

The chap who works with Dr. Targ and  
 Dr. Pithers... and who speaks for me  
 at the Para-Conference. Given

# FRONTIERS OF PSYCHIC DEVELOPMENT



by Jeffrey Mishlove

Perhaps the development of a psychic can be compared to Imlac's description of poetic development in Samuel Johnson's famous work, *The History of Rasselas* (1759):

"To a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination: he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast or elegantly little . . . His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition; observe the power of all the passions in all their combinations,

and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the spriteliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude. He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age or country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions and rise to general and transcendental truths . . . He must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of successive generations; as a being

superior to time and place. His labor is not yet at an end: he must know many languages and many sciences; and that his style may be worthy of his thoughts, must, by incessant practice, familiarize to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony."

As Imlac continued his enthusiastic albeit aggrandizing, description, his listener Rasselas cried out, "Enough! Thou has convinced me, that no human being can ever be a poet."

Were Imlac speaking of psychics, parapsychologists might well be echoing Rasselas' thoughts. This is because of many elegant systems of psych

development which have reputedly been effective in different cultures throughout history still lack scientific verification.

Yoga is probably the oldest existing system which offers a complete course of psycho-spiritual development. The classical path of yoga contains the following eight steps toward the achievement of spiritual liberation: (1) *yama*, the restraint of bad habits; (2) *niyama*, the cultivation of good habits in one's daily life; (3) *asana*, the adoption of steady and comfortable postures with specific physiological effects; (4) *pranayama*, special breathing exercises; (5) *pratyahara*, withdrawing the mind from objects of sensory perception, as in meditation; (6) *dharana*, concentration on selected objects; (7) *dhyana*, steady contemplation in which the sense of separateness of the self from the object of concentration disappears; and (8) *samadhi*, the absolute, ecstatic experience of mystical unity. This does not, as some suppose, entail a loss of individuality. "The drop is not poured into the ocean. Rather the ocean is poured into the drop."

During the process of attaining *samadhi*, which may take many years, different centers of psychic perception in the body, called *chakras*, are said to be awakened through the activating energy of *kundalini* which is symbolized as a snake rising slowly from the lower spine to the top of the head. When all of the *chakras* are activated, *samadhi* is attained. Studies by Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama in Japan have attempted to measure the physical and psychic effects of the *kundalini*.

While psychic powers are said to develop from concentration, repetition of words, and other austerities, full enlightenment is not attained until the yogi can remain undistracted by his own psychic abilities. It is probably for this reason that few earnest practitioners of yoga have so far been tested in parapsychological laboratories.

Another approach to psychic development is that of tribal shamanism. The youth who was called on to become a shaman, or healer, attracted the notice of his people through his love for soli-

tude, his visions and spontaneous song-making. In some modern cultures the behavior of the prospective shaman might seem to indicate a psychopathology. However, it is precisely because they succeeded in curing themselves that these individuals became shamans.

Often, in fact, the *initiatory sickness* was induced through the use of drugs, solitude, fasting and other austerities. Typically during these rituals, the shaman would experience a powerful series of waking dreams, over many days, symbolic of a death and rebirth pattern.

Imagine having your body dismembered by demons or ancestral spirits; your bones cleaned, the flesh scraped off, the body fluids thrown away, and your eyes torn from the sockets, but set aside so that you may watch the entire procedure. It was only after such a purgative experience that the shaman could obtain his powers of healing and psychic vision. Then he was given new flesh and the spirits instructed him in the psychic arts.

He learned to find the souls of sick men who have wandered, or been carried by demons away from their bodies. He learned how to guide the souls of the dead to their new abodes; and he added to his knowledge by regular association with higher beings. He learned how to explore the new planes of existence disclosed through his experience.

An interesting approach to psychic development is found in a medieval magical grimoire of uncertain origins called *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin The Mage*. This work seems to have had a profound influence on twentieth century esoteric schools such as the Order of the Golden Dawn in England - which included such eminent personalities as Aleister Crowley and William Butler Yeats. The sacred magic involved rituals, prayer and concentration throughout a six-month period of solitude. Specific clothing, incense, objects and ritual arrangements were required to aid in the focusing of consciousness on the magical task. During the entire period, one's attention was to be resolutely

focused on attaining conversation with one's true Holy Guardian Angel through whom all psychic mysteries were revealed.

Other systems of magic prescribed shorter periods of solitude which lead to the accomplishment of lesser effects. On the other hand, Tibetan training in certain sects required over three years of solitary meditation and the visualization of tutelary dieties.

In the late eighteenth century, Franz Anton Mesmer originated an unorthodox system of healing which combined both dramatic ritual and the induction of a focused, presumably altered state of consciousness. The treatment, taking place within an emotionally charged atmosphere, involved passing the hands of the healer near the body of the patient. Sometimes the behavior resulting from Mesmer's treatments resembled pagan rites, or perhaps the rites of modern discotheques, with shrieking, spasmodic jerking, rapturous embracing or frantic horror. At other times, patients were known to go into deep trance states which Mesmer's follower, the Marquis de Puységur, identified as *somnambulistic*.

Perhaps the first clinically documented case of psychic development is that of Victor Race, an uneducated peasant who was mesmerized by de Puységur. While in the *somnambulistic* trance he was able to perceive the unspoken thoughts of the mesmerist as well as other events taking place at a distance. Within a short time, dozens of practitioners were reporting similar results.

However, even the more conventional claims of mesmerism did not receive official scientific recognition until 1938 when the American Medical Association approved the use, by qualified personnel, of what is now known as hypnosis.

Parapsychological studies using hypnosis show that subjects score better

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