

a self that seeks integration, we also have many autonomous complexes pursuing their own agendas.

This book is an examination of how psychotropic plants can elicit the deepest levels of human awareness and how the shamanic societies that routinely use such plants, no matter how widely they may be separated by space, time, or cultural diversity, have remarkably consistent beliefs about the plants' powers and the realities that they evoke.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous complex of beliefs addresses the notion that each plant species contains a "spiritual entity," usually regarded as a teacher, able to communicate with the person ingesting the plant. The following quotation by an anthropologist, one of many I could have chosen from an abundant body of literature, sums up these common ideas:

Aside from the psychological effects of drug use, we see from the data presented . . . that many of the societies exhibit belief systems that approach universality. For example, the belief in animated spirits of hallucinogenic plants recurs throughout the samples . . . The shaman may call upon such forces to protect his community. At times, such spirit forces have been considered more powerful than man and have been viewed as a means of communicating with the realm of the supernatural, rather than experienced as forces which could be controlled.¹⁰

Historically, most Westerners have regarded these beliefs with condescension—such "naive" worldviews are not included within the general reality-construction of modern scientific thought.

As the preceding twelve personal experiences suggest, however, at the very least we should acknowledge that not all of the data is in yet on the nature of human consciousness. Indeed, human awareness is a Mystery of such magnitude that it is prudent to admit that we know virtually nothing about the subject at all! This ignorance plus our passion for logical explanation often compel us to replace one hypothesis with another one equally extravagant:

The Mazatecs say that the [*Psilocybe cubensis*] mushrooms speak. If you ask a shaman where his imagery comes from, he is likely to reply: I didn't say it, the mushrooms did. No mushroom speaks, that is a primitive anthropomorphization of the natural, only man speaks, but he who eats these mushrooms, if he is a man of language, becomes endowed with an inspired capacity to speak . . . At times it is as if one were being told what to say, for the words leap to mind, one after another, of themselves without having to be searched for: a phenomenon similar to the automatic dictation of the surrealists except that here the flow of consciousness, rather than being disconnected, tends to be coherent: a rational enunciation of meanings . . . For the shaman, it is as if existence were uttering itself through him.¹¹

Despite the "as if" disclaimer, it seems at least as implausible to hypothesize "existence" speaking through one as the spirit of a mushroom. The point is that the main question remains unaddressed, and that is: How is it possible for some "other," some "not-me" to speak to me from within my own psyche? The "naive" explanation is that there must exist somewhere another world, another entire multiverse perhaps, from which invisible yet intelligent entities are able to communicate with us. This hypothesis is labeled "dualism" by scientific thinkers and is generally regarded as anathema to rational discourse.

Nevertheless, fresh insights into complex subjects can often be gained by examining their simplest explanations without preconceived ideas. Since it's all a Mystery anyway, what useful data might we acquire by provisionally accepting the notion that plants are sentient entities able to communicate with those who ingest them: or perhaps more plausibly, that the molecules within certain plants can evoke dissociated incorporeal intelligences from the psyche who present themselves as sentient teachers? Those who closely monitor their dreams will confirm that one doesn't need to take drugs to hear inner voices of transcendent intelligence.

That's a lot of what this book is about, but before I can ask the reader to accept such radical premises, I must first create a foundation

for how it might be made plausible for sober consideration. The following hypotheses, based on empirical experience, provide a starting point for the discussion that follows.

1. The human psyche transcends corporeal existence; therefore, we must be multidimensional entities. (Those who closely monitor their dreams will readily affirm this observation.)
2. The ego is not the center of the psyche, but only the space-time portion of a greater reality that unfolds and reveals itself from what the ego perceives as its own unconscious mind. (This is standard Jungian theory, confirmed by abundant research.)
3. Space-time is a partial reality, and the materialist position is an illusion if taken literally.
4. Consciousness is a form of energy. (What else could you call it?)
5. Since matter and energy are relative manifestations of the same basic phenomenon, in some dimensions matter is energy and vice versa; therefore, in some dimensions thoughts are "physical" entities.
6. In the dimensions tangential to ego consciousness, these incorporeal intelligences experience realities that are normally unconscious to ego perception. (Depth psychology and parapsychology offer abundant evidence for this hypothesis.)
7. As they "go about their lives," these hidden forces, operating outside of space-time concepts of causality, often symbolically mirror the ego's subjective reality in the physical realm. (These are called synchronicity experiences.)
8. The psychic energy of others, consciously or unconsciously focused, is able to directly affect one both psychologically and physically.
9. Time is relative to, and inextricably connected with, consciousness itself.

It should be noted that each of these hypotheses supports the shamanic concept of reality, a worldview often accessed, enhanced, and informed by the use of psychotropic substances.



Chapter Two Shamanic Dimensions

I believe that the best map we have of consciousness is the shamanic map. According to this viewpoint, the world has a "center," and when you go to the center—which is inside yourself—there is a vertical axis that allows you to travel up or down. There are celestial worlds, there are infernal worlds, there are paradisaical worlds. These are the worlds that open up to us on our shamanic journeys, and I feel we have an obligation to explore these domains and pass on that information to others interested in mapping the psyche. At this time in our history, it's perhaps the most awe-inspiring journey anyone could hope to make.¹

An unbelievable number of books and articles have been written about shamanism within the last two decades. For the purposes of this discussion, all we need to know about the subject is found in the above quotation. In essence, the shamanic map of the psyche posits the existence of "higher dimensions" of reality that are accessed via consciousness.

Nevertheless, notice how the quoted definition is still structured in three-dimensional terms; the body is implicitly a vessel containing the psyche, which is also a vessel containing a hierarchy of Upper and Lower Worlds that are accessed via a central vertical axis. It is a kind of Chinese-box image—worlds within worlds within worlds. Given our physical restriction to three-dimensional space, this is probably as good a metaphor for transcendent realms of experience as most of us can easily visualize.

"Dimension" is a word so overused that often we don't consider it carefully enough. What exactly does it mean? Since an understanding

of the concept is crucial to our comprehension of altered states of consciousness, let's facilitate this discussion with another definition:

It is possible to imagine a point as having zero dimensions, a line as having one dimension (length), a surface as having two dimensions (length and breadth), and a solid figure, such as a cube or sphere, as having three dimensions (length, breadth, and height)... What we mean today by a solid object, or a "material" object, is an object that is three-dimensional in the Euclidean sense.²

From this definition we see that each ensuing spatial dimension is structured in a direction perpendicular to the one preceding it. (The word "perpendicular" refers to a line or plane at right angles to another line or plane.) This unfolding sequence is a consistent principle, an equation for the erection of higher-dimensional structures. Hence, a one-dimensional line is *perpendicular* to a zero-dimensional point; a two-dimensional plane is *perpendicular* to a one-dimensional line; and a three-dimensional cube is *perpendicular* to a two-dimensional plane. If the principle is constant, it should point the way to four-dimensional space. The logical question is: which "direction" is *perpendicular* to a cube?

This is impossible to visualize externally because we are subjectively perceiving from three-dimensional space. It is easy to comprehend a point, line, plane, and cube; indeed, any child can readily discern spatial dimensions below three, but even mystics get confused when trying to describe four-dimensional space. I thus use the term "perpendicular" in a special sense to convey the idea of being at *any angle or direction that transcends the boundaries of a dimension*. (The idea of precise ninety-degree "right angles" is not necessarily relevant to the concept except as an aid to visualization.)

Being denizens of three-dimensional space it is extremely difficult for us to imagine what could be perpendicular to a cube; no external direction would be more than another three-dimensional projection. Does the analogy of "perpendicularity" break down when dealing with

spatial dimensions higher than three? Logical consistency demands that the principle must hold—but how?

Taking a hint from the shamanic model of reality, it is a startling realization to discover that the only logical direction "perpendicular" to three-dimensional space is "within." This is made clearer when we realize that we cannot subtract the observer from the equation or forge that subjective perception is the foundation upon which all observation are made. Perception from a "center" or "point" (the subjective psyche comes first, and the three external dimensions radiate from that point

That one can observe three dimensions without putting the observer in the center (i.e., I can observe the three dimensions of a house without being inside of the house) confuses the issue, but does not negate the fundamental truth that *I am always at the center of the space-time surrounding me*.

This insight immediately opens the shamanic world to our understanding and suggests that *consciousness itself is a multidimensional phenomenon!* The fact that each observer is at the center of his or her experience implies a "backstage" realm (the "unconscious") from which each subjective awareness is projected into physical space. This lends credence to Jung's concept of the so-called collective unconscious or objective psyche: not as a state of consciousness alone, but also as a location, or hierarchy of locations, in extra-dimensional space. The following quotation describes the almost-universal shamanic conception of the "three worlds." It goes without saying that both the Upper and Lower Worlds are internal (perpendicular) to the Middle "external" World of space-time:

For most shamanic cultures, the universe is believed to be composed of at least three levels: the Middle Realm is the world as we know it, the world of normal human events; the World Below, the Underworld, can be associated with the dead and dangerous spirits; and the Over World, the Celestial Realm, is frequently characterized as the abode of the Sun, in some places the realm of transcendent consciousness.³

This makes the physical body a kind of vessel that "contains" higher-dimensional constructs. In three-dimensional terms it is logically absurd for a vessel to be smaller than its contents, yet this is not an inevitable conclusion if higher dimensions are factored into the equation.

Another way to conceptualize this is to think of space-time as the "outer" projection of an inner infinity. Imagine what it would be like to be a two-dimensional entity living on one of the six faces of a cube. Although it isn't immediately obvious to you, your world is actually tangential to five invisible two-dimensional "universes" similar to your own, each with its unique population of beings. Imagine that turned inside out, in three dimensions, and you get an intuitive grasp of how we can access other realms from within. It may take a while to integrate these insights, but once they become obvious, almost everything mysterious about shamanic and other altered states of consciousness becomes not only plausible, but self-evident and necessary.

As large as the universe outside, even so large is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning, and all the stars. What is in the macrocosm is in this microcosm.⁴

Another route to understanding these ideas is to approach them in terms of the difference between subjectivity and objectivity. First of all, authentic objectivity is impossible for any differentiated (subjective) observer. Indeed, if such a state of perception were possible, there would be no question about what is "true," since the truth would be obvious to all observers. Therefore, since we cannot be objective, except in a relative sense, "objectivity" must be a function of the imagination. That is, I can imagine what objectivity is, but I cannot be objective in any true or ultimate sense, except intersubjectively, which is to say, in accordance with socially imagined rules, such as the scientific method. This consensus objectivity is indispensable for daily living, but we must not forget that it is only an abstraction (like money) created to facilitate social intercourse.

The first fact of life is that it is always a subjective experience; there

is no way this can be denied or avoided—which is not to claim that there is no objective cosmos, only that all our experience of it is subjective. To imagine what the objective multiverse might be like, we can postulate that it is the sum total of all subjective experiences of it, plus what it is "in itself," as universe. Even the imagination balks at such strenuous conceptualization; to see the universe objectively (i.e., as universe), one would have to be outside of it!

Nevertheless, we can observe one- and two-dimensional space relatively objectively because we are perceiving "from above and outside, as it were. It is more difficult to see three-dimensional space in this way because of our embodiment within it. It follows that to really be able to discern three dimensions "objectively," one would have to perceive them from an "outside" perpendicular direction—that is, from a fourth spatial dimension.

Integrating these insights into our shamanic model, we see that for human beings, spatial dimensions of three and less are external, and dimensions higher than three are internal. Hence, for us, *all spatial dimensions higher than three are mental or psychic*. It follows from this that a four-dimensional being would be experienced subjectively by a three-dimensional being as an inner voice or hallucination, as a *interior* phenomenon.

Pause for a moment and try to imagine four-dimensional space. It is right next to you, but in a direction you can't point to. No matter how well hidden you may be, a four-dimensional creature can see you perfectly well, inside and outside.⁵

Leaving aside for the moment the hypothesis that some entities, such as UFOs, can "holographically" project themselves into our physical space, the only higher-dimensional entities that human beings usually encounter are internal, an obvious example being the "inner voices" heard by schizophrenics. The fact that consciousness is a subjective trans-dimensional bridge linking many realms explains why shamanic states cannot be measured in three-dimensional terms: although our imagined protocols may be in some sense "objective," it is impossible

to objectify the consciousness trying to measure itself by them! *It is precisely because consciousness is multidimensional that it is inaccessible to adequate measurement in this dimension.*

Another problem is that because our primary experience is fixed within three-dimensional reality, so is our language. It is impossible to be semantically precise when describing hyperspace because language can only approach it metaphorically. For example, the word "heaven" is often used to describe a transcendent paradisiacal world because this realm is experienced as "higher" than ours. We use a three-dimensional concept (higher) to describe an inner state transcending three dimensions entirely. Semantically, the word "heaven" refers to the starry expanse above planet Earth that extends into three-dimensional infinity. The metaphysical "heaven," on the other hand, represents but one portion of an interior multiverse encompassing all modes of consciousness, including the infernal dimensions. In popular usage, heaven is above and hell is below, but from the perspective of hyperspace they are both *within*.

It is significant to note that this metaphorical principle works in both directions; dreams, the language of the unconscious psyche (hyperspace), are usually metaphors for states of consciousness that are non-verbal, hence indescribable in ordinary language. Psychedelic and shamanic states of consciousness are often equally indescribable. In other words, entities in hyperspace, whether they be our own dissociated psychological complexes, or true "aliens," are generally experienced (especially in dreams) as metaphors for higher-dimensional realities. Although they do not conform to our literal, three-dimensional expectations, this in no way implies that they are not real in their own space.

Any discussion of dimensions is incomplete without including time, since modern descriptions of our external reality refer to it as the "space-time continuum," or simply space-time. Here is a concise explication of this idea:

The idea of a fourth dimension . . . was introduced to the modern world by Hermann Minkowski, who pointed out in 1908 that

Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity is equivalent to an assertion that the world we live in is not three-dimensional but four-dimensional, the fourth dimension being time. Since "space" implies three-dimensionality, Minkowski referred not to "four-dimensional space" but to the "four-dimensional space-time continuum . . ." It is only necessary to think of the three spatial dimensions—length, breadth, and height—as extensions in space. It is then an easy step to conceive the fourth dimension as extension in time. In other words, the fourth dimension of any object is its duration.⁶

To integrate this perspective with the shamanic model of the cosmos, we must first recognize that time is inseparable from consciousness:

Time [is] bound up in consciousness. Man experiences time, can detect all time's endless changes and yet can he ever be sure it exists of its own right, out there, independent of him? Scientists as well as philosophers are concerned with such questions and indeed the objectivity of time and its separation from consciousness is perhaps one of the central issues in trying to understand time from a scientific viewpoint.⁷

It follows from this that, although time can be imagined as a dimension of "duration," it is always experienced subjectively as an eternal, "zero-dimensional" present:

Time is conceived as a line along which a point travels from the past toward the future. That point is the present moment. Being a point, it is necessarily infinitely short . . . Since the present is all that exists, the past having gone and the future not yet being here, such a concept of time is inadequate even for the description of inanimate reality. But it is the best of which we are capable.⁸

This paradox can be resolved by recognizing that time is an observer-centered subjective experience of continuity in a three-dimensional present. Thus, time conceived of as "a dimension of duration" is dependent

on two functions of consciousness: memory and imagination. Although we can remember past events and can imagine future ones, we can only experience the past and the future as artifacts of our conscious present. It follows that time (the immediate present) is perpendicular to consciousness because memory (the past) and imagination (the future) are both components of the psyche. Therefore, if time is a dimension, then so is consciousness, because they are existentially inseparable.

Using the equation that each "higher" dimension is perpendicular to the one "below" it (these are three-dimensional concepts, but the principle transcends its description), we can say that consciousness and time are perpendicular to space, and are therefore multidimensional phenomena. This brings us back to the shamanic model of the psyche, which we can now see as a more precisely differentiated description of human awareness than any provided by Western psychology.

In summary: Our familiar three-dimensional reality is called the "Middle World" in the shamanic model. Both the Lower and Upper Worlds are internal dimensions that are entered via altered states of consciousness. Because hyperspace is perpendicular to ego awareness, consciousness is the bridge that links all of the worlds together. Access to these inner dimensions is dependent on many factors. Everyone enters them while dreaming, but hypnosis, meditation, severe stress, and many other catalysts, including psychedelic drugs, can also provide admittance. For the purposes of this book, we will concentrate on conscious shamanic intent in conjunction with psychotropic plants as our method of entry into hyperspace. But first, having differentiated the territory, we must further examine its structure and contents.



Chapter Three

The Experience of Many Worlds

A common thread seems to connect all shamans across the planet. . . . That this commonality cuts across seemingly irreconcilable ethnic and cultural lines attests to the mystery and power lying at the source of myth, the human psyche. . . . From Lapland to Patagonia, from the Paleolithic to today, the archetypes activated during shamanic ordeals and exaltations are astonishingly similar.¹

We know very little about the human psyche, which is to admit that we know very little about ourselves, let alone hyperspace. The inner dimensions remain largely *terra incognita*, despite a million descriptions of them by a cross-cultural spectrum of observers throughout history. In addition to constituting the Upper and Lower Worlds of shamanism, this realm is the Pleroma of the gnostics, the astral plane of occultism, the bardo realms of Tibetan Buddhism, the Eternal Dreamtime of the Australian aborigines, the unconscious psyche of modern psychology, and the heavens and hells of fundamentalist sects worldwide. The list could be extended almost indefinitely, and many volumes devoted to their comparison. For the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to acknowledge that these are all descriptions of hyperspace, the inner dimensions accessed by consciousness.

As human beings incarnated in physical bodies on planet Earth, we have evolved a belief system called "consensus reality" to facilitate agreement about our experience here. Out of this belief system we have agreed to create finer distinctions, such as "subjectivity" and

“objectivity,” which help to standardize (however crudely) our perceptions of the world. Because we are all physically locked in to three-dimensional space, the general outlines of consensus reality appear self-evident: the attributes of earth, air, fire, and water are pretty much agreed upon by most observers. Nevertheless, consensus reality resembles a political platform endorsed by majority vote; some of it is accepted without argument, some of it has been pushed through by lobbyists who’ve convinced us of their beliefs. Obviously there are huge areas of experience for which there is no general agreement. If true objectivity were possible, this could never happen.

We began by acknowledging the obvious, that subjective consciousness is a precondition for the perception of any spatial dimension. We observed that the scientific hypothesis of time as a “dimension of duration” is dependent on memory and imagination, and that time cannot be separated from consciousness without violating subjective experience. The notion of “space-time” is a part of modern consensus reality, but I suggest that this is an attempt to objectify memory and imagination as dimensions of time when they are, in fact, functions of consciousness. Consequently, instead of “space-time,” it seems more accurate to substitute “space-mind” as a concept linking physical space with the mind perceiving it.

Space-mind describes the experience of our subjective consciousness immersed in a three-dimensional world. But this is far from our only reality. The “zero-dimensional” point of consciousness, when focused inward, perceives another region, which I submit is best described by the term “mind-space,” a distorted mirror-image of space-mind. Space-mind and mind-space are, back to back, the two infinities confronted by consciousness:

The unknown falls into two groups of objects: those which are outside and can be experienced by the senses, and those which are inside and are experienced immediately. The first group comprises the unknown in the outer world; the second the unknown in the inner world. We call this latter territory the unconscious.²

I am tuned to space-mind when I am primarily interacting with a three-dimensional external reality. I’m tuned to mind-space when I am interacting with the inner worlds of the psyche.

Consensus reality reassures us that there are laws of nature determining the way physical space is presented to our awareness—solid bodies tend to remain that way; gravity is a law of motion; properties of light affect the way in which we perceive objects in space; etc. To us, these laws are “objectively” self-evident, which is to say that in our imaginations we conceive of them operating independently of subjective observation.

Because there is little consensus about the dimensions of mind-space, they tend to be dismissed as fantasy realms, as epiphenomena of the subjective imagination. This is the illusion of “objectivity” imposed on the existential core of the psyche, the imaginary negation of our perceptual essence according to misconceived rules of evidence. Such a belief system guarantees the impossibility of ever exploring these dimensions in any systematic way.

Shamanic cultures are not so handicapped and therefore have a more empirically useful grasp of mind-space than most Western psychology is willing to admit. For thousands of years, healers have been routinely effecting cures by manipulating disease pathogens within multidimensional space. Western medicine says that this is impossible, even when confronted with evidence to the contrary.

Empirical portrayals of mind-space describe it as preeminently a realm of images, suggesting an alternative title of “the imaginal realm.” The following is a capsule definition of this concept, stressing the idea that these images are real entities that are as “solid” in their own space as we are in ours:

In dealing with things of the imaginal realm, we are not talking about the stuff of fantasy or even of imagination, as these terms are generally understood today. Specifically, we are not concerned here with fictive matters or with what is “made up” through creative invention. . . . The imaginal realm is not only ontologically