

PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE MEDIUM TRANCE

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This work proposes a study about the mediums personality, aside from characterise or not the existence of a predominant personality pattern among the mediums, as well as tries to establish the basic electroencephalographic register before and even during the "medium trance", and through a comparative study tries to estimate the possible psychoneurophysiological changes between the two states.

Introduction

Since immemorial times the man attempts to establish a relationship among the mental disturbs and the "maligns" influences either natural or "supernatural".

On the more antique civilisations, the mental disturbs were predominantly assigned to a demoniac possession and generally treated by wizards and religious methods applied by doctors/priest.

Existing among several cultures on many continents: Amok and Bebainan (Indonesia), Latah (Malaysia), Pibloktoq (Arctic), Umbanda, Candomblé (Brazil), Spiritism (Europe, USA, South America), would have the trans-cultural psychiatrists model the ability to justify the phenomenology like "normal"? That "normal" could or not be knowledgeable like synonymous of mental health?

For a few the "trance" would be an altered state of consciousness, a natural phenomenon, as sex, eating, speaking, being the human species able to perform, when ever in some contexts and under some stimuli (Michael Lambek (1989, p.48)).

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To others, a demonstration of insanity, a normal signal of personal madness and sometimes collective. This appreciation has in consideration the cultural, religious, social and ethnical patterns of the phenomenon connoisseurs.

Can we establish a correlation between the "medium phenomena" and the psychiatric phenomena? Is there a relation between personality disturbs, dissociation phenomena and medium trance phenomena? For Psychiatry, the phenomena of "trance and possession" is already acknowledged, existing on the I.C.D. 10, Illness International code, in the 10th edition the reference to these phenomena, in item F.44.3 (trance and possession Disturbs), on the classification of dissociation (or conversion) disturbs.

The I.C.D. defines trance disturbances as: "disturbances on what there is a temporary loss in the sense of the personal identity and of the entire environment consciousness; in certain cases, the person acts as if it was taken by another personality, spirit, god and "power".

The attention and the consciousness may be limited or focus at only one or two aspects of the immediate atmosphere and there are more times a conditioned conjunct but repeated of movements, positions and vocal expressions.

Merely trance disturbances that are involuntary or unwanted and that whether interfere in the common activities, occur out of religious situations or others accepted in the culture, must be here included. (I.C.D. 10, 1992).

Yet rebound need to exclude situations as: psychotic esquizofrenics, raves, multiple personality, physical disturbances such as epilepsy of the temporal zone, cranial traumatic, acute intoxication by psychoactive matter, of that classification. Is there on mediums personality some pathology, or the epileptic's phenomena type may be at the basis of such symptomatology? It could be that the mediums are carrier of a cerebral disrhythmic that could configure by partial attack with sensorial symptoms, for example with audible hallucinations, and "voices"?

What happens to the "medium" at the level of his neuropsychophysiology, during the "trance" states is the propose of this work. These are some questions that this project tries to clarify, taking into account a better understanding of the medium trance phenomena, from a phenomenology point of view.

Objectives

1. To analyse the existence of a more frequent personality pattern of mediums characteristic.
2. To characterise the psychophysiology related to the "Medium trance".
3. To define the "medium" basal electroencephalographic pattern before "medium trance" and during the event.

Study's Hypothesis

1. It doesn't exist an abnormal pattern of personality among the mediums.
2. There is a temporary neuropsychophysiological change on the mediums during the trance phenomena.

Methodology

Population

The target population to be studied will be composed by persons acknowledged as "medium" by the Portuguese Spirit Federation that has ostensibly "medium faculty" and practise the medium activity at some country Spirit Centre for at least one year. At the minimum, 10 persons will be studied, of age greater than 18 years, any civil status, any educational degree and of both sexes.

Sample

Mediums that have medium faculty of: psychofony, psychografy, vidence or any other that eventually may be included and that are indicated by spirits centres that recognised their aptness.

Research instruments

1. Personnel history
2. Psychology evaluation:
 - a) Application at the test ES-80 (Pio de Abreu, 1994), psychopathological situations.

b) Application of scale DES (Bernstein & Putman, 1986), for dissociative experiences.

c) Application of MMPI – personality test.

d) Human figure test – dynamic of the personality

e) Test Rawen – intelligence test

3. Neurophysiological register of the patient basal state and of the event “medium trance”, with proper instruments, in order to proper garnering of:

a) 16 canals of EEG, with differentiation of alpha, beta, theta, bilateral.

b) Muscular activity (with surface electrode).

c) Cardiac attendance.

d) Arterial tension (before and after the “trance”).

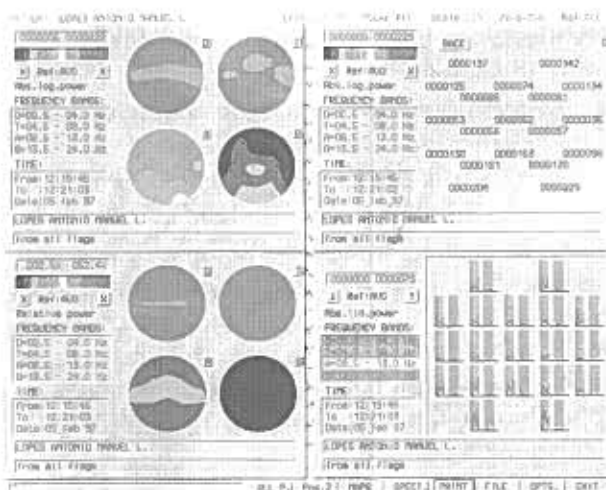
e) Skin conductance.

f) O₂ Saturation.

4. Register in VHS video of the demonstrations during the “medium trance”.

5. Auto-evaluation for altered states of consciousness, before and right after the “medium trance”, APZ (Dittrich, 1975).

The study group is controlled by itself, as it will be psychoneurophysiologically studied either in basal state and also under “medium trance”.



Partial results

We have 40 mediums to enrol from the cities of: Porto, Vila Nova de Gaia, Viana do Castelo, Rio Tinto and we expect the contact of Associations of Lisbon and Caldas da Rainha. The age of the mediums varies from 18 to 68 years. Present are the following medium faculties:

Psychofony – 28 persons

Psychografy – 1

Vidence – 5

Feeling – 6 (only included in the first phase of the study, what the review of the personality and register electroencephalographic of basis, by being the trance fewer ostensibly).

We are still not able to affirm or lessen the existence of a pattern of personality characteristic or abnormal in that population studied, as well as to weave considerations about the changes encountered on the electroencephalographic register, since the study is still in progress.

Acknowledgements

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