

# PSYCHEDELIC 'THERAPY'

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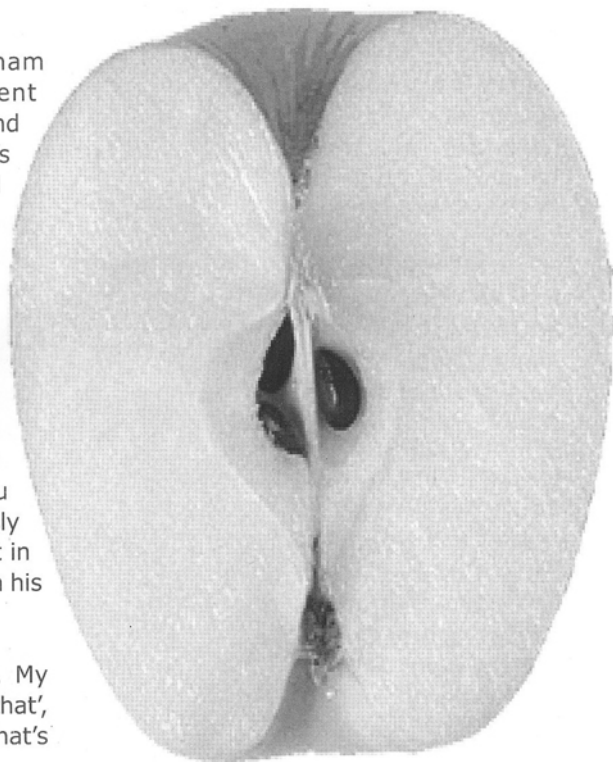


n experience, back in the sixties, when AHP(UK) was just being born and I was 20 years old, gave me my first informal taste of regression and primal work with me, ironically, not in the role of client but of improvising therapist -which goes some way to disprove the dictum that you can only allow your client to go as far as you have been yourself. The 'session' would however no doubt have been improved if I had had more experience of regression to childhood states myself, and a calmer environment in which to practise. The incident took place, unplanned, in my rented rooms in Ashbury Street, San Francisco. I recorded it in my journal at the time as follows:

'That night Shadow (a Vietnam veteran who had gone absent without leave) had brought round - and left in the hall 'because he's crazy' - a 40 year old man called Howard, who was having a bad trip on acid given to him by Shadow.

Howard sat down and began to go into convulsions and I suggested getting him into my landlady's front room where there was music therapy available, and I put on 'All you need is love' and surreptitiously downed a morsel of hash to get in tune, and took Howard's hand in his convulsions.

I told him to breathe deeply. My friend Will warned 'Don't say that', so I just said 'Relax' - (Will:) 'That's better'.

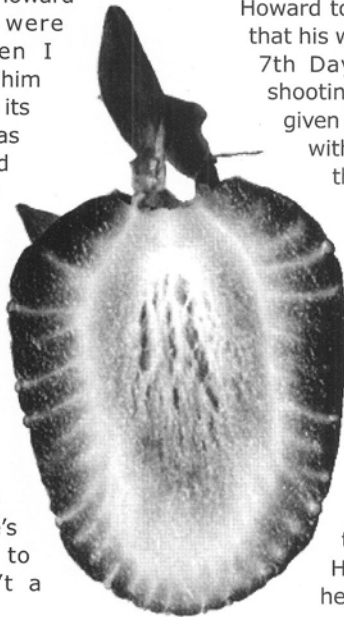


Howard recovered enough to remark that Will's girlfriend Caren was beautiful. (Me:) 'What does she look like to you?' (Howard:) 'Like an Egyptian lady'.

He went back to his convulsions, and I thought Caren was hardly boosting his self-assurance when she ordered him to 'Stop freaking', and, calling over his head, cursed at Shadow, 'You don't know nothing about dope' - loudly berating Shadow for giving Howard acid, and making derogatory remarks about Howard's instability to prove her case against Shadow.

To distract Howard, I gave him an apple, biting it voluptuously myself to reassure him it was OK. He hallucinated it to be a vagina, so I took it away to remove the two suggestive pips. But he saw me do this and was utterly horrified - 'He stuck his finger in it' he exclaimed.

Later, I tried again with two strawberries, making sure to eat one first so that Howard could see they were harmless and then I handed him one, for him to be able to admire its beauty. He said it was 'a gland' - I'd read how to change an acid fantasy - I got him to close his eyes, swapped the strawberry to my right hand to make it seem a new object, and to change it yet more. I opened it in half, and presented it to him with the words 'Here's a strawberry', but to him it still wasn't a



strawberry, and his word 'gland', I learnt later, was a euphemism for penis, and there I was opening it up before his eyes, with red stain on my hands. He convulsed with terror, although a moment before he had said that nothing frightened him, since he was prepared to die, and saw himself as a mere particle after death in the Universal Mind.

At last I found an object he could appreciate, giving him a candle to meditate on, and he went from convulsions into ecstasy and, without prompting, he saw the centre of the flame as the soul of man.

Howard told me I was a fine psychotherapist - earlier he'd said 'you're dancing around barefoot in my mind'. I laughed to show I had no aggressive intentions, and told him 'I'm as nervous as you are', which made things worse for a time.

Howard told me some of his past life: that his wife was a bitch and he was a 7th Day Adventist who'd started shooting amphetamine; he'd been given probation for getting overdue with his grocery bills, and then three years in jail for trying to sell amphetamine at 10 cents a capsule to truck drivers; and seven months in solitary with only the Catholic missal to read, followed by electric shock treatment in a mental hospital.

I tried to take him back through his past, to get him to face up to bad memories that were still haunting him. How his mother-in-law, when he visited with his fiancée, told

him 'You're a...' he couldn't get the word out - (Me:) 'Go on, say it. You've got to face it' ... 'A homosexual', he shouted out and convulsed. (Me:) 'That's better'.

I took him back into his childhood. He got back as far as five, feeling guilty about sticking a finger in a girl's cunt and then at four how his sister sucked his cock, and his mother threatened to cut it off. (Me:) 'She was sick, and she didn't mean what she was saying. You can forgive her'.

There were people milling around in the room, and we were going too fast to really work things out, and I got over-ambitious: 'Go towards birth'. I suggested, but there was a glint in my eye, perhaps, and he suspected manipulation, and for once was unable to react to my suggestion.

I thought perhaps an acid trip for him, as for Ginsberg, would be an opportunity to appreciate women for a change, and anyway, I was finding it hard to handle when he got sexy with me, seeing me as at one moment a Greek God, the next Narcissus, and the next Dorian Gray.

I got Hilary to come over so that he could appreciate her instead, and he was sensible with her - 'She's Cleopatra', but he also said 'Men are easier to lay'.

Howard was now fairly peaceful, and when the Bulgarian music started up I advised him 'Dissolve into the music. Dissolve, dissolve', and he listened intently. His eyes closed at last.

My landlady arrived back from a party and wanted Howard out. A black man gave him two phenol-barbitones and we coaxed his address out of him, and Shadow escorted him home.

A few days later I met Howard when he was straight again and he said he felt bad when left alone with Shadow afterward, and that he'd felt he was surrounded by glass, and that next day he'd got very drunk on rum cakes, and collapsed nearby looking for my house, and had been taken to hospital.

He also told me of the vision he'd had when his eyes were closed listening to the Bulgarian music, and that he'd seen a court judging him for the whole of humanity and that he'd been Christ on the cross.

I met him again a year after this in San Francisco and he was more self-assured, claiming he was the reincarnation of Julius Caesar and dressed for the part, and he told me that once on a trip he tried to phone me in London.

I wondered whether his brain cells were burnt away from amphetamine remembering a newstory of a post-mortem of a lorry driver addicted to amphetamine whose brain was disintegrated to a cobweb. Will, who liked speed, had an unflustered response to this: 'Yes, but the last brain cell, what a beauty!'

All in all, I was pleased with my part in helping with a bum trip, and felt exhilarated for a long time afterwards.

