

*Hallucinogens
and
Shamanism*

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The Mushrooms of Language

Henry Munn

The Mazatec Indians eat the mushrooms only at night in absolute darkness.¹ It is their belief that if you eat them in the daylight you will go mad. The depths of the night are recognized as the time most conducive to visionary insights into the obscurities, the mysteries, the perplexities of existence. Usually several members of a family eat the mushrooms together: it is not uncommon for a father, mother, children, uncles, and aunts to all participate in these transformations of the mind that elevate consciousness onto a higher plane. The kinship relation is thus the basis of the transcendental subjectivity that Husserl said is intersubjectivity. The mushrooms themselves are eaten in pairs, a couple representing

1. The Mazatec Indians, who have a long tradition of using the mushrooms, inhabit a range of mountains called the Sierra Mazateca in the northeastern corner of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. The shamans in this essay are all natives of the town of Huautla de Jiménez. Properly speaking they are Huauteccans; but since the language they speak has been called Mazatec and they have been referred to in the previous anthropological literature as Mazatecs, I have retained that name, though strictly speaking, Mazatecs are the inhabitants of the village of Mazatlan in the same mountains.

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Psilocybe mexicana Heim. One of the most widely used psychotropic mushrooms of the Mazatec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico.

man and woman that symbolizes the dual principle of procreation and creation. Then they sit together in their inner light, dream and realize and converse with each other, presences seated there together, their bodies immaterialized by the blackness, voices from without their communality.

In a general sense, for everyone present the purpose of the session is a therapeutic catharsis. The chemicals of transformation, of revelation that open the circuits of light, vision, and communication, called by us mind-manifesting, were known to the American Indians as medicines: the means given to men to know and to heal, to see and to say the truth. Among the Mazatecs, many, one time or another during their lives, have eaten the mushrooms, whether to cure themselves of an ailment or to resolve a problem; but it is not everyone who has a predilection for such extreme and arduous experiences of the creative imagination or who would want to repeat such journeys into the strange, unknown depths of the brain very frequently: those who do are the shamans, the

masters, whose vocation it is to eat the mushrooms because they are the men of the spirit, the men of language, the men of wisdom. They are individuals recognized by their people to be expert in such psychological adventures, and when the others eat the mushrooms they always call to be with them, as a guide, one of those who is considered to be particularly acquainted with these modalities of the spirit. The medicine man presides over the session, for just as the Mazatec family is paternal and authoritarian, the liberating experience unfolds in the authoritarian context of a situation in which, rather than being allowed to speak or encouraged to express themselves, everyone is enjoined to keep silent and listen while the shaman speaks for each of those who are present. As one of the early Spanish chroniclers of the New World said: "They pay a sorcerer who eats them [the mushrooms] and tells them what they have taught him. He does so by means of a rhythmic chant in full voice."

The Mazatecs say that the mushrooms speak. If you ask a shaman where his imagery comes from, he is likely to reply: I didn't say it, the mushrooms did. No mushroom speaks, that is a primitive anthropomorphization of the natural, only man speaks, but he who eats these mushrooms, if he is a man of language, becomes endowed with an inspired capacity to speak. The shamans who eat them, their function is to speak, they are the speakers who chant and sing the truth, they are the oral poets of their people, the doctors of the word, they who tell what is wrong and how to remedy it, the seers and oracles, the ones possessed by the voice. "It is not I who speak," said Heraclitus, "it is the logos." Language is an ecstatic activity of signification. Intoxicated by the mushrooms, the fluency, the ease, the aptness of expression one becomes capable of are such that one is astounded by the words that issue forth from the contact of the intention of articulation with the matter of experience. At times it is as if one were being told what to say, for the words leap to mind, one after another, of themselves without having to be searched for: a phenomenon similar to the automatic dictation of the surrealists except that here the flow of consciousness, rather than being disconnected, tends to be coherent: a rational enunciation of meanings. Message fields of communication with the world, others, and one's self are disclosed by the mush-

rooms. The spontaneity they liberate is not only perceptual, but linguistic, the spontaneity of speech, of fervent, lucid discourse, of the logos in activity. For the shaman, it is as if existence were uttering itself through him. From the beginning, once what they have eaten has modified their consciousness, they begin to speak and at the end of each phrase they say *tzo*—"says" in their language—like a rhythmic punctuation of the said. Says, says, says. It is said. I say. Who says? We say, man says, language says, being and existence say.²

Cross-legged on the floor in the darkness of huts, close to the fire, breathing the incense of copal, the shaman sits with the furrowed brow and the marked mouth of speech. Chanting his words, clapping his hands, rocking to and fro, he speaks in the night of chirping crickets. What is said is more concrete than ephemeral phantasmagoric lights: words are materializations of consciousness; language is a privileged vehicle of our relation to reality. Let us go looking for the tracks of the spirit, the shamans say. Let us go to the cornfield looking for the tracks of the spirits' feet in the warm ground. So then let us go walking ourselves along the path in search of significance, following the words of two discourses enregistered like tracks on magnetic tapes, then translated from the native tonal language, to discover and explicitate what is said by an Indian medicine man and medicine woman during such ecstatic experiences of the human voice speaking with rhythmic force the realities of life and society.

The short, stout, elderly woman with her laughing moon face, dressed in a *huipil*, the long dress, embroidered with flowers and birds, of the Mazatec women, a dark shawl wrapped around her shoulders, her gray hair parted down the middle and drawn into two pigtales, golden crescents hanging from her ears, bent forward from where she knelt on the earthen floor of the hut and held a

2. The inspiration produced by the mushrooms is very much like that described by Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*. Since the statement of Riinbaud, "I is another," spontaneous language, speaking or writing as if from dictation (to use the common expression for an activity very difficult to describe in its truth) has been of paramount interest to philosophers and poets. Says the Mexican, Octavio Paz, in an essay on Breton, "The inspired one, the man who in truth speaks, does not say anything that is his: from his mouth speaks language." Octavio Paz, "André Breton o La Busqueda del Comienzo," *Corriente Alterna* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1967), p. 53.

handful of mushrooms in the fragrant, purifying smoke of copal rising from the glowing coals of the fire, to bless them: known to the ancient Meso-Americans as the Flesh of God, called by her people the Blood of Christ. Through their miraculous mountains of light and rain, the Indians say that Christ once walked—it is a transformation of the legend of Quetzalcoatl—and from where dropped his blood, the essence of his life, from there the holy mushrooms grew, the awakers of the spirit, the food of the luminous one. Flesh of the world. Flesh of language. In the beginning was the word and the word became flesh. In the beginning there was flesh and the flesh became linguistic. Food of intuition. Food of wisdom. She ate them, munched them up, swallowed them and burped; rubbed ground-up tobacco along her wrists and forearms as a tonic for the body; extinguished the candle; and sat waiting in the darkness where the incense rose from the embers like glowing white mist. Then after a while came the enlightenment and the enlivenment and all at once, out of the silence, the woman began to speak, to chant, to pray, to sing, to utter her existence:³

My God, you who are the master of the whole world, what we want is to search for and encounter from where comes sickness, from where comes pain and affliction. We are the ones who speak and cure and use medicine. So without mishap, without difficulty, lift us into the heights and exalt us.

From the beginning, the problem is to discover what the sickness is the sick one is suffering from and prognosticate the remedy. Medicine woman, she eats the mushrooms to see into the spirit of the sick, to disclose the hidden, to intuit how to resolve the unsolved: for an experience of revelations. The transformation of her everyday self is transcendental and gives her the power to move in the two relevant spheres of transcendence in order to

3. The shamanistic discourses studied in this essay, were tape-recorded. I am indebted for the translations to a bilingual woman of Huautla, Mrs. Eloina Estrada de Gonzalez, who listened to the recordings and told me, phrase by phrase, in Spanish, what the shaman and shamaness were saying in their native language. As far as I know, the words of neither of these oral poets have hitherto been published. They are Mrs. Irene Pineda de Figueroa and Mr. Román Estrada. The complete text of each discourse takes up ninety-two pages. For the purposes of this essay, I have merely selected the most representative passages.

achieve understanding: that of the other consciousness where the symptoms of illness can be discerned; and that of the divine, the source of the events in the world. Together with visionary empathy, her principal means of realization is articulation, discourse, as if by saying she will say the answer and announce the truth.

It is necessary to look and think in her spirit where it hurts. I must think and search in your presence where your glory is, My Father, who art the Master of the World. Where does this sickness come from? Was it a whirlwind or bad air that fell in the door or in the doorway? So are we going to search and to ask, from the head to the feet, what the matter is. Let's go searching for the tracks of her feet to encounter the sickness that she is suffering from. Animals in her heart? Let's go searching for the tracks of her feet, the tracks of her nails. That it be alleviated and healed where it hurts. What are we going to do to get rid of this sickness?

For the Mazatecs, the psychedelic experience produced by the mushrooms is inseparably associated with the cure of illness. The idea of malady should be understood to mean not only physical illness, but mental troubles and ethical problems. It is when something is wrong that the mushrooms are eaten. If there is nothing the matter with you there is no reason to eat them. Until recent times, the mushrooms were the only medicine the Indians had recourse to in times of sickness. Their medicinal value is by no means merely magical, but chemical. According to the Indians, syphilis, cancer, and epilepsy have been alleviated by their use; tumors cured. They have empirically been found by the Indians to be particularly effective for the treatment of stomach disorders and irritations of the skin. The woman whose words we are listening to, like many, discovered her shamanistic vocation when she was cured by the mushrooms of an illness: after the death of her husband she broke out all over with pimples; she was given the mushrooms to see whether they would "help" her and the malady disappeared. Since then she has eaten them on her own and given them to others.

If someone is sick, the medicine man is called. The treatment he employs is chemical and spiritual. Unlike most shamanistic methods, the Mazatec shaman actually gives medicine to his

patients: by means of the mushrooms he administers to them physiologically, at the same time as he alters their consciousness. It is probably for psychosomatic complaints and psychological troubles that the liberation of spontaneous activity provoked by the mushrooms is most remedial: given to the depressed, they awaken a catharsis of the spirit; to those with problems, a vision of their existential way. If he hasn't come to the conclusion that the illness is incurable, the medicine man repeats the therapeutic sessions three times at intervals. He also works over the sick, for his intoxicated condition of intense, vibrant energy gives him a strength to heal that he exercises by massage and suction.

His most important function, however, is to speak for the sick one. The Mazatec shamans eat the mushrooms that liberate the fountains of language to be able to speak beautifully and with eloquence so that their words, spoken for the sick one and those present, will arrive and be heard in the spirit world from which comes benediction or grief. The function of the speaker, nevertheless, is much more than simply to implore. The shaman has a conception of *poesis*⁴ in its original sense as an action: words themselves are medicine. To enunciate and give meaning to the events and situations of existence is life giving in itself.

"The psychoanalyst listens, whereas the shaman speaks," points out Lévi-Strauss:

When a transference is established, the patient puts words into the mouth of the psychoanalyst by attributing to him alleged feelings and intentions; in the incantation, on the contrary, the shaman speaks for his patient. He questions her and puts into her mouth answers that correspond to the interpretation of her condition. A pre-requisite role—that of listener for the psychoanalyst and of orator for the shaman—establishes a direct rela-

4. ". . . the Greek word which signifies poetry was employed by the writer of an alchemical papyrus to designate the operation of 'transmutation' itself. What a ray of light! One knows that the word 'poetry' comes from the Greek verb which signifies 'make.' But that does not designate an ordinary fabrication except for those who reduce it to verbal nonsense. For those who have conserved the sense of the poetic mystery, poetry is a sacred action. That is to say, one which exceeds the ordinary level of human action. Like alchemy, its intention is to associate itself with the mystery of the 'primordial creation' . . ." Michel Carrouges, *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1950).

tionship with the patient's conscious and an indirect relationship with his unconscious. This is the function of the incantation proper. The shaman provides the sick woman with a *language* by means of which unexpressed and otherwise inexpressible psychic states can be immediately expressed. And it is the transition to this verbal expression—at the same time making it possible to undergo in an ordered and intelligible form a real experience that would otherwise be chaotic and inexpressible—which induces the release of the physiological process, that is, the reorganization, in a favorable direction, of the process to which the sick woman is subjected.⁵

These remarks of the French anthropologist become particularly relevant to Mazatec shamanistic practice when one considers that the effect of the mushrooms, used to make one capable of curing, is to inspire the shaman with language and transform him into an oracle.

"That come all the saints, that come all the virgins," chants the medicine woman in her sing-song voice, invoking the beneficent forces of the universe, calling to her the goddesses of fertility, the virgins: fertile ones because they have not been sowed and are fresh for the seed of men to beget children in their wombs.

The Virgin of Conception and the Virgin of the Nativity.

That Christ come and the Holy Spirit. Fifty-three Saints. Fifty-three Saintesses. That they sit down at her side, on her mat, on her bed, to free her from sickness.

The wife of the man in whose house she was speaking was pregnant and throughout the session of creation, from the midst of genesis, her language as spontaneous as her being that has begun to vibrate, she concerns herself with the emergence of life, with the birth of an existence into that everyday social world that her developing discourse expresses:

With the baby that is going to come there is no suffering, says. It's a matter of a moment, there isn't going to be any suffering, says. From one moment to another it will fall into the world, says. From one moment to another, we are going to

5. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Effectiveness of Symbols," *Structural Anthropology* (Doubleday Anchor, 1967), pp. 193-95.

save her from her woe, says. That her innocent creature come without mishap, says. Her elf. That is what it is called when it is still in the womb of its mother. From one moment to another, that her innocent creature, her elf come, says.

"We are going to search and question," she says, "untie and disentangle." She is on a journey, for there is distanciation and going there, somewhere, without her even moving from the spot where she sits and speaks. Her consciousness is roaming throughout existential space. Sibyl, seer, and oracle, she is on the track of significance and the pulsation of her being is like the rhythm of walking.

"Let us go searching for the path, the tracks of her feet, the tracks of her nails. From the right side to the left side, let us look." To arrive at the truth, to solve problems and to act with wisdom, it is necessary to find the way in which to go. Meaning is intentional. Possibilities are paths to be chosen between. For the Indian woman, footprints are images of meaning, traces of a going to and from, sedimented clues of significance to be looked for from one side to the other and followed to where they lead: indicators of directionality; signs of existence. The hunt for meaning is a temporal one, carried into the past and projected into the future; what happened? she inquires, what will happen? leaving behind for what is ahead go the footprints between departure and arrival: manifestations of human, existential ecstasis. And the method of looking, from the right side to the left side, is the articulation of now this intuition, fact, feeling or wish, now that, the intention of speaking bringing to light meanings whose associations and further elucidations are like the discovery of a path where the contents to be uttered are tracks to be followed into the unexplored, the unknown and unsaid into which she adventures by language, the seeker of significance, the questioner of significance, the articulator of significance: the significance of existence that signifies with signs by the action of speaking the experience of existence.

"Woman of medicines and curer, who walks with her appearance and her soul," sings the woman, bending down to the ground and straightening up, rocking back and forth as she chants, dividing the truth in time to her words: emitter of signs. "She is the woman of the remedy and the medicine. She is the woman who

speaks. The woman who puts everything together. Doctor woman. Woman of words. Wise woman of problems."

She is not speaking, most of the time, for any particular person, but for everyone: all who are afflicted, troubled, unhappy, puzzled by the predicaments of their condition. Now, in the course of her discourse, uttering realities, not hallucinations, talking of existence in a communal world where the we is more frequent than the I, she comes to a more general sickness and aggravation than physical illness: the economic condition of poverty in which her people live.

"Let us go to the cornfield searching for the tracks of the feet, for her poorness and humility. That gold and silver come," she prays. "Why are we poor? Why are we humble in this town of Huautla?" That is the paradox: why in the midst of such great natural wealth as their fertile, plentiful mountains where waterfalls cascade through the green foliage of leaves and ferns, should they be miserable from poverty, she wants to know. The daily diet of the Indians consists of black beans and tortillas covered with red chili sauce; only infrequently, at festivals, do they eat meat. White spots caused by malnutrition splotch their red faces. Babies are often sick. It is wealth she pleads for to solve the problem of want.

The mushrooms, which grow only during the season of torrential rains, awaken the forces of creation and produce an experience of spiritual abundance, of an astonishing, inexhaustible constitution of forms that identifies them with fertility and makes them a mediation, a means of communion, of communication between man and the natural world of which they are the metaphysical flesh. The theme of the shamaness, mother and grandmother, woman of fertility, bending over as she chants and gathering the earth to her as if she were collecting with her hands the harvest of her experience, is that of giving birth, is that of growth. Agriculturalists, they are people of close family interrelationships and many children: the clusters of neolithic thatch-roofed houses on the mountain peaks are of extended family groups. The woman's world is that of the household, her concern is for her children and all the children of her people.

"All the family, the babies and the children, that happiness

come to them, that they grow and mature without anything befalling them. Free them from all classes of sickness that there are here in the earth. Without complaint and with good will," she says, "so will come well-being, will come gold. Then we will have food. Our beans, our gourds, our coffee, that is what we want. That come a good harvest. That come richness, that come well-being for all of our children. All my shoots, my children, my seeds," she sings.

But the world of her children is not to be her world, nor that of their grandfathers. Their indigenous society is being transformed by the forces of history. Until only recently, isolated from the modern world, the Indians lived in their mountains as people lived in the neolithic. There were only paths and they walked everywhere they went. Teams of burros carried out the principal crop—coffee—to the markets in the plain. Now roads have been built, blasted out of rock and constructed along the edges of the mountains over precipices, to connect the community with the society beyond. The children are people of opposites: just as they speak two languages, Mazatec and Spanish, they live between two times: the timeless, cyclical time of recurrence of the People of the Deer and the time of progress, change and development of modern Mexico. In her discourse, no stereotyped rite or traditional ceremony with prescribed words and actions, speaking of everything, of the ancient and the modern, of what is happening to her people, the woman of problems, peering into the future, recognizes the inevitable process of transition, of disintegration and integration, that confronts her children: the younger generation destined to live the crisis and make the leap from the past into the future. For them it is necessary to learn to read and to write and to speak the language of this new world and in order to advance themselves, to be educated and gain knowledge, contained in books, radically different from the traditions of their own society whose language is oral and unwritten, whose implements are the hoe, the axe, and the machete.

Also a book is needed, says. Good book. Book of good reading in Spanish, says. In Spanish. All your children, your creatures, that their thought and their custom change, says. For me

there is no time. Without difficulty, let us go, says. With tenderness. With freshness. With sweetness. With good will.

"Don't leave us in darkness or blind us," she begs the origins of light, for in these supernatural modalities of consciousness there are dangers on every hand of aberration and disturbance. "Let us go along the good path. The path of the veins of our blood. The path of the Master of the World. Let us go in a path of happiness." The existential way, the conduct of one's life, is an idea to which she returns again and again. The paths she mentions are the moral, physical, mental, emotional qualities typical of the experience of animated conscious activity from the midst of which spring her words: goodness, vitality, reason, transcendence, and joy. Seated on the ground in the darkness, seeing with her eyes closed, her thought travels within along the branching arteries of the bloodstream and without across the fields of existence. There is a very definite physiological quality about the mushroom experience which leads the Indians to say that by a kind of visceral introspection they teach one the workings of the organism: it is as if the system were projected before one into a vision of the heart, the liver, lungs, genitals, and stomach.

In the course of the medicine woman's discourse, it is understandable that she should, from astonishment, from gratitude, from the knowledge of experience, say something about the mushrooms that have provoked her condition of inspiration. In a sense, to speak of "the mushroom experience" is a reification as absurd as the anthropomorphization of the mushrooms when it is said that they talk: the mushrooms are merely the means, in interaction with the organism, the nervous system, and the brain, of producing an experience grounded in the ontological-existential possibilities of the human, irreducible to the properties of a mushroom. The experience is psychological and social. What is spoken of by the shamaness is her communal world; even the visions of her imagination must have their origin in the context of her existence and the myths of her culture. The subject of another society will have other visions and express a different content in his discourse. It would seem probable, however, that apart from emotional similarities, colored illuminations, and the purely abstract patterns of

a universal conscious activity, between the experiences of individuals with differing social inherences, the common characteristic would be discourse, for judging by their effect the chemical constituents of the mushrooms have some connection with the linguistic centers of the brain. "So says the teacher of words," says the woman, "so says the teacher of matters." It is paradoxical that the rediscovery of such chemicals should have related their effects to madness and pejoratively called them drugs, when the shamans who used them spoke of them as medicines and said from their experience that the metamorphosis they produced put one into communication with the spirit. It is precisely the value of studying the use in so-called primitive societies of such chemicals that the way be found beyond the superficial to a more essential understanding of phenomena which we, with our limited conception of the rational, have too quickly, perhaps mistakenly, termed irrational, instead of comprehending that such experiences are revelations of a primordial existential activity, of "a power of signification, a birth of sense or a savage sense."⁶ What are we confronted with by the shamanistic discourse of the mushroom eaters? A modality of reason in which the logos of existence enunciates itself, or by the delirium and incoherence of derangement?

"They are doing nothing but talk," says the medicine woman, "those who say that these matters are matters of the past. They are doing nothing but talk, the people who call them crazy mushrooms." They claim to have knowledge of what they do not have any experience of; consequently their contentions are nonsense: nothing but expressions of the conventionality the mushrooms explode by their disclosure of the extraordinary; mere chatter if it weren't for the fact that the omnipotent *They* forms the force of repression which, by legislation and the implementation of authority, has come to denominate infractions of the law and the code of health, the means of liberation that once were called medicines. In a time of pills and shots, of scientific medicine, the wise woman is saying, the use of the mushrooms is not an ana-

6. "In a sense, as Husserl says, philosophy consists of the restitution of a power of signification, a birth of sense or a savage sense, an expression of experience by experience which particularly clarifies the special domain of language." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1964).

chronistic and obsolete vestige of magical practices: their power to awaken consciousness and cure existential ills is not any the less relevant now than it was in the past. She insists that it is ignorance of our dimension of mystery, of the wellsprings of meaning, to think that their effect is insanity.

"Good and happiness," she says, naming the emotions of her activated, perceptualized being. "They are not crazy mushrooms. They are a remedy, says. A remedy for decent people. For the foreigners," she says, speaking of us, wayfarers from advanced industrial society, who had begun to arrive in the high plazas of her people to experiment with the psychedelic mushrooms that grew in the mountains of the Mazatecs. She has an inkling of the truth, that what we look for is a cure of our alienations, to be put back in touch, by violent means if necessary, with that original, creative self that has been alienated from us by our middle-class families, education, and corporate world of employment.

"There in their land, it is taken account of, that there is something in these mushrooms, that they are good, of use," she says. "The doctor that is here in our earth. The plant that grows in this place. With this we are going to put together, we are going to alleviate ourselves. It is our remedy. He that suffers from pain and illness, with this it is possible to alleviate him. They aren't called mushrooms. They are called prayer. They are called well-being. They are called wisdom. They are there with the Virgin, Our Mother, the Nativity." The Indians do not call the mushrooms of light mushrooms, they call them the holy ones. For the shamaness, the experience they produce is synonymous with language, with communication, on behalf of her people, with the supernatural forces of the universe; with plenitude and joyfulness; with perception, insight, and knowledge. It is as if one were born again; therefore their patroness is the Goddess of Birth, the Goddess of Creation.

With prayers we will get rid of it all. With the prayers of the ancients. We will clean ourselves, we will purify ourselves with clear water, we will wash our intestines where they are infected. That sicknesses of the body be gotten rid of. Sicknesses of the atmosphere. Bad air. That they be gotten rid of, that they be removed. That the wind carry them away. For this is

the doctor. For this is the plant. For this is the sorcerer of the light of day. For this is the remedy. For this is the medicine woman, the woman doctor who resolves all classes of problems in order to rid us of them with her prayers. We are going with well-being, without difficulty, to implore, to beg, to supplicate. Well-being for all the babies and the creatures. We are going to beg, to implore for them, to beseech for their well-being and their studies, that they live, that they grow, that they sprout. That freshness come, tenderness, shoots, joy. That we be blessed, all of us.

She goes on talking and talking, non-stop; there are lulls when her voice slows down, fades out almost to a whisper; then come rushes of inspiration, moments of intense speech; she yawns great yawns, laughs with jubilation, claps her hands in time to her interminable singsong; but after the setting out, the heights of ecstasy are reached, the intoxication begins to ebb away, and she sounds the theme of going back to normal, everyday conscious existence again after this excursion into the beyond, of rejoining the ego she has transcended:

We are going to return without mishap, along a fresh path, a good path, a path of good air; in a path through the cornfield, in a path through the stubble, without complaint or any difficulty, we return without mishap. Already the cock has begun to crow. Rich cock that reminds us that we live in this life.

The day that dawns is that of a new world in which there is no longer any need to walk to where you go. "With tenderness and freshness, let us go in a plane, in a machine, in a car. Let us go from one side to another, searching for the tracks of the fists, the tracks of the feet, the tracks of the nails."

It seemed that she had been speaking for eight hours. The seconds of time were expanded, not from boredom, but from the intensity of the lived experience. In terms of the temporality of clocks, she had only been speaking for four hours when she concluded with a vision of the transcendence that had become immanent and had now withdrawn from her. "There is the flesh of God. There is the flesh of Jesus Christ. There with the Virgin."

The most frequently repeated words of the woman are freshness and tenderness; those of the shaman, whose discourse we will now

consider, are fear and terror: what one might call the emotional poles of these experiences. There is an illness that the Mazatecs speak of that they name fright. We say traumatism. They walk through their mountains along their arduous paths on the different levels of being, climbing and descending, in the sunlight and through the clouds; all around there are grottos and abysses, mysterious groves, places where live the *laá*, the little people, mischievous dwarfs and gnomes. Rivers and wells are inhabited by spirits with powers of enchantment. At night in these altitudes, winds whirl up from the depths, rush out of the distance like monsters, and pass, tearing everything in their path with their fierce claws. Phantoms appear in the mists. There are persons with the evil eye. Existence in the world and with others is treacherous, perilous: unexpectedly something may happen to you and that event, unless it is exorcised, can mark you for life.

The Indians say following the beliefs of their ancestors, the Siberians, that the soul is sometimes frightened from one, the spirit goes, you are alienated from yourself or possessed by another: you lose yourself. It is for this neurosis that the shamans, the questioners of enigmas, are the great doctors and the mushrooms the medicine. It is the task of the Mazatec shaman to look for the extravagated spirit, find it, bring it back, and reintegrate the personality of the sick one. If necessary, he pays the powers that have appropriated the spirit by burying cacao, beans of exchange, wrapped in the bark cloth of offerings, at the place of fright which he has divined by vision. The mushrooms, the shamans say, show: you see, in the sense that you realize, it is disclosed to you. "Bring her spirit, her soul," implores the medicine woman to whom we have just been listening. "Let her spirit come back from where it got lost, from where it stayed, from where it was left behind, from wherever it is that her spirit is wandering lost."

With just such a traumatic experience, began the shamanistic vocation of the man we will now study. In his late fifties, he has been eating the mushrooms for nine years. Why did he begin? "I began to eat them because I was sick," he said when asked.⁷

7. The story of how he began his shamanistic career, together with the information to follow about fright, payments to the mountains, and practices in relation to the hunt, are quotations from an interview with Mr. Román Estrada whom I

No matter how much the doctors treated me, I didn't get well. I went to the Latin American Hospital. I went to Córdoba as well. I went to Mexico. I went to Tehuacán and wasn't alleviated. Only with the mushrooms was I cured. I had to eat the mushrooms three times and the man from San Lucas, who gave them to me, proposed his work as a medicine man to me, telling me: now you are going to receive my study. I asked him why he thought I was going to receive it when I didn't want to learn anything about his wisdom, I only wanted to get better and be cured of my illness. Then he answered me: now it is no longer you who command. It is already the middle of the night. I am going to leave you a table with ground tobacco on it and a cross underneath it so that you learn this work. Tell me which of these things you choose and like the best of all, he said, when everything was ready. Which of these works do you want? I answered that I didn't want what he offered me. Here you don't give the orders, he replied; I am he who is going to say whether you receive this work or not because I am he who is going to give you your diploma in the presence of God. Then I heard the voice of my father. He had been dead for forty-three years when he spoke to me the first time that I ate the mushrooms: This work that is being given to you, he said, I am he who tells you to accept it. Whether you can see me or not, I don't know. I couldn't imagine from where this voice came that was speaking to me. Then it was that the shaman of San Lucas told me that the voice I was hearing was that of my father. The sickness from which I was suffering was alleviated by eating the mushrooms. So I told the old man, I am disposed to receive what it is that you offer me, but I want to learn everything. Then it was that he taught me how to suck through space with a hollow tube of cane. To suck through space means that you who are seated there, I can draw the sickness out of you by suction from a distance.

What had begun as a physical illness, appendicitis, became a traumatic neurosis. The doctors wheeled him into an operating room—he who had never been in a hospital in his life—and suffocated him with an ether mask. And he gave up the ghost while

questioned through an interpreter: the conversation was tape-recorded and then translated from the native language by Mrs. Eloina Estrada de Gonzalez, the niece of the shaman, who served as questioner in the interview itself.

they cut the appendix out of him. When he came to, he lay frightened and depressed, without any will to live, he'd had enough. Instead of recuperating, he lay like a dead man with his eyes wide open, not saying anything to anyone, what was the use, his life had been a failure, he had never become the important man he had aspired all his life to be, now it was too late; his life was over and he had done nothing that his children might remember with respect and awe. The doctors couldn't help him because there was nothing wrong with him physically; contrary to what he believed, he had survived the operation; the slash into his stomach had been sewn up and had healed; nevertheless, he remained apathetic and unresponsive, for he had been terrified by death and his spirit had flown away like a bird or a fleet-footed deer. He needed someone to go out and hunt it for him, to bring back his spirit and resuscitate him.

The medicine man, from the nearby village of San Lucas, whom he called to him when the modern doctors failed to cure him of the strange malady he suffered from, was renowned throughout the mountains as a great shaman, a diviner of destiny. The short, slight, wizened old man was 105 years old. He gave to his patient, who was suffering from depression, the mushrooms of vitality, and the therapy worked. He vividly relived the operation in his imagination. According to him, the mushrooms cut him open, arranged his insides, and sewed him up again. One of the reasons he hadn't recovered was his conviction that materialistic medicine was incapable of really curing since it was divorced from all cooperation with the spirits and dependence upon the supernatural.

In his imagination, the mushrooms performed another surgical intervention and corrected the mistakes of the profane doctor which he considered responsible for his lingering lethargy. He went through the whole process in his mind. It was as if he were operating upon himself, undoing what had been done to him, and doing it over again himself. The trauma was exorcised. By intensely envisioning with a heightened, expanded consciousness what had happened to him under anesthesia, he assumed at last the frightening event he had previously been unable to integrate into his experience. His physiological cure was completed psychologically; he was finally healed by virtue of the assimilative, creative powers

of the imagination. The dead man came back to life, he wanted to live because he felt once again that he was alive and had the force to go on living: once exhausted and despondent, he was now invigorated and rejuvenated.

The cure is successful because not only is his spirit awakened, but he is offered another future: a new profession that is a compensation for his humble one as a storekeeper. The ancient wise man, on the brink of death, wants to transmit to the man in his prime, his knowledge. What he encounters is resistance. The other doesn't want to assume the vocation of shaman, he only wants to be cured, without realizing that the cure is inseparable from the acceptance of the vocation which will release him from the repression of his creative forces that has caused the neurosis with which he is afflicted. It is no longer you who command, he is told, for his impulse to die is stronger than his desire to live; therefore the counterforce, if it is to be effective, cannot be his: it must be the will of the other transferred to him. You are too far gone to have any say in the matter, the medicine man tells him, it is already the middle of the night. By negating the will of his patient, he arouses it and prepares him to accept what is being suggested to him.

He shows him the table, the tobacco, the cross: signs of the shaman's work. The table is an altar at which to officiate. When the Mazatecs eat the mushrooms they speak of the sessions as masses. The shaman, even though a secular figure unordained by the Church, assumes a sacerdotal role as the leader of these ceremonies. In a similar way, for the Indians each father of a family is the religious priest of his household. The tobacco, San Pedro, is believed to have powerful magical and remedial values. The cross indicates a crossing of the ways, an intersection of existential paths, a change, as well as being the religious symbol of crucifixion and resurrection. The shaman tells him to choose. Still the man refuses. You don't give the orders, says the medicine man, intent upon evoking the patient's other self in order to bring him back to life, the I who is another. Whether you want to or not, you are going to receive your diploma, he says, to incite him with the prospect of award and reputation. Living in an oral culture without writing, where the acquisition of skills is traditional, handed down from father to son, mother to daughter, rather than con-

tained in books, for the Mazatecs wisdom is gained during the experiences produced by the mushrooms: they are experiences of vision and communication that impart knowledge.

Now he is spoken to. The inner voice is suddenly audible. He hears the call. He is told to accept the vocation of medicine man that he has hitherto adamantly refused. He cannot recognize this voice as his own, it must be another's; and the shaman, intent upon giving him a new destiny, sure of the talent he has divined, interprets for him from what region of himself springs the command he has heard. It is your father who is telling you to accept this work. A characteristic of such transcendental experiences is that family relationships, in the nexus of which personality is formed, become present to one with intense vividness. His super-ego, in conjunction with the liberation of his vitality, has spoken to him and his resistance is liquidated; he decides to live and accepts the new vocation around which his personality is re-integrated: he becomes an adept of the dimensions of consciousness where live the spirits; a speaker of mighty words.

In his house, we entered a room with bare concrete walls and a high roof of corrugated iron. His wife, wrapped in shawls, was sitting on a mat. His children were there; his family had assembled to eat the mushrooms with their father; one or two were given to the children of ten and twelve. The window was closed and with the door shut, the room was sealed off from the outside world; nobody would be permitted to leave until the effect of what they had eaten had passed away as a precaution against the peril of derangement. He was a short, burly man, dressed in a reefer jacket over a tee shirt, old brown bell-bottomed pants down to his short feet, an empty cartridge belt around his waist. In daily life, he is the owner of a little store stocked meagerly with canned goods, boxes of crackers, beer, soda, candy, bread, and soap. He sits behind the counter throughout the day looking out upon the muddy street of the town where dogs prowl in the garbage between the legs of the passers-by. From time to time he pours out a shot glass of cane liquor for a customer. He himself neither smokes nor drinks. He is a hunter in whom the instincts of his people survive from the time when they were chasers of game as well as agriculturalists: inhabitants of the Land of the Deer.

Now it is night-time and he prepares to exercise his shamanistic function. His great-grandfather was one of the counselors of the town and a medicine man. With the advent of modern medicine and the invasion of the foreigners in search of mushrooms, the shamanistic customs of the Mazatecs have almost completely vanished. He himself no longer believes many of the beliefs of his ancestors, but as one of the last oral poets of his people, he consciously keeps alive their traditions. "How good it is," he says, "to talk as the ancients did." He hardly speaks Spanish and is fluent only in his native language. Spreading out the mushrooms in front of him, he selected and handed a bunch of them to each of those present after blessing them in the smoke of the copal. Once they had been eaten, the lights were extinguished and everyone sat in silence. Then he began to speak, seated in a chair from which he got up to dance about, whirling and scuffling as he spoke in the darkness. It was pouring, the rain thundering on the roof of corrugated iron. There were claps of thunder. Flashes of lightning at the window.

Christ, Our Lord, illuminate me with the light of day, illuminate my mind. Christ, Our Lord, don't leave me in darkness or blind me, you who know how to give the light of day, you who illuminate the night and give the light. So did the Holy Trinity that made and put together the world of Christ, Our Lord, illuminated the Moon, says; illuminated the Big Star, says; illuminated the Cross Star, says; illuminated the Hook Star, says; illuminated the Sandal, says; illuminated the Horse, says.

One who eats the mushroom sinks into somnolence during the transition from one modality of consciousness to another, into a deep absorption, a reverie. Gradually colors begin to well up behind closed eyes. Consciousness becomes consciousness of irradiations and effulgences, of a flux of light patterns forming and unforming, of electric currents beaming forth from within the brain. At this initial moment of awakening, experiencing the dawn of light in the midst of the night, the shaman evokes the illumination of the constellations at the genesis of the world. Mythopoetical descriptions of the creation of the world are constant themes of these creative experiences. From the beginning, the vision his words create is cosmological. Subjective phenomena are given cor-

relates in the elemental, natural world. One is not inside, but outside.

"This old hawk. This white hawk that Saint John the Evangelist holds. That whistles in the dawn. Whistles in the light of day. Whistles over the water." Wings spread wide, the annunciatory bird, image of ascent, circles in the sky of the morning, drifting on the wind of the spirit above the primordial terrain the speaker has begun to explore and delineate, his breathing, his inhalations and exhalations, as amplified as his expanded being: an explanation for the sudden expulsion of air, the whooshes and high-pitched, eerie whistles of the shamans on their transcendental flights into the beyond.

"Straight path, says. Path of the dawn, says. Path of the light of day, says." Through the fields of being there are many directions in which to go, existences are different ways to live life. The idea of paths, that appears so frequently in the shamanistic discourses of the Mazatecs comes from the fact that these originary experiences are creative of intentions. To be in movement, going along a path, is an expressive vision of the ecstatic condition. The path the speaker is following is that which leads directly to his destination, to the accomplishment of his purpose; the path of the beginning disclosed by the rising sun at the time of setting out; the path of truth, of clarity, of that revealed in its being there by the light of day.

"Where the tenderness of San Francisco Huehuetlan is, says. Where the Holy Virgin of San Lucas is, says. Where San Francisco Tecoaatl is, says. San Geronimo Tecoaatl, says." He begins to name the towns of his mountainous environment, to call the landscape into being by language and transform the real into signs. It is no imaginary world of fantasy he is creating, as those one has become accustomed to hearing of from the accounts of dreamers under the effects of such psychoactive chemicals, fabled lands of nostalgia, palaces, and jewelled perspectives, but the real world in which he lives and works transfigured by his visionary journey and its linguistic expression into a surreal realm where the physical and the mental fuse to produce the glow of an enigmatic significance.

"I am he who speaks with the father mountain. I am he who

speaks with danger, I am going to sweep in the mountains of fear, in the mountains of nerves." The other I announces itself, the transcendental ego, the I of the voice, the I of force in communication with force. His existence intensified, he posits himself by his assertions: I am he who. The simultaneous reference to himself in the first and third person as subject and object indicates the impersonal personality of his utterances, uttered by him and by the phenomena themselves that express themselves through him. Arrogantly he affirms his shamanistic function as the mediator between man and the powers that determine his fate; he is the one who converses with all connoted by *father*: power, authority, and origin. He is the one who is on familiar terms with the sources of fright. The conception of existence manifested by his words is one of peril, anxiety, and terror: experiences of which he has become knowledgeable by virtue of his own traumas, his life as a hunter, and his adventures into the weird, secret regions of the psyche. Where there is foreboding and trembling, the medicine man tranquilizes by exorcising the causes of disturbance. His work lies among the nerves, not in the underworld, but on the heights, places of as much anguish as the depths, where the elation of elevation is accompanied by the fear of falling into the void of chasms. This is perhaps why, throughout Central and South America, the conception of illness in the jungle areas is the paranoid one of witchcraft, whereas in the mountainous areas is prevalent the vertiginous idea of fright and loss of self.⁸

"There in Bell Mountain, says. There is the dirty fright. There is the garbage, says. There is the claw, says. There is the terror, says. Where the day is, says. Where the clown is, says. The Lord Clown, says." In vision he sees, throughout his being he senses a repulsive place of filth and contamination, a stinking site of pustulence, of rottenness and nausea, where lies a claw that might have dealt with cruel viciousness an infected wound. His words,

8. "Finally, the illness can be the consequence of a loss of the soul, gone astray or carried off by a spirit or a revenant. This conception, widely spread throughout the region of the Andes and the Gran Chaco, appears rare in tropical America." Alfred Métraux, "Le Chaman des Guyane et de l'Amazonie," *Religions et magies indiennes d'Amérique du Sud* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1967).

emanating evil, seem to insinuate some horrible deed that left an aftermath of guilt. The sinister hovers in the air. Where? Where the clown is, he says. Concern and carefreeness are linked together, dread and laughter, from which we catch an insight into the meaning of the matter: during such experiences of liberation, there are likely to be encountered disturbances of consciousness by conscience, when reflection comes into conflict with spontaneity, guilt with innocence. It is as if the self drew back in fright from its ebullience, from its forgetfulness, unable to endure its carefreeness for long without anxiety. But the exuberant welling up of forms is ceaseless, in this flux, this fountain, this energetic springing forth of life, the past is left behind for the future, all is renewed. Beyond good and evil is the playfulness of the creative spirit incarnated by the clown, character of fortuity, the laughing one with his gay science.

Thirteen superior whirlwinds. Thirteen whirlwinds of the atmosphere. Thirteen clowns, says. Thirteen personalities, says. Thirteen white lights, says. Thirteen mountains of points, says. Thirteen old hawks, says. Thirteen white hawks, says. Thirteen personalities, says. Thirteen mountains, says. Thirteen clowns, says. Thirteen peaks, says. Thirteen stars of the morning.

The enumeration, by what seems to be a process of free association, of whirlwinds, clowns, personalities, lights, mountains, birds, and stars, is an expression of his ecstatic inventiveness. Whether he says what he sees or sees what he says, his activated consciousness is a whirlwind of imaginings and colored lights. Why always thirteen? Because twelve is many, but an even number, whereas thirteen is too many, an exaggeration, and signifies a multitude. What's more, he probably likes the sound of the word thirteen.

The mushroom session of language creates language, creates the words for phenomena without name. The white lights that sometimes appear in the sky at night, nobody knows what to call them. The mind activated by the mushrooms, from out of the center of the mystery, from the profoundest semantic sources of the human, invents a word to designate them by. The ancient wise men, to describe the kaleidoscopic illuminations of their shamanistic

nights, drew an analogy between the inside and the outside and formed a word that related the spectrum colors created by the sunshine in the spray of waterfalls and the mists of the morning to their conscious experiences of ecstatic enlightenment: these are the whirlwinds he speaks of, gyrating configurations of iridescent lights that appear to him as he speaks, turned round and round and round himself by the turbulent winds of the spirit. Clowns are frequent personae of his discourse, the impish mushrooms come to life, embodiments of merriment, tumbling figments of the spontaneous performing incredible acrobatic feats, funny imaginations of joyfulness. Personalities are more serious. Others. Society. The faces of the people he knows appear to him, then disappear to be succeeded by the apparition of more people. The plurality of incarnated consciousnesses becomes present to him. Multitude. His is an elemental world where cruel, predatory birds wheel in the sky; where the star of the morning shines in the firmament. Outside the dark room where he is speaking, the mountains stand all around in the night.

I am he who speaks with the dangerous mountain, says. I am he who speaks with the Mountain of Ridges, says. I am he who speaks with the Father, says. I am he who speaks with the Mother, says. Where plays the spirit of the day, says. Cold Water Mountain, says. Big River Mountain, says. Mountain of Harvest and Richness, says. Where the terror of the day is, says. Where is the way of the dawn, the way of the day, says.

It is significant that though the psychedelic experience produced by the mushrooms is of heightened perceptivity, the *I say* is of privileged importance to the *I see*. The utter darkness of the room, sealed off from the outside, makes any direct perception of the world impossible: the condition of interiorization for its visionary rebirth in images. In such darkness, to open the eyes is the same as leaving them closed. The blackness is alive with impalpable designs in the miraculous air. Even the appearances of the other presences, out of modesty, are protected by the obscurity from the too penetrating, revealing gaze of transcendental perception. Freed from the factuality of the given, the constitutive activity of consciousness produces visions. It is this aspect of such experiences,

to the exclusion of all others, that has led them to be called hallucinogenic, without any attempt having been made to distinguish fantasy from intuition. The Mazatec shaman, however, instead of keeping silent and dreaming, as one would expect him to do if the experience were merely imaginative, talks. There are times when in the midst of his ecstasy, whistling and whirling about, he exclaims: "Look at how beautiful we're seeing!"—astonished by the illuminations and patterns he is perceiving—"Look at how beautiful we're seeing. Look at how many good things of God there are. What beautiful colors I see." Nevertheless, the *I am the one who speaks* enunciates an action and a function, weighted with an importance and efficacy which *I am the one who sees*, hardly more than an interjection of amazement, totally lacks.

"I am he who speaks. I am he who speaks. I am he who speaks with the mountains, with the largest mountains. Speaks with the mountains, says. Speaks with the stones, says. Speaks with the atmosphere, says. Speaks with the spirit of the day." For the Mazatecs, the mountains are where the powers are, their summits, their ranges, radiating with electricity in the night, their peaks and their edges oscillating on the horizons of lightning. To speak with is to be in contact with, in communication with, in conversation with the animate spirit of the inanimate, with the material and the immaterial. To speak with is to be spoken to. By a conversion of his being, the shaman has become a transmitter and receiver of messages.

"I am the dry lightning, says. I am the lightning of the comet, says. I am the dangerous lightning, says. I am the big lightning, says. I am the lightning of rocky places, says. I am the light of the dawn, the light of day, says." He identifies himself with the elements, with the crackle of electricity; superhuman and elemental himself, his words flash from him like lightning. Sparks fly between the synaptic connections of the nerves. He is illuminated with light. He is luminous. He is force, light, and rhythmic, dynamic speech.

The world created by the woman's words, articulating her experience, was a feminine, maternal, domestic one; the masculine discourse of the shaman evokes the natural, ontological world. "She is beseeching for you, this poor and humble woman," said the

shamaness. "Woman of huipile, says. Simple woman, says. Woman who doesn't have anything, says." The man, conscious of his virility, announces: "I am he who lightnings forth."

"Where the dirty gulch is, says. Where the dangerous gulch is, says. Where the big gulch is, says. Where the fear and the terror are, says. Where runs the muddy water, says. Where runs the cold water, says." It is a landscape of ravines, mountains, and streams, he charts with his words, of physical qualities with emotional values: a terrain of being in its variations. He evokes the creation, the genesis of all things out of the times of mist; he praises, marvels, wonders at the world. "God the Holy Spirit, as he made and put together the world. Made great lakes. Made mountains. Look at the light of day. Look at how many animals. Look at the dawn. Look at space. Great earths. Earth of God the Holy Spirit." He whistles. The soul was originally conceived of as breath. The wind, he says, is passing through the trees of the forest. His spirit goes flying from place to place throughout the territory of his existence, situating the various locations of the world by naming them, calling them into being by visiting them with his words: where is, he says, where is, to create the geography of his reality. I am, where is. He unfolds the extensions of space around himself, points out and makes present as if he were there himself. "Where the blood of Christ is, says. Where the blood of the diviner is, says. Where the terror and the fright of day are, says. Where the superior lake is, says. Where the big lake is, says. There where large birds fly, says. Where fly dangerous birds." The world is not only paradisiacal in its being there, but frightening, with perils lurking everywhere. "Mountains of great whirlwinds. Where is the fountain of terror. Where is the fountain of fright." And the different places are inhabited by presences, by indwelling spirits, the gnomes, the little people. "Gnome of Cold Water, says. Gnome of Clear Water, says. Gnome of Big River, says. Big Gnome. Gnome of Burned Mountain. Gnome of the spirit of the day. Gnome of Tlocalco Mountain. Gnome of the Marking Post. White Gnome. Delicate Gnome."

The shaman, says Alfred Métraux, is "an individual who, in the interest of the community, sustains by profession an inter-

mittent commerce with the spirits or is possessed by them.”⁹ According to the classical conception, derived from the ecstatic visionaries of Siberia, the shaman is a person who, by a change of his everyday consciousness, enters the metaphysical realms of the transcendental in order to parley with the supernatural powers and gain an understanding of the hidden reasons of events, of sickness and all manner of difficulty. The Mazatec medicine men are therefore shamans in every sense of the word: their means of inspiration, of opening the circuits of communication between themselves, others, the world, and the spirits, are the mushrooms that disclose, by their psychoactive power, another modality of conscious activity than the ordinary one. The mere eating of the mushrooms, however, does not make a shaman. The Indians recognize that it is not to everyone that they speak; instead there are some who have a longing for awakenment, a disposition for exploring the surrealistic dimensions of existence, a poet's need to express themselves in a higher language than the average language of everyday life: for them in a very particular sense the mushrooms are the medicine of their genius. Nonetheless, there is a very definite idea among the Mazatecs of what the medicine man does, and since the mushrooms are his means of converting himself into the shamanistic condition, the essential characteristics of this particular variety of psychedelic experience must be manifested by his activities.

“I am he who puts together,” says the medicine man to define his shamanistic function:

he who speaks, he who searches, says. I am he who looks for the spirit of the day, says. I search where there is fright and terror. I am he who fixes, he who cures the person that is sick. Herbal medicine. Remedy of the spirit. Remedy of the atmosphere of the day, says. I am he who resolves all, says. Truly you are man enough to resolve the truth. You are he who puts together and resolves. You are he who puts together the personality. You are he who speaks with the light of day. You are he who speaks with terror.

9. Ibid.

It is immediately obvious that a discrepancy exists between the Indian conception of the mushrooms' effect and the ideas of modern psychology: whereas in experimental research reports they are said to produce depersonalization, schizophrenia, and derangement, the Mazatec shaman, inspired by them, considers himself endowed with the power of bringing together what is separated: he can heal the divided personality by releasing the springs of existence from repression to reveal the ecstatic life of the integral self; and from disparate clues, by the sudden synthesis of intuition, realize the solution to problems. The words with which he states what his work is indicate a creative activity neither outside of the realm of reason or out of contact with reality. The center of convergent message fields, sensitive to the meaning of all around him, he expresses and communicates, in direct contact with others through speech, an articulator of the unsaid who liberates by language and makes understood. His intuitions penetrate appearances to the essence of matters. Reality reveals itself through him in words as if it had found a voice to utter itself. The shaman is a signifier in pursuit of significance, intent upon bringing forth the hidden, the obscure into the light of day, the lucid one, intrepid enough to realize that the greatest secrets lie in regions of danger. He is the doctor, not only of the body, but of the self, the one who inquires into the origins of trauma, the interrogator of the familiar and mysterious. It is indeed as if that which he has eaten, by virtue of the possibilities it discovers to him, were of the spirit, for perception becomes more acute, speech more fluent, and the consciousness of significance is quickened. The mushrooms are a remedy to which one has recourse in order to resolve perplexities because the experience is creative of intentions. The way forth from the problematic is conceived of, the meaning of resolved. The shaman, he is the one in communication with the light and with the darkness, who knows of anxiety and how to dispel it: the man of truth, psychologist of the troubled soul.

Where is the fear, says. Where is the terror, says. Where stayed the spirit of this child, says. I have to search for it, says. I have to locate it, says. I have to detain it, says. I have to grab it, says. I have to call it, says. I have to whistle for it in the

midst of terror, says. I have to whistle for it through the cumulus clouds. I have to whistle for it with the spirit of the day.

Once more there appears the notion of alienation, the malady of fright, the loss of the self. The task of the shaman, hunter of extravagated spirits, is to reassociate the disassociated. He explains his method himself in these words:

Under the effect of the mushrooms, the lost spirit is whistled for through space for the spirit is alienated, but by means of the mushrooms one can call for it with a whistle. If the person is frightened, the mushrooms know where his spirit is. They are the ones who indicate and teach where the spirit is. Thereby one can speak to it. The sick person then sees the place where his spirit stayed. He feels as if he were tied in that place. The spirit is like a trapped butterfly. When it is whistled for it arrives where one is calling it. When the spirit arrives in the person, the sick one sighs and afterwards is cleaned.

It becomes evident from the words used to describe the condition of fright—the spirit is said to have been left behind, to have stayed somewhere, to be tied up, and as we will see later, to be imprisoned—that just as in the etiology of the neuroses, the sickness is a fixation upon a traumatic past event which the individual is incapable of transcending and from which he must be liberated to be cured. It is not by chance that the mushrooms, which cause a flight of the spirit, should be considered the means of chasing what has flown away. The shaman goes in search; by empathic imagination, sometimes even by dialogue with the disturbed one, he gains an insight into the reasons for the state of shock, which allows him to make his invocations relevant to the individual case. The patient, by the mnemonic power of the mushrooms, freed from inhibitions and repressions, recalls the traumatic event, surmounts the repetition syndrome that perpetuates it by virtue of the ecstatic spontaneity that has been released from him, suffers a catharsis, and is brought back to life, integrated again.

Another method of regaining the lost spirit, used as well as invocation, is to barter for it. Merchants, the Mazatecs conceive of all transactions in terms of commerce, of trading one

value for another. Throughout his discourse, the shaman, a store-keeper in daily life, dreams of money, of richness, of freedom from poverty. "Father Bank. Big Bank. Where the light of day is. Córdoba. Orizaba." He names the cities where the merchants of Huautla sell their principal commercial crop—coffee—in the market. "Where the Superior Bank is, says. Where the Big Bank is, says. Where the Good Bank is, says. Where there is money of gold, says. Where there is money of silver, says. Where there are big notes, says. Where the bank of gold is, says. Where the bank of well-being is, says." It is not surprising that among such mercantile people it should be considered possible to buy back the lost spirit, to retrieve it in exchange for another value.

"Where the fright of the spirit is. Going to pay for it to the spirit. Going to pay the day. Going to pay the mountains. Going to pay the corners." The shaman becomes a transcendental bargainer. He is told by the supernatural powers how much they demand as a ransom for the spirit they have expropriated, then he undertakes to transact the deal. He explains it himself in this way:

Cacao is used to pay the mountain and to pay for the life of the sick one. The Lord of the Mountain asks for a chicken. This is an important matter because it is the Masters of the Mountains who speak. That is the belief of the ancients. The chicken is the one who has to carry the cacao. Loaded with cacao it has to go and leave the offering in the mountain. Once it is on the mountain, seeing it loaded no one bothers to catch it because already it belongs to the Masters of the Mountain where it is lost forever. The cacao that it carries is money for the Master of the Mountain. The bark paper is used to wrap the bundle and the parrot feather that goes with it. The signification of the parrot feather is that it is as if the parrot himself arrived on the mountain. It is he who arrives announcing with his songs the arrival of the chicken loaded with cacao, the arrival of the money to pay what was asked for, as if the liberty of a prisoner were being paid for. It is as if an authority said to you, "This prisoner will be set free for a fine of one hundred pesos and if it isn't paid, he won't go free." The transaction probably has the psychological

effect of assuaging anxiety with the assurance that the powers angered by a transgression have been appeased.

As we have seen, though these shamanistic chants are creations of language created by the individual creativity of the speakers, the structure of the discourses, short phrases articulated in succession terminated by the punctuation of the word *says*, tend to be similar from person to person, determined to a large extent by culture and tradition as is much of what is said. An instance is the invocatory reiteration of names, a characteristic common to all the Mazatec shamanistic sessions of speech. The names repeated by the Indian medicine men, devout Catholics, are those of the Virgin and the saints. In ancient times, other divinities must have been named, but without any doubt, to name and make present has always played a role in such chants. "Holy Virgin of the Sanctuary. Holy Virgin. Saint Bartholomew. Saint Christopher. Saint Manuel. Holy Father. Saint Vincent. Saint Mark. Saint Manuel. Virgin Guadalupe, Queen of Mexico." To sing out the holy names serves the function for the oral poet, like the stereotyped phrases of Homeric song, of keeping the chant going during the interludes of inspiration; at the same time, the rhythmic enunciation is a telling over of identities, an expression of the interpersonality of consciousness. To recall again the affirmation of Husserl: Transcendental subjectivity is intersubjectivity. The name is the word for the person. In the mind of the speaker one identity after another becomes present, names call up people, the vision of people calls up names. Instead of naming his own acquaintances, which might occur in a desacralized discourse, the shaman invokes the holy ones. The sacred nomenclature is a sublimation of the nomenclature of family and social relationships.

It is now his everyday self, his wife and his family whom he speaks about. "Our children are going to grow up and live. I see. I see my wife, my little working woman. I love her. I speak to her through space. I speak to her through the cumulus clouds. I call to her spirit. Nothing will befall us." Man and woman, the couple and their children, that is his theme now that love for his family wells up in his heart.

Nothing can happen to us. We will go on living. We will go on living in the company of my wife, of my people. We should not make our wife irritable. We went to receive her before God, in the sight of God, in the Sacred Sacrament, in sight of the altar. There was a great mass, there was a mass of union. We were able to respect each other forty-three days and therefore God disposed that our children should be born and live. Because of that our seeds bore fruit, our offspring grew, offspring and seed that God Our Lord gave us.

He who speaks and says, perhaps it is rumored that the work he is doing, this person, is great, that his ranch is large. He is not presumptuous. He is a humble person. He is a laborious person. He is a person of problems. He is a person who has already loaned his service as an authority. He has realized himself, his gifts are inherited, he is of important people: Justo Pastor, Juan Nazareno. He is of a great root, an important root. Large trees, old trees. All our children will live, says. Will have a good harvest. Will rear their animals. Well-being and pleasure in their sugar cane, in their coffee groves. I will live much time yet. I will become an old man with gray hair, I will continue living with my offspring and with my people. My children will have education and well-being. Education must be given to my sons.

He says the changes through which he passes, the transformations and permutations of his ecstatic consciousness in the course of its temporalization—the sense of gamble, the risks, the moments of fright, the presence of light and vigor. “It turns into a game of chance, says. It turns into terror, says. It turns into spirit, says.”

He whistles and sings and dances about. “That which sounds is a harp in the presence of God and the Angel of the Guard. Plays space, plays the rocks, plays the mountains, plays the corners, plays fear, plays terror, plays the day.” He plays the facets of the world as if they were musical instruments. Things and emotions, at the contact of his singing and touch are magically resolved into ringing vibrating tonalities, into music—music of mountains and rocks, of space and fear. “Where sound the trees, says. Where sound the rocks, says. Where sound baskets. Where

sounds the spirit of the day." He is hearing the ringing and the buzzing and the humming of his effervescent consciousness and finding analogies for the sounds he hears in the echo chambers of his eardrums: the sighing of the wind through the trees, the clinking of stones, the creaking of baskets. He whistles and sings. His words issue forth from the melodic articulation of inarticulate sounds, from the physical movement of his rhythmic whirling about and scuffling in the darkness. "How beautiful I sing," he exclaims. "How beautiful I sing. How many good pleasures concedes to us the Lord of the World." He dances about working himself up to a further pitch of exaltation. "How beautiful I dance. How beautiful I dance." Repetition is one of the aspects of the discourse as it is of the pulsation of energy waves.

"This person is valiant," he says of himself. "He is of the people of Huautla, he is a Huauteacan. With great speed he calls and whistles for the spirits among the mountains; whistles the fright of the spirit." Then he flips out. He throws himself into the shamanistic fit, his voice changes, becomes that of another, rougher, more guttural, and beginning to speak in the speech of San Lucas from where came his old master, a town in the midst of the corn on a high windswept peak, he recalls his spiritual ancestor, the ancient wise man who taught him the use of the gnomic mushrooms. "He is a person of jars. He is of San Lucas. A person of plates. He is a person of jars and bowls. He is an old one." San Lucas is the place where all the black, unadorned, neolithic pottery used throughout the region is made. Men go from town to town carrying the jars, padded with ferns, on their backs to sell them in the marketplaces of the mountain villages. "Old man of pots, dishes, bowls. These are the people of the center. They speak with the mountains arrogantly. He is from San Lucas. He speaks with the whirlwind, with the whirlwind of the interior."

From what he himself tells of this old shaman, appear vestiges of the days when the shaman of the People of the Deer, intermediary between man, nature, and the divine was a thaumaturge who presided over fertility and the hunt. "I had to visit the same medicine man," he recounts, "when we went to the hunt. I had

to prepare for him an egg, an egg to be offered to the mountain. It all depends on the value of the animal that one wants. It is as if you were going to buy an animal," he said.

He is the one who says what one is to pay. He goes to leave the egg. Afterwards the dogs go into the woods and begin to work. It is necessary to rub tobacco on the crown of the dogs' heads. But with the egg and twenty-five beans of cacao, the master is sure that the deer is already bought. I have paid for the game, says the true shaman. And every time we went to hunt, we were therefore sure to encounter deer because a good shaman from San Lucas can transform a tree or a stone into a deer once he has exchanged its value for it with the Lord of the Mountain. We were sure to come upon deer because they had been paid for.

"Here come the Huautecons. Here come the Huautecons." Dancing about in the darkness, flapping his coat against his sides to imitate the bounding of a startled deer through the underbrush, he, the hunter of spirits and of game, barking like the dogs closing in around the cornered animal, tells a hunting story, talking rapidly with intense excitement in the gruff voice of one from San Lucas who sees from his vantage point the hunters of Huautla in the distance:

Listen to how their dogs bark. It's an old dog. Here they come by way of the Sad Mountain. They are bringing their kill. There is barking in the mountain. Here they come. Listen to how their arms sound. Already they have shot a colored deer. They pay the mountains. They pay the corners. The deer was killed because the Huautecons pay the price. They paid the spirit. Paid the Bald Mountain. Paid the Hollow Mountain. Paid the Mountain of the Spirit of the Day. Paid fifty pesos. You can't do just as you like. It is necessary to pay the White Gnome. The Huautecons are like clowns. They are carrying the deer off along the path. The rifles of the Huautecons are very fine. These people are important people. They know what they are doing. They know how to call the spirit. The Huautecons call their dogs by blowing a horn. Already the dogs are coming close.

The story comes almost at the conclusion of his discourse. The effect of the mushrooms lasts approximately six hours; usually

it is impossible to sleep until dawn. In all such adventures, at the end, comes the idea of a return from where it is one has gone, the return to everyday consciousness. "I return to collect these holy children that served as a remedy," the shaman says, calling back his spirits from their flight into the beyond in order to become his ordinary self again. "Aged clowns. White clowns." The mushrooms he calls sainted children and clowns, relating them by his personifications to beings who are young and joyful, playful, creative, and wise.

"The aurora of the dawn is coming and the light of day. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by the sign of the Holy Cross, free us Our Lord from our enemies and all evil. Amen."

What began in the depths of the night with the illumination of interior constellations in the spaces of consciousness ends with the arrival of the daylight after a night of continuous, animated speech. "I am he who speaks," says the Mazatec shaman.

I am he who speaks. I am he who speaks with the mountains. I am he who speaks with the corners. I am the doctor. I am the man of medicines. I am. I am he who cures. I am he who speaks with the Lord of the World. I am happy. I speak with the mountains. I am he who speaks with the mountains of peaks. I am he who speaks with the Bald Mountain. I am the remedy and the medicine man. I am the mushroom. I am the fresh mushroom. I am the large mushroom. I am the fragrant mushroom. I am the mushroom of the spirit.

The Mazatecs say that the mushrooms speak. Now the investigators¹⁰ from without should have listened better to the Indian wise men who had experience of what they, white ones of reason, had not. If the mushrooms are hallucinogenic, why

10. It is necessary to express one's debt to R. Gordon Wasson, whose writings, the most authoritative work on the mushrooms, informed me of their existence and told me much about them. "We suspect," he wrote, "that, in its integral sense, the creative power, the most serious quality distinctive of man and one of the clearest participations in the Divine . . . is in some sort connected with an area of the spirit that the mushrooms are capable of opening." R. Gordon Wasson and Roger Heim, *Les Champignons hallucinogènes du Mexique* (Paris: Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, 1958). From my own experience, I have found that contention to be particularly true.

do the Indians associate them with communication, with truth and the enunciation of meaning? An hallucination is a false perception, either visual or audible, that does not have any relation at all to reality, a fantastical illusion or delusion: what appears, but has no existence except in the mind. The vivid dreams of the psychedelic experience suggested hallucinations: such imaginations do occur in these visionary conditions, but they are marginal, not essential phenomena of a general liberation of the spontaneous, ecstatic, creative activity of conscious existence. Hallucinations predominated in the experiences of the investigators because they were passive experimenters of the transformative effect of the mushrooms. The Indian shamans are not contemplative, they are workers who actively express themselves by speaking, creators engaged in an endeavor of ontological, existential disclosure. For them, the shamanistic condition provoked by the mushrooms is intuitionary, not hallucinatory. What one envisions has an ethical relation to reality, is indeed often the path to be followed. To see is to realize, to understand. But even more important than visions for the Mazatec shaman are words as real as the realities of the real they utter. It is as if the mushrooms revealed a primordial activity of signification, for once the shaman has eaten them, he begins to speak and continues to speak throughout the shamanistic session of ecstatic language. The phenomenon most distinctive of the mushrooms' effect is the inspired capacity to speak. Those who eat them are men of language, illuminated with the spirit, who call themselves the ones who speak, those who say. The shaman, chanting in a melodic singsong, saying *says* at the end of each phrase of saying, is in communication with the origins of creation, the sources of the voice, and the fountains of the word, related to reality from the heart of his existential ecstasy by the active mediation of language: the articulation of meaning and experience. To call such transcendental experiences of light, vision, and speech hallucinatory is to deny that they are revelatory of reality. In the ancient codices, the colored books, the figures sit, hieroglyphs of words, holding the mushrooms of language in pairs in their hands: signs of signification.