

This document comprises chapter one, “It’s not like you see God” from my book, *Growing Up Psychedelic: Becoming Human in a World of Spirit*.

It is illustrated with images created with the AI tool Dall-E from openai.

While the rest of the 300+ pages take a rather more serious turn, ultimately looking at the psychedelic state from the point of view of Rudolf Steiner’s anthroposophy. The first chapter seemed to lend itself to this admittedly frivolous exercise. I had briefly entertained the idea — before I started work on the book in earnest — of attempting the work as a graphic novel.

The peculiarities of the AI tool are such that the images take on a character of their own. Most are the result of iterating over multiple input prompts. The blonde character is, of course, a representation of my teenage self. Both vanity and laziness led me to omit the prompt “with acne” from most of the images, but the psychedelic fish image can give you a flavor.

I hope you enjoy and are perhaps motivated to get a copy of the book for real and read the rest of it.

David Eyes

January, 2024

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“David, it’s not like you see God or anything!”

Thus spoke my close friend Alan. It was sometime in the late winter of 1970, shortly after I turned fifteen; we were passing outside between classes. I was again discussing the whys and why-nots of taking LSD. I was the one yet to be “experienced,” and continued to probe with questions.

He and I had become friends during junior high, in eighth grade, when I returned to public school from a one-year exile at a private school (my parents thought I was underperforming). I befriended him and his neighbor Paul, to start, through the mutual interest Paul and I had in making 8mm films.

Alan was a somewhat broad-shouldered guy, his brown hair in the process of growing longer, as was mine. He had the facial hair to sport a rich pair of the then-popular sideburns (Jealous. I couldn’t grow a legitimate mustache until my forties). He and Paul were neighbors and lived near the beach; often, I hitchhiked to one of their homes, and the three of us would hang out.

He was enthusiastically engaged in rock music, particularly the San Francisco scene; he was often the first to tune in on this or that new musical group. Alan had a well-developed sense of humor and seemed an endless source of jokes, including sometimes practical jokes.

He had first dosed on LSD at Woodstock — the music festival considered a defining event of the counter-culture era — the previous summer. Now, along with the rest of our hanging out, pot-smoking, and poker-playing circle of guys, he had since tripped somewhat routinely (once or twice a month) across the fall semester of 10th grade. I was

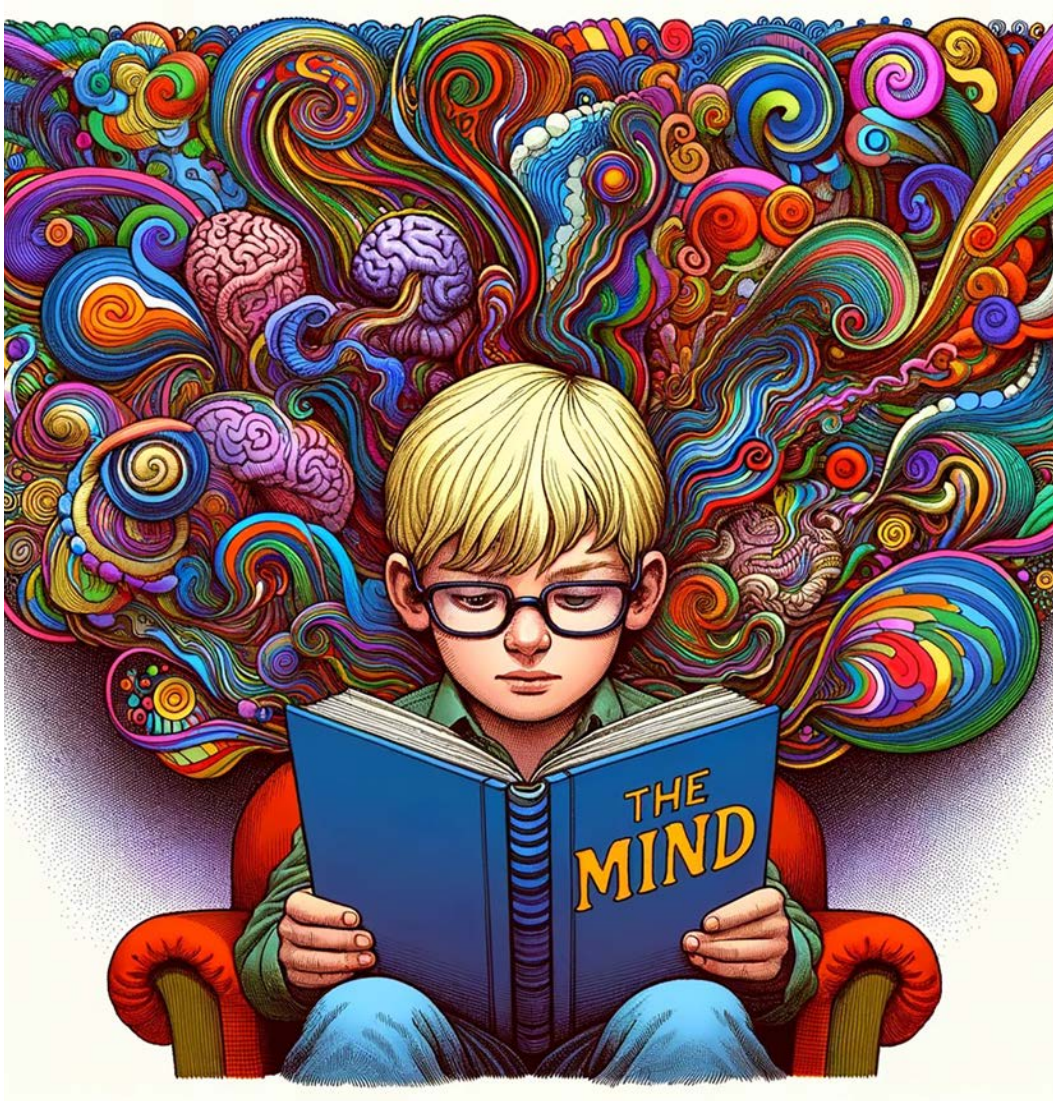


the last holdout in my immediate circle. That day we spoke back and forth until finally, as we were about to mount the steps to the blacktop in front of the cafeteria, he turned, looked at me, and announced this as “the final word,” with a certain exasperation and mild disdain.

I don’t know what I would have said previously, but it would have reflected my general anxiety that LSD was not something to be trifled with.

Well, that shut me up. The gauntlet, as it were, was down, and there was no helping it but to suck it up, stop dithering, and take the plunge. With his assurance that I would not be experiencing any heavenly encounters and the turmoil that implied, I decided I was ready. I hadn’t quite strictly been concerned that I would see God. As it was to happen, that might well have been one worry to have had.

I first learned of LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, or colloquially, “acid”) in 1964 or 1965—at the age of nine or ten—by reading about it in the Life Science Library volume titled *The Mind*. The Life Science Library was a subscription set of books—you would receive one every month. My mother — an inquiring woman, keen for us to grow up informed and curious, had signed us up. I would study them avidly as they arrived. They were profusely illustrated on every page, in keeping with their being produced “By The



Editors of *Life*” — *Life Magazine*, that is, the weekly photo news magazine that was a primary source for the reception of glossy, full-color images of the world during the sixties—long before the internet, obviously, and also before color TV became ubiquitous. Not so coincidentally, the publishers of *Time* and *Life*, Henry and Clare Luce, were among the first wave of the LSD and psychedelic elite of the fifties. From their first experience in 1954, when it was completely unregulated, and on into the sixties, when it became controversial, they tended toward a favorable editorial slant.

I found the whole book fascinating as, with magazine-style illustrations, it covered the full spectrum of psychology and neurology of the time. Moreover, the topic of psychology had come to be somewhat of an interest through happenstances such as having a good friend whose father was a psychiatrist; a bit through my mother (a philosophy major in school) studying for a Master’s in psychological testing; and last but not least, a twenty-five cent booklet on *Dream Interpretation* my mother purchased for me at the supermarket checkout.



The Mind included an account of the discoverer of LSD, Albert Hoffman's⁶ first intentional LSD experience, wherein he is quoted as:

I lost all control of time; space and time became more and more disorganized and I was overcome with fears that I was going crazy. The worst part of it was that I was clearly aware of my condition though I was incapable of stopping it. Occasionally I felt as being outside my body. I thought I had died. My 'ego' was suspended somewhere in space and I saw my body lying dead on the sofa. I observed and registered clearly that my 'alter ego' was moving around the room, moaning.

The section continues with another two pages devoted to research, theory, set and setting, and more.

I found the "out of body" perspective fascinating and the whole description somewhat terrifying yet intriguing. I discussed my interest with my mother and shared the idea of this being something I might want to explore as an adult—rather in the way one might discuss the possibility of being an astronaut. She was not unsupportive, and I internalized a sense that she, too, found it intriguing.

This was all before LSD had become a broadly controversial question. Timothy Leary⁸ was in the process of becoming the leading popularizer of the virtues of LSD; he indeed had just been fired from the psychology department at Harvard, where his increasingly undisciplined psychedelic studies ran afoul of academic protocol and politics. His first popular publication, *The Psychedelic Experience* was also published in 1964. This was



co-authored with Richard Alpert, later to become Ram Dass, and Ralph Metzner — all of whom were part of the Harvard psychedelic studies project. Leary had not yet fully emerged as the wild-eyed LSD prophet but was *en route*, step by step, to becoming, according to President Richard Nixon, “the most dangerous man in America” and a fugitive from the law.

In 1964, the Beatles had just appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, taking America by storm. Also that year, the US Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution — which set the stage for the war in Vietnam and years of misery and protest throughout the sixties.

The military draft was still far from its 1966 peak of 380,000. Military dead in 1964 was 206—the anti-war movement, a key driver of the anti-establishment counter-culture — along with LSD and the hippie movement, was not yet underway. However, the civil rights and “free speech” movements were rapidly warming up.

LSD was, in 1964, in the socially acceptable legal status of a research drug. While the article in *The Mind* registered a deep interest, at the same time, I also internalized that this is a powerful, scary, profound experience, definitely belonging in the province of mature adulthood. This essentially correct perspective remained active as I found myself growing



into a high school scene that was well along into incorporating it into its general party culture.

Fast forward from age nine to my junior high and early high school years. A lot of counter-culture had flowed under the bridge; LSD had been classified as a Schedule I drug (no medical use, high abuse potential). The generational conflict was at a peak, and the baby boomer cohort was exploring itself with a vengeance and fighting like hell to avoid and protest the draft and the war in Vietnam. It was also acting out hedonistically with increasing abandon, fueled by drugs and the now widely available birth control pill. Timothy Leary was in jail by the time Alan and I were discussing LSD. Rock and roll was the vehicle of a common culture, manifested most dramatically by the Woodstock festival. A new spiritual awareness was dawning in some, catalyzed by “all of the above” and widely socialized in the 1968 trip to India by the Beatles. For most of those drawn to that new awareness, the light of that pathway was seen to rise in the East. In the West Coast scene, Zen had already established itself in the milieu of the fifties beat culture of literary figures like Allen Ginsburg and Jack Kerouac. From there, it is a short step to Ken Kesey, who was to first try LSD as a volunteer at a Veteran’s Administration hospital in Menlo Park, CA. This erupted into Kesey’s Merry Pranksters, a form of proto-hippies romanticized in Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-aid Acid Test*.



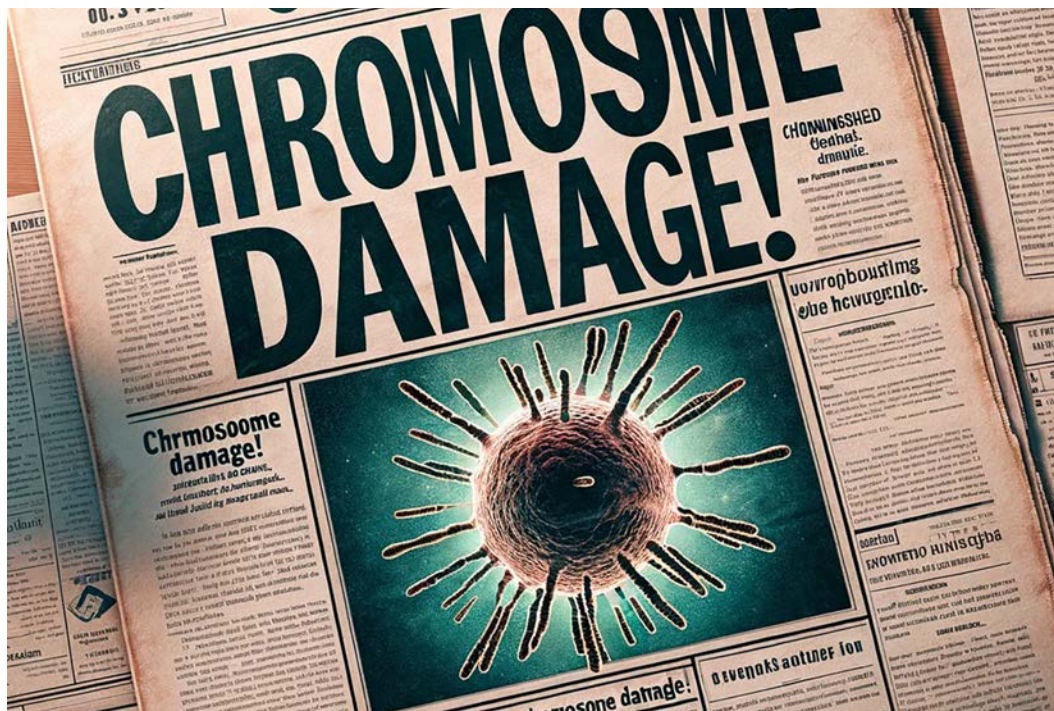
A few months before this dialog between Alan and myself, I had somewhat predictably begun smoking marijuana regularly with my friends. This seemed to happen inevitably. The arc of my initiation into the counter-culture scene, of which marijuana and psychedelics were an integral part, could be traced by the musical trends of the times we grew up in—my Junior High school years started in seventh grade listening to the more pop style of rock and roll influenced by the Beatles-inspired (musical) “British invasion” — including softer groups like the Monkees, The Loving Spoonful, the Turtles, and also some of the progressively edgier acts like the Rolling Stones, The Who, Bob Dylan, and so on. The flavor of the music scene evolved, such that by ninth grade, bit by bit, radio song by radio song, and album by album, it had morphed into the full-blown acid-rock of the Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin/Big Brother, Jimi Hendrix and of course, the fully psychedelicized Beatles of the *Revolver* and *Sergeant Pepper* albums. Lyrics of songs by the likes of the Beatles, Donovan, and the Jefferson Airplane were laced with LSD-influenced ideas.

This progress is typified in my life with a memory of my visit to New York City with one of my close grade school friends, at age 13 in 1968, to see the just-released film *The Monterey Pop Festival*. This documented a precursor to the Woodstock Festival in Monterey, California, that drew together many of the San Francisco acts of the acid-rock scene with bands from LA and Britain. It showcased the next generation of artists, such



as Jimi Hendrix and Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin. Emerging from the film — the scene of Hendrix setting his guitar on fire, among other things, having been a bit mind-blowing for us — we wandered south and found ourselves in the East Village. We would have walked past the just-opened Fillmore East and then wandered on into Tompkins Square, bustling with full-on hippies. We were probably gaping about as tourists when a young woman with a military jacket and John Lennon-style “granny glasses” asked us if we wanted to buy some pot. We were both mildly shocked insofar as we believed and assumed we were too young to be sized up as potential customers.

The leading edge of the college students just ahead of us — that is, of older brothers and sisters — was already fully engaged in the counter-culture, anti-war political movement, and drug scene. By the end of our final year of Junior High School in 1969, the adjustment was being made internally amongst myself and my peers to the idea that sooner or later — probably sooner — we would start to smoke pot.



It was probably somewhere between ninth and tenth grade that I finally won the battle with my father about not having to cut my hair. It was already at a “shaggy early beetle” length, and as high school progressed, it was to grow down past my shoulders in the typical “hippie freak” style of that era.

Even though I was by the fall of that year regularly smoking pot with my male friends, the acid trips they began indulging in that fall were, at first, somewhat “on the down low” and only whispered about in my presence. But before long, it had become a commonplace event, and the question that stood before me, voiced internally and outwardly by my friends, was: when will you get with it?

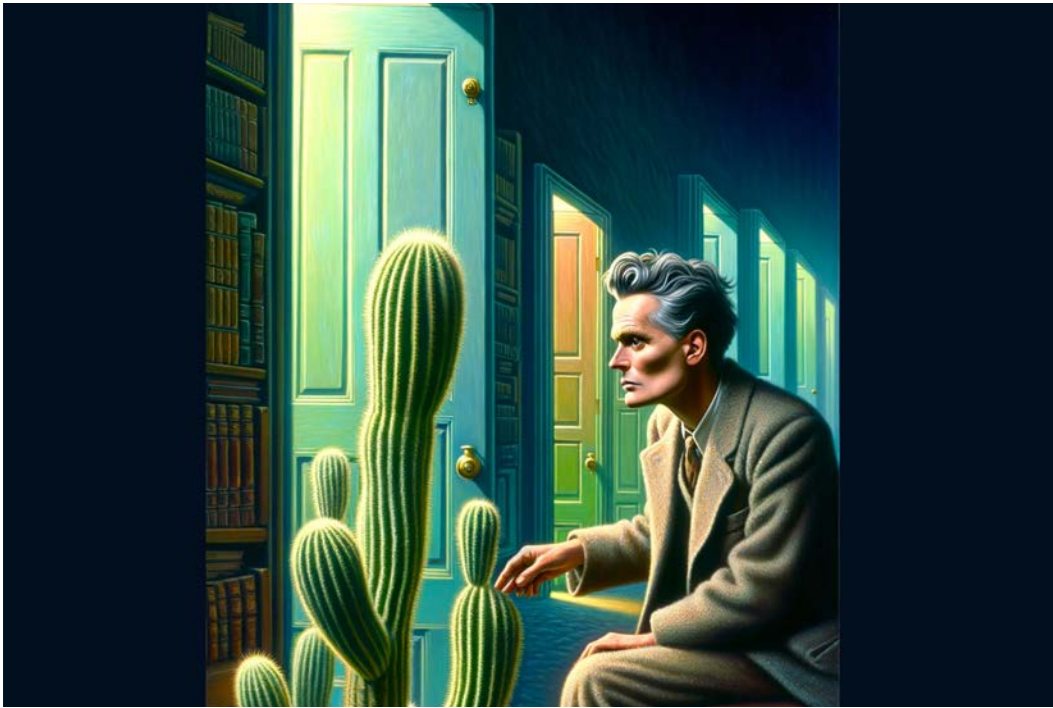
My interest, having been implanted at nine years old, prompted me to learn and read much more than a bit about it since it moved across the headlines in the years since. It was nevertheless still, in many ways, quite mysterious to my young, still-forming fifteen-year-old mind. The anti-psychedelic propaganda machine had since gone into high gear, injecting fear and illegality into the equation. Art Linkletter — always a benign, folksy, and avuncular figure in my life as a child through his TV show, *Kids Say the Darnedest Things* had ferociously led the public charge against LSD after the death by suicide of his LSD-using daughter. The false “scare story” was widely circulated in the press that LSD use would cause chromosome damage. The milieu was culturally complex, especially if



you were a 14 or 15-year-old kid. And once I had started smoking pot and, apparently, not immediately turned into a junkie, the establishment credibility, as far as providing the straight story on drugs, was gone. So it was pretty clear which side of the counter-cultural divide I would land on.

Although I adapted to the idea that LSD was now part of the high school scene, I was perplexed by the casual nature of its usage. Somehow, this powerful substance was being used *merely* recreationally, as if it were simply like smoking pot, only more so. And stories would pop up locally about bad trips — or trips with a “bad” component. In addition, with the broad experimentation with, and use of, drugs of all kinds among the local high school population, there were occasionally “death by misadventure” types of stories in the news that, one way or another, had a drug angle to them.

By the point of Alan’s rebuke, my recreational drug use was otherwise in full flower — funded, I think, primarily by lunch money. Our suppliers were other kids with access to some source or other, presumably an older brother or sister or young adult hippie type. With Alan having spoken what proved to be the final word on the question, it was now just a matter of a short number of days. With my friend Ted (also a friend of Alan’s and part of our immediate circle), I embarked on my first psychedelic dose, my first trip.



Ted had moved into town in ninth grade and probably first befriended Alan on the football team. Ted was good-looking, tall, and muscular. While perhaps not a particularly good student, or interested in studies, he was yet clever and intelligent and, at times, could be a deep thinker. He was the only aspiring rock and roller among us, starting to study guitar in tenth grade. The rest of us, however — with Paul and I taking the lead technically — did produce light shows together at area dances.

By the time we landed in high school in tenth grade, there were five of us, also including my friend George, who, like Ted, had also come to town as a “new kid” in ninth grade. We smoked pot together, played poker, traveled into New York City to see concerts at the Fillmore East and elsewhere, and generally palled about. This was the group I was to first explore psychedelics with.

As it happened, perhaps auspiciously, it was not LSD that just then happened to be the readiest psychedelic to be had that week, but instead, mescaline. As part of my previous studied curiosity about psychedelics, I had already read (with only a dim sort of comprehension) Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception*, where he recounts his experience in the 1950s with mescaline. As I was also in general fond of Huxley from his

literary works, the gentle cachet of mescaline, with the implied benediction of Huxley, made the prospect of my virgin voyage seem a bit less daunting.



Before recounting my first psychedelic journey, I want to advise the reader that the nature of street drugs being what they are, the dosage of a given hit that one might acquire, was pretty far over the lot. Based on comparisons with somewhat more carefully dosed experiences in literature, my sense is that in terms of what was in circulation at that time, a given dose of LSD, the primary psychedelic I used, might vary between 100 or 125 micrograms to upwards of over 300 micrograms. My vague sense is that the “typical” dose would be around 150 to 200 micrograms, well into the high-moderate range. Generally, we expected that splitting a dose would still yield a passable, if milder, experience. The reader will need to infer from the experiences recounted here some appreciation of the likely dosage range by gauging the intensity of the episode. My first mescaline dose was perhaps roughly the equivalent to 125 mcg or so of LSD.

With little clarity on my side about how things were going to unfold, Ted and I “dropped” right around lunchtime: if Ted can do it, I thought, so can I. We anticipated it would require about a class period (fifty minutes) to “get off” and experience the onset of effects.



Staples High School, where I grew up in suburban Westport, Connecticut, was very open — both the physical campus and permissively. Students were allowed to come and go — leave school — as their class schedules permitted. The blacktop in front of the cafeteria that Alan and I had been walking toward that winter day was a giant smoking lounge where everyone would congregate between classes and for lunch or study hall. As part of the place’s generally lax and permissive tenor, it was also quite easy, with a generally low consequence, to skip classes, which I did pretty often.

While I was free that period, and planned to skip class the rest of the afternoon, Ted needed to attend one more class. So while he went to class, I was parked in the cafeteria with one of our friends, Ruth.

I first met Ruth in my tenth-grade biology class. Alan and I were desk mates, and Ruth sat in the row directly in front of us. Her family had just moved from New York City to

Westport, although she had summered in Westport for some years. She had reddish hair, was slender and shapely, and had a certain New York City savoir-faire while being very spirited and fun.

She and I played the card game “spit” for the hour, which required focused attentiveness and quick hands. She was more skilled at it than I was. Somewhere during that time, the mescaline began to come on; and Ruth (likewise, like Ted, already among the “experienced”) coaxed me playfully through the onset — which was gentle and not completely alien in that it felt like I was first, just getting *very* high on pot. From the get-go, it was also clear that it was a different, more intense experience that was inevitably to take me farther in its own direction than pot ever would. I also knew quickly that I would enjoy it and, with a bit of help from Ted, manage well enough. Looking back, I can imagine that this onset period probably had some imprinting effect relative to Ruth; she was to figure again later as a significant player in pivotal trips. But to begin with, it started as just a “slightly *very* high” card game in the school cafeteria.

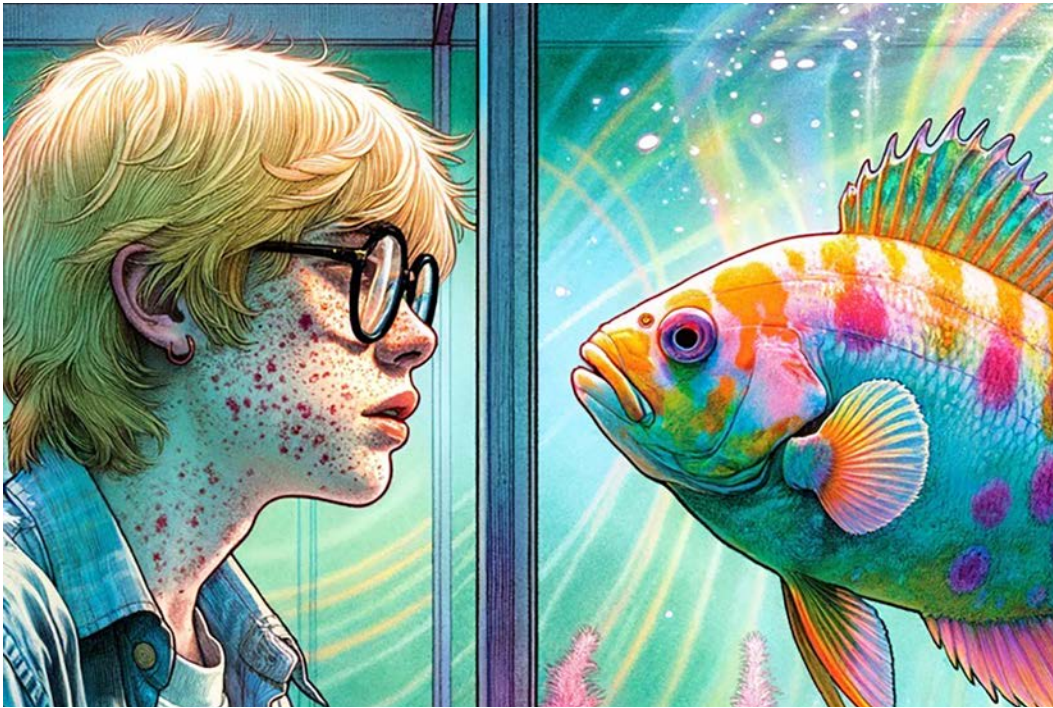


The class period ended, and it was clear that I was feeling the effects come on with increasing strength as the minutes rolled on. Ted located me in the cafeteria, and together we headed to his locker to drop off his books before we hitchhiked into town. As we walked away from the cafeteria, things began to shimmer. Being together and both starting to get off, I think we reinforced each other's experience of being high; by the time we got to the building where his locker was, we were feeling beyond giddy and about to be having a little bit of difficulty maintaining walking- in-the-halls decorum. Unsurprisingly, Ted had some slight trouble managing the unlocking of his locker and reorganizing his things, which seemed highly amusing; and at the peak of his fumbling, who should walk by but one of the Vice Principals, a rather dour, tall and, to us, quite aged grandfather type who seemed to have very little sense of humor. He appeared to eye us suspiciously, but fortunately, he didn't stop or speak with us. With a sense of having just gotten away with something, we quickly bolted the campus, suppressing fits of laughter — the susceptibility to which was a hallmark of my early trips.

It was at this point that it was clear to me that, indeed, I had entered a new realm of being and knowledge. Although it is a bald fact that the experience is essentially ineffable and indescribable and unlike anything one might have experienced, it is possible to describe approximately certain things, such as some visual effects. Most striking is the phenomenon of "trails" — where a wave of the hand yields a flutter of snapshots of the

motion through space, with after images of movement appearing frozen in space and time for brief moments. Suddenly one sees a stop-motion strobe picture of the entire motion existing at once before the images collapse back into the resting hand. One can also feel ecstatic, blissful physical rushes of energy up and down one's body.

The *Through the Looking Glass* sensation was palpable — everything seemed different, alive, and humming. Although one's entire sense of things was churning, at the dosage level we were at, the intensity was such that one could still maintain an inner equilibrium if one relaxed and “went with it.”



I don't recall the trip from school into town, a few miles away. Arriving, we first headed for the Pet Shop ("Fur, Fin and Feather") — something of a hangout for us; the owner was a "head" himself, who we sometimes smoked pot with.

Our friend George had become a tropical fish enthusiast and especially enjoyed the animals in the store; he had been our original connecting link with the owner. It was a pretty old, funky place, with lots of animal sights, sounds, and smells — but because of our friendship with the owner, a safe spot to ride through my acclimation to my first psychedelic peak. I'm pretty sure our friend, the owner, knew we were tripping. Staring into the fish tanks, I saw in fascination layers of detail previously unnoticed — some of which were probably not actually there.

The dose was perfect: reasonably mild but strong enough to give a first taste of the full psychedelic state. I continued to experience the sort of typical medium-dose psychedelic phenomena — visual trails, colored hallucinations overlaying the "normal" visual — dazzling geometric figures and flows of color. Enhanced sensory awareness. Bodily rushes. The mentioned susceptibility to fits of laughter at the slightest hint of humor from Ted — after all, we were both "in the know." Beyond these specific phenomena of the basic medium dose psychedelic state, there was an overriding feeling that everything was more vivid, engaging, and intrinsically valuable, that one had entered into a new realm

where the streets were not paved in gold but where a new and different sense of reality and possibility pervaded.

My detailed memory of the several hours we spent in town is spotty, although I remember particular highlights as we roamed up and down the main street, in and out of the various stores, and wandering back to the pet shop. One memory is of going into the record department of one of the shops and seeing an album cover with one of the most horrific photographs of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam — unsettling but a sadly typical visual from the news²⁶. Also, running into the mother of a classmate of mine who was friendly with my mother and her trying to engage me in a genial way—I was filled with anxiety that I would be unable to maintain the appropriate manner. Still, I was able to wiggle through it. I also remember walking up and down the streets of the town and repeatedly glancing at my faint reflection in the plate glass windows angling away from the doors to the showcase windows of the shops. I think I was trying to stay grounded and reinforce that the familiar “me” was still there.



Later, inside the public library — we had likely gone in to use the restrooms — we ran into a bit of a peculiar-looking couple in perhaps their forties, he markedly shorter than her, who asked us where the Town Hall was. They were getting married and bursting with excitement: it seemed an impromptu decision on their part. Bemused, we pointed them down the block; it seemed a rather strange encounter but somehow fit the crazy magic of the trip. Who knows what became of them?

The afternoon grew late, toward the time when Ted and I would each be expected to have come home from school. Ted took off, and I likewise headed home. Home for me was a short walk from town, over the bridge, and up the hill on the other side of the river.

I found that I was still very much tripping when I got home, although the peak had passed. I remember parking myself in the armchair in the living room and talking with

my mother, who was trying to have, I think, a pretty typical “How was your day” type of conversation.

I quickly came to realize that I was only able to form words into sentences with great difficulty and what seemed to me long pauses in between. Apparently, I had not attempted much in the way of responsive adult conversation during my wanderings with Ted downtown, so I didn’t anticipate this would be a problem. Nevertheless, it was my first real experience of this sort of “dissociative aphasia.”

Dissociative phenomena like this appear in many forms in psychedelic states, and experiencing them can provide an angle of insight into the spectrum of transformations of consciousness as, ultimately, awareness of the spiritual world develops.

I’m sure that my mother sensed “something was up” with me but, perhaps wisely, didn’t push the point as I could — somewhat — carry the thread, just very slowly and with a great inner effort of concentration.

And together with everything else, it also happened to be Friday night. At some point, I realized that I had made a date to see a movie with a girl from school, which I had no doubt been looking forward to all week. This required not a little scrunching up of courage to propose in the first place. I’m not sure when or to what extent I had considered the intersect of these two activities — my movie date and my first psychedelic trip, the latter being spontaneously decided on that morning. I’m sure that my mother (who would be driving the car to pick up my date) would have mentioned it as one of the conversation topics. Somehow I managed to beg off the whole interview with, I expect, a plan as to when to leave (in a few hours) and a claim to need a nap first.



In my room upstairs, I lay in my bed. I very soon was focussed internally on a world of images that rose up in me — somewhat like hypnagogic imagery, only more vivid, animated, and “lit up.” The image that I particularly remember taking hold was of a brilliantly lit, colored, and fast-moving “inner world” of a solar-system- like imagination. Pictures of brightly colored planets flowed easily, like a more active dreaming/ daydreaming. They seemed to occupy a “planetary space within” as if contained in an inner armillary sphere.

Any threshold dose of psychedelics will make you susceptible to a new sensitivity to what may be described as the *texture* of experience. Primarily visually, but with an accompanying rhythmic- breathing aspect, one can find oneself “tuning in” — as I did — on patterns, and possibly energies, flowing through one’s experience that were unperceived or unnoticed before. Gazing at a grain of wood, a pattern of fabric, or simply a scattered arrangement of objects can metamorphose into a deep penetration into fractal-like shapes now seen as emerging out of the background of what was previously taken as simply the noise of a given coat of paint, a given surface of material, or a given arrangement of things. The outlines of the forms thus seen can themselves be seen to transform, to metamorphose, to highlight now this and now that, and also to detach from the items that initially revealed the patterns and continue inward as an internal visionary process.

This can fascinate and also overwhelm; it can carve new channels of feeling in your sensed body. This kind of kaleidoscope of vision and sensation — which is what psychedelic art tries to capture — is, for many people, part and parcel of the attraction of psychedelic experience: an entirely new sense of reality and, correspondingly, of self. At the same time, especially as intensified at higher doses, it is an edge wherein the accustomed moorings of the sense-world experience become increasingly disjointed, and the awareness of the inner motions begins to deconstruct (disassociate) our habitual patterning of thought.

After exploring and enjoying this state alone in my room, I eventually became restful; things were dying down. Finally came the time for the movie date. I can only think I went through the motions on autopilot, as I was still somewhat mesmerized by my internal psychedelic process. I do remember the girl; I do remember the movie (*Z*), but I am sure I was even more intensely non-present to the dating situation than your most typically awkward fifteen- year-old kid.

That was my first trip. Gentle, medium dose, fun, interesting, confidence-building in the sense of “I can do this,” introducing me to the social and interpersonal awkwardness possible when presenting yourself normally while in an intensely different reality. No major catastrophes. And for now, I felt pretty well dialed in on not “seeing God” or anything too disruptive or transformational. And my checklist of “drugs I have tried” got another notch. My appetite for experimentation was reinforced.

Through the spring and into summer, I tripped close to a dozen times or a bit more—the next also being on mescaline, only a few weeks later. It was similarly enjoyable; the only fixed memory of it was lying on my friend Paul’s lawn and looking up at the moon (in daylight) and knowing that a space flight was in progress. This would have been Apollo 13. It hinted at a sense of the cosmic, the beyond-earthly.



And then I was ready for acid — similar, but a little more “electric” and with a feeling of much more significant headroom being available dosage and intensity-wise. These experiences were all within the circle of my four other closest male friends (Alan, Ted, Paul, and George). Sometimes the five of us would dose together, sometime I would trip with one or two others; occasionally, another male friend would join in. The logistics of these eight- hour adventures involved the usual teenage subterfuges, sleeping over at friend’s houses when their parents were away, and so on — although we all developed “sea legs” that would allow us to function (provided nothing too out of the ordinary took place and we avoided the peak time) around our parents and other adults. The duration of a trip being at least eight hours, one often had to put in an appearance at the family dinner table, do homework — whatever, trying to skate on the near side of “acting normal” while being very much not normal.

By late May of that year, I was pretty much on my way to being a committed acidhead. I was loving it.

I began to become aware of one particular thing during this time. There was a sort of unspoken rule among my friends — not emanating from me — that sought to ensure that we all stayed tethered to the here and now — at least, after a fashion. If, for example, one became too enthusiastically engaged with the fascination of, say, emerging forms and

shapes suddenly morphing out of the grain or pattern of some everyday thing or an interesting weave or shimmer which suddenly quivered alive with layers and matrices of colored energy in a previously unnoticed geometry — one would be chided, mocked or ridiculed and “brought back down to earth” with some remark that would color your interest as of a “hippy dippy” nature. It was as if there was a sense of a current flowing in the background, an undertow, always ready to pull you into its overpowering domain. These pushbacks always disappointed me, as I was willing to, and wanted to, “go deeper.” Nevertheless, it was somehow understood that one’s experience needed to maintain a certain ratio between focus on the consensus reality and the parallel alternate track. If one allowed the psychedelic world to become predominant, one would be yanked back by the others.

I will mention that despite these socially-enforced guard rails on the experience, a more profound vision would nonetheless penetrate. I recall very clearly tripping with Ted, George, and Alan in the basement of George’s house — where we often played poker together — and suddenly perceiving what I would have to describe as a clairvoyant perception of the “pranic aura” of Ted’s breath. It was as if the air circulating in and out of his mouth and, more particularly, nostrils, was perceptible in shades of color, forming definite swirls and eddies of a cosmic energy in the space around him. I registered it as “I am seeing something real here,” although I lacked the concepts or context to take it anywhere. And quite likely, rather than prompting a “back to earth” type admonishment, my pause to observe this was unnoticed by the others. My attention likely was soon diverted by whatever the following unrelated remark one of my friends made was.

Once, at George’s house, one of Ted’s friends from where he used to live on Long Island visited and joined us tripping. In the joking back and forth, suddenly, a stream of ad-libs turned into what felt like an exercise in telepathic suggestion, where off-the-wall punch lines were delivered by the friend who should have had no likelihood of providing the in-joke answer. It was startling; we would pause, register that “something” had happened, take it in, and move on.

Situations could develop around the general atmosphere of widespread and fairly indiscriminate teenage drug use. But, again, this was during the anti-war years, the post-Woodstock year, very *us vs. them* generationally. LSD, in particular, certainly contributed to some serious psychiatric outcomes. A kindergarten friend I had drifted away from but still felt connected to was reported hospitalized after a “bad trip.” He was to commit suicide a year or so later. In later times I came inwardly to have a sense of how his psychedelic experiences may have overwhelmed him. I do not believe he was under the influence when he killed himself. It is hard to know if his LSD use was causative, or perhaps self-medication for existing symptomology.

Before my first trip, my friend Paul in my immediate circle had had a “challenging” trip that at first, panicked Alan and George, who were tripping with him. He had become unresponsive and withdrawn while they were walking on the beach, and they rang me to help them figure out what to do (presumably because I would be straight enough to deal with it while leaving them out of it). However, by the time I got there, he had come down. He was in fact responsive and self-possessed enough (while still high) to take part in “pranking” me by at first appearing completely catatonic on my arrival, curled up in a corner. Fooled you!

Scary stuff. Feeling young and immortal, we essentially chalked all this up to bumps in the road, or “accidents” — that wouldn’t happen to us.

Although generally speaking, I was enjoying psychedelic drug use “recreationally” it *could* start to wear thin in certain ways. We also all smoked pot, or as available, hashish, pretty much every day, and experimented with various other things, drugs like uppers and downers — neither of which I came to enjoy particularly.



The positives were plentiful: a definite ecstatic high that could be shared with others; a total transformation of the sense world into a variation of a living psychedelic art poster; body rushes, and a greatly enhanced sense of apparent wit that expressed itself in cleverness infused with merriment. One of our favorite typical pastimes while tripping was listening to a record album of the multi-layered storytelling of the Firesign Theater, a “radio skit” ensemble, which told absurd stories laced with multi-layered cultural “in” jokes, ironies, absurdities, and comic effects — all of which could be profoundly experienced and appreciated while lying on the floor of a dark room on 150 micrograms or so of LSD. Likewise, of course, music too would be greatly enhanced in the dark. In general, your zaniness and sense of humor were significantly enhanced if you were inclined that way. The fundamental characteristic is that *any* psychological attribute can be amplified.

But then, on the other hand, there was “crashing” — the energetic depletion after eight hours of psychically arduous experience coupled with high-intensity neurological and endocrinological activity. And, in my experience, this became one of the weak points when at last, you put yourself to bed alone in the dark; all manner of apprehensions can rise up. For me, this might be a certain foreboding, perhaps accompanied by quasi-

nightmarish ideation and visualization, that one would have to navigate one's mind away from. But again, for me, it never quite became too overwhelming or took the upper hand. It was generally regarded as a situation where one "took the bad with the good" — with, generally, the experience of the "good" being very favorable. Smoking a joint when coming down seemed to soften the crash.

Of course, it was around that time that any number of other age group peers were also starting to experience psychedelics for the first time, and I remember the intensity of shared enthusiasm that would express itself when you first identified with another of the "experienced" cohort. It was such a transformational new capacity — to experience life so intensively this way — and it seemed clear that it would change the world. We told each other how venerable we would be when we told our grandchildren that "we were there" when the psychedelic wave first began. Expecting, of course, that psychedelic use would become mainstream by the time we became adults and wrested control from the establishment.

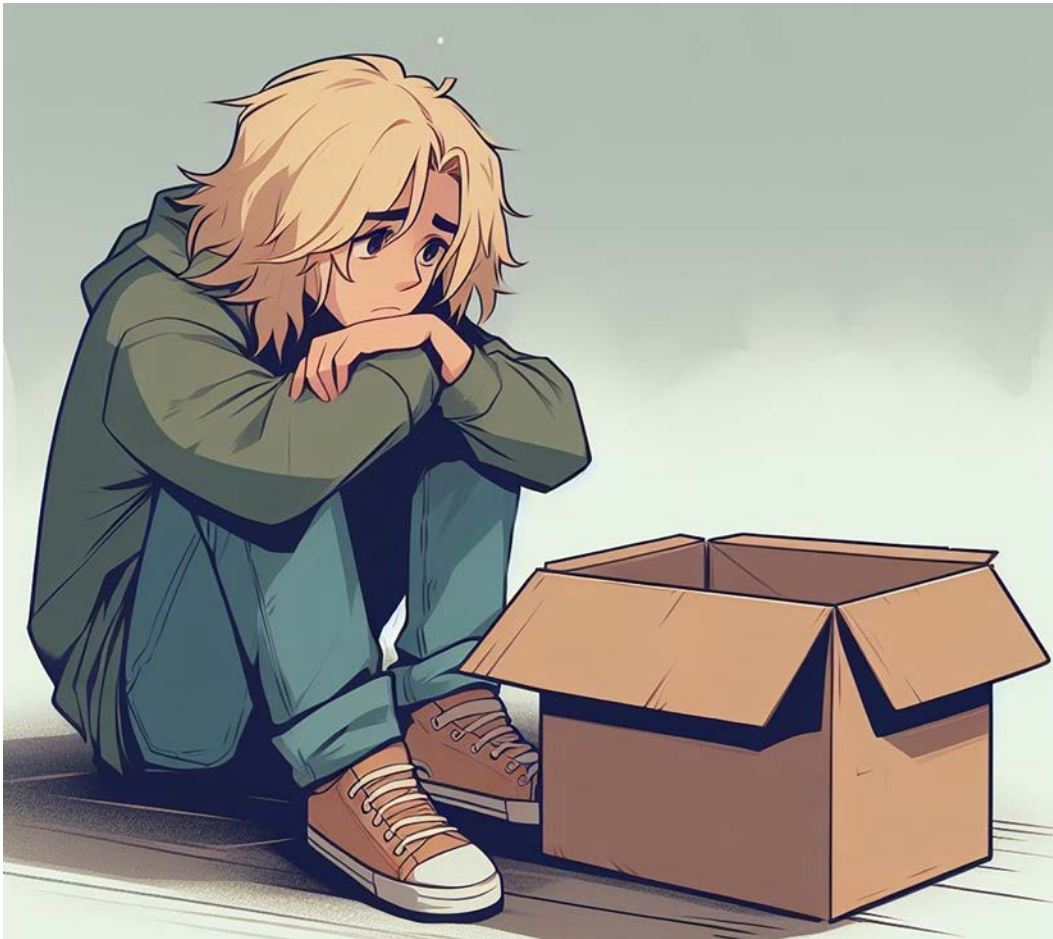
Yet in 1970, although the hippie counter-culture was penetrating our world at many, many angles, there (unsurprisingly) wasn't a coherent worldview around psychedelic drugs. However, from Tim Leary on down, all manner of ideas were in circulation. But for my little crowd, it was at the start, a recreational, hedonistic, escapist *adventure* against the backdrop of a turbulent and confusing world.



This continued into my junior year; I remember tripping at home on a school night and trying to do my chemistry homework. Quite an effort! In these first two years, across the several dozen trips I took with my friends, there were others I recall notably. The rock group The James Gang, who were taking off, came to my high school when I was in tenth grade. Ted and I had tickets to the first show; we dropped acid and found seats in the front row. Joe Walsh (later of *Eagles* fame) played awesome rock and roll, more or less in our faces. The presence of a mid-tier professional light show greatly enhanced this. Through his connection with the high school technical staff, Paul sat in to assist with it. When the first show was over, we walked onto the stage and behind the rear projection screen, gave Paul a shout, and had a peek at the gear they had set up for the light show. After our chat, we walked back into the hall the way we had come and realized that they were already letting in the audience for the general admission second show — so we cheerfully resumed our (unpaid for this time) front-row seats. It was a great trip.



I can also recall toward the end of my junior year — a pending but unspoken psychedelic hiatus already making itself felt — I tripped on what proved a relatively low dose by myself and attended a performance of *Waiting for Godot*; Alan was Estragon, and his friend Daniel — who some years later was to marry our friend Ruth — was Vladimir. On the one hand, it was a bit of a bleak and desolate experience; on the other, somehow a cathartic one.



And then, somewhere centered around the middle of my junior year, there was a ver palpable tapering off of the interest among my friends in further psychedelic adventures. I experienced this as somewhat of a loss — I was still up for it but wanted companions. Although I didn't really have an idea of where it might be going, I knew that the experience was still calling me.

I attributed it to the wearing-thin effect, although from another angle, I might also characterize it as the recognition that to go further down this pathway would require a willingness to undergo some kind of challenging transformation. Simply pressing the “play” button again on these experiences was, otherwise, an exercise in some sort of psychic depletion. Or you could just say that folks were, for the moment, getting a little burnt out and giving it a rest. But it did feel like someone had pressed the “pause” button, but not in a strictly overt way. It just sort of happened. Obviously, we were all also continuing to grow up in all kinds of other ways.