

Robbins Rants

Tom **Robbins** is the author of numerous books, including *Fierce Invalids Home from Hot Climates*, *Still Life with Woodpecker*, *Skinny Legs and All*, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* and *Another Roadside Attraction*.

feelings or experiences that spontaneously wish to arise. It may take exploring with different attitudes and occasionally focusing our attention on various considerations, especially if we are prone to getting tense by trying too hard. Things that may work in one situation may not work the next time, and a fresh approach is required. And since we are all different, results may well vary considerably from person to person. For it is fresh, unmediated experience that we are seeking. Just reading this information or hearing similar ideas and concepts from others will not accomplish the objective. We each in our own way must seek out how to best discover and maintain this priceless connection. For myself, I have found that simply being still and “just being” is extraordinarily difficult.

Yet I firmly believe this to be the highest prize. Having achieved an on-going connection or realization of our True Self, we are free to direct our attention wherever we wish. It is from this perspective that any object of attention is seen in its clearest light, in its truest aspects, in the most meaningful connections with other aspects of reality. It is from this perspective that the greatest creativity flows forth. By learning how to maintain this connection, we have truly learned how to learn. •

Notes

1. Grof, S. 1998. “Human Nature and the Nature of Reality: Conceptual Challenges from Consciousness Research,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 30(4): 351.

2. To reify, as used here, is to invest some concept or idea with the power of the mind so that for us it becomes true or real. Such reifications then become barriers which interfere with our direct perception of Reality.

3. Wilber, K. 1999. *One Taste*, p. 223.

4. An excellent book covering the essentials of a good meditation practice is Wallace, Alan B. 1999. *Boundless Heart: Cultivation of the Four Immeasurables*. Snow Line Publications.

THE TIN CAN was invented in 1811. The can opener was not invented until 1855. In the intervening 44 years, people were obliged to access their pork ‘n’ beans with a hammer and chisel.

Now, the psychedelic can opener, the device that most efficiently opens the tin of higher consciousness, was discovered thousands of years ago and put to beneficial use by shamans and their satellites well before the advent of what we like to call “civilization.” Yet, inconceivably, modern society has flung that proven instrument into the sin bin, forcing its citizens to seek access to the most nourishing of all canned goods with the psychological equivalent of a hammer and chisel. (I’m referring to Freudian analysis and the various, numberless self-realization techniques.)

Our subject here, however, is creativity, and I don’t mean to suggest that just because one employs the psychedelic can opener to momentous effect, just because one manages to dip into the peas of the absolute with a lightning spoon, that one is going to metamorphose into some creative titan if one is not already artistically gifted. The little gurus who inhabit certain psychoactive compounds are not in the business of manufacturing human talent. They don’t sell imagination by the pound, or even by the microgram. What they ARE capable of doing, however, is reinforcing and supporting that innate imagination that manages to still exist in a nation whose institutions—academic, governmental, religious and otherwise—seem determined to suffocate it with a polyester pillow from WalMart.

The plant genies don’t manufacture imagination, nor do they market wonder and beauty—but they force us out of context so dramatically and so meditatively that we gawk in amazement at the ubiquitous everyday wonders that we are culturally disposed to overlook, and they teach us invaluable lessons about fluidity, relativity, flexibility and paradox. Such an increase in awareness, if skillfully applied, can lift a disciplined, adventurous artist permanently out of reach of the faded jaws of mediocrity.

The impact of psychedelics upon my own sensibility was to dissolve a lot of my culturally-conditioned rigidity. Old barriers, often rooted in ignorance and superstition, just melted away. I learned that one might move about freely from one level of existence to another. The borderlines between reality and fantasy, dream and wakefulness, animate and inanimate, even life and death, were no longer quite as fixed. The Asian concept of interpenetration of realities was made physically manifest—and this served to massage the stiffness out of my literary aesthetic.

Unbeknownst to most western intellectuals, there happens to be a fairly thin line between the silly and the profound, between the clear light and the joke; and it seems to me that on that frontier is the single most risky and significant place artists or philosophers can station themselves. I’m led to suspect that my psychedelic background may have prepared me to straddle that boundary more comfortably than those writers who insist on broaching the luminous can of consciousness with a hammer and chisel, and, especially, those who, spurning the in-CAN-descent altogether, elect to lap their watered-down gruel from the leaky trough of orthodoxy. •