

Entheogens and Personal Development

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GROWING UP GAY IN THE SIXTIES was anything but that. The subject was hardly talked about in polite society. When it was mentioned at all, it was in embarrassed, hushed tones and the subject was quickly changed. I could hardly admit this secret truth about myself. All I knew was a lot of frustration and loneliness. I wanted to change my life, to make it freer and happier but I didn't know how. Church didn't help too much. A couple of psychotherapists had barely scratched the surface. I had heard of LSD of all places in Sunday school

from a young seminary student and wondered how a pill could enable one to see God. Then one day my father brought a book home for me titled *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*. It was basically case studies of people whose lives had been changed through insights received during guided sessions with entheogens. I ate it up and determined that whatever else I did while at college, I was going to look into that.

The substances I was interested in, namely LSD and mescaline, were already illegal by that time, and I knew of no one who was professionally trained to facilitate therapeutic sessions with them. So, I was on my own both to obtain the substances and to conduct my own sessions. I knew the importance of proper mental preparation and a supportive setting and did the best I could with my limited resources as a college student living on campus. I had expected to see hallucinations and was totally unprepared for something so deep, rich, and profound, that seemed more real to me than anything I had called "reality" up to that time. Though I didn't have language to express it then, what I was in fact seeing was the divine nature of my own soul. As long as I live I will never forget the "talk" the universe had with me during an experience in a public park with peyote. It was all about self-acceptance and going with the flow of things. Such deep cosmic truth had never before been encoded on a discarded gum wrapper. Wow!

As a ministerial intern and lifelong student of consciousness, I must in all fairness say that I do not believe that any mystical or religious experience—however it is arrived at—is transformational all by itself. There is no magic bullet and no substitute for the discipline of spiritual practice and the work that entails. But such experiences do facilitate a depth of personal conviction and understanding that can inform our choices made in the everyday world, if we allow it to be so. Such choices made in integrity with the deepest parts of our revealed being can lead us to the truest and fullest experience of life that we are capable of. And what purpose is nobler than that? •

