

NOTE TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF A PSYCHEDELIC PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

Much of what has been written and said about the psychedelic experience over the past 75 years has been surprisingly narrow in scope. Enthusiasts have been so bowled over by their early journeys into Innerspace that they've rushed to apply the first paradigm that seemed to fit. Typically, this paradigm has been either psychotherapeutic or religious. As pointed out in my general study *Psychedelia* (2012), the 20th century saga of psychedelic culture is in a way the saga of a series of failed metaphors. For several decades, learned, enthusiastic men and women twisted their brains into knots trying to understand, formulate and propagate the meaning of the psychedelic experience. The majority of their contentions have turned out to be inaccurate, no matter how great the enthusiasm with which they were presented. As detailed in Chapter II of the aforementioned *Psychedelia*, this sequence of failures was to some extent due to the Zeitgeist and intellectual state of the mid-20th century.

Today, a decade and a half into a new century, at the final stage of the third wave of modern Psychedelia (the 'techno-shamanistic' phase), the future should be of greater relevance to us than the past. More people are using psychedelic drugs today than at any other point in history. Science focuses increasingly on the operations of the human brain and the mystery of consciousness, and scientists have been allowed to run experiments with psychedelic compounds again, after a 40-year moratorium. Currently there are dozens of mainstream research projects going involving psilocybin, LSD and DMT. The next phase of Psychedelia is likely to be dominated by the consciousness enigma and its micro and macro-level implications.

Despite these encouraging developments, there is a troubling lack of intellectual discussion regarding the psychedelic way of life and the extraordinary insights and changes that the serotonergic hallucinogens bring about in many men and women. Coupled with the inability of earlier generations to create a coherent understanding of Psychedelia as a culture and lifestyle we are currently

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provided with a *tabula rasa* of sorts. The lack of consensual, fundamental structures offers the opportunity to start afresh, integrating valuable knowledge clusters from the past century as one goes along. Ultimately, the objective is nothing less than the definition of a stand-alone psychedelic philosophy, an intellectual paradigm through which other phenomena can be analyzed and evaluated, but also an understanding of the world from which to shape one's life. The present notes discuss the principles upon which such an intellectual model could be raised, and take some steps toward an outline.

As the reader will find, the difficulties involved can be reduced by keeping a persistent watch on the primary beacon that governs a psychedelic philosophy, which is the psychedelic experience itself. An effective 'acid test' for the progress of the model checks its truthfulness against the nature and effects of the journey to Innerspace, both as individual knowledge and as the experience base of millions of travelogues. Using empirical evidence to validate or refute a general theory may sound obvious, but only in rare cases has this norm been adhered to within Psychedelia.

LEARY & KESEY

In the 1966 foreword to his hallucinogenic interpretation of the ancient *Tao Te Ching*, Dr Timothy Leary wrote:

From the beginning of the Harvard-IFIF-Castalia exploration into consciousness two facts were apparent. First, that there were no extant maps, models, myths, theories, languages to describe the psychedelic experience. Second, the temptation to impose old models, premature theories, must be avoided...

This would have been an admirable approach, if Leary & co had actually followed it. However, during those preceding years that he mentions, Leary and his fellow psychologists had actually done everything they could to 'impose old models' on the psychedelic experience, be it Tibetan meditation instruction or psychodynamic 'imprinting'. By 1966, not much was left of the original Harvard scientist agenda, and Tim Leary himself was preparing to leave academia behind and target the youth of America with his psychedelic gospel. His foreword may have been an attempt to re-write the 'Harvard-IFIF-Castalia' group's history, after realizing how misguided their numerous attempts at structure and metaphor had been.

The original 1950s-60s research into mescaline, psilocybin and LSD was strongly dominated by attempts to pigeonhole and subordinate the psychedelic

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experience into a closely guarded little box within an established field of research. There were some early enthusiasts who understood not to rationalize the journey to Innerspace, but instead enjoy and hopefully extend the ride, the most prominent example being Ken Kesey & the Merry Pranksters. Kesey's group of fun-loving bohemians did on occasion claim to adhere to certain philosophical and aesthetic principles, but as one looks closer at the statements and events that form their legacy, the intellectual content becomes inconsistent. What is claimed to be an artistic or philosophical approach appears more like a behavioristic principle than anything profound. Tom Wolfe's 1968 book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* discusses in some detail Kesey's notion that we are 'watching the movies of our lives' due to a millisecond processing delay in our central nervous system. This observation, that we are forever lagging behind the actual flow of the world, may at first strike one as an intriguing concept. But like several Merry Prankster principles, attempts to turn this quirky fact into a general, existential notion yields a kind of irresponsible nihilism and little else.

As exemplified by familiar cases like Leary and Kesey, the early days of psychedelic culture displayed only a limited interest in devising a coherent system of ideas and experiences. Other nexus of psychedelic activity from the first (1950-1963) and second (1964-1980) phases show similar kinds of inconsistent, *ad hoc* intellectual frameworks, even when the outward intentions seem varied. The reason why usable cultural paradigms failed to emerge even among its bohemian supporters is that Psychedelia was taken as an attribute, not the central object. To truly understand the range of human consciousness, both scientists and laymen need to reverse their perspective and place the psychedelic experience at the center of the experiment.

Rather than using notions from mainstream religion or psychology as yardsticks for Psychedelia, the psychedelic experience itself should be the yardstick by which things like religion and psychology are measured. More than a catalyst it should be understood as a prism through which the rest of the world is passing. This seemingly radical view is not unprecedented, but can be found with several of the ayahuasca/yagé-drinking tribes in Amazonia. The notorious Jivaro (Shuar) even go so far as to view the hallucinogenic state as the real world, and the baseline world as an illusion. In the modern West, despite the remarkable socio-cultural impact that psychedelics have had from Aldous Huxley in 1955 to Terence McKenna in 1995, the potential for Psychedelia as a free-standing spiritual lifestyle and intellectual frame of reference is seldom discussed.

WESTERN LEGACY

Invoked via words or put to use through action, the merits of a psychedelic

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philosophy of life will be examined again and again, at different times and places. Not just by its adherents, but by critics opposed to the idea of any abstract model based on the psychedelic drug experience. With its roots in the otherworldly climate of Innerspace, Psychedelia tends to produce concepts far from the semi-secularized monotheism and Cartesian-Newtonian positivism of the West. This conflict with the local socio-cultural tradition strengthens the experiential orientation, but even more importantly, it reveals for those concerned that the psychedelic philosophy of life offers something that existing belief systems do not, which is the direct experience of the otherworldly.

Dominant ideas, such as Christianity, will replace the citizen's immediate experience of its tenets with the publicly sanctioned teaching of Christian beliefs in schools, mass-media, in the military and so on. These fundamental ideas are injected into every personal copy of the socio-cultural template and so become validated as principles of society, even if the individual lacks both faith and interest. This acculturation of what was originally a radical religious sect has been so effective that it could afford to restrict the visionary experiences that originally gave birth to it. The revelation of the Logos and the sacred visions has been removed to an intermediary class of saints and priests, who as gatekeepers pass the divine teachings on to the congregation. This model, which is characteristic of all three major Abrahamic religions from the Middle East, is sustainable and at times even successful, but the practical value it offers society at large is also the spiritual loss of the single individual, who is not allowed access to the revelations of the higher realms.

It is interesting to note that the earliest psychedelic gatherings of the West, the Great Mystery celebrations at the temple of Eleusis in ancient Greece, were directed entirely towards the individual's experience of eternal life and the felt presence of the gods. After preparation through fasting and physical ordeals, the initiand at Eleusis was required to drink the hallucinogenic *kykeon* before spending the night in the great temple, where visual and aural effects stimulated the minds of thousands toward a climactic moment of private revelation. The Great Mysteries were celebrated for nearly 2,000 years. They followed Mediterranean culture out of the vegetation rites of prehistory into the great societies of Athens, Alexandria and Rome, influencing the entire duration of classical antiquity. The experience of Eleusis is so strongly intertwined with Greco-Roman high cultures that its presence is simply taken for granted by classic scholars.

The final days of Eleusis coincide with the final days of Rome, as a joint force of Germanic tribes and Christian conquerors destroyed the great temple around 400 A.D. Emerging as the new dominant force in the Mediterranean region, the adherents of Christianity were eager to destroy existing polytheistic beliefs

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and nature cults, a show of violent intolerance that coming centuries would find repeated around the world. Despite the intermingling of these elements in the Western heritage, the Greco-Roman seeds of our civilization championed a belief system and a way of life that was profoundly opposed to the Christian notions that would ultimately emerge as the basis for Occidental society. Central to the spiritual celebrations at Eleusis stood the individual's immediate experience of a higher world, the main principle of a psychedelic philosophy.

PHENOMENOLOGY

It was suggested above that the psychedelic experience could be used as a prism, through which our perception of the world might become richer and more imaginative. In an objective experimental setting however, it is more appropriate to apply what cybernetic science calls a 'black box' model. A black box is an active process element whose interior design and functionality are unseen and unknown. What is known is that the black box receives certain in-data and produces certain results, and from this available information a sufficient image of the unknown process inside the box is developed.

The black box model is well-suited for the empirical approach that this paper promotes for understanding the psychedelic experience. A similar conclusion has been reached by earlier researchers in the hallucinogen field, although their vantage point is psychological rather than cybernetic. Their paradigm of choice is the philosophy branch known as *phenomenology*, a model which in practical application aligns closely to black box methodology. Both variants operate in a pure observational mode, registering the data that surface with no hypothetical result or end-state in play, putting the analysis aside for a later phase. There are several indications that phenomenology is becoming the gold standard for the experimental study of psychedelic drugs and their effects. Research elder Ralph Metzner, who was a vital member of Leary's group back in the 1960s, points to the usefulness of a phenomenological approach in his excellent foreword to the anthology *Ayahuasca* (2002). Similarly, in *Antipodes of the Mind* (1999) one of the most thorough studies of psychedelic states so far, cognitive psychologist Benny Shanon defines his method as wholly phenomenological.

Looking back on the earlier phases of Psychedelia for traces of phenomenology, one will find the same combination of bold intention and poor implementation as the socio-cultural metaphors discussed above. Timothy Leary's ex-Harvard group went on record around 1965 stating that their approach was phenomenological, a claim repeated some 10 years later by Terence McKenna and his brother Dennis when probing the depths of high-dosage psilocybin trips. Neither case have left any records behind to indicate any phenomenological

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studies, and in all likelihood these were cases of harmless lip service, by which 'phenomenology' simply meant that one paid close attention to what was going on inside Innerspace. The desire to verbalize and metaphorize the extraordinary impressions will effectively void the neutral stance of phenomenology; when out there in the psychedelic state, it seems the temptation for the analytical mind becomes too strong to resist.

What writers like Metzner, Shanon and Lundborg (in the aforementioned *Psychedelia*) describe for the psychedelic research of the 2000s is a phenomenology rooted in the actual philosophy that bears this name, rather than some loose vow to be objective and attentive. What this entails is not difficult to understand, and its practical usefulness should be equally easy to see. Phenomenology was essentially the brainchild of a single thinker, the German 19th century philosopher Edmund Husserl. Husserl was dissatisfied with the vagaries and open contradictions of contemporary philosophy, and from a relatively young age he strove to develop a philosophical system that was both independent of other disciplines and as rigorously defined as the natural sciences.

Unlike more recent thought models such as post-structuralism, the principles of phenomenology are not difficult to grasp, even for a layman unfamiliar with branch philosophy. Phenomenology, as Husserl devised it, is clearly defined and intuitively sound. For the psychedelicist, two of Husserl's fundamental principles are of particular interest; (A) *any mental activity such as looking, thinking, imagining, dreaming, etc, is constituted by three elements: a) the consciousness that is engaged in the act, b) the phenomenon that is being perceived, and c) the act of perception (seeing, thinking, remembering, dreaming...)*. If either one of these three elements is removed, there no longer exists a mental activity. It is vital to understand that Husserl viewed these three elements as bound together in a totality, and it was this totality that was the main object of his interest. He dismissed traditional models like the subject/object distinction as insufficient to truly understand consciousness.

The radical yet conceptually simple model that Husserl proposed leads to an interesting effect; namely that (B) *there is no qualitative distinction between different types of mental activity*, such as imagining, seeing, remembering, dreaming or hallucinating; nor is there any formal difference between the thought of something that 'exists', such as an apple tree, and something that probably 'not exists', such as a unicorn. To Husserl, these activities all fall under his same fundamental principle (A). They may be classified as different *types* of thought, but can all be described and analyzed by the same simple model.

With this ingenious system, Husserl solved several problems that plagued earlier models of epistemology (knowledge theory). For the psychedelicist the advantage is obvious; receiving and documenting the often radical mindstream

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in the hallucinogenic state can be performed in an equal manner to how one describes an eventful day in a diary, or how one takes down a nocturnal dream. Assumptions or defensive belittling of the extraordinary input on LSD-type drugs automatically fall away, since they have no place in phenomenology. Instead, the method points out the resemblance between writing down a memorable night dream and the recollection of a powerful sequence in psychedelic Innerspace. No matter how bizarre or otherworldly, these dreams and drug visions and dizzying sights all pass through the simple, objective core channel of phenomenology.

An intriguing meeting between Psychedelia and phenomenology occurred as early as the 1940s, when the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty underwent a few mescaline experiments in order to develop his theories on perception. Rarely discussed and in fact unknown to many psychedelic researchers, this event yielded no major intellectual breakthroughs for Merleau-Ponty (unlike his colleague Jean-Paul Sartre, who wrote the groundbreaking *La Nausée* following a horrific mescaline journey) due to the moderate doses he took, but it provides us with a look at how phenomenology encounters psychedelics. As a phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty makes no valuation of his OEV (open eye visuals) hallucinations, but simply registers what takes place before his eyes. Distinctions of things as 'real' or 'unreal' are not made, nor is there any type of symbolic reading of the visions. Judgment or interpretation would mean a regression into the primitive forms of epistemology that Husserl wished to eradicate. Given science's historical mishandling of LSD it is obvious that phenomenology, especially the pure Husserlian form described here, could have offered a terrific framework for psychedelic research, with a fit and intellectual rigor superior to the psychoanalytical or religious-mystic models that were invoked in the 1950s-60s.

PURPOSELESS PLAY

It is vital to understand that phenomenology doesn't form a closed system that would make it an idealist or even solipsist philosophy. It does not aspire to make definitive statements about the world, neither outside us nor inside us. Merleau-Ponty accepts the logic in extending phenomenology into a complete philosophical system, but rejects this path in favour of a modern and less definitive paradigm. As phenomenologists, our view of the world is radically changed, but the world is not reduced to something only in our own minds; rather it occupies a peculiar, hypnotic middle ground. The reduction that this modern intellectual stance occasions is not a reduction of the world or our position in it, but of the rigid attention we have developed to all sensory and cognitive input. As a method it '...steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks

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from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world, and thus brings them to our notice. It, alone, is consciousness of the world, because it reveals the world as strange and paradoxical' (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945).

Another of Husserl's followers, the German philosopher Eugen Fink, found a similar transformation of consciousness in the phenomenological reduction, 'a wonder in the face of the world'. Fink viewed man's conscious life as an enthrallment with the constant mystery of phenomenological observations, and he took man's purpose as to engage in what he called 'play'. As an expression of free will and the phenomenological stance, man finds meaning in play, which forms a microcosmic mirror of a macrocosmic world, abstracted out of his reach. In play, there are no boundaries for consciousness, and man transcends the rules and restrictions of his everyday life. As a field of endless possibilities, play becomes a symbol of the totality of the world, and to engage in play is to come closer to understanding the full nature of our existence.

With these developments from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Eugen Fink, phenomenology is brought in the vicinity of what could be called a psychedelic philosophy. Unlike structuralism, neo-Marxism or psychoanalysis, there is nothing in phenomenology that contradicts the psychedelic experience. On the contrary, Fink's notion of play is reminiscent of the ideas of certain genuinely psychedelic thinkers, such as Alan Watts. Being a phenomenologist, Fink did not entertain the notion of a true 'I' or 'self', but merely noted that there was an activity of consciousness. For this reason, Fink's philosophy has been called 'play without anyone playing'. Compare this to *The Joyous Cosmology* (1962), where Alan Watts writes: '...Life is basically a gesture, but no one, no thing, is making it. There is no necessity for it to happen, and none for it to go on happening. For it isn't being driven by anything; it just happens freely of itself. It's a gesture of motion, of sound, of colour, and just as no one is making it, it isn't happening to anyone. There is simply no problem of life; it is completely purposeless play'. Alan Watts arrived to this view by way of LSD and his substantial training in Eastern religion. His vantage point was completely different than Fink's, yet the ultimate insights that the two men describe seem close. There are clearly parallels between the Buddhism and Taoism that Watts knew, and the basic tenets of European phenomenology. However, the ego-less play that Eugen Fink and Alan Watts independently describe is neither Buddhist-Taoist nor classic idealist, but something else; perhaps it could be called a psychedelic existentialism, casting a wider net than phenomenology. Again like Fink, Watts pointed to the importance of this 'purposeless play':

'No one is more dangerously insane than one who is sane all the time. He is like a steel bridge without flexibility, and the order of his life is rigid and brittle

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[...] our play is never real play because it is almost invariably rationalized; we do it on the pretext that it is good for us. [...] The play of life is at first apprehended rather cynically as an extremely intricate contest in one-upmanship, expressing itself deviously even in the most altruistic of human endeavours. [...] But finally, rapacious and all-embracing cosmic selfishness turns out to be a disguise for the unmotivated play of love.' (*The Joyous Cosmology*)

As I show in *Psychedelia*, Watts most likely picked up the phrase 'purposeless play' from avant composer John Cage, who used it in lectures to explain his new and radical aesthetics. Watts' familiarity with New York City avant-garde was manifested in his groundbreaking free-form acid jam recording *This Is IT* (1962), frequently described as the first genuinely psychedelic LP. While the ongoing dialogue between his Eastern metaphysics and a series of psychedelic trips bred the unorthodox existentialist world-view described above, it is evident that cutting edge aesthetic theory also informed Watts' activities and provided him with the psychedelic key phrase 'purposeless play'. The *This Is IT* album has been written about at length elsewhere; its connection to Watts' LSD experiments is evident from the back liner notes, which quote directly from *The Joyous Cosmology*.

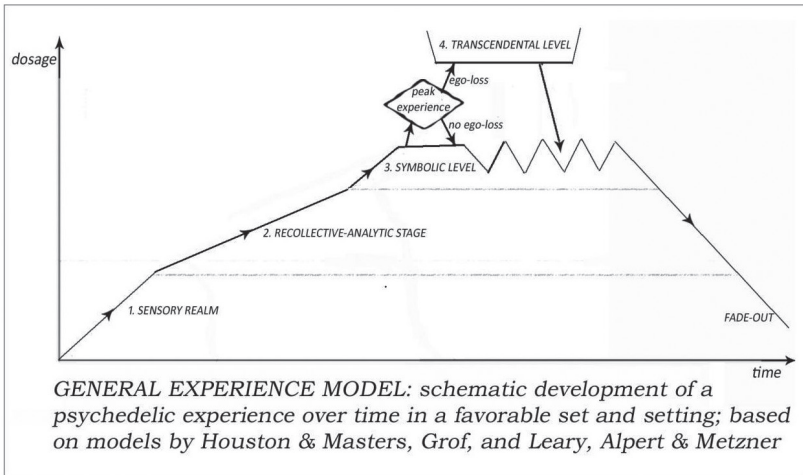
Only a year or so later, a new generation of non-academic psychedelicists would appear not far from Watts' San Francisco home turf, putting into practice Watts' hypothetical notion of purposeless play as a lifestyle. Ken Kesey & the Merry Pranksters used their own set of trippy catch phrases to signal their presence, but there are few better ways to describe their free-form multimedia mind games than purposeless play. In interviews, such as the one heard on the *Acid Test* LP (1966) Kesey would insist upon the meaningless nature of their goals, and how they would also try to undermine the efforts to reach the goals. This, we are told, all takes place because the Pranksters 'have nothing else to do'. Amusement for no reason and with no actual goal; purposeless play.

This perspective bears upon the Prankster group's lack of a genuinely operative philosophy or aesthetic theory that was discussed above, suggesting that the playful phenomenology of Fink and the purposeless, ego-less diversions of Watts could in fact serve as pre-existing models for Kesey & co, instilled by zeitgeist and the psychedelic experience. Alas, the lack of a fully developed intellectual framework (beyond the active principle of purposeless play in the movie of life) made the Pranksters overly dependent on specific personalities rather than creativity, which contributed to their fairly rapid downfall in a San Francisco scene that was becoming self-aware of its collective significance.

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PSYCHEDELIC CORE VALUES

Perhaps because their most vital heritage was socio-cultural rather than intellectual, the Merry Pranksters have remained relatively immune to the passing of time and the often critical revaluations of the counterculture 1960s. When the 'rave' scene emerged in the late 1980s, psychedelic veterans were quick to point out the similarity to the old Acid Tests around the SF Bay Area. The lingering relevance of Kesey's group to underground culture in general and Psychedelia in particular is linked to one of the fundamental values that inform a psychedelic philosophy of the West, which is the belief in and practicing of *hedonism*. As shown above, Alan Watts referred to this kind of psychedelic existentialism as 'purposeless play', while the Pranksters thought of it as a 'movie of life'. Hedonism is the celebration of the present moment, a giving in to the natural euphoria of the here and now.



A 3000-year arc connects the Dionysian festivals of ancient Greece with the psychedelic parties that defined the mid-'60s (the Millbrook weekends, the Acid Tests, Trips Festival, Human Be-In, Monterey Pop) and the all-night dances of today's neo-hippie Goa culture. None of these gatherings were revolutionary think-tanks or cutting edge artist collectives, but events of joy and exuberance, an unconditional championing of the glory of human life made manifest by LSD and its sister hallucinogens. Psychedelic hedonism is not a wish to escape, nor is it a neurophysical effect of hyper-stimulant drugs: it is a core element in the psychedelic way of life, rooted in profound individual revelations of higher states. Aldous Huxley put it most succinctly: the world, it seemed to him after a

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few mescaline experiences, was 'alright'. This insight calls for a celebration.

A second fundamental value of Psychedelia which is both linked and juxtaposed with the hedonistic strain is *holism*. Psychedelic holism is not some vague phrase on a Mahatma Gandhi t-shirt, but a core principle that emanates out of the uncharted depths of consciousness. To truly understand what is meant by holism in a psychedelic philosophy, you need to get far out enough in Innerspace so that you perceive and understand the notion that the world is constructed of energy, and that the same type of energy is everywhere, even in conceptually dead things such as rocks and buildings. Some may embrace this energy as 'sacred'; others may choose to simply register it as a visual representation of the micro-physical plane. Either way, the constantly buzzing transformations of energy among the elementary particles are laid bare for you to see. How and if you interpret this experience is subjective and non-vital, the lasting insight is the holistic homogeneity of the world.

Whatever the cosmos is made up of, it is the same fundamental energy everywhere. The Tibetan Buddhists have a terrific term for this; they call it 'one-taste', meaning that for your senses and your cognitive mind, everything 'tastes' the same once you reach a certain level of transcendental insight. This state is not necessarily the experience of non-duality, but it is at least the *perception* of non-duality, and as such it represents a substantial gain on the spiritual path. Indeed, a Platonic/Neo-platonic interpretation of the psychedelic-holistic revelation would be that one has left the mundane plane of emanated forms and ascended to the level of ideas. This has a certain amount of historical justification, since both Plato and several of his followers partook in the celebrations at Eleusis. The few documents that refer to Eleusis (despite sworn secrecy) talk of the peak experience of the hallucinogenic night in the temple as an understanding of eternal life and the existence of a transcendental world.

Pantheism is the third psychedelic core value. Clearly related to holism, its specific traits need to be distinguished for a full conceptual understanding. Holism is essentially the result of a vision of homogenous energy which is frequently experienced in the higher states. Pantheism is primarily a mundane, earthbound philosophy which usually emerges from a different experiential path than holism. The concept behind pantheism says that everything that is alive is charged with the same presence, or spirit, or god. The orientation is towards animate agents only, meaning living organisms; some might limit it to higher animals only, which would be considered to have a soul. Again, the personal definition is less important than the fundamental experience from which pantheism emerges in an almost automatic manner.

In the psychedelic state there will come a passage where you seem able to see through present organisms and discover their true core. If this occurs, the

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discovery is usually that all these living things are alike at the core; animated by the same drive, or energy, or spirit or god. This is usually a humbling experience as the subject realizes the arrogance of his assumed human superiority over animals and plants, and questions his or her right to dominate organisms whose principle of life is the same as one's own. It is no coincidence that many acid-heads become vegetarians, or that almost all higher spiritual schools proscribe vegetarianism. Not because you feel 'sorry' for animals, but because you are violating a sacred presence whose existence you yourself have felt. The pantheistic insight brings an important ethical dimension to Psychedelia.

Pantheism as a revealed philosophy of life may emerge out of holism, or precede the holistic vision during the same psychedelic experience, but it is the present author's belief that the pantheistic vision arises out of a wholly separate mindstream. It is possible to receive the pantheistic message without entering the non-dualistic ego-less vision of holism; depending on set, setting and dosage, as always. The pantheistic insight is dualist and organic in its nature, whereas the holistic insight is non-dualist and cosmic. Some might perceive the pantheistic core as a kind of transcendental fiber around which the myriad of living entities are formed, leading towards a radical form of Gnosticism, or the Hindu dichotomy of the *Atman* and *Brahman*.

Another perspective validated by the Eleusinian-Platonic model is to view the pantheist as someone who has ascended to a higher spiritual state, from which he can recognize spiritual qualities in the material plane otherwise hidden from human eyes. The ascension of layers is not only typical for the psychedelic journey, but also a model with a Neo-Platonic implication. Plotinus and the later Neo-Platonists strove to examine the higher, formless planes while Plato had restricted his cosmology to one undifferentiated higher world. A charting of the psychedelic experience will favor the gradual Neo-Platonic structure, in the sense that Innerspace displays topology and amplitude, in addition to its horizontal vastness. The vital facts remain untarnished by these speculations—the pantheistic impulse was present at Eleusis 3000 years ago, and it remains present in the psychedelic experience that people are embarking on today.

THE DOUBLE POSITIVE OF PSYCHEDELIA

A significant contribution to the allure of the psychedelic lifestyle comes from the fact that it is a philosophy that does not deal in negatives or contradictions. Psychedelia's fundamental message is to enjoy yourself in your present time, respect life and respect nature, and in time prepare yourself for ascension to the transcendental state that the hallucinogenic experience showed you exists. This *double positive* stands very much in contrast with the Abrahamic religions and

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their rigid dichotomies, and even the Eastern religions, despite their flexibility and variation, cannot really accommodate the combination of pantheism, hedonism and Neo-Platonism that a tentative psychedelic philosophy might embrace.

As one familiarizes oneself with the psychedelic perspective, it becomes increasingly clear how remarkably sinister the traditional religious schools are. The body is there usually said to be evil, as are normal human desires, and personal guilt over supposed transgressions become liturgical weapons for the ordained religious teacher, who alone is allowed to communicate with the godhead, which in its monotheistic domain is as fixated upon Manichean dualism and human behavior as everything else in the old Middle Eastern belief systems.

Nor is there relief in the revelation of a higher transcendental state that was offered the initiands at Eleusis and which motivated their jubilant celebration, since this experience too remains the property of the religious middle-man such as a priest, rabbi or imam. In fact, private visions of high spiritual realms may expose the congregation member to accusations of heresy rather than a vital step forward on the path. A direct comparison between the tenets of a psychedelic philosophy of life and the leading world religions yields so little conceptual overlap that the situation looks more like a direct conflict than a disagreement. That Christian forces from the East led the attack and destruction of the Great Temple at Eleusis seems entirely logical in view of the respective teachings. Indigenous cultures around the world, not least in the Americas, would come to find their pantheistic belief systems eradicated along with their villages by invading Christian warriors.

As for the double positive of Psychedelia, it is possible to find instances of ideas along this route in modern Western culture. However, the picture is made clearer if the core values of hedonism, holism and pantheism are augmented with another vital element in psychedelic culture, which is *utopianism*. The drive to create a psychedelic Utopia is so common that it seems almost inevitable among long-running, coherent groups of 'acidheads'. The Utopia can take many forms, from the anarchic jet set party at Millbrook to the large experiment in self-subsistence at Stephen Gaskin's Farm. The utopian idea itself can be tracked backwards to the core values of pantheism – to live close to nature – and hedonism – to enjoy life in one's own way. But other and more specific factors also informed this drive, which are more of a socio-cultural nature and needn't be covered here. What is relevant is the frequency with which the utopian project emerges among psychedelic enclaves after a certain time. Any model that deals with a psychedelic philosophy of life should recognize the utopian aspect as integral to the enterprise.

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PATTERNS OF PSYCHEDELIZATION

The relation between the utopian drive and the double positive of a psychedelic philosophy can be discerned among certain artists who have made significant contributions to the field of Psychedelia. An interesting parallel emerges from a close study of two seemingly very disparate icons, the Nobel Prize winning author Hermann Hesse and the legendary acid rock group the 13th Floor Elevators. Their preoccupation with psychedelic lifestyles is evident for all to see in works such as Hesse's *The Steppenwolf* and *Journey To The East*, and the Elevators' *Roller Coaster* (an anthem for hallucinogenic hedonism) and *Slip Inside This House* (both with lyrics by the group's intellectual leader Tommy Hall). Much has already been written about these works, but the thematic correspondence that spans across several works of Hesse and the Elevators is rarely discussed. What one finds, beyond their shared interest in higher states of consciousness, is a near-identical thematic arc which in turn matches the psychedelic philosophy discussed in the present article.

The arc takes its beginning with an initiation into hallucinogenic Innerspace, and the spontaneous enjoyment of one's newfound world (hedonism; *Steppenwolf*; *Roller Coaster*). This is followed by the necessary deepening of the experience into the transcendental state of ego-loss and the emergence of a spiritual revelation (holism; *Siddhartha*; *Kingdom Of Heaven*). The third step finds enlightened psychedelic beings developing a shared spiritual view of the world and tightening their bonds via mental explorations (pantheism; *Journey to the East*; *Slip Inside This House*). The fourth and final step is the impulse towards tribal Utopia, wherein the members of the psychedelic group retreat from the world to set up an ideal community where they will enjoy the double positive of purposeless play in ordinary reality, illuminated by the beckoning transcendental glow of higher realities (utopianism; *The Glass Bead Game*; *Dust*).

It should be stressed that the isomorphic pattern found in these otherwise divergent sources can be identified in several other cultural contexts where use of psychedelic drugs occur; the comparison between Hesse and the Elevators is just one example. The long night of initiation at Eleusis began with hedonism and moved into holistic-pantheistic revelation as the *kykeon's* effect peaked inside the participants. The first utopian vision, Plato's *Republic*, is quite possibly inspired by what he himself saw in the Great Temple. In our modern times, one could dissect the socio-cultural development of the psychedelic underground of the 1960s and find the same schematic process; from the hedonistic acid parties of 1965, via the closely bonded "love generation" of 1966-67, up to the communal-rural impulse of the later years. Hedonism, holism, pantheism and utopianism linger as psychedelic effects on the individual micro-level, soon to be reflected

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back on a socio-cultural macro-level like a fractal pattern receding to reveal identical supra-levels. The development also illustrates the difference between how a psychedelic community and a religious community emerge. In the case of the latter the profound vision of revealed truth comes first, and it is usually only incarnated in a single prophet-founder, while the hedonistic element is often completely absent.

CONCLUSION

These notes suggest several aspects worth considering in the development of a psychedelic philosophy of life. The fundamental principle is that anything included in the system must have evolved naturally from the psychedelic experience itself. External concepts are only brought in when they fill a specific need. Such is the case with Husserl's phenomenology, which is a tool that helps the psychedelicist to stay objective and attentive before the rich and often chaotic flow of the experience, and in addition works to remind one that visions received in hallucinogenic Innerspace are of equal validity as visions received in dreams or meditation. Phenomenology reduces the drama of the experience, it helps one to preserve the vital information given in the higher state, and (in the mode of Eugen Fink and Alan Watts) it has a corresponding active principle in the notion of purposeless play.

The psychedelic experience itself can be understood by Lundborg's *General Experience Model*, which describes the subject's progress through levels of altered cognition as a typical journey unfolds over several hours. The model highlights the importance of dosage for reaching the higher states, a factor often forgotten when set and setting are discussed. The GEM is not a 'map' to follow, but a generalized model drawn from thousands of observations and calibrated against older models. It is intended primarily to identify one's degree of psychedelization (i.e. 'how high was I?'), and to indicate approximately how the path unfolds. Students of Neo-Platonism may find it particularly easy to adapt the levelled model, while the practical handling of the experience can be developed by studying principles from shamanism for navigation and interaction in altered states of consciousness. From traditional meditation the technique of maintaining 'the Witness' and other ways to regain control of one's mindstream are excellent tools.

The *Psychodelia* book to which this paper corresponds stresses the need for preparation by way of 'Gnothi Seauton 101'. This ground course to 'know thyself' refers to a basic cleansing of psycho-dynamic baggage, either through therapy or meditation, in order to reduce the risk for strong adverse reactions on the initial psychedelic journeys. Ego-defenses, fixed ideas, repressed material and

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similar mental obstacles can of course be dealt with in the hallucinogenic state, but it is a demanding and risky type of self-treatment. As one becomes familiar with the psychedelic landscape of one's consciousness, there is frequently a development of one's personality following the first few experiences. This may be subtle at first, but in hindsight stand out as a major turning point. Not everyone is affected in a lasting manner, but those who felt attracted to Psychedelia even before taking a hallucinogen almost invariably become enthusiasts and even advocates for this way of life.