

Alien Love

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The idea of sexual relationships between human and nonhuman beings is a persistent subtheme through much of mythology. Ralph Metzner reminded me that in the Old Testament it says, “And the gods found the daughters of men fair.” The Persephone myth is a good example of this. Another example that should be mentioned are the incubi and succubi of medieval mythology. These were male and female spirits that were thought to come to people in the night and have intercourse with them. This was thought to be very bad for one’s health, and general wasting diseases were often explained by invoking this phenomenon.

Recently the flying saucer phenomenon has begun to take on a new character — an erotic dimension. There is no hint of this kind of thing in the early literature, meaning from 1947 through 1960, but now it seems to be a rising theme. Though this idea is the darling of a screwball fringe, it represents an interesting developing folkway that we can learn from.

It’s only in the last sixty years, since the discovery of DNA and the Hertzprung-Russell equation, that we have begun to get an idea of the true size of the universe. Until then, the notion of extraterrestrial life and extraterrestrial intelligence could not even be coherently framed. Before that time, humanity’s relationships with transhuman intelligence tended to be demonic or angelic and fall into those categories of beings that occupied levels above and below us in the hierarchy of being. These beings were all terrestrial in some sense. But science, by clarifying the nonuniqueness of biology and giving us an idea of what’s going on in the galaxy and beyond, has validated the notion that life is ubiquitous and that intelligence is a property that accompanies life and is probably common in the universe. This legitimates fantasy about the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence. In the last half of the 20th century, the mythological outlines of what the alien must be are being cast. The expectations of a public who has been given a rudimentary knowledge of biology and astronomy allows the thing to be conceived. Public expectations are casting the extraterrestrial archetype into a mold that it will hold until it is confirmed or denied by true extraterrestrial contact, whatever that means.

We now know enough to fantasize realistically about what an alien might be like, and this sets up polarities in the collective psyche that previously we have seen only at the level of the individual. What the developing archetype of the extraterrestrial “Other” means, and the source of our fascination with it, is that, collectively, for the first time we are beginning to yearn. This new collective yearning is happening in religion on a very broad scale. The previous concerns of salvation and redemption are shifting into the background for the great majority of people, and what is driving religious feeling is a wish for contact — a relationship to the Other. The alien then falls into place in that role; the alien fulfills it. I believe that if religion survives into the long centuries of the future, this will be its compelling concern — an attempt to define a collective relationship with the Other that assuages our yearning and our feeling of being cast out or, as Heidegger says, “cast into matter, alone in the universe.”

It’s as though by passing into the psychedelic phase — the space-faring phase — the entire species were passing into adolescence and becoming aware of the possibility of something like a sexual completion with an Other, with an intelligent, nonhuman species. This is an idea that had previously been masked for us in our collective prepubescence or polymorphically perverse phase, during which we were self-absorbed. One dimension of the culture crisis is a collective erotic drive for a connection with the Other.

To sum up what I’ve said about religion, it is as though the Father-God notion were being replaced by the alien-partner notion. The alien-partner is like the angelic tetramorph. It is androgynous, hermaphroditic, transhuman; it is all these things that the unconscious chooses to project upon it until we have enough information to define what it might actually be for itself.

Eventually this contact will occur. We are now in the pubescent stage of yearning, of forming an image of the thing desired. This image of the thing desired will eventually cause that thing to come into being. In other words, our cultural direction is being touched by the notion of alien love, and it comes to us through the rebirth of the use of plant hallucinogens. The shamanic vision plants seem to be the carriers of this pervasive entelechy that speaks and that can present itself to us in this particular way.

The appetite for this fusion is what is propelling global culture toward an apocalyptic transformation. It isn’t recognized as that in the culture yet, but nevertheless it is this fascination with the Other that propels us forward. Culturally we are growing toward the potential for falling in love, but then if there is no one to love this potential can turn to rancor and disillusionment. We have embarked on the exploration of a unique historical opportunity in which for the first time the issue of the Other is being fully constellated and dealt with by the species. The question is being asked, “Are we alone?” and though we now focus on that question, we need to think beyond that to, “What if we are not alone?” Then what becomes the next imperative question? It is obviously the exploration of the relationship to the Other, part of which has an erotic character.

We will discover, as soon as communication is even remotely possible, that we are obsessed with it. It becomes very important to know whether or not we are

alone. It becomes very important to open a dialogue if any dialogue is possible. I think that at this stage the facts are secondary to the description of what is going on. In other words, this option could slip away from us. It is a potential that has drifted near the historical continuum, and if it is invoked by enough people, it will become a fact. But it could also slip away. We could harden; there are dominator, hypertechnological futures that we could sail toward and realize. That would eliminate this possibility of opening to the Other.

I always try to define for myself what the historical importance of psychedelics is, because we know that shamans have used these plants for millennia and have plumbed these depths as individuals. Still, I always have the intuition that there is a historical impact of some sort, and I think this is it: that we are actually positioned to attempt something that has never been attempted before, to open a dialogue as a collectivity with the Other and to use that synergy to bootstrap ourselves to a new cultural level. There isn't a great deal of talk about it; this intuition exists at the folk level. None of the managerial or analytical elements in society are looking at this at the moment. But it is forming and crystallizing in the background.

Contact with extraterrestrials and voices in the head and Logos-like phenomena are not a part of the general mythology of LSD. Certain exceedingly intense individuals may have achieved this intermittently, but it is not something that is attached to the notion of what LSD does to you. With psilocybin, on the other hand, it definitely is. Our survey showed that as people's doses increased, their susceptibility to this phenomenon increased markedly. The issue of contact with the extraterrestrial for large numbers of people has been broached by mushrooms. It's very puzzling to people, because our expectations are always that we are cells in a vast societal animal and that the news of anything truly important will be conveyed electronically to us; that if flying saucers land, the president and the secretary general of the United Nations will convey the word to us. But the challenge of the psychedelics is to realize that the potential for an alchemical wedding with the alien exists now. It is a tribal phenomenon that is happening as an experience at the individual level. People in the confines of their own apartments are becoming Magellans of the interior world, reaching out to this alien thing, beginning to map invisible landscapes and to bring back stories that can only be compared to the kind of stories that the chroniclers of the New World brought back to Spain at the close of the 15th century. Stories of insect gods, starships, unfathomable wisdom, endless realities.

Many times I've spoken of the psychedelic experience as a landscape and as a confidant — a kind of girl Friday who tells you things; but another facet of it is the erotic element. There is no other word for it, because it inspires a feeling of opening and merging that is, in our cultural conditioning, what we associate with Eros. To distinguish it from ordinary love I always think of it as LUV. It's the kind of love that you get with the alien. What it means is that the relationship to the alien can be thought of as modeled on the relationships to the Other that each of us forms through relating to other people. This is similar to the Jungian notion of the *coniunctio*, a situation in which two people get together and try to function as alchemical mirrors for each other. Tantra and

Taoist sexual practices also have to do with fusing into dyads. In that situation each party to the fact is taking on the quality of the other. In a nonerotic context that's called becoming what you behold.

We are uniquely susceptible to becoming what we behold. This is why we have always been led into the future by our imaginations; because we dream and then we realize the dreams. This fact about our monkeyhood, when put in combination with a relationship with an alien mind, means that we will become the Other we behold. This is, in fact, what I think is happening. The curious intimations of the deepening contact with the Other make it seem probable to me that we are in love, but we're only slowly realizing this because we've never been in love before. So articulating this kind of idea, one person saying it to another and discussing it, is actually an attempt to conjure this into being — to call it forth and make this supposition become fact. Because all facts are the suppositions of very large numbers of people, the fate of this archetype now hangs in the balance.

There is tension around the flying saucer, aside from the erotic connotation, because the flying saucer represents a tremendous challenge to science, perhaps the ultimate challenge. It may be as confounding to science as the resurrection of Christ was to Greek empiricism and Roman imperialism. The flying saucer is essentially an agent of cultural change. On the level of the machine, it bids distress for our most cherished explanatory schema, but on the level of the alien as flesh, it presents a much more basic and fundamental challenge, because the erotic complex is being redefined by this phenomenon.

Many people take LSD, and yet it's very difficult to get precise numbers on this matter because people don't talk about it. Yet in the last fifteen years, sexual researchers have had a field day because people are very, very willing to discuss their bizarre sexual peculiarities and to pour out their hearts to people with clipboards. So we now know a great deal about human sexuality. I suggest that our taboos are on the move. They are moving so that as we become more sexually polymorphic and open with each other and our ego is less identified with our sexuality, we become very private and constrained, secretive and religious about our psychic experiences, particularly the psychedelic experiences. We are much more open with each other sexually and in our examination of our libidinal drives, but the taboo has now moved to this interior world where we have an adolescent sensitivity about our developing relationship to the Other.

These attitudes are elements in the emerging human future, a human future that is accelerating exponentially. It is not a mere linear propagation of the present; peculiar factors are impinging on it: psychedelic substances, the ability to erect large structures in deep space, the presence of the alien Logos in the mind of the collectivity, the presence of the cybernetic network that is developing, the politics of feminism — all these things are going toward release of humanity into the imagination. To date, the cultural engineers have not stressed enough that the erotic element be included in the design of the human future.

Let me sum up by saying that there is an emerging zeitgeist of hyperspace. I call it a zeitgeist of hyperspace because electronic culture will add another dimension whose effects will reverberate at every level. We are now living in a

hyperdimensional collectivity, not only of earth and space but of information of past and future, of conscious and unconscious. The technological culmination of this is the projection of human consciousness into whatever form it seeks to take. The zeitgeist of hyperspace that is emerging, initially freighted with technology and cybernetics, requires that it be consciously tuned to an erotic ideal. It is important to articulate the presence of this erotic ideal of the Other early. This is an opportunity to fall in love with the Other, get married, and go off to the stars; but it's only an opportunity and not evolutionarily necessary.

If we only live with the ideal of the Other and never find and fuse with the Other, we can still evolve along whatever pathways lie ahead of us. But if the opportunity is seized, if we take seriously the experience of the last ten millennia and complete the modern program of realizing the ideals of the Archaic Revival, recognizing that what the 20th century really is about is an effort to establish and perfect the ideals of late Paleolithic shamanism, then we will have acted with integrity in relating to this opportunity and we guarantee ourselves a grand and peculiar historical adventure — which I cheer for.

Audience: Could you say a bit more about the role of the psychedelic experience?

Once we set ourselves the task of describing the psychedelic experience it will become more accessible, because if we each gave our best metaphor and then all used those metaphors to produce a better metaphor, we eventually would retool our language so that we would be able to handle these modalities. And this will happen. Historically, the psychedelic experience is a new object for the Western languages. It will be very interesting to see what English, the language of Milton, Chaucer and Shakespeare, will be able to do with the psychedelic experience. In William Blake you get the feeling that English can do staggering things with it. Passages in Andrew Marvell imply the same.

The relationship of the psychedelic experience to literature is a whole field unto itself; there are certain moments where great literature has passed near it. Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* got it, very succinctly. Huysmans' *Against the Grain* is an amazing novel about a man who is so sensitized to perception that he can't leave his apartments. He has his walls covered in felt and keeps the lights very low. He collects Redon when nobody had ever heard of Redon. He buys turtles and has jewels affixed to their backs. Then he sits in a half-lit room and smokes hashish and watches the turtles crawl around on his Persian rugs. Let's all go home and do this.

Audience: I'm curious about whether the chemical induction is necessary. I've been exploring vision through dream work and it seems promising. In sleep we see a lot of things.

Yes, I think dreaming and states of psychedelic intoxication, possibly the after-death state, possibly the post-apocalypse state for the collectivity, all these are related to each other. Certainly dreaming is the natural access point, be-

cause it's a part of everyday experience. But these places are what's called state-bounded. It's very hard to bring back information — you have to have a natural inclination or a technique. It doesn't matter whether you are using psychedelics or yoga or dream-manipulation; it's just a matter of exploring the mind by whatever means works. I've seen studies that show that the deepest part of sleep is the high point of production of endogenous hallucinogens, such as DMT and β -carbolines, in the human brain. Nevertheless, it's only in the wildest dreams, which are necessarily the most difficult to recover, that one passes into places that are like DMT and psilocybin ecstasy. Yoga makes the claim that it can deliver you into these spaces, but people have different proclivities for these altered states of consciousness. It's very hard to move me off the baseline of consciousness. I am very stolid and set in the here and now, so plants work better than anything else for me. I scoured India and could not convince myself that it wasn't a shell game of some sort or was any more real than the states manipulated by the various schools of New Age psychotherapy.

But in the Amazon and other places where plant hallucinogens are understood and used, you are conveyed into worlds that are appallingly different from ordinary reality. Their vividness cannot be stressed enough. They are more real than real, and that's something that you sense intuitively. They establish an ontological priority. They are more real than real, and once you get that under your belt and let it rattle around in your mind, then the compass of your life begins to spin and you realize that you are not looking in on the Other; the Other is looking in on you. This is a tremendous challenge to the intellectual structures that have carried us so far during the last thousand years. We can do tricks with atoms, there's no question about that, but these tricks immolate us. The higher-order structure of molecules, let alone organelles and that kind of thing, is intellectual terra incognita to us; we have no notion of how these things work or what is going on. Yet it is from those levels that the constituent modalities of reality are being laid down. What do I mean by that? I mean that you can understand all this fine nuclear chemistry about the atom, but where does it put you if you are an intellectual? The story you tell yourself about how the world works can't explain to you how forming the wish to close your open hand into a fist makes it happen. This is the true status of present science. It cannot offer so much as a clue about how that happens. Scientists know how muscles contract — all *that* they know. It's the initiating phenomenon, that which decides, "I will close my hand." They know as much about that as — and perhaps less than — Western or Eastern philosophy knew in the 12th century.

And it is at that level, at the level of the body experience and the mind experience, that we operate. You can live in the social and religious system of Hellenistic Greece and offer sacrifice to Demeter, or you can live in 20th century America and watch the evening news, but you should have no faith that you are getting the true story on reality. These are just historical contexts that can be transcended only by the acquisition of gnosis, knowledge that is experienced as self-evidently true. It's hard for people to even realize what I might be talking about because they believe that something like logical consistency or ability to be reduced to mathematical formalism is how you judge the efficacy

of an idea. Ideas such as that are what led us into this extremely alienated state. We haven't demanded that the stories we tell ourselves about how the world works confirm our direct experience of how it works. The psychedelic substances, by focusing attention on the mind-body-brain interactions, are reframing these questions; and not a moment too soon, because the cybernetic and technical capabilities of this society demand that this all be looked at very clearly or we're just going to sail right off the moral edge of things and into the abyss.

Audience: Could you comment further on the interaction between various sexual yogas and the psychedelic experience or intoxication as tools — as in effect potential tools for approaching the kind of extraterrestrial eroticism you're talking about?

Certainly. You have all kinds of things going on when people are having sexual intercourse. The physiological state is one of activation, there's production of pheromones. I've noticed on psilocybin that there is a disappearance of normal resistance across a membrane, especially if there is perspiration, so that two people with large amounts of skin in contact become one entity. I'm convinced enough of this that I would suggest to Masters and Johnson, or whoever has license to do these kinds of things, to check it out if they are serious about validating telepathy. This is a very simple experiment.

Taoist sexual practices lay a lot of stress on the generation of unusual substances in the genitals or in the perspiration, which is a theme that is absent from Indian yoga but that is picked up in Amazonian shamanism, where there is a lot of discussion of magical forms of perspiration, magical objects that are generated out of the body or put into the bodies of other people.

In the matter of Taoist alchemy, it appears that there was an erotic control language, so that much of what appear to be prescriptions for sexual practices are actually recipes for plant combinations, because words that were used with sexual connotations were also code words for plants and fungi. The association in the Taoist mind between the fungi and the feminine genitalia was very close. The words and the concepts are the same. This is a prevailing motif of the so-called esoteric schools of Chinese eroticism, meaning the schools where actually nothing appears to be going on, but the presence of certain plants and certain objects in a composition indicate that it actually is an erotic cryptogram of some sort.

Audience: Could it be that the natural psychedelics that exist on the planet are a kind of love offering from the Other to us with which, when we accept them, we can develop that bond sought by the Other?

I have spoken about extraterrestrial contact and the relationship to the psilocybin mushrooms. I've mentioned that psilocin, which is what psilocybin quickly becomes as it enters your metabolism, is 4-hydroxy-*N,N*-dimethyltryptamine. It is the only 4-substituted indole in all of organic nature. Let this rattle around

in your mind for a moment. It is the only 4-substituted indole known to exist on earth. It happens to be this psychedelic substance that occurs in about 80 species of fungi, most of which are native to the New World. Psilocybin has a unique chemical signature that says, “I am artificial; I come from outside.” I was suggesting that it was a gene — an artificial gene — carried perhaps by a space-borne virus or something brought artificially to this planet, and that this gene has insinuated itself into the genome of these mushrooms.

It is an unresolved problem in botany why there is such a tremendous concentration of plant hallucinogens in the New World — in North and South America. Africa, which is where man is generally thought to have arisen and gone through his formative cultural development, is the poorest of all continents in hallucinogens. The New World is very, very rich, and this is why hallucinogenic shamanism is so highly developed in the New World. So, yes: the fact that the psilocybin compound is chemically unique, the fact that it induces this Logos-like experience, causes me at least to entertain the possibility that this is an extraterrestrial contact and that the notion of extraterrestrials as we have previously conceived them, as someone from far away who would come in ships and get in touch with us, is an obsolete notion.

As human history goes forward, we develop the linguistic discrimination to be able to recognize the extraterrestrials that are already insinuated into the planetary environment around us, some of which may have been here millions and millions of years. In other words, space is not an impermeable barrier to life; there is slow drift. There is genetic material that is transferred through space and time over vast distances.

Operationally, I deal with the mushroom that way. It may well be an adumbration or some slice of the human collectivity, but since it presents itself as the Other, I treat it as the Other. Sometimes, as I have said, it is my colleague, and sometimes it is my Jewish godfather, and sometimes it is what Jung called the *soror mystica*, and what my brother Dennis called the sore mistress. It all has to do with changing our preconceptions of things so that the idea that a mushroom could be an intelligent extraterrestrial, which is preposterous from one point of view, can be seen to move from possible to highly probable. This change of mind occurs by simply shifting language around; the evidence has been left untouched.

The evidence is equally friendly to either point of view because the evidence is so impersonal — science is totally impersonal. The empirical evidence that the mushroom is an extraterrestrial is thin and circumstantial, but the subjective experience of those who have formed a relationship with it overwhelmingly supports that view. This, then, is where we have ideas in competition, the evolution of points of view through time. That’s why I say the opportunity should not be missed to open a cultural dialogue concerning this phenomenon among ourselves, and with the thing itself. It’s a unique opportunity.

Audience: I’m going to ask you to speculate just for a minute.

I never speculate.

Audience: Just try. Given that we are led by our imaginations into the future, and that facts are indeed suppositions that are agreed upon by a large group of people, how many people do you suppose it would take to agree on these facts and what sort of rituals or ceremonies would be required to align everybody's thinking to agree on specific elements of the invisible landscape to the point where it would be possible to retool the language to accommodate the new visions and take advantage of this opportunity to perfect the Paleolithic ideals of shamanism?

I don't know. Maybe there's a critical 5%, or something like that. Political revolutions are made by 10%. Psilocybin mushrooms have emanated throughout society. In the last eight years we have undergone something like a second Neolithic revolution. The first Neolithic revolution was the invention of agriculture; the second Neolithic revolution was the invention of home fungus cultivation. Suddenly, twenty or thirty species of psilocybin-containing mushrooms, which were previously rarely met forest endemics or the coprophilic kinds of mushrooms — the ones that grew on the dung of cattle — all of which had restricted endemic zones of occupation, these all have become available. *Stropharia cubensis*, the most ubiquitous in the natural state, was before the invention of human cultivation a rare tropical mushroom. Now it grows from Nome to Tierra del Fuego in every attic, basement and garage around. The strategy by which the mushroom conquers society is exactly the same strategy by which the mycelium spreads across a petri dish; it simply moves out in all directions. My brother and I wrote the book *Psilocybin: Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide* in 1975. It sold a hundred thousand copies. We had competition from Bob Harris, who also wrote a cultivation book. Jonathan Ott wrote a book. So did Gary Menser and Stephen Pollock. Spore companies sprang up; it's very hard to imagine how many people are doing this.

I'm very bullish on psilocybin. I think that the word "drug" is inappropriate and that the model of hallucinogenic substances that we have inherited from our experience with LSD is completely inadequate — that the fact that LSD is our model hallucinogen for doctors and researchers is only a historical accident. It was discovered first, or characterized first, in the laboratory, and then millions and millions of people took it. It's active in the 100 μg range, whereas psilocybin is active at 15 milligrams. Millions and millions of people were able to be touched by LSD. I don't think that mass drug taking is a good idea, but I think that we must have a deputized minority — a shamanic professional class, if you will — whose job is to bring ideas out of the deep, black water and show them off to the rest of us. Such people would perform for our culture some of the cultural functions that shamans performed in preliterate cultures.

I like the plant hallucinogens. I think that a true symbiosis is happening there. LSD was a thing of the laboratory. Psilocybin is a creature of the forests and fields. When we propagate it, when we spread it, when it stones us, there is a reciprocal relationship and transfer of energy and information. This is a true symbiosis. Both parties are gaining; nobody is giving up anything. We have

domesticated many plants and animals; that's not big news. But this is not a walnut or an apple; it isn't even a cat or a dog; it may be smarter than we are. So the implications of this relationship have to be couched in at least human terms, and that's why the erotic metaphor is not inappropriate.

Audience: If psychedelic substances were legal and this were a class in introductory psychedelic appreciation, what do you suppose our first assignment would be?

From me? I guess I would have you plant some seeds and read some history; when you had read the history and grown the seeds (and I don't know what they would be — morning glory seeds or the spores of mushrooms), when you had assimilated and cared for the plant and brought it to its fullest self-expression of fruitful production of alkaloids, then you would be at the threshold of your career and I would adjourn the class.

Appreciation of history is very important to doing well in the psychedelic experience. Psilocybin shows you movies of history; it sees us as historical creatures. It has this above-everything point of view where it isn't dealing in the slice of the moment. It's dealing with the phenomenon of the monkeys over the last million years; that is how it sees us. You can assimilate some of its viewpoints by having a real feeling for the ancestors, all the people who are dead and the people who went before. What a long, strange trip it's been, you know — from the cave paintings at Altamira to the doorway of the starship. And now we stand on that threshold, hand in hand with this strange new partner; out of historical change comes the unexpected. The problem of the Other, the need for the Other, the presence of the Other, the nature of the Other — these are the questions and the concerns that will drive the next order of human knowing.

Audience: You don't preclude at all the possibility that the yearning for the Other is just a yearning for the Self — that the Other really is an undisclosed Self.

No, I don't. In fact, I said at the beginning that the nature of the archetype is being set now in the light of scientific knowledge concerning other intelligence in the universe. It's a combination of our need for connection and science giving its blessing to this form of expression of that need that is creating the potential phenomenon of alien love. We don't know what the Self is; Buddhism says that everything is Bodhi-mind; that means that there could be extraterrestrials, and if it's true that everything is Bodhi-mind, they too are an aspect of the Self. This word "Self" is as great a mystery as the word "Other." It's just a polarity between two mysteries and then the thin, thin myths that are spun to hold you suspended there without freaking out. The myths of science and religion and shamanism all represent a polarity between the mystery of the Self and the mystery of the Other — and remember, a mystery is not to be confused with an unsolved problem; a mystery is by its nature mysterious and will not collapse into solution. We are unfamiliar with that kind of thing. We think that if there's

a mystery, then experts of whatever kind can get it straightened out and issue a report, but this approach only works for trivia. And what's important — our hearts, our souls, our hopes, our expectations — is completely mysterious to us. So how must they appear, then, to the Other, if it truly is Other?

We need to cultivate a sense of mystery. The mystery is not only in the Other; it is in us. This reverberates again with the idea that we become what we behold. The nature of history is suddenly transforming in the post-quantum physics, postmodern phase; this was not expected. The 19th century, the early 20th century — they didn't realize this was what they were pointed into. Although some few people, the 'Pataphysicians, the surrealists, saw what was coming. But now here we are.

Audience: The discussion earlier of how the mushroom was likely seeded from afar reminded me of the panspermia theory — of the idea that life itself was sent and that we were all sent down here together.

Yes, I should have mentioned that theory because it is the best support I have for the idea I was putting forth. The panspermia theory was formulated by Cyril Ponnampereuma, who was the discoverer, along with James Watson and Francis Crick, of DNA. Ponnampereuma and Crick are proposing a much more radical theory than what I put forth, at least in terms relative to biology. They are saying that prebiotic molecules arise in the greatest numbers in deep space, not on the surfaces of planets; that planets are only biologically important at a late stage in the development of complex polymers and prebiotic compounds. I'm sure you know the old adage that we each are made of stars, that the atoms in your bodies were once cooked in the hearts of stars. This is true, but an unremarked accompanying necessity of that fact would be that there must therefore be some atoms in your body that were not cooked in the heart of stars, but were part of the planets that circled around those stars before they exploded.

My point being that not all of this material that is circulated in the galaxy has been through something as violent as nuclear burning at the heart of a star. When stars go nova their planets are blown to pieces, and if biotic material has evolved on those planets it is injected into the general cosmic soup of circulating material. That is more my idea of what the spore strategy may have originally been about. The spore evolved in very harsh environments where seeds could not survive. Mushroom spores survive best in an environment as much like that of deep space as possible. Ideal is a total vacuum at -60°C . There they last virtually forever. The logic of the case is well-founded. What is on much shakier ground, of course, is the idea that the mushroom is an intelligent life form. That's my special obsession and province. Most people say I'm welcome to it.

It's very interesting that in a book called *Scientific Perspectives on Interstellar Communication* by Cyril Ponnampereuma, there is an article by R.N. Bracewell, an astrophysicist, who talks about the logic of searches for intelligent life. He concludes that no matter what kind of life form you are, no matter what kind of technology you have, if you are seriously going to search space

by physically sending probes from one star to another, then the only strategy that would work would be what is called a von Neumann machine, meaning a machine that can reproduce itself. Four of these machines are sent out in four opposed directions from a parent star. At a certain distance from the parent star, each machine replicates, giving eight machines. At double that distance, they replicate again, giving sixteen machines, and so on. The notion is that only by this process of replication can all bets be covered. And then what you do is send an initial contact message that says, “We are searching the galaxy for intelligence by an exhaustive means. If you read this message, please call the following toll-free number and we will initiate contact.” Only in this way could you hope to have contact with all the habitable worlds in the galaxy. This scenario makes clear that it may be very important to understand what the message is that the mushroom conveys.

The Mandaeans, an obscure religious cult of Gnostics in the Middle East of very long survivability, believe that at the end of time what they call the Secret Adam will come to earth. The Secret Adam is a messiah-like figure, but he builds a machine that then transmits all the souls back to their hidden source in the All-Father outside of the machinery of cosmic fate. This notion of the messiah building a machine is very interesting. It’s conceivable that if there is an extraterrestrial message in our environment, it is a message to build some kind of device so that a less tenuous form of communication can be opened up. Bracewell makes this point; to him this is inherent in the logic of the situation.

It would be an interesting branch of logic — the logic of protocols of extraterrestrial contact. What can we define about contact that is so basic that whatever form of life and intelligence you were, you would have to flow along those creodes? This is probably an undeveloped field at this point, but it certainly could be done. It’s like alternative physics. We need alternative theories of social contact and social contract-making in the event that we meet an extraterrestrial. This is a fertile theme in science fiction, the logic of contact, how to make it without giving away too much and yet still get something out of it. It’s poker, but the stakes are very high. We’re talking survivability, viability, and evolutionary fates of species, if not entire planets.

Audience: I would like to ask whether you see a difference with what you’re doing with your life and what a shaman would do? The last time I heard you speak, you said you didn’t consider yourself a shaman.

The primary characteristic of shamans is that they cure. In other words, they perform a medical function. If I’m performing a medical function, it is a fairly curious one. That’s how I differentiate, because I respect that and it is often lost sight of. People think of the psychedelic plants and the magic and the magical feats, but they forget the curing. In Carlos Castaneda’s work I don’t think anybody cures anybody in about 1,200 pages of material; nevertheless, classically and statistically, shamans are healers. I think there is something called “lived shamanic ideals,” which is what I’m trying to do — to try to explore reality with a shamanic spirit and by shamanic means. But the curing is the sine qua

non of shamanism.

Audience: Could you give me your best understanding of what space is from the psychedelic perspective and the differentiation between inner mental space and outer physical space, and the validity of that differentiation? Just the relationship between space in general and consciousness.

The world is reconstructed in the mind through the input of sensation. The sensation is canalized through the perceptrors so that we're getting at least three or four lines of unrelated input, or it's generally thought of as unrelated. But the body is the interface between the mind and the world, and language seems to be the throughput from the mind to the world and then from the world back into the mind. As for space — there is this curious thing in biology: the earliest forms of life had no perception of the world at all. If food was in their way, they took it in. Then later, with the development of eyespots and pigment-sensitive chemicals concentrated in certain cells, you get the differentiation between light and darkness. Then later still you get mobile animals and the evolution of complicated eyes and so forth. You see, what is happening is that biology is a conquest of dimensions and that if you view culture as the extension of biological evolution, it too is a conquest of a dimension. It is the conquest of a dimension of time where, through the invention of alphabets and coding systems and oral traditions, experience is able to be coded. Now we seem to be coming into a place where we are coding space and time, but the evolution of the conquest of space through motion allows our whole mapping of the world. Culture is turning into a hyperdimensional entity fulfilling the biological program of life. Whatever it is, it is transforming itself through a series of dimensions, bootstrapping itself from one dimension to another. You'll notice that currently human culture is very two-dimensional, or it's very flat. What is the highest building in the world, a thousand feet high? And generally most buildings are twenty feet high; but now we are proposing to build space colonies where the notion of how high the building is doesn't exist because the world is the building and the building is fifty or a hundred miles long.

We can record essentially anything we want about any event and recall it later. There is a synthesis of all this, which leads to the discovery of the inner dimension, which may be thought of as a higher or lower dimension. The human imagination is the dimension beyond space and time, or it precedes all dimensions. At some level it has pointlike characteristics; that's why all this talk about the hologram, because it has the pointlike characteristics of new consciousness. It has all-at-onceness. Its everywhere-at-the-same-timeness has fascinated commentators.

Audience: You talked about the collapse of the distinction of inner and outer space. Would you go into that more?

The distinction of inner and outer space is rooted in association of the Self with the body. I think as the Self moves out into the ocean of electronic con-

sciousness and, as we explored, into the erotic dimensions with the Other that I've indicated tonight, this identification between Self and body will become secondary, in the same way that the identification between king and Self has become rather secondary over the last 5,000 years. We don't even have a king. We seem to manage without one. It's conceivable we could manage without a body as well. These are just ways that loyalty is transferred toward forms of cultural concrescence validated by local languages.

Audience: It seems that the talk is of humanity being on the threshold of a New Age, and that maybe contact with aliens will help us cross this threshold.

I definitely think that there is a process that has been long underway that has been gaining momentum since its very beginning. It is the process that formed the planet, that called life out of the ocean, that called higher animals out of the lower animals, that called humanity out of the primates, and that called history out of tribal, sacral, timeless existence. What it is leading toward is some kind of transcendental, transformative flowing together of everything that is beyond our language system. It is the umbilicus of being; it is where it's all tied together, and therefore it's very hard to describe. I think that all of our science and religion and history are patterns thrown across a limited set of dimensions by the hyperdimensional presence of a certain object at the end of history toward which we are moving and toward which we are being drawn. I think that most things about human beings are mysterious and that what is happening to us is mysterious. The sudden explosive development of the neo-cortex is entirely out of context with what we know about the rates of evolution that occur in other species and previously went on in the primates.

It's been very fashionable in the past fifty years to think that it's all very humdrum; yet every ideological system that has been granted the status of being the official view of reality has always proclaimed that it had everything nailed down but the last 5%; their best people were working on that. But I think that we know practically nothing. Though I am not in most senses religious, I think that religious thinking about the transformation of the world is more on the right track than the notion that the laws of physics will always be what they are, the laws of biology will always be what they are, and we're all just going to go along and things are going to get worse and worse, or better and better, but that there are no surprises. I think that we do not see what's going on.

One of the reasons I like to make this argument about the mushroom and the extraterrestrial is to show people how one can see things differently. If things can be seen that differently, how many ways can they be seen differently? Try to get people to stop waiting for the president to enlighten them. Stop waiting for history and the stream of historical events to make itself clear to you. You have to take seriously the notion that understanding the universe is your responsibility, because the only understanding of the universe that will be useful to you is your own understanding. It doesn't do you any good to know that somewhere in some computer there are equations that perfectly model or perfectly don't model something that is going on. We have all tended to give ourselves away

to official ideologies and to say, “Well, I may not understand, but someone understands.” The fact of the matter is that only your own understanding is any good to you, because it’s you that you’re going to live with and it’s you that you’re going to die with. As the song says, the last dance you dance, you dance alone.