

ETHYL OXIDE

by Aleister Crowley

I

Experiments conducted (at odd times beginning July 1916 e.v.) on my own person, have convinced me that the particular technical administration of Ethyl Oxide in combination with certain mental exercises enables the experimenter to ascertain;

1. The value of the relation of a given thought or faculty with the sum of his mental characteristics.
2. The final opinion of the experimenter on any given subject (In the popular phrase, "what is at the bottom of the flask".)

While of course complete unconsciousness has often been reached (in surgical operations etc.) it has never been ascertained what occurs in this state (of anesthesia induced by Ether) to the normal healthy individual when he has trained himself to hold a thought through a period of unconsciousness so that there is complete identity between the last thought before losing, & the first after regaining, consciousness.

It suggests itself that knowledge on this point might throw light upon;

- a. The psychology of dying
- b. The post mortem consciousness, assuming that after bodily death, the individual "awakes" to another form of life.

II

The following conditions appear in the light of experience & reasoning to be favorable to the experiment.

1. The experiment must take place in such conditions, physical & psychological, that distraction is minimized. (e.g. choose a quiet spot & time, let the mind be free from care or preoccupation.). Let the experimenter be thoroughly awake & alert, free from physical fatigue, & in sound bodily health.
2. The process of intoxication should be exceedingly gradual. The free

nostril should be applied to the neck of the flask, but no attempt made to exclude air from the lungs. The criterion of proper administration is given by the time occupied, which should not be much less than 2 hours from the beginning to the moment of losing consciousness. If properly done, a very small amount of Ethyl Oxide is required, say 1/2 oz. (The time will vary with the expertness of the experimenter; one can quicken up when one knows how to maintain full control of the thought-stream.)

3. The experimenter should already be expert:
 - a. in analyzing his thoughts; so as to be able to detect the character of any thought & to understand precisely why it has superseded its predecessor. (He should have some experience in detecting the subconscious links between successive ideas. "the words of the insane are mountain-tops" etc.)
 - b. in controlling his mind so as to be able to reject any thought which is not in the logical sequence of his chosen subject of meditation. (Per contra, an apparently alien thought sometimes belongs, importantly, to the course of analysis.)
 - c. in concentrating his mind so that during the whole period of the experiment he is able to maintain uninterruptedly the analysis of the chosen subject of his investigation. (The beginner should select a problem which really interests him as deeply as possible.)
4. He should already be expert in Mantra Yoga to the point when, having gone to sleep repeating his mantra, it should spring instantly to consciousness on awakening (either naturally or if disturbed) without any effort of recollection.
5. He should be sufficiently expert in Yoga to be able to discover the concealed meaning of any thought. (This is the essence of the process. One begins by considering any particular opinion or feeling proper to one's character, & proceeds to eliminate the accidental circumstances which have determined its form; until one discovers its root in one's original nature. For example, one begins by reflecting that one dislikes a given color or is attracted to a given system of philosophy. These phenomena are merely symbols of the shape of one's soul, so that an aversion to red might be connected with one's fear of death, or one's sympathy with Herbert Spencer significant of one's intellectual habits.) Psychoanalysis assists one to some extent: but avoid accepting the conclusions of other people, or allowing any theory to prejudice the analysis.

III

1. Ethyl Oxide appears to assist the mind to distinguish between thoughts proper to its own nature & those suggested to it by some combination of circumstances.
2. It sometimes enables one to perceive at a glance each & all of the forces bearing upon the problem & to extract unerringly their resultant. (In other words, one is able to make up one's mind quite definitely on any point without fear of having omitted some consideration. It thus informs one what is one's True Will, or the nature of one's inmost Self, in reference to any chosen subject.)
3. The course of analysis usually proceeds logically up to a certain point; but it often happens that at the last moment, when one feels that an irrevocable event is imminent, the whole analysis is suddenly perceived as camouflage--although perfectly sincere--& is violently rejected & replaced by an apparently disconnected assertion, usually of extreme simplicity. Subsequent conscious analysis should reveal this as the true cause of the false chain of thought.
4. The first experiments should, in my opinion, be directed to straightening out any kinks in the consciousness of the experimenter; (i.e. he should seek to discover who he really is, his true relation with the Universe as opposed to the conscious idea of himself which he has created, or has been imposed on him by his early training & experience. i.e. analyze away Wish-phantasms, Fear-spectres, False idiosyncrasies, & prejudices. He should thus get rid of fear, desire, false idealism, & in particular of the doubt which exists (as I suppose) in practically all men as to their own ultimate validity. I mean that we all have moments when we wonder whether we really exist, or merely persuade ourselves that we do. Also whether we are absolutely straight with ourselves--see Sir Palamede, sections about Hunchback & the knight that he was Sir P. & Sir P. an impostor.
5. Deep-seated personal complexes such as above indicated, should be abolished before they disturb the analytical faculty at critical moments. This being achieved, one may proceed to ask such questions as the following: What is my real conception of time, space, causality, truth, etc.?

It will be found that the definitions of such ideas, however well they satisfy the normal mind, appear, in the light of this analysis, as of a totally different order. For instance, time & space may lose all their accepted characteristics & appear as arbitrary modes of discrimination between aspects of an idea. Such logical axioms as A is A may be recog-

nized as false.

6. Having perceived ~"the Universe as Nothingness with twinkles" etc. (See Star Sponge Vision Records (Book \$, Part IV) CCXX Comment on Chap I. v.59) & subsequently understood that this form is determined by the structure of the nervous system & thus really a phantasm of it, one may begin again from that standpoint to enquire why the nervous system itself should be conceived as it is, from anatomical indications which themselves depend on the same sensory perceptions which in turn determine the form of the original vision. i.e. Having got "the Universe as I see it is an Image of my nervous system" ask; "Why do I see the nervous system as I do? What is the ultimate meaning of this conception? What does it imply, my imprisonment in this `circular argument'"?
7. A discreet scribe should be employed to record the progress of the analysis. The time should be carefully noted. Apparently senseless exclamations often prove the most valuable indications of discoveries which are perhaps unintelligible to the experimenter himself even at the time.
8. The really vital problem is this (Note: sleep & death are negative. What is it then which withdraws or relaxes? Does the fact indicate a Self behind the Conscious Ego: if so, cannot we reach that Self by exploring sleep?): "What happens to a man when he is unconscious?" It should be possible to throw some light upon this question by accurate observation of the last conscious thought & its successor on awakening. Given an experimenter trained to maintain a Mantra through sleep, any difference between these two thoughts should be due to something that has happened in the unconscious state.
9. The analysis should proceed constantly to deeper levels of the mind. It is essential to reach the subconscious strata & make them articulate. The final thought should represent the nature of the man stripped of all terrestrial conditions so ever. (It is generally admitted that intoxication helps reveal the true self of a man, & that at the moment of death he will not utter a lie. This process should reach deeper yet by willed intelligent elimination of any sources of error.)
10. The experimenter should make a point of analyzing away any thoughts symptomatic of the Will-to-Live, i.e. he should treat the unconscious state as a real death, in order to make sure that his last thought is not contaminated by considerations of his conditioned existence. (The Will-to-Live is an expression of the bodily & mental complexes, not the True Self; otherwise, one would never consent to go to sleep as one does.)

11. Ethyl Oxide may also be used in connection with Magical Invocations to loosen the girders of the Soul. The method is to exalt the consciousness to the utmost by means of the proper ceremonies & incantations, & then, selecting some short but intense conjuration, the dramatic climax of the ritual, to use it as a mantra (See The Paris Working, where the Mantra began on starting actual sexual intercourse, & had to be kept going undisturbed by physical & moral interference, even through orgasm itself. See also Liber HHH & 831.) at the same time concentrating the Will upon entering into direct communication with the Intelligence invoked. The moment of entering unconsciousness should be the climax of this process, so that, as one loses oneself, one becomes that Intelligence. There is thus no true unconsciousness, but the arising of a new consciousness, & on coming to oneself, one should bring with one the memory of his nature & message.
12. The nature of scientific, mathematical, & philosophical conditions may be investigated with every prospect of success. For instance, it should be easy to discover whether a statement such as Twice 2 is 4 really asserts anything about the nature of things, or defines a mental limitation, or is a simple tautology. One might also enquire whether one really believed in an external universe, whether one's idea of the Ego was convenient fiction or no, what one really meant by Zero, Infinity, the square root of -1, & so on. (This is particularly important because all truths, so-called, may be rationally resolved into necessary forms of the mind, so that if, for example, it should turn out that mathematics was no more than a system of symbolizing the facts of logic, one might save much time & eliminate an obvious source of error.)
13. Ethyl Oxide helps one to confine the area of conscious sensation to any desired limit. Thus, one can concentrate one's attention on a finger & so analyze the sensation of the minutest muscular movements such as convey no appreciable impression to the normal mind. One becomes conscious of what the parts of the body feel themselves: e.g. the cells of the nostrils feel a definite pleasure at the free passage of air. (This is as far as I have gone; but it seems as if this line of research might prove fruitful in the right hands.) It should enable one to distinguish between local and centralized consciousness, & to determine whether the Ego is a single simple Idea, or an illustration composed of diverse complex elements & realized as a unit for mere convenience' sake.
14. The analysis of sensations enables one to separate them from the ideas of pleasure & pain. One can thus remember events normally lost in oblivion through the operation of Freudian protection. One can also

destroy any given fear which tends to oppress the mind & prevent it exercising its function freely. Tradition asserts that we forget our previous incarnations because the shock of death erects a barrier. Without assenting to this theory, I will say that having trained myself to face the fact of Death without mental disturbance, I found myself able to recall my last death, & so to pick up many memories of my previous life as Eliphas Levi; also, that having overcome the first obstacle, it became progressively easier to recall lives previous to that. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that I find it difficult to remember by Magical mistakes, & am (in particular) barred even now from remembering the details of a tremendous Magical catastrophe in the remote past whose effect was to hurl me from a series of incarnations in which I was a high Initiate, & of which I remember many incidents, to climb painfully once more to my present state. There is thus a definite gap in my Magical Memory, a shape of shame & horror which I have not yet found courage to unveil.

15. Ethyl Oxide helps one to classify & understand one's mental faculties & their inter-relation. In particular, one can clear up the confusion caused by the fact that in one state of mind A is A is absolute; in another, untrue. One also learns how one faculty implies, & is involved with, another. This assists one to purify each from its accidents, to develop it, & to coordinate it with the others to the best advantage... One also learns not to confuse separate orders of idea, generally, to correct wrong thinking.

16. Ethyl Oxide helps one to diagnose the diseases of the mind. In early experiments, especially if one's Magical Training be imperfect, the stimulation of the drug is almost certain to call up emotional complexes or intellectual prejudices. These must of course be noted, analyzed, & destroyed, before attempting any serious research. The ability to inhibit any such interference when under the influence of intoxication affords a reasonable guarantee that one has mastered any such seditions elements in the soul.

17. The delicacy of the mental equilibrium produced by skillful administration of the drug, enables one to make accurate measurements of the elements of consciousness. One should make a systematic examination of these, & draw, so to speak, a map to scale, of the mind. This should be done actually, by means of diagrams or descriptions, & corrected from time to time as fresh information comes to hand. It is particularly to understand & estimate the components of each faculty, somewhat as is done in Buddhist psychology.

The question of the Skandhas is important. One must assimilate fully the fact of Nama-Rupa being a sheath of sensation, & that of perception

& so on: & be sufficiently practiced to dig out the Vinnanam concerned in any overt thought or impression without having to perform a conscious analysis, & so be distracted from the main subject of the meditation.

18. The experimenter will learn to recognize instinctively when he has reached the desired result. It comes as a climax with the force of a revelation. I believe it to be useless to continue the experiment after this has occurred. One should start entirely afresh. i.e. suppose one gets a revelation in the course of the work, which is however not the one required; one should accept defeat for the moment. The point is that a genuine revelation exhausts the species of Energy involved for the time being. The parallel case is the occurrence of orgasm in sexual intercourse. A perfect orgasm should leave no lust: if one wants to go on, it simply shows that one has failed to collect every element of the personality, & discharge it utterly in a single explosion.