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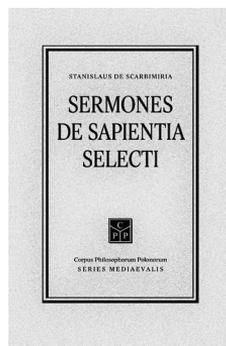
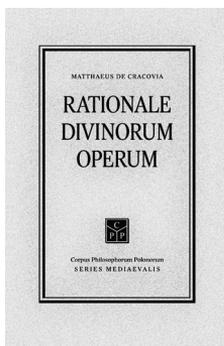
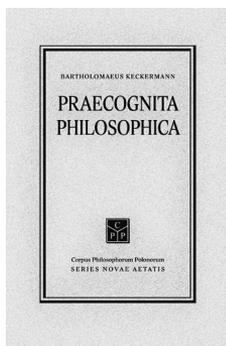
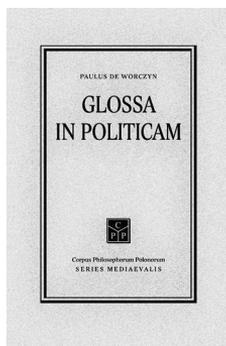
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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION



She smoked one cigarette after another, which made her hoarse. When she laughed, she laughed with her whole being. Arendt's eyes shone with vitality, curious about everything life presented to them. She was sure of what she thought and what she did. At the same time, she constantly hesitated, because she knew well that thinking needs time to solidify into a system of ultimate, uncompromising judgments. She knew dozens of poems by heart, mostly in German. She recited in Greek and Latin. This was one of the ways in which she conducted her dialogue with tradition – often not silently. The Great

Dead were as close to her as the living. Always within reach, they formed a reservoir of reliable and steadfast thoughts. She knew when to reach for them and why. Thinking, she argued, is a serious matter – perhaps the most serious one we encounter in life – because it has a direct and decisive impact on what we do. In other words, we can arrange our lives foolishly or, on the contrary, wisely and sensibly; the choice is always ours. There are no dangerous thoughts, for thinking itself is dangerous enough.

She was a European living in the United States, a nonbelieving Jew deeply concerned about the fate of Israel. She advocated for a binational state in her writings, understanding little of the complex everyday life of Jews and Arabs. Her diagnoses were formulated from a distance. She visited Israel while traveling to Europe for her frequent summer stays. Her husband, Heinrich Blücher, a German and a communist who hated anything with a nationalist flavor, waited for her in Athens while she visited her family in Jerusalem.

For Israelis, their statehood was still fresh and uncertain. Israel's Independence Day, the year it coincided with the trial of Adolf Eichmann, was celebrated enthusiastically, with the participation of state authorities. Arendt could not find her place in all this. A small part of her seemed to remain a Zionist, yet any form of nationalism aroused fear and revulsion in her, partly under her husband's influence. "Nationalism signifies essentially the conquest of the state through the nation," she wrote in January 1946.

She left a vivid impression in the memories of many people, including her niece, Edna Brocke, who lived in Jerusalem. "Like a great many Jews, she was very conscious of being a Jew without being Jewish in the religious sense," writes Brocke in her memoirs:

This was apparent on the one hand in her very close relationship to her small family in Israel, and on the other in her circle of friends in New York, which consisted for the most part of Jewish emigrants. This deeply rooted Jewish awareness conditioned her political and historical observations of the reality of her times, as well. She herself

described this sensation in a letter to Karl Jaspers: "As far as the Jews are concerned: You are historically correct in everything you say. Nonetheless it is a fact that many Jews are like me entirely independent from Judaism in a religious sense and at the same time Jews. Perhaps that will bring about the end of this people, there's nothing to be done about it. What one can do is only to strive for political conditions that will not make their survival impossible."

Hannah Arendt died, as the calendar reminds us, exactly half a century ago, at only 69 years of age. Too early. She was standing among friends. There was some wine, laughter, some conversation. She sank onto the sofa. Then everything unfolded, as the poet wrote:

We never know we go when we are going –
We jest and shut the Door –
Fate – following – behind us bolts it –
And we accost no more –
[Emily Dickinson]

Arendt did not survive her second heart attack – a heart ravaged by History. She left behind works that remain a wellspring for the "life of the mind," continuously encouraging thinking for all those who need it – thinking that is self-sufficient, unprejudiced, free.

By printing Arendt's notes on Kant, we want to refresh her presence among us and also honor her memory. Arendt has accompanied us in our work since the founding of *Kronos*. We published her major works in Polish translations and printed smaller pieces in our quarterly. Arendt thus seems to be our good spirit and guide – as anarchic as she is trustworthy. *Memoria eius honoretur*.

Piotr Nowak, Deputy Editor in Chief

Hannah Arendt

KANT SEMINAR: *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*

10/24/64

Title and Content:

Critique: Criticism & κρίνειν: to distinguish & to judge. Enlightenment. Eighteenth century: Aesthetics new science & with it criticism. It is supposed to find and lay down the rules, to legislate.

Hence: not criticize but show its peculiar field: “to trace the complete outline”. Architectonic B 296/7 the “limit of its employment” what lies within & what without its proper sphere.

Pure:

- a) unmixed: The principle of pure reason must be justified out of its own character: not other faculty involved.
- b) Not practical: practical is an “extension” of pure reason – B xxx: Pure = speculative.
- c) pure: no admixture of anything empirical (B 3) nothing “extraneous” – esp. no “experience or sensation” A 11! left out in B! – representations are “pure” in which “there is nothing that belongs to sensation” (B 34).

Reason: A faculty whose fate it is “to precipitate itself into darkness and contradictions.” [A viii] (Kant’s letter that the contradictions made him write his work: scandal of reason.)¹ Metaphysic: “a battlefield of endless controversies.” More than any other faculty stands in need of critique: quote – B XIX note [“reason is involved in unavoidable self-conflict”].

Reason: Metaphysics → supposed to become a science! Understanding: Science

2 questions: (technically speaking) How is experience possible – Knowledge

How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible – Thought

All knowledge and all Thought are synthetic: I connect – Synthesis: p. 112² (B 103):

I think = I connect.

Knowledge: Two stems: Intellect (*a priori*) and senses.

B 29 (*a posteriori*): “perhaps from a common but to us unknown root.” *A priori*: earlier than what is given, prior to.

B XVI f. their being given to senses.

A priori – *a posteriori* only in experience (B 296).

A posteriori: later than I, given to me.

Hence: I, the knower, is *a priori*. Question: How can this *a priori* be relevant to the given?

Synthesis:

a) In the field of the given: The sky is blue: two empirical data are connected by me.

Hence: Connection itself *a priori*, but the things are given.

b) there are 4 chains: The 4 is not given, I add it, as it were. It is a synthesis between an empirical given and an *a priori*.

c) Every change has a cause – Causality. What is given is change, the Causality (*a priori*). I bring in order to bring order into the given. It is a concept or category. (κατηγορεῖν: What I say with resp. to a ὑποκείμενον, a *substratum* which lies beneath. Category: what you say in general (B 106) of everything: you determinate its quality, its quantity, relation, modality – *A priori* “ – concepts of synthesis” – This sentence is *a priori* synthetic for causality is not inherent in change (as weight is in bodies). The opposite (uncaused change) would not be contradictory in terms. Hence: 2 kinds of necessity: logical: contradictory in terms; e.g., A triangle laughs, or: bodies have no weight. 2) necessary for human reason: I must commit no contradiction in terms and I must not contradict myself: my own reason. “The scandal of reason” in the antinomies: The world has a beginning – the world has no beginning, both can be thought – i.e., proved without contradiction in terms!

d) Man is free. God exists. The soul is immortal.

The field of these proportions differs in that freedom is a (*gleichsam ein*) “fact” of inner experience. Reason in and by itself presupposes and “knows” freedom. Or: just as I can’t understand change without casualty. I can’t understand human existence without freedom. It is not a contradiction in terms, but I would contradict myself. Hence: a synthetic

¹ Cf. Kant’s letter to Christian Garve, 21 September 1798 (I. Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967], 252).

² Arendt refers to the English edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1963). Her personal copy with marginalia is available at Bard College (call #: B2778.E5 S5).

a priori proposition in the same sense as under c). If we were deprived of c), no science, hence no knowledge would be possible. If we were deprived of “free,” no thought and no action would be possible, or rather: no desire = desire to know, desire to do.

In these instances: Something empirical: Man (not reason or the I-think) changes, is connected with an *a priori*: freedom, causality. And the problem: How can this *a priori* be relevant to the *a posteriori*: is identical with the question: How can we, endowed with reason, live in a world given to us? The harmony is the synthesis.

Different with: God exists. Here you have a pure thought, not given in experience, and connect it with, predicate upon it, something you know only from experience. (In the case of God: existence empirical, in the case immortality: soul empirical.) Reason: tendency to transcend.

II

I started with synthetical judgments, instead of analytical, and with *a priori* instead of analytical, and with *a priori* concepts instead of *a posteriori* (whiteness when we abstract). Why? According to Kant all analytical judgments [are] based on synthetical [judgments] since analysis presuppose synthesis or combination: (B 130)

All bodies are extended (instead of have weight): This is an analytical judgment for extension, occupation of same space, inherent in “body.” But: one could argue: This is because my concept of body has already combined space with it – is a spatial object. In the concept of body I am conscious of “the manifold which I always think in that body” (B 11). All analytical judgments are *a priori* and necessary, i.e., given the concept: body, extension & weight follow. They are tautologies.

In other words: all knowledge rests on the combination or connection of a manifold; this is expressed in the category of unity. But as category, unity applies only to a special branch of knowledge: knowing what is given through the senses. “But the combination of a manifold in general ... is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation – B 130 – Unity presupposes combination. And this condition for combining the manifold is the original synthesis, some original oneness which underlies all subsequent combining; the I-think which accompanies all my representations: B 132. The “I” itself does not give any manifold, only when confronted with the world does it become the ground of unity (= knowledge). Hence: the synthesis is the I-think, i.e., the synthesis between the given & the intellect.

All judgments of experience are synthetic (*a posteriori*). Science.

All judgments of logic are analytical (*a priori*).

All judgments of math. are synthetic *a priori*.

All judgments of metaphysics are (in intention) synthetic *a priori*.

III

Back to sense-intellect as the stem of all knowledge. Since sense perceives what is given and this given knowledge is then ordered by concepts of intellect, our given is that sense-perceptions are wholly empirical and *a posteriori* (later than I myself). This means Kant’s great discovery that sense perception is not possible without an *a priori* (earlier than experience): The *a priori* is time and space: everything appears in the temporal form of

succession and co-existence. Nothing is ever entirely isolated, not because one thing has it in its nature to be related with another thing, but because it falls into our experience or intuition whose form demands this interconnectedness in time and as well as space.

A priori – (see preface! B xii sq.): knowledge of objects is *a priori*: something in regard to them is prior to their being given, This prior am I, i.e., the constitution of my faculty.

Transcendental: Intro. B 25: “I call transcendental all knowledge which concerns not so much the object as our mode of knowing objects insofar as these objects are to be possible *a priori*.” (Now: The conditions of the possibility of [the] experience of objects are identical with the conditions of the possibility of the existence of objects.)

IV

By now, you should ask: But what is reason? Suppose I know how all this works, is that not enough? It would be enough for philosophy as epistemology, but for Kant [it would be] only preliminaries. To understand what I know and what I don't know.

The greatness: What I don't know does not go out of the window. I am not only a knowing but a thinking animal. But to confuse thought with knowledge was the cause of metaphysics: God, freedom and immortality – The most inward things. Can I think without talking nonsense? Sense-intellect: mere preparation for reason as the faculty of ideas.

Ideas: can be used theoretically and practically, theoretical and practical reason

Reason: scandal of reason that it contradicts itself: Thought contradicts itself (Antinomies).

Newton: “absolute, true & mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything” and “absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar & immovable.”³

Leibniz: “space is relative; an order of coexistence, time similarly an order of successions.”⁴

Ad Time:

Eternity and sempiternity:

Succession in sempiternity. (What Hegel calls the “bad infinitude.”)

Eternity: where the succession is simultaneity.

Question: if you remove all objects, you may still have space but certainly not simultaneousness. The same for time and succession.

The notion of time: intuition!

Time: primacy: first sentence: Simultaneous is also: time. Cf. B 182-83!

³ I. Newton, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, trans. A. Motte, bk. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 6.

⁴ G. W. Leibniz and S. Clarke, *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), 25-26.

Simultaneity (B 226) only with respect to ontological sense: for us: succession. Time as order of appearances: simultaneity and duration: B 219.

13/9/64

I. We saw:

- a) Two stems of knowledge: but what connects them? What makes that we understand what is given?
- b) What unites the manifold of the given to comprehensible unites? The answer: The I-think as the horizon of the intellect.
- c) This was shown in the form of a deduction – the *quaestio iuris*: What is on trial? Formally speaking: human reason or the “harmony” of man & world. (Absurdity!) The tribunal: B 697, B 731. We have the concepts or categories of the intellect, not given but produced by us. With what right do we apply them? As Kant says: do they have “reality” – yes! *essentia*, not *existentia*; “objective validity.”

II. In the transcendental deduction the use of intellect was justified to such a degree that it got into contradiction of first sentences of *Critique* where intellect was servant of intuition. It was as though the uniting principle sprang after all from intellect, hence primacy of understanding. This is corrected in schematism. Cf. first edition! where imagination is in the center.⁵

1. For perception everything presents itself as particulars: shape, form, image. We can make an image of it: portrait, and then an image of the portrait, etc. What you see in all of them is twofold: Mr. X – or a man. In the latter case: something in general, i.e., valid for many other such things. But this: man as such, is a concept, not [a] given. And if you see it in the image, you have made sensible a concept:

This is a kind of conceptual representation, or: you have found the rule: man as such, house as such, under which you can now subsume all houses, all men. And the mystery is that this rule is an image.

Hence: the particular, though it presents always only a particular entity, represents at the same time something which can serve as a rule. It is as though our sensibility offers an understanding [of] the rules. Somehow the opposite of what we heard in the deduction.

Thus I have five points,, an image of the number five, in which the image of number is present, i.e., 1000 where I can no longer make points, Still! 1000 is “the representation of a method [...] rather than the image itself.” “This representation of a universal procedure of imagination in providing an image for a concept, I entitle the schema of this concept.” (B 179)

2. Schema is the image of a concept, but not so that it actually presents the concept, which is impossible, but indicates the rule for its representative function – to present one

⁵ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. J. S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 131-208.

particular house insofar as all houses which are not present are represented. This [is] true for empirical concepts (Kant's dog) and [a] pure mathematical concept (triangle, number). Hence: Concepts always immediately related to the schema of imagination (B 180)

Conclusion: If all thought proceeds according to concepts and all concepts are related to schemata of imagination, then no human thought [is] possible without *Versinnlichung*.

3. B 182: "the pure image of [...] all objects of the senses in general is time" (Namely: pure succession).

Hence: Time is the medium in which the schemata qua rules become effective: namely, rules applying to objects.

B 183: The schema of substance is "endurance of the real in time." Substance means: substratum abiding while all else changes.

Now: Time is this abiding, for everything "passes in time but not time itself."

To time corresponds substance. Time itself stands outside of time. Just as the I-think was outside of time. Hence: the equation in Heidegger.

4. B 116: Kant starts with problem of subsumption: there must be a "homogeneousness" between the object and the concept. In other words: how can I apply concepts to objects without this "homogeneousness" (*Gleichartigkeit*), of the same kind.

Concepts and empirical intuitions are "quite heterogeneous": causality. How can I apply causality to appearances? "Significance" of concepts. (B 185) What is this "third thing" between category and appearance, which mediates? It must be intellectual & sensible. Answer: the schema. (B 177)

The 3rd thing seems to be time. Time is a form of sensibility – Hence: The "conditions of sensibility constitute the universal condition under which alone category can be applied to any object." (B 179)

Why time? B 182: The distinction between image and schema: "The pure image of all magnitudes for outer sense is space; [...] but its schema is number, i.e., succession. Procedure: hence generating time."

5. B 186: The schemata of sensibility actualize the categories and restrict them to the field of experience. If we take the categories without the schemata, they would apply to things as they are & not merely to things as they appear. The schemata connect the understanding to a finite being whose main job is experience. The concepts in themselves without schemata have a mere logical significance. They don't promote knowledge. They "can find no object." (B 186-87)

12/5/64

Transcendental Deduction. Introductory Remarks.

The two roots of experience & knowledge; Sensibility-understanding, Objects given – objects thought or understood. What right do we have to apply our "thoughts", i.e., categories, to what is given: What right do we have to say: The stone is heavy, not merely:

it seems heavy? Heaviness is not given like colors or resistance. The question is always: What is an object: How do thoughts & perceptions come together? We may have concepts which are “blind” for which there is no sense experience: e.g., a centaur; it is inapplicable. Couldn’t we perhaps also have perceptions which are unthinkable, or without concepts and hence empty? (B 75) E.g., If we would meet a centaur, it would not be unthinkable; but suppose we should meet a laughing triangle – this would be unthinkable.

Hence: Every object to be an object (and not mere sensation) must be perceptible and thinkable.

To think & to know – § 22 B 146 (p. 161 and 174). Immortal soul.

In the transcendental aesthetic: What is perception? In the transcendental deduction: What is thought? Or to put it differently:

That the manifold given in perception should be experienced and known as an object is not given: B 126. The transcendental deduction – thought: Even in intuition I recognize already an object, and this is “thought.” No thought without perception – now: No perception without thought. The independence of thinking & perceiving, of sensibility and intellect.

Thinking: is connecting, is synthetic. All analysis because [of] previous connection. We experience a manifold as a unity: Namely, one object, that is: we connect *a priori*: In perceiving we unify: synthesis. And this synthesis, object qua object, is prior to perception of all the other characteristics which I perceive already as the properties of an object. This synthesis is active, we connect: B 130. It is necessary for the object [to be] thought, not perceived: without it, everything given would be “not thinkable”.

This unity springs from the subject, it is thinkable by the same subject to whom perceptions and the manifold are given. Thinking and perceiving in the same person Hence: It is connected within me. That I perceive the given and understand it as an object is based upon the “synthesis” of perception and thinking within me: which means it is an identical subject that perceives and thinks. This unity of thought and perception is actualized in self-consciousness, in the I-think: B 131/32.

“Pure apperception” or original apperception or transcendental apperception.

The point is that the ground of all synthesis or connection, the principle of unity is found in myself and in understanding, that is, in something active.

1. It is pure because it is independent from all “given,” it is not a recognition of my “inner self.” (This is empirical consciousness.)
2. It is original because it remains outside of what it unifies – origin or source – it is not unified or connected in the same manner in which it connects. It is unconnected and therefore can connect.
3. It is transcendental because all “*a priori* knowledge arises from it.” (B 132) “There can be no it unless there is an I which is aware of the it and hence of itself” (Körner).⁶

This pure apperception relates to understanding as space and time relate to sensibility.

(B 136) What constitutes an object qua unity is this apperception: B 139.

⁶ S. Körner, *Kant* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), 62.

Hence: The title or the certificate of birth is in the I-think – the highest point.

The self as an object (inner sense form of time) and the self in the I-think, no object: only that I am: B 153-59.

Space as:

- a) Not given in experience: not a particular entity. Spaces within Space.
- b) Valid for each special relation, hence perhaps a concept – valid for everything. Not a concept, no abstract discursive – I run through. Spaces are limitations of space. These limitations are therefore spatial. Space presupposes limits.
- c) Space is represented [as] infinitely given magnitude. Magnitude: not greatness (which I could measure) but what makes “quantities” possible! Space is infinitely different and “greater” than all its parts.
- d) In everyday life, space is implied as that which makes spatial appearance possible

What Kant understood is the absolute character of Beginning, Hence the danger of arbitrariness. This arbitrariness = not determined, he called freedom.

Ad Kant's: What can I know? The question: How do I know that I know?

Answer: I know myself knowing – *cogito me cogitare* – The reconstitution of the world in self-consciousness –

Philosophy is the knowing of knowing – epistemology (?). Only of this I can be certain. Descartes.

Ad seminar a priori: Why is not the givenness of the world an *a priori*? I.e., qua givenness?

One reason:

Christianity: Life & world: The reversal: Life is everlasting. The world comes to an end.

Ad 4: causation and *a priori*:

The domination of the *causa finalis* as the effect produced by fabrication.

Cause is what is prior. Now the subject as maker becomes the *a priori*.

Second reason.

Third reason:

Descartes: Real is only the experience given in self-consciousness. The experienced object must be subjectified, produced by the subject, in order to be reliable.

Seminar: *Causa finalis* and purpose: judgment presupposes a “formal design” in nature (Third *Critique* bridges the gap between theory & nature.)

Transcribed by Andrzej Serafin and Tomasz Janowski

KANT NOTEBOOK

Freedom “as it were as a fact”¹ – that is: we are conscious of freedom even though we cannot prove it. This is the reason why, for the ancients, it was not a problem but a political matter. *Critique of Practical Reason*.²

The only idea of pure reason whose object is a fact is among the *scibilia*. *Critique of Judgement*.³ “Private opinions” of reason – cf. the faculty of judgment. See *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁴

Insight – intuitive (sensuous) vs rational (discursive).
Moral insight resembles intuitive–sensuous insight.

“Conscience is an instinct to pass judgment upon ourselves in accordance with moral laws.” (*Lectures on Ethics*)⁵

Metaphysics of Morals:⁶ Man cannot avoid hearing the voice of conscience...

Freedom (*Critique of Practical Reason*): “Freedom, however, among all the ideas of speculative reason is the only one whose possibility we know a priori. We do not understand it, but we know it as the condition of the moral law which we do know.”⁷

The good is like “red colour” – one must “see” it oneself.

Givenness: not like nature, but only in human life.

¹ I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 5 (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), 53; *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L. W. Beck (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1956), 48 (Arendt is using German and English editions interchangeably).

² Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 62, 100, 114; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 57, 94, 109.

³ I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 5, 551 [§ 91]; *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), 321.

⁴ I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 3 (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1923), 526 [A 782 / B 810]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1963), 620.

⁵ *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik*, ed. P. Menzer, (Berlin: Pan Verlag R. Heise, 1924), 11; *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. L. Infield (London: Methuen and Co., 1930), 129.

⁶ I. Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 7, 250; *The Doctrine of Virtue: Part II of The Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. M. J. Gregor (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 103.

⁷ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, vol. 5, 4; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 4.

Freedom: idea of an “inscrutable faculty” – *Critique of Practical Reason*.⁸

The immoral (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*): to make an exception in favor of our inclination. Self-love is possible only in concealment.⁹

Ethics: “Everyone regards the moral law as something which he can publicly profess, but his maxims as something which must be concealed.”¹⁰ – By thinking my private, hidden maxim as public, I test it for its morality. Persisting in the evil maxim coincides with hiding – withdrawing from publicity. Morality consists in being-able-to-let-oneself-be-seen, before the ruler (God) as the all-knowing “one who knows the heart [*Herzenskündiger*]” (*Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*),¹¹ the omniscient one.

Duty to oneself placed before duties to others in Kant – see his stance on suicide, *Metaphysics of Morals*¹² – or: “He who transgresses against himself loses his manliness [humanity] and becomes incapable of doing his duty towards his fellows” (*Ethics*).¹³ And “the greatest violation of man’s duty to himself” is the lie (*Metaphysics of Morals*).¹⁴ For acting there belongs a certain “vigilance,” *vigilantia moralis* (*Ethics*).¹⁵

On freedom:

Freedom: free from empirical interest?¹⁶

Freedom to choose between good and evil: struggle.

Freedom = to begin something new – spontaneity.

Will is reason insofar as it is itself the cause of producing action.¹⁷

Freedom = to will freely, even against being able to – despair, struggle.

Freedom = to be able to do something – virtuosity.

Freedom: to go where I want – freedom of movement, e.g., “necessity or compulsion.”

Freedom = autonomy, to obey only the law that speaks in me: the legislator.¹⁸

Will = faculty of acting according to the conception of laws or of principles.¹⁹

Question: Which capacity corresponds to freedom?

Traditional answer: will.

⁸ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 54; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 49.

⁹ I. Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 4, 282; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and What Is Enlightenment?*, trans. L. W. Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 42.

¹⁰ *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik*, 52; *Lectures on Ethics*, 43.

¹¹ I. Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 6 (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1923), 184ff. [208, 214, 244]; *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 89, 110; cf. Acts 1:24, 15:8 (ὁ καρδιόγνωστος).

¹² Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, vol. 7, 234; *The Doctrine of Virtue*, 84.

¹³ *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik*, 147; *Lectures on Ethics*, 118.

¹⁴ Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, vol. 7, 240; *The Doctrine of Virtue*, 92.

¹⁵ *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik*, 157; *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 126.

¹⁶ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 307; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 67.

¹⁷ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 321-22; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 81.

¹⁸ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 297; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 56.

¹⁹ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 270-71; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 30.

Antiquity: What situation corresponds to freedom? The polis or community, insofar as it

- a) supports slavery, negatively;
- b) makes acting with others possible, positively.

Kant's doctrine of evil in the philosophy of religion.

Evil:

- a) only as exception;
- b) a peculiar "hollowness" (*Anthropology*).²⁰

Perversity (*perversitas*) of the heart.

On the other hand, the human being is evil by nature = selfishly closed off.

On will: the heart is "the totality of all incentives that move the will and are the ground of all doing and leaving-undone" (*Anthropology*, ed. Stark).²¹

Veracity: the "foul stain of our species" (*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*).²² Perfidy is "to deceive oneself."²³ What is required is a "revolution" in which one vows to compel oneself.

"Happiness" is "self-contentment" (*Critique of Practical Reason*).²⁴ Therefore virtue is its own reward.

Rejection of theodicy in *Religion*,²⁵ analogous to the antinomies in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: Job is right!²⁶

Respect: springs from the fact that I can humble myself, but that it is I who performs this act. It contains two moments: sensuous humiliation and intellectual elevation (*Critique of Practical Reason*);²⁷ the latter is self-approbation.²⁸ The human being finds

²⁰ I. Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 8 (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1923), 223; *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. R. B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 233-34.

²¹ *Immanuel Kants Menschenkunde oder philosophische Anthropologie, nach handschriftlichen Vorlesungen*, ed. F. Ch. Starke (Leipzig: Die Expedition des europäischen Aufsehers, 1831), 228.

²² Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, 178; *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 61.

²³ Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, 177; *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 60.

²⁴ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 128; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 122.

²⁵ I. Kant, *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee*, in *Werke*, ed. E. Cassirer, vol. 6, 121-33; "On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies," in M. Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 283-97.

²⁶ Kant, *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee*, 132; "On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies," 291-93.

²⁷ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 82ff.; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 76ff.

²⁸ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 89; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 83.

“in the independence of his intelligible nature and in the greatness of soul to which he sees himself called to find himself” an ample compensation “for the sacrifice he makes.”²⁹

Sublime: “respect for our own destination” (*Critique of Judgment*),³⁰ vis-à-vis nature (as the affective foundation of science, in which we cognize nature as though it had no power over us, in disinterested delight) and vis-à-vis the “moral order of the world,” in which we, for example, no longer fear God. One can “regard an object as fearful without being afraid of it [...] Thus the virtuous man fears God without being afraid of Him” (*Critique of Judgment*).³¹

With respect to nature, this rests on the fact that “humanity in our person remains unhumiliated, though the individual might have to submit to this dominion.”³² What is required for this is “a mood of calm contemplation and a quite free judgment.”³³ Replacement of fear through awe.

On conscience: Who speaks in the voice of conscience?

- a) God;
- b) The human being qua human being in general = humanity;
- c) The *they* (*das Man*), including customs, etc.

Krüger:³⁴ Kant as the last attempt of theistic metaphysics to save itself. *Critique of Pure Reason*: If theoretical metaphysics is impossible for reason, then “in the practical knowledge of reason, data may not be found sufficient to determine reason’s transcendent concept of the unconditioned.”³⁵ – Nature as an ascending order of freedom, understood up to the sufficiently subjective standpoint of God.

The transcendental question about the possibility of experience asks everywhere: How is the “object” given – for example, the final purpose – which reaches beyond what is naturally and sensuously given? The human being is “master of nature” because he can set ends and “through his reason can set up a system of ends”; thus nature is “given” and the “final end” as well.

On conscience or self-consciousness: *conscientia coram Deo* [conscience in the presence of God] – Augustine.³⁶

²⁹ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 164; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 156.

³⁰ Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 329; *Critique of Judgement*, 96.

³¹ Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 332; *Critique of Judgement*, 100.

³² Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 333; *Critique of Judgement*, 101.

³³ Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 335; *Critique of Judgement*, 103.

³⁴ G. Krüger, *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), 11ff.

³⁵ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 20 [B XXI]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 24-25.

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, X.5.7; cf. H. Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, trans. J. V. Scott and J. C. Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 84: “Conscience puts him *coram Deo*, into the presence of God.”

On the “good will” (*Groundwork*, first sentence):³⁷ it is primarily not the human will, which always stands in need of command. And the command does not come from the will.

Spontaneity: “marvelous faculty, which the consciousness of the moral law first reveals to me” (*Critique of Pure Reason*).³⁸

“To deny knowledge in order to make room for faith” (*Critique of Pure Reason*).³⁹

Heidegger – conscience (*Being and Time*)⁴⁰

Conscience:

- a) the call to the self out of the *they*, toward selfhood;
- b) not an inner self-conversation, presented as a conversation between the they-self and the self;⁴¹
- c) belonging to the call is hearing;
- d) the caller does not make himself known; thus the question “who does the calling?” (actually: what is conscience?) must remain phenomenally unanswered. “The call comes from me and yet from beyond me”⁴² – it calls.

The caller is the naked “that-it-is” of existence in its uncanniness, being not-at-home.⁴³ “Dasein is at the same time both the caller and the one to whom the appeal is made [the called]:”⁴⁴ call of care.

Guilt: the original guilt – since I did not make myself, I owe my Dasein, I am a debtor. The call calls back out of the *they* to acknowledgement of being guilty. Guilt through deed is “derivative.”⁴⁵

Every acting is in fact necessarily “conscienceless.”⁴⁶

“The call itself is a primordial kind of discourse for Dasein; but there is no corresponding counter-discourse in which, let us say, one talks about what the conscience has said, and pleads one’s cause.”⁴⁷ Silence “Conscience calls only in silence” and is understood in the mode of reticence.

³⁷ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 249; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 9.

³⁸ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 292 [B 431]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 383.

³⁹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 25 [B XXX]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 29.

⁴⁰ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1949), 267-301 [§ 54-60]; *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 312-48.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 274 [end of § 56]; *Being and Time*, 319.

⁴² Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 275 [§ 57]; *Being and Time*, 320.

⁴³ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 276; *Being and Time*, 321.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 277; *Being and Time*, 322.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 287; *Being and Time*, 333.

⁴⁶ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 288; *Being and Time*, 334.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 296 [§ 60]; *Being and Time*, 342.

“The term ‘take action’ is one which we are purposely avoiding. For [...] it suggests a misunderstanding in the ontology of Dasein, as if resoluteness were a special way of behaviour belonging to the practical faculty as contrasted with one that is theoretical.”⁴⁸ – Cf. “By publicness everything gets obscured.”⁴⁹

Kant: perfectly good will – conceived without constraint. The “ought” ceases, because willing and law are in complete agreement (*Groundwork*).⁵⁰

Categorical imperative, in contrast to the hypothetical.

Hypothetical: an action as means to something else.

Categorical: without reference to any other end.

“What is essentially good in it consists in the intention, the result being what it may.”⁵¹
Imperative of morality.

Morals: belonging to free conduct as such (*Groundwork*).⁵²

On why is Kant so interested in morality and politics? The human being as the highest being there is – or rather, that we know of. His dignity. Moral philosophy shows the conditions that make this possible. His *sublimity*. The “absolute worth of man.”⁵³

This worth: autonomy of the will is the ultimate criterion: “The action which can be compatible with the autonomy of the will is permitted; that which does not agree with it is prohibited.”⁵⁴

On freedom: we can act only under the idea of freedom – the falling stone and Bergson’s ant.

Kant’s concept of freedom: spontaneity (cf. Heidegger); therefore in the practical sphere: [being an] originator.

Interest:

a) an interest drives me;

b) I take an interest in something.

On freedom: “by the idea of freedom we detach ourselves from every empirical interest”⁵⁵
– freedom makes us free!

⁴⁸ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 300; *Being and Time*, 347.

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 127 [§ 27]; *Being and Time*, 165.

⁵⁰ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 271; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 29.

⁵¹ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 274; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 33.

⁵² Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 274; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 34.

⁵³ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 298; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 58.

⁵⁴ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 298; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 58.

⁵⁵ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 309; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 68.

On the “ought”: “ought’ is properly a ‘would’” (*Groundwork*).⁵⁶ Therefore the difference between “is” and “ought” is the difference between what is found in receptivity and the willing that can change what is found. The ought in Kant is directed only against one’s own sensibility, not against the world of beings. That world is confronted by willing.

For Kant the question is: Why ought I? – even when I see that, in principle, I can act only under this presupposition. Whence the binding force?

Hidden presupposition: the villain actually wants to be good.⁵⁷ So: there is only corruption, no wickedness. However: “provided that otherwise he is accustomed to use reason”!!

Dialectic (contradiction):⁵⁸

Freedom

idea of reason – relates to acting – objective reality doubtful, cannot be proved through experience – human being qua reason as *thing in itself*.

Necessity

concept of understanding – relates to what happens – objective reality likewise doubtful, but condition of all possible experience – human being as *phenomenon*.⁵⁹

Thus: the same object of thought, a deed, can be thought under the idea of freedom and experienced under the category of necessity. But neither necessity nor freedom is empirically given, hence this double meaning (?). Everything that happens is necessary (seen afterward, from the standpoint of acting); everything that is done is free, namely, as seen from the side of action itself.

Night from 28 to 29 April 1964

It is highly striking that in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the other moral writings of Kant there is hardly any mention of the so-called fellow-human (*Mitmensch*). It really concerns only the self and reason functioning in solitude. Thus Kant’s morality, including the categorical imperative, is the morality of powerlessness; but as such it is unassailable. This is what one calls an ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*), and one has a right to an ethics of conviction only in “borderline situations,” when one can no longer assume responsibility for the world. In the *Critique of Judgment*, by contrast, the political human being comes to speech. The question is: can an ethics of power be developed out of judgment?

⁵⁶ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 308; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 67.

⁵⁷ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 314; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 73.

⁵⁸ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 315ff.; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 74ff.

⁵⁹ Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 317; *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 76.

Critique of Practical Reason: there exists only the self or “rational being in general”⁶⁰ – human beings do not appear!

Power. *Practical Reason*: “It is always in everyone’s power to satisfy the categorical command of morality,” for there [is] no question of “capacity and physical ability” involved.⁶¹ “Whatever he wills to do he can also do.”

I – myself: I don’t cheat at play because if I did I “must despise” myself.⁶²

Conscience: As based on “moral feeling.” The concept of duty “cannot be derived from it, for we would have to presuppose a feeling for law as such and regard as an object of sensation what can only be thought by reason.”⁶³

The main point: conscience = thought (or a “merely mechanical play of refined inclinations”).

Autonomy of the will: Question: what part of the “self” gives the law? The will to the will, or reason to will, or it arises out of a dialogue (reasoned dialogue?) between will and reason? *Practical Reason*:⁶⁴ Reason determines the will; will stands between reason and desire.

Power, cont.: the moral law would ideally “bring forth the highest good were it accompanied by sufficient physical capacities.”⁶⁵ Ergo: the I-can [is] not taken into account.

Will: is “the practical use of our pure reason.”⁶⁶

What is “practical”? = $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ = action.

Freedom = causality, i.e., a causality whose cause I am. Necessity = causality as law of nature: Both are related to man, but in the former to man as a being in itself, in the latter as appearance.

Freedom for Kant in the center of philosophy. See Preface to *Practical Reason*: “Keystone of the whole architecture of the system of pure reason and even of speculative reason.”⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 55-57 [§ 1]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 65-67.

⁶¹ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 42 [A 64-65]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 38.

⁶² Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 43 [A 65]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 38.

⁶³ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 45 [A 68]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 40.

⁶⁴ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 48ff. [A 72ff.]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 43ff.

⁶⁵ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 50 [A 75]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 45.

⁶⁶ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 4 [A 6]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 4.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 3 [A 5]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 3.

Freedom: *ratio essendi* of moral law – moral law: *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom (i.e., without it only an idea that is not self-contradictory).

The categorical imperative [is] “only” a new formula, no new principle. And this indeed [is] all that could be required: “as if the world had hitherto been ignorant of what duty is or had been thoroughly wrong about it” (*Practical Reason*).⁶⁸ It is the perfect formula for the powerless individual.

Practical Reason:⁶⁹ a) reason presupposes only itself; b) it is categorical only if “regardless of any purposes,” “irrespective of what is attained by [the will’s] causality.”⁷⁰ “Consistency is the highest obligation of a philosopher.”⁷¹

Kant’s arguments against pleasure, displeasure, desire, as not universally valid apply only to the so-called “higher” needs. Just as he begins: all human beings *qua* rational beings are equal, and what holds for one holds of necessity for all – one could also say: all beings that have a body are equal, and what holds for one holds for all. The only objection against the body as common denominator is that it depends on something bodily outside itself.

Practical Reason: On the maxim suitable for universal law-giving:⁷² Theft for instance contradicts my own interest and destroys concept of property. See Kant’s example of deposit: No man would make a deposit any longer, hence: deposits would no longer exist.

On judgments: Determining judgments and reflective judgments: to subsume a particular under a rule, the universal, and to »reflect« – that is, to see the particular, to hold on to it, and to see it in the light of a universal unknown that the particular reveals: We consider it under the hypothesis of a universal.

Imperative maxim

Categorical – hypothetical imperatives: End in itself – means to an end (*Summum bonum*).

Categorical: Legislate and even create (Jaspers).⁷³

Actually two criteria:

- a) Don’t cheat or you’ll despise yourself.
- b) Don’t steal or property will no longer exist.

⁶⁸ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 4 [A 6]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 8.

⁶⁹ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 21-23 [§ 1]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 17-19.

⁷⁰ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 23 [A 38]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 19.

⁷¹ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 27 [A 44]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 23.

⁷² Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 30-31 [§ 4, A 49]; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 27.

⁷³ K. Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers: The Foundations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), 292.

Ethics of principle versus ethics of responsibility (*Gesinnungs-* versus *Verantwortungsethik*): Kant extraordinarily insisting on this! We must “leave the outcome wholly out of account, when a particular action is considered.” The outcome “depends on the course of the world” (Jaspers).⁷⁴ See Jaspers, [next page], for the catastrophic results.⁷⁵

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (section on the ideal of the highest good):⁷⁶ reason is compelled to assume a future intelligible world “otherwise it would have to regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain, since without this postulate the necessary consequence which it itself connects with these laws could not follow.”

On *Euthyphro: Critique of Pure Reason*:⁷⁷ “we shall not look upon actions as obligatory because they are the commands of God, but shall regard them as divine commands because we have an inward obligation to them.”

On Rousseau:⁷⁸ “Do you really require that a mode of knowledge which concerns all men should transcend the common understanding, and should only be revealed to you by philosophers?”

“The legislation of human reason has two objects, nature and freedom.”⁷⁹

On freedom: “A dependent man ceases to be a man”;⁸⁰ “No misfortune is more terrible than to find myself at the mercy of a creature of my own kind, who can compel me to surrender to his caprice and do his will.”⁸¹

Translated by Andrzej Serafin

⁷⁴ Ibid., 298.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 299.

⁷⁶ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 544 [A 811 / B 839]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 639.

⁷⁷ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 549 [A 819 / B 847]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 644.

⁷⁸ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 556. [A 831 / B 859]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 651-52.

⁷⁹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 562 [A 840 / B 868]; *Critique of Pure Reason*, 658.

⁸⁰ Immanuel Kant's *vermischte Schriften und Briefwechsel*, ed. J. H. v. Kirchmann (Berlin: L. Heimann's Verlag, 1873), 336; quoted in Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers*, 329.

⁸¹ Immanuel Kant's *vermischte Schriften und Briefwechsel*, 334; quoted in Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers*, 329.

METAPHYSICS AND POLITICS IN ARENDT'S 1964 READING OF KANT

In 1964, Hannah Arendt confessed to Günter Gaus that reading Immanuel Kant, her fellow-countryman from Königsberg, was not merely an intellectual exercise but an existential necessity: “Ever since I was fourteen years old [...] I read Kant. [...] I can either study philosophy or I can drown myself, so to speak.”¹ That same year, amidst the controversy following the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt retreated into the workshop of her thinking to engage with Kant’s philosophy with renewed intensity. We present here two distinct documents from this pivotal Kant year: the “Kant Notebook” from the spring of 1964, and the “Kant Seminar Notes on the *Critique of Pure Reason*” from the fall of 1964. Altogether, they document a profound philosophical trajectory.

These two texts belong together chronologically and thematically: both originate in 1964, when Arendt was teaching Kant seminars in Chicago and at the New School; and both document an intensive re-reading of Kant that will later feed into *The Life of the Mind* and the New School lectures on Kant’s political philosophy. Thus, in the same year, Arendt is reading practical Kant (for Chicago) and theoretical Kant (for New York). These are not separate projects; these are two angles on one fundamental question: how critical philosophy articulates the freedom of a world-constituting subjectivity. Hence, the two texts are published here together, offering English-speaking readers a synoptic overview of Arendt’s 1964 engagement with Kant for the first time. In conjunction, they provide a coherent picture of Arendt’s attempt to reconcile metaphysics and politics in Kant.

THE “KANT NOTEBOOK”

The “Kant Notebook,” containing only one dated note, from 28-29 April 1964, was written in preparation for Arendt’s seminar on Kant’s Moral Philosophy at the University of Chicago. In the aftermath of the Eichmann trial, these notes reveal Arendt wrestling with the problem of conscience and the banality of evil (though the phrase is not explicit, the concept of thoughtlessness permeates the text). The manuscript is preserved at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (MS 93.37.28). It consists of a twenty-two-page notepad titled “Aufzeichnungen über Immanuel Kant.” This is the first publication of the English version of the text.

¹ H. Arendt, “What Remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus,” in *The Last Interview and Other Conversations* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2013), 15.

Arendt wrote to Karl Jaspers in May 1964 that she was conducting a seminar on the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals and that “reading Kant is giving [her] a great deal of pleasure.”² This preparatory notebook is filled with ethical considerations on conscience and judgment, serving as the seedbed for her inquiry into moral philosophy. It is devoted almost entirely to Kant’s practical philosophy. Arendt excerpts from the *Groundwork*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, *Critique of Judgment*, and from Paul Menzer’s edition of Kant’s *Lectures on Ethics*, interspersing the citations with her own glosses and questions.

In this notebook, Arendt moves consciously and proficiently through the entire set of Kant’s ethical and theoretical works, clearly searching for a morality that escapes the trap of the solitary will. To achieve this, she examines the consequences of Kant’s definition of conscience as an internal court of justice while remaining skeptical of the solipsism inherent in the categorical imperative. Crucially, the “Kant Notebook” shows Arendt pivoting toward the *Critique of Judgment* as a solution to the aporia of a purely subjective ethics. She explores Kant’s idea of a “broadened way of thinking,”³ understood as a transposition of the Aristotelian κοινή αἴσθησις, or *sensus communis*, into the politically loaded communal sense, or *Gemeinsinn*. Ultimately, she attempts to ground morality not in the command of a solitary subject but in the community of judging spectators *qua* witnesses.

THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON SEMINAR

The *Critique of Pure Reason* seminar notes date from October to December 1964, when Arendt conducted a seminar on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* at the University of Chicago. This chronology is significant. Having spent the spring wrestling with Kant’s *ethics*, Arendt felt compelled in the fall to return to the first *Critique*, which suggests that she realized the problems of morality and judgment could not be solved without confronting the epistemological machinery that severed the subject from the world in the first place. The preparatory notes for this seminar, reconstructed here for the first time from the original typescript and manuscript, constitute a significant archival discovery. They offer a rare glimpse into the workshop of Arendt’s thought, serving as a bridge between her political theory and the epistemological investigations that would culminate in her final, unfinished magnum opus, *The Life of the Mind*. These notes are based on the typescript and manuscript held at the Library of Congress in the Hannah Arendt Papers Collection (Box 59, MS 11056). The material consists of twenty-six pages of notes that have never been published before.

These seminar notes on the *Critique of Pure Reason* reveal a startlingly original reading. Arendt treats the “I-think” (the transcendental unity of apperception) not as a logical abstraction but as an event – the “certificate of birth”⁴ of a world-constitutive subjectivity. While she moves carefully through the main architectonic elements of

² H. Arendt to K. Jaspers, 14 May 1964, in H. Arendt and K. Jaspers, *Correspondence 1926-1969*, trans. R. and R. Kimber (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 353.

³ She initially examined this concept a few years earlier, already in 1957; see H. Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, vol. 1 (Zürich: Piper, 2002), 572, 575, 580.

⁴ H. Arendt, “Kant Seminar Notes: *Critique of Pure Reason*,” *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 14 (2025), 12.

Kant's system (title, synthetic a priori judgments, transcendental aesthetic, deduction, schematism), she persistently shifts the emphasis from scientific epistemology to reason, finitude, and the absolute beginning of subjectivity, indispensable for its ultimate freedom. She identifies the Kantian "scandal of reason"⁵ of the antinomies not as an error but as the necessary condition of human freedom. Most significantly, she inverts the standard hierarchy of faculties. She observes that, in the original formulation of the transcendental deduction, "intellect is a servant of intuition,"⁶ which puts the intellect in a subordinate position secondary to the primordial givenness of the intuited world. This foreshadows her lifelong philosophical project: to save the dignity of the given world from the tyranny of abstract logic. Ultimately, she goes even further and shows how the subject itself constitutes the world, demonstrating that not the given world but a free – that is, political – human subject is the ultimate a priori.

INTERPRETATIONS OF KANT BEFORE ARENDT

The dominant academic image of Kant in Arendt's formative years was neo-Kantian: Kant as the epistemologist, philosopher of the conditions of possibility of experience.⁷ But even before neo-Kantianism, it was Madame de Staël who in her *De l'Allemagne* (1813) popularized an image of Kant as the thinker who provides intellectual foundations for religion, a solitary sage living a strictly philosophical life, restoring spiritual authority after its crisis.⁸ This figure of Kant was in turn countered by Heinrich Heine, who in his *Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1834) depicted Kant as the Robespierre of philosophy, the executioner of deism, and the *Critique of Pure Reason* as the sword with which the execution of deism was carried out in Germany.⁹ Both readings are too one-sided for Arendt: De Staël domesticates Kant into an apologist for religion, Heine turns him into a proto-Nietzschean destroyer of theistic metaphysics. Arendt implicitly rejects them, following Krüger's reading, according to which "Kant [is] the last attempt of theistic metaphysics to save itself."¹⁰ For her, Kant is neither the triumphant gravedigger of God nor the simple restorer of dogma but the thinker in whom the crisis of theistic metaphysics becomes philosophically transparent. She also rejects the neo-Kantian interpretation of the first *Critique* as a theory of scientific cognition and as a delimitation of metaphysics to methodology. In this framework, the *Critique* is primarily a theory of knowledge, the transcendental is reduced to the a priori forms of scientific objectivity, and the ideas of reason (God, freedom, immortality) are treated as merely regulative. Arendt's reading resists this domestication at every step. She treats the *Critique* not primarily as an epistemology but as a trial of reason before the tribunal of reason itself.

Nevertheless, the most important interpretation of Kant that influenced Arendt decisively is Heidegger's interpretation, initially articulated in *Kant und das Problem der*

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ See, for example, H. Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1885).

⁸ M. de Staël, *Kant*, in *Germany*, vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1813), 70ff.

⁹ H. Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, trans. H. Pollack-Milgate (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 78-79, 98, 131.

¹⁰ H. Arendt, "Kant Notebook," *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 14 (2025), 16.

Metaphysik (1929), which represents a decisive break from the prevailing neo-Kantian interpretations of the early twentieth century. While neo-Kantians read the *Critique of Pure Reason* as an epistemology, Heidegger reinterprets it as an ontology, an inquiry into the fundamental structure of being and the finitude of the Dasein. Heidegger challenges the neo-Kantian dualism that separates the appearance from the thing-in-itself, treating them as distinct entities, and asserts their co-original identity: “being ‘in the appearance’ is the same being as the being in itself. [...] Appearances are not mere illusion, but are the being itself.”¹¹ Transcendental conditions of objectivity are already ontological conditions: conditions of givenness of being are conditions of being itself. Heidegger traces both theoretical and practical reason back to a common root: the transcendental imagination, which he identifies with the original, temporal freedom of the finite subject. The question of the possibility of transcendence – the transcendental question – thus concerns the ground of being as such – that is, its openness. The question is how it is possible that the being of human beings is the ground of the openness of being as being. Being corresponds in advance to our receptivity because we ourselves project it. What we project is its being. The condition of possibility of this transcendence is what Kant calls freedom: not merely a moral topic but the ontological condition for the openness of being itself.

ARENDT'S REAPPROPRIATION OF HEIDEGGER'S KANT

Hannah Arendt's 1964 notes clearly reveal that she fully absorbs Heidegger's destruction of the epistemological Kant, but she redirects the ontological force of this reading. Like Heidegger, Arendt transposes the epistemology of the *Critique* onto a focus on the “I-think” as an existential structure. Arendt embraces the identification of the “I-think” with absolute spontaneity. She views this not as a logical function but as the ontological root of freedom, which corresponds to Heidegger's projecting of a world. In her “Kant Notebook,” she notes that freedom is a fact that needs no proof. This echoes Heidegger's view of freedom as the pre-theoretical ground of existence. Heidegger's freedom is the freedom of the solitary Dasein projecting its own world. Arendt finds this insufficient for a political being. She argues that true freedom appears not in the solitude of the “I-think” but in the plurality of the public realm. To save freedom from Heideggerian solipsism, Arendt pivots from the first *Critique* to the third *Critique* (of judgment). She relocates freedom from the transcendental imagination of the solitary subject to the *sensus communis* – the community of judging spectators.

From the very beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason* seminar, Arendt refuses the epistemological framework. She starts not from analytic judgements but from the synthetic a priori, and she immediately links this to the theme of existence. The question of how the a priori can be relevant to the a posteriori is “identical with the question: how can we, endowed with reason, live in a world given to us?”¹² That is a Heideggerian move: the transcendental question is ultimately about our being-in-the-world rather than norm-conditions for scientific statements. Arendt treats the *Critique* as a foundation of

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 22 [§ 5].

¹² Arendt, “Kant Seminar Notes,” 6.

metaphysics in a very literal sense: the critical analysis of synthetic a priori judgements is not mere boundary-drawing but constitutes the reconstruction of an original metaphysics we must presuppose in order to be at all. Arendt's reading parallels Heidegger's interpretation of schematism: if we take the categories without the schemata, they would apply "to things as they are and not merely as they appear"; but the schemata "connect the understanding to a finite being whose main job is experience"; categories without schemata have only a "mere logical significance" and "can find no object."¹³ The crucial place where this finitude is articulated is Kant's schematism in the time-bound, image-like mediation between pure concept and factual intuition.

The most Heidegger-like move in Arendt's seminar is the question she poses near the end: "Why is not the givenness of the world an a priori?"¹⁴ Instead of simply taking the world as a neutral given, she asks why we do not treat its givenness as an a priori condition. Her answer shifts the focus away from the world to the subject: it is not the world that is a priori; rather, the subject as maker becomes the a priori – that which fabricates or constitutes the world through synthesis. This closely parallels Heidegger's idea that Dasein's transcendence (projection of the being of beings) is what makes the openness of being possible. But Arendt formulates it explicitly in the language of making and fabrication, which resonated with her earlier work, *The Human Condition*. She then ties this directly to freedom: in the *Critique of Pure Reason* seminar's final notes, she speaks of the "absolute character of Beginning," of being "not determined" and therefore "free," and links this to the subject's status as a priori. In the "Kant Notebook," she begins with "freedom 'as it were as a fact' – we are conscious of freedom although we cannot prove it"; freedom is defined as the capacity "to begin something new – spontaneity."¹⁵ For Heidegger, freedom is the condition of the possibility of the openness of the being of beings – the ontological name for human transcendence. For Arendt, freedom as fact is the ontological mark of a subject that can begin; the "subject as maker"¹⁶ is the a priori that constitutes the world. In both cases it is the ontological core of the transcendental project.

TRANSITION FROM METAPHYSICS TO POLITICS

Arendt is using Kant to undertake the transition from the typically philosophical solitary metaphysics into the domain of the political: "There is a kind of enmity against all politics in most philosophers, with very few exceptions. Kant is an exception."¹⁷ Thus, she goes beyond Heidegger's Kant in two aspects. She does not step back behind the subject to being itself. Heidegger's own trajectory after his Kant book is to move beyond transcendental subjectivity toward being; the human no longer stands at the center but is appropriated into a history of being. Arendt, instead, transposes transcendence into the public, political realm. She turns the Heideggerian juxtaposition of transcendence and freedom into a radically political figure. In Arendt's reading of Kant, freedom is tied to the ability to begin and to the experience of the moral law. Conscience is conceived as

¹³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹⁵ Arendt, "Kant Notebook," 14.

¹⁶ Arendt, "Kant Seminar Notes," 12.

¹⁷ Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," 5.

an inner court that projects one's maxim onto an imaginary public, while evil is linked to hiding, withdrawing from publicity. Morality "consists in being-able-to-let-oneself-be-seen"¹⁸ – which translates the transcendental structure of self-relation into a condition for appearance among others. She now reads Kant's third *Critique* as a proto-political theory with *sensus communis* as the *Gemeinsinn*, the capacity to judge from the standpoint of the political. The same freedom that, in metaphysical terms, consists in spontaneity and beginning becomes politically the capacity to judge in public, among others, within a shared world. Heidegger's Kant stops at freedom as transcendence and at the ontological status of the finite knower. Arendt uses that as a springboard to a political ontology: into a world fabricated and maintained by free beings who constitute the political domain via the intersubjective faculty of judgement.

The final pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason* seminar notes exemplify Arendt's departure from Heidegger. They restate the theological context of Kant's thought: Arendt explicitly reveals Christianity's reversal of world and life ("life is everlasting; the world comes to an end")¹⁹ as the hidden background of and reason for not taking the world as an a priori. She re-centers the subject as maker (fabricator) instead of dissolving it into being. Thus, the a priori is not being's event but the productive, world-forming activity of a free subject. While Heidegger reads Kant as a decisive step in the overcoming of onto-theology, Arendt, on the other hand, seemingly going along with him as far as the ontological reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is concerned, ultimately refuses to comply with his anti-theological and anti-subjectivist stance. The point of arrival for her is not being but a free, world-fabricating subject whose capacity to begin has a theological and political resonance. Most revealing is the long block where she juxtaposes three accounts of conscience:²⁰ (1) Kant's: "Conscience is an instinct to pass judgment upon ourselves in accordance with moral laws"; "One cannot avoid hearing the voice of conscience [...]"; conscience as inner court before "the all-knowing 'one who knows the heart.'" (2) Augustine's: *conscientia coram Deo*, conscience as being "in the presence of God." (3) Heidegger's: "The caller does not make himself known [...]. The call comes from me and yet from beyond me – it calls"; "Every acting is in fact necessarily 'conscienceless.'" By putting these three in one block, Arendt is doing more than a mere exegesis; she is staging a contrast: Kant's and Augustine's conscience is intrinsically relational and public; it involves the possibility of being seen, of being responsible before God or other people; Heidegger's conscience is radically depoliticized, silent, without "counter-discourse," fundamentally derived from a withdrawal from the political. Arendt draws a conclusion about Kant's ethics: it is the inverse of Heidegger's: "Persisting in the evil maxim coincides with hiding – withdrawing from publicity. Morality consists in being-able-to-let-oneself-be-seen, before the ruler (God) as the all-knowing 'one who knows the heart,' the omniscient one."²¹ Where Heidegger protects conscience from the "publicness" of the they, Arendt insists that the test of moral integrity lies in the capacity to appear – to have one's maxim exposed to a public (imagined or real) and still be able to endure that gaze. That is a direct inversion of

¹⁸ Arendt, "Kant Notebook," 14.

¹⁹ Arendt, "Kant Seminar Notes," 12.

²⁰ Arendt, "Kant Notebook," 16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

Heidegger's solitary, non-discursive, apolitical account of conscience. She has managed to absorb his ontological stance while refusing his exit from the public world.

CONCLUSION: THE GOOD AS THE KEYSTONE

To summarize: Arendt basically accepts Heidegger's ontological reinterpretation of Kant. In her reading, the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not an epistemology but a foundation of metaphysics. Transcendental conditions of objects are conditions of their being for a finite knower. The center of the *Critique* is synthesis, imagination, and the "I-think." She refuses his move beyond the Dasein to pure being. In the seminar, the "harmony of man and world"²² remains the real issue. The last notes reinstall the subject as a maker and explicitly weave in Christian motifs of beginning and creation. Instead of letting the subject be absorbed into the history of being, she holds onto a person – a free human being whose capacity to begin has metaphysical weight. Thus, she repoliticizes freedom and conscience. In the notebook, she takes the Heideggerian idea of freedom as ontological condition and translates it into freedom as the capacity to begin something new in a situation of being with others within a polis; conscience is essentially linked to publicity and visibility; evil is conceived as withdrawal from that publicity. This transposes the Heideggerian transcendental interpretation of freedom as transcendence into the infrastructure of political life – which is exactly what Heidegger never does. Arendt retheologizes instead of detheologizing. Heidegger reads Kant as a turning point in the overcoming of onto-theology. Arendt instead allows herself to see Kant as the "last attempt of theistic metaphysics to save itself"²³ and takes that seriously: the absolute character of Beginning, the postulate of the highest good, *conscientia coram Deo* – these all matter for her. But she integrates them with a worldly, political concern for communal sense, judgment, and responsibility for the world. Thus, Arendt's reading of Kant is not a repetition of Heidegger. It presupposes his destruction of the neo-Kantian picture and his ontological rehabilitation of the first *Critique* – but then redirects the whole project away from being and back to the world, away from solitary Dasein and back to plurality, away from silent conscience and back to public appearance, away from the destruction of metaphysics and back to a theistically inflected metaphysics of freedom and beginning that can ground politics.

Arendt ultimately restitutes the Platonic-Augustinian motif of the highest good in a way alien to Heidegger's project. Already in her doctoral dissertation, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin* (1929), the highest good is an absolute future that, once conceived, becomes a constant point of reference, transcending the world for the sake of the world, regulating all worldly relations: "a point of reference that lies, in principle, outside the world itself, [...] regulator of all things inside the world as well as of the relationships by which they are interconnected."²⁴ Similarly in the "Kant Notebook": the good is a guiding standpoint that structures both metaphysical reflection (as that which must be presupposed for human life to have sense) and political judgment (as that which allows us to judge our actions in the

²² Arendt, "Kant Seminar Notes," 9.

²³ Arendt, "Kant Notebook," 16.

²⁴ H. Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, ed. J. V. Scott and J. C. Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 37.

political domain of the *Mitmensch*). Its givenness “resembles intuitive-sensuous insight”; it is given just like “red colour – one must see it oneself.”²⁵ The good is thus given to any moral subject in all human – that is, political – life. It is its ultimate condition of possibility, *conditio sine qua non*. Thus, while Heidegger breaks the neo-Kantian spell by reading Kant’s *Critique* as a finite, ontological metaphysics centered on transcendence as freedom, Arendt takes over his basic move and radicalizes it: the same freedom that for Heidegger grounds the openness of being becomes for Arendt the freedom to begin and to appear in public, through which a common, political world is fabricated and judged. Arendt agrees with Heidegger, claiming that the “I-think” is the ontological root of freedom, the “absolute beginning.”²⁶ She rejects, however, his claim that freedom is a solitary act of world-projection. To overcome Heidegger, she reappraises the *sensus communis* of the political community, thereby rescuing the facticity of the world from the subjectifying, projecting power of the human will.

²⁵ Arendt, “Kant Notebook,” 13.

²⁶ Arendt, “Kant Seminar Notes,” 12.

Leon Larkin

ESSAY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MODERN THEOLOGY

1. ON THE IDEAL OF PURE REASON AND PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

According to Kant, reason is naturally inclined toward supposing that all of its concepts have their being through an ultimate concept under which all others fall. This, however, is a merely conceptual exercise and in no way proves that there is any being through which all things have their being and that corresponds to this concept in reality. Thus, reason turns to arguments in order to attempt to prove that there must be some existent being corresponding to this ultimate concept.

The first two of these arguments are the cosmological and teleological arguments. The cosmological argument attempts to argue that the world must have some cause and then to reason that that cause must be identical to God, while the teleological argument reasons from the appearance of purpose in the design of things in the world to the existence of some purposeful creator, which, as in the cosmological argument, we are to believe is God. Kant quickly shows that these arguments do not even meet the standards of validity, as even if they can succeed in showing that the world must have some first cause or purposeful creator behind it (and, I would contend, they may very well succeed in this regard), it hardly follows that that cause or creator is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, or in possession of any of the other qualities we consider essential to God.

The third argument in support of the existence of God is the ontological argument, which proves to be far more interesting than the first two. The ontological argument, as traditionally stated, argues that God must exist because we can conceive of a being than which none greater can be conceived in the understanding, but it is better to exist in reality than merely in the understanding, so the being than which none greater can be conceived

must exist in reality as well as the understanding, otherwise we'd be able to conceive of a being greater than the being than which none greater can be conceived, which is absurd.

Kant admits that this argument is valid, but he ultimately rejects this argument as well. He contends that the ontological argument rests on the belief that the predicate *being* adds something to the concept of an object beyond its mere existence. As he explains,

Being is evidently not a real predicate, that is, a concept of something that can be added to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing of a thing, and of certain determinations in themselves. Logically, it is merely the copula of a judgement. The proposition, *God is omnipotent*, contains two concepts, each, having its object, namely, God and omnipotence. The small word *is* is not an additional predicate, but only serves to posit the predicate *in relation* to the subject. If, then, I take the subject (God) with all its predicates (including that of omnipotence), and say, *God is*, or, There is a God, I do not add a new predicate to the concept of God, but I only posit the subject in itself with all its predicates, and indeed posit the *object* in relation to my *concept*. Both must contain exactly the same, and nothing can be added to the concept, which expresses only possibility, by my thinking this object (through the expression, *It is*) as absolutely given. And thus the actual does not contain more than the merely possible. A hundred actual Talers [a currency of Kant's time] do not contain the slightest bit more than a hundred possible Talers. For as the latter signify the concept, the former the object and the positing of it in itself, it is clear that, if the former contained more than the latter, my concept would not express the whole object, and would not therefore be its adequate concept. In my financial position, no doubt, there exists more in the case of a hundred actual Talers than in the case of their mere concept (that is, their possibility), because in reality the object is not only contained analytically in my concept (which is a determination of my state), but is added to my concept synthetically; but these imagined one hundred Talers themselves are not in the least increased by their existence outside my concept.¹

Kant's argument, at least at first, might seem plausible, but his own example casts light on the strangeness of his position. There is certainly a difference between one hundred Talers in the understanding and one hundred Talers in reality, and I think we can be quite certain that any merchant of Kant's day could have reassured him of that fact. Indeed, Kant himself seems momentarily to recognize the absurdity of his position toward the end of this passage, admitting that whether the Talers exist in his understanding or in reality makes quite a bit of difference as far as his financial position is concerned.

In the first place, we must recognize that Kant seems to fall into some confusion here about the nature of concepts. He maintains that concepts correspond exactly to the

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Logic: Transcendental Dialectic, III, IV (my emphasis).

objects they represent. However, this is not the case. Concepts are mental representations of objects or classes of objects. While we aim, through reason, at refining our concepts to correspond with reality insofar as it is possible, all concepts are human constructions and, in being subject to human limitations, are liable to be incomplete or inaccurate. However, even if we can grant that it is at least possible that some concepts might be perfect representations of the objects to which they correspond, Kant still seems confused about whether he is talking about the concept of a particular hundred Talers or a hundred Talers in general. We must recognize an essential distinction between particular and general concepts. General concepts do not represent particular objects, and as only particular objects can exist in the material world, general concepts can only exist in the understanding and not in reality. Thus no merchant will ever accept the general concept of a hundred Talers as payment. Particular concepts, on the other hand, represent particular objects. These particular objects may exist merely in the understanding if they are the products of mere fantasy, or they may exist in reality if they actually exist in the material world. And clearly there is quite a difference between the concept of a particular object that exists merely in the understanding and one that exists in reality as well, as a merchant will certainly refuse payment with the former, but the latter may well be acceptable. Thus we might draw a distinction between the mere property of existence and the property of existence in a world, which certainly adds something to an object in the world in which it exists – namely, an ability to act and be acted upon in that world.

We may now hope to rehabilitate the ontological argument in light of Kant's criticisms, and Alvin Plantinga has done just that with his modal version of the argument. This is an argument that draws on the doctrine of modal realism, which holds that all possible worlds are equally real. According to this doctrine, actuality is a merely indexical concept; in other words, what exists in our world is actual to us from our perspective in our world, while what exists in other worlds is not actual to us from our perspective in our world; however, to observers in other worlds, what exists in their world is actual to them from their perspectives in their worlds, while what exists in our world is not actual to them from their perspectives in their worlds. Plantinga draws a distinction between maximal excellence, which he defines as a being having all perfections in a world, and maximal greatness, which he defines as a being having maximal excellence in all worlds. He argues that we can conceive of a world in which a maximally great being exists, but because maximal greatness entails maximal excellence in all worlds, if a maximally great being exists in any world, it must exist in our world as well, or else it is not actually maximally great.²

While this version of the ontological argument is indeed convincing, we must remember that it is still only dealing with mere concepts and by no means provides direct evidence or knowledge of the object whose existence it seeks to prove. All this argument does is show that belief in God is, at the very least, rational. The only way to actually confirm the existence of this object and know its nature is, just as in the case of the material world, to experience it directly, though this object can only be experienced intellectually, not through the material senses. Such experience can take many different forms and can

² For Plantinga's discussion of this argument, see chapter 10 of his *Nature of Necessity*.

come in varying degrees. Let us describe a few of these experiences, keeping in mind that this account is hardly exhaustive and many such experiences may defy generalization.

In most cases, experience of the intelligible takes the form of everyday experience. This might be understood as some sort of force, energy, or feeling. For example, the great seer Emanuel Swedenborg believed we can find evidence of God in the experience of love, writing,

Love is our life. For most people, the existence of love is a given, but the nature of love is a mystery. As for the existence of love, this we know from everyday language. We say that someone loves us, that monarchs love their subjects, and that subjects love their monarch. We say that a husband loves his wife and that a mother loves her children, and vice versa. We say that people love their country, their fellow citizens, their neighbors. We use the same language about impersonal objects, saying that someone loves this or that thing.

Even though the word “love” is so commonly on our tongues, still hardly anyone knows what love is. When we stop to think about it, we find that we cannot form any image of it in our thoughts, so we say either that it is not really anything or that it is simply something that flows into us from our sight, hearing, touch, and conversation and therefore influences us. We are wholly unaware that it is our life – not just the general life of our whole body and of all our thoughts, but the life of their every least detail. Wise people can grasp this when you ask, “If you take away the effects of love, can you think anything? Can you do anything? As the effects of love lose their warmth, do not thoughts and speech and action lose theirs as well? Do they not warm up as love warms up?” Still, the grasp of these wise people is not based on the thought that love is our life but on their experience that this is how things happen.³

Thus, in Swedenborg’s view, the evidence of God is all around us, in many forms and variations. We need only look at the love of a parent for their child, the love of a man for his wife, or the love a man has for his neighbor in order to recognize the source of these instances in the pure Love that God has for all Creation and through which God gives us life.⁴

But such evidence for the existence of God is necessarily subtle and can easily be lost or forgotten in the constant stream of perceptions. As Swedenborg goes on to say, we are very often fooled into mistaking ourselves for the source of love and life when these are in fact our source. According to one view that has become increasingly popular in recent years, we might even mistake love for something material by understanding love to be equivalent to certain functions of the brain. And while there may well be certain

³ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, trans. G. F. Dole (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2021), 3.

⁴ See also Alvin Plantinga’s discussions of the *sensus divinitatis* in his *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172ff.

states or functions of the brain that may correspond to the experience or perception of love, these states are not identical to our experience of love, for as in Leibniz's argument, if we were to enter into an enlarged brain, as into a mill, and observe its inner operations, we would only observe various neurons firing and chemicals acting on the brain, but none of these would be identical to the subjective experience of love.⁵ Further, there is no compelling reason to think that it is more likely for the brain state to be the cause of the mental state than it is for the mental state to be the cause of the brain state. Indeed, as the mental pole of such a state, that is, the actual experience of love, seems to be all the more significant aspect of the state of affairs in question, there is very good reason to suppose that the mental state is the cause of the brain state and that the brain state is little more than a mere physical representation of the mental state. However, in the constant light of the Love of God, our vision can at times grow strained, and we might come to overlook the evidence of the divine that is everywhere in front of our eyes. Thus there are certain additional varieties of experience that can serve to refocus our spiritual eyes and help us keep sight of the Truth all around us.

These are the experiences that fall under the category of mystical, for the whole wonder that is Creation is held in them and in them its mysteries unveil themselves. These can take many forms, ranging from the experience of spirits, visions of other worlds, or past or future circumstances, a sense of union with nature, or the presence of angelic or demonic beings. The most spectacular of these experiences are those that deal directly with the Ideal. Such experience can come in two forms. The lesser of these two is the experience of being directly in the presence of the Divine. This is the purest experience of what we might call the Beautiful, as the Will is capable of maintaining its current state of objectification, simply experiencing the pure pleasure of being able to catch a glimpse, however brief, of the Ideal. The greater of these two experiences we might call union with the divine. This is the purest experience of the Sublime and consists of the complete dissolution, however brief, of the Will's current state of objectification and a state of complete union with the Ideal. This sort of experience, while potentially extremely satisfying to the highest gradations of the Will, which anticipate their eventual return to their original state of sublimity, can cause great distress in the lower gradations of the Will, which is concerned with maintaining the order it has established below.

These sorts of experiences can be brought about by a wide array of causes. They may arise through no effort of the subject at all, such as in the case of dreams, visions induced by fever or injury, the convergence of several external or internal circumstances, or for no apparent reason whatsoever. They may also arise as a result of the deliberate efforts of the subject or merely as a result of the subject's internal assets and abilities, as is the case in the various meditative traditions that have existed throughout the world and throughout the ages. However, by far the most consistent and reliable method of inducing such experiences is with the use of psychoactive plants and chemicals, especially those commonly classified as psychedelics.

It might seem that this appeal to the experiences induced by psychoactive drugs could be used to object to the other forms of such experiences on the grounds that they, like

⁵ G. W. F. Leibniz, *Monadology*, § 17.

drug-induced experiences, are simply hallucinations resulting from the effect of chemicals interacting with the brain, but I would counter that the fact that certain external substances can replicate and even intensify the effects brought about entirely through the internal voluntary processes of meditation serves as a valuable confirmation from the external world of the validity of such experiences. And the experience of such phenomena is certainly devastating to the materialist who relies on a functionalist theory of the mind, for the clear function of the most profound of these experiences is to give direct perception of the Ideas and of God. The atheist might respond that the function of such states is not in fact the perception of truth but the production of a mere illusion, perhaps meant to comfort us or to fill in blanks left by the limitations of our own experience. This objection can be dismissed on several grounds. First, in many cases, the mystic is certain that their perception of God is of just as much, if not greater, intensity and reality as their experience of everyday material objects. Second, it is not the case that such experiences are always comforting. Some may be extremely distressing, such as in cases where people are made to reflect on grave misdeeds in their past and feel the full weight of their actions. Third, it is not uncommon for a person having such an experience to attempt to scrutinize the experience as far as possible through reason and common sense, yet to still come away fully confident in its reality. Finally, as we have already established that there is at least one argument that shows that a belief in the existence of God is rationally defensible, there is good reason not to doubt the real possibility of a direct experience of God. The functionalist might object that these experiences are the result not of brain functions at all but of malfunctions induced by the drug. However, this can be refuted by the fact that similar experiences can be induced without the use of any drugs. Furthermore, while it might be fair to call occurrences within the brain that result from the ingestion of a drug malfunctions on the grounds that drugs cause perceptions that are evolutionarily disadvantageous (in that they make it more difficult for the individual to successfully navigate the external world), such a designation would necessarily be the result of a value judgment – namely, the judgment that only those experiences that help us to successfully navigate the external world or are somehow evolutionarily advantageous are valuable and thus that only those functions are proper functions of the brain. Such a value judgment is inadmissible in science. If the functionalist position is to be consistent and to maintain proper scientific impartiality, it must recognize even those occurrences in the brain that are not evolutionarily advantageous as proper brain functions, for whatever the brain does must be regarded as a necessary reaction to whatever conditions gave rise to its action, thus that action must be regarded as its proper function when presented with those circumstances. This subject will be analyzed to a far greater extent in the sequel to this essay.

2. ON THE PLUS-FOUR EXPERIENCE

As we have mentioned above, the most remarkable effect of psychedelic drugs is their ability to produce what Alexander Shulgin called the plus-four experience. In order to understand how psychedelic drugs work to bring about such experiences, we must first understand the nature of the plus-four experience.

In the first place, we must be clear that drug use is not a necessary component of the plus-four experience and that there are likely many cases of plus-four experiences

in which no drug use was involved at all, for example in cases of experiences achieved through meditation or hypnosis. The plus-four experience, in the most general terms, can be understood as a state in which the subject finds itself overcome with awe with the world and all that it perceives. This is a state that can often be characterized by a sense of encountering all objects of perception for the first time ever or at the very least in a manner in which they have never been perceived before. For this reason, it is likely that plus-four experiences may be particularly common among children, though the significance and specialness of such experiences might not be recognized by the child at the moment because, given children's lack of experience with the world, this may well be the common mode of perception for many children. Some other common phenomena associated with these sorts of experiences include distortions in the perception of time, as well as feelings of oneness or peace with one's environment and the world.

It will perhaps be useful to consider some concrete examples of experiences not induced by drug use that exemplify the plus-four experience. The first experience belongs to Albert Hofmann. In the introduction to *LSD: My Problem Child*, he writes,

It happened on a May morning – I have forgotten the year – but I can still point to the exact spot where it occurred, on a forest path on Martinsberg above Baden, Switzerland. As I strolled through the freshly greened woods filled with birdsong and lit up by the morning sun, all at once everything appeared in an uncommonly clear light. Was this something I had simply failed to notice before? Was I suddenly discovering the spring forest as it actually looked? It shone with the most beautiful radiance, speaking to the heart, as though it wanted to encompass me in its majesty. I was filled with an indescribable sensation of joy, oneness, and blissful security.

I have no idea how long I stood there spellbound. But I recall the anxious concern I felt as the radiance slowly dissolved and I hiked on: how could a vision that was so real and convincing, so directly and deeply felt – how could it end so soon? And how could I tell anyone about it, as my overflowing joy compelled me to do, since I knew there were no words to describe what I had seen? It seemed strange that I, as a child, had seen something so marvelous, something that adults obviously did not perceive – for I had never heard them mention it.

While still a child, I experienced several more of these deeply euphoric moments on my rambles through forest and meadow. It was these experiences that shaped the main outlines of my worldview and convinced me of the existence of a miraculous, powerful, unfathomable reality that was hidden from everyday sight.⁶

Alexander Shulgin, who was the first to employ the concept of plus-four experiences by that name, relates a very similar childhood experience:

⁶ Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, trans. Jonathan Ott (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 3.

My back yard had a fence that ran between our place and the back yard next door. It was completely covered with honeysuckle so that the fence couldn't be seen. The plant held up the fence more than the other way around. It was an immensely high, immensely thick, immensely long mass of what appeared to be free-standing honeysuckle vine, covered with small leaves that grew in opposite directions from one-another, and millions of tiny flowers everywhere.

Of course, I knew that there was really a fence under it all, because I had a secret entry to my tunnels inside the honeysuckle mass, tunnels that no one else knew anything about. This was my own private place. I would go inside my tunnel on one side, through a small hole where a few fence boards had disappeared, to a parallel tunnel on the other side. When I was in there, inside my capsule, I would nip off the base of a blossom and taste the droplet of sweet nectar that oozed out. It was absolutely quiet; even the street-cars that normally rattled up and down Rose Street couldn't be heard. I did not need to move my eyes to see everywhere about me. I didn't need to breathe. I could see no one, and no one could see me. There was no time here. Little bugs that should have been crawling along the stems or on the old broken boards simply didn't move. Of course, when I would pay attention to something else, then look back, they were in a different place, but while I was looking at them, they didn't move. The only things moving were fantasies, and memory pictures of my past and future, when I was in the honeysuckle place.

The taste of the honeysuckle was a magical connection with this world where every leaf and insect was a friend and I was an intimate part of everything.⁷

From the apparently novel mode of perception, to the distortion of the flow of time, to the overwhelming sense of peace and interconnectedness with other things, both Hofmann's and Shulgin's experiences demonstrate some of the defining characteristics of the plus-four experience. Their descriptions also serve to indicate the ease with which the child is able to slip into such states without need for any drug or meditation of any kind.

But what exactly are these experiences and how are they distinguished from normal experience? There seems to be a clue in the senses of timelessness and connection with external objects that are such crucial factors in so many experiences of this sort. It would seem that in these states the individual transcends the limits of normal temporal experience. At the same time, the boundaries between subject and object begin to dissolve and a sort of unity is achieved. These are clearly transitions toward the eternity and unity of the Ideas and away from the change and multiplicity of the material world. Thus we might point to such experiences, as Schopenhauer likely would, as examples of the Ideas being apprehended directly in perception.

⁷ Alexander Shulgin and Ann Shulgin, *PiHKAL: A Chemical Love Story* (Berkeley: Transform Press, 1991), 5.

But the sorts of experiences described by Shulgin and Hofmann are but one variety of plus-four experiences that we can identify. These are experiences that, to a large degree, continue to conform to the normal mode of perception, despite the overwhelming awe that is attached to the objects of perception and the sense of timelessness that might accompany the experience. Due to these sorts of plus-four experiences' conforming by and large to typical experiences, we might well regard them as the most common or at least most basic variety of plus-four experience, and we may regard their most important significance to be their demonstration that the entirety of the world around us has its existence by participation in the Ideas.

But not all plus-four experiences have their foundation in the typical mode of experiencing the world. Some plus-four experiences may alter the manner in which our senses perceive the world in radical ways. Others might eliminate sensory perception altogether, causing a purely conceptual or even a purely intelligible experience. Some of these experiences may include indescribable interactions with fantastic beings the likes of which are unknown in our world.

But if there is a hierarchy among the various types of plus-four experiences, the highest order of plus-four experiences are those that allow the subject to transcend the confines of their own individual being so that they might experience a sort of union with something greater than themselves. These states of transcendent unity can themselves be divided into their own hierarchy.

The lowest of these transcendent unities may be understood as the state of union with matter. In this state, it is as if the subject has been pulled deeper into their body so that it is as if their soul has been totally imprisoned and is incapable of escape. At the same time, however, the subject begins to recognize that there is no radical distinction or point of separation between their body and the rest of the world around them. But this form of union is necessarily inferior to the others that we will mention, for it requires the soul to be pulled down to an even baser plane than that in which it typically exists – namely, the material plane. Thus, while an incredibly profound state of perception for its ability to demonstrate that there is an interconnectedness between all things even on the basest level, this state may also provoke intense dysphoria and terror, as the individual perceives themselves losing any freedom that was connected to their spiritual nature and being rendered a slave to the necessity and determinism of material processes.

The next form of transcendent unity occurs within the soul itself. This sort of unity may consist of an increased awareness of one's personal history, thoughts, desires, ambitions, and the like, an acceptance of all of one's component parts, and a resolve to reform and reintegrate any parts that are out of line with the individual's overarching Ideas of themselves. It is this sort of union that is capable of producing the senses of self-acceptance that are so valuable for therapeutic purposes.

Above this union within the soul of the individual is another sort of spiritual union, but one that transcends individuality and goes to the heart of the interconnectedness of the universe. This is another sort of union with the world, but it is of an entirely different sort than the first sort of union we discussed. Whereas the first sort of union we discussed was union with the matter of the world, this is union with the Mind of the world, and thus, in contrast to the former, the latter consists of an expansion and freeing of the soul from

the confines of the body. As a result, though fear may accompany such an experience at times, such union tends to induce a sense of euphoria far more often than it tends to induce feelings of dysphoria.

Above this are a variety of states of union in which a person might become united with one of the Ideas. These states are various, and their exact nature can be expected to vary depending on the Idea with which one is united. However, we must note that it is at this point that true perceptual modes fail us. Though we might later relate experiences with the Ideal world in terms of space, time, and other descriptive terms common to our descriptions of perceptual experience, these are necessarily analogical; the result of our attempts to relate our extraordinary experience to those things experienced in everyday life. In truth, however, experiences of this sort of union are purely intellectual, and thus the descriptive terms of empirical experience are inadequate for their proper description.

Finally, there is that ultimate sense of unity in which all possibility of further unification is extinguished. I speak, of course, of that state of unity with the principle of unification itself, Union with the One. It is here, and only here, that it is possible for the individual to fully recognize the unity at the heart of all things and how each of the multifarious objects of Creation serve, each in its own special way, to recapitulate the essence of the One and work together to form a path for the Will to attain that absolute unity once more.

This enumeration of states of union is certainly not exhaustive, and there may be a number of variations on the general kinds of union we have listed, as well as stages that are intermediate between the various sorts of unity. We may also mention a state that goes beyond even this ultimate union with the One, a state in which all forms, including that of Unity and Being themselves, are totally extinguished. This state may be equated with the Buddhist notion of nirvana, though its duration is necessarily only momentary. This is by far the most profound and limit-stretching state that one can experience. For this reason, it might be necessary to expand our rating system beyond Shulgin's, naming an experience such as this a plus-five experience.

As for the question of how precisely the various sorts of plus-four experiences are achieved, as with other questions of this sort, I lack the expertise to give precise explanations in terms of neurotransmitters and their interactions with various areas in the brain, but it is possible to state again some generalities about what must be occurring in order to allow these experiences to occur. In the most basic form of plus-four experience where objects might be seen in a slightly different light or the passage of time might be experienced differently than usual, there may be some changes in the area of the brain associated with perception of the external world. But, to be sure, what is most characteristic of these sorts of plus-four experiences is not any change in the manner in which objects are perceived but the manner in which the objects of perception are understood once received by the subject. Thus we must suppose that the greatest changes here occur in the areas of the brain responsible for our conceptual associations. These changes may cause the subject to fail to apply their typical concepts to an object presented in perception, making it as though the subject is encountering the object for the very first time or at least perceiving it in an altogether new manner. In the case of union with the matter or mind of the world, interference with the typical processes associated with conceptualization likely occurs

as well, but these are accompanied by radical transformations in perception as well, as evidenced by the fact that the former sort of union is usually accompanied by sensations of heaviness and being pulled deeper inside the body, while the latter is often accompanied with sensations of lightness and being released from the body. Likewise, in the cases of union that transcend this world and bring the subject face to face with the Ideal Realm, we must also suppose a radical interference in the areas of the brain concerned with perception. But here, rather than the interference causing a transformation in the mode of perception, the result is a diminishing, if not extinguishing, of all perception of the material world. In such experiences the conceptual processes may also be diminished, if not entirely extinguished, and replaced with immediate intellectual understanding of all those things presented in the course of the experience. While science has made extraordinary advances in determining how precisely different neurotransmitters and different areas of the brain contribute to different sorts of experiences, there is still considerable work to be done. This is an extremely valuable area of research with tremendous potential for telling us more about how we, as humans, are connected to all around us, both material and Ideal. Indeed, we might compare neurology to a language, with the neurotransmitters and neurons corresponding to the morphology of that language, their interactions corresponding to the syntax of that language, and the perceptions that arise out of those interactions corresponding to the semantics of that language. To understand this language would be to understand the purest and most natural of all languages.

But for all that we have said here, we must complicate the discussion once more, for we must recognize that the addition of a new substance into the body's neural processes is not the only means of invoking a plus-four experience, nor is it always sufficient for this purpose. We have already pointed to cases of plus-four experiences that were not induced by drugs, but we must also recognize that even if a person was able to achieve a plus-four experience with a drug at one time, it does not follow that it is possible to replicate that experience at will through the application of an identical dose in a similar set and setting. These facts demonstrate that there must be something, in addition to the mere chemical, that contributes to the ability to enjoy a plus-four experience. The fact that plus-four experiences can be induced without the help of drugs suggests that, at least at some level, plus-four experiences are the result of a favorable correspondence (i.e., synchronicity) between an individual's own internal states and the state of the external world. Similarly, we might explain cases in which drugs fail to induce plus-four experiences where they have before as the result of a lack of correspondence between the individual's internal states and the external world. In this respect, we must always remember that human beings are complex systems. Each human has a distinct biochemical and psychological make up. Even in the same person, the precise composition of the body, as well as the psychological state, can be significantly different from time to time. Such inconsistencies can contribute to a drug's having radically different effects when consumed at different times. Thus, while drugs may be the most reliable means of inducing plus-four experiences, if the subject is not ready for such an experience at the time of using the drug, a plus-four experience may well be impossible to achieve, even with drug use.

And even if drugs are the most efficient means of achieving a plus-four experience, we must not neglect other means of achieving such experiences, for drugs are not always

available, and even if they are, repeated use can have detrimental effects, and dependency is something that should be avoided as far as possible. Further, means of achieving similar effects, for example, meditation and certain methods of self-hypnosis, allow the individual to access such states solely through their own power, and self-sufficiency should always be preferred over dependency when possible. Indeed, it is worth considering the possibility that some meditation techniques might be the result of attempts by individuals to observe the effects of psychoactive substances and to replicate them through their own will alone, as it is quite possible that early cultures with knowledge of entheogens did not have access to their entheogens throughout the year. This might have motivated some to seek means of achieving states like those experienced under the influence of their entheogen, resulting in the development of more sober-minded forms of mysticism.

3. WHY PSYCHEDELICS ARE ILLEGAL

We come now to a discussion of the relationship between psychedelic drugs and modern society. It is no secret that modern society has had a particularly strained relationship with psychedelic drugs. In most countries across the world, the most well-known and popular psychoactive drugs are banned outright. Those who choose to defy the law and use illicit drugs are seen by society as drug addicts and are at risk of being thrown in prison among hardened violent criminals to be robbed of their liberty, dignity, and time. What justifies such a harsh reaction? What dangers do the public and political leaders see in these substances, and how well-founded are their fears?

As we have already admitted, all drugs pose a certain degree of danger of physical harm to those who choose to use them, psychedelic drugs not excluded. However, when compared with other drugs, the most well-known psychedelic substances tend to be relatively safe. Indeed, substances such as LSD and psilocybin are far less likely to cause a fatal overdose than is alcohol. So, if it is the physical dangers of psychedelics that scare our society and lawmakers so, then either alcohol must be banned for consistency (and we all know how well Prohibition turned out last time), or the physical dangers of psychedelics cannot serve as a reason to prohibit such substances. That being said, it might be argued that the dangers posed by psychedelics go well beyond the mere physical and that the sorts of dangers psychedelics pose may be far more deleterious to society at large than if they only presented physical dangers.

If psychedelics are not particularly dangerous physically, it is still possible that they pose a significant risk to mental or spiritual health. It should come as little surprise that the rapid onset of drastic changes in perception such as psychedelics are capable of producing should prove to be distressing to some people. Now, in most cases, such distress typically leads to what is known as a “bad trip.” While the person experiencing a bad trip may well be in for a frightening and difficult few hours, their mood will tend to improve as the effects of the drug subside. But in some cases, overcoming the experiences of a trip is not quite as simple as waiting for the effects of the drug to subside. Some visions might be particularly disturbing and difficult to forget, while in other cases a person might be presented with some ineffable truth that seems incredibly pertinent but that the person lacks the ability to adequately integrate into their understanding of the world, creating a serious risk of the development of what has been called mental illness. That being said,

the dangers of mental illness arising from the use of psychedelics must not be overstated. Those who have been able to experiment with psychedelics only to go on with their lives relatively unchanged vastly outnumber those who have fallen victim to severe psychosis as a result of psychedelic misadventure. Further, given the suggestions that psychedelics may actually be beneficial to the treatment of mental illness in some cases, there seems to be good reason not to allow the relatively few cases of psychedelic-induced mental illness to threaten research into potential future benefits.

Jünger feared the consequences of psychedelics' becoming widely available to the general public. He feared that psychedelics serve to open us up to a realization of new knowledge, which may spell disaster if left available to the general public. As a result, he suggested that the exploration of psychedelic compounds should be reserved for an elite few. But just what sort of knowledge do psychedelics grant access to and what, precisely, is so dangerous about letting that knowledge fall into the hands of people who are not prepared for that knowledge?

It is interesting to note that particularly fierce opposition to psychedelics comes from two corners that have traditionally been at odds with one another – namely, the Church and the scientific community, especially those highest priests of the Church of Scientism – doctors. Moreover, it would seem that it is the very same aspect of the psychedelic experience that is behind the deepest concerns of both the religious and the scientific opponents of psychedelics. There is good reason to believe that psychedelic drugs grant us clearer access to different realms of consciousness that we typically overlook due to the overwhelming force with which the objects of material perception present themselves to our normal consciousness. In doing so, psychedelics open us up to interactions with the entities that reside in those realms. These sorts of experiences present direct challenges to the orthodox schools of both Judeo-Christian and scientific thought, resulting in what might be considered an unholy alliance between the Church and the scientific community to wage a war against a shared source of heresy.

The Church's line of opposition to psychedelic drugs should come as little surprise; by opening the individual up to contact with immaterial beings other than the One, psychedelics produce a risk of contact with demons or unclean spirits that might attempt to ruin the soul of the individual in some way. Thus to the Church, psychedelics represent a serious threat to the moral fabric of society; they represent a source for the rise of new and terrible demons that threaten to turn us away from the One in idolatrous worship. To be sure, the Church's concerns in this regard are not entirely without merit. If the arguments we have advanced up to this point are correct, then we must admit that it is at the very least possible that psychedelic substances can open us up to the influence of other entities. And if psychedelic substances truly do open us up to the influence of other entities, it is reasonable to assume that these entities have interests and desires of their own that will not always overlap with our own and that some may even be malicious toward humanity in general. If, in our psychedelic explorations, we accidentally encounter one of these hostile entities and, moreover, if we in any way grant that entity power or agree to do its bidding, the results could very well be harmful to us or to society at large. The danger is doubled by the fact that evil spirits might sometimes mask their intentions. After all, Lucifer often appears as an angel of light. And what is addiction but a sort of idolatry,

whereby the drug and its effects are elevated high above all other goods, including the well-being of the user and even God. We are reminded of the cocaine addict, reported by Lewin, who declared “God is a substance.”⁸

We must agree with the Church that, for the reasons just given, there are certainly great dangers associated with the use of psychedelic substances. Still, those dangers do not justify the complete prohibition of their use. That some of the entities encountered while in the psychedelic state might be hostile or malicious is not reason to avoid contact with all such entities, just as the fact that some humans might be hostile or malicious is not reason to avoid contact with all humans. Thus, we must not reject all psychedelic entities out of hand. Instead, we must approach our interactions with them with a sense of cautious open-mindedness. While we must approach such entities with caution and a sound moral framework so that we may not be led astray, we must, at the same time, recognize that such entities may have valuable lessons to teach us. Furthermore, we must not fear that all interactions with psychedelic entities are inherently idolatrous. We must remember that these entities are just as much creations, or aspects, of God as we are and that to better understand these entities and our relationships with them is to better understand ourselves and our relationship with God. Furthermore, we must counter the Church’s accusations of idolatry by pointing out that the Church, in its exclusive devotion to the One, is guilty of idolatry itself. For the One is too but an aspect of God, thus in showing exclusive devotion to It, the Church, in turn, neglects God as a whole. Thus, while we must always retain sight of the One as our guiding light toward which we direct our conduct, we must always recognize that a true and complete understanding of our natures, and of God’s, requires that we be conversant with as many aspects of Creation as possible. For God is in all of Creation.

Interestingly, whereas the Church’s opposition to psychedelics is founded on its admission of the existence of the entities encountered in the psychedelic state, scientific opposition to psychedelics is largely founded on the denial of the existence of such entities. To put it more precisely, psychedelics present a serious threat to the scientific world view, which elevates empirical investigation to a position of the highest prominence, rejecting all other sources of knowledge in the process. This is because in granting us access to new realms and modes of being, in giving us glimpses of the overall structure of Creation, and in putting us in direct Ideal contact with other entities, psychedelics would seem to indicate that there are other sources of knowledge in addition to empirical investigation through which we might come to understand the world and our position in it. For this reason, psychedelics cannot receive a fair evaluation from the adherents of scientism, for if the scientific world view is to be upheld in the face of the psychedelic experience, those phenomena encountered while under the influence of psychedelics must be explained away as mere tricks of the mind or, more precisely, misfirings in the brain. Those who continue to maintain that what they saw was real after the effects of the drug wear off are to be denounced as victims of mental illness, further degrading the reputation of the drug. Ironically, according to this same world view, those who have these sorts of experiences

⁸ Louis Lewin, *Phantastica: Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs. Their Use and Abuse*, trans. P. H. A. Wirth (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1964), 83.

without the intervention of a drug are to be declared mentally ill as well and given a drug in hopes of preventing further such experiences. The inconsistency of the scientific attitude in each of these cases seems to point to a more serious inconsistency at the very heart of the scientific world view. In particular, it seems to suggest that the adherent of scientism wants to cover up and suppress any experiences that might challenge the primacy of the empirical method in arriving at knowledge about the world. But in suppressing empirical evidence of nonempirical knowledge, scientism necessarily undermines its own doctrine.

Still, even if the scientific criticisms of psychedelics are too severe, we must not totally discount the danger that false beliefs might be produced as a result of psychedelic experiences. We must be prepared to exercise considerable caution in attempting to derive any knowledge from such experiences. Though psychedelics may present us with new and exciting truths that we would not have noticed otherwise, these truths must be properly integrated into our wider set of beliefs if their addition is to truly increase understanding. To simply take every revelation that is presented in the psychedelic state at face value is to expose oneself to the grave danger of falling into fantasy and delusion. For example, visions of the Ideal Realm might be mistaken for revelations about the nature of the material world in which we live. Poorly understood visions of the Ideal Realm may be to blame for several of the unfounded and irrational conspiracy theories about the world that have become prevalent in recent years.

One such conspiracy theory holds that the Earth is hollow with an advanced civilization living along the inside of the Earth's crust. In some accounts there is even said to be a sun-like structure in the center of this hollow earth, hanging over the heads of the people that live there. We need not take any time here attempting to refute such a fantastic tale. However, it is still curious how so many people could come to hold a belief, some with the utmost conviction, that is entirely at odds with verifiable facts about the world. There can be little doubt that the prevalence of such beliefs must be attributed, at least in part, to tellers of tall tales and their gullible audiences. But to attribute all such beliefs to mere deception or stupidity seems rather unsatisfying, and, at the very least, charity demands we determine whether there might be some more substantive force driving belief in a hollow Earth. Indeed, the description of a society supposedly living along the inner circumference of the Earth with a light source at the center is incredibly similar to accounts of the One hanging over every point of the Ideal Realm like a sun. This might help to explain why many people are willing to accept the hollow-Earth theory with no evidence, for, if they have some intuition or memory of the nature of the Ideal Realm, it is possible that the overwhelming truth of that intuition could be unconsciously transferred to the mental image that accompanies the idea of a hollow Earth due to its similarity to the image of the Ideal Realm.

In a similar position are those who claim that we are prisoners in some sort of virtually simulated reality. Whereas in the hollow-Earth conspiracy theory aspects of the Ideal world are applied to the material world, in the simulation conspiracy the roles are flipped, with aspects of the material world being mistakenly applied to the Ideal world. This is because, according to this theory, the seemingly material world that surrounds us is a mere illusion, the product of a computer program running in the real world. But even if we were merely the product of a simulation inside of a world that is in some sense

more real than ours, we would still face the very same problems in that world – even if we could find our way back to it – that have led us to the adoption of Idealism in this world. Thus, even if we are somehow imprisoned inside of a simulation in some other material world, we need not concern ourselves so much with getting back to that original world when we can already focus on the Ideal world, our ultimate destination, in this world. It is quite curious that simulation-style conspiracy theories seem to have become particularly prevalent among people who have taken an interest in the doctrines of the ancient Gnostics, leading to a materialistic debasement of those glorious teachings. This, however, lends credence to the idea that belief in a conspiracy theory is, at least in some cases, motivated by a confusion of knowledge of the material world with visions of the Ideal Realm.

Modern representatives of the Church of Peter and Paul have seized upon such debasements of Gnosticism to reignite the age-old charges of Luciferianism against its teachings. This has led to still further conspiracy theories within the Church which hold that Gnosticism is the official cult of a secret evil elite. In some cases, these conspiracy theories have caused extreme backlash against Idealistic world views among some segments of the Church. Some have gone so far as to completely reject the Ideality of the One, taking the Good as something that must be brought forth in this world and fought for in this lifetime. They read *Revelations* as a literal description of a physical war between the forces of Good and Evil and, in their declaration of war on any trace of Evil in this world, threaten to render the prophecies of the End Times self-fulfilling. How far has this church strayed from the original teachings of Christ? For these so-called Christians have entirely forsaken the Ideals of forgiveness and the Middle in their quest to realize perfection all at once. More than that, in their attempt to achieve perfection in this world by force, they have rejected the doctrine of the Ideality of the World to Come. Thus, these so-called Christians have themselves been deceived into worshipping the material world over the One – they have fallen victim to a sort of Luciferianism themselves.

And there can be little doubt that, in the face of all of this confusion between Christ and Lucifer, matter and Ideality, Good and Evil, and the calls for violence and destruction to resolve these confusions, Satan laughs. Thus, if there is any cabal that seeks to keep humanity entombed in the material world by promoting endless divisions and controversies, that cabal is surely a Cult of Satan. And, without question, this cult surely exists. But this cult must not be understood as existing in the sense of the secretive cabals of the elite that operate in concert from the shadows to manipulate world events and that are so common in popular conspiracy theories. This cult is not exclusive to the elite but has members belonging to every class, race, and nation. Nor is this cult organized. Indeed, most of its members are unaware that they serve the cult, and many would deny the existence of Satan altogether. But what else could we expect from the Cult of the Great Deceiver?⁹ This is a cult that, for the most part, is nothing more than a loose association of people animated by one and the same drive toward destruction. While some members of this Cult may at times come together and acknowledge the force they serve, some even composing complex liturgies and systems of thought, the adherents of this cult act in large

⁹ Indeed, the Deceiver may even deceive himself, for Judas (Saklas) believed that he served Christ and failed to recognize his own true identity as Lord of this World.

part unconsciously in the vast majority of cases, unable to name or describe the force that drives them to act as they do. Some members of this cult are easier to spot. They are the mass murderers, the tyrants, the unabashed lovers of all forms of cruelty. But then there are those who show their devotion to their cult in more subtle ways: those who poison a nation with lies, promote false wars, and sow division among the populace. Though these devils may rarely carry out violence themselves, they are often capable of inflicting the most damage in the name of Satan.

But the influence of this cult extends to all people, far beyond murderers and corrupt political leaders. For, as we live in a world of the Deceiver, we should not be surprised to learn that most people in this world, if not all, have to some degree succumbed to the influence of the Cult of Satan. Nearly all of us have fallen victim to some level of deception at one time or another. Some have been deceived into denying the Ideal world and God, others have foolishly come to value base material pleasures over the highest spiritual goods. But in the end, all of these deceptions have their root in the most fundamental of all deceptions. This is a deception that constantly nags at each and every one of us. Even once we have seen through this deception, it attempts to overtake us once more at every moment, and in moments of weakness or carelessness, even those who have seen clearly through the deception are liable to revert to modes of thinking that take this deception for granted as a foundational truth. I speak of course of the deception by which we fail to recognize the Will as it appears in other people and objects as one and the same Will that is operative within us, instead coming to view others as completely distinct entities, entirely isolated from us.

We come now to the true reason, above all others, why psychedelics are illegal: they are illegal because they threaten to shed light on this most fundamental of all deceptions and to expose the intimate connection we share with all other inhabitants of our world through the Will. This deception is a fundamental fact of our world, and it is the driving force behind a number of crucial natural processes. Further, it is the cause of every subsequent deception and for this reason may be regarded as the root of all worldly evils. For it is out of this deception that evils such as racial hatred, vicious hedonism, and selfish egoism have their origins. Indeed, many people build their entire identities on the shaky foundations of these deceptions. For this reason, there is a great danger in exposing the fact that the Will in all things is one and the same. There can be little surprise when those who have built their identities on deceptions react violently as their entire sense of self crumbles into dust. To be sure, there should be no surprise if it seems that all of the forces of nature are aligned against one who seeks to expose such lies. As psychedelics are capable of making it abundantly clear that the Will in all things is one and the same, it should come as no surprise that psychedelics represent a serious threat in the minds of many people, especially those in positions of power whose identities are all too frequently built upon several layers of deception that enable them to ruthlessly advance their own interests with little regard for the damage inflicted upon others in the process. Thus it is ultimately in defense of the deceptions on which their status in society is built that those in positions of power have decided that psychedelics must be prohibited throughout society and that violence must be used to enforce this prohibition if necessary. In prohibiting psychedelics, these elites serve Satan by preventing the masses from accessing one of the most efficient

means of arriving at the Truth, thus keeping the majority of people imprisoned within this world of Deception. Psychedelics allow us to catch the Will unaware and to peer into the deepest level of our unconscious, thus they threaten those who are afraid of what they will find there, so their Wills lash out at every point against these great threats to the illusions that they have built for themselves.

4. WHY ALL DRUGS MUST BE LEGAL

There is perhaps no greater argument for the legalization of drugs, or at the very least psychedelics, than the one alluded to in the conclusion of the last section – namely, the ability of psychedelics to grant us access to the most fundamental Truths in all of Creation. We could certainly rest our argument here, but then we would not convert those who have, for one reason or another, refused to adopt the metaphysical picture presented here. And there are less-abstract arguments in favor of legalization. Perhaps by highlighting some concrete benefits that society could expect to enjoy by legalizing drugs, we can still hope to win over these more-sceptical readers.

In the first place, we must state emphatically that there are no legal grounds for the so-called War on Drugs; moreover, according to the United States Constitution, the War on Drugs is positively illegal. The strongest argument to this effect stems from the First Amendment guarantee that Congress should make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion. As I believe has been adequately shown throughout the course of this essay, drugs of all sorts have been used as religious sacraments by a wide range of peoples throughout history. Therefore, to prohibit drugs and drug use is to prohibit the free exercise of religion.

Moreover, the Ninth Amendment makes clear that the people retain all rights not specifically enumerated in the Bill of Rights. Taken in conjunction with the Tenth Amendment, which guarantees that the federal government has no power which is not explicitly delegated to it by the Constitution, and the fact that Congress is nowhere given the authority to prohibit the sale, use, or distribution of drugs of any kind, we must conclude that the right to use drugs, for any reason, is a right delegated to the people with which the federal government must not interfere. Proponents of state power will inevitably point to the commerce clause, which authorizes Congress to regulate interstate commerce as evidence of Congress's power to regulate the sale of drugs, but this is not at all convincing. It must be pointed out that early applications of the commerce clause did not view it as a clause enabling the federal government to restrict trade but as one that enabled the federal government to intervene when states' policies threatened to restrict trade between states. Moreover, we certainly cannot interpret the clause as giving Congress a free pass to trample on people's rights.

But for those not convinced by the metaphysical or legal arguments, there are also moral arguments for the legalization of all drugs. It is quite clear from a short walk through the streets of any American city that drug prohibition has done nothing to keep drugs off the streets. As long as people have a desire to get high, they will find a way to do so. All that drug prohibition has accomplished is the very same thing that alcohol prohibition accomplished before it: the establishment of a vast and violent criminal underground determined to make money by providing drugs to eager customers without any concern for the lives they destroy in the process.

Drug money is a crucial source of income for gangs across America and the rest of the world, and it fuels deadly gang wars. By legalizing drugs, we would immediately cut off a major source of revenue for these gangs and begin the process of bringing an end to the senseless violence. No more would business disputes have to be settled with gang wars when they could be settled in the courts instead. This would go a long way toward weakening the cartels that terrorize Latin America, toward stabilizing the region, and toward alleviating the migrant crisis. Moreover, without the cartels to point to as boogeymen, some of the more xenophobic attitudes of Americans might be tempered, and the nation might eventually even come around to the idea of more-open borders and freer trade.

There are some who claim to support drug prohibition because they care about addicts and believe that by limiting access to drugs they are helping the addict. But in opposition to these voices, we must assert that no one who truly cares about the welfare of drug addicts can reasonably support efforts to prohibit drugs, for the harm done to addicts by such policies far outweighs the supposed benefits of limiting the addict's access to their drug of choice. The additional challenges that addicts must face as a result of making the substance they are addicted to illegal are numerous.

In the first place, now, simply by trying to feed his addiction, the addict has been rendered a criminal. He faces threats of arrest and prosecution, and, if convicted, he is liable to be robbed of years of his life and forced to live among hardened criminals who are likely to subject him to unspeakable forms of abuse. This is certainly no way to treat someone who is struggling with addiction. Despair over the state of the world and one's station in it is the driving force behind many cases of addiction. Labeling such an addict a criminal, stripping them of their rights, and forcing them to confront the worst aspects of human nature face to face is no way to help that person overcome their addiction. How many otherwise innocent and peaceful people have been thrown into jail because of a drug charge, only to be transformed into a hardened criminal in order to survive the ordeal into which they have been placed?

Further, prohibition almost certainly contributes to the deleterious effects of drug use on the health of the user. Prohibition may motivate patients to be dishonest with doctors about illicit drug use, making it more difficult for doctors to pinpoint the cause of medical problems and decide on an appropriate solution. In addition, a significant and growing number of drug-related deaths can be attributed to impurities in the drugs that people purchase from illicit dealers. By legalizing drugs and allowing drug users to purchase their drugs from established and reputable businesses, drug users could be confident that the drugs they are using are pure and the risks of overdose as a result of impurities could be minimized. Meanwhile, any vendor providing adulterated drugs could be held responsible for this crime. For these reasons, we must chastise anyone who would profess their love and concern for addicts out of one side of their mouth while preaching prohibition out of the other side of their mouth, for in their support of such policies, they are condemning addicts to persecution, poisoning, and ultimately death.

But the injustices our society has inflicted upon drug users have not gone unavenged. Poetic justice is at play, and the entire population has had to face growing sickness as punishment for our transgressions against drug users. For there was a time in this country's history when there were relatively few impediments to the free study of chemistry. A vast

array of chemicals could be easily purchased with no need for government approval and oversight, and private citizens could freely experiment with these chemicals in their own labs. However, in time, often as a direct consequence of the War on Drugs, these freedoms in the study of chemistry have gradually been eroded to the point that it is nearly impossible for anyone to investigate anything going beyond relatively basic chemistry without cutting through thick jungles of governmental red tape. America now faces devastating consequences as a result of these policies. Limiting access to the materials necessary to investigate chemistry has caused waning enthusiasm for the science, and chemical manufacturing operations have largely been moved to foreign countries such as China and India. This is especially true in the case of pharmaceuticals. Now the United States finds itself in a state of deadly dependency on foreign rivals for many of the drugs that Americans rely on to maintain a healthy and productive life. Yet for once the military industrial complex has found a threat to national security that it chooses not to amplify and exploit because the solution in this case is not more state authority and the further erosion of our rights but a restoration of Americans' liberty to freely investigate matters of chemistry and medicine. A renewed army of citizen scientists free to investigate the problems that interest them without fear of violent reprisals from the law would provide fertile ground for new and fruitful scientific discoveries.

Applying the sort of reforms mentioned above in conjunction with reforms to intellectual property laws may even prove effective in lowering medical costs, an issue ever at the forefront of public consideration. No individual or corporation may justly claim a right to every instance of a particular substance nor to the processes used to obtain that substance to the exclusion of all others. Property rights extend only to concrete and particular objects, and they only arise once an individual has labored to lift that object out of the state of nature. Since discovering a particular molecule is not the same as having discovered every instance of that molecule and discovering a particular method of obtaining a molecule is not the same as actually carrying out every instance of that method, it does not follow that one who discovers a molecule or a method for obtaining a molecule can claim a right to each subsequent instance of that molecule that is discovered or is produced through the method they discovered, for in these future cases the original discoverer has done nothing to lift anything out of nature. Therefore, to prevent the manufacture of a drug on the grounds that all instances of the drug or the method by which it is produced is owned by some a specific manufacturer is not legitimate and patent laws must be repealed. If the abolition of patent laws coincides with a renewed interest in chemistry among the general public and an increase in the number of functioning labs, many concerns over the cost and availability of medications would vanish practically overnight with new supplies of drugs becoming available to the market at rates outpacing demand.

5. AGAINST INSTITUTIONALIZATION

While the legalization of all drugs is a moral imperative, it is necessary that the process of legalization be handled in such a way as to ensure that new injustices are not carried out in the process of trying to right past injustices. We must be vigilant in ensuring that the new markets that emerge from drug legalization stay truly free. We must stand firmly against the formation of any bureaucratic agencies or licensing schemes that will arbitrarily

determine who is able to participate in the market. Growers of psychoactive plants should be able to sell their goods at farmers markets just like any other crop, and the sale of psychoactive chemicals should be just as free as the sale of any other over-the-counter drug. Further, drug legalization should not be sold to governments with the promise of large tax revenues. There are legitimate therapeutic and spiritual reasons for drug use, and it would be a travesty if the state's insatiable thirst for funding were to stand in the way of the fulfillment of people's therapeutic and spiritual needs. In the case of marijuana, in the places where the process of legalization has already begun, these concerns have not been given anything approaching proper consideration. More importantly, legalization must be absolute, not partial. We have seen already how Jünger believed that psychedelics should only be reserved for the elite in society. This is an outcome that we must make every effort to avoid.

Psychedelics are capable of producing experiences with a level of profundity and meaning that is unlike any other. To prevent any person from accessing these experiences is a crime, and to place the distribution of psychedelic substances into the hands of a select few arbitrarily chosen by the state is to place that group in an undue position of privilege over others. Thus we must ensure that psychedelics can be freely bought and sold by all consenting adults, and we must resist all approaches to legalization that threaten to create privileged groups. And while it is understandable why, given the world-shattering effects of psychedelic substances, some might be inclined to think that the elite are more well-disposed to responsible use of psychedelics than any other segment of the population, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, we can see quite clearly in a story recounted by Albert Hofmann that even knowledgeable chemists cannot always be trusted to act responsibly:

The danger of psychotic reaction is especially great if LSD is given to someone without his or her knowledge. This was demonstrated in an episode that took place soon after the discovery of LSD, during the first investigations with the new substance in the Zurich University Psychiatric Clinic, when people were not yet aware of the danger of such jokes. A young doctor, whose colleagues had slipped LSD into his coffee as a lark, wanted to swim across Lake Zurich during the winter at -20°C [...] and had to be prevented by force.¹⁰

Thus we must not equate technical knowledge with responsibility, and we must resist any efforts that would give any class of experts special authority over psychedelics. Specifically, we must be vigilant to ensure that access to drugs is not reserved to a few specially privileged groups, such as doctors or priests.

The threat of legalization occurring in a limited way, such as that the medical community is granted privileged access to psychedelics, forcing the rest of society to depend on doctors when they wish to have a psychedelic experience, is particularly strong. This is because many advocates for psychedelics have clung to the potential medicinal value of psychedelics as the principal reason why psychedelic substances should be legalized.

¹⁰ Hofmann, *LSD*, sec. 5.

To be sure, there can be little doubt that there are very real medical benefits associated with psychedelics and that those who have taken up this line of argument deserve credit for having made the most progress in the fight for legalization. But the success of this line of argument has not come without its costs, most serious being those associated with the fact that those adopting this line of argument have had to adapt their arguments to the realities of the medical system as it currently exists and that system is itself in need of serious and substantial reform. Of particular issue is the degree to which the practice of medicine has come under the control of government and corporate regulation. Indeed, it is likely that the tight control of our medical system by state regulation is what has caused the medical arguments for legalization to be so successful, for, not wanting to antagonize the state any more than necessary in their struggle to make psychedelics more widely available, those who take this approach are more than willing to work within the regulatory system that is already in place. Thus, these are the arguments for legalization that are most palatable to governments, for they leave room for the state to maintain a considerable degree of power given the stranglehold it already has on medicine. So, while we must be grateful for the limited progress the medical argument has made in the fight for legalization, we must at the same time recognize medical arguments as inferior grounds for legalization, as such arguments open the door for the institution of new regulations that will only have to be repealed later. Justice, as well as efficiency, demand that we pursue full legalization all at once.

While it is certainly true that there is a medical dimension to drug use and it might even be prudent to seek professional medical advice before deciding to use a drug, this in no way justifies any legislation that prevents people from accessing or using drugs without the mediation of a medical professional. The decision of whether or not to use a drug is certainly a medical one, but it is not *only* a medical decision. As we have made clear throughout this essay, drug use has many aspects. It may be done for medical reasons, in which case consultation with a doctor may make sense. Of course, most of us do not consult a doctor any time we pop an aspirin for a headache, so it does not seem reasonable to always require some sort of mediation by a doctor even if a person's reason for using a drug is entirely medical. But drugs may also be used for other reasons – for example, in some cases drug use might be meant to serve spiritual purposes, while in other cases it may be used to help facilitate socialization. It would certainly be absurd to demand that we all seek the approval of our doctors before we go to our local bar for a few beers or to church to take communion.

Further, we must protest vehemently against any laws that would require psychedelics to be used only within a medical setting. It might be argued that psychedelics are very different from alcohol, and due to the unpredictability of people's reaction to them, they should only be administered in a carefully controlled medical environment overseen by a medical professional. While it may well be advisable to have an appropriate and comfortable environment and trusted people nearby to help one through a psychedelic experience, as we have noted already, most psychedelics are no more toxic than alcohol, so there is no reason to think that a medical setting is the appropriate environment for a psychedelic experience. Indeed, it might even be the case that a medical setting could prove to be counterproductive to realizing the full potential of psychedelic substances. In

the seventeenth chapter of *PiHKAL*, Ann Shulgin describes her first psychedelic experience, which was achieved by means of peyote. At one point in her story, she describes entering an exhibit made up of lifeless statues after having experienced the vibrance of life outside. She eventually realized that moving between the two settings had an extreme effect on her frame of mind, with a sort of despair setting over her while viewing the exhibit. After relating her experiences to the friend accompanying her, he remarks,

I don't know if you realize this, but there are some researchers – doctors – who are giving this kind of drug to volunteers, to see what the effects are, and they're doing it the proper scientific way, in clean white hospital rooms, away from trees and flowers and the wind, and they're surprised at how many of the experiments turn sour. They've never taken any sort of psychedelic themselves, needless to say. Their volunteers – they're called "subjects," of course – are given mescaline or LSD and they're all opened up to their surroundings, very sensitive to color and light and other people's emotions, and what are they given to react to? Metal bed-frames and plaster walls, and an occasional white coat carrying a clipboard. Sterility. Most of them say afterwards that they'd never do it again.¹¹

This observation forces us to take pause in considering what limitations the scientific method might have in its attempts to study the nature of psychedelics and the psychedelic experience. If the sterility of a scientific or medical environment inhibits certain effects of psychedelic substances while amplifying others, it might be that conventional methods of scientific investigation are inadequate to acquiring an understanding of the full nature of psychedelic substances, and it may be necessary to develop new methods of scientific investigations or to admit fundamental limitations to what can be learned through the scientific method. And there is good reason for thinking that science and medicine, at least in their current forms, are indeed inadequate and incapable of producing a complete understanding of psychedelics, for as we have discussed at length, the psychedelic experience can at times expose the user to phenomena and entities of a sort that the modern scientific mindset does not recognize and is not in any way ready to consider seriously. This puts the modern scientifically trained physician in an incredibly awkward spot should he find himself in a position of having to help a patient deal with phenomena of which modern science cannot even admit the possibility. Yet at the same time, there are traditions that have long accepted the possibility of the sorts of phenomena psychedelics produce and that have made great efforts to try to understand and work with these sorts of phenomena. So, it is quite possible that, where the scientific method fails to arrive at a complete and clear understanding of psychedelics and related phenomena, other traditions are capable of coming closer to the goal. Thus it would seem that if any experts are to be entrusted with special authority when it comes to psychedelics, it would be more appropriate if those authorities were entrusted to members of religious traditions that have made genuine

¹¹ Shulgin and Shulgin, *PiKHAL*, 125-26.

efforts to understand spiritual matters rather than representatives of modern scientific medicine, which has all but denied such matters entirely.

The inclination to entrust the medical community over all others with controlling the distribution of psychedelics and overseeing its use is reflective of a more general trend, which Thomas Szasz has referred to as the “medicalization of society.”¹² Throughout his works, Szasz demonstrates in great detail how, as religious faith and the authority of the Church has declined, modern society, in order to fill the void, has become characterized by an increasing preoccupation with health and deference to the authority of medical professionals. One of the consequences of medicalization has been the development of the concept of “mental illness.” From the outset, Szasz dedicated a significant portion of his career to showing the flaws in the thinking that gave rise to the concept. Ultimately, Szasz concluded that “mental illness” is little more than a euphemism meant to describe people who might face a multitude of problems in adjusting to the circumstances of their lives. Szasz saw clearly that attempts to classify such problems as true diseases necessitating medical treatment could not be extended beyond mere metaphor. In these cases, there is no damaged tissue for the physician to treat, no bodily processes that have gone wrong for a drug or surgery to correct. Thus, to peddle these as solutions is to overextend the proper domain of medicine to problems that might be better dealt with if left to the affected individuals and those with whom they have close relationships to work through together. In some cases, where so-called mental illness arises from some sort of misunderstanding or dissatisfaction with the nature of Creation or one’s station in it, medicine may even begin to infringe on territory rightfully reserved for religion. But in its strict adherence to the standards of empiricism, modern medicine cannot even admit the existence of entire regions of Creation, including some that might play a major role in the origin of spiritual disturbances. Medicine’s meddling in areas that it neither has the ability nor the desire to understand can only result in disaster, for in the mindset of modern medicine, truly nothing is sacred. This urge to medicalize religion can clearly be seen in the medical sector’s efforts to control society’s access to psychedelics. Many have gone so far as to employ cups with ceremonial aesthetics in delivering psychedelic therapy. Regulations that prevent anyone who does not have an advanced college degree and a state-issued license to practice medicine from administering psychedelic therapy cannot be taken as anything less than a slap in the face, as such regulations would prevent people coming from traditions with generations and in some cases possibly thousands of years’ worth of experience – people such as Maria Sabina herself – from employing psychedelic substances in their therapeutic practices, from administering psychedelic therapies. Such policies are inexcusable.

This tendency toward medicalization reaches its height in what Szasz refers to as “pharmacocracy” or the “therapeutic state,”¹³ a state that considers preserving the health of its citizens to be among its foremost duties, often to the point of forsaking the liberty of its citizens. Indeed, here we might say that the hospital takes the place of the Church

¹² Thomas Szasz, *The Medicalization of Everyday Life: Selected Essays* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

¹³ Thomas Szasz, *Pharmacocracy: Medicine and Politics in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

because the more pervasive the therapeutic state becomes, the more individual actions are to be regulated according to what medical authorities deem to be most conducive to good health. Thus, in setting the parameters of acceptable conduct, doctors in effect become the new priestly class. And in its most extreme iterations, a pharmacocracy may rise to the level of a true theocracy, for when the goals of a pharmacocracy are taken to the extreme and individual, cultural, or religious customs stand in the way of the goal of good health, those customs are to be exposed and eradicated. What spiritual ruin might befall us should we find ourselves under the thumb of a pharmacocracy that promotes a materialistic science that rejects anything that cannot be confirmed empirically? This criticism must not, of course, be taken as a condemnation of the entire medical community or all doctors who work with psychedelics. There are without question many well-meaning medical professionals doing excellent work with psychedelics, and they should certainly have the freedom to continue their work. But we must not let the successes of medical professionals limit our visions for the future and enter down a path of legalization that limits anyone's access to psychedelics.

At the same time, we should not let the religious aspect of psychedelics become an excuse to establish any sort of religious test for those who wish to use psychedelics. Just as doctors should not be given any special access to psychedelics, neither should priests or any other sort of religious authority be given any special access to psychedelics. Nor should there be any requirement for membership in any religious organization for a person to exercise their spiritual rights. Any such regulations would require the government to make distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate religious beliefs in violation of the First Amendment's prohibition of any establishment or prohibition of religion. Further, such a requirement would stand in direct opposition to the theology outlined here, which calls on all people to establish their own, personal, relationship with the Divine, without the mediation of any religious authority.

Furthermore, there should be no requirement that a person profess any religious beliefs whatsoever in order to exercise their right to explore their own consciousness, for there are some cases where psychedelics may prove useful in solving purely secular concerns. Indeed, one of the greatest benefits of psychedelics may be their ability to help a person become their own therapist, allowing people to work out past trauma and neuroses without having to reveal their deepest secrets to another. This may even be part of the reason for much of the opposition to psychedelics, for if people were to learn to use them in this way, the Church and psychiatrists alike would lose the power they gain over people through the sacrament of confession.

There will certainly be those who object that this degree of freedom in the realm of psychedelics is liable to lead to irresponsible use and tragedies. To these objections we must reply that anyone who infringes on the liberties of others while using psychedelics should be appropriately punished so as to deter such transgressions in the future. But those who pose a risk to no one but themselves must be left to their devices, even if that means their untimely demise. While we should never promote irresponsibility and must mourn it where it goes awry, we must always respect the dignity of others, which means allowing them the freedom to live their lives as they see fit, even if we fundamentally disagree with their choices. Besides, we must always remember that at times it is the misadventures of the fool that provide the impetus for some of the world's greatest discoveries.

6. PSYCHEDELIC EDUCATION

Though ethically we must respect the rights of even the fool to experiment freely with psychedelics, we must not mistake this for a denial of the great power and potential dangers of psychedelics if used improperly. Psychedelics are not a panacea, and we should not think that simply by allowing everybody to partake in a psychedelic experience we will achieve a perfectly ethical society overnight. After all, psychedelic use was widespread across pre-Columbian Mexico, but then, so was human sacrifice.¹⁴ And if Allegro's thesis is correct, it seems that human, even child, sacrifice may have been prevalent among the Near Eastern fertility cults that used the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom. In light of these connections, perhaps we should not even find it surprising if it were to turn out that psychedelic use may have in some way influenced these violent episodes.¹⁵ At any rate, we must not let our overarching belief in liberty nor our enthusiasm for psychedelics lead us into deception. We must always admit that psychedelics are a source of great danger. Thus, even though we cannot ethically accept any policies aimed at limiting the general public's access to psychedelics, we should still make efforts to encourage people to use these substances as responsibly as possible and to minimize any potential hazards that might arise from the use of these substances, whether these be the mere physical dangers that the fool, in his recklessness, exposes himself and others to, or if they be the true spiritual dangers associated with coming into direct contact with devils and evil spirits. To this end, we must establish a course of education intended to prepare people for life in a world where psychedelics are readily available so as to promote responsible use and avoid unnecessary tragedies.

If psychedelics are to come to play a crucial role in our society and they are to become widely accessible, it would stand to reason that education concerning such substances should begin at an extremely early age. Just as we would warn a child to avoid

¹⁴ In the interest of truth and fairness, I must admit that the case here may be overstated. According to Dale Pendell in his *Pharmako/Gnosis: Plant Powers and the Poison Path* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2005), while several psychedelic plants were employed by the Aztecs for medicinal, military, and other purposes, it appears that the Aztec elite were rather averse to the entheogenic and recreational use of psychedelic plants. In particular, the priestly class and nobility were strictly prohibited from becoming intoxicated on psychedelics, and those who did were often compared to common riff-raff. According to Pendell, consumption of psychedelics was primarily confined to the lower classes, especially the merchant class, and was only tolerated by the Aztec elite due to their reliance on the merchant classes. Nonetheless, the consumption of psychedelic mushrooms in celebration of the coronation of Montezuma II is well attested, thus it seems that even the commoners who freely used these plants were enthusiastic participants in the ceremonies of the Aztec state. Thus, even if psychedelics were not the ultimate cause of human sacrifice, it does not appear that they inspired any particularly intense opposition to the practice.

¹⁵ John M. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* (Belfast: Belfast Telegraph, 1970). Indeed, Allegro paints a picture of an ancient Holy Land populated by a number of competing cults characterized by their own rituals, customs, and codes of conduct. Some of these cults engaged in acts of debauchery, while other cults stood in fierce opposition to such cults. It seems that many of these more debauched sects were also users of psychoactive mushrooms, causing the tamer sects to come to see the mushrooms as influencing such debauched acts, resulting in the rise of some mycophobic cults, including the cult that would evolve into mainstream Judaism. But, if Allegro is correct, it does not seem that every cult rejected the mushrooms alongside the debauchery that was associated with them, with some continuing to use them to commune with other worldly powers. This is the significance of Christ. He serves as a source of protection against evil and temptation and an example of how one ought to conduct oneself; he is a guiding light in the darkness showing the path to salvation; he is a means of eating the sacred mushroom without being brought down to ruin by the evil forces to which the psychedelic state can at times expose one.

a hot stove or an electrical outlet, so too should we teach our children of the dangers that can come from immature and irresponsible drug use and that it is best to avoid such substances until one has reached an appropriate age and understanding so that the risks associated with psychedelic use may be minimized and the benefits can be maximized. We must never understate the dangers of drug use, but at the same time we must never overstate the dangers of drug use and endorse a “Just Say No” policy. Even if we were to admit that there are no benefits to drug use whatsoever, it would still be highly irresponsible to claim that any drug is more dangerous than it really is just to deter others from using that drug, whether those others are adults or children. Such a strategy may even prove to have an effect that is completely the opposite of what was initially intended in that, if a person tries a drug that they had been told their entire lives would completely ruin their life if not kill them with just one use but instead finds that they emerged from the experience entirely unharmed, perhaps even better than before, this person may begin to doubt all of the warnings that they had been given about drugs over the course of their life and assume that the warnings in the case of all drugs were completely overblown. Such an attitude could lead to careless experimentation, perhaps even with drugs that truly live up to their reputation, resulting in tragedy. It is likely that the campaign to demonize marijuana in the twentieth century has had this sort of effect at least to some degree.

But considering the position of immense importance the philosophy presented here has given to psychedelic substances as facilitators of gnosis that allow us to experience and know the Divine intimately, limiting our concerns to merely educating children about the practical dangers of drugs is entirely insufficient. If education is to be truly aimed at developing students’ understanding and helping them to lead the most fulfilling lives possible instead of mere training with no more ambitious a goal than hammering students into shape so that they can take their place as cogs in a machine in which they are but a small replaceable part whose sole purpose is to produce for the whole, then it is necessary that our entire system of education must be constructed with the goal of preparing students to eventually attain gnosis. While this is an immense task and a full exposition and justification must necessarily be the topic of another essay, we may here mention some general features that such an education might have, as well as some of the obstacles currently standing in the way of implementing such an educational model. The essay “On Education” in Schopenhauer’s *Parerga and Paralipomena* provides a strong starting outline on which a much more detailed curriculum could be built.

In the first place, education must be primarily aimed at helping students recognize the Ideas. As Ideas can truly be known only through experience, the earliest education must be geared toward helping children develop their senses and gain first-hand experience of the world. Every effort should be made to ensure that childhood is filled with as many and as diverse experiences as possible. Children should be introduced to plants, animals, rocks, and indeed all of nature. Following Plato, we must insist that children be instructed in music and poetry so that they might begin to understand their emotions and in physical fitness so that they might learn to control their bodies. Physical education should especially emphasize the study of martial arts, as teaching students to defend themselves will help to produce self-confident individuals capable of upholding their own dignity.

As children get older, they should begin to be introduced to mathematics and the various sciences so that they may gradually come to a deeper understanding of the phenomena they experience in their day-to-day life. As students are gradually introduced to increasingly complex mathematics, they should also be exposed to physics, chemistry, biology, and other sciences, wherever possible replicating or at least explaining in as much detail as possible the experiments that have led to our modern understanding of these sciences so that the intimate relationship between the abstract truths of mathematics and the processes of the natural world can be seen. However, we must always be careful to remind students that our scientific understanding of the world is only an approximation of the truth, not the truth itself, and that we must constantly readjust and refine our understanding so that we might arrive at an even closer approximation of the truth.

Schopenhauer warns that children should be sheltered from religious and metaphysical doctrine in order to preserve the child's objectivity and ability to think critically. While Schopenhauer's concern for protecting children from the trap of dogmatism is quite understandable, he certainly would not have intended for education to lead students to a base materialism that accepts only the truths of empirical science. Considering the modern world's adoption of an empiricist dogmatism as opposed to the religious dogmatism that was more prevalent in Schopenhauer's day, perhaps it is necessary that we add safeguards in the opposite direction, while remaining ever careful never to indoctrinate a child in any dogma, always remembering that it is the proper goal of education to help the child reach their own conclusions about the nature of the world and not to impose any conclusions upon the child.

To this end, the study of history is likely to be a welcome addition to a child's education. Through the study of the various cultures and religions of the world, the child can be exposed to various ways of understanding the world as well as some of the major points that have animated the debates between these viewpoints and begin to ponder some of the same questions so many before them sought to answer. At the same time, the vast number of stories that come down to us from history provide us with fertile material with which the child can work to begin to develop their moral reasoning.

As the child begins to mature, they should gradually be introduced to true philosophizing. Efforts should be made to give the child a survey of as many systems of thought from as many times and regions as possible. Educators must carefully consider the works of the major thinkers of each tradition and catalog texts according to whether they are more suited to students who are just beginning, intermediate students, or more advanced students, and efforts should be made to introduce students to texts that are appropriate for their level of advancement in philosophical studies. As students advance in their philosophical studies, we must encourage them to begin to construct their own understanding of the nature of reality. However, we must not let students be content in settling upon their own self-created dogmatism. A crucial part of education at this point is scrutinizing the student's world view and pointing out any seeming inconsistencies or points of objection to the arguments that caused the student to arrive at their conclusions. However, this must not be done in such a way as to crush the child's spirit. The child must be constantly reminded that the journey to a true understanding of the world is treacherous

and often filled with various setbacks. After all, Plato is quite insistent in his *Republic* that students not be initiated into the most advanced philosophy and dialectic until well into adulthood. It may take years and perhaps even lifetimes for any given soul to come to a proper understanding of the world and its place in it.

However, even once the student begins down the path of abstract philosophical thought, every effort must be made to remind the student constantly that they are able to know the world most intimately not through abstract reasoning but through direct experience. For this reason, we must insist that in childhood and at least the first few years of philosophical study all use of psychoactive drugs, with few exceptions,¹⁶ should be completely avoided so that the child may become intimately familiar with their natural, unadulterated mode of experiencing the world.

I will not venture to say when precisely a person should have their first psychedelic experience or what substance is the best choice for inducing that first experience. It is likely that there are no clear answers to these questions, and what answers there are will likely be highly dependent on the particular individual in question. To answer generally, however, it seems that the introduction of a psychedelic substance should coincide with the individual's maturation. But whether this maturity ought to be based on custom or biology is another question altogether and one that we will not venture to answer here, but taking both into account, we might say that the most appropriate time for one to have their first psychedelic experience is likely sometime between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Further, while it is not immediately clear which psychedelic substance is best suited for inducing one's first psychedelic experience, we might suggest that prior to one's first true psychedelic experience, the individual should have some experience with a substance that alters perception in less drastic, more controllable ways than psychedelics, such as alcohol or marijuana.

Having said all of this, we must now face a major impediment standing in the way of the implementation of an education system such as we have described – namely, the marriage of education and the state. Today, the education of our children has largely been entrusted to the state. While there are still some private purveyors of education, a combination of draconian laws and economic incentives has driven most parents to hand their children over to the state's system of compulsory education. And given that many private institutions receive government subsidies and must meet state educational standards, even private education is unable to escape being shaped and molded by state dictates. But state-controlled education is inherently highly unsuited for providing the instruction necessary to properly prepare anyone for a psychedelic experience. The state's

¹⁶ Exceptions may be made for cases in which psychoactives might offer real medical benefits. There are also some examples of cultures in which children are welcome participants in ceremonies employing psychoactive substances. While in the interest of the child's sensory and intellectual development, it is likely prudent to exclude children from any new customs involving the use of psychoactive substances, in the interest of tolerance and the preservation of cultural history, we must not object to the continuance of such customs so long as there is no concrete evidence of the child's suffering serious long-term harm as a result of such practices. Allowing such traditions to continue may even provide a good opportunity for studying the effects of psychedelics on the developing mind, which may help us to determine the optimal time for an individual to have a psychedelic experience.

concerns in its stranglehold over education are largely utilitarian. Thus state education is closer to the sort concerned with producing efficient cogs in the machine of society, as opposed to developing a student's understanding and individuality in any meaningful way. Further, as we have made clear, the use of psychedelics is a deeply religious matter, and an education intended to produce people who are prepared to experience the sort of gnosis that psychedelics offer could never be implemented by a government-run school system due to the fundamental political principle of separation of church and state. In the first place, given the fact that psychedelics are objects of religious ritual, the very passing of any judgment on them or their use, whether positive or negative, may be regarded as an expression of a religious opinion. In the course of education, especially as contemplation of philosophical matters intensifies, it is necessary that the student be scrutinized in their beliefs and encouraged to either defend or revise their beliefs in the face of criticism. The teacher must scrutinize the reasoning by which the student arrives at their conclusions, present the student with alternative explanations of phenomena, and present arguments as to why those explanations are better than the student's. So, in the course of proper and rigorous education, it is almost inevitable that some religious beliefs will be hopelessly ridiculed, while others might be consistently praised. But this is unacceptable in an education system sponsored by a government supposedly committed to the principles of separation of church and state. Thus, the state neither does nor should provide an education that is adequate to prepare students for a psychedelic experience – or even a meaningful and fulfilling life. State education only prepares the student to serve the system. In opposition to this, we must endeavor to establish a system of education that prepares the student to live for himself and his most intimate relations. Further, the compulsory nature of state education might even result in a rebellion against learning by the children forced to sit in a lifeless classroom and merely regurgitate seemingly meaningless facts all day. True education, if it is to meet its goal of entering the deepest recesses of the student's soul, inspiring them with a love of knowledge and a desire for constant learning, must be accomplished on a free and voluntary basis.

Moreover, we must recognize that, in allowing children to be taken from their homes to receive the majority of their education from strangers rather than their parents, we are failing to live up to the Buddhist Doctrine of the Middle in an extraordinary way. Indeed, it seems that as time moves on, more and more of the child-rearing process is entrusted to the state. Today, on top of educating children, the state is also expected to feed children. It has been well understood since the time of Plato that the family unit is one of the largest bulwarks against unchecked state power and that the survival of the state depends on weakening, if not entirely destroying, that family structure. Thus, before we reach the dystopian world Plato describes, wherein the family is completely destroyed and all children are to be raised in common, parents must finally declare that enough is enough and proclaim their rights and ascent to their duty to oversee their children's educations to the exclusion of the state. Thus, education in matters such as psychoactive drugs and sex, along with all other topics of education, must be declared the exclusive responsibility of parents. After all, parents should know their children better than anyone else, making parents the best disposed for determining which lessons are appropriate for their child at a given time and which lessons might do more harm than good.

Given these considerations then, though all education is better if started in youth, it would seem that, if we wish to educate the general population about drugs, we must start with the adult population. From there, parents may add what they learn about drugs to the curricula they have developed for their children in whatever way they see most fit. This, of course, is much easier said than done, as in targeting the adult population we will inevitably have to contend with prejudice arising from years of propaganda from the state and others in positions of power. We cannot expect attitudes toward drugs to change all at once or for any one person to achieve that change in attitude. On the contrary, if attitudes and legislation are to change, it will likely take a concerted effort. Thus, we must call on all those who have already come to recognize the benefits associated with the use of certain drugs along with the evils of prohibition to be inspired to a sort of evangelism and to go forth and preach the merits of responsible psychedelic use. This endeavor should not, of course, be modeled on the single-minded militaristic sort of evangelism that has characterized so many religious movements of the past. In contrast, though we may be excused for giving into our passion for our cause at times, our evangelism must endeavor to be cool-headed and rationalistic. While we may preach the benefits of drugs to those who may benefit from them, we must learn to recognize where our views will not be considered with an open mind and remain silent where our opinions will only provoke unnecessary controversy and attention. We should endeavor to become as conversant as possible with the science surrounding psychedelics so that we might mount the best defense possible when confronted by those who fear the perceived dangers of psychedelics. Should someone be interested in trying a psychedelic substance, we should never pressure them into going through with the plan. Instead, we must practice cautious encouragement by stressing the importance of the interested party's taking an honest survey of their health, consulting a doctor if there are any doubts, and ensuring that they pursue their experiment in a safe and comfortable environment. Furthermore, those of us with experience with psychedelics as well as philosophical matters should offer to do our best in helping new adventurers into the world of psychedelics to better understand the meaning and importance of their experiences.

7. ON DRUG USE IN SOCIETY

After having addressed how we might approach education concerning psychedelics and other drugs, it is only natural that we turn now to an examination of precisely how the use of these drugs should be integrated into our society. To be sure, we need not start from scratch in this endeavor as many drugs already have long cultural traditions associated with their use, nor have philosophers been altogether silent on this matter. Schopenhauer, for instance, recognized the ability of a small amount of wine or opium to stimulate the mind and aid in thinking. And in his *Laws*, Plato proposed instituting elaborate ritualized drinking parties. Interestingly, Plato suggests that these parties should be used in part to teach participants to practice self-control. In our own culture, alcohol has earned its place as a social sacrament that, in its best uses, can help build connections between members of a community, and at times, it may bring people together in the pursuit of greater projects and even to confront tyranny. Taverns and public houses are an important point in any community, and we all should do our part to keep such traditions alive.

However, we would be well advised to incorporate some of Plato's emphasis on self-control into our traditions.

Given that the philosophy presented here draws much inspiration from the ancient mysteries and that psychedelics have been employed in a number of initiatory and religious rites across the globe, it might seem tempting to prepare a series of mysteries and initiation rituals that incorporate psychedelics. While this may well prove an admirable endeavor, it is also one that must be approached with much caution, as initiatory orders are, by their nature, amenable to abuse. Careful steps must be taken to ensure that those charged with dispensing the order's secret wisdom and guiding initiates to the Divine, or even the symbolism employed by the order, do not become objects of devotion themselves. While membership in such an order may be a useful vehicle for furthering one's relationship with the Divine, anyone who establishes or joins such an order must be ever cognizant of the risk that the individual's relationship with the order will become more important than their relationship with God, for when this occurs initiatory orders actually work against their proper goal, straining the individual's relationship with God instead of strengthening it. Furthermore, there is certainly much room for flexibility in constructing a system of teachings and symbols meant to guide others to a sacred truth. Symbols that might serve as an efficient means of conveying a concept to a person of one background might prove to be hopelessly confusing to a person of a very different background.¹⁷ For that reason, I will refrain from proposing any initiatory system and will instead encourage others, after reflecting on the central doctrine presented here, to create their own initiatory systems constructed out of symbols that are significant to them. In doing so, if there are to be initiatory rites, it is probably best if they are kept relatively small and private and are developed with the principal intent of including close family and friends to ensure as much resonance between the members and symbolism of the group as possible.

That being said, there is no need for such pomp and circumstance to enjoy the fullest spiritual and intellectual benefits offered by psychedelics. Many have remarked on the similarities between modern ravers who slip into dance and ecstasy-fueled trance states and the trance states that are often observed in many ritualized dance forms seen the world over, yet there is no priest or set of teachings at work at a rave. In my experience, psychedelics are best enjoyed in a casual and comfortable environment, perhaps among a few close friends, or even alone. Music can add to the experience immeasurably, and it always helps to have a few interesting books around or somewhere to write should a thought strike you.

¹⁷ For this reason, in addition to having a strong understanding of the nature of Creation and the human mind, anyone who intends to take up the role of therapist, whether psychedelic or otherwise, must also try, as far as possible, to understand the symbolic framework within which the patient operates. Thus, if a patient is a devotee of a particular religion, anyone attempting to act as therapist for that person should first familiarize themselves with the system of symbols that animates that patient's religion. This being the case, it might even be best that a therapist come from the same or at least a closely related spiritual tradition. However, the therapist must also be cognizant that the symbolism of a given religion does not necessarily have the same meaning to all members of that tradition and that some may have come to understand their religion's symbolism in quite divergent ways. Thus, above all, the therapist must try to understand the system of symbolism under which the individual patient operates and avoid making false assumptions based on the individual's association with a given group.

This casual approach, however, does have the drawback of attracting those who are interested in drugs for purely hedonistic reasons. To ensure that psychedelic experiences provide the greatest intellectual and spiritual rewards possible, it might be wise to establish courses of preparatory studies that should be completed before one's first experience with a given substance in order to direct the mind toward those Ideas that the substance in question is best able to demonstrate. Once initial studies are completed and the first encounter with the substance is experienced, a path for future studies might become illuminated. The creation of a corpus of preparatory texts and exercises for psychedelic substance is a grand project that will require an intimate knowledge both of man's philosophical traditions as well as the nature of each psychedelic substance. For this reason, we cannot outline any sort of preparatory course in great detail here.

8. CONCLUSION: ON THE ASCENT OF THE NEW DIONYSUS

We have now reached a point at which we can construct a hierarchy of various theologies by reference to that aspect of Creation with which those theologies primarily concern themselves. This, of course, is only a rough hierarchy, and the traditions named in it are only paradigmatic examples of a tradition concerned with the particular aspect of the hierarchy of Creation with which that tradition concerns itself. We must admit the existence of other points in the hierarchy of Creation between those discussed here, and we must also admit that there might be other traditions than the ones we name that are concerned with the same points on the hierarchy of Creation.

At the top of this hierarchy is the Beginning. Perhaps the best representative of a tradition concerned with the Beginning is Buddhism, with its emphasis on achieving release from Creation through Nirvana.

Directly below this tradition are those dealing with the One in its pure Being. The Hindu veneration of the Trimurti is the best example of a tradition dealing with the One in this sense.

Next we might cite the Christian Trinity, which is concerned with the personal aspects of the One. If we may be permitted to make an analogy to human anatomy, if we are to think of all of Creation as God and the One as the brain of God, we might think of the Son as the so-called cortical homunculus of God. On the Will's descent, the Son may be regarded as a motor homunculus, while on the Will's ascent, the Son may be regarded as a sensory homunculus.

Below this tradition is the theology of the Platonists, which deals with the One as the source of the Ideal Realm as well as the role of the Demiurgi in the creation of the material realms. The various Ideas that populate this region may be regarded as angels. Those devoted to the Demiurgi have also been known at various times as devotees of Lucifer.

Beneath Platonism, we may recognize many of the traditional pantheons of the ancient world that describe the unfolding of the material world, ultimately resulting in the creation of humanity. Let us take the pantheon of classical Greece as a paradigmatic example of this sort of theology. We might understand the first generation of gods, headed by the primordial Gaia and Ouranos, Mother Earth and Father Sky, as representative of the formation of the space in which the material world was to take shape. The next generation, headed by Kronos and Rhea, represent the addition of time and the spark

of life that set the events of the world in motion. Next, the Olympian gods represent the cosmic order established within the confines of the time and space provided by the previous generations. Zeus, serving at the head of these gods, governs the heavens with the gods of the various stars and planets under his domain. Under him, governing the sea and storms and thus exerting considerable control over the forces of the Earth is Poseidon. Finally, the Underworld of death and decay is ruled by Hades, who has also been called Satan. Below this is Tartarus, the End, that great abyss of Nothingness from which all of the realms above are repelled out of fear of falling into nonexistence for all of eternity. Thus, at the End, even Hades must turn back to preserve his realm. In doing so, he provides a foundation on which new complexities can be built and the Will can begin its journey back to its source. Satan, in his rebound toward the One, takes on the form of the great god Pan.

Throughout human history, there have been various traditions attempting to call humanity's attention to the existence of and its relationship to these other realms that make up the Order of Creation. These traditions have been led by figures with names such as Thoth, Legba, Hermes, Orunmila, Orpheus,¹⁸ Dionysus, and others.¹⁹ All of these figures

¹⁸ In mentioning Orpheus here, I recognize that in this essay I have largely neglected to discuss the significance of music, and I would be remiss if I did not include at least a few words on the subject here. As is evidenced by the Orphic tradition, music has long been associated with mysticism and held to have special, perhaps even magical, power. In Latin the word *carmen* can equally designate a song or an incantation. Pythagoras, inspired by Orpheus, played a crucial role in the development of music theory and was a firm believer in the therapeutic potential of music. Indeed, Pythagoras believed that there was music to be discovered in all parts of nature, not least of all in the celestial bodies, leading him to develop his glorious doctrine of the Harmony of the Spheres. Schopenhauer, too, saw immense value in music, recognizing it as the art form capable of the deepest penetration of the Will. Further, there are clearly intimate connections between music and psychedelics. Many report that the experience of listening to music is greatly enhanced under the influence of psychedelics, and the psychedelic state has been a source of inspiration for many musicians. Today, medical and mental-health professionals have begun to reexamine the therapeutic powers of music, which perhaps can be enhanced when used in conjunction with psychedelic therapy. We may even discover that when used together psychedelics and music hold the keys to the secrets of the universe, vindicating Pythagoras in the end.

¹⁹ It is worth noting that many of the figures listed here are trickster gods or liminal deities. Several fall into both categories. That tricksters and liminal figures are often closely associated with one another and that both should play a crucial role in connecting man to Creation more broadly should come as little surprise. Liminal deities hold dominion over boundaries, and the mischief of the trickster god is often the result of transcending (or transgressing) boundaries. For this reason, for his tricks to be successful, the trickster must either have the cooperation of liminal deities or he must hold dominion over boundaries himself, thus the two sorts of gods must always be closely associated with one another, if not held to be entirely identical. Indeed, the most powerful and well-known of these gods, such as Legba, Thoth, and Hermes, display both liminal and trickster aspects. When taken in their former aspect, they are held to be responsible for establishing the various boundaries that comprise the entire Order of Creation. In this sense they are the principle by which individuation is achieved. When taken in their latter roles, they are responsible for the dissolving of such boundaries. In this sense, these gods may be taken as the principle by which the disparate parts of Creation come to be reunited once more. As man must break through the normal limits of his perception in order to come to understand his place in the grand order of Creation and as Union with God requires transcendence of our worldly mode of existence, liminal and trickster gods must necessarily play a crucial role in man's quest for salvation. Deities that display both liminal and trickster qualities provide fertile ground for intellectual inquiry and speculation of many sorts. For example, when the profound similarities in the traditional characterization of Legba, Thoth, and Hermes (along with the traditional identification of the latter two with one another) are considered, it is hard to avoid the purely historical question of whether the traditions surrounding these three gods might in some way share a common point of origin in human history. But this purely historical question, regardless of the outcome of historical investigation, drives us to purer and more profound speculations. Are these three deities truly their own unique divinities, or are they merely a single deity who, through his proclivities for tricks, has appeared to humanity in different guises? If there is a common identity lying behind these gods, is

may be regarded as types of Christ, for in attempting to bring humanity into harmony with all of the forces of Creation, all of these figures anticipated Christ.

Here we are concerned with Christ in his relation to Dionysus. We can see in Euripides's *Bacchae* that Pentheus, in fact, represents a primitive Dionysus, and his demise represents the ascent of the new Dionysus of the Vine. We have seen that there are convincing connections to be made between the figure of Christ and the sacred mushroom. However, Christ allowed these connections to be occulted and for wine to retain its place as a sacrament in the first iteration of his church. But now, the veil has been lifted, and the time has come for a new, psychedelic Dionysus to rise. This Dionysus need not tear its predecessor apart in the manner of Pentheus, for alcohol still has a role to play in our society. Indeed, this new Dionysus may even see fit to resurrect the primitive Dionysus, for his sacraments are not entirely without value either, as modern medical advancements have shown us. But he must assert that his class of intoxicants, with their ability to call people's attention to higher realms of Creation and to achieve union with God, occupy a place of special honor above the older intoxicants.

At this point, I believe the case for the ascendance of this new Dionysus has been made. Through Dionysus, humanity will once more recognize its intimate connection to all parts of Creation, Christ shall break the cross, and the great god Pan shall rise again in a new glorious form to guide the Will of our world toward its True, Heavenly End. It has finally come time for us to transcend the transcendental. Now, for all those who have come this far, found the case presented here compelling, and would like to take the next step by experiencing the gnosis offered by psychedelics first hand, I may finally indulge myself by stating seriously what I had wished to say in jest previously: Take a hit of DMT!

Or in the words of that great pioneer of psychedelic research Humphry Osmond:

*To fathom Hell,
Or soar Angelic,
Just take a pinch
Of psychedelic.*

there a common identity lying behind all examples of liminal and trickster deities, or are there indeed boundaries between the various gods of boundaries with each liminal deity only having dominion over certain boundaries in accord with their nature? If this latter possibility holds true, is there some overarching liminal deity to which all these more particular manifestations of liminal deities are subservient? Is such a god none other than what we have referred to as the Will in its manifestation of all things? Or is it the Intellect that provides the Will with the very material it must manifest? If there is such a god of all liminal deities, is that god capable of overcoming all boundaries, or are there some boundaries that, even for the Lord of Boundaries, cannot be transgressed? Such questions deserve deep and prolonged meditation.

Regardless of how we resolve the questions suggested above, as psychedelics are capable of producing illusions and changes in our normal mode of perception, the psychedelic state must be recognized as the proper domain of such deities as well. For these reasons, all people, but especially those who wish to pursue the psychedelic path, would be well advised to become closely acquainted with liminal deities, trickster gods, and their associated traditions.

GROUND FOR THE ELEUSINIAN VISION

If we ask how the *imitatio dei vel deae* – the imitation of a god or a goddess – was realized in the *ἐποπτεία* of Eleusis, we once again encounter the uniqueness of these mysteries. Among all direct or indirect testimonies, whether true or false, there is not a single report that a person represented the goddess Persephone at the climax of the mysteries in the Telesterion.

Entry into the Telesterion was entirely different from entry into a theater. One came as a visitor and was specially prepared for that visit. In the theater, figures appeared on stage before the spectators; they were masked, as if they were spirits from the underworld.¹ We also know of no case in which a masked person confronted the initiates or a mask was shown to them during the *ἐποπτεία*. The initiates themselves were the “persons,” and even if unmasked, they were nonetheless, by the garments required for the procession, in a certain sense disguised. They had stepped into the role of the goddess who searches for her daughter and were prepared as Demeter herself had been. The imitation realized there was an *imitatio Cereris*. Men and women alike appeared in the role of the goddess – the goddess who searches for her daughter, something of herself, her own repetition in the daughter.

The separation of mother and daughter, in all its painfulness, may already be called archetypal: it is characteristic of the destiny of women. If men participate in this destiny as if it were their own, the possibility of this must be sought on a deeper level than that of the divided existence of women and men – here only women, there only men. Being separated, as a mother is separated from her daughter, and the longing for one’s own young girl, the Kore, must be characteristic of undivided human existence: for men as well as for women, though in a different manner for each.

The assumption is therefore false that the Eleusinian *ἐποπτεία* was originally – during a “matriarchal period” – a mystery only for women and that men merely imitated women by participating in it. For the imitation of the searching goddess by men leads to the same τέλος, to the same goal, to the same fulfillment as the *imitatio deae* of women: to *ἐποπτεία*, to *visio beatifica*. What took place was a true visit, a *visitatio* – for which the Greek word θεωρία may be used² – both for women and for men, and women and men stood in the same relation to the person visited and beheld.

¹ K. Kerényi, *Streifzüge eines Hellenisten* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1960), 45.

² K. Kerényi, *Die Religion der Griechen und Römer* (Munich: Droemer Knauer, 1963), 156.

The difference between *ἐποπτεία* and *θέαμα*, the spectacle of the theater, may also be defined in this way: *ἐποπτεία* stood closer to *θεωρία* in the original sense of the word – closer to a visit to images of the gods and their contemplation. Indeed, it would almost have been that – a “contemplative visit,” which is the precise meaning of *θεωρία* – had the visitors not been specially prepared, had they not already approached the vision through the *imitatio* of a deity, and had they not participated in it otherwise than one participates in the viewing of a statue.

The objects of *θεωρία*, in that original sense in which it formed a summit of Greek religion as a whole, were *ἄγαλματα*, statues of gods. They were meant to delight both the beings represented and human beings, to grant a most natural *visio beatifica*: this is what the word *ἄγαλμα* signifies.³ They were created by artists who were guided, driven, and constrained by their own imaginations and at the same time by a shared imagination – an imagination characteristic of the Greeks and preserved through a living tradition. That a statue was shown at the climax in the Telesterion is no more attested, suggested, or likely than the appearance of a human person in the role of Persephone. Statues did play a role in the Egyptian mysteries, and this could not be kept secret.

The *visio beatifica* of the *ἐπόπται* (the initiates at the highest level), the appearance of the Kore – who, as the Hierophant proclaimed, had already given birth⁴ – continues the *imitatio deae* and occurs as a division within the soul of the initiates, a division necessary for the experience of *visitatio* with the Ineffable One.

It was not an intellectual experience of evident insight – that every daughter is the separated continuation of her mother – that occurred here; such insight alone could hardly have produced the blissful effect. Rather, something suddenly became visible that surpassed the imagination of artists since it did not require the hand to be realized. From a mystic who was an artist, though not a Greek, comes the saying: “He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments and in stronger and better light than his perishing eye can see does not imagine at all.”⁵

The Eleusinian vision may also have possessed a power that philosophers were unwilling to concede to it. But above all, it laid claim to truth, and the soul of the *ἐπόπται* acknowledged it. The duality of the seeker and the sought was not thereby abolished. Through this duality – through the doubling of the mother into “Mother-and-Daughter” – the gaze opens; through it, sight suddenly stands open into the feminine source of life, indeed into the origin of life for women and men alike, just as through the ear of grain one peers, as it were, into the “abyss of the seed.”

The reason for this is surely that all human beings, not only women, carry within them this origin and this duality – that is, the mother and the daughter of the Eleusinian myth – and are thereby heirs of the infinite series not only of their fathers but also of their mothers. Hence the Eleusinian vision is also a ground for further reflection by psychologists.

Translated by Andrzej Serafin

³ K. Kerényi, *Griechische Grundbegriffe* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1964), 40.

⁴ K. Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1962), 99.

⁵ *The Writings of William Blake*, ed. G. Keynes, vol. 3 (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1925), 108.

PREREQUISITES OF INITIATION IN ELEUSIS

I wish to speak about certain prerequisites of initiation in Eleusis: to offer a small contribution to this colloquium on initiation rites and at the same time an addendum to my book *Die Mysterien von Eleusis*¹ from a standpoint that I have gained since its publication and that I now wish to submit for consideration in connection with other, more general points of view. Among these are two theses that, as I see it, have become common currency in discussions of initiations and the secret cults associated with them. They are already present in my work of the 1940s or can be derived from it as a consequence.

The first is the application of a famous verse by Goethe, from the “Epirrhema” to the poem *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, to such “natural” – as I called them – secret cults. They were, in Goethe’s words, “a holy public secret” (*heilig öffentlich Geheimnis*).² What was kept secret in Greek cult, as I explained elsewhere, was

certainly known to all who lived in the vicinity of the cult site in question, yet it was something unspeakable. Indeed, it possessed this character – the character of the ἄρρητον – independently of the arbitrary will of the cult participants. For it was profoundly – at that depth where it could become the object of cult – precisely unspeakable: a genuine secret. Only subsequently do explicit prohibitions transform the ἄρρητον [unspeakable] into an ἀπόρρητον [forbidden to say].³

The reasoning offered in this explanation may not have been accepted – or not explicitly accepted – by others; yet the consequence that follows from my *Urmensch und Mysterium*⁴ was accepted. Its result was the “not merely Greek view” – and here I cited a very precise ethnological parallel –

that in order to become human from primordial man, a second formation, creation, or birth is required. Among the Greeks, this second formation was sanctification through bread and through the gift of the mysteries, upon

¹ K. Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1962).

² J. W. v. Goethe, “Epirrhema,” v. 6, in *Werke*, ed. J. John et al., vol. I (Munich: Hanser, 1996), 358.

³ K. Kerényi, *Die Geburt der Helena* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1945), 49.

⁴ K. Kerényi, “Urmensch und Mysterium,” *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 15 (1947): 41-74.

which, according to this view, civilization rests no less than upon agriculture itself. Human beings come from the earth, but they become human only through the second phase of their creation.⁵

The Greek word ἀτελής, which I cited there, means both unfinished and uninitiated. It may therefore be concluded that initiations are, in the deepest sense, initiations into being human. Yet the regions in which this was actually the case would have to be precisely identified and entered onto the map of the world in order to survey the scope of this insight.

Does Eleusis also belong to the regions in which this general meaning of initiation – initiation into being human – applied? I would like to propose an even more general formulation, one that applies to all natural initiations and also to many non-natural ones, such as initiations into professions, classes (not age-classes), and estates. Every initiation that is more than an empty formality or a joke presupposes a life-content (x) which, in comparison with all other life-contents (n) already known to the person to be initiated, is something more or higher by a y : $n + y = x$, to put it in a formula. One possesses a life-content – even the newer and higher or fuller one, for example, the life-content of a more mature age. Those who are already within it need only a hint in order to understand one another regarding what they have in common. Those who are not yet within it cannot be given the same thing by any word. Hence initiatory communication concentrates upon y . One attempts to make the *difference* – not merely the transition (the *passage*) – noticeable, tangible, knowable by every means possible.

Herein lies our great difficulty with regard to the mysteries of Eleusis: two unknowns are at work. In all natural and in most non-natural initiations, we are able to imagine something corresponding to x . This makes comprehensible whatever can be determined in each case about the initiation rites. Not so in Eleusis. There, too, much can be determined about the ceremonies, yet we do not grasp what the decisive difference was. The multilayered and complicated nature of the rites does not encourage us to assume, as x , a life-content related to something entirely natural, of the kind into which maturity ceremonies initiate. The connection between agriculture and a better, more humane life is known as an Eleusinian view. The sequence – whether agriculture was the primary content of the mysteries and humane life its interpretation, or whether the humanity achieved through initiation was only later interpreted as life in agriculture – cannot be decided in advance.

I therefore limit myself to certain prerequisites of initiation in Eleusis and emphasize only that in which the difference between being initiated and not being initiated found expression as the highest stage of initiation and could also be precisely designated for the non-initiated. This is stated in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* in a perfect tense (line 480): ὄπωπεν. One has seen, and what one has seen one retains. This is what the perfect tense signifies. Initiation was accomplished through seeing – seeing in an intensive sense, since, in accordance with the perfect form, it possessed a lasting content as the completion of the preceding phases of initiation: the state of being initiated. Besides those phases, there

⁵ K. Kerényi, *Niobe* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1949), 86.

were also preparations that did not themselves belong to initiation but that were designated as its prerequisites just as clearly as was the importance of seeing.

A very general prerequisite – one that needs to be designated as such only for us – was, in the historical period of the mysteries, Greek mythology. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the Greek goddess of agriculture precedes the initiates through all the preparations by her own example. This observation has long been made and may be regarded as generally accepted. The goddess of agriculture first had to be initiated – certainly not into the secrets of agriculture and its blessing, of which she herself was the embodiment – in order to show the mysteries to the Eleusinians. This speaks not for an original, essential connection between initiation in Eleusis and agriculture but rather for a later unification. It becomes evident from the goddess’s example that fasting was one of the prerequisites of initiation. It is clearly designated as such by the confession – the σύνθημα – that the initiates had to utter before initiation could be completed. The duration and severity of the fast – nine days without nourishment – are evident from the details in the *Homeric Hymn* concerning Demeter’s condition before she revealed the mysteries:

v. 47: ἐννῆμαρ μὲν ἔπειτα κατὰ χθόνα πότνια Δηὸ στροφᾶτ’ αἰθομένας
δαΐδας μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχουσα, οὐδέ ποτ’ ἀμβροσίης καὶ νέκταρος ἠδυπότοιο
πάσσαι, ἀκηχεμένη, οὐδὲ χροῖα βάλλετο λουτροῖς
[for nine days then revered Deo wandered over the earth, holding blazing
torches in her hands, nor did she ever taste ambrosia and sweet-tasting
nectar, grieving, nor did she bathe her skin with water]

v. 200: ἀλλ’ ἀγέλαστος ἄπαστος ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος ἦστο
[but she sat, without smiling, abstaining from food and drink]

The σύνθημα⁶ designates, after fasting, drinking as the second prerequisite – according to Arnobius, the “drinking up” of the kykeon:⁷

Ἐνήστευσα, ἔπιον τὸν κυκεῶνα
[ieiunavi atque ebibi cyceonem]
[I fasted; I drank the kykeon]

In the *Homeric Hymn*, Demeter follows this sequence precisely and gives instructions for the preparation of the drink. The mixture consisted of barley, water, and tender leaves of *Mentha pulegium*.⁸ It is then emphasized that this was the kykeon – kykeon *par excellence* – since other mixed drinks were also called kykeon. The Eleusinian mixture was no secret, but the goddess’s instruction must be understood as ritual instruction:

⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 2.21.

⁷ Arnobius, *Adversus nationes*, 5.26.

⁸ Thus interpreted, correctly, the Homeric epithet by A. Delatte, *Le cycéon, breuvage rituel des mystères d’Éleusis* (Paris: Société d’édition “Les Belles Lettres,” 1955), 33. The green leaves are more effective than the dried ones.

v. 208: ἄνωγε δ' ἄρ' ἄλφι καὶ ὕδωρ δοῦναι μίξασαν πιέμεν γλήχωνι τερείνηι.
 ἦ δὲ κυκεῶ τεύξασα θεᾷ πόρεν ὡς ἐκέλευε
 [she bade them give her barley-meal and water mixed with tender pennyroyal
 to drink, and she made the kykeon and gave it to the goddess as she bade]

The goddess drank the beverage from a ritual vessel characteristic of the Eleusinian mysteries, probably also mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn* in the line missing after v. 211, as in the Orphic version.⁹ The form of this vessel is known from numerous representations and reconstructions, indeed from fragmentary examples excavated at Eleusis.¹⁰ The question whether a fermenting – or already fermented – drink was carried in such vessels during the procession from Athens to Eleusis was raised by the Greek archaeologist Andreas Skias,¹¹ but it was quickly dismissed by others on the grounds that, in the *Homeric Hymn*, there was no time for fermentation between the goddess's instruction and the offering of the finished drink. This objection fails to consider the goddess's power, which might have produced fermentation, just as Dionysus performs the wine miracle. In Eleusinian and Athenian households, the drink for the fasting initiates was probably prepared several days before they were permitted to drink it. Roasted barley may have been used – *tosta polenta* according to Ovid¹² – but roasting was not necessary. Grain can serve as the basis for alcoholic beverages even in an unroasted state. Added to this was *Mentha pulegium*.

Attention to the fact that the initiates, before they “saw” at Eleusis, consumed – even if only lightly – an alcoholic drink after a long, strict fast yields an additional standpoint from which what was seen in the Telesterion, the place of the consummation of initiation, must be judged, even if we knew nothing of its content. Regarding the effect of *Mentha pulegium*, known to us only as a carminative and calming agent in the form of peppermint tea, I consulted a specialist in phytochemistry renowned for his research into substances appearing in the history of religion – such as psilocybin, mescaline, and related compounds – Dr. Albert Hofmann of Basel. From him I learned that pennyroyal oil (*Oleum Pulegii*), extracted in southern Europe from *Mentha pulegium* for flavoring purposes, produces delirium, unconsciousness, and convulsions in high doses. Between the minimum and the maximum – peppermint tea and high-dose pennyroyal oil – there are of course intermediate stages.

Especially valuable to me was what Dr. Hofmann wrote to me about the kykeon after I had presented him with the entire philological and archaeological material. He prefaced his remarks by noting that the content of visions in chemically – i.e., drug-induced – visionary states is “largely or perhaps entirely determined by expectations, spiritual preparation, psychological disposition, and milieu,” and continued:

⁹ Frag. 52.5 Kern; cf. K. Kerényi, “Parva realia,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 36 (1960): 15.

¹⁰ L. Couve, “Kernos,” in *Dictionnaire des antiquités*, ed. C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, vol. 3, pt. 1 (Paris: Hachette, 1900), 823ff.; cf. Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis*, figs. 1a, 20, 24, and note 173. The vessel in question, which was carried on the head by women during the procession, is neither κέρνος nor θυμιατήριον, but there are examples that combine the functions.

¹¹ A. Skias, “Eleusiniakai keramographiai,” *Ephēmeris archaeologikē* (1901): 19ff.

¹² Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 5.450.

According to the evidence you present, it would be conceivable that fasting alone, in this case, opened the “doors of perception,” to speak with Huxley. The content of what was seen – the images – would then have been determined by expectations, ritual, and symbols. As an “initial spark” in such a state, even a small dose of alcohol could suffice, as you suggest as a possible explanation. *Mentha pulegium* would then indeed have only the role of a carminative, a quality that is undisputed. On the other hand, the essential oils contained in pennyroyal oil, in addition to the alcohol content of the kykeon, could very well have exerted a hallucinogenic effect upon persons sensitized by fasting.

Thus the importance of factors for which the natural scientist is responsible was confirmed by an outstanding specialist, alongside the historical and spiritual, mythological and religious prerequisites of initiation in Eleusis. The effect of prolonged fasting and the drinking of the kykeon in initiation rites – rites in which Aristotle emphasized *πάσχειν* and *διατεθῆναι*¹³ – deserves serious consideration, and *Mentha pulegium* deserves to become the object of special research. Preparation by means of fasting and consuming such a drink is already understandable if it could contribute, through precisely this combination, to the success of initiation. The content of the vision whose realization it promoted cannot be deduced from it. Here the mythology made present at the mystery festival played the guiding role – without yet exhausting all possible factors.¹⁴

The content of the vision appears less clearly in Euripides’s *Heracles* (v. 613), where the hero’s words – that he has seen what the initiates in Eleusis see – cannot be unambiguously related to his experiences in Hades; it appears clearly in a Milan papyrus,¹⁵ where Heracles is prepared to refuse initiation in Eleusis because he has already seen Persephone in the underworld. The encounter with death, in the form of the Queen of the Underworld, was something that allowed humanity to be fully experienced and at the same time enriched it with hope because such an experience was possible at all. This life-content, possessed by the initiates after their vision in a way that was different from the non-initiates, is perhaps not entirely unimaginable: it touches upon the common prerequisite of natural initiations wherever they meant becoming human. The pre-agricultural human core of the mysteries of Eleusis is – if one may slightly alter Goethe’s verse – their holy manifest secret.

Translated by Andrzej Serafin

¹³ Aristotle, frag. 15 Rose: “Aristotle claims that those who are being initiated into the mysteries are to be expected not to learn anything but to suffer some change [*πάσχειν*], to be put into a certain condition [*διατεθῆναι*]”; cf. Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis*, 105ff.

¹⁴ Further discussion in K. Kerényi, “Ground for the Eleusinian Vision,” in this issue of *Kronos Philosophical Journal*, 66-67.

¹⁵ *Papiri della Reale Università di Milano*, ed. A. Vogliano, vol. 1 (Milan: Hoepli, 1937), 177, nos. 20, 31; its importance was already recognized by W. F. Otto, “Der Sinn der eleusinischen Mysterien,” *Eranos Jahrbuch* 7 (1939): 105; cf. K. Kerényi, “Über das Geheimnis der eleusinischen Mysterien,” *Paideuma* 7, no. 2 (November 1959): 69ff.; Kerényi, *Die Mysterien von Eleusis*, 90-100.

LSD AND THE ROAD TO ELEUSIS¹

I am deeply impressed by the warm reception which I received here in California. I thank you so much. I must apologize for relying in my talk on my paper – speaking a foreign language.

The announced topic of this meeting embarrasses me to some extent. First, because it puts me too much in the center of this event: the inauguration of a library dedicated to preserving the legacy of consciousness research of the last 50 years. To this research, I made only a substantial contribution – substantial in the true sense of this word – namely, in the form of two substances. These became influential.

Second, I am embarrassed because you may expect from me a survey of 50 years of research in consciousness. But this research is the domain of psychologists, psychiatrists, and philosophers. Being a chemist, I am not competent to present such a survey. What I can offer you are only my personal experiences and ideas.

Precisely 50 years ago, in 1938, I synthesized a substance that had an unexpected influence on my life at the time and that later influenced and changed the lives of many others. I mean D-lysergic acid diethylamide, known as LSD-25, or just LSD. Its preparation and the discovery of its astonishing effects on the psyche have already been described and published so many times that they need not be repeated here. And in addition, Dr. Strittmatter has presented to you the whole story this evening.

I am often asked what has made the deepest impression upon me in my LSD experiments and whether I have arrived at new understandings through these experiences. Of greatest significance to me has been the insight that I attained as a fundamental understanding from all my LSD experiences, that what one commonly takes as “the” reality by no means signifies something fixed but rather something that is ambiguous. That there is not only one reality, but there are many realities, each comprising a different consciousness, also of the ego.

One can arrive at this insight through scientific reflection. The problem of reality is and has been from time immemorial a central concern of philosophy. There is, however, a fundamental distinction between approaching the problem of reality rationally, or obtruding upon this problem emotionally through an existential experience. The first planned LSD experience was therefore so deeply moving and alarming because everyday

¹ In October 1988, Albert Hofmann delivered the keynote address at the “Albert Hofmann in America” conference. The event served as both a celebration of “50 years of Consciousness Research” and an inaugural fundraiser for The Albert Hofmann Foundation, timed to mark the 50th anniversary of his first synthesis of LSD.

reality, which had until then been considered to be the only reality, dissolved, and an unfamiliar ego experienced another, unfamiliar reality.

Another problem also appeared: that of the innermost self, which, itself unmoved, was able to record these external and internal transformations. How could those strange changes in this experience of reality be explained? Evidently, the outer, objective material world did not change during the time I was under the influence of LSD. Therefore, something inside me, in the experiencing subject, must have been altered.

These reflections led me to conceive reality as the product of a transmitter, the material exterior world, and the receiver, our consciousness, the inner, spiritual center of a human individual.

In order to describe the mechanism by which reality comes into being through the interaction of these two factors, transmitter and receiver, one can use the metaphor of TV broadcasting. Evidently, both transmitter and receiver are needed to produce a TV picture. If either one is lacking, the TV screen will remain blank, and there will be no sound. Correspondingly, if only the material world existed without conscious humans or vice versa, no human reality would exist.

Let us now examine what we know about what comprises human reality, still using the transmitter-receiver metaphor. First, what is the fundamental difference between a transmitter and a receiver? Whereas there is only one transmitter, one outer material world, there are as many receivers as there are human beings. And whereas the outer material world exists objectively, human consciousness is a subjective spiritual entity. All that we know objectively about the exterior world, about the transmitter, has been revealed by scientific research. All that can be discerned objectively in the exterior world is matter and energy.

Matter, occurring in innumerable inorganic forms, the stars, the Earth with its oceans and mountains, with its organisms of the plant and animal kingdoms, with the products of human creativity, cities, objects of our daily life and of arts. We are surrounded by matter and are matter ourselves with our bodily existence. The science that is involved with the investigation of matter is chemistry.

The other component of the outer world that can be objectified is energy occurring as radiation, heat, and kinetic energy. So much for the transmitter.

Now, what do we know about the receiver? About human consciousness? Consciousness defies scientific definition, because it is what I need to contemplate what consciousness is. Our inability to grasp the very nature of consciousness can be illustrated by this metaphor: you can't pull yourself into the air by tugging on your own head. All attempts to define consciousness are tautological. Consciousness can only be described as the receptive and creative spiritual center of the ego, as the very core of what we call the "I." Consciousness remains a mystery, the very central mystery of our existence. This becomes even more evident if we examine its role as receiver in the production of reality.

The antennae of the human receiver are formed by our five sensory organs. The antenna for optical images, the eye, is capable of receiving electromagnetic waves and projecting a picture onto the retina that coincides with the object from which those waves emanate. It is important to realize that the human eye can only receive a very small band of the immeasurable spectrum of electromagnetic waves traveling through

the universe – namely, only waves measuring 0.4 to 0.7 thousandths of a millimeter. Within this small section, our eyes and the receiver, our consciousness, are capable of differentiating between different wavelengths and recording them as different colors.

In connection with our reflections on reality, it is important to note that colors do not exist in the exterior world. Mostly, we are not aware of this basic fact, even though it can be looked up in every textbook on physiology. All that actually, objectively exists in the outer world is matter, matter transmitting energy, transmitting electromagnetic oscillations of varying wavelength. If an object reflects or transmits electromagnetic waves with a length of 0.4 thousandths of a millimeter, then we say that it is blue. If it transmits waves with a length of 0.7 thousandths of a millimeter, we describe the object as being red. This means that the perception of color is a purely psychological and subjective event, taking place in the inner space of an individual. The brightly colored world as we see it does not exist on the outside. It exists only on the screen inside every individual, of every individual.

Regarding the acoustic world, there is a similar relationship between transmitter and receiver. The antenna for acoustic signals, the ear, displays a similar limited breadth of reception in its function as part of the receiver. And like colors, sounds do not exist objectively. What does exist objectively are, once again, waves, wavelike compressions and expansions of the air that are received by the ear, registered by the tympanic membrane, and transformed into the sensation of sound in the hearing center of the brain. Also, the other aspects of reality that are made accessible by the remaining three senses, those of taste, smell, and touch, are created by the interaction of transmitters in the outer world and receivers in the inner world. Just like sound and colors, touch, smell, and taste do not exist objectively. They, too, represent purely subjective phenomena occurring only in the inner space of individual humans.

The metaphor of reality as the product of transmitter and receiver clearly illustrates that the seemingly objective picture of the world surrounding us, that which we call reality, is actually a subjective picture. This basic fact signifies that the screen is not outside but inside every human being. We all carry inside our own personal image of reality, created by our own private receiver.

Understanding reality as a product of transmitter and receiver takes on an especially important meaning that could existentially alter our daily life when we consider the part that each receiver, each individual human, plays in the role of, in the formation of, reality. We become fully aware of the world-creating power vested in every human being. Our understanding makes us aware of the fact that each individual is the creator of his or her own world. For it is in each individual mind, and only there, that the world and the abundance of life it contains, that the stars and the sky become real, become human reality.

Our real, true freedom and responsibility is formed in our ability to create our own individual world. Once I have recognized what part of reality is objectively on the outside and what is subjectively taking place within me, then I am more aware of what I can change in my life, where I have a choice, and thus what I am responsible for. Conversely, I become aware of what is beyond my willpower and has to be accepted as an unalterable fact. This clarification of my potential and my responsibility can be of invaluable help.

I have the ability to choose what I want to receive from the endless, infinite program of the great transmitter of creation. That means that I can let those aspects of creation of

the cosmos that make me happy enter into my consciousness and thus imbue them with reality. Or I can let in other aspects, those that depress me. I am the one who creates the bright and the dark picture of the world. I am the one who invests the objects that are only shaped matter in the outer world not only with their color but with my affection and my love and also with their meaning.

This applies not only to my inanimate surroundings but also to living beings, to plants, to animals, and to my fellow humans. With this insight, the full creative power of love becomes evident. Just as I am the receiver for messages from my fellow man, I am in turn a transmitter for him, since I am materially located in his outer world. I can only convey my messages, my desires, even if they are purely spiritual, an idea or my love, only through that which characterizes the transmitter – namely, via matter and energy. An understanding expressed by a glance or a light touch, even this can only be conveyed by material fingers, by material eyes, by the material bodies of a loving couple.

This shows that communication would not be possible without matter and energy. The transmitter-receiver metaphor for reality reveals another basic fact: the fact that reality is not a fixed state. Rather, it is the result of a continuous input of material and energetic signals from the outer world and their continuous decoding and transformation into an inner conscious experience. This demonstrates that reality is a dynamic process, since it is created anew at each moment. Actual reality exists in the here and now, in the moment.

This explains why a child, living in the given moment much more extensively than an adult, perceives a real image of the world. It lives in a world permeated with more reality, more truth than that of an adult. To experience true reality in the moment is one of the main concerns of mysticism. That is where childlike and mystical experiences meet. If reality were not the result of continuous changes but a stationary condition, there would be no experience of the moment. There would not even be any time. Since the sensation of time is only possible through the perception of change, the dynamic character of reality creates time. The transmitter-receiver concept of reality also imparts an insight into the essence of time.

This metaphor of reality would appear to correspond to a dualistic concept of the world: external space, internal space, objective transmitter, subjective receiver. But reality, everyday reality, can be experienced and imagined only as a totality of transmitter and receiver. There would be no picture or sound on a TV screen if either one were missing. This example makes it evident that transmitter and receiver are nothing other than constructs of our intellect – useful, valuable, even necessary means for a rational understanding of the mechanisms by which human reality exists.

Dualism is but a construct of our intelligence that leads us to believe that the so-called objective exterior world stands in opposition to our inner subjective spiritual world. The failure to grasp that there is no dualism is one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, for the tragic, catastrophic developments in our world. This dualistic world view, so dominant in Western culture today, has its roots in Greek pre-Socratic philosophy and in the Judeo-Christian belief “to make the Earth your servant.”

The experience of the world as matter, as an object to which man stands opposed, has provided the philosophical basis for the development of modern natural sciences and technology. With this science and technology, man has changed the world, has subdued

nature. Its wealth has been exploited in a manner that may be characterized as plundering, and the sublime accomplishment of technological civilization, the comfort of Western industrial society, stands face to face with a catastrophic destruction of the environment. Our objective intellect has progressed even to the heart of the matter, to the nucleus of the atom and its splitting, and has unleashed energies that threaten all life on our planet. The misuse of this knowledge could not have emerged from a consciousness of reality in which human beings perceive themselves as an integral part of living nature and the universe.

All of today's attempts to make amends for this damage by adopting environmentally protective measures will remain futile or superficial patchwork if no change of the dualistic world view ensues, until it is replaced by an existential experience of a deeper reality. The experience of such an all-encompassing reality is impeded in an environment rendered dead by human hands, such as that found in our great cities and industrial districts. Here the contrast between self and outer world becomes especially evident. It is these sensations that impress themselves on everyday consciousness in Western industrial society and everywhere technological civilization extends. It is also these morbid sensations that strongly influence modern art and literature.

In a natural environment, there is less danger that a split-reality experience will arise. In a field and a forest and in the animal world sheltered therein, indeed, in every garden a reality is perceptible that is infinitely more real, older, deeper, and more wonderful than everything made by man, a reality that will endure long after the inanimate, mechanical, and concrete world has vanished, become rusted, and fallen into ruin. In the sprouting, growth, blooming, fruiting, death, and regeneration of plants; in their relationship with the sun, whose light they are able to convert into chemically bound energy in the form of organic compounds out of which all that lives on our Earth is built; in the being of plants – in all this, the mysterious, inexhaustible, eternal life energy is evident, the same that has brought us forth and takes us back into its womb, and in which we are sheltered and united with all living things.

We are not leading to a sentimental enthusiasm for nature, to the *retour à la nature* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romantic movement that sought the idyllic in nature, that can also be understood as a reaction to humankind's feeling of separation from nature. What is needed today is a fundamental, existential experience of the oneness of all living things, of an all-encompassing reality.

But this happens less and less as the primordial flora and fauna of Mother Earth must yield to a dead technological environment. The experience of reality as the ego opposed to the outer world had already begun to form itself during Greek antiquity, as I mentioned before. At that time, people no doubt already knew the suffering connected with a dualistic consciousness of reality. The Greek genius tried to cure this disease by supplementing the objective Apollonian world view with the Dionysian world of experience, in which the split was abolished in ecstatic inebriation.

It is remarkable what the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote about this in his book *The Birth of Tragedy*. We can read there:

It is either through the influence of narcotic potions, of which all primitive peoples and races speak in hymns, or through the powerful approach of

spring penetrating with joy all of nature, that those Dionysian stirrings arise, which in their intensification leads the individual to forget himself completely. [...] Not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once again by the magic of the Dionysian rite, but alienated, hostile, and subjugated nature again celebrates her reconciliation with her prodigal son, man.

So far, Nietzsche.

The Dionysian cult was closely connected with the Mysteries of Eleusis, the most important mysteries of the antique world, which were celebrated annually in the fall over a span of about 2,000 years. These mysteries were established by the goddess of agriculture and grain, Demeter, as thanks for the recovery of her daughter, Persephone, whom Hades, the god of the underworld, had abducted. A first offering of thanks was the ear of grain, which was presented to Triptolemus, the first high priest of Eleusis. The cultivation of grain was then disseminated over the whole world. Persephone, however, was not allowed to remain with her mother always. She had to return for a part of the year to the underworld. During this time, it was winter on Earth, the plants died and withdrew into the ground, only to awaken to new life early in the year with Persephone's journey back to Earth.

The myth of Demeter, Persephone, and Hades formed, however, only the external framework for the events at the mysteries. The climax of the ceremonies, which began with a procession from Athens to Eleusis lasting several days, was a concluding ceremony of initiation. The initiates were forbidden by penalty of death to divulge what they had learned and beheld in the innermost holy chamber of the temple, the Telesterion. Not one of the multitude that were initiated ever divulged these mysteries. Pausanias, Plato, Roman emperors such as Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and many other known figures of antiquity were party to this initiation. It must have been an illumination, a visionary glimpse of a deeper reality, an insight into the true basis of the universe. We can deduce this from the initiates' own statements about the value and the importance of the vision.

For example, it is reported in a Homeric hymn: "Blissful is he among men on earth who has beheld this. [...] he who has not been initiated into the holy mysteries remains a corpse in gloomy darkness." Pindar speaks of the Eleusinian benediction with the following words: "Blissful is he who, after having beheld this, enters on the way beneath the earth. He knows the end of life as well as its divinely granted beginning." Cicero, also a famous initiate, said about the splendor that fell upon him, upon his life from Eleusis: "Not only have we received the reason there that we may live in joy, but also besides that we may die with better hopes."

How could the mythological representation of such an obvious occurrence, which runs its course annually before our very eyes, the seed grain that is dropped into the earth, dies there, prove to be such a deep comforting experience as that attested by the cited reports? It is traditional knowledge that the initiates were furnished with a potion, the kykeon, for the final ceremony. It is also known that barley extract and mint were ingredients of the kykeon. Scholars of mythology such as Károly Kerényi are of the opinion that the kykeon was mixed with a hallucinogenic drug.

I was associated with Kerényi in the 1960s doing research on this mysterious potion, an investigation as to what kind of hallucinogen could have been contained in the kykeon. A reference to this collaboration is made in Kerényi's book *Eleusis*, which was published in 1977 in New York. And it is from that text that the preceding statements on the Eleusinian mysteries were taken. Later, in the 1970s, I was again engaged in the investigation of the hallucinogen in the kykeon. This time I worked in collaboration with Gordon Wasson, the famous ethnomycologist with whom I had worked in the research on magic Mexican plants, the psilocybin mushroom and ololiuqui; and Carl Ruck, a professor at Boston University who was a classical scholar specialized in Greek ethnobotany. We published the results of our studies in 1978 in the book *The Road to Eleusis*.

In that publication, we put forth the hypothesis that the kykeon's effect could have been due to an LSD-like preparation of ergot. From investigations in the Sandoz research laboratories on all the various species of ergot fungus, I knew that ergot growing on the wild grass *Paspalum distichum*, which is widespread in the Mediterranean region, contains the same alkaloids that we had found in the ancient Mexican drug ololiuqui – namely, lysergic acid amide (LSA) and lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, closely related to lysergic acid diethylamide, LSD. The high priest of Eleusis had access to this hallucinogen just in front of the temple. He just had to collect the infected grains of *Paspalum distichum* growing there, grind them, and put the powder into the kykeon in order to have a perfect hallucinogenic potion. Whether or not they really did so, of course, must remain a hypothesis, but a hypothesis with a high degree of probability. And Demeter was the goddess of grain.

The cultural-historical meaning of the mysteries of Eleusis, their influence on European intellectual and spiritual history, can scarcely be overestimated. The hallucinogen of the kykeon may link these mysteries with the role of LSD in our time. What we urgently need now is evidently the same as was already needed during antiquity: to be freed from an experience of reality in which the individual feels himself to be separate from the outer world. We need to be healed from a dualism that had and still has such catastrophic consequences, as expounded in the preceding reflections. Insights into the essence of reality, which I tried to provide using the transmitter-receiver metaphor, could help us to overcome this dualistic world view. However, insights that are solely the result of rational reflections are not effective enough to become decisive factors in our lives. Only when accompanied by an existential, emotional experience do they grow strong enough to be able to influence and alter our view of life. Such an emotional confirmation of an insight, of a truth, can be achieved through meditation.

I see the true importance of LSD, the kykeon of our time, in its ability to provide a pharmacological aid to meditation aimed at the experience of a deeper, all-encompassing reality, a reality in which the outer material and the inner spiritual worlds, transmitter and receiver, are experienced as one. And I thank you for your attention.

ON THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES¹

[Hanscarl Leuner] Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues. Let us begin. I welcome you very warmly, especially on behalf of our board and the committees that have prepared this congress. It is a great pleasure and an honor for us that you have come in such abundance, in such great numbers, and especially that representatives and colleagues from so many foreign countries – nineteen in total – are among us and interested in the same topic as we are. We believe this topic is relevant, not just for insiders, but relevant in a much broader context, scientifically on the one hand and, on the other hand, in a certain respect, socially.

It seems that we have filled a gap with this topic and this invitation and that a kind of longing exists – a longing we also had – to once gain an overview of a broad subject. And this is the subject that has concerned humanity not just from birth but for millennia – namely, its consciousness.

When one organizes such a congress, one initially sets off with full sails. To prepare ourselves mentally for this great step forward in our society, we have tried, in the form of a few trial runs, to get an insight into how our concern is perceived and what acceptance it receives. This is the sixth event; five symposia have taken place in previous years, and we have seen how the interest has grown ever greater.

Now, if one reflects and looks at our program, and if one reflects – which we naturally have done, especially now in view of these diverse topics – one must, of course, ask oneself, what are we actually doing here? Or what are we actually bringing you? What are we actually expecting of you? And a piece of the criticism – our self-criticism, I would say – has already been delivered to us by the press. I will answer that shortly. So, in the *Göttinger Tageblatt*, at the end of a very short article about worlds of consciousness, it said, “Thus, different topics are treated, such as experimental basic research on humans, religious experience and meditation, or chemistry and neurobiology of psychoactive substances.” So, what is this? Is it a potpourri? Is it a miscellany? Is it just thrown together without reflection? You see, of course, if you look at the program, we already have certain sections, and we have consulted with the chairs of the sections in the most diverse fields. We have done a great deal in that direction. What have we done? We did a kind of brainstorming. We tried to capture everything that is relevant in the individual fields today. And based on that, we invited the respective, mostly excellent speakers. And I ask you, now that you are here – and you will do so, because you have come to this event – to forget the walls between the little drawers of categories. Yesterday, another press representative asked me, “Well, how

¹ In September 1992, Albert Hofmann delivered the talk “Die Eleusinischen Mysterien” at the Internationaler Kongreß des Europäischen Collegiums für Bewußtseinsstudien “Welten des Bewußtseins” in Göttingen.

is it actually? You've organized psychotherapy, and then afterwards, assisted dying. Are you doing psychotherapy now, or are you doing assisted dying?" Right? And in response, I told him, "You see, that is precisely what we are striving for: that we open the drawers between the individual categorical compartments and bring everything together because it belongs together." And it belongs together, of course, factually, because, on the one hand, the psychotherapist can treat and, on the other hand, he, along with the theologian, is probably the one most called upon to assist people in the final hour of their lives, or on the way there.

So, we are opening the drawers. And I see this whole congress, if you will, as a large brainstorming session. Brainstorming means putting the material on the table without judgment. The organization of this large body of material is then up to you, up to us. And beyond that, you can obtain the documentation, you can listen to all the lectures again on audio, some also on video. So, at home, we can again meditate on the connections that are first presented here, naturally, in individual spots. Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you very pleasant, stimulating days. I wish you, even in the background, conversations with professional colleagues and with others. And don't hesitate to register for discussions on individual questions or to speak with the respective people afterward, to come together. There is a great opportunity to communicate here, even across national borders. It is indeed uplifting when you see that you can talk about similar things with colleagues from Brazil, from the United States, from St. Petersburg; you can learn similar things from each other and perhaps plan joint projects later on. Thank you very much for listening. I now ask Mr. Dittrich to take the floor.

[Adolf Dittrich] Yes. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, as a chairperson, one essentially has two tasks. The first task is to introduce the speaker, and the second task is to be a policeman – that is, to ensure that the speaker does not go over his time excessively. The first part of my task is very simple. I almost would have said every baby knows Albert Hofmann as the discoverer of LSD and psilocybin. What is perhaps a little less known about Mr. Hofmann is that he created pharmaceuticals with which his former company still makes hundreds of thousands in sales annually. That, perhaps, as an addition. My second task, my second task as a policeman is a bit more difficult. It will be very hard for me to stop Mr. Hofmann if he exceeds his time. If he does it to the absolute maximum, then I will come by here with a little note on which is written: "Albert, be careful with the dosage."

[Albert Hofmann] Thank you very much for the kind introduction. Ladies and gentlemen! However much human consciousness, in terms of its content of knowledge and wisdom, may have changed over the millennia, the fundamental features of its nature have remained the same to this day. It is the same fundamental problems and longings that have occupied humanity since the beginning of recorded history. These are, on the one hand, engagement with the material outer world, with nature, for the securing and satisfaction of physical needs and, on the other hand, the striving for transcendence as a search for meaning in the spiritual world.

In our present time, the general consciousness has turned one-sidedly to the material aspect of our existence. A threatening ecological, social, and spiritual collapse is the consequence of this materialistic world view. The salvation from this threatening situation

can only come from a change in consciousness. The focus on the material foundations of our existence must be brought back into balance with the spiritual, transcendental needs of the human being. The great example of such a balance is offered to us in Greek antiquity by the Eleusinian Mysteries. I would now like to speak about their significance for the present day.

I begin with the citation of praise for these mysteries, which is contained in an epic poem known as a *Homeric Hymn*. It reads, “Blessed is he among men on earth who has seen these mysteries. He who has not been initiated into the holy mysteries, who has had no part in them, remains a corpse in dull darkness.”²

The mysteries meant here are, as has already been said, those of Eleusis. These were the most significant mysteries of antiquity, celebrated over a period of almost 2,000 years, from about 1500 BCE to the fourth century CE, in Eleusis, Greece, in honor of the grain goddess, Demeter, and her daughter, Persephone.

The story that led to the founding of the sanctuary of Eleusis is detailed in the aforementioned *Homeric Hymn*. The author of this hymn and the place of its origin are unknown. The time of its creation is likely around the end of the seventh century BCE.

One day, as Persephone, daughter of Zeus and Demeter, was picking flowers in a beautiful meadow, she was abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. Her mother searched for her in vain, finally learning of her daughter’s abduction from Helios. Deeply grieved, Demeter stayed away from Olympus, after learning that Zeus, her husband, had also consented to the abduction. Disguised as a simple woman dwelling among mortals, Demeter found a friendly reception in the palace of the king of Eleusis, Celeus, and his wife, Metanira. As thanks for the hospitality, Demeter, after revealing herself as a goddess, established a temple in Eleusis. To punish the Olympian gods for the abduction of her daughter, Demeter let all the plants on earth die, so that humanity was threatened with extinction.

The gods thus feared losing the worship and sacrifices of men and begged Demeter to make the earth fruitful again. She only complied with this request after Zeus had commanded his brother Hades in the underworld to return Persephone to her mother. Mother and daughter returned to Olympus, but Persephone had to return to her husband in the underworld for one-third of the year, when it became winter on earth. But every year, with Persephone’s journey to earth in the spring, the plant world awakened to new bloom and fruit-bearing.

Before Demeter returned to the other gods on Olympus, she gave King Celeus instructions on how the rites in her honor were to be performed in her temple. These were secret rules, mysteries, which had to be strictly observed. Their disclosure or violation was punishable by death. As thanks for the good outcome of the drama, Demeter gave the first initiate of Eleusis, Triptolemus, an ear of grain with the commission to teach mankind agriculture.

The cult of Demeter and Persephone in Eleusis soon became an important part of the state life of Athens and then developed further into a Panhellenic institution, acquiring universal significance during the time of the Roman Empire.

² *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, v. 480-82 (frag. 3 [A 1] Colli).

What was this message that was proclaimed in Eleusis and made this cult the most influential, spiritually significant mystery of antiquity? This question cannot be answered in detail, as the veil of the hidden, the mysterious, which was given by the strict law of secrecy, has not been lifted over the millennia. Based on the testimonies of great initiates, we can only form an idea about the basic features and the spiritual significance that the teachings of Eleusis had for the individual.

It was not actually a different, new religion that was proclaimed in Eleusis. This can be concluded from the fact that the initiates, when they returned from the mysteries to their hometowns, remained faithful to the cult of the local religion. They must have been revelations about the nature of human existence, about the meaning of life and death, that were bestowed upon the initiate. We know of prayers from mystes, from initiates, to the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, in which they implored her to awaken and keep alive the memory of the holy consecration. For the consecration was to remain an experience that would radiate throughout one's entire life and transform one's existence.

Participation in the mysteries was an experience of a special kind that brought about a change in the soul of the initiate and cannot be described by external events. This is evident from the testimonies of famous initiates. Thus, Pindar speaks of the Eleusinian blessing with the following words: "Blessed is he who, after having seen this, enters the path beneath the earth. He knows the end of life and the beginning given by Zeus."³ Cicero, also a famous initiate, likewise testified to the splendor that fell upon his life from Eleusis when he said, "Not only have we received the reason there that we may live in joy, but also that we may die with better hope."⁴

The initiates apparently experienced in the vision the totality of being and the eternally creative primordial ground. It must have been an encounter with the ineffable, only metaphorically representable, an encounter with the divine. It is striking how the Eleusinian experience is repeatedly described in antitheses: darkness and light, terror and bliss. This ambivalence is also attested in other descriptions, such as that of Aelius Aristides. "Eleusis is at once the most terrifying and the most luminous of all that is divine for humans."⁵ The Emperor Marcus Aurelius also names the mysteries among the gifts in which the care of the gods for humanity became visible.

As much as has been passed down to us about the significance of the visionary spectacle conveyed in the mysteries, little is known about the structure of the ritual through which the illuminating vision was imparted to the initiates. In contrast, the events on the long path that led to this central ritual in the Telesterion, in the innermost sanctuary, have been documented in detail.

They began with the so-called lesser mysteries, which were held in the spring in Athens, in the flower month of Anthesterion. The celebrations of the actual great mysteries also began in Athens. They were held annually in the autumn, in the month of Boedromion, corresponding to late September or early October in today's calendar. After four days of

³ Pindar, frag. 137a Snell-Maehler, quoted in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.3.17 (frag. 3 [A 2] Colli).

⁴ Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.14.36 (frag. 3 [B 2] Colli).

⁵ Aelius Aristides, *Eleusinius (The Eleusinian Oratton)*, 2.

rites and festivities in the city, the solemn procession from Athens to the approximately fourteen-mile-distant Eleusis began on the fifth day with great pomp.

During the procession, rites, sacrificial ceremonies, and purification ceremonies were performed, which took place in public and are therefore handed down in all detail. The sixth day was spent in Eleusis, in the surroundings and outer districts of the sanctuary, with sacrifices, celebrations, and purifying fasting. This too has been reported in detail. But what then happened in the night at the climax of the Eleusinian festival, inside the sanctuary in the Telesterion to which only the priests and the initiates had access, has remained essentially a secret. The law of secrecy has been observed throughout all time.

But what is known, and this is of particular importance in the context of my lecture's theme, is that before the climax of the initiation, before the illuminating vision, the initiates were administered a sacred drink, the kykeon. It is also recorded that the kykeon was prepared from barley and mint. In more recent times, however, scholars of Eleusis have put forward the hypothesis that the kykeon must have also contained a psychedelic substance. Only this would explain how it was possible for the priests to induce an ecstatic-visionary state in hundreds of initiates simultaneously, programmatically, so to speak.

Thus, the problem of the kykeon became a significant part of the secret of Eleusis. Could the visionary experience in Eleusis be induced by rites unknown to us alone, or was a psychopharmaceutical, an ecstatic-state-producing plant extract, added to the kykeon? But this also touches upon a current topic of our time. It concerns the much-discussed question today of whether, under certain circumstances, the use of consciousness-altering drugs to gain new insights into the spiritual world is epistemologically, ethically, and religiously justifiable.

Before we pursue this current question further, let us return to the problem of the kykeon. If the drink contained a psychedelic substance, what kind of psychedelic could it have been? With this question, mystery researchers – first Professor Károly Kerényi, who published two books on the mysteries of Eleusis, and then the American ethnomycologist Gordon Wasson – approached me because, through the discovery of the highly potent psychedelic LSD and through the investigation of psychedelic Mexican magical plants, I had become an expert on the chemical side of the problem.

The investigation into the possible hallucinogen of the kykeon, which I conducted together with Carl Ruck, a professor of ethnobotany of Greek mythology at Harvard University, and Gordon Wasson, uncovered interesting possible connections between the mystery cult of Eleusis and still existing magical rites among Indian tribes in remote areas of southern Mexico.

In the region of the Mazatecs and Zapotecs in the southern mountains of Mexico, the medicine men still use today, as they have for millennia, a hallucinogenic drink in their magically determined healing practices, in a religious-ceremonial context, a drink prepared from the seeds of certain morning glory species, from *Turbina corymbosa* and from *Ipomoea violacea*. We have investigated the active ingredients of this drug, known as ololiuqui, in the chemical-pharmaceutical research laboratories of Sandoz in Basel. They were alkaloids that also occur in ergot – namely, lysergic acid amide and lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, thus very close relatives of lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD. Even

the non-chemist can hear the relationship: lysergic acid amide in ololiuqui and lysergic acid diethylamide, which is LSD.

Now, for those who don't know, a brief explanation of what ergot is. Ergot refers to growths of the fungus *Claviceps*, which parasitizes on grain and also on wild grasses. The ears infested by the fungus form dark spurs instead of the normal, light-colored grains – that is the ergot. There are different types of ergot that contain different ingredients, different alkaloids, and produce different effects, depending on the grass, depending on the grain on which the ergot grows.

Now, the exact same LSD-like active ingredients as in ololiuqui, that is, lysergic acid amide, we also found in the ergot of the wild grass *Paspalum distichum*, a grass that is widespread in the Mediterranean region. From these findings, it was now plausible to deduce the hypothesis that the same psychedelic substances used today for the preparation of the sacred ololiuqui drink were used as a consciousness-altering additive to the kykeon. The priests of Eleusis only needed to collect the ergot from the *Paspalum* grass, which surely grew abundantly in the vicinity of the sanctuary, pulverize it, and add it to the kykeon to impart consciousness-altering potency to it.

These connections suggest that in the sanctuary of the grain goddess Demeter, a drink prepared from a special ergot could have been the sacred drug of Eleusis. A further connection of ergot with Eleusis could also be seen in the fact that an Eleusinian ritual consisted of the presentation of an ear of grain by the priest. This ritual has been linked to the myth of the barley corn, which, sunk into the earth, dies to give life to a new plant that rises to the light again in spring. A symbol for the annual change of Persephone from the darkness of the underworld to the light of Olympus, a symbol also for the continuation of life in the cycle of dying and being born.

If the hypothesis is correct that the kykeon contained a consciousness-altering LSD-like drug, then the mysteries of Eleusis are connected to our time not only by a spiritual-existential concern but also by the problem of the controversial use of consciousness-altering substances for attaining mystical insights.

In the second part of my lecture, I would now like to address the following questions. First, what was the intellectual-historical function of the Eleusinian mysteries in Greek antiquity and their significance for the present day? Second, why and to what extent can these mysteries be a model for our time?

The great importance and long duration of the mysteries indicate that they met a deep psychological need, a spiritual longing. If we are to follow Nietzsche's view, then it was a split consciousness of reality that characterized the Greek spirit from the very beginning. Greece was the cradle, the birthplace of an experience of reality in which the self feels separated from the outside world. Here, the conscious separation of the individual from the environment developed earlier than in other cultures.

This dualistic world view, which the German physician and writer Gottfried Benn described as the neurosis of European fate, subsequently shaped European intellectual history and civilization decisively and is still fully effective in the Western world today. A self that is capable of confronting the external world, that can view the world as an object, this mind, capable of objectifying the external world, was the prerequisite for the emergence of Western scientific natural research. This objective world view was already

effective in the first documents of scientific thought, in the cosmological theories of the Greek pre-Socratic philosophers.

This position of man in relation to nature, from which a thorough domination of nature became possible, was then clearly formulated and philosophically justified for the first time by Descartes in the seventeenth century. In Europe, a natural science emerged that was completely dedicated to the objectifiable and measurable and succeeded in clarifying the physical and chemical laws in the structure of the material world. Its knowledge enabled a previously unprecedented use of nature and its forces. It led to the worldwide industrialization and technologization of almost all areas of life that we see today. This brought a previously almost unimaginable comfort and material prosperity to a part of humanity. At the same time, however, as we know all too well, this was associated with a catastrophic destruction of the natural environment, which has already escalated into a worldwide ecological crisis today. Even more serious than the material damages are the spiritual damages caused by this development, which has led to the prevailing materialistic world view of today.

The individual has lost the connection with the spiritual, divine primordial ground of all being. Unprotected, insecure, left alone to himself, the individual today stands lonely before a soulless, material, chaotic, threatening environment. The seed of this dualistic world view, which has had such catastrophic effects in our time, was already, as previously explained, present in Greek antiquity. But the Greek genius attempted healing by shaping the outer, material world, which was subject to Apollo, to maximum beauty and supplementing this colorful, sensual, but also painful Apollonian world view with the Dionysian world of experience, in which the subject-object split was abolished in ecstatic intoxication.

Nietzsche writes about the Dionysian experience of the world in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

It is either through the influence of narcotic potions, of which all primitive peoples and races speak in hymns, or through the powerful approach of spring penetrating with joy all of nature, that those Dionysian stirrings arise, which in their intensification leads the individual to forget himself completely. [...] Not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once again by the magic of the Dionysian rite, but alienated, hostile, and subjugated nature again celebrates her reconciliation with her prodigal son, man.⁶

So says Nietzsche.

The mysteries of Eleusis were closely connected with the celebrations and festivals in honor of the god Dionysus. They contributed significantly to the healing, to the overcoming of the split between man and nature – one can also say, to the abolition of the separation between creator and creation. That was the actual great task of the Eleusinian mysteries. Their cultural-historical significance, their influence on European intellectual history

⁶ F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, ch. 1.

can hardly be overestimated. Here, the Greek man, divided by his rational, objectifying mind, found healing in a mystical experience of wholeness, which let him believe in the immortality of an eternal being.

In early Christianity, this belief lived on, albeit with different symbols. It is also found as a promise in various places in the Gospels, most purely in the Gospel of John, for example, in chapter 14, verses 16 to 20. Jesus speaks there to his disciples as he takes leave of them: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another comforter, to be with you forever; the Spirit of truth. [...] On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." Here, dualism is overcome.

Ecclesiastical Christianity, however, defined by the dualism of creator-creature, has largely extinguished the Eleusinian-Dionysian legacy of antiquity in its nature-alien religiosity. In the Christian sphere of faith, only a few gifted individuals attest to a timeless, comforting reality experienced in spontaneous visionary experience, to which in antiquity countless people had access through the initiation at Eleusis. The *Unio Mystica* of the Catholic saints and the visionary sight, as described in the writings of such representatives of Christian mysticism as Jakob Böhme, Meister Eckhart, Angelus Silesius, Teresa of Ávila, and many others are obviously akin in essence to the enlightenment that was granted to the initiates in the Eleusinian mysteries.

The fundamental importance of a mystical experience of wholeness for the health of a humanity suffering from a one-sided, rational-materialistic world view is emphasized today not only by adherents of such Eastern religious currents as Zen Buddhism but also by leading representatives of psychology and psychiatry. Even more significant is that not only medical but increasingly broader, even ecclesiastical circles of our society see the overcoming of the dualistic world view as a prerequisite and the foundation for the recovery and spiritual renewal of Western civilization and culture.

The official Christian churches, whose dogmas correspond to a pronouncedly dualistic world concept, are unable to provide a framework for such a renewal. It is private associations and groups that are trying to satisfy the need and longing for a holistic experience of the world that corresponds to our current knowledge and consciousness. Workshops and courses of all kinds for yoga, meditation, and self-discovery are offered in large numbers, all with the goal of a change in consciousness or an expansion of consciousness.

It is no coincidence that in these groups drugs are also used as pharmacological aids to produce altered states of consciousness. And indeed, they are the same types of drugs that were used in Eleusis and are still in use today among certain Indian tribes, as mentioned. They are the psychedelics or, as they are also called, the entheogens.

A prerequisite for a meaningful, psychologically beneficial use of these substances, which can be described as sacred drugs, is the external setting and the spiritual preparation of the subject, as was done in an exemplary manner in Eleusis. The Indians believe that, if the LSD-like ololiuqui drug is taken by a person who has not prepared for the ceremony through fasting and prayer, that person will go mad or even be killed. This wise and cautious application, based on millennia of experience, has unfortunately often not been observed in the use of psychedelic drugs in our society, resulting in predictable consequences, in the form of psychotic breakdowns and serious accidents. This was the cause that led in the 1960s to the prohibition of the use of this type of drug, even in conventional medicine.

In Eleusis, where the preparations and the framing ceremonies were optimal, as was the case among the Indians, where the application is in the hands and under the control of the medicine man, these types of drugs have found a blessed use. Eleusis could be a model for our society in this regard, as could the Indians. In conclusion, let me touch upon the fundamental question: Why were entheogenic drugs used in Eleusis in a religious-ceremonial context? And why is such a use in Christian worship hardly conceivable?

The answer is that in Christian worship a divine power enthroned in heaven, that is, a power outside the individual, is revered. In Eleusis, on the other hand, a transformation within the individual was sought, a visionary insight into the ground of being, which made him a mystes, an epopt, an initiate. A transformation within the individual is what is needed again today. The necessary changes toward a holistic consciousness as a prerequisite for overcoming materialism and for a new relationship with nature cannot be delegated to society or the state. The change must and can only take place within the individual.

Such a change can and should also be pursued without the aid of psychopharmaceuticals, through meditation and daily effort. For the capacity for mystical experience is inherent in every human being. It belongs to the essence of human spirituality. It is independent of the external, social condition of the individual. That is why in Eleusis, men and women, free and slaves, could be initiated. Eleusis can be a model. Eleusis-like centers could unite and strengthen the many spiritual currents of our time, which all have the same goal: that of creating the conditions for a better world, without war and without environmental destruction, for a world with happier people through a change of consciousness in the individual. Thank you.

[Audience Member] Does ergot grow in our regions, and could it have been the substance used at Eleusis? If not, are there local psychoactive substances with effects comparable to those hypothesized for the Eleusinian kykeon?

[Albert Hofmann] No, ergot also grows in these regions, but it does not correspond to what was used in Eleusis. On the other hand, mushrooms grow in our regions, the *Psilocybe semilanceata* is the name of this mushroom, and it contains psilocybin and psilocin, which are structurally and chemically very closely related to LSD in their psychological effects.

[Audience Member] What do you see as the fundamental cause of the present cultural or spiritual crisis, and how did the ancient Greeks – especially the mysteries – attempt to resolve this problem?"

[Albert Hofmann] I believe I have emphasized that sufficiently in my remarks, what the cause of the present misery is in principle – namely, dualism. But the Greek spirit, in Greece, this dualism existed. Although I believe that the mysteries stem from the time of the matriarchy. But later, attempts were made to overcome this dualism or at least to bring it into balance. To bring the devotion to the materialistic outer world into balance with the inner experience. A complete immersion in the inner being is not possible. We have to prove ourselves again and again in the outer world. And the Greek genius was also unique in this respect. The Greeks tried to shape this material outer world, to which we

belong with our physicality, to maximum beauty on the one hand; and on the other hand, they then tried to compensate for this devotion to the material world with the Dionysian experience, with the experience of wholeness, with the female part of our existence.

[Audience Member] Can such mystical or psychedelic experiences have a social or collective meaning, or are they essentially private and incommunicable? And why, historically, was there such a strict prohibition on speaking about the Eleusinian Mysteries?

[Albert Hofmann] It is certainly the case that the experience of which we speak, this holistic experience, is of course limited to the individual. That is to say, one cannot simply say society should change, but the individual must change. And what you mentioned, regarding the mystery, I believe it was primarily the ineffable, which presents itself in this very individual, very personal experience of the psychedelic intoxication. This ineffable should be respected, should be honored. It makes no sense to dissect with words something that one cannot communicate. For this reason, it was forbidden in ancient Greece – one can speak of the meaning, but exactly what it was, what the ceremony was like, what one experienced, one should not speak about that. There is a wonderful poem by Hegel titled “Eleusis.” And there, the problem is mentioned, where Hegel says one should not dissect with words and desecrate what is individually, very personally ineffable. Our language is tailored to our everyday world. It arose from this everyday world, and there, in this mystical state, one encounters states for which there is yet no language and for which a language can be given. That is one of the reasons why these festivals were called mysteries, because the ineffable, very personal, individual was expressed therein.

[Audience Member] What should one do with such an ineffable experience? How should it be used or applied in life?

[Albert Hofmann] I must leave that up to every man, what he can make of it. To every man and every woman.

[Audience Member] But what does that have to do with science?

[Albert Hofmann] It has to do with consciousness studies, with changing consciousness, it has a great deal to do with it. And that is the theme of this conference.

[Audience Member] Are psychedelic substances necessary in order to attain mystical experiences, or can such states be reached without drugs?”

[Albert Hofmann] Certainly one also can, and this is surely well-known, one can have these states spontaneously, to have spontaneous visions. Every person, especially in their childhood, has experienced these states. This feeling of being embedded in a deeper being, this feeling of oneness with nature. This state was described by the mystics I mentioned, by the Catholic enlightened ones. This state can be achieved through fasting, through isolation, through meditation, through a striving in everyday life to overcome one’s egoism,

one's self. It is all one and the same. Drugs can be a tool, a medicine. One doesn't always need medicine; one needs it, in principle, especially for extraordinary circumstances. But the fundamental experience, as I said in conclusion, the capacity for mystical world experience, is embedded in every human being. And we should develop this capacity again, by whatever method – that doesn't matter.

Translated by Andrzej Serafin

THE MESSAGE OF THE MYSTERIES TO THE WORLD

The ancient testimony about the religious experience offered to thousands of pilgrims in the sanctuary of the Goddess in the tiny village of Elefsina (Eleusis), some ten miles west of the great city of Athens, is unanimous. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* declares that it was essential to the art of living: “Whoever among men who walk the earth has seen these Mysteries is blessed, but whoever is uninitiated and has not received his share of the rite, he will not have the same lot as the others, once he is dead and dwells in the mould where the sun goes down.”¹

The rite was performed annually for two thousand years, beginning in the mid-second millennium BCE, in roughly the same place, modified and enlarged over the course of time to accommodate the ever-growing number of participants. Construction of the sanctuary obliterated the archaeological record of the earlier occupation of the site, but it is probable that it was sacred from Neolithic times, if not before. The rite as practiced through the Classical and Roman periods represents a transition from female dominance to an accommodation with patriarchal traditions.

In the sixth century BCE, it passed under Athenian control and became the defining influence that produced the mentality that characterized the classical age, which became the fountainhead of ensuing European civilization. Almost everyone of importance, as well as the common man and woman, foreigner and Greek alike of every status in society sought out the initiation at least once in a lifetime. In the Roman period, the orator and philosopher Cicero declared it the greatest gift of Athens to the world, the essential impetus for humankind’s elevation from savagery, imparting the power not only to live with joy but also to die with better hope.

The paradigm uniting life and death was the seed implanted into the ground, entrusted to the darkness of the earth in the expectation that it would return and sprout, without which there could be no life here in the realm above. What the initiates experienced was a journey of the spirit to a reality in a parallel dimension, establishing pathways of communication and rights of friendly reciprocal visitation so that life was nourished by the accord or testament that defined the terms for humankind’s relationship to Gaia. It was more than a mere metaphor. The initiates were offered the opportunity to identify themselves with the cycles of nature at the deepest level of their existence.

¹ *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, v. 480-82 (frag. 3 [A 1] Colli).

In the 1970s, I was a member of a team that attempted to reconstruct what happened in the ceremony that was enacted at this ancient sanctuary whose desecrated ruins lie beside us. We demonstrated that the initiates were afforded a glimpse into a transcendent reality – something experienced by almost all the great figures of classical antiquity, as well as common people, regardless of sex or social class. Thirty years later, I returned to the subject to present a clearer explanation, incorporating many new discoveries made in the intervening years.

When I asked my colleague the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann shortly before his death at the age of 102 to provide a comment, even if only a sentence in view of his frailty, he wrote, “Only a new Eleusis could help mankind to survive the threatening catastrophe in Nature and human society and bring a new period of happiness.”

Something happened at this sanctuary of Eleusis that gave hope and meaning to humankind for two millennia. As the Roman philosopher Cicero wrote, “For among the many excellent and indeed divine institutions which your Athens has brought forth and contributed to human life, none, in my opinion, is better than those mysteries.”²

Hofmann’s discovery of LSD in 1943 was an event that inaugurated a new awareness of our role in the cosmos, and looking back at the end of the century whose mentality he, probably more than anyone, influenced, he saw the crisis that we humans have created by our destruction of our planet Gaia and the possible extinction of our species.

Cicero credited the ancient mystery enacted here at Eleusis as the essential impetus for the evolution of humankind’s rise from savagery to civilized modes of life: “we have learned from them the beginnings of life, and have gained the power not only to live happily, but also to die with a better hope.”³

The great hall of initiation at Eleusis was an architectural similitude of a cave whose antiquity as a motif can be traced back to the Paleolithic, when humans first rose above the beasts as *Homo spiritualis*, not *sapiens*, but with the first inklings of spirituality, a remembrance of forgotten dreams. The cave was the womb of Gaia, the vulva to a world beyond and a gateway for birth into this realm of ordinary living.

Plato used the ancient motif as his Allegory of the Cave. What the Telesterion offered was release from the Cave of ordinary seeing.

What we know of the Mystery dates largely from the seventh century BCE, but its origins go back at least to the mid-second millennium. Like all the great ancient religious sites, it represents an assimilation of a pre-existent sanctuary to the evolving dominance of the Indo-European Greek-speaking peoples and their family of twelve deities, headed by the patriarchal father god Zeus.

In deference to this earlier existence of the religion, Demeter, who will teach the Mystery, claims that she has come from Crete when she first arrives at Eleusis. Hades had abducted her daughter, begotten by her brother Zeus, while picking flowers with a sisterhood of maidens. The spiritual rapture as an abduction is a common motif and involves always the special fantasies of herb cutters, the gatherers of magical herbs.

² Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.14.36 (frag. 3 [B 2] Colli).

³ *Ibid.*

Such plants grow wild, and the maiden is abducted, not married, to the possessing spirit that materialized from the magical plant.

A myth is read as a dialogue in the language established by its structural polarities. With the establishment of the Mystery, Persephone has become the wedded wife of her abductor. The abduction is associated with fleabane, the concubine of Hades, named Minthe (*Mentha pulegium*), pennyroyal, which is an abortifacient. The abduction is also associated with the magical flower called *νάρκισσος*, “narcotic,” and narcosis, as induced by opium, is symbolic of death. A flask, *ἀρύβαλλος*, in the shape of the opium capsule was a tomb offering.

Not only does abduction yield to marriage, but through death Persephone yields life. She eats a seed of pomegranate as she leaves the underworld and becomes pregnant with Hades’s son. The pomegranate resembles the opium poppy capsule but signifies the fertile womb instead of death.

Persephone should have been an Olympian, since both her mother and her father are Olympians, but she has taken food and seed in the underworld, so she belongs to her husband’s world. Demeter becomes the mother-in-law of Hades and has a grandson born from the chthonic realm.

Originally, Demeter had rejected the option of mortality and had tried to burn away the flesh of her nursling Demophoön and caused a stoppage of foodstuff upon the earth. Humans were starving and the Olympians were losing the sacrificial offerings upon which they depend. They relent and allow the release of Persephone, on the one proviso.

As acknowledgment of the situation that Persephone belongs to her husband and has sullied her celestial purity with food and conception in the chthonic realm, Demeter teaches the Mystery – to the boy of many names, ultimately her grandson.

The structural polarities as established by the myth are the following:

1. matriarchal freedom to wedded subservience;
2. wild gathered plants to cultivation;
3. aborted birth of the bastard to fathered son;
4. purely spiritual being to incarnation of the spirit;
5. famine and death to resurrection;
6. toxic plants to cultivated barley;
7. narcosis to vision.

The initiates for the ceremony drank a special potion, called the *kykeon* or “mixture,” whose ingredients in water were the wild fleabane and the cultivated barley. It was intended as a magical mediation of all the mythical structural polarities. It obviously should be something visionary or an entheogen, which neither the wild nor the cultivated ingredients are. A common weed in fields provides the answer. Tares looked identical to grain. It has the reputation of being intoxicating because of the fungal growth or ergot that infests it.

The most primitive of the cultivated grains from which barley was hybridized is spelt, which originally had only two red kernels that resemble the ergot of tares. Like all grasses, it too is infested with ergot. Tares is not an edible grass but represents the wild weed, and the common denominator of all the grasses is the enlarged ergot kernel, whose contamination spreads also to barley, pulling it back to primitivism. The common

denominator is intoxication, a source of the visionary LSA, similar to LSD, an intoxicant or entheogen that mediates between deadly poison and spiritual enlightenment.⁴

The Eleusinian Mystery, as we know it, dates from the seventh century, and like most of the pre-Hellenic religions, it probably involved human sacrifice, as in the burning of Demophoön, pacified in the later evolution by the offering of animal surrogates. In its Hellenic manifestation, it is an assimilation of Indo-European motifs, as evidenced by its promotion of Olympian dominance. Thus the supposed first priesthoods were seventh-century Thracian northerners, backdated to the mid-second millennium.

As such, it is also an assimilation of the Thracian mushroom cult and the Indo-European *haoma* sacrament. Ergot represents the seed of the seedless mushroom and hence a further mediation as the entheogen of the kykeon. Both ergot and some *Amanita* mushrooms, moreover, are deadly poisons; both require expert knowledge to access the visionary potential.

There were two levels to the Mystery, the Greater and the Lesser, although the latter probably was added later, after Athens assumed control of the religion. The Lesser involved the Thracian entheogen and the abduction of Persephone, enacted by the titular Queen of Athens.

The initiates journeyed in spirit from the Telesterion to visit Persephone and Hades in Elysium. They were hospitably received under the sacrosanct obligation that bound hosts to guests, but at the critical moment of parturition, when Persephone was due to deliver Hades's son, they resurfaced in the Telesterion, reborn along with the Mystery child as Persephone returned from the netherworld and the Hierophant announced the Mystery: "Brimo has given birth to Brimos. Brimos is a mother's son."⁵

Since the initiates were now obligated to death by his hospitality in the netherworld, they could expect a similar obligation to offer him sacred hospitality as Plouton, source of worldly prosperity. Death, when it came, would be a journey to the blessed paradise of Elysium, a place they had already visited, ruled by the hosts who had already extended the bond of ξένια.

The influence of the Thracian revisionist theology, attributed to Orpheus, added a new dimension, which never really became officially incorporated into the Eleusinian tradition. After many returns, with purifying ordeals in both this world and the other, the incarnation would be nullified and the Apollonian spirit would ascend, divested of the burden of flesh, to its true home in the fiery empyrean beyond the stars for an eternal existence.

An earth depleted of its resources may force us to seek other worlds to colonize. We propose the other pathway: to renegotiate our covenant with Gaia. The War on Drugs is a futile battle against plants. Eleusis had its drug problem also, when it was found that people were abusing the sacred potion as a recreational drug. Abuse deprives the entheogen of its sanctity. Today, we face the same destinations, the same solutions.

⁴ R. K. Antonopoulos, C. A. P. Ruck, M. A. Hoffman, et al., *Investigating the Psychedelic Hypothesis of Kykeon, the Sacred Elixir of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Research Square, 6 November 2025; <https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-8000194/v1>.

⁵ Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, 5.8.41-43 (frag. 3 [B 8] Colli).

THE ROAD TO ELEUSIS: UNPUBLISHED AFTERWORD

The year 1998 marks the twentieth anniversary of the first publication of *The Road to Eleusis*.¹ Twenty years is long enough for a child or an idea to reach the threshold of maturity. The ideas that the authors – the banker, the chemist, and the classicist – brought forth have been largely unchallenged and ignored by specialists in the culture of ancient and classical Greece. The situation seems to fulfill the rule of thumb that, when ideas are controversial, they are discussed; when they are revolutionary, they are ignored.

And without contest the ideas put forth by this unlikely threesome are revolutionary indeed. But why? Of what possible import could the methods and materials of a dead mystery cult hold for this world of the third millennium? The answer is simply this: how we understand and explain to ourselves what transpired at Eleusis determines in large measure our spiritual values and our relationship to the dark uncharted vastness of the entheogenically illuminated mind. The extinction of the cult at Eleusis was a small part of the tumult and turmoil that gripped the ancient world as its syncretic and celebratory polytheism was harried and hunted to extinction by hate-crazed mobs acting in the name of their Prince of Peace. Let us not pass over the fact that Alaric the Visigoth, the destroyer of Eleusis and much else of the ancient world, was as thoroughly Christian as he was barbarian.

Often in my mind's eye, I have visited that evil day when the dark smoke of rape and pillage defiled the blue of the Attic sky and the ominous standard of the crow, insignia of this barbarian chieftain, fluttered and snapped in the sullied air, a mute witness to history-shaping atrocity. It was a day of unthinkable acts: the Telesterion breached, the priesthood shattered, the sacred lineage terminated by murder and diaspora. If there are truly pivotal moments in human history, then this surely was one of them. For as the authors of *The Road to Eleusis* make clear, the day before that day of rampage was the last sane moment that Western man was to know for nearly 1,500 years. The destruction of Eleusis cut the umbilical cord of the developing Western mind, severed its connection to the great mysteries of the earth mother/Great Goddess and the still more ancient cults of Crete with its connections further south and deeper into time, to the bedrock of the African genesis of consciousness and ecstasy in our newly evolved species.

¹ R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

And one can wonder: What if the fates had seen fit to allow another ending? What if the horrifying cult of the Galilean had not insinuated its way into dominance of Roman civilization? What if late Roman Christianity had not been allowed to hunt its critics into extinction and to infect the whole polity of Europe with its necrophilia and self-hate? The true poignancy of the situation can only be felt by those who agree with the premise of this book – that Eleusis was the last redoubt ofentheogen-based religious spirituality in the West. With the destruction of Eleusis, the connection to the Earth Mother Γῆ, the Gaian Logos, was severed, and the stage was set for the descent into mass pathology that reached its apocalyptic crescendo in the rise of the modern industrial state and its use of propaganda and the threat of nuclear annihilation to pursue its agenda.

On a particular weekend some several decades ago, as the Jewish inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto were being systematically murdered like rats in a sewer by a particularly virulent expression of the Western mind, the Wermacht acting at the behest of German National Socialism, a Swiss pharmaceutical chemist made a remarkable discovery. Unaware that just a few hundred miles away from his quiet laboratory was unfolding a situation whose horror would come to epitomize the mindless self-devouring psychosis of twentieth-century politics, Albert Hofmann self-administered lysergic acid diethylamide and began his famously unsteady bicycle ride through the streets of Basel.

Hofmann himself would doubtless, in that moment, have been amazed if anyone had suggested to him that his lysergic epiphany had any relationship at all to the horror then unfolding in Poland or to the extinction of a nearly forgotten Greek mystery cult centuries ago.

Now, however, and with the superior wisdom of hindsight, we see that these disparate events in time and space were all part of the unfolding drama of the evolution of the human soul and its struggle with the primal darkness that attended its birth like a placenta.

For we have been lost for some time. Monotheism, scientific reductionism, materialism, and mass marketing have built a world unfit for fools, let alone the rest of us. Our culture, which denies spirit, femininity, ambiguity, Eros, and fun and offers in its place debt, alienation, and debauchery is daily perceived as more and more inadequate by more and more people. And the answer to this dilemma is clear: we require a radical reintegration with the living mystery, both individually and collectively. This encounter is the sine qua non for setting a new course toward sanity, balance with the earth, and true community. These values are only to be recovered through a rebirth of the mysteries and a reconnection with the numinous. This is most effectively and easily achieved through the use of entheogens, those same sacraments that flourished at Eleusis and that today excite the agendas of pharmaphobes and crypto fascists.

Quite simply, we need to change our minds. Quickly. And nothing is capable of changing our minds as gently and effectively and rapidly as the entheogens have been shown to do. They are the medicine we need, they are our ancient birthright, denied us by the thin-lipped heresy hunters ever on the lookout for competitors to their own miserably eviscerated Eucharist. The discoveries described by the authors of this book hint at a return to a world of experience that is authentically human. For this alone we owe these authors a debt of enormous gratitude. Their lives and work have rekindled the entheogenic light

so brutally extinguished at Eleusis. Because of their scholarship and discoveries, there is an iota more of hope in this troubled world. This cannot be a bad thing.

Terence McKenna
Opihihale, Hawaii
May, 1998

Commentary by Robert Forte:

In 1998, I embarked on an ambitious project that has not yet been realized: an attempt to amend the Controlled Substance Act to allow for the religious use of psychedelic plants and drugs in the United States. The Controlled Substance Act hastily became law in 1970 after Timothy Leary showed that the law restricting cannabis was unconstitutional. So the Nixon Administration formed a new law, the CSA that created the Drug Enforcement Agency, which classified all the known psychedelic drugs in the most restrictive category, Schedule I: “drugs which have no medical use and a high potential for abuse.” The only exemption to this category was peyote, which could be used by members of the Native American Church.

In 1974, The Church of the Awakening, a bona fide, New Mexico–based religious organization that had been using peyote and other psychedelics as sacraments for years safely and effectively before the CSA, petitioned the US government for a similar exemption. But the court refused to grant it, arguing that Native Americans have a long tradition of using hallucinogens whereas modern Western society does not.

Since that 1974 decision, in 1978, R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl Ruck teamed up to publish *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries*. Their collaboration presents compelling evidence that the ancient Greek Eleusinian Mysteries used a psychedelic drink to celebrate a direct experience of the sacred. These mysteries are considered among the greatest mystical-religious celebrations in history. They survived for at least fifteen hundred years. Virtually all of the greatest minds that in many ways gave birth to Western religion and philosophy were inspired by them. According to the research of *The Road to Eleusis*, which is widely accepted among classical scholars, these mysteries included a psychedelic induced initiation.

The Road to Eleusis was first published in 1978, at the tail end of the first wave of psychedelics. Psychedelics had created quite a sensation since the late 1950s when they were first introduced into modern society, a sensation that had faded by the time the book was released. So although the hypothesis was acceptable to scholars – though not vigorously debated – for the most part the book fell on deaf ears. It had become well known that psychedelics played (and continued to play) a significant role in primitive – or, what Mircea Eliade termed “traditional” societies – but the radical idea that our own modern Western society was also based on these experiences has not yet had the impact it might and should have on the modern appreciation of these drugs. *The Road to Eleusis* sold out of its first printing and was never reprinted. So, in 1998, I endeavored to publish a Twentieth Anniversary Limited Edition, with the support of the Wasson Estate and the living authors, Carl Ruck and Albert Hofmann.

Since my intention was to re-introduce the topic to academics, I added some new chapters by Carl Ruck and Albert Hofmann and asked my good friend, teacher, and colleague Professor Huston Smith to write a new preface. Knowing his interest in the subject and his great respect for Hofmann and Wasson, I was surprised and disappointed when he declined. He explained to me that he had already written enough about psychedelics and religion and did not want his career to be defined as a drug enthusiast because he had many reservations about how the subject had evolved. “Know ten things, tell nine,” he wrote in “The Psychedelic Evidence,” an appendix to what I think is one of this most important books, *Forgotten Truth*.

Surprised and disappointed that he declined the invitation, I pivoted and asked my friend Terence McKenna if he would like to introduce the new edition. “Honored to,” he said and promptly submitted the essay, which is published for the first time in this journal. Published for the first time because the day after I received it from him via email, Huston called me up and said he had reconsidered and would like to write a new preface. It took a couple of weeks to perfect his lovely piece.

I was in editor’s heaven. For now I had the universally respected elder of religious studies and the comparatively young upstart Terence McKenna, whose essay I would use as a lively afterword. Except that when I told Huston I had invited Terence to be in the new edition and showed him this essay, Huston immediately called on the phone to tell me he would have to withdraw his piece. He did not want to be in the same book as Terence. Furthermore, he warned me that, if my purpose was to attract modern classical scholarship, including Terence’s piece would be counterproductive. It was vituperative, he said, and erroneous, and certainly not in the style of Wasson, who was his friend. At the same time Huston expressed his great admiration of Terence, whose intellect and what he called his eidetic memory and lyrical prose were unlike anyone he knew. Nonetheless he refused to be in the same book as him, whom he saw as an uncritical promoter of psychedelic drugs – as his friend Timothy Leary was.

So this put me in the slightly awkward position of telling Terence I was not going to publish his essay. He accepted my decision cheerfully, except for a snide remark to me in private, referring to Huston as “academic lickspittle.” It was a blow to our friendship, but I think I made the right decision, given the circumstance. I love the essay, but Huston is right, it is vituperative. Can’t imagine it is helpful in the difficult but I think necessary effort to bridge the divide between world religions, in this case Christianity, and Ancient Greek. Still, the essay is provocative, thoughtful, exciting, and enjoyable, so I am happy to finally share it with the readers of this journal.

Robert Forte, Lenmos, Greece, 2024

RICHARD EVANS SCHULTES: PLANT EXPLORER

In the early 1970s, a time of few heroes, there was one man who loomed large over the Harvard campus, Richard Evans Schultes, a kindly professor who shot blowguns in class and kept outside his office door a bucket of peyote buttons available to his students as an optional laboratory experiment. In time, mountains in South America would bear his name, as would national parks. Prince Philip would call him “the father of ethnobotany.” Students knew him as the world’s authority on medicinal and hallucinogenic plants, the botanical explorer who had sparked the psychedelic era with his discovery in Mexico in 1938 of teonanácatl, the psilocybin mushrooms known to the Aztec as “the Flesh of the Gods.”¹

Three years later, after having identified ololiuqui, the serpent vine, another long-lost Aztec sacred hallucinogen,² Schultes took a semester’s leave of absence and disappeared into the Northwest Amazon of Colombia. Engaged in a mission vital to the war effort, with the fate of civilization itself in the balance, he endured unimaginable hardships, including beriberi and twenty-one bouts of malaria, as he pursued one of the most elusive botanical mysteries of the Amazon. Twelve years later, he returned having gone places no outsider had ever been, mapping uncharted rivers and living among two dozen Indian tribes while collecting some thirty thousand botanical specimens, including three hundred species new to science. The greatest Amazonian explorer of the twentieth century, he was a living link to the great naturalists of the Victorian age and a distant era when the tropical rain forests stood immense, inviolable, a mantle of green stretching across entire continents.

At a time when there was little public interest in the Amazon and virtually no recognition of the importance of ethnobotanical research, Schultes drew to Harvard an extraordinarily eclectic group of students. Andrew Weil, today America’s doctor, got his start studying the narcotic use of nutmeg by inmates at a maximum security prison just outside of Boston. Dick Martin, another protégé, used to blow sax by night in whorehouse towns up and down the Amazon, while by day he explored the flora of an unknown land. One of Schultes’s botanical colleagues once complained that Martin was doodling through his every class of advanced plant taxonomy. Schultes looked into the matter and discovered that his student was taking notes in fluent Japanese. Tim Plowman, the world’s authority on

¹ Richard Evans Schultes, “Plantae Mexicanae II: The Identification of Teonanacatl, a Narcotic Basidiomycete of the Aztecs,” *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 7, no. 3 (1939): 37-54.

² Richard Evans Schultes, *A Contribution to Our Knowledge of Rivea corymbosa, the Narcotic Ololiuqui of the Aztecs* (Cambridge, MA: Botanical Museum of Harvard University, 1941).

coca, the source of cocaine and a plant known to the Inca as the Divine Leaf of Immortality, lived in the basement of the Botanical Museum in an office that had the atmosphere of a gypsy tea room. His lover was Teza, a beautiful artist who drew illustrations of new species that Tim had discovered. They were the only drawings I ever saw that captured the feel of wind on paper.

The great professor himself held court on the fourth floor of the museum in the Nash Lecture Hall, a wooden laboratory draped in bark cloth and cluttered with blowguns, spears, dance masks, and dozens of glass bottles that sparkled with fruits and flowers no longer found in the wild. Oak cabinets elegantly displayed every known narcotic or hallucinogenic plant, together with exotic paraphernalia, opium pipes from Thailand, a mescal bean necklace from the Kiowa, a kilogram bar of hashish that went on display following one of Schultes's expeditions to Afghanistan. In the midst of enough psychoactive drugs to keep the DEA busy for a year, Schultes would appear, tall and heavyset, dressed conservatively in gray flannels and thick oxfords, with a red Harvard tie habitually worn beneath a white lab coat. His face was round and kindly, his hair cut razor short, his rimless bifocals pressed tight to his face. He lectured from tattered pages, yellow with age, sometimes making amusing blunders that students jokingly dismissed as the side effects of his having ingested so many strange plants.

Throughout the 1960s, as America discovered the drugs that had fascinated Schultes for thirty years, his fame grew. Suddenly academic papers that had gathered dust for decades were in fierce demand. His 1941 monograph on *ololiuqui* had been published on a hand-set printing press in the basement of the Botanical Museum. In the spring and summer of 1967, requests for copies poured into the museum, and florists across the nation experienced a run on packets of morning glory seeds, particularly the varieties named Pearly Gates and Heavenly Blue. Strange people began to make their way to the museum. A former graduate student tells of going to meet Schultes for the first time and finding two other visitors waiting outside his office, one of them passing the time by standing on his head like a yogi.

For all his achievements, Schultes was an odd choice to become a sixties icon. True, in 1953 he led William Burroughs into the forests of the Colombian Putumayo and introduced the writer to ayahuasca, the vision vine, the most potent of all Amazonian hallucinogenic preparations. But he also dismissed Timothy Leary for bastardizing the Greek language by insisting on the term *psychedelic*, when any scholar loyal to the Classics knew that the proper orthography was *psychodelic*. His politics were exceedingly conservative. Neither a Democrat nor a Republican, he professed not to believe in the American Revolution and always voted for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. As an anthropological colleague once remarked, the only way for Schultes to go native would be for him to go to London. A proud Bostonian, he would not use a Kennedy stamp, insisted on calling New York City's Kennedy Airport by its original name, Idlewild, and refused to walk on Boylston Avenue in Cambridge after its name was officially changed to John F. Kennedy Boulevard. When Jackie Onassis visited the Botanical Museum, then Director Schultes vanished. Rumor had it that he hid in his office closet to avoid having to guide her through the museum's famous exhibit of glass flowers.

These stubborn political convictions, however rigidly held, belied the fundamental decency and generosity of the man. On all issues of personal choice and freedom – sexual

orientation, abortion, use of drugs, religion – he was a complete libertarian. His devotion to struggling students was legendary. For years he used to travel around the country using an obscure taxonomic argument to obtain the release of dozens of young people charged with marijuana possession.

The argument went something like this: Marijuana was illegal, but until the law was changed to defeat Schultes's crusade, the actual legal statute prohibited by name only *Cannabis sativa*. Schultes maintained that there were three species of marijuana, including *Cannabis indica* and *Cannabis ruderalis*. As an expert witness he would testify that there was no way of distinguishing the species with forensic material alone. That left the burden of proof on the prosecution to show beyond reasonable doubt that a bag of ground-up flower buds was *Cannabis sativa* and not one of its botanical relatives. Since even the botanists could not agree on how many species there were, it was by definition an impossible task. It made for great theater, of course, with Schultes and his long haired entourage on the one side and arrayed against him a team of indignant botanists, often envious of his fame, infuriated by his stand on drugs, and openly contemptuous of his taxonomic position.

In truth, the botanical evidence for Schultes's argument was somewhat dubious. In the heated passions of the times, however, when young students were being jailed for smoking an innocuous herb, none of the academic details were important. What did matter was Schultes's uncanny ability to break open the courtrooms and set the students free. This, as much as anything else he did, contributed to his mythic reputation on the Harvard campus. Between the extremes of his personality, in the space created by what superficially appeared to be immense contradictions in his own character, there was room for anyone to flourish.

The outline of his life appeared safe and predictable in the fall of 1933 when young Dick Schultes walked through the Johnson Gate as a freshman at Harvard College. The first of his family to attend university, he hoped to become a physician and return to his neighborhood in East Boston to establish a practice. But he had no idea what awaited him at the Botanical Museum. Taking a job stacking books and filing cards for 35 cents an hour, he found himself in the midst of one of the most eclectic libraries in the country. Between the folios of Linnaeus and the herbals of Fuchs and Brunfels, there were volumes on African ordeal poisons, monographs on distant tribes, entire shelves dedicated to narcotic plants and stimulants. Intrigued, he enrolled in the museum's basic course in economic botany, Plants and Human Affairs, and promptly found himself distilling alcohol, brewing beer, and drinking copious amounts of both, just as the students had done in lab every year throughout Prohibition.

When time came to study a curious group of plants classified in the lab manual as the Phantastica, those botanical denizens capable of causing "excitation in the form of visions and hallucinations, often in colour."³ the students were assigned a book report. Hard-pressed by other obligations, Schultes rushed to the back of the room and grabbed

³ Richard Evans Schultes and Albert F. Hill, *Plants and Human Affairs: Laboratory Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1973), 60.

the thinnest volume. Its title was *Mescal: The Divine Plant and Its Psychological Effects*.⁴ Published in 1928 and written by the German psychiatrist Heinrich Klüver, it was the only monograph then available in English that described the astonishing pharmacological effects of the peyote cactus. Opening the book later that evening in his room back in East Boston, Schultes read throughout the night of visions of orb-like brilliance, of stars, delicate floating films of colour sweeping over the imagination and transforming human consciousness.

Stunned that a plant could do such things, he approached his professor, the famous orchid specialist Oakes Ames, and asked if he might write about peyote for his undergraduate thesis. Ames agreed, but on the condition that Schultes study the plant in ritual context. Thus, in the summer of 1936, with a small grant provided by Ames himself, Schultes, who at 21 had never been west of the Charles River, found himself bouncing over the dusty tracks of Tennessee in a 1928 Studebaker heading for Oklahoma and the homeland of the Kiowa. There, in solemn nocturnal ceremonies that invariably lasted into the dawn, he ate peyote three and sometimes four times a week. For two months of his young life, time turned into colour, thoughts unleashed sounds, gestures became rainbows of light. His teachers were Charlie Charcoal, Heap O'Bears, Mary Buffalo. He entered their lives and thus became one of the last generation of scholars to know Kiowa elders who had lived the great culture of the plains, a way of life that had withered and died within a century of its birth.

Returning to Boston, a student transformed, Schultes became an advocate of the rights of the Native American Church. In February 1937, he traveled to Washington to testify successfully against Senate Bill 1399, the latest effort to outlaw the religious practices of the Kiowa. In his undergraduate thesis, he wrote that through the use of peyote the Indians are "able to absorb God's Spirit in the same way that the white Christian absorbs the Spirit by means of sacramental bread and wine."⁵ This was a bold idea in the spring of 1937. For Schultes, it was only the beginning. While still in Washington working at the Smithsonian, he stumbled upon a critical clue that would propel him into his next adventure: a series of expeditions that would be the envy of Indiana Jones. In the sixteenth century, Spanish chroniclers in Mexico had written in some detail of an intoxicating preparation derived from mushrooms and known as *teonanácatl*. William Safford, a prominent Smithsonian anthropologist, had summarily dismissed such reports as fable. In a series of influential academic papers beginning in 1915, he noted that three centuries of field investigations had yielded no evidence of the existence of a narcotic fungi.⁶ *Teonanácatl*, he claimed, was not a mushroom but an Aztec name for peyote. Schultes believed the Spanish, but he had no evidence until one morning at the US National Herbarium he came upon a letter attached

⁴ Heinrich Klüver, *Mescal: The Divine Plant and Its Psychological Effects* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1928).

⁵ Richard Evans Schultes, *Peyotl Intoxication: A Review of the Literature on the Chemistry, Physiological and Psychological Effects of Peyotl* (undergraduate thesis, Harvard University, 1937).

⁶ William Edwin Safford, "An Aztec Narcotic (*Lophophora williamsii*)," *Journal of Heredity* 6 (1915): 291-311; "Peyote: The Narcotic Mescal Button of the Indians," *Journal of the American Pharmaceutical Association* 11, no. 2 (1922): 93-96.

to a herbarium specimen of peyote and written by one Blas Pablo Reko of Guadalajara, Mexico. Addressed to the director of the herbarium and dated 18 July 1923, the letter claimed not only that Safford was wrong but that psychoactive fungi were still being used by the Indians of Oaxaca in their religious feasts. Schultes, who had just leapt off one Greyhound bus from Tulsa, slipped onto another destined for Mexico City.

It was July 1938, little more than a year before the outbreak of war in Poland. Mexico was thick with German sympathizers, and Reko, Schultes discovered to his dismay, was one of them. As they traveled south by train to Oaxaca, this Mexican citizen of Slavic blood and Austrian birth boasted of racial purity and spoke confidently of the imminent takeover of the world by the Germans. When Schultes begged to differ, suggesting that the moment Germany went after Britain, Hitler would be destroyed, Reko was shocked.

“Schultes is a good German name,” he said. “You must be Jewish.”

“Unitarian,” Schultes replied.

“With Jewish blood,” Reko declared. Schultes suggested that they restrict their conversations to matters botanical.

Thus in a world on the edge of a precipice, with madness the backdrop of the age, Schultes found himself about to enter the mountains of Oaxaca to search for *teonanácatl* with an ardent Nazi as a companion. To make matters more interesting, there was a second team of researchers pursuing the identity of the mysterious plant. The same month that Schultes and Reko reached the small Mazatec village of Huautla, a team of anthropologists arrived led by a tall, strapping Englishman named Bernard Bevan, a man rumored, Schultes would later discover, to be affiliated with the British Secret Service. With Bevan was Jean Bassett Johnson, an anthropology student from Berkeley.

On the night of Saturday, 16 July 1938, Johnson and Bevan became the first outsiders to attend a vigil in which mushrooms were ingested by an old *curandero* as part of a complex healing ceremony. A week later, when Schultes ran into Bevan’s party in Huautla, Johnson shared his discovery. He had not taken the sacrament himself, but the mushrooms clearly were the vehicle of transformation that gave legitimacy to the divinatory rite. All the prayers and chants, every ritual gesture, were the voices of the mushrooms speaking through the body of the healer.

Neither Johnson nor Bevan had secured specimens that would allow for the scientific identification of the mushrooms. This breakthrough occurred eleven days later when Schultes and his main contact, a Mazatec merchant by the name of Jose Dorantes, were approached by a thin middle-aged man in threadbare clothes with a face that was all bones and eye sockets. In his hands was a small basket, and within it were a dozen fresh mushrooms.

“The Saint Children,” Dorantes said, “the Little Ones Who Spring Forth.”

On 21 February 1939, Schultes reported his discovery. Needless to say, in a world moving toward war, a paper titled “*Plantae Mexican II: The Identification of Teonanacatl, a Narcotic Basidiomycete of the Aztecs*” did not receive wide circulation. Undeterred, Schultes returned to Oaxaca the following summer, and in a series of arduous expeditions through the rainforests of Chinantla, solved the second of the great mysteries of Aztec ethnobotany. *Ololiuqui*, the serpent vine, was a powerfully psychoactive morning glory, closely related to the common garden varieties.

At this point, the war intervened and the thread of the research was not picked up until a highly unusual series of events began to unfold in the early 1950s. Gordon Wasson, a banker and vice-president of J. P. Morgan and Co. in New York and his Russian-born wife, Valentina Pavlovna, were ardent lovers of fungi and based on linguistic evidence had concluded that early humans had worshiped certain mushrooms. In September 1952, just as the Wassons were struggling to prove their assertion, they received a letter from the poet Robert Graves in Majorca who somehow had stumbled upon Schultes's 1939 paper identifying teonanácatl.⁷ Wasson contacted Schultes, who directed him to Oaxaca and a Mazatec *curandera*, Maria Sabina. It took three years to secure her confidence, but on the night of 29 June 1955, Wasson and his photographer, Allen Richardson, became the first outsiders actually to ingest the mushrooms in a sacred context. Wasson later struggled to find words to describe his "soul-shattering experience."⁸ They did not exist. "We are all confined within the prison walls of our everyday vocabulary. With skill in our choice of words, we may stretch accepted meanings to cover slightly new feelings, but when a state of mind is utterly distinct, then our words fail. How can you tell a man who has been blind what it is like to see?"⁹

When on 13 May 1957 Wasson published an account of his Oaxaca expedition in *Life* magazine, a young editor attempted to capture the ineffable quality of the experience in a snappy title, "Seeking the Magic Mushrooms."¹⁰ The name stuck, and the article marked a certain watershed in the social history of the United States, the beginning of the psychedelic era. Among those who read it was a young Harvard lecturer named Timothy Leary. In the summer of 1960, Leary would travel to Mexico and ingest the mushrooms in Cuernavaca. "Like almost everyone else who has had the veil drawn," he would later write, "I came back a changed man."¹¹

There remained only one missing link in the chronicle of teonanácatl and ololiuqui: the isolation of the chemicals responsible for the hallucinogenic effects of the plants. First came the mushrooms, sixty-four of which were shipped to Albert Hofmann, then director of the natural-products department of the Sandoz research laboratories in Basel, Switzerland. Hofmann began by feeding half the sample to his dog. Nothing appeared to happen. So Hofmann himself ate thirty-two mushrooms. Something did happen. The landscape outside his laboratory window began to look like Mexico, the face of his colleague overseeing the experiment turned into that of an Aztec priest, the pencil in his hand became an obsidian blade. After ninety minutes, "the rush of abstract motifs [...] reached such an alarming degree that I feared I would be torn into this whirlpool of form and color and would dissolve."¹²

⁷ Thomas J. Riedlinger, ed., *The Sacred Mushroom Seeker: Essays for R. Gordon Wasson* (Portland, OR: Dioscorides Press, 1990), 37, 112.

⁸ R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008), 27.

⁹ R. Gordon Wasson, "The Hallucinogenic Fungi of Mexico: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Religious Idea among Primitive Peoples," *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 19, no. 7 (1961): 144.

¹⁰ R. Gordon Wasson, "Seeking the Magic Mushroom", *Life Magazine*, 13 May 1957, 100-120.

¹¹ Timothy Leary, *High Priest* (New York: World Publishing, 1995), 34.

¹² Albert Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, trans. Jonathan Ott (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 112-13.

Such an experience might have unnerved an ordinary scientist, but Hofmann was not of that sort. For more than a decade he had been experimenting with lysergic acid, the fundamental building block of a curious group of chemicals responsible for Saint Anthony's fire, the mass poisonings that had periodically convulsed European towns since the Middle Ages. Caused by a fungal parasite of rye crops, these outbreaks killed hundreds and left thousands scarred for life. Many victims lost fingers and toes or had their noses literally rot on their faces. Others experienced horrific hallucinations and went mad. The drug in question acted powerfully to constrict blood vessels – hence the gangrene in the extremities – and it was this medical potential that Hofmann had been investigating in the spring of 1943 when, overwhelmed with vertigo and restlessness, he had suddenly felt compelled to leave his laboratory and go home. Due to the wartime shortages of gas, he had no car, so he set off on what turned out to be one of the most momentous bicycle rides in history. The compound he was making, a trace of which he had accidentally absorbed through his skin, turned out to be the most potent hallucinogenic agent ever discovered: lysergic acid diethylamide 25, LSD for short. On his ride home Dr. Hofmann went on the world's first acid trip.

So Hofmann was quite prepared for the visual onslaught that resulted from ingesting the mushrooms. In short order he isolated the active ingredients, and in March 1958 announced the discovery of psilocybin and psilocin, two new substances that turned out to be very close in structure to serotonin, a compound that plays a vital role in brain chemistry¹³. He then turned to ololiuqui. What he found was scarcely believable. The active principles were compounds that he already had sitting on the shelves of his lab. They differed from LSD only by the replacement of two hydrogen atoms for two ethyl groups. Four years before Hofmann discovered LSD, Richard Evans Schultes had found its analogue in nature, in the seeds of a humble morning glory that was worshipped as a god incarnate by the ancient peoples of central Mexico.

Schultes first traveled to South America in the fall of 1941. His initial quest was to identify the botanical sources of curare, the flying death, the arrow poison that would yield d-tubocurarine, a muscle relaxant destined to revolutionize modern medicine. But he was interested in all plants, and especially those of the shaman's repertoire. In his first month in the field, living among the Kamsa Indians at the headwaters of the Rio Putumayo in southern Colombia, he reported no fewer than four new hallucinogens. In Sibundoy, a mountain valley that can be traversed on foot in a day, he counted 1600 individual hallucinogenic trees, the greatest concentration of psychoactive plants ever discovered by science. Continuing east, crossing the Andes by mule, he dropped into the upper Amazon and the homeland of the Inga. They introduced him to yoco, a powerful stimulant taken each morning at dawn to allay hunger. A new species, later named by Schultes, the plant contained caffeine, quite a lot of it as it turned out. Indeed, in knocking back their morning calabash of yoco, the Indians absorbed the equivalent of twenty cups of coffee in a single bolt. They were not, as Schultes later recalled, a people to do things in half measures.

¹³ Albert Hofmann, "Psilocybin, ein psychotroper Wirkstoff aus dem mexikanischen Rauschpilz *Psilocybe mexicana* Heim," *Experientia* 15, no. 3 (15 March 1959): 107-9.

While still with the Inga, Schultes made one of the most important and curious discoveries of his career. The preparation in question was ayahuasca, known also as yagé, the vision vine, the vine of the soul, the most celebrated hallucinogen of the Amazon. Schultes naturally knew of the potion. It had been first described in the nineteenth century by his great hero, the indefatigable English plant explorer, Richard Spruce. Sacred to all the tribes of the upper Amazon, it was the embodiment of the jaguar, a magical intoxicant capable of freeing the soul, allowing it to wander to mystical encounters with ancestors and animal spirits. Shaman maintain that collective visions occur and that under the influence it is possible to communicate across great distances in the forest. When the active ingredient harmaline was first isolated, Colombian scientists called it telepathine¹⁴. What Schultes encountered took things to an entirely different level.

On 28 February, 1942, he collected the woody liana for the first time and recorded the following notes:

“Yagé is taken often by some, infrequently by others. It is a most violent purge and often acts as a vomitive. Extremely bitter. Some say the after effects are an exhilaration and feeling of ease and well-being; others that it is a day of discomfort and headache. The bark of yagé is scraped off and small pieces are heated in water. The water is drunk. People take it alone or in small groups in houses, often with a sick person who is to be cured. The curandero takes yagé to see the proper herb or herbs the sick man needs. Usually taken alone, but in Puerto Limón it is taken sometimes together with the bark of another vine – the *chagropanga*. It is said to be almost the same leaf, but a harder and stouter vine.”¹⁵

Schultes was not sure what to make of this, but two themes intrigued him. First was the realization that the healer embraced yagé both as visionary medium and as teacher. The plant made the diagnosis. It was a living being, and the Inga acknowledged its magical resonance as reflexively as he accepted the axioms of his own science. Yet, at the same time, there was evidence here of pure empirical experimentation of a specificity he had never before encountered. In Oklahoma and Mexico, and more recently among the Kamsá of Sibundoy, he had always seen psychoactive plants taken alone, not in any sort of combination. Now his Inga informants insisted that by manipulating the ingredients of the preparations, in this case by adding a plant known as *chagropanga*, it was possible to change the nature of the experience.

Schultes did not question the word of the Indians. Instead he elected to test their preparation on himself. At Puerto Limón he drank an infusion derived solely from the

¹⁴ Rafael Zerda Bayón, “Informe del Jefe de la Expedición Científica del año 1905 á 1906,” *Revista del Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Fomento* (Colombia), yr. 1, vol. 1, no. 10 (December 1906): 294-303; Alexandre Rouhier, “Le yagé, plante télépathique,” *Paris médical* 52 (1924): 341-46; E. Perrot and Raymond-Hamet, “Yagé, ayahuasca, caapi et leur alcaloïde: télépathine ou yagéine,” *Bulletin des Sciences Pharmacologiques* 34, nos. 6, 7, 8 (1927): 337-47, 417-26, 500-514.

¹⁵ Richard Evans Schultes, *Field Notebook: Colombia, February–April 1942*, unpublished manuscript, Harvard University Botany Libraries, 29; <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/254614#page/29/>.

bark of the liana *Banisteriopsis caapi*. The visions that came were blue and purple, slow undulating waves of color. Then, a few days later he tried the mixture with *chagropanga*. The effect was electric, reds and golds dazzling in diamonds that turned like dancers on the tips of distant highways. If yagé alone felt like the slow turning of the sky, the addition of *chagropanga* caused explosions of passion and dreams that collapsed one into another until finally, in the empty morning, only the birds remained, scarlet and crimson against the rising sun.

What Schultes had stumbled upon was a bit of shamanic alchemy that, in its complexity and sophistication, had no equal in the Amazon. The psychoactive ingredients in the bark of yagé are beta-carbolines harmine and harmaline. Long ago, however, the shamans of the northwest Amazon discovered that the effects could be dramatically enhanced by the addition of a number of subsidiary plants. This is an important feature of many traditional preparations, and it is due, in part, to the fact that different chemical compounds in relatively small concentrations may effectively potentiate each other.

In the case of yagé, some twenty-one admixtures have been identified to date. Two of these are of particular interest. *Psychotria viridis* is a shrub in the coffee family, the first specimen of which was actually collected by William Burroughs in his Putumayo sojourn in 1953. *Chagropanga*, the admixture that Schultes identified in 1942, is *Diplopterys cabrerana*, a forest liana closely related to yagé. Unlike yagé, both of these plants contain tryptamines, powerful psychoactive compounds that when smoked or snuffed induce a very rapid, intense intoxication of short duration, marked by astonishing visual imagery. The sensation is rather like being shot out of a rifle barrel lined with baroque paintings and landing on a sea of electricity. Taken orally, however, these potent compounds have no effect as they are denatured by an enzyme, monoamine oxidase (MAO), found in the human gut. Tryptamines can be taken orally only if combined with an MAO inhibitor. Amazingly, the beta-carbolines found in yagé are inhibitors of precisely this sort. Thus when yagé is combined with either one of these admixture plants, the result is a powerful synergistic effect, a biochemical version of the whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. The visions, as the Indians promised Schultes, become brighter, and the blue and purple hue is augmented by the full spectrum of the rainbow.

What astonished Schultes was less the raw effect of the drugs – by this point, after all, he was becoming accustomed to having his consciousness awash in color – than the underlying intellectual question that the elaboration of these complex preparations posed. The Amazonian flora contains literally tens of thousands of species. How had the Indians learned to identify and combine in this sophisticated manner these morphologically dissimilar plants that possessed such unique and complementary chemical properties? The standard scientific explanation was trial and error. It is a reasonable term and may well account for certain innovations. But at another level, as Schultes came to realize on spending more time in the forest, it is but a euphemism disguising the fact that botanists have very little idea how Indians originally made their discoveries.

The problem with trial and error is that the elaboration of the preparations often involves procedures that are either exceedingly complex or that yield products of little or no obvious value. Yagé is an inedible, nondescript liana that seldom flowers. True, its bark is bitter, often a clue to medicinal properties, but it is no more so than a hundred other forest

vines. An infusion of the bark causes vomiting and severe diarrhea, conditions that would discourage further experimentation. Yet not only did the Indians persist, they became so deft at manipulating the various ingredients that individual shamans developed dozens of recipes, each yielding potions of various strengths and nuances to be used for specific ceremonial and ritual purposes.

In the case of the arrow poison, curare, Schultes learned, the bark is rasped and placed in a funnel-shaped leaf suspended between two spears. Cold water is percolated through, and the drippings collect in a ceramic pot. The dark fluid is slowly heated and brought to a frothy boil, then cooled and later reheated until a thick viscous scum gradually forms on the surface. This scum is removed and applied to the tips of darts or arrows, which are then carefully dried over the fire. The procedure itself is mundane. What is unusual is the fact that one can drink the poison without being harmed. To be effective it must enter the blood. The realization on the part of the Indians that this orally inactive substance, derived from a small number of forest plants, could kill when administered into the muscle was profound and, like so many of their discoveries, difficult to account for by the concept of trial and error alone.

The Indians naturally had their own explanations, rich cosmological accounts that from their perspective were perfectly logical. Sacred plants that had journeyed up the Milk River in the belly of anacondas, potions prepared by jaguars, the drifting souls of shamans dead from the beginning of time. As a scientist, Schultes did not take these myths literally. But they did suggest to him a certain delicate balance. "These were the ideas," he would write half a century later, "of a people who did not distinguish the supernatural from the pragmatic."¹⁶ The Indians, Schultes realized, believed in the power of plants, accepted the existence of magic, acknowledged the potency of the spirit. Magical and mystical ideas entered the very texture of their thinking. Their botanical knowledge could not be separated from their metaphysics. Even the way they ordered and labeled their world was fundamentally different.

It was in Sibundoy, en route to the Putumayo, that Schultes first learned that the Indians did not distinguish the colour green from the colour blue. "For them," a Capuchin priest had explained, "the sky is green and the forest is blue."¹⁷ This was a strange concept, one that lingered in his imagination as he entered the lowlands. It surfaced when he confronted yet another botanical enigma: the manner in which the Indians classified their plants. The Inga at Puerto Limón, for example, recognized seven kinds of yagé. The Siona, a neighboring tribe, had eighteen, which they distinguished on the basis of the strength and color of the visions, the trading history of the plant, the authority and lineage of the shaman. None of these criteria made sense botanically, and, as far as Schultes could tell, all the plants were referable to one species, *Banisteriopsis caapi*. Yet the Indians could readily differentiate their varieties on sight, even from a considerable distance in the forest. What's more, individuals from different tribes, separated by large expanses of forest, identified these same varieties with amazing consistency. It was a similar story with

¹⁶ Wade Davis, *One River: Science, Adventure and Hallucinogenics in the Amazon Basin* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 218.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

yoco, the caffeine-containing stimulant. In addition to *yoco blanco* and *colorado*, Schultes collected black yoco, jaguar yoco, yagé-yoco, yoco of the witches, fourteen categories in all, not one of which could be determined based on the rules of his own science.

Though trained at the finest botanical institution in America, Schultes, after but a month in the Amazon, felt increasingly like a novice. The Indians knew so much more. He had gone to South America because he had wanted to find the gifts of the rain forest: leaves that heal, fruits and seeds that supply the foods we eat, plants that could transport the individual to realms beyond this dimension. Yet within a month, he had learned that, in unveiling the indigenous knowledge, his task was not merely to identify new sources of wealth but rather to understand a new vision of life itself, a profoundly different way of living in a forest. By the time he reached the Kofan, by reputation the finest poison makers in the northwest Amazon, Schultes felt fully at home in a world of phytochemical wizardry unlike anything he had ever imagined. Between seasons, he was free to wander, south to the lowlands of Bolivia, north through the jungles of the Vaupés, east to Brazil. He lived for his work. Every moment not in the forest was a lost dream, a species denied to science, a botanical mystery left unsolved. To understand the source of his drive and ambition, one must appreciate just what kind of botanist he had become.

Most naturalists working in the Amazon must come to peace with their ignorance, so complex and remarkable is the diversity of flora and fauna. When they look at the forest, their eyes fall first on what is known and then seek what is unknown. Schultes was the opposite. He possessed what scientists call the taxonomic eye: an inherent capacity to detect variation at a glance. When he looked at a forest, his gaze reflexively fell on what was novel or unusual. And since he was so familiar with the flora, he could be confident that, if a plant was new to him, it was likely to be new to science. For Schultes, such moments of discovery were transcendent. He was once in a small plane that took off from a dirt runway, brushed against the canopy of the forest, and very nearly crashed. A colleague who was with him recalled years later that throughout the entire episode Schultes had sat calmly by a window, oblivious to the screams of the terrified passengers. It turned out that he had spotted a tree, a new species of *Cecropia*, and had scarcely noticed the crisis. What all this meant was that Schultes could resolve botanical problems in the moment, write descriptions in the field, realign species and genera just by holding a blossom to the light. In the entire history of Amazonian botany, only a handful of scientists have possessed this talent.

Thus for Schultes, each journey was like a new morning, full of a day's potential for wonder or disappointment. The reach of his travels, the risks and dangers, the ease and confidence with which he moved into unknown lands, the challenges endured, all mark him as a man from another time. In 1947, for example, he embarked on what would be a ten-month sojourn exploring the upper reaches of the Rio Negro, the greatest tributary of the Amazon, an affluent that were it to exist alone would be the second largest river on Earth. From the start, it was a horrendous expedition; his journal is a litany of boat wrecks, impossible rapids, lost specimens, hunger, death, and disease, including a near fatal attack of malaria that forced his Indians to carry him prostrate in his hammock off the face of a mountain. And all this in only the first few weeks.

The real crisis would come later, in June 1948, when at the very headwaters of the Rio Negro he noticed a tingling sensation in his fingertips. Initially he thought it

a consequence of using formaldehyde to preserve his specimens, but within days the sensation had spread to his toes. He realized that a thousand miles from the nearest city, in the midst of a sterile forest where not a tree was in fruit, he was coming down with beriberi. Caused by a deficiency of vitamin B1, or thiamine, in the diet, the disease is progressive. Early symptoms of lassitude and numbness in the limbs and extremities gradually give way to the complete degeneration of the nerves, resulting in muscular atrophy, a complete inability to move, and ultimately death. The only treatment is thiamine – massive doses injected repeatedly over time. Schultes was a long way from a pharmacy.

Heading downstream, he reached the Salesian mission at Sao Gabriel on the evening of 21 June. By then, his symptoms were pronounced, and it was imperative that he get proper medical attention as soon as possible. One option was to continue down the Rio Negro for another six hundred miles to Manaus. The head of the mission, Padre Miquel, suggested another route. By heading up the Rio Vaupés, a tributary that flowed into the Negro at Sao Gabriel, Schultes could reach a portage that would take him overland to the headwaters of a stream that would eventually carry him to Colombia and a remote military outpost where he might secure a flight for Bogotá. The total distance by land and water would be half that of going down river to Manaus.

Unfortunately, the padre had his geography wrong. It was not a day to the portage, it was five, by which time Schultes's feet were numb and he could only walk with the aid of two sticks. The short portage turned out to be a three day slog on legs that felt like stumps. Fortunately, he encountered by chance a wandering band of nomadic Indians, the legendary Macu, a tribe he had always wanted to know. Bad luck turned to good as they invited him to attend a nocturnal ritual, which involved a mysterious and curious preparation. The effects were unmistakable. "I learned experimentally," Schultes later reported, "that it had strong hallucinogenic properties."¹⁸ In fact, the intoxication was as intense as any he had experienced. It lasted all night and into the dawn. His eyes still painted in color, his mind swirling in the cool mist and scent of the forest, his body awkward and clumsy, he made his way to a small clearing where an old man who had danced all night revealed the source of the drug. He recognized immediately that it was a new species in a genus of plants never before known to be psychoactive. He named it *Tetrapteryx methysica* and with the help of the shaman gathered specimens as well as material for chemical analysis.¹⁹ These bulk collections were unfortunately lost in the following days when the canoe was spun over in a rapid, but the herbarium specimens survived and later confirmed that in the midst of his darkest hour, with beriberi progressing through his body, Schultes had indeed discovered a new hallucinogen.

His ordeal, however, was only beginning. The Indians carried him overland and, reaching the Colombian watershed, left him and his one young mestizo companion, Pacho Lopez, alone in a thatch shelter, while they returned to get his canoe and the rest of the equipment and supplies. For three days, in the midst of the most terrific rainstorms he would ever experience in the Amazon, he and Pacho waited. At no point did he consider

¹⁸ Richard Evans Schultes, "Some Aspects of Spruce's Explorations on Modern Phytochemical Research," *Rhodora* 70 (1968): 330.

¹⁹ Richard Evans Schultes, "Plantae Austro-Americanae IX. Plantarum Novarum Vel Notabilium Notae Diversae," *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 16, no. 8 (1954): 202-5.

what might have happened had the Indians not lived up to their promise to return. Though he had been with them for less than a week, his trust was absolute.

They did return, and Schultes headed off down river into Colombia. His food and fuel exhausted, he faced five days of tortuous rapids and portages before reaching the main channel of the Rio Caquetá. There, by chance, he encountered a remote patrol of Brazilian soldiers who gave him food and enough gasoline to motor two days upriver to the Colombian military post of La Pedrera.

At the landing, before even leaving his canoe, Schultes asked a guard when the next plane was due. The soldier began to laugh. Schultes repeated the question. The soldier still did not believe the question was serious. "Have you not heard?" he asked

"What?" replied Schultes.

"La Violencia," the soldier said, referring to the civil war that had broken out in Colombia in the year that Schultes had been away in the forest. There had not been a military flight to La Pedrera in three months, nor was one expected. Schultes had traveled for nearly a month, enduring extraordinary hardships, only to find himself several hundred miles further from rescue. He had no choice but to head down river. By the time he reached Manaus, after nine days of steady running, he could no longer walk and had to be carried from the docks in a hammock to the hospital.

An ordinary man might have rested for a few days. Not Schultes. On the way up the landing, he noticed a fine riverboat belonging to the American Chicle Company. That night he dispatched young Pacho to make inquiries, and by morning everything was arranged. Schultes was not about to hang around Manaus nursing himself with injections. He got hold of a syringe, learned how to use it, and bought a large supply of thiamine. Within three days of arriving in Manaus, he was back on the river headed for the Rio Madeira, after the Rio Negro the second largest tributary of the Amazon. Three years before, when he had come down the Madeira from Bolivia, low water had prevented him from reaching a remote savannah, home to a rare endemic species. He was not about to let beriberi get in the way of a chance to secure flowering specimens of an unknown plant.

Schultes returned to Harvard in 1953 and devoted more and more of his time to those who would carry on his work. His own research, of course, continued and, in time, generated no fewer than 496 scientific papers, ten books, and it must be told, one *Golden Guide to the Hallucinogens*.²⁰ But it was really as a professor that he found his calling.

He was a true mentor, a catalyst of dreams. His own achievements were legendary, and merely to move in his shadow was to aspire to greatness. The very force of his personality gave form and substance to the most esoteric of ethnobotanical pursuits. At any one time he had students flung all across Latin America seeking new fruits from the forest, obscure oil palms from the swamps of the Orinoco, rare tuber crops in the high Andes. Under his guidance, it somehow made perfect sense to be lost in the canyons of western Mexico hunting for new varieties of peyote, miserably wet and cold in the southern Andes searching for mutant forms of the tree of the evil eagle, or hidden away in the basement

²⁰ Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann, *The Golden Guide to Hallucinogenic Plants* (New York: Golden Press, 1976).

of the Botanical Museum figuring out the best way to ingest the venom of a toad rumored to have been used as a ritual intoxicant by the ancient Olmec.

By the time I met him in the fall of 1973, it had been some years since he had been capable of active fieldwork. I found him at his desk in his fourth-floor aerie at the Botanical Museum. I was nineteen at the time. We had never met, and he knew nothing of my past. I introduced myself as an undergraduate student from British Columbia. The adjective British caught his attention. I said that I wanted to go to the Amazon and collect plants, just as he had done so many years before. At the time I knew little of South America and less about plants. Asking nothing of credentials, he peered across a stack of dried herbarium specimens and, as calmly as if I had asked for directions to the local library, said, "Well, when would you like to go?" A fortnight later I left for South America, where I remained during that first sojourn for fifteen months.

Just before leaving Cambridge, I stopped by his office, hoping to pick up a few tips, at least some guidance that might allow me to placate my parents. He had three vital pieces of advice. First, I was to avoid high leather boots as all the snakes strike at the neck. Second, he recommended that I bring a pith helmet because in thirteen years he had never lost his bifocals. Third, he insisted that I not come back from the forest without having tried ayahuasca, the vision vine. Then he handed me two letters of introduction, which, as it turned out, might as well have come from God, such was his reputation throughout Colombia and beyond. And so I went, as others had, and did what I could to honor his trust. And, of course, I did try ayahuasca, not to mention several other curious preparations, but that is another story.

PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS: SACRED OR PROFANE?

The invitation to write about Mircea Eliade's view of psychedelic drugs brought up many memories of my time, between 1982 and 1985, with the great historian of religion as his student at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. As I thought of this assignment, three other notable figures came to mind: the ethnomycologist R. Gordon Wasson, who introduced the subject of mushrooms and religion to the modern world; the bard Terence McKenna; and the philosopher of religion Huston Smith. I had the pleasure of knowing each of them in my decades-long study of psychedelic drugs and the religious experience. My hope is these memories serve to provoke a critical analysis of what appears today as a widespread and unchallenged endorsement of these drugs and religion.

Terence McKenna, a unique, gifted wordsmith and enthusiastic promoter of psychedelics, especially cannabis, psilocybin mushrooms, and dimethyltryptamine, differed sharply with the historian Eliade and philosopher Smith on the significance and value of these mysterious so-called "magic mushrooms."

I first met Terence McKenna in the fall of 1983. He was one of the speakers at a conference on psychedelics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. This was one of the early conferences that kicked off what is now known as the Psychedelic Renaissance. I contributed to starting this renaissance as well, having organized a large conference two years earlier at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a few after – private gatherings at Harvard Divinity School, the University of Chicago, and the Esalen Institute, on which my first book, *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*, is based.

In 1983, I was a graduate student in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, where I had gone to study the history and psychology of religion and religious experience with Mircea Eliade after a year of immersion in the theory and practice of LSD psychotherapy in direct study with Stanislav Grof at the Esalen Institute, where I was his assistant. I had become deeply interested in the subject of psychedelic drugs because it seemed to me that civilization was on a precipice, on the verge of a crisis – political, economic, and ecological. It seemed to me that a spiritual awakening might be the greatest hope for our continued survival. I thought intelligent research into the psychedelic experience could contribute to that spiritual awakening. The psychedelic 1960s had come and gone. Many mistakes were made. It was a good time to learn from the errors of the past and develop new ways to incorporate psychedelic visions into more sustainable public policy and cultural healing.

The lineup for the Santa Barbara conference was too good to pass up. Although I'd never heard of Terence McKenna, the other speakers, Ralph Metzner, Albert Hofmann, Carl Ruck, and Alexander Shulgin, I had already come to know as some of the brightest lights and most important teachers in my nascent career.

Terence McKenna was one of the most engaging, thoughtful, and entertaining speakers I had ever heard. His lyrical prose that afternoon covered many topics, but what I remembered most was his critique of Professor Eliade, in which he took issue with critical and erroneous statements Eliade made about drugs and religion in books he wrote in his youth and published in the 1950s. In those books, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*¹ and *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*,² Eliade dismissed the importance of "psychedelic" drugs in the history of religion and mysticism. The word "psychedelic" had, of course, not yet been invented, nor had psychedelic drugs reached any prominence in the modern world. Eliade referred to them as narcotics and called them "late in derivation." Furthermore, he asserted that real shamans didn't use them. The ecstasy produced with such plants were not the real ecstasy. He said that cultures where such drugs are used are in a decadent phase. While he acknowledged their use to evoke trance, attain ecstasy, Eliade describes them as "passive and crude." These and other remarks offended McKenna, who was just starting his popular career as an indiscriminate psychedelic advocate.

R. Gordon Wasson, whom McKenna referred to as the Moses of the modern psychedelic religion and in whose steps he tried to follow, was his hero. Wasson was the source for many of his ideas, including McKenna's now famous stoned ape theory of human evolution. Wasson had earlier, in *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*, also taken on Eliade's youthful dismissal of the sacred plants in considerable detail:

Today Professor Eliade enjoys renown and his word carries weight in certain circles interested in the origin and history of religions, and since he seems to hold the view that the use of divine inebriants is probably a "recent phenomenon" among shamans, or at least among Siberian shamans, a few words of comment on his treatment of this vital aspect of his subject seems called for.³

In *Soma*, Wasson devoted seven full pages to an analysis of Eliade's literary sources, debunking his assertions that they are relatively recent and phenomenologically insignificant compared to the genuine ecstasies and enlightenment of the real shamans and yogis.

Yet it is worth mentioning that the very first thing Wasson learned about the existence of "hallucinogenic mushrooms," he told me, was a field report from CIBA, the pharmaceutical company, from February 1944. In the very first paragraph, the report states:

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

² Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1958).

³ R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 328.

A poisonous mushroom, the crimson fly-agaric, *Amanita muscaria* (L.) Pers., is eaten by the Kamchadal, Chukchi, and Korean tribes of northeastern Asia in order to induce narcosis for two purposes: one (by medicine men or shamans) to place themselves in an ecstatic, oracular trance, and by the other (ordinary people) in order to become intoxicated and indulge in debauchery.⁴

I cite this here, now, because although Wasson critiques Eliade's position and writes several more books all only praising the role of mushrooms, never, as far as I know, does he mention this report or the historical debauchery that other researchers before him brought to his attention.

Now, if all you knew about Mircea Eliade's thoughts on psychoactive plants and the history of religion were from these sources, you would be right to be leery and judge his work harshly. However, as I have said, these texts were early in Eliade's career, a career that continued long past these books. Eliade went on to author dozens more articles and books about the history of religion, a discipline he founded, in addition to publishing many works of historical and autobiographically inspired fiction, novels, and novellas. In many instances, he addresses phenomena related to the emerging psychedelic drugs and their effects. And, importantly, he corrects what was erroneous about his statements from his youth. To judge his view of sacred plants by his earliest statements about them without familiarity with all he said after, as Terence did that afternoon in Santa Barbara, is rather sophomoric, to say the least. I said this to Terence after his talk. That conversation was the beginning of our friendship and collaboration.

Over the next few years, I would organize several private academic conferences on psychedelics and publish three anthologies, with Terence contributing to all of them. One of the essays that Terence wrote at my request that was intended to be published in the twentieth anniversary edition of *The Road to Eleusis* is published here for the first time. Keep reading for an explanation of why this is so.

But first, let us look at what Eliade left us to ponder about the divine inebriates now with the benefit of looking backward through his many books and articles. As we have said, he first described their use in 1951 as "late in derivation," an error that Wasson and McKenna point out. But neither Wasson nor McKenna ever took note of this significant correction, which he stated in his final three-volume series, *A History of Religious Ideas*.⁵ I brought this to Wasson's attention in 1985. You see a complete reversal of Eliade's oft-quoted misstatement of the timing of their appearance. For here Eliade acknowledges the primary significance of Soma. Whatever the original plant was, he recognizes that it was a plant and that it came first.

We will not stop to consider the surrogates and substitutes for the original plant in the cult. It is the role that these somic experiences play in Indian thought that is important. Very probably such experiences were confined

⁴ Robert F. Heizer, "Mixtum Compositum: The Use of Narcotic Mushrooms by Primitive Peoples," *Ciba Symposia* 5, no. 2 (February 1944): 1713-16.

⁵ Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978-1985).

to priests and a certain number of sacrificers. But they had considerable repercussions by virtue of the hymns that praised them and especially by virtue of the interpretations the hymns called forth. The revelation of a full and beatific existence, in communion with the gods, continued to haunt Indian spirituality long after the disappearance of the original drink. Hence an attempt was made to attain such an existence by the help of other means: asceticism or orgiastic excesses, meditation, the techniques of Yoga, mystical devotion. [...] In addition, the quest for absolute freedom gave rise to a whole series of methods and philosophoumena that, in the last analysis, opened out into new perspectives and vistas, unsuspected in the Vedic period. In all these later developments, the god Soma played not a very prominent role; it is the cosmological and sacrificial principle that he signified which ended by preempting the attention of theologians and metaphysicians.

Here, in his journal *No Souvenirs*, he shows us he has thought about these things deeply, openly:

For that is the very problem that is obsessing me: although I see man crushed, asphyxiated, diminished by industrial civilization, I can't believe that he will degenerate, decline morally, and finally perish, completely sterile. I have a limitless confidence in the creative power of the mind. It seems to me that man will succeed – if he wishes – in remaining free and creative, in any circumstance, cosmic or historical.

But how can the miracle be brought about? How can the sacramental dimension of existence be rediscovered? At this point, so much can be said: all the things that have existed we have not definitively lost; we find them again in our dreams and our longings. And the poets have kept them. This is to say nothing of the religious life, because the authenticity and depth of the religious life among my contemporaries seems to me a most mysterious problem.

There must be a way out. Aldous Huxley proposes mescaline, [...]. There would be a great deal to say on that score.⁶

Mircea Eliade and I had many conversations about their effects on some people and how these drugs may figure in contemporary religious studies. He seemed to love hearing my reports from sessions we had in secret with divinity school students. His openness and his wisdom in person contrasted sharply with the image that Terence and Wasson cast on him. But still there was a reluctance, a sort of phobia, more than a disinterest, something else, as if he were hiding something from us.

Our conversations were always one-sided – that is, I would report my own experiences and the experiences of the participants, fellow Divinity School students.

⁶ Mircea Eliade, *No Souvenirs: Journal, 1957-1969*, trans. Fred H. Johnson (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 80.

I recall Eliade's wide-eyed interest when I reported experiences of the "inner light" brought on by LSD. The "inner light," a topic about which he wrote extensively, a central and common feature of the world's mystical traditions.⁷

Alan Piper once asked me if I thought Eliade's novella *Youth Without Youth*,⁸ a story that takes place in 1938, was a psychedelic allegory. It could be. It is a story about a man who is hit by lightning and attains a kind of enlightenment and immortality and who has to keep it secret for fear the Nazis will acquire it.

Psychedelics were not his forte. During my first conversation with him, I asked him what he thought about LSD. He said, "LSD? Doesn't that do something to your fertility?" That was a perfectly understandable question in light of the fact that a study was widely published when LSD first became controversial in the United States that it would cause chromosome damage. Subsequent studies debunking this claim received comparatively little attention. Stanislav Grof devotes an appendix to this issue in his *LSD Psychotherapy*.⁹

We never discussed his own experiences. While preparing this essay, it came to my attention that he did experiment with mind-altering drugs, apparently opium and Pervitin, a methamphetamine. I have no personal knowledge of this period in Eliade's life, which he wrote about in his autobiography and which was discussed in articles by the Romanian scholar Andrei Oiștenanu.¹⁰

Finally, in the spring of 1985, I asked him if I could interview him on the subject in order to condense into a coherent piece ideas he had scattered around his writings. He was very open, and we agreed to do it. I typed out a dozen pages of questions drawn from his references to sacred plants or psychedelic drugs throughout his work. When I arrived at his office, he looked very disheveled and uncomfortable. He said he did not feel well and could not see me that day. This had never happened before. I persisted. I said, "A lot of people could really benefit from hearing your views." He said he really did not know anything and was too old to begin something new. Then, in a rare burst of emotion, he exclaimed, "I do not like these plants." The full, albeit brief interview is published in "A Conversation with R. Gordon Wasson," in *Entheogens and the Future of Religion*.¹¹

These memories of Mircea Eliade also bring to mind Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, who was my professor at that time. Wendy played an important role in Wasson's research career and was a close colleague of Mircea Eliade's. Wendy was hired by Wasson to help him translate Sanskrit. It was Wendy who found the decisive text, "Full bellied the priests piss Soma," which confirmed Wasson's *Amanita muscaria* theory because of the well-known consumption by Siberian shamans of *A. muscaria* by urine drinking. Working with Wasson launched her career in academia, then threatened it as the psychedelics became

⁷ See, esp., Mircea Eliade, "Experiences of the Mystic Light," in *The Two and The One*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Youth Without Youth*, trans. Mac Linscott Ricketts (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988).

⁹ See "The Effects of LSD on Chromosomes, Genetic Mutation, Fetal Development, and Malignancy," in Stanislav Grof, *LSD Psychotherapy* (Pomona, CA: Hunter House, 1980).

¹⁰ Andrei Oișteanu, *Religie, politică și mit. Texte despre M. Eliade și I.P. Ciulianu* (Limba: Polirom, 2007), or <https://revista22.ro/cultura/mircea-eliade-de-la-opium-la-amfetamine>.

¹¹ Robert Forte, "A Conversation with R. Gordon Wasson," in *Entheogens and the Future of Religion* (San Francisco: Council on Spiritual Practices, 2000), 86-125, also <https://www.alteredstatesofamerica.net/>.

more problematic. Her own opinion of the mushroom hypothesis varied from supportive to dismissive. She wrote a paper with Brian K. Smith, arguing that Soma did not exist at all but was merely a mythic plant. My final paper was for her class; it traced the changes in her perspective and challenged her most recent position. She gave me an A, with the note, “You were right and I was wrong, about the mushroom.” She summed up her thought in her own words with this comment in Tom Riedlinger’s festschrift for Wasson:

One of the reasons that Gordon kept at me was that he never entirely succeeded in persuading me that the second half of his hypothesis – the argument that Soma was not only a hallucinogen but one in particular, the fly-agaric mushroom – was correct. [...] I was pretty cagey about it at first: without admitting it outright to Gordon, I did not believe (and still do not) that he had proven Soma definitely *was* [italics in original] a mushroom, any more than I felt anyone could prove it was not. On the other hand, I did believe we had established a far more important hypothesis: Soma was a hallucinogen. If true, this casts an entirely new light on the whole of Indian religious history, particularly on the esoteric traditions and on yoga techniques.¹²

I cite these remarks to show that Wasson’s theories, embraced thoroughly by the now blossoming psychedelic renaissance, by enthusiasts such as McKenna, are by no means universally accepted by scholars in the relevant fields. In other words, lacking among enthusiasts is what the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, Eliade’s colleague, termed a hermeneutics of suspicion – that is, a suspicion that religious texts are straightforward and therefore should be read with skepticism.

One important skeptic of the value of psychedelics in spirituality and religion is the prolific author and mystic philosopher of religion Huston Smith. Smith, an early member of the Harvard Psilocybin Project of Timothy Leary’s, was at first enthusiastic about the value and application of psychedelics to religious studies. He wrote extensively and appreciatively, but before long he backed off his enthusiasm after witnessing the unfolding scene. While he never wavered in his respect for Wasson’s historical research¹³ and for the potential of these drugs, he wrote only with caution about their significance and utility in the later days of his career. “Know ten things, [...] tell nine,” he began his appendix, “The Psychedelic Evidence,” to *Forgotten Truth: The Common Vision of the World’s Religions*:

If the only thing to say about the psychedelics was that they seem on occasion to offer direct disclosures of the psychic and celestial planes as well as (in rare instances) the Infinite itself, we would hold our peace. For though such experiences may be veridical in ways, the goal, it cannot be stressed too often, is not religious experiences; it is the religious life. And

¹² Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, “‘Somatic’ Memories of R. Gordon Wasson,” in *The Sacred Mushroom Seeker: Tributes to R. Gordon Wasson*, ed. T. J. Riedlinger (Portland, OR: Dioscorides Press, 1990), 58.

¹³ See his review of Wasson’s *Soma*: Huston Smith, “Wasson’s *Soma*: A Review Article,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 4 (1972): 480-99

with respect to the latter, psychedelic “theophanies” can abort a quest as readily as, perhaps more readily than, they further it.¹⁴

A more nuanced and thorough expression of Smith’s attitude and experience with the psychedelics is my interview “A Conversation with Huston Smith about Timothy Leary and the Modern Psychedelic Movement.”¹⁵

Smith’s experienced, philosophical, and reserved stance on the psychedelics brings us back to the modern psychedelic renaissance and to Mircea Eliade’s original comments about decadence:

For, on the one hand, shamanic myths and folklore record a decadence among the shamans of the present day, who have become unable to obtain ecstasy in the fashion of the “great shamans of long ago”; on the other, it has been observed that where shamanism is in decomposition and the trance is simulated, there is also overindulgence in intoxicants and drugs.¹⁶

Narcotics are only a vulgar substitute for “pure” trance. We have already had occasion to note this fact among several Siberian peoples; the use of intoxicants (alcohol, tobacco, etc.) is a recent innovation and points to a decadence in shamanic technique. Narcotic intoxication is called on to provide an imitation of a state that the shaman is no longer capable of attaining otherwise. Decadence or (must we add?) vulgarization of a mystical technique – in ancient and modern India, and indeed all through the East, we constantly find this strange mixture of “difficult ways” and “easy ways” of realizing mystical ecstasy or some other decisive experience.¹⁷

[...]

[...] closer study of the problem gives the impression that the use of narcotics is, rather, indicative of the decadence of a technique of ecstasy.¹⁸

We are living in an unprecedented time of world history where the sacred drugs of antiquity are more popular, more common than ever before. As I wrote that sentence, I heard the words of my teacher, Huston Smith: “I want to take exception to your calling them ‘sacred drugs.’ They have sacred possibilities, I’m not going to back down on that. But Aldous Huxley was wise in calling them ‘heaven and hell drugs,’ and hell connotes what is demonic rather than sacred.”

¹⁴ Huston Smith, “The Psychedelic Evidence,” in *Forgotten Truth: The Common Vision of the World’s Religions* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), 155.

¹⁵ Robert Forte, *Outside Looking In: Appreciations, Castigations, Reminiscences* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1997), <https://www.alteredstatesofamerica.net/>; see also Smith’s final work, *Cleansing the Doors of Perception*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Sentient Publications, 2003).

¹⁶ Eliade, *Yoga*, 338.

¹⁷ Eliade, *Shamanism*, 401.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 477.

Before Wasson and the modern psychedelic movement, psychedelic mushrooms were known only to a small population of indigenous users, a few anthropologists, and small sects of Bohemian esotericists, who for the most part kept their interest rather secret.

After an explosion of popularity in the 1960s and a second wave of popularity, of which McKenna was perhaps the most prominent voice, psychedelic mushrooms are now ubiquitous in modern society. Not just mushrooms but all of the traditional psychoactive sacraments are becoming widely popular. Headline stories in the mainstream media are rampant: “Can LSD make you a billionaire?”¹⁹ There are dozens of courses to sign up for and new ones popping up practically every day offering to train you to become a psychedelic guide for a fee. Hundreds of books rave about the wondrous effects of these drugs. In every major and minor city across the United States every weekend, you can find an ayahuasca ceremony being conducted, for a fee, to almost anyone, led by self-appointed experts in this ancient indigenous practice, many of whom haven’t ever left the United States.

I’ve seen almost zero critical analysis of this media-fueled trend, which grows every day, along with reports of widespread sexual abuse by these so-called neo-shamans, or scientific fraud by the psychedelic profiteer, Rick Doblin, most extolled by the media.²⁰ Doblin’s trip is to offer psychedelic therapy to battle-scarred veterans of foreign wars for the small fee of \$15,000 for a few sessions. And so, wars can continue with happy warriors.²¹ At least one state official is trying to pass a law to limit his greed.²² You can even spend your money on a course on “microdosing,” the newest international trend. By definition, a microdose is so small it has no noticeable effect. Still the business grows ... selling nothing.

So let us reflect on these developments and reconsider Eliade’s view. Can anyone argue that we in the modern West are not in a state of cultural decline, coincident with a dramatic rise in psychedelic drugs proliferating in society?

Robert Forte
Athens, Greece

¹⁹ Erica Fink, “When Silicon Valley takes LSD. Can LSD Make You a Billionaire?,” <http://maps.org/news/media/cnn-can-ldsd-make-you-a-billionaire/>.

²⁰ Jamie Ducharme, “Rick Doblin,” <https://time.com/6968396/rick-doblin/>.

²¹ Russel Hausfeld, “Building Better Killing Machines – With Ecstasy! Rick Doblin, the pioneer of MDMA therapy, advocates for dosing soldiers upon enlistment,” <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/building-better-killing-machines-with-ecstasy/>.

²² “Massachusetts Lawmaker Files a Law to Cap the Costs of MDMA Therapy,” <https://psychedelicspotlight.com/massachusetts-lawmaker-files-a-law-to-cap-the-costs-of-mdma-therapy/>.

OBSEQUIES FOR THE PSYCHEDELIC RENAISSANCE: NON-OBLIVIOUS SEMANTICS FOR THE PSYCHOPTIC RESURGENCE

Our problem is to adapt a language which is not now suitable to describing *the continuüm of mind and body, a Universe of complete continuity*. Somehow or other, we have to invent the means of talking about these problems in an artistically varied way, which shall make them accessible to the general public. Ideally, for example, we ought to be able to talk about a mystical experience simultaneously in terms of theology, of psychology and of biochemistry. This is a pretty tall order, but unless we can do something of the kind, it will remain extraordinarily difficult for people to think about *this continuous web of Life, to think about it as a continuüm*, and not in terms of the old Platonic and Cartesian Dualism – which *so extraordinarily falsifies our picture of the World*. [...] As long ago, as the beginning of the XIX Century, Wordsworth, in his *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, made the statement that the time would come, when *the remotest discovery of the physicist and the chemist would become a suitable subject for poëtry*.

[Aldous Huxley, Lecture, San Francisco: January 1959]¹

In the first place, there is no need for any “Psychedelic Renaissance” ... insofar as the so-called “psychedelic” *never died*: hence, cannot be *reborn*! On the other hand, this term may be useful by historical analogy to the Renaissance: a reawakening of science after more than a millennium of obscurantism – a medical *renaissance*. In the original case, it was *religious fanaticism* that obnubilated the spiritual and scientific legacy of the ancients. In our case, it is an *equally religious*, Puritanical zeal masquerading as scientific rationality that saddled us with Drugs Prohibition and its corollary of making visionary drugs a taboo

¹ Aldous Huxley, *The Final Revolution*, in: *Moksha. Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience* (New York: Stonehill, 1977), 166-67. *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems*, published in 1798, was the joint work of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge that launched the Romantic movement in English literature and included “The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere.” Huxley is referring to “Poetic Diction,” the appendix to the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 3rd ed., 1802. (My emphasis in Huxley quote.)

subject. The real problem, then, is calling this a “psychedelic” renaissance. Our field has ever been dogged by a semiotic or semantic confusion and obfuscation. What “began” back in 1953 as “hallucinogenic” drugs later were transmogrified to “psychedelics” per obscene detours through ersatz “psychotomimetic” or “psychosomimetic” drugs. Yea, I was part of the group that coined the neologism *entheogenic*,² but this term *does not* and *cannot* apply to the so-called “mainstreaming” or “medicalization” of visionary drugs. Let us examine the origins and contexts of most of these words (particularly their lexical definitions) with an eye to linguistic perspicuity and in furtherance of what Wasson called “a vocabulary to describe all the modalities of a Divine Inebriant.”³ It happens that I wrote an entire book on this subject: *The Age of Entheogens & The Angels’ Dictionary*⁴ – rather, three-fifths of a book (*The Angels’ Dictionary* was obviously my riff on Ambrose Bierce’s *The Devil’s Dictionary*).⁵ Although I use principally *The Oxford English Dictionary*,⁶ I shall cite definitions from the more recent *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*,⁷ although it was published more than a decade before “entheogen” and “entheogenic” had been added to the canon of the incomparable *OED*.⁸ Not only has *The OED* definitions of over 600,000 words but also their etymologies, all known orthographies, and proceeds “on historical principles” – that is, it has 2.4 million quotations supporting each given sense of a word. *The Oxford Encyclopedic* has more than 200,000 defined words (which greatly exceeds the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, the standard in Castilian) and represents words more commonly in modern use.

The subjacent scientific foundation of ethnopharmacognosy was laid in 1806 by a young apprentice pharmacist of Padeborn in northern Germany, Friedrich Sertürner, who then isolated *Morphium* (now called morphine) from *opium* (*Papaver somniferum* L. [Papaveraceæ]); making the key discovery that it was alkaline, or “a base,” to be called the prototypical *alkaloïde* about one decade later. Nine decades passed, which saw the isolation of alkaloids from shamanic inebriants such as nicotine from tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L. [Solanaceæ]), harmine from Syrian rue (*Peganum harmala* L. [Zygophyllaceæ]), and later ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi* [Spruce ex Grisebach] Morton [Malpighiaceæ]), then cocaine from coca (*Erythroxylum coca* Lamarck [Erythroxylaceæ]), before Arthur Heffter, also German, not merely isolated but ingested, in “psychonautic bioassays,”⁹ the

² Carl A. P. Ruck et al., “Entheogens,” *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 11, no. 1-2 (1979): 145-46.

³ R. G. Wasson, “The Hallucinogenic Fungi of Mexico: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Religious Idea Among Primitive Peoples,” *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 19, no. 7 (1961): 137-62.

⁴ J. Ott, *The Age of Entheogens & The Angels’ Dictionary* (Kennewick, WA: Natural Products, 1995).

⁵ Ambrose Bierce, *The Cynic’s Word-Book (The Devil’s Dictionary)* (London: Arthur F. Bird, 1906).

⁶ *The Compact Edition of The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁷ *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁸ Volumes 1 and 2 of *The Oxford English Dictionary Additions Series (Oxford English Dictionary Additions Series* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993]) added 6,000 words to supplement the second edition of 1989 and as a foretaste of the third. In volume 2, seven words derived from “ethnic” were added, which included “*ethnomedicine*” and “*ethnopharmacology*” (latter defined as “*pharmacognosy* as practised in different ethnic groups”). Dare I hope my more precise “*ethnopharmacognosy*” be incorporated? “Ethnic groups” practice no pharmacology, with its “scientifically objective” vivisection; but archaic shamans were *pre-literate* pharmacognosists! However, the only “psych-” word to be added was “*psychographic*” in volume 1 (“psychedelic” had been incorporated into the second edition). This equates to more than *four* neologisms daily over four years, which is a dramatic linguistic dynamism!

⁹ To describe pharmacological explorers of the “psychocosmos,” the noun “psychonaut” was coined by German writer Ernst Jünger in *Heliopolis* (Ernst Jünger, *Heliopolis: Rückblick auf eine Stadt* [Kirchhorst: Heliopolis Verlag,

major visionary principle of peyotl (*Lophophora williamsii* [Lemaire] Coulter [Cactaceæ]), which he named (in an obstinate, obtuse confusion between two quite different plants) *Mezcalin* (today known as mescaline). It was 23 November 1897 when Heffter inaugurated this “Heffter-Technique” by ingesting 150 mg of *Mezcalin* (having also sampled three other alkaloids he, likewise, had isolated), as well as the entire peyotl cactus.¹⁰ Forty-one years later, to the day, a young Swiss chemist in Basel, Albert Hofmann, first synthesized LSD-25 (*Lysergsäure-Diethylamid*, the twenty-fifth compound in a series of synthetic derivatives of ergonovine,¹¹ being the propanolamide of lysergic acid),¹² which, 4.4 years later (on 16 April 1943), was to inebriate him most “strangely” while he *re*-synthesized it, leading to his own psychonautic bioassay with 250 mcg of LSD-25 on 19 April: the original “Bicycle Day.”¹³ Four years later, in 1947, the psychiatrist Werner Stoll (the son of Hofmann’s boss, Arthur Stoll) introduced LSD-25 to the world, trade named as Delysid™, in the first clinical psychiatric study, calling LSD in his title “*ein Phantasticum*,”¹⁴ using

1949)) and subsequently in his logbook of experimentation with numerous drugs, *Annäherungen* (E. Jünger, *Annäherungen: Drogen und Rausch* [Stuttgart: E. Klett Verlag, 1970]). Some of his bioassays involved Delysid™ (LSD) and Indocybin™ (the Sandoz tradename for psilocybin), conducted in the company of Albert Hofmann, who was his friend. In the novel *Heliopolis: Rückblick auf eine Stadt*, Jünger stylized Albert Hofmann as Antonio Peri. Jünger was wounded seven times in WW I, awarded the Iron Cross, and became famous both as a writer and as a military hero. He was a persistent critic of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) and twice declined a curule in the Reichstag (Parliament) for that party, while refusing to render obeisance to Adolf Hitler – still, Hitler was quoted as saying, “Nothing happens to Jünger.” He served as a Hauptmann (captain) in the occupation of France and became friends there with Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau. He was peripherally involved in the Stauffenberg plot to assassinate Hitler, which resulted in his being cashiered from the Wehrmacht. Hitler, however, had his 18-year-old son sent to a penal battalion on the Italian front, where soon he was killed, either in action or by the SS (the SchutzStaffel or “Protection Squadron” under Heinrich Himmler). This would have been a unit of the Waffen SS (“armed” or “combat”) that initiated the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. It was the SS Totenkopfverbände (“Death’s Head Units”) that ran the concentration/death camps. On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday (like Albert Hofmann, he lived 102 years), Ernst Jünger was decorated, both by French president François Mitterrand and by the German chancellor Helmut Kohl! Kohl offered Jünger funds for his library, but he asked, instead, for “a few grammes of cocaine”! To honor Jünger’s centenary, I dedicated *The Age of Entheogens & The Angels’ Dictionary* to him.

¹⁰ A. Heffter, “Über Cacteenalkaloide (II Mittheilung),” *Berichte der Deutschen Chemischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1896): 216-27, and A. Heffter, “Über Pellote. Beiträge zur chemischen und pharmakologischen Kenntniss der Cacteen. Zweite Mittheilung,” *Archiv für experimentelle Pathologie und Pharmakologie* 40 (1898): 385-429.

¹¹ Ergonovine, the specific uterotonic principle of ergot (*Claviceps purpurea* [Fr.] Tulasne [Clavicipitaceæ]), was isolated simultaneously in four laboratories (one being in England), so it received four different names (Ergobasin, ergometrine, ergostetrine, and Ergotocin). As there was no clear priority, “ergonovine” was established as official by the International Pharmacopœia Commission. In England, this initially had been called “ergometrine”; however, Hofmann’s derivative methyl-ergonovine (Methergine™) sometimes is called methyl-ergometrine there. Both ergonovine and methyl-ergonovine are psychoactive in doses above 2.0 mg (J. Bigwood et al., “Entheogenic Effects of Ergonovine,” *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 11, no. 1-2 [1979]: 147-49; A. Hofmann, “A Challenging Question and My Answer,” in R. G. Wasson et al., *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978], 25-34; and J. Ott and P. Neely, “Entheogenic (Hallucinogenic) Effects of Methyl-Ergonovine,” *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 12, no. 2 [1980]: 165-66). The chemists at Sandoz had named this alkaloid Ergobasin (A. Stoll and E. Burckhardt, “L’Ergobasine, un nouvel alkaloïde de l’ergot de seigle, soluble dans l’eau,” *Bulletin des sciences pharmacologiques* 42 [1935]: 257-66). Hofmann was the first to synthesize ergonovine in 1937, being the first synthesis of any *ergot*-alkaloid (A. Stoll and A. Hofmann, “Partialsynthese von Alkaloiden vom Typus des Ergobasins,” *Helvetica Chimica Acta* 26, no. 3 [1943]: 944-65).

¹² Stoll and Hofmann, “Partialsynthese von Alkaloiden vom Typus des Ergobasins.”

¹³ A. Hofmann, *LSD – mein Sorgenkind* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1979), and A. Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*, trans. J. Ott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

¹⁴ W. A. Stoll, “Lysergsäure-diäthylamid, ein Phantasticum aus der Mutterkorngruppe,” *Schweizer Archiv für Neurologie und Psychiatrie* 60 (1947): 279.

a neologism coined by Louis Lewin for a then novel class of drugs, *Phantastica*¹⁵ – and our modern *Psychoptic Era* had commenced!

In the four decades between the key chemical discoveries of Heffter and Hofmann, Ernst Späth had synthesized mescaline,¹⁶ proving its structure and opening the portal to a widespread clinical experimentation with the drug (the source cactus, *L. williamsii*, is endemic to the deserts of northern Mexico and southernmost Texas; it is tiny, painfully slow-growing, and *not* a viable source for any extensive use, apart from its being prohibited for trade under the CITES treaty).¹⁷ In the decade following Späth's synthesis, synthetic mescaline came to be studied clinically rather widely in Germany, England, and France, leading to the publication of three books about this research: Kurt Beringer's 1927 *Der Meskalinrausch*,¹⁸ Heinrich Klüver's 1928 *Mescal*,¹⁹ and Alexandre Rouhier's 1927 *Le Peyotl* (as the title suggests, this last concentrated mainly on the pharmacology of peyotl extracts rather than on pure mescaline),²⁰ besides many technical articles in the medical and scientific literature.

Lewin's "phantasticant" has hung fire – it has the disadvantage of being derived from "phantasm," "an illusion, a phantom," although "phantasmagoria" means "a shifting series of real or imaginary figures as seen in a dream." "Phantasmagoria" had been a name for an early "magic lantern–type of projector," still earlier called a "psychoptic looking glass" (we shall return to this term). Up until the time of mescaline research in the 1920s and Lewin's contemporaneous book, what we now call *psychoactive* or *psychotropic* drugs had been known generically as narcotic drugs.²¹ But that word designates linguistically somniferous drugs, which Lewin called *Hypnotica*, the only one of his (five-category)

¹⁵ L. Lewin, *Phantastica: die betäubenden und erregenden Genußmittel. für Ärzte und nicht Ärzte* (Berlin: Georg Stilke Verlag, 1924).

¹⁶ E. Späth, "Über die Anhalonium-Alkaloide. I. Anhalanin und Mezcalin," *Monatshefte für Chemie und verwandte Teile anderer Wissenschaften* 40 (1919): 129-54.

¹⁷ A. Ermakova, "Ecology and Conservation of Peyote in Texas, USA," in *Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychedelia*, ed. A. Tollan et al. (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2022), 37-51, details the endangered status of peyotl in the United States, which marks the northernmost extremity of its range (in the United States, it grows only in the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande Valley of southern Texas). Unfortunately, as regards commerce with the Native American Church of North America, Texas is the only *legal* source. Although it has a vast range in México, the CITES treaty proscribes international traffic in *any* wild cactus species. To my knowledge, there has been no such objective study of its Mexican ecology, which is sorely needed.

¹⁸ K. Beringer, *Der Meskalinrausch: seine Geschichte und Erscheinungsweise* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1927).

¹⁹ H. Klüver, *Mescal: The "Divine Plant" and Its Psychological Effects* (London: Paul Kegan, 1928).

²⁰ A. Rouhier, *La plante qui fait les yeux émerveillés – le peyotl* (Paris: Gaston Doin et Cie, 1927).

²¹ There were three books dealing with psychoactive plants and shamanic inebriants in the mid-nineteenth century: James F. Johnston, *The Chemistry of Common Life*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood, 1854/55); Ernst Freiherr von Bibra, *Die narkotischen Genußmittel und der Mensch* (Nürnberg: Verlag von Wilhelm Schmid, 1855); then, lastly, Mordecai Cubitt Cooke, *The Seven Sisters of Sleep: Popular History of the Seven Prevailing Narcotics of the World* (London: Blackwell, 1850). Both von Bibra and Cooke called such drugs *narcotics* in their titles, while the second volume of Johnston's pioneering treatise on "biochemistry" largely was dedicated to "The Narcotics We Indulge In." When Richard Spruce, "On Some Remarkable Narcotics of the Amazon Valley and Orinoco," *Geographical Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1873): 184-93, reported his pioneering research in Amazonia – which included ñopo snuff or parica (*Anadenanthera peregrina* [L.] Speggazine [Leguminosæ]) and ayahuasca (or "caapi/yaj[glé]," which he was the first scientist to ingest) – these were the "remarkable narcotics" in his title. Carl Hartwich, in his encyclopedic treatise of the new, twentieth century (*Die menschlichen Genußmittel: ihre Herkunft, Verbreitung, Geschichte, Anwendung, Bestandteile und Wirkung* [Leipzig: Chr. Hermann Tauschnitz, 1911]), also used this term. His eclectic tome features much more extensive coverage than its triad of nineteenth-century precursors.

taxonomy for psychoactive drugs to have endured.²² However, another of his genera was *Euphorica*, in which he placed opioids and, incongruously, the decidedly stimulating cocaine (as narcotics, this perdures in a legal but not scientific sense to designate illicit

²² Lewin's five categories, including his concise amplifications, were as follows: 1) *Euphorica*, *Seelenberühigungsmittel*; euphoricants, or "anodynes for the mind": opioids and coca/cocaine; 2) *Phantastica*, *Sinnestäuschungsmittel*; phantasticants, or "sensory illusion-agents": peyotl, *Cannabis indica* Lamarck (Cannabaceae), *Amanita muscaria* [L. ex Fries] Persoon ex Gray (Agaricaceae), nightshades such as *Hyoscyamus* and *Datura* (Solanaceae), and *Banisteria/opsis caapi*; 3) *Inebriantia*, *Berauschungsmittel*; inebriants or "inebriating agents": alcohol, chloroform; [diethyl]-ether, benzene; 4) *Hypnotica*, *Schlafmittel*; hypnotics or "sleep-agents": chloral hydrate, barbital, Polynesian kava (*Piper methysticum* Forster fil. [Piperaceae]), *und so weiter*; and 5) *Excitantia*, *Erregungsmittel*; excitants or "stimulants": camphor; betel (*Areca catechu* L. [Arecaceae]), qat (*Catha edulis* [Vahl] Forskal [Celastraceae]), several caffeine plants, such as coffee, tea, cola (*Cola nitida* [Vent.] Schott et Endl. [Malvaceae]), maté (*Ilex paraguariensis* St.-Hilaire [Aquifoliaceae]), cacao, tobaccos, and parica (snuffs, from seeds of *Anadenanthera peregrina*). Setting aside Lewin's first category, *Euphorica* (which in fact prefigured those prohibitionist narcotics), the remaining four are rational and presently correspond to the following: 2) *Phantastica*: visionary drugs; 3) *Inebriantia*: general anaesthetics; 4) *Hypnotica*: hypnotics; and 5) *Excitantia*: stimulants. Albert Hofmann suggested adding a sixth category: *Neuroleptica* or "neuroleptic sedatives," such as meprobamate and chlorpromazine (which did not exist in Lewin's time) based on *Rauwolfia serpentina* Benth. ex Kurz. (Apocynaceae), from which Hofmann had been the first to isolate reserpine, although he did not get priority, as the genius-pharmacologists at Sandoz deemed it to be wanting in commercial viability until their competitor launched it as a "blockbuster drug" a couple of years later! Nonetheless, Lewin had misclassified several in his otherwise cogent scheme. *Euphorica* is an obnoxious, officious category, and no toxicologists today would hesitate to include coca/cocaine in the stimulant group (*Excitantia*). While I might argue that opioids deserve a separate category, such does not yet exist, and these more aptly should be classified among other general anesthetics (*Inebriantia*). Finally, tobacco and parica snuff, albeit decidedly stimulants (*Excitantia*), belong more appropriately among the visionary drugs (*Phantastica*). Although we misuse "narcotic" to describe at once, *very specifically*, the class of opioids (the opiates morphine and codeine, as well as many artificial, *semi*-synthetic derivatives, such as 14-hydroxy-dihydro-codeinone [OxyContin™], fully artificial congeners, including meperidine [Demerol™], and numerous derivatives of Fentanyl™ – many being ad hoc creations of the black market), and likewise, as a legalistic catch-all for illicit drugs (Lewin's *Euphorica*, plus a great number of his *Phantastica*: peyotl; *Cannabis* species and their active principles; LSD, DMT, and kindred tryptamines, originally isolated from parica; and as long as sad an et cetera); it might be said that "*Narcotica*," *sensu lato*, would embrace alike Lewin's opioid *Euphorica* and encompass the entirety of his *Inebriantia* and *Hypnotica* – all are "sleep agents" at appropriate dosages. On the other hand, history and modern judgement – informed by steady advances in chemistry and pharmacology – have underwritten their separation into distinct categories. His obtuse class of *Euphorica* is as problematic for pharmacologists/chemists as that to which we aspire, a catchall for visionary drugs, insofar as, in either case, a wide spectrum of chemical-structural types and also general psychopharmacology is needed to embrace either drugs used to evoke *euphoria* ("bearing well") or *vision*. *Euphorica* might be the opioids so classified but also *Phantastica* such as LSD and DMT (which did not exist in Lewin's time); *Inebriantia* (alcohol and ether); *Hypnotica* (kava and Quaalude™, not then extant); and *Excitantia* (cathinone from qat and the reclassified cocaine). The same applies to visionary drugs: opioids have been productive of *oneiric visions*, for such as Thomas De Quincey, "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar," *The London Magazine* (September and December 1821; *Appendix*, December 1822); we would accept *all* of Lewin's *Phantastica* as being visionary (although only peyotl and *Banisteriopsis caapi* might be misnamed as "psychedelics," albeit the latter, *by itself*, is decidedly a hypnotic or a "sleep agent"); ketamine is a general anesthetic, which Lewin might have classified in the *Inebriantia*; and kava may be visionary in a shamanic context. These minutiae provide depth and context to this thorny problem of nomenclature for an ever-growing diversity of "mind drugs," particularly, in the present case, for visionary drugs. Although L. Lewin, in *Banisteria caapi: ein neues Rauschgift und Heilmittel* (Berlin: G. Stilke Verlag, 1929), had published the first monograph on ayahuasca and had isolated harmine (which he named *Banisterin*: L. Lewin, "Untersuchung über *Banisteria caapi* Spr. [ein südamerikanisches Rauschmittel]," *Archiv für experimentelle Pathologie und Pharmakologie* 129 [1928]: 133-49), besides having been the pioneer in the chemical study of peyotl (L. Lewin, "Über *Anhalonium lewini*," *Archiv für experimentelle Pathologie und Pharmakologie* 24 [1888]: 401-11), there is no indication he was a psychonaut, and it is interesting that he had chosen *Phantastica* for his title – surely the least used and most obscure of his five categories.

drugs). As many of us know full well, what some now call *psychedelics* generally are potent stimulants, while today *narcotic* is still used imprecisely for the opioids, which are not somniferous in such doses as commonly are used for ludicrous or medicinal purposes. Although LSD was all-but-solely responsible for the “Psychedelic Sixties” and the late-twentieth-century interest in this category of ineffable drugs, it had been introduced to the world as a novel “phantasticant,” an incongruous term (a barbarism in fact), which came to categorize these drugs as *hallucinogen/hallucinogenic*. For want of any better, I myself used it in the titles of my first two books, and it was canonized, per that modern classic from those great pioneers Richard Evans Schultes and Albert Hofmann: *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens*.²³ “Hallucinogenic” had first appeared prominently in print as the title of D. Johnson’s 1953 pamphlet *The Hallucinogenic Drugs*,²⁴ but he had borrowed it from three psychiatrists: the Briton, J. Smythies; the Canadian, A. Hoffer; and the Anglo-Canadian, Humphry Osmond. Three years later, in correspondence with Aldous Huxley in 1956, Osmond coined the neologism “psychedelic,” which was *mis*-read by Huxley as “psychodetic,” while Huxley proposed instead “phanerothyme.” On 30 March, Osmond responded with the following doggerel: “To fathom Hell or soar angelic, / Just take a pinch of *psychedelic*.” Huxley replied in kind: “To make this trivial world sublime, / Take half a gramme of *phanerothyme*.” Obviously, Huxley had mescaline in mind – judging by this dose – and indeed, three years earlier, on 6 May 1953, Osmond first introduced Huxley to *entheognosis* at his home in Los Angeles, when he gave 400 mg of mescaline-*sulfate* to the famous English writer, whereby his “doors of perception were cleansed” (from William Blake’s immortal *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* of 1793). Huxley devoted the last decade of his life to research on visionary drugs and published quite influential essays on their phenomenology: *The Doors of Perception*,²⁵ and *Heaven and Hell*.²⁶ His final (fictional) book, *Island*,²⁷ was set on an Asian island that practiced a Buddhist/Hindu spirituality based on the entheogenic use of cultivated mushrooms modeled on the teonanacatl of María Sabina, V. P. and R. G. Wasson’s *Psilocybe mexicana* Heim (Agaricaceæ), and other “psilocinic” species. However, Huxley (like me) was punctilious in linguistic matters: he objected to Osmond’s deformation of the “psycho-” root to “psyche-”²⁸ and always used the proper orthography, “psychodelic” (Osmond, of course, had made

²³ R. E. Schultes and A. Hofmann, *The Botany and Chemistry of Hallucinogens* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1973; enl. 2nd ed. with forward by Heinrich Klüver, 1980).

²⁴ D. Johnson, *The Hallucinogenic Drugs* (London: C. Johnson, 1953).

²⁵ A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (New York: Harper, 1954).

²⁶ A. Huxley, *Heaven and Hell* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956).

²⁷ A. Huxley, *Island* (New York: Harper, 1962).

²⁸ Alas! *The OED* defines “psyche” as “breath [...] to breathe, to blow, (later) to cool; hence, life.” It is true that the Classic Greeks considered “breath” to be “the animating principle [...] the soul or spirit, in distinction from its material vehicle,” and this might well be construed as “the mind.” “Psycho-,” as a prefix, is similarly defined as “breath, life, soul”; but: “since the 17th C., taken as a formative in the sense of ‘mind.’” There exist *many* “psycho-” “mind words,” but *none* are given for “psyche-”! The “-delic” suffix is a variant of “*deiw-*,” “to shine,” derives from some “name of the sky god,” and is cognate with the Latin “*deus*,” “god, deity.” So “psychedelic” means “deity in the psyche” (*The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979], 1511)! Thus “psychedelic,” should we desire to be scrupulously and perspicuously literal, means “god-breathing.” In French it is “*psychédélique*,” but “*psyche*” means “cheval glass,” a kind of movable mirror. Neither French nor German employs “psyche-” as a prefix to compound any other “mind words.” If we were to spell it “psychædelic,” it might possibly be somewhat less objectionable... Nay!... just *bin* it!

this disfigurement to evade the obloquy of “psychotic” – germane, insofar as many of his quondam colleagues considered such drugs to effect some “model psychosis” leading to the term “psychotomimetic”). “Psycho” was insinuated into popular consciousness to describe a deranged murderer by the success of Alfred Hitchcock’s eponymous film of 1960.²⁹ But “psychedelic” cannot elude the shadow of this “psycho-” stigma: in Castilian (as in several other languages), it is spelled “*psicodélico*,” “psychodelic.” Moreover, I have yet to see “psychology” written as “psychelogy,” neither “psychotherapy” as “psychetherapy,” nor “psychoactive” as “psycheactive,” and so forth.

Terence McKenna disdained “entheogen” as “a clumsy word freighted with theological baggage” (inconsistently, in his book titled *Food of the Gods!*), and many atheistic or agnostic (even say, an acredist like me, “who, with disdain, rejects belief and disbelief”) enthusiasts of “psychedelics” take comfort in assuming, wrongly, that “psychedelic” is free of “theological baggage.” In the first place, the “clumsy word” is not “entheogen” (from the Greek root ἔνθεος, “divine within,” and the suffix “-γεν,” “becoming”:³⁰ “becoming divine within.” As William Blake wrote, “Thus men forgot that *all deities reside in the human breast*” [my emphasis]), but that awkward “psychedelic”... Furthermore, while the prefix “psycho-” deformed as “psyche-” rather obliquely refers to what we call “the mind,” “-delic,” from “delos,” derives from the name for an obsolete “sky god”! The island of Delos was the mythical birthplace of Apollo and Artemis, *deus/Zeus* being a cognate word. “Entheogen” then is “becoming divine within,” whereas “psychedelic” means literally “*god-minded*”! Curious, to be an *enthusiast* of “psychedelic drugs” whilst rejecting *entheogens* – insofar as “*enthusiasm*” and “*entheogen*” share the same root! Moreover, “*entheos*” referred, literally, to states that were imagined as having been inspired by some “*deific force*,” whether following ingestion of heavily “spiked” wines (as in the case of the Mænads or Bacchantes), in characterization of *poetic inspiration* (per six of the nine Muses), even to certain “*dreams*” pursuant to the “*rite of incubation*” in the temples of Asclepius.³¹ Note that the ancient Greeks diluted their wines with from three up to twenty parts of water, for these were not alcoholic *intoxicants* but rather psychoactive *inebriants* infused with potent, some being *visionary*, psychoactive plants, including poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L. [Papaveraceæ]), mandrake (*Mandragora officinarum*

²⁹ *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) defines “psycho” as “Abbreviation of ‘psychopath’” but accords priority, by one year, to a certain C. Macinnes (*Absolute Beginners* [London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1959]). Their definition, however, isn’t objectively precise – “psycho” is more an apocope than an abbreviation. There is scarcely any doubt that Alfred Hitchcock’s successful film inspired its widespread popular use.

³⁰ The suffix “-gen” (“-γεν”) has ever meant “producing” in scientific nonce words since the day Antoine Lavoisier (who obviously lost his head in the French Revolution) named the elements *oxygène* for “engendering acid” and *hydrogène* for “engendering water.” However, as *The OED* had stated clearly, “The fact that the suffix[...] [-gen] was not capable of meaning ‘that which produces’ was overlooked or disregarded [by Lavoisier]” (my emphasis). It means “becoming,” as we had noted in “Entheogens.” These are elements of atomic number 8, oxygen (O), and 1, hydrogen (H). The atomic number refers to numbers of protons in the atomic nucleus and defines elements. Variable quantities of neutrons are called *isotopes* of an element. Hydrogen, for instance, has three isotopes: protium (1 proton/0 neutrons); deuterium (1 proton/1 neutron), and tritium (1 proton/2 neutrons). Tritium is radioactive, while protium and deuterium are stable. These were originally “oxygine” and “hydrogine.”

³¹ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

L. [Solanaceæ]), and henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L. [Solanaceæ]). The Old Testament “scriptures” refer not merely to regular vinous wine (*yayin*) as an *intoxicant* but also to the *inebriating* effects of *shekar*, or “strong drink” – most likely a Palestinian version of those contemporaneous Greek vinous infusions of psychoactive plants. In I Samuel 1:14, Eli was rebuking Hannah, “How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy *yayin* from thee!”; to which, proudly, she rejoined: “I have drunk *neither yayin nor shekar*.” In the *Knyghtes’ Tale*, of *Tales of Caunterbury*, G. Chaucer wrote:

For he hadde yeve his gailler drynke so
Of a *clarree* maad of a certeyn *wyn*
With *nercotikes* and *opie* of Thebes fyn.³²

By “clarree,” Chaucer was not referring to “claret” but to “clary” wine infused with psychoactive *Salvia sclarea* L. (Labiatae). “Clary-sage” was the “nercotike” to which Palamon added “opiūm” in order to stupefy his “gailler” (gaoler or jailer), so to make his escape.

Which brings me to the dichotomy of “intoxicant” / “inebriant” – these are *not* synonyms! Not only have highly stimulating, sometime entheogens such as cocaine been (unscientifically) called *narcotics*, but *inebriants* have obstreperously been disparaged as *intoxicants*! To be sure, “intoxicant” comes from τóξικόν, a poison (for arrowheads: τόξα means “arrows” and τόξον means “bow,” which is why lovers of archery may be called toxophilites, practicing toxophily, per Roger Ascham’s 1545 book *Toxophilus*), so an *intoxicant* literally is a *poison*. Withal, this may be appropriate for ethanol (viz., ethyl-alcohol, CH₃CH₂OH), which is hepatotoxic, neurotoxic, cardiotoxic, and carcinogenic. *Inebriation*, on the other hand, refers to “heavenly” alterations of consciousness. The first English use (in 1526) is apposite: “This *inebriacyon* or *heuenly dronkenesse of the spiryte*”; as is that of *inebriate* (1497): “Peter is a man *inebryat in the loue of God*.”³³ In German, it is a word with a distinct root, *Rausch*; and in French, it is *ivresse*. I was scouted and scorned when first I referred to “shamanic *inebriants*” due to this mistaken synonymy – in common parlance – of *inebriation* and *intoxication*. However, two decades of my obdurate insistence on the crucial distinction seem to have told, so now I find this in rather common use. The great writer R. Gordon Wasson – as punctilious as he was masterful in linguistic matters – always made this neat distinction: his plea for “a vocabulary to describe all the modalities of a Divine Inebriant” was issued in 1960 during his lecture before the Mycological Society of America in Stillwater, Oklahoma.³⁴ Others have not been so prim nor so precise. In his precocious book, Philippe de Félice (in the title) obtusely presaged Wasson: *Poisons sacrés, ivresses divines: essai sur quelques formes inférieures de la mystique*.³⁵ Here we have “divine inebriations,” well and good,

³² G. Chaucer, *Tales of Caunterbury*, 1st printed ed. (London: William Caxton, 1476), 1470-72; written in 1392 (my emphasis).

³³ *The Oxford English Dictionary (The Compact Edition)* (my emphasis).

³⁴ Wasson, “The Hallucinogenic Fungi of Mexico.”

³⁵ P. de Félice, *Poisons sacrés, ivresses divines: essai sur quelques formes inférieures de la mystique* (Paris: A. Michel, 1936).

but following (oxymoronic) “sacred poisons,” which we then are told are “certain *inferior* forms of mysticism”! Take my word for it and *do* judge this book by its cover: de Félice most felicitously had taken up this long-fumbled [d]rugby ball... but with the depreciatory attitude he made manifest in his title, he did not run with it all too far down the field!³⁶ It is true that – yielding to centuries of misuse – *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* defines “inebriation” by its de facto synonymy to “intoxication.”³⁷ But these hardly are de jure synonyms. “Inebriation” derives from the Latin word *ebrius*, “drunk,” but we have seen that the Classical wines – which were imbibed, yes – were only nominally alcoholic (alcohol was more of a preservative than an active principle).

A congenital defect bedevils “hallucinogen/ic.” As I have mentioned, psychiatrists early on were of the opinion that LSD, mescaline, and psiloc[*yb*]ine elicited some “model psychosis” – supplanted, by some means evoked, an “endogenous psychotoxin” (or schizotoxin) – and that primary use in psychiatry most likely would be for the training of psychotherapists so that they might therewith experience a controlled approximately 8-hour “psychosis” and then be better able to relate to their “psychotic” or “schizophrenic” patients. This was not such a *crazy* idea, but none of it panned out. No “endogenous *schizotoxin*” has ever been found, and those with a mind to self-experimentation soon realized that LSD states *did not* mimic “psychoses.” But the damage had been done: many denigrated LSD as a *psychotomimetic*, and the medical profession in general settled on the term “hallucinogen” to describe such drugs. Now, a hallucinogen manifestly elicits hallucinations, or “the apparent or alleged *perception of an object not actually present*” (my emphasis); whereupon “*hallucinogen*” is defined as “a drug causing hallucinations.”³⁸ Well, experiencing such hallucinations is one primary symptom of so-called “schizophrenia psychosis,” so the psychiatrists and physicians have stuck with a watered-down version of their cockamamie “model psychosis.” In several hundreds of ingestions, I have *never* experienced one single *hallucination*, so defined, and these are *extremely rare* in experiences with LSD-type drugs. When fellow users have described to me their personal LSD “hallucinations,” these *have not* as a rule entailed true hallucinations – ergo, “hallucinogen” is a misnomer, and it most definitely is a pejorative one, at that!

Unfortunately for proponents of “psychedelic” as an alternative term, outside of the echo chamber of the “Psychedelic Renaissance Scene,” for physicians in general and in the broader lay world, “psychedelic” is a literal synonym of “hallucinogen,” even is defined by that: “– *adj.* **1** a expanding the mind’s awareness etc., esp. through the use of

³⁶ The first part is titled *Toxicomanies d’aujourd’hui*; the second, *Les intoxications religieuses chez les peuples primitifs*; and the third, *Les ivresses divines dans les religions des peuples Indo-Européens*. The bibliography is sparing: 139 sources, mostly contemporaneous and secondary, only 13 of them being ethnographic studies or historical classics. De Félice did cite Lewin’s *Phantastica* – rather, the French translation of 1928, which stole Baudelaire’s title (*Les paradis artificiels: opium et haschisch* [Paris: Poulet-Malassis et De Broise, 1860]). The original likewise was cited. The English translation of 1931 inspired Huxley during the composition of *Brave New World* [New York: Harper, 1932] as did Rouhier’s *Le peyotl*, as well as De Quincey’s 1821 classic and Jean Cocteau’s *Opium: Journal d’une désintoxication* (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1930). De Félice clearly confused “inebriation” and “intoxication,” exaggerated “the problem of toxicomanias” (*opiomanie, cocaïnomanie*), but he did cover kava, ayahuasca, tobacco, hashish, qat, and peyotl among “primitive peoples”; regarding (the less “primitive”?) Indo-Europeans, he discussed soma/haoma, Dionysus cults, the Mysteries of Eleusis, and Celtic and Germanic potions.

³⁷ *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

hallucinogenic drugs. **b** (of an experience) *hallucinatory*, bizarre. **c** (of a drug) *producing hallucinations*. – *n.* a *hallucinogenic drug*.³⁹ Thus, for most folks outside the cozy “adytum of psychedelia,” a psychedelic is a drug “producing hallucinations”; aye, a drug evoking “the apparent or alleged *perception of an object not actually present*” (that being prima facie evidence of “psychosis”)! Alas! it may matter much more what your neighbor, constable, or justice *thinks* that it means (we have seen what they will find in their dictionaries) than what you *know* that it means! If those folks reside on this wild side of the Atlantic, they might more commonly consult *The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary* and therein find “psychedelic” defined as follows: “Of, pertaining to, or *generating* hallucinations, *distortions of perception*, [...] and occasionally states resembling *psychosis*.”⁴⁰ How much worse could this possibly be? Should one wish to describe Huxley’s “continuum of mind and body” as “psychedelic,” well... most definitely not!

Besides being literally a hallucinogen, “psychedelic” is beset by distinct temporal, artistic, even therapeutic associations that militate against its broader use. For most everyone, it has a decided connotation of the “Psychedelic Sixties,” hippie use, and political opposition to the war in Vietnam. I lived through those sixties – “survived them” is perhaps more apt – came of age at their conclusion. It was *not* a pleasant time for me, and it inspires not one whit of nostalgia! Life, for me, was only allowed to begin when those “Psychedelic Sixties” finally ended! I held myself fortunate to escape both the demential slaughter in Vietnam and the state penitentiary! Still, it put my future on hold for four long years of living on the street as a vagabond-outcast. I suspect I am not alone in looking back not-at-all fondly on that *Æra* – but that is beside the point. As a word, “psychedelic” has a marked temporal association to the 1960s, as, naturally, to so-called “psychedelic art,” “psychedelic music,” “psychedelic culture” (I am neither an art nor a music historian or critic but venture to suggest that no Dutch masters, Impressionists, Baroque and Classical composers will suffer by the comparison: perhaps the best word for the “psychedelic arts” is *kitschig*). But that is a matter of taste for which there can be no accounting. Given that the major thrust of the “Psychedelic Renaissance” has been to “mainstream” *some* psychedelics into medical (and particularly psychotherapeutic) praxis, we would do well to investigate the terminology employed when they were (however obliquely) a growing part of said therapy. There were two schools or variants of LSD psychotherapy: *psycholytic* therapy and *psychedelic* therapy. The differences revolved around frequencies of administration and dosage, but this need not distract us here. My point is that there exists an extensive literature on *psychedelic* therapy, which has a very specific meaning in medicine that refers to *one drug* in particular: LSD (I hardly need mention that, had its psychoactivity then been known, MDMA would not have been considered for either class of therapy).⁴¹ *Psychedelic* therapy, moreover, implies distinctly the 1950s to early 1960s

³⁹ *Ibid.* (my emphasis).

⁴⁰ *The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language* (my emphasis).

⁴¹ This points to another fatal inadequacy of “psychedelic”: its haphazard scope and random inclusivity. “Psychedelic/hallucinogen” refers to LSD and mescaline, full stop (these were *the only* such drugs known in 1953-56 when the words originated). By extension, it later was applied to DMT and psilocybin, tryptamines closely related to LSD; still later, to DOM/DOI and allied artificial congeners of mescaline; still other tryptamines, such as 5-methoxy-DMT, as their effects were elucidated. It would be fair to say that it refers

with their (penal) state mental institutions (a short step up from the “imbecile asylums” and “bedlams” of yore); vivisectional “experiments” upon *non*-convict inmates, as well as upon convicts in state penitentiaries; electroshock “therapies,” *pre*-frontal lobotomies, and straitjackets – *that*, I’m afraid, is the context of *psychedelic* therapy. Does anybody *really* wish to be associated with the (generally primitive, barbaric, *non*-consensual – not to say sexist) “Freudulent” psychiatry of some seven decades ago?

Yet there is a far graver problem attending this loose, casual use of “psychedelic” – that is, of a colonialist, cultural appropriation. This article is based on a lecture I delivered at Breaking Convention VI in Exeter, England, in April 2023. I possess only two volumes of the *Breaking Convention* book series (and I contributed to that based on Breaking Convention V in Greenwich in 2019) but was dismayed and disturbed to find “psychedelic” used rather too commonly in the context of shamanism – of a shaman using a *psychedelic [sic] plant*.⁴² Let us at least agree on one principle: there is no “psychedelic

specifically to β -phenethylamines and/or tryptamines with psychoptic effects. But what about pañ/mukhomor, *Amanita muscaria*, and another half-dozen mushrooms containing ibotenic acid, which, just like María Sabina’s mushrooms, are used for shamanic divination, as psychoptic drugs? Ibotenic acid is an isoxazolic amino acid, not at all related chemically to tryptamines and β -phenethylamines: it *is* a psychoptic entheogen... but nobody would call it a *psychedelic*! What of nicotine and related alkaloids from tobaccos? These tobaccos are the very central hub, the nexus of shamanism all over the world, and no more renowned entheogens (ayahuasca, ololiuqui, peyotl, San Pedro, teonanacatl) ever are used shamanistically sans tobacco in some form. Take it from me, who consumes about one-third gram of nicotine every day: nicotine is *not* a psychedelic (but it *is* psychoptic in higher doses)! An entire article in the *Journal of Psychoactive [née Psychedelic] Drugs* was given to objecting that bufotenine was *not* a psychedelic, hallucinogenic drug (T. Lyttle et al., “Bufo Toads and Bufotenine: Fact and Fiction Surrounding an Alleged Psychedelic,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 28, no. 3 [1996]: 267-90)! The same applies to *Salvia divinorum* Epling et Játiva (Labiatae) and its active agent, salvinorin A – this is *the most potent* natural product-psychoptic drug known and used in shamanism together with teonanacatl and ololiuqui, but its effects have *nothing in common* with mescaline and LSD... it most assuredly is *not* a psychedelic! Moreover, what of *Cannabis*? But you get the idea, and I shall not flog this dead horse any longer. This was our rationale behind seeking a novel term to characterize shamanic inebriants. By the same token, such desperately is needed for the “medicalization” of visionary drugs. “Psychedelic” is too specific to encompass and embrace those already in therapeutic use and more will be introduced, whereas “psychoptic” tidily fills this bill. *Vide* J. Ott, “Entheogens II: On Entheology and Entheobotany,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 28, no. 2 (1996): 205-9, quoting a few specialists denying that various entheogens were psychedelics. This article also reprinted our original Ruck et al., “Entheogens,” as an appendix owing to persistent confusion regarding it. I encountered a similar semiotic Tower of Babel (Babble?) in the 72-page program for the sixth *Breaking Convention*, in Exeter in 2023. Of 141 talks scheduled for this “Sixth International Conference on Psychedelic Consciousness,” at least 12 (8.5%) in no way pertained to “psychedelic” drugs (e.g.: *Cannabis*, MDMA, ibogaine, ketamine). Only 5 (3.5%) in some fashion involved shamanism and/or ethnopharmacognosy, while some 8 (5.6%) were more religious than scientific! Of 76 biographies detailed, there were *none* (0%) of shamans, and of 5 “headline speakers,” 5 (100%) were *Old White Boys* (I include myself there), of which 4 of us (80%) are likewise... Yanks! Is *this* your “Psychedelic Renaissance”? Are Psychedelic “Renaissance Men” latter-day “Jerry Crunchers” (the grave robber from Charles Dickens’s *Tale of Two Cities*) or oblivious “Victor Frankenstein’s” (to be sure, from Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin [Shelley]’s *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*)?

⁴² This is but one example of the considerable linguistic laxness evident in the two Breaking Convention events I attended (BC V in Greenwich in 2019 and BC VI in Exeter in 2023), as in the book based on BC V (*Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychedelia*). I do not criticize this withal worthy anthology per se, to which, after all, I am one of twelve contributors. I refer merely to generally loose and imprecise semantics, which are not in keeping with the intellectual rigor of the essays. I have admitted to being punctilious but am not being picky – words matter! In M. Albert’s interesting and timely essay (M. Albert, “Psychopharmacology in an Age of Planetary Crisis: What Role for Psychedelics?” in *Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychedelia*, 23-36), we read that “Indigenous peoples” are “informed by psychedelic shamanism,” are “carriers and protectors of psychedelic plant-based knowledge,” and that “the psychedelic community [is in] debt to indigenous communities

shamanism,” nor can any shaman employ “psychedelic plants” (we created “entheogen/ ic” precisely to describe the context of shamanic use – by derivation of sacramental use in a few primordial religions – of an agglomeration of organisms encompassing chemical structural types and pharmacological properties, *far too diverse* to admit of facile chemo-pharmacological classification)! Shamans, by definition, use entheogenic plants, which,

and their shamanic traditions” (with this last of which I agree heartily and do here applaud). I shall state my reasons for opposing such nomenclature as colonialist cultural appropriation. In her insightful review of “Femtheogenic consciousness,” G. Tavini (“Three Psychonautical Women: The Spiked, the Channeled and the Transgressive,” in *Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychodelia*, 75-87) is much more precise (also, like her, I had chosen Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*, which has a trip scene, as exemplar in a new book, *Pharmacomania*) and well refers to the “entheogenic wisdom” of Maria Sabina. But in the second paragraph of the section immediately following, we read that “... *entheogens* act as a mediator between the material world and the unconscious [...] This might explain why *hallucinogens* have the ability [...]” (my emphasis) – once again, “entheogen” is *not* synonymous with “hallucinogen”! In her *Reflection*, “hallucinogens” overwhelms “entheogens” and “psychedelics” (these three are used eight times conjointly, with four being “hallucinogens”) as if they all three were synonyms. This is the case for “psychedelics” and “hallucinogens” but wrongly conjoins “entheogens.” In his exaggeratedly eulogistic essay about Patanjali (“Patanjali’s Phenomenology of Non-Ordinary States of Being and Psychedelic Experience,” in *Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychodelia*, 103-11) – never mind that the second-to-fourth century author of *Yoga Sutras* had never even heard of psychedelics – P. Yates says, “I use the term ‘psychedelic’ rather than the current favourite ‘entheogen’” (again mistakenly taking these to be synonyms, insofar as “God isn’t guaranteed to turn up” (whereas “God” never is expected to appear [besides being a fictitious character of many names – *YHWH* and innumerable synonyms in India], one expects to “become divine within”), in concluding: “‘psychedelic’ meaning ‘mind-manifesting’ serves my purposes, being both accurate and without onto-theological baggage.” It certainly is not accurate to allege that “psychedelic” means “mind-manifesting”: no dictionary I have consulted gives that sense. Besides, “mind-manifesting” doesn’t mean anything coherent and is not germane to this topic! “Mind” refers to (*self*)-consciousness: if that is not manifested... there simply *is* no “mind”! While at best “psychedelic” means “expanding the mind’s awareness, etc.,” *that* would be “through the use of hallucinogenic drugs.” At worst, it means “generating hallucinations, distortions of perception, and, occasionally, states resembling psychosis”! As for “entheogen” (purportedly) being burdened with “onto-theological baggage” (I am at a loss to divine precisely what *that* signifies but shall concentrate, instead, on “theological baggage,” which echoes the very words of T. McKenna, we have seen that it is not, or, at least, so less so than “psychedelic,” the root of which, “*delos*,” refers to an obsolete sky “god” and is cognate with the very Latin word for “god,” “*deus*.” Yates and others may be firmly persuaded that “psychedelic” means “mind-manifesting,” but that is not congruent with lexicographers’ definitions of this word, and, as I have written, “it may matter much more what your neighbour, a constable or Justice, *thinks* that it means (we have seen what they will find in their dictionaries), than what *you know* that it means!” On another topic, in Matthew Clark’s 2022 cogent, interesting, and much-needed review of *Cannabis* in India (where I have resided for roughly one year over two), we find consistent and recursive misuse of “intoxicant” for “inebriant,” which occurs at least nine times (“*Cannabis* Use in India: Ancient and Modern,” in *Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychodelia*, 112-24). This is most strange, inasmuch as one reference to the *AtharvaVeda* mentions the use of *Cannabis*: “as a protective device [...] against evil and poison”! How, then, could it *itself* be a poison, an intoxicant? Here again, we have another inappropriate/culturally appropriative use of “psychedelic”: “*soma* (the psychedelic, ritual drink of the Brahmins of ancient India),” only to be cautioned of “*datura*, a dangerous and potent hallucinogen”! *Datura* species in India and Southeast Asia are at least as “sacred” as is *Cannabis* – indeed, they constitute the most cosmopolitan, pre-Contact entheogen! Finally, Clark’s hard saying “*Cannabis* for *spiritual* intoxication” is an oxymoron, recapitulating P. de Félíce’s *Sacred Poisons, Divine Inebriations*! Setting aside an implied, spurious equivalence of “intoxication” and “inebriation,” any person sensitive to the savor of words and their harmonious juxtaposition readily can desecrate that there can be no spiritual intoxication! Do we presume to alter society’s denigrating attitudes toward “psychodelics,” we would do well first to get our linguistic “ducks in a row” lest these be “shot like ducks in a barrel”! These expressions may not be current in genuine English – I *am* a Yank, by birth! – O, do heed my obdurate obscuration! Render not your obstinate, obsessive, obsequious obeisance to that obtrusive *psychedelic*: please condemn us not to objurgatory obloquy! This is for your own good! Not only had these papers by M. Clark and P. Yates more to do with religion than science... I was stunned and amazed that *Breaking Convention* (and *Psychedelic Press*) had published Clark’s edition of Timothy Leary’s *Eight Circuits of the Brain* (T. Leary, *Eight Circuits of the Brain*, in *Timothy Leary’s*

synonymously, are shamanic inebriants. In my experience, of *psychedelics* shamans know nil; thus, they practice not psychedelic shamanism but rather what I call entheognosis. To write of any “*psychedelic* shaman” ingesting a “*psychedelic* plant” is to suggest that s/he had done their [“her or his”] apprenticeship in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco in 1967, “The Summer of Love,” and had been initiated into entheognosis by some seedy hippie guru such as Charles Manson (alas! here is another connotation of *psychedelic* as *gruesome*, as *indelible*!) We know full well that it is quite the contrary: hippie gurus were spawned by the millennial shamanic use of a diversity of entheogenic plants. True, *we* came to entheognosis through LSD, which was, after all, a creation of the Western pharmaceutical industry. But Hofmann’s syntheses of ergot-alkaloids culminated some sixty years of phytochemical study of ergot, a traditional remedy for parturition, medical interest in which derived from information obtained from German midwives (shamans) originally back in 1582 and in 1808 in the Modern Era pursuant to John Stearns’s “An Account of the *Pulvis Parturiens*, a Remedy for Quickening Childbirth” (as was the case with Adam Lonicer’s 1582 *Kräuterbuch*, John Stearns had been inspired to investigate ergot by questioning a German midwife). This amounts to harnessing some objurgated millennial chariot before the horse: the “Psychedelic Sixties” came and went in but a blink of an eye; shamanism has existed for *decades*, possibly *centuries* or *millennia*, and was in all likelihood the earliest, the primogenital human profession! Please, do us the favor of honoring our most distinguished cultural elders and consign “psychedelic shamanism” to the oblivion it, O! so richly deserves! Note that we had warned, in the article coining this neologism: “However, not only is ‘psychedelic’ an incorrect verbal formation, but it has become so invested with connotations of the pop culture of the 1960s that it is incongruous to speak of a shaman’s taking a ‘psychedelic’ drug.”⁴³

So what might this leave us? I’ve outlined my case for tossing “psychedelic” overboard with those shabby, ungentle hippie gurus such as Charles Manson; its kinship

Eight Circuits of the Brain, vol. 4 of *Mahabongo Weeny Introductions*, ed. M. Clark [London: Psychedelic Press, 1991]! This *religious science-fiction*, ineptly masquerading as (teleological) “evolutionary theory,” certainly did not bear reprinting and better had been left in the oblivion it, O!, so richly earned! Moreover, the *second* talk presented at *BC VI* in Exeter was by Clark, pursuant to his “Fifty-year retrospective on the ideas of Dr. Timothy Leary” (I would call these *idiocies*). Appropriately, *Leary’s Eight* is volume 4 of *Mahabongo Weeny Introductions*! *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* gives this definition: “weeny [...] *colloq.* tiny. [...] weeny-bopper a girl like a teeny-bopper but younger”! Is *Breaking Convention* striving to strangle, in its pre-term cradle their (so-called) *Renaissance*? This infantile and incoherent, this religious claptrap is embarrassingly *naïve*, not to say *megalomaniacal*. It had been kinder to Leary’s memory to leave it completely forgotten! By the same token, the sixth talk at *BC VI* had been devoted to Terence McKenna as an “Apocalyptic poet and raving medium” (more precisely I would say “raving crackpot” ... Arthur Conan Doyle’s “spiritualist-mediums” were the only fantasy wanting to cement a religious take-over of *BC*). Hawking *science-fiction* as *science*, Leary and McKenna both gave “psychedelics” a bad name ... McKenna and I were business partners for eight years (*Entheobotany Seminars*, principally at Palenque, here in Southeast México: 1993-2001) ... thus, I am painfully aware of this! Lastly, the final talk, by Rick Doblin of MAPS (or... is it Lykos?), was a 1.5-hour “infomercial” – as a prelude, I should imagine, to pan-handling some of the well-heeled attendees for their “spare change” – replete with “vapourware” slides of non-existent “treatment centers” of an indeterminate (and unlikely) future ... assuming we all stump up! This had doubtless been tailored for venture capitalists but was completely out of place in an (ostensibly) scientific conference! Nonetheless, it afforded a vision of the road fast being paved to a Big Pharma (what Lykos hopes to become) Corporate/Monopolist future for Psychodelia. A. Tollan (*Breaking Convention: A Seismic Shift in Psychodelia*) had dubbed this “the big corporatisation boom” in her “Introduction” to the *BC V* book.

⁴³ Ruck, “Entheogens.”

to *kitschig*, condignly forgotten art forms; and its ineluctable connotations of 70-year-old psychiatry as practiced in state penal institutions masquerading as hospitals – with their electroshocks, lobotomies, and straitjackets. It is synonymous with “hallucinogenic,” and both suggest psychopathology. I shall not permit you to broach some Entheogenic Renaissance, qua medicalization,⁴⁴ and if you did, most likely I should pen another such

⁴⁴ An oblique danger of this medicalization is coming into focus and ought to have been expected as an inevitable concomitant. What we cherish in psychotropic drugs are their “mind-enhancing,” their “mind-altering” capacities – aye, their very essence – those which, both in medical and scientific opinion, are hallucinations ... merely undesired side-effects! A recent article (D. Cao et al., “Structure-Based Discovery of Nonhallucinogenic Psychedelic Analogs,” *Science* 375, no. 6579 [2022]: 403-11), highlighted by a news item (R. F. Service, “Psychedelics Without Hallucinations?” *Science* 375, no. 6579 [2022]: 370), had detailed work involving visualizing the structure of a serotonin receptor, 5-HT_{2A}R (“5-HT” is 5-hydroxytryptamine – serotonin, a close homologue of bufotenin: 5-HO-DMT), after binding by serotonin, LSD, psilocine and lisuride (a non-psychoactive LSD derivative). These Chinese scientists had been “aiming to make analogs that retain medical usefulness but don’t cause hallucinations.” Based on X-ray crystallography of bound receptors, they determined that the “psychedelic hallucinogens” activated the main serotonin receptor but also what they called an “extended binding pocket.” In short, based on some rather dubious bioassays (of mouse behaviors: no psychonautic bioassays here!), these scientists alleged that they had “teased apart the molecular interactions responsible for psychedelics’ antidepressive effects from those that cause hallucinations.” They synthesized two LSD derivatives, IHCH-7079 and IHCH-7086 (without giving their structures – probably indicating a patent application), which (according to their mice) acted as anti-depressants (no “freezing responses”) while avoiding the dread hallucinations (no “head twitches”) – “mouse behaviours strongly associated with depression and hallucinations in human[being]s, respectively”! I shall spare you most of my sardonic comments on the absurdity of assaying inscrutable effects in non-communicative rodents, while noting that similar work has taken place in the United States: “a nonhallucinogenic analog of the psychedelic compound ibogaine, called tabernanthalol, showed antidepressive effects in rodents.” Please notice here that the words “psychedelic” and “hallucinogenic” (quite properly) are used as synonyms (and the fact that two different articles use the word “nonhallucinogenic” for psychedelic analogues) and the key fact that the (misnamed) hallucinations are treated as being so many noisome side-effects to be eliminated militate against therapeutic utility! A yet more recent article concerned 2,5-Dimethoxy-4-iodoamphetamine (DOI, a Shulgin compound: PiHKAL No. 67 [A. T. Shulgin and A. Shulgin, *PIHKAL: A Chemical Love Story* (Berkeley: Transform Press, 1991)]) as an anxiolytic (J. Muir et al., “Isolation of Psychedelic-Responsive Neurons Underlying Anxiolytic Behavioral States,” *Science* 386, no. 6723 [2024]: 802-10). This was pursuant to the same goal: “These results suggest that the *therapeutic and hallucinogenic effects of psychedelics can be dissociated, paving the way for the development of more specific drugs*” (my emphasis). Notice here again that “hallucinogenic” and “psychedelic” are used correctly – as synonyms. These authors concluded, “...it is possible to isolate the anxiolytic effects of a psychedelic drug from its hallucinogenic properties through reactivation of a DOI-tagged network” (my emphasis). It is worth noting that this article presented no fewer than 50 references (including that cited above), indicative that considerable work in this vein is proceeding. Indeed, as more than twenty years ago I had admonished Hattie Wells, Amanda Feilding, Rick Doblin, besides others, it remains improbable that any medical authorities – either official or scientific – suddenly will welcome with open arms drugs that for one half century have been disparaged and disdained as having “high potential for abuse and no recognized medical use” (in spite of the fact that their medical value had been established long before they were proscribed!). Should you wish to treat depression or PTSD with psychotropic drugs, I am afraid the probability is that you will have to continue to do so on your own or through clandestine therapists, as has long been done. “Mainstream” medicine, I fear, will only proffer you the psycho- without the -delic, the real side-effects without the Main Event! Please do not mistake me as belittling any PTSD treatments or therapies for anxiety or depression – I favor *most anything* conducive to human health, happiness, aye, fulfillment – but we seem to be missing the forest in minute examinations of a few trees. What had been appraised as a promising beginning looks like it is being overlooked as if it were a dead-end cul-de-sac. What of this “hallucinogenic” (so-called “side effect”)? Let us not pitch out that baby ... with her bathwater! Early psychiatric interest in LSD focused on its potential in psychotherapy to approach the roots of human alienation (if I may resurrect an obsolete term for that badly called “mental illness”). What is needed is marshaling our exquisitely sensitive technology in the study of how one-tenth of a milligram of LSD – most of which is metabolized within one hour – catalyzes such profound alterations in consciousness ... which may last for 12 hours! It is estimated that, of a 100 mcg dose of LSD, merely 0.02 mcg (2 x 10⁻⁸ g) – or some 3.7 million molecules – briefly enters the brain with some 13 billion neurons! We

philippic jeremiad. Besides, we already *have* an *Entheogenic Reformation!*⁴⁵ Surely, what we require is another word, a break from a past that has seen one-half a century of obtuse stigmatization of visionary drugs, which has been all too successful, alas! That was why, forty-six long years ago, we solved this problem vis-à-vis both the anthropological and the ethnobotanical (or *entheobotanical*) fields. At that time, it was not our bailiwick to address the medical field, and I see now that this was rather a lamentable oversight, if not precisely an egregious error. As I mentioned at the beginning, I had published *The Angels' Dictionary* thirty years ago, which encompasses 318 words from 30 languages (70, or 22%, from 29 *non-European* tongues – mainly Indigenous). As I explained in its “Exordium”:

...it seemed to me prudent at least closely to examine the extant words in the English language, many of them obsolete, for shamanic inebriants, ecstatic states and allied topics. We are not bereft of words for the appropriate concepts, but we are certainly not accustomed to speaking of the in-effable. What words we have we no longer use, or have burdened with secondary meanings, and sometimes then depaupered by overuse – the word *ecstasy* itself is an obvious example.⁴⁶

Just as we ought not put the millennial chariot before the horse, mayhap we need not reinvent the wheel in this process. Many think I coined “pharmacotheon” as a title for my 1993 book, but that is no neologism: my sedulous study of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, which led me to conceive of *The Angels' Dictionary*, revealed to me this obsolete word. “Meeting” only by correspondence an informal committee convened by R. Gordon Wasson and chaired by professor of classics Carl A. P. Ruck examined and considered numerous possible substitutes. I had proposed “pharmacotheon,” which had the advantage of precedence and might have obviated a three-decades wait to see our eventual champion enter *The OED*. But that lent itself not gracefully to any adjectival form and was rather a mouthful. One of Ruck’s suggestions was “epoptics” from those Eleusinian Mysteries (the initiates were called μύσσης/μύσσαι and, once they had experienced the visionary κκεών in the culminating rite within the Telesterion, became ἐπόπτης/ἐπόπται: *those who had seen*). We all liked this for hoary antiquity and being apposite, but Wasson said it sounded like “Pop! goes the weasel” and that pretty much shot down *that* candidate! There were others that didn’t make the cut, but when Ruck later proposed “entheogen/ic,” all acceded with *enthusiasm*. Sharing the hoary antiquity of “epoptic,” this was of broader and more general scope: not confined to a specific and (secondary) religious context, it applied to shamanic and ludible uses, even poetic inspiration.

have at hand a scalpel to dissect the very interface between the material brain and an energetic mind! This is the real conundrum that LSD presents us with, but it only can be approached by melding psychonautic bioassays with scanners, neural electrode implants and optogenetics: head-twitching rodents just will not do! Modern medicine, which (predictably) is dismissing the primary as an adverse side effect not only will fail to realize the true potential of psychoptic drugs ... quite obtusely and blindly, it will discard this psychoptic baby with her bathwater ...

⁴⁵ Ott, *The Age of Entheogens*.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

I propose we replace “psychedelic” with “psychoptic.” This already exists as the (obsolescent) scientific term for “producing *vision* of the *mind* or *soul*,” with a derivative in widespread use in this very context: “entoptic,” to describe what are commonly called phosphenes or “the sensation of rings of light produced by pressure on the eyeball” (as entoptic phenomena, which, unlike hallucinations, are commonly experienced in LSD-type states). Aye, “psychoptic” is very uncomfortably close to “psychotic”: my Little Genius Spell-Checker™ automatically assumes that is what I had meant to write and instantly expunges that second “p.” Yes, this opens the door to potentially tergiversated typographical errors that will be hard to descry. Likewise, it cannot escape the *psycho*-stigma, but neither can “psychedelic/psychodelic” – which, once we’ve removed our anglophonic cultural blinders, we shall find to be spelled both ways still – or “psychopharmacology,” “psychoactive,” and “psychotropic,” besides other “psycho-” words having *nothing to do* with psychosis. So *that*, after all, is no disqualifying obstacle: it encumbers a host of words. We merely must add “psychoptic” to the lexicons of our spell checkers. There’s scarce any danger of its misconstruction as “psychooptic” (a subdiscipline of psychophysics, which is concerned with our internal “video screens” or the *mental constructions* of visual imagery), insofar as I have *never* heard that word used, save only in listening to myself! I had pointed out that “psychoptic” was used in 1744 to describe a “magic lantern” projector as a “psychoptic looking glass,” an instrument also known as phantasmagoria, which means “a shifting series of real or imaginary figures *as seen in a dream*.” So there exists nothing in its meaning nor well-circumscribed prior use to render it unfit. We ought to remember that LSD-type drugs usually do elicit visual percepts, especially “entoptic phenomena,” and that such appear to be primary in the experiences of the majority: I have known 5-methoxy-DMT to be disparaged by comparison to DMT because “there were no colors.” Convenience and also semantic-linguistic economy argue alike in favor of “psychoptic.” “Hallucinogenic” has fourteen letters with six syllables; “psychedelic,” eleven letters with four syllables; “psychoptic,” merely ten letters and only three syllables! It occupies less space and is easier to pronounce – what’s not to like? A psychoptic drug, then, is one evocative of visions... aye, of *mental* visions, of *soul*-visions...

Indeed (as I made the topic of my *Marriage of Energy and Matter*,⁴⁷ to me, the essence of the psychoptic state is that it enables one to experience the Universe more as energy than as matter – as, in fact, *it really is!* I shall not recapitulate that argument but shall merely note that all we *can* see is electromagnetic energy (vulgarly called “light” or “the visual portion of the electromagnetic spectrum,” being waves from 380 to 780 nm in wavelength). Albert Hofmann, in his autobiographical *LSD: My Problem Child*,⁴⁸ suggested that LSD alters a “wavelength setting” for our visual “receivers,” enabling us “to see” more of the much broader range of electromagnetic energy broadcasted by the “transmitter”: the Universe. That may well be. What is undeniable to me is that it permits me to experience the Universe, the World, as *living, dancing energy*, not as *dead, lifeless matter*. For me, this has transformed my weltanschauung and my life... in an *anti-materialistic* sense. Human brains mainly are wired *visually*; our languages are *visually* centered: they equate

⁴⁷ J. Ott, “The Marriage of Energy and Matter,” in this issue of *Kronos Philosophical Journal*, 138.

⁴⁸ Hofmann, *LSD – mein Sorgenkind*; Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*.

understanding with vision. “Don’t you see?” My point is that these drugs, in this figurative sense, *enable us “to see,”* immersed in a colorful *phantasmagoria*, what hitherto had been *eclipsed*. Any descriptive word ought to reflect that visual dimension. “Psychedelic” manifestly *does not*, except insofar as it is synonymous with *hallucinogen* and then only in a depreciatory, aye, psychopathological sense! On the other hand, “psychoptic” *does* reflect the centrality of this visual aspect and bears none of the pejorative overtones that beleaguer the word “psychedelic” (or “hallucinogen”). Neither need it offend other *anti-religious* folk, like me, as it is blissfully free of that “*delos/theos*” root. “Psychedelic” is a *harsh* and *ugly* sounding word that rings false etymologically. “Psychoptic” is euphonious – “a suitable subject for poetry,” in Huxley’s words. In Lewin’s Latinized schema, most felicitously it becomes “psychoptica.” Its meaning is unambiguous; aye, crystal clear: “psych-optic,” of mental vision. It took me nearly twenty years of concerted efforts – six or eight books, countless lectures, and not a few essays, particularly “Entheogens II,”⁴⁹ to anchor “entheogen” firmly, then to obtrude it into *The OED*. I expect to be among you for another thirty years, at the least, but currently am averse to so much foreign travel for reasons of ecology (and indolence), but establishing “psychoptic” will require no such heavy lifting: forsooth, it already is in *The OED*! Is it not time that we insinuate it into other, lesser dictionaries by adding it to our own vocabularies, thereby consigning that tainted and maladroit, so malaprop “psychedelic” to the dustbin of history, which is where it belongs – together with its synonyms “hallucinogenic” and “psychotomimetic”?

Jonathan Ott
Tlalnelhuayocan, México
Spring 2025

⁴⁹ Ott, “Entheogens II.”

THE MARRIAGE OF ENERGY AND MATTER

Over the years, I have frequently been asked, “*What do visionary drugs do?*” In service of perspicuity, I shall call them *psychoptic* drugs (those that propitiate “vision of the mind or soul”).¹ The great Usan (U.S.-an) entheobotanist Richard Evans Schultes ever had been wont to disparage any *spiritual* interpretations of his multifarious experiences with a broad diversity of (psychoptic) shamanic inebriants – or *entheogens*,² and would *deadpan*, jocosely, “I merely see *little wavy lines*.” I, too, have perceived suchlike “wavy lines,” which I call *arabesque* (as opposed to *geometric*) *patterns*: as it were, *projected onto* the field of one’s vision. In response to this same question, the late Usan drugs-chemist Alexander T. ‘Sasha’ Shulgin often would remark (I paraphrase rather than quote literatim these two important pioneers): “*Psychedelics* [the term he’d favored] don’t *do* anything! They enable *the user to do*, or *experience, something different*.” While I take not exception to either of their responses, the former is rather flippant; the latter, not overly illuminating to the naïve (those not “experienced,” in the words of Jimi Hendrix). The best, clearest answer I can give to this common question is as follows: visionary, or psychoptic, drugs enable the user to experience the World, more as *energy*, than as *matter* – as, in fact, *it really is!* This hardly is some flight of poetical fancy – indeed, it is a sober reflection upon the architecture of the *matter ...* of the Universe. I shall elucidate this with a minimum of technical terminology, having recourse only to simple solid-geometry-mathematics.

THROUGH THE OBJECTIVELOOKING-GLASS

Objectively, with our attentions focused on the Exterior World (setting aside the *solipsism* of David Hume),³ psychoptic drugs enable the *Psychonaut* (that is: the explorer of the *Psychocosmos*)⁴ to perceive the World more as *energy* than as *matter* – as it truly is! Forsooth, *the only thing that we can see* is the *reflection* of a beam of *Electromagnetic Energy* (‘light’:

¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary, The Compact Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

² Jonathan Ott, “Entheogens II: On Entheology and Entheobotany,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 28, no. 2 (1996): 205-9; Carl A. P. Ruck et al. “Entheogens,” *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs* 11, no. 1-2 (1979): 145-46 (reprinted as *Appendix* in Ott, “Entheogens II”).

³ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: John Noon, 1739-40).

⁴ E. Jünger, *Heliopolis: Rückblick auf eine Stadt* (Kirchhorst: Heliopolis Verlag, 1949). The *character* Antonio Peri is Albert Hofmann stylized. E. Jünger, *Annäherungen: Drogen und Rausch* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970).

the *photon* [particle of light] is the *boson* or bearer of the *Electromagnetic Force*; one among *four Fundamental Forces* [or *five... six?*: if it be *real*, the force of the Higgs Boson (nothing less than *mass* itself) and that of suppositious Dark Energy (*its boson be the inflaton?*) would have to figure in the list]), which rebounds from *the surfaces* of objects to enter our eyes and there excite photosensitive cells upon the retina (via mechanisms *biochemically* analogous to the photovoltaic effect in a semiconductor-diode of *silicon* or *gallium* – the photon “liberates” an *electron* [*vide infra*] or “excites” it, promoting it from the “valence band” to the “conduction band”).⁵ All that we see *literally is* Electromagnetic Energy (the inscrutable process that devolves in the *mental mirror* of visual *perception* is called *psychooptics* [a facet of *psychophysics*, in contrast to the adjective *psychoptic*: pertaining to “vision of the mind or soul”]; that so stubborn process through which we obstinately reify this energy is called *materialism*). In *The Republic*, Plato (fifth-fourth centuries of the Archaic Era) fortuitously and quite unintentionally approximated a modern physical description of visual perception with his famous parable of persons chained perpetually within a cavern, ever facing away from its luminous mouth (or, some fire), so that we are able to see merely “Imitations” (these are literally *mirror images*), just like moving *shadows* projected upon the wall before those troglodytes; *never* what Immanuel Kant called “the thing in itself” (*Ding an sich*)⁶ and that which Plato had denominated “Ideas” or “Archetypes” (the *type* of the *Arche*, which then was the postulated Fundamental Particle of the Universe).

Moreover, *every* object that reflects beams of Electromagnetic Energy consists of *energy* more than of *matter*! “Solid” matter made up of *atoms* is composed of two *quarks* (*viz.*: the *up* quark, with +2/3 charge; and the *down* quark, with -1/3 charge) and one *lepton* (the *electron*, of -1 charge) – three among twelve *fermions* (three [+ / -] pairs of quarks, plus three [charged / neutral] pairs of leptons: the pair of the electron is the *electron neutrino*; the *fourth*, and last, of those twelve, which corresponds to “ordinary” matter, albeit *not* precisely as a component), or *Fundamental Particles*, which constitute and incarnate *the most diminutive matter* (fermions have diameters of $\sim 1.0 \text{ am}$ or $1 \times 10^{-18} \text{ m}$, in contrast to “gigantic” *atoms*, with an average diameter of 100 pm or $1 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}$). Even an atom of the largest *element* (thus far), *oganesson* (Og, atomic number 118), contains merely *1,000* (while the smallest atom, *hydrogen* [H, atomic number 1: to be precise, *protium*, its *isotope*], contains only *4!*) of these minuscule particles (882 quarks [as 412

⁵ To underscore the fact that all we *can* see is Electromagnetic Energy, let us examine human “color” vision. What we call “light” or “the visual spectrum” of electromagnetic energy are those waves having wavelengths from ca. 380 to 780 nanometer (a span of $\sim 400 \text{ nm}$, or 0.4 micrometer: $4 \times 10^{-7} \text{ m}$). Physiologists are in agreement that we can discriminate *at least one million* “colors” over this spectrum (color does not exist *objectively* but is *subjective*: this refers to subtle differences in the *wavelengths* of that light, which correspond, in inverse proportion, to the *energies* of those light waves: the *shorter* the wavelength, the *higher* is the *energy*... light-waves perceived as the color *violet* are more energetic than those perceived as *red*). Thus, in color perception, we can discriminate $4 \times 10^{-7} \text{ m}$ (or the breadth of the visual spectrum) $\div 1 \times 10^6$ (sub-divided into *one million* colors), or with a *finesse* of $4 \times 10^{-13} \text{ m}$ (0.4 picometer, or *400 femtometers*)! This is equivalent to our being able “to see” something *250 times smaller* than an average atom (~ 100 picometer diameter) [*vide infra*]! Insofar as the *geometric* limit to our visual discrimination is around 0.1 mm (roughly the diameter of a human hair: $1 \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}$), our ability to discriminate minute wavelength differences as “colors” (which is, in fact, *energetic discrimination*, or, our being able “to see” differences *in energy!*) is equivalent to our possessing effectively a ~ 4 *Giga Powers* “micro” lens within our eyes [$4 \times 10^{-13} \div 1 \times 10^{-4} = 4 \times 10^{-9}$], or *4 billion times* finer a discrimination than the spatial!

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1788).

up-, 470 down-], plus 118 electrons) within an atom, roughly 100 million times larger than each! In other words – applying the solid geometry of Euclid – “solid” matter contains a maximum of one part in 1,000 million-million millions (i.e.: 1×10^{-15} ppm, or $1 \times 10^{-19}\%$) of solidity! In fact, it contains still less, insofar as every atom of “Period 7” is larger than the “average” atom. All of the remainder is Inner Space: proportionately, every bit as vast as is Outer Space! Were Helios, our Sun, the nucleus of an atom, the Heliopause (outer limits of our solar system), which Voyager 1 required 40 years to reach (traveling at 1.5 million kilometers/1.5 Gm per day – or, able to reach Gaian Moon in less than six hours), would have to be extended three-fold farther from the Sun so as to model the radius of an “average” atom! Voyager 1 would require 240 years to traverse a complete diameter of such a “Cosmic Atom” – even light would require 5.4 days!⁷ Neils Bohr’s model of an atom, as a nano- (rather, a pico-) solar system fails because our solar system... is much too small! It is the momentum of the electrons, their charge (and that of the quarks), that alienates one from the other and thus is inflated and bulked up, the volume of these rarefied – aye! vacuous – atoms. To put this most perspicuously and brutally: could we supersede or eliminate the momentum and charge of these fermions, all of the “solid” matter in our entire Planet might be crammed into a sphere of less than two meters in diameter! All that remains... is Inner Space! I might advert parenthetically that it could be more facile to do this than to wrap our heads ’round so astonishing a datum! Our planet, Gæa (the densest planet in our Helian solar system), has a diameter of 12,756 kilometers (or 12.756 megameters) and a mass of ca. 6.0×10^{27} grams (or 6,000 Yg – Y/y, Yotta/yocto, 10^{+24} , is the limit of the metric system – I have proposed O/o, Otta/octo, for 10^{+27}).

Whensoever we visualize matter, the light in reality is reflected from an electronic field that occupies most of the vast space between these minuscule Fundamental Particles (per se, invisible pursuant to any perspective that would permit an observation of an entire atom – not to mention conglomerations of innumerable atoms), and these electrons and quarks are, in truth, the Platonic “Ideas” or “Archetypes” (so sorry: Eidectrons and Quarketypes?). That genial neologism, quark, derived from James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake,⁸ which, according to that tribunal consulted, is the most sublime production of universal Literature... or the most infuriating atrocity of some erudite, literary manustrupation (I contrive to reconcile both of these judgements).

It is apparent that Plato had been an ἐπόπτης – “one who had seen,” τὰ ἱερᾶ, “the sacred,” an initiate into the “Higher Mysteries” – that he had imbibed the entheogenic

⁷ In this “Cosmic Atom” model, with Helios as an atomic nucleus, component protons and neutrons of that nucleus (vide infra) would have the size of the Planet Jupiter; their constituent quarks (and their “orbiting” electrons), roughly the size of our Planet, Gæa. Rather than situate at some 23-23.7 Terameters, or ca. 153–158 Astronomical Units from Helios (1.0 A.U. being the mean radius of the Gæan orbit – 149.6 Gigameters), the Heliopause (in this model: the exterior “orbit” of electrons) would be 70 Terameters (468 A.U.) distant – instead of roughly 5-X, above 15-X farther from Helios than the orbit of Neptune (the most distant Planet from Helios at 4.5 Terameters, or 30.1 A.U.). For oganesson, our “Cosmic Atom” would be three-fold larger than the Heliopause, all the vast space containing merely 1,000 Planets Gæa, as solid bodies – 882 within the hollow sphere of Helios (which could hold up to 1,000,000); 118, spaced in seven “planetary orbits,” extending fifteen times farther than the orbit of Neptune (which, rather than being the outermost orbit, would instead be among the innermost!). I say! Here we have an extremely vast Inner Space indeed!

⁸ James Joyce, Finnegans Wake (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

κυκεών (“the mixture”: a synonym of *chacruna*, leaves of *ayahuasca*) in the τελεστήριον (“Goal”) at Eleusis.⁹ Thus we see that the *κυκεών*, *ayahuasca*, or any number of other psychotropic drugs, in no sense could be “*hallucinogens*” – quite the contrary: they afford us *a more faithful vision of substance... as energy more than as matter*. In a kindred fashion, our tactile sense deludes us: inasmuch as, in reality, no particle of matter can touch any other. Should a gourd of *ayahuasca* rest upon a table (the rustic “altar,” shall we say, of a remote, Amazonian hut)... that would be analogous to some *maglev* train (“magnetic levitation”) stopped at its station. Those peripheral electrons of the superficial atoms in the shell of the gourd repel their homologues in the wood of the table, these possessing the like, *negative* polarity. This rather is like endeavoring to touch two identical poles (whether North or South) of a pair of strong magnets... save only that *the intensity* of the force and *the separation* are vastly inferior. The same applies to a *plasma* (the *fourth* state of matter: free atomic *nuclei* and free electrons; as within a *tokamak*, or “doughnut-shaped” magnetic vessel from a nuclear fusion reactor), except, in that case, it also is the *positive* nuclei that (mutually) repel one another. This accounts for the quandary that nuclear fusion requires inconceivable energies to approximate four nuclei of *hydrogen* sufficiently to *fuse* into a *single nucleus of helium* (He, atomic number 2: with 2 protons and 2 neutrons). The *hydrogen* nuclei (that is, of the isotope *protium*) consist of solitary *protons* only: two *protons* are transmogrified into *neutrons* pursuant to the “oscillation” of one quark each [*vide infra*].

To culminate my tutorial of nuclear “chemophysics” (and also fully to unveil *τά ἱερᾶ*), quark compounds are known as *hadrons*: either *mesons* with two or *baryons* with three. These atomic nuclei, having 1/100,000th of the total atomic diameter (average: *1.0 femtometer* (fm), or 1×10^{-15} m), may be fractionated into two *baryons* – the *proton* (2 *up* quarks + 1 *down* quark: net charge = +1 [total number of protons, or *atomic number*, defines the element]); and the *neutron* (2 *down* quarks + 1 *up* quark: net charge = ±0); with diameters of ca. *100 attometers* (am), or 1×10^{-16} m. The *Strong Nuclear Force* (*gluon*, its boson) binds *three* quarks within these baryons (the *SNF* is *by far* the strongest force, which must overcome the repulsion between two *like* charged quarks, both attracted to the third quark with an *inverse* polarity). Even these baryons, 100-fold larger than their (three) constitutive quarks – these hadrons, *the most solid* of all that exists, which incarnate *almost all* of the mass of matter – can claim merely *3 ppm* (0.0003%) of “solidity”! The “oscillation” of one *up* to one *down* quark (*per* the *Weak Nuclear Force* with its three bosons: *W+*, *W-*, and *Z*) transmogrifies a proton into a neutron (and vice versa). The final one of those four (“classical”) Fundamental Forces and – with a *titanic difference* – *the weakest and the most tenuous* (should you fall down: take consolation in this!) is, of course, the immanent *Gravity*, with its (pretend) boson, the *graviton* (which *has not* been discovered yet... nor is ever likely to be).¹⁰

⁹ R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

¹⁰ Sub-Atomic Dimensions

Entity	Diameter	Multiplier
Fermion [Quark/Electron]	1×10^{-18} m	1-X
Baryon [Proton/Neutron]	1×10^{-16} m	100-X
“Average” Atomic Nucleus	1×10^{-15} m	1000-X
Some “Average” Atom	1×10^{-10} m	100,000,000-X
“Visible Light” Wavelengths	$4-8 \times 10^{-7}$ m	1,000,000,000,000-X

Finally, to model an *atom* at our human scale: let us suppose *fermions*, the size of 1.0 cm pearls... the *baryons* of the nucleus then would be 1.0 m diameter *beach balls* (each containing only 3 *pearls*); the *nucleus* itself, a 10.0 m diameter *meteorological balloon* (containing from 1 and up to 294 *beach balls*); whereas an entire *atom* then would be 1,000 km in diameter (1.0 Mm: slightly larger than the *planetoid Ceres*; and 12.8-fold smaller than our planet, *Gaea*)! O... the plastic that conforms all of the *balloons*, even as the crust of the *planetoid*, in reality *does not exist!* The *energy* surrounding the cohorts of 3 *pearls* occupies the volume of each *beach ball* as *energy* of a cohort of these occupies that of the *meteorological balloon*. Dispersed throughout that vast volume of *planetoid Ceres* (in its center: a diminutive *meteorological balloon* of 10.0 m in diameter) are found 26 (in the case of *iron*, Fe: atomic number 26) unto a maximum of 118 (in the case of *oganesson*, Og: atomic number 118) minuscule *pearls*, the *energy-field* of which occupies and delimits the whole! To be able to contemplate an entire *atom*, the only “solid” parts of this – its constituent *fermions* (*i.e.*: electrons and quarks) – *would be completely invisible!* We cannot, therefore, view with precision this, our Universe, *as a material construct – QED*¹¹

§§§§

Our Lady Gaia: a tremulous, cærulean sphere of congealed, all unfathomed, *Inner Space*... precipitating herself quite quixotically throughout that curvilinear fastness of *Outer Space*...

§§§§

She orbits *Helios*, at ~108,000 km/hour; orbits the galactic core with *Helios* at ~754,000 km/hour; she travels together with the *Milky Way Galaxy* at ~22 Million km/hour. Meanwhile, the radial velocity (of the axial rotation) upon her Equator... is *supersonic* (~*Mach 1.4*)!

POETIC COUNTERPOINT

The Voice of the Devil

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That Man has two real existing principles, viz.: a Body and a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body, and that Reason, called Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

¹¹ At a true human scale, let us suppose an “average” *atom* being *beach-ball* sized: 1.0 m in diameter. Its component *quarks* and *electrons* (100,000,000 times *smaller* and being a scant 4 in the case of *hydrogen* and up to 1,000 in the case of *oganesson*), then, would be merely 10 *nanometers* in diameter or ~60-times *smaller* than the *wavelengths of visible light*, as such being *completely invisible* even under the most powerful optical microscope (an object must be at least ~*one-half the wavelength of the light* irradiating it to be able to *reflect that light*, rendering it *visible*)! The *protons* and *neutrons*, having diameters of 1.0 *micrometer*, would be visible, then, under such a microscope, but the *nucleus*, with a diameter of 10 *micrometers*, would still be approximately ten times *too small* to be visible to the naked eye! We might hold such an “atom” in our hands... but we would *see absolutely nothing*... just some empty, *Inner Space*!

But the following Contraries to these are True:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul, for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body, and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. *Energy is Eternal Delight*.¹²

THROUGH THE SUBJECTIVELOOKING-GLASS

Subjectively, the *ecstatic*¹³ state, which (in optimal conditions) psychoptic drugs may evoke in us, places a mirror before *the soul* (or *center*, or *inner self*: *the essence* of a human being)... the *Psychoptic Looking-Glass* (in 1744, this term was coined to name some “magic lantern”

¹² Willaim Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (London: 1793), self-engraved, hand painted, and published (in an edition of fewer than 20 sets of prints from 27 cupreous plates. Blake invented the technology of acid etching, which is the basis for μ -chip manufacture!

¹³ *Ecstasy*, from $\epsilon\kappa$ $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\sigma\iota\varsigma$, literally means “standing outside oneself,” which might be to say, “separating *the soul* from *the body*.” This could be construed as distinguishing *energy* from matter or the *subjacent Real* from the *superficial Apparent*. As Blake also wrote:

But first the notion that man has a Body distinct from his Soul is to be expunged; this I shall do by... melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid. If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.

There is no evidence that William Blake ever ingested any psychoptic drug: visionary ecstasy apparently came naturally to him, as it has throughout History to vanishingly few individuals. Blake’s extraordinary poem of 1793 seems to anticipate twentieth-century physics. In my opinion, it is the greatest poem ever written in *any* language! In his *Correspondence*, Blake also remarked:

A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour, or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing eye can see, does not imagine at all.

Blake’s life bore witness to the fact that – as Sasha Shulgin intimated – psychoptic drugs don’t “do” *anything*: they *catalyze the emergence, reawakening, or manifestation* of what is an *innate capacity* of us human beings, which has been suppressed, burned at the stake, beaten to snuff, snuffed out by Millennia of cultural, social, political, and linguistic *Evil Violence*. They are indeed “*de-hallucinogens*” that can afford us some few blessed and blissful hours of *grace*; they most decidedly are, as the Mesoamerican Chichimecas revered them: “*wondrous mushrooms*” (*teonanácatl*), *wondrous Agave wine* (*teocitli*), or *wondrous cacao potions* (*teocacáhuatl*): see Jonathan Ott, *The Cacahuatl Eater: Ruminations of an Unabashed Chocolate Addict* (Vashon, WA: Natural Products Co., 1985), publication pending by Entheobotanica of *The Cacahuatl Eater: Ruminations of an Unabashed Chocolate “Addict,”* a revised *De Luxe Edition*; J. Ott, *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic Drugs, Their Plant Sources and History* (Kennewick, WA: Natural Products Co., 1993); J. Ott, *Ayahuasca Analogues: Pangæan Entheogens* (Kennewick, WA: Natural Products Co., 1994); J. Ott, *Pharmacophilia or The Natural Paradises* (Kennewick, WA: Natural Products Co., 1997); J. Ott, *Shamanic Snuffs or Entheogenic Errhines* (Solothurn, Switzerland: Entheobotanica, 2001); J. Ott, *Ometochtzin: las muertes de Dos-Conejo* (Atoyatl Xocoyolapan, México: Amoxcalli Xochiatl, 2004); J. Ott, *Pharmacomania or Mr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde: The Literary Creation of “Addicts” and “Alcoholics”* (Kennewick, WA: Natural Products Co., 2026); J. Ott and J. Bigwood, eds., *Teonanácatl: Hallucinogenic Mushrooms of North America* (Seattle: Madrona Publishers, 1978) – which possess the potential to restore us to a state of childlike wonder... marveling at this mysterious, living World,... instinct as it is with the *Eternal Delight* of what is (the Universe being our Creator) *Divine Energy*.

projector).¹⁴ As this might be: the pellucid *Mimir's Well*, at the foot of the *Cosmic Tree*, *Yggdrasil*, overflowing with *Othrorir*, that visionary *Mead of Wisdom* of Odin (or Wotan)... mayhap that crystalline spring whereby Echo had espied Narcissus contemplating himself. The martyred sixteenth president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, remarked, with a rustic candor that is anathema to self-respecting contemporary politicians: "You can fool *all* of the People *some* of the time and *some* of the People *all* of the time... but you cannot fool *all* of the People *all* of the time." Nevertheless (at least in a quotidian fashion) we are – *all of us* human beings – *experts at fooling ourselves* (almost) *all of the time!* We *all* are "pre-programmed" with mental automatisms, as, for instance: *selective* memory, *false* and completely *fantastic* memory, almost infinite capacity for *rationalization*, *ex post facto*... As *automatic* as they are *unconscious*, these and other mechanisms ever conspire to "paint the color of roses" our own *acts* and *motivations*, to tergiversate events and personal interactions so ever to place *us* in the best light or perspective possible, albeit were this at a cost of besmirching "the other," even the most beloved person! So we elaborate an obdurate self-image – *all but impervious to any contrary testimony*: to obstinate and inveterate *facts* (as though this were of *the hardest steel*, covered with *Teflon™*) – which, as an absolute rule, omits or quite overlooks one or another facet (perform being nugatory and not, strictly speaking, laudatory); despite the fact that any friend or "other" who knows us well would place *that* in the first rank... all while this accentuates or highlights miscellaneous *noble*, *refined*, or *attractive* qualities that, inexplicably and enigmatically, had escaped the notice of the entire world, not excepting that of those most dear to us! Under the appropriate conditions (*viz.*: dearth of sensory stimulation, solitude, some serious and explicit intents, conscientious preparations), a psychoptic drug, of a sudden, might dissolve or compenetrates this labyrinthine miasma of *fiction*, *rationalization*, *aye!*, of the most intrepid and impudent *fantasy*: to *show* ourselves, *to* ourselves, as it might be, *in the eye of the beholder* to "the disembodied eye" – at all events in a light more faithful to *Reality* than to our most perfervid and hyperbolic *desires*, *wishes*, and *prejudices*. As Henry David Thoreau speculated, "Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?"¹⁵ This *pharmacotheon* (or *medicamentum divinum*) just might facilitate our passage into a *trans-linguistic realm of direct experience*: of being unable to *name*, *characterize*, and/or *analyze* objects, enabling us, instead, to perceive their living, their *immediate essence*, to behold them, *of themselves*, not as *abstractions* or *memorable images* (such being merely "Imitations," according to Plato) – "Ah... *that is a table... there is a gourd of ayahuasca...*" – in open-mouthed astonishment, bereft of words, it might unveil to us, denuded, *our very souls*, reprimed, stripped of their dense accretions of layers upon layers of *fantasy* and *prevarication*... reveal to us, before this *Psychoptic Looking Glass*... our very own, living, *aye! our reprimed souls... sans fripperies... without furbelows or any cosmetic patches.*

Reptant... a parlous potential skulks, latent... in this very brutal *efficiency*, and the exquisite *specificity*, of such wise a *psychological scalpel* for *the dissection*, for *the unveiling of the soul*. There are, manifestly, persons so rigid and controlled (bulwarked in

¹⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*.

¹⁵ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854).

“character armor,” in the words of Wilhelm Reich), whose personal biographies enshroud mayhap occult chapters all too dreadful or horrifying... they, who might lament with King Macbeth, “O, full of Scorpions is my Minde” – *attributed to Shakespeare*¹⁶ – such that one or another decalitre of rose-colored paint just might be *medicinal*, frankly *palliative* and *lenitive*... I say! but a little short of *indispensable* to facilitate a social adequacy, however truncated or meretricious, so that such persons might not find themselves, like Rodion Raskolnikov (of *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoevsky),¹⁷ complacently ensconced in some foetid and wretched attic, withdrawn from social contact, perchance emerging, only to murder and despoil an aged usurer. As Henry Jekyll learned, to his dismay (in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson),¹⁸ his “Transcendental Medicine,” far from *mollifying* or *reconciling him* with his “inner monster,” ended as “the caged”: “came out roaring,” then gathered strength, and ultimately took full control, eventuating in a perpetual imprisonment of Jekyll! To be sure, that class of persons who harbor tenebrous monsters within them should head the list of those most necessitous of psychotherapy in general and of the *Psychoptic Looking Glass* in particular, with all due cares and precautions. As that usurper, King Macbeth, had asked rhetorically (concerning *the mental alienation* of his Queen, the dire Lady Macbeth):

Can’st thou not Minister to a minde diseas’d,
 Plucke from the Memory a rooted Sorrow,
 Raze out the written troubles of the Braine,
 And with some sweet Obliuious Antidote
 Cleanse the stufft bosome, of that perilous stuffe
 Which weighs vpon the heart?¹⁹

TWO “MEMORABLE FANCIES”

How do you know but ev’ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
 Is an immense world of delight, clos’d by your senses five?

§§§§

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert, that God spoke to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the case of imposition.

Isaiah answer’d. I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception: but my senses discover’d the infinite in every thing...²⁰

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, 1st fol. (London: Edward Blount, William & Isaac Jaggard, 1623 [1606]).

¹⁷ Fyodor Dostoevsky, “Crime and Punishment,” *Russkiy Viestnik* (January-December issues, 1866, 12 monthly installments, in book form the following year).

¹⁸ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1886).

¹⁹ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 5, sc. 3, lines 50-55.

²⁰ Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, “A Memorable Fancy,” 3, 5.

THROUGH THE PSYCHOPTIC LOOKING GLASS

Like the (perhaps not entirely) fictitious Alice (Liddell?) in Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's (or Lewis Carroll's) "visionary" book and literary chess game *par excellence*, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*,²¹ this *Psychoptic Looking Glass* might afford us a perspective beyond the *superficial*: transcending our visual "imagination" based on the reflections of *energy* from *the surfaces* only of this lovely World. Mayhap this vouchsafes us a glimpse of:

The vndiscovered Countrey, from whose Borne
No Traueller returns...²²

This, to be sure, is from the climax of Prince Hamlet's "immortal" soliloquy-lament. With dulciloquy, we might call this "Wonderland"... it simply is *the Real*, inherent in *the Apparent*. Examining the *minutiae* of the most materialistic of the sciences, *chemistry* or "chemophysics," we found scant little support for a materialistic weltanschauung ("world view"). We learned that there really *isn't much matter in matter*, that *energy* rules the sub-atomic roost (and for about a Century now we have *known*, we have *proven*, that *matter* and *energy* are interchangeable, but two sides of one coin – that *one single gram of matter* embodies *the energy of 330,000 liters* [around 300 Mg] of petrol, of gasoline!). Einstein's famous formula, $E = mc^2$ (Energy [in *ergs*] = mass [in *grams*] times *the square of c* [or the speed of light, in *cm/sec*]), or, for 1.0 g: $E = 1.0 \times (3.0 \times 10^{10})^2$. So, there lurks an Energy, of 9.0×10^{20} *ergs*... within *one single gram of matter*!

It seems manifest to me that in the *Psychoptic Looking Glass* I perceive the World more as it really is: as *living, dancing energy* rather than *dead, inert matter*. This is *not* a hallucination! By the same token, Schultes's "little wavy lines" (or, for me *arabesque* or *geometric patterns* or *designs*) are a concomitant of this perception of the World, as *instinct with energy* – shimmering, fluctuant *waves* or *auras* of *energy* ubiquitous, like Baudelaire's "magic lustre,"²³ or an iridescent oil slick riding rippling waters and flowing over the World. Moreover, this *Psychoptic Looking Glass* is *bidirectional*, acting not merely on the Exterior World (as a *picoscopic* "peer glass" into the occulted life of matter) but turning its [psych]optics *within*, proffering us hints to those "bio-algorithms" operative somewhere betwixt our retinas *cum* optic nerves and some inscrutable psychoöptic mental screen of visual perception. Our brains, principally, are *visually wired*, and our visual perception very much is attuned toward *seeking patterns* in the World. It looks to me as if our perceptual *ordering* of this chaotic *energy*, ecstatically perceived, accounts for its *organization* into luminous *patterns* – that is to say, those *patterns*... are our *projections* onto the World: through this *Psychoptic Looking Glass*, we become able, in a sense, *to perceive* this, our unconscious, automatic, *pattern-seeking* function, "hard wired" into our brains! By an analogy to computer-graphics projections, we perceive our brains

²¹ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (London: Macmillan, 1871-72).

²² William Shakespeare, *The Tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*, 1st fol. (London: Edward Blount, William and Isaac Jaggard, 1623 [1603-4]), act. 3, sc. 1.

²³ Charles Baudelaire, *Artificial Paradises*, trans. S. Diamond (New York: Citadel Press, 1996), 63.

breaking *apparent surfaces* into tessellated polygons or – as it sometimes happens to be – Oriental carpet-designs!

Withal, this multifaceted, *enhanced* perception – both of the arcane and occult *inner essence of matter as energy*, “out there” in the Exterior World and of the inscrutable mechanisms of my psychoöptic mental screen, “in here,” within my Interior World – has constituted, for me, nothing short of a *Revelation*, anent one cold December night in Pittsburgh at the end of 1968. Then... thenceforward – having ventured *hundreds of times Through the [Psychoptic] Looking Glass* – I have inhabited a different World... this *ineffable* World, of intrinsic *Mystery* and *Wonder*... far more *intriguing and compelling* than that *dead* Materialistic World *I had been taught to see*...

EIDETIC INTUITION: SEEING IDEAS IN KANT, HUSSERL, AND HEIDEGGER

The Greek word *eidos* (εἶδος, pl. εἶδη), created upon the basis of the stem *id/vid* (to see), means at once “form,” “look,” and “idea,” “the shape in which something appears to an observer, the sight or view that it presents to him,” and metaphorically an “inner shape that appears to the mind’s eye.”¹ In the Platonic allegory, it names what is seen when the mind turns away from the shadows identified with sensible things toward their origin, which truly is. From antiquity onward, this seeing of ideas has often been reduced to a mere metaphor for thinking: to see an idea is simply to understand a concept. Visual language was treated as pedagogical ornament, subordinate to abstract thought.

The hypothesis that I want to defend runs directly against this reduction. It claims that there is a genuinely *visual* but *non-sensory* mode of cognition: an inner, mental, non-sensual, apodictic kind of vision that I call *eidetic intuition* (in the sense of *Anschauung*, immediate evidence). This mode of seeing is different both from ordinary visual sense perception and from discursive, non-visual intellection; yet it is as immediate as sensory vision and capable of yielding evidence and certainty.

My further claim is that this eidetic intuition can, under certain conditions, be induced. Building on research by Klüver, Jensch, Lippert, and Koch, among others, I assume that pharmacologically induced visions stand in strict continuity with Platonic θεωρία and Eleusinian ἐποπτεία, the contemplation, or beholding, at the core of Greek metaphysics and that what was beheld were eidetic images, inner visual phenomena seen in the literal sense of the word, perceived by means of eidetic intuition.² This forces us to revise Kant’s famous claim that nothing in possible experience can ever coincide with the Platonic idea.³ Instead, it would mean that there are modes of experience in which perceptions identified with Platonic εἶδη are given – though not as sensually given objects.

¹ P. Natorp, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas: An Introduction to Idealism*, trans. V. Politis (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2004), 52.

² H. Klüver, “Mescal Visions and Eidetic Vision,” *The American Journal of Psychology* 37, no. 4 (October 1926): 502-15; H. Klüver, “Eidetic Images,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (1929), vol. 8, 112; H. Klüver, “Eidetic Phenomena,” *Psychological Bulletin* 29, no. 3 (1932): 181-203; E. R. Jaensch, *Eidetic Imagery and Typological Methods of Investigation*, trans. O. A. Oeser (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930); H. Lippert, *Einführung in die Pharmakopsychologie* (Bern: Huber, 1959), 13, 28, 62, 70; C. Koch, *Then I Am Myself the World: What Consciousness Is and How to Expand It* (New York: Basic Books, 2024).

³ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 395-96 [A 313-14/B 370-71]:

However, in order not to relapse into a naïve hypostatization, we need a conceptual framework in which such givenness can be understood without contradicting the critical demand that cognition be tied to the conditions of possible experience. My proposal is that eidetic intuition is best understood as intuition of schemata in the Kantian sense. What is seen in eidetic intuition are not suprasensible things but schematic structures – pre-empirical forms that articulate how beings can appear at all.

PLATONIC/ELEUSINIAN ORIGINS OF EIDETIC INTUITION

Plato repeatedly describes metaphysical insight in terms of seeing. In the *Phaedrus* he evokes an otherworldly, supracelestial region, an “intangible truly existing essence [...] visible only to the mind.”⁴ Eleusinian testimonies similarly attest of a visionary *ἐποπτεία* – literally a “beholding” – as the climactic moment of the mystery rites.⁵ Ancient and late-antique commentators, from Plotinus to Proclus, took such language literally enough to speak of a noetic vision of intelligible forms.

Modern scholarship, following Hegel, has usually tamed this tradition by reading vision as allegory for purely conceptual thought. But a minority line – running through the work of Otto Kern, Walter Burkert, Giorgio Colli, and the Tübingen school – has insisted on a much closer link between Plato and Eleusinian mysticism.⁶ They suggest that Platonic metaphysics is rooted in a practice of inner vision, *θεωρία*, understood as an inner contemplative glance whose primordial mode is not discourse but image.⁷

Kerényi, Burkert, and Wasson radicalized this line by adding a psychopharmacological hypothesis: the *κυκεών* of Eleusis, and perhaps the “divine madness” (*μανία*) of Plato’s dialogues, were mediated by psychoactive substances capable of inducing mental visions – “archetypes, the very ideas of Plato,” seen “with the mind’s eye.”⁸ Heinrich Klüver, a pioneer in the experimental study of induced visionary states, introduced the term “eidetic visions”

Plato made use of the expression *idea* in such a way that we can readily see that he understood by it something that not only could never be borrowed from the senses, but that even goes far beyond the concepts of the understanding [...] to cognitions that go much too far for any object that experience can give ever to be congruent, but that nonetheless have their reality and are by no means merely figments of the brain. [...] Now I cannot follow him in this, just as little as I can in the mystical deduction of these ideas or in the exaggerated way in which he hypostatized them, as it were; although the lofty language that served him in this *field* is surely quite susceptible of a milder interpretation, and one that accords better with the nature of things. (emphasis in original)

⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c-d (trans. H. N. Fowler).

⁵ P. Hadot, *Epotheia*, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter and K. Gründer, vol. 2 (Basel: Schwab Verlag, 1972), 599.

⁶ O. Kern, “Die hohe Zeit der Philosophie und der Volksreligion,” in *Von Platon bis Kaiser Julian*, vol. 3 of *Die Religion der Griechen* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1938), 12-37; W. Burkert, “Philosophische Religion,” in *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2011), 455ff.; G. Colli, *Dioniso, Apollo, Eleusi, Orfeo, Museo, Iperborei, Enigma*, vol. 1 of *La sapienza greca* (Milan: Adelphi, 1977), 28-29; K. Gaiser, *Platons esoterische Lehre*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. T. A. Szlezák and K.-H. Stanzel (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2004), 332; A. Serafin, “Plato and Eleusis,” *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 13 (2024): 245-63.

⁷ H. Rausch, *Theoria: von ihrer sakralen zur philosophischen Bedeutung* (Munich: Fink, 1982).

⁸ R. G. Wasson, “The Divine Mushroom: Primitive Religion and Hallucinatory Agents,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 102, no. 3 (1958): 222-23. Cf. K. Kerényi, “Mescaline-Perioden der Religionsgeschichte,” *Wege zum Menschen* 18 (1965): 201-4; K. Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, trans. R. Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 179-80; W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. P. Bing (Berkeley: University of California

in the 1920s; Willy Hellpach coined the term *eidetica* for the substances that induce them.⁹ If we accept even provisionally that such non-sensory, image-like experiences exist and can be induced and that this is the contemporary scientific consensus, we are faced with the following philosophical questions: What is their epistemic and ontological status? Are they only hallucinations, mere imaginary entities, or can they yield genuine cognition? What exactly is given in them? If we refuse to speak of hypostasized ideas, how can we characterize their content? These questions lead us from Plato to Husserl, Heidegger, and Kant.

EIDETIC INTUITION IN HUSSERL'S LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The possibility of seeing ideas (*Ideenschau*) in Husserl is grounded in his rigorous analysis of fulfillment (*Erfüllung*) and the necessary expansion of the concept of intuition (*Anschauung*). It is in the *Sixth Logical Investigation* that Husserl lays out the fundamental cognitive structure that makes the eidetic intuition possible and conceivable at all.¹⁰ The key lies in his analysis of fulfilling intuition, the ideal of adequation, and the subsequent widening of the concept of intuition. In chapter 5 (§§ 36-37), Husserl defines this basic structure: a signitive, or non-intuited, intention (mere meaning, *Meinung*) can be fulfilled by means of an intuition in which what is meant is intuitively given.¹¹ Husserl argues that, just as physical objects are given to us in sensory perception, ideal objects (essences, universals, or states of affairs) are given to us in a distinct, higher-order act of intuition. To understand how one can see an εἶδος, one must first understand what seeing means for Husserl in its most general epistemological sense. Husserl defines the ideal of adequate perception as the state where a meaning intention is completely fulfilled by a corresponding intuition.

We can think or talk about an object without seeing it (empty intention). When we finally perceive the object, the intention is fulfilled. The object is no longer just meant but is given “in person” or “as itself,” thereby fulfilling the hitherto empty intention. This moment of perfect coincidence between what is meant and what is given is self-evidence. It is the phenomenological realization of the classic *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Husserl establishes that it makes no difference whether this fulfilling intuition is a physical perception or a construction of fantasy, provided it offers the object “as itself.” Thus, the core criterion of seeing is not the operation of the physical eye but the self-givenness of the object to consciousness. Crucially, Husserl remarks that it is irrelevant whether this fulfilling intuition is perception, imagination, or some other mode; what matters is that

Press, 1983), 287; W. Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, trans. J. Raffan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 277.

⁹ W. Hellpach, “Funktionelle Differenzierung der ‘psychischen Stimulantien,’” *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift*, no. 50 (1941): 1359-60: “Eidetics [*Eidetika*, *Bildspender*, i.e., image providers] are eidetic substances [*pharmaca eidetica*] that played a leading role in all oracles, prophecies, ecstasies, mysteries, secret cults, ethno-myths, and magical practices; without them, the fundamental forms of metaphysical strivings and the metaphysical imaginarium would be unthinkable.”

¹⁰ E. Husserl, *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*, pt. 2 of *Logische Untersuchungen*. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1901); English translation: *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹¹ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, 259-62.

there is an intuitive givenness. From the standpoint of phenomenological evidence, the psychological source (outer perception vs. inner cognition) is secondary to the function of intuition as fulfillment.

Already here, Husserl makes two moves that are decisive for an inner seeing of ideas. First, the very same structure of fulfillment applies equally to individual and universal objects. Self-evidence is “the act of this most perfect synthesis of coincidence,”¹² regardless of whether the object is singular or universal. Second, he acknowledges an objection: the “realized consciousness of the universal,” the consciousness that gives “the universal object itself,”¹³ seems to rest not on perception but on imagination or to be indifferent to the distinction between perception and imagination. This, Husserl admits, exposes a gap in the analysis and forces him to widen the concepts of perception and intuition. That widening is the hinge where a non-sensuous seeing of εἰδῆ becomes thinkable.

Thus, in chapter 6, Husserl confronts the limitation of standard sensory perception. The systematic place for this move is the second part of the *Sixth Investigation*, in the discussion of categorial intuition (§§ 43-45).¹⁴ Husserl begins by insisting that the objective correlates of categorial forms – for example, being or unity – can also be intuited. Nothing like being is to be found among the sensually given objects of perception, hence being is “absolutely imperceptible” if we confine perception merely to our senses. This leads Husserl to recall the wider, everyday use of words such as seeing and perceiving. He solves this by introducing the concept of categorial intuition. “Where do the categorial forms of our meanings find their fulfillment?” asks Husserl. His answer is that there must be an act that renders “identical services to the categorial elements of meaning that merely sensuous perception renders to the material elements.”¹⁵ This mental seeing is not a mystical faculty but a founded act in which the categorial form is not merely thought or hypothesized; it is set before our very mental eyes. The object is not merely thought of but intuited or perceived in its categorial structure. Husserl explicitly takes this broader usage seriously: there is a legitimate sense in which we can talk of perceiving and seeing non-sensuous objects such as states of affairs insofar as they are given with a character of self-givenness analogous to that of sense perception.

In § 44, Husserl turns directly to the origin of the concept of being and of other categories that can be intuited in a similar way. He denies that these arise by mere reflection on inner psychic processes; rather, they arise in the fulfillments of judgements themselves – when a corresponding state of affairs is actually given to us. Here he formulates the decisive analogy: “just as any other concept (or idea, specific unity) can arise, i.e. become self-given [*selbstgegeben*], only on the basis of an act that sets at least some individual instance before our eyes, so too the concept of being can arise only when some being, actual or imaginary, is set before our eyes.”¹⁶ Two things are said here. First, Husserl includes εἰδῆ in the same class as other concepts: they arise only when grounded in an act that presents a concrete instance “before our eyes,” whether in perception or imagination.

¹² Ibid., 263.

¹³ Ibid., 261.

¹⁴ Ibid., 277-81.

¹⁵ Ibid., 280.

¹⁶ Ibid., 279.

Second, he insists that some state of affairs must be given “by way of an act which gives it, an analogue of common sensuous intuition.”¹⁷ The act that gives a state of affairs is not sensuous intuition in the strict sense, but it is still an intuition – a non-sensuous analogue of sensuous perception.

In § 45, Husserl explicitly speaks of widening the concept of intuition and of perception. Alongside sensuous intuition and sensuous perception, he introduces a “supersensuous (i.e., raised above sense, or categorial) concept of perception.”¹⁸ In both cases – sensuous and categorial – “something appears as actual and self-given.”¹⁹ This is Husserl’s formula for a non-sensuous seeing: an act in which something is given “in person,” as self-present, even though it is not a sensible datum. From these analyses, the possibility of seeing εἶδη as inner, non-sensuous seeing can be reconstructed entirely within *Logical Investigations* VI. According to Husserl, εἶδη are among the objects that can become self-given to us, provided that an act “sets some individual instance before our eyes”²⁰ (in perception or imagination). The universal does not lie inside the individual as an object but is given in a new act that looks through the individual to the specific unity. This act is intuitive, not merely discursive: Husserl treats the intuition of universals and categorial forms as genuine intuitions in a widened sense, capable of fulfilling intentions and grounding self-evidence in the same structural way as sense perception does. It is nevertheless non-sensuous in its givenness: the εἶδος is not a color, a shape, a sound, nor any component of the empirical thing. It is an ideal unity, grasped in an “analogue of common sensuous intuition”²¹ – that is, a categorial intuition or intuition of the universal.

The most profound application of this is ideation or the intuition of the universal, discussed in § 52.²² This is the mechanism for seeing the εἶδη. In this act, the εἶδος “is brought to consciousness, and achieves actual givenness,” “the universal itself is given to us; we do not think of it merely in significative fashion [...] but we apprehend it, behold it.”²³ Husserl insists that talking of “intuition and, more precisely, of a perception of the universal is in this case, therefore, well-justified” because the εἶδος is given with the same intuitive self-presence as a physical thing. Crucially, because this is an *eidetic* seeing, it does not depend on the physical reality of the object. We can perform this abstraction just as well on a generic image in pure fantasy. Thus, for Husserl, the inner mental seeing of εἶδη is a rigorous concept. It is the act of fulfillment for universal meanings: the moment where the εἶδος stands before the mind as a self-given reality, validated by a specific type of intuition that transcends the senses while remaining analogous to them. Thus Husserl answers, in phenomenological terms, the question of whether εἶδη can be seen inwardly. Yes, but only in a specific sense: not by a mystical gaze into a separate realm and not by conceptual thinking but by acts of intuition in which the universal or the categorial form becomes self-given. These acts are structurally analogous to perception: something

¹⁷ Ibid., 280.

¹⁸ Ibid., 281.

¹⁹ Ibid., 282.

²⁰ Ibid., 279.

²¹ Ibid., 280.

²² Ibid., 292-94.

²³ Ibid., 292.

appears as actual and self-given, yet what appears is no longer the individual sensible thing but the εἶδος itself – seen in an inner, non-sensuous way.

HEIDEGGER'S RADICALIZATION OF KANTIAN SCHEMATISM

Husserl's *Sixth Logical Investigation* describes non-sensuous seeing as an intuition of universals and categorial forms that is founded on perception or imagination yet irreducible to them. Having established the necessity of a mental seeing, he does not explicitly detail the *generative* mechanism of this vision within the finite subject. The εἶδος seen is not a sensible thing but an ideal unity that becomes self-given in a higher-order act of intuition. With this in mind, Heidegger's interpretation of Kantian schematism in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*²⁴ can be read as a transposition of Husserl's eidetic insight into Kantian terrain. The question now becomes: If Husserl shows that we can see εἶδη as ideal structures, can we say with Kant that the schemata themselves are a kind of inner, non-sensuous εἶδη and that we in fact see *schemata*? Is the seeing of the εἶδη as schemata not just a passive reception but a productive act of the transcendental power of imagination?

Kant distinguishes intuition (*Anschauung*) from concept (*Begriff*). Intuition is a singular, immediate act of perceiving an object, while concepts constitute the general framework for thinking. This distinction creates a critical gap: pure concepts of the understanding (categories of intellect) are not derived from experience, yet they must apply to objects of experience. The key to bridging this gap is transcendental schematism. The schema is homogeneous with the category on the one hand (as universal) and with the intuited appearance on the other (as temporalized). However, Heidegger argues that the true nature of this seeing remains obscure. By radicalizing Kant's text, specifically the chapter on schematism, Heidegger uncovers a mode of inner mental seeing that is distinct from sensory perception yet undeniably intuitive. This is the mechanism of schematism. The central problem of finite intuition is that it must receive its object; it cannot create it out of nothing. A pure intuition must give the object immediately as a whole (*unmittelbar ganz*) prior to any empirical encounter. This requires a faculty of pure making sensible (*reine Versinnlichung*). This is the core of mental seeing of "a look, but one which all the same does not offer the being."²⁵

Heidegger states the decisive question in § 9 of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, starting from a Kantian problem that closely mirrors Husserl's: "Can such a thing as a pure intuiting be found in the finite knowing of beings?"²⁶ Finite intuition is sensibility: it always already depends on being affected by what is given. And yet Kant speaks of pure intuitions that are not empirical. So what exactly is "represented in, and only in, pure intuition" if it is "not an object" and "not nothing"?²⁷ Pure intuition must, as intuition, still give something immediately and give it immediately as a whole. This already implies a non-empirical *Anschauung*: a way of having something before one's eyes that is not a sensible object. We are very close to Husserl's move when he widens

²⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991); English translation: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. R. Taft (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997).

²⁵ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 65.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the concept of intuition to include states of affairs and categories. Heidegger's answer is already proto-*eidetic*: a pure intuition must still give something intuitively – that is, in a mode of *Anschauung*, not as a mere concept or rule. It must “give what is intuited immediately, and immediately as a whole.”²⁸ So there has to be a non-empirical, non-sensuous look (*Anblick*) that finite intuition nonetheless has before its eyes. That is the opening for seeing something other than empirical things: seeing pure looks.

In § 19, Heidegger radicalizes Kant's notion of sensibility: for Kant, “sensibility means finite intuition.”²⁹ Pure sensibility must therefore be a kind of intuition that “takes what is intuitable in stride in advance,”³⁰ prior to all empirical reception. But finite intuition, as intuition, cannot “produce an intuitable being.”³¹ Heidegger concludes: pure sensibility must be a pure making-sensible, a taking-up of something that is first formed in this very taking-up – that is, a look that nevertheless does not itself offer a being. So pure intuition is neither an empty form nor an empirical image; it is a forming of a look that makes something in principle intuitable, without yet presenting any determinate object. This is structurally analogous to Husserl's categorial objects: they are not real moments of the thing but special kinds of objectivity that appear only in a specific kind of intuition. Heidegger's next question is therefore exactly Husserlian in spirit: What is the character of what is thus intuited in pure sensibility? Can it have the character of an image? And how is the forming look in pure imagination – the pure schema – distinct from empirical images? At this point, *schemata* already resemble non-objectual yet genuinely intuitive looks: proto-εἶδη.

To understand how we can see a schema, we must first understand what the schema is not. In § 20, Heidegger distinguishes the schema from a mere image understood as a copy or likeness (*Abbild*).

To understand this look, Heidegger rigorously unfolds the concept of image in layers, distinguishing the schema from an empirical image:

1. Empirical image: an immediate look of a determinate being, a look at this corpse, this house, this tree as present-at-hand.
2. Likeness image: a mask, photograph, casting, death mask, etc. that reproduces the look of an absent thing. An image in the ordinary sense, a likeness (*Abbild*) of a being that is already on hand. It copies a specific entity.
3. Schema image: a look of something in general. However, it is not a copy of a look of a specific thing. Rather, it provides the possibility of any particular look at all.

It is the rule that allows an image to particularize and temporalize. A schema is the rule of generation that allows any house to appear as a house. This look (*Anblick*) is formed (*sich bildend*) in the pure imagination itself (*Einbildungskraft*). Unlike empirical intuition, which receives an object, the pure power of imagination (*reine Einbildungskraft*) is productive in schematism. It does not reproduce a being; it forms (*bildet*) the look itself. “Pure making-sensible, must be the taking of something in stride which indeed is formed first of all in the taking-in-stride itself; that is, [it must be] a look, but one which all the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

same does not offer the being.³² Thus, a schema is not a picture in a mental gallery. It is the procedure of active production of a horizon – a pre-view (*Vorblick*) – that dictates how a being must look before we ever encounter it. What do these schema-images show? What appearance (*Aussehen*) do they give? What do they make sensible? They show how something appears in general, “in the one that applies to many.”³³ They function as a gateway to the εἶδος: they do not show any particular face but the “face-look,” the face as such; not any particular house, but the “house-look” that is valid for many. We are now exactly in Husserl’s terrain: the schema conceived in such a way corresponds to εἶδος as “the one that applies to many,” the ideal unity seen through particular cases. But Heidegger articulates it in Kantian terms: as a look that is no longer an empirical object yet remains intuitable as how something looks in general. This prepares the step to schema-images: pure, general looks that no longer depend on any particular empirical object but articulate a priori how any particular something can appear at all.

If the schema is not an empirical image, then in what sense can it be seen? Heidegger answers this in § 22 by introducing two notions: pure intuition and pure image. He addresses the central difficulty of how a pure, non-sensuous concept of the understanding can be brought into intuition otherwise than via an empirical givenness of an object. The solution lies in a radical reinterpretation of what constitutes an image through the faculty of pure intuition (*reine Anschauung*). It is pure intuition that gives a look prior to all experience. Heidegger begins by defining the specific character of pure intuition. Unlike empirical intuition, which receives a look (*Anblick*) from an object that is already present, pure intuition is active prior to all experience. Heidegger explicitly says that there is a *reine Anschauung* that “procures a look prior to all experience.”³⁴ This means that pure intuition does not stare at a void; it generates a specific kind of visibility. It provides a horizon or a domain of looking before any specific object appears. Even before any empirical object is given, finite intuition already has a certain look, a way in which something can appear. This is not yet the look of any particular thing but a pre-given horizon-look. The “pure look which gives itself in such pure intuition”³⁵ must be called a pure image (*reines Bild*). Such a pure image has the status of that look: it is an image but not an empirical picture; it is the image as the condition for anything to appear. This image is prior to all experience and yet genuinely intuitable. It is not a concept, not a rule in the logical sense, and not an empirical representation; it is an intuitable form that precedes and conditions any encounter with objects. Therefore, a schema can be “brought into an image” if and only if image means a pure image. On this basis, Heidegger formulates his key theoretical claim: “Hence the schema of the pure concept of the understanding can also be brought very nicely into an image, provided that ‘image’ is now taken as ‘pure image.’”³⁶ In other words, only if by image we mean an empirical picture, Kant is right that no schema can ever be reduced to an image: no picture exhausts the rule. But if by “image” we mean a pure image – that is, the look that gives itself in pure intuition prior to experience – then a schema is an image in

³² Ibid., 65.

³³ Ibid., 66.

³⁴ Ibid., 73.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

exactly this sense. So, in Heidegger's interpretation, § 22 says that pure intuition always already gives a pure look, that look is a pure image, a non-empirical, intuitable figure, and *schemata* given in pure intuition are precisely such pure images. This is why schemata can be seen, not as pictures (*Abbilder*) of things, but as inner pure images, the pre-empirical looks in which anything whatsoever can first appear. Thus, against Kant's own cautious reservation that "the schema [...] is something that can never be brought to an image at all,"³⁷ Heidegger says: yes, it can – with one condition. We must understand image not as empirical picture but as pure image, pure look. Ontologically, they are not empirical objects, but phenomenologically they are intuitable looks – non-sensuous images of the basic structures of appearance. When we see a schema, we are not seeing a mental picture of a geometric figure or a generic object. We are seeing the pure image generated by pure imagination. The schema is the concept brought into this pure look. The possibility of seeing εἶδη rests on the existence of this pure image. It is a non-sensuous, a priori look provided by means of pure intuition. This allows the schema to be intuitable (visible to the mind) without degrading it into a mere empirical picture.

Heidegger then further clarifies the ontological status of these pure images by introducing the faculty of transcendental imagination. He describes the transcendental imagination explicitly in § 28: Pure intuitions belong to human finitude, as such they "cannot allow any beings to spring forth"³⁸ in their act of intuiting. They are original because "according to its essence it is the pure power of imagination itself which formatively gives looks (images) from out of itself."³⁹ So pure intuition as the work of pure imagination is a giving of looks that does not produce beings but rather pure images out of itself. What is crucial is that pure intuition must be "originally unifying, i.e. giving unity,"⁴⁰ and therefore it must catch sight of unity. Kant uses the Platonic term *σύννοησις* in this context. Thus, to intuit in such a way is not merely to see but to see the unity of a manifold in the schematic structure of its appearing. This relates directly to Kant's remark (A 94-95) that "space and time are the forms of the pre-forming in intuition. In advance they form the pure look which serves as horizon for the empirically intuitable."⁴¹ If pure intuition is itself pure imagination, then what is pre-formed in it – these pure looks – is itself imaginative. They are not beings but not nothing either. Heidegger recalls Kant's doctrine of the *ens imaginarium* as one possible "form of the 'Nothing'"⁴² not a being in the sense of what is present-at-hand nevertheless in some sense "something" (*Etwas*), "but certainly not 'objects'" (*Gegenstände*).⁴³ Pure intuitions are "intuitions without things" (*Anschauungen ohne Dinge*), but they "nevertheless have what is intuited in them."⁴⁴ So *schemata*, as pure temporal images, have no objectual ontic status, but they are not nothing either. Kant speaks of *entia imaginaria* as a peculiar type of non-beings: they are

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 274 [A 142].

³⁸ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 99.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

that which is not a being in the sense of something present-at-hand, yet they are positive imaginative structures: pure, unthematic, non-objective looks that function as a horizon of appearance. This is what an εἶδος is: not a thing, not a mental fiction, but a pure look that shapes how beings show up.

Thus, to summarize, Heidegger provides a phenomenology of inner eidetic seeing: Pure intuition in finite knowing cannot produce beings, but it can give pure looks that determine the “forms of pre-forming.” These looks are images in a widened sense: not empirical pictures but pure images through which any by means of which “something appears in general,” “in the one that applies to many”⁴⁵ – what Heidegger explicitly glosses as εἶδος, *idea*. The *schemata* of the categories are precisely such pure images. Hence, they themselves can “very well be brought into an image” if image is taken as “pure image.” As pure imagination, finite reason formatively gives these looks from itself. In pure intuition it “catches sight” of unity – this is Kant’s transcendental synopsis, which Heidegger interprets as a way of seeing of the εἶδος. So in Heidegger’s reading of Kant, *schemata* are not just rules, they are pure images, pure looks; they are not objects, but neither are they mere logical fictions; they are *imaginative, non-objectual looks* that constitute the horizon of appearing. We see them in a broadened sense of seeing: as inner, non-sensuous intuition – what Heidegger calls in a clearly Platonic way *synopsis*, catching sight of unity, and what we can legitimately call eidetic inner vision. In this phenomenological reading, Kant’s schematism – radicalized by Heidegger – does indeed entail a possibility of seeing εἶδη: what is seen are the pure schema-images in which beings show up as beings. They are not Platonic forms above experience but transcendental looks – pure, schematic figures – accessible to a reflective, phenomenological *Anschauungskraft*. This is close to Husserl’s statement that the objective correlates of categorial forms are not real moments of things but a special sort of objectivity given in a specific intuition. In both cases, the “objects” of this inner seeing are *not* things but ideal structures of appearance.

In his study of eidetic visions, Jaensch found that Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant – specifically the centrality of the transcendental imagination – provides a confirmation of his own psychological research into the eidetic faculty.⁴⁶ Heidegger describes imagination as a faculty that can form or provide an image, or look, without the object being physically present-at-hand. Jaensch claims this description applies word for word to the eidetic faculty discovered in experimental psychology, which is the primordial form and the condition of possibility of grasping the world. Its crucial aspect is a peculiar unboundness from being that lies in the faculty of imagination, a peculiar double sense. As a faculty of intuiting, it is forming in the sense of procuring an image; as a faculty not reliant on the presence of the intuitable, it creates the intuited image itself, imposing it only secondarily and subsequently upon the intuited sensuous data, providing them form. This formative power is at once a receptive, sensuous taking-in and a spontaneous creating and interpreting, thus falling in a peculiar way between both as the common root of sensibility and understanding. Such a schematism is an analogue of Husserl’s categorial intuition.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁶ E. R. Jaensch, “Die eidetische Unterbauung der Wahrnehmungs- und Erkenntnislehre und M. Heideggers Kant-Interpretation,” in *Über den Aufbau des Bewußtseins, Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, suppl. vol. 16 (Leipzig: Barth, 1930), 413-24, esp. 414-17.

Both converge on the idea that there is a mental seeing that is different from sensuous: a seeing of the forms of appearance themselves.

CONCLUSION: RESTITUTING METAPHYSICS FROM THE SOURCES OF EIDETICS

We can now restate the central thesis: eidetic intuition is a non-sensory, inner vision in which what becomes visible are transcendental schemata – pure mental structures that articulate how beings can appear. This thesis has several advantages:

1. It honors Kant's critical demand. Instead of positing a separate realm of hypostasized ideas beyond experience, we understand the content of eidetic intuition as the very conditions of experience. What is seen are not otherworldly entities situated beyond the world but the schematic precondition of this world's objectivity and intelligibility. In this sense, eidetic intuition does not violate the Kantian claim that no empirical object can coincide with the idea. It simply claims that there are modes of experience in which the schemata themselves become intuited, not as empirical objects, but as quasi-images or patterns that can be looked at in an inner, non-sensory givenness.

2. It radicalizes Husserl's notion of eidetic intuition. Husserl already acknowledges an intuition of universals and categorial structures. But he does not connect this to Kantian transcendental structures that make experience possible. Re-reading him through Heidegger, we can say: what eidetic intuition intuits are not just generic forms but the primordial schemata that underpin objective experience. This fits well with testimonies of inner visions in which experiencers report seeing structures or archetypal forms that seem more real and more authoritative than empirically given reality. Contemporary neurophenomenological descriptions likewise emphasize the impression of accessing an inner space of forms rather than meeting concrete, empirical objects.

3. It clarifies the Platonic heritage. Interpreted schematically, Platonic εἶδη are not supernatural entities but limit-figures of intelligibility: quasi-pictorial intuitions of the ways in which being can be given as one, true, good, beautiful, and so forth. The idea of the good would then be the ultimate schema of objectivity and intelligibility, the utmost determination of objects appearing empirically in time and space, letting anything show up as meaningful, letting it show up at all. In this view, the vision of ideas in Plato and the beholding in Eleusis are not otherworldly journeys out of this world (as Couliano put it)⁴⁷ but heightened intuitions of the schematic structures of this world's appearance – an ontological insight in which the foundational patterns of mind become intuited.

4. It counters Carnap's criticism of metaphysics. Rudolf Carnap's *Elimination of Metaphysics* argues that genuinely metaphysical sentences are either pseudo-statements containing meaningless pseudo-concepts or syntactically well-formed but logically type-confused combinations of otherwise meaningful words.⁴⁸ In both cases, since no verification procedure can be indicated and no logical truth is stated, such sentences are literally meaningless, according to Carnap. The eidetic–schematic conception proposed here undercuts this critique. Carnap targets claims about a realm beyond all possible

⁴⁷ I. P. Couliano, *Out of This World: Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (Boston: Shambhala, 1991).

⁴⁸ R. Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language," trans. A. Pap, in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959), 60-81.

experience and metaphysical concepts that “refer to something beyond experience,” “above or behind experience.”⁴⁹ By contrast, eidetic intuition concerns the structures of possible experience itself: transcendental schemata as a priori determinations that make objectivity possible. Statements about such schemata do have experiential implications (they say how any experience of objects must be structured in order to be an experience at all) and so can be tied to systematic descriptions, comparisons, and even experimental manipulations of experience (for instance, in induced eidetic states). They are therefore not cut off from the sort of verification Carnap demands. Recasting eidetic intuition as an insight into schemata turns metaphysics into something that is neither fictional mythmaking nor a set of pseudo-statements lacking objective reference but a disciplined investigation of the formal conditions of experience – and thus, pace Carnap, not meaningless. Thus the eidetic–schematic conception does not deny Carnap’s insistence that meaningless metaphysical jargon be eliminated. Once metaphysics is reconceived as a disciplined investigation of eidetic structures – accessible in experience though not as ordinary objects, describable in phenomenological and logical terms, and tied to explicit methods of intuitive and experimental access – it no longer falls under his charge of meaninglessness. Instead, it appears as a critical continuation of the methodical and rigorous analysis of reality that Carnap himself pursues at the level of logical syntax but now extended into the domain of eidetic intuition.

If eidetic intuition is indeed an acknowledged mode of cognition, the next question is whether it can be systematically induced and studied, positing a methodological, not merely speculative, proposal. Contemporary work in neuroscience and psychopharmacology has shown that certain substances can induce highly structured visual experiences that subjects describe as more real than the customary everyday reality, accompanied by a strong sense of insight and intelligibility.⁵⁰ Classical reports – from Pascal’s night of fire, via Boehme’s vision, up to Christof Koch’s recent description of a pharmacologically induced state in which self, time, and world vanished while an atemporal luminous essence remained that was eidetically intuited⁵¹ – exhibit a striking resemblance to Platonic and Eleusinian testimonies. We propose interpreting such states as episodes in which the normal dominance of sensory input is suspended, allowing schematizing activity to be perceived. Instead of silently structuring experience from behind the scenes, the transcendental imagination appears to turn upon itself, presenting its own schematic determinations as intuited εἶδη.

Let us restate the hypothesis: There exists a kind of intuition different from both sense-perception and discursive thought, an inner, image-like, pre-conceptual, non-sensual *eidetic intuition*. This intuition can, under specific conditions, be induced. It lies at the root of both Platonic metaphysics and Eleusinian mysticism and is accessible in states of mind resulting from sensory deprivation. A critical philosophy of such intuition must

⁴⁹ Ibid., 66, 76.

⁵⁰ A. Shulgin, “Chemistry and Structure-Activity Relationships of the Psychotomimetics,” in *Psychotomimetic Drugs: Proceedings of a Workshop Organized by the Pharmacology Section, Psychopharmacology Research Branch, NIMH*, ed. D. H. Efron (New York: Raven Press, 1970), 22-23; A. Shulgin, “Psychotomimetic Drugs: Structure-Activity Relationships,” in *Stimulants*, ed. L. L. Iversen, S. D. Iversen, and S. H. Snyder, vol. 11 in *Handbook of Psychopharmacology* (Boston: Plenum, 1978), 248.

⁵¹ Koch, *Then I Am Myself the World*, 1-2.

avoid reifying and hypostasizing its contents as otherworldly things in themselves. By bringing Kant's schematism into dialogue with Heidegger's ontological interpretation and Husserl's notion of evidential intuition of the universal, we can say: What is seen in eidetic intuition are schemata – pure structures of intelligibility, pure images that let beings appear as what they are. Platonic εἶδη can be reinterpreted as such schemata rather than as hypostasized objects. Eidetic intuition can be understood not as an otherworldly voyage but rather as an intensified glimpse into the world's own inner transcendental precondition of givenness. Thus, the promise of a non-sensory intuition of being need not be dismissed as mythological, fictional, or nonsensical. It becomes a critical, experimentally approachable possibility: a way of restituting metaphysics, not by reviving dogmatic systems, but by returning to its eidetic sources – to that powerful human capacity to *see* not only things but the very forms by which things become manifest, to see the manifestedness and unconcealedness of things, or, as the Greeks put it: ἀλήθεια.

BASILIDES OF ALEXANDRIA AS AN ARISTOTELIAN Gnostic IV: BASILIDES'S DOCTRINE OF THE GREAT ARCHON

4.7. THE GREAT COSMIC ARCHON (23, 3)

After Basilides has thus clarified the nature of the Light and the Firmament (an Intelligible Light that shines in the Darkness of the cosmos, and a Firmament that forms the impassable boundary between cosmic and hypercosmic reality),¹ he proceeds to discuss the cosmic life forms.

“The Great Archon, the Head of the cosmos” (23, 3) was the first to push his way out of the cosmic seed. He is also referred to as a “Power” (Δύναμις). Two things are striking here: first, the terms “Archon” and “Head of the cosmos”; second, the fact that this Archon is also referred to as a Power (Δύναμις).

4.7.1. The Great Cosmic Archon as “Ruler”

The name “Archon” characterizes this divine figure as ruler or governor. It is a common term in Gnostic systems for cosmic rulers.

New Testament texts and many Gnostic writings often use the term “Archon,” “Ruler,” to denote cosmic powers but always for powers that are *subordinate* to a higher, ultimate entity. Texts influenced by Greek philosophy probably reflect in this way the separation between the activities of the “philosopher” and the “King,” as argued by Aristotle on the basis of his separation of “θεωρία” and “πράξις,” in opposition to the Platonic ideal of the personal union between the “philosopher” and the “King.”²

¹ It is conceivable that Basilidean writings explained in a comparable way the “great chasm” mentioned in Luke 16:26, in the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus.

² Cf. Themistius, *Orationes*, 107c-d = Arist. *De regno* frag. 2 Ross; 982 Gigon; and A. P. Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology in Aristotle's Lost Dialogues* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 65-70; P. Boyancé, “Dieu cosmique et dualisme: Les archontes et Platon,” in *Le origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. U. Bianchi (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 340-56, and Boyancé, “Le Dieu très haut chez Philon,” in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 139-49; J. Daniélou, “Le mauvais gouvernement du monde d'après le gnosticisme,” in *Le origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. U. Bianchi (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 448-59; and S. Pétremont, “Le mythe des sept Archontes créateurs peut-il s'expliquer à partir du Christianisme?” in *Le origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. U. Bianchi (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 460-87.

We will also see that Basilides repeatedly relates Bible texts that talk about “the LORD” (Κύριος) to this Great Archon. We can consider here that Philo of Alexandria repeatedly explained the two names of God in the Old Testament, “Κύριος” and “Θεός,” as designations not of the highest God but of the two principal Powers of God.

But we will also have to consider that Gnostic systems sometimes made a connection between the highest cosmic power and the divine “Man” (Ἄνθρωπος or Adamas), based on a special explanation of the first chapters of the book of Genesis.³ According to Genesis 1:26 and 28 and Psalm 8:7, man’s tasks include that of “ruling” (ἄρχειν). In particular, if we are right to suspect that Basilides’s threefold Sonship, which is “ὁμοούσιος” with the transcendent God, refers to “the image of God,” which Man possesses according to Genesis 1:26-27, we can suppose that Basilides postulated “rulers” on three levels. This could suggest that the Great Archon together with the first Sonship stands for the cosmic Man. But this bi-unity was then broken by the *separation* of the perfect Sonship, owing to which the Great Archon stays behind in the cosmos, as *the cosmic Man without his divine component!* In that case, the Lower Archon together with the less subtle Sonship would stand for the demonic Man, whose Sonship *has separated*, after which only the cosmic component of the demonic Man stays behind.

Only the third Sonship is left behind in the heap of formlessness. As a result, mortal, earthly human beings still have the possibility to realize “the image of God” (but also with the final goal of the *separation* of the third Sonship from the cosmic formlessness in which it was present since the deposition of the World Seed).

I note once again that if Basilides’s central scheme can be understood in this way, his conception is extraordinarily original and profound. And in that case the point of his quotation from John 1:9: “the true light that enlightens *every Man* was coming into the world” (VII 22, 4) is wholly meaningful and understandable. For this Light comes to all three levels of cosmic reality and ultimately performs its work of enlightenment from the Πνεῦμα at the boundary, via the level of the Great Archon and his Son and via the level of the Lower Archon and his Son, to the regions where we live, mortal human beings with pneumatic principles.

4.7.2. The Great Cosmic Archon as “Head of the Cosmos”

But the Great Archon is also characterized here as “Head of the cosmos.”⁴ This expression is not very common in pagan literature, but it occurs regularly in Jewish and early Christian literature. Perhaps Basilides was thinking here of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which he often quotes. It is said there that God revealed the mystery of his will “according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”⁵ Basilides probably related this to the “cosmic

³ For this, cf. *Haer.* V 6-8 (on the doctrine of the Naassenes). This could be indicated in Basilides by *Haer.* VII 25, 2: ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία [...] ἐβασίλευσεν γὰρ ὁ μέγας ἄρχων. Cf. with this VI 35, 4 (on the doctrine of the Valentinians): ὥσπερ οἱ κατὰ τὸν Ἀδὰμ κτισθέντες ἀπὸ μόνου ἐκτίσθησαν τοῦ ὑψίστου τουτέστι τοῦ δημιουργοῦ.

⁴ *Haer.* VII 23, 3: ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ κόσμου. Likewise in X 14, 6.

⁵ Eph. 1:9-10: προέθετο [...] εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. See also Eph. 4:15 and Col. 2:10: ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἄρχῆς

Christ,” who is begotten by the Great Archon as his son but who is of much higher quality than he is himself and will direct his work of creation!

4.7.3. The Great Cosmic Archon as “Power”

There is also the remarkable characterization of the Great Archon as “Power” (Δύναμις). We should bear in mind here that Philo of Alexandria had elaborated an extensive doctrine of the Powers of God. And Philo had opened his exposition on the creation of the cosmos with a firm rejection of the view held by people who excessively admired the cosmos and therefore neglected the Powers operative in the cosmos, as Powers of God.⁶ And Philo had also identified the two most important Powers or Δυνάμεις of God as his creative and ruling/legislative Powers (*Cher.* 27-28).

At first sight, the Archon exists by himself, and he is only the Power of himself. But on closer consideration and with increase in insight, it becomes clear (and finally it is even made clear to the Archon himself!) that the Archon is not just a loose cannon but that in hidden fashion he is merely the executor of the divine counsel and as such a Power of God!

We can add that Matthew 26:64 may also play a role. Jesus, before the high priest Caiaphas, who says to him, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God,” answers, “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power [Δύναμις], and coming on the clouds of heaven” (my emphasis). In what follows we will discuss the notion that the Great Archon produces a Son whom he seats at his right hand and who will later prove to be the “Anointed,” that is, with holy Πνεῦμα. The fact that the Gospel of Matthew here talks about a heavenly “Power” (Δύναμις) allowed Basilides to present the special Son of the Great Archon, who receives the place of honor in the heavenly regions and thus the function of the priest Melchizedek, as the Son of man, who is mentioned in Matthew 26:64 and in many other places.

4.7.4. The Great Cosmic Archon Cannot Be “Uttered” (23, 3)

As regards the Great Archon, there is also an intriguing critical text. As soon as his birth is mentioned, he is described as “the “Head of the cosmos, a beauty and greatness and Power which cannot be loosened.”⁷ The intention of this description is not very clear. And the difficulty is increased in that the immediately following sentence starts with “for”: “For he is, says he, more ineffable than the ineffable ones, mightier than the mighty, and wiser than all that is wise and better than all the fair ones you can describe.”⁸ In his critical apparatus, M. Marcovich has pointed out that the Extract of book X says the following about the Great Archon: “the Head of the cosmos, a beauty and greatness which cannot be

καὶ ἔξουσίας. On these texts, cf. the thesis of G. H. van Kooten, *The Pauline Debate on the Cosmos: Greco-Roman Cosmology and Jewish Eschatology in Paul and in the Pseudo-Pauline Letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁶ Philo *Opif.* 7-9. For the theme of the Powers of God in Philo, cf. A. P. Bos, “Philo of Alexandria: A Platonist in the Image and Likeness of Aristotle,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 10 (1998): 66-86, and C. Termini, *Le Potenze di Dio: Studi su δύναμις in Filone di Alessandria* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Agostiniane, 2000).

⁷ *Haer.* VII 23, 3: ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ κόσμου, κάλλος τι καὶ μέγεθος καὶ δύναμις λυθῆναι μὴ δυναμένη.

⁸ *Haer.* VII 23, 3: ἀρρητῶν γάρ, φησίν, ἐστὶν ἀρρητότερος καὶ δυνατῶν δυνατώτερος καὶ σοφῶν σοφώτερος καὶ ὁ τι ἂν εἴπῃς τῶν καλῶν παντὸς κρείττων.

spoken.”⁹ And in VII 23, 3, following J. Bernays, he therefore corrects “which cannot be loosened” to “which cannot be uttered.”¹⁰ This correction by Marcovich certainly merits serious consideration, if the transmitted text cannot be defended.

Or can it? If “which cannot be loosened” is a corruption, it is a very striking one. The term immediately calls to mind the famous text in Plato’s *Timaeus* on whether the visible world, which has come into being, will also pass away. The Demiurge assures the visible celestial gods there:

Although you, having come into being, are not immortal nor indissoluble altogether, nevertheless you shall not be dissolved nor taste death, finding my will a bond yet stronger and more sovereign than those wherewith you were bound together when you came to be.¹¹

The author of the *Elenchos* himself quotes this passage in his description of the doctrine of Plato in Book I¹² and alludes to this passage in the exposition of his own, orthodox philosophy.¹³ It is quite conceivable that Basilides here directly characterizes the Great Archon as eternal and imperishable. This also agrees with 27, 1-4, where the end of World History is not described as an Armageddon or cosmic destruction¹⁴ but as the descent of a great Ignorance upon the cosmos, which itself will continue to exist but will no longer desire matters that go beyond its nature.

This conception is again properly Aristotelian, in that Aristotle denied a beginning and end of the cosmos against Plato but argued instead that the cosmos eternally depends for its existence on the unchanging Origin.

4.7.5. The Great Cosmic Archon in His Limitations

It is next said of the Archon that he raised himself up and ascended and was borne right up on high as far as the Firmament and then came to a standstill. I believe that this “coming to a standstill” is an important part of the conception and is wrongly deleted by Wendland and Marcovich.¹⁵ For this is precisely the essential difference between the Great Archon and the Sonship, which did not stand still but ended up at the non-being God (22, 8). The fact that the Archon came to a halt typifies him as a being that belongs to natural cosmic reality and has no knowledge of hypercosmic reality. His coming to be is the result of divine will, but he himself has no inkling of this. We should stress, too,

⁹ *Haer.* X 14, 6: ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ κόσμου, κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει ἀνεκκαλήτω.

¹⁰ *Haer.* VII 23, 3: <λα>ληθῆναι μὴ δυναμένη. Earlier likewise, [Hippolytus], *Philosophumena sive Haeresium omnium confutatio opus Origeni adscriptum*, ed. and trans. P. Cruice (Paris: In typographeo Imperiali, 1860), 353, and *Hippolytus Werke*, ed. P. Wendland, vol. 3 of *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, vol. 26 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916; repr. Berlin: Akademische Verlag Hinrichs, 1977).

¹¹ Plato *Tim.* 41b2-6, esp. b3: οὐτι μὲν δὴ λυθήσεσθε (*Plato’s Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*, trans. F. M. Cornford [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1937], 140).

¹² *Haer.* I 19, 8-9: ἅλυστα ἐμοῦ γε θέλοντος, ὡς ἂν εἰ λυθῆναι αὐτὰ θέλει, ῥαδίως λυθησόμενα.

¹³ *Haer.* X 33, 8: ὁ δὲ κόσμος ἐξ οὐδενός· διὸ οὐ θεός· οὗτος <γὰρ> ἐπιδέχεται καὶ λύσιν, ὅτε βούλεται ὁ κτίσας. See also X 32, 2-3.

¹⁴ As in 2 Pet. 3:10; 3:12.

¹⁵ The word ἠνέχθη would then be corrected to ἐνεχθείς.

that the author of the *Elenchos* says that the Archon deemed the Firmament to be the limit (τέλος) of his ascent and elevation.¹⁶ He does not participate in the holy Πνεῦμα of the Firmament. The holy Πνεῦμα itself is the boundary between cosmic and hypercosmic reality. So as a living being, the Archon is characterized as ψυχικός and as cosmic. He has no awareness of a higher goal to be achieved (just as man often has no awareness that there is any other way of achieving immortality than by reproduction or by complete dedication to a life of sensual pleasure). The Archon belongs to the souls that, according to 27, 2, have a nature to remain in the cosmic region (in contrast to his Son).

It is striking that this passage (23, 3-4) talks about the Archon in a very positive sense. There is no question here of a “demonizing” of the Demiurge, as in some later Gnostic texts.¹⁷ As far as this goes, the Great Archon resembles the Elohim in the system of Justin the Gnostic, who in the summary in book X of the *Elenchos* is next to Basilides. The only negative aspect of the Archon is that he suffers from ignorance about the hidden Origin of all things. The evil inhering in his lack of knowledge is an ontological deficiency, a *privatio cognitionis*. In this way, the story in Genesis 3 about the fall resulting from the gaining of knowledge (of good and evil) has been typically changed into a conception regarding an ontological lack of γνῶσις!

The Archon's life is presented as a life brimming over with activity and productivity, a productivity directed at the generation of individualized entities. The Great Archon's level of knowledge clearly comprises perception, rationality, and skill (τέχνη). The only major deficiency of the Great Archon, so that he cannot compare with the Sonship that has stayed behind in the seed-mass, is his ignorance of the Transcendent (23, 4).

Perhaps we should also bear in mind that the Great Archon had “conceived the idea that *there was Nothing* at all beyond the Firmament.” This means very specifically here that the Great Archon has no awareness of the “non-being God.” Whereas according to 20, 2ff., Basilides had done his best to make it clear that the “non-Existent” is the origin of all things, 23, 4, and 25, 3, show him playing with the idea that the Great Archon, because he believes there is nothing higher than the cosmos, is ignorant of the non-being God, whose instrument he is. So the defect of the Great Archon is that he thinks there is nothing higher than himself, whereas “Nothing” was in fact higher! The Great Archon is like “the “fool” in the book of Psalms, who says in his heart “there is no (higher) God.” This probably led to the tradition in which the highest Archon was given the name “Saklas” (“fool”).¹⁸

The Great Archon symbolizes all people who conceive of God/the gods as cosmic. We should take into account here that the author of the *Elenchos* himself, like Philo of Alexandria (*Decal.* 52-65), presented all Greek theology as so dazzled by the parts of the cosmos that it deified these parts and failed to achieve knowledge of the Creator of the cosmos.

¹⁶ For τέλος, see also VII 25, 3. The term ὕψωμα here is used by Paul in 2 Cor. 10:5 in the sense of a “barrier raised against” the Knowledge of God. Basilides doubtless regarded the worship of the cosmic powers as a barrier that obscured the true γνῶσις.

¹⁷ Cf. M. A. Williams, “The Demonizing of the Demiurge: The Innovation of Gnostic Myth,” in *Innovation in Religious Traditions: Essays in the Interpretation of Religious Change*, ed. M. A. Williams, Collett Cox, and Martin Jaffee (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 73-105.

¹⁸ Cf. B. A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007).

The Great Archon corresponds systematically to the “dreaming Kronos,” of whom Plutarch, in his myth at the end of *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon*, says that demons close to him govern the cosmos on the basis of the dream oracles that Kronos supplies. Sleep is said here to be the bond with which the Titan Kronos has been shackled by the transcendent God Zeus. Elsewhere I have argued that this myth probably linked up with the motif of the “dreaming Kronos” in Aristotle’s lost dialogue *Eudemus*.¹⁹

4.7.6. The Great Cosmic Archon: Efficient but Not Goal Oriented (23, 5)

“Because he deemed himself Lord [κύριος] and Master [δεσπότης] and a ‘wise [σοφός] architect,’ he [the Great Archon] set about the creation in detail of the ordered world.”²⁰ The text here uses for “Lord” the Greek word “κύριος,” which is regularly used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for Yahweh/Adonai.

Basilides repeatedly related passages from the Old and New Testament containing the term “κύριος” to the Great cosmic Archon. For Basilides, the Great Archon is the god who is the creator-god in the Old Testament (and the Lower Archon is identified with the lawgiver-god, who spoke with Moses). Basilides clearly meant here that the Great Archon wrongly held this opinion that there was no God higher than he himself. The truth (hidden to the Great Archon) was that not he but the transcendent God was Lord and Master. The God who is called in Paul “the only wise God” (Rom. 16:27) is in Basilides emphatically not the Maker-God. Basilides here draws the distinction that Philo of Alexandria had made in his explanation of Genesis 1 – that is, the distinction between a King who orders the foundation of a city and a craftsman-architect who brings about its realization. Philo himself introduced this separation of a principal and an executor to circumvent philosophical criticism of the biblical conception in the vein of Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s demiurgic theology. In this way he introduces a distinction between the highest aspect of God and a lower aspect, analogous to Aristotle’s separation between *θεωρία* and *πραξις* or between intellect and soul.

Of course, the image introduced by Philo could not possibly mean that the Architect is active without being aware of the intentions of the divine King and principal. Basilides seems to adopt the motif of the Principal and the Architect but also to correct it in such a way that the Architect does carry out somebody else’s commission *but thinks that it is his own exalted concept!*

More emphatically than Philo, Basilides stressed the immanence of the Λόγος in matter by presenting the process of creation as a process of *development*, in which the Powers of God, too, can only be recognized in the long term as Powers of God.

4.7.7. The Great Cosmic Archon as Instrument in the Counsel of the Highest God

To illustrate this, I refer to the way Aristotle in *De generatione animalium* compared the process of formation in nature with the process of formation in craft. Aristotle had emphasized that a carpenter makes a table out of his material by imposing the *εἰδός* of this

¹⁹ Cf. Bos, *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology*.

²⁰ *Haer.* VII 23, 5. An essential remark here is that the Great Archon creates “the individual things” (τὴν καθ’ ἕκαστα κτίσιν τοῦ κόσμου), as distinct from the νοήματα of the highest God.

table contained in his imagination (in his “soul”) on the material by means of his hands and his instruments. It is just so in the natural process of (re)production. Via his semen, the male specimen passes on to the menstrual fluid of the female specimen the soul as formal principle in the sense of movements/powers, which then lead the instrumental body (which contains the Πνεῦμα) to produce and govern the visible body, but which at the same time develop the potentialities for higher degrees of life present in the instrumental body.²¹ At a crucial point, Aristotle here uses the model of the winding mechanism: as soon as the catch of the blocking system has been pulled, the mechanism continues automatically and executes successive tasks in a preprogrammed process. Remarkably, Aristotle is therefore implying in effect that the male specimen passes on a movement to the instrumental body, which is then continued by the instrumental body as if the instruments of the carpenter, even after the carpenter has withdrawn his hands from them, continue with their production – and not just of something like a table, but of what will become a child, and later an adolescent, and in the long run even a new carpenter!²²

The “great Architect” is in a certain sense an instrument of the great Principal, an instrument that (initially) believes it is itself designer and carpenter! In analogous fashion, Aristotle had presented ether as the efficient tool or instrument by which the transcendent God orders and preserves all cosmic reality.²³

This is a most intriguing motif, which we repeatedly find in Gnostic texts. It is the motif of a divine being that believes itself autonomous and autarkic but is in fact not. It is the motif of difference in perspective, which we already encountered in the distinction between cosmic reality and transcendent reality and which is fundamental to Aristotle, Philo, Basilides, and the author of the *Elenchos*. This difference in perspective is directly connected with the distinction between spurious knowledge and real knowledge (γνώσις) but also with the distinction between (spurious) freedom and real freedom. Gnostics teach their followers that the heavenly powers, which for many in their time were inexorable powers and the bestowers of Fate or the Εἰμαρμένη, are in fact themselves unfree and bound to the *premeditated counsel* of the transcendent God.²⁴ But in passing this also shows that the generation of the concrete, physical cosmos was part of God’s counsel. In that case the bondage of spiritual beings to material reality is a part of God’s counsel too!

The question of why this is necessary can only be answered by hypothesizing that the divine counsel entails that spiritual beings *come to be* of the same spiritual essence as the divine Origin itself. This coming-to-be of spiritual beings is only possible by means of seed that is sown. And all life that comes to be must be led by a soul-principle. According to Aristotle, this soul-principle is “not without body.” Plato, too, had already said that a somatic being could only be connected with intellect if a soul was present as

²¹ Arist. *Gener. anim.* I 22, 730b12-19; II 1-5; cf. *Metaph.* Z 7, 1032b1, 1032b5, 1032b23; *Metaph.* Z 9, 1034a24.

²² Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 1, 734b4-17; II 5, 741b7-9. Cf. A. P. Bos, “Development” in *The Study of Aristotle* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2006).

²³ Using the same image of a winding mechanism as in *On the Cosmos* 6, 398b12-16. Strikingly, Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II 11, 1, accuses the Basilideans of making people into “puppets” whose movements are not determined by them but by a higher entity.

²⁴ Cf. *Gospel of Philip* § 16a (*Das Philippus-Evangelium: (Nag Hammadi-Codex II 3)*, ed. H.-M. Schenke [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997]): “The Archons thought that it was by their own power and will that they were doing what they did, but the Holy Spirit in secret was accomplishing through them as it wished.”

intermediary. Both Archons can be understood as manifestations of life that owes its principle to the divine initiative of depositing the World Seed containing the threefold Sonship but that results in a level of life that is primarily aimed at production and control and does not achieve real “spiritual” life owing to the lost connection with the first and second Sonships, which have already ascended to the hypercosmos.

The Great Archon (wrongly) deemed himself “Lord and Master and a ‘wise architect’” (23, 5). The expression “Lord and Master” (κύριος καὶ δεσπότης) is also found in Philo of Alexandria (*Mut.* 19) as names of one of the two principal Powers of God – namely, the royal Power. In his text edition, M. Marcovich notes that the words “wise architect” occur in Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians. It is also worth mentioning that a text closely related to Aristotle’s exposition in *Metaphysics* A 2 on the semantic development of the word “σοφία” from “skill” to “(theoretical) wisdom” (in the sense of knowledge of the hypercosmic) contains the expression σοφὸς ἤραρε τέκτων, “the skilled craftsman constructed,” derived from Homer. But the entire description of the Great Archon makes it clear that, inasmuch as he is “wise,” his wisdom is described as a “wisdom of this world” and as a practical skill. Significantly, the author of the *Elenchos* remarks in 23, 4, just prior to our passage, that the third Sonship, which had stayed behind in the seed-mass, “was wiser than he.” This doubtless has to do with what is said in 1 Corinthians 2:14 about the “ψυχικός,” who has no antenna for the things of the Πνεῦμα.

The Great Archon is the one who creates the individual things in the ethereal sphere (23, 5; 23, 7). This should probably be taken to mean that he is the God who creates the stars and planets, just as the Demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus* creates the visible gods. This is the crucial difference compared with the highest God who produced the World Seed, that is, the genus from which all vital principles emerged as from a seed-mixture. It is the same distinction drawn by Philo of Alexandria (*Opif.* 17-20), when he presents the King as the principal of the project as a whole and the Architect as the one who works out the details and particulars. It is the same distinction that Justin Martyr apparently knows from philosophy, when he blames some philosophers for claiming “that God cares about the totality and the genera and the species but not about me and you and individual entities.” It is a distinction that runs parallel with the distinction between sense-perception as the gaining of “impressions” of individual entities and the intellect’s activity in grasping the universal, as developed by Aristotle in his epistemology. It is also a distinction that links up closely with a doctrine of limited divine Providence, as frequently attributed in Antiquity to Aristotle. We should bear in mind here that the production of concrete, material entities is a matter that cannot be realized “without body.” As World Archon, the Archon himself is also part of the cosmos and so of somatic reality. As World Soul, he cannot but be burdened with a natural body. Above we already suggested that the sphere of the Great Archon is the sphere of the subtle (fine-material) part of the cosmos.

4.7.8. The Aristotelian Way of Explaining the Ἄγνοια of the Great Archon

But we need to ask why the Great Archon comes to be as a natural, cosmic being without perfect γνῶσις. In a general sense, this question was already raised in chapter 4.3.1.²⁵ in the

²⁵ See *Kronos Philosophical Journal* 13 (2024): 179.

commentary on 21, 2, and later in chapter 4.6.2.²⁶ The question can also be formulated as: Why did the World Seed deposited by the highest God contain more than just the threefold Sonship, which was “of the same essence” as the transcendent God? And we could also put it in this form: Why were there gradations in the Sonship requiring a complex cosmic process of development to bring the second and third Sonships to their destination?

The answer to the question of why the Great Archon suffered from structural ignorance of hypercosmic reality must be: *because the Sonship of fine-material reality had already achieved its completion and had separated from its cosmic principle of life and the Πνεῦμα had withdrawn from the heavenly regions to the Boundary of the cosmos and the hypercosmos!* The development of the upper cosmic sphere had been completed. Owing to the first Sonship’s entrance into the hypercosmic sphere, fine-material reality has already realized its divine potential. Thus, were it not that this sphere gives birth to beings who contain a part of the third Sonship, the eschatological situation had already arrived for this sphere! Because the Sonship for Basilides is the vehicle of the principle for the γνῶσις (Knowledge) of the highest God, the ascent of the first Sonship means that the corresponding cosmic sphere is deprived of the possibility of γνῶσις. What remains is merely an εἶδωλον of the vital principle on this level (cf. chap. 4.7.9. below). This εἶδωλον should be classified with “the souls that possess a nature enabling them to remain in this (cosmic) region” (27, 2, and 27, 6). The same applies to the less subtle sphere and the Lower Archon: because the corresponding second Sonship has ascended as far as the hypercosmos (with the help of the holy Πνεῦμα), the less fine-material sphere is also deprived of the possibility of γνῶσις. The fact that there is nevertheless “Enlightenment” in these two spheres can only be explained by hypothesizing that the Archons, in their ignorance and urge to produce, both produce a Son from “the underlying,” that is, from the rest of the Formlessness in which the third Sonship had stayed behind. In these highest two spheres, the Sons of the Archons form a kind of “fifth column,” “another race,” “another seed,”²⁷ which is more excellent than their Producers/Makers, because these Sons, like the “pneumatic” living creatures of the human race, do possess the potential for γνῶσις.

In this system, the absence of the first and second Sonships and of the holy Πνεῦμα in the celestial regions provides a complete explanation for the fact that some mortal human beings possess something of higher value than the stars and planets, an idea so vehemently opposed by Plotinus.²⁸

This also gives us an insight into the origin of a core dogma in many Gnostics, which can be seen to follow from an Aristotelian line of thought: his proposition that the highest perfection and divinity must be equated with pure intellectuality and immateriality. A necessary consequence of this doctrine is that the stars and planets, with their fine-material instrumental bodies, cannot possibly be pure intellect. Aristotle himself, therefore, describes them as “ensouled” and engaged in πρᾶξις. Inasmuch as people have

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 222.

²⁷ For this theme, see G. A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

²⁸ Cf. Plot. *Enn.* II 9 [33] 9, 53: “σὺ ἔση βελτίων ἅπαντων οὐ μόνον ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν” – “You shall be better than all, not only men, but [even] gods” (*Plotinus*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, vol. 2 [London: Heinemann, 1966], 261); cf. *Plotinos, Over schouwing en Tegen de gnostici*, intro., ed., and trans. T. G. Sinnige (Bussum: Wereldvenster, 1981), 139.

the potential to raise themselves to knowledge of the highest God and knowledge that God himself possesses,²⁹ they reach a higher level of knowledge than that of the celestial beings engaged in *πρᾶξις*.

The line followed by Basilides's doctrine of *γνώσις* is a consistently Aristotelian line. It explains why mortal human beings can pretend to possess a higher knowledge than the cosmic gods and how the Ἄγνοια of the Great Archon is entirely in keeping with Basilides's fundamental belief in the development of the cosmos from embryonic life to perfect *γνώσις*.

4.7.9. Can Basilides Have Characterized the Great Archon as “Ἐἶδωλον”?

In the foregoing we argued that the characterization of the first Sonship as “subtle” should be taken to mean that the highest, divine, and in itself immaterial Sonship, by participating in the World Seed, receives a psychological covering, that is, an attachment of subtle quality. This subtle covering of the Sonship does not prevent it from ascending to the hypercosmic God “as fast as thought.”

Next, we said that Basilides presented the Sonship as pure intellect that separates from all material reality. And we suggested that the first Sonship belonged with the Great Archon, just as Man's intellect belongs with Man. After the first Sonship has ascended, the Great Archon is therefore like the Man deprived of intellect, that is, deprived of that which makes him of the same essence as the highest God. After the ascent of the Sonship, which belonged with him and had been his principle of life, the Great Archon is like a soul that stays behind after the highest principle of the complete Man has separated from it.

In this context, we need to bring up the very special doctrine of the psychological *εἶδωλον*, as it was known in the time of Basilides.³⁰ Plutarch's work *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon* ends with a discussion of what happens to the soul after the death of the individual human being. The fundamental idea here is that “the intellect is so much more excellent and divine than the soul as the soul is more excellent and divine than the body” (943A). This leads Plutarch to speak about “dying” as a process in two phases: first the earthly body is cast off on earth; then the soul is cast off on the Moon by the intellect (943B-E). Of the soul that stays behind on the Moon, Plutarch also says that it “preserves as it were certain traces and dreams of life” (944E-F).

To underline this statement, the author cites the famous text from the *Odyssey* that tells of Odysseus's meeting in the underworld with the specter of Heracles: “Then I noticed the mighty Heracles: his specter [*εἶδωλον*], for he himself was among the immortal gods” (*Od.* 11, 601-2). This Homeric text is explained as evidence for the idea that a human being's “self” should not be identified with emotions or with flesh and bodily fluids but with reason and the mind (944F-945A). The soul, however, receives its form from the intellect and in turn gives form to the body by enclosing it on all sides; consequently, it incorporates an imprint of the body's form. That is why, after it has been separated from both, it retains this likeness and imprint for a considerable period and is rightly called “*εἶδωλον*” (“specter”)

²⁹ Arist. *Metaph.* A 2, 983a5-10.

³⁰ Cf. A. P. Bos, “Aristotle on the Etruscan Robbers: A Core Text of ‘Aristotelian Dualism,’” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (2003): 290-93.

(945A). In due course, these specters “dissolve” and are united with the substance of the Moon. But this process takes longer according to whether people lived their earthly lives less philosophically and were more driven by passions. These souls experience their memories of their life on earth as in a kind of dream, as did Endymion’s soul (945B).

The same passage from the *Odyssey* plays a role in part of the work *De Homero*, attributed to Plutarch. From 2, 122, onward, the author wants to show that Homer contains not only various theological views from Greek philosophy but also the main psychological theories – to start with, the doctrine of the soul’s immortality as supported by Pythagoras and Plato. One of the examples given by the author is that, in the description of Odysseus’s visit to the underworld, Homer describes how the souls of the dead “live on and, when they drink blood, can speak” (Ps.-Plut. *Hom.* 2, 122). “Homer knew,” he continues, “that blood is the nourishment and food for Πνεῦμα and that Πνεῦμα is the soul itself or the soul’s vehicle.” Homer also states clearly that man is nothing but his soul. As his first example, Pseudo-Plutarch mentions the passage in *Odyssey* 11, 90-91, on Teiresias, and then in lines 11, 601-2, on Heracles. He explains this in the sense that Heracles’s “self” should be identified with “the “purest part of the soul.” But Odysseus has a perception of Heracles’s εἶδωλον (2, 123). In view of what 2, 122, says about Πνεῦμα as being identical with the soul or with the soul’s vehicle, we are justified in concluding that the author presents Heracles’s εἶδωλον as the fine-material vehicle of Heracles’s soul.³¹

We find the same motif in Plotinus, *Enneads* I 1 [53] 12, 31-33. He mentions that the Poet distinguishes the Self and the εἶδωλον of Heracles and situates the εἶδωλον in Hades but Heracles’s Self in the world of the blessed gods.³² In Porphyry we find the same theme of the εἶδωλον as consisting of the pneumatic soul-body.

Why have we analyzed this motif so extensively? The term εἶδωλον does not even occur in Basilides in the *Elenchos*’s account. Yet the theme could be relevant. Plotinus also uses the term εἶδωλον to characterize the Demiurge. In his refutation of the Gnostics, he says that according to these opponents the descended Sophia did not decline but only illumined the darkness, and so an εἶδωλον from it came into existence from matter (*Enneads* II 9 [33] 10, 19-26). “And then they form an εἶδωλον of the εἶδωλον, [...] and produce what they call the Maker” (10, 26-31).

No modern commentator has satisfactorily explained this passage. However, against the background of what we have read in the *Elenchos* about Basilides’s Great Archon, we could hypothesize that Basilides presented the Great Archon as an εἶδωλον, as a “spectre” of the true Man.³³

It is significant in this connection that Plotinus draws a distinction between these εἶδωλα and “genuine souls” (12, 5).

³¹ Cf. J. Pépin, “Héraclès et son reflet dans le Néoplatonisme,” in *Le Néoplatonisme*, ed. P. M. Schuhl and P. Hadot (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), 167-92.

³² Cf. *Enn.* IV 3 [27] 27, 7-8; 29, 3; VI 4 [22] 16, 40-44.

³³ In *Anim.* II 1, 413a8-10, Aristotle had asked whether the soul is the entelechy of the (soul-)body in the way that a sailor is the entelechy of a ship. He thus raised the question whether the soul is such that it can leave behind the soul-body after bringing it to its destination. Basilides’s Great Archon could be compared to the ship that has been left behind by its helmsman.

So from the combination of the information in the *Elenchos* and that in Clement of Alexandria and Plotinus we can draw conclusions that bring out more clearly the consistency and systematic unity of Basilides's conception.

As his starting-point, Basilides chose the non-being God who deposits a non-being World Seed containing the threefold Sonship of the same essence as the highest God. This threefold Sonship forms the immaterial life-principles for three levels of living creatures characterized psychically as "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification."

We suggested that the three material labels "subtle," "less subtle," and "in need of purification" stand for the psychical coverings in which the threefold Sonship has been clothed as a result of "being sown" in the Darkness.

But we should bear in mind that these coverings have a psychical nature because they are vitalized by the spiritual life-principles. Underlying this is the Aristotelian theory that the differences in quality of life between the various kinds of souls are determined by the "mixture" of their Πνεῦμα with other "natural bodies,"³⁴ which gives rise to the "natural instrumental bodies" of a variegated series of souls. We can perhaps infer this direction of Basilides's thought from Plotinus's remark about the Gnostic introduction of "a different kind of soul"³⁵ [compared with the immortal soul which descended from the spiritual world], which they compose from the elements."³⁶ What Clement called the "attachments to the rational soul" should also be interpreted as psychical, fine-material coverings and so as components of the instrumental body of the vital principles.

We should therefore distinguish from these the coarse materiality of the visible bodies of mortal beings. This materiality is "accidental" in an even more secondary sense, and for Basilides it is totally alien to the spiritual reality of the highest God and the World Seed. This is a fundamental point of disagreement with Plotinus, who emphatically related matter to the highest Origin, albeit as the last level of emanation and as "*privatio boni*," but not as an independent "*malum*."

For Basilides, with his interest in texts from the Old and New Testaments, this εἰδωλον doctrine has a special side effect in that it can wholly link up with the biblical admonitions against all idolatry (εἰδωλολατρία – cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). But for him this admonition also involves a warning against the cult of the God of Moses and of the Jewish people!

³⁴ Arist. *Gener. anim.* II 3, 736b38ff.

³⁵ This could suggest the expression "the other seed" – Gen. 4:25 – which was popular among some Gnostics!

³⁶ *Enneads* II 9 [33] 5, 17.

“UBI ESSET ILLA, IBI ESSE ET ME”: THE MEANING OF A REVOLUTION

Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't.
[Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 5.1]

Although it may have been distorted or simply apocryphal, the story was told that upon being asked, back in the sixties, about the meaning of the French Revolution, the Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai, replied with unfeigned humility, “It is too early to tell.” Revolutions may *change* the world, Zhou intimated in Marx’s protean wake, but to *interpret* a revolution, to recognize it or know it for what it is, to understand it, is another matter. Earlier, Sigmund Freud had been moved to offer his own, perforce untimely, views on another revolution, this time, the Copernican revolution.¹ Not unlike Zhou, Freud stretched the arrow of time, parsing otherwise the meaning of the event. Freud named names – Copernicus, Darwin, and himself – and identified a repetition (perhaps a compulsion), specifically three humbling “blows,” that pushed humanity from its place at (and as) the center of the universe; three collisions that threw humanity off its axis. Each of the blows, Freud submitted, belonged to a different dimension or register of meaning: the cosmological, the biological, the psychological.

In his own take on – the by now many – Copernican revolutions, on humanity’s repeatedly losing “the distinction of a central position in the universe,” Rudolf Carnap named the same names and recognized the same registers, though he did add to them the historical (Marx) and the moral (Nietzsche). Expanding as well on a suggestive lexicon (Carnap wrote of idols dethroned, of dignity and grandeur debased), Carnap conceded to Freud “the ideas and actions of men,” but he kept “psychology” for himself – yes, psychology – which, once “robed in majesty as the theory of spiritual events,” was now being “degraded to the status of a part of physics.”²

Whatever the merits of Carnap’s overbidding, he joined Freud in repeating a glaring omission, leaving to Bertrand Russell and to Hans Blumenberg (more recently to Jean

¹ Sigmund Freud, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al., vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1974), 135-44. Sigmund Freud, “The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis (1925 [1924]),” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al., vol. 19 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1986), 213-22.

² Rudolf Carnap “Psychology in Physical Language,” trans. George Schick, in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959), 167-68.

Laplanche and to Quentin Meillassoux) the task of debating the place of philosophy; the task of determining, more specifically, the truth of Kant's reason and the exclusion of his Copernican turn – or else of his “Ptolemaic counter-revolution” – from the “catalogue of misanthropisms” thereby compiled.³ Freud did give some credit to Schopenhauer, but Ernst Cassirer went a different way, siding with Kant's achievement and adding “culture” to the mix, whereas Jacob Taubes, himself quite fond of using the phrase “*kopernikanische Wende*,” insisted, and so more vehemently than Kuhn and Blumenberg, that we continue reflecting upon “theology after the Copernican turn,” not only beforehand.⁴ God too, it turned out, and theology as well would have been, otherwise than dead, rather off-centered, decentered. Unless we must all recognize that we have never been centered.

Since Reinhart Koselleck we have known, of course, that the concept of “revolution” became a political concept of great, perhaps hegemonic, significance, a concept that “entered politics via the prevalent astrology of the time,” not least because of Copernicus.⁵ Although we forget what Zhou knew – namely, that a revolution, Copernican or otherwise, is itself a *belated* event, the meaning of which remains contested, debated, and ultimately deferred⁶ – we have some sense of its vicissitudes. We understand, for instance, that “nothing could be further removed from the original meaning of the word ‘revolution’ than the idea of which all revolutionary actors have been possessed and obsessed, namely, that they are agents in a process which spells the definite end of an old order and brings about the birth of a new world.”⁷ Yet, in this peculiar translation or displacement from science to politics, we may begin to notice that the political remains oddly and persistently absent from the above catalogue (Freud's lexicon of intelligence, command, and surveillance, of absolute rulers, external enemies, and foreign intrusions, his depiction of psychoanalysis as a sort of “mirror for princes,” his assertion, finally, that “the ego is not master in its own house,” could be said to have hinted quite clearly in that direction, of course). Was there a Copernican revolution in the realm of politics, a political Copernican revolution? It remains to be seen whether there is room to ask, after the manner of Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, say, about “the history of science and the history of politics” in their togetherness; reason to wonder whether “the problem of generating and protecting knowledge is a problem of politics” and, conversely, whether “the problem of political order always involves solutions to the problem of knowledge.”⁸ The question suggests less a translation than a *continuation of science by other means*, and this in a specifically political register.⁹ More specifically, it raises the possibility of an unheard of decentering,

³ Hans Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 611-12.

⁴ Jacob Taubes, *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Toward a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Fonrobert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

⁵ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 46.

⁶ I. Bernard Cohen, *Revolution in Science* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁷ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 42.

⁸ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 21, and see Cohen, *Revolution in Science*.

⁹ Bentley Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui, “Interview,” www.e-ir.info/2021/01/31/interview-siba-nzatioula-grovogui/.

the decentering of what has long passed as the political center, as the axis of the political world. Not the succession of sovereigns, nor the shift of regimes well rehearsed since Plato and Aristotle, much less the violent recentering of "Man as the political subject of the state" painstakingly traced by Sylvia Wynter in her own engagement with the Copernican revolution¹⁰ – at stake would rather be a yet to be imagined past, a still unrecognized shift of axis of the political world. Was there, then, a political Copernican revolution? Was the *polis* ever thrown off its axis, as it were, decentered or excentered, subjected to the force of an exorbitant elsewhere? Has political thought been dethroned, robbed of, rather than robed in, "majesty as the theory of political events," as Carnap might have put it? Finally, has such a decentering of politics, were it to have taken place, been claimed or associated with a specific *name*?

It is, in this context, quite remarkable that, but for one, strangely fortuitous, exception, Carl Schmitt never referred to the Copernican revolution. Granted, it is a lone and singular statement – no more, really, than a brief narrative aside, a *Beispiel*, literally, a side-play or play within the play – offered in response to a late question about his concept of the State. "An Italian once told me that it is about a turning point of a Copernican sort [*una svolta di tipo copernicano*]."¹¹ Or perhaps, since this was uttered in an interview conducted by an Italian scholar, it is merely true to Schmittian form and thus convenient, even opportunistic. Schmitt, at any rate, does not claim the revolution, conservative or otherwise, for himself. He is not a contender, nor is his name in the race. Schmitt does not pretend to have initiated a Copernican turn of his own. He merely reports something that was said to him. He was told that this is what he had done. Someone, an Italian who shall remain nameless, thought there had been a political Copernican revolution (earlier, Mario Tronti, another Italian, had been complaining that "every day we are hearing about Copernican revolutions by individuals who have pushed their desk from one corner of the room to the other").¹² But this unknown and anonymous Italian would have named his name, he would have named Carl Schmitt, unwittingly but decisively including him – and the political – in that revolutionary catalogue of tropisms and misanthropisms.

What are we to make of what seems to be the one and only reference, and certainly the only reference I could find, to Schmitt – a thinker otherwise acutely attuned to space and to its transformations, to the earth and to the planetary, to the *Über-planetarische* – engaging with the Copernican revolution? Undeniably brief, if not necessarily opaque, Schmitt's assertion cannot be overestimated in its significance, if only because his own readers have completely ignored it (Schmitt, for instance, never appears in Blumenberg's treatment of "the Copernican world"), just as they have broadly ignored Copernicus (hardly a staple of political thought or of theories of revolution, if you omit, which shouldn't be too hard, Emery Reves, on whom more later). As he finally turns a distracted attention to it, Schmitt himself does little more than to reiterate what he had established decades beforehand – namely, that, over against those who raise the State to the center

¹⁰ Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Toward the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337.

¹¹ Carl Schmitt, "Un giurista davanti a se stesso," in *Carl Schmitt: Un giurista davanti a se stesso: Saggi e interviste a cura di Giorgio Agamben* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1982), 156.

¹² Mario Tronti, *Workers and Capital*, trans. David Broder (London: Verso, 2019), xvii.

of their thought, to the center of politics, his own claim had been that the State rather finds its presupposition (one might again say: its center) elsewhere: in the political. Nor does Schmitt even use the word “revolution” here, although (and perhaps because) he had to be aware of the changes the term “revolution” had undergone since Copernicus’s 1543 *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (as I already mentioned, Schmitt’s student, Reinhart Koselleck, had originally written about these changes in c.1969). Moreover, Schmitt was unlikely to be ignorant of Sigmund Freud’s own take on the Copernican revolution – that triple “blow” inflicted on humanity’s sense of itself at (and as) the center of the universe. Yet, whereas Freud named Copernicus, Darwin, and himself, explicitly identifying the cosmological, the biological, and the psychological, as the three registers of the revolution, Schmitt does no more (if also no less) than quickly evoke the possibility of the political, and more precisely, of a Copernican revolution of the political. Was there, then, a revolution of this sort? Was there a political Copernican revolution? A decentering of politics, of the political? With all due respect to Schmitt’s “own” claim (uttered, once again, in a minor key, as it were *en passant*, hushed and basically ventriloquized, stashed away in a late interview available only in Italian and Spanish), or to Thomas Kuhn and Hans Blumenberg’s celebrated treatments (Kuhn, to be sure, isolated the astronomical, the natural, and the moral and barely used the word political, all too briefly discussing Jean Bodin and Thomas Jefferson;¹³ Blumenberg is equally discreet, really), we might ourselves ask whether anyone has in fact claimed, in Copernican terms, that the center of politics has at some point in time moved off its axis; whether the *polis*, from which we inherit our understanding of the political, of the political as *centered*,¹⁴ whether the city or the state, the ruler or the ruled, entire nations, whether our political concepts and institutions, whether the political “itself” has ever been decentered? What could the meaning of such an event be if it even came to pass, and would it be too early to tell in any case? Or else has the time finally come to pronounce and to speak, to speak politically, to announce and proclaim that the world has come off its axis, that *the time is out of joint*?

“THE TIME IS OUT OF JOINT”

It is difficult to think of a better description of the Copernican revolution – “the time is out of joint” – difficult to think of a better account of the times in which we live as well.¹⁵ In the remainder of this essay, at any rate, I will be proposing that Carl Schmitt’s *Hamlet or Hecuba* wittingly or unwittingly provides us with the rudiments of a reading grid or protocol toward the reckoning of an event such as I have intimated, an event of Copernican proportions, with an inkling of some of its meaning, too. Decentering *Hamlet* and *Hamlet* (without quite recentering the play in *Hamlet*’s mother, Gertrude, or in that “paradigm of mourning motherhood,” *Hecuba*), Schmitt seems to contend with a Copernican

¹³ Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*, trans. Janet Lloyd and Jeff Fort (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Jaques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

turn – a political Copernican turn – registered by Shakespeare himself in his famous play.¹⁶ And since, armed with such grandiose claims, I can no longer hope to emulate the humility of Zhou Enlai, I shall nevertheless try to initiate my own inquiry into the meaning of that Copernican event with more modest questions. First, what did Schmitt know about the Copernican revolution and when did he know it? Did he know, for instance, about William Shakespeare's sense of the Copernican revolution? Did he know about Thomas Digges¹⁷ or about "the Elizabethan world picture"?¹⁸ And what about Wittenberg, Hamlet's *alma mater* as well as "the leading German educational institution of this period, a major center of the Reformation and the first port of entry for the Copernican theory"?¹⁹ Today renamed Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, it is where Luther taught and Philipp Melanchthon, too (Tycho Brahe was a guest, among whose ancestors were Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern). In fact, Melanchthon conducted the first Copernicus reading group there, known as the "Melanchthon Circle." But did Schmitt know that Melanchthon also had a hand in theater, himself directing the popular *Hecuba* of Euripides, among others? Did Shakespeare himself know about Copernicus? Anselm Haverkamp attributes to Walter Benjamin the recognition of a Copernican "overturning" in Shakespeare, a "Copernican reversal" that would have replaced myth with history.²⁰ In his book on *Trauerspiel* and tragedy, Benjamin himself did not mention Copernicus, which is quite unexceptional as few, among Shakespeare's readers, even take the Copernican event into consideration, though Stanley Cavell knew better.²¹ It is in any case difficult for anyone to ignore that, fifty odd years after Copernicus's calculations, as Shakespeare sits down to write *Hamlet* ("a distinctly republican play," according to Andrew Hadfield),²² the revolution was by no means settled, its meaning still undecided. How better to describe this condition than with the phrase "the time is out of joint"? Between the earth and the sun ("doubt that the sun doth move [...]"), in other words, the question of the centre – of planetary successions, yes, but also of motion and of revolutions – was far from resolved. Which is why, among the few scholars in the know (most notably Peter Usher), Natalie Elliot referred to that very time as "a cosmological interregnum."²³ The expression evocatively resonates with the matter at hand (the question of a political Copernican revolution) and, more

¹⁶ Nicole Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, trans. Corinne Pache (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 40; Steve Sohmer, *Shakespeare for the Wiser Sort* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 8-16.

¹⁷ David Levy and Judy Hayden, "An English Renaissance Astronomy Club? Shakespeare, Observation and the Cosmos," in *Literature in the Age of Celestial Discovery: From Copernicus to Flamsteed*, ed. Judy A. Hayden (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

¹⁸ E. M. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959).

¹⁹ Robert Westman, *The Copernican Achievement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 286; the same Robert Westman attends elsewhere to "the Wittenberg interpretation of the Copernican Theory": "The Melanchthon Circle, Rhetoric, and the Wittenberg Interpretation of the Copernican Theory," *Isis* 66, no. 2 (1975): 165-96.

²⁰ Anselm Haverkamp, *Shakespearean Genealogies of Power: A Whispering of Nothing in Hamlet, Richard II, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice and The Winter's Tale* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 18.

²¹ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35-36n3; and see Francis R. Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England: A Study of the English Scientific Writings from 1500 to 1645* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1937); Katherine Walker, *Shakespeare and Science: A Dictionary* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2022).

²² Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 189.

²³ Natalie Elliot, "Shakespeare's Worlds of Science," *The New Atlantis* 54 (Winter 2018): 37.

pointedly no doubt, with the state of the State of Denmark, the innumerable pairings and oscillations the play stages (“To be or not to be [...]”) and offers its interpreters. Between the astrological and the astronomical,²⁴ the supernatural and the political, “cosmological interregnum” cannot but raise theological political concerns, Schmitt’s own assertion notwithstanding that *Hamlet* “is neither religious, nor does it stand (like classical French theater) in a framework determined by the sovereignty of the state.”²⁵ Schmitt will say it again, for good measure, introducing more binaries on the way: “Shakespeare’s play in its comic as well as melancholic aspects was coarse and elementary, barbaric and not yet ‘political’ in the sense of the state-centered politics of the time.”²⁶ And yet again: *Hamlet* “is no longer religious in the medieval sense, but neither is it state-centered or political in the concrete sense that the state and politics acquired on the European continent.”²⁷

Most ostensible, perhaps, and certainly weighed by these other charges is yet another pairing, not the least, nor certainly the last, but textually the very first and, to my mind, the hardest to ignore as it condenses the allegorical and historical registers long activated by the play. I refer to the strange alternative Schmitt, himself singularly sensitive to titles, offers from the outset, which he extracts and foregrounds from the play and elevates onto his own title: *Hamlet or Hecuba*.

Schmitt presents us with an alternative, one that pairs or opposes two “stars” – in French, the word is *astre* (hence astronomy) and perhaps, after Blanchot, we might speak of *désastres* or disasters – two vying centers of the play and of the plot, two disasters indeed – namely, the mother and the son. Unless it is the mother *or* the son? The “taboo of the queen” versus the figure of the avenging prince? Hamlet or Hecuba?

Whatever the iterative nature of that pairing might be, its meaning can hardly be said to be transparent. Adding to Shakespeare’s singular title, Schmitt undoubtedly puts (or adds) the queen, the mother, at the center of his – and our – interests. But what’s Hecuba to him or he to her that she should claim such title? That she should rise to his title? In the list of Schmitt’s manifest engagements with what he elsewhere calls, “political personalizations” (“entire nations can also appear as Hamlet”),²⁸ Hecuba might be said quite literally to *intrude* upon our consciousness, just as she does on the course of Denmark’s kingdom as well, of course, on Hamlet himself and on countless audiences and readers after him all the way to Emmanuel Levinas and Nicole Loraux. Under “the burning eyes of heaven,” Hecuba certainly becomes an object of *observation* (“the actor speaks the speech while observed by Hamlet, who is in turn carefully observed by Polonius, all of them observed by an audience,” which is to say, astronomically enough, “at a considerable distance and through several mediating agents”).²⁹ Yet, it is impossible to ignore that

²⁴ Piotr Nowak, *The Ancients and Shakespeare on Time: Some Remarks on the War of Generations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).

²⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*, trans. David Pan and Jennifer R. Rust (New York: Telos Press, 2009), 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹ Ivan Lupać, “The Mobile Queen: Observing *Hecuba* in Renaissance Europe,” *Renaissance Drama* 46, no.1 (2018): 25.

"above all else, Hecuba is a mother."³⁰ A popular and celebrated figure of Renaissance theater, she is "the *mobled* queen," which Jean-François Lyotard glossed "a mobile mother [...] a mother misplaced appearing where she is not expected and not appearing where she is."³¹ Which may be why it seems inevitable that, owing to "the oscillating, mobile nature of the area in which the spectacular relationship takes place,"³² Schmitt's readers must find – or lose – themselves suspended between Hamlet and Hecuba.

With or "without being equal to the powerful theme that is evoked by such a title,"³³ or perhaps "in keeping with the title of his book,"³⁴ Schmitt thus appears to stage his own version of the "cosmological interregnum" initiated by Copernicus. Strikingly enough, unwittingly enough, Schmitt recasts the matter by highlighting the intrusion of history and, more precisely, the distinction between aesthetics and politics by way of two literary figures: the figure of a Greek, grieving (and vengeful) mother and that of a grieving (and vengeful) son. Schmitt stages, in other words, his own version of a displaced or lost center, an intrusion and an oscillation, at the very least, between two political personae or personalizations, an indecisive and undecided political interregnum, between "his majesty the baby" and the mother, the Queen.

Schmitt is no psychoanalyst. He says so himself, and he certainly ought to know (or, as the case may be, not to know). Unlike Freud, who, Schmitt says, sees in "every neurotic [...] either an Oedipus or a Hamlet, depending on whether his neurosis is fixated on the father or the mother," Schmitt's reading turns on a different axis.³⁵ Yet Schmitt is no Janet Adelman either, who herself nevertheless delays, in her *Suffocating Mothers*, the mere mention of Hecuba ("the model of the beneficent mother Hamlet hopes to find – or to make – in Gertrude"),³⁶ that mother and queen whom Schmitt raised, to all appearances, high in the scale of our distracted attentions. Adelman puts Hecuba on a different orbit, discussing her briefly in a chapter other than the one she dedicates to Hamlet's mother, to Hamlet's "confrontation with the maternal body."³⁷ Adelman, for her part, foregrounds the domestic over the political, yet she does begin her argument with the striking assertion of a maternal turn or return, a change of axis perhaps, stating that, "in *Hamlet*, the figure of the mother returns to Shakespeare's dramatic world."³⁸ Accordingly, Adelman repeatedly speaks of power, of "maternal power" and more specifically of the mother's "annihilating power" (about which, I explained elsewhere, Thomas Hobbes, too, had much to say).³⁹ Not unlike Schmitt, if also far from him, Adelman sees in Gertrude, in the mother, the true

³⁰ Karen Bassi, "Hecuba – The Dead Child, or Queer for a Day," in *Queer Euripides: Re-Readings in Greek Tragedy*, ed. Sarah Olsen and Mario Telò (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 167.

³¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 388.

³² *Ibid.*, 389.

³³ Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁶ Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Gil Anidjar, *On the Sovereignty of Mothers: The Political as Maternal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024).

gravitational and energetic, if also unknown, center of the play. Hamlet, one might have to recognize, is thereby decentered. Indeed, for Adelman, Hamlet's own soliloquy testifies to "his attempt to locate a point of origin for the staleness of the world and his own pull toward death, and he discovers this point of origin in his mother's body."⁴⁰ Secure in her identification of that singular coordinate, Adelman nonetheless underscores the unknown, the shadow of the object or of the unconscious. Adelman writes rightly that we know very little about Gertrude and, more generally, that, when it comes to the Queen and mother, empirical observation may not suffice – the telescope to the maternal not having been invented yet, and "the Gertrude we see is not quite the Gertrude [the characters] see."⁴¹ Which is why Gertrude is rather "the ground for fantasies,"⁴² ground or figure, and a layered figure at that, or perhaps an allegory, who together with Nature or Fortune, with the witches and "the dark female powers of the night," stands in opposition to that favored symbol, the Sun-god (the son-god).⁴³ In Adelman's own, and literal, version of an inter-regnum, Gertrude herself orbits otherwise. She seems suspended, indecisive and undecided, between two kings, between the living and the dead, just as she is precariously balancing between her husband and her son, in a "crisis of differentiation." Ultimately, for Adelman, there is, in the play, "in the deep fantasy of the play," "an astonishing transfer of agency from male to female," whereby "the killing attaches itself irrevocably to Gertrude [...] she becomes the active murderer."⁴⁴ There is only one conclusion, then, and it is "the centrality of Gertrude."⁴⁵

Compared to Adelman, Schmitt appears indecisive and undecided. Perhaps melancholic. He does not quite manage to find his center, to choose between Hamlet and Hecuba, between the mother and the prince. His title aside, Schmitt writes the book with, and between, two "political personalizations," with "the taboo of a queen and the figure of the avenger,"⁴⁶ each corresponding to two "genuine intrusions."⁴⁷

Exit the Ghost. Schmitt opens, quite spectacularly, with the question of the mother, the taboo – a clear site of maternal danger, according to Freud – of the mother's guilt. Yet Schmitt, that famed decisionist, insists on indecision, on the impossibility of a consensual, a political, decision. Thus, although "what Hamlet does in the drama is entirely different, depending on whether guilt or innocence is attributed to the mother. Yet, in three hundred years one has not been able to reach a consensus on the guilt or innocence of the mother. And there will be no consensus, because there prevails in this matter an admittedly odd, but obviously deliberate and intentional obscurity."⁴⁸ Either a Kantian interiority or an exorbitant mother. Clearly, only a god can save us now, or at least an outside intervention, an intrusion from the outside – exorbitant and excentric – which could, on principle (should

⁴⁰ Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁶ Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

there remain one), resolve the matter and bring about a decision. The play itself, at any rate, remains suspended, undecided. In the ether.

Yet, the more important oscillation that Schmitt presents is perhaps elsewhere still. Schmitt himself locates it rather in "the source of the tragic, *die Quelle der Tragik*," which is not two, but one. Between the historical and the aesthetic, between the tragedy and the State, there would be a decision made with regard to *meaning*. Schmitt at once maintains and resolves the duality, in other words, as well as the sovereign centrality, of history. Meaning in history. Between Mary, Queen of Scots, and James I (of biblical fame), Schmitt does not quite put the Queen at the center. And though he insists on calling attention to her, to the mother and to the queen – Gertrude, Hecuba – Schmitt insists that "the mother is carefully kept out of the revenge assignment – that is to say, out of the dramatic core of the play [*aus dem dramatischen Kern des Stückes*]."⁴⁹ Hamlet, to put it otherwise, "does not weep for Hecuba."⁵⁰ Yet, there is something *between* them, something rather than nothing between Hamlet and Hecuba, the possibility of a confusion, of an oscillation, perhaps even of an intrusion. Blissfully oblivious of the fact that, "in the early modern period, Hecuba was the established icon of Greek tragedy," a veritable "template for the exceptionally popular genre of revenge drama," particularly of maternal revenge drama, and of violence against tyranny,⁵¹ does Schmitt not protest too much? It is, he says, "inconceivable [*undenkbar*] that Shakespeare intended no more than *to make his Hamlet into a Hecuba* [*als seinen Hamlet zur Hekuba zu machen*] that we are meant to weep *for Hamlet as for Hecuba* [*um Hamlet wie um Hekuba*] if we wished to divorce the reality of our present existence from the play on the stage."⁵² Is the intrusion one or two? Is the play history or history the play? Could Hamlet identify with his mother? Tanya Pollard, for one, writes of "the play's insistent interest in Hamlet's potential maternity [which] highlights the player's identification of Hecuba with milk and teeming loins." Ivan Lupić, for his part, points out that "the figure of Hecuba [is] fundamentally opaque – a figure to be observed without being fully comprehended."⁵³ Could Hamlet be (or not be) a mother, then, if one admittedly "unpregnant" of cause? Is not Claudius himself a mother, after all? And does not Hamlet, like King Solomon, show his ability to know a mother, to recognize a living or dead mother (as opposed to a living or dead father), a good, bad, or good enough mother? In Ophelia as well? As Schmitt reiterates the "*Unvereinbarkeit*," the irreconcilability between the play and the court, between the seriousness of history and the play of drama, between literature and history, he certainly orbits, not unlike *Hamlet*, quite a few times around the mother, the Queen mother. Besides, Schmitt never abandons the goal of finding a center, "an ineluctable reality that no human mind has conceived – a reality externally given, imposed and unavoidable. This unalterable reality is the mute rock [*der stumme Felsen*] upon which the play founders, sending the foam of genuine tragedy rushing to the surface."⁵⁴ Upon the rock of the real, the reality of another star or planet – unless it is

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁵¹ Tanya Pollard, "What's Hecuba to Shakespeare?" *Renaissance Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 1068.

⁵² Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 43.

⁵³ Lupić, "The Mobile Queen," 54.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 45.

upon Niobe, “like Niobe, all tears,” that weeping rock of a mother, which was of so much interest to Walter Benjamin – Schmitt may well be finding, and losing, his footing.⁵⁵ After all, Hecuba is nothing to him, all (f)or nothing. “We can weep for Hecuba. One can weep for many things. Many things are sad and melancholy.” Tragedy too originates elsewhere. “Tragedy originates only from a given circumstance that exists for all concerned – an incontrovertible reality for the author, the actors, and the audience.”⁵⁶

There they – an audience or a nation, say – will find their *Vereinbarkeit*. There is “the core of tragic action, *Der Kern des tragischen Geschehens*.” This is perhaps why Schmitt goes on to say, “Mary Stuart is still for us something other and more [*immer noch etwas anderes und mehr*] than Hecuba.”⁵⁷ So why, why again, raise her to the title?

THE UNFINISHED COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

As I began to write, in a book now published, about mothers and about maternal sovereignty, and more precisely about “the political as maternal,” I proposed that Schmitt’s title and the oscillation to which it testified offered us yet another clue, if such were necessary, to reconsider the political centrality of mothers. As I revisit the matter here, I find myself wondering anew about the center and am increasingly inclined to meditate further on Cedric Robinson’s notion of the “antipolitical,” a tradition of collective existence and thought, which, Robinson argues, remains “uncentralized.”⁵⁸ Much as Copernicus’s revolution sedimented a mistaken view of pre-Copernican worlds (and perhaps post-Copernican worlds as well), modern revolutions, along with their insistence on “the terms of order” (in Robinson’s felicitous phrase), present us with all too stable an axis, undoubtedly with a center – a ruler or a government, a sovereign and a polity, a people or a nation – around which everything revolves and for which the marginal remainder figures as no more than “externalities” (as the economists have it). For my part, I have proposed to consider the mother, and more precisely mothers, and specifically here, in Schmitt’s vicinity, the Queen’s two bodies (Gertrude, Hecuba) as figures of externality, concrete figures Robinson might say, of the “antipolitical,” if what is meant thereby is a different sense of the political axis, indeed, an uncentered, decentered, or excentered collective that does justice to its very condition of possibility, the condition of collective existence in time. A political Copernican revolution? Or an antipolitical one? Were there time and space, I would want to linger with Sara-Maria Sorentino’s compelling argument that, beyond Copernicus’s sun, beyond Schmitt’s history, and beyond the mother, there might be other figures, other intrusions. Sorentino, for her part, asks whether “all intrusions take the same form and can this question of the relation *between* intrusions extend to the crisis of Schmitt’s critique itself?”⁵⁹ She goes on to suggest that the slave – “slavery as a founding,

⁵⁵ Rebecca Comay, “Nihil Est in Imagine Vivum,” in *Niobes: Antiquity, Modernity, Critical Theory*, ed. Mario Telò and Andrew Benjamin (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2024).

⁵⁶ Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 45.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁸ Cedric Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 189.

⁵⁹ Sara-Maria Sorentino, “The Intrusion of Slavery into the Time of Schmitt and Shakespeare,” *Telos* 194 (2021): 97.

unthought antagonism" – rather than the mother (unless it is the "peasant slave" Hamlet is), or perhaps in addition to the mother, establishes the excentric condition of the political at play in *Hamlet*.⁶⁰ The "slave's position is not the position of the sovereign," but it marks a change of axis, an astronomically inflected change, "the eclipse of religious difference in service of racial difference."⁶¹ With the rise of a different science, race science, race might be "revealed most where it does not make itself manifest," while it "undergirds incipient order and orientation."⁶² For my part, I shall only remark that Hecuba is precisely queen and captive, *mother and slave*, the very oscillation or dialectic I have argued constitutes the maternal contract and maternal sovereignty.⁶³

But has the political ever moved from its center? Can it? Can a Copernican politics be imagined, one in which the *polis* (the people, the nation, the leader, the government) is not at the center of exclusive concerns, relegating all others, other mothers, upon which it may well depend, to the distant orbit of externalities? Is it too early to tell? Arguing in 1945 against the "nation-centric conception of world affairs," Emery Reves seems to have left very little by way of legacy (if he is remembered at all, it is as a "world federalist" or as Churchill's literary agent). "We are living in a geocentric world of nation-states," Reves wrote. "No matter in which country we live, the center of our political universe is our own nation. In our outlook, the immovable point around which all the other nations, all the problems and events outside our nation, the rest of the world, supposedly rotate, is – our nation."⁶⁴ There are other political centers, so I have begun to argue, yet it is difficult to fault Reves for his persistent sense that "our political and social conceptions are Ptolemaic," while "the world in which we live is Copernican."⁶⁵ The time is out of joint.

Overdue by now is, in any case, an account of my own title. But before I close in on this final task, I shall mention that, as he argues that the Copernican revolution remains "unfinished," otherwise incomplete – in philosophy and, more importantly, in psychoanalysis – Jean Laplanche makes a further intriguing claim. What he says there is that the phrase "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden" (translated, not unproblematically as "where the Id was, there Ego shall be"), which has to be one of Freud's most famous "summaries" of his own Copernican revolution – that phrase, Laplanche says, is "at root Ptolemaic."⁶⁶ I confess that this puzzling claim leaves me unconvinced, although I cannot give it the attention it obviously deserves. I will merely underscore what Laplanche more persuasively explains – namely, that the unconscious is "not our center," that it is rather "an 'excentric' center."⁶⁷ Hence Laplanche's insistence on "the primacy of external alien-ness," his going so far as to call the mother "the alien one."⁶⁸

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 98; and see Amaryah Armstrong, "Of Flesh and Spirit: Race, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference in the Turn to Paul," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 16, no. 2 (2017).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶³ Anidjar, *On the Sovereignty of Mothers*.

⁶⁴ Emery Reves, *Anatomy of Peace* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), 26.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁶ Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 84.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

As I in turn ponder the decentered or excentered (Laplanche deploys terms such as “exorbitant” or “extravagant”) kernel of psychoanalysis, I would not say that mothers quite provide, for Laplanche or for Freud, an alternative axis, a different psychic or psychoanalytic, much less a political center. It is also the case, after all, that neither Laplanche nor any Freudian reader I am aware of seems to have given thought to the strange parallel – in the wake of Jacques Lezra’s remarkable efforts in tracing Freud’s phrase,⁶⁹ I do not call it a philological source, much less an origin – found in the dream of a mother, the dream of Augustine’s mother, Monica.⁷⁰ As Schmitt writes, “even the dreams that the dramatist weaves into his play must be able to become the dreams of the spectators, with all the condensations and displacements of recent events.”⁷¹ In *The Confessions* (which Freud seems to have completely ignored), Augustine tells of Monica’s – mother, slave, and certainly servant – being granted that dream by God. And in that dream, a young man appears and reassures her with regard to the fate of her wayward and not yet properly Christian son, for she “mourned [his] perdition.” The young man tells Monica not to worry for, as Augustine renders it, “*ubi esset illa, ibi esse et me,*” “where she was, there was I also” or, as one German translation has it, “*wo sie wäre, da sei auch ich.*” Over the course of the dispute that this divine and oneiric revelation occasions between mother and son, Monica feels compelled to clarify, “*non enim mihi dictum est: ubi ille, ibi et tu, sed: ubi tu, ibi et ille,*” “The word spoken to me was not ‘Where he is, there will you be also,’ but ‘Where you are, there will he be also,’” which the German renders, “*Wo er, da wirst du, sondern wo du, da wird auch er stehen.*” In a slightly freer, and no doubt extravagant, translation I find (for my own sins) the exorbitant and no doubt premature political meaning of a yet unthinkable Copernican revolution: “Where mothers are, there we are as well.”

⁶⁹ Jacques Lezra, “The Instance of the Sovereign in the Unconscious: The Primal Scenes of Political Theology,” in *Political Theology and Early Modernity*, ed. Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁷⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), bk. 3, §§ 19-20.

⁷¹ Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 36.

CARL SCHMITT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF “HUMANITY”

Is a totally depoliticized world possible? As Leo Strauss observes in his “Notes” on Carl Schmitt’s *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt gives inconsistent answers to this question. More than once he flatly declares the political inescapable, yet he also admits that he does not *know* that this is so.¹ He seemingly holds that the political would be inescapable if man were “by nature evil” or, more specifically, if man were naturally and unchangeably “dangerous.”² While clearly inclined to believe this,³ he acknowledges that the thesis of man’s natural and ineradicable dangerousness is only a “presupposition” or an “anthropological profession of faith.”⁴ The goal of the present paper is to argue that, even granted this presupposition, Schmitt has no reason to hold that a totally depoliticized world is impossible. Whether such a world is desirable is, of course, a distinct (though not unrelated) question.

WORLD “STATE” OR “HUMANITY”

Since politics is, for Schmitt, inseparable from the real possibility of war, the most obvious feature of a totally depoliticized world would be not just the absence but the impossibility of war. He speaks of a hypothetical world in which all “human groups” are “so unified

¹ Leo Strauss, “Notes on Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*,” trans. J. Harvey Lomax, in Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 94-96.

² Schmitt, *Concept*, 58. He puts this word in scare quotes. Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (text of 1932), 9th ed. (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2015), 55.

³ Whether he was merely *inclined* to believe it or *did* believe it is difficult to say. A full discussion of this question would need to address the larger and notoriously difficult question of whether the Schmitt of *Concept* was still in some sense a believing Catholic and, more particularly, a serious believer in original sin. Reinhard Mehring, “A ‘Catholic Layman of German Nationality and Citizenship’? Carl Schmitt and the Religiosity of Life,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Carl Schmitt*, ed. Jens Meierhenrich and Oliver Simons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 73, examines “the multiple meanings of religion, both personal and professional, in Schmitt’s long life.” He is on the whole skeptical of Schmitt’s numerous professions of Catholic (or Christian) affiliation and contends that Schmitt “had no clear Catholic identity” (80). For a contrasting view, see the following note.

⁴ Schmitt, *Concept*, 58; *Begriff*, 54. The overtly religious expression “profession of faith” (*Glaubensbekenntnis*) suggests that, for Schmitt, the question of whether the political is inescapable is at bottom a religious one. Heinrich Meier has argued forcefully for this reading of Schmitt. In *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss: The Hidden Dialogue*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 50-59, Meier seeks to show, partly on the basis of a comparison of differences among the three editions of *Begriff*, that the thesis of man’s dangerousness is indeed Schmitt’s own religious “profession of faith.” The “heart” of this confession of faith, he contends, is “original sin” (53).

that a conflict between them is impossible and unthinkable.”⁵ In the same sentence, he also speaks of a world “empire” (*Imperium*) within which even the possibility of civil war is “for all times” out of the question. It is not entirely clear whether he is here describing a single hypothetical depoliticized world in two different ways or whether he is describing two different species within the genus “depoliticized world,” but the former seems likely. When a few pages later he describes a hypothetical “world state”⁶ embracing “the whole world and all of humanity,” he stresses that such an entity would be “no political entity” and could “only in a manner of speaking” be called a “state,” and a little later he adds that it would know neither state nor kingdom “nor empire” (*noch Imperium*). It is again not entirely clear whether this world “state” is the same hypothetical entity as the world “empire” he has earlier described, but it seems to be. If so, it may be that, just as “world state” is only an imprecise manner of speaking, so too “empire” is strictly speaking a misnomer for the hypothetical nonpolitical, global society within which civil war is forever impossible. Nonetheless, Schmitt’s verbal inconsistency and the apparent necessity for him to resort to imprecise speech point to a substantive difficulty: would the world “state” or “empire” have any government?

Schmitt apparently thinks that it almost certainly would. He speaks of the “terrible power” (*furchtbare Macht*) associated with “a world-embracing economic and technical centralization” and pointedly raises the question “to which human beings” (emphasis in original) this power would fall. This question cannot be dismissed, he avers, in the hope that all would “go by itself” or that things would “administer themselves” (*sich selbst verwalten*), and that “a government of human beings by human beings would have become superfluous, because human beings would then be absolutely ‘free.’” For, he continues, “the question is precisely: why do they become free?”⁷ The thought behind this question seems to be that a government of human beings by human beings may after all be a necessary precondition of the “freedom” enjoyed by the inhabitants of the hypothetical world “state” or “empire.” Schmitt will later say that, for liberalism, the state exists only “to secure the conditions of freedom and to eliminate disturbances of freedom,”⁸ and the “world state” as he describes it seems to fulfil characteristically liberal aspirations. The possible answers to the question of why the inhabitants of the “world state” would be “free,” he says, are no more than optimistic or pessimistic “guesses” (*Vermutungen*)⁹ that finally boil down to a “profession of faith” – that is, a profession of faith in man’s innate goodness or wickedness. If human beings were naturally good, a totally depoliticized world in which all were free and things “administered themselves” would be possible. If they were naturally evil, only a nonpolitical world government of human beings by human beings could secure the freedom of the governed.

⁵ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 54. He puts this expression in scare quotes.

⁷ “... *es fragt sich gerade, wozu sie frei werden*”: Schwab, *Concept*, 57, renders this “For what would they be free?” (emphasis added in both). While grammatically possible, this translation seems to deprive Schmitt’s question of any point relevant to its immediate context.

⁸ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 65.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

If the "pessimistic" Schmitt seriously believed in the possibility, however remote, of a nonpolitical "world state" in which all were "free" thanks to the existence of a nonpolitical world government, he would have to admit that the thesis of man's natural and ineradicable dangerousness does *not* entail the inescapability of the political. It seems likelier that the question he poses concerning the identity of the human beings wielding the "terrible power" associated with a "world state" is intended as a kind of rhetorical *reductio ad absurdum* of this possibility. Is it credible that these human beings, who *ex hypothesi* are no less naturally evil than those they govern, would be content "for all times" to use their historically unparalleled power to no other end than that of safeguarding bourgeois liberty? Liberalism has historically seen in governmental power an ever-present threat to freedom and has accordingly sought to limit it. Surely, then, the prospect of a *global* government – a global government, moreover, with sufficient power to render *unthinkable* mortal conflict between any of the human groups subject to it – would be anathema to any serious liberal. Unless its rulers were angels, they would assuredly use their tremendous power for illiberal ends sooner or later.

The impossibility, granted anthropological pessimism, of a *liberal* "world state" would not be a sufficient reason for affirming the inescapability of the political. Might an *illiberal* (Communist, Fascist, Islamic, etc.) world "empire" be possible? While Schmitt declares that all "genuine political theories" presuppose anthropological pessimism, he nowhere says or unambiguously implies that anthropological pessimism entails the inescapability of the political.¹⁰ An alternative interpretation of his question concerning the identity of the rulers of a world "state" is that he means to intimate the real possibility, granted anthropological pessimism, of a depoliticized world in which all human beings are subject to avowedly illiberal rulers and hence are *not* "free." However this may be, it is plain that his primary concern is the specifically liberal drive to "depoliticize the world,"¹¹ and a demonstration that the world's total depoliticization would not, at any rate, leave human beings securely "free" would undoubtedly be a valuable result. If he does intend to adumbrate such a demonstration, his reasoning is questionable. Crucially, he presupposes that a totally depoliticized and "free" world would require a "world-embracing economic and technical *centralization*" (*Zentralisation*). This presupposition is not self-evident. Indeed, Schmitt himself in one place describes the world's hypothetical depoliticization (leaving human beings "free") in a strikingly different way. The context is a brief discussion of the concept of "humanity" (*Menschheit*) in eighteenth-century "natural-rights and liberal-individualistic doctrines."¹² "Humanity" in this sense refers to "a system of relations between individual human beings," which really exists only if "the real possibility of war has ceased to be in question and every friend- and enemy-grouping has become impossible." Whereas he speaks of the unification of human "groups" (*Gruppen*) in his initial description of a hypothetical world "empire," here he speaks of relations between "individual human beings" (*einzelnen Menschen*). Although he describes these relations as forming a "system," it is not evident that such a system

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57. Strauss, "Notes," 96, nonetheless (plausibly) interprets Schmitt as holding that "the necessity of the political is as certain as man's dangerousness."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹² *Ibid.*, 52.

would amount to the “unification” of their relata, still less that it would involve or require any “centralization.” Schmitt’s apparent verbal inconsistency regarding the presence or absence of “empire” in this system perhaps betrays his awareness of this, despite his apparent assumption that the system would involve or require “centralization.”

Is a totally depoliticized but also radically *decentralized* world then possible – a pure “system” of voluntary relations between free individuals? This is tantamount to asking whether anarchic order is possible. Though his own discussion of “humanity” prompts this question, it seems clear not only that Schmitt would answer it in the negative but also that he regards the anarchist vision of radically decentralized, voluntarist order as sheer fantasy. Short of pure chaos, the only alternative he seriously considers to a world of political entities (nonvoluntarist human groupings between which mortal conflict is at least a latent possibility) is a nonpolitical world “state” (a nonvoluntarist grouping of the whole human race). He apparently thinks that such a “state” is either impossible or possible only at the probable cost of the freedom of those subject to it, and he clearly finds the prospect of it both unappealing and mercifully remote. Why, however, does he not seriously consider the anarchic or voluntarist alternative? Why should anarchic order – “humanity” – be no more than a fantasy?

THE WAR OF ALL AGAINST ALL

The familiar Hobbesian answer is that, given the natural propensity of human beings to fight over scarce resources or for “glory,”¹³ a condition of anarchy will necessarily be a condition of the most extreme and inhumane disorder. Unless there exists at least one “common power to keep them all in awe,” human beings will live in a permanent state of war, “and such a war, as is of every man, against every man.”¹⁴ Given Schmitt’s admiration for Hobbes and his evident sympathy with the “pessimistic anthropology” he considers the necessary presupposition of all “genuine political theories,” we might expect him to accept this answer or something like it. At first glance, it seems that he does. He holds that “there is in social reality no order [*Ordnung*] without supremacy and subordination [*Über- und Unterordnung*],”¹⁵ that there is no “supremacy and subordination” without “protection and obedience,”¹⁶ and that, consequently, “the *protecto ergo oblige* is the *cogito ergo sum* of the state.” He here cites with frank approval Hobbes’s statement at the end of the *Leviathan* that the book’s real purpose is to bring before men’s eyes again “the mutual relation between protection and obedience.”¹⁷ This seems a clear endorsement of Hobbes’s rationale for rejecting the possibility of anarchic order.

Yet what Schmitt goes on to say about “the protection-obedience axiom” should give us pause. He speaks of “the bad times of civil war” and alludes to Hobbes’s own

¹³ Thomas Hobbes, “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning Their Felicity, and Misery,” chap. 13 in *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 83. Hobbes also identifies “diffidence” (suspicion) as a third source of “quarrel,” but this is plainly an indirect consequence of one or the other of the first two.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, trans. Jeffrey Seitzer (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 60; Carl Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1970), 5.

¹⁶ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 49.

¹⁷ Hobbes, “A Review and a Conclusion,” in *Leviathan*, 476.

experience of the English Civil War, but the lesson he draws from this unhappy experience is different from that drawn by Hobbes himself. For Hobbes, "the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government, use to degenerate into, in a civil war" reveals the "manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to fear."¹⁸ For Schmitt, by contrast, the experience of civil war reveals that, if there are within a state "organized parties" better able than the state itself to afford their members "protection," then "the state becomes at best an annex of such parties, and the individual citizen knows whom he has to obey."¹⁹ Whereas Hobbes speaks darkly but broadly of the degraded manner in which "men" would supposedly live in the absence of any generally recognized common power, Schmitt focuses narrowly on the supposed necessity for the individual "citizen" to submit, during a civil war, to some organized "party" – that is, to some group of men that lays claim to political power. Hobbes's concern is to illuminate, by means of an analogy with civil war, the manner of life that was or would be characteristic of pre-political or post-political anarchy; Schmitt's concern is to throw into stark relief the eminently *political* reality of civil war itself as a conflict between rival groups, each of which aspires to rule. It is no doubt true, as Schmitt says, that the individual citizen, in the bad times of civil war, will obey the strongest (or apparently strongest) organized party in the hope of being protected – but he will hope for protection precisely against other organized parties, perhaps including the beleaguered state itself. He will hope for protection – that is, against political violence, which is the violence threatened or perpetrated by parties seeking to acquire or preserve sovereignty. Protection against the predations of other individuals with whom he is in competition for scarce resources or glory is not here in question, except incidentally.

Schmitt then adds that the protection-obedience axiom's "fundamental correctness" comes to light "even more clearly" in "foreign policy and interstate relations," and he alludes briefly to protectorates, federal states, confederations with dominant member states, and interstate treaties offering protection and guarantees. In these examples, "even more clearly" than in that of civil war, there is again no question of individuals being protected against the predations of other individuals. Political or quasi-political entities are instead protected against subjugation by other political entities. It is unsurprising that Schmitt concludes his discussion of the "protection-obedience axiom" by remarking on the dangers faced by a "weak" or "defenseless" *people (Volk)*, while saying nothing about the dangers faced by weak or defenseless individuals. It would seem, then, that the "protection-obedience axiom," as he understands it, applies exclusively to protection against political violence, not to protection against violence generally. We find support for this interpretation in his later remark that the hypothetical nonpolitical world "state" would know "neither protection nor obedience."²⁰ He cannot mean by this that the world "state" would idly let its "citizens" suffer assault, theft, and so on. He presumably means that, since with this "state's" emergence neither foreign aggression nor civil war would any longer be possible, protection against political violence would no longer be necessary.

¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹⁹ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 50.

²⁰ Ibid., 54.

(A corollary is that “obedience” in the specific sense of the protection-obedience axiom, as Schmitt understands it, is a political act: one “obeys” qua member of a people actually or potentially organized politically, not qua individual human being.)

Schmitt’s apparent lack of interest in the Hobbesian state of nature as a pre-political war of “every man against every man” emerges with striking clarity when, in *Political Theology*, he identifies the *bellum omnium contra omnes* with the clash of antagonistic *parties* (not individuals) *within* a state (not in pre-political or post-political anarchy), each of which “wants the general good” but no two of which agree on what this general good would be.²¹ In short, he equates the “war of all against all” with actual or incipient civil war. Moreover, he sees the deepest root of this war in ideological disagreement and so implicitly rejects the Hobbesian thesis that the principal causes of human conflict are competition for scarce resources and glory. He is of course aware of the authentically Hobbesian meaning of the phrase he appropriates. In his later book on the philosopher, he correctly identifies “the well-known *bellum omnium contra omnes*” with the “state of nature,” in which “[e]veryone knows that everyone can slay everyone else” and, consequently, everyone is “the foe and the competitor of everyone else.”²² His un-Hobbesian use of the phrase, his equally un-Hobbesian restriction of the protection-obedience axiom’s scope to “protection” from *political* violence, and his silence in non-exegetical contexts about the “state of nature” and its supposedly endemic (nonpolitical) conflict do not show that he disagrees with Hobbes either about the impossibility of anarchic order or even about the reasons for this impossibility.²³ Nonetheless, such divergences can hardly be accidental; they point to disagreement of some kind.

In *Leviathan in the State Theory of Hobbes*, Schmitt criticizes Hobbes’s account of the state’s origin in a covenant between self-interested, rational individuals desirous of escaping the state of nature, partly on the grounds that, “from the perspective of the state [...] the state is something more than and something different from a covenant concluded by individuals.”²⁴ He thus rejects Hobbes’s individualistic point of departure. Political reality can be grasped only by treating political human groups *as* (already political) groups, not by constructing conjectural histories of the emergence of such groups through covenants (or any other interactions) between initially unassociated, “atomic,” individual human beings. The political is not reducible to the individual. It is not, then, surprising that Schmitt should have little interest in the Hobbesian state of nature and its nonpolitical war of all individuals against all other individuals.²⁵

²¹ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 9.

²² Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 31.

²³ Strauss, “Notes,” 90, claims that Schmitt “implicitly adopts” “Hobbes’ polemic against the state of nature as a state of war of *individuals*” (emphasis in original), citing as evidence Schmitt’s “comment, expressly following Hobbes, on the relationship between protection and obedience.” He thus seems to disregard the less than straightforwardly Hobbesian character of Schmitt’s discussion of this relationship.

²⁴ Schmitt, *Leviathan in the State Theory of Hobbes*, 33.

²⁵ Peter Schröder, “Carl Schmitt’s Appropriation of the Early Modern European Tradition of Political Thought on the State and Interstate Relations,” *History of Political Thought* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 348-71, notes Schmitt’s near-silence about the Hobbesian state of nature and the escape therefrom via a covenant between individuals, but he attributes this near-silence to Schmitt’s wariness of “the individualistic and liberal potential of Hobbes’s

I shall return in the final section to Schmitt's denial that political reality can be reduced, analytically or genetically, to the interactions of individuals. This denial may or may not be well-motivated. It is in any case still an intelligible question whether the "state of nature" would necessarily be disorderly and inhumane or whether anarchic order is possible, if perhaps unlikely. Schmitt's assertion that "there is in social reality no order without supremacy and subordination" (i.e., without government of human beings by human beings) is a clear rejection of the possibility of anarchic order. However, perhaps because of his relative lack of interest in the Hobbesian state of nature, he offers no explicit defense of this assertion. It would admittedly be understandable if he saw no need to do so, since very few dispute the necessity of government for social order. Even liberalism, for all its hostility to governmental power, grudgingly recognizes this necessity. Is it right to do so?

LIBERALISM, INDIVIDUALISM, AND ANARCHISM

In the immediate aftermath of his nation's defeat in the Great War, the idiosyncratic socialist Oswald Spengler declared that, while other principles were hated and disreputable in Germany, liberalism alone was despised.²⁶ Eight years later, the staunch Austrian liberal Ludwig von Mises ruefully remarked that not only Germany but the world at large wished "to know no more of liberalism."²⁷ Schmitt, whose hostility to liberalism is notorious, was certainly aware that such outspoken, articulate liberals as Mises were vanishingly rare in postwar Europe. Yet when he published *The Concept of the Political* in book form in 1932, he felt compelled to admit that the liberal system of thought had not yet been "replaced" in Europe.²⁸ Though generally spurned, this "astoundingly consistent" (*erstaunlich konsequente*) system remained the intellectual bedrock of European culture and politics, "setbacks" (*Rückschläge*) such as the Bolshevik and Fascist revolutions notwithstanding.

The Nazi dismantling of the liberal Weimar Republic a year later may have seemed to Schmitt to herald the dawn of a new, genuinely postliberal age. If so, subsequent events surely proved this a delusion. In 1989, four years after Schmitt's death, Francis Fukuyama famously claimed that "Western liberalism" had decisively and permanently triumphed over its ideological competitors (above all, Fascism, Nazism, and Communism).²⁹ He has since repeated this claim more than once, most recently in October 2022.³⁰ Whatever our misgivings about the Hegelian-Kojévian "end of history" thesis, Fukuyama is undoubtedly right that no well-developed antiliberal system of thought with universalist pretensions currently seems likely to replace liberalism in what is loosely called the Western world. More concretely, if we accept Schmitt's characterisation of liberalism in *Concept* as

theory," which he "deliberately ignored" (356). My (more charitable) interpretation seems to me better grounded in Schmitt's own statements. The two interpretations are not, however, mutually exclusive.

²⁶ Oswald Spengler, *Sozialismus und Preußentum* (Munich: O. Beck, 1920), 34.

²⁷ Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalismus* (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1927), 2.

²⁸ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 65. Meier, *Hidden Dialogue*, 21, notes that a comparison between the texts of 1927 and 1932 reveals that Schmitt was more optimistic in 1932 than in 1927 about the prospects for a postliberal world.

²⁹ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989): 3.

³⁰ Francis Fukuyama, "More Proof That This Really Is the End of History," *The Atlantic*, 17 October 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/10/francis-fukuyama-still-end-history/671761/>, accessed 16/11/2022.

a system of thought for which “the individual must remain terminus a quo and terminus ad quem” and which accordingly denies to anyone other than the individual himself the right “to dispose of his own physical life” and to decide on the “content and measure” (*Inhalt und [...] Maß*) of his liberty,³¹ we may say that liberal individualism currently has no politically significant ideological competitors in the West.³² To be sure, denunciations of “individualism” are commonplace and restrictions on individual freedom ubiquitous and sometimes far-reaching. Liberal individualism as trenchantly delineated by Schmitt has few principled academic champions. All the same, today no less than in 1932 no coherent system of political thought that formally rejects liberal individualism has replaced it or even threatens to replace it.

For Schmitt, of course, liberalism is not a genuine system of political thought at all. The “political entity” must, when necessary, demand of the individual that he sacrifice his life (e.g., in a defensive war), a demand that for “the individualism of liberal thought” is “in no way to be arrived at or explained.”³³ An unstated but obvious corollary of the political entity’s right, when necessary, to make this most extreme of all demands is its right, when necessary, to make less extreme but still extraordinary demands (e.g., the requisitioning of property in wartime). Since such demands manifestly violate or override what liberal individualism regards as the individual’s *exclusive* right to decide on the “content and measure” of his liberty, they, too, cannot be justified on liberal-individualist premises. A “consistent individualism” therefore contains a “negation” of the political, and “no specifically political idea” can be derived from “the pure and consistent concept of individualistic liberalism.”³⁴ Distinctively liberal, ostensibly political demands (such as the separation of powers) serve the merely negative, proximate end of limiting state power and the positive but nonpolitical or even antipolitical, remote end of protecting “individual freedom and private property” from state encroachment. A “liberal state” simpliciter is a nonsense. The constitution of a liberal *Rechtstaat* will necessarily be a hybrid of liberal and “specifically *political*” (monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic) components,³⁵ and these heterogeneous components will necessarily be in tension.³⁶ “There is [...] no liberal

³¹ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 65.

³² Some may think that, while clearly true of the Anglosphere and above all of the United States, this claim is dubious as regards continental Europe. I must content myself here with drawing attention to the European Union’s Charter of Fundamental Rights, according to which the EU “places the individual at the heart of its activities.” Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Preamble, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>, accessed 16/11/2022.

³³ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 65.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁵ Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, 125 (emphasis in original).

³⁶ That liberalism and democracy (understood in contradistinction to “parliamentarianism”) are incompatible in principle is the well-known, and hardly original, thesis of *Die Geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*, 10th ed. (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2016). The specific source of this incompatibility is said to be “the insuperable contradiction of liberal individual human consciousness [*Einzel-mensch-Bewußtsein*] and democratic homogeneity” (23). However, the fundamental incompatibility between liberalism and the state form in general is also a necessary corollary of the individualistic, hence antipolitical, character of liberalism. In *Verfassungslehre*, 201, after observing that the modern *Rechtstaat* constitution “can appear in the form of a monarchy as well as in that of a democracy,” Schmitt says that, in either case, the “consistent implementation” (*konsequente Durchführung*) of the *Rechtstaat* principle “hinders” (i.e., is incompatible with) the consistent

politics simply, but always only a liberal critique of politics."³⁷ Schmitt would accordingly reject the "end of history" thesis, certainly in the form given it by Fukuyama, who speaks interchangeably of "liberalism" and "liberal democracy." If history will have ended when all systemic "contradictions" in human affairs have been satisfactorily resolved, then even "a world made up of liberal democracies"³⁸ could not be the end of history since there is a basic contradiction between liberalism and democracy. More generally, a world made up of liberal states (democratic or otherwise) could not be the end of history since there is a basic contradiction between liberalism and every possible state form.

If a consistent individualism unavoidably "negates" the political, it would seem to follow that liberalism's acceptance of a (minimally interventionist) state is in truth an *inconsistency* in this otherwise "astoundingly consistent" system of thought. A truly consistent individualist would be, not a liberal, but some kind of anarchist. In *Concept* Schmitt contrasts liberalism, which is "not actually anarchistic," with "open anarchism,"³⁹ thereby suggesting that liberalism tends toward anarchism or even, possibly, that anarchism represents an honest ("open") acknowledgement and acceptance of a conclusion – the simple rejection of the state – that follows ineluctably from liberal premises but that liberalism is loath to accept. Admittedly, mainstream European anarchism, at least from Bakunin onward, has not been "individualistic" in anything like the sense delineated by Schmitt.⁴⁰ Moreover, while Schmitt identifies private property as the "central point" of the liberal system,⁴¹ mainstream European anarchism has always vehemently rejected private property. However, an acceptance of private property (including private ownership of the means of production) coupled with a rejection of the state in the name of individual freedom not only is theoretically possible but, perhaps unbeknownst to Schmitt, was in fact seriously if sometimes tentatively mooted by some of the more radical nineteenth-century French and German laissez-faire liberals. Classical liberalism in its purest form had granted to the state no other function than, in Schmitt's words, "to secure the conditions of freedom and to eliminate disturbances of freedom" – that is, to ensure security of person and private property. The most radical thinkers in this tradition eventually came to doubt whether state provision even of security was either necessary or desirable. The most noteworthy example is the Belgian-born economist Gustave de Molinari, who in 1849 formally argued that security, no less than any other good, could and should be supplied by the free market.⁴²

implementation of the relevant principle of political form. In short, liberalism is, in principle, incompatible with monarchy no less than with democracy.

³⁷ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 64.

³⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), xx.

³⁹ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 56.

⁴⁰ According to George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Toronto: Broadview Encore Editions, 2004), 138, "[w]ith Bakunin the main stream of anarchism parts from individualism, even in its mitigated Proudhonian form." Schmitt himself accordingly speaks in *Political Theology*, 63, of "atheist-anarchist *socialism*" and identifies Bakunin, "the greatest anarchist of the nineteenth century," as the most consistent exponent of this (nonindividualistic) form of anarchism (66).

⁴¹ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 65.

⁴² Gustave de Molinari, "De la production de la sécurité," *Journal des Economistes* (February 1849): 277-90. David M. Hart discusses Molinari's radical French predecessors in "Gustave de Molinari and the Anti-Statist Liberal Tradition, Part 1," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 5, no. 3 (Summer 1981): 263-90. Ralph Raico sketches

This position, today commonly known as private-property anarchism, libertarian anarchism, and anarcho-capitalism, would be more fully elaborated and defended in the twentieth century by Murray N. Rothbard, David Friedman, and others. A corollary of its denial that state provision of security is necessary or desirable is its denial that *legislation* is necessary or desirable. Libertarian anarchy, say its advocates, would not be lawless, but its law would be exclusively private, customary law: a stable though not static body of generally recognized rules, largely developed by private judges who demarcate private property rights with ever-increasing precision and determine forms of redress for their accidental or intentional violation.⁴³ Historic models for such law include the private law of republican Rome and English common law. Libertarian anarchists argue that, absent coercive rule, the development of customary law tends to favor individual rights.⁴⁴ Those libertarian anarchists who subscribe to some form of natural-law or natural-rights theory accordingly argue that customary law tends to accord with the requirements of natural justice. Indeed, the development of customary law, in this view, tends to be a process of *discovering* what is naturally just rather than *making* a legal code that is merely conventionally so. As some libertarian anarchists recognize, this is a basically premodern view of law.⁴⁵ It is the reverse of the Hobbesian axiom, which Schmitt frequently quotes with evident approval, that *autoritas, non veritas facit legem*.⁴⁶

Unlike the anarchism of Bakunin or Kropotkin, libertarian anarchism purports not to be premised on the natural goodness of man. For the libertarian anarchist no less than the classical liberal, freedom worth having requires security against the ever-present possibility of aggression, and social order can be secured only if aggressors face violent retaliation. Libertarian anarchism is to this extent compatible with anthropological pessimism. However, the libertarian anarchist denies that security against aggression requires “supremacy and subordination” or any kind of centralization. On the contrary, he claims, the decentralized provision of security by competing private agencies (probably insurance companies) would be incomparably more efficient than its monopolistic provision by a central government. He would also remark on the incongruity, noted briefly above, between affirming the natural wickedness of man and demanding that some men govern others. As Schmitt himself comes close to acknowledging in *Dictatorship*,⁴⁷ the natural

the often neglected history of radical German liberalism in the first chapter of *Der Partei der Freiheit: Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Liberalismus*, trans. Jorg Guido Hülsmann (Stuttgart: Lucius and Lucius, 1999).

⁴³ For a thorough presentation of this position, see Bruce L. Benson, *The Enterprise of Law: Justice Without the State* (Oakland: The Independent Institute, 2011).

⁴⁴ As Benson observes, “[t]he attributes of customary legal systems include an emphasis on individual rights because recognition of legal duty requires voluntary cooperation of individuals through reciprocal arrangements” (*Enterprise of Law*, 36 [emphasis added]).

⁴⁵ N. Stephan Kinsella, “Legislation and the Discovery of Law in a Free Society,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1995): 136. See also Friedrich von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 243-44.

⁴⁶ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 33; Schmitt, *Geistesgeschichtliche Lage*, 54; Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, 182. Schmitt himself notes that the medieval view of law as something “discovered” (hence as a kind of *veritas*) underlies the English common law in “The International Crime of the War of Aggression and the Principle *Nullum Crimen, Nulla Poena sine Lege*,” in *Writings on War*, trans. Timothy Nunan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 133.

⁴⁷ With reference to Mably, Schmitt says that “[t]he absolutist doctrine of the natural malice of human beings was shaken by the fact that the ruling people were also naturally driven by passions and ignorance” (Carl Schmitt,

wickedness of man tells at least as much against allowing any human being to wield coercive power over his fellows as it does against allowing every human being to "rule" himself. The libertarian anarchist would, moreover, urge the common objection to Hobbes (and to other "social contract" theorists) that, in Claude Ake's succinct formula, "'natural' man would be incapable of making the social contract unless he was already 'social.'"⁴⁸ If, as Hobbes contends, human beings are by nature so antisocial as to need a government, they would for this very reason be incapable of establishing one.⁴⁹ Conversely, since they are not in fact so antisocial – governments do, after all, exist – the Hobbesian argument for government's necessity cannot be correct.⁵⁰

Above all, the libertarian anarchist emphasizes the strictly voluntary character of the decentralized "system" of the private, voluntary provision of security that he advocates. He insists that no other system is compatible with a truly consistent individualism. If the "sovereign individual" is to remain the terminus a quo and terminus ad quem, the nonvoluntarist character of all political entities and also of the improperly named world "state" is a decisive objection to them.

The remarkable tenacity of liberal individualism in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Western culture and politics, despite a dearth of articulate defenders and an abundance of eloquent opponents, supports the hypothesis that, if history is indeed to reach an ideological "end," this end will need to be either liberal or anarchistic. There are, as we have seen, Schmittian reasons for denying that it could be liberal. If we accept these reasons and are otherwise sympathetic to Fukuyama's thesis, we may conclude that a kind of anarchic world order – one embodying a ruthlessly consistent individualism – is indeed possible and perhaps more than just possible. Farfetched though it may presently seem, a libertarian-anarchic "end of history" could in the long run be a more realistic prospect than a liberal-democratic one.

Disregarding still the question of whether such an end of history is desirable, let us press further the question of whether it is possible.⁵¹ At least two Schmittian (and not

Dictatorship: From the Origin of the Modern Concept of Sovereignty to Proletarian Class Struggle, trans. Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014], 93).

⁴⁸ Claude Ake, "Social Contract Theory and the Problem of Politicization: The Case of Hobbes," *The Western Political Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (September 1970): 463. Ake cites George H. Sabine and T. H. Green as two of the most distinguished exponents of this objection.

⁴⁹ The objection has a direct and obvious bearing on what Hobbes calls a "commonwealth by institution" (i.e., by covenant), but it has an indirect bearing also on what he calls a "commonwealth by acquisition" – a commonwealth "acquired" by violent conquest. Although the victims of conquest do not make any kind of covenant with their conquerors, the conquerors must have tolerably peaceable relations *with each other* in order, as a group, to succeed in their conquest. If they enjoy peaceable relations despite not having any "common power" to keep them all in awe, then Hobbes's account of the state of nature must be false. If they enjoy peaceable relations because they already have a government, this government must, on pain of a vicious regress, be a government by institution.

⁵⁰ Ake, "Social Contract Theory," seeks to show that the aforementioned objection is invalid and that Hobbes's "account of the transition of man from the state of nature to political society is perfectly intelligible and coherent" (463). In brief, he argues that the horrors of the *bellum omnia contra omnes* would over time force human beings in the state of nature to become minimally prudent and, therefore, peaceable. In this way, "human nature generates both the state of nature and its antithesis, civil society" (470). But he gives no reason for supposing that human beings grown minimally prudent and peaceable would need *government*.

⁵¹ One possible objection to libertarian anarchism is that purely voluntary arrangements would be inadequate in the face of dire, large-scale emergencies, such as the recent pandemic. Depending on its real or perceived force, this

merely Schmittian) grounds for skepticism immediately suggest themselves. First, it is not obvious how such an end of history could be brought about *by nonpolitical means*, yet it would seem a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of the anarchist's (professed) rejection of politics to propose to bring it about by political means. Second, there are both historical and other reasons for suspecting that the political is in some sense natural to man. If man is, in Aristotle's well-worn phrase, a political animal, even *the* political animal, then a totally depoliticized world would be a totally dehumanized world. Unless we are prepared to imagine either a genuinely "posthuman" or "transhuman" world, whatever this might mean, or else a world populated by radically degenerate human beings (Nietzschean "last men" or, in Fukuyama's borrowing from C. S. Lewis, "men without chests"⁵²), it would follow from the political nature of man that a totally depoliticized world is simply impossible. In the following two sections, I shall consider each of these Schmittian grounds for skepticism about the possibility of anarchic global order.

THE WAR AGAINST WAR

"Nothing," says Schmitt in *Concept*, "can escape th[e] logical conclusion [*Konsequenz*] of the political."⁵³ Since the specifically political distinction is the friend-enemy distinction, the will to escape or evade the political is fundamentally the will to avoid drawing this distinction, which in practical terms means the will never to resort to war. Pacifism, then, is the antipolitical creed par excellence. (The anarchist is perforce a pacifist, though, unlike many pacifists, he may not object to defensive or retaliatory violence in principle.) Schmitt accordingly illustrates the supposed impossibility of escaping "the logical conclusion of the political" with the hypothetical example of a pacifist hostility to war that reaches such a pitch of strength as to drive pacifists into a war with nonpacifists in a "war against war." This would show, he says, that pacifism had acquired real political "power" (*Kraft*), inasmuch as it had become strong enough to form the basis for friend-enemy groupings. However, by resorting to war, the pacifists reveal that they have ceased to be pacifists. Put differently, they have ceased to be antipolitical.

This hypothetical scenario of pacifism's "self-overcoming" is open to two interpretations. It might be supposed to throw into relief the *practical* impossibility of realizing the pacifist goal of eliminating war without resorting to war or, more generally, the practical impossibility of realizing any essentially antipolitical goal without resorting to political means. The political would thus prove to be practically inescapable. Alternatively, the scenario might be supposed to reflect the *psychological* impossibility of seriously desiring war's elimination while refusing to countenance political means, including war itself, to realize this goal. On this interpretation, Schmitt's broader point would be that there is a tendency toward politicization inherent in all "oppositions" (*Gegensätzen*) within different "regions of human life." Once the motives at work in these oppositions become

objection might be taken to tell either against the desirability or against the very possibility of an anarchic world. For a libertarian anarchist response to it, which takes Schmitt's treatment of the "state of exception" as its point of departure, see Michael McConkey, "Anarchy, Sovereignty, and the State of Exception: Schmitt's Challenge," *The Independent Review* 17, no.3 (Winter 2013): 415-28.

⁵² Fukuyama, *End of History and Last Man*, 188.

⁵³ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 34.

sufficiently *strong*, he implies, the oppositions necessarily become politicized – that is, they become the basis for friend-enemy groupings. This in turn suggests that a willingness to accept such politicization and the attendant possibility of war is an essential mark of radical seriousness of purpose. A pacifist who shrinks from war is, paradoxically, an unserious pacifist. But this is, of course, only a roundabout way of saying that serious pacifism is impossible. The political is then psychologically inescapable.

These two lessons that might be drawn from the “war against war” scenario are not mutually exclusive, and Schmitt may well want his readers to draw both. I shall consider the second in the next section. Before turning to the first, however, it is important to stress that each lesson is logically independent of the other. If the realization of the pacifist goal were impossible without resort to war and if (barring self-deception) no intelligent pacifist could fail sooner or later to recognize this fact, serious pacifism would in a way be psychologically impossible. (The intelligent pacifist would sooner or later have to recognize that he wants the impossible since the necessary means to his goal are incompatible with that goal.) But this is not the kind of psychological impossibility at issue on the second interpretation of Schmitt’s hypothetical scenario. On this second interpretation, serious pacifism would be psychologically impossible even if the pacifist goal *could* be realized without resort to war. The logical independence of Schmitt’s two possible lessons means that, while either (if true) would prove his thesis of the inescapability of the political, neither (if true) would prove, or even lend any support to, the other.

Does Schmitt’s scenario prove the practical inescapability of the political? Could anarchists successfully bring about a totally depoliticized world without resorting to political means, including war? The suggestion may seem fanciful. On the other hand, a *localized* depoliticization does not seem impossible. A group of anarchists might establish a voluntarist community within the territory of a political entity, deny this entity’s sovereignty over this portion of territory and its inhabitants, and declare their readiness to resort to violence in defence of their lives and property. Any ensuing conflict between them and the armed forces of the political entity would not strictly speaking be a “war” as long as each anarchist combatant risked his life voluntarily and made no attempt to compel any of his fellow anarchists to do likewise. (Some might well pay others to fight.) From the anarchist perspective, no member of the community can have any *enforceable* obligation to risk life in defence of the community – if, indeed, the very idea of defending “the community,” in contradistinction to defending one’s own or others’ individual rights, makes sense at all from an anarchist perspective, which is questionable. Again, from the anarchist perspective, the armed forces of the political entity are simply individuals who happen to represent a present threat to life and property. Neither the persons nor the property of the rulers and noncombatant citizens of this political entity are legitimate targets of the anarchists’ defensive violence. The strictly “private” and voluntary character of this violence deprives it of the political character of war proper.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ It might be more accurate to say that this violence would have the character of a “private war,” a premodern concept familiar to Schmitt. However, in *Concept*, he clearly understands by “war” a specifically political (public) conflict.

The empirical problem of whether and for how long a voluntarist community of this kind might realistically hope to survive and successfully to resist the efforts of its erstwhile “host” political entity to reabsorb it is complicated. Assuming that the political entity was considerably larger and commanded vastly greater resources, would this necessarily make the anarchists’ situation hopeless, at any rate in the long run? Would the relatively greater difficulty of offensive, as compared with defensive, military action significantly offset the anarchists’ logistical disadvantages? To what extent might accidents of geography assist them? Would the absence of centralization and compulsion in their community fatally compromise their ability to resist military subjugation? Would it, on the contrary, make such subjugation more difficult inasmuch as there would be no “command center” whose capture would mean their defeat?⁵⁵ Even on the most sanguine view, two things seem clear. First, if prolonged conflict and its associated risks and hardships were at least a serious possibility, as seems likely, then purely “selfish” motivations for being prepared to commit to such conflict would not suffice. The mere desire to defend one’s own rights or the rights of one’s nearest and dearest, to say nothing of the mercenary’s desire to be paid for his services, could not safely be relied upon. Something analogous to specifically political sentiments would almost certainly be necessary. The obvious candidate, since *ex hypothesi* there is no supraindividual entity to fight and die for, is a resilient devotion to individual liberty *as an abstract principle*. Second, while the emergence of a small number of successful, localized anarchic communities is conceivable and while the example of some might well inspire the creation of others, the *global* emergence of anarchy – the world’s total depoliticization – would nonetheless require more. It would require a general, if not universal, adoption of the anarchist perspective.

The moral of both of these observations is that the “war” anarchists must wage is fundamentally ideological rather than military. If the anarchist vision of global depoliticization is ever to be realized, a majority of human beings must be persuaded to accept anarchism. Moreover, if global depoliticization could only come about as the culmination of a series of local depoliticizations, as seems likely, a sizable number of human beings would have to be persuaded that individualism is an abstract principle worth fighting and even dying for. The serious anarchist must, then, regard education as the single most important means in his struggle against the political.

What the anarchist would call “education” would of course be considered misguided or nefarious propaganda by Schmitt and other opponents of anarchism. For present purposes, the relevant question is whether this possibly misguided or nefarious “propaganda” might in the end be successful. Could the world be depoliticized through persuasion? Ultimately, the success or failure of the attempt would turn largely, though not entirely, on the truth or falsity of the anarchist doctrine. If anarchy were a social “system” to which human beings are by nature well-suited, this would be a *prima facie* reason to expect that anarchist doctrine will in the long run tend to gain progressively greater acceptance. (By the same token, the general failure of most human beings hitherto

⁵⁵ For an optimistic discussion of such a community’s prospects, see Guido Hülsmann, “Secession and the Production of Defense,” in *The Myth of National Defense: Essays on the Theory and History of Security Production*, ed. Hans-Hermann Hoppe (Auburn, AL: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2003), 383-86.

to accept it or even to consider it would call for explanation.) The onus would then be on anarchism's opponents to show why the world's total depoliticization is nonetheless not possible. To deny that human beings are by nature well-suited to anarchy, on the other hand, is to accept some version of the thesis that man is a political animal.

MAN, THE POLITICAL ANIMAL

If man is a political animal, then he is only truly man when he is a member of a political entity. This implies that a political entity is not a mere accidental association of individuals who remain substantially unchanged by this association. A political entity rather somehow transcends, and thereby also transforms, its individual members. We have already seen that Schmitt takes little interest in the Hobbesian state of nature because he denies the possibility of reducing political phenomena to the self-interested actions or interactions of individuals. Stated positively, he affirms the political entity's transcendence and transformation of its individual members.⁵⁶ Why does he deny the possibility of an individualistic reduction of political phenomena? One reason, at least, seems to be that any such reduction would necessarily fail to do justice to the *representative* element of politics. As well as saying, in *Leviathan in the State Theory of Hobbes*, that the "state" is something more than and different from a covenant concluded by individuals, he adds by way of elucidation that "[t]he sovereign-representative person is much more than the sum total of all the participating particular wills."⁵⁷ In order to appreciate the full meaning of this second, more specific formulation, we must consult his discussion of "representation" in *Constitutional Theory*.⁵⁸ "To represent," he states, "means to make an invisible being visible and present through a publicly present one."⁵⁹ The individuals or groups bearing the "representative" function in a political entity publicly "represent" this invisible entity's *existence* and existential interests, which transcend the existence and interests of any of its individual members. (This transcendence of its individual members presumably accounts for the entity's "invisibility.") Purely private interests, such as each individual's private interest in avoiding violent death in the state of nature, cannot in this sense be publicly represented. The idea of representation "rests on a people existing as a political entity, as having a type of being that is higher, further enhanced, and *more intense* in comparison to the natural existence of some human group living together" (emphasis added). The words I have italicized bring to mind the claim in *Concept* that "the political [...] marks [...] the *degree of intensity* of an association or dissociation of human beings" (emphasis

⁵⁶ If man is only truly man when he is a member of a political community, it follows that the Hobbesian state of nature is strictly impossible. Meier, *Hidden Dialogue*, 49, interprets Schmitt as denying "that men ever existed or could exist in a state of nature," ultimately on theological (biblical) grounds.

⁵⁷ Schmitt, *Leviathan in the State Theory of Hobbes*, 33.

⁵⁸ John McCormick devotes all of chapter 4 of his *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) to the topic of representation. He focuses primarily on Schmitt's treatments of the topic in *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), and *Geistesgeschichtliche Lage* (whose precise relation to the later treatment in *Constitutional Theory* is, I confess, not clear to me) and does not discuss its bearing on the problem of the ontological status of a political entity as something "more" than its members. Duncan Kelly, "Carl Schmitt's Political Theory of Representation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 1 (January 2004): 114, recognizes "the centrality of representation to Schmitt's political thought," but he, too, does not discuss its ontological ramifications.

⁵⁹ Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, 243.

in original).⁶⁰ This degree of intensity is apparently the maximum possible degree. It is the fruit of sufficiently strong *motives* – that is, as I suggested in the previous section, of sufficiently radical seriousness of purpose. The motives that, when sufficiently strong, make possible an association or disassociation with this maximum degree of intensity can be “religious, national (in the ethnic or cultural sense), economic, or of another kind,” provided only that they forge “connections and separations” between human beings – as the Hobbesian motive of *individual* self-preservation clearly cannot.⁶¹

However, the political association or dissociation is not only “more intense” than any other; its “intensity” is *qualitatively* as well as quantitatively unique.⁶² Though Schmitt does not say so in *Concept*, one reason for this seems to be that the political association is, uniquely, an association that makes possible (and necessary) “representation” in the sense delineated in *Constitutional Theory*. Given associative motives (religious, national, etc.) of sufficient strength or, equivalently, given radical seriousness of (religious, national, etc.) purpose, there comes to exist an invisible type of being that is “higher” and “further enhanced” than any “natural” being such as a human individual or family. This invisible entity also has a “more intense” type of *being* than any natural being because it somehow exists by virtue of the unique intensity or seriousness of the relevant associative motives of the natural beings who are its members. Qua invisible, it must be “represented” if its members are even to recognize its existence and their membership in it.

Schmitt’s account of “representation” seems to commit him to an implausible or even mystical hypostatization of the political “entity.” He hastens to say in *Leviathan in the State Theory of Hobbes* that the “sovereign-representative person’s” “transcendence” of its individual members is to be understood “obviously only in a juristic and not in a metaphysical sense,”⁶³ but this disavowal of metaphysics is difficult to reconcile with the account of representation in *Constitutional Theory*. If the application of the specifically juristic concepts of personhood and entity status to collective “persons” has no metaphysical significance, this is presumably because it is a mere juristic fiction – that is, a convenient but in principle dispensable *façon de parler*. The rights, responsibilities, and actions of juristic persons that are not individual human beings are arguably reducible, from a juristic perspective, to those of individual human beings.⁶⁴ (Schmitt would disagree,⁶⁵ but if the

⁶⁰ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 36. Schmitt apparently adopted (or plagiarized) this criterion of “intensity” from the 1928 doctoral dissertation of Hans Morgenthau, who deployed it to criticize the original version of *Concept*. See chapter 9 of William Scheuerman, *Carl Schmitt: The End of Law* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 225-52.

⁶¹ Schmitt, *Begriff*, 36.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶³ Schmitt, *Leviathan in the State Theory of Hobbes*, 34. The qualification “obviously” suggests that this statement is not mere exegesis of Hobbes but expresses Schmitt’s own opinion.

⁶⁴ For an elaboration of this point with reference to corporations, see Robert Hessen, *In Defense of the Corporation* (Stanford, CA.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 16-22.

⁶⁵ See the discussion of juristic fictions in his *The Value of the State and the Significance of the Individual*, in *Carl Schmitt’s Early Legal-Theoretical Writings*, trans. Lars Vinx and Samuel Garrett Zeitlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 230. In *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, 26, he claims that “[j]urisprudence lost both its meaning and the specific concept of representation” in the nineteenth century, seemingly implying that the loss of the second at least partly explains the loss of the first. The sentence (*hat die Jurisprudenz den Sinn und den spezifischen Begriff der Repräsentation verloren*) could also be rendered, “jurisprudence lost the meaning and specific concept of representation,” a much less damning assessment of the state of post-nineteenth-century jurisprudence. Carl Schmitt, *Römischer Katholizismus und Politischer Form* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 43.

application of these juristic concepts to collective "persons" were not a mere convenient fiction, we could not assume without further ado that it had no metaphysical significance.) An essential feature of the account of representation in *Constitutional Theory*, however, is that the attributes and actions of the visibly represented "invisible" political entity are *not* so reducible. Moreover, it is unclear, to say the least, how one could meaningfully attribute a "higher," "more enhanced," "more intense" type of *being* than "natural" being to a mere juristic fiction. It may be that Schmitt avoids mentioning representation in *Concept* because of the concept's seeming entanglement with dubious metaphysics. Since the book's primary or anyhow most obvious target is liberalism, whose individualistic antipolitical animus naturally tends to be coupled with a distrust of metaphysical collectivism, it perhaps suits his polemical purpose not to expose himself to "commonsense" liberal ridicule by even seeming to adumbrate an "uncritical metaphysics of the state."⁶⁶

Even if the Schmittian concept of representation were inextricably bound up with a rationally indefensible metaphysics of the state, the concept might nonetheless prove indispensable to a comprehensive phenomenology of the political. Put differently, belief in the *myth* of an invisible, supra-individual political entity with a higher type of being than the merely natural, an entity that can only be made visible through representation, might be an essential (if often inchoate or unrecognized) element of the experience of political life.⁶⁷ If this experience in turn were essential to man as man, belief in this myth or at least the capacity for belief in it would likewise be essential to man as man, and the political would be inescapable.

As a "higher" type of being, the invisible political entity presumably has a greater *dignity* than the natural human individual or even than any natural human grouping such as the family. There is, then, a Schmittian, nonutilitarian rationale for the political entity's right, in extremities, to demand the sacrifice of individual life. The good of the political entity is, in Aristotle's words, "nobler and more divine" than that of the individual.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the dignity of the human individual would be enhanced by virtue of his membership in such an entity. In his early (1914), heavily Kantian essay *The Value of the State and the Significance of the Individual*, Schmitt goes so far as to say that "the individual human being as fact has *no* significance"⁶⁹ and only acquires significance or value from "submission to the supra-individual rhythm of a lawfulness"⁷⁰ that for most individuals is the lawful "rhythm" of the state to which they belong. The youthful Schmitt's

⁶⁶ He uses this expression in the context of describing Léon Duguit's campaign against the concept of sovereignty and against the idea of the state's "personality." Duguit, he says, has for decades waged this campaign with some "apt arguments against an uncritical metaphysics of the state and the personifications of the state" (*Begriff*, 38). In the 1937 lecture "The Turn to the Discriminating Concept of War" (in *Writings on War*), he identifies a similar hostility to "metaphysics" in the liberal thought of Georges Scelle, which he says "stems from Duguit" (48). For Scelle, "[t]he only real subject of justice is the human individual; everything else is thrown out as unscientific, medieval 'metaphysics,' or an 'anthropomorphism'" (40).

⁶⁷ The role of myth in Schmitt's political and historical thinking is an important but obscure and difficult topic that I cannot discuss in any detail. Federico Finchelstein discusses the topic in "Carl Schmitt Between History and Myth," *History and Theory* 56, no. 3 (September 2017): 362-69.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 3 (1.2).

⁶⁹ Schmitt, *The Value of the State*, 220, emphasis added.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

contemptuous allusion to the individual's "ephemeral individual existence"⁷¹ prompts the thought that belief in the myth of the political entity is, at least for most human beings, a necessary means for escaping or transcending the suffocatingly narrow limits of natural, mortal existence – or, more simply, a necessary means for coming to terms with death. However, he does not say as much, much less develop or defend the thought. Since he also acknowledges that the state's lawful "rhythm" is not strictly *necessary* if human life is to be invested with value or significance, this early essay hardly provides the resources for an adequate defense of his later (uncertain) assertion of the inescapability of the political.

It is not obvious how one might either prove or disprove the hypothesis that belief in what I have called the myth of the political entity is essential to man as man. A natural starting point for reflection on this hypothesis is Schmitt's claim that any motive that forges connections and separations between human beings will, if sufficiently strong, inevitably become the basis for friend-enemy groupings, hence for the emergence of the political. (On one possible interpretation of his "war against war" scenario, as we have seen, the politicization of an associative – or, more precisely, associative *and* dissociative – motive is even a mark of the seriousness of those who profess it.) This claim sheds curious light on the protection-obedience axiom. *Protecto ergo obligeo*, Schmitt says, is the *cogito ergo sum* of the state, by which he seems to mean that protection is the fundamental rationale for the state's existence. If all associative-cum-dissociative motives are capable of increasing in strength to the point of politicization, potentially leading to mortal conflict, one of a state's basic tasks will indeed be to protect citizens from the dangers of such conflict, whether in the form of foreign or civil war. Yet if this protection is not merely one of the state's basic tasks but its very *raison d'être*, whatever associative-cum-dissociative motive or motives make possible the political organization of a certain people into a state and give this state its political "energy" must be subordinate, in some sense, to the humbler, Hobbesian motive of security. In what sense? Since Schmitt emphasizes the state's right, in emergencies, to demand that the individual risk his life and since a citizen whose obedience to the state was motivated exclusively by a desire for security would not accede to this demand, it would seem that the strongest *effectual* motive for obedience must be the associative-cum-dissociative one (e.g., nationalism) or, perhaps, one whose strength ultimately derives from the associative-cum-dissociative one. The desire to do one's civic duty, for instance, presupposes a devotion to one's state that, in a Schmittian view, must derive its strength at least in part from whatever associative-cum-dissociative motive makes this state's existence possible. The only perspective from which this motive could nonetheless be said to be subordinate to that of security seems to be that of detached self-interest, understood in a more or less Hobbesian way. In other words, the *rational* strongest motive for obedience, at least in normal times, is security. This, however, would seem to imply that the associative-cum-dissociative motive is in truth an *irrational* one, at least qua political motive.

Schmitt in a way confirms this when he says that "[t]here exists no rational goal [...] which could justify men in killing each other on its account."⁷² He seeks to avoid

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁷² Schmitt, *Begriff*, 46.

the conclusion that warfare (and therefore politics as such) is irrational by saying that in the presence of "existential enemies" (*Feinde in der seinsmäßigen Bedeutung*), warfare is "reasonable, but only politically reasonable" (*sinnvoll, aber nur politisch sinnvoll*). It is not "reasonable" (or, perhaps, "meaningful") either from the perspective of rational self-interest or for the sake of any "rational goal." Yet, since the political entity draws its strength from a motive that impels toward some such goal and, indeed, *exists* only by virtue of this motive's strength or by virtue of the intensity of association and dissociation that supervenes on this motive's strength, the denial that the entity's existential struggles in any way subserve this goal is barely intelligible. The obscure description of war against an existential enemy as "(only) politically reasonable," upon which Schmitt does not elaborate, smacks of evasion.

By Schmitt's own lights, then, the politicization of an associative-cum-dissociative motive seems irrational. Authentic seriousness of purpose, however, is not consistent with irrationality and certainly cannot require it. Politicization, or even just the possibility thereof, cannot be a mark of such seriousness.

Political life as Schmitt depicts it is infected with irrationality both inasmuch as it rests on the myth of the political entity as an invisible, "higher" type of being and because the associative-cum-dissociative motives whose maximal intensification makes it possible take on an irrational character through this very intensification. I have acknowledged that (irrational) belief in the myth of the political entity might conceivably be essential to the experience of political life and that this experience in turn might conceivably be essential to man as man. Might susceptibility to associative-cum-dissociative motives that tend to intensify to the point of (irrational) politicization likewise be essential to man as man?

This suggestion is open to a serious objection. As Schmitt never tires of emphasizing, politics is a field of *decision*. On the face of it, however, one such decision is between the political and the antipolitical. Schmitt says that the anarchist Bakunin was forced to "decide against the decision," implying that the decision in favor of the antipolitical represents a kind of performative self-contradiction.⁷³ The libertarian anarchist would aver that, whatever may be true of socialistic anarchism, libertarian anarchism is an individual free decision against a collective (coercive) "decision," which in no way represents a performative self-contradiction. This anarchist would at least demand to be given reasons to accept that the decision he favors is not just misguided but somehow impossible, since this is not self-evident. The suggestion presently under consideration is that the anarchist's preferred decision is impossible because it is a denial of his nature as a human being, inasmuch as it is essential to man to be susceptible to associative-cum-dissociative motives that tend to intensify to the point of politicization. Since this, too, is not self-evident, the Schmittian partisan of the political would need to give the anarchist reasons to accept this suggestion. But the giving of reasons – argumentation – is a quintessentially rational activity. One cannot seriously argue with someone one takes to be irrational. To argue is to presuppose that one's interlocutor is capable of understanding and, possibly, of accepting one's arguments. To give *practical* reasons is, furthermore, to presuppose that one's interlocutor is capable of understanding, accepting, and *acting*

⁷³ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 66.

on such reasons. The Schmittian could give the anarchist theoretical reasons to believe that, as a human being, he is susceptible to associative-cum-dissociative motives that tend unavoidably to intensify to the point of politicization. These would *ipso facto* be practical reasons for acting in certain ways – for example, desisting from anarchist activism. Yet, *ex hypothesi*, the Schmittian would thereby seek to persuade the anarchist of his own latent, unconquerable irrationality. He would seek to persuade him of his *incapacity* to act on the knowledge that no associative-cum-dissociative motive can justify what, in extremities, it is nonetheless supposed to justify (war). This seems a genuine performative self-contradiction: the Schmittian presupposes his interlocutor’s practical rationality as he seeks to persuade the anarchist of his practical irrationality.⁷⁴

If this objection is sound, Schmitt cannot – on pain of performative self-contradiction – argue for his thesis that associative-cum-dissociative motives unavoidably tend to intensify to the point of (irrational) politicization. The thesis is, in a peculiar sense, impossible to defend rationally, let alone to prove. Since it undergirds his account of representation, this account, too, cannot be rationally defended.

CONCLUSION

The prospect of a totally depoliticized world that would not be a world “state” but rather a noncentralized system of relations between sovereign individuals was assuredly distasteful to Schmitt. He nonetheless gives no compelling reasons for denying its possibility. Even on the assumption of man’s innate wickedness, global depoliticization may be possible.

Although I have not thematically considered the question of whether global depoliticization (leaving behind mere “humanity”) would be desirable as well as possible, my discussion of the nature of politics has indirectly touched on this question. Schmitt’s theory of representation and political association seems to entail that the political is necessarily infected with irrationality, as he all but admits. War, whose possibility is essential to politics, can only be depicted as an existential necessity if one irrationally accepts what I have called the myth of the political entity, while Schmitt himself denies that it can be justified with reference to any goal other than defense of this mythical entity. If war is rationally indefensible, this speaks in favor of depoliticization. Some who accept this conclusion might argue that this depoliticization should take the form of a centralizing union of all human groupings into a nonpolitical world “state” rather than of a radical (anarchic) decentralization. I am inclined to agree with Schmitt, however, regarding the more than likely abuse of the “terrible power” that such a centralization would place in the hands of the world’s rulers.

⁷⁴ The argument of this paragraph owes much to the work of the contemporary libertarian anarchist Hans-Hermann Hoppe, who in a number of publications has sought to show that any attempt to argue against the “non-aggression principle” fundamental to libertarian anarchism is a kind of performative self-contradiction.

DE LA MORA'S CRITIQUE OF EGALITARIANISM: ENVY AND THE PASSIONS THAT UNDO REGIMES

I. INTRODUCTION

The principle of equality is often celebrated as a cornerstone of modern political thought, particularly in liberal democracies, where legal and social equality are regarded as essential components of justice and fairness. Spanish philosopher Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, however, offers a striking critique of this ideal, especially in the context of material equality. In *La Envidia Igualitaria*,¹ De la Mora argues that the relentless pursuit of equality, particularly through state-driven redistribution, can lead to unintended and harmful consequences. These include fostering social envy, destabilizing political institutions, and diminishing the value of hierarchies that sustain societal order.

This critique resonates strongly in today's European context, where policies emphasizing wealth redistribution and social welfare dominate political discourse. De la Mora cautions that disregarding the natural limits of equality could weaken the foundations of political institutions painstakingly built over centuries. Rather than viewing inequality as inherently unjust, he presents it as an organic feature of human society that reflects natural variations in talent, ambition, and circumstances. As De la Mora succinctly states, “[Authority] is a declarative and sapiential superiority: it belongs to those who know more. [Power] is dispositive and executive; it belongs to whoever has more capacity for coercive power. Authority cannot be transferred; power may be delegated. Authority is logical; power is factual. Authority is accepted; power is imposed” (151). This hierarchy of capabilities and responsibilities, he argues, is essential for maintaining order and stability.

Policies aiming to erase these differences often exacerbate the very inequalities they seek to eliminate. De la Mora states, “All human societies underwrite two large styles of hierarchies, authority, and power” (151). By attempting to impose uniformity, such policies erode the authority and stability that natural hierarchies provide, resulting in social fragmentation and political discord. De la Mora highlights envy as a central force driving these dynamics, observing that envy is intrinsic to human nature. He argues that envy

¹ Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora, *La envidia igualitaria* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1984), *Egalitarian Envy: The Political Foundations of Social Justice*, trans. Antonio T. de Nicolás (New York: Paragon House, 1987; repub. as paperback: Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); page numbers given in text refer to the 1987 edition.

does not arise from a “will to power” or an “inferiority complex” but from the intrinsic human desire to possess what others have, whether material goods or intangible qualities such as health or happiness. As he puts it, “There is no envy without an ownership” (67).

Pursuing material equality often creates unrealistic expectations that everyone can achieve the same wealth or success. When these expectations remain unmet due to the inherent impossibility of absolute equality, envy and resentment take root, fostering social divisions and political instability. De la Mora encapsulates this reality when he declares that the desire for perfect equality expressed as “Egalitarianism is not [...] a dreamed utopia, it is an impossible nightmare” (186). For contemporary European societies, these insights are a critical warning against pushing the ideal of equality to extremes.

De la Mora underscores how history demonstrates the dangers of pursuing equality at all costs. He points to the French and Russian Revolutions as stark examples of how egalitarian ideals can devolve into violence and authoritarianism. These historical lessons, he argues, remain relevant as modern Europe grapples with calls for wealth redistribution and economic leveling. Egalitarian revolutions, he warns, often destroy the very structures, such as family, education, and civic institutions, that provide social stability and cohesion.

In defending inequality as a natural and necessary societal feature, De la Mora offers a counterbalance to the modern European emphasis on material leveling. Rather than perceiving hierarchies as inherently oppressive, he posits that they provide individuals with purpose and stability, fostering a sense of community belonging. Excessive pursuit of material equality, on the other hand, risks weakening these bonds and fueling fragmentation across societies.

De la Mora’s critique serves as a timely reminder for European policymakers: the welfare state must strike a careful balance. While providing a safety net is crucial, it must not foster dependency or cultivate envy-driven competition over limited resources. Instead, promoting values such as meritocracy, responsibility, and opportunity can preserve the vitality and cohesion of European societies. As De la Mora warns, egalitarian movements that prioritize leveling differences risk sowing the seeds of envy and discord, undermining the democratic and social institutions that make Europe a model of stability. Achieving a balanced approach to equality – one that respects fairness while acknowledging natural inequalities – is essential for sustaining both economic prosperity and social harmony. By heeding De la Mora’s insights, Europeans can navigate the complexities of modern equality without sacrificing the foundational principles that underpin their political and social order.

II. DE LA MORA’S PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY

To fully appreciate Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora’s critique of the excessive desire for a quality framed as egalitarianism, it is essential to distinguish between its forms. Egalitarianism, as understood in political philosophy, rests on the two-fold nature of equality, which is multifaceted. Broadly, it encompasses two categories: legal equality and material equality. Legal equality ensures that individuals are treated impartially under the law, regardless of arbitrary differences such as race, sex, or social status. It is a cornerstone of justice in modern democracies, vital for upholding fairness and safeguarding individual rights. Material equality, on the other hand, goes beyond equal treatment before the law

to attempt a uniform distribution of resources, wealth, and opportunities. This second form of equality is the central focus of De la Mora's critique of egalitarianism. While noble in theory, material equality often proves unrealistic and destabilizing in practice, undermining the natural hierarchies that sustain society.

De la Mora asserts that material equality is fundamentally incompatible with the diversity inherent in human societies. Differences in talent, ambition, intelligence, and circumstances are not injustices but reflections of the natural variation that drives progress. Efforts to eliminate these differences, often through redistributive policies or social engineering, disregard this reality and create what De la Mora describes as a "utopia of equality" – a concept he deems both impossible and destructive. As he explains, perfect equality is not merely unattainable; it contradicts the nature of human existence, which thrives on diversity and excellence (180-83).

For De la Mora, the pursuit of material equality requires the imposition of artificial uniformity, which disrupts the organic functioning of society. In his view, hierarchies – whether based on knowledge, authority, or merit – are not oppressive constructs but essential frameworks for order and cooperation. His distinction between authority and power is given in the introduction above. This distinction underscores his belief that natural hierarchies provide stability and cohesion, whereas efforts to level them result in disorder and inefficiency.

De la Mora identifies envy as the underlying force driving the push for material equality. He distinguishes this form of envy, which he terms "egalitarian envy," from general feelings of inadequacy or a will to dominate. Instead, it stems from the human desire to possess what others have, whether tangible goods or intangible qualities such as beauty, happiness, or status. De la Mora emphasizes that envy arises from comparison and the perception of unfair deprivation (67).

This dynamic, he argues, becomes particularly dangerous when political movements capitalize on envy to advance egalitarian agendas. By promising to rectify inequalities through redistribution or revolutionary change, these movements foster resentment and unrealistic expectations among their followers. When these expectations go unmet because absolute equality is unachievable, frustration and social unrest ensue.

De la Mora bolsters his argument by examining historical examples where the pursuit of equality has led to catastrophic outcomes. Both the French and the Russian Revolutions, driven by egalitarian ideals, sought to dismantle hierarchies and redistribute wealth. However, these revolutions devolved into chaos, culminating in violence, authoritarian regimes, and new forms of inequality. The French Revolution's Reign of Terror and the Russian Revolution's creation of a repressive communist state serve as stark reminders of the perils of excessive egalitarianism (86-87). De la Mora argues that these revolutions illustrate how envy-driven movements destroy the institutions necessary for stability and justice.

De la Mora's critique extends to contemporary examples, such as Venezuela's economic collapse following its socialist policies. Efforts to equalize wealth through nationalization and redistribution led not to prosperity but to widespread poverty and the erosion of democratic institutions. What began as a movement to rectify inequality became

a humanitarian crisis, demonstrating the real-world dangers of prioritizing material equality over institutional integrity.

In addition to its economic and political consequences, the pursuit of material equality undermines key social institutions that provide identity, moral guidance, and stability. De la Mora emphasizes the importance of the family, religious organizations, and free markets as mediators between individuals and the state. The family, in particular, plays a crucial role in transmitting values such as responsibility, hard work, and solidarity. Yet, as De la Mora notes, egalitarian policies often erode these institutions by encouraging dependency on the state and diminishing personal accountability.

He warns that weakening these institutions leads to social fragmentation and moral decay. Without strong families, communities, and markets, individuals lose their sense of belonging and purpose, making them more susceptible to envy, resentment, and alienation. The destruction of mediating institutions, De la Mora argues, does not result in greater equality but in a society where envy thrives unchecked (see 100-112).

De la Mora's critique is not a wholesale rejection of equality. He recognizes the importance of legal equality as a foundation of justice and fairness. However, he warns against the excesses of material egalitarianism, which he sees as a threat to the stability and cohesion of society. By acknowledging the limits of equality and embracing the natural hierarchies that structure human life, societies can avoid the destructive consequences of egalitarian envy.

De la Mora's defense of inequality is, at its core, a call to preserve the institutions that foster social cohesion and promote the common good. Legal equality ensures fairness, but material equality risks undermining the very frameworks that sustain a stable and prosperous political order. By respecting individual differences and valuing merit, societies can strike a balance between justice and order, avoiding the pitfalls of unchecked egalitarianism. This balanced approach, De la Mora concludes, is essential for maintaining a society that is not only fair but also functional and harmonious.

III. EGALITARIAN ENVY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF EQUALITY

De la Mora contends that egalitarian envy arises as a natural consequence of pursuing material equality. In societies where significant disparities exist, differences in wealth or status are often accepted as part of the social order. However, as these differences narrow through redistributive efforts, residual inequalities become more visible and provoke greater dissatisfaction. He notes that, the closer people are to each other in terms of material conditions, the more acute the envy becomes for those slight remaining differences (see 82-87).

This paradox illustrates how the pursuit of equality creates a vicious cycle: the closer a society gets to achieving equality, the more envy intensifies, demanding even greater leveling. Such envy often masquerades as a fight for justice and fairness, but De la Mora asserts it is driven by resentment rather than genuine concern for societal good. Thus, the language of social justice is too often a rhetorical cloak for the irrational demands of envy (see 93-95).

Egalitarian envy manifests in various ways, from public support for wealth redistribution to resentment of individuals who succeed in competitive systems. De la

Mora highlights the danger of policies driven by this envy, noting that they often lead to inefficiency, stagnation, and the erosion of societal trust. As he argues, when society becomes obsessed with material leveling, it prioritizes tearing down excellence rather than fostering it (see 172-76).

The paradox deepens in modern democracies, where demands for material equality often grow even as overall wealth and social mobility increase. For instance, in Western nations, policies such as progressive taxation, expanded welfare programs, and market regulation are often justified in the name of fairness. Yet, these measures frequently reflect an underlying resentment toward the successful. The rise of populist movements that target “elites” and “the wealthy” underscores how envy fuels political discontent.

De la Mora’s analysis is especially relevant in the context of modern social media. Platforms such as Instagram and Twitter provide a constant stream of curated images and narratives highlighting wealth, status, and lifestyle differences. These highly visible disparities amplify feelings of envy among users who compare their lives to idealized portrayals of others. This phenomenon aligns closely with De la Mora’s claim that envy thrives where comparison is unavoidable and differences are most visible (see 88-89). In this environment, even individuals who are relatively well-off may feel inadequate or resentful when confronted with the perceived advantages of others. Social media thus creates fertile ground for egalitarian envy, driving demands for policies that punish success rather than reward achievement.

Egalitarian envy is not limited to personal discontent; it also shapes broader political and social movements. De la Mora warns that movements driven by envy often promise to eliminate inequality through drastic redistributive measures. However, these efforts rarely achieve their intended goals and often result in unintended consequences, as in the examples of the French and Russian Revolutions noted above (see 86; 133-34).

De la Mora’s critique extends to contemporary examples, including the economic policies of countries such as Venezuela. Attempts to equalize wealth through state control and redistribution initially garnered popular support but ultimately led to widespread poverty, hyperinflation, and institutional decay. Egalitarian envy creates a spiral of resentment and retribution that undermines the very stability it seeks to establish (see 52-57).

As described by De la Mora, egalitarian envy is a corrosive force that undermines societal cohesion and progress. While material equality may appear desirable theoretically, its pursuit often generates resentment and hostility, destabilizing social and political systems. By understanding the mechanisms of envy and its impact, societies can better navigate the challenges of inequality without succumbing to the destructive consequences of excessive egalitarianism. De la Mora’s critique offers a compelling caution against allowing envy to dictate the terms of social and political policy, emphasizing instead the need to recognize and respect natural differences and hierarchies.

IV. CIVIL STRIFE AND REVOLUTION AS PRODUCTS OF EGALITARIANISM

As De la Mora contends, egalitarian envy does not remain confined to personal feelings of resentment. It extends into the political and social realms, often with destabilizing consequences. When a critical mass of individuals perceive themselves as disadvantaged

due to inequality, their collective frustration can spark demands for radical political change. He argues that egalitarian movements, frequently driven by envy, are prone to inciting civil strife, dismantling institutions, and fostering conditions ripe for revolution.

De la Mora highlights the French and Russian Revolutions as emblematic cases of egalitarianism leading to societal upheaval. The French Revolution, initially framed as a struggle for equality before the law and the elimination of aristocratic privileges, quickly spiraled into chaos. The revolutionary drive to obliterate all social distinctions gave rise to extreme measures such as the Reign of Terror, in which thousands were executed in the name of egalitarian ideals. Institutions vital to societal stability, including the monarchy and the church, were dismantled, leaving a vacuum that was soon filled by authoritarian rule under Napoleon Bonaparte.

Similarly, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia sought to establish a classless society by overthrowing the bourgeoisie and redistributing wealth. However, the revolution descended into civil war, mass repression, and economic devastation. The egalitarian ideals that inspired the revolution led to the rise of a totalitarian regime epitomized by Stalin's rule, where power became concentrated in the hands of a few, and inequality persisted in new, oppressive forms. Thus, revolutions ignited by the dream of equality often culminate in systems far more unequal and repressive than those they seek to replace.

Egalitarian movements are frequently driven by an unwavering ideological commitment to equality, which blinds their proponents to the practical and moral consequences of their actions. De la Mora argues that the ideology of absolute equality is inherently destabilizing because it requires dismantling hierarchies and redistributing resources at any cost. This relentless drive often undermines the institutions providing political stability and social cohesion. For example, in revolutionary France, dismantling traditional hierarchies and redistributing property created widespread economic dislocation and social fragmentation. Similarly, in Soviet Russia, the confiscation of land and the collectivization of agriculture resulted in mass starvation and the erosion of local communities. These examples underscore De la Mora's contention that egalitarianism's ideological fervor can have disastrous real-world consequences.

De la Mora's critique extends beyond historical examples to contemporary egalitarian ideologies, such as socialism and populism, which often frame inequality as a moral injustice that must be rectified through radical redistribution. This framing fosters a zero-sum mentality, where societal resources are perceived as finite, and any advantage one group holds is viewed as a direct harm to others. In modern democracies, this mentality manifests in political polarization and class conflict. Movements advocating for wealth redistribution, higher taxes on the wealthy, or expanded social welfare programs frequently gain traction by appealing to feelings of envy and resentment. For example, in many Western nations, populist leaders have capitalized on public discontent by portraying economic elites as the source of societal woes. While these movements often claim to seek fairness, De la Mora warns that they exacerbate social divisions, turning citizens against one another in a battle for limited resources.

Egalitarian ideologies also inflame divisions along racial, ethnic, and ideological lines by framing disparities as evidence of systemic oppression. De la Mora critiques

this tendency, arguing that it reduces complex societal issues to simplistic narratives of victimization and privilege. By attributing all differences to injustice, egalitarian rhetoric transforms society into a battlefield where every group vies for dominance.

In the modern era, social media amplifies these divisions by providing platforms for grievance and comparison. As individuals become more aware of disparities in wealth, status, and opportunities, their perceptions of injustice grow, even when their material conditions remain stable or improve. This heightened visibility of inequality fuels demands for radical change, often without consideration of the broader implications.

De la Mora emphasizes that the societal costs of egalitarian revolutions far outweigh their potential benefits. Revolutions driven by envy and demands for equality often result in the erosion of trust, cooperation, and shared values – the very foundations of a stable society. Moreover, the institutions that ensure political order, such as the judiciary, legislative bodies, and even civil society organizations, are frequently dismantled or co-opted in the name of equality. What begins as a demand for fairness ends in the destruction of the structures that sustain fairness itself.

De la Mora's critique of egalitarianism highlights the inherent risks of movements driven by envy and a relentless pursuit of equality. By examining historical revolutions and modern political trends, he demonstrates that egalitarian ideologies often lead to civil strife, social fragmentation, and the breakdown of political stability. His insights serve as a cautionary tale for contemporary societies, urging them to balance the desire for fairness with the need to preserve the institutions and hierarchies that ensure order and cohesion. Instead of succumbing to the divisive allure of egalitarian envy, societies must seek solutions that promote cooperation and respect for natural differences.

V. THE DESTRUCTION OF STABLE REGIMES

Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora argues that stable political regimes depend on accepting natural hierarchies and individual differences. These hierarchies manifest in wealth, status, and power and are not merely inevitable but essential to a well-ordered society. They provide a framework for individuals to find purpose and contribute productively to the common good. De la Mora emphasizes that attempting to erase these natural distinctions in the name of absolute equality leads to disorder and societal fragmentation. As he notes, hierarchy is not a denial of justice but its instrument. Without it, there is chaos, not fairness (see 101-5).

De la Mora contends that hierarchies are the glue that holds societies together, channeling individual talents, ambitions, and capacities into structured roles. This structured order fosters both personal fulfillment and collective harmony. Attempts to dismantle these hierarchies often result in the destruction of institutions that ensure stability. For example, the family provides moral guidance and transmits values such as responsibility and solidarity. The church promotes shared virtues such as charity and humility. The market offers opportunities for individual achievement and social mobility. Together, these institutions form a network that sustains civic virtue and social cohesion.

When egalitarian movements target these hierarchies, they undermine the institutions critical to a functioning society. Institutions that have evolved over centuries

to balance differences are discarded overnight, leaving behind a vacuum filled by instability and strife. Revolutionary movements inspired by the ideal of material equality often dismantle existing regimes, which unstable or authoritarian governments then replace. De la Mora cites the French and Russian Revolutions as stark examples. In France, the revolution's effort to abolish aristocratic privilege led to a period of chaos, culminating in the authoritarian rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. Similarly, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia sought to eliminate class distinctions but instead created a repressive regime marked by economic failure and political oppression.

De la Mora warns that these revolutions follow a predictable pattern: revolutionary leaders, overwhelmed by the forces they unleash, resort to coercion and repression to maintain control. What begins as a quest for equality inevitably becomes a descent into tyranny, where the realities of power and chaos betray the promises of justice and fairness.

De la Mora's critique extends beyond historical revolutions to modern societies, where populist and socialist movements continue to push for material equality. He would argue that countries such as Venezuela, which pursue radical redistributive policies, have experienced economic collapse, political instability, and the erosion of democratic institutions. Thus, while such redistributive policies are initially popular, the drive to equalize wealth through nationalization and state control led to widespread poverty and authoritarian rule.

In Western democracies, the push for greater material equality has weakened traditional institutions such as the family, the church, and the market. De la Mora highlights how these institutions serve as critical mediators between the individual and the state, providing a sense of identity, stability, and moral direction. When the family is devalued, the church discredited, and the market shackled, society loses the anchors that hold it steady amidst change.

The family, for instance, instills values of responsibility and self-restraint, forming the bedrock of moral development. The church offers a moral compass, emphasizing the common good over individual grievances. When functioning correctly, the market creates pathways for social mobility and innovation. When these institutions are undermined, society becomes fragmented, and individuals are left adrift and more susceptible to envy and resentment.

De la Mora connects these weakening of institutions to the decline of civic virtue—values such as mutual obligation, trust, and a commitment to the common good. He argues that the obsession with material equality encourages individuals to see each other as competitors, eroding trust and solidarity. This mentality fosters political polarization and makes it difficult to address societal challenges constructively.

As civic virtue declines, societies become vulnerable to demagogues and authoritarian leaders who exploit grievances and promise quick fixes to inequality. In the absence of shared values and stable institutions, societies turn to leaders who offer simple solutions to complex problems, often at the cost of liberty and stability.

De la Mora's critique is not a rejection of equality altogether but a call to recognize its limits. He acknowledges that some inequalities are unjust and should be addressed. However, he warns against pursuing absolute equality at the expense of the institutions

that sustain social order. Thus, equality without limits is not a remedy but a poison, one that corrodes the very structures that ensure fairness and justice.

By reinforcing the institutions that promote cohesion, such as the family, the church, and the market, societies can mitigate the negative effects of inequality without succumbing to the dangers of egalitarian envy and revolution. De la Mora advocates for a balance that respects natural hierarchies while ensuring fairness and opportunity. This approach, he argues, is essential for preserving both stability and liberty.

De la Mora's warnings about the destruction of stable regimes resonate in today's political climate, where the push for material equality often threatens to undermine the institutions and values that sustain democracy. His critique underscores the importance of accepting natural hierarchies and preserving the networks of family, faith, and economic opportunity that hold societies together. Rather than pursuing equality at all costs, De la Mora calls for a balanced approach that safeguards civic virtue and institutional stability, ensuring a just and harmonious society.

VI. CONCLUSION

In a time when calls for greater equality dominate political and social discourse, Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora's insights offer a crucial perspective on the unintended consequences of pursuing material equality without restraint. His critique reminds us that while equality is a noble aspiration, the drive for absolute material parity often disregards the complexities of human nature, the necessity of hierarchies, and the institutions that underpin stable societies.

De la Mora underscores the value of legal equality – the principle that all individuals are entitled to equal treatment under the law. This cornerstone of justice ensures fairness without attempting to erase the natural differences among people in talent, ambition, and circumstances. However, he warns that the push for material equality creates unrealistic expectations and fosters envy – a deeply destructive force that breeds resentment and disrupts social harmony. “Equality imposed by force,” De la Mora observes, “leads not to justice but to dissatisfaction and division” (186).

One of De la Mora's key arguments is the necessity of accepting natural hierarchies. When based on merit, capability, and contribution, these hierarchies provide the structure and coherence societies need to function effectively. Inequalities are not inherently unjust; rather, they reflect the diverse roles of individuals in advancing the common good. Instead of seeking to eliminate these distinctions, societies should ensure that everyone has opportunities for personal growth and advancement. Thus, a well-ordered society is not one without inequality but one where inequality serves a higher purpose.

De la Mora also stresses the importance of reinforcing institutions that sustain social cohesion, such as the family, religious organizations, and the market. These institutions provide individuals with identity, moral grounding, and opportunities for achievement. Undermining them in the name of material equality risks eroding civic virtue, fostering social fragmentation, and enabling authoritarianism.

His critique serves as a warning: the unchecked pursuit of equality can destabilize political systems, weaken social bonds, and lead to outcomes that contradict the very

principles of fairness and justice it seeks to uphold. Instead, De la Mora advocates for a balanced approach that respects the limits of equality, values meritocracy, and promotes civic responsibility. In the end, equality is not an absolute goal but a principle that must coexist with the realities of human diversity and the imperatives of order.

Ultimately, De la Mora's analysis offers a timely reminder that while fairness and opportunity are essential for justice, they must be pursued with an awareness of their limits. The pursuit of equality must not come at the expense of societal stability, institutional integrity, or respect for human nature. By acknowledging these truths, societies can foster harmony and progress without succumbing to egalitarian envy's divisive and destabilizing effects.

LIBERAL CATHOLICISM IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION

The present essay focuses on liberalism in one of its most germinal and forgotten forms: the advent of liberal Catholicism in England in the years 1822-1848. The traits of this variant of liberal politics are transnational, not confined to this period, place, or personal constituency but rather symptomatic of the epochal event known as the Enlightenment. Leaving aside the question of whether this intellectual current proved more progressive than detrimental, the relevant feature I will discuss is a sort of equality founded on free discourse, which enabled academic theologians to reconsider the nature of Catholic devotion and worship altogether, from the privacy of immediate consciousness to the execution of liturgy.

This notion of equality in the freedom and ability of the individual to discuss – because it plagued the Church of England with the new, unending, and laborious effort of the scholarly intellect to attain precise knowledge about whatever it questions – confused the order of the Catholic tradition to a similar extent that it dissolved the institution of monarchy. So-called liberal Catholics, from their alliance in the 1820s, brought *skepticism* into the Church and sought reforms that might fatally intellectualize the service, abandoning thereby customs and ordinances native to the “Church Fathers.” The Catholic service owed its fortitude to fixed, unwavering customs, thus the introduction of “reasonable” sermons or exegeses could easily corrupt the religious enterprise. Faith can only be called such when no proof, tangible or logical, can be applied to its object. Yet, based on the writings of my foremost source, liberal Catholicism was unable to endorse faith as allied rather to the intellect, reason, and continual academic discourse, at least not by means of the existing Catholic order, as Cardinal Newman’s reflections point unmistakably to a collision between faith and intellect in which the latter demands precedence by calling the former into question, specifically concerning, among other things, the need for faith in already established customs, the nature of salvation, and the freedom to worship outside of ecclesiastical strictures.

FIRST INDICATIONS OF LIBERALISM IN ENGLAND

Rather than present liberalism from its very origin, I begin by describing its emergence in the Anglo-Saxon context and elucidate the chief principles of its stratagem during that era. In selecting this context, England from 1822 to 1848, it ought not to be assumed that

liberalism arose exclusively in England or even in Europe alone. Yet it is within this narrow bandwidth that there is a pronounced development of its features and extension, as well as a formation that has been overlooked in historical study. This view is not unique to my analysis, for, as J. C. D. Clark states in his *Revolution and Rebellion*, “To attempt to write the history of *liberalism* before the 1820s is thus, in point of method, akin to attempting to write the history of the eighteenth-century motor car.”¹ Although more than thirty years have elapsed since Clark’s publication, there still remains scant evidence to substantiate an earlier liberalism, which does not mean that it was nonexistent prior to 1820, as, for instance, may be disproved by the case of the Spanish *Liberalismos*.²

At what time liberalism was conceived and by whom cannot be answered with certainty. Retrospectively, we can only gain a sense of when the use of this term as a social identity, as well as a political and intellectual disposition, began to gain prominence. It was thus in a journal titled *The Liberal* (1822-23) that perhaps the first use of this term appeared in English, denoting the emancipation of the individual from the constraints of convention and state. While *The Liberal* was a short-lived project, founded by the famed English poets Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, the contents of its four publications are highly suggestive of what was soon to blossom into an official doctrine of free opinion. According to Jane Stabler, the journal was “international in scope,” “[exhibiting] mobile and culturally pluralistic viewpoints,” “[championing] religious free thought,” and “avant-garde” in character.³ Apart from this journal, traces of political liberalism at this time are scarce, or altogether absent, and it is unknown whether Byron and Shelley designed it with a clear idea of liberal politics, though it bears marked resemblance to succeeding liberal movements.

In 1823, André Vieuzeux provided a concise history of early liberalism in his *Essay on Liberalism*. Although this source has remained largely unknown and is not cited in Guido de Ruggiero’s 1927 *History of European Liberalism*,⁴ Vieuzeux asserts that the origin of liberalism cannot have preceded the French Revolution and was probably its offspring. This hypothesis coincides with what was later suggested by Cardinal Newman, to whom I shall soon turn to establish the specific tendencies of nineteenth-century liberalism. The *Essay on Liberalism* tells us that the title “Liberal” had been used in the vernacular for some years prior to 1823 but that this must have begun after 1790. As time passed, the liberal disposition consistently proved to be a counterpose to longstanding

¹ J. C. D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 102.

² For documents that attest to pre-Anglo-Saxon liberalism, see André Vieuzeux, *Essay on Liberalism; Being an Examination of the Nature and Tendency of the Liberal Opinions: With a View of the State of Parties on the Continent of Europe* (London: Pewtress, Low, and Pewtress, 1823), according to which liberalism as such was a multinational phenomenon prior to 1820 (i.e., in France, Italy, and Germany); see also Javier Fernández Sebastián, *La Aurora de la Libertad: Los Primeros Liberalismos en el mundo Iberoamericano* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones de Historia, 2012) for a record of its development in Ibero-American regions.

³ Jane Stabler, “Religious Liberty in the ‘Liberal,’ 1822-23,” in *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. Dino Franco Felluga, see: branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=jane-stabler-religious-liberty-in-the-liberal/ (accessed 11.14.2019).

⁴ Guido de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, trans. R. G. Collingwood (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959).

traditions and beliefs, continually urging systematic reform in whatever institution it happened to be invested, as Vieusseux describes:

Since the French Revolution, however, the question of the political rights of men and nations has become the universal topic of discussion – it has been taken up, as it were, by whole masses, and if it is not yet brought to a clear demonstration, we cannot certainly ascribe this want of success to a scarcity of disputants. Upon the abstract part of the question, the theoretical rights of men, several opinions exist; these, however, do not form the object of the present essay; but on the practical part of the enquiry, which is to us the most important, as to the manner in which men and nations as they now exist, ought to exercise their political rights, the combatants may be classed into two great divisions; each of these is subdivided by shades of opinion, which do not prevent a common feeling of sympathy, and a sort of tacit understanding in favor of general principles. These two parties may be denominated, one the friends of *stability*, the other the partisans of *innovation*. The latter have for some years past assumed the name of Liberals, under which they are now generally known. [...] The supporters of stability wish to leave things to their natural course, they do not come forward with any new doctrine, they want nothing but what is already, they stand purely on the defensive. Not so the Liberals; they wish to alter or destroy the old machinery of different governments. [...] [Liberalism] is the system of the party that is loudly calling for change and innovation in almost every kingdom of Europe.⁵

Reverend H. Townsend Powell, who in 1830 criticized Dr. Arnold's sermons in his *Liberalism Unveiled*, details an early example of liberals unsettling the Church.⁶ As bishop of the Church of England, Arnold proved to be a rather equivocal Christian, or in Reverend Powell's words, "a Christian only in the abstract." To him, sacraments, obedience to commandments, fear of God, and commitment to fixed doctrine were only secondary measurements of a man's holiness. An avowed love for God and the acquisition of grace on one's own independent terms were to him sufficient proofs of sanctity. The curious fact of this scenario is that Arnold is here a bishop of the Church of England, though Powell and other tradition-oriented churchmen are in stark opposition to his overt leniency:

It may sound very plausible to endeavour to promote christian charity, by casting away as unimportant all those differences of form and opinion which have distracted the christian world – but what is the meaning of this? He who would be a Christian only in the sense in which all distinctions as Churchman, Presbyterian, Independent, &c. are laid aside, is a Christian

⁵ Vieusseux, *Essay on Liberalism*, 4-5.

⁶ Reverend H. Townsend Powell, *Liberalism Unveiled, or, Strictures on Dr. Arnold's Sermons* (London: Cochran, Cock, and Wix, 1830).

only in the abstract; just as food, laying aside all those differences which distinguish one food from another, is neither fish, nor flesh, nor fowl, but only food in the abstract. And as he who lives only upon food in the abstract is in danger of starving, so he who is a Christian only in the abstract is in danger of being no Christian at all. There is no one point of christian doctrine on which there has not existed some difference of opinion. He therefore who believes nothing but what has never been disputed will believe nothing at all; and so Christianity in the abstract becomes an infidelity. Not that it is possible for a moment to entertain the thought that Dr. Arnold is an infidel at heart. It would be the basest slander even to hint at such an imputation; there is an evident character of sincerity stamped upon his whole volume: but the best of men have erred, even he who afterwards laboured more abundantly than all, while he was inflicting grievous wounds upon the Church, verily thought that he was doing God service. Though we may admire the preacher, we cannot deny the tendency of his doctrines. Indifference to religious truth must open the door to infidelity. Though we may be conscious that the preacher writes from his heart, and may even feel that some kindred chord has awakened in our own, still he who is truly attached to the Church of England must rise from the perusal of Dr. Arnold's sermons with a feeling of the deepest regret that a Clergyman, who plainly wishes to do so much good, and who can write so beautifully, should be so infatuated by the delusive sophistry of liberalism, as to imagine that christian charity is seen in an indifference to the truth of church doctrines; and that christian liberty absolves a minister of the Church from his solemn engagement to defer to her authority.⁷

THE POPE, THE LIBERAL CATHOLICS, AND CARDINAL NEWMAN

It is hard to assess how many liberals of Arnold's disposition were members of the Church in 1830, but according to Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, they were numerous and influential.⁸ Newman was an Oxford scholar, an Anglican priest, and by 1845, having apparently wearied of his native place of worship, was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. Far from being a liberal himself, Newman used this term to identify those with a willingness to adulterate Church doctrine by belittling the dogmatic component of Christianity. In fact, Newman also had reservations about Dr. Arnold and for much of the same reasons as Reverend Powell.⁹ Having spent a great portion of the 1820s to the 1840s as an Anglican priest and member of the Oxford Movement, Newman parted ways

⁷ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁸ Cardinal John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions* (New York: Aeterna Press, 1865).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 62: "I was specially annoyed with Dr. Arnold, though it did not last into later years. Some one, I think, asked in a conversation at Rome, whether a certain interpretation of Scripture was Christian? it was answered that Dr. Arnold took it; I interposed, 'But is he a Christian?' The subject went out of my head at once; when afterwards I was taxed with it I could say no more in explanation, than that I thought I must have been alluding to some free views of Dr. Arnold about the Old Testament: – I thought I must have meant, 'But who is to answer for Arnold?'"

with both of these institutions, claiming that each had been led astray by the liberals.¹⁰ While admitting that intellectualism makes for excellent academics, he found that when unchecked it proved harmful to the Church, whose sacrality would begin to crumble when forced to bend to the doubts and whims of men.

While ostensibly used in the political sense at times, the literature of nineteenth-century liberalism strongly indicates its being a primarily religious phenomenon. This is further strengthened when one compares Newman's *Apologia* with Pope Gregory XVI's *Mirari Vos* (1832),¹¹ in which he criticized the liberal propositions put forth in the *L'Avenir*. The three editors of this newspaper, Felicité Robert de Lamennais, Charles Forbes René de Montalembert, and Jean-Baptiste Henri Lacordaire, propagated ideas that were irreconcilable with the spiritual sovereignty of the Church, which obliged the Pope to reassert what Christianity must be if it is to endure. *Mirari Vos* was advanced amongst scholars and reformers in Oxford only to be condemned by the papacy – a clear indication that not only the Church but also the university had become a meeting ground for liberal priests and scholars, who were concerned to reestablish the present and future of these organizations.

Although Pope Gregory XVI did not use the term “Liberal” in his letter, we find that he and Cardinal Newman both combated the same factions, the only difference being that Newman did indeed refer to them as “the Liberals.” He also expressed admiration for Montalembert and Lacordaire in his “Notice of Liberalism in Oxford,” while the pope did not mention anyone by name.¹² Though both were self-proclaimed liberal Catholics, Newman said they were “before their age” and agreed with much of what they said. In general, however, he could not but find dangerous elements in the positions held by most liberals.

WHY INTELLECTUALISM IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH CHURCH ORTHODOXY

While nineteenth-century Anglo-liberalism was born out of the tension between individual belief and the impositions of the clergy, it was not until Newman's writings appeared that the actual discrepancies came to light. In Newman's *Apologia*, we read the memoirs of

¹⁰ The Oxford Movement was a group of Anglican scholars who were accused of an organized attempt to render the Church of England “Roman” by revising the liturgy to emulate the forms and rites of ancient Catholicism as practiced by the “Church Fathers.” Their vision of the Church did not comply with that of the Liberal Catholics or even with the more modest clergymen. By 1845, Newman had joined the Roman Catholic Church, whose superior tradition he could never foresee reaching England.

¹¹ Pope Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos* [Fourth Encyclical Letter on Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism], The Holy See, 15 August 1832, see: papalencyclicals.net/greg16/g16mirar.htm.

¹² The explanation of Newman's concession to Montalembert and Lacordaire was attested to by their later actions, which revealed a loyalty to the established Church order in spite of any conflicting sentiments:

In this new orthodox form, no less than in the heretical and democratic form expressed by Lamennais, [Liberal Catholicism] served to detach a section of Catholics from the reactionary policy of Restoration and bring them into touch with the main stream of nineteenth-century Liberalism. We shall see these Catholics taking part in the revolution of 1848 and coming forward to oppose the Caesarism of the Second Empire. It was in large part owing to their work [Montalembert and Lacordaire, now with Félix Doupanloup and Frédéric Ozanam] that the revolutionaries, who in 1830 were unanimous in hating the “ultras” and the priests, were in 1848 full of religious fervour, and asked the Church for its blessing upon the flag of liberty. [De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*, 176.]

an earnest bishop and his struggle against young scholars whose aspirations were at odds with the preservation of the Catholic rites and ordinances.¹³ The overarching problem was the exercise of liberty where this was not warranted. The Anglican clergymen, by Newman's account, had succumbed to the liberals' scrutiny of worship, catering to their needs as opposed to staying loyal to the established theology:

While I was engaged in writing my work upon the Arians, great events were happening at home and abroad, which brought out into form and passionate expression the various beliefs which had so gradually been winning their way into my mind. Shortly before, there had been a revolution in France, the Bourbons had been dismissed: and I believed that it was unchristian for nations to cast off their governors, and, much more, sovereigns who had the divine right of inheritance. Again, the great Reform agitation was going on around me[...]. The Whigs had come into power; Lord Grey had told the Bishops to set their house in order, and some of the prelates had been insulted and threatened in the streets of London. The vital question was how were we to keep the Church from being liberalized? there was such apathy on the subject in some quarters, such imbecile alarm in others; the true principles of Churchmanship seemed so radically decayed, and there was such distraction in the councils of the clergy. The Bishop of London of the day, an active and open-hearted man, had been for years engaged in diluting the high orthodoxy of the Church by the introduction of the Evangelical body into places of influence and trust.[...] And the Evangelical party itself seemed, with their late successes, to have lost that simplicity and unworldliness which I admired so much in Milner and Scott. It was not that I did not venerate such men as the then Bishop of Lichfield, and others of similar sentiments, who were not yet promoted out of the ranks of the clergy, but I thought little of them as a class. I thought they played into the hands of Liberals.[...] I felt affection for my own Church, but not tenderness; I felt dismay at her prospects, anger and scorn at her do-nothing perplexity. I thought that if Liberalism once got a footing within her, it was sure of the victory in the event. I saw that Reformation principles were powerless to rescue her. As to leaving her, the thought never crossed my imagination; still I ever kept before me that there was something greater than the Established Church, and that that was the Church Catholic and Apostolic, set up from the beginning, of which she was but the local presence and organ. She was nothing, unless she was this. She must be dealt with strongly, or she would be lost. There was need of a second Reformation.¹⁴

¹³ While originally published in 1864, Newman's *Apologia* is retrospective. He provided a vivid chronology of his experiences, though not always with the specificity needed for the current investigation. The passages cited relate his encounters with Liberals during the 1830s, starting from 1832 and, based on his *Tract for the Times* (1833-41), possibly extending to the 1840s.

¹⁴ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 59-61.

Given the changed social and intellectual climate brought about by the *philosophes* and the Reform Agitation in close proximity to the Church of England, Newman sensed that the Day of Judgement was soon to come to the Church and that any unwarranted flexibility of the clergy would result in its demise. Thus the clergymen were to assert the creed and Church order as incontrovertible, or else the Church will have relinquished its claim to Revealed Truth.

The Enlightenment, or faith in the faculty of human reasoning, had sunk its teeth into Western civilization. Since “[t]he corrosiveness of the Enlightenment [was] nowhere clearer than in its attacks on Christianity,”¹⁵ the corrosiveness of liberalism, which drew inspiration from Enlightenment ideals, lay in what de Ruggiero calls *free examination*. “No interpreter to come between man and the scriptures; no ecclesiastical mediation to come between the believer and God. From the very solitude of his consciousness the individual gains an intimate sense of trust and responsibility.”¹⁶ In contrast to Newman and the Pope, who favored the preservation of the Catholic tradition as opposed to its revision, liberals, consciously or unconsciously, adopted the methods of rationalism, a supposedly infallible chain of inquiry capable of attaining certainty through individual and justifiable claims. Rationalism is assumed to be grounded entirely in the present, stripped of any a priori assumptions that may hinder its disinterested analysis of the problem at hand. Michael Oakeshott describes rationalism as the predominant tendency toward “technical knowledge” at the expense of “practical knowledge.” He argues that the two can never be separated, though they can be discerned.¹⁷ Accordingly, technical knowledge can be formulated in words and reflected upon: Its *modus operandi* is the disintegration of a focal point (a claim or judgement), followed by an attempt to rebuild it step-by-step with a linear chain of reasoning, thus finding truth through verbally communicable and verifiable explanations. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, can only be acquired through practice. By practice is meant action or noticing the appearance or style of a person or thing, none of which can be adequately expressed by any means other than themselves. This knowledge is purely *visceral*. The aesthetic of a culture, the stylistic tendencies of a musical teacher, and likewise the ordained sacraments of a Church impress themselves upon the individual, effecting a change of character and perception. Since liberals put greater faith in technical knowledge, tradition seems to them uncertain, as guided only by opinion or conviction and thus as having no intelligible justification.

In contrast, for Newman and Pope Gregory XVI, faith is not predicated on ignorance but on their understanding that religious devotion entails a *sacrificium intellectus*.¹⁸ Their

¹⁵ Crane Brinton, *The Shaping of Modern Thought* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentiss-Hall, 1950), 134.

¹⁶ De Ruggiero, *History of European Liberalism*, 20.

¹⁷ Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Carmel, IN: Liberty Fund, 1991), 12.

¹⁸ “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, Authorized King James Version). This is a common dictum found throughout the New Testament – namely, the subjection of psychological phenomena (or mental acts) to moral law, of which Matthew 5:28-29 is a well-known example. Actions of the mind, whether or not carried out by the body in concert, are therefore considered equally punishable and iniquitous. This aspect of Christian morality is considerably relevant to the current study, for Cardinal Newman and the pope are in plain agreement as to the morbidity of exalting reason beyond the judgement of Divine Revelation, an impersonal measure of conduct which could never result from the reasonings of many individuals. According

deeper understanding of this radical commitment contrasts with that of liberal Catholics, such as Dr. Arnold, who were uncertain about the absolute truth of their heritage; it was easy for them to identify as Catholics but less so to trust the “Word” and “Body of Christ” for what they were. What separated the liberal from the traditional Catholics was the ability to sacrifice the intellect to Divine Judgement, of which Scripture and the clergy were prime mediums. Devout Catholics, anchored in the traditional composition of their theology, recognize that its practicality is not subject to analysis. In other words, the mere presence and preservation of the tradition reveal its validity – moreover, its necessity – which is beyond verbal explanation and can only be corrupted by it.

CARDINAL NEWMAN'S APOLOGIA

Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* is a rich and reliable source for understanding the effects of liberalism on the Church. In his estimation, the rise of Protestantism was more problematic for the Catholic Church than liberalism, yet given the focus of this article, it is necessary to provide a brief outline on why liberalism is hostile to the Church.

As an ideology that promotes the sovereignty of individual thought and interpretation, nascent liberalism negates the objective statements of the Christian religion with regard to human conduct and Providence. Faith, as a type of certainty, is rebuked in the religious context as subjectivity (i.e., personal thought or judgement) but gains greater authority over the solidity of Scripture and holy places, which have been passed down from antiquity as the established, unalterable sacred texts and sacraments of the Lord. From an ecclesiastic standpoint, change, as an unavoidable circumstance of the world, is to be allowed only insofar as it cannot be prevented – all change is burdensome, but the worst is humans' audacity to correct any supposed insufficiencies of the Church or Bible. As Newman himself admits, Christianity is dogmatic; those whose highest value is the freedom of the individual intellect will find any dogma repugnant. But anyone who sees the need for an order transcending human reason, outside of oneself and “the world,” the dogmatic element becomes indispensable. Liberals favored a subjectivism that, if prevalent, cannot but undermine all external manifestations of Divine Order. Newman writes in a letter to a “zealous Catholic layman”:

Are you aware that the more serious thinkers among us are used, as far as they dare form an opinion, to regard the spirit of Liberalism as the characteristic of the destined Antichrist? In vain does any one clear the Church of Rome from the badges of Antichrist, in which Protestants would invest her, if she deliberately takes up her position in the very quarter, whither we have cast them, when we took them off from her. Antichrist is described as the ἄνομος, as exalting himself above the yoke of religion and law. The spirit of lawlessness came in with the Reformation, and Liberalism is its offspring.¹⁹

to most exponents of religious dogma, the reasoning faculty can be exercised in an infinite number of directions and can thus justify the most obscene undertakings if left unchecked by divine judgement.

¹⁹ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 165-66.

It is unclear whether the recipient was a liberal, a Protestant, or if he merely approximated their “free views.” Newman’s sensitivity to dissidence was high; he was well aware that religion and law require consensus, even if their conditions cannot be logically understood – for religion, in particular, there is a need to stop short, or dogmatize, for there are simply too many variables in the universe for there ever to be an all-encompassing doctrine that accommodates all of the subtleties of human reason. This stopping short is most clearly indicated in our laws. Unlawful conduct is so for reasons that are not obvious beyond the fact of our collective sense of fairness and decency. We know instinctively to punish those who commit such crimes for a more peaceful and functional world. Religion is decisive in the same way, which is why liberals breach the solid foundations of the Church by dint of their ambivalence.

If skepticism was one aspect of liberalism that threatened the Church’s integrity, religious indifferentism was the other: nineteenth-century liberals thought it mattered less what religion you practiced than if you belonged to a religious tradition at all – that the gates of heaven were equally open to Methodists, Protestants, Jews, or Hindus as they were to Catholics. According to indifferentism, the notion of the Divine Creed, as written in the Bible and spoken at the altar, need not remain what it has always been: if followers are not comfortable with the creed, it is permissible to alter it indefinitely so long as they continue to pray and attend service or on condition of whatever other qualifications may avail themselves. This is discussed at great length in *Mirari Vos*, where Pope Gregory XVI conveys to all Catholic brethren his disapproval of those who are *contra fidem* and pro-revision. Without calling them “liberals” but merely “shameless lovers of liberty,” he emphasizes the necessity for men of faith to disavow any attempts to humanize the Catholic Church by subjecting it to reason, something “weak and infirm.”

Newman, like the pope, sided with the established, supra-personal authority of the Church and was distrustful of the ever-changing attitudes of individuals. This is nowhere seen more clearly than in his eighteen propositions on liberalism.²⁰ In them, we see firsthand the chalk outline drawn by Newman separating objective and subjective religiosity and strongly in favor of the former. The eighteen theses provide revealing diagnoses of the liberals’ need for scriptural understanding and free selection of beliefs, as opposed to anything dogmatically imposed from the outside:

1. No religious tenet is important unless reason shows it to be so.
– Therefore, e.g. the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed is not to be insisted on unless it tends to convert the soul; and the doctrine of the Atonement is to be insisted on, if it does convert the soul.
2. No one can believe what he does not understand.
– Therefore, e.g. there are no mysteries in true religion.
3. No theological doctrine is anything more than an opinion which happens to be held by bodies of men.

²⁰ For other invocations of Newman’s eighteen propositions, see Brinton, *The Shaping of Modern Thought*, 180; Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion*, 172; Jacob Duggan and Zbigniew Janowski, *John Stuart Mill: On Democracy, Freedom and Government & Other Selected Writings* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2019), 747.

- Therefore, e.g. no creed, as such, is necessary for salvation.
- 4. It is dishonest in a man to make an act of faith in what he has not had brought home to him by actual proof.
 - Therefore, e.g. the mass of men ought not absolutely to believe in the divine authority of the Bible.
- 5. It is immoral in a man to believe more than he can spontaneously receive as being congenial to his moral and mental nature.
 - Therefore, e.g. a given individual is not bound to believe in eternal punishment.
- 6. No revealed doctrines or precepts may reasonably stand in the way of scientific conclusions.
 - Therefore, e.g. Political Economy may reverse our Lord’s declarations about poverty and riches, or a system of Ethics may teach that the highest condition of body is ordinarily essential to the highest state of mind.
- 7. Christianity is necessarily modified by the growth of civilization, and the exigencies of times.
 - Therefore, e.g. the Catholic priesthood, though necessary in the Middle Ages, may be superseded now.
- 8. There is a system of religion more simply true than Christianity as it has ever been received.
 - Therefore, e.g. we may advance that Christianity is the “corn of wheat”; which has been dead for 1800 years, but at length will bear fruit; and that Mahometanism is the manly religion, and existing Christianity the womanish.
- 9. There is a right of Private Judgment: that is, there is no existing authority on earth competent to interfere with the liberty of individuals in reasoning and judging for themselves about the Bible and its contents, as they severally please.
 - Therefore, e.g. religious establishments requiring subscription are Anti-Christian.
- 10. There are rights of conscience such that everyone may lawfully advance a claim to profess and teach what is false and wrong in matters, religious, social, and moral, provided that to his private conscience it seems absolutely true and right.
 - Therefore, e.g. individuals have a right to preach and practise fornication and polygamy.
- 11. There is no such thing as a national or state conscience.
 - Therefore, e.g. no judgments can fall upon a sinful or infidel nation.
- 13. The civil power has no positive duty, in a normal state of things, to maintain religious truth.
 - Therefore, e.g. blasphemy and sabbath-breaking are not rightly punishable by law.
- 14. Utility and expedience are the measure of political duty.
 - Therefore, e.g. no punishment may be enacted, on the ground that God commands it: e.g. on the text, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”
- 15. The Civil Power may dispose of Church property without sacrilege.
 - Therefore, e.g. Henry VIII committed no sin in his spoliations.
- 16. The Civil Power has the right of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and administration.
 - Therefore, e.g. Parliament may impose articles of faith on the Church or suppress Dioceses.
- 17. It is lawful to rise in arms against legitimate princes.

- Therefore, e.g. the Puritans in the seventeenth century, and the French in the 18th, were justifiable in their Rebellion and Revolution respectively.
- 18. The people are the legitimate source of power.
 - Therefore, e.g. Universal Suffrage is among the natural rights of man.
- 19. Virtue is the child of knowledge, and vice of ignorance.
 - Therefore, e.g. education, periodical literature, railroad traveling, ventilation, drainage, and the arts of life, when fully carried out, serve to make a population moral and happy.²¹

Here we see reverberations of the subjectivism in early liberal sects: Order is what *I* say it is, Scriptures are mere accessories that I can interpret and scramble any way I see fit. “Thought,” “Science,” “System[s] of Ethics,” “Private Judgement,” “Utility and Expedience” – if all that Newman has said thus far of liberals is true, then their agenda, in principle, was to make a servant of God, that He should bow down to each of these human enterprises rather than God being the master and the people His inferiors. It is doubtful that such an ethic can be traced to the thought of the liberal Catholics *in concreto*: we may interpret this merely with the aid of the accounts of clergymen. Therefore, the idea that the liberal sect sought to subjugate the divinity is to be taken at best as an illustration of the assessment made by the traditional priesthood concerning liberalism, which perhaps discloses the latter’s unconscious motivation. Who better than the authorities themselves should answer whether authority has been challenged?

This point of subjugation (of the Church to personal judgement) is made clear in the Notice of Liberals in Oxford. Scholasticism and pride gained the upper hand over the liberals’ religious sensibilities – Newman recounts their competitive spirit in the process of reformation, trying to overpower one another in decision-making and “car[ing] little for the object which others had at heart”:

These Reformers, as they may be called, were for some years members of scarcely more than three or four Colleges; and their own Colleges, as being under their direct influence, of course had the benefit of those stricter views of discipline and teaching, which they themselves were urging on the University. They had, in no long time, enough of real progress in their several spheres of exertion, and enough of reputation out of doors, to warrant them in considering themselves the *élite* of the place; and it is not wonderful if they were in consequence led to look down upon the majority of Colleges, which had not kept pace with the reform, or which had been hostile to it. And, when those rivalries of one man with another arose, whether personal or collegiate, which befell *literary and scientific societies*, such disturbances did but tend to raise in their eyes the value which they had already set upon academical distinction, and increase their zeal in pursuing it. Thus was formed an intellectual circle or class in the University – men, who felt they had a career before them, as soon as the pupils, whom they were forming, came into public life; men, whom non-residents, whether country parsons

²¹ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 294-96.

or preachers of the Low Church, on coming up from time to time to the old place, would look at, partly with admiration, partly with suspicion, as being an honour indeed to Oxford, but withal exposed to the temptation of ambitious views, and to the spiritual evils signified in what is called the “pride of reason.”²²

Newman adds a short clarification:

Whenever men are able to act at all, there is the chance of extreme and intemperate action; and therefore, when there is exercise of mind, there is the chance of wayward or mistaken exercise. Liberty of thought is in itself a good; but it gives an opening to false liberty. Now by Liberalism I mean false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place. Among such matters are first principles of whatever kind; and of these the most sacred and momentous are especially to be reckoned the truths of Revelation. Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word.²³

Early Anglican liberalism took philosophical skepsis for what for millennia has been considered Divine Revelation and the soil for cultural ethics. Religious men, in the actively devout rather than merely inherited sense, are well acquainted with the idea that virtue is not the child of knowledge but that a superordinate principle is required: and this principle, or Deity, is agreed upon by dogmatists and theologians alike to exceed human knowledge, as something far beyond and superior to it, to which reason and man himself should remain obedient.

Liberalism, as specified above, was partial to an academic mentality and, consequently, a threat to Christian faith, as it produced a collision between scholarly inquisitiveness and theology, which follow extremely different sets of rules. The former flourishes as a result of ongoing discussion, arriving at new and refined conclusions in relation to various problems. It thrives on novelty. Theological doctrine, in contrast, is by definition permanent, as it is the Word of God – the conclusions are already there, and any deviation from what has been established is automatically a mistake; in this field, “correction” equals error. Today we associate conservatism in the United States with the Republican Party and progressivism or liberalism with the Democratic Party. During Newman’s stay in the Church of England, the progressivist tendency had already been in full swing through the body of liberal Catholics, only it was mistakenly placed in the

²² *Ibid.*, 286-87 (emphasis added).

²³ *Ibid.*, 288.

sphere of religion, where it does not belong, and could even be described as infecting the Church. Newman refers to this pathology as “Antichrist.”

Newman speaks of liberals in several other passages of his *Apologia*, none of which are at odds with what has been said here.²⁴ It is uncertain when precisely Anglo-liberalism began, or whether we can ever know this. In closing, however, one last quote from the *Apologia* should be cited, for it contains traces of the scholastic, subjective, and anti-dogmatic principles explained earlier:

There may be, and doubtless is, in the hearts of some or many of them [Anglo-Liberals] a real antipathy or anger against revealed truth, which it is distressing to think of. Again, in many men of science or literature there may be an animosity arising from almost a personal feeling; it being a matter of party, a point of honour, the excitement of a game, or a consequence of soreness or annoyance occasioned by the acrimony or narrowness of apologists for religion, to prove that Christianity or that Scripture is untrustworthy. Many scientific and literary men, on the other hand, go on, I am confident, in a straightforward impartial way, in their own province and on their own line of thought[...]. But putting these particular classes aside, as having no special call on the sympathy of the Catholic, of course he does most deeply enter into the feelings of a fourth and large class of men, in the educated portions of society, of religious and sincere minds, who are simply perplexed – frightened or rendered desperate, as the case may be – by the utter confusion into which late discoveries or speculations have thrown their most elementary ideas of religion.²⁵

For Newman, the rise to dominance of scientific knowledge exacerbated the issue of how to reconcile the knowledge gained thereby with religious faith. Being completely separate entities, there is no solution to this problem: one either trusts or distrusts the doctrine of faith. Furthermore:

I am far from denying that scientific knowledge is really growing, but it is by fits and starts; hypotheses rise and fall; it is difficult to anticipate which will keep their ground, and what the state of knowledge in relation to them will be from year to year. In this condition of things, it has seemed to me very undignified for a Catholic to commit himself to the work of chasing what might turn out to be phantoms, and in behalf of some special objections, to be ingenious in devising a theory, which, before it was completed, might have to give place to some theory newer still, from the fact that those former suggestions had already come to nought under the uprising of others. It seemed to be a time of all others, in which Christians had a call to be patient, in which they had no other way of helping those who were alarmed, than

²⁴ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, 106, 173, 198.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

that of exhorting them to have a little faith and fortitude, and to “beware,” as the poet says, “of dangerous steps.”²⁶

Newman understood that, while academics were engaged in an everlasting process of self-correction, Christian doctrine must in the end remain fixed, beyond correction, so as not to fall into infinite regress. On this principle, early liberalism, by its very partiality to revision, was maladapted to the Church. Unlike modern science, the Christian tradition promulgates and endures owing to the conviction the liberal Catholics were incapable of holding without introducing personal and intellectual qualifications.

CONCLUSION: THE POST-LIBERAL MOMENT

My account of the rise of liberal Catholicism reveals the emergence of what John Stuart Mill called the “brooding self-consciousness” of modern man, here exemplified in a revisionist and intellectual subpopulation of Oxford and the Church who made a rigorous attempt to rethink Catholic worship in all its private and public forms. We see this self-consciousness in the Church of England, as well as in that of Rome, while some mention has been made of this tendency arising elsewhere (Germany, France, and Spain, among others). This “brooding self-consciousness” conveys, if only imperfectly, the rudimentary stage of European liberalism in that it illustrates a sense of self-importance, skepticism – or the valuation of personal judgement over the objective and lawful – and the desire to supplant the objects and ideas of privileged authorities with those belonging to persons of lower rank – that is, the citizen or the populace. Each of these developments is shown expressly in the Enlightenment and its subsequent religious reform groups, including the case in point of liberal-Catholicism.²⁷ The French catastrophe, it seems, riveted even the surrounding nations, which succumbed to similar currents against antique authorities and

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁷ As has been shown, a great deal of the spiritual power of a place of worship rests in its immunity to the world outside of it, and especially to human judgement and reason, for which the Church has sought to be a corrective. For further treatment of the Catholic principle of cognitive demarcation, see Pope Pius IX’s “Syllabus of Errors” (1864, see: papalencyclicals.net/pius09/p9syll.htm), which also corroborates the endurance of the liberal “indifferentism.” The Church that is committed to conservation, however, today struggles to reconcile itself with an ever-diversifying world. This struggle of the past-rooted Church against a modernizing civilization has caused many an Episcopal congregation to adapt their House to be more “inclusive,” demonstrating flexibilities that often negate their heritage. Thus the dilemma is whether a priesthood should speak out against the assimilation of the Church to the times (à la Pope Gregory XVI in *Mirari Vos*), or if it should adjust itself and the House according to the fluxes of modernity – for example, by the incorporation of pop-music into the choir, changes in dress code, alternative portrayals of the Savior, or freer, unregulated interpretation of Scripture, the last of which is characteristic of the liberal-Catholics. Among the most controversial of questions forced upon the Church is the treatment of sexual relations; for an argument posited against the Church of England on this matter, see Colin Coward, “Decadence of the Church of England,” *Unadulterated Love*, 21 November 2017, see: unadulteratedlove.net/blog/2017/11/21/the-decadence-of-the-church-of-england/. For more on the contemporary handling of Church modification, see the following online popular-press articles: David V. Kimball, “5 Problems with the Modern Christian Church,” *Medium*, see: medium.com/@davidvkimball/5-problems-with-the-modern-christian-church-356c89029d15/; Ashley-Anna Aboreson, “Religion Evolving to Fit the Modern World,” *PantherNOW*, 25 October 2017, see: panthernow.com/2017/10/25/religion-evolving-to-fit-modern-world/; Sarah Shortall, “When Catholicism Embraced Modernity,” *Boston Review*, 10 August 2018, see: bostonreview.net/philosophy-religion/sarah-shortall-when-catholicism-embraced-modernity/; Fr. James V. Schall, “On Adapting to ‘Modern Times,’” *Catholic Culture*, see: catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=7709; and Gary McIntosh, “Adapting to Culture...

established norms. Wheresoever the liberal proclivity for progress began, it entered into the Church rather fruitlessly in the nineteenth century, soon afterwards manifesting itself instead in debates over temporal law, civil conduct, rights and freedoms of the individual, and so on. The momentous impact of the French Revolution led separate, mainly European nations to mimic the tendency to progress, one definitive expression of which was the advent of Liberalism in England in 1822 (viz. *The Liberal*), though there is evidence that suggests its prior development elsewhere.

My aim in presenting the rise of modern Liberalism as a blend of political and religious (or, anti-religious) activity was to illuminate the ecclesiastical and scriptural dynamics once so integral to the Liberal movement. Liberalism today concerns itself less with religious authority than with the rights and powers of the State. Yet the primal-religious variant of early Liberalism, as I have shown, was associated with skepticism, subjectivism, individualism, scholastic or academic epistemology, rationalism, as well as revisionist or reformist attitudes. I have argued that the growing “Liberal” attitude might have been the result of a growing self-consciousness, a realization of one’s own individual powers: just as the *Tiers État* deemed the Bourbons out of season, so too did the Liberal Catholics consider the traditional priesthood to be too arbitrary and unadaptable. It is worth considering the impact of scientific and philosophic thought on religious participation today and that this impact would seem to be degenerative: in other words, the more the former excel, the more religious traditions suffer. On this last point, as I have shown, Cardinal Newman’s *Apologia* provided the ultimate example, in which the progressivist and intellectual tendency threatened to deracinate the Church from within.

Appropriately!,” *The Good Book Blog*, Biola University, 12 June 2012, see: biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2012/adapting-to-culture-appropriately.

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WADE DAVIS (1953) is a Canadian ethnobotanist, anthropologist, and writer who served for many years as explorer-in-residence at the National Geographic Society. He holds degrees in anthropology and biology and a PhD in ethnobotany from Harvard University. Davis conducted fieldwork in the Amazon and Andes, documenting the ritual, medicinal, and cosmological uses of psychoactive plants within indigenous cultures. His books include *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985), *One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rain Forest* (1996), *Light at the Edge of the World: A Journey Through the Realm of Vanishing Cultures* (2001), *The Lost Amazon: The Photographic Journey of Richard Evans Schultes* (2004), *The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* (2009), *The Lost Amazon: The Pioneering Expeditions of Richard Evans Schultes* (2016), and *Beneath the Surface of Things: New and Selected Essays* (2024).

JACOB DUGGAN studied at Towson University, Baltimore. His interests focus on political thought. He co-edited *John Stuart Mill: On Democracy, Freedom and Government & Other Selected Writings* (2019) and *John Stuart Mill: Articles, Columns, Reviews and Translations of Plato's Dialogues* (2022).

ROBERT FORTE (1956) is an American scholar of religion and an editor and independent researcher associated with theentheogenic movement. He received a BA in psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an MA in religious studies from the University of Chicago (1985). He is the editor of *Entheogens and the Future of Religion* (1997) and *Timothy Leary: Outside Looking In: Appreciations, Castigations, Reminiscences* (1998). He published the twentieth and thirtieth anniversary editions of *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secrets of the Mysteries* (1998, 2008).

ALBERT HOFMANN (1906-2008) was a Swiss research chemist at Sandoz Pharmaceuticals in Basel. He is best known for discovering lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD-25) in 1938 and subsequently discovering its psychoactive properties in 1943. Hofmann also performed the first isolation and synthesis of psilocybin and psilocin, the active compounds in visionary Mexican mushrooms. He co-authored *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (1978),

providing the chemical evidence for the ergot-based visionary potion used in ancient Greece. His later writings, including *LSD: My Problem Child* (1979), articulate a vision of psychedelics as tools for epistemic, ethical, and ecological insight.

KARL KERÉNYI (1897-1973) was a Hungarian philologist and one of the founders of modern studies in Greek mythology. He served as a professor of classical studies at the universities of Pécs, Szeged, and Budapest before emigrating to Switzerland in 1943. Closely associated with the Eranos circle, he developed a phenomenological and symbolic approach to Greek myth, emphasizing its experiential, ritual, and existential dimensions. Kerényi collaborated extensively with Carl Gustav Jung, with whom he co-authored *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis* (1941). His extensive body of work, including *The Gods of the Greeks* (1951) and *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (1967), focuses on the psychological and historical reality of myth. Alongside R. Gordon Wasson and Albert Hofmann, he was a primary proponent of the theory that the Eleusinian Mysteries involved the use of a visionary sacrament.

LEON LARKIN (1993) is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He was born and raised in Massachusetts, where he continues to reside with his wife, children, and mother. His research interests include the intersection of theology, psychedelics, and politics, as well as syncretic, ecumenical approaches to theology drawing on influences from ancient Gnosticism and Neoplatonism, transcendental idealism, as well as Eastern religions and folk traditions. His writing is featured on his website, *Revolutionary Restraint*. He also holds the rank of Godan and is an instructor of Nick Cerio's Kenpo JiuJitsu Karate, which he regards as a formative influence on his approach to philosophy.

TERENCE McKENNA (1946-2000) was an American ethnobotanist, author, and independent scholar known for his advocacy of the use of naturally occurring psychedelic plants. He received a degree from the University of California, Berkeley (1975). McKenna co-authored *The Psilocybin Mushroom Grower's Guide* (1976) with his brother Dennis under the pseudonyms O.T. Oss and O.N. Oeric. His major works, including *The Archaic Revival* (1991), *Food of the Gods* (1992), and *True Hallucinations* (1993), explore the role of psychedelics in human evolution and the linguistic nature of the visionary experience. Through his writings and extensive lecturing, he became one of the most prominent interpreters of psychedelics as catalysts of cognitive, cultural, and spiritual evolution.

PIOTR NOWAK (1966) is a professor of philosophy at Białystok University in Poland. He has translated the works of such writers as Hannah Arendt, W. H. Auden, Leo Strauss, Alexander Kojève, Allan Bloom, Boris Pasternak, Vasily Rozanov, Andrei Bely, Pavel Florensky, Jacob Taubes, and Semyon Frank. He is the deputy editor in chief of the philosophical quarterly *Kronos* (in Polish) and the annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English). He is also a member of the board of the Count August Cieszkowski Foundation. He is the author of the following monographs: *Ontology of Success: An Essay on the Philosophy of Alexandre Kojève* (2006), *The Prince's Signature: Reflections on Strength and Weakness* (2013), *The Ancients and Shakespeare on Time: Some Remarks on the War of Generations* (2014; in English), *Troglodyte Breeding: Comments on Higher Education and the Mental Culture of Contemporary Man* (2014), *I Die Therefore I Am* (2016), and *The Box with Pandora Within* (2016). His most recent books are *Violence and Words: The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (2018), for which he was awarded the National Library of Poland's Wings of Daedalus Literary Prize in 2019; *After Jews: Essays on Political Theology, Shoah and the End of Man* (2022; in English); *Philosophers* (2022), for which he was awarded The Institute of National Remembrance's Historical Book of the Year Prize in 2023 in the category "Best popular science book devoted to the history of Poland in the 20th century"; *A Misanthrope's Sketchbook* (2023); *A Typical Polish Accent: Sketches on Polish Culture* (2024), which received distinctions from the Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2025) and the Professor Jan Baszkiewicz Award (2025).

JONATHAN OTT (1949-2025) was an American ethnobotanist, chemist, and independent researcher specializing in psychoactive plants and traditional entheogenic practices. A student and close collaborator of R. Gordon Wasson and Albert Hofmann, Ott conducted extensive fieldwork in Mesoamerica and South America and contributed significantly to the taxonomy, chemistry, and phenomenology of entheogens. He authored seminal works such as *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic Drugs, Their Plant Sources and History* (1993), *Hallucinogenic Plants of North America* (1976), *The Age of Entheogens & The Angels' Dictionary* (1995), and *Pharmacophilia: Or the Natural Paradises* (1997). Ott was instrumental in refining the concept of the entheogen and in documenting the continuity between indigenous sacramental use and contemporary psychedelic research.

CARL A. P. RUCK (1935) is a professor in the Classical Studies Department at Boston University. He received a BA from Yale University, an MA from the University of Michigan, and a PhD from Harvard University. Ruck has written extensively

on Greek mythology and the ecstatic rituals of the god Dionysus. With the ethnomycologist R. Gordon Wasson and Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann, he identified the secret psychoactive ingredient in the visionary potion that was drunk by the initiates at the Eleusinian Mysteries. In *Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origin of Religion*, he proclaimed the centrality of psychoactive sacraments at the very beginnings of religion and innovated the neologism "entheogen" to free the topic from the pejorative connotations of words such as "drug" or "hallucinogen."

ANDRZEJ SERAFIN (1980) is an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of the National Education Commission (KEN, Komisja Edukacji Narodowej) in Kraków, a translator, and the editor of the philosophical journals *Kronos* (Polish) and *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (English). He is the founder of the Platonic Summer Seminar held annually in Lanckorona since 2017. His PhD thesis focused on the concept of truth in Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle (2016). His major publications include *Heidegger: Fenomenologia niewidzialnego* (Heidegger: Phenomenology of the Invisible, 2022), *Nowoczesność Platona* (Modern Plato, 2023), and *Studies on Heidegger* (2024).

Hannah Arendt

KANT SEMINAR: CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON

This seminar text reconstructs Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* through a pedagogical and conceptual lens. Arendt explains the critical project as an inquiry into the limits and legitimacy of reason, emphasizing the architectonic structure of critique and the distinction between pure and empirical cognition. Central attention is given to synthetic a priori judgments, the role of synthesis, and the function of categories in making experience possible. The text elucidates Kant's analysis of causality, freedom, and the antinomies as expressions of reason's internal conflicts. Arendt stresses that while causality grounds scientific knowledge, freedom is known as an indispensable presupposition of thought and action. The seminar interprets the *Critique* not as negation but as clarification of reason's proper sphere, offering a novel account of Kant's transcendental method and its existential as well as political implications.

Hannah Arendt

KANT NOTEBOOK

This text presents Hannah Arendt's interpretive notes on Kant's moral philosophy, focusing on freedom, conscience, judgment, and the public character of morality. Arendt emphasizes freedom as a "fact of reason" known a priori through moral experience rather than theoretical proof. She explores the relation between moral insight and intuitive judgment, the role of conscience as self-judgment, and the distinction between private maxims and their public testability. Central themes include the duty to oneself, veracity, the concealment inherent in evil, and morality as the capacity to appear before others without self-deception. Arendt also reflects on respect, the sublime, and the rejection of theodicy, highlighting Kant's understanding of moral dignity as grounded in autonomy and self-legislation. The notes illuminate Kant's ethics as a philosophy of visibility, responsibility, and inner freedom, interpreted through Arendt's broader concern with political and moral agency.

Andrzej Serafin

METAPHYSICS AND POLITICS IN ARENDT'S 1964 READING OF KANT

This study reconstructs Arendt's intensive engagement with Kant in 1964 through two previously unpublished or little-known texts: the *Kant Notebook* and seminar notes on the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Serafin argues that these documents constitute a unified philosophical project aimed at reconciling metaphysics and politics. Written in the aftermath of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the texts reveal Arendt grappling with conscience, judgment, and the problem of evil while reexamining the epistemological foundations of subjectivity. By reading practical and theoretical Kant together, the article shows how Arendt moves from Kant's moral philosophy toward the *Critique of Judgment* and the concept of *sensus communis* as a basis for political judgment.

Leon Larkin

ESSAY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MODERN THEOLOGY

Larkin develops a speculative philosophical theology engaging critically with Kant's critique of traditional proofs of God's existence. Revisiting the cosmological, teleological, and ontological arguments, the essay challenges Kant's rejection of existence as a predicate and argues for a rehabilitated ontological approach, drawing on modal reasoning. The text emphasizes the limits of purely conceptual proofs and insists on the necessity of experiential access to the intelligible. Larkin explores everyday, mystical, and psychedelic experiences as modes of encounter with the divine, arguing against reductionist accounts of consciousness. The essay proposes a modern theology grounded not in dogma but in rational defensibility and experiential depth, integrating metaphysics, phenomenology, and altered states of awareness.

Karl Kerényi

GROUND FOR THE ELEUSINIAN VISION

Kerényi investigates the unique character of Eleusinian initiation, focusing on the concept of *ἐπιπτεία* as a form of transformative vision rather than theatrical spectacle. Rejecting interpretations that posit ritual impersonation or dramatic representation, he argues that initiates themselves embodied the sacred drama through an *imitatio deae*, specifically the search of Demeter for Persephone. The essay emphasizes the participatory and contemplative nature of Eleusinian experience, interpreting it as a form of *θεωρία* understood as a “visit” rather than observation. Kerényi situates this vision within Greek religious imagination and highlights its universal anthropological significance, transcending gender distinctions and grounding initiation in a shared human destiny.

Karl Kerényi

PREREQUISITES OF INITIATION IN ELEUSIS

This essay examines the conditions and meaning of initiation at Eleusis, proposing that initiation signifies a second birth into full humanity. Kerényi analyzes the concept of the sacred secret (*ἄρρητον*) as intrinsically unspeakable rather than merely forbidden, and interprets initiation as a transformation marked by lasting vision (*ὄρωπτεν*). He introduces a formal model of initiation as the acquisition of a higher life-content inaccessible to non-initiates through discursive means. The essay stresses that Eleusinian initiation culminated in seeing rather than doctrinal instruction, and reflects on the difficulty of reconstructing its decisive experiential content. Kerényi frames Eleusis as a central site for understanding initiation as a fundamental anthropological and spiritual process.

Albert Hofmann

LSD AND THE ROAD TO ELEUSIS

Hofmann offers a personal and philosophical reflection on the discovery of LSD and its implications for the nature of reality and consciousness. He develops a “transmitter–receiver” model in which reality emerges from the interaction between the material world and human consciousness. Psychedelic experience reveals the plurality of realities and challenges naive realism by demonstrating the constructive role of perception. Hofmann distinguishes rational philosophical inquiry from existential insight, arguing that altered states can disclose dimensions of reality inaccessible to ordinary cognition. While cautious about generalization, he suggests that such experiences resonate with ancient initiatory traditions, including Eleusis, and invite a reconsideration of consciousness as a fundamental, irreducible mystery.

Albert Hofmann

ON THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

In this lecture, Albert Hofmann reflects on the Eleusinian Mysteries as a paradigmatic example of balance between the material and spiritual dimensions of human existence. He situates the mysteries within a broader inquiry into consciousness and argues that ancient Greek culture offers a model for integrating transcendence with everyday life. Hofmann interprets the Eleusinian rites as a response to fundamental human longings for meaning and renewal, suggesting their relevance for modern ecological and spiritual crises. Without reducing the mysteries to pharmacology, he explores their experiential core and symbolic power, emphasizing transformation of consciousness as their enduring legacy. The text connects ancient religious practice with contemporary reflections on altered states and the future of human self-understanding.

Carl A. P. Ruck

THE MESSAGE OF THE MYSTERIES TO THE WORLD

Ruck explores the Eleusinian Mysteries as a central institution of ancient Greek religion and a formative influence on Western civilization. Drawing on literary, archaeological, and philosophical sources, he argues that the Mysteries offered initiates a transformative vision of life, death, and humanity’s relationship to the natural world. The ritual experience is interpreted not as symbolic instruction alone but as a genuine encounter with a transcendent dimension that integrated agricultural cycles, ecological balance, and spiritual renewal. Ruck situates Eleusis as a precursor to later philosophical motifs, including Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, and emphasizes its role in shaping ethical and existential orientations across centuries. The essay concludes by linking the ancient mystery experience to modern ecological crises, suggesting that the loss of such integrative spiritual practices has contributed to contemporary alienation from nature.

Terence McKenna

THE ROAD TO ELEUSIS: UNPUBLISHED AFTERWORD

In this polemical afterword, McKenna reflects on the historical significance of the Eleusinian Mysteries and their violent suppression, interpreting their destruction as a decisive rupture in Western spiritual history. He frames Eleusis as the last stronghold of entheogen-based religion in the ancient world and contrasts its cosmological vision with the ascendance of monotheism and materialism. McKenna links the loss of Eleusis to modern cultural alienation and ecological crisis, arguing for a renewed engagement with altered states of consciousness as a path toward spiritual and civilizational renewal. The text blends historical speculation, cultural critique, and visionary rhetoric, positioning Eleusis as a symbol of lost integration between humanity, nature, and the sacred.

Wade Davis

RICHARD EVANS SCHULTES: PLANT EXPLORER

This biographical essay portrays Richard Evans Schultes as a foundational figure in modern ethnobotany and a pivotal influence on twentieth-century understandings of psychoactive plants. Davis traces Schultes's early academic formation at Harvard, his pioneering fieldwork in the Amazon, and his discoveries of sacred indigenous plants such as psilocybin mushrooms and ayahuasca. Emphasis is placed on Schultes's role as both a rigorous scientist and an unconventional teacher whose mentorship shaped generations of researchers, writers, and clinicians. The essay also highlights the apparent paradoxes of Schultes's character: his conservative political views alongside a radical commitment to personal freedom and intellectual openness. By situating Schultes within the broader history of exploration, colonial science, and the psychedelic era, Davis presents him as a bridge between classical natural history and contemporary debates on consciousness, ecology, and cultural survival.

Robert Forte

PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS: SACRED OR PROFANE?

Drawing on personal experience and intellectual history, this essay critically examines the role of psychedelic substances in religious experience. Forte revisits debates involving Mircea Eliade, R. Gordon Wasson, Terence McKenna, and Huston Smith, focusing on conflicting evaluations of psychoactive plants as vehicles of the sacred. While acknowledging the transformative potential of psychedelics, the author questions uncritical enthusiasm and highlights historical ambiguities, ethical concerns, and overlooked evidence of misuse. The text situates the contemporary "psychedelic renaissance" within a longer scholarly and cultural context, emphasizing the need for discernment between genuine spiritual insight and romanticized projections. Forte calls for a more nuanced understanding of psychedelics that respects both their religious significance and their potential dangers.

Jonathan Ott

OBSEQUIES FOR THE PSYCHEDELIC RENAISSANCE: NON-OBLIVIOUS SEMANTICS FOR THE PSYCHOPTIC RESURGENCE

This essay critically reassesses the notion of a contemporary "psychedelic renaissance" by focusing on the semantic and conceptual confusion surrounding visionary substances. Ott argues that the psychedelic never truly disappeared and therefore cannot be reborn; what is required instead is linguistic and conceptual clarity. Tracing the historical evolution of terms such as "hallucinogen," "psychedelic," "psychotomimetic," and "entheogen," the essay exposes how shifting nomenclature has obscured the experiential and cultural specificity of these substances. Ott situates modern debates within the longer history of ethnopharmacology, beginning with nineteenth-century alkaloid research and culminating in twentieth-century psychonautic experimentation. He calls for a vocabulary capable of addressing visionary experience across theology, psychology, and biochemistry without reducing it to pathology or medical utility. The essay ultimately presents semantic precision as a prerequisite for any serious engagement with the resurgence of psychoptic research.

Jonathan Ott

THE MARRIAGE OF ENERGY AND MATTER

In this essay, Jonathan Ott advances a phenomenological and scientific account of visionary experience grounded in contemporary physics. He argues that so-called psychoptic substances enable perception of the world as fundamentally energetic rather than material, revealing the illusory solidity of matter. Drawing on optics, quantum physics, and Platonic philosophy, Ott contends

that ordinary perception already consists in the reception of electromagnetic energy, which the mind habitually reifies as material objects. Psychedelic experience intensifies this insight, dissolving the perceptual habits of materialism and disclosing the energetic architecture of reality. The essay challenges reductive accounts of visionary experience as hallucination, proposing instead that such states offer an epistemically meaningful correction to naive realism. By integrating scientific explanation with philosophical reflection, Ott presents visionary perception as a legitimate mode of insight into the structure of the universe.

Andrzej Serafin

EIDETIC INTUITION: SEEING IDEAS IN KANT, HUSSERL, AND HEIDEGGER

This article defends the existence of a genuinely visual yet non-sensory mode of cognition termed eidetic intuition. Challenging the reduction of Platonic “seeing ideas” to metaphorical language, Serafin argues that ideas can be intuited as inner, nonsensory images possessing evidential force. Drawing on Plato, Eleusinian *ἑωπία*, Husserl’s theory of fulfilling intuition, Kantian schematism, and Heidegger’s phenomenology, the article proposes a conceptual framework for understanding such experiences without hypostatizing ideas as transcendent objects. Serafin further explores the continuity between classical metaphysical vision and modern induced visionary states, suggesting that eidetic intuition can, under certain conditions, be experimentally accessed. The article concludes that eidetic intuition reveals schematic structures governing the appearance of beings, thereby reopening the question of metaphysical insight within a critical philosophical horizon.

Abraham P. Bos

BASILIDES OF ALEXANDRIA AS AN ARISTOTELIAN GNOSTIC IV: BASILIDES’S DOCTRINE OF THE GREAT ARCHON

This study analyzes Basilides’s doctrine of the Great Archon within the framework of early Gnostic cosmology and its engagement with Greek philosophy. Bos interprets the Great Archon as ruler, cosmic head, and divine Power (*δύναμις*), arguing that Basilides integrates biblical motifs with Aristotelian and Philonic concepts. The article explores the hierarchical structure of cosmic powers, the relation between Sonship and Archon, and the symbolic role of the “cosmic Man.” Special attention is given to textual problems concerning the ineffability of the Archon and to proposed emendations of the source tradition. Bos demonstrates the originality of Basilides’s system, in which cosmic governance is understood as an indirect execution of divine will, and situates this doctrine within broader debates on Gnosticism, metaphysics, and early Christian theology.

Gil Anidjar

“UBI ESSET ILLA, IBI ESSE ET ME”: THE MEANING OF A REVOLUTION

This essay interrogates the concept of revolution through the lens of the Copernican turn, questioning whether political thought has ever undergone a genuine decentering comparable to that of modern science. Drawing on Freud’s notion of successive “humbling blows” to human self-understanding, Anidjar revisits the legacy of Copernicus, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, and Schmitt to explore the temporal deferral inherent in revolutionary meaning. Revolutions, the essay argues, are never fully intelligible at the moment of their occurrence; their sense remains belated, contested, and unstable. Special attention is given to the absence of politics from classical narratives of Copernican displacement and to the question of whether a specifically political Copernican revolution is conceivable. By examining Carl Schmitt’s ambivalent engagement with the idea of a Copernican turn, the essay raises fundamental questions about sovereignty, centrality, and the possibility that politics itself may have been decentered by an “exorbitant elsewhere” that remains insufficiently thought.

Jeremy Raymond Bell

CARL SCHMITT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF “HUMANITY”

This essay reexamines Carl Schmitt’s claim that the political is an inescapable dimension of human existence by interrogating the possibility of a fully depoliticized world. Bell analyzes Schmitt’s conception of the political as grounded in the real possibility of war and his ambivalent reflections on a hypothetical world state or global humanity. While Schmitt often presupposes an anthropological pessimism according to which human beings are inherently dangerous, the essay argues that this presupposition does not logically entail the permanent necessity of political conflict. Bell explores Schmitt’s tension between liberal aspirations to depoliticization and his skepticism toward anarchic or radically decentralized forms of order. By reconstructing Schmitt’s scattered remarks on humanity, sovereignty, and global governance, the article raises the question of whether a nonpolitical yet ordered human world is conceptually coherent. The essay ultimately exposes unresolved ambiguities in Schmitt’s thought regarding freedom, authority, and the limits of political theology.

Clifford Bates

DE LA MORA'S CRITIQUE OF EGALITARIANISM: ENVY AND THE PASSIONS THAT UNDO REGIMES

This article analyzes the Spanish philosopher Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora's critique of egalitarianism, with particular emphasis on material equality as a destabilizing political ideal. Bates situates De la Mora's arguments within modern European political discourse, where redistributive policies and welfare-state models often presuppose equality as an unquestioned moral good. De la Mora challenges this assumption by identifying envy as the primary affective force driving egalitarian movements, arguing that enforced equality erodes natural hierarchies of authority and competence essential to political stability. The article examines De la Mora's distinction between authority and power, as well as his claim that inequality reflects organic differences in talent, responsibility, and vocation rather than injustice. Historical examples, including the French and Russian Revolutions, are invoked to demonstrate how egalitarian ideals can culminate in violence and authoritarianism. Bates concludes that De la Mora offers a provocative counterpoint to contemporary political thought by urging a balance between legal equality and the preservation of hierarchical order.

Jacob Duggan

LIBERAL CATHOLICISM IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

This article examines the emergence of liberal Catholicism within the Church of England between 1822 and 1848 as a distinctive manifestation of Enlightenment liberalism in a religious context. Duggan analyzes how liberal Catholic thinkers emphasized free discourse, individual conscience, and intellectual inquiry, thereby challenging traditional doctrines, liturgical authority, and inherited forms of worship. Drawing on figures such as Cardinal Newman and contemporary critics of liberal theology, the essay explores the tension between faith understood as unquestioned tradition and faith subjected to rational scrutiny. Liberal Catholicism, the article argues, introduced a form of equality grounded not in social leveling but in the equal right to interpret and debate religious truth. This intellectualization of devotion destabilized established ecclesiastical structures while reshaping Anglican religious life. Duggan situates these developments within broader political transformations of the nineteenth century, showing how liberal Catholicism mirrored parallel challenges to monarchy and inherited authority.

The philosophical quarterly *Kronos* was established in 2007 by scholars connected with the University of Warsaw and the University of Białystok. Metaphysics, the philosophy of politics, the philosophy of literature and religion, and the history of psychoanalysis comprise the thematic scope of the journal. The editors of the quarterly strive to familiarize the Polish reader with new translations and commentaries of classic works (Plato, Joachim of Fiore, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, Heidegger, and many others), as well as the work of contemporary philosophers.

The annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English) was established in 2012 as a companion edition to the quarterly, to supplement it, yet without repeating the content of the Polish edition. The papers presented in the annual might be of interest to readers from outside Poland, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the dynamic thought of contemporary Polish authors, as well as entirely new topics rarely discussed by English-speaking authors. One of the issues published so far contained passages from previously unknown lectures by Leo Strauss on Aristotle; another issue was dedicated to the Russian phenomenologist Gustav Shpet.

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