

Pilgrimage to the Light?

*On the Threshold of a Dream: Sacred Plants,
Passionate Dedication to Ideals and Healing*

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Introduction

The honor of being here touches me deeply. I am so happy to be able to share with you my perspectives on the movement. The desire to incorporate ancient healing practices with sacred plants into modern medicine has been a central passion of my career as a clinician and psychedelic researcher for over forty years. During that time Mexico has offered me friendship, collegiality, adventure and wonder. At times I have felt when visiting first Nations in Mexico like I was stepping back into ancient times. The wonder and honor of knowing Maria Sabina, Don Ricardo, Niuweme and other healers and shamans has transformed my outlook on the practice of psychedelic medicine.

I am happy to say that the two remarkable men I will discuss with you today are from Latin America. This is important as the conquest came from Europe. And is important to me because I live in countries that disparage Latin American people in general and specifically people of color.

Mexico has been blessed with a wide variety of psychedelic plants and ancient traditions for their use in healing. In recent times Mexico was also blessed with a true pioneer, a man who asked native people how they used sacred plants. He not only asked the questions but also listened to what they said and took it seriously enough to follow some of their advice. Psychotherapy with this doctor, whose name I will keep a mystery for now, became a pilgrimage of the spirit searching for meaning, truly a journey to God. His treatment transcended the pathological and sailed dramatically into the land of the spirit. This is especially important, for so many of the ailments of modern civilization are rooted in the spiritual vacuum in which we live.

Human beings are on a meaning seeking and meaning making journey through existence. As individuals we feel best when we are in touch with our reason for being, our story, our purpose, our unique individual nature and can see clearly a meaningful path through our life.

It is remarkable that these native people from a wide variety of nations within Mexico were willing to share precious keys that open the door to meaning and

belonging, to spirit and wonder. The people offering this forgotten wisdom had been themselves conquered by invaders from Europe. My psychotherapy mentors held that the effects of trauma persist up to seven generations after the original insult! Trauma injures the capacity to weave meaning into our lives, it decontextualizes us, injects a random or meaningless, capricious or diabolical element into our consciousness. In the course of losing their ability to make meaning the individual usually prepares to die in hopelessness and in so doing surrenders the essential capacity that brings hope to our experience.

I believe that such trauma lies at the core of addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder and some depressions. Used wisely sacred plants and psychedelic drugs can offer an opportunity for a deeply remedial healing experience, one that repairs despair with hope and annihilates hopelessness with the most deeply meaningful experiences possible.

We live in a world with too much environmental stress, collapsing ecosystems, diminishing cultural diversity, loss of languages and ways of being, and the dangerous creation of a global monoculture. At this point in history it is essential for us to pursue an awareness and openness to prior successful adaptations. In order to gain the perspective necessary to adopt new treatments for trauma we need first to regress, to back up, to carefully examine the organization of cultures and societies that are able to integrate the effects, insights and experiences of sacred plants. Hunting and gathering cultures can be characterized as primitive or we can realize that they are actually quite sophisticated and elegant in their adaptation to the environment. Their adaptation is more complete than our own. The consequences of our poor adaptation are catching up with us. The pressures of expanding populations threaten humanity. It is as though our phenomenal neurological gift, the three-pound universe we carry between our ears, were not enough to guide us properly, we face the same end story as a colony of bacteria that blindly consumes all available resources on a petri dish until there is a collapse.

Carlos Castaneda a Consummate Shamanic Accomplishment

In the spirit of regression in service of the ego, the fact that sometimes returning to the past is the best prelude to progress. Let's turn back to the late 1960s. An unknown graduate student at UCLA published a remarkable little book, *Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of knowledge*. Over the years that followed Carlos Castaneda became a household word in North America. To me

he always insisted that his name was pronounced and spelled Castaneda not Castañeda. Fame and fortune were followed by academic attack and denouncement. The details of sacred plant use in Carlos's books were inaccurate at best. Perhaps the Yaqui Indian sorcerer/shaman Don Juan was a figment of the imagination. Amidst cries of academic fraud, Castaneda's books persisted on the bestseller lists; his bank accounts grew past the bursting point. This phenomenal success was all the more remarkable because with one notable exception, for Time magazine, Carlos Castaneda did not give interviews to the press, did not permit portraits, did not make television appearances, and over all laughed at the antics of journalists and influence peddlers who pretended to know what is going on in the world.

Attempts to bury the popularity of Carlos Castaneda and his books remain unsuccessful to this day. We can focus, along with disgruntled academics, and the son of Cecil B. DeMille, the renowned American director of films like "The Ten Commandments", on the flawed details of brilliant literary accounts that skillfully depict encounters with new realities and unknown worldviews. But, whether Don Juan exists or not is after all not the point. In focusing on errors and guessing at the location and true tribal identity of the sage in Castaneda's accounts we ignore Carlos' consummate shamanic act. In his books he addressed the children of those who won World War II and struggled with Korea. He addressed young men who were being asked to give their lives in a meaningless war in Southeast Asia. He captivated the imagination of a generation that grew up watching cowboys and Indians in movies and television. He showed them that the Lone Ranger's sidekick Tonto might not be so tonto (stupid in Spanish). He took the well-established sense of cultural superiority, the illusion of progress and the notion that material plenty would address all human ills and turned them on their ear. Through his captivating portrayals of dialogues with Don Juan he craftily suggested that this old Yaqui gentleman was onto something, that he knew something about how to live a meaningful life, that he knew something about the inner struggles of being a human being, he intimated that overlooked shamanic wisdom could only be had if one gained membership in another culture. In these accounts Carlos himself appears an utter fool and thus portrays for us the foibles of a person confronting an entirely new and different worldview. What is more important yet he created a worldwide hunger to know these secrets in an entire generation!

In Don Juan's own terms Carlos shifted our assemblage point, the place in our mind where we assemble reality, he completely shifted his readers out of a semi-conscious, superior and culturally self-centered stance. A view that native people are helplessly primitive, dimwitted, inadequate, violent not quite human morons was transformed into a sense of mystery, curiosity and wonder towards folks who just might have the secret of how to live a life of meaning and profound purpose. Maybe those Indians knew something after all! After reading Castaneda's accounts many of us pursued careers in anthropology, in psychology, in medicine, in literature; always unconsciously in pursuit of this hidden knowledge held by romantic, inaccessible Amerindians. Mexico was invaded by hippies looking for Don Juan, searching for the Mazatecs, the Huichols and the Tarahumara, trying to find the lost, or not yet found, meaning of their lives. Later, the search spread to South America. Today, Ayahuasca is practically a household word in the United States and Canada. The effects of the hunger and passion elicited by Castaneda have been mixed. Ethno-tourism has become a major industry and is undermining the very societies it seeks to appreciate.

Carlos Castaneda, perhaps spun or frightened by his sudden fame, fortune and notoriety, took his teaching underground. He formed a cultish group of followers with absolute loyalty to him. When he died 16 years ago he was the Howard Hughes of the New Age, a reclusive multimillionaire, no longer the focus of constant public interest and adulation. As to Castaneda's disregard for journalists and the press, on June 19th, 1988, the Los Angeles Times published the most tentative of obituaries. "Carlos Castaneda... apparently died *two months ago*¹ in the same way that he lived: quietly, secretly, mysteriously."

Can you imagine a greater shamanic success than completely rending asunder the blind conquest of native peoples and restoring a sense of wonder and esteem for their nobility, botanical, philosophical and pharmacological knowledge in its place? To transform the children of the conquerors into obsequious seekers of wisdom was a stroke of true mastery. A blow for renewed cross-cultural respect.

The next figure from the past I would like to introduce was a Mexican national; a man whose life's work has been buried in controversy. He was a giant of

¹ Emphasis by the author.

innovation in psychotherapy and psychopharmacology. He was a physician and a high order public health official and executive in the Mexican ISSSTE². He was a man with the humbleness and openness to ask native people how they viewed and used their sacred plants. He not only asked this question, he took their answers seriously, even when he was uncertain of the reasons behind principles, like holding mushroom *veladas* at night rather than in the daytime. He chose to respect centuries of ritual use and usually opted for tradition over convenience. He took what he learned from native healers and joined it with his training as a Western psychoanalyst in the tradition of Eric Fromm. Through these wide-ranging sources of inspiration and his unique awareness as a public health doctor he forged a group psychotherapy process that could effectively address the longing for meaning and connection that is characteristic of city dwelling humanity today.

Salvador Roquet

Salvador Roquet Pérez, M.D., M.P.H., was a pioneering Mexican psychiatrist/psychoanalyst who explored the use of psychedelic drugs and plants as adjuncts to group psychotherapy with the focus of transforming the personality and character of his patients. He practiced variations on his unique style of psychotherapy from the late 1960s until his death in 1995.

In 1973 when Dr. Roquet arrived at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center where I was working as a research psychotherapist, we immediately held a meeting to orient him to our facility and acquaint him to our clinical approach. We wanted to show him our state of the art Psychedelic Therapy technique. This involved creating the safest most home-like atmosphere possible, unthreatening, peaceful and kind, a completely supportive environment within which to administer a psychedelic drug. Our clinical emphasis was on encouraging our patient/subject to let go into whatever experience arose in the drug induced altered state. Since our patients were utterly safe, unthreatened in the therapy milieu and relationship, they were conveyed toward transcendence with the aide of carefully selected music (Bonny and Pahnke 1972). Art was just beginning to be used as well, to facilitate integration (Kellogg, Mac Rae et al. 1977). We felt that our approach enhanced the possibility of a peak or a mystical experience! It was also likely that patient/subjects might experience

² Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado, Institute of Social Services and Safety for the Workers of the State.

events that could repair emotional wounding from past life trauma. In our most advanced study we were involved with cleaning out early emotional conflicts and difficulty using one to three, sometimes up to five drug experiences and then aiming for a mystical experience to reintegrate the personality. We were working with three drugs, LSD and DPT³ and MDA, as adjuncts to psychotherapy. Our final goal was an integrative and healing mystical experience for our patients and subjects.

We were working with inpatient alcoholics, professionals in training, outpatient neurotics and helping terminal cancer patients to die well. (Pahnke 1963, Pahnke and Richards 1966, Kurland, Pahnke et al. 1968, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1969, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1969, Tjio, Pahnke et al. 1969, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1970, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1970, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1970, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1970, Grof, Pahnke et al. 1971, Kurland, Pahnke et al. 1971, Kurland, Savage et al. 1971, Pahnke, Kurland et al. 1971, Bonny and Pahnke 1972, Yensen 1975 & 1976).

I had the honor to simultaneously translate the first oral presentations of Roquet's work for the staff of the MPRC since he spoke only Spanish.

Roquet's Method of Working with Psychedelics

It is important for you to understand the remarkable approach that Roquet used with psychedelics, so that you can appreciate the contrast with accepted practice.

Whereas our group in Maryland was focused on scientifically establishing the effectiveness of the experimental administration of various psychedelic drugs in psychotherapy, Roquet freely combined naturalistic research and experimentation and consultation with shamanic practitioners. He immediately applied his insights to an unrestricted psychedelic psychotherapy practice. He told us he had a blanket permission to use psychedelics that was issued through his political connections with the attorney general's office of the federal government of Mexico.

Roquet developed an involved multi-level poly therapy. He worked with both individual sessions and group sessions and utilized a wide variety of

³ Dipropyltryptamine had a variable duration of action, approximately one hour in low doses (psycholytic doses) and four to six hours in higher doses (psychedelic doses).

psychoactive drugs and plants. Whereas our work was methodical and linear, he seemed to be doing everything at once!

Dr. Roquet practiced a group therapy he called psychosynthesis⁴, in groups that ranged from ten to twenty-eight patients. It was his claim that through this process he synthesized what most analysts would analyze. He envisioned his therapy as a round-trip out of normal consciousness into the world of the madman and the mystic and back to normal. He used Datura, a plant delirogen, in this approach and produced a toxic psychosis in the course of a multi-session, psychedelic, transpersonally oriented therapy. Mystical experiences were the *sine qua non* of successful treatment in a sensory overload setting.

Each of his groups was a carefully selected balance, heterogeneous not only with respect to age and sex but also length of time in treatment. Individual patients would be administered selected psychoactive medications during the session. Patients would receive different medicines whatever psychoactive plant or medicine was prescribed by Roquet, from a wide variety of possibilities. With different patients receiving different medicines.

The group sessions in psychosynthesis took place at night, mirroring shamanic practice in Mexico. Before the psychoactive session itself, the participants met in a large room for a leaderless group discussion. This allowed each patient the opportunity to meet new members and review his or her expectations, fears, and previous experiences with the group. An important function of the pre-drug meeting was to allow projections and transferences to take place between group members. There was a self-organizing quality to this therapy prelude, one that smoothly introduced a new patient to the process through descriptions from veterans. The deep candor and openness of these groups set the tone for what would ensue.

The pre-drug meeting lasted about two hours. The group then entered the treatment environment, a large room decorated with an array of paintings and posters selected for their evocative quality. Toward the rear of the room there was a large table with a variety of audiovisual equipment. In the main part of the room, mattresses were arranged along each wall. The central part of the room was kept clear so that patients could walk freely if they wished.

⁴ Although psychosynthesis is better known as an approach to transpersonal psychotherapy pioneered by Roberto Assagioli in Italy, Roquet's approach was independently developed and is an absolutely unique style of therapy the only commonality is the name.

As soon as all the patients entered the room and settled into their spots, the sensory overload would begin. The overload used slides, movies, two stereo sound systems, and colored floodlights that flashed intermittently. The elements included in the slides and films were as varied as possible. Within what seemed a confusing barrage of unrelated images and sounds there would be a main theme. Among the themes Roquet found useful were: death, birth, sexuality, religion, and childhood. Each evening's stimuli were assembled so that in addition to the main theme of the evening there were slides of particular importance for each client: scenes from childhood, family pictures etc. These pictures, when projected, would be accompanied by music of importance for that particular patient. During the overload show a specially chosen full-length feature film with an emotionally evocative plot was also projected⁵. The two stereo sound systems were used with a wide variety of music from all over the world combined with sound effects in order to modulate the depth and intensity of the group's emotional reactions. When maximum stimulation was desired a chaotic effect could be achieved by playing both stereo systems at the same time at high volume with different records.

After approximately fifteen minutes of moderately intense sensory stimuli the psychedelic substances were administered. The substances used as therapeutic adjuncts were quite varied, including the seeds of two types of Morning Glory, *Rivea corymbosa* and *Ipomea violacea*. The outer coat on these seeds has an emetic effect. The vomiting, combined with a mild degree of psychedelic action, can facilitate the disruption of character armor, particularly armoring against sadness, grief and involuntary sobbing. This in turn assisted the recovery of early childhood memories. The complex reliving of childhood trauma greatly enhanced the therapeutic alliance and increased trust in the ongoing therapy process.

In subsequent sessions any of a variety of psilocybin containing mushrooms⁶ could be administered. Then after about a month, *Lophophora Williamsii* (the Peyote cactus) would be used to deepen the recollective-analytic process in the next session. The deepening sequence of experiences would uncover memories related to patient's symptoms. This would strengthen the therapeutic alliance he formed with the patient to help them resolve their conflicts.

⁵ For instance *The Bird Man of Alcatraz* was one of the films used on occasion, for its dramatic portrayal of an Oedipal theme concerning the protagonist's relationship with his mother.

⁶ Psilocybe Mexicana, Psilocybe Mazatecorum, Psilocybe cubensis for example.

Finally *Datura ceratocaula* (an anticholinergic delirogen with hyoscyamine, atropine and scopolamine it's active ingredients) and subsequently Ketamine hydrochloride (Ketalar®) would be introduced as the last part of a repeating sequence of psychoactive adjuncts. Ketamine was used in three serial intramuscular administrations.

Roquet through discussions with an anesthesiologist colleague had discovered that Ketamine in sub-anesthetic doses produced profound changes in psychological functioning that could be helpful in his psychotherapy process. One of the important specific ways that Ketamine was used was to facilitate reintegration of *Datura* experiences. Ketamine was also used, in a triplet of administrations over the 24 hours of a session, as a major psychedelic in its own right without any other plant or drug.

The sensory overload portion of the drug session lasted for about six hours. After this, pictures from each patient's chart were passed out. Bibliotherapy, psychodrama and other techniques would be blended into this psychotherapy marathon. Passages from philosophers might be read by Roquet and tape recordings of emotional moments from patients' previous sessions might be played back. This reflective phase was conducted without sensory overload or music. Patients might be given letters they had written to important figures in their life to read aloud for the group. Other participants might read from their descriptions of previous sessions or relevant passages from literature. This phase lasted two to three hours ending around sunrise. At the end of this phase all participants and the therapist would sleep or rest for about an hour.

After the rest, the integrative phase would begin. This session lasted from four to twelve hours. Each patient would discuss his or her experience with the group. Greater abreaction and more intense catharsis than occurred during the pharmacological drug peak were characteristic of this phase. During this session the personality of each participant was reintegrated around insights gained during the drug session. Members of the patient's family could visit at this time as the therapeutic milieu expanded toward the everyday world. The tone of the session was confrontational, with the therapist presenting patients with on-going problems in their life situation. The staff was audiotaping every session for documentary purposes and for possible use in future sessions.

The course of therapy consisted of ten to fifteen drug sessions although as many as twenty might be necessary for less responsive individuals. The patient population consisted mostly of neurotic outpatients, though antisocial

personality disorders, character neuroses, drug abuse and even schizophrenia were treated successfully on occasion.

The contrast of methods and approaches was clearly evident. At MPRC we occupied a multi-million dollar facility and conducted fairly linear clinical studies in a very focused manner according to rigorous scientific method. Suddenly we were confronted with Dr. Roquet, a single clinician, doing a much more complex treatment in an immediately relevant therapy⁷ using innovative techniques we had never heard of before. He appeared to be breaking many of the rules established for successful psychedelic therapy and yet he was reporting and illustrating remarkable results. The whole idea that the staff wore white coats in a psychosynthesis session seemed directly at odds with our home-like atmosphere where therapist and nurse wore informal street attire.

There was shock, denial, and disbelief on the part of many researchers at the MPRC. We had never heard of such procedures. We had never heard of Ketamine. Dr. Roquet showed artwork created by his patients during and after the therapy process. Some of these folks were professional artists of enormous skill and accomplishment. Slides of these world-class pictures represented all aspects of the psychedelic mindscape, from mystical resolution of major life conflicts, to provocative cartoons illustrating sexual conflicts. I recall one multi-layered oil painting that depicted spiral galaxies with a blissful, veiled, gossamer embryo radiating from white light that shined through a huge wave crashing on the shore. The art was stunning and clearly represented deep emotional and transpersonal experiences as well as the remarkable skill and acumen of the artists!

Roquet confronted us, a lone clinician heading up a non-profit institute with a multifaceted approach to effectively address human suffering. At his Institute there was also a Summerhill⁸ inspired primary school for children. There was another school that taught how to be an effective parent, as well as the psychiatry clinic that, in effect, taught how to live a loving and full life.

Roquet seemed larger than life, resembling some of his heroes. He was a combination of Albert Schweitzer, Nikos Katantzakis and Mother Theresa.

⁷ Roquet had around 300 patients engaged in his process at any given time.

⁸ **Summerhill School** is an independent British boarding school that was founded in 1921 by [Alexander Sutherland Neill](#) in the belief that the school should be made to fit the child, rather than the other way around.

His wild exploits, ranged from ethically questionable participation in psychedelic interrogation as favors for the Federal Police, to cooperating with a young revolutionary named Mario Falcon by offering him a therapeutic psychedelic experience. That session convinced Falcon to surrender, in the midst of his violent occupation of the University of Mexico UNAM, and eventually to immigrate to Chile and become an artist.

Ketamine

That evening the head of our department joined me and another young graduate student to experience the effects of Ketamine firsthand. As far as we knew, at that time, we were the first in the USA to have the experience of Ketamine intentionally administered as a psychedelic drug rather than an anesthetic.

I was concerned as Roquet injected our chief with this, until now unknown psychedelic drug. Usually poised and thoughtful, almost contemplative, our leader started blithering. He made repeated, high-pitched, staccato sounds, rather like stuttering, except the utterances were complete gibberish. One of the most brilliant individuals I ever met was suddenly behaving rather like the village idiot! My thoughts became paranoid, "Is this guy trying to hurt us? What's happening here?" And just then, Roquet gave me an injection! Within three minutes it felt like a cosmic wringer washer had painlessly caught my little finger. With increasing speed I was wrung out of my body and out of my paranoid thoughts. I was melted through the floor of the session room! Actually I melted out of the room and into the universe, where I became a spiral arm in a galaxy. Then, I slowly came back to the room. These transformations were simply stunning, so much more than anything I'd ever experienced. And at the same time, they were so matter-of-fact, because the effects of Ketamine were totally compelling. The drug's effects overwhelmed me. It was not polite... it didn't ask: "Would you like to go this way?" but rather it was: "Here we go!" Out and back in about an hour.

Ketamine has a quality that might best be conveyed by personifying it, as though the effects of Ketamine are saying, "Take my hand and gently but firmly let's go out of your body." The journey is gentle, but absolutely definite, there is no way to resist and in fact resistance is not usually a thought. Now, free of corporeal restraints and identifications, there is apparently no limit to where the mind may wander! "You *are* going to do this!" Through this process patients in Roquet's psychosynthesis would begin their journey of

understanding. The Ketamine session would follow a Datura-provoked toxic psychosis in a prior session (a month earlier). I will carry the personification into the inner dialogue of the patient, “So *that* was the whole process! *That* is what the hallucination was referring to, *that* is why life was so frightening.” Having lost any semblance of sanity through the effects of Datura, now this other substance would begin a process of confrontation, emotionally cleansing release and reintegration into a more insightful and loving sense of self.

Roquet used Ketamine to foster a synthesis of the raw elements that arose in the Datura session. He likened the effects of the Datura to a steam shovel. This shovel dug through the mind rather than the earth. It dredged up repressed conflicts from the unconscious. The repressed material was experienced in psychotic hallucinatory episodes. There would be huge amounts of fear and anxiety when the patient realized that they had been completely out of control, totally insane under the effects of the Datura! After a month of anguish or when the state was absolutely unbearable, Ketamine was given. The Ketamine journey fostered insight that the chaotic Datura experience was *not simply crazy*. The drug effects said, “No postponing this one, let’s have a look at it right now! You, come with me!” The process with Ketamine could also take on a symbolic quality, but usually more refined than the strange journey with Datura, one more likely to flow toward a conclusion. With sufficient resolution of some of their conflicts a patient could survive to the next psychedelic session without overwhelming anxiety or depression⁹. The task of further insight and integration would then continue with a series of monthly sessions with classical psychedelics (mescaline from Peyote, LSD, psilocybin mushrooms and Morning Glory seeds (amides of lysergic acid)).

Today psychiatry is taking baby steps toward exploring the frontiers that Roquet freely explored clinically. Ketamine has recently been discovered to have instant anti-depressant effects. Of this discovery, in total ignorance of Roquet’s pioneering and much more sophisticated use, Ketamine has been described as a

⁹ As I introduced Salvador Roquet to Richard Evans Schultes, the intrepid Harvard botanist who documented so many psychedelic plants in the Amazon during WWII. When I mentioned the use of morning glories and Datura Schultes was immediately animated and enthused in his response, “What a wonderful idea! Perhaps when the Aztecs referred to the Ololiuqui (*Rivea corymbosa*) as the sister of Datura they were referring to more than a floral resemblance. He found it fascinating that their implication could be they should be kept or used together. He also mentioned that Datura is a common admixture to Ayahuasca prepared by shamans in the Amazon.

breakthrough drug. The most important advance in psychopharmacology in fifty years! Imagine that Roquet was working in a complex therapy with this drug in 1967!

The Fall from Grace — Prison and Its Consequences

Therapy with Roquet was a pilgrimage to God! Robert S. Hartman the well-known philosopher and axiologist from UNAM, described the work at Roquet's Institute as meaning making of the highest intrinsic order.

Roquet's benefactor at the Department of Justice (Procuraduria), the origin of his "blanket" permission, had presidential ambitions in the forthcoming election. Soon the winds of fate changed direction. Roquet knew it was coming and thought he accepted his fate.

"24 hours in hell" was the headline that led to Roquet's arrest. The article appeared in the popular magazine *Tiempo*. It was part of a carefully orchestrated press blitz designed to discredit him and portray his work in the most outrageous way. The journalist was so terrified in his session that he locked himself in the bathroom the entire time!

Roquet was interrogated in the room that he had interrogated others in. He knew of the existence and the location of the two-way glass but that made the dismantling of his identity perhaps more brutal. He was broken completely!

They imprisoned him in a place called *Lecumberri*, the inescapable prison. Its history is somehow fitting for a country of such passion and struggle, as is Mexico. The sprawling building was at once magnificent and humiliating, it represented the power of the state to annihilate the gift of freedom that is life, to incarcerate those who would dare to challenge the ultimate authority and reign of the great static archetype of government. This palace turned penitentiary had an illustrious list of unwilling tenants that included the great revolutionary Pancho Villa, the impassioned muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros. Jaime Ramón Mercader del Río Hernández, murderer of Leon Trotsky had lingered there after his famous act of assassination. Only the prominent revolutionary general, Pancho Villa had ever escaped the clutches of this enslaving dungeon alive. No wonder they called it *The Black Palace of Lecumberri!* The powerful tendrils of royalist domination contained those yearning revolutionary urges to liberation more effectively that day than they did in the time of Pancho Villa.

The *federales* burst into the institute expecting to catch the doctor dispensing the prohibited elixirs of freedom, the condemned sacred plants, sacraments to the first people in this land. When the conquering forces arrived in the New World fresh from the Spanish Inquisition full of travail from the ultimate injustice of religious domination and intolerance, they brought with them the mysterious un-healing evil wounds of trauma. There was no tolerance for direct experience of the sacred. They preferred symbols of spirit mediated through corrupt priests deeply involved with power and royalty. That first horse of the Apocalypse, who initially waded ashore in the New World disguised as a Conquistador, now arrived in the form of a *Federale*, policeman of the Federal District of Mexico.

Roquet and I shared a vital wound throughout our lives, both of us were abandoned by our fathers at birth. We danced a transferential tango in our emotional relationship. I was both his father and his son and he mine. I was his LSD guide in training sessions at the Maryland Center; he was mine in sessions when I visited him in Mexico. We felt admired, loved, acknowledged and abandoned by each other throughout 22 years of more than collegial friendship.

At the time of his imprisonment I was only 23 years old and a Ph.D. candidate, but *I had to set him free!* His defense team had told me that the key to success was humiliation of those who condemned him. Letters from world famous people, powerful icons from abroad, would immeasurably aide his case. I raced to Mexico City to testify before the House of Deputies and the Supreme Court. I brought with me two psychiatrists, Kenneth Godfrey and James Davis. Dr. Godfrey was a well-established psychedelic researcher at the Veterans Administration Hospitals, and he bore a letter of support from perhaps the most illustrious psychiatrist in the USA. Dr. Karl Menninger was co-founder of the famous Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. Dr. Davis was co-founder of the fledgling Davis Psychiatric Clinic in Indianapolis, Indiana. He came to describe how impressed he and his U.S. Air Force-trained psychiatrist brother Larry were with Roquet's therapy process. Dr. Walter Houston Clark, psychologist of religion, also joined us in the struggle to liberate this pioneer of psychedelic medicine from the clutches of denouncing political expediency. The administration of my own Maryland Psychiatric Research Center was not willing to risk the political consequences of supporting Roquet against the gathering forces of the great wave of prohibition even though he was one of our LSD professional training program participants.

A U.S. born lawyer practicing in Mexico City, told me that the CIA had approached Roquet about "treating" a few special patients for them. If he would turn his art once again to interrogation, as he had been willing to do for the Mexican government at one point, the U.S. spy agency would establish a clinic where he could practice as freely in the U.S. as he had in Mexico. He turned them down and they began fueling the process that led to his arrest and imprisonment as a political football in the forthcoming presidential election.

Roquet was charismatic in his actions, commanding and compelling in his therapy. Carlos Castaneda was charismatic and compelling in his writing. The sticking point for both was charisma, the illusive and compelling quality that completely seduces followers. The charm that completely seduces the place in each of us that wants to be led by a superior individual. A two edged sword, Charisma can be a tremendously positive quality. Certainly these two men would not have occupied the place they occupy in history were it not for their charismatic qualities. Yet in a way the undoing of each of them was precipitated by their charisma, by their compelling popularity with some, and by the jealousy that that engendered in others.

The Challenge of Moving Forward

In order to move this field forward we need remarkable leadership, a measured charisma, one that engages and inspires without exciting too much jealousy. Perhaps more dangerous than jealousy is the inherent fact that sacred plants and psychedelic drugs allow for experiences and insights that peer into repressive structures like civilization itself. These insights can lead to rebellion. Witness the opposition to the Vietnam War, the "hell no we won't go" of an entire generation exposed to the effects of psychedelic drugs in a mass experiment with no controls. The legislative response to this threat toward the military industrial complex was something that knocked the whole field silly. It thrust into the hands of ill-prepared politicians, legislators and lawyers a fearful demand for control over demon drugs that were destroying the nation's youth. The hastily drafted prohibitions ignored scientific knowledge and the recommendations of researchers in the field. This led one of the great nations of the latter half of the 20th century to initiate a poorly considered prohibitionist movement that quickly evolved into an anti-intellectual war on drugs. Initiated in the country with a drugstore on every corner, this has really been a war on people of color and of the middle class, a war on knowledge, a war against insight, and a war of imperialism. Here in Mexico it is clear the

tragic human cost of the war on drugs. But the cost of prohibition was clear in the United States from the onset. All one had to do was observe what happened when government attempted to prohibit alcohol. It was clear from the outset what the consequence of prohibition would be, crime and corruption, yet fear and jealousy drove scandal sensitive legislators to prohibit rather than to regulate. I am grateful that this era appears to be coming to a close. It cannot end soon enough.

Leadership Challenges as the Drug War Ends

As the era of repression shifts there is a vacuum of leadership. Will there be a spokesperson that can wear the hero's hat without falling into grandiosity and abuse of power? We cannot move the field forward without dynamic leadership and yet we must have leadership that does not endanger the field. I don't have the answer to my own question. Perhaps the answer can only be found in doing and being. At this point you are the one's moving the field forward. Beware, be humble, and be happy!

Integrity is an essential quality for this kind of leader. Honesty, integrity, humility openness, compassion, intellectual ability, sensitivity, perseverance, a sense of adventure, a discerning mind with a clear and strategic understanding of the opposition are all essential qualities. All of these are important ingredients for our leaders. Do you have them? If you can manifest these virtues you will earn the respect and gratitude of the First Nations over-run by conquerors, capitalists and imperialists. You will also address the suffering masses that don't currently understand the agonizing lack of meaning they endure in life.

There are many foibles and challenges along the way. We need careful research. Scientific research is promoted as the only valid kind and yet combinations like careful naturalistic descriptive research and clinical treatment are keys to a balanced understanding. Healing rituals can be studied and understood without desecrating them.

A small window of political good fortune made the kind of experimentation Roquet conducted possible. I believe this is the best approach for joining the ancient and the modern. I am speaking of real research, not politically expedient drivel that belabors trivia. Instead, we need careful work that examines what determines successful treatment with sacred plants when it occurs. We cannot trade vacuous mechanical understanding of brain processes

for relevance to the ongoing struggles of human beings. Just as the mechanization of healthcare does not address the longing for meaning that is at the core of the modern malaise, research without relevance to the human condition will fail us. Only a balance of understanding, inter-cultural respect and compassion can move us forward and integrate the ancient with the modern, the mystical and the technological.

We must keep in mind that permissions are political in nature, whether they are simply accomplished through influence and exist only as a handshake, or they involve written documents. Swings of the political pendulum can obliterate permissions, sometimes without warning.

Success itself can be a danger. It can produce ego inflation. Being a leader in the midst of wondrous miracles that heal can distort and inflate your sense of self-importance. Arrogance is always a danger in researchers, shamans, religious groups, politicians and individual researchers.

Surely we need some good medicine here. So where is the medicine? After many years of working with transpersonal group processes without the privilege of using sacred plants or psychedelic drugs in those publically advertised workshops, I can attest to the fact that: The sacred dimension of being is available to all. We just need methods and techniques to achieve the proper alteration of consciousness and the proper ritual community to hold us.

Where is the medicine? The medicine is in you. Where is the healing? The healing is in you. Where is the leadership? The leadership is in you. Carry it forward as you already are doing. If you can, move forward with reverence for the infinite resource that is the sacred and the spiritual. Note that this infinite dimension and access to it is the birthright of every human being. I hold you in my heart and I honor your journey.

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