(A Brief History and) Motivation of an Entheogenic Chemist

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Abstract

Casey Hardison was arrested spring 2004 for the production of psychedelic-type drugs, i.e., LSD, 2C-B and DMT. In the three years since, not one person from 'authority' had bothered to ask him what motivated him to synthesise psychedelic drugs. It was as if the *a priori* assumption that 'all illegal drugs are bad' had provided the answer. Hence, the Judge asserted that Hardison did it for "that basest of human emotion, greed" as though the psychospiritual benefits of an alchemical path dedicated to expanding consciousness and personal transformation, through insights integrated into action, upon which he had expounded at great lengths during trial, were some elaborate "portmanteau defence", just some ruse to get him out of the dock. It was not, it was a committed stand for 'cognitive liberty' and for a world full of people who understand the fine line between alone and all one.

MINDSET

I was born in Washington State on the edge of Western exploration in the New World in the summer of 1971. I came of age in and around the communal rooms of AA, NA, ACA, Alanon and Alateen throughout the Pacific and Mountain West. My father is 33 years sober. His father died 14 years sober in 1982.

I too wrestled my psychospiritual demons through alcohol and *Cannabis* which gratefully led me to the rooms of AA and NA where, at the age of 14, I declared myself an alcoholic and an addict. I delved headlong into the 12 Steps and promptly saw that I had wrapped myself in a shame-bound identity ('ism' - internalised shame manifested). Upon recognising this, I had the promised spiritual awakening of the twelfth step. I then sought, via being of service to other addicts and alcoholics, to maintain this awareness.

Eventually, I came to a point where I just didn't feel I belonged in AA. I felt that what I had come to learn had been learned. I was no longer afraid to be alive nor was I willing to hide. I had recovered from my shame-bound self. In short, I got tired of pretending that there was something wrong with me, I had become a spiritualized being living a predominantly joyous and fulfilling life.

So, on October 31st 1993, on the eve of my 8th AA birthday, I ended my inflexible 'once and always' identification with alcoholism and drug addiction. This came about in an "All Hallows Eve" ritual which had a 'spiced wine' component. I had requested of my partner that my wine be heated to remove the alcohol. This was done.

As we journeyed through the ritual, I pondered the rigid way in which I had insisted on having the alcohol removed from my 'sacrament'. I had recalled seeing a heart-rate monitor flat-line. Life had pulse, it had cycles, and a flat-line meant only one thing: death.

In a flash, I realized the most important insight: *Life is transformation.* Life is a cycle of death and rebirth, renewing itself each day. Upon recognising this, I declared to my companions in a choked up teary-eyed expression, "I am recovered." My future uncertain, my world of illusion shattered, I ventured forth into unfamiliar territory. The ritual had worked.

About three weeks later, a friend of mine, John, was coming to visit me in Idaho. He and I had met in Yosemite Valley, California, at an AA meeting. We had been sober and travelled together for six years; he had ended his tour of AA with much the same realization as I had. We chose to celebrate his arrival by drinking our first beer together. Absolutely nothing happened, we didn't foam at the mouth or go into fits of obsessive compulsive behaviour, nothing.

Another three weeks passed and John and I rented the video, *The Making of 'A Brief History of Time'* by Stephen Hawking (Hawking, 1992). As it started John said, "Oh hey, did I mention to you all, I have some Liquid LSD that 'the Lorax' made." I knew 'the Lorax' was a mad, old-school chemist and I trusted and respected him. I had also heard a few stories of peoples' spiritual adventures with LSD, peyote cacti and 'magic' mushrooms; not least of which were told by many 'Deadheads' I had known whilst being a 'clean and sober Wharf Rat' on Grateful Dead tour. I also knew that Bill Wilson, the co-founder of AA, had consumed LSD with spiritual intent (Wilson, 1984). With all this, I was curious.

SETTING

On a cold night in December of 1993, I ingested approximately 250 micrograms of LSD. Although, I was borne into a global 'War on (some people who use some) Drugs', I was unaware that I had just ingested *the* forbidden fruit, or at least the modern-day variant.

I 'tuned in' somewhere in the midst with Stephen Hawking philosophizing about the origins of the universe. About an hour or so in, I wanted to go outside. After discovering that I could still don my foul weather gear, tie my shoelaces and otherwise perform with dexterous ease, I stepped out for a snowy night-time walk through the woods to the lakeshore; damn, the world was breathlessly bright and I awoke into a childlike wonder!

INSIGHT

Several hours later, whilst it lightly snowed on my face where I lay buried in the pea-gravel of the lakeshore, I recognised 'I' was still and yet my experience was vast: complete absorption; self had vanished. This was my first glimpse of a possible 'Land without Evil'.

Two hundred years earlier William Blake wrote, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in everything". Transformed by my ineffable LSD experience, I knew what he meant; there was no going back.

In less than eight hours I had been shown a rare glimpse of the power of the human mind to shape reality. I saw that my limited neurotypical consciousness was only one plane, level or aspect and that there were infinite new things to discover. I found new perspectives on birth, death, and the nature of mind and consciousness as the field of creation. The experience of the oneness of all things replaced the *myth* of separation. Perennial wisdom dawned and my heart burst forth in praise, gratitude and love, rooted in a mindset of compassion for self and other.

INTEGRATION

In absorptive reverie, I began to integrate these insights whilst a deep desire welled up within me to study consciousness and its intersection with mysticism, the creation of religious belief systems and man's place in this great biosphere. Some hours later, I was roused by the bells ringing out at the local community college a mile across the water; I had never noticed them before. It was time to go to school!

Later that morning, still reeling from the profound transformations of the previous 13 hours, innocent, humbled and hungry for wisdom, I went down to the local community college and, in tears, I begged them to let me in. I was 22, I had not graduated high school and I was determined to do what ever it took to understand what had just happened to me, to validate my experience and to find others who had tasted these forbidden fruits.

At school I refused to hide. I boldly declared to anyone who would listen that I was intent on studying psychedelics, psychoactivity, consciousness and its interconnection with religious belief systems. Several professors, friends and family attempted to steer me from my path concerned that I would end up in prison. They were right but I was willing to pay the piper if the monkey showed up with the cup; indeed, Martin Luther King Jr. had said (King, 1963):

"[A]n individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

Here, those in power had drawn a line in the sand on the shores of a Rubicon which I had already crossed; so, I knew and accepted my possible futures and pasts. Hell, after promising certain death, all God could think to do was throw Adam and Eve out of the Garden for eating the forbidden fruit. If that is the worse that can happen, so be it.

In school I learned that not only has mankind been intentionally consuming psychoactive substances to alter mental functioning for a proverbial eon or two, we also consume plants rich in alkaloids as an important source of nutrition and energy for survival, particularly in stressful environmental conditions. This suggests an evolutionary purpose for 'drug' taking and illustrates our symbiotic relationship with plants evident in our shared chemical communicants.

I also learned that in the last twelve thousand years or so there has evolved a priest-class hell-bent on maintaining control of these substances as a way of enforcing the artificial divide between orthodox and heretical experience (Council on Spiritual Practices, 1997).

I recognised this artificial divide as the crux of the 'War on (some) Drugs' that continued an ancient 'pharmacratic inquisition' which had begun sixteen hundred years earlier when Alaric's Goths sacked the sanctuary at Eleusis ending a two thousand year old Mystery religion which centred on the ingestion of a sacred potion, the *kykeon*; where individuals permitted to imbibe saw '*ta hiera*', 'the holy' (Ott 1993, 1995). It has been

suggested that the *kykeon* is derived from the Ergot fungus, *Claviceps,* which grows on many cereal grains, synthesises the biochemical precursor of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, LSD, and, is the source of Ergotism also known as 'St. Anthony's Fire' (Ruck, Wasson & Hofmann, 1978; Schultes, Hofmann & Rätsch, 1979, 2001).

COMMITMENT

On learning this, I made a commitment to myself that I would synthesise Albert Hofmann's 'Problem Child', LSD (Hofmann, 1979). I had completed the requisite undergraduate chemistry courses, so, I knew I was capable of synthesising most psychedelic-type drugs, but I was not yet ready; I was experiencing the adage "when the student is ready the master will appear". So, after some pedagogical meandering and whilst continuing to experiment with various psychedelic compounds, I fixed on biochemistry and medical anthropology as the paradigmatic backdrop upon which I would unite my conscious studies and psychospiritual development.

ACTION

Central to therapeutic efficacy, as described by an interdisciplinary Medical Anthropology, is the power of declaration either made by the sufferer or the healer that is listened by the sufferer with credibility or faith (Csordas & Kleinman, 1996); this especially holds in the magico-religious context outside of Western Biomedicine and married nicely to my insights from AA's 12 Steps, the use of psychedelics, meditation and the personal empowerment paradigm I had engaged in as a participant of Landmark Education. Crucially, I was able to apply this to myself.

As I matured and my insights began to consistently manifest in new ways of being which produced measurable results, I engaged in lively philosophical transactions within the scholastic community and followed my intellectual curiosity until, after 11 semesters, the public funding ran out.

Conveniently, during my last school semester, I managed to talk the Anthropology department Head into giving me a grant and credit to attend the spring 2000 Entheobotany Seminar in Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico. All I had to do was present a slide show, talk and a paper when I got back.

Entheobotany is the study of plant entheogens. The neologism entheogen derives from an obsolete Greek word meaning "realizing the divine within" - the term used by the ancient Greeks to describe states of poetic or prophetic inspiration - and now used to describe the entheogenic state which can be induced by sacred plant-drugs. (Ott, 1993, 1995)

In Palenque, I was in an indefatigably good mood as I had found validation of my path and true community with which to resonate. I was no longer a lone psychonaut. I had arrived and just in the nick of time. Suddenly, I was immersed in a diverse community of those who were on the path of the entheogenically inclined. I was ecstatic to say the least. I took notes and photographed the main speakers for my slideshow. I tried to absorb as much of the proceedings as I could whilst I sampled a veritable variety of other entheogenic entities, i.e. psychedelic-type drugs. In so doing, I noticed a number of

individual conference participants had subjectively bioassayed 2C-T-7, an entheogenic phenethylamine substantially similar to the mescaline found naturally in peyote cacti (Shulgin & Shulgin, 1991).

Recognizing this as an opportunity to further the understanding of 2C-T-7 through anecdotal experiential accounts and to lend credibility to the scientific methodology of the subjective bioassay, I transformed insight into action, prepared and administered a written survey and, with gratuitous grace, the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies agreed to publish the results in their forthcoming summer 2000 *Bulletin, 10* (2).

Upon returning to the States, I knew my life was never going to be the same. I presented my slideshow to about 50 people from the University, about half of whom where professors. I received the credit, a serious cheer, and respect. What a confirmation of my path.

OPENINGS

I wrote up the 2C-T-7 article whilst under the influence of 2C-T-7 and to this day no one has noticed that I classically forgot to count myself and 'K-dog' in the 48 bioassays. Shortly thereafter an individual who had just renewed his subscription to the MAPS *Bulletin,* which had lapsed for some years, got his first new issue.

I received a cryptic letter from him. He told me he had studied for 20+ years the phenethylamine and tryptamine families of psychedelic-type drugs until the 1986 US Controlled Substances Analogue Act came into force. He said he had seen my article in the *MAPS Bulletin* and thought I might want to communicate; mysteriously, I ignored his letter.

Later that fall he wrote again. This time more direct and to the point. He was serious. He wanted to give me his lab and years of research notes. He wanted someone to pick up his torch. Was the student ready? Had the master appeared? Knowing from direct experience the profound impact of these molecules to facilitate healing and shatter epistemological paradigms, I wanted to be of service and thus I was more than willing. So in spring 2001 I picked up his torch and began the slow process of assembling the materials for a sufficient laboratory.

I recognised my bench practice was limited but I had worked in the biology and chemistry labs throughout university. I cold-called Sigma Aldrich Chemical Co., danced through their questions, ordered the chemicals and purchased, via the Web, more used glassware.

I began by making mistake after mistake until I succeeded finally in making a viable, purified molecule: 2C-D, another psychedelic phenethylamine. I chose 2C-D because I had a fantastic recipe and the precursors and reagents to start four steps back thereby improving my skill and avoiding detection. 2C-D has a very gentle dose-response curve

with a fantastically large range. 2C-D is what some have called a ‘pharmacological tofu’ (Shulgin & Shulgin, 1991).

Imbibing my first home-made entheogen was a serious triumph. Even better was sharing the gift with my friends and family. The results were immediate and over the years many people have expressed their appreciation of my facilitations of their psychospiritual transformations. I would thank them for ingesting, remind them that they had done the work and ask that if they could do but one thing, they could integrate their insights and transform them into concrete actions which make a difference for humanity.

Unexpectedly, whilst at play in the fields of the Lords, opportunities abounded and my services were in high demand. I was travelling the world from one conference to another, stopping off in foreign lands to learn of their people’s drugs of choice; and I saw intimately how today’s diversion of immense resources away from the everyday needs of humanity to combat a ‘War on (some) Drugs’ leaves people thirsty, hungry and destitute, and so they turn with evolutionary predictability to the very drugs the West is purportedly seeking to suppress.

In December 2001 I attended the ‘Ibogaine Conference’ in London on the eboga plant, *Tabernanthe iboga* and its alkaloids. Eboga is an African rainforest shrub of the Gabon region traditionally used by indigenous peoples of western Africa in low doses to combat fatigue, hunger and thirst, and in higher doses as a sacrament in spiritual initiation ceremonies.

Ibogaine is a naturally-occurring psychoactive indole derived from the roots of *Tabernanthe iboga* whose pharmacological properties have been researched for over 100 years. In fact, ibogaine was marketed in France until 1970 as Lambarene to promote a sense of well being. In 1962, Howard Lotsof discovered the efficacy of ibogaine for treatment of drug dependence and, in 1985, “he was awarded a series of use patents related to ibogaine’s apparent ability to ‘interrupt’ a wide range of substance abuse disorders, including those associated with opiates (heroin), opioids (methadone), stimulants (cocaine & amphetamine), as well as alcohol, nicotine and poly-substance abuse” (Anonymous, 2003).

At the conference in London I was offered the opportunity and funding to set up and run a sub-pilot *Tabernanthe* extraction laboratory in order to isolate ibogaine. I accepted the offer and immediately began acquiring the necessary materials to conduct laboratory work. By June 2002 my lab was up and running and I was fulfilling my obligations with a traditional organic laboratory, including all necessary reagents, enabling me to follow almost any common organic synthesis or phytochemical research and development path I so chose. As capital and experience was reinvested, my capabilities and competencies expanded.

I chose to synthesise the phenethylamine 2C-B for my own psychospiritual explorations. 2C-B had been invented in 1974 by Alexander Shulgin. He introduced it to psychotherapists around the world, many of whom found it of value in creating a warm,

empathetic bond between patient and healer, as its pharmacological action helps dissolve one's ego-defences, enabling an individual to contact suppressed emotions and repressed memories, helping to resolve psychospiritual trauma (Shulgin & Shulgin, 1991; Stolaroff, 1994). In time, my efforts went towards facilitating a reliable pure source of 2C-B for psychotherapists.

FULFILMENT

Late 2002, I was approached with the express intent of synthesising LSD for a group. It was my first chance at LSD synthesis and I took the opportunity though in my heart I had no desire to continue working with this group after completion of the agreement. I was successful.

Then, in early 2003, I created the opportunity to research the ergot fungus, *Claviceps,* first hand. Ergot is possibly the single most important medicinal genus on the planet, as evidenced by the volume of literature on ergot as well as the current use of over 400 prescription compounds (Křen & Cvak, 1999). In fact, it was medicinal ergot research which facilitated the 1943 discovery of LSD and other lysergamides by Albert Hofmann, a chemist working for Sandoz Pharmaceutical in Basel, Switzerland whilst looking for a blood stimulant. Prior to it being controlled by international agreement in the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, LSD underwent thousands of hours of clinical, laboratory and psychotherapeutic research with many promising results (Erowid, 2005).

Notably, LSD is substantially similar to the psychoactive Lysergic Acid Amide found in the sacred *Convolvulaceae* Morning Glory, *Ololiuqui*, which, until 1955, Mazatec curanderas of the Oaxaca highlands of Mexico utilized undisturbed for more than three millennia alongside *teonánacatl,* the 'sacred mushroom' of the Aztecs, *Psilocybe mexicana* and *Psilocybe cubensis,* in healing and divination ritual (Wasson, 1957; Hofmann, 1971).

I began my research into ergot by learning saprophytic culture techniques for the fungus but culturing was slow and deliberate work and by May 2003, whilst attempting to extract the alkaloids from the culture broth, I failed knowing I had neither adequate facilities nor knowledge for the sterile growth and extraction of ergot; I experienced once again the adage 'when the student is ready the master will appear'. I trusted the 'mutterkorn' alkaloid.

Having kept the faith, in late 2003 another opportunity to work with Ergot alkaloids arose. I was given a mass of dark resinous material purported to be ergotamine tartrate (ET) which had undergone a botched conversion to lysergic acid (LA) an intermediate in the production of ergot alkaloids as well as other lysergamides. I was entrusted with the goal of sorting out what had gone wrong and hopefully recovering enough LA to cover the costs of the original starting materials.

I struggled for several months trying to unwind what was possibly a futile effort. I utilized all spare monies I had and even began borrowing capital to help the project possibly bear fruit. I was confounded by not having adequate qualitative analytical

equipment and reference standards for the LA and ET as they are available only with a Home Office licence or purchased from the black market. I had neither connection.

Eventually, I was able to confirm that the original material indeed had ET in it but I was unsure if it had been adulterated as the individual who handed me the black resin had acquired the original material without a certificate of analysis. So, using every extraction technique I could dream up, my only way of knowing if I had actually extracted LA was to attempt to synthesise LSD with it and then test the final product via the usual method of the subjective bioassay.

I failed repeatedly in my attempts at extraction and synthesis and had to find a method that was not extremely sensitive to water, light or other resinous materials. By January 2004, I felt that I had synthetic process enabling me to proceed. Eventually, the first week of February 2004, I succeeded. In ordinary circumstances, I might have been awarded a novel synthesis patent; instead, I was-awarded a twenty-year prison sentence.

CLOSURE

So, why did I do it? There is no single pat answer. The simplest: my love of learning. The veiled: for my ego, for the attention, to feel special, to be loved, etc. The flippant: because I could. With hindsight: civil disobedience, academic and religious freedom in the study of the mind, and an expression of equal rights. The most accurate: my desire to share entheogenesis with others, to wake humanity up from the penumbral dream-world of materialist delusion, to help end the blatant injustice and rape of human dignity that occurs within the context of a "War on (some) Drugs", to seize the world stage and help create a forum for the cooperative and conscious stewardship of Mother Earth and all her relations.

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