

Inner Paths to Outer Space
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The sacred voyage

Beyond Science Fiction?

Slawek Wojtowicz

DO WE LIVE IN A DREAM WORLD?

How many of us realize that a wide spectrum of uniquely human activities has its roots in altered states of consciousness? Origins of all religions, art (going all the way back to cave paintings created thirty thousand to forty thousand years ago), spiritual and shamanic healing, and even the creation of civilization itself can be traced back to altered-state-of-consciousness experiences. Even the history of science gives us plenty of examples of inspiration that come from beyond consensus reality.

One well-known instance is the story of the organic molecule known as benzene. The formula of benzene (C_6H_6) mystified scientists who could not figure out its structure. German chemist Friedrich August von Kekulé, who laid the groundwork for the modern structural theory in organic chemistry, came up with a solution that provided a satisfactory explanation. In 1861, after years of studying carbon bonding, benzene, and related organic molecules, he had a dream of whirling snakes in which he saw one of the snakes seizing its own tail. He woke up with a start. He'd experienced the "Eureka!"

moment that gave him the structure of benzene—which is made up of a ring of carbon atoms. In 1929 the ringlike nature of benzene was confirmed by the eminent crystallographer Kathleen Lonsdale. Another more recent story is that of Francis Crick, who reportedly came up with the double-helix structure of DNA—the most significant biological discovery of the twentieth century—while under the influence of LSD. That discovery won him the Nobel Prize (shared with James Watson).

By now it should be clear that psychedelics can produce an astounding variety of experiences—from meetings with aliens and time travel to journeys into the spirit world and mystical revelation. Yet is there an internally consistent explanation that can make sense of these experiences? Interestingly, both mystical religions and modern quantum physics seem to agree concerning the true nature of reality: Time and space are just constructs of human consciousness created by our minds. The reality we perceive as solid and independent doesn't really exist on its own; it is simply a projection emanating from our minds. Some call it *Maya*, a dream, an illusion, and others describe it as a full-immersion movie that's better than the one that could be experienced on a holodeck in *Star Trek*.

Is it possible that we live in a dream world or, to use more modern terminology, in a very sophisticated virtual reality simulation? As Rick Strassman has hypothesized here, DMT may be the molecule that is responsible for maintaining the illusion in which we live. Those who are science-fiction fans won't be shocked by this supposition. Similar concepts have been explored thoroughly in science-fiction novels and in movies such as *The Matrix*, *Waking Life*, and *eXistenZ*.² Since we are the source of the dream, it appears so real and familiar to us that we cannot even tell that it's just a dream.

This is an idea that many of us may have a great deal of difficulty accepting. It is the strange dynamic between the relative and the absolute that is perhaps one of the ways DMT and similar endogenous molecules play a role in our lives. At the deepest, spiritual level of

awareness, this reality is some sort of weird projection. Yet where most of us are most of the time—even the most enlightened among us—is the relative everyday level that we need to learn to negotiate as skillfully as possible.

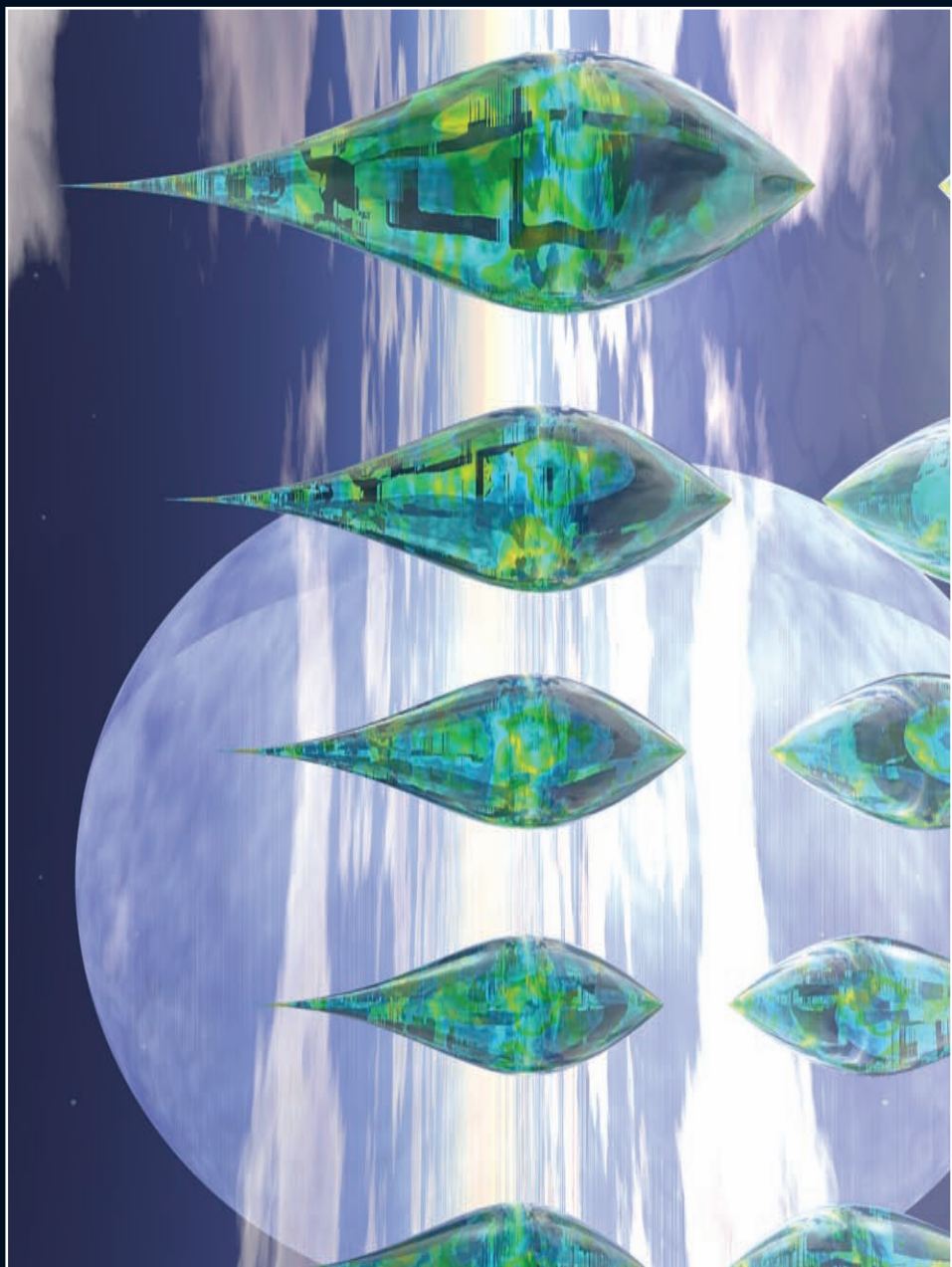
The biggest illusion of all is that we appear to be separate, individual beings. Mystics across all religions agree that there is only one actor playing all the parts in this virtual reality movie. That actor is God, the same one who is responsible for the creation of our universe. He is you and me as well as all other sentient beings. The mind of the Divine forms the essence of our own mind. Therefore, when we learn how to unite with the Source, we will know how to reach across time and space—anywhere in the universe—simply by looking deep within.

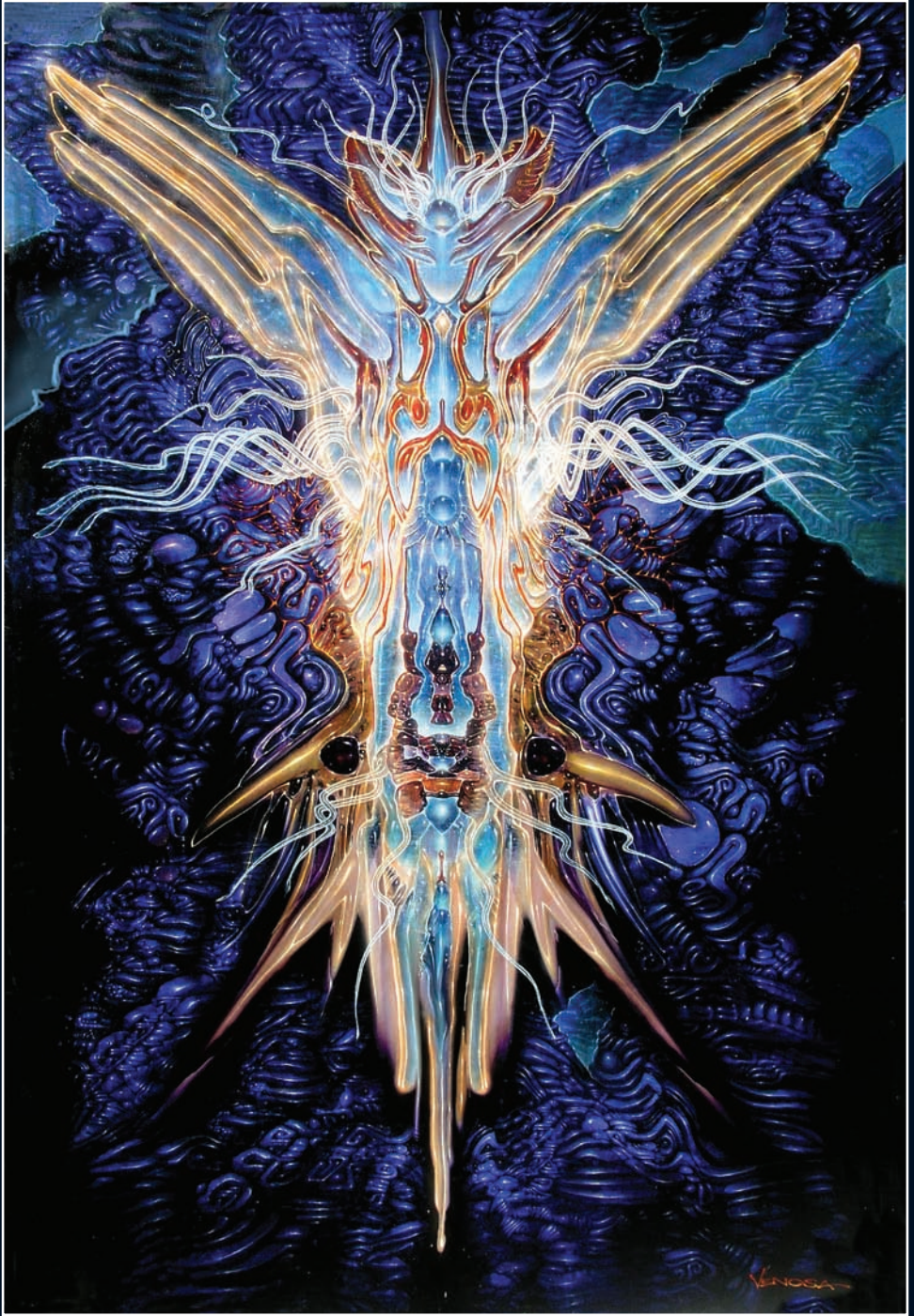
Each of us being able to open the doors in our mind that lead to the entire universe is a much more incredible and exciting notion than any science-fiction story! So how do we do this? Most of those who use psychedelics sporadically don't learn how to control access to these gateways: lacking the training and proper preparation, they stumble through their psychedelic experiences and don't know how to return to a particular location they visited once before. Notable exceptions include shamans and yogis. Their specialty is exploration of other realities. They learn how to access and travel in these regions safely; they make maps of alien realms and pass this knowledge to apprentices, from generation to generation.

Becoming a shaman requires first awakening from the dream in which we all are immersed. But what exactly does it mean to be *awake*? Do we really have to take the red pill, like Neo in *The Matrix*, to awaken and learn what's real and what's not?

Mystical religions tell us that the root of all unhappiness and suffering is our ignorance concerning the nature of reality. We suffer because we chase after certain illusions (such as sex, money, fame, and power), and we are afraid of others (death is a good example!) because we think they are real. The prerequisite for awakening is a personal

experience of the true nature of reality—it is not enough to hear or read about it or believe that we live in a dream. Psychedelics can provide exactly that: firsthand experience of other otherwise unseen realities. It is essential to experience these firsthand, but, to awaken truly, we must transcend ourselves—to become more than our sense of a separate self. In fact, we all are on a spiritual path, even if some of us don't yet realize it.





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