



psychedelics

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*The Uses and Implications
of Hallucinogenic Drugs*

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way of coming closer to the source of all things. They do not want to convert us to their ways. They do not claim that the peyote road is the only way of reaching out toward their Great Spirit and Heavenly Father. In Frank Takes Gun's words, "We just want to be let alone to worship our God as we wish." Must we obstruct and attempt to crush a new religion, which is beautiful and has never been shown to do any harm, simply because it is unfamiliar and because we can't imagine that it would work? Can we not let them tread their peyote road and see what happens—provided they conduct their services decorously and account properly for the peyote used? They would, I believe, welcome observers from time to time. Those observers could see and experience for themselves the form of worship that the aboriginal inhabitants of these lands developed when their world was tottering. The loss of the hunting grounds and the slaughter of the buffalo was for them an even greater catastrophe than that appalling event one early morning at Hiroshima in August 1945.

I shall not forget my Indian hosts, who took me back to a life through which all mankind has passed. A harsh, fierce, dangerous, passionate life where hunter and hunted are one. A life rich in beauty and meaning. Little more than eighty years ago, this was their life and had been so beyond the memory of man. In a few short, terrible years it was torn from them, and they are still bewildered at the world in which we are clumsily trying to find a place for them. But then perhaps we share some of that bewilderment, for our new world is unimaginably strange. Should we not join them in their prayer that ". . . the Universe may prevail"?

REPORT OF THE MESCALINE
EXPERIENCE OF
CRASHING THUNDER

PAUL RADIN

(Crashing Thunder is a Winnebago Indian whose autobiography describes in detail his initiation to the peyote worship.

Long persecuted by the guilt of having once fraudulently told his people that he had had a vision, and of having made a shambles of his life through drunkenness, living with various women, and even implication in a murder, Crashing Thunder sets out for a peyote meeting with some reluctance. In this first experience, not too much happens except, he reports, "I felt different from my normal self." Several further meetings follow, and then the one reported below.)

When we arrived, the one who was to lead asked me to sit near him. There he placed me. He urged me to eat a lot of peyote, so I did. The leaders of the ceremony always placed the regalia in front of themselves; they also had a peyote placed there. The one this leader placed in front of himself this time, was a very small one. Why does he have a very small one there? I thought to myself. I did not think much about it.

It was now late at night and I had eaten a lot of peyote and felt rather tired. I suffered considerably. After a while, I looked at the peyote, and there stood an eagle with outspread wings. It was as beautiful a sight as one could behold. Each of the feathers seemed to have a mark. The eagle stood looking at me. I looked around, thinking that perhaps there was something the matter with my sight. Then I looked again, and it was really there. I then looked in a different direction, and it disappeared. Only the small peyote remained. I looked around at the other people, but they all had their heads bowed and were singing. I was very much surprised.

Some time after this, I saw a lion lying in the same place where I had seen the eagle. I watched it very closely. It was alive and looking at me. I looked at it very closely, and when I turned my eyes away just the least little bit, it disappeared. I suppose they all know this and I am just beginning to know of it, I thought. Then I saw a small person at the same place. He wore blue clothes and a shining-brimmed cap. He had on a soldier's uniform. He was sitting on the arm of the per-

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son who was drumming, and he looked at everyone. He was a little man, perfect in all proportions. Finally I lost sight of him. I was very much surprised indeed. I sat very quietly. This is what it is, I thought; this is what they all probably see and I am just beginning to find out.

Then I prayed to Earthmaker (God): "This, your ceremony, let me hereafter perform."

As I looked again, I saw a flag. I looked more carefully and I saw the house full of flags. They had the most beautiful marks on them. In the middle of the room there was a very large flag and it was a live one; it was moving. In the doorway there was another one not entirely visible. I had never seen anything so beautiful in all my life.

Then again I prayed to Earthmaker. I bowed my head and closed my eyes and began to speak. I said many things that I would ordinarily never have spoken about. As I prayed, I was aware of something above me, and there he was; Earthmaker, to whom I was praying, he it was. That which is called the soul, that is it, that is what one calls Earthmaker. Now this is what I felt and saw. The one called Earthmaker is a spirit, and that is what I felt and saw. All of us sitting there, we had all together one spirit or soul. At least that is what I learned. I instantly became the spirit, and I was their spirit or soul. Whatever they thought, I immediately knew it. I did not have to speak to them and get an answer to know what their thoughts had been. Then I thought of a certain place far away, and immediately I was there. I was my thought.

I looked around and noticed how everything seemed about me, and when I opened my eyes I was myself in the body again. From this time on, I thought, thus I shall be. This is the way they are, and I am only just beginning to be that way. All those that heed Earthmaker must be thus, I thought. I would not need any more food, I thought, for was I not my spirit? Nor would I have any more use for my body, I felt. My corporeal affairs are over, I felt.

Then they stopped and left, for it was just dawning. Then someone spoke to me. I did not answer, for I thought they were just fooling and that they were all like myself, and that therefore it was unnecessary for me to talk to them. So when

they spoke to me, I only answered with a smile. They are just saying this to me because they realize that I have just found out, I thought. That was why I did not answer. I did not speak to anyone until noon. Then I had to leave the house to perform one of nature's duties, and someone followed me. It was my friend. He said, "My friend, what troubles you that makes you act as you do?" "Well, there's no need of your saying anything, for you know it beforehand," I said.

Then I immediately got over my trance and again got into my normal condition, so that he would have to speak to me before I knew his thoughts. I became like my former self. It became necessary for me to speak to him. . . .

Now since that time (of my conversion), no matter where I am, I always think of this religion. I still remember it, and I think I will remember it as long as I live. It is the only holy thing that I have been aware of in all my life.

After that, whenever I heard of a peyote meeting, I went to it. However, my thoughts were always fixed on women. If I were married (legally), perhaps these thoughts would leave me, I thought. Whenever I went to a meeting now, I tried to eat as many peyote as possible, for I was told that it was good to eat them. For that reason, I ate them. As I sat there, I would always pray to Earthmaker. Now these were my thoughts. If I were married, I thought as I sat there, I could then put all my thoughts on this ceremony. I sat with my eyes closed and was very quiet.

Suddenly I saw something. This was tied up. The rope with which this object was tied up was long. The object itself was running around and around in a circle. There was a pathway there in which it ought to go, but it was tied up and unable to get there. The road was an excellent one. Along its edge, blue grass grew; and on each side, there grew many varieties of pretty flowers. Sweet-smelling flowers sprang up all along this road. Far off in the distance appeared a bright light. There a city was visible, of a beauty indescribable by tongue. A cross was in full sight. The object that was tied up would always fall just short of reaching the road. It seemed to lack sufficient strength to break loose of what was holding it. Near it lay something that would have given it sufficient

strength to break its fastenings if it were only able to get hold of it.

I looked at what was so inextricably tied up and I saw that it was myself. I was forever thinking of women. This is it with which I was tied, I thought. Were I married, I would have strength enough to break my fastening and be able to travel in the good road, I thought. Then daylight came upon us and we stopped. . . .

[He did marry, and "together we gave ourselves up at a peyote meeting. From that time on we have remained members of the peyote ceremony."]

On one occasion while at a meeting, I suffered great pain. My eyes were sore and I was thinking of many things. Now I do nothing but pay attention to this ceremony, for it is good. Then I called the leader over to me and said to him, "My elder brother, hereafter only Earthmaker shall I regard as holy. I will make no more offerings of tobacco. I will not use any more tobacco. I will not smoke and I will not chew tobacco. I have no further interest in these. Earthmaker alone do I desire to serve. I will not take part in the Medicine Dance again. I give myself up to you. I intend to give myself up to Earthmaker's cause." Thus I spoke to him. "It is good, younger brother," he said to me. Then he had me stand up, and he prayed to Earthmaker. He asked Earthmaker to forgive me my sins.

Thus I go about telling everyone that this religion is good. Many other people at home said the same thing. Many, likewise, have joined this religion and are getting along nicely. . . . Before my conversion I went about in a pitiable condition, but now I am living happily, and my wife has a fine baby.

MUSHROOMS AND THE MIND

RALPH METZNER

Was the Buddha's last, fatal supper a mushroom feast?
Was *soma*, the mystery potion at Eleusis, a mushroom? Why