

The Soul-Searchers

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On returning to America [in 1958] I was introduced to psychiatric adventures of a very different order, for Aldous Huxley had recently published *Doors of Perception* about his experiment with mescaline, and had by this time gone on to explore the mysteries of LSD. Gerald Heard had joined him in these investigations, and in my conversations with them I noticed a marked change of spiritual attitude. To put it briefly, they had ceased to be Manicheans. Their vision of the divine now included nature, and they had become more relaxed and humane, so that I found myself talking to men of my own persuasion. Yet it struck me as highly improbable that a true spiritual experience could follow from ingesting a particular chemical. Visions and ecstasies, yes. A taste of the mystical, like swimming with waterwings, perhaps. And

perhaps a reawakening for someone who had made the journey before, or an insight for a person well practiced in something like Yoga or Zen.

Nevertheless, on these "inner planes" I am of an adventurous nature, and am willing to give most things a try. Both Aldous and my former student at the Academy, mathematician John Whittelsey, were in touch with Keith Ditman, psychiatrist in charge of LSD research at the UCLA department of neuropsychiatry. John was working with him as statistician in a project designed both to test the effect of the drug on alcoholics and to make a map of its effects on the human organism. So many of their subjects had reported states of consciousness that read like accounts of mystical experience that they were interested in trying it out on "experts" in this field, even though a mystic is never really expert in the same way as a neurologist or a philologist, for his work is not a cataloguing of objects. But I qualified as an expert insofar as I had also a considerable intellectual knowledge of the psychology and philosophy of religion: a knowledge that subsequently protected me from the more dangerous aspects of this adventure, giving me a compass and something of a map for this wild territory. Furthermore, I trusted Keith Ditman. He wasn't scared, like so many Jungians, of the

unconscious. Nor was he foolhardy, but seemed level-headed, cautious, tentative in opinion, yet lively, bright-eyed, and intensely interested in his work.

We made, then, an initial experiment at Keith's office in Beverly Hills in which I was joined by Edwin Halsey, formerly private secretary to Ananda Coomaraswamy, and then teaching comparative religions at Claremont. We each took one hundred micrograms of d-lysergic acid diethylamide-25, courtesy of the Sandoz Company, and set out on an eight-hour exploration. For me the journey was hilariously beautiful—as if I and all my perceptions had been transformed into a marvelous arabesque or multidimensional maze in which everything became transparent, translucent, and reverberant with double and triple meanings. Every detail of perception became vivid and important, even ums and ers and throat-clearing when someone read poetry, and time slowed down in such a way that people going about their business outside seemed demented in failing to see that the destination of life is this eternal moment. We walked across the street to a white, Spanish-style church, surrounded with olive trees and gleaming in the sun against a sky of absolute, primordial blue, and saw the grass and the plants as inexplicably geometrized in every detail so as to suggest that

nothing in nature was disordered. We went back and looked at a volume of Chinese and Japanese *sumi*, or black-ink paintings, all of which seemed to be perfectly accurate photographs. There were even highlights and shadows on Mu-ch'i's persimmons that were certainly not intended by the artist. At one time Edwin felt somewhat overwhelmed and remarked, "I just can't wait until I'm little old me again, sitting in a bar." In the meantime he was looking like an incarnation of Apollo in a supernatural necktie, contemplatively holding an orange lily. [\(1\)](#)

All in all my first experience was aesthetic rather than mystical, and then and there—which is, alas, rather characteristic of me—I made a tape for broadcast saying that I had looked into this phenomenon and found it most interesting, but hardly what I would call mystical. This tape was heard by two psychiatrists at the Langley-Porter Clinic in San Francisco, Sterling Bunnell and Michael Agron, who thought I should reconsider my views. After all, I had made only one experiment and there was something of an art to getting it really working. It was thus that Bunnell set me off on a series of experiments which I have recorded in [The Joyous Cosmology <jccontnt.htm>](#), and in the course of which I was reluctantly compelled to admit that—at least in my own

case—LSD had brought me into an undeniably mystical state of consciousness. But oddly, considering my absorption in Zen at the time, the flavor of these experiences was Hindu rather than Chinese. Somehow the atmosphere of Hindu mythology and imagery slid into them, suggesting at the same time that Hindu philosophy was a local form of a sort of undercover wisdom, inconceivably ancient, which everyone knows in the back of his mind but will not admit. This wisdom was simultaneously holy and disreputable, and therefore necessarily esoteric, and it came in the dress of a totally logical, obvious, and basic common sense.

In sum I would say that LSD, and such other psychedelic substances as mescaline, psilocybin, and hashish, confer polar vision; by which I mean that the basic pairs of opposites, the positive and the negative, are seen as the different poles of a single magnet or circuit. This knowledge is repressed in any culture that accentuates the positive, and is thus a strict taboo. It carries Gestalt psychology, which insists on the mutual interdependence of figure and background, to its logical conclusion in every aspect of life and thought; so that the voluntary and the involuntary, knowing and the known, birth and decay, good and evil, outline and inline, self and other, solid and space, motion and

rest, light and darkness, are seen as aspects of a single and completely perfect process. The implication of this may be that there is nothing in life to be gained or attained that is not already here and now, an implication thoroughly disturbing to any philosophy or culture which is seriously playing the game which I have called *White Must Win*. Polar vision is thus undoubtedly dangerous—but so is electricity, so are knives, and so is language. When an immature person experiences the identity of the voluntary and the involuntary, he may feel, on the one hand, utterly powerless, or on the other, equal to the Hebrew-Christian God. If the former, he may panic from the sense that no one is in charge of things. If the latter, he may contract offensive megalomania. Nevertheless, he has had immediate experience of the fact that each one of us is an organism-environment field, of which the two aspects, individual and world, can be separated only for purposes of discussion. If such a person sees thus clearly the mutuality of good and evil, he may jump to the conclusion that ethical principles are so relative as to be without validity—which might be utterly demoralizing for any repressed adolescent. Fortunately for me, my God was not so much the Hebrew-Christian autocrat as the Chinese Tao, "which loves and nourishes all things, but does not lord it over

them."

I hesitated a long time before writing *The Joyous Cosmology*, considering the dangers of letting the general public be further aware of this potent alchemy. But since Aldous had already let the cat out of the bag in *Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, and the subject was already under discussion both in psychiatric journals and in the public press, I decided that more needed to be said, mainly to soothe public alarm and to do what I could to forestall the disasters that would follow from legal repression. For I was seriously alarmed at the psychedelic equivalents of bathtub gin, and of the prospect of these chemicals, uncontrolled in dosage and content, being bootlegged for use in inappropriate settings without any competent supervision whatsoever. I maintained that, for lack of any better solution, they should be restricted for psychiatric prescription. But the state and federal governments were as stupid as I had feared, and by passing unenforceable laws against LSD not only drove it underground but prevented proper research. Such laws are unenforceable because any competent chemist can manufacture LSD, or a close equivalent, and the substance can be disguised as anything from aspirin to blotting-paper. It has been painted on the thin pages of a small Bible, and eaten

sheet by sheet. But as a result of this terror, the injudicious use of LSD (often mixed with strychnine or belladonna or quite dangerous psychedelics) has afflicted uncounted young people with paranoid, megalomaniac, and schizoid symptoms.

I see this disaster in the larger context of American prohibitionism, which has done more than anything else to corrupt the police and foster disrespect for law, and which our economic pressure has, in the special problem of drug abuse, spread to the rest of the world.

Although my views on this matter may be considered extreme, I feel that in any society where the powers of Church and State are separate, the State is without either right or wisdom in enforcing sumptuary laws against crimes which have no complaining victims. When the police are asked to be armed clergymen enforcing ecclesiastical codes of morality, all the proscribed sins of the flesh, of lust and luxury, become—since we are legislating against human nature—exceedingly profitable ventures for criminal organizations which can pay both the police and the politicians to stay out of trouble. Those who cannot pay constitute about one-third of the population of our overcrowded and hopelessly mismanaged prisons, and the business of their trial by due process delays and over taxes the courts beyond all reason. These are

nomogenic crimes, caused by bad laws, just as iatrogenic diseases are caused by bad doctoring. The offenders seldom feel guilty but often positively righteous in their opposition to this legal hypocrisy, and so emerge from prison loathing and despising the social order more than ever.

I speak with passion on this problem because I have often served as a consultant to the staffs of state institutions for mental and moral deviants, such as the institutional hells which the State of California maintains at San Quentin, Vacaville, Atascadero, and Napa—to mention only those I have visited, and knowing that they are considerably worse in other parts of the country, and most especially in those states afflicted with religious fanaticism. Relative to our own times, the prosecution of sumptuary laws is as tyrannical as any of the excesses of the Holy Inquisition or the Star Chamber.

My retrospective attitude to LSD is that when one has received the message, one hangs up the phone. I think I have learned from it as much as I can, and, for my own sake, would not be sorry if I could never use it again. But it is not, I believe, generally known that very many of those who had constructive experiences with LSD, or other psychedelics, have turned from drugs to spiritual disciplines—

abandoning their water-wings and learning to swim. Without the catalytic experience of the drug they might never have come to this point, and thus my feeling about psychedelic chemicals, as about most other drugs (despite the vague sense of the word), is that they should serve as medicine rather than diet.

It was again through Aldous that I first heard of a Dr. Leary of Harvard University who was doing experimental work with the drug psilocybin, derived from a mushroom that had long been used for religious purposes by some of the Indians of Mexico. From the detached and scholarly flavor of Aldous's account of this work I was expecting Timothy Leary to be a formidable pandit, but the man I first met in a New York restaurant was an extremely charming Irishman who wore a hearing-aid as stylishly as if it had been a monocle. Nothing could then have told me that anyone so friendly and intelligent would become one of the most outlawed people in the world, a fugitive from justice charged with the sin of Socrates, and all upon the legal pretext of possessing trivial amounts of marijuana. It so happened that Timothy was working under a department of the University that had long been of interest to me, the Department of Social Relations, which had been established by Henry Murray. On

several occasions I had visited Murray's domain, at 7 Divinity Avenue, and been entertained at luncheons where, as host, he showed a special genius for arousing intelligent conversation and for making other people appear at their best. In his company there would turn up—it might be— I. A. Richards, Mircea Eliade, Clyde Kluckhohn, or Jerome Bruner for such civilized intellectual discourse as is all too rarely heard in academic circles, where it now seems a point of honor to keep off one's subject and discuss the trivia of departmental politics. But these gentlemen were ashamed neither of their scholarship nor their personalities, and on one occasion—over an old-fashioned before lunch—I distinctly heard Richards remarking, "Well, as a matter of course, I always regard myself as the perfect human being." I was so delighted with Murray's milieu that, with the assistance of a wealthy friend, I managed to get myself a two-year fellowship for travel and study under his and the University's dispensation—a breather which gave me time to compile *The Two Hands of God* and to write *Beyond Theology*.

The time I could actually spend at Harvard was all too brief, for this is a university so assured of its intellectual reputation that its faculty can afford to be adventurous. But—even at Harvard—you must draw the

line somewhere, and Timothy did not know just where that was.

Whenever I was in Cambridge I kept closely in touch with him and with his associates Richard Alpert and Ralph Metzner, for—quite aside from the particular fascinations of chemical mysticism—these were the most lively and imaginative people in the department other than Murray himself, who watched their doings with deep and constructively critical interest even after his official retirement.

I was also interested in the work of B. F. Skinner, wondering how so absolute a determinist could write a utopia, *Walden Two*, and digging into his beautifully reasoned writings until I discovered the flaw in his system. This I explained in a lecture which Skinner, though I had forewarned him in person, did not attend.(2) I saw that his reasoning was still haunted by the ghost of man as a something—presumably a conscious ego—determined by environmental and other forces, for it makes no sense to speak of a determinism unless there is some passive object which is determined. But his own reasoning made it clear, not so much that human behavior was determined by other forces, but rather that it could not be described apart from those forces and was, indeed, inseparable from them. It did not seem to have occurred to him that "cause" and "effect" are simply two phases of, or two ways of

looking at, one and the same event. It is not, then, that effects (in this case human behaviors) are determined by their causes. The point is that when events are fully and properly described they will be found to involve and contain processes which were at first thought separate from them, and were thus called causes as distinct from effects. Taken to his logical conclusion, Skinner is not saying that man is determined by nature, as something external to him: he is actually saying that man is nature, and is describing a process which is neither determined nor determining. He simply provides reason for the essentially mystical view that man and universe are inseparable.

Such problems were involved in my attempts to work out an intellectual structure for what Timothy and his friends were experiencing in their psychedelic states of consciousness. For I saw that their enthusiasm for these states was leading them further and further away from the ideals of rational objectivity to which the department and the University were committed; especially as the department had recently acquired a computer and was going overboard for the statistical approach to psychology. On the one hand, I was trying to persuade Timothy's clan to keep command of intellectual rigor, and to express their experiences in terms that people bending

over backward to be scientific would understand. On the other hand, I was trying to get such conservatives as David McClelland, Murray's successor, and Skinner to see that the so-called "transactional" description of man as an organism-environment field was a theoretical description of what the nature-mystic experiences immediately, whereas most scientists continue to experience themselves as separate and detached observers, determined or otherwise. Their feelings lag far behind their theoretical views, for psychologists, in particular, are still under the emotional sway of Newtonian mechanics, and their personal feelings of identity have not yet been modified by quantum mechanics and field theory.

But Timothy could not contain himself, and it seemed to him more and more that, in practice, the procedures of scientific objectivity and rigor were simply an academic ritual designed to convince the university establishment that your work was dull and trivial enough to be considered "sound." It so happens that psychedelic chemicals make one curiously sensitive to pomposity. Anyone talking memorandumese, or religious or political rhetoric, or anyone waxing enthusiastic about a product in which he does not believe, sounds so ridiculous that you cannot keep a straight face: one excellent reason

why no government can tolerate a "turned-on" populace. Both Timothy and Richard Alpert began to see, furthermore, that a distinguished academic career was not all that important, since the university was already an obsolete institution representing the nineteenth-century mythology of scientific naturalism. But when one arrives at this point of view after, if not because of, "taking drugs," it becomes impossible to maintain rational discourse with the establishment, even though some of its more distinguished brains are pickled in alcohol. Thus things came to the point where Timothy and Richard were as suspect as if they had been lobotomized or become Jehovah's Witnesses.

I was present at the dinner party where Timothy finally agreed with David McClelland to withdraw experimentation with drugs from his work under the department. David was making the point that they had become too enthusiastic about their work to preserve scientific integrity, and with this I was in partial agreement, because to be intellectually honest you must be able to come to terms with any intelligible criticism of your ideas. When I have received inspirations during an LSD session, I have always reviewed them subsequently in the light of cold sobriety, in which some, but by no means all, of them

appear to be nonsense. But David was going so far as to insist that no one with a religious commitment could really do scientific work in psychology, and this so amazed me that I protested, "Now, David, are you seriously saying that, for example, a very sober, honest, and devoted Quaker, well educated and straight from Philadelphia, could not be entrusted with scientific work?" I do not remember his reaction, but I was unaware at the time that he himself was a concerned Quaker. What followed is now a matter of history. Timothy and Richard continued their experiments unofficially, and scandalized the University authorities by including undergraduates in their work. Henry Murray, however, with a wise look on his face, reminisced about the days when psychoanalysis first struck Harvard, and what an uproar of indignation had come to pass when a psychoanalyzed faculty member had committed suicide. Nevertheless, I myself began to be concerned, if mildly, at the direction of Timothy's enthusiasm, for to his own circle of friends and students he had become a charismatic religious leader who, well trained as he was in psychology, knew very little about religion and mysticism and their pitfalls. The uninstructed adventurer with psychedelics, as with Zen or yoga or any other mystical discipline, is an easy victim of what Jung calls "inflation," of

the messianic megalomania that comes from misunderstanding the experience of union with God. It leads to the initial mistake of casting pearls before swine, and, as time went on, I was dismayed to see Timothy converting himself into a popular store-front messiah with his name in lights, advocating psychedelic experience as a new world-religion. He was moving to a head-on collision with the established religions of biblical theocracy and scientific mechanism, and simply asking for martyrdom.

Life with Timothy, as I saw it in his communes at Newton Center and Millbrook, was never dull, even though it was hard to understand how people who had witnessed the splendors of psychedelic vision could be so aesthetically blind as to live in relative squalor, with perpetually unmade beds, unswept floors, and hideously decrepit furnishings. It could be, I suppose, that being turned-on all the time is like looking through a teleidoscope: it makes far more interesting patterns out of messes (such as dirty ashtrays) than out of such orderly scenes as neatly arranged books in shelves. But Timothy was the center of a vortex which pulled in the intellectually and spiritually adventurous from all quarters, and in his entourage student hippies jostled with millionaires and eminent professors, while to spend an evening with

him in New York City or Los Angeles was to be swept from one exotically sumptuous apartment to another.

Through all this, Timothy himself remained an essentially humorous, kindly, lovable, and (in some directions) intellectually brilliant person, and therefore it was utterly incongruous— however predictable—to become aware of the grim watchfulness of police in the background. Now nothing so easily deranges people using psychedelics as a paranoid atmosphere, so that by their intervention the police created the very evils from which they were supposed to be protecting us. In the early days when LSD, psilocybin, and mescaline were used more or less legitimately among reasonably mature people, there was little trouble with "bum trips," and episodes of anxiety were usually turned into occasions for insight. But when federal and state authorities began their systematic persecution, the fears invoked to justify it became self-fulfilling prophecies, and there was now real reason for a paranoid atmosphere in all experiments conducted outside the sterile and clinical surroundings of psychiatric hospitals. Although Timothy won a case in the Supreme Court which technically quashed the federal law against possessing and using (but not against importing) marijuana, the state laws remained in force, and he was harassed wherever he went,

until finally imprisoned without bail with so many technical charges against him that there was nothing for it but to escape and seek such asylum in exile as he could find.

Richard Alpert, who in all this had played a much quieter role, also went into exile, but in another way. While visiting India he realized that he had come to the end of the identity as a psychologist which he had thus far played, so much so that he could not envisage any normal role or career for himself in the United States. Furthermore, he felt as I did that he had learned all that he could get from psychedelics, and that what remained was actually to live out the life of freedom from worldly games and anxieties. He therefore took the name of Baba Ram Dass, and came back as a white-robed and bearded *sannyasin*, full of laughter and energy, dedicated simply to living in the eternal now. And, as might be expected, people raised their eyebrows and shook their heads, saying that the old showman was playing another game, or, alas, what drugs had done to such a promising young scientist, or that it was just great to be a *sannyasin* with an independent income. But I felt that he had done just the right thing for himself. I spent many hours with him and sensed that he was genuinely happy, that his intelligence was as sharp as ever, and that he was confident enough in

what he was doing not to try to persuade me to follow his example. Certainly he was having great pleasure in the multitudes of young people who came to listen to him, but in this respect he and I are alike, for we enjoy thinking out loud with an appreciative and intelligent audience just as we enjoy landscape or music. But would he be going about in a white robe if he were really sincere? Indeed yes. For in a country where a philosopher's sincerity is measured by the ordinariness of his dress, I too will sometimes wear a kimono or sarong in public, lest, like Billy Graham, I should attract an enormous following of dangerously serious and humorless people.

Now, in retrospect, it must be said that the Psychedelic Decade of the sixties has really begun to awaken psychotherapists from their studiedly pedestrian and reductionist attitudes to life. Here I am using the word "psychedelic" to mean all "mind-manifesting" processes: not only chemicals, but also philosophies, neurological experiments, and spiritual disciplines. At the beginning of the decade one felt that so many psychiatrists saw themselves as guardians of an official reality which might be described as the world seen on a bleak Monday morning. They saw a good orientation to reality as coping—as having a normal heterosexual (and preferably monogamous) sex life, a

"mature adult relationship" as it was called; as being able to drive a car and hold down a nine-to-five job; as being able to recall the product of 6 and 7 without hesitation; and as being able to participate in group activities and show qualities of initiative and leadership.

It was, as I remember, in 1959 that I was asked to speak before a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Los Angeles.

Learned statistical papers had dragged on and on, overtime, and my turn came when we were already late for lunch. I abandoned my prepared remarks (being what the press calls a textual deviate) and said:

"Gentlemen, this is not going to be a scientific paper because I am a simple philosopher, not a psychiatrist, and you are hungry for lunch. We philosophers are very grateful to you for showing us the unconscious emotional bases of some of our ideas, but the time is coming for us to show you the unconscious intellectual assumptions behind some of yours. Psychiatric literature is full of unexamined metaphysics. Even Jung, who is so readily repudiated for his 'mysticism,' bends over backward to avoid metaphysical considerations on the pretext that he is strictly a physician and a scientist. This is impossible. Every human being is a metaphysician

just as every philosopher has appetites and emotions—and by this I mean that we all have certain basic assumptions about the good life and the nature of reality. Even the typical businessman who asserts that he is a practical fellow unconcerned with higher things declares thereby that he is a pragmatist or a positivist, and not a very thoughtful one at that.

"I wonder, then, how much consideration you give to the fact that most of your own assumptions about the good life and reality come directly from the scientific naturalism of the nineteenth century, from the strictly metaphysical hypothesis that the universe is a mechanism obeying Newtonian laws, and that there is no other god beside it. Psychoanalysis, which is actually psychohydraulics following Newton's mechanics, begins from the mystical assertion that the psychosexual energy of the unconscious is a blind and stupid outrush of pure lust, following Haeckel's notion that the universe at large is a manifestation of primordially oafish and indiscriminating energy. It should be obvious to you that this is an opinion for which there has never been the least evidence, and which, furthermore, ignores the evidence that we ourselves, supposedly making intelligent remarks, are manifestations of that same energy.

"On the basis of this unexamined, derogatory, and shaky opinion as to the nature of biological and physical energy, some of your psychoanalytic members have this morning dubbed all the so-called mystical states of consciousness as 'regressive,' as leading one back to a dissolution of the individual intelligence in an acid bath of amniotic fluid, reducing it to featureless identity with this—your First Cause—mess of blindly libidinous energy. Now, until you have found some substantial evidence for your metaphysics you will have to admit that you have no way of knowing which end of your universe is up, so that in the meantime you should abstain from easy conclusions as to which directions are progressive and which regressive. [*Laughter*]"

It had always seemed to me that, by and large, psychotherapists lacked the metaphysical dimension; in other words, that they affected the mentality of insurance clerks and lived in a world scrubbed and disinfected of all mystery, magic, color, music, and awe, with no place in the heart for the sound of a distant gong in a high and hidden valley. This is an exaggeration from which I will except most of the Jungians and such occasional freaks as Groddeck, Prinzhorn, G. R. Heyer, Wilhelm Reich, and others less well known. Thus, writing of American psychology in 1954, Abraham Maslow remarked that it was

overpragmatic, over-Puritan, and overpurposeful.... No textbooks have chapters on fun and gaiety, on leisure and meditation, on loafing and puttering, on aimless, useless, and purposeless activity.... American psychology is busily occupying itself with only half of life to the neglect of the other—and perhaps most important—half.(3)

The publication of my *Psychotherapy East and West* and *Joyous Cosmology* early in the sixties brought me into public and private discussion with many leading members of the psychiatric profession, and I was astonished at what seemed to be their actual terror of unusual states of consciousness. I had thought that psychiatrists should have been as familiar with these wildernesses and unexplored territories of the mind as Indian guides, but as I perused something like the two huge volumes of *The American Handbook of Psychiatry*, I found only maps of the soul as primitive as ancient maps of the world. There were vaguely outlined emptinesses called Schizophrenia, Hysteria, and Catatonia, accompanied with little more solid information than "Here be dragons and cameleopards." At a party in New York I fell into conversation with one of that city's most eminent

analysts, and as soon as he learned that I had experimented with LSD his personality became surgically professional. He donned his mask and rubber gloves and addressed me as a specimen, wanting to know all the surface details of perceptual and kinesthetic alterations, which I could see him fitting into place zip, pop, and clunk with his keenly calipered mind. I took part in a televised debate on "Open End," with David Susskind trying to moderate between the two factions of psychedelic enthusiasts and establishment psychiatrists, and in the ensuing uproar and confusion of passions I found myself flung into the position of moderator, telling both sides that they had no basis in evidence for their respective fanaticisms.

In all these contacts I began to feel that the only psychiatrists who had any solid information were such neurologists as David Rioch, of Walter Reed, and Karl Pribram, of Stanford. They could tell me things I didn't know and were the first to admit how little they knew, for they were realizing the odd fact that their brains were more intelligent than their minds or, to say the least, that the human nervous system was of such a high order of complexity that we were only just beginning to organize it in terms of conscious thought. I sat in on an intimate seminar with Pribram in which he explained in most careful detail how

the brain is no mere reflector of the external world, but how its structure almost creates the forms and patterns that we see, selecting them from an immeasurable spectrum of vibrations as the hands of a harpist pluck chords and melodies from a spectrum of strings. For Karl Pribram is working on the most delicate epistemological puzzle: how the brain evokes a world which is simultaneously the world which it is in, and to wonder, therefore, whether the brain evokes the brain.(4) Put it in metaphysical terms, psychological terms, physical terms, or neurological terms: it is always the same. How can we know what we know without knowing knowing?

This question must be answered, if it can ever be answered, before it can make any sense at all to say that reality is material, mental, electrical, spiritual, a fact, a dream, or anything else. But always, in contemplating this conundrum, a peculiar feeling comes over me, as if I couldn't remember my own name which is right on the tip of my tongue. It really does make one wonder if, after all . . . if . . .

Anyhow, at the end of these ten years I have the impression that the psychiatric world has opened up to the possibility that there are more things in heaven and earth than were dreamed of in its philosophy.

Orthodox psychoanalysis has appeared more and more to be a

religious cult and institutional psychiatry a system of brainwashing.

The field is giving way to movements and techniques increasingly free from the tacit metaphysics of nineteenth-century mechanism:

Humanistic Psychology, Transpersonal Psychology, Gestalt Therapy, Transactional Psychology, Encounter Therapy, Psychosynthesis (Assagioli), Bioenergetics (Reich), and a dozen more interesting approaches with awkward names.

Historians and social commentators will try to discover from any autobiographer how much he has influenced the movements of his time and how much they have influenced him. I can say only that as I get older I get back into that strange childlike feeling of not being able to draw any certain line between the world and my own action upon it, and I wonder if this is also felt by people who have never been in the public eye or had any claim to influence. A very ordinary person might have the impression that there are millions of himself, and that all of them, as one, are doing just what it is in humanity—that is, in himself—to do. In this way he could perhaps feel more important than someone who has taken a particular view and followed a lonely path. Part of the problem is that the closer I get to present time, the harder it is to see things in perspective. The events of twenty, thirty, and forty

years ago are clearer in my mind, and seem almost closer in time than what has happened quite recently— in years that seem fantastically and excitingly crowded with people and happenings. I feel that I must wait another ten years to find out just what I was doing, in the field of psychotherapy, with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, Fritz Perls and Ronald Laing, Margaret Rioch and Anthony Sutich, Bernard Aaronson and Stanley Krippner, Michael Murphy and John Lilly; in theology with Bishops James Pike and John A. T. Robinson, Dom Aelred Graham and Huston Smith; and in the formation of the mystical counterculture with Lama Anagarika Govinda and Shunryu Suzuki, Allen Ginsberg and Theodore Roszak, Bernard Gunther and Gia-fu Feng, Ralph Metzner and Claudio Naranjo, Norman O. Brown and Nancy Wilson Ross, Lama Chogyam Trungpa and Ch'ung-liang Huang, Douglas Harding and G. Spencer Brown, Richard Weaver and Robert Shapiro— to mention only a few of the names and faces gathering out of the recent past to tell me that I have hardly begun this story.

References

1 Several years later he was killed in an automobile accident on his

way to Ajijic in Mexico, where he had made his home. And so went into obscurity a most extraordinary and brilliant man, who wrote a book that no one would publish (his Harvard Ph.D. dissertation) on history as a subjective illusion, based on the conflicting views of modern critics of the New Testament. He was both a scholar and an artist in life from whose conversation and criticism of my work I profited greatly. However, his liberal views were too much both for Reed College and for Claremont, where he was refused preferment and tenure—unless, as he was once told, he would settle down and marry a nice Episcopalian girl. [\(back\)](#)

2 "The Individual as Man-World," *The Psychedelic Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Cambridge, Mass.: June 1963).

3 *Motivation and Personality* (New York Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954), pp. 291-92.

4 see his *Languages of the Brain*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ Prentice-Hall, 1971).