On one hand, there might be external difficulties involved, like obtaining drugs or motivated subjects (to take obvious examples); on the other hand, there are perhaps more serious difficulties inherent in some of the techniques that have been suggested.

Before I discuss the three main themes of the conference, I want to say a few words about a paper presented yesterday which—in a certain quiet way—I regard as a minor bombshell. That is the communication from Dr. L'Huillier about the work on dowsing that Dr. Rocard has been

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doing in Paris. I'm not at all sure that I would recognize these phenomena as strictly paranormal, but there is no doubt that if they can be confirmed, they would be of great interest to sensory physiologists and to psychophysicists. Although this episode may only be of incidental relevance to parapsychology considered in a broader sense, it certainly contains a very important lesson for us. For it is remarkable that if the effect is genuine, it should have remained undetected for so long. After all, people were searching for just such magnetic effects in the early days of Mesmerism, and yet somehow none of these early claims were corroborated. It may well be that it was the peculiarity of finding dowsing connected with a very specific region of stimulus variation that accounts for its escaping detection: the idea that there might be an upper threshold so that the stronger magnetic fields would have no effect, whereas weaker fields did. It's something that further research will clear up, but it is worth thinking about.

Another general point that I want to make concerns the genetic issue in parapsychology; the possibility that psi may turn out to be some kind of an "all or nothing" effect dependent on hereditary factors. If this should be the case, I'm afraid the outlook for parapsychology is going to be very dim. There have been so few good sensitives in the past that progress has been very difficult indeed, and certainly all this discussion about altered states of consciousness will be wasted if everything ultimately hinges on your subjects having this peculiar property inborn. Nothing is really known about the hereditary component in psi, but I draw your attention to some interesting remarks made by Dr. Owen about the possible genetic components in the psi process. On one hand, he points out, it is conceivable that it might be monogenic, in the sense that it is dependent on a single gene complex; but it is more likely to be polygenic, that is, genetically multifactorial. Dr. Owen puts forth the rather interesting concept of a threshold faculty. Psi might very well be present universally in a latent form, but only rise above threshold, and therefore be detectable, in certain particular individuals. If in certain particular persons, why not also in certain particular states? In that case, even though there were this genetic determination, there's no reason why we might not hopefully proceed with the assumption that altered states of consciousness might solve a lot of our research difficulties.

Coming back to the main themes, hypnosis, dreams and drugs, the view which has very strongly impressed itself on me is that in order of practical utility, hypnosis easily figures first. Second, I would say, comes

dream research and third, the use of drugs. A lot of people may disagree very much with this estimation. In the course of my commentary I shall give my reasons for holding to this point of view. Anyhow, I will proceed to consider these techniques in their reverse order and begin with a few remarks on the pharmacological front.

I think one can say, from hearing the experts on this issue, that almost certainly we cannot expect our pharmacologists to produce a "miracle" drug that will automatically release psi abilities and solve all our problems. At best, what we can hope to obtain from the pharmacologists are drugs that will facilitate the emergence of what Dr. Tart called a "psi-plus state." I think this is the point on which we need to focus.

First, let us consider the grounds for supposing that drugs can help toward facilitating a psi-positive state. There is a certain amount of anthropological field evidence on the use of drugs in rituals of a Shamanistic kind,¹ and we've also been hearing about various incidental psi responses that have been reported during states of drug intoxication. On the other hand, if we take account of this anecdotal evidence, my impression is that psi responses should have occurred in much greater profusion. Drugs are so widely used in America, especially on college campuses, by those in search of new experiences, that we should be hearing about more definite identifiable ESP. But we can be on the alert.

TART: In talking to many students I've noticed that they take parapsychological experiences occurring in conjunction with psychedelics so matter of factly that they never get around to thinking there's anything special or important to report.

BELOFF: I'm glad you made this observation, because this may be the answer.

CAVANNA: I want to object to Dr. Beloff's statement that a new "miracle" drug would not be possible. It is not inconceivable to orient our research toward finding a drug endowed with a particular action on the central nervous system.

BELOFF: I did not mean to rule out this possibility. I merely said that we cannot yet expect this. Concerning the experimental evidence on drugs and psi, we can mention three specific investigations: that of Cavanna and Servadio,² the Masters-Huston series,³ and the Dutch experiments of Kappers.⁴ Of these, only one, the Masters-Huston, can really claim to have obtained any significant results. Certainly the Dutch investigation

was negative, and I think Drs. Cavanna and Servadio will admit that one is not really able to draw any conclusions from their research. Unfortunately, the Masters-Huston was by far the weakest of them methodologically.

With regard to the practical problems involved in this kind of research, it's hardly necessary for me to point out that at the moment the obstacles are formidable. There is tremendous panic about the use and abuse of drugs. My medical friends have told me that it would be virtually impossible for me even to consider using drugs in my experiments.

More interesting, though, are the possible inherent difficulties; a number of them have been mentioned here. There is, for example, the notorious flow of images and ideas you get with the ingestion of psilocybin, which can interfere with the degree of concentration required to focus on a target. Ingenious ways of getting around it have been suggested, but it remains an inherent difficulty. We also heard from Dr. Pahnke about the transcendental type of experiences you can get in the drug states: they may be simply too blissful for experimental purposes. Our subjects may lose the motivation to cooperate in any systematic experiment.

Dr. Ludwig gave us hints about the possibility to obviate these difficulties by using hypnosis in order to control the drug states. I think these combinations might be utilized to advantage.

On the question of dreams, we can start with the fact that ESP occurrences during dreams probably account for the majority of all spontaneous psi experiences. In addition, Dr. Servadio reported the occurrences of psi during dreams in the psychoanalytic situation.

On the experimental front, I really don't need to add anything to the reports by Drs. Ullman and Krippner. It is a very promising start indeed, and it is encouraging to see that this scheme has been pushing ahead. So many of these psi projects flourish for a little while, but then for some reason peter out. One hears no more about them, and other investigators can't replicate the experiments. The whole area is in a very unsatisfactory state. Now, of course, we are waiting for another dream center to undertake the problem and confirm your results.

It's no good denying, however, that the dream technique has very serious limitations. In the first place, the sheer limitation of cost is immense. Most of the parapsychology research in the world is still carried out on a part-time basis. Dream experiments can only be done in an institute that has the necessary equipment for the study of sleep. I think this is really a matter of winning support and cooperation from researchers in this area, who perhaps were not previously interested in parapsychology.

TART: May I inject an optimistic note. I've shown that with posthypnotic suggestions some subjects can wake up quite well by themselves at the end of their dreams. You might be able to dispense with expensive monitoring machines.

BELOFF: This is a very optimistic note indeed. I'm glad you said it, your suggestion seems well worth trying.

The other, and perhaps more inherent, limitation is the fact that it is a very messy technique: it's an indirect and very devious way of assessing psi. Dream images are very far flung, and you have to go through an elaborate matching technique if you're going to distill a significant correspondence. But again, in the course of the next few years you may discover ways of focusing the dreaming onto the target. I suggested to Dr. Ullman that one could posthypnotically suggest to the subject that he will dream about the agent, and when he dreams about the agent, he will also be dreaming about what the agent is doing and looking at. He agreed that this was a feasible proposition and that he and his co-workers would try it.

MUNDLE: I think you've been a little unkind to the Maimonides team in describing this as a very messy technique. As a pioneer experiment, I think it's very good.

BELOFF: Of course it is.

MUNDLE: I think it would be more useful to distinguish between telepathy and clairvoyance conditions. When you're in telepathy conditions, how the agent interprets the target is part of the target. Therefore, in these experiments there should be no feedback to the agent. She should learn of this only after the experiment.

BULOFF: I want to correct my statement. What I meant to say was that the phenomena were messy, not the experiments.

I would now like to concentrate on hypnosis which is, in my opinion, the psychological tool par excellence for modifying consciousness in a desired direction. It is also a simple tool that most people can quite readily learn to use.

What assurance do we have that hypnosis can produce the desired results? There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence from the very early days, as described by Dr. Servadio and Mr. Angoff.

In this connection, you might be interested to know that the Parapsychology Foundation is sponsoring a comprehensive historical work on hypnotism and its implications for parapsychology. This volume, edited by

Dr. E. J. Dingwall, will put us in a much better position to discuss the possibilities of this method.⁵ Ever since the founding of the Society for Psychical Research there has been a good deal of experimental literature on the use of hypnosis in parapsychology. But, in more recent times, especially after the advent of the Rhine school of parapsychology, the usefulness of hypnosis for inducing ESP has been strongly challenged. Within the past few years, however, Lawrence Casler in New York has carried out some impeccably designed experiments in which he did obtain a significant increase in scoring with use of the ESP cards under the hypnotic condition.^{6, 7}

Furthermore, Rýzl's work has raised the important point whether hypnosis can be used as an aid in the training of psi ability. This is a terribly tantalizing proposition, but it is so difficult to evaluate its significance. There is published evidence on only two of the hundreds of subjects he screened, and it is impossible to say how far the success of these two individuals is due to their early hypnotic training.

I attempted to repeat this training work in Edinburgh with many volunteer student subjects over the period of a year without success.⁸ Perhaps one ought to apply some kind of screening procedure and only take promising subjects who already give some indication of ESP.

Hypnosis has only one practical drawback: not everyone is hypnotizable. Therefore, you are bound to lose some subjects simply because they can't be sufficiently hypnotized. Furthermore, if entering a deep trance state is important (Rýzl himself did not work with deep states), this will further reduce the number of subjects one can work with, as there is only a small minority who can reach this state. Unless, of course, there happens to be a high correlation between being a good hypnotic subject and a good sensitive. I have no evidence for that and no reason for thinking that it's true.

In summary, there are at least three distinct ways in which hypnosis could play a role in psi research. First, by inducing the appropriate state of consciousness, whatever this state may be (concentration, emptying the mind, or a combination thereof). Second, by removing the attitudinal and emotional blockages that might interfere with successful psi performance in the ordinary waking state. Third, by deepening the rapport that might already exist between the hypnotist and the subject, thereby facilitating possible telepathic occurrences.

ULLMAN: Thank you very much Dr. Beloff, for your excellent summary.

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