

STATES OF SUGGESTIBILITY

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LSD is an implement for discovering the nature of the mind. Its central action, psychologically, is to dissolve stable reference points in the outside world, an action whose other face is the dissolving of the usual self-image. What is left is the mind in a state of enormous suggestibility, receiving images both from the outside world and from its own unconscious. Its capacity to feel these images as being actual parts of itself accounts both for the illuminating and the psychotic aspects of the LSD experience.

The LSD experience turns into a model psychosis when, through a number of possible reasons, the mind seizes upon its own movement and takes it to be stationary, thus making a wrong identification. The first problem of the LSD researcher, therefore—if his interest is not just in the psychomimetic aspects of the mind—is to find some way of assuring the subject of identity, and to find something on which to center the mind when the usual constructs of experience, of time and of space, are done away with.

Such an assurance comes when the subject has a free and affectionate relationship with the other people present so that he does not easily find himself cut off by his own projected emotions. Other things follow naturally from this relationship. Since the mind is that by which illusions arise—"illusions" being its way of coming into relationship with other minds—then it can explore the nature of such images as have been traditionally used to waken the mind to its own capacities: images which are little more than diagrams, such as yantras;

images which bring about a definite emotional involvement and movement, such as religious and mythological images; and those images embodied in words, which can be used as social rituals to bring numbers of people together as a group.

The purpose of these exercises in involvement is twofold. Firstly, they show the mind its powers of functioning, and the nature of the illusion-forming process; secondly, they allow the mind to enter into proper understandings with the other minds who have accompanied it through the exercises. Two new sets of reference points have thus been created: a reference point in the action of the mind itself, rather than in its productions; and reference points from the growing cohesion of the group.

The LSD group thus formed can be used to work on various forms of non-verbal expression and communication. The ability of the mind under LSD to transform gestures and expressions into their proper meaning is phenomenal; one is reminded of the same ability in mediums, who without a doubt make use of it in their mediumship. A considerable part of mediumship, indeed, seems to consist in this ability to become aware of minute cues, from wherever they may come, and to allow these cues to form meaning and find utterance without interference. A positive activity of the mind is therefore matched by a negative one, in which the conscious attention withdraws and partly extinguishes itself.

This holding in abeyance of some of the usual activities of consciousness is also necessary during the LSD experience, if full use is to be made of it; and the journey of the mind as it detaches itself from the various worlds of habit bears some resemblance to the experiences of mediums and others. The resemblance, however, is imprecise, due partly to the specific nature of the LSD experience, and partly to the lack of skill of those who undergo it; the real problem is whether the resemblance is sufficient, or can be heightened, for a medium to transmit anything of her own skills—if this is possible—to an ordinary person who has taken LSD.

However, the first mark to aim for in any cooperation of the medium with the LSD taker, is to explore the realms of

the mind rather than trying to wield some of its more intriguing powers. The LSD group is as yet an uncertain organism and its first task must be to train its members to form and to use the relationships it offers. The cooperation of the medium, by definition sensitive to such relationships, should do as much for psychedelics in this basic matter as in any other; and the medium may well benefit by the understanding others gain of the peculiar problems involved in mediumship.