

Concerning Terence McKenna's Stoned Apes

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The following outlines findings from inquiry over some years, into "stoned apes." My aim has been solely to discover — not suppose, speculate or theorize — the truth about a profound subject of considerable interest; in which "stoned apes" is one micro-tiny thread.

This discussion follows recent pieces in RS [Rolling Stone] about Terence McKenna's legacy and impact, particularly Watkins' incisive inquiry into timewave zero — its "intellectual Waterloo" as Hanegraaf calls it (*Religion and Retributive Logic*, Cusack & Hartney: 311). Watkins offered a level of clarity unprecedented in "Terence McKenna studies."

More striking was the sheer intellectual integrity and honest credibility of his effort and achievement. These are qualities not always apparent in the exuberantly enthusiastic universe of TM's ideas and theories — a word I use here in deference to their common representation as such. I first learned of Watkin's "Autopsy" from Letcher's book *Shroom*. In RS he gave a more definitive discussion, powerfully illuminating the timewave's nature and worth (other than commercial).

I heartily applaud Watkins' principled lack of any agenda to support or "debunk" a prior conclusion fondly favored, and his determination to simply find out the truth of a matter, regardless what it should prove to be (Mr. Watkins, we got a phone message for you, from Diogenes; he's looking for you).

In many respects my inquiry into "stoned apes" parallels Watkins' approach, and focus on facts, as well as can be established, as basis for understanding; rather than tortuous reasoning or argument from ignorance ("we don't know x, can you prove its NOT true?"). Further, Watkins skillfully utilizes sharp tools in the shed, disciplined expertise in a technical field (math) timewave rests upon. Likewise, no analysis of a supposed theory about evolution can get far without a sound grasp of biology, especially natural selection.

As many will soon feel reading, it pains me to reveal findings that don't dovetail with the bedazzled sentiments Terence McKenna inspired in many. As some know, I can affirm, profound phenomena of consciousness elicited by psilocybin (such as recently verified by Griffiths et al.) are of great interest and importance. But where there is truth there can also be falsehood. The brightest light of reason is capable of casting the deepest, darkest shadows, depending on what it illuminates. Truth is a compelling human interest from which we dare not seek too much escape, especially when facing a hierophany. If truth hurts we may nonetheless be strengthened in the long run, if we are not destroyed by it.

In *The Emperor's New Clothes*, a spell of social manipulation has been cast by political power, subliminally denying permission to speak the truth about a particular situation. Not only does no one dare tell honestly what their lying eyes reveal, they must profess to see what the script demands; even compete with each other in sheer extravagance of praise for the naked king's fancied, fancy attire. Does Watkins' article signal cracks in a similar spell TM, perhaps the most charismatic and beloved pied piper in recent memory, capably cast upon his subjects? Maybe time will tell.

Prelude: my first intimation

The bicentennial year had scarcely rung in when a new book showed up at 'head shops' across the fruited plain. Now legendary, *Psilocybin: Magic Mushroom Growers Guide* by Oss and Oeric detailed a method for home cultivation of *Psilocybe cubensis* (AKA *Stropharia cubensis*). Among several such books published in that era, this one was distinguished by a bizarre preface, disconnected from anything to do with how to grow fungi. Its author wrote the mushroom was the seat of an extraterrestrial intelligence, which had told him: "I am old, older than thought in your species ..."

At the time I shrugged this off as dismal nonsense, and wondered vaguely what it was doing there. It purported to be about the mushrooms effects, but posed a perplexing inconsistency with both research (e.g., Grof, Masters & Houston etc.) and word from the street. This minor blip on the radar signaled my first inkling of what we now know as the work of Terence McKenna.

Years later I noted a striking parallel, for popular psychedelic interest, between this strange preface, and accounts by 'contactees' for UFO-minded audiences. The best-known case is probably that of George Adamski, who claimed an extraterrestrial intelligence contacted him, giving him portentous messages to relay to an astonished world. This struck me after reading J. Vallee's *Messengers of Deception*, a book I recommend to anyone trying to fathom the enigma not merely of TM, but his enshrinement as a folk hero in contemporary psychedelic subculture as well.

Contact

I gave the matter no further thought till 1978, when my eye lit upon a brochure advertising books, including Oss and Oeric. Its promo blurb had words I realized could only refer to the preface: "includes some spacey science fiction." I wondered if this reflected inside information. Had Oss or Oeric told the bookseller the preface was fictional, written and included for entertainment, "added value?" (Maybe he told them he has to warrantee his merchandise fit for sale, factually described?)

It was time for me to write Oss and Oeric and ask about this, straight up. I considered if I received an answer such as "yes the preface was just to entertain, sci-fi fantasy or humor," nothing suspect there, my question would be well rested. But if I got any other type reply — perhaps not so simple, depending. A practical joker may not wish to spoil the fun. The whole idea of a prank is to "game" or fool — some of the people all of the time, or all the people some of the time. Insisting with a straight face, when confronted: "no, really its true!" — or "could be true!" — even as the audience laughs, is part of a grand 'tall tale' tradition. The spirit of blarney can be in good fun, but innocence can be an act. On trial for livestock rustling, Hermes put the jury of Mt. Olympus in stitches with his "innocent" routine: "I didn't steal those sheep, I couldn't have; its impossible — you see, I don't even know what sheep are!" But his brazen clowning did more than amuse. It cleverly undermined the purpose of the hearing, subverting jurors' ability to even take the proceedings seriously, much less return a guilty verdict for this loveable rogue.

A minor twist (half-twist?) ensued. Scarcely had I mailed my "Dear Oss and Oeric" letter then I read, their names were pseudonyms (Ott and Bigwood, 1978, *Teonanacatl*, p. 121). Was my face red, having written them neither knowing nor even suspecting! What kind of fool was I?

In January 1979 I received a friendly, one-page typed reply letter, saying — the preface was in earnest! — "The tendency of the psilocybin trance to personify itself in the form of little elf-like beings suggested to us the POSSIBILITY the mushroom provides access to intelligently inhabited dimensions ..." etc. It ended on an invitational — or, considering strategies of indoctrination, I might say recruitmental — note: "If you've had any experiences that would tend to support these ideas, we'd be interested in hearing about them." It was signed: Oss.

(Vallee reproduces one of Marshall Applewhite's invitations pre-qualifying or targeting prospective recruits: "If you've ever entertained the idea that there might be a ..." etc. Vallee's efforts to direct attention to issues for broader society of cultism and thought control fell largely on deaf ears — some of which may have been opened 18 years after his book, with the 1997 mass suicide of Applewhite's cult.)

A final note about the "Oss" letter: it featured a P.S. directing my attention for further information: "I'm enclosing a flier for a book that discusses some of these ideas in greater depth." Indeed, a sheet was included advertising a book I'd not heard of, *The Invisible Landscape* by Terence and Dennis McKenna (which I soon borrowed from a library and read).

This is how the name Terence McKenna first came to my attention. Of course I did not yet realize he was author, not only of the book hawked in the flier accompanying the letter, but also the letter itself. When it came out years later that "Oss and Oeric" were the brothers McKenna, two and two put themselves together. But back then it didn't dawn on me an appearance had been staged, of one author, the pseudonymous "Oss," recommending a book written by others (McKenna and McKenna) — as if there were some broader basis, in writings of others than just "Oss," for the peculiar ideas of such exclusive interest to him.

Enter the Stoned Apes

In 1992 I was initially excited to learn of a new book, *Food of the Gods*, ostensibly about psilocybin mushrooms and their significance, a subject that had received little recent attention. I eagerly delved into its pages, my curiosity piquing. At the time I was in grad study for mycology at University of Florida. I'd already gotten my Masters in anthropology at Western Michigan, specializing in shamanism and ethnobotany. So I had some fairly extensive, related background study under my belt.

As I read *Food* I grew troubled. It opened my eyes for the first time to the wider range of TM's reflections and theorizing from his experiences tripping; including "stoned apes," his now famous — or infamous, depending on one's perspective — "theory" of how psilocybin mushrooms, eaten by ancestral hominids in Africa, catalyzed the very evolution of *Homo sapiens*.

From my studies I was familiar with the fossil record relating to human evolution. As such I was struck by TM's relative lack of citation to any of the paleoanthropological evidence informing our understanding of human origins. To me this lack of referral to the evidence (which proves complex, with many details awaiting clarification) stuck out like a sore thumb. I also realized general readers, without above-average knowledge of the subject, might not notice anything amiss, especially given TM's skills as a gifted writer.

Misconstrued attempts upon evolution are nothing new historically, or unique to "stoned apes." But they've come mainly from biblical literalism, with its insistence upon a young earth. Manipulation and misuse of evolutionary science and evidence has increased in recent decades, and concerns have been expressed about the ramifications. I've been studying the wider sociocultural context and ideological aspects of this apparent power struggle for the soul of truth, and what constitutes credible basis for claims upon it, for some time. The Center for Theology and Natural Science published one of my reports (*Whether Evolution is Fact: The Terms of a Non-Scientific Debate*). Another has been posted online by the Metanexus Institute.

In "stoned apes" TM crafted a markedly idiosyncratic variation on a familiar theme: warped theorizing about human origins, in audacious defiance of scientific standards but as if pretending to be scientific. A recent example from the ideological right is Intelligent Design. It concealed its origins in religious concerns (as found in the discovery phase of the Dover, PA trial) by exploiting scientific concepts and data. Another well-known instance is 'scientific creationism' (an ungainly oxymoron), as distinct from 'biblical creationism.' There is nothing novel in ideologically driven efforts to challenge, and hopefully subvert, at least in a naive audience's mind, "conventional" understanding especially as based in scientific perspective. The novelty of McKenna's entry in this category was that it came from the counterculture rather than old-time religion — from us, not them.

Engaging "stoned apes"

Inquiry into "stoned apes" runs into a surprising split among celebrants about its proper context for appreciation and how it should be taken, which poses an obstruction for interpretation. Some disapprove if "stoned apes" is taken seriously, excusing it from scientific critique by defining it as narrative art. Others object that its NOT taken seriously — specifically, by the scientific "establishment." A considerable problem for engaging "stoned apes," beyond scientific issues, is this difference among enthusiasts as to what framework it rightly belongs in, and thus what kind of comment on it (especially if less than enthusiastic) is acceptable. There seems to be no proper entrance, no right way it can be approached. This evokes a recent observation by M. Ball in RS: "Ultimately Terence brought us deep and abiding confusion."

Another reflection of this 'confusion obstacle' is a shifting focus in which TM presented "stoned apes," as if he changed his mind over time, or preferred not to commit (keep his options open), or perhaps just couldn't decide whether he was talking about origin of a species, of human consciousness, or of culture. Whichever of these emphases is tried, one easy ploy for "stoned apes" defenders is to simply move the goal posts, neutralize discussion, keep a moving target with no

fixed coordinates to train sights on. It seems a bit devious, almost recalling Br'er Fox's cunning creation the 'tar baby.' Lay a hand on it and the trap is sprung — you're mired, caught.

Reflection here beckons other questions; of basic scout concepts like honesty and fairness, intentions, qualities of character in society and individuals; of standards, expectations of self and other that pattern our social and personal relations (especially in a narcissistic culture); ultimately to clarification versus confusion of values, and our susceptibility as individuals to social influences of group approval or disapproval; questions that can only be noted in passing, as signposts of what lies beyond, looking deeply between the lines.

(Of contacteeism J. Vallee noted: ""The social, historical and political consequences of the spreading belief ... are real, no matter how ludicrous and bizarre they may appear. In fact, the more ludicrous and bizarre ... the more effective they are as subliminal seduction and as other forms of psychological control. The absurdity ... is not a superficial logical mistake. It may be the key to their function ... the confusion ... may have been put there deliberately to achieve certain results. One of these results has been to keep scientists away..." p. 102)

For discussion purposes — and stepping carefully around any confusion about what the phrase "stoned apes" expresses or implies — I consider it here as presented in *Food of the Gods* (first edition of which I have), addressing the evolution of our species and outlining the basic idea.

Faced with scientific issues of "stoned apes," many fans assert that viewing it as a real attempt at theory is invalid and misconstrued even if McKenna seemingly presented it thus. A frequent rebuttal from this camp to criticism on any scientific basis is: "You missed the point!" One might as well "debunk" Santa Claus, in effect trampling the yuletide joy of innocent children, without actually informing anyone of anything they don't already know. This form of apologetics has an advantage. Placing "stoned apes" on whimsical ground shields it from dismissal by effectively rendering scientific criticism categorically irrelevant, moot. No disagreement here; as whimsy it would be of no notice for science.

But fans who loyally defend "stoned apes" as *bona fide* theory, insisting it should be seriously investigated, lament its neglect by scientists, sometimes bitterly. They often attribute lack of scientific regard for it, glibly, to how narrow-minded ("dualistic") scientists are — i.e., transparent prejudicial stereotyping. Insisting "stoned apes" is real theory not poetry or fairy tale offers an unexpectedly convenient soapbox for propaganda about how benighted and backward "conventional" science is. It's a "hurray TM, boo science" gag. A few years ago, Wikipedia's entry for TM (which seemingly reflects ongoing tampering to keep a properly celebratory, uncritical tone) stated "stoned apes" has "been largely ignored by the very scientists whose research could possibly substantiate it." The picture thus painted is one of science in default, refusing to look through Galileo's telescope as it were, a contemptible traitor to its own mission.

Casting "stoned apes" as a potentially tenable theory may be more consistent with how TM presented it (taken at face value) but it's in deeper quicksand. Conceptualizing it as fantasy or story-bookings exempts it from scientific issues (which prove dire, even fatal). But the idea it "is too a real theory" allows it no such escape clause, leaving its flank exposed. Investigation by "the very scientists whose research could possibly substantiate it" might be the last thing fans who cling to more grandiose interpretation with theoretical ambitions, should ever want. Why? There are two major reasons:

One has to do with problems in McKenna's comprehension of how evolution occurs. Selective processes are not immediately obvious in some respects, even a bit subtle, with crucial nuances easily misunderstood. For "stoned apes" this alone proves deadly because an argument, for whatever logic it holds, is only as good as the information and understanding that informs it.

Just the facts, ma'am

The other problem concerns merest fact; especially one upon which "stoned apes" is largely founded. I refer to something we all know about the effects of psilocybin, discovered by research of R. Fischer, R. M. Hill and colleagues. Namely, psilocybin in low doses increases visual acuity. But where did we learn about this intriguing low-dose effect of psilocybin? Not from reading technical journals. We found out because it was made famous by TM, who cited it to

Fischer and Hill. He inferred this enhancement would, logically, increase the success of hunters. This heightened visual acuity is the foundation of "stoned apes" in terms not of logical speculation or "what ifing," but actual scientific research, reported findings about psilocybin's effects.

TM surrounded this visual enhancement effect with supposition, a chain of "if b, then maybe c, in which case maybe also d, whereupon perhaps" (such 'double ifing' is known as 'begging the question'). He figured (a) psilocybin mushrooms were growing where our ancestral hominids roamed, (b) they ate the mushrooms (c), went hunting under their effect (d), brought home more game due to their enhanced visual acuity (e), won more mates and bred more successfully, so (f) the tripping hominids prevailed in the struggle for existence, out-competing the non-trippers, thus evolving into us. A curious insistence sometimes interjects here, that the word "possibly" be added at each step; the rationale being, it didn't matter to TM whether we were convinced, only that we consider it as possible. In any case, TM argued this enhanced acuity "would have been" adaptive for the tripping hominids he imagined, driving evolution. And why not, doesn't it all make sense?

It doesn't, but that comes under the first problem, of reasoning from error. Bigger trouble here lies with TM claiming Fischer and associates reported this 'enhanced visual perception' in the first place; because — it's untrue. He misrepresented their work. Yes, they published studies about visual perception — perception, not acuity — as affected by psilocybin, in terms of various specific parameters. Not visual acuity, unfortunately.

Nor have I found that Fischer *et al.* reported any advantages for evolutionary fitness in effects of psilocybin; neither in articles TM specifically cited nor any of their others I've read. The only point I've found, concerning any possible adaptive significance for psilocybin's effects on visual perception, is in "Induction and Extinction of Psilocybin Induced Transformation of Visual Space" (R. Fischer and R.M. Hill, 1973, *Pharmakopsychiat.* 6: 258-263):

"There is a 'natural' tendency to misjudge the position of the visual as compared to the gravitational vertical. A 160 µg/kg psilocybin-induced accentuation of this misjudgment ... is reported. Psilocybin ... consistently increases the natural misjudgment of the AVV." (Apparent Vertical Visual) Here's the payoff: "At its worst, such disorientation may be compared to a 'jammed computer' state, a condition which MAY NOT BE CONDUCIVE TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE ORGANISM" (p. 263; caps added for emphasis).

Sometimes if we squint hard enough, we can make things look however we like. I've seen under-skilled, over-eager magic mushroom hunters pick a specimen, pinch it, see some darkening, squint a bit, and pronounce it blue — when no such color has appeared. Wishful thinking plus power of imagination can incur self-deception, with varying fallout from harmless, to other. Are there any clues to such a process at work in TM's 'enhanced visual acuity' or was he merely a crass however amiable liar?

Considering all relevant evidence, I find the latter, uncharitable interpretation does not hold, compared to one more humanely empathetic in light of the human condition: suffering (*dukkha* in Pali), particularly in some of its deeper, more intangible, little-understood aspects, as manifest in TM's odyssey. It seems he was called by sirens of self-deception powered by fond wishes, and fell prey. The way he did this relative to 'enhanced visual acuity' is exhibited, in its specifics, in *Food of the Gods*, pages 24-25.

On page 24 TM notes: Fischer, Hill et al. (1970) found psilocybin improved subjects' performance in detecting "the moment skewed lines became parallel." Next page, he refers to this as improved "edge detection" (a parameter for computer image analysis; not perceptual psychology as far as I know); and calls psilocybin "chemical binoculars." Here he speaks of: "the effect that Fischer noted: small amounts of psilocybin... impart a noticeable increase in visual acuity ..." (p. 25). That's distinctly misleading; Fischer noted no such thing. But we can at least see how TM fabricated the fact, of research saying psilocybin improves eyesight — by stepwise exaggeration of a specific, much less sensational finding ("Myth and legend often contain an ingredient of fact, Captain" — Mr. Spock).

My results aside, I think the authors TM cited would be best qualified to comment on his use of their work. I've not reached Fischer, but I've contacted Hill. He confirms they didn't report nor even test visual acuity; any claim along such lines would be "entirely spurious," he advised.

But knowing the truth leads to an unsettling perspective, of the extent to which this claim has gone unquestioned, and become accepted as factual, true ("confusion embraced" as M. Ball cited). It has become installed in the foundation of a misinformed understanding surrounding a subject of considerable interest – one arguably more deserving of clarification than mystification. But, how can it be that so many who know psilocybin's effects directly, personally — and would therefore be able if not likely, one would think, to know what they've experienced — fail to take pause at this, or compare the 'fact' against the evidence of their own senses? (Hint: as we know or should know by now, heightened suggestibility is a finding well confirmed by research on effects of psilocybin and similar drugs.)

Ripples of misinformation

IFC recently aired an entertaining film, *KNOW YOUR MUSHROOMS*, about an annual mushroom celebration event in Telluride, CO, featuring clips of TM (as "Writer and Visionary"). One scene reflects the hold this factoid, singularly promoted by TM, has taken in popularly-misinformed circles, as a proven finding about psilocybin (on account of which it might have been the trigger of our species very evolution!). Organizer Art Goodtimes says: "Terence McKenna talks about mushrooms as having been catalyst for human consciousness. And he has a whole theory of this ... it turns out in low dose, Psilocybe increases visual acuity." (He goes on to summarize TM's argument proceeding from this: "In hunter-gatherer society if you got better eye sight, you hunt better, you're selected for advancement ..."). I wonder how many people are now learning of psilocybin's enhancement of eyesight for the first time, from seeing this film — a disconcerting tribute to TM's influence; with us, perhaps increasing.

Goodtimes cites another TM "fact" claim about psilocybin, also embedded in the fallacious structure of his "stoned apes" argument: "It turns out, you eat more of those mushrooms, you get kind of horny. And if you get kind of horny you have more kids. So here you are, a better hunter having more kids." I'm not aware TM bothered citing any literature in connection with this 'fact' — somewhat more titillating than 'enhanced visual acuity.' Nor do I find supposed aphrodisiac properties verified in various sources, especially research literature and review.

How it really works

Even if psilocybin did enhance visual acuity however, or make you more "horny," such effects could not play a role in selective processes along lines TM argued. Why? Beyond false facts lies a general problem of fallacious reasoning from misconceptions about evolutionary processes. Such misunderstanding is not uncommon, TM and his audience hold no monopoly on it.

In this light, suppose this attention-grabbing 'horny' claim were true. "Horniness" neither produces children, nor success in competition for mates. Just ask males of a sexually dimorphic species like lions, who must fight each other tooth and claw in a run-off that ends in only one having breeding privileges, the rest left to console each other, out of luck. They can be as "horny" as they want, it makes no difference whatsoever for chances of their genes passing into the next generation. The predicted winner is the bigger, more powerful male, with thick mane — not "horniest" (that's irrelevant). For possible adaptive advantage, 'visual acuity' enhancement seems less nonsensical, by comparison.

But it's nonsense still, because of how evolution actually occurs. In favoring adaptive traits, it's the genome selection operates on, across generations in a reproducing population. If an individual carrying whatever gene reproduces, he or she serves as a means for its transmission to the next generation. Biological evolution = change, to any degree, from one generation to the next, in proportions of GENES in a population. To my knowledge TM never proposed a gene for "eat psilocybin" in the hominids who in his fanciful scenario ate mushrooms, vs. those who did not. Genes may render some particular food(s) indigestible, but no gene governs that we eat mushrooms or don't. Without a gene that could be selected if adaptive, there's nothing to inherit from eating fungi; thus no toehold for selection, regardless how many offspring.

Variations due, not due to genes, but to some environmental input, even if advantageous, don't drive biological evolution. A textbook example: Hungry giraffes craning and straining to reach leaves on higher tree branches, as lower branches are stripped by grazing, might stretch their necks — but any young they bear would show no difference in neck length for it. This reflects the error of Lamarck, who attempted an explanation for evolution before Darwin. Lamarck didn't understand, the only variations that can be passed on are those based in genes. Never mind false facts; the reasoning behind "stoned apes" is based in antiquated Lamarckian ideas, obsolete since Darwin. One could pump iron, go from a 98 pound weakling to a Greek god build; but sons born before or after the transformation do not thereby inherit a difference in physique.

Note: Environmental stimuli can turn genes on or off, without change in gene sequence, by 'epigenetic' processes (e.g., methylation of DNA bases). Some of TM's more educated fans have heard of this, and a few stake last-ditch hopes on it to salvage "stoned apes" as theory; but mainly for purposes of keeping issue alive it seems. I've learned of other "creative" embroideries of "stoned apes" too, citing other research in confused fashion. Nor are the purposes or interests involved clear in some cases, raising further issues such as Vallee cites. We might distinguish misinformation (TM's error) from disinformation. Either way, I've noticed various initiatives to renovate and maintain TM's empty castle built on the Planet of the Stoned Apes sand, continuing apace. There, it seems reason has become something of a cart, placed before the horse of doctrines or conclusions its forced to draw; with rationality deposed by its dubious twin, rationalization; to serve — what interests exactly, with what ramifications?

TM's case seems to have been one of a deeply, desperately split psyche — a very human situation. To date, I think he was his own principle mark, fooling others secondarily to a primary self-deceptive wish, to convince himself of sensational, psychotic-like ideas he knew better than to credit deep down, but which he found rapturously exhilarating, infatuating his imagination beyond his power of reason to resist. His remarkable cultural appeal may originate in a precisely equivalent conflict collectively. That "such an unjustifiable theory (has) survived so long, but also attracted so much interest and attention" (as Watkins says of timewave) spotlights a greater wish or need to believe certain possibilities' even if we know better, underlying the ardent "embrace of confusion."

Thus far, on impression: ideas that psychedelics were a vital factor in something as momentous as our species' evolutionary origin likely express an intuition, from direct experience of their effects, of some profound importance or significance they hold; but of unknown, enigmatic nature, teasing the intellect. At some level "stoned apes" seems an unconscious or half-hearted effort to answer this intuition, and thus resolve the provocation it poses. For fans the greatest tribute to TM's legacy might lie in helping this intuition reach solid ground, by finding real answers to it, if possible, able to hold up under serious consideration.

Having cited Vallee, I must mention another source of urgent value in this context (although not high school level reading): R. Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind*, Chapter 18. Tarnas offers an inclusive, brilliantly integrated framework invaluable for understanding of the human condition in depth, especially in our times — a master key to our "embrace of confusion," and many other things. It has been conveniently posted online.

The horizon of comprehension extends beyond analyses, to decisions about what matters. Pursuit of true understanding must be kenotic, based in compassion, informed by inclusive, accepting, affirming values. It must seek to understand Dorothy's anguish, and ours, at being unable to fly over the rainbow – when a voice inside demands this be, or by right should be, within our ability. But such endeavor risks reinforcing the confusion, and must beware of unwittingly strengthening the chronic angst thus inflicted; indeed, with clear resolve of putting it to rest, if possible; of finding our way out of the dark bitter wood in which Dante was lost; like Odysseus trying to find his way home – a place there's no other like, as Dorothy finally found. Not that everything there is all fine or perfect either. Thus far, there seems no end to reality's ongoing confrontation with itself, in us.