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Printed in L. Grinspoon + J. Bakalar (Eds.),  
Psychedelic Reflections. New York: Human Sciences  
Press, 223-233. 1983

Initial Integrations of Some Psychedelic Understandings

into Everyday Life

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Ordinarily when I sit down at my typewriter, I write in the role of a successful scientist, a craft in which I have learned how to skillfully weave hard data and tight logic to produce a clear argument. This role is a comfortable one for me now, after years of practice, although there was a time at the start of my career when it was worrying, challenging, frustrating. Suppose I hadn't done the experiment quite right, or overlooked something that would be obvious to everyone else? Had made an interpretation that was illogical? Didn't know about some important background study? With application, practice, and experience, I have changed. When I write a scientific paper now I know that I am skilled at science. I also know that I've undoubtedly overlooked something, but perfection is not a sane goal: only doing your best is.

Now I have been asked to write about my personal experience with psychedelic drugs and what I have learned from that experience, and it's like beginning again, but even more so. I could limit myself to my scientific role, report as accurately as possible on observations of myself as an experimental subject, and form reasonable hypotheses about why I experienced what I did. That course would be safe and comfortable. It would also be prudent: I do a lot of researching and theorizing at cutting edge areas of science like altered states or parapsychology which are quite controversial, so it would certainly be prudent to show that I have only logical and rational thoughts about my temporary excursions into a kind of chemical insanity. How better buttress the image of being

a supremely reasonable scientist than to show that even my own "irrationality" can be used in the service of reason?

That conservative course would also be much less than I could do, and not be true to my own understandings.

I'm no longer a twenty-six year old with a fresh Ph.D., oriented to proving to myself and others how rational and scientific I am. In eighteen years I've changed a lot (I like to think of it as maturing!), partly as a result of some psychedelic experiences, mostly from learning from life. I like science, I do a good job at it, I no longer feel a need to prove my competence to myself or anyone else. I know my science's limits as well as its strengths. I've also discovered I have a body and a heart. Most of the most important parts of life have not been touched on by science, especially matters of the heart. If I were a poet or a composer, perhaps I could "speak" of some of these matters more clearly, but I'm not. I know that part of my mind that frames these words and thoughts is only a small (but very valuable) part of my body, so what I say here about things I've learned from psychedelic experiences is only a part of a part. Nevertheless, I can say something useful. For those used to the clarity of the scientific style of writing, you have my advance apologies for my occasional use of descriptions that are paradoxical. I suggest you will find it useful, though, to let the occasional apparent paradox raise questions about the limits of our ordinary minds, rather than serve as an excuse to ignore parts of reality.

In speaking of limitations, I would note too that I have had a number of psychedelic "trips," both in and outside of formal laboratory settings, yet the implications of the colloquialism "trips" are quite appropriate. I have seen a lot of psychedelic territory as a tourist taking occasional trips might, enough to convince me that while I am familiar with the high-

Tart -3

lights, I don't really understand the "country" or the "language" as a "native" does.

Depth of Understanding:

If I ask "What have I learned from psychedelic experiences?" in terms of what sorts of concepts, what sorts of words do I apply in my professional work and my life, then the answer would be not much I didn't already know. The difference is in the experiential reality of the concepts, the "flavor," the appreciation of their depth and reality.

I find this is a hard point to make in a verbally oriented culture like ours, where being able to skillfully say words is implicitly equated with understanding of the realities referred to by the words. I share in this prejudice myself, and it has taken me a long time to (sometimes) understand how little relation verbal facility can have to real knowledge. The point was impressed and re-impressed forcefully and repeatedly on me for several years when I began to study Aikido, a Japanese martial art somewhat like Tai Chi or some forms of Karate. My instructor was not particularly verbal, and I found that within a few weeks I could explain (to outsiders) what Aikido was and the principles behind it much better than my instructor could. Every time I was on the mat actually practicing, though, I was reminded that I knew absolutely nothing compared to my instructor. The real knowledge was not verbal. So it is with psychedelic experience: I could have verbalized most of the things I've learned fairly skillfully without those experiences, but looking back from the perspective of the psychedelic experiences, my real knowledge was very shallow.

First Experiences:

While finishing up my psychology degree at the University of North Carolina, I occasionally visited with friends at the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University. Through one of them I met a prominent European

Tart -4

psychologist who was on sabbatical leave at Duke. He had done some of the early studies on the effects of mescaline on people in Europe. When the topic turned to such effects, he remarked that he did not know of any material on how Americans reacted to a drug like mescaline, and was curious about it. Thinking that an unusual opportunity had occurred (without beginning to comprehend just how unusual it was!), I volunteered to try some mescaline he had with him, since I was obviously "typical" and could so represent the American population! It was arranged that we would try the experiment on a Saturday morning in a friend's office at the laboratory.

Saturday morning came. I skipped breakfast so the drug effect, as I had been told, would come on faster. I drank 400 milligrams of pure powdered mescaline sulfate dissolved in a glass of lukewarm tap water. The first sip convinced me that I was making a considerable sacrifice for the sake of science, as I can only describe the mixture as tasting like warm vomit. We then waited for effects to begin. Two and a half hours later we were still waiting for the effects to begin! The psychologist could not understand why nothing had happened, and was probably concluding that Americans were indeed different in some strange way from Europeans. The best I could report was that if I pressed forcibly on my closed eyes, the visual phosphenes, normally very dim, were perhaps 20% brighter than they ordinarily would be, a most trivial effect and hardly worth the sacrifice of the taste of the mixture. As a last resort before calling it quits for the day, I drank another 100 milligrams of mescaline sulfate.

A few minutes later the most extraordinary event happened. Quite suddenly the room I was in, instead of being a dingy office in an old college building, was like a cathedral of enormous size and beauty. The colors of the furnishings were incredibly beautiful, full of deep texture and hues I had never seen before. Small objects around the office were

Tart -5

magnificent works of art. My friends were surrounded by beautiful colored rainbows: indeed, within a few minutes rainbows were floating through the air everywhere. It was only after reflecting on similar experiences later in life, that I realized that I had gone from no effect at all from the mescaline to the peak of the psychedelic experience in less than a minute or two.

As a student of psychology, my experiences were fascinating beyond description. For the first time I really understood the concept of dissociation, for example, by experiencing it. To illustrate: at some point in the experiment one of my friends wanted me to do some ESP tests, guessing at standard Zener cards. Because of a mutual interest, I had agreed before the experiment began to do this, but from my perspective at the time, I could not have been asked to do a more trivial, uninteresting, and wholly inappropriate task. I resolved the problem of continuing to explore the unusual mental state I was in while fulfilling my bargain by dissociating a part of my mind. It would generate the ESP symbols with no attentional involvement on my part and speak them aloud, as directed by the experimenter. After long intervals of exploring inner space I would occasionally check in and find I was still dutifully calling ESP symbols, as I had agreed to. The reality of a part of "me" operating independently of "me" was quite clearly demonstrated. My ESP scores, incidentally, were at chance expectation!

This personal understanding was useful years later when I reviewed the small literature on attempts to enhance ESP with psychedelics, and saw at once how inappropriate the testing methods were for the subjects' probable mental state. Even more importantly for the development of my psychological understanding, this and other personal experiences of dramatic degrees of dissociation under psychedelics sensitized me to the importance of the concept and led me to notice how very frequently less dramatic (but

Tart -6

quite important) processes of dissociation occur in everyday life. Attempts to understand dissociation, such as Hilgard's (1977) neo-dissociation theory, will lead to important progress in psychology.

As a person, rather than simply a student of psychology, though, I can still remember the most important thing about that first experience. For the first time in my life, I knew what the word "beauty" meant. True, I had spoken it thousands of times in my life before, had pointed at objects I'd been taught to believe were beautiful and said the word in association with them, and occasionally had vague, moderately positive feelings in connection with such objects. Now I understood that I had never even begun to penetrate what beauty was all about. While the incredible and intense immediate experience of beauty faded rapidly after the experiment, a door had been opened in my mind and senses that would never close completely.

Laboratory Subject:

While still a graduate student I was a subject in laboratory studies of the effects of LSD and psilocybin on numerous occasions. The work was done in the Psychiatry Department at the University of North Carolina by Dr. Martin Keeler. One aspect of these experiences that was especially useful for my later experimental work in studying altered states of consciousness was the immediate understanding I gained of the inappropriateness of most conventional approaches to their study! Given scientific knowledge available at the time, Keeler's research was quite sophisticated. Given the inside, psychedelic perspective of a subject, the studies could show very little of real value. I shall give a few examples.

One of the tests routinely taken while intoxicated was a symptom check list. Dozens of various symptoms/experiences were individually typed on 3x5 file cards. I was to read each card and put it in a True box if I was experiencing that symptom, or in a False box if I was not. From

our ordinary perspective, this is a well developed and useful way of getting a description of ongoing experience in a form amenable to statistical analysis. From my inside perspective, I discovered almost immediately that the test was seldom merely an assessment procedure, it was usually an induction procedure: reading the description of a symptom suggested it, and if I happened to read it several times the cumulative effect of the suggestions usually induced the experience. Once I knew this, I controlled it. I might read, "Your palms are sweating green sweat," decide that would be interesting to experience, and so read it several times to strengthen the suggestion. Then I would look down at my palms and see them sweating green sweat! The card would go in the True box. If I came across a symptom card like "I am feeling very anxious," I would throw it in the False box right away so it wouldn't have a chance to come true! The difference between assessment and induction has been very important in all my experimental work. I always remind myself that I (as experimenter) and my measurement instruments may be creating effects in subjects, not simply measuring what is already there. To lose sight of this possibility, to not actively investigate it, makes the experimenter more biased, unaware of the role he may be playing in artifactually creating the things he is studying.

Set, Setting, and Control:

Many people writing about psychedelics have spoken of the importance of set and setting. My own psychedelic experiences taught me this importance in great depth. The still all too predominant chemical model, that the chemical nature of the drug taken interacts in some fixed fashion with the chemistry of the brain to produce relatively invariant effects, is so obviously inadequate. The chemical effects take place, but they are then organized and interpreted in ways most easily understood as psychological variables. For example, the knowledgeable reader may have wondered why,

in my first psychedelic experience, I showed no response to 400 milligrams of mescaline, a quite powerful dose. I wondered too at the time, but years later it is quite understandable to me. On the conscious level, I was very interested in the expected psychedelic experience and looked forward to it. On an unconscious level I was extremely fearful of losing control, so psychologically and unknowingly increased the intensity of various stabilization processes so that the destabilization caused by the chemical effects of the drug was not sufficient to induce an altered states of consciousness. When the dosage was increased to 500 milligrams, the destabilization effect was then powerful enough to overwhelm my increased psychological stabilization: thus my unusual experience of going from my ordinary state of consciousness to the peak of the experience in a matter of less than a minute. In retrospect, my fear at that time was groundless--nothing terrible happened--but it was sufficient to drastically modify the drug effects.

I can recall other occasions in my psychedelic experiences as a laboratory subject in graduate school when this interaction of psychological and drug effects was quite obvious. As well as being an experimental subject, I occasionally assisted that study project as a research assistant. There were several occasions when I and other subjects were simultaneously drugged, but the social situation called for some help in the research assistant role. I often suppressed most of the drug effects so that I could be of some assistance as research assistant: once the task was done I would let the drug effects again intensify. Indeed, I can recall humorous occasions when several drugged subjects and several undrugged experimenters would all be in the same room and a visiting psychiatrist or psychologist would be asked to try to identify who was drugged and who wasn't. Their accuracy was often very poor.

Openness:

One of the most striking things I have learned from my psychedelic



experiences is to be open and sympathetic to a wide variety of things that I was formerly closed to. I have often been struck by how much in ordinary life we define the "me" and the "not me," and the steps we take to preserve sharp distinctions. As an example, I am a very intellectual person, and ordinarily find "artists" a strange and illogical breed. But if I trouble to remember my psychedelic experiences, or to psychologically re-induce aspects of that kind of state, I know what it is like to see beauty in form, color, and texture, to become lost in and fascinated by the interplay of the elements of an object or scene, to create beauty. While the ordinary me may be an intellectual, I remember a small change, and I am also an artist. I have seen my personality temporarily take on very altered configurations during a psychedelic experience, and remembering that I can empathize with other people more, I could feel like that, I could think like that, I could behave like that. I can understand processes of mental illness much better than ever before, and be empathic to the suffering involved: I have been "crazy" in a variety of ways for periods of time. My ordinary self has little patience with the kind of person we would call a "mystic," yet I know I have been a mystic, I understand the urgency of that quest. This too is "me." I try to remember that while "me" is ordinarily tightly defined, this should not be a basis for rejection of the other, for I have some direct understanding of what it is like to be other than myself.

#### Creating Realities:

In describing my experiences as a laboratory subject, I mentioned how I discovered that I could make any item on a symptom questionnaire become true simply by concentrating on it, by repeating it a few times in my mind. I have experienced this not only for isolated effects, but for creating, as it were, whole worlds, for creating interrelated perceptions, thoughts,

feelings, and actions, that constituted a new experienced reality in and of itself. Such eyes-closed fantasies/constructed realities under the influence of psychedelic drugs cannot be simply described as "real" but usually were more adequately described as "realer than real." With eyes open, fantasies/constructed realities could make use of surrounding stimulus material in ways to amplify and apparently validate themselves very readily.

As an example of how readily a fantasy/constructed reality can be created, I recall a day in the laboratory when I had taken some psilocybin. During the afternoon I was hungry, so someone brought me a bag of potato chips and then left me alone. I was in a laboratory room which had a one-way observation mirror set in its wall. I knew that I was frequently observed by one experimenter, and that there might occasionally be other observers, but this had never been of particular concern to me. For some reason I began worrying about it that day as I ate the potato chips, and my reality rapidly changed to that of "The Beast and the Potato Chips." I noticed that I was dropping some crumbs of potato chips as I ate, that they fell on my clothes, and I thought how sloppy this was. I perceived an instinctual, driven quality to my eating, and began to feel like a beast consuming food rather than a person. I perceived shapes moving dimly behind the observation window as if many people were in there observing, and I became acutely embarrassed at the thought that many friends and colleagues would now see how depraved, beastlike, and sloppy I was, yet I could not stop eating. A part of me was terribly ashamed, wanting desperately to behave, while the beast part wanted nothing more than to continue devouring potato chips. I felt that my body was covered with slimy sweat, and saw it glistening. I smelled my own sweaty smell incredibly strongly, full of bestial animal overtones. All my experience was consistent

Tart -11

with, overpowered by the animal in me having now triumphed, in spite of my ego's acute embarrassment.

The experience eventually passed, but it was quite definitely what was later to be called a "bummer." It was a good lesson in the way my mind could create a reality, without being at all anything I would want to create.

Sensitivity to the degree to which we can create the same type of fantasies/constructed realities by self-suggestion or from suggestions by others has been very important in my theoretical understanding of altered states of consciousness. In my systems theory approach to consciousness (Tart, 1975), I begin expounding a systems approach by bringing to consciousness the implicit assumption that our ordinary state of consciousness is somehow natural and given. From my own experience with how readily it could be changed, with how plausible so many of those changes were, and from observations of others in all areas of life, I understand that our ordinary state of consciousness is a semi-arbitrary construction, not something simply natural and given. This applies not only to our thoughts and actions, but to our perceptions. Certainly there is some "hard-wiring" in the perceptual systems, but having experienced the immense number of ways the same object can be perceived in a psychedelic state, I realize how arbitrary (and often maladaptive) some of our apparently "natural" perceptions may be. Looking into the literature of developmental psychology has confirmed my feelings: our perceptions of, interpretations of, and actions in the world are, in vitally important ways, constructed in the enculturation process. In many important ways our "normal" state of consciousness is a (partially shared) fantasy/constructed reality, and so must be examined, not taken for granted.

Realizing this had an important professional effect of making me more open-minded in investigating various altered states of consciousness. My enculturated prejudice was to see them as pathological. Realizing the cultural relativity of our ordinary state, I understood how arbitrary, limiting, and just plain silly it is to automatically consider anything different from it as pathological. The construction of ordinary consciousness in the socialization process is discussed on a scientific level elsewhere (Tart, 1975).

Meaning, Paradigms, Metaparadigms, and Nonsense:

One of the most important developments in the philosophy of science has been Thomas Kuhn's articulation of the idea of paradigms (Kuhn, 1962), overarching, interconnecting sets of assumptions, often gone implicit, that explicitly and implicitly define what is legitimate to ask questions about and the form the answers are expected to take. One of the most important things I learned from my psychedelic experiences was the reality of paradigms, through experiencing alternate paradigms. Again and again I experienced drastic reconstructions of my perceptions of reality and styles of thought about it. "Sensible" and "nonsensical" questions became a function of the particular state of mind I was in. Things which I had been enculturated into accepting until they became implicit, the "obvious" and "normal" ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and behaving were often seen, from another paradigmatic perspective while intoxicated, to be quite relative. What was obviously "me" could sometimes be "not me," and vice versa, so all the implicit and apparently "natural" structurings of importance and priority could change. The world I perceived around me could be beautiful or ugly, obviously orderly or chaotic. Particularly, a wide variety of things I took for granted were called into question. Serious things were

often seen as trivial and irrelevant, while small things normally overlooked could be quite important.

My first real inklings of the fact that much of what I took to be natural and given was enculturated knowledge, and really quite relative and subject to question, came from psychedelic experiences. Issues which were very important from my ordinary perspective could be seen in an entirely new light, and sometimes seen as pseudo-issues. This shift in perspective sometimes included a kind of meta-perspective in which the existence of my own ego was a quite trivial fact. Its survival or death, its gratification or suffering, were as nothing from some other perspectives, and were everything from others. Seeing this relativity of cultural and personal perspective also extended to scientific questions. In discussing methodological issues I have mentioned that standard tests may not be relevant to the intrinsic nature of the altered state induced at a given time by psychedelics: indeed, the tests may be trivial and quite misleading in terms of what is obviously important from the paradigmatic perspective of that particular state. I am not saying that scientific investigation per se is a trivial activity, but rather that when a number of paradigms, a number of perspectives are available, scientific questions can be seen as relative to perspective. This offers the possibility of learning what really important questions are because they remain valid questions from several perspectives, and/or of answering questions from a variety of perspectives.

Some of my experiences of paradigm shifts could be more properly described as meta-paradigm shifts. That is, the nature of my knowledge changed so drastically that the idea of paradigm shift is not adequate. It was more as if several alternative paradigms dealing with similar subject matter could now be viewed from a "higher" or "outside" paradigm, from a perspective that showed something about the fundamental nature of those paradigms,

Tart -14

rather than just dealing with their subject matter. I find this verbal description of meta-paradigms quite inadequate, but I recall that when I have been in those meta-paradigmatic states, my understanding was perfectly clear. This is an example of state-specific knowledge, which I shall also return to later.

I suspected, sometimes afterwards and sometimes at the time, that some of the alternative paradigmatic organizations of consciousness that I experienced might be nonsense, might be "pseudo-paradigms" in a sense that they were not an organized and valid way of knowing but more an elaboration of a fantasy without a real logic of its own. Put more simply, under the influence of psychedelics I frequently observed the capacity of my mind to create meaning out of whatever was available. This meaning usually seemed profoundly true at the time, but in retrospect I might evaluate a given insight as quite creative and useful in many ways, or as totally nonsensical. Some of the things I put in the nonsensical category, however, may be mistaken classifications due to a loss of the state-specific kind of understanding in which they were evolved.

To illustrate the ready creation of meaning, I recall a test we used in the laboratory to decide whether a subject had sufficiently recovered from the psychedelic drug effects to be allowed to go home on his own. Keeler had taken a number of ordinary proverbs, split them in half, and randomly mixed the beginnings and endings. To evaluate whether a subject would be allowed to go home, he would be asked something like "Do you understand that birds of a feather gather no moss?" If he understood, he was not ready to leave the laboratory! The ability of the mind to read meaning into random collections of stimuli is indeed extraordinary. Indeed, even today I suspect that that particular proverb could be quite meaningful in certain circumstances! One of the most important professional benefits

from becoming sensitized to this hyper-creative faculty of the mind for me has been to make me cautious about the feeling of insight. I know how much I enjoy the feeling of "This is obviously true" that can accompany certain kinds of insights, but I also know that the intensity of that feeling may have little to do with the applicability and validity of that insight in any particular circumstance.

State-specific Knowledge and Science:

Earlier I mentioned the state-specificity of knowledge, the fact that in a particular altered state you may understand something, but once that state is no longer present you can not really comprehend your earlier understanding. Note that I emphasize state-specific knowledge rather than drug-specific knowledge. As I've argued elsewhere, what particular altered state of consciousness is created by psychedelic drugs is a function of many things besides the drug itself (Tart, 1975). Thus altered states, especially those induced by psychedelics, hold out the lure of other kinds of knowledge, often apparently "higher" and more satisfying kinds of knowledge that cannot be reached any other way. The direct experience of various kinds of state-specific knowledge can be extremely satisfying, often much more so than the abstract, hyper-intellectual kind of understanding that characterizes so much of ordinary science. The other side of the coin that I've already introduced, though, is the enhanced meaning-creating ability of the mind as a result of psychedelics, including the ability to take what is probably total nonsense and endow it with great depths of experienced meaning and insight. Indeed, I believe one of the greatest dangers of altered states in general and psychedelic drugs in particular is their ability to lure us onward into a deeply satisfying world of fantasy, a world that might, for a particular individual, be constructed of far too great a degree of personal fantasy, personal nonsense, and personal psychopathology.

The traditional scientific response to dealing with inner experiences,

Tart -16

especially once they are suspected of sometimes containing nonsense, is to not deal with them, to declare them as illegitimate data for science. Historically this was reflected in psychology's rejection of introspection as a primary methodology and a switch to behaviorism. I, like many psychologists, believe that the most important aspects of psychology were thrown out by this rejection, although technically it was probably a good maneuver at that period in history.

My psychedelic experiences (as well as other data) convinced me that important inner experience does not have to be rejected as a domain of study. Even state-specific experience which cannot be adequately recalled or understood in one's ordinary state of consciousness may be susceptible to study. This conviction must stem partially from the fact that I was not simply anyone having psychedelic experiences, I was a committed scientist having psychedelic experiences. While intoxicated I frequently asked scientific-type questions to myself, thought about how an experiment might be set up to test the consequences of certain kinds of state-specific understandings, etc. These were grandiose thoughts for a beginner, for an infrequent traveler to strange lands rather than an experienced native, but they convinced me that much of what seemed "ineffable" could be studied by basic scientific method. What is probably my most important professional contribution to date is my 1972 paper in Science, "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences." In that, I argue that the essence of scientific method is an interaction between data collection/experience, interpretation/theorizing, testing of new consequences (predictions) of the concepts and theories, and sharing of experience and conceptualizations with colleagues. While it is much easier to carry out this process in areas like the physical sciences, I see no reason in principle why internal experiences could not constitute the data, and why the altered styles of



thinking, alternative logics, that occur in specific altered states could not be applied to the data. Thus one could have a state-specific science, one in which a scientist had himself to enter the appropriate altered state of consciousness in which he would make special kinds of state-specific observations, formulate hypotheses with the state-specific logic available, work out and test the consequences of that logic on other internal state-specific observations, and share all phases of this process with colleagues (also in that state) who would correct, refine, and amplify the investigation. Technical details are available in the original paper (Tart, 1972).

The proposal that we establish state-specific sciences for various states of consciousness is quite far reaching, and we may not be mature enough to begin such undertakings in any really effective way yet. The usefulness of the discipline of scientific method in checking out the consequences of understandings, though, will ultimately be extremely helpful in understanding the core phenomena found in psychedelic experiences and other altered states.

I want to add an important caveat as to using scientific method to study the important experiences of altered states. As Abraham Maslow, in his too little read but exceptionally fine book, "The Psychology of Science" (1966) pointed out, science is a tool used by human beings and, as such, reflects the qualities of the particular users. A given individual can use scientific method in an open-minded, growthful manner that enhances his own range of functioning and personal maturity, or an individual can misuse it as one of the best neurotic defense mechanisms around. Science can be a high prestige rationalization mechanism. The application of basic scientific method to the phenomena of altered states requires a delicate balance in the practitioner between a kind of softness and openness to new experience. It calls for a willingness to be guided by whatever

happens regardless of one's preconceptions, balanced by a realization that there are ways in which we love to fool ourselves and are very good at it. Thus the discipline of testing the consequences of understanding through science is vital. That latter kind of "hard-headedness" must be an accepting, loving kind of hard-headedness: to the extent that it comes out of self-rejection, it will be destructive. The development of state-specific sciences, then is a delicate matter. In the long run, I have great faith that this will increase our understanding of ourselves and of our world, but over shorter time periods I expect enormous variability and a fair amount of craziness as we work through our resistances and try this new endeavor.

Glimpses of the Lost and the Vital:

In important ways, my experience of psychedelic drugs has been that they disrupted some of my acquired, enculturated mental processes, and by disrupting them allowed the emergence of earlier, more child-like psychological processes. The result was sometimes very positive. As William Wordsworth put it,

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

Reflecting on his current adult status, he went on to write,

It is not now as it hath been of yore;  
Turn whereso'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

(Wordsworth, 1952)

This loss of our child-like simplicity, innocence, and wonder in the course of enculturation is also expressed in the religious allegory of The Fall. Something very vital, very essentially individual, very personal, is neglected, suppressed, and repressed in the process of making us "normal," the process of cajoling, frightening, manipulating, conditioning, and "educating" us so that the internal structure of our minds reflects the values of our particular parents and culture. I have come to believe there is something inherently costly in the process of enculturation, regardless of what culture it takes place in. Some part of us knows that an essential part has been lost, and culture does not provide adequate compensation. Thus the longing for the "good old days," for a more perfect world. For me, psychedelics allowed me to temporarily be a child again in many ways, and recontact something vital of my own essence. It was only a glimpse, though, and it has required much personal psychological work to follow that glimpse and begin to re-vivify the lost, essential child in me. This vital core of self can be recontacted and integrated into adult life.

Perhaps the most difficult learnings from psychedelic experiences to speak of are those that I would put in the category of intimations of the spiritual. I don't mean spiritual in the sense of organized religious systems, but refer to the core experiences behind these socialized (and often distorted) derivatives. These are difficult to speak of because words are inadequate, because my own understanding of my own experiences is inadequate, and because to even really touch on them requires skill in speaking "from the heart," rather than speaking "from the head." While my training as a scientist has given me skill in the latter sort of speech, it has not touched on the former. Let me simply say that I have learned something about the smallness (but not worthlessness) of my understanding, something of what people hint at when they speak of the "spiritual

life," and something of the kinship of life. It is frustrating that the most important experiences are the ones I am least able to talk about, but that is the reality.

Sometimes when I think about things I have learned from my psychedelic experiences, I ask myself the question, "Would I like to do it again?" For many years the answer has been "No." The insights and experiences I had years ago were extremely valuable, especially when I have "brought them down to earth," tried to apply my understandings in my everyday life. Too, my own personal psychological growth practices have resulted in a day to day clarity of consciousness and self-understanding which I value very much. In addition to insights, my psychedelic experiences also contained a lot of confusion and fantasy, and I am not particularly interested in re-experiencing that kind of activity. By and large, I feel the major use of psychedelic drugs is to stimulate some insights: these insights will be useful only insofar as they are brought into everyday life. Too much psychedelic experience interferes with bringing these insights into everyday life.

Since many of the experiences I had as a result of using psychedelics could not be understood in my everyday state of consciousness, this means that most of my experiences have been lost. The temptation is there to try to re-experience those things by again using psychedelics, but I have little interest in doing this. The experiences are not really "lost," even though I cannot bring any obvious and clear part of them back. They did open a door in my mind and my heart, and having glimpsed what is beyond the door, I hope to grow toward the potentials of those visions in the course of my ordinary life.

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