stay close to the house, and, with those who lived through that night, compare notes, and utter ejaculations of amazement.

As man emerged from his brutish past, thousands of years ago, there was a stage in the evolution of his awareness when the discovery of a mushroom (or was it a higher plant?) with miraculous properties was a revelation to him, a veritable detonator to his soul, arousing in him sentiments of awe and reverence, and gentleness and love, to the highest pitch of which mankind is capable, all those sentiments and virtues that mankind has ever since regarded as the highest attribute of his kind. It made him see what this perishing mortal eye cannot see. How right the Greeks were to hedge about this Mystery, this imbibing of the potion, with secrecy and surveillance! What today is resolved into a mere drug, a tryptamine or lysergic acid derivative, was for him a prodigious miracle, inspiring in him poetry and philosophy and religion. Perhaps with all our modern knowledge we do not need the divine mushrooms any more. Or do we need them more than ever? Some are shocked that the key even to religion might be reduced to a mere drug. On the other hand, the drug is as mysterious as it ever was: "like the wind it cometh we know not whence, nor why." Out of a mere drug comes the ineffable, comes ecstasy. It is not the only instance in the history of humankind where the lowly has given birth to the divine. Altering a sacred text, we would say that this paradox is a hard saying, yet one worthy of all men to be believed.

If our classical schloars were given the opportunity to attend the rite at Eleusis, to talk with the priestess, what would they not exchange for that chance? They would approach the precincts, enter the hallowed chamber, with the reverence born of the texts venerated by scholars for millennia. How propitious would their frame of mind be, if they were invited to partake of the potion! Well, those rites take place now, unbeknownst to the classical scholars, in scattered dwellings, humble, thatched, without windows, far from the beaten track, high in the mountains of Mexico, in the stillness of the night, broken only by the distant barking of a dog or the braying of an ass. Or, since we are in the rainy season, perhaps the Mystery is accompanied by torrential rains and punctuated by terrifying thunderbolts. Then, indeed, as you lie there bemushroomed, listening to the music and seeing the visions, you know a soul shattering experience, recalling as you do the belief of some primitive peoples that mushrooms, the sacred mushrooms, are divinely engendered by Jupiter Fulminans, the God of the Lightning-bolt, in the Soft Mother Earth.

PLATO:

A Touchstone For Courage

From time to time the editors will reprint significant passages from literature relevant to consciousness-expansion. It is fitting that our first passage comes from the fount of Western thought — the philosophy of Plato. *The Laws,* the product of his mature wisdom, were written a few years before his death. A conversation takes place between an Athenian Stranger, a Cretan, and a Spartan on the subject of good and bad laws in the constitution of the ideal state. The passage below is taken from Book I. (Translation by A. E. Taylor)

In the discussion of the role of interior states, the comments on the effects of alcohol and the idea of drug-induced psychological immunization, this passage anticipates by 2000 years important modern concepts. It is possible that Plato's discussion of the fear-inducing drug was based on first-hand psychedelic experience. The Eleusinian Mysteries are believed by some scholars to have involved the consumption of a psychedelic potion as the central rite.[1] If, as has been suggested, Plato was initiated into the mysteries,[2] he would be under a vow of secrecy, which he circumvents in this passage by his use of the subjunctive.

ATHENIAN: One person has within himself a pair of unwise and conflicting counselors, whose names are pleasure and pain?

CLINIAS: The fact is as you say.

ATHENIAN: He has, besides, anticipations of the future, and these of two sorts. The common name for both sorts is *expectation,* the special name for anticipation of pain being *fear,* and for anticipation of its opposite, *confidence.* And on the top of all, there is *judgment,* to discern which of these states is better or worse, and when judgment takes the form of a public decision of a city, it has the name of *law.*

CLINIAS: I fear I hardly follow you, yet pray proceed with your statement as though I did.

MEGILLUS: I, too, find myself in the same condition.

ATHENIAN: Let us look at the whole matter in some such light as this. We may imagine that each of us living creatures is a puppet made by gods, possibly as a plaything, or possibly with some more serious purpose. That, indeed, is more than we can tell, but

one thing is certain. These interior states are, so to say, the cords, or strings, by which we are worked; they are opposed to one another, and pull us with opposite tensions in the direction of opposite actions, and therein lies the division of virtue from vice. In fact, so says our argument, a man must always yield to one of these tensions without resistance, but pull against all the other strings — must yield, that is, to that golden and hallowed drawing of judgment which goes by the name of the public law of the city. The others are hard and ironlike, it soft, as befits gold, whereas they resemble very various substances. So a man must always co-operate with the noble drawing of law, for judgment, though a noble thing, is as gentle and free from violence as noble, whence its drawing needs supporters, if the gold within us is to prevail over the other stuff. In this wise our moral fable of the human puppets will find its fulfillment. It will also become somewhat clearer, first, what is meant by self-conquest and self-defeat, and next that the individual's duty is to understand the true doctrine of these tensions and live in obedience to it. . . . And when we intend to make a man immune from various fears, we achieve our purpose by bringing him into contact with fear, under the direction of law.

CLINIAS: So it would appear.

ATHENIAN: But now, suppose our aim is to make him rightly *fearful*. What then? Must we not ensure his victory in the conflict with his own lust for pleasures by pitting him against shamelessness and training him to face it? If a man can only attain mature courage by fighting the cowardice within himself and vanquishing it, whereas without experience and discipline in that contest, no man will ever be half the champion he might be, is it credible he should come to fullness of self-command unless he first fights a winning battle against the numerous pleasures and lusts which allure him to shamelessness and wrong, by the aid of precept, practice, and artifice, alike in his play and in his serious hours? Can he be spared the experience of all this?

CLINIAS: The view, certainly, does not seem plausible.

ATHENIAN: Now, tell me, has any god bestowed on mankind a specific to induce fear — a drug (pharmakon) whose effect is that the more a man permits himself to imbibe of it, the darker he fancies his fortunes at every draught, present and future alike grow increasingly alarming, and the climax is abject terror in the bravest, though

when the subject has recovered from his stupor and shaken off the effects of the potion, he regularly becomes his own man again?

CLINIAS: Nay, sir, where in all the world can we find a liquor like this?

ATHENIAN: Why, nowhere. But suppose one could have been found. Would the lawgiver have availed himself of it to develop courage? I mean, it would have been very much to the purpose to discuss it with him to some such effect as this. Pray, sir legislator —whether it is for Cretans or for any other society your legislation is intended — in the first place, would you be thankful for a touchstone of the courage or cowardice of your citizens?

CLINIAS: And he would, no doubt, be sure to say yes.

ATHENIAN: Well then, would you like the touchstone to be safe and applicable without serious risks, or the reverse?

CLINIAS: There, again, he would be certain to prefer safety.

ATHENIAN: You would employ it to bring your citizens into such a state of fear and test them under its influence, thus constraining a man to become fearless, by encouragement, precept, and marks of recognition, as well as of disgrace for those who declined to be such as you could have them in all situations? He who shaped himself to this discipline well and manfully would be discharged from the test unscathed, but on him who shaped badly you would lay some penalty? Or would you simply refuse to employ the liquor, supposing you had no fault to find with it on other grounds?

CLINIAS: Why, of course he would employ it, my dear sir.

ATHENIAN: It would, at least, give us an infinitely readier and safer training than our present arrangements, whether for the individual, for small groups, or for groups of any desired numbers. A man would do pretty right to save endless trouble by providing himself with this single specific and training himself in privacy to face his fears, isolating himself, of course, from public view behind his regard for decorum until he had obtained a satisfactory result. And, again, he would do right, when confident that he was already adequately prepared by native endowment and preliminary practice, to prosecute his training in the company of fellow drinkers, and make public exhibition of the virtue which enables him to transcend and master the effects of the inevitable disturbances due to the potion,

without once suffering a serious fall or deterioration, though he would leave off before he reached the final draught from fear of our universal human weakness before the liquor.

CLINIAS: Why yes, sir, even such a man as you speak of would be wise to do that.

ATHENIAN: Then let us resume our conversation with the legislator. Very good, we shall say to him, as for such a fear-inducing specific, providence has given us none, and we have invented none ourselves, for we need not take quacksalvers into account, but what about fearlessness, excessive confidence, improper confidence at the wrong moment? Is there a liquor which has these effects, or is there not?

CLINIAS: He will, of course, say yes, and he will mean wine.

ATHENIAN: And are not its effects the very opposite of all we have just mentioned? When a man drinks it, its first immediate effect is to make him merrier than he was, and the more he takes, the more it fills him with optimistic fancies and imaginary capacity. In the very final phase the drinker is swollen with the conceit of his own wisdom to the pitch of complete license of speech and action, and utter fearlessness; there is nothing he will scruple to say, nothing he will scruple to do. I think this will be universally conceded.

[1] See the article by Wasson in this issue.
[2] Friedlander, P. *Plato: An Introduction.* New York, Pantheon Books, 1959, pp. 70ff.

Provoked Life:

An Essay On The Anthropology Of The Ego

GOTTFRIED BENN

Gottfried Benn (1886-1956) was one of the leading German lyric poets of this century and the major spokesman of the writers of the expressionist period in Germany. A physician by profession (he practiced medicine throughout his life) he did a considerable amount of original research in his field. In poetry he stood for the exploration of novel and often extreme experiences for the expression of which he created a new language combining divergent elements from the medical, vernacular and refined poetic vocabularies, coining new expressions, using daring images, and revolutionary ideas.

A trenchant social critic, Benn exposed the dangers of our technological era and the trend toward overemphasis of the rational and intellectual. He was anything but conservative in his writings and supported unlimited creative expansion and expression. He strove for a reconciliation between the natural, instinctual basis of man and his intellect; he worked for the resolution of dichotomies characterizing our lives, inner and outer, real and unreal, natural and artificial. Benn advocated the realization of our "antinaturalistic" nature, the creation of a "cerebral reality," a "provoked Life out of the materials of dream and stimulation."

The essay *"Provoziertes Leben"* (Provoked Life) was written in the early 1940's and appeared in the volume: "Ausdruckswelt, Essays und Aphorismen," 1949, Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany, to translate and reprint this essay.

I

Several years ago a film was shown in Berlin, a film about Negroes called "Hosiannah," in which one saw Negroes getting intoxicated through communal singing. The disposition to do this lies in their nature, the process itself was sensual and conscious. Similar phenomena are reported about the North American Indians: The "Great Nightsong" is one of their principal ceremonies, where the men hold one another, move rhythmically and go into a trance. Closeness to intoxication is evidently a primitive quality as is the transition to a collectively heightened sense of being. The assembly provokes the transition through rites, movements, and certain ancient chants. It is a call of the race. Its nature is religious and mythical, an exciting communion with the totality which expands individual existence.