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Tryptamine Hallucinogens and Consciousness

Zusammenfassung

Tryptamin-Halluzinogene und Bewußtsein.

Die ungeheure Tiefe und Bizartheit der Erfahrungen, die unter dem Einfluß von DMT und verwandten Stoffen (Psilocybin) auftreten, werden diskutiert. Sie werden dabei mit Prinzipien der Quantenphysik verglichen. Weiterhin wird die Möglichkeit der Kommunikation zwischen Menschen und Pilzen beleuchtet.

I want to call your attention to a very circumscribed place in organic nature that has, I think, important implications in a most particular and experiential sense. I refer to a family of hallucinogenic drugs: the tryptophane derived hallucinogens; di-methyltryptamine (DMT), psilocybin and a hybrid drug which is in aboriginal use in the rain forests of South America, Ayahuasca. Ayahuasca is di-methyltryptamine but made orally active by being taken in the presence of a monoamine oxidase inhibitor. The reason it seems appropriate to talk about these drugs at a conference devoted not only to consciousness, where it's appropriateness is obvious, but devoted to quantum physics, is because it is my interpretation that the major quantum mechanical phenomena that we all experience, aside from life itself, are dream and hallucination. These states, at least in the restricted sense that I am concerned with, occur when the large amounts of radiation of various sorts that are conveyed into the body by the senses, are restricted. And instead we see interior images, interior processes which are psychophysical. These processes definitely arise at the quantum mechanical level. It's been shown by JOHN SMYTHES (1970), ALEXANDER T. SHULGIN (1973) and others, that there are quantum mechanical correlates to hallucinogenesis of one atom. In other words, a compound will be inactive and one atom is moved on the ring and then the compound becomes highly active. To me this is a perfect proof of the dynamic linkage at the formative level between matter, quantum mechanically described, and mind as experienced.

So for that what I've said is true generally, of hallucinogens and disassociative anesthetics, and of other drugs and experiences as well. Ordeals, dieting, this sort of thing can also elicit hallucination. But what makes the tryptamine family of compounds interesting is the intensity of the hallucinations and the concentration of activity in the visual cortex. There is an immense vividness to these interiorized landscapes. It is as if information was being presented three-dimensionally and fourth-dimensionally deployed, as light, as evolving surfaces, which have information coded into them. When one confronts these dimensions the dynamic relationship which is involved is that of relating to the experience while trying to decode what it is saying. These phenomenon is not new, people have been talking to gods and demons for millenia. In fact, people have been talking to gods and demons for far more of human history than they have not.

It is only the conceit of post-industrial societies, science and technology, that allows us to even propound some of the questions that we take to be so important. For instance, the question of contact with extraterrestrials is a kind of red herring because it is premised upon with a number of assumptions which a moments' reflection will show are completely false. To search expectantly for a radio signal from an extraterrestrial source is probably as culture-bound an assumption as to search the galaxy for a good Italian restaurant. It is just not going to happen. And yet, this has been chosen as the avenue by which it is assumed contact is likely to occur. Meanwhile, people all over the world, psychics, shamans, mystics, schizophrenics; their heads are filled with information, but it has been ruled a priori irrelevant, incoherent, or mad. Only that which is consensually validated through certain sanctioned instrumentalities will be accepted as a signal. Another problem is that we are actually so inundated by these signals, these other dimensions, that there is a great deal of noise in the circuit.

It is no great accomplishment to hear a voice in the head. The accomplishment is to make sure that it is telling you the truth. Because the demons are of many kinds. Some are made of ions, some of mind, the ones of ketamine, you'll find, stutter often and are blind. It is not that one kneels in genuflection before a god, because one will be like Dorothy before Oz. There is no dignity in the universe unless we meet these things on our feet, and that means to have an I/Thou relationship. One says to the Other: "You say you are omniscient, omnipresent, or you say you are from Zeta Reticuli. You're long on talk, but what can you show me?" Magicians, people who invoke these things, have always understood that one must go into such encounters with one's wits about one.

What does this have to do with this family of compounds I wish to discuss? Simply this, that the unique phenomenology of this family of compounds has been overlooked. Psilocybin, though rare, is the best known of these neglected substances. Psilocybin, legally and in people's uniformed assumptions about it, is lumped with LSD. Psilocybin, LSD and mescaline are commonly thought of as similar. Each one of these compounds is a phenomenologically defined universe unto itself. Psilocybin and DMT, although DMT is more intense and briefer in its action, invoke the logos. This means that they work directly on the language centers, so that the important aspect of the experience is the interior dialog. As soon as one discovers this about psilocybin, about tryptamines in general, one must decide whether or not to enter into the dialog, to try and make sense of the oncoming signal. This is what I have attempted. I don't call myself a scientist, I call myself an explorer, because the area that I'm looking at contains insufficient data to even dream of being a science. We are a stage comparable to explorers who map one river and indicate other rivers flowed into it but they didn't ascend those rivers and so nothing is known about them. This Baconian collecting of data with no assumptions about what it might eventually yield, has pushed me to a number of conclusions that I did not anticipate. Perhaps through reminiscence I can explain what I mean. For describing past experiences raises all of the issues.

I first experimented with DMT in 1965, even then it was a compound rarely met with. It is surprising how few people are familiar with it. We live in a society that is absolutely obsessed with every kind of sensation imaginable. Every therapy, every drug, every sexual configuration, all forms of media overload, all of these things are adored in this society. Yet here is something that however much we may be hedonists or pursue the bizarre we find this thing is too much. It is, as they say in Spanish, "*Bastante*", it's enough, so much enough that it's too much. Once smoked the onset of the experience begins in about fifteen seconds. One falls immediately into trance. One's eyes are closed, one hears a sound like ripping cellophane, like someone crumbling up plastic film and throwing it away. A friend of mine suggests this is our radio entelechy ripping out of the organic matrix. A tone is heard. An ascending tone. Also present is the normal hallucinogenic modality; it is a shifting geometric surface of migrating and changing colored forms. At the site of activity all available bond sites are being occupied and one sees the mode shift occur over a period of about thirty seconds.

At that point one arrives in a place which defies description. One finds oneself in a space, it has a feeling of being underground, or somehow insulated, and domed, it's what's in *FINNEGAN'S WAKE* is called *the merry go raum*, from the German word "raum" for space (JOYCE 1939). The room is actually going around, and in that space one feels like a child, though one has come out somewhere in eternity. It always reminds me of the twentyfourth fragment of Heraclitus; "The Aeon is a child at play with colored balls". (KIRK 1954) One has not only become the Aeon at play with colored balls, but there are entities as well. In the book by my brother and myself *The Invisible Landscape* I describe them as self-transforming machine elves, for that is how they appear. (McKENNA 1975) These entities are dynamically contorting topological modules that are somehow distinct from the surrounding background, which is itself undergoing a continuous transformation. I always recall the scene in the film version of "The Wizard of Oz" after the Munchkins come with a death certificate for the Witch of the East. They all have very squeaky voices and they sing a little song about being "absolutely and completely dead". The tryptamine Munchkins come, these hyperdimensional machine elf entities and they bathe one in love. Love is spelled luv, it's not erotic and it's not heartfelt, but it certainly feels good. These beings are like fractal reflections of some previously hidden and suddenly autonomous part of one's own psyche.

What they are saying is don't be alarmed, remember and do what we are doing. One of the interesting characteristics of DMT and another reason why I prefer it over something like ketamine, is the fear. With ketamine one is not afraid, one goes unafraid. One of the interesting approaches to evaluating a drug is to see how eager people are to do it a second time. A touch of terror gives the stamp of validity to the experience because it means; "This is reply." We are in the balance. We read the literature, we know what the maximum doses are, the LD 50, etc. But so great is one's faith in mind, that when one is out there, one comes to feel that the rules of pharmacology do not really apply and that control of existence on the plane is really decision and luck and the roll of the dice.

The fractal elves seem to be reassuring, saying "Don't worry, don't worry, do this, look at this." Meanwhile, one is completely "over there". One's ego is intact, one's fear reflexes are intact, one is not "fuzzed out" at all. Consequently, the natural reaction is amazement; profound astonishment which persists and persists. One breathes and it persists. The elves are saying "Don't get some loop of wonder going that quenches your ability to understand, try not to be so amazed, try to focus and look at what we're doing." What they're doing is emitting sounds like music, like language. These sounds pass, as Philo Judaeus said that the Logos would when it became perfect, from being heard without every going over a quantized moment of distinction, into things beheld. One hears and beholds a language of alien meaning which is occurring right in front of you, and it is converting alien information, which cannot be Englished. Now being monkeys there is a kind of cognitive dissonance that is set up in our hind brain when we encounter a translinguistic object. We try to pour mind over it, and its sheds is like water of a duck's back. We try again and fail again, and this cognitive dissonance, this "wow" or flutter that is building off this object causes wonder or awe and astonishment. Awe at the brink of terror. One must control that and the way to control it is to do what the entities are telling one to do, to do what they are doing. When one begins to experiment with ones voice unanticipated phenomena become possible.

I mention these "effects" to invite the attention of experimentalists, whether they be shamans or scientists. There is something going on with these compounds that is not part of the normal presentational spectrum of hallucinogenic drug experience. One begins with this glossalalia-like phenomenon, although it isn't classical glossalalia, which has been studied. In classical glossalalia pools of saliva eighteen inches across have been measured on the floors of South American churches where people have been kneeling. Participants always ask after the glossalalia has happened, turning to the people next to them "Did I do it, did I speak in tongues?". This isn't like that, this is simply a brain-state, which allows the expression of the assembly language which lies behind language or a primal language of the sort that ROBERT VON RANKE-GRAVES discussed in *The White Goddess*, (1948) or a cabalistic language of the sort that is described in the "Zohar", a primal, *Ursprache* that comes out of one's self (SCHOLEM 1949). One discovers one can make the extraterrestrial objects, the feeling-toned, meaning-toned, three-dimensional rotating complexes of light and color and transformation. To know this is to feel like a child, one is playing with colored balls, one has become the Aeon. This happened to me twenty seconds after I smoked DMT on that particular day in 1965. I was apalled, I had thought that I had my ontological categories intact, and I had taken LSD, yet this thing came upon me like a bolt from the blue. I came down and said, and I said it many times, "I cannot believe this, this is impossible, this is completely impossible." Because it was. I was not kneeling at the feet of some rishi or roshi or geysay, there was a declension of gnosis which proved to me in a moment that right here and now, one quanta away, there is raging a universe of active intelligence that is transhuman, hyperdimensional, and extremely alien. I call it the Logos, and I make no judgements about it. I constantly engage it in dialog, saying "Well, what are you?"

Are you some kind of diffuse consciousness which is in the ecosystem of the earth? Are you a God or an extraterrestrial? Show me what you know."

The problem is that the mushroom is just full of answers to these questions. The true history of the galaxy over the last four and a half billion years is tribal to it. One can tune these images, and, of course, the question always involves independent validation. At least for a time this was the question, but as I became more familiar with the epistemological assumptions of modern science I slowly realized that the structure of the Western intellectual enterprise is so flimsy at the center that apparently no one knows anything with certitude. It was then that I became less reluctant to talk about these experiences. They are experiences and as such they are primary data for being. This dimension is not remote and yet it is so unspeakably bizarre that it casts into doubt all of humanity's historical assumptions.

The psilocybin mushrooms do the same things that DMT does although the experience builds up over an hour and is sustained for a couple of hours. Nevertheless there is the same confrontation with an alien intelligence and extremely bizarre translinguistic information complexes. These experiences strongly suggest that there is something that one can do with one's body that no one has ever done. Yet once done it will be so obvious that it will fall right into the mainstream of cultural evolution. It seems to me that language either is the shadow of this ability or that this ability is a further extension of language. Perhaps a human language is possible where actually the intent of meaning is beheld in three-dimensional space. If this can happen on DMT it means it is at least, under some circumstances, accessible to human beings. Given ten thousand years and highcultural involvement in such a talent, does anyone doubt that it could become a cultural convenience in the same way that mathematics or language has become a cultural convenience?

Naturally in the light of the confrontation with the organized intellect on the other side, many theories have been elaborated. The theory that I put forth in *Psilocybin: Magic Mushroom Growers' Guide* held that the mushroom was, in fact, an extraterrestrial (Oss & OERIC 1975). I suggested that the *Stropharia cubensis* mushroom was a species that did not evolve on Earth. Within the mushroom trance I was informed that once a culture has complete understanding of its genetic information, it re-engineers itself for survival. The *Stropharia cubensis* mushroom's version of that is a mycelial network strategy when in contact with planetary surfaces and a spore dispersion strategy as a means of radiating throughout the galaxy, and though I am troubled by how freely Bell's non-locality theorem is tossed around, nevertheless the alien intellect on the other side does seem to be in possession of a huge body of information drawn from the history of the galaxy. They say that there is nothing unusual about this, that humanity's conceptions of organized intelligence and the dispersion of life in the galaxy and this sort of thing are hopelessly culture-bound, that the galaxy has been an organized society for billions of years. Life evolves under so many different chemical regimens and regimens of temperature and pressure that searching for an extraterrestrial who will sit down and have a conversation with one is foredoomed to failure. The main problem with searching for extraterre-

strials is to recognize them. Time is so vast and evolutionary strategies and environments so varied, that the trick is to know that contact is being made at all. The *Stropharia cubensis* mushroom if one can believe what it says in one of its moods, is a symbiot, and it desires ever deeper symbiosis with the human species. It achieved symbiosis early by associating itself with the domesticated cattle that people keep. In other words, like the plants men and women grow and the animals they husband, the mushroom was able to inculcate itself into the human family. It's very clear that where human genes go these other genes will be carried. The mushroom, by being domesticated by human beings has become a part of the human family, but this is all merely a beginning (McKENNA 1992).

Speaking for a moment in terms of the classic mushroom cults in Mexico; they were destroyed by the coming of the conquest. The Franciscans had an absolute monopoly on theophagia, which is eating god, and yet in the New World they came upon these people calling a mushroom *Teonanācatl*, the flesh of the gods. They set to work, and with the Inquisition were able to push the old religion into the mountains of Oaxaca so that it only survived in a few villages until VALENTINA and GORDON WASSON went in the 1950s and found it there.

There is another metaphor. One must balance these explanations. Now I shall sound as if I don't think the mushroom is an extraterrestrial. It may be, it may not be. It may be what I've come recently to suspect, that the human soul is so alienated from us in our present culture that we treat it as an extraterrestrial. The most alien thing in the cosmos is the human soul. Aliens Hollywood-style could arrive on earth tomorrow and the DMT trance would remain weirder and continue to hold more promise for useful information for the human future. It is that intense a kind of thing. Ignorance burnt the mushroom cult, ignorance forced it into hiding, ignorance burned the libraries of the Hellenistic world at an earlier period, and dispersed the ancient knowledge, shattering the stellar and astrological machinery that was the work of centuries. By ignorance I mean the Hellenistic-Christian-Judaic tradition. It was them who built a triumph of mechanism. It was them who later realized the alchemical dreams of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries, and the Twentieth century, with the transformation of elements and the discovery of gene transplants. But then, having conquered the New World, and driven its people into cultural fragmentation and diaspora, they came upon the body of Osiris, the condensed body of Eros, in the mountains of Mexico where it had retreated at the coming of the Christos. And by their finding it, they unleashed it.

PHILLIP K. DICK, in one of his last novels, *VALIS*, (1981) discusses the long hibernation of the Logos, how it went underground. A creature of pure information it was buried in the ground at Nag Hammadi, at the burying of the Chenoboskion library circa 370 AD. As static information it existed there until 1947 and then the texts were translated and read. As soon as people had the information in their minds, the symbiot came alive for it is a thing of pure information. We are discussing a similar sort of thing. The mushroom consciousness is the consciousness of the Other, in hyperspace, which means in dream and in the psilocybin trance, at the quantum foundation of being, in the human future, and after death. All of these places which were thought to be discrete and

separate, are seen to be part of a single continuum. History is the dash over ten to fifteen thousand years from monkeyhood to flying saucer, without ripping the envelope of the planet so badly that the birth is aborted, and fails, and we remain prisoners of matter.

History, essentially then, is the shock wave of escatology. Something is at the end of time and is casting an enormous shadow over human becoming and it is drawing all human becoming toward it. So that all the wars of history, the philosophies, the rapes, the pillaging, the migrations, the cities, the civilizations, all of this is occupying a microsecond of geological, planetary and galactic time as the monkeys react to the symbiot which is in the environment and which is feeding information to humanity about the historical situation in the galaxy. I do not belong to the school that wants to attribute all of our accomplishments to alien lore given to us as a gift from friendly aliens. What I'm saying is something I hope is more profound than that. As nervous systems evolve to higher and higher levels they come more and more to understand the true situation in which they are embedded. And the true situation in which we are embedded is an organism, an organization, of active intelligence on a galactic scale. Now science may be culture-bound, mathematics may be culture-bound. People can argue about these things, but no one knows because we have never dealt with an alien mathematics or an alien culture, except in the occult realm area that is ruled out of bounds by the guardians of scientific truth. In other words, the content of shamanic experience, of plant induced ecstasis, is ruled out of bounds. This is because the source of novelty, the cutting edge of the ingression of the novel into the plenum of being, is accruing there. Think about it for a moment; if the human mind does not loom large in the coming history of the human race, then what is to become of us? The people who worry about getting the epistemological and the ontological bases of these things nailed down say that the mathematics is in good order. The problem is that the mathematics does not map well into English or any other natural language, and so people have violent disagreements in English when they are completely in agreement over the mathematical foundations of the argument. I am suggesting we are at the beginning of human thought. History is the birth crisis of intelligence, and intelligence is something which is moving through the higher primates at greater and greater speed. We know that there were primate species that were not human that chipped tools and made fire and drilled beads. The question, are we unique, has already been answered by the physical anthropologists. There have been other intelligent monkeys walking this planet. We exterminated them, and so now we are unique, but what is loose on this planet is language, self-replicating information systems. It may be a further rarification or a further hypothetization of what is happening in DNA. Learning, coding, templating, recoding, testing, retesting, recoding are present in the functions of DNA. Or it may be a quality of an entirely different order.

Whatever it is in the monkeys now and moving through them and moving out their hands and into the noosphere with which we have surrounded ourselves. The tryptamine state seems to be in one sense transtemporal, it is an anticipation of this future. It is as though Plato's metaphor were true. Plato said time is the

moving image of eternity. The tryptamine ecstasis is a stepping out of the moving image and into eternity, the eternity of the *nunc stans*, the standing now, the standing wave form of Thomas Aquinas.

In that state all of human history is seen to lead toward this culminating moment. Acceleration is visible in all the processes around us, the fact that fire was discovered fifty thousand years ago, language, thirty five thousand, then measurement, five thousand, then Gallileo, four hundred, then Watson-Crick and DNA. What is obviously happening is that everything is being drawn together. The description our physicists are giving us of the universe; that it has lasted billions of years and will last billions of years into the future, is a dualistic conception, an inductive projection that is very unsophisticated when it comes to the nature of consciousness and language. Consciousness is somehow able to collapse the state vector and thereby cause the stuff of being to undergo what WHITEHEAD (1969) called the formality of actually occurring. Here is the beginning of understanding of the centrality of human beings. Western societies have been on a decentralizing bender for five hundred years concluding that the earth is not the center of the Universe, man is not the beloved of God. We have moved ourselves out toward the edge of the galaxy. The fact is that the most richly organized material in the Universe is the human cerebral cortex and the densest and richest experience in the Universe is the experience you are having right self. That is the primary datum.

The perceiving self under the influence of these hallucinogenic plants gives information that is totally at variance with the models that we inherit from our past. Yet these dimensions exist. On one level it is a matter of no great consequence, people have been into this for millenia. It is that we moderns are so grotesquely alienated and taken out of what life is about that to us it comes as a revelation. Without psychedelics the closest we can get to the Mystery is to try and feel in some abstract mode the power of myth or ritual. This grasping after is a very over-intellectualized and unsatisfying sort of process.

Always in these kinds of discussions one must present oneself as an explorer, not a scientist. Testimonials are what's being given. I do not believe that I am unique, because if I believed that I were unique, none of my conclusions would have any meaning outside the context of myself. My experiences, like yours, have got to be more or less a part of the human condition. Some may have more facility for these things than others and these things may be difficult to achieve, but they are part of the human conditions. There are few clues that these places exist. If part carries images out of the Other from the Logos to the world, drawing ideas down into matter, why is human art history so devoid of what psychedelic voyagers experience so totally? Perhaps the flying saucer or UFO is the central motif to be understood in order to get a handle on reality here and now.

We are alienated, so alienated that the Self must disguise itself as an extraterrestrial in order to not alarm us with the truly bizarre dimensions that it encompasses. When we can love the alien then we will have begun to heal the psychic discontinuity that has plagued us since at least the sixteenth century, possibly earlier.

The testimony that I want to give today is that magic is alive in hyperspace, it is not necessary to believe me or do anything to validate that, except to form a relationship with these plants. The fact that the gnosis comes from plants is the centrally important characteristic.

There is some certainty that one is dealing with a creature of integrity if one deals with a plant. But the creatures born in the demonic artifice of laboratories have to be dealt with very, very carefully.

Q: You failed to mention that DMT is manufactured in the human brain but only at subthreshold levels.

T: Yes, I could have mentioned that. DMT is an endogenous hallucinogen. Also it is important to know that psilocybin is 4-phosphoryloxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine, that serotonin, the major neurotransmitter in the human brain, found in all life, found most in man, is 5-hydroxytryptamine. The very fact that the onset of DMT is so rapid, lasting five minutes and coming on in forty-five seconds, means that the brain is absolutely at home with this compound. Whereas a hallucinogen like LSD is retained in the body. This is even more true of Ketamine.

I will add a cautionary note. I always feel odd telling people to verify these findings since the sine qua non is the hallucinogenic plant. People should be very careful. I am addressing experimentalists, psychologists, psychiatrists. One must build up to it. These are bizarre dimensions of extraordinary power and beauty. There is no set rule for acquiring power to avoid being overwhelmed, but moving carefully, reflecting a great deal, and always trying to map it back onto the history of the race and the philosophical and religious accomplishments of the species, this should always be done. All compounds are potentially dangerous. All compounds, at sufficient doses, or repeated over time, involve risks; for example, the possibility of kindling epileptic effects or depressing the immune response has been suggested for Ketamine. The first place to go when looking into taking a new compound, is the library.

Q: One comment, there is in the Oriental tradition some, if not a tremendous amount, of information about these demonic aspects. Both from experimenting with drugs which are fairly common with religious sects all over India and China. Drugs were always used, plant drugs, of course. In the Zen traditions, also, there is unmistakable evidence of encountering these demons and they are talked about in various ways. In the enlightenment experience of the Buddha it was the confronting of Mara, the god of death, which sounds very similar to the terror experience that you talk about. We are beginning to understand that these experiences must occur because something similar happened in the Classical religious experience in fact, these drug experiences have been extremely valuable in telling us about many of the other experiences that we find in mystical literature. The comment that interested me most is your statement that the terror in the drug experience is essential.

T: I'm not saying that there's something intrinsically good about terror, I'm saying that, granted the situation, if one is not terrified, then one must be somewhat out of contact with the full dynamics of the situation. To not be terrified means either one is a fool or one has taken a compound which paralyzes

the ability to be terrified. I have nothing against hedonic experience, and I certainly bring something out of it, but the experience must move one's heart. It will not move your heart unless it deals with the issues of life and death. If it deals with the issues of life and death it will move one to fear, it will also move one to tears, it will also move one to laughter. But these places are profoundly strange and alien, and I agree with you and I disagree with you about the relation to tradition. I have been to Konarak, and visited Bubaneswar. I'm familiar with that art, collected thangkhas, etc. I did see similarities in my LSD experiences, in fact, it was LSD experiences that dove me to collect Mahayanaist art. But what amazed me was the total absence of the motifs of DMT. It is not there, it is not there in any tradition familiar to me.

There is a very interesting story by JORGE LUIS BORGES, called *The Sect of the Phoenix* (1962). Allow me to paraphrase. He starts out by saying: "There is a sect, and it touches all mankind, it's practitioners have been the victims of persecution in every war in history, it's practitioners have held the hot poker at every inquisition in history, it touches the wealthy, it touches the poor, it respects no language barrier, it respects no age, no nothing. It involves a rite, and the practitioners of the sect view the rite as trivial. It may be done in doorways, it is propitious to do it at the waxing of the moon. It involves something orange, it is old. The practitioners never speak of their cult and when they do they refer to it as the secret ..." He goes on and he traces it to the Gypsies, but never explicitly says what it is. But if one knows his other story, *The Aleph*, one can bring these two together and realize that the Aleph is the Mystery of the cult of the phoenix.

In the Amazon when the mushrooms were revealing all this information and deputizing us to do various things, we asked, "Why us? Why should we be the ambassadors of an alien species into human culture?"

And it answered, "Because you did not believe in anything. Because you have never given over your belief to anyone." The sect of the phoenix, the cult of this experience is perhaps millenia old, but it has not yet been brought to light where the threads may run. The history of ecstatic plant use on this planet is fairly well understood. Psilocybin mushroom taking was confined to the central isthmus of Mexico. Not, however, *Amanita muscaria*, which is a different issue and a different compound. But psilocybin use seems to have been restricted to central Mexico until the Spanish conquest. *Stropharia cubensis* is not known to be in archaic use in a shamanic rite anywhere in the world. DMT is used in the Amazon, and has been for millenia, but by cultures quite primitive, usually nomadic hunter gatherers.

I am baffled by what I call the black hole effect, which seems to surround DMT. A black hole is a curvature of space such that no light can. Since no signal can leave it, no information can leave it. (Let us leave aside the issue of whether this is true in practice of spinning black holes.) Think of it as a metaphor. DMT is like an intellectual black hole in that once one knows about it it's very hard for anyone to understand what one is talking about. One cannot be heard. The more one is able to articulate what it is the less others are able to understand. This is why I think people who attain enlightenment, if we may for

a moment co-map these two things, are silent. They are silent because we cannot understand them. Why this phenomenon has not been looked at by scientists, by thrill seekers or anyone else, I am not sure, but I recommend it to your attention.

I have left unmentioned the human future that the psychedelic state implies, but the future is bound to be psychedelic, because the future belongs to the mind. We are just beginning to push the buttons on the mind. Once we take a serious engineering approach to this, we are going to discover the plasticity, the mutability, the eternality of the mind, and I believe, release it from the monkey. My vision of the final human future is that what history is about in engineering terms, is an effort to exteriorize the soul and interiorize the body, so that the exterior soul exists as a super-conducting lens of translinguistic matter, generated out of the body of each of us at a critical juncture, our psychedelic Bar Mitzvah. From that point on we are eternal somewhere in the solid state matrix of the translinguistic lens we have become. One's body image existing as a holographic wave transform yet one is at play in the fields of the Lord, one lives in Elysium.

Q: You said, "What's the point of going to the fields of Elysium if you can't carry the mail?" And you carried the mail. I wonder to what extent you overlook the profundity of your own imagination as the means by which you are able to articulate these concerns. You've maintained objectivity, you've maintained your self throughout these experiences, for that reason you are the most self-contained person I've ever met. I don't think most people could remain whole, monitor, observe and grow, I think most of us would be inarticulate or dislocated from the experience.

T: I think the tragedy of our cultural situation is that we have no shamanic tradition. Shamanism is primarily techniques, not ritual. It is a set of techniques that work, that have been worked out over millenia and that make it possible, though perhaps not for everyone, to explore these areas. But for people of predilection, and there is also a method of noticing people of predilection, and then taking them through it, I feel very lucky because I've weathered some terrific storms and capsizings on the dark ocean of mind. But I always make the metaphor that, how many of us, how many people, if they didn't know how to sail, could learn to sail if they came upon a sail boat drawn up on the sand? That's the challenge, and obviously a great deal of the success of any person in that situation would depend on the weather, yet the weather is something one must be able to intuit. If the sea is calm one has a fair chance of mastering the rudiments of sailing before one's mettle is tested in any situation. If the weather is not calm, there's great danger. I feel very lucky. As readers of *The Invisible Landscape* know, we put in some fairly tough times in the Amazon. There was an instance of an irreversible monoamine oxidase inhibition which lasted twenty-two days, and had we not been in the Amazon Basin, completely unreachable by modern health care delivery systems, it would have fared far different for us. Fortunately, we were able to go through the entire thing undisturbed (McKENNA 1975). I take these things only occasionally, several times a year, and I always approach the experience with fear and trembling. It has been very good to us. I have two amazing children, and a lovely wife, and my head is full of ideas, my house is full of books. When I had the dialogue with the

Other concerning, "Why us?", it said "Because you are good". When we were flirting with the flying saucer, and trying to coax it out of the matrix, there were heated discussions between members of the expedition, "Why should we do this, isn't this going to be like atomic energy, isn't it going to be used by people to coerce other people?"

On this point the Logos were very insistent, "You are not to worry about that, this belongs to the just and no one can lay a finger on it unless their heart is pure".

Q: You said something about predilection, to recognize a predilection for being able to do these things?

T: In archaic societies where shamanism is a thriving institution, the predilections are fairly easy to state; oddness or uniqueness in an individual. Epilepsy is often a signature in preliterate societies, or surviving an unusual ordeal in an unexpected way. For instance, people who are struck by lightning and live are thought to make marvellous shamans. People who nearly die of a disease and fight their way back to health after weeks and weeks in an indeterminate zone are thought to have strength of soul or a hypersensitivity to trance states. In traveling around the world and dealing with shamans, I find the distinguishing characteristic is an extraordinary centeredness. Usually the shaman is an intellectual. The shamans invariably alienated from society. A good shaman sees exactly who you are, and says, "Oh, here's somebody to have a conversation with." The anthropological literature always presents shamans as embedded in a tradition. But when you get to know them they are always very sophisticated about what they are doing. They are the true phenomenologists of this world, because they know plant chemistry yet they call these energy fields spirits. We hear the word spirits through a series of narrowing declensions of meaning that are worse, almost, than not understanding. Shamans speak of "spirit" the way a quantum physicist might speak of "charm". It is a technical gloss for a very complicated concept.

It is possible that there are shamanic families, at least in the case of hallucinogens using shamans. In other words, it's all about how many of these sites of activity occur in the brain, thus facilitating these experiences. Some claim to have these experiences naturally. I am underwhelmed by the evidence that this is so. What it comes down to for me is "what can you show me".

I always ask that questions and, finally, in the Amazon, informants said, "Let's get our machetes and hike out here half a mile and get some vine and boil it up and we will show you what we can show you."

Let us be clear. People die in these societies that I'm talking about, all the time, for all kinds of reasons. Death is really much more among them than it is in our society. Those who have epilepsy who don't die are brought to the attention of the shaman and trained in breathing and plant usage and other things. But the fact is that we don't really know all of what goes on. These secret information systems have not been well studied. Shamanism is not, in these traditional societies, a terribly pleasant office. Shamans are not, normally, allowed to have any political power because they are sacred. The shaman is to be found sitting at the headman's side in the council meetings, but after the council

meeting he returns to his hut at the edge of the village. Shamans are peripheral to society's goings on in ordinary social life in every sense of the word. They are called on in crisis, and the crisis can be someone dying or ill, a psychological difficulty, a martial quarrel, someone has stolen something, or weather must be predicted. Shamans perform all these functions. We are not that society, so when I explore these plants and try to call your attention to them, it is as a phenomenon. I don't know what we can do with this phenomenon. I have a feeling that great things can be done with it, but the mind set that I always take to it is simply exploratory, Baconian, mapping and gathering facts.

HERBERT VON GUENTHER talks about human uniqueness and says one must come to terms with one's uniqueness (1966). We are naive about the role of language and being as the primary fact of experience. What good is a theory of how the universe works if it's a series of tensor equations that, even when understood nowhere come tangential to experience. The only intellectual or poetic or spiritual path worth following seems to me the one that builds on personal experience.

Q: You have described all of these experiences as coming from the plants, which are of the earth, and you have described all of these experiences as extraterrestrial. I don't know what you mean by extraterrestrial.

T: A fungus is not a plant, fungi are a third kingdom in nature, fungi require oxygen just as animals do and respire carbon dioxide. It is as though they are an amorphous animal. Yet they have been lumped in with the plants. But once the genetics were looked at closely and the metabolism was looked at closely, fungi were clearly seen to be a third category. The information that comes from ayahuasca, which is made from the vine, *Banisteriopsis caapi*, which is a higher plant, is earth centered and healing. That information seems to be about the envelopes of information that surround the earth and our bodies and the jungle.

What the mushroom says about itself is this: That it is an extraterrestrial organism, that spores can survive the conditions of extraterrestrial space. They are black, deep, deep purple, the color that they would have to be to absorb in the deep UV end of the spectrum. The casing of a spore is one the hardest organic substance known, the electron density is similar to that of a metal.

Q: Are you saying that the mushrooms never evolved on earth?

T: That's what *Stropharia cubensis* suggests, I'm not sure. Global currents form on the outside of the spore, it is very light and by Brownian motion these spores percolate to the edge of a planet's atmosphere and then through interaction with energetic particles coming in from space. Understand that I'm talking now about an evolutionary strategy where only one in ten high nine spores actually makes the transition across the stars. It is a biological strategy for radiating throughout the galaxy without a technology, it takes a billion or so years, but it's the same principal by which plants migrate into a desert.

There are no fungi in the fossil record older than sixty million years, and the orthodox explanation of that is that they are soft bodied and didn't fossilize well, but on the other hand we have soft bodied worms from the bottom of oceans in the flintstone chert that is dated over a billion years old. So, I don't

believe what the mushroom tells me, rather we have a dialogue, it is a very strange person and has many bizarre opinions, and I entertain it the way I would any eccentric friend. I say, "Well, so that's what you think." When the mushroom began saying it was an extraterrestrial, I felt that I was placed in the dilemma of a child who destroys a radio to see if there are little people inside. I couldn't figure out whether the mushroom is the alien or the mushroom is some kind of technological artifact allowing me to hear the alien and the alien is actually light years away and some kind of Bell non-locality principle is allowing it to communicate.

Q: Would you agree with this statement; the mushroom is a conscious being, however, the consciousness is not released until we become directly connected to it through ingestion.

T: That's what it says. It says, "I require the nervous system of a mammal, do you have one handy? Good. Shall we go to lunch?"

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