

INCREASES IN AWARENESS AND SUGGESTIBILITY

FRANCIS HUXLEY (*U.S.A.*)

Parapsychology has always had difficulties in trying to discount the subjective and unreliable components in its phenomena, and to set itself upon objective grounds. There is a temptation to imagine that ESP exists in some way separately from human beings, and might even be detected by quite mechanical means. However, the personal element seems to be very much the key to ESP, and there must be a way of using this element to the advantage of parapsychology, which would be much more fruitful than to ignore it.

If this is so, one of the first aims of a parapsychologist should be not to work directly at detecting ESP, but to train his subjects in the exercise of certain of their most subjective faculties. It may be here that parapsychology can make the best use of LSD 25 and other psychedelic drugs. LSD does not by itself improve scoring for ESP, because the influx of personal images is so great, and the tests do not make use of the very personal feelings involved, which are felt to be an embarrassment. However, it is these feelings, as far as one can see, that provide mediums with their basic energy and confidence; and whatever it is that they transmit, it has first somehow to be embodied, an embodiment which cannot take place if the medium refuses it his subjectivity. The problem thus is a double one: firstly in the perception (which includes the embodiment) of parapsychological phenomena; and secondly, the expression and transmission of these to other people.

This perception involves, often, going into unfamiliar psycho-physiological states. Some changes in breathing and awareness often happen under LSD, though the matter has

not been pursued actively. But this similarity suggests a number of experiments that could be tried, in varying the rhythms of breathing, or muscle tension and posture, for instance, to see the effect they have on perception and awareness and, therefore, on ESP. People who do not usually show ESP may do so if their faculties and awareness are exercised and stirred up.

The problem of perception shades into that of expression: to try and make sense of some dim feeling by talking about it. Dr. Blewett, for instance, discovered this when he tried psychometry; he identified feelings by expressing them as a story. One might learn more about this problem from literary criticism, with its minute dissection of verbal imagery, and dramatic form and context. But the problem of identification will change for various people: some are more apt at seizing identity by turning their feelings into a story, others at discovering names or attributes, or becoming aware of acts and gestures. All these quite normal methods of expression must surely be developed before the very subtle business of experimenting with ESP can advance, for good subjects may very possibly have little skill at the prosaic business of describing what they are aware of. The problem of expression has been met, sometimes, by the use of various forms of spontaneous motor activity: automatic writing is an example, and there is also a kind of almost automatic speech used by certain shamans, who can extemporize rhyming couplets of perfect form for hours at a time, using this perfected faculty to express immediately, and without conscious interference, whatever finds its way into their minds. Indeed, the whole apparatus of magic and shamanism deserves to be examined by parapsychologists, to see whether these traditional methods of translating subconscious activities into motor forms might not be used by them in modified ways; and in all these experiments the psychedelic drugs, which so increase both awareness and suggestibility, may be of prime importance.