# Strange Ripples

## The Bizarre Relationship Between Psychedelics and Dreams, Part I

By Danny Byrne

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**Notes from the author:**

-This is a 30 to 45 minute read. If you do not make it all the way through, make sure not to skip watching these [[one](https://youtu.be/VFfSCnEq6UM), [two](https://youtu.be/8JivVwe15v8), [three](https://youtu.be/HSy3vrWU7m8)] short clips. These should at least pique your interest until you are ready to digest this.

-This material may be updated.

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It is nighttime, and I am looking down one of the many canyons that form the hills of Hollywood, California. The canyon opens to the expanse of the Los Angeles basin, with the grid of city lights stretching out to the horizon.

In the sky above the city is an object of *prominence,* in the form of a large oval spherical cloud protruding from the right side of my view. My attention is drawn to it, and just as suddenly, the *fear* is amplifiedwithin me. I am paralyzed as the object appears to transform from a gaseous state into a gigantic solid disk, several miles wide. It motions inwards towards the center of my view. I can feel a clenching in my chest. The *fear* grows in intensity.

The sensation becomes so intense that I wake up.

I look around, feel my bedsheets underneath me, and see the sun peeking through the window. It is May of 2015 and I am 31 years old. I am completely oblivious to the turn that my life and view of reality will take in about a month’s time, a multi-year journey set into motion by an encounter with a potent, mind-altering plant.

In his 1990 book *The Botany of Desire*, Michael Pollan (of “How to Change Your Mind” fame) examines humanity’s intricate relationship with plants. In a small passage in the introduction of the book, he describes the gardens that humans have maintained throughout history–gardens that are tended purposefully to include plants that can heal, plants that can kill, and a few “...with the astounding power to alter consciousness–even to *plant dreams in the brains of awake humans.*”

This is a journey of books and an exploration of ideas, and of how we form expectations, preconceptions, and misconceptions. This story relates to psychedelic experiences with both Psilocybin mushrooms and Ayahuasca. These plants and fungi would more appropriately be called ‘the dream team’, and an even more accurate roster of this team would include many more plants throughout the world.

These are my own accounts along with those of others–some of whom I know and others I have never met. However, this piece is less about the effects in the immediate hours after one has been ingested, and more about experiences that are detached, oddly, sometimes taking place *before* ingestion. In my experience, these two biological organisms are catalysts for these experiences.

However, herein lies the conceptual challenge. When I refer to them as ‘catalysts’, our mind defaults to an understanding within the confines of temporal causality–the only framework we’ve come to trust, the ‘natural law’ we term as *cause* *and* *effect.* I’m here to show you something incredibly strange, and also something that you may be able to experience for yourself. Know that there really is nothing I could say that would spoil it for you. I am writing this because I have to start *somewhere.*

Right now, at any given moment, someone out there may be about to have their first experience with one of these materials. And for that person, or even for the reader who researches just out of curiosity, when entering into the expanding informational realm of psychedelics, a person can develop many expectations of what kind of experience they may have when it is their turn. The altered state carries with it a series of strange interpretations and anecdotes in our modern day culture that have undoubtedly been shaped by *misinformed* opinions of them in the past. Quite often these misconceptions wind up in our expectations.

So, for a newcomer to the ever expanding realm of the psychedelic, these questions may arise:

“What will I experience? What are the effects?”

Eight years into my journey with these plants and fungi, one thing that has struck me as the most odd about these experiences is a side effect, or a more appropriately titled *phenomenon*, that I had neither associated with these two, nor even heard of before.

The phenomenon is a particular kind of dream, one that has been named many names: hypnagogic, oneirogenic, prescient, *prophetic*. There is something distinct about this dreaming as opposed to a standard dream that is quickly forgotten.There is a clarity, intensity, and lucidity to them, certain themes and images repeat themselves. You could even say that they are experienced with part of your awake mind. These dreams are *remembered* vividly. The reason I hesitate to call this a psychedelic effect, or a side effect, is because of one important distinction. Simply put, that reason is this:

A side effect of a drug isn’t supposed to take place before a drug is taken.

Or, to spin one of the most prevalent of the modern misconceptions of altered states on its head, you can kind of grasp just how bizarre this phenomenon really is with the following statement:

*An LSD flashback isn’t supposed to occur before one has ever taken LSD.*

A few years into my journey, sometime in early 2017, I heard Ayahuasca described by one of my teachers as being “an intelligence that transcends time and space.” I didn’t really realize it at the time, but I had already experienced how.

One month before I drank the pungent sweet brew for the first time on June 19th 2015, I had no idea I would be imbibing it. I was not actively seeking it. Although I had heard of it and some of its immediate effects, I had little idea of what it actually entailed. I won’t kid you, some of those things sounded pretty strange. Yet, it was in this period that I had the most bizarre dream of my life up until that point. As I would come to realize, this dream with a disk in the sky eerily mirrored many facets and shared many characteristics of the Ayahuasca experience itself.

Before learning about this ceremony, to me Ayahuasca existed as something that I had watched a YouTube video about or heard some friends talk about in the years prior. In all of those conversations and all the articles and books that I had read regarding the topic since, I had never heard one could enter or re-enter the experience not in the immediacy of ingestion, specifically in dreams.

Additionally in relation to this very first dream’s imagery, I had also possessed somewhat of an interest in the UFO topic. I experienced something as a kid that I have never been able to explain. Up to my very first Aya dream, I had never considered UFOs as being anything other than an ‘externalized’ experience. The intricate psychological layers underpinning such experiences, which I delve deeper into later in this narrative, had never crossed my mind.

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When I had this dream in the middle of 2015, the ‘psychedelic renaissance’ had not quite kicked off yet. A week or so after this dream a friend of mine reached out proposing a dinner date. That evening, I learned of a local facilitator organizing Ayahuasca ceremonies.

Less than a month after this dream with the disk in the sky, I traveled to a secluded property a few hours outside the city, and for the first of many times since, I drank the thick and pungently sweet tasting brew. That night I died a death of sorts, and began what at the time of this writing has been an eight and half year journey into psychedelic ceremony guardianship, musical guidance, and co-facilitation.

It wasn’t until two years into this profound work that I connected this initial dream to my experiences with Ayahuasca. The catalyst in this shift in my mindset was that these dreams returned, more vivid and telling than before. Through their content I put together a message about *my* life that absolutely shook me to my core in so many ways and on so many levels. As many of the more profound lessons of the plants come in retrospect, it was as if the message of the initial dream was ‘Knock knock..this will eventually all make sense.’

Quite often these dreams contain some kind of *specificity* about objects, subjects, themes, and even explicit messages. At some point after this, we see that there is some truth or significance to what was shown to us in this dream, correlating with a *real* physical occurrence either past, present or future. This occurrence is always in some way unbeknownst to us. The contents are always ‘out of scope’ in a certain weird way. If we are relying on conventional ideas about how information enters into our psyche, our ability to ‘know’ or ‘observe’ these occurrences and commit them to conscious or subconscious memory isn’t quite there yet. These dreams and the experiences that spring from them confront us with the irrational. They defy logic. You could even say that they *defy the laws of physics*.

Not too long after uncomfortably grasping the extraordinary nature of my own dreams, I took note of some interesting anecdotes from various podcasts, suggesting that this phenomenon is part of the bigger picture of the psychedelic landscape that has not quite come to our awareness yet. There is no one speaking about this at psychedelic conventions. There is no one including this in surveys for research purposes. There is no one doing studies on this. There is no data.

When I discovered these conversations over the span of several years, I took some comfort knowing that I was, in fact, not alone. Others who experienced this found it just as baffling as I did.

The following is a transcript from a conversation that aired Feb 26 2021, told by Kyle Buller of the ‘Psychedelics Today’ podcast. [[Spotify @ 44m11s](https://open.spotify.com/episode/11XZEAdrCiE8TEd2eQsqOD), [Youtube Clip](https://youtu.be/VFfSCnEq6UM)] from an episode appropriately titled *Embracing the Mystical*. Key quote: “That dream was happening as the event was unfolding.”

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“…This is one of my big dreams that I still scratch my head and go ‘I don’t know how to really explain this.’

Let me preface this, so I was in Hawaii studying plant medicine and indigenous stuff with Kat Harrison and whatnot, and I think that day she talked about the Mazatec people eating mushrooms in pairs.

My dream starts off, people have these mushrooms and I go ‘oh we gotta eat them in pairs because Kat told us that the mushrooms sing to each other.’

So, in my dream I eat these mushrooms in pairs and they start coming on, and I walk down to the convenience store in my town, and it just got robbed. And I go ‘man this town is going to shit’ and then I walk a little bit more and there’s this kid with this AK47 an he’s pointing at people and I’m like ‘Dude what are you doing’ and he’s like ‘Oh it’s just for fun’ and I say ‘No it’s not fun you’re scaring people, you can’t do that’ he’s like ‘No no no it’s all a joke its all for fun’ and I say ‘yea you can’t do that’.

So I grab the gun away from him and I stare down the barrel and it’s got like you know the red dot on it [that shows it as a toy], and I go ‘ok I can see why you think this is fun, you’re getting a reaction out of people. But you can’t do this, you’re really scaring people.’ So I grab the gun and I throw it away.

So, I wake up, and I’m in Hawaii, which is 8-7 hours time difference, I wake up at like 7 or 8 in the morning, and I grab my phone, and there’s a text message from my best friend, and he goes ‘Yo our town is going to shit, QuickCheck just got robbed and the whole town’s on lockdown, there is SWAT team everywhere, there’s someone saying they have an AK47 and they’re threatening to shoot the town up.’

And I just wipe my eyes and am like ‘Am I dreaming still? What the fuck is going on?’

So I immediately grab my phone to google what’s going on in town. They present this whole story that someone called on an untraceable number threatening to shoot up the town with an AK and they couldn’t find them or anything like that. [The authorities] finally wrapped up the investigation into this…It was a prank phone call coming from South Korea, and it’s just like, **that dream was happening as the event was unfolding**…and I go ‘What’s going on there?’ And I think to myself, did I check my phone? but I didn’t because the message would have been read if I had read through it, so the message was left unread, I didn’t see it. What’s going on there?

How did I get that through the dreamworld with so much *accuracy*?..”

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[Here is the news story about what occurred that day](https://www.njherald.com/story/news/2013/07/02/officials-say-online-chatroom-led/4009544007/)

In this example, Kyle Buller dreamt of events that, in a sort of skewed way, were unfolding in real life. A convenience store robbery, the phrase “this town is going to shit”, and a prank involving an AK47. Interestingly, within this dream, he also consumed psilocybin mushrooms.

It is important to reiterate that besides the dreamlike state produced by psychedelics, these experiences mostly take place detached from any ingestion of any substance at all. In my experience they quite frequently occur in the run up to the two main psychedelics that have been involved with, Psilocybin mushrooms and the Ayahuasca brew. However the dreams can also happen separated from any ingestion of a psychedelic by longer time periods, sometimes by *years.*

Kyle Buller’s accountreminded me of an experience that my wife and I had not too long before. During a visit to the Big Island of Hawaii in February 2021, we spent a day exploring the eastern side of the island. We had planned to visit some of the lava tubes and caves that dot the landscape, and to explore some of the beaches north of Hilo. Our plan for later in the day was to venture up to the observatory on Mauna Kea to see the sunset and stargaze at 11,000 feet. We had planned to take some microdose mushroom capsules before sunset. People knew we were in Hawaii, but we had not mentioned our plans for that day to anyone.

Early on in our adventures, we received a text message from someone who had attended one of our mushroom ceremonies over a year prior.

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“I just woke up from an afternoon nap and you both were in a dream with me. We were in a cave near the ocean that you need to crawl into, and then it opened up inside. We had a fire going, it was beautiful, we dug through the roof of the cave so we could see the stars.”

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In this dream she pulled in three details from what we were doing that day: the beach, the cave, and the stars. To us, this was another nod from something that expresses itself in this amazing way, and another glimpse into a tremendous mystery that we have come to believe has accompanied us even before we realized we were setting foot on this path, one that has been with us since even before we took these ‘drugs’.

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The connection between Kyle Buller’s dream and the dream of our mushroom ceremony attendee seems to be psilocybin mushrooms. As Kyle had eaten mushrooms in his dream, and we had served our friend in ceremony approximately a year prior, almost to the exact date.

These occurrences leave us somewhat baffled. We can’t help but to ask “What are the odds that this is a coincidence?” The dream and the real life occurrence are always *out of time* or *out of scope* in a particular way. They are events that are unfolding as we dream, unknown events from the past, and even more strangely, sometimes they are events that have *yet to happen*. Such experiences lend themselves to the theory that these plants and fungi have *supernatural* qualities. Of course, there is actually no such thing as ‘the supernatural’--there is only the natural, and the rest is just what we have yet to understand.

Delving deeper into the mysteries surrounding magic mushrooms, renowned mycologist and author Paul Stamets shared a narrative on the Joe Rogan Podcast #1035, dated November 7, 2017. Regardless of one's opinion of Joe Rogan, the format and topics of his podcast encourage guests to share such experiences openly. The importance of the stories like this that are shared by his guests is paramount.

In this segment, Paul recounts a day in his youth when he and some companions stumbled upon a patch of mushrooms in the wild. Once identified as a strain of psilocybe, they decided to ingest them. [[Youtube Clip](https://youtu.be/8JivVwe15v8)]

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“So I go to bed and I’m laying in bed, and full blown experience, I can barely sleep because all the colors are keeping me awake and my mind is racing....and then I have a lucid dream. And I’m dreaming and I wake up and I go downstairs and I go ‘I had this crazy dream…I saw thousands of cattle, dead, baking in the sun’.

I said, ‘I think there’s going to be a nuclear war. What could kill all these cattle?’ I know [in the dream] I was in Olympia and I needed to rush to Derrington to my cabin because my books were up there and my manuscripts were up there and I needed to save my research.

So they laughed and laughed and said ‘When’s the world going to end Paul?’

And I go ‘Well, it’s not this weekend, it’s next weekend.’ So they wrote on the calendar, December 1st. I put it in my book. I think it was 1975, ‘the end of the world’. They wrote ‘Paul predicts the end of the world’. So we forgot about it.

Massive rains the next week..huge amounts of snowfall. And then, on Wednesday and Thursday temperature inversion, and it flipped to 75 to 85 degrees. All the snow started to melt. All the rivers were flooding, and my little cabin was right next to this river that would swell from morning to night. It would go up 6 feet just from the snowmelt**.** I said ‘oh my gosh I’m going to lose my manuscript, all my research I need to get up there, I need to get up there’.

I get to my cabin, my cabin was on the verge of falling into it and so I got my manuscripts and I got all my books and I rescued all the material I had, but I couldn’t get out of there because the roads had been closed. And so I had to wait two days and the roads then opened up and I drove out into the Snohomish valley, and I went around the bend and there the sun was a brilliant sunny day, a warm day, and there floating in the fields were hundreds and hundreds of dead cattle.”

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Rogan lets out an audible gasp, and Stamets continues.

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“How do you explain that? I think I entered into the multiverse.”

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After a moment of disbelief, supernatural claims in the air, Rogan chimes back in.

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“Now as a scientist I think you realize that when you say these things that you open yourself to a lot of ridicule, do you feel hesitant to communicate these ideas?”

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Paul responds.

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“To a degree yes and you know, at one point I realize I just don’t care. This is true, this happened to me. And you know, I can push the envelope on these ideas because the credibility of my research is well established..So I’m telling you things and I’m not making these things up. I don’t have to.”

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He then states probably one of the most important observations that one may eventually reach in a journey into the realm of psychedelics, which could also be seen as the crux of this exploration:

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“Just because you can’t explain it doesn’t mean it’s not true. And I think that we need to accept the fact that reality is not limited to the perception that we have traditionally used.”

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It is not every night that you dream of fields filled with hundreds of dead cattle, and not every day that you see one less than a week afterwards. What, then, are the chances? Once more, mushrooms emerge as a strange companion in these scenarios. Paul Stamets actually did eat the mushrooms in real life, and did fall asleep and had that dream within the effect of the mushroom journey itself. However, the *context* of that dream had not yet occurred. In Paul’s dream, he had to rush to his cabin to save his research (presumably about mushrooms), then the scene cuts to a field full of dead cows. Both of which he experienced in real life the following week.

His dream, while distinct from that of Kyle Buller and our friend, all share the same characteristic, a familiar pattern. How would any of them have known? If not them, then *what* did? If I were to suggest “an intelligence that transcends time and space”, would you believe me?

Dreams are not talked about as a wider part of the narrative within the psychedelic renaissance because dreams are not what we expect or look for when we think of the broader *effects* of a drug. We may not even think to associate the two because of this. Some may scoff at the idea and write it off as hallucination-persisting perceptual disorder, aka “flashbacks”, or the often lauded excuse of simply being ‘projections of the subconscious’, or even psychosis.

Conceptualize this phenomenon as I do with this statement:

*The ripples from a stone thrown into a pond do not form before the stone penetrates the water.*

If you had gone through one of these experiences, what would you think?

This dream phenomenon is not exclusive to psilocybin mushrooms; in fact some of the most intriguing cases of this involve the ingestion of the amazonian plant brew, Ayahuasca. Moreover, experiences with Ayahuasca are markedly distinct from those with mushrooms. The ‘Strange Ripples’ metaphor is not only even more applicable here, it’s actually amplified in multitudes of weirdness.

In the indigenous cosmology, Ayahuasca is used to commune with the spirits of plants in search for answers and guidance. It is commonly used as an aid on the hunt, to visualize where the next animal will be felled. Sometimes it is used to find lost items.

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“Before a hunt, shamans drink caapi to dream of the animals, to learn where they are gathering, or whether the forest will be generous.” - Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff - *Amazonian Cosmos* (1971)

“Ayahuasca is employed in the Upper Amazon not merely as a healing potion, but as an oracle... visions during the intoxication are consulted to locate game, enemies, or lost items.” - Richard Evans Schultes - *Plants of the Gods* (1979)

“In the Amazon, ayahuasca is used not only for healing but for clairvoyance: to locate lost objects, to find where game animals are hiding, to identify the causes of illness, and to uncover hidden truths.” - Michael Harner - *The Way of the Shaman* (1980)

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The next example is one of the most pivotal in our understanding of why it might not make sense to call these drugs.

<img id=TLCNetflix />

On May 1, 2023, a single-engine Cessna took off from the Amazonian town of Araracuara, Colombia, en route to the town of San José del Guaviare. The occupants of the plane were the pilot, four children, their mother, and another adult. Approximately halfway to their destination, the plane experienced engine failure and crashed through the thick foliage of the jungle canopy. A search was initiated involving 100 Colombian Army commandos and 70 indigenous locals from the Huitoto community.

When the downed plane was located, searchers found the bodies of the three adults, but the four children were nowhere to be seen. There was evidence of their presence surrounding the wreckage, and a trail of debris led deeper into the jungle. What followed was a 40-day search — an event that may become one of the most public and widely publicized examples of the strange ripples that this phenomenon seems to create.

The search area was calculated to be 17 km by 19 km roughly the size of Washington, D.C. This is a massive area, made even more difficult by the sheer density of the Amazon jungle. I recently returned from the region, having spent time in the Peruvian jungle about 200 miles south of the crash site. The jungle is so dense that visibility rarely extends beyond 20 feet before the foliage forms a wall you can’t see past.

<img id=TLCPlane />

The ordeal is detailed in the beautiful documentary *The Lost Children*, which was released on Netflix in the fall of 2024. When I started watching, I didn’t expect Ayahuasca to play such a prominent role in the story. I remembered seeing news reports when the event occurred, but, as is often the case, many important details went un- or under-reported. As the film unfolds, you witness the growing desperation among the rescuers as their hope of finding the children alive begins to fade. The commandos eventually tried a new tactic, searching at night.

Huitoto tribal elder Don Rubio details where the paranormal aspect of the story begins:

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“At night, we sometimes felt that people were walking around us. It felt like there were things going on that weren’t normal.” </div>

One of the commandos adds:

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“Lots of weird things happened. The GPS compasses started spinning rapidly. It was scary. We didn’t know what was happening to us — or who was there with us.”</div>

“I’m a practicing Catholic. I’m a believer in the existence of God. But supernatural things exist. No doubt about it.”

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On day 34 of the ordeal, military commander General Sánchez made the heartbreaking decision to abandon the search, leaving the Indigenous rescuers to continue alone.

Don Rubio continues:

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“I told them, ‘Brothers, have faith’… There was one more thing we could try. Yagé, the plant of the gods. Besides yagé, there was no other solution.”

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Ayahuasca is known as **yagé** in Colombian lineages like the Huitoto, Tukano, and Cofán.

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“Yagé would tell us where the children were.”

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The tribespeople had their village prepare the brew and conduct ritual prayers. The prepared yagé was then airlifted into the jungle by the Colombian military. The children’s father drank it, but the brew rejected him. The rest of the group had already arranged for a helicopter to take them out on the 40th day. Don Rubio drank the remaining portion on the night of the 39th day in the jungle.

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“Whether we find them or not, we are leaving,” said one of the tribesmen.

“We’re finding the kids at 3 o’clock today. They are northwest of here,” said Don Rubio, alluding to the visions he received the night before. “That’s where the children are.”

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The team searched far and wide in the northwest direction. At 2:00 p.m. that day, a group of four Huitoto from the Putumayo region found the children — emaciated, weak, and dehydrated, but alive. The children’s rescue on June 9, after an unimaginable 40 days alone in the jungle, sparked an outburst of national jubilation led by Colombian President Gustavo Petro, who described the rescue as “a miracle.”

The Ayahuasca connection made headlines, including coverage by [**NBC**](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/indigenous-plane-crash-searchers-used-ayahuasca-find-missing-kids-rcna89801) and [**The Guardian**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/16/indigenous-wisdom-colombia-amazon-children-rescue), which noted:

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“The crucial importance Indigenous groups can have in defending the Amazon from deforestation is increasingly accepted by researchers, along with the depth of their irreplaceable knowledge of the region’s flora and fauna.”

“The searchers also took yagé, or ayahuasca, a hallucinogenic plant-based drink which Indigenous faith healers say can open the mind to allow spiritual insight.”

“Some people become anacondas during these ceremonies, some tigers, others large birds. I don’t know what animals the Murui transformed into that night, but it is what brought them to circle back toward the crash site, where they found the kids,” says Flavio Yepes, a member of the Sikuani community.

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“Many of us had dreams which helped guide them towards the children,” said Luis Acosta, head of Columbia’s indigenous guard.

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The Indigenous peoples of the upper Amazon have a spiritual address to the supernatural world.

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“Indigenous elders performed rituals and consulted plant medicines to seek spiritual guidance on where the children might be.”  
 — *El Espectador* (May 2023)  
 — *Semana* (June 2023)

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The case of the lost children in Colombia is a perfect contemporary echo of this phenomenon — and perhaps one of the most well-publicized in modern times.

The dream I described at the beginning of this piece occurred about a month before my first Ayahuasca session. A month prior to my first time drinking the brew, I had no idea that I would be imbibing it. The dream contained *context* that would later return during our Ayahuasca experiences.

That particular dream’s animate and sensory nature was identical to the Ayahuasca experience in the immediacy of ingestion. I have even experienced little hallmarks of my first, pre-Aya dream experience later on in Ayahuasca and Mushroom journeys, a reference to a real location, and physical/emotional sensations, <u>context</u>. It is as if the same artist were using the same brushes to create it. The dream was the preview and later, the Ayahuasca “journey” itself was the continuation. In both his experience and mine, there was another ‘presence’ in the dream, which seemed to have control over what *we* were experiencing. As crazy as it sounds, this is a central attribute of what Ayahuasca does. This is what the entityexperience *is*. I did not make the connection between dreams and the plants for a while because I lacked *context.* After all, a side effect of a drug isn’t supposed to occur before a drug is taken. This first dream was like getting a preview of what was to come a month later. The contextual clues from my initial Ayahuasca dream did not reappear for nearly two years, during which I had been supporting the ceremonies as a guardian. The dreams came back, and in a strange sense they continue to this very day.

In my experience, Ayahuasca acts both as an artist and a curator, with our perceptions serving as both the gallery and the canvas. You could also say that Ayahuasca is the playwright, the stage, and the characters. You may notice one character that stands out a bit more than the others, one that is more prominent. When detractors question the reality of the entities encountered in these states, asking 'Is what you experience real?', I respond, 'Is Mickey Mouse real? No. But is the intelligence that created Mickey Mouse real? Yes.’ For some, this concept may appear entirely incomprehensible. If you’re “hallucinating things that aren’t there”, that means you’re crazy.

The dream team encourages us to think outside of the box, and of the many other things, I think one thing that all who have worked with the team for a while would agree upon, is that it makes us confront our fears.

As humans, we harbor specific fears about the unknowns or 'big questions' of our existence. One is the fear of death, and another one of those fears is uncertainty of what else is out there in the universe. Are we alone?

A month after dreaming of a disk in the sky, I drank Ayahuasca and experienced a metaphorical death. With this came the intense realization that there were many other ways of experiencing and much more to this existence than I could ever have conceived of prior. In the many years since, I have experienced the myriad ways that this ‘other’ intelligence can present itself. Including a somewhat reliable way of encountering what I now confidently describe as *“an intelligence that transcends time and space.*”

At the age of 33, two years into my journey with the plants, I had a series of dreams that came straight from the mind of Ayahuasca. Little multi-sensory clues, little dots that at some point I realized I had no choice but to connect.

It seemed to me like I had to recognize their importance, their relevance. I had to realize that this was not a flashback. This was not ‘dream psychosis’. This was not a ‘projection of my subconscious’. This was a very ‘real’ phenomenon. Once I formed that realization, the rest of the dreams started rolling in. Like being fed little bite sized chunks of information to digest.

Even more bizarrely, this series of dreams, spanning two years, were book-ended by dreams where I was in the presence of *disk shaped objects,* the first of which I detailed at the beginning of this piece. The second was a dream that happened at the terminus of this sequence of dreams approximately two and a half years after the very first one in May 2015.

In this dream which occurred in the early Fall of 2017, I was holding onto a liquid metallic disk-shaped object. Accompanying me was someone else that I knew well, but they appeared as they did when I was just a young child. Our arms were extended outward, as if connected to this object. We stood seemingly still but were at the same time traveling *through the surface* of an uphill slope of a mountain. The ground crumbled below us and the trees split into pieces, moving along a disc-shaped path around, above, and below us, reforming in our wake like water flowing around a ship. We crested the mountain and shot up into the sky.

Then the entire scene changed, and I was viewing a dimly lit room from a distance. I experienced an intense emotion I will never forget. I physically felt things I can never un-feel, and was shown an image that I can never unsee. And like that very first dream, the sensations became so intense that I woke up.

I sat with the contents of this dream for a few weeks, wondering, ‘What did *that* one mean?’ I knew at that point that there must have been some reason as to why this was happening, but I had not yet discovered the dreams of Kyle and Paul. I had never heard of any other examples of this. In these experiences and the conversations that they led to, I pieced together something about my own life that shook me to my core. I learned about a series of events in relation to my life that were ‘true’, that I had no knowledge of or had ever conceived of prior. It had not yet taken on this dimension. Understand that this information is deeply personal, and I will share more details when it is all ready to be shared.

Just know that this was one of the most significant moments of my life, and something that made me view it under a different light.

There are various schools of thought regarding unconscious and subconscious memories. Some branches of thought do link UFO experiences with traumatic memories recollected from other parts of the experiencer’s life. Accounts of “alien abductions” and narratives of Indigenous Shamans entering the spirit realm in their rituals bear striking similarities. They must hold some tiny truths in relation to this extraordinarily strange puzzle.

<img id=carlJungBookImage />

In his essay “UFOs: A Modern Mystery of Things Seen in the Skies”, first published on New Years Day 1958, the psychologist Carl Jung discusses the psychological aspects of the UFO phenomenon*,* and in particular the experience of UFOs in dreams.

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“Not only are Ufos seen, they are of course dreamt about. This is particularly interesting to the psychologist, because the dreams tell us in what sense they are understood by the unconscious…Certain objects are seen in the earth’s atmosphere, both by day and by night, which are unlike any known meteorological phenomena. They are not meteors, not misidentified fixed stars, not ‘temperature inversions,’ not cloud formations, not migrating birds, not aerial balloons, not balls of fire. And certainly not the delirious products of intoxication or fever, not the plain lies of eyewitnesses. **What is as a rule seen is the body of round shape**, **disk-like or spherical**, glowing or shining fierily in different colors, or more seldom, **a cigar shaped or cylindrical figure** of various sizes. It is reported that occasionally they are invisible to the naked eye but leave a ‘blip’ on the radar screen. **The round bodies in particular are figures such as the unconscious produces in dreams, visions, etc**..this is not by any means a new invention, for it can be found in all epochs and in all places, and it reappears time and time again, independent of tradition..”

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The imagery of the disk, the sphere, the golden wheel, the mandala, is something that transcends time periods and cultural backgrounds. Maybe it is an image that something deep down inside of us comprehends in a strange way. If anything, what this really indicates is that I am far from the first person to experience a UFO or disk-like object in a dream.

In contemporary culture, mentioning disk-shaped objects in the sky, UFOs, or their more modern term, UAP (unidentified anomalous phenomenon—which aren't always solid objects), carries significant baggage. This subject will undoubtedly become their own chapters in this. For now, this story is just starting to get weird. It only gets more strange.

I have also had UFO encounters while awake, and the timing of these experiences in relation to what *else* was going on, is quite suggestive. Five times (at least) I have seen something anomalous in the sky, most commonly appearing as a blinking, flashing, or pulsating orb, except for the time that it wasn’t.

I believe it is no coincidence that of those five times, four of these occurrences have happened either in the hours *before* an ayahuasca ceremony or in the hours after the major effects have subsided. Never in the immediacy of ingestion has this happened. I didn’t see this because I ‘was on drugs’. If I include the experiences of my friends, that number grows, and also includes similar sightings surrounding psilocybin mushroom experiences.

Most mysteriously, in 2018 my wife and I witnessed a dark, completely silent object with no visible means of propulsion, traveling from west to east maybe 100 feet above 29 Palms Highway in Joshua Tree, in broad daylight. It was like a dark liquid metallic *blob* that was rotating. Its shape obscured the red desert rocks of hills that form the northern part of Joshua Tree National Park as it traversed our view with its strange, undulating form. This particular sighting took place two hours *before* we were to provide music for an Ayahuasca group.

My logic tells me that if the supernatural exists, and if two seemingly different supernatural events take place hours detached from each other, then those events have some sort of causal or as Carl Jung would suggest, *acausal* connection.

In my dream experiences, it seemed as if an intelligence presenting itself as a disk appeared to me outside of my understanding of *causality*, of time. This was later accompanied by other awake time experiences where actual physical objects operated outside of my understanding of space and gravity.

Time, space, and gravity.

*Correlation* is defined as “a mutual relationship or connection between two or more things.” In regards to the wider UFO phenomenon, there isn’t much correlation in the overall accounts (actually, I take that back, there is a correlation with UFOs and [nuclear weapons](https://inis.iaea.org/search/search.aspx?orig_q=RN:46130842), a topic for a separate article). In the examples I have provided, we have three data points: dreams, tryptamine-based psychedelics, and UFOs. A Venn diagram of these three would show each overlapping with a big question mark in the middle..

<img id=magonia />

Jacques Vallee is a well-known scientist and author, long regarded as one of the most respected and senior scientific investigators of unidentified aerial phenomena and their related experiences. Steven Spielberg’s 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* features a main character based on Vallee. He is well known for bringing to light the commonalities in UFO reports in modern times with those from before the ‘modern era’ of this strange phenomenon. He is one of many who note the same patterns in accounts spread across cultures and time periods. He compares modern UFO encounters with tales of apparitions from the Middle Ages and faerie lore from around the world. In a nutshell, it’s the same script, different costumes, worldwide, and not confined to the post-WWII ‘Roswell’ era. This phenomenon goes back to prehistory. There are even indications of this in the art of our cave dwelling ancestors.

In Vallee’s book *Passport to Magonia*, he mentions a case where a farmer dreams every night for a week that a UFO will land in his field and on the final night, one actually *does*. According to Vallee, this particular *dreaming* detail places that particular case “in the best tradition of the fairy faith”. Vallee was well-known for proposing the interdimensional theory of UFOs, which posits that the craft and beings might originate from different dimensions, rather than being advanced biological beings from planets within our own universe. He states:   
  
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“There exists a natural phenomenon whose manifestations border on both the physical and mental. There is a medium in which *human dreams* can be implemented, and this is the mechanism by which UFO events are generated...We could also imagine that for centuries some superior intelligence has been projecting into our environment (chosen for reasons best known to that intelligence) various artificial objects whose creation is a pure form of art. Perhaps it enjoys our puzzlement, or perhaps it is trying to teach us some new concept. Perhaps it is acting in a purely gratuitous effort, and its creations are as impossible for us to understand as is the Picasso sculpture in Chicago to the birds that perch on it. Like Picasso and his art, the UFO master shapes our culture, but most of us remain unaware of it.”  
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Dr. Jacques Vallee proposes that there is a genuine UFO phenomenon, which is partly associated with a form of non-human consciousness that manipulates space and time. The phenomenon has been active throughout human history, and seems to masquerade in various forms to different cultures, over different time periods.

He states:

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“If it were possible to make three-dimensional holograms with mass, and to project them through time, I would say that this [is the UFO phenomena]. And with that theory we could explain many of the apparitions. In numerous UFO cases and in some religious miracles, the beings appeared as three dimensional images whose feet did not actually touch the ground…It is tempting to assume that the witness, far from witnessing by chance the maneuvers of interplanetary visitors, was deliberately exposed to a scene designed to be recorded by him and transmitted to us.”

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<img id=hynekVallee />

This idea also appears in the work of Harvard Psychology professor John Mack. He observed that the boundary between dream states and what might be considered ‘real’ experiences was often blurred in abduction narratives. For some ‘experiencers’, abductions occurred during sleep or in states that closely resembled dreaming, yet these experiences carried a sense of reality and consistency that was hard to dismiss. Mack also explored the transpersonal dimensions of alien abduction experiences, suggesting that they might represent a form of engagement with a broader consciousness or reality. He proposed that these experiences could serve as a <u>catalyst for personal transformation and a deeper understanding of one’s place in the universe.</u> John Mack faced criticism for his departure from mainstream psychological interpretations, as many others who share a similar disposition do.

The connection between dreams and knowledge of medicinal plants is deeply rooted in global indigenous traditions and may have even been a central part of ancient Greek religious practices. In the book *The Secret Teachings of Plants: The Intelligence of the Heart of Nature*, author Stephen Harold Buhner speaks on how indigenous healers from all over the world know about the plant Yarrow’s healing abilities, even on different continents, independent of each other. When asked how they knew, they all said the plant ‘came to them in a dream, and told them.’

This archetypal experience is alive in the origin stories of Ayahuasca itself as well, as the instructions on which plants to use to make the brew are frequently said to have been delivered in a dream. In his insightful book on Amazonian Shamanism *Singing to the Plants*, Stephen Beyer recalls an experience shared with him by his teacher, Doña Maria.

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“Many indigenous peoples assert that their knowledge of plants and their uses comes from some other-than-human person who appears in a vision or a dream. These spirits may, as in the mestizo tradition, be the plants themselves, but not necessarily; when Doña Maria was young, for example, it was *the Virgin Mary*, not the plant spirits, who appeared in her dreams, showed her the healing plants, and taught her the plants to heal specific diseases.”

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The intertwining of dreams, molecular compounds produced by nature, and human perception underscores the intricate relationship between the mind and the mysterious forces that co-inhabit this world with us, forces that humans have encountered repeatedly across cultures, locations and historical epochs. Such narratives highlight this profound connection.

The neuropsychological theory of cave art suggests that archaic humans immortalized their transformative experiences, including encounters with powerful natural elements, in cave paintings. This theory can also be extended to consider how such experiences and the environment influenced other aspects of prehistoric life, such as the development of medicinal plant knowledge among hunter-gatherer communities.

The elders or healers in these societies, who were often the most experienced or knowledgeable individuals, played a crucial role. They not only practiced healing but also taught others about the properties of various plants. This knowledge was often framed within the broader context of their spiritual and cultural beliefs, intertwining the practical with the mystical. For example, certain plants might be considered powerful not only for their physical healing properties but also for their purported spiritual benefits, such as protection against evil spirits or enhancement of one's connection to the spiritual world.

Ayahuasca and Psilocybin mushrooms are rooted in indigenous botanical wisdom. They also share a few molecular compounds in common within their makeup. Psilocin, found in mushrooms, contains 4-hydroxy-N-Dimethyltryptamine. Ayahuasca vine contains Beta-carboline alkaloids, including compounds like harmaline, harmine, or d-tetrahydroharmine. The leaves of plants like Psychotria viridis or Diplopterys cabrerana which are used in Ayahuasca brews, contain the powerful psychoactive compound N, N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT). Dimethyltryptamine has garnered various nicknames, such as 'The God Molecule' and 'The Spirit Molecule,' highlighting its profound effects on consciousness. A common myth in the psychedelic realm is that DMT is the active component in Ayahuasca. I would argue that it is not that simple.

This observation suggests that the molecular combination of DMT, harmala, and beta-carboline alkaloids may possess more complexity than a purely materialistic perspective can explain. The interplay between these compounds and the human mind remains a captivating mystery. Of the many things I am trying to demonstrate here, this is one I would underscore the most: a schism exists in the psychedelic space between materialists, who believe these compounds and their experiences can be synthesized in a lab, and those who argue their full experiential potential cannot be synthesized. The re-creation of these profound experiences with synthetic counterparts remains a topic of debate in the psychedelic community. However, current studies often do not delve deeply into the intricacies of these ‘other’ sorts of experiences. These examples I have shared with you underscore why it is so important to not let one specific voice dominate the narrative on what these things even are.

The common thread among the dreams experienced by individuals like myself, Paul Stamets, and Kyle Buller, and our friend lies in the consumption of DMT-containing biological material. From an evolutionary perspective, the common ancestor of plants and fungi is estimated to have existed around 1.1 billion years ago during the Proterozoic Eon. This organism likely possessed characteristics similar to both modern plants and fungi. Over time, these lineages diverged, leading to the diverse plant kingdom and fungi we recognize today. Before plants existed, the earth was covered in mushrooms that were as tall as houses and trees. While the earliest plants grew from the ground, fungal mycelium acted as their roots.

This raises questions about the potential loss of essential aspects of the psychedelic experience, either due to a lack of data or the hesitancy to explore those realms of the experience that may be regarded as too ‘woo-woo’. It is essential to recognize the significance of these experiences and their potential impact on our understanding of human consciousness. Ignoring or dismissing these aspects could prevent us from making groundbreaking scientific and spiritual discoveries. It would be a shame if this aspect of the psychedelic experience got lost in the sauce simply because of the reluctance of our minds to want to *go* *there*. It would be a shame if the scientific establishment were 'missing the forest for the trees' in their quest to create novel designer molecules that rob experiencers of the experience and cash in on what they view as the next generation of antidepressants.

Let's reconceptualize this phenomenon with the following statements:

*The ripples from a stone thrown into a pond do not appear before the stone penetrates the water.*

*The ripples from a stone thrown into a pond don’t appear before we know of a stone, a pond, or a ripple.*

In other words, it is unreasonable to attribute these dream experiences solely to the power of suggestion and expectancy effects, i.e., 'someone said you'd experience it, and that’s why you did.’

In the final days editing this piece, I take note of [another anecdote](https://youtu.be/uM7gp7CP9eY) from author Brian Muraresku, again, from the Joe Rogan podcast. Except this one is a bit different, as Brian himself has never experienced a psychedelic.

Brian is a lawyer turned author with a background in classical languages: Latin, Greek and Sanskrit. In his debut book, 'The Immortality Key,' he explores the historical role of mind-altering plants and fungi from Ancient Greece and medieval Europe up to the present day. He does so without ever having experienced a psychedelic substance himself, to ‘maintain objectivity’.

Despite this, he has twice dreamt of drinking a hypothesized ancient Greek psychedelic potion, and even felt some of its effects.

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“I’ve had a couple dreams where I’ve imbibed the potion and uh, it’s very strange actually man. I don’t have visions, there isn’t a breakthrough experience but there’s this sense of overwhelming calm and serenity. And so I never felt like I was hallucinating things that weren’t there, maybe I got the wrong potion. But, when I’ve had these experiences in the dreamworld, it’s like the dreamworld wraps itself around me in a cocoon.”

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The two get into the reluctance of researchers in academia who do not want to tarnish their reputations, thus reinforcing the stigma these materials unnecessarily carry.

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“But also it’s like very unpopular until recently to even suggest anything about psychedelics. Think of all the people whose careers suffered because they did bring up psychedelics.”  
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Brian continues…

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“That’s who I write about in the book. Professor [Carl] Ruck, 88 years old. He’s at Boston University. In the late 70s when they unleashed that hypothesis it really impacted his career in the eighties and nineties and beyond. I was aware of that. That’s partly the reason why I haven’t tried psychedelics. I wasn’t personally called to that experience.”

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Joe chimes in.

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“If you were a guy who did psychedelics and then you’re reporting on psychedelics, then people would be like ‘Oh this is confirmation bias. This guy wants to believe this’, but instead, since you haven’t it’s probably better for the overall acceptance of your research that you’re looking at it purely from an academic perspective. You’re just looking at fact-based evidence-based historically-based and trying to find the data.”

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In *The Immortality Key,* Brian explores the pagan continuity hypothesis, which posits that Christian traditions are based on earlier pagan traditions that were assimilated into Christianity. This is not a new theory; in fact, it was discussed in an academic paper by [Martin Luther King Jr.](https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/influence-mystery-religions-christianity) in 1950. In the context of Brian Muraresku's book, this hypothesis suggests that the Christian tradition of a wine-based sacrament has roots in the Eleusinian Mystery tradition of the Ancient Greeks. A common practice among Greek philosophers was the practice of *pharmakon*, the knowledge of medicinal plants and fungi. In Eleusis, initiates would drink a powerful potion called the *Kykeon,* and would go through some sort of an experience*.* Muraresku’s work is a continuation of Professor Carl Ruck of the Boston University Classics department. Ruck co-authored “The Road to Eleusis” in 1978 with Albert Hoffman and Gordon Wasson.

The theory posits that during Ancient Greece and earlier periods, alcoholic beverages were very different from those of today. Quite often, medicinal and mind-altering plants were mixed in. The alcohol served to preserve and decoct the chemical components from the plant materials into the wine itself, which was then drunk in small amounts. In short, the point was not to get drunk off of alcohol. The fermented juice was merely a carrier of something else which produced an experience that is closer to Ayahuasca than it is to the communal wine served in the Catholic Mass.

A notable detail of his account is that although Brian has never consumed a psychedelic in real life, he has experienced consuming the Kykeon and feeling its effects in his dreams. I would argue that he is experiencing the same phenomenon as myself, Paul Stamets, Kyle Buller and Audrey Marcus.

He also notes that if you are an author, scientist, or someone with academic credentials who has consumed a psychedelic, your credibility is often questioned. This is the *stigma* that these altered states carry unfortunately. You cannot be trusted if you’ve done drugs. You can be a drunk, but if you have experienced any of the more magnificent states of mind that this world has to offer, historically, you are discredited and your career is put in jeopardy.

So, the question arises: Why do we drink psychedelic potions in our dreams?

I browse Reddit one day and I come across a post appropriately titled [“Had a dream about taking ayahuasca”](https://www.reddit.com/r/Ayahuasca/comments/14wsk3q/had_a_dream_about_taking_ayahuasca/).

As I make my way through it, I hear another strange echo of a sound I’ve heard before.

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“I have never tried ayahuasca but for the past year had a strong desire to experience it. Last night I had a dream which was really weird and twisted and hard to explain, where I tried ayahuasca. The main logic and context behind it was that after trying it, my mind got rebooted and I had to start opening different doors with different classrooms and learn new principles from scratch. I felt as if I was a new but empty person who had to experience life all over again.

I know this is strange but that’s what happened. Also the way I described it is quite vague, but the dream was very unordinary and words can’t describe the full extent of it. Something like a mushroom trip where you can’t clearly explain what happened but gained a bunch of insights all of a sudden.

Has anyone else had this? What could this dream have meant?“

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Another term that indigenous peoples of the upper Amazon use to describe Ayahuasca is ‘plant teacher’*.* She is just one of many. To me, many of these experiences feel like encounters with a very old and wise teacher, who sometimes displays a peculiar and even morbid sense of humor.

Although these ideas may initially seem strange, they only really reinforce themselves. These experiences point to something larger than just the effects of drugs. Some voices within the community struggle to conceptualize these experiences and their meanings, particularly those individuals who fail to distinguish between communion with this 'other' intelligence and psychosis. Some individuals do not recognize the value in these primary religious experiences.

The issue of psychedelics directly pertains to some of the most profound questions we, as humans, face regarding our existence. Furthermore, as the psychedelic renaissance progresses, it is clear that we may only be scratching the surface of these profound connections. Considering all this, we can reconsider the question skeptics often ask ”Is it real or is it imagined?” Perhaps the answer is ‘both’.

To truly understand the implications of these experiences, we must 'Embrace the Mystical.'

This is where I find part of my purpose in this renaissance.

Aya Dreams

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