



DISEMBODIED EYES REVISITED: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ONTOLOGY OF ENTHEOGENIC ENTITY ENCOUNTERS

by David Luke

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan* (1816)



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ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD. Such a maxim might well serve any psychic voyager on a journey into the weirder realms that psychedelics can serve up. After all, out here on the edges there is seldom firm evidence that the beatific or hellish visions beheld whilst chemically neurohacking your wetware have any basis in consensus reality. Indeed these visions are often so extravagantly strange and terrifyingly ineffable that reminding yourself they are *not* real can serve to keep your sanity on a short leash when madness looms. Nevertheless, as John Lilly put it, how does one recognize one's in-sanity from one's out-sanity? And in any case, how would one even begin to try and prove the ontological credibility of the psychedelic experience of visiting some other world or meeting some alien entity? No one has yet put forward a solid method for testing these supposed realities within the domain of science, despite some admirable attempts recently (e.g., Rodriguez 2007)¹, so all we have left to rely on is anecdote and phenomenology. This story lies somewhere between the two, but it also takes on a new dimension that has urged me to depart momentarily from the fruits of science into the "foamy custard" of folklore and myth, cultural studies and related disciplines.² Yet it seemingly has enough semblance of objectivity to warrant a whisper of truth—whatever that may be.

I'd taken a full DMT dose (~ 50 mg smoked) about forty or fifty times, but always with some trepidation and reverence for its power. True to form, I met a variety of extraordinary entities on these excursions. (As Terence McKenna³ once said, "You get elves, everybody does.") Sometimes I saw unknown god-like beings, sometimes shape-shifting





mischievous imps—but increasingly I kept getting the feeling I was intruding upon a cosmic gathering to which I wasn't invited. Occasionally the effects failed to go any further than an ego-dissolution and a swim through a fractal explosion of pulsing light with the usual wild array of colors. Yet I often felt as though I was being blocked from whatever lurked beyond these multiple geometric dimensions, as well as not being allowed to revisit places to which I had been previously. A couple of times I felt so uninvited and intimidated by the entities I met that I did not wish to return, regardless of my curiosity.

On my last DMT session I was determined to return to the mystic bliss I had once known. I travelled to a secluded beach on the banks of the River Ganges. I prepared myself with an improvised ritual, hoping to gird against whatever lay beyond, and I inhaled a pipe-full of vapors from the foul plastic-tasting resin. Sucked into the space between the pipe and my brain, I found myself breaking through the veil like a gatecrasher into a party of swirling, smiling eyeballs all attached to snake bodies, which were as startled to see me as I was to be there. The whole ordered assortment of eyes and snakes acted as one being. In the brief moment before it reacted to my arrival, I managed to catch a glimpse over what might loosely be described as “the shoulder” of this strange entity and instantly realized that I had seen something I should not have—a brief glance at the truly forbidden.

Afterwards I could not remember what this was exactly, having somehow blocked it out. I only recall that it was a scene that seemed both ineffable and highly illegal for mortal minds. Then the multitudinous eyes of the being before me suddenly and quite deliberately blocked my curious consciousness's further explorations by mesmerizing me with its squirming, rhythmic eyeball hypnosis. I mean, this thing really scared me! It had acted with utter surprise at my being there; and then, alarmed, the ominous numinous proceeded to let me know that I should *not* be there and that I should certainly not be peering into the hallowed space beyond it, which it clearly guarded. I opted against defying this terrifying entity and attempted to remain as passive as possible while it pulsed and

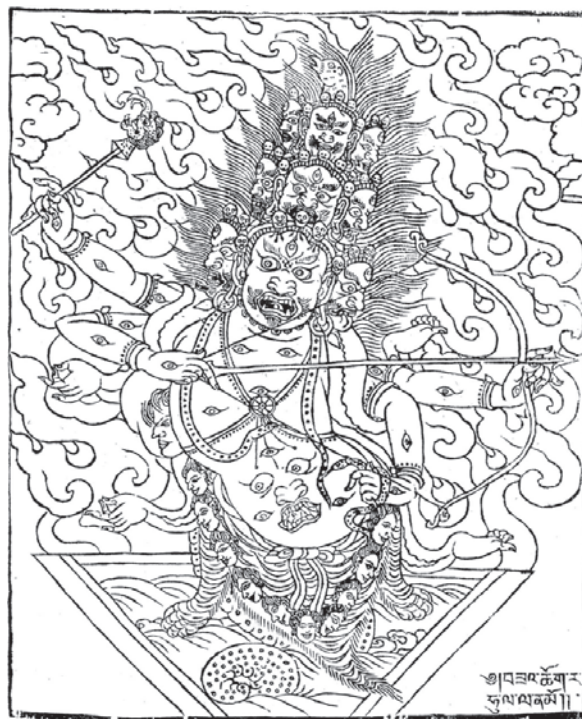
gyrated intimidatingly at me for the next ten minutes (though it seemed like an aeon). I finally came out of it all—a bit shell-shocked—and decided that this would be my last DMT experience... for a long time, at least.

Like many of my psychedelic encounters with seemingly discarnate beings, I didn't know quite what to make of this experience, which had rocked me to the core. Yet some time later, after a few years had passed, I began to piece it together with some other visionary fragments. In a dream once, quite naively, I had a mind-blowing encounter with Azrael—the Islamic angel of death. The angel told me its name (which I hadn't heard before), but unfortunately it never showed itself. Among Muslims the archangel Azrael is considered to have ten thousand eyes and it is the holy psychopomp who ushers souls into the realm of the dead. A similar character, Azrail—the god of death—belongs to the Huasa people of western Africa (Besmer 1983). I also stumbled across Ezekial's vision of the cherubim guarding a throne in the bible (Ezekial 10:12). They, too, were covered in a multitude of eyes, all over their hands, backs, wings, etc., much like the multi-eyed beasts guarding the throne of God in heaven mentioned in Revelations (4:6). These descriptions struck a cord of recognition, although the being I had met on DMT had not seemed quite so angelic.

It wasn't until several years later that I made a surprising discovery when I accidentally came across a reference in a book on Tibetan magic to an ancient deity, by the name of *Za* (or *gza'*), who is known to appear with half the body of a snake, no less, and is covered in a thousand eyes. Interestingly, like the cherubim guarding the throne, the Tibetan *Za* functions as a “protector of the law” and is a guardian deity belonging to a class of demon-gods called *Lu* or *Lhamayin* (associated with the Indian *nāgas*), who appear with snake bodies. The author, Beyer (1978), wrote: “These *lu* are undisputedly the spirits of the [underworld], found in those places where their realm impinges upon ours, such as in springs, wells, and rivers...” This struck an even greater chord when I realized that on the last occasion I had smoked DMT, I was on the banks of the River Ganges near the Tibetan



The "ancient" protector Za.
From an iconographic sketch by Tendzin yongdū (Beyer 1978).



Tibetan image of Za (Rahu).
From the collection of Mike Crowley.

border, which in retrospect would seem like a sure way to meet this Tibetan deity.

The idea that I had been interloping into the sacred realm of the dead, the underworld, and was blocked by a powerful guardian spirit sat well with my experience, which had me wishing I hadn't turned up unexpected and obviously not on the

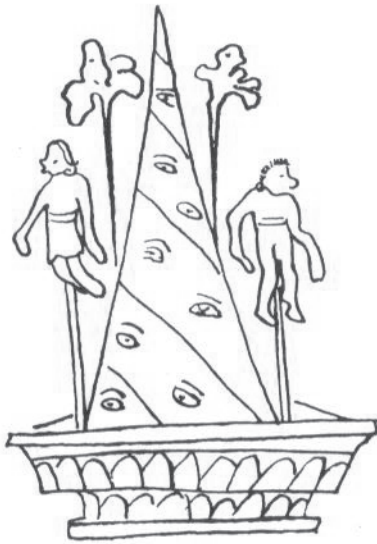
guest list. Knowing I shouldn't be there, I clearly recall spending the duration of the trip trying to keep my tryptaminated mind inconspicuous. And so I focused on the mesmeric rhythmic eyes and nothing more, realizing that I'd stolen a glance at some holy grail when I had burst through the veil. The entity responded quickly and I couldn't have been more compelled to not mess with it. This feeling was further corroborated by Beyer (1978) who wrote that, in relation to Za and the other fierce protector gods, they:



A peaceful *lu* and a fierce *lu*.
From a sketch by Tendzin yongdū (Beyer 1978).

...are the powerful deities who symbolize currents of cosmic force to be tampered with only at one's peril. They constitute the monastic cult [of the Nyingma yogin—the oldest Tibetan sect] because they are best left to the ritual experts. It is not that their cult is particularly secret, just as there is nothing esoteric about the workings of a television set; but in both instances the forces involved are too potent to be played with by a layman, and in both instances the same warning applies.





Sketch of red-colored *gtor ma* propitiatory dough cake dedicated to Za (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956).

The same sentiment was echoed by the noted scholar of Tibetan demons, Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) who offered that the Nyingmapa consider the planetary god Za (Rahu) to belong in the highest trinity of deities and that he “guards the religious teachings, and his thousand eyes watch the happenings in the three worlds.” Worryingly, Nebesky-Wojkowitz indicates that the elaborate propitiatory cake (*gtor ma*) made to honor Rahu (Za) is constructed of a large red serpentine pyramid dotted geometrically with numerous eyes and bearing stakes “arranged around the base of the ‘gtor ma’ on which dough effigies of men and animals have been impaled as offerings.” (Strangely, this eyed-pyramid bears some resemblance to the be-tentacled pyramidal monster of Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea’s *Illuminatus! Trilogy*, the Leviathan). Beyer (1978) even submits that a lama led him to believe that Nebesky-Wojkowitz died accidentally before his time because of his careless interest in these fierce protector deities.

Reading Beyer’s account made me feel particularly alarmed that there had been some objective reality to my encounter and that, seemingly, I had actually run into this Tibetan underworld guardian.

But these few coincidences barely constitute enough to convince most folks of the objective reality of DMT entities or Tibetan deities. Nor should they, particularly those folks like James Kent (2004), who argue that these entities are merely the imaginary output of our neurochemical meddlings. Others have suggested that these entities cannot be considered either real or fictitious but are better thought of as just a part of ourselves (Turner 1995). It might have ended there but, soon after, I discovered that my “unique” experience was not so unique after all. And this discovery threatened to bolster the tentative argument that our particular DMT entity, who we could call Za, might have some objective reality—and then so too might all those other beings we encounter along the way to Chapel Perilous, be they mischievous dwarves, machine elves, ancient gods, or praying mantis aliens.

Only a few days after reading about Za, I chanced across an article by Meyer (1994) titled “Apparent Communication with Discarnate Entities Induced by Dimethyltryptamine (DMT),” in which the following account appeared:

I noticed what seemed to be an opening into a large space, like looking through a cave opening to a starry sky. As I approached this I saw that resting in the opening was a large creature, with many arms, somewhat *like an octopus*, and *all over the arms were eyes*, mostly closed, as if the creature were asleep or slumbering. As I approached it the eyes opened, and it/they became aware of me. It did not seem especially well-disposed towards me, as if it did not wish to be bothered by a mere human, and I had the impression I wasn’t going to get past it, so I did not try. [*Emphasis added.*]

That this creature was also quite intimidating and appeared to be guarding the way to something beyond matched my own experience; but it doesn’t end there. I was conducting a web survey of paranormal psychedelic experiences at the time (Luke & Kittenis 2005) and found that one of my respondents also had a similar experience, but with psilocybin rather than DMT:





I was convinced I was [dying], I saw another dimension, one filled with eyes in a fibonacci vortex/dome... I've explained this to so many people and regardless of how many things I see, be it in art or biblical references, they all say I'm nuts.

Encouraged by finding these chance reports, I began searching through psychedelic journals and on the Internet for similar stories and found a few more corresponding accounts. This first one occurred with psilocybin-containing mushrooms and appeared in *The Entheogen Review* (Owl 1995):

I began seeing a peculiar phenomenon during low dose mushroom sessions: a pattern of threatening eyeballs. I intuited that the mushroom was trying to scare me, and I marveled at the workings of the mind, feeling humored rather than frightened. ... In spite of my scientifically-orientated worldview, I was being visited by a spirit which seemed to be anticipating a deeper encounter.

...I took about five grams... This is when I felt the strange spirit enter me: the many-eyed apparition that had already been haunting my consciousness. The difference was that this time the "creature" seemed to be inside of me. ...I instinctively began questioning its intentions—who was it, what did it want, and was it a demon? I received no answer, and so, not being certain it belonged in my head, [I] forcefully commanded it to leave, which it apparently did. ...I had the creepy feeling that I was either going crazy or was infected with a spooky denizen of hyperspace. ...Perhaps, like an insect under a magnifying lens, I have difficulty fathoming this mysterious being of a thousand eyes. Interestingly enough, one of my companions later commented that at one point he perceived my forehead to be covered with eyes.

This next one, posted to Erowid.org, occurred on LSD (Trip333 2007):

Countless numbers of eyeballs were looking at me. They were the most evil things I have ever seen. They were all on these snakelike bodies that were weaving back and forth. I reopened my eyes and saw the eyes and the worms all over me and on the ground.

Although I only found these three isolated reports on LSD and psilocybin, I found numerous DMT reports that mentioned eyeball-riddled snake entities in variously weird or disturbing sequences. I needn't quote them all, as this last one offers some kind of "radical empirical"⁴ mystical triangulation of my own experience and a tentative interpretation of it (Pup 2006):

I remember the veil, like rubber, or the surface of jelly stretched in front of me. ...I leaned forward to touch the surface of the membrane and then what happened next I swear nearly killed me from its sheer bizzarity. ...A creature emerged. It was not a happy, smiley elf. ...It had [innumerable] tentacles, like a cross between some weird octopus or jellyfish...and the EYES! OH MY GOD THE EYES!!!

I froze on the spot thinking shit that's it. I've gone and done it now. I'm fucking toast. I never believed. I should have believed. And now. Now I am at the mercy of [something] much, much, bigger and complex, and clever and definitely [more] malevolent than myself.

I asked it [its] name. I wish I had not asked. [Its] voice utterly destroyed me. It was like being caught in a storm of [psychic] noise—a whirlwind of deadly electrical shrapnel. ...With its innumerable eyes, It gazed at me steady and extended a tendril. At the same moment it fired a beam of light directly between and above my eyes. The alien laser was pinkish-green. It hurt. I begged it to stop. I whimpered. please stop. you're hurting me. I'm fragile. Please be careful—I am sentient and mean you no harm...

It seemed to consider this; the laser was withdrawn but the tendrils (there were more now) still held me in place. I was trying to make out details of its shape or structure but the closer I looked, the more it slipped away from me. It seemed to tell me in some weird non-verbal fashion not to struggle and to stop making noise with my eyes. I took this to mean 'be calm. do not struggle. clear your head. See but don't look.'

Then it became a little clearer. It seemed to be cloaked in some way—some sort of organic hood and covering was wrapped around it—some sort of armour or protection. The tentacles had no substance as we know it and the eyes

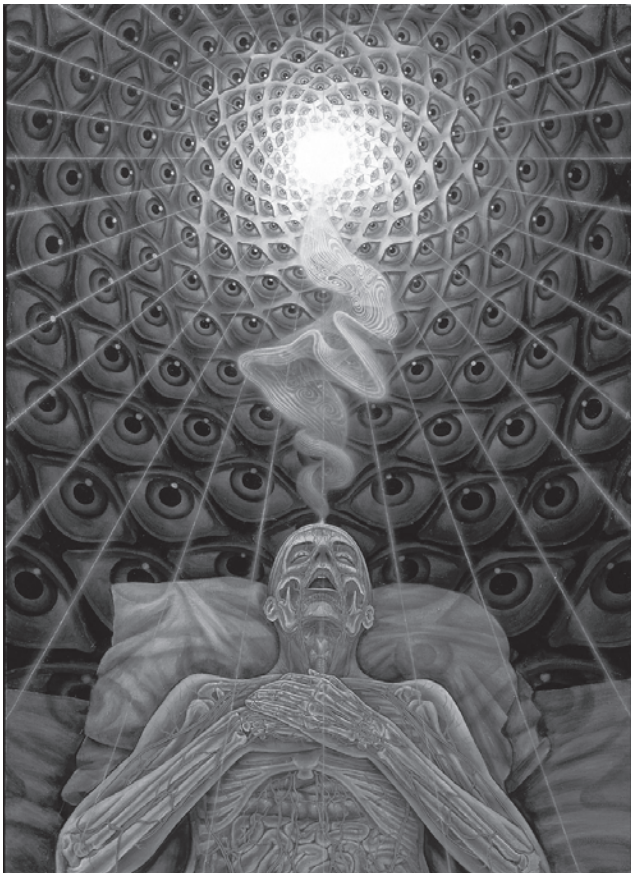




were the most awe-inspiring/terrifying thing I have ever beheld. They defied counting. They defied reason. The whole thing was [too] much and I felt myself losing my mind.

I...JUST...LOST...IT...gooooooooooooooooooooo

I guess this account really did it for me. There seemed to be at least a degree of objective reality to all these reports (including mine), because they had historical precedent, shared experience, and—most importantly—some apparent meaning. On a level playing field of explanation, where all theoretical perspectives hold equally convincing—or perhaps equally unconvincing—positions, the notion of *meaning* can provide the greatest intuitive appeal to one's understanding. For instance, a physiological or neurotheological explanation might suggest that the highly similar visions are due to similar neurochemical reactions; but this will be seen by some to devalue the complexity and cultural significance of the experience, and it also extends itself much further than the current



Dying by Alex Grey, 1990; www.alexgrey.com.

explanatory power of neuroscience. Alternatively, a parapsychological explanation might suggest that these similar visions all belong to a particular morphogenetic field (a field of consciousness that contains imprints of past experiences which can be accessed by others) activated by chemically-induced near-death-type experiences. Yet there is little understanding of or evidence for morphogenetic fields of this kind, even if they may be possible in principle (Sheldrake 1988). Any number of other theories might be put forward. But with all such explanations appearing as equally unconvincing, the possibility of this entity somehow being real as an independently sentient discarnate being—whatever that may be—has comparable explanatory power. However, beyond other ontological speculations this level of explanation—an acceptance of the experience at face value—also has esoteric and cultural *meaning* because it fits with a mystical understanding of the universe in which the existence of supernatural beings is accepted.

That said, I have little problem, then, assuming that entities—be they dream angels, DMT encounters, or mythical beings—have at least the *possibility* of independent sentience or some kind of objective reality, because I ultimately don't confine myself to any one ontological perspective. So, as clearly as I can make sense of it, it seems that smoking DMT can lead temporarily to some kind of death realm—an idea championed by Rick Strassman (2001) and supported by shamanic concepts of ayahuasca states—and in such a place the traveler might encounter one of the (archetypal) guardian deities of the underworld. One such guardian is the angel of death, who appears with thousands of eyes, much like Alex Grey's painting called *Dying*.⁵ Yet it seems that sometimes this multi-eyed being also assumes the tentacled or snake-bodied appearance of Za. And like a guardian of the underworld no doubt should be, this being is not to be trifled with. It holds those who encounter it in the grip of utter fear, compelled to obey its hypnotic glare—to just “see but don't look”—because it seemingly guards the sacred way on after death.

On reflection, my encounters with both Za and Azrael have resonance with each other and possibly represent the same psychic atavism or Jungian





archetype (albeit an archetype that may have independent sentience), which may become activated by tryptamines such as DMT, or by dreaming or other altered states. This entity is the archetype of the guardian of the realm of death and the doorway to occult knowledge. In considering this, I was lucky enough to find a book by two occultists (Jackson & Howard 2000) who offer an argument that the Islamic Azrael, the angel of death, is synonymous with the Hebrew Azazel, the fallen angel of light and the serpent of the Tree of Knowledge (who, as the Promethean prototype, stole the Gnostic fire from God and gave it to man—in much the same way that psychedelics can). They also associate the Persian fallen angel Azza, or Shemyaza with the Luciferian Azazel, who in similar Promethean style swapped the name of God for sexual favors with the mortal Ishtar, thereby making her immortal.

Jackson and Howard likewise associate Azazel, the great watcher, with the Persian dragon serpent Azhadaha, the black serpent of light and leader of the Inri, the fallen angels known—appropriately—as the watchers. Interestingly, they link the etymology of the common root *az* with the Hebrew

letters *ayin* (or *ain* in Arabic) meaning eye, and *zayin* (*zain* in Arabic) meaning sword, which represent the all-seeing eye, and the flaming sword of initiation (the guardian of the Garden of Eden in biblical and cabalistic tradition). Jackson and Howard (2000) suggest that, “The secret significance of the Zayin Sword is typified by Azazel as Master of Metals and Lord of the Forge” because smithcraft and fireworking were the crafts first taught to humans by the watchers, much like the myth of Prometheus. They note that:

The Hebrew letter-form of Zayin, ז, the sword blade, is the supracosmic fire that, like a shining lightning flash or thunderbolt, “cuts” through the veil of material nescience.

Assembling all these links, it didn’t take a huge cognitive leap to also associate the Tibetan eyeballed serpent of my DMT encounter, Za, with these anarchic archangels of other cultures. Without making any great claims to the exclusive resemblance of any of these myths to each other—for these legends have both similarities and differences—further comparisons to Za and Azrael from elsewhere can also be made, such as the Persian Zahhāk, also known in Iranian mythology as Aži Dahāka the serpent or dragon, who was struck down by the divine Frēdōn and snakes issued forth from the wounds (Boyce 1975). Like Prometheus he was condemned to be chained to the side of a mountain for eternity. The likely etymological link here between the interchanged *ayin* (a) and *zayin* (z) of *za* and *az* is itself compelling, especially in the case of the Zahhāk/Aži Dahāka, but the myth story of Za himself has further resonance with the other fallen archangel and Promethean myths.

In Tibetan mythology, Za (known as Rahu in the Indian tradition) features in the *Dri Med Zhel Phreng* version of the Buddhist “churning of the oceans” story about the origins of the original entheogenic ambrosia par excellence, *amrita*, or *soma* (Crowley 1996). Having been left in charge of the Buddha’s newly made water of life (the *amrita*) before its supposed dissemination to humanity, Vajrapani (associated with the great soma-fiend Indra) carelessly left the sacred *amrita* unguarded and returned to find the demon Za, the Lhamayin, had drunk it. In



Azazel appearing with numerous eyes, from *The Sandman* (Gaiman et al. 1991).





further offence to the gods, Za urinated what remained of the processed amrita back into the vessel. As penance, Vajrapani was made to drink what had now become poisonous, permanently turning blue as a consequence. The similarities here between the methods of enjoying amrita and psychedelic *Amanita* mushrooms have not gone unnoticed (Crowley 1996), and furthermore the link here between the psychedelic and the Promethean features of the myth is clear.

As just punishment, Vajrapani finally caught up with Za, wounded him many times, and then sliced him in two with his vajra, the lightning bolt. But because Za had drunk the amrita, the water of life, he survived; “amrita” translates from Sanskrit as “deathlessness,” and it seems appropriate that this guardian of the underworld himself should become “deathless.” As further punishment, the Buddha replaced Za’s severed legs with the tail of a serpent or dragon (much like the Iranian Aži Dahāka above) and fixed eyeballs upon his numerous wounds, giving him his unique appearance.

It’s here that I saw a further transcultural myth emerging with the legend of the Greek Lamia, the serpentine daimon and prophetess. The Lamia is somewhat similar in character to the Lhamayin, the class of Tibetan serpent spirits to which Za belongs. However there is some contention, not least from the Tibetan scholar, psychedelicist, and etymologist, Mike Crowley (2005), that the Tibetan language has no roots in Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean languages because it is uniquely related to Mongolian. Nevertheless, in the same vein with which Robert Graves (who tipped off Wasson to entheogenic mushrooms) makes more poetic than precise associations between cultural myths, there is a resonance between the legend of Za—the Tibetan serpentine Lhamayin—and the Greek serpentine Lamia, whom we may also associate with Python, the serpentine prophetess of Delphi.

Accordingly, Python was responsible for maintaining the secret of prophecy and the wisdom of the underworld (similarly to Za), was struck down by the sun god Apollo, heralding what Graves (1961) describes as the usurpation of the goddess for the rights over divinatory power, and henceforth

recasting Python in the role of demon. Something similar also resounds in the Greek myth of the Medusa and Perseus, and perhaps with the Luciferian Norse Loki and the Assyrian-Babylonian Zu (or Azu) too—Zu was struck down by a lightning bolt for stealing the tablets of destiny from Tiamat the dragon queen (but that’s another story). With the dawning of the age of patriarchal theism that occurred two to three thousand years ago, the Promethean-type tale of Python retells the same story of the divine maverick: a chthonic being betwixt this world and the underworld, the all-seeing serpent divinity holding the key to man’s enlightenment, who steals that wisdom or shares it with mankind and then becomes re-branded as a demon, a fallen angel, a trickster or a deceiver, much like Za, Azazel, and the rest. The Aryan demon Rahu (Za) had once been a Dravidian god and it’s clear that an old culture’s gods often become a dominating culture’s demons, and the archaic tools with which the old culture accessed their divine, be they psychedelic or otherwise, become heretical.

Subsequently, the old chthonic sacramentals, such as amrita, or henbane—called “pythonian” by the ancient Greeks in honor of Python (Rudgley 2000)—fell out of grace as easily as Lucifer fell from heaven, or Adam and Eve fell from the Garden of Eden. But like poor old Frank Olsen,⁶ did they fall, or were they pushed? The identity of amrita was completely lost, and remains a matter of debate. Although few soma hunters have proposed tryptamines as the culprit—save perhaps McKenna (1992), who championed psilocybin-containing champignons—what the Tibetan lama Chögyam Trungpa says about it fits happily with the various tryptamine visions mentioned above:

...amrita is the principle of intoxicating extreme beliefs, belief in ego, and dissolving the boundary between confusion and sanity so that co-emergence can be realized.

Perhaps a report of a multi-eyeballed Za-like entity being induced by *Amanita muscaria* might say something more for the favored identity of amrita; and yet, even though there’s some certainty that the ancients of the East never smoked DMT, perhaps any old entheogen will do.



But is there anything that can be found in this wayward meandering through myth and vision that offers a case for the genuine reification of “the other” encountered in psychedelic spaces on the far side of the psyche? Knowing that speculation is the vice of the precise and the virtue of the poetic, I have no doubt that those wearing their left brain today will already have departed company with me somewhere along the line here. As a scientist myself, I have deeply questioned this temporary departure from so-called rational thought. But as an explorer of the weirder realms of the mind, I have also been forced occasionally to leap the fence at the edge of my field of expertise and traverse unknown territory. I don’t offer any of this as “fact” beyond the phenomenological, but merely as “possibility” in a psychic landscape as “off the map” as that provided by DMT. Indeed, here be dragons. And yes, beware that among the dragon’s treasure, all that glitters is not gold. Yet who can resist occasionally inspecting a few gems in case they are of any real value? ☉



Many-eyed dragon drawn by a psilocybin subject in Paris.
(Note the similarity to the depiction of Azazel on page 7.)
Image taken from Heim & Wasson’s 1965–1966 book
Les Champignons Hallucinogènes du Mexique.

FOOTNOTES

1. Grossly simplified, Rodriguez proposes obtaining from the entities solutions to complex mathematics puzzles that the DMT experient does not know. Regrettably, this ingenious method for testing the reality of DMT entity encounters is subject to a number of flaws, such as the huge assumptions involved in expecting our supposed entities to be hyper-intelligent and/or have the desire to cooperate. The most crippling problem for his test, however, is what is known as the super-psi hypothesis—an issue long-proven difficult to surmount in parapsychological attempts to validate the existence of discarnate entities considered to be spirits of the dead (e.g. those apparently communicating via trance mediums). The problem is that, because clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition (collectively called psi) have no theoretical (or even apparent) limits, it always remains a possibility that any information provided by ostensibly discarnate entities may actually be due to the super-psi of the person (e.g., the medium) receiving the information (see Braude 2002 for a comprehensive discussion). However, such an issue doesn’t carry quite as much currency with my perspective on investigating entities in this manuscript.

2. Acronym (**folklore and mythology, cultural studies and related disciplines**) courtesy of foamy custard chef, Bob Trubshaw. For information, see www.indigogroup.co.uk/foamycustard.

3. “You get elves, everybody does.” Audio remix at Trip Receptacles, www.nvo.com/cd/trip.

4. By “radical empirical” I refer to the term as championed by William James (2003/1912), which posits that standard scientific empiricism tries to reduce experience to bare sensations at the expense of prior reasoning, intuition, revelation, or meaning. James argued that we see the world in terms of meaning and the actual connections made between phenomena, so introspection of experience is as legitimate a scientific enterprise for studying one’s experience and the contents of one’s own mind as is the mere observation of the sensation of experience (i.e., empiricism).

5. Incidentally, when Alex Grey was asked about the prevalence of disembodied eyes in psychedelic visions he merely said that they represent infinite awareness. However, he recalled that a woman who had seen his *Dying* painting had reported once traveling down a tunnel of eyes during a near-death experience (Hanna 1998).

6. Frank Olsen was a U.S. Army officer who was unwittingly dosed with LSD by the CIA in 1953. A few days later—under CIA supervision—he plummeted to his death from a hotel window. It was alleged that he jumped, and the drugging incident was covered up for over twenty years as part of the secret MKULTRA operation. Forensic evidence from 1994 added a new twist, strongly suggesting that Olsen was pushed: a murder, rather than a suicide.

