

DRUG PROVINGS IN A NEW ROLE

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There exists at present a controversy in the field of psychiatry. The proponents of the chemical cause of psychoses diligently advance research to substantiate their theses. Their adversaries hold just as vigorously that psychoses, and schizophrenia in particular, derive from emotional causes. Neither group realizes that they are falling into the same old error of the "either/or" proposition. It is not our intention to take sides in this controversy, but to utilize this controversy for a purpose never envisioned when the experiments were undertaken.

It has been the practice of the homœopathic school of medicine to experiment with human beings, to ascertain the reactions of those individuals after having taken drugs orally. This type of experiment has continued for two centuries. The purpose was to create a *Materia Medica*. This type of experiment has been known as *The Proving*. The proponents of the chemical cause of psychoses, among whom we can number Drs. Savage, Baringer, and Hofman, have appropriated the proving technique for their own purposes.

In order to study better the schizophrenia syndrome, there would be advantages in being able to produce it at will. It had come to the attention of researchers that the ingestion of Mescaline was frequently followed by a drug illness which was so similar to the natural illness, in this case, schizophrenia, that they were indistinguishable. There were some objections, however, to the use of Mescaline. By pure chance it was found that the ingestion of Lysergic Acid was frequently followed by a similar clinical picture. There were certain advantages to the Lysergic Acid, mainly in the fact that the dose could be infinitesimally small. In fact, Dr. Hofman is of the opinion that mere inhalation of the Lysergic Acid is sufficient to provoke the desired reaction. In any case, as Hahnemann pointed out, here was an agent which could on many occasions in the sensitive laboratory animal bring about a drug disease, and this reaction could be provoked quantitatively

and qualitatively within certain reasonable limitations at the will of the experimenter.

The modern-day experimenter errs semantically as well as logically in much the same way as did Hahnemann, by jumping to the conclusion that there exists a power or potency in the drug "to do." In this particular day and age we should be in a better position to speak realistically and less mystically. It would be closer to the truth to say that the power to create the pathology, either subjective or objective, or both, lies in the laboratory animal and is in the nature of a reaction and not of an effect. To state this another way, it would be far more correct, particularly in the reaction following the inhalation of Lysergic Acid, to say that we are dealing with pharmaco-dynamic phenomena and not an instance of pharmacology.

As might have been anticipated, when these provings were repeated in individual instances and with groups, a certain technique began to develop, and this technique is becoming more and more similar to that developed by the homœopathic investigator. The experimental animal underwent careful examination before being proven. During the proving he or she was frequently examined and interviewed. The prover's own language was utilized in the data accumulated. The nature of the drug being administered was unknown to those conducting the experiment. Selected individuals in the group were given placebos as a control. The pathogenesis of the one agent, Mescaline, was compared with the pathogenesis of Lysergic Acid and their similarities noted, as well as their differences. This amounts to an exercise in comparative materia medica. Other drugs were administered along with or in combination with the above-mentioned agents in order to determine whether or not they were complementary or inimical. As the number of provings grew, it was found that there was a certain drug picture resulting from the administration of Mescaline, as there was a drug picture resulting from the administration of Lysergic Acid; and although there were similarities between these pictures, there also were certain differences. Abnormal people were introduced into the experiment—in one instance an individual who had undergone lobotomy—in order to determine what influence there would be, if any, on the drug picture. As

the symptoms of the pathogeneses increased in number and variety, they were organized into categories, such as the generals, the particulars, the mental, and so forth. In other words, rubrics were established, classifying and cataloguing the various components of the reaction. It would be too much to expect this type of research, with its particular objective in mind, to completely parallel the homœomethodology; but there is a startling similarity. After several years of experimentation, we find the following paragraph:

“Nevertheless, to date, experiments with LSD (Lysergic Acid) have raised more questions than they have answered: How can such an infinitesimal amount of material so change the psychic life of the subject? Is latent schizophrenia present in everyone, and does LSD merely release it? Is this drug or its derivatives, or analogues, a metabolic cause of schizophrenia? What are the dimensions of this “other world” described by so many as a result of this administration? Is this same psychic experience present for all who take the drug? Why do some respond with anxiety, fear, projection, and depression, while others sense elation, peace, revelation, and a vision of beauty?”

The question of ambivalency in the homœopathic *Materia Medica* has been a vexing one and criticized, as Cliffey pointed out, that the same drug administered to different individuals will in one instance be provocative of a reaction depressing in character, and in another individual his reaction will be one fundamentally of elation. The inference has always been that this is evidence of a weakness in or shortcoming of the homœopathic *Materia Medica*. Certain it is that the homœopathic physician finds that this experimental verity greatly complicates his prescribing. It is complimenting and rewarding to find, from completely unprejudiced sources, confirmation of an experimental fact long known to the homœopathic profession. One attempts to recall where there is some partial or complete explanation of this paradox. To my personal knowledge there is a suggestion to be found in the works of Pavlov. Speranski submits a partial explanation in the following sentence: “The stage is already set in the individual, needing only the drug or the pathogen to raise the curtain or set the play in motion.”

There exists the possibility, however remote, that as aggressive and inquisitive minds continue to experiment in the realm of drug pathogenesis, there may be at long last a re-discovery of the homœomethodology in ways quite unanticipated and unforeseen. If a new science at present going under the term Cybernetics comes of age and is more generally utilized, this possibility becomes even more acute. Defined, the science of Cybernetics means the communication of knowledge between scientific groups of alien interests. The most recent publications of the transactions of such a society were published in March of 1951, by the Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation and were edited by H. von Froester. This subject is so important that it will form the basis of a subsequent article by this essayist.

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ONE OF MY CASES

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to everything. Has a sinking sensation, as if everything was dropping out when she uses the toilet. If she scratches herself, the spot she scratches feels very cold. Hungry not relieved by eating.

January 16th 1958. Sent Sepia 200, one dose and sac lac.

February 13th 1958. Wrote and said "I feel on top of the world since the last medicine but in the last day or so there has been a slight return of my symptoms.

February 14th 1958. Sent Sepia 200, one dose (second) and sac lac, and asked her to report in three weeks.

As this is the end of February 1959, and I have heard nothing further from this lady, I take it all is well.

—*The Homœopathic World, April-June, '59*
