

I

Ecstasy Research in the 20th Century- An Introduction

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1. *Definitions*

Scholars have always been interested in distinctive phenomena in culture and religion. Thus the accounts and achievements of yogis and mystics received attention at an early stage. There is a similar tendency with shamans, different kinds of sorcerers and with the "group-hysterical" phenomena that have appeared from time to time. There is, on the other hand, no major collection of research contributions on all the phenomena belonging to this field. Before I proceed to discuss some of the research produced over this vast area, I shall introduce some of the technical terms and concepts current in this field of study.

Ecstasy is derived from a Greek word, with the original meaning of removing oneself from a given place. By an extended sense of the word, this implies that the ego is no longer in the physical frame. In Latin it can be translated by "alienatio" (Spoerri 1968, 1f.). In research it has come to signify different states of consciousness that are characterised by unusual achievements, peculiar experiences and odd behaviour. In the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* from 1912 we have a fairly short but nonetheless lucid definition as follows: "an abnormal state of consciousness, in which the reaction of the mind to external stimuli is either inhibited or altered in character. In its more restricted sense, as used in mystical theology, it is almost equivalent to 'trance'" (Inge 1912, 157). We have a number of monographs on the subject of ecstatic phenomena both within Christianity and beyond. Older studies include those of Achelis (1902), Beck (s. a.) and

Linderholm (1924); more recent contributions are those of Arbman (1963–1970), Lewis (1971) and Laski (1961).

In addition to ecstasy, other words are used to describe phenomena in the same category. Trance is a term that is employed in almost exactly the same sense as the word ecstasy. Anna-Leena Siikala mostly uses the word *trance* in her study of shamanism and provides the following definition: “trance is a form of behaviour deviating from what is normal in a wakened state and possessing a specific cultural significance, typical features being modifications of the grasp of reality and the self-concept, with the intensity of change varying from slight alterations to complete loss of consciousness” (Siikala 1978, 39). Siikala points out that, apparently, anthropologists more frequently use the word *trance*, whereas students of religion employ the word *ecstasy* (*ibid.*).

Another concept often associated with ecstasy is mysticism. Attempts have sometimes been made to assign all ecstatic phenomena to mysticism. Thus the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines *ecstasy* as a term “used in mysticism to describe its primary goal: the experience of an inner vision of God or of one’s relation to or union with the divine”. It is not customary however to proceed in this manner and the two concepts, as a rule, are only partially allowed to coincide. When we speak of mysticism we imply a much wider field—where aspects of knowledge and intention are prominent—than when we use the word *ecstasy*. Mystical experiences are perhaps best described as occurrences through which an individual, in an intensive and unusual way, is afforded new knowledge of the innermost essence of the universe. Not infrequently the experience implies some sort of absorption into the great universal whole. In the case of *ecstasy* however, interest is more concentrated on certain mental changes without any assumptions being made about the constituent qualities of the experience itself (*cf.* Holm 1979).

Possession is another term which converges on the concept of *ecstasy*. We have a number of studies dealing with possession, including those of Oesterreich 1921, Bourguignon 1976 and Crapanzano-Garrison 1977. In his introduction to the latter work, Crapanzano provides us with a short but concise definition of possession. It is “any altered state of consciousness indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit” (Crapanzano 1977,7). We see here that in the case of possession there is a special interpretation of the course of events. There is a god, a spirit or some other supernatural force exerting an influence on the person possessed. This interpretation is thus borrowed from the culture in question and only used by researchers for the purpose of classification. It may thus involve the influence of both good and evil forces.

In recent years another term has come into currency to designate ecstatic phenomena. It is the term "altered states of consciousness". This term has been used in an attempt to cover all states of consciousness except the normal alert state. Ludwig, who classified this state at an early stage, gives the following definition of the concept: "For the purpose of discussion, I shall regard 'altered states of consciousness' [...] as those mental states induced by various physiological, psychological or pharmacological maneuvers or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation, in terms of subjective experience of psychological functioning, from certain general norms as determined by the subjective experience and psychological functioning of that individual during alert, waking consciousness" (Ludwig 1968, 69f.). Ludwig's article goes on to provide a comprehensive account of the different ways in which altered states of consciousness occur, together with the characteristics and functions these states assume in different contexts. He classifies these states according to whether the exteroceptive stimulation and activity is higher or lower and whether mental alertness is increased or diminished. It is obvious that the concept of altered states of consciousness is the most comprehensive one hitherto in use and that all ecstatic states can be assumed within it. No value judgements are implied in the concept and it is thus well-suited to a scientific context. The only problem is that the concept is a very broad one and that it does not convey any information about the origin or function of the state. There is thus a continual need for scientific categorisation and clarification of ecstatic states.

After this brief survey we can therefore state that there is a general ecstatic phenomenon, implying alteration of man's mental activity and with attendant consequences for his interpretation of reality and his ego-perception. Within different religions and cultures this phenomenon then acquires different interpretations and meanings. I am here using the terms altered state of consciousness, trance and ecstasy in the same sense. Possession, however, implies the addition of another criterium: the altered state of consciousness must acquire a specific interpretation from the culture or individual concerned. Mysticism is a broad term but it does not focus attention, as do the previously mentioned terms, on the alteration of consciousness. The concept of hypnosis has gained fairly wide scientific currency and clearly converges on the phenomenon I am studying here. It would be carrying things too far to extend our discussion to include research into hypnosis and I therefore refrain from any detailed reference to it. In my final comments however, I provide a link with the results of hypnosis research.

2. *Earlier 20th century research*

After this brief survey of the concept of ecstasy and its related terms, we shall now give further consideration to the literature on the subject. It transpires that the latter may be fairly simply divided into different categories depending on the type of research in question. We have, first of all, a large number of contributions characterised above all by the analysis and meticulous description of some phenomenon or occurrence somewhere in the world, often without any greater aspirations towards a general explanation of the phenomenon in question. Another group of studies aims, however, at a theoretical explanation of ecstatic states. These explanations may of course be very different in character but the theoretical concepts involved may easily be divided into two groups: 1) research which attempts to compare ecstasy with ideas taken from psychiatry or which tries to fit ecstasy into some classification of mental states, 2) research which applies an anthropological or social-psychological point of view. There are of course marginal approaches between the two groups. In what follows, I shall not discuss accounts that are essentially descriptive in character. I shall instead pay closer attention to research that is more interpretative in nature and which attempts to apply a theoretical perspective to the phenomenon.

The purpose of research in the first category of the more theoretical contributions may be regarded as the description of the ecstatic state in as precise terms as possible to provide an opportunity for comparison with other known mental states. There has often been an interest in discovering as many criteria as possible for ecstatic states, which may then be all the more easily compared to other states, particularly those of a pathological nature. Towards the end of the 19th century psychiatry made great progress and also began to display an interest in religious ecstasy. New prospects were provided of understanding a large number of distinctive phenomena within the history of religious enthusiasm. In this context I shall do no more than briefly recall such figures as Janet, Kraepelin, Ribot and, in Sweden, Gadelius, as representatives of psychiatry. There was a tendency to believe that if one found parallels between ecstatic states and proven cases within psychiatry, this in itself was sufficient explanation. The sick states which research tried to "carve out" were often regarded as clear quantities with a specific genesis and a certain characteristic course of events. The pathological state with which connections were most frequently formed was that of hysteria. Students of religion such as Linderholm, Andrae, Voipio and Arbman readily made this connection.

In his study "Die Ekstase" from 1902 Th. Achelis gives us a comprehen-

sive survey of the phenomenon. He uses the psychology and sociology of his day but also shows a familiarity with cultural variations in different parts of the world. He emphasizes, among other things, the use of different narcotic agents to induce ecstasy. He also describes dancing, castration and self-torment of various kinds. He regards people with a weak and, to a certain degree, undeveloped nervous systems as more easily susceptible to every sort of influence from nature and the group and therefore more liable to become involved in ecstatic phenomena. He writes: "Je geringer die Herrschaft des Menschen über sich selbst ist, je weniger er imstande ist, willkürlich seine Aufmerksamkeit zu bestimmen, umso mehr ist er von seiner Umgebung abhängig, je grösser ist seine Suggestibilität, wie der technische Ausdruck lautet" (Achelis 1902, 18). In describing the social importance of ecstasy he claims that many ecstatic movements have been emphatically group phenomena where individual needs have been fused with the group spirit (Achelis 1902, 184).

P. Beck in his study uses an evolutionary approach. He assumes that states of consciousness, just like physical organs, have had different functions and purposes during the course of evolution. Phylogenetically speaking, they are of different ages. He writes: "Nach meine Hypothese ist die Ekstase der Rückfall in einen uralten Bewusstseinzustand, in das Urbewusstsein, das der Differenzierung des modernen Bewusstseins in Ich und Aussenwelt vorangeht. Dieser Zustand ist im allgemeinen verschwunden, wie ein alter Kontinent, der jetzt vom Meer bedeckt wird" (Beck, 50).

In his study of Pentecostalism, E. Linderholm discusses the basis and origin of the Pentecostal movement in the first volume. He calculates that ecstasy is "a deep rooted tendency in man's mental constitution" (Linderholm 1924, 11). The state is produced by various external means of suggestion, both material and nonmaterial in nature. It is characteristic of ecstasy, of which there is both a spontaneous and a voluntary form, that the external senses, particularly those of sight and hearing, cease to function. The awareness of time and space also disappear. The "subconscious spiritual activity" nevertheless continues (14). Linderholm points out that ecstasies from different cultures display certain general similarities, although there are otherwise a host of cultural variations. The similarities or correspondences may be explained by the fact that "in the highest or deepest ecstatic states all notions of the subconscious spiritual life and all memory of the ordinary cognitive universe have been so strongly reduced, that they are no longer able to appear specialised" (21). If, however, the cognitive assertions are more specific in kind, the ecstatic's dependence on a cultural environment becomes evident.

T. Andrae, who in his book "The Psychology of Mysticism" (unfortu-

nately only in Swedish) has given detailed descriptions of the various mystical states in terms of possession or inspiration, also discusses the phenomenon in relation to the theory of hysteria. He finds similarities between the two concepts and writes: "It cannot in my opinion be denied that the phenomena of religious possession and inspiration must be regarded as manifestations of hysteria and that consequently most mystics must be called hysterics. We have seen that the clearly defined and highly typical cycle of symptoms that normally accompany possession and inspiration correspond clearly to the stigmata of hysteria" (566 f.). But Andrae wishes to point out that the hysterical reaction should not be regarded as particularly more "primitive" than thought or volition. In his studies of sleeping preachers in Finland, particularly the prophetess Maria Åkerblom, A. Voipio has indicated hysteria as an explanation for the distinctive phenomenon involved (Voipio 1923; 1951).

Arbman's great study of ecstasy "Ecstasy and Religious Trance" may also be placed in the category of research that has tried to classify ecstasy in relation to other known mental states. Arbman has given several long definitions of ecstasy and I should like to quote the one which perhaps best clarifies his position: "In all its forms and manifestations . . . the ecstasy shows itself unmistakably as a state of mind in which the consciousness of the believer has been involuntarily absorbed in the religious complex which in the state by which it was preceded constituted its sole exclusively dominating content or object, and in such a way that it has in its entirety been drawn under the more or less untrammelled automatic control of the latter . . . I have in several passages in the foregoing chosen to designate and describe the ecstasy or the religious trance as a state of *suggestive absorption*" (Arbman 1963, XV).

Arbman's study provides a comprehensive survey of the literature of ecstasy until the middle of the 50's. It also discusses ecstatic phenomena in different religions. An important section is devoted to his treatment of the relation of religious ecstasy to concepts developed within psychiatry. This account is to be found, above all, in the third volume of his work. He adopts a critical attitude to the equating of religious ecstasy with hysteria. He also however opposes Andrae's more sympathetic attitude in this context (Arbman 1970, 238 ff.). Whilst he acknowledges that ecstasy can occur in close connection with hysterical states, he strongly emphasizes that the distinctive character of religion is of great significance for religious ecstasies. He writes: "I have, I believe, clearly shown in the foregoing that ecstasy, as a consequence of the states of mind from which it proceeds and of which in the last analysis it only constitutes an abnormal intensification or culmination, cannot, despite its many striking resemblances with the

hysteric trance, be regarded as identical with the latter state or in all respects completely similar to it" (Arbman 1970, 45).

I should now like to mention the research that has aimed to provide a classification of different states of consciousness. From the literature written in German we have one scrupulous attempt to accomplish this. W. Gruehn thus speaks of "Überwache" and "Unterwache" states of consciousness. Normal states occupy a small field in a diagram whilst above and below them occur states which can be classified according to their intensity. The "überwache" state is characterised by an intensified alertness although the heightened awareness is often operational within a very limited area. The "Unterwache" states are characterised by varying degrees of sleep. Ecstatic-mystical states, according to the scheme, constitute an "überwache" state (Gruehn 1960, 124 ff.).

K. Thomas works along the same lines in his study of meditation. In this context he introduces the concept of "ausserwache Bewusstseinsstufe" by which he means primarily hypnosis and intoxication of various kinds, particularly by means of narcotic substances. In his chart of states of consciousness he has also introduced a scale according to which these states are evaluated from a religious point of view (Thomas 1973, 10 ff.).

A classificatory approach is also adopted by D. Langen in his study of archaic ecstasy and Asian meditation (1963), and by Th. Spoerri in his book "Beiträge zur Ekstase" (1968). Spoerri distinguishes between primitive ecstasy and cultural ecstasy. Together with C. Albrecht he speaks of a somnambulistic-ecstatic consciousness and of a "versunken-ekstatisches Bewusstsein". In describing different states of consciousness one should, according to Spoerri, pay attention among other things to awareness itself, that is the mechanism of sleep and wakefulness, communication with the environment and the question of integration (1 ff.).

A theoretical innovation that can also be included in this group is W. Sargant's view of religious ecstasy. He starts from Pavlov's research on the effects of overloading the nervous system and discovers that ecstasy may be regarded as a form of collapse of the nervous system (Sargant 1973). From the field of depth-psychology too, we have a number of studies devoted to ecstatic states. The discussion has largely centred on projection and paranoid forms of self-punishment (cf. Wikström, 203 ff.).

3. Anthropological and social-psychological research

Within this area of research there is considerably more interest than in the previous one in understanding ecstasy as a function of cultural and social factors. In several cases we find an emphasis on cultural determinants and other more individual ones. As I have suggested earlier, there is no ques-

tion of a sharp divide *vis à vis* the research contributions I have already discussed but rather of a shift in emphasis, with attempts at clarification.

I. M. Lewis is an anthropologist who has attempted to consider the phenomena of trance and possession in a sociological perspective. He makes a distinction between peripheral cults and what he calls "main morality possession religions" (Lewis 1971, 34), that is to say religions where possession constitutes a central part of the dominant culture. He makes an additional division in the case of the latter between religions that are concerned with ancestral spirits and those where possession allegedly resorts to more independent divine powers. To understand the authority exercised by the key persons within a cult, one must, according to Lewis, consider the whole spectrum of other more specialised means for the exertion of political or social control. The relationship between authority and ecstatic phenomena is expressed by Lewis in the following way: "If certain exotic religions thus allow ecstasy to rule most aspects of their adherents' lives, all the evidence indicates that the more strongly-based and entrenched religious authority becomes, the more hostile it is towards haphazard inspiration" (34).

Lewis provides a comprehensive survey of the phenomenon of possession in the peripheral cults and discovers that it is almost exclusively women who are possessed. They are often in a difficult position. They are subject to male oppression and otherwise without influence with respect to social and political conditions. By being possessed, the women, as it were, make a virtue of necessity and can also to a certain extent achieve a kind of liberation. In the eyes of the ruling groups, possession is regarded as an expression of evil spirits demanding in turn a ritual or something comparable if the possessed person is to be freed. Lewis writes: "... if it is in terms of the exclusion of women from full participation in social and political affairs and their final subjection to men that we should seek to understand their marked prominence in peripheral possession, we must also remember that these cults which express sexual tensions are yet permitted to exist by men" (88). Lewis supposes that male tolerance of the cults may reflect a dim consciousness within the men of the unjust position of women in society. Peripheral possession is generally directed by subordinates at superiors, whilst other forms of witchcraft assuming the form of accusations are used between groups of equal status or in relation to subordinates (Lewis 1971, 120).

In the case of religions where the possession phenomenon has a central position, however, the carriers are often, according to Lewis, more highly regarded people. The phenomenon then functions to maintain the system of power and control which the dominant groups wish to preserve. It is often

the religious elite that has the technique of ecstasy in its own hands in this case, and in contrast to the situation previously described, it is not used democratically. Instead it is only shamans, sorcerers, priests etc. who can and may practise this art of possession (Lewis 1971, 170ff.).

Erica Bourguignon and her research team have also worked with ecstatic phenomena. They have made special studies of possession in a number of cultures but have also been interested in trance and altered states of consciousness as a general phenomenon. In order to establish the presence of this phenomenon all over the world, they made a survey of 488 societies on the basis of information contained in an ethnological atlas. Results showed 90% of the societies "to have one or more institutionalized, culturally patterned form of altered states of consciousness" (Bourguignon 1973, 11). For Bourguignon, this result has the effect of legitimising research into the phenomena of trance and possession. It is in other words a central phenomenon in various cultures and thus worthy of detailed research.

Bourguignon makes a division between what she calls "possession trance" and "trance", that is between trance interpreted as possession and other forms of trance. Similarly, she calculates that possession can occur without trance. She writes: "We shall say that a belief in possession exists, when the people in question hold that a given person is changed in some way through the presence in him or on him of a spirit, entity or power, other than his own personality, soul, self, or the like. We shall say that possession trance exists in a given society when we find that there is such a belief in possession and that it is used to account for alterations in consciousness, awareness, personality or other aspects of psychological functioning" (Bourguignon 1976, 7-8). Bourguignon thus emphasizes that possession is a special interpretation of a course of events and that it depends on factors within each specific culture.

Bourguignon has made a further division between cultures where "possession trance" occurs either alone or in conjunction with "trance", and those where "trance" occurs quite alone. It then emerges that those cultures in which "possession trance" is found are the most complex ones, having "the largest population and the largest local group, stratification, slavery, sedentary settlement pattern, and a complex hierarchy of jurisdictional levels" (Bourguignon 1973, 20).

In her own interpretation of the theoretical concepts I have presented above, Bourguignon restricts herself to voodoo on Haiti. In her account of this she offers examples of numerous other interpretations made from social, historical or personal standpoints and is far from representing a single narrow view (Bourguignon 1976, 28ff.). The essential part of her

analysis of voodoo seems to be that she regards possession as an individual solution in a social situation through models provided by the culture. She summarises as follows: "The people find it possible to play the requisite roles and to have the appropriate experiences, however, not only because cultural learning of this behavior is available but because they have the personality structures, resulting from their particular upbringing and life experiences, that make them apt to engage in such behavior and to find it personally as well as socially rewarding" (Bourguignon 1976, 41).

Bourguignon's collaborators have each become specialised in their own field. I do not therefore discuss their work here, but I should like to emphasize that their theoretical concepts have differed somewhat from those of Bourguignon. Jeannette H. Henney, who has studied the "shakers" on the Island of St Vincent in the West Indies, stresses that the experience of visions found occurs among the shakers has an integrative effect on the individual. She has moreover drawn interesting parallels between "sensory privation" and the method for producing visions practised by the shakers (Henney 1973, 219 ff.; 1974, 3 ff.).

Felicitas D. Goodman, another of Bourguignon's collaborators, has studied a small group of Pentecostals in Yucután, Mexico, their success, their intensive apocalyptic expectations and the almost total disintegration of the group when the fulfilment of the prophecies did not materialise. Glossolalia behaviour within the group is of central significance in her books and articles. To understand glossolalia Goodman uses a neurophysiological approach, claiming that it is basic cross-cultural structures on a neural level that manifest themselves during speaking with tongues. These are revealed in the special mental state into which the glossolalist is placed. An essential part of Goodman's argument is her examination of how an individual is placed in this state and in what way the awakening from it takes place. The occurrence of glossolalia thus becomes an argument for Goodman to the effect that the state in which the glossolalist finds himself is indeed a special mental state (Goodman 1972; Goodman 1973; Goodman 1974, 267).

I have already discussed Goodman's interpretation of speaking with tongues on an earlier occasion and found that it hardly holds good. The structures which she has found in glossolalia and which she claims are linked with a specific mental state, are so general in most languages that one cannot, on the basis of this alone, support the occurrence of some specific state. This does not of course preclude the appearance of the gift of tongues under unusual mental conditions. It is merely that glossolalia with its attendant structures is not in itself indicative of an altered state of consciousness (cf. Holm 1974; Holm 1976; Holm 1977).

One of the most important studies of possession in recent years is the

account published by V. Crapanzano and Vivian Garrison in 1977 under the title "Case Studies in Spirit Possession". I shall not discuss every article in the book, but instead limit myself to reproducing something of the main argument presented by Crapanzano in his introduction. He and the other authors represented in the book combine a modified depth-psychology interpretation of possession with a socialanthropological approach. This means that the authors regard the phenomenon of possession as part of a cultural unity at the same time as they emphasize the individual mental and above all dynamic development in the people they study. There is then, according to these writers, a correspondence between individual needs and the methods provided by society for the enactment and resolution of problems.

When discussing the concept of altered states of possession, Crapanzano joins forces with Ludwig, whose article we have previously discussed. Possession consists of the projection and articulation of emotions and needs, according to the specific model each culture provides to this end. Crapanzano calls this model the idiom. A learning process is necessary, both with regard to the language the possessed person is expected to use and to other external procedures, such as the method of entering into a trance, the way of performing expected actions during the trance and sometimes also the way of emerging from a trance. There is then, according to Crapanzano, both a technical and a symbolic side to possession and both must be learned. Many cultures have specific tasks for people who are "called" to function as intermediaries between the spiritual sphere and the human, terrestrial one.

Crapanzano also draws a parallel between the transformation that takes place "within the spirit idiom" and that which occurs on the level of linguistic metaphor. He writes: "Spirit possession may be conceived as a complex series of transformations of (usually negative) metaphorical statements into (occasionally positive, at least ritually neutral) metonomous ones in a dialectic play of identity formation" (Crapanzano 1977, 19). In the phenomenon of possession, needs and demands are transformed into expressions acceptable to the group in question, with the result that purely therapeutic effects are achieved. For Crapanzano it is important to be able to show connections between the procedure and effects of spirit possession and the results achieved by modern psychotherapy. This emerges clearly in a number of articles in the volume, but above all perhaps in Vivian Garrison's contribution, where she describes a 39 year old Puerto Rican woman living in New York. The woman has a nervous attack and goes to visit a "spiritualist" group in order to be cured. She is also the subject of treatment from neurologists and therapists. Garrison shows that there is a

great similarity in the different stages of treatment on the part of both groups (Garrison 1977, 383 ff.).

Together with these social-anthropological studies we have research that has applied the theories of social psychology to ecstatic phenomena. It is regarded as a fact that a given society has ecstatic "modes of intercourse" and the main question asked is by what laws and with what regularity do individuals react. Interest is not therefore focussed on finding individual reasons for the distinctive behaviour. There is instead a desire to fit the behaviour and the whole course of events within a normal psychological process.

This point of view is represented by T. R. Sarbin and V. L. Allen who demonstrate in their theoretical article on role theory that ecstasy can be explained from this perspective. In their study of the intensity of role activity they have introduced a variable called "organismic involvement", which can vary from no involvement at all to an extremely strong personal absorption in the role. On a seven point scale they calculate that ecstasy constitutes the sixth point. It thus approaches one of the limits, represented by "bewitchment", the frequently irrevocable experience of being enchanted or possessed. According to the authors, ecstasy implies "a suspension of voluntary action" (Sarbin-Allen 1968, 489 ff.) and cannot therefore be of any great duration without causing permanent damage to the body. They emphasize that ecstasy is usually enshrined in institutionalised ritual, which effectively regulates its occurrence and control.

Another theoretically inclined article that I would like to mention in this context is R. E. Shor's "Hypnosis and the concept of the generalized reality-orientation". His study is effectively a contribution to the discussion of hypnosis but he also touches fruitfully on ecstatic phenomena and his work has been used, as we shall see, in research into shamanism.

Shor develops the idea that unusual states of consciousness must be understood, using role theory as a point of departure. Normal consciousness has the characteristic feature that the individual, in his interpretation of new stimuli, continually verifies his information against a background of a structured frame of reference that is learned. Shor calls this frame of reference "generalized reality-orientation". In his article he develops 12 postulates emphasizing the importance of this concept for the understanding of altered states of consciousness. According to one of the postulates, this generalized reality-orientation is not maintained without a conscious mental effort on the part of the individual to maintain it. If a person's active ego is not in contact with this generalized reality-orientation, a mental state occurs which Shor denotes by the term *trance*. He writes: "Any state in which the generalized reality-orientation has faded to relatively nonfunc-

tional awareness may be termed a trance state” (Shor 1969, 241). In trance, therefore, the individual is absorbed in one single special sector of reality and loses control over himself according to how far the generalized reality-orientation has moved into the background. Hypnosis and ecstasy are seen by Shor as the results of similar psychological mechanisms.

In her study of Siberian shamanism Anna-Leena Siikala has used the above social-psychological theories. She first introduces the concept of altered states of consciousness and thus follows Ludwig’s suggestion, too. According to Siikala, the mental states of shamans can be accommodated within these concepts and the origin of these states can be explained consistently from theories produced by social psychology and hypnosis research. This implies, she states, that any person with a normal nervous system is capable of becoming a shaman. A pathological disposition is not therefore a prerequisite for the role. Shamanism is a normal institution in Siberian cultures and therefore requires people to carry out its rites. The method for recruiting potential shamans and the way of conducting ritual follows, in principle, the social-psychological mechanisms as other corresponding processes within the society. Siikala therefore regards the state of trance as a gradual absorption into a role and as a variation in the generalized reality orientation, the function of which is dependent on various external influencing factors and of the shaman’s experience of his role. The shaman’s deep trance is a delicate balance between absorption into the role patterns of the spirit world and deference to the demands and expectations of his audience (Siikala 1978, 28 ff., 340 f.).

4. An example: Glossolalia in the Pentecostal Movement

The scholarly view of glossolalia corresponds clearly to the developments in research I have outlined above. At the beginning of the century the gift of tongues was in itself regarded as something ecstatic, and parallel interpretative models were sought, above all, in psychiatry. The gift of tongues was said to appear in individuals of a hysterical disposition and with an otherwise weak mental constitution. Individuals of this type were more liable than stable people to produce so-called automatisms, that is to say behaviour beyond the control of volition. The more influential and animated individuals at a Pentecostal meeting exerted an influence, above all, on people of this type, it was believed.

In later research, the individual mental constitution has not been so strongly emphasized, but a new stress on group-dynamic processes has appeared. In this respect, attention has been entirely removed from abnormal psychology. My own work is based on observation and interview

material from the Pentecostal Movement in Swedish Finland together with an analysis of tape recordings of meetings. I shall briefly summarise the main results of my research.

Within the Pentecostal Movement the gift of tongues is connected with something known as baptism of the spirit. It is seen as a concrete event through which a person becomes filled with the Holy Spirit in abundant measure. At this spiritual baptism the individual receives an external sign, a so-called gift of grace, usually the gift of tongues. The interviews show that this doctrinal aspect is often attended by experiences on an individual level. I therefore wonder what mechanisms of a sociological and psychological nature accompany the emergence of an ecstatic baptism of the spirit in the individual?

In order to be able to answer this question, I first studied the nature of glossolalia from a linguistic point of view. I wanted to know what sort of language was involved and how complicated the gift of tongues was. Through an analysis of glossolalia on tape, I discovered that no normal extant language was involved, but rather a pseudo-language with similarities, above all, to the speaker's mother tongue. The linguistic structure of glossolalia is simple and therefore easy to reproduce on the basis of normal language acquisition. In all probability, it is barriers of a social nature that prevent people from using forms of pseudolanguage more frequently. This suggested to me that it is not the occurrence of glossolalia that is remarkable or that constitutes the ecstatic element in the context, but that other explanations must be sought for the experiences of an ecstatic type that I observed and had reported to me.

By the use of symbolic interactionism, above all according to Berger-Luckmann's formulation (Berger-Luckmann 1973) I have shown how the individual becomes gradually implicated in the symbolic universe of the Pentecostal Movement. He then becomes conscious of the roles, expectations and positions existing within the social unit constituted by the Pentecostal congregation. Central to this is the doctrine of baptism of the spirit. Very quickly a newcomer acquires familiarity with the behaviour and experiences connected with spiritual baptism and an expectation of being filled by the spirit grows within him. This expectation means in practice a desire to be able to speak with tongues. But according to tradition and doctrine the gift of tongues should be inspired by God and not be a false, humanly inspired glossolalia. It was the process initiated in the individual mind for the gift of tongues to be interpreted in a certain situation as a gift of God, or as divinely inspired, that I took to be the interesting question and the aspect that was connected with ecstasy.

I have also used H. Sundén's so-called role-taking theory to explain the

process in question. According to this theory, we should take into account mythical roles stored in the religious tradition. These are brought to the fore by familiarity with holy scripture and by an aspiration to share the spiritual experiences of the early Christians. Regarding baptism of the spirit we may state that clear role models are present in the Bible and that a Pentecostalist today can well enter into the situation experienced by the first disciples. Something we might call "the role of spiritual baptism" is now brought to the fore. In a given situation this can so structure the field of perception that an individual gift of tongues is felt to be inspired by God. The assumption of the role brings simultaneously a rich collection of emotional expressions connected with the role within the social community (Holm 1976; Holm 1978; Holm 1978 a).

But role-theory does not entirely explain how it is that misgivings about the gift of tongues are finally dispelled in the individual. I have therefore also indicated various socialpsychological promotion mechanisms present in a cult situation like a Pentecostal Meeting. We find there clear examples of persuasive communication, such as repetition of emotionally charged words, sharp contrasts, ejaculations, song and music, assurances of God's immediate presence and influence, admonitions and exhortations to receive gifts of grace and perhaps most important of all, intercession often accompanied by the laying-on of hands. Such methods of influence ensure that the individual's entire interest is focussed on spiritual baptism and receiving the gift of tongues. This leads to the removal of inhibiting factors within the individual and facilitates the onset of speaking with tongues. If glossolalia occurs this is the external stimulus which initiates role-taking. But the role presupposes a so-called genuine speaking with tongues, inspired by God, and it is not until the individual's conception of reality and ego-perception have combined to suggest the divine inspiration of his glossolalia, that he assumes his role completely. I should like to stress, however, that not all Pentecostalists begin speaking with tongues in a cultic situation in circumstances similar to those described. Many receive their baptism of the spirit when alone, often as they are retiring to bed. If the role of spiritual baptism is developed in them too, however, glossolalia has the same importance in prompting role-taking.

It is, then, the actual experience of being baptised in the spirit with its attendant signs (glossolalia) that I should like to call ecstatic. For most Pentecostalists baptism of the spirit emerges as a unique experience and the descriptions justify our interpreting this event as a form of ecstasy. It is apparent, however, that after the actual experience of spiritual baptism Pentecostalists often use speaking in tongues on their own initiative. Once filled by the spirit and once having received the gift of tongues, they can

control the latter at will. Such instances of speaking with tongues are not accompanied by ecstasy, at least not to any greater extent.

In my research, therefore, I regard speaking with tongues as expressions of roles and behavioural patterns instituted and sanctioned by the Pentecostal Movement. It is above all people with a flexible and integrated consciousness who assume the roles and transmit them further. Research has thus moved from a narrow preoccupation with the mental condition of single individuals to an emphasis on the social patterns with which every social unit is endowed. On the individual level, speaking with tongues in all probability acquires a function corresponding to that of meditation in the newer religious movements (Holm 1978; Hutch 1980).

A point that I would like to stress in conclusion is the manner in which ecstatic elements change with the growing institutionalisation within the Pentecostalist Movement. Over the period during which I have been able to study the movement I have noticed that spiritual baptism has increasingly become a routine matter so that it is now experienced increasingly by teenagers often during attendance at a camp and without obvious ecstatic features. Will we one day find that in the Pentecostal movement, too, young people at some form of collective "confirmation act" will be declared to participate in the Spirit and thereby be spiritually baptised without any external signs or gifts of grace becoming apparent? It will, in this case, be a baptism of the spirit without any hard-won ecstatic experience. The Pentecostal Movement will then have taken a large step into the denominational fold.

5. *Conclusion*

A survey of research into ecstatic phenomena reveals that an important kind of development has occurred with regard to theoretical modes of thought. The earlier group of studies that I have discussed is a fairly heterogeneous collection, although they shared a common desire to establish the nature of the ecstatic state as precisely as possible to be able to classify it subsequently with other better known mental states, especially those of a pathological nature. Characteristic particularly of older studies within this group was the tendency to regard mental states as fixed quantities which would serve as explanations for a large number of religious distinctive phenomena. If only the different mental states could be mapped with sufficient accuracy, one would come to a satisfactory understanding of all the curious occurrences that accompanied ecstatic phenomena—or so it was reasoned. Students were partly blind to social-psychological mechanisms, particularly to an understanding of ecstatic phenomena as integrative parts of a working (sub-)culture.

Research of recent years, in contrast to the earlier approach, has emphasized the possibility of understanding distinctive phenomena from the perspective of normal psychology. It is common to speak in terms of an intensification of certain mental mechanisms and processes towards a certain upper limit. In addition, the cognitive content—the system of religious concepts—has received attention as a contributory factor in the process. Without the conceptual world that is specific to every culture, we do not, it is felt, find any ecstatic phenomena. It is also interesting to discover that to the extent that “case studies” have been carried out, an emphasis of intra-psychic, dynamic processes has also occurred.

We may say that the divergence between the two groups is expressed in their view of ecstasy itself, and in particular to what extent the mental state is to be regarded as an explanatory factor. The former group has a more static conception throughout, whilst the attitude of the latter is closer to a process model. The opposition of two such views is apparent in several places. It appears clearly in the case of research into hypnosis. Here we speak explicitly of “state theorists” and “non-state theorists” (Gaunitz 1980, 8). The controversy between the two schools of hypnosis research has gone on for some time and occasionally the data are open to interpretation favouring both tendencies.

Gaunitz has made a contribution with regard to this issue. He has compared, in his research, the state attained by those who practise Transcendental Meditation with the state produced by induction of hypnosis. He proceeded from a claim that the state reached by those who meditated deviated from the normal waking state and also from hypnosis (Gaunitz 1980). The results obtained by Gaunitz suggest that one might, to a great extent, equate religious ecstatic states with hypnosis of varying degrees. There is thus no need to suppose that there is a large number of distinctive mental states, but that there are instead changes along similar lines in hypnosis, ecstasy and possession of various kinds. This opens important theoretical perspectives for ecstasy research in general and invites interesting contributions to the field of religious psychology.

Among the most pressing assignments, the following four appear: 1) continued research into the nature, origin and properties of the mental state itself, particularly in relation to hypnosis, 2) studies of culture-bound models of altered states of consciousness, 3) the significance of ecstatic states for the whole social system of a given culture (sociology of ecstasy) and 4) the use of ecstasy seen from the point of view of the individual (psychology of ecstasy).

An interesting question that presents itself is whether trance can occur without any specific (religious) environment. We have seen that altered

states of consciousness appear in religious contexts and that similar states are produced under hypnosis. What role or significance do trance or ecstasy have in our own "secularised" culture, where these phenomena are often pushed into the background?

We know that there exist individual movements and groups that rigorously cultivate the capacity for ecstasy. In this context I am thinking not least of the youth religions with their interest in meditation and religious experience in general. But the latest research into mysticism in the world today also suggests that intensive experiences are present without primary religious interpretation. Many of the experiences exhibit features which have traditionally been regarded as characterising mysticism (Holm 1979). We can therefore state that phenomena of an ecstatic nature have a wide distribution and also occur in (sub-) cultures where they are not given a primary function. The latest observations about human creativity also point in the same direction. Creative people often experience their periods of greatest creativity as being in some way divergent from normal conditions (Ruth 1980). We still do not have any general theory for experiences of the kind suggested. I should nevertheless like to point out in this context that the human neurological structure appears to be such, that different mental states succeed each other in a perpetual cycle. Moreover, man has a basic capacity to condense his needs, desires and relations of various kinds into symbolic form. An interaction between these two phenomena seems to provide both the individual and the culture-bound forms for ecstatic behaviour. The actual cultivation of this interaction seems, however, to be a function of factors within the social environment.

In the articles that follow, ecstasy receives illumination from many sides: there are contributions which treat the phenomenon in a more comprehensive, psychological and sociological fashion and studies that enter deeply into a single phenomenon within one of the religions. We have therefore a survey where different perspectives are able to complement each other.

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