

Review

Roots and Herbs

Peter Webster vignes@wanadoo.fr

From the pages of
The International Journal of Drug Policy

The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries.
Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Hermes Press, 1998.
R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, Carl A.P. Ruck
(Originally published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1978)
ISBN 0-915148-20-X

We, the Inquisitors against heretical perversity and apostasy, by virtue of apostolic authority declare, inasmuch as the use of the herb or root called Peyote has been introduced into these Provinces for the purpose of detecting thefts, or divining other happenings, and of foretelling future events, it is an act of superstition condemned as opposed to the purity and integrity of our Holy Catholic Faith. This is certain because neither the said herb nor any other can possess the virtue or inherent quality of producing the effects claimed, nor can any cause the mental images, fantasies and hallucinations on which the above stated divinations are based. In these latter are plainly perceived the suggestion and intervention of the Devil, the real author of this vice, who first avails himself of the natural credulity of the Indians and their tendency to idolatry, and later strikes down many other persons too little disposed to fear God and of very little faith. (Leonard, 1942)

The Inquisitors had obviously not ingested any of the condemned herbs or roots in the course of their investigations, for in doing so they would have had little doubt as to their powerful effects. If they had been the intellectuals they pretended to be, rather than mere propagandists for the subjugation and confiscation of the entire hemisphere, they might themselves have achieved the power of divination through ingestion of the native spirit-medicines to see the course of horror they were helping to unleash. But it was not to be. Nearly three centuries would have to pass before Western man could muster the intellectual courage to experience what the conquered 'primitives' had been experiencing for millennia.

It was the beginning of the strong and popular perception, reinforced over the centuries, that altered states of consciousness and the use of the magical plants which produced them were something to be rigorously avoided, something irrational that only 'primitives' engaged in, something beneath the dignity of any civilised person, something that must be repressed by every means possible. Not only the Peyote cactus, but many other long-used Mexican and pan-American psychoactive plants were condemned by the Catholic Church and civil authorities alike, and the tribes which employed such 'tools of the devil' relentlessly persecuted. Only a few of the wide range of New World psychoactives came to be accepted by Europeans, such as tobacco, cocoa, (and for a time, much later, coca), and

it might be immediately observed that the drug plants that were accepted were those that acted merely as stimulants, substances which did not so much alter consciousness to some unaccustomed or even fantastic state, but which merely restored or accentuated normal work-a-day consciousness.

Peyote, however, along with *ololiuhqui* (a seed containing LSD analogues), *teonanácatl* (psilocybin mushrooms), and literally dozens of other shamanic drug plants which appeared to give native peoples powers and perceptions that were in conflict both with Catholic dogma and the paradigms of the dawning Age of (so-called) Rationality, were declared diabolical, the states they produced insane, and much effort was expended attempting to 'convert' the peoples that used them. The Drug War had begun, and its essential if unstated justification was that the diabolical substances and the experiences they produced posed a threat to both religious and colonial authority at a practical level, undermining the colonial enterprise, and even more significantly, a threat to the fundamental beliefs and assumptions — the paradigms — of the dawning Age of Progress, Science, and Technology.

The persecution of 'drug-users' by the Inquisition had its parallels in Europe too, for the practice of witchcraft in medieval times had long been accompanied by the use of psychoactive hallucinogenic plants such as *Atropa*, *Datura*, *Hyoscyamus*, and *Mandragora* species. The witches' 'flying-ointments' did not enable adepts to fly through the air as has been the myth, but when applied to the genital area with 'broomsticks,' produced strong and reliable hallucinations of flying during the resulting trance and delirium. (Harner, 1973). Several modern experiments have confirmed the effect. (Ott, 1993)

The use of psychoactives in Europe had roots extending far back into history and prehistory as did such use in the New World, but the traditions and rituals in Europe had become decadent and far removed from mainstream society, whereas in the New World they had by the time of the European conquest attained primary importance almost universally among the aboriginal tribes and civilisations. And it was the long influence of the Catholic Church which was responsible for the difference. At first glance one might conclude that Christianity had thus saved wider European society from the 'primitive practice' of drug use, but that first glance would be as devoid of truth as were the views and motives of the Inquisitors.

It was not surprising that Catholicism took the same attitude in the New World as it had taken concerning the practices of European witchcraft, because that attitude had its roots many centuries before in the Catholic Church's drive for centralisation of religious and political power and the accompanying excommunication or eradication of competing sects seen as threats to orthodoxy. One such sect was centred in Greece, and in the year 395 A.D. Alaric the Goth and his merry band of Onward Christian Soldiers overran and destroyed the Temple at Eleusis, the holy place where the famous and two-thousand-year-old Eleusinian Mysteries had been practised. The central feature of that yearly celebration, initiation, and revelation was the partaking of a powerful and mysterious potion, the *kykeon*. Far from being a minor and obscure sect, the Mysteries had been for centuries a central and important religious experience and inspirational revelation whose initiates included essentially all the great names of Greek antiquity. Its importance, along with the secret of the divine and psychoactive sacrament used in the yearly celebration, has remained to this day almost entirely ignored by scholars.

2.

The perception that 'drug use' was something primitive, something pre-scientific, an anachronistic practise which 'modern' people with 'rational' minds not only did not need but should actively shun and condemn, that although it was something done by nearly all

tribal peoples modern rational society had outgrown it and, indeed, was now harmed and threatened by it, had its origins in a long Catholic politic and gathered momentum in the general mind-set and philosophy of intellectuals and religious authorities during the time of the colonial era. But the attitude soon attained the status of an 'obvious truth' that would reign unquestioned for centuries. Of course, the outlook was well-suited to the dawning age of exploration and expropriation. It provided a powerful justification for the depredations of colonialism and European manifest destiny by insinuating the great superiority of European consciousness, religion and philosophy; it thus assisted the centralisation of power and authority first by the Church and later by governments and their institutions; it assisted the scientific world view to slowly replace the 'superstition' of heretics and out-groups everywhere and eventually even of religion itself, becoming in the process the modern equivalent of that which it replaced. Calling the practises diabolical was perhaps more of propaganda than philosophy, even then.

Thus it wasn't until late into the 19th century that a few curious scientists and intellectuals began to experiment with the long-ignored drugs and the states they produced, but even then it required the passage of another half-century before any general research program began to study the subject. (And even then, the research at first was directed largely at possible uses of the drugs for warfare and 'mind-control'.) Although scientific study of some widely-observed phenomenon has for various reasons sometimes been delayed or ignored for long periods, the general and centuries-long ignorance both public and scientific of the widespread use of psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs is unprecedented, and leads to the conclusion that deep psychological and metaphysical prejudices embedded in the collective mind and perception of Western, Industrial-Age man must have been at root. The up-tight reaction by mainstream authorities to the sudden rediscovery and wide interest in psychedelic drugs in the 1960s, (and we are perhaps now at the height of the backlash, the reactionary attempt to erase even the memory of positive findings about the substances and their use), provides further strong suspicion that the subject of 'drugs' strikes some deep chord within the human collective unconscious, that the states of mind they unleash have some hitherto unsuspected, intimate and powerful connection with the general psychological makeup not only of modern man, but of the human race in general. Even the long propaganda of Catholic orthodoxy in fostering the myth of drug use as a heathen and unclean practice would not have been as effective were it not for some much deeper and more fundamental connection between drug-produced altered states of consciousness and the roots of the human psyche both Western and aboriginal.

The only counterpoint to such automatic perceptions about 'drug use' as discussed above — the experiments and writings that began late in the 19th Century with Louis Lewin, William James and other pioneers of the study of altered states of consciousness and which continued on to its peak in the 1960s — has in general been considered an oddball pursuit and of little interest or significance to Western traditions and thought. This remains the general attitude. The convictions sown by nearly two millennia of Catholic dogma and reinforced by the perceptions and practicalities begun in those early days of colonialism have apparently become so much a part of the modern paradigm that they act almost invisibly. When proposed as reasons for people's prejudices against drugs and altered states of consciousness, and the continuing illogic and tragic folly of Drug Prohibition, the suggestion is routinely dismissed as absurd. But history proves otherwise. Deeply ingrained into the modern consciousness is the notion that modern society represents the final triumphant exit of man from the primitive world and all its dirty devices, despite the fact that our beloved Century of Progress has seen atrocities that would have awed and perhaps even disgusted the greatest tyrants of the ages, and despite the important body of modern research which shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that some of those 'dirty devices,' the

drugs now prejudicially called 'hallucinogenic' or even 'psychotomimetic,'¹ are intimately connected with the deepest levels of the collective psychology of the human race and demand a thorough exploration. The situation even suggests that the knowledge such an exploration will produce may well be the most important element yet missing in mankind's understanding of himself and his place in Creation.

3.

The connection of 'drug-use' with aboriginal peoples and our perception of tribal man as so inferior that he cannot possibly have anything of value to teach we moderns, has thus long helped to prevent the merest suspicion that psychoactive plants and their preparations might have played a role in early European times before the Christian era, or in other cultures which constitute at least to some degree the intellectual roots of Western civilisation. The work of R. Gordon Wasson and his wife Valentina in the 1950s, showing the possible sources of certain European customs and language features in an early ritual use of psychoactive mushrooms, or that psychoactive mushrooms were also the identity of the *Soma* of the *Rg Veda* and that Siberian use of the same mushroom by shamans goes back many thousands of years, (Wasson, 1957, 1968) has not held much interest either for scientists nor religious authorities. Such research is dismissed as an irrelevant curiosity despite the fact that it brings the use of psychedelic and hallucinogenic plants much closer to home than was possible to believe formerly.

If the use of such plant drugs was universal and of utmost importance to tribal man, we must conclude that 'drug use' extends back into the most remote periods of human prehistory: the prevalence and importance of the drugs makes it highly unlikely that their use suddenly appeared throughout the world in some later stage of human development. These same factors also argue strongly that 'drug use' was not an impediment, and certainly not the curse the medieval Church, and many of us still today believe it to be, but rather a very positive influence, otherwise we would have either long succumbed to the practices or eliminated them during our long developmental process.² The seeking of drug-produced altered states of consciousness must have been a frequent and contributory feature of human

¹ Despite some suggestions to the contrary, perhaps all these terms are actually quite useful to denote general types of effects produced by the various psychoactive drugs. Drugs such as LSD, peyote, psilocybin, and even cannabis are well described by the term 'psychedelic,' in accordance with the idea advanced by pioneer researcher Humphrey Osmond that the drugs 'manifest' or bring into the open aspects of consciousness normally hidden or latent but nevertheless genuine, aspects of mind which may be not only individual but collective. The psychedelic state of consciousness is not at all a delirium, and the experiencer finds his normal functions such as co-ordination, walking, eating, etc., relatively unimpeded. In addition, memory of the psychedelic experience is accurate. The witches' brews mentioned, however, are better described by the term 'hallucinogen' in that they produce a trance in which normal functions are greatly affected, and the state can accurately be seen as a delirium in which actual hallucinations can arise, as of flying. Other even more powerful drugs may be termed 'psychotomimetic' when their effects so disorient the subject that he actually appears psychotic, and perhaps even suffers long-term consequences of the experience. The CIA research in the 1950s, directed at finding sinister uses for drugs, experimented with such horror-producing concoctions as Ditran and BZ ("which causes trips lasting a week or more and which tends to induce violent behaviour" writes John Marks in *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate*).

² I shall not discuss here the particulars of tribal use of these substances with a goal of showing that the practices were beneficial, but I would point out that our prejudices about 'primitive' peoples and about 'drugs' naturally lead to a further prejudice, that the use of these substances must certainly have been debasing and an influence tending to impede 'progress' and 'advancement' toward modernity. All of these prejudices, to use a polite term, are illegitimate.

life from the very beginnings of our existence and continuing for a period representing more than 98 percent of our time on earth.³

The practices must thus permeate our own history and pre-history so thoroughly that failing to look for and discover their prevalence in societies and civilisations that gave rise to Western civilisation is far more than mere oversight. Such failure would posit either the unbelievable heresy that medieval Catholic dogma thus still controls the outlook and agenda of the modern scientific enterprise, or, far more likely, that the significance of the phenomenon, when its true dimensions will have been revealed, will necessitate some drastic revisions, perhaps even revolutions, in the entire range of sciences of man including psychology, sociology, anthropology, evolution, and the practice of medicine and psychiatry, not to mention religion! The history of scientific discovery has repeatedly demonstrated that collectively, the scientific enterprise seems to have an inbuilt mechanism tending to preserve its position in favour of embracing pending revolutionary changes even when a significant minority has convincingly shown the way toward the inevitable. (Kuhn, 1962). It is a conservatism that somehow resists and causes its individual workers to avoid any radical changes in their perceptions or research programs that might topple the structure of authority and chain of command, and in that aspect it has undeniable similarities with the religious orthodoxy and authority structure it has today largely replaced.

The final discovery of the connection between the evolution of the human psyche and the use of mind-altering plant drugs may well turn out to be the 'General Relativity Theory' of both psychology *and* religion and have far reaching consequences for theories of cognition and mind, human biological evolution and the entire range of life sciences. We are being forced to realise that not only our continuing prejudicial attitudes toward aboriginal populations, but our conviction that altered states of consciousness and the modern western mind are and should be mutually exclusive are grave errors. To separate ourselves from this long developmental process, or to believe our own ancestors 'drug-free,' to believe that we do not still harbour in our collective psyche not only the traces but the continuing need for altering consciousness in profound ways, is profoundly ignorant, wilfully ignorant, and reminds this writer of the position of the Creationists in denying evolution, positing that God placed fossils on the earth to tempt us away from the truth as revealed in the Bible. No doubt He also placed heathens and their evil drugs amongst us as even greater tests of faith. With regard to elucidating the importance of psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs, the modern scientific enterprise resembles far more the attitude of the Creationists and 'Creation Science' than the model of objectivity it purports to be.

4.

One of the most interesting and potentially revolutionary books that has been published concerning the connection between psychedelic drugs and the antecedents of European civilisation, again a work from the pen of R. Gordon Wasson and in this instance in

³ The latest genetic research indicates that the entire human race as we know it descended from a very small band of Africans (perhaps as few as two hundred) who may be considered the first humans, and that this proto-society had its beginnings about 130 thousand years ago. Allowing a generous interval of several thousand years for the beginning of general use of psychoactive plant drugs by humans, and taking the demise of Eleusis as the end-point of generalised use of psychedelics by a civilisation, we arrive at the figure of 98%. (Of course, such use continued on until modern times with isolated tribal societies not representative of the forefront of civilisation). But perhaps the discovery of psychoactive drugs was what set this original proto-society apart from the much larger African population of pre-humans, perhaps the genesis of human consciousness itself was catalysed by psychoactive plants?

collaboration with Albert Hofmann and Carl A. P. Ruck, is the volume under review here. Originally published twenty years ago, the theory described in *The Road to Eleusis* was presented as a series of papers to the Second International Conference on Hallucinogenic Mushrooms held in the state of Washington in the United States in October of 1977. As we might expect from my observations on the avoidance of revolutionary discovery by the mainstream, the original publication of the book went practically unnoticed. Carl Ruck, co-author and an authority on ancient Greece, its myths and religions, writes in one of the new chapters added to this Anniversary Re-edition:

The book excited no interest amongst colleagues in my profession, and rarely has anyone even mentioned it to me... The discussion of Dionysos and Greek wine, including the symbolic significance of the *thyrsos*, has been completely ignored by Classicists; and the work on Eleusis rarely earns even a disparaging footnote in treatments of Greek religion. More recently, the Eleusinian Mystery has been expropriated for the curriculum in Women's Studies, but despite the grain Goddess, ethnobotany is not on their agenda; and they, too, don't speak to me. Students who work with me have been warned that they will be blacklisted. My textbooks in grammar, as well, as if by contagion, are viewed by some as suspect and a threat to normalcy.

Indeed, the principal hypothesis of the book, merely considered as if unsupported conjecture, is so important as to pull the rug out from under the entire set of modern preconceptions and prejudices about psychedelic drugs both popular and scientific. That hypothesis is, that the secret of the *kykeon*, the active ingredient of the potion which inspired the great philosophers, mathematicians, scientists, artists, architects and poets of ancient Greece who we recognise as the progenitors of Western civilisation, the sacrament which was revelation for these greatest of the greats was an analogue of LSD: A naturally-produced lysergic acid alkaloid whose effects were identical to those of that "greatest of all evils," that "diabolical drug which destroyed a generation," that "fly now, die later drug," that "greater threat to the nation than the Vietnam War," (to quote merely a few of the more tame epithets that have been hurled at the revered sacrament of Eleusis in its newly discovered form.)

In the original edition of *The Road to Eleusis* as in the new, we read three chapters in the story of Eleusis that rightfully should become three parallel chapters in the story of civilisation. In the first, Gordon Wasson describes the long and fascinating voyage of his ethnomycological investigations, first in Europe and Asia and later in Mexico with his discovery in the 1950s of continuing aboriginal shamanic use of sacred psychedelic mushrooms and other plant drugs. The road he followed finally led him to Eleusis and the surprising but inevitable conclusion which he draws about the long-ignored religion. The story might be considered an allegory of mankind's own ethnomycological investigations in which the sacred plants, discovered by our most ancient forebears, became a constant feature of civilisation culminating with the ultimate use of the most powerful and inspiring of those substances in Greece and the corresponding rise of Greek society from a bronze-age tribal society to the highest levels of civilisation.

In chapter two Albert Hofmann, discoverer of LSD and the active principles of the Mexican sacred mushrooms, and perhaps the world's foremost authority on the chemistry of psychedelic and hallucinogenic plant drugs, presents the result of his own investigation into the Eleusis hypothesis, and in his story we can recognise the highest traditions of our own civilisation in the scientific exploration of the perennial questions that have been the central quest for mankind since the dawn of consciousness. In a deceptively brief, always concise presentation, Dr. Hofmann tells the story of his long collaboration with Wasson, and the "Challenging Question" to which that road of friendship and seeking led: Given the

conclusion that the *kykeon* of Eleusis was a consciousness-altering sacrament, what were its active ingredients and how might they have been prepared by the Eleusinian Priests?

In chapter three Carl Ruck explores the mythology, art, and surviving writings from and about ancient Greece to fit together the assembled puzzle from Wasson's surmise, Hofmann's biochemical researches, and pieces of evidence long lost and long ignored. In the process he shows that the Eleusis hypothesis is far more than mere conjecture, but has attained the status of a theory supported by several lines of evidence and which reveals a wide spectrum of truth about the entire development of civilisation.

In the new edition of the book, and in homage to the life and work of the late Gordon Wasson, Carl Ruck and Albert Hofmann have contributed further chapters of their reflections and afterthoughts on the Eleusis theory, and have concluded that the passage of time has proven a positive test for it. And as a special surprise, the noted theologian Huston Smith, who has been writing on the connection between religion and psychedelic drugs for over thirty years, (Smith, 1964) has contributed a short commentary on the importance of the hypothesis for modern society. In recognising this importance we shall find a new "Road to Eleusis," for this Road is a two-way street: In our time it is the discovery by these three scholars of some of the most important information on the roots of our civilisation and the herbs which nourished them, yet Eleusis was also the triumphant end of another road, that of the evolution of human consciousness toward high civilisation. Thus, as Eleusis stood most significantly in the midst of Greek Civilisation so does it stand for the evolution of humankind and our modern discovery of the scenario of our own genesis.

5.

In our recent history, outrage from every quarter has certainly been forthcoming concerning drugs, and considering its source in age-old prejudice we can perhaps understand and even forgive outrage when it comes from public opinion and perception. But outrage is supposedly not among the tools of the scientific method, and neither is wilful ignorance. Modern myth insists that science is transparent and immune to cultural prejudice, that it pursues truth wherever it may lead, that it shirks not its duty to reveal even when religious or social convictions criticise and try to impede it. Where, therefore, is the appreciative recognition of this great Eleusinian discovery, the accolades from the scientific establishment, or even from the influential minority of researchers that Kuhn has shown to be the vanguard of scientific change and revolution? Where are the expressions of scientific astonishment that psychedelics should have played such a fundamental role in the early evolution of Western consciousness? The discovery of the role of psychedelics in mankind's evolution both social and psychological should be the equivalent of the discovery of relativity for physics, the discovery of DNA for biology, the introduction of antibiotics for medicine...

The proofs are there: the fact of long and intimate association with sacred drugs by the entire family of man (save post-Catholic-Inquisitional man), and here in this final volume of a long series of works by Wasson and a few other pioneers the research which irrevocably ties the most important foundations of our own civilisation to mind-changing drugs. Why is not this book acknowledged as one of the most important of our time, along with *The Origin of Species*, *The Meaning of Relativity*, and other works which define the entire direction of modern thought? There is a simple answer to my questions which, if not obvious to the reader by now, should be.

I urge scientists and all those whose future welfare and self-esteem depends on having not fallen prey to the prejudice and ignorance that devalues and even obliterates the work of a lifetime, all those who will wish to end their days with the idea that they helped to dispel superstition and not prolong it, to read of Wasson's long life-work in the uncovering of

facts that should astonish the world but have not, to read of the work of the brilliant Swiss chemist whose discoveries should have brought great prizes and universal recognition but have not, to read the facts revealed by an expert on Greek civilisation and religion who likewise should be sharing fame and fortune with the greats of our time; to read the case as presented in *The Road to Eleusis* and allow this revolutionary view to dissolve what is perhaps the most important and destructive prejudice and superstition that remains to be dispelled by modern man.

If 'drugs' have played the role we now see they must have, how can any rational person, or an organisation that more than any other represents the collective knowledge and momentum of modern civilisation, the United Nations, be promoting the conviction that a 'drug-free world' is a desirable and necessary, a *noble* goal? Brian Inglis, in his excellent survey of Prohibitions, *The Forbidden Game*, wrote, "Drugs will not be brought under control until society itself changes, enabling men to use them as primitive man did; welcoming the visions they provided not as fantasies, but as intimations of a different, and important, level of reality." Once the initial step is made, once the recognition of truth and necessity has let a thin shaft of light through the now precariously shuttered doors of our collective perception, these substances themselves will aid humanity to advance to its next phase. Considering the history of the 20th Century, 'advance' is not only desirable, but critically necessary if we are to do more than survive. Considering some of the worst of modern trends, even survival may be an optimistic hope.

No book, and no theory, of course, is perfect, and I have my quibbles with certain small aspects of the theory presented in *The Road to Eleusis*. Objections have been voiced that there remain problems with the proposed methods of preparation and use of the Eleusinian sacrament, and that no one has yet experimentally reproduced a potion with sufficient psychoactive properties. A recent article by Ivan Valencic, "Has the Mystery of the Eleusinian Mysteries Been Solved?" (Valencic, 1994), provides the best statement of current objections. But nowhere do we read of serious faults that can dismiss the larger view inherent in the entire body of scholarly study about psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs, nor can it be refuted that there has been a deplorable lack of scholarship over the years in ignoring the Eleusinian religion, nor can it be maintained that anything other than illegitimate morality insists that the *kykeon* must surely not have been a *drug*! In light of the now available evidence, such objections today put a writer or a scientist in not much better position than were the Inquisitors who wrote the statement I quoted at the start of this review. The inseparable and symbiotic relationship between 'drugs' and the entire family of man is in no more doubt than the fact that life has evolved. No amount of doctrine, convictions, hand-wringing, epithets, or 'drug-abuse hysteria' will change the facts. Let me assure the reader that the existing *legitimate* criticism of the Eleusis theory leaves wide open possibilities for variations on the theme which will surely get closer to the truth, and not disqualify the original insights. Gordon Wasson wrote,

As man emerged from his brutish past, thousands of years ago, there was a stage in the evolution of his awareness when the discovery of a mushroom (or was it a higher plant?) with miraculous properties was a revelation to him, a veritable detonator to his soul, arousing in him sentiments of awe and reverence, and gentleness and love, to the highest pitch of which mankind is capable, all those sentiments and virtues that mankind has ever since regarded as the highest attribute of his kind. It made him see what this perishing mortal eye cannot see. How right the Greeks were to hedge about this Mystery, this imbibing of the potion, with secrecy and surveillance! What today is resolved into a mere drug, a tryptamine or lysergic acid derivative, was for him a prodigious miracle, inspiring in him poetry and philosophy and religion. Perhaps with all our modern knowledge we do not need the divine mushrooms any more. Or do we need them more than ever? Some are shocked that the key

even to religion might be reduced to a mere drug. On the other hand, the drug is as mysterious as it ever was: “like the wind that comes we know not whence nor why.” Out of a mere drug comes the ineffable, comes ecstasy. It is not the only instance in the history of humankind where the lowly has given birth to the divine. Altering a sacred text, we would say that this paradox is a hard saying, yet one worthy of all men to be believed.

Evolution probably has favoured the emergence of a rather mediocre and utilitarian state of consciousness as the norm, a state of mind preoccupied mostly with those necessities that all animals must be concerned with or perish, a state we seem to be infatuated with today to the extent that we deny the importance, even the existence of higher states of consciousness. But a state of mind which is merely an attitude for survival produces much suffering and unfulfilled lives, for the intellectual horizon of humankind is, or should be far more universal than mere survival and reproduction. In response and protest, in the wake of today’s merely utilitarian consciousness have thus come ill-guided, isolated, insufficiently-informed and immature revolutionary movements which are attempting to follow again from the beginning the path of our ancient tribal ancestors, trying to find out the proper ways to use these drugs, and the proper conclusions to draw about the experiences they produce. In view of the long Road to Eleusis that we once followed, it is not surprising that today’s revolutionary movements have largely failed to find the wisdom sought, not least because they have been persecuted and ostracised, as once were even the remnants of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Concerned with survival, power, coping, reproducing, competition to the exclusion of co-operation, xenophobia, the ‘normal’ state of mind leads to a general situation in which the truly creative mind is the freak, the outcast. Yes, we do need these divine gifts more than ever, and we need to find ways of making our collective outlook and institutions *approve and contribute to* the quest now being explored only ineffectively by those ‘ill-guided movements’. We need the gift that Eleusis provided for nearly two thousand years to those of sincere intention, of sound mind, the gift which opens us to “all those sentiments and virtues that mankind has ever since regarded as the highest attribute of his kind.” If this be heresy and I a madman, surely hell is already our collective fate.

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