
Psychedelics: My Problem

Discourse

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Abstract

The discourse surrounding psychedelics is problematic on several vectors. The investigation of their effects on human beings is illegal in most circumstances, yet exploration continued after their scheduling in the late 1960s and early '70s. The article examines this problematic from the viewpoints of four leading psychedelic outlaws—Terence McKenna, Philip K. Dick, Timothy Leary, and John Lilly—who continued their explorations and wrote extensively about these experiences post-illegalization. The paradox of prolixity in the face of unspeakable or ineffable experience is one dimension of the problematic. The author weaves in her own experiences of encounters with a language from the psychedelic sphere, in light of the call for new language to communicate about and with the spheres of experience contacted through psychedelic self-exploration.

“There is no knowledge without risk-taking.”

Terence McKenna¹

So what's the problem? Psychedelics: the discourse of the unmentionable by the disreputable about the unspeakable.

1. Terence McKenna, “Psilocybin and the Sands of Time” (audiotape), in *Word Magic: The Collected Talks of Terence McKenna*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: Lux Natura, 1986).

Terence McKenna wrote an afterword to Lawrence Sutin's *In Pursuit of Valis: Selections from the Exegesis*,² Phillip K. Dick's thousands of handwritten pages produced from 1974 until the end of his life in 1982. In the *Exegesis*, Dick tried every-which-way-but-loose to unpack the meanings of the divine invasion, the blast of knowledge-laden pink light that seized him during February and March 1974 and never really let him go. McKenna titles his afterword, "I understand Phillip K. Dick." The following set of notes could be titled, "I Understand Phillip K. Dick *and* Terence McKenna," with the subtitle "*and* I Understand Terence McKenna understanding Phillip K. Dick" and the sense in which he had to put it that way: in the first person, pointing to the kind of understanding that has nothing to do with a close reading or textual analysis, but the gripping recognition, "I've been there."

[H]allucination, whether induced by psychosis, hypnosis, drugs, toxins, etc., may be merely quantitatively different from what we see, not qualitatively so. In other words, too much is emanating from the neurological apparatus of the organism, over and beyond the structural, organizing necessity. . . . No-name entities or aspects begin to appear, and since the person does not know what they are—that is, what they're called or what they mean—he cannot communicate with other persons about them. This breakdown of verbal communication is the fatal index that somewhere along the line the person is experiencing reality in a way too altered to fit into his own prior worldview and too radical to allow empathic linkage with other persons.³

Terence McKenna calls it *folie a' deux*, citing the synchronicities that overlapped his life-line with Dick's: the extraterrestrial content; the Gnostic philosophical mappings; and the intensity of having lived, with his brother Dennis, through his own alien download in 1971, a wraparound reality that seemed both hyperreal and of critical importance—a shared and true hallucination.⁴

Does the delusion of one visionary ecstatic validate the delusion of another?
How many deluded, or illuminated ecstasies does it take to make a reality?
PKD proved that it only takes one. But two is better.⁵

2. Lawrence Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis: Selections from the Exegesis* (Novato, CA: Underwood-Miller, 1991).

3. Philip K. Dick, quoted in Lawrence Sutin, *The Shifting Realities of Phillip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995).

4. Terence K. McKenna, *True Hallucinations: Being an Account of the Author's Extraordinary Adventures in the Devil's Paradise* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

5. Terence K. McKenna, "Afterword," in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).

I'll invoke a *folie a' trois*. That's where I'm coming from, and *that* is one of the things that makes it so damned difficult to talk about psychedelics (you know how nutty it sounds), and, if the *folie* seizes you hard enough, so impossible not to.

The experience is private, personal, the best part, and ultimately unspeakable. The more you know the quieter you get. The explanation is another matter and can be attempted. In fact it must be told, for the Logos speaks and we are its tools and its voice.⁶

Of course, the *folie* count is higher: John Lilly's pursuit of ECCO (Earth Coincidence Control Office) through Vitamin K (Ketamine)⁷ and Timothy Leary's *Starseed*⁸ represent texts of a very particular sort (someone's bound to think I mean a *genre*, but I don't, exactly). These texts—hyperventilated, urgent, “epistemologically potent,” and accompanied by the kinds of synchronicities that represent confirmation to the downloadee and confirmation of paranoid conspiratorial thinking to the psychiatric observer—communicate noetic experiences that focus one's attention as would a lens placed dead center of awareness. These noetic lenses, through which the past is re-viewed (Dick's *anamnesis*) and the future is pre-viewed (McKenna's *eschaton*, the hyperdimensional object casting shockwaves back through time), align events to provide a new and coherent meaning to the whole storyline of one's life and the historic storyline of the human race. These storylines spiral tightly around/through this lens of meaningfulness.

Phil wasn't nuts; Phil was a vortex victim.⁹

The storylines are both produced by and contained in themselves, viewed through the lens, whose apocalyptic apparition is part of the story. The noetic gesture self-enfolds.

Descriptions of any intelligent system (and the Universe is obviously one; fictional texts create others) in order to achieve epistemological potency must include accounts not only of how the system is regulated and organized, and of how it communicates among its own parts, but also of how it knows and describes itself. In other words, any epistemologically potent system must include a discourse that enfolds its own intelligence.¹⁰

6. *Ibid.*

7. John C. Lilly, *The Dyadic Cyclone: The Autobiography of a Couple* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976).

8. Timothy Leary, *Starseed: Transmitted from Folsom Prison* (San Francisco: Level Press, 1973).

9. McKenna, “Afterword,” in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).

10. David Porush, “The Anthropic Cosmology Principle and Literary Theory,” paper presented at the Conference of the Society for Literature and Science, Boston, 1993.

Consciousness arrives in a present moment and receives a transmission, an alien download so off the wall and so difficult to describe, much less interpret, that you spend the rest of your life trying to do just that.

There is an idea that wants to be born, it has wanted to be born for a very long time. And sometimes that longing to be born settles on a person. For no damn good reason. Then you're "it," you become the cheese, and the cheese stands alone. You are illuminated and maddened and lifted up by something great and beyond all telling. It wants to be told. It's just that this idea is so damn big that it can't be told, or rather the whole of history is the telling of this idea, the stuttering rambling effort of the sons and daughters of poor old Noah to tell this blinding, reality-shattering, bowel-loosening truth.¹¹

Such events, and the need to tell of them, demand a strategy. Letting people know you know what you sound like is one option.

Sounds like megalomania to me, Martha.¹²

My own beliefs are unbelievable.¹³

Keeping one's mouth selectively shut is certainly another.

Objectivity and subjectivity were traps that people fell into. I prefer the terms "insanity" and "outsanity." Insanity is your life inside yourself. It's very private and you don't allow anybody in there because it's so crazy. Every so often I find somebody that I can talk to about it. When you go into the isolation tank outsanity is gone. Now, outsanity is what we're doing now, it's exchanging thoughts and so on. I'm not talking about my insanity and you're not talking about yours. Now, if our insanities overlap then we can be friends.¹⁴

Another strategy: spin psychosis as a potential positive. There is not only method in madness, but madness can be a methodology.

[P]sychosis is the redemptive process *ne plus ultra*.¹⁵

11. McKenna, "Afterword," in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).

12. Frequent Terence McKenna quip.

13. John C. Lilly, in Jeffrey Mishlove, "In the Province of the Mind: An Interview with John C. Lilly." "Thinking Allowed." 1998. <http://www.williamjames.com/transcripts/lilly.htm>.

14. John C. Lilly, in David J. Brown, "From Here to Alternity: An Interview with John C. Lilly," in *Mavericks of the Mind: Conversations for the New Millennium* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1993).

15. Dick and McKenna, in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).

The redemptive psychosis in various guises is described by R. D. Laing,¹⁶ Stanislav Grof,¹⁷ Wilson Van Dusen,¹⁸ and Christopher Bache,¹⁹ all therapists utilizing altered states, part of the LSD psychotherapeutic vanguard of the 1950s and '60s or the entheogenic "new wave" of the '90s.

A fourth option: endless explanation. My problem discourse suffers here, but it suffers more from silence.

Those who grasp a piece of the action end up with two things on their plate; the experience and their own idiosyncratic explanation of the experience based on what they have read, seen, and been told. The experience is private, personal, the best part, and ultimately unspeakable. The more you know the quieter you get. The explanation is another matter and can be attempted. In fact it must be told, for the Logos speaks and we are its tools and its voice. . . . I have my own experience, equally unspeakable, and my explanation, equally prolix.²⁰

It is time to confess now just how prolix it can get. Especially if the download, my piece of the action, is a language-like artifact. The date is 9-74, trailing PKD's original VALIS blast by a few months (just as ten years earlier, I rolled a VW bug a few months after PKD rolled his, a few miles up the road from Oakland). I am to give a lecture to a communications class when I am suddenly inspired to tell an extended story, never told before, that seems to make itself up as I go along. It's a kind of philosophical fairytale about the devolution of consciousness down through periods of human and pre-human history, that ended, one-and-a-half hours later, with most of the class (about twenty people) in tears, and one man sobbing uncontrollably. Prior to 9-74, I had written and published stories and poems but never had done any oral storytelling, especially not the spontaneous kind.

One scene of the story (later titled "The Lost") gestated until 1998, and sprouted to the surface as the urge to write a science-fiction novel. In the early stages of exploring the story world, which revolves around a futuristic game, I asked, "How is the game played?" looking for the details—the rules, the playing field, and the social

16. R. D. Laing, in David Black, *Acid: The Secret History of LSD* (London: Vision Paperbacks, 1998).

17. Stanislav Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research* (New York: Viking, 1975), and *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985).

18. Wilson Van Dusen, *The Natural Depth in Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

19. Christopher M. Bache, *Dark Night, Early Dawn* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

20. McKenna, "Afterword," in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).

context. The answer came as a split-second download of a series of twenty-seven glyphs of a visual language, Glide. It can only be said that it was all there, all at once: the form of the glyphs, their meaning, how they functioned in the game (as mazes, as a labyrinth traveled in a psychedelic-vision quest); their origin and history (given by a plant teacher, a blue water lily, to those who tended it, breathing its psychoactive pollen); their multiple uses (as game maze, architecture, poetic language, secret code, oracle); and their internal logic (ternary). Only in clock-time did the glyphs get written down one at a time, and these notions unfold into the characters, plot, and scenery that became *The Maze Game*.²¹

But from the beginning, the glyphs themselves performed as teachers, commanding attention and delivering information about themselves and their function as a symbolic system per se, above and beyond the story world. The Glide glyphs began wrapping real life (RL) into the story world at the same time the story world was being brought into being in RL in a self-enfolding and self-expressing gesture.

Reality leaves a lot to the imagination.²²

Glide presents it/self as a sentient language, as object *and* subject (thus an “it” *and* a “self”), as a being or beings embodied in language that set about to teach me about it/self. This instruction included the suggestion to create a series of interactive multimedia environments through which it could better describe, display, and bespeak it/self as a dynamic, morphing, living language of transformation. It further suggested that RL and the story be more deeply intertwined by the author’s participation in RL of some of the practices described in the story, including the blue lily’s vision quest in which the characters seek and find the focus of their lives. Thus began a highly active and interactive dialogue with Glide that from the beginning functioned within, and across, multiple worlds: the story world; my time-track unfolding in RL (“The Story of My Life”), and the series of psychedelic self-explorations into the alternities opened by the lily’s visions.

Because our consensus reality programs us in certain destructive directions, we must experience other realities in order to know we have choices. That’s what I call Alternity.²³

21. Diana Reed Slattery, *The Maze Game* (Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2003).

22. John Lennon.

23. John C. Lilly, in Judith Hooper, “Omni Interview with John C. Lilly.” 1983. http://www.futurehi.net/docs/Lilly_Omni_Interview.html.

These explorations, from the beginning, have had ground rules laid down by Glide—just a few, but crucial:

1. Develop the skill of note-taking, using natural language—good old English—or drawings, while journeying.
2. The notes are to faithfully scribe (the phenomenological ethic), despite all urges to withhold or edit, what occurs.
3. Journey alone.
4. Trust in the process as it unfolds, within a given session and over multiple sessions.

Rule 1 functions as a lifeline, an Ariadne's thread of continuity howsoever one-dimensional, through the multidimensional labyrinth. The silkworm's thread, self-spun around itself to make the space of transformation—the space from which one emerges fundamentally changed. This cocoon can be unwound back into a text-thread for integration of the experiences at baseline and for weaving them with other accounts.

High doses of psychedelics . . . go to deep waters . . . consciousness to unconsciousness and back, enriching each modality by what is brought across.²⁴

Rule 2 turns out to be the most difficult. Issues of control of the writing hand: motor control, but also “who's writing?”

A heroic dose is one that sweeps away the control of the ego and unleashes the noetic capacity of the plant.²⁵

Rule 2 inevitably encounters resistances of self-judgment and issues of personal revelation—garden-variety embarrassment. There are the great variations of tone and legibility, word-play, puns, and subtle variations, omissions, additions. And the task of learning to be clear as to what is being reported and described and what interpreted and explained is a constant discipline. The solution is just to write it all down and sort out the categories later. The use of the low bandwidth and slow software of natural language to the task at hand is frequently frustrating.

The truth is to cultivate the powers of detached observation—expectations will only get in your way.²⁶

24. Terence K. McKenna, “Running the Edge” (audiotape) (Berkeley, CA: New Medicine Tapes, 1997).

25. Ibid.

26. Terence K. McKenna, “New and Old Maps of Hyperspace” (audiotape) (Big Sur, CA: Dolphin Tapes, 1982).

The prerequisite for overcoming the fears and developing session protocol engendered the trust required in rule 4 that associated with rule 3. These explorations became interwoven with the construction of the novel, *The Maze Game*, drafted in 1999 and published in 2003. The Glide software evolved over the same period into a series of applications: the Collabyrinth, a two-dimensional Glide glyph editor; the Oracle, including a library of over 2,000 translations—Glide to English—of glyph formations and transformations. The period 2003–05 has seen the development of LiveGlide, which brings Glide writing from two- to three-dimensional forms. These glyph “tunnels” suggest, by their complex motions, layered transparency of forms, and transformations, the interpolations among multiple realities (worlds with differing space/time and dimensional structures) that are features of the psychedelic landscape. LiveGlide is currently used by sound artists as a performance instrument. Current efforts are geared toward creating DomeWorks, in which the forms are enacted in the wraparound reality of a domed space, such as a planetarium, where surround-sound spatialization and transformations of acoustic space can evoke shifting, multidimensional realities in the sonic world as well. Doctoral work was begun in 2003, with Glide as its not-so-secret informant. My inquiry centers on linguistic phenomena in the psychedelic sphere.

That’s why it’s so important to communicate, for all of us to put our best foot forward, to put our best metaphors on the table. Because we can move no faster than the evolution of our language. And this is certainly part of what the psychedelics are about: they force the evolution of language. And no culture, so far as I am aware, has ever consciously tried to evolve its language with the awareness that evolving language was evolving reality.²⁷

Throughout this period, the notes I promised to keep, to unpack the Glide download, to continue downloading into English the logs of the research sessions, have filled a two-foot stack of notebooks, which I am beginning to transcribe. So . . . talk about *prolix*. The joints of my left hand are lumpy with arthritis from all that handwriting.

Sounds like megalomania to me, Martha.²⁸

So, the difficulties of the psychedelic discourse unwind. Legitimizing the discourse becomes a cottage industry, finding a place for

27. Terence K. McKenna, *The Archaic Revival: Speculations on Psychedelic Mushrooms, the Amazon, Virtual Reality, UFOs, Evolution, Shamanism, the Rebirth of the Goddess, and the End of History* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

28. Frequent Terence McKenna quip.

the disreputable black sheep within a disciplinary fold: medical, psychotherapeutic, bio-chemical, spiritual, anthropological, ethnobotanical, neuroscientific, or even as a literary genre. Forget it. A transdisciplinary approach—an approach that spans multiple levels of perception and reality as outlined by quantum physicist Basarab Nicolescu and Karen-Claire Voss in *The Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*²⁹—is the closest framework yet found.

The psychedelic discourse labors under the social restraints and penalty-laden politics of knowledge. One becomes “disreputable” by even showing an interest. There are parallels with other “fringe” topics and their investigators: Nobel laureate Brian Josephson, when he moved from quantum tunneling to research in ESP, has been regarded dubiously by his physicist colleagues; and Harvard professor John Mack’s tenure was questioned because of his studies of alien abduction. Both topics have connections to the content of the psychedelic discourse. Psychedelics have it all: reports of alien encounters, ESP, time-travel, past lives . . . but . . .

It’s hard to make a career out of taking a psychedelic drug.³⁰

Settling on what to call “them”: psychedelics, hallucinogens, entheogens, allies, plant teachers, psychotropic/psychoactive/psychotomimetic, or the terms everybody wants to avoid, “substances,” as in “abuse of,” and “drugs,” as in “war on”? Each term comes equipped with its own form of appropriative moves, its share of the social baggage of the 1960s, and its filtered selection of the spectrum of experience, contexts, and outcomes. Sincere attempts to find a single name for a protean family of catalytic chemicals whose functions, uses, effects, side-effects, potentials, and dangers are barely known have included the invention and use of strategic euphemisms. Throughout the last sixty years the climate of research has shifted, of course; burgeoning and funded research during the 1950s and ’60s, followed by forty years of prohibition, the backdoor approach of anthropological and ethnobotanical studies (psychedelics as “primitive” practice), and the current delicate negotiations to re-establish and legitimize both scientific research and sacramental uses have involved an unavoidable dance around the terms, with apologetics, neologisms, euphemisms, and coded messages and private language on the public forums.

29. Basarab Nicolescu and Karen-Claire Voss, *The Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*, SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

30. McKenna, “Running the Edge” (above, n. 25).

This list of difficulties could turn into a boring whine that psychedelics are marginalized, or yet another ritual flogging of Timothy Leary as the Great Spoiler who chose the road of excess and the hedonistic imperative, who hung out with radicals and heads instead of his Harvard colleagues and who, to this day, takes the rap (how did Captain Al Hubbard escape the charge?) for letting the genie out of the Sandoz bottle and the control of these substances out of the funded fingers of academic researchers. I'd rather transform the whine into a claim that psychedelics *define* the margin (the fringe, definitely) of conscious experience, of reality, of language-exceeding experience, of what one is *allowed* to think about, at least in academic circles (the politics of knowledge)—or, more to the point, to perceive and think and feel *with*, currently identified as matters of cognitive liberty.

Reality is not stranger than you suppose, it is stranger than you can suppose.³¹

If I try to spiritualize all psychedelic experience (the entheogenic description), then am I restricted in my descriptions to religious or theological classifications—the Stations of the Cross or the stations of accelerated bliss? Granted, religion's models and vocabularies, its images, metaphors, and archetypes are rich and plunderable. At certain tunings of the mind, all texts are sacred; there are plenty of heavens and angels and demons and hells to catalog. But must I assume that this hell/heaven dichotomy is the only useful ontology? Or the psychotherapeutic dichotomy: are psychedelics the cause or the cure of psychosis and addiction? Is such a therapist—or shaman—healer or dealer? Is this margin that I claim is defined by psychedelics a margin in any normal sense? Is it an edge we cross (we *know* when we're not in Kansas anymore) or run along, as McKenna suggests?³² Is that defining edge no ordinary line, but akin to the evolving fractal boundary of the Mandelbrot set, an edge of infinite length and depth and detail, the multiscalar shoreline of the body-mind-soul set in high relief?

If you like the experience of having your whole ontological structure disappear out from under you, you'll probably love psychedelics.³³

The problem of how to know and what to know about, and to formulate and make useful this new knowledge that is delivered,

31. McKenna, paraphrasing the physiologist J. B. S. Haldane, in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).

32. McKenna, "Running the Edge" (above, n. 25).

33. Terence K. McKenna, "New Dimensions Radio Interview" (audiotape) (Big Sur, CA: Dolphin Tapes, 1986).

often with life-changing impact, by the varieties of psychedelic experience turns epistemology into an extreme sport.

Modern epistemological methods are just not prepared to deal with chattering, elf-infested spaces. We have a word for those spaces—we call them “schizophrenia” and slam the door.³⁴

Is the appearance of the next moment, and all that it presents to consciousness miraculous or mundane?

Our language and our culture are completely set up to devolve the mystery that presses us on all sides.³⁵

The restoration of wonder is a staple feature of the psychedelic landscape. How to describe the sense of the ultimate mystery of exactly why and how an event, a phenomenon, an appearance makes its appearance, a manifestation manifests, what causes that minute particular, the glint of iridescent blue off the morpho's wing, to arise out of the sea of potential particulars, “to undergo,” as McKenna puts it (following Whitehead), “the formality of actually becoming”?³⁶ How can language—this kind of language, the natural languages of twenty-first-century Homo sapiens—be deployed to bring this sense of wonder back to Earth?

How do we read the psychedelic texts? We have the precipitate of words after the return (the first-person trip reports and travelers' tales) and the dry, tabulated, bowdlerized clinical observations, but what are meant are the primary (*in situ* and *in vivo*) texts, as we have spoken of the world as text and nature as a book: the sounds, sights, narratives, visions, archetypal presences, and emotions we are trying to parse as they reverberate through consciousness when all the categories by which we describe our *experience of experience*—perception, conception, cognition, including the linguistic—have been profoundly rearranged, or simply dissolved? How then, if *reading* the psychedelic sphere in this primary sense is so problematic, do I *write* the psychedelic texts? How do I shape “my problem discourse” on the edge of language or beyond?

Reality is truly made of language and of linguistic structures that you carry, unbeknownst to yourself, in your mind, and which, under the influence of psilocybin begin to dissolve and allow you to see beyond the speakable. The contours of the unspeakable begin to emerge into your perception, and though

34. Terence K. McKenna, in Will Noffke, “A Conversation over Saucers.” *ReVision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformation* 11:3 (1989): 23–30.

35. McKenna, “Running the Edge” (above, n. 25).

36. Terence McKenna, *The Archaic Revival* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992).

you can't say much about the unspeakable it has the power to color everything you do.³⁷

The problem is in part "literary" and "linguistic," though in some suitably expansive reframing of those domains.

Construction of the saucer is a poetic challenge.³⁸

But just as we are using new technology to investigate matter and its relationship to mind, so I believe we shall increasingly use an old technology to navigate consciousness and transcendence of the material state. This ancient technology, [which] has been used by shamans for millennia, is the technology of plants, specifically psychoactive plants. I believe that as it becomes more widely understood and experienced, this plant technology will join with computer technology to affect radically our way of being.³⁹

So, my problem discourse is in part a literary problem; a matter of texts, in the broadest Barthean sense of text, new worlds to be read, and then somehow languaged into wordy texts, to be transcribed, interpreted, and closely read. There is, of course, a literature of psychedelic self-experimentation—a canon even: Huxley, Baudelaire, Fitz-Hugh Ludlow, William James, William Burroughs.⁴⁰ But I submit that there is a secret, closet literature of which the brief anecdotes visible in the vaults of Erowid are the trailers for major feature-length travelogues. It is my educated guess—or wild shot in the dark—that there exist documents reporting on multiple sessions with psychedelics, over long periods of time, that can show us how the individual evolves and what is learned from repeated journeys and repeated observations.

Engaged in the politics necessary to wire the world, I encounter many people in positions of influence and visibility—politicians, corporate leaders, scientists, engineers, writers, academics—who are motivated by the same mystical drive that propels me. They are acidheads, but nearly all of them are afraid to admit it. It's as though the future were being created by a secret cult. And even though it's my secret cult, I'm not crazy about secrecy or cults, and I'm certainly not keen on having them design the rest of society.

37. McKenna, in Noffke, "A Conversation over Saucers" (above, n. 34).

38. *Ibid.*

39. Roy Ascott, "The Bridge of Consciousness: Art, Media and Mind in the 21st Century." 2000. www.nabi.or.kr/cocoon/pdf/roy_lecture.pdf.

40. Marcus Boon, *The Road of Excess: Writers on Drugs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

I think it's time to be brave and honest. I know that if everybody who'd ever taken a major psychedelic stood up and said, "Yeah, I did that and this is how it changed my life," the world would be a better place the next day.⁴¹

My guess is that these texts that have been or could be written are closeted in part because they reveal the content that is so problematic as it was and is experienced. I submit that the margin defined by psychedelics (is it time yet to call it a frontier?) will benefit by the coming-out of these documents where they can be read—closely read, read through a variety of filters and sensibilities—and perhaps even interrelated. The raw data—the unexpurgated content—of the experiences and of their integration into the lives of individual explorers seem important to be made available. I'd like to tease these documents out into the open, and/or to encourage such authorship. Is this a research program? It's too early for that, I think.

It is important to give these compounds to volunteers but also to the researchers who are actually going to grapple with the problem. So much scientific talk orbits around the psychedelic experience but how many scientists have had a psychedelic experience? The early approach with psychedelics was the Baconian approach and was the correct one. This is the notion that intelligent, thoughtful people should take psychedelics and try and understand what's going on. Not groups of prisoners, not graduate students, but mature, intelligent people need to share their experiences. It's too early for a science. What we need now are the diaries of explorers. We need many diaries of many explorers so we can begin to get a feeling for the territory. It is no coincidence that a rebirth of psychedelic use is occurring as we acquire the technological capability to leave the planet. The mushroom visions and the transformation of the human image precipitated by space exploration are spun together, and nothing less is happening than the emergence of a new human order.⁴²

But it is not too early to talk about a psychedelic phenomenology, or to recall William James's radical empiricism or use in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* of Bergson's *document humain*.⁴³ The basic self-experiment (which can be varied and refined) is the essence of

41. John Perry Barlow, in Charles Hayes, *Tripping: An Anthology of True-Life Psychedelic Adventures* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2000).

42. McKenna, in Noffke, "A Conversation over Saucers" (above, n. 34).

43. Psychologist William James used the term *document humain* in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* to mean accounts of directed, lived experience, such as the account of George Fox's mystical visions, in one's own words (see James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [Megaladon Entertainment LLC, 2008], p. 248). James's *document humain* might be called a "traveler's tale" in today's greater level of mistrust of first-person accounts.

simplicity: 1) ingest, inject, or smoke a psychedelic substance; and 2) observe what happens. *Sounds like science to me, Martha*. The problematic of the discourse insists that multiple strategies be found to report on the first-person experiences, communication that does not elide the content for the sake of respectability or acceptance or to assume the position of scientism's objectivity, but to try to make some sense of it as part of the range of human experience. The task of understanding the psychedelic varieties of experience seems to require a new consortium of literature and science and philosophy, one capable of bringing together the objective and subjective perspectives—the discourses of science and literature as they are now conceived and mostly practiced. There is a wealth of neuroscientific data potentially available about altered states through noninvasive imaging techniques that could be brought together with the first-person accounts of ongoing experience—the phenomenological task. How can we produce and record the reports—the words, pictures, gestures, dances—by which these states, verging always on the unspeakable—are expressed? How, after the fact, can we interpret and analyze these texts?

I read the clues left by Terence McKenna and return to the lens analogy. He says, like Galileo, to deploy the lens. McKenna's lenses are DMT and psilocybin. Pick them up, he suggests, look through them, perform your own tailored version of "the experiment." Practice a little outlaw science, or go to Brazil or Amsterdam and do it legally. There are new worlds to be seen about which little is known and much can be speculated. These observations seem to demand a radical reframing of our current worldview, including our notions of space and time. Galileo's observations through his lenses of outer space were subversive to the prevailing worldview of his time and the outlaw science of his day; McKenna's observations of inner space are equally so. My own piece of the action is linguistic; after the Glide download in 1998, I started looking everywhere for clues about visible or visual language, which led me to McKenna's work. I wanted to tell him, in 1999, after working through some of the details, but he was already dying, so the hallucination remained unshared. But the lens was there to be picked up. Looking through it, sure enough, that dome of consciousness he describes is hovering. Prepare for landing. The *folie* count is rising.

How many deluded, or illuminated ecstasies does it take to make a reality?⁴⁴

But what a discourse, problematic or not, that will make, when the true hallucinations are shared.

44. McKenna, "Afterword," in Sutin, *In Pursuit of Valis* (above, n. 3).