

HENRI MICHAUX

MISERABLE
MIRACLE

(Mescaline)

With eight drawings by the author



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Chapter I

FOREWORD

This book is an exploration. By means of words, signs, drawings. Mescaline, the subject explored.

From the thirty two autograph pages reproduced out of the hundred and fifty written while the inner perturbation was at its height, those who can read handwriting will learn more than from any description.

As for the drawings, begun immediately after the third experiment, they were done with a vibratory motion that continues in you for days and days and, though automatic and blind, reproduces exactly the visions to which you have been subjected, passes through them again.

It being impossible to reproduce the entire manuscript, which directly and simultaneously translated the subject, the rhythms, the forms, the chaos, as well as the inner defenses and their devastation, we found ourselves in difficulties, confronted by a typographical wall. Everything had to be rewritten. The original text, more tangible than legible, drawn rather than written, would not, in any case, suffice.

Flung onto and across the paper, hastily and in jerks, the interrupted sentences, with syllables, flying off, frayed, petering out, kept diving, falling, dying. Their tattered remnants would revive, bolt, and burst again. The letters ended in smoke or disappeared in zigzags. The next ones, similarly interrupted, continued their uneasy recitation, birds in the midst of the drama, their wings cut in flight by invisible scissors.

Sometimes words would be fused together on the spot. For example, "Martyrissibly" would recur to me time and time again, speaking volumes. I couldn't get rid of it. Another repeated untiringly, "Krakatoa!" "Krakatoa!" or sometimes a quite ordinary word like "crystal" would return twenty times in succession, giving me a great harangue all by itself, out of another world, and I could never have augmented it in the least or supplemented it with some other word. Alone, like a castaway on an island, it was everything to me, and the restless ocean out of which it had just come and of which it irresistibly

reminded me for I too was shipwrecked and alone and holding out against disaster.

In the huge light-churn, with lights splashing over me, drunk, I was swept headlong without ever turning back.

How to describe it! It would require a picturesque style which I do not possess, made up of surprises, of nonsense, of sudden flashes, of bounds and rebounds, an unstable style, tobogganing and prankish.

In this book, the margins, filled with what are epitomes rather than titles, suggest very inadequately the *overlappings* which are an ever-present phenomenon of mescaline. Without them it would be like talking about something else. I have not used any other "artifices." It would have required too many. The insurmountable difficulties come (1) from the incredible rapidity of the apparition, transformation, and disappearance of the visions; (2) from the multiplicity, the pullulation of each vision; (3) from the fan-like and umbellate developments through autonomous, independant, simultaneous progressions (on seven screens as it were); (4) from their unemotional character; (5) from their inept, and even more, from their mechanical appearance : gusts of images, gusts of "yes's" or of "no's," gusts of stereotype movements.

I was not neutral either, for which I do not apologize. Mescaline and I were more often at odds with each other than together. I was shaken, broken, but I refused to be taken in by it.

Tawdry, its spectacle. Moreover it was enough to uncover one's eyes not to see any more of the stupid phantasmagoria. Inharmonious mescaline, an alcaloid derived from the Peyotl which contains six, was really like a robot. It knew only how to do certain things.

Yet I had come prepared to admire. I was confident. But that day my cells were brayed, buffeted, sabotaged, sent into convulsions. I felt them being caressed, being subjected to constant wrenchings. Mescaline wanted my full consent. To enjoy a drug one must enjoy being a subject. To me it was too much like being on "fatigue duty."

It was with *my* terrible buffetings that *It* put on its show. I was the fireworks that despises the pyrotechnist, even when it can be proved that it is itself the pyrotechnist.

I was being shoved about, I was being crumpled. In a daze, I stared at this Brownian movement — disturbance of

perception.

I was distraught and tired of being distraught, with my eye at this microscope. What was there supernatural about all this? You scarcely got away from the human state at all. You felt more as if you were caught and held prisoner in some workshop of the brain.

Should I speak of pleasure? It was unpleasant.

Once the agony of the first hour is over (effect of the encounter with the poison); an agony so great that you wonder if you are not going to faint (as some people do, though rarely) you can let yourself be carried along by a certain current which may seem like happiness. Is that what I thought? I am not sure of the contrary. Yet, in my journal, during all those incredible hours, I find these words written more than fifty times, clumsily, and with difficulty : *Intolerable, Unbearable*.

Such is the price of this paradise (!)

II WITH MESCALINE

In a state of great uneasiness, of anxiety, of inner solemnity.— The world retreating in the distance, an ever increasing distance.— Each word becoming more and more dense, too dense to be uttered from now on, word complete in itself, word in a nest, while the noise of the wood-fire in the fireplace becomes the only presence, becomes important,— strange and absorbing its movements. ... In a state of expectancy, an expectancy that becomes with each minute more pregnant, more vigilant, more indescribable, more painful to endure . . . and to what point can it be endured ?

*In a dimly lighted
room, after taking
3/4 of a 0.1 gr.
ampule of
Mescaline*

Far away, like a soft whistling of the wind in the shrouds, harbinger of storms, a shiver, a shiver lacking flesh and skin, an abstract shiver, a shiver in the workshop of the brain, in a zone where shivering with shivers is impossible. Shivering with what then ?

*shivers
shivers
gnawings*

As if there were an opening, an opening which would be an assembling, which would be a world, which would be that something might happen, that many things might happen, that there is a crowd, a swarming of what is possible, that all the possibilities are seized with pricklings, that the person I vaguely hear walking outside might ring the bell, might enter, might set the place on fire, might climb up to the roof, might throw himself howling onto the pavement of the courtyard. Might everything, anything, without choosing, without any one of these actions having precedence over another. I am not particularly disturbed by it either. "Might" is what counts, this prodigious urgency of possibilities, which have become incalculable and continue to multiply.

*That something
may happen that a
world of things
may happen.*

*Phenomenal
swarmings of
possible things
that want to be,
are hurrying, are
imminent.*

(The sounds of the radio or of records — words or music — have no effect. Only reality sows and is productive.)

★ ★ ★

Suddenly, a knife — but first preceded by a vanguard- word, a courier-word, a word launched by my language — center which receives the warning before I do, like

*might
might
might*

*Beginnings of
inner visions*

*Knives long as
trajectories*

*Dazzling knives
plough swiftly
through empty
space.*

*The torture of
enormous ruptures*

*Painful ruptures as if
the cells of my body
were being forced
(unless their own
convulsions are
themselves the cause)
to accompany these
terrible accelerations
to the very limit of
their own elasticity.*

*from the tip
terribly high
to the base
terribly low*

*divergents
divergents
i MM ense
terremoto
Mense.*

*Remarkable words
with letters bigger
than aqueducts
ringed with
quicksilver,
flamboyant and
shocking, like
advertising.*

*In the midst of this
unceasing
earthquake, I am
thinking at the same
time of making
hugely ascending
declarations.*

those monkeys who feel earthquakes before men, suddenly a knife, preceded by the word “blinding,” suddenly a thousand knives, suddenly a thousand dazzling scythes of light, scythes set in flashes of lightning, enormous, made to cut down whole forests, start furiously splitting space open from top to bottom with gigantic strokes, miraculously swift strokes which I am forced to accompany internally, painfully, at the same unendurable speed and up to the same impossible heights, then immediately afterwards down down into the same abysmal depths, with the ruptures ever more and more monstrous, dislocating, insane . . . and when is it going to end ... if it is ever going to end?

Finished. It's finished.

★ ★ ★

Himalayas all at once spring up higher than the highest mountain, sharply pointed, but false peaks, diagrams of mountains, though not less high for all that, inordinate triangles with angles ever more acute, to the very edge of space, idiotic but immense.

While I am still occupied looking at these extraordinary mountains, the intense urgency that possesses me, having settled on the letters “m” of the word “immense” which I was mentally pronouncing, the double down strokes of these miserable “m’s” begin stretching out into the fingers of gloves, into the nooses of lassos, and these in turn, becoming enormous, shoot up toward the heights — arches for unthinkable, baroque cathedrals, arches ridiculously elongated resting on their unchanged little bases. It is utterly grotesque.

Enough. I've understood. Don't think! Don't think at all. Vacuity, lie low! Don't give It ideas. Don't give the mad mechanism spare parts. But already the machine has resumed its movement at a hundred images a minute. The Himalaya-producing machine had stopped, now it starts again. Great plowshares plow up a stretch of space which doesn't give a damn. Enormous plowshares plow without any reason for plowing. Plowshares and again great scythes mowing empty space from top to bottom with enormous strokes that will be repeated fifty, a hundred, a hundred and fifty times. (Until the storage

batteries have run down.)

Why bother, since nothing can be done about it. The stretchings are less painful. Would I be getting used to them.

★ ★ ★

And “White” appears. Absolute white. White whiter than all whiteness. White of the advent of white. White without compromise, by exclusion, by the total eradication of non-white. White, mad, exasperated, shrieking with whiteness. Fanatical, furious, riddling the eyeball. White, atrociously electric, implacable, murderous. White in blasts of white. God of “white.” No, not a god, a howler monkey. (If only my cells don’t burst!)

Cessation of white. I feel that for me white will have something immoderate about it for a long time to come.

★ ★ ★

On the edge of a tropical ocean, in a thousand reflections of the silver light of an invisible moon, among undulations of restless waters, ceaselessly changing. . . .

Among silent breakers, the tremors of the shining surface, in the swift flux and reflux martyring the patches of light, in the rendings of luminous loops and arcs, and lines, in the occultations and reappearances of dancing bursts of light being decomposed, recomposed, contracted, spread out, only to be re-distributed once more before me, with me, within me, drowned, and unendurably buffeted, my calm violated a thousand times by the tongues of infinity, oscillating, *sinusoidally* overrun by the multitude of liquid lines, enormous with a thousand folds, *I was and I was not*, I was caught, I was lost, I was in a state of complete ubiquity. The thousands upon thousands of rustlings were my own thousand shatterings.

★ ★ ★

Sensation of a fissure. I hide my head in a scarf in order to know, to recognize my surroundings.

I see a furrow. A furrow with little, hurried, transversal sweepings. In it a fluid, its brightness mercurial, its behavior torrential, its speed electric. Seemingly elastic too. Swish, swish, swish it rushes along showing innumer-

A whiteness appears, a whiteness to blind you, dazzling, like molten metal pouring out of a Besemer converter.

If a detonation could be whiteness.

So white really exists !

To have to live always in constant scintillation.

An ocean that has no salt, no iodine, no breeze, does not refresh—an ocean for an optician.

Slashed to pieces by reflections.

Through me, the sea undulates.

Torture of undulation.

Breaking against nothing.

Torture of what is unstable, of what is impermanent, torture of being tickled by iridescence.

I am being hollowed out. . .

There is the fact of its being torrential, there is the fact of its plunging headlong, there is the fact of its bursting.

*the unforgettable
furrow*

*A lost phantom
was lying at full
length, probably
myself. A furrow
runs through this
motionless giant
while storms,
smoke, cuts, lashes
were torturing this
"no man's land."*

*The electric
rivulet*

*unspeakable
currents
counter-acting
counter-flowing
cross-hatching
too, too shaken
this rock
corresponds to I
don't know what in
me which breaks,
and breaks again,
endlessly re-forms
and breaks again.
cleavage
breaches breaches
breaches
everywhere
at the same time
rents in a bag
intolerably angular.*

able little tremors. I also see stripes.

Where is this furrow exactly? It is just as though it were crossing my skull from the forehead to the occiput. Yet I can see it. A furrow without beginning or end, as tall as I am and whose average breadth is appreciably the same above and below, a furrow that I'd say comes from one end of the earth, goes through me and on to the other end of the earth.

My body's envelope (if I think or try to think about it) floats freely around the furrow, (how can it?) enormous balloon containing this little river, for this great furrow when I try to see my body at the same time is only a rivulet, but still lively: untamed, champagne and spitting cat. An immense space between my body and the furrow, with the furrow running through the middle. Sometimes there is nothing in this space. (Strange, I thought I was full.) Sometimes there are little dots all over it.

So then, I contain the furrow, except at its extremities which disappear in the distance, and yet it is myself, it is each of my instants, one after the other, flowing in its crystalline flux. In this flux my life advances. Fractured into a thousand fractures, through this rivulet I have continual prolongation in time. It might stop. Perhaps. Yet no one seeing it would believe that it could ever stop flowing, leaving me there.

★ ★ ★

Now I am in front of a rock. It splits. No, it is no longer split. It is as before. Again it is split in two. No it is not split at all. It splits once more. Once more no longer split, and this goes on indefinitely. Rock intact, then split, then rock intact, then split, then rock intact, then split, then rock intact, then split. . . .

★ ★ ★

Cardboard now, cardboard sheets, cardboard boxes, factories of cardboard, truckloads of cardboard . . . and finally an avalanche of cardboard. (Documentary film or sonata ?)

Enormous sheets of cardboard, bigger than screens, of a gray that is unpleasant to look at and a texture that must be unpleasant to touch, are being handled very

briskly by hands I do not see.

To hell with all this cardboard! I'm not interested! Why all this cardboard? I have just noticed a certain numbness of my lip and upper jaw, the beginning of the well-known sensation (before the extraction of a tooth) of the "cardboard mouth."

Cessation.

★ ★ ★

"What, past noon already! Is it possible? And I haven't seen any colors yet, no really brilliant colors. Perhaps I am not going to see any." Annoyed, I wrap up in my scarf again. Then, the result apparently of my reflection * released by the thought or by the switch-button word, I am submerged by thousands of little colored dots, a tidal wave, a deluge, but with each tiny globule perfectly distinct, isolated, detached.

Cessation of the deluge.

*First stage
toward the
of colors.*

★ ★ ★

Return of the deluge. . .

What is happening? An enemy of these colors? No longer any colors at all. Yet they are not really absent either. Or are they vanishing too quickly now to be really perceptible? (like an electric current not sufficiently strong or prolonged). At moments it seems to me they are there. Certainly not much of a spectacle, or I might say that it is to a real spectacle what "noisily" is to "noise." Strange evasiveness.

At last equivocation ends. This time color abounds. A hundred Empire State Buildings at night, all windows lighted with all kinds of lights, would not fill my visual screen with as many splashes of distinct unbelievable colors. †

*Apparition
of colors.*

*fusillade
of colors.*

* Or the reverse: the thought was launched by an imperceptible sensation, a pre-sensation.

† I know now, and will know even better soon, that the teaming drawings, "bourres" as Dr. Ferdiere calls them — of some of the insane, are not exaggerated but give a *moderate* view of their extraordinary universe.

On one of my frontiers (I had at first called it my "Spitsberg") an impossibly immense area of colored bulbs inundates me.

Cessation.

Not a single color. As if "It" no longer had the strength to be color.

★ ★ ★

It's come back, it's beginning again. The mechanism is once more running : *Green!*

★ ★ ★

*Green?
Not green?*

Green. Did I see it? Too fugitively seen. I know that there is green, that there is going to be green, that there is an expectation of green, that there is green frantically straining toward existence, a green that couldn't be greener. It does not exist, and there is any amount of it (!)•

★ ★ ★

*I emit
"green."*

Here it comes ! It has emerged. Completely.

*Extinction
of green*

I am honeycombed with alveoli of green. Greens like bright dots on the back of a beetle. It is the zone in me that emits green. I am wrapped in green, immured. I end in green. (A kind of emerald green.)

★ ★ ★

A large plaque, fairly circular and as though elastic. A spasm causes it successively and almost imperceptibly to contract, then to expand again.

*In the pink
sewer.*

It is also as though elastically pink. Pink, then not pink, then pink, then not pinks or barely pink, then very pink. Pink spreads. Innumerable pink bulbs appear. Pink spreads more and more. I generate it, I sparkle with it. I am sprouting pink. I suffocate with pinkness, with pinkening. The pecking of this pink disturbs me, is odious. —Cessation.

Thank heaven!

★ ★ ★

Disjunction

I hear my cleaning woman's step in the hall. She has come back. Why! Does she want something? Is she going to knock on the door ? I hope not.

At this moment I see (with inner sight) my fist suddenly strike out with violence in her direction, fifteen, twenty times in succession, at the end of my extended arm, but long, long, long, an arm three meters long, a skinny arm and, like my childish fist, unrecognizable. Stupefying sight. Anger? But I feel none. *It* has burned up feeling. It has caught, not even the dynamic, but the kinetic side of anger, with all feeling completely conjured away. That is the strange part of this mechanism. To express an emotion it excludes all consciousness of emotion. That is why you watch like a stranger this unsuccessful mechanical gesture, wondering if you aren't really idiotic to want to interpret this ridiculous spectacle as a consequence of an anger which you don't know if you feel, and which at the very most corresponds to "If only no one opens the door!"

★ ★ ★

There is haste, there is urgency in me.*

I should like. I should like to be rid of all this. I should like to start from zero. I should like to get out of here. Not to go out through an exit. I should like a multiple exit, shaped like a fan. An exit that never ends, an ideal exit, an exit such that having gone out I should immediately start to go out again.

I should like to get up. No, I'd like to lie down, no, I'd like to get up immediately, no I'd like to lie down at once, I want to get up, I am going to telephone, no, I am not going to telephone. But I really must. No, I am going to lie down. And thus, ten, twenty, fifty times in a few minutes, I decide, then decide the contrary, I come back to my first decision, go back to my second decision, return once more to the first, one moment as wholeheartedly, fanatically eager as for a crusade, and the next totally indifferent, uninterested, perfectly relaxed.

No question of saying, as in the case of the visual images, that I'm not fooled, that I understand the mechanism (which is the same). Twenty times I am on the point of getting up to telephone, as many times, indifferent, I give

*Phenomenon
of breakings
and reversings
of the current.*

*a madman with
his hand on the
switch*

*The current
always being
switched on
switched off.*

* What would happen if this accelerator were administered to slow-motion animals, to the camoleon, to the lazy three-toed sloth, or to the marmot just coming out of hibernation?

up. I'm on the shuttle line. Current off, current on, current off, current on. I shall be like that as many times as "It" wishes, completely mobile and then completely at rest and tranquil and serene on the platform of a single second. (Or perhaps of a double or a triple second.)

★ ★ ★

*Many crystals
on the tables
and on the
people at the
tables.
When the eye
enjoys, it
enjoys
crystallinely*

Once more there is haste. Great haste. Intolerable haste. Haste is about to put on a show, short and repeated over and over again. Mesc. can only furnish stunts : I see an enormous restaurant. Numerous stories, and people eating on all the balconies (yes, there are balconies *and* with pillarets!), thousands of tables, thousands of people eating, thousands of waiters in blue jackets. Funny idea! Dishes are served. Dishes are removed. Are served again. Are re-removed. No sooner is the dish served than the plate is taken away. No sooner is the plate set down than the dish is taken away. The speed is no longer even that of a comic gag, but of a metronome. It is not that of an alternating current either. Try to picture the details: These diners are like manikins, the waiters too. No expression one can remember. No individuality in the movements either.

*Flashes of
hunger*

*Mesc. provokes
desires which
appear and
disappear in an
instant*

What possible explanation? Yet, this utterly idiotic spectacle is the translation of a prodigious mechanism. One must realize that mescaline provokes the most violent sensations of hunger. For mescaline instantaneously "images," and realizes sensations or ideas without the least participation of the will, and without any consciousness of desire. The silly gag is the result of this perfect, automatic functioning.

The rest of the show, what I detest the most: exhibitionism. That of clothes, that of the "pleasures of the table". The festive air and the balconies with colors to give the impression of gaiety, have not been forgotten.

Pause.

Several pauses. Some colored plains.

Another pause.

This time it must surely be the end.

It was only the end of something, the end of the tremors.

The cellulose brushings have ceased. Tickling is about to

begin. And what will the cells do, not knowing how to respond to tickling with tickling.

I was soon to find out. Something I should never have expected.

Afer a long blank period and in a kind of lull after battle (or was it my capitulation that was in preparation), the rapid motions were still there, not so violent, not lacerating at all, yet still master ... as I was to have occasion to discover.

Without any particular reason, except — and it was sufficient — that I had been astonished not to hear any music (inner music) although the outside noises and even the distant strains of a band penetrated intact, I see, after a great many different blues, a good fifty trumpet players with raised trumpets dressed in blue and pink* costumes, whose name I don't know or care to know, but very operetta-looking, who begin to play, or at least to go through the motions at an incredible speed, with half a city such as Orleans listening to them, also grotesquely dressed, and as conspicuous as a necktie. There were, I'd swear, at least forty rows of balconies one above the other (and, so that nothing should be lacking, little columns ridiculously elongated). And all of this, of course, colored like children's candies or little girls' ribbons. Perfectly nauseating.

★ ★ ★

Ludicrous, all that! Intolerable! Why, after such reflections, did the word "recruit" occur to me ? And who would ever have thought it could be so "recruiting" ? Normally it

The retinal circus.

In the paradise of everything flashy.

*sickly forms
perforated, hollow.*

*Monuments of
another
civilization.*

the ensnaring word

*disorderly raid on
words, and so rapid
that there is no time
to charge them with
meaning.*

*It is only later that
one can consider
them from the point
of view of meaning.*

* We think it wonderful to see colors appear when we recall some piece of music. It would be, if one had them in addition ! But the first thing one notices, and with much annoyance, is that one can no longer evoke any sounds. The circuit is closed. Why? Does one center inhibit another? Excessive attention fixed on one side (optic) preventing attention on the other (acoustic)?

It is a law I have remarked in normal life and it is flagrant under the influence of mescaline. Here is always a closing to create an opening. A new opening automatically starts the closing of another side. . . . Sensibility on one side calls for insensibility on the other. It is what graphologists find it so hard to understand.

What an absurdity a total man would be with all parts of him equally present, important, accentuated.

means nothing to me and departs without a trace, without creating a ripple.

But now, hardly arrived, irresistibly it drags after it its brothers and cousins (and in the most superficial way) its distant cousins that are barely connected, (I choose the least farfetched), irremediable, inexhaustible, inexorable, indestructible, indefinable, ineradicable, indefatigable, incredible innumerable, irrevocable, incurable, insuperable, incontestable, to say nothing of incompressible, inacceptable, indomitable, and a whole string of others which I really must interrupt, now that I can, for at the time, not only was I unable to interrupt the stupid enumeration but I had to repeat all the words, pronouncing them in my mind rapidly and emphatically and very unpleasantly. (A strange elastic bridge in fact connected me with each one of them.)

Horrible this compulsory almost muscular cooperation with the disgraceful procession of words.

Impossible to stop them. The adverbs, the long adjectives in *able*, and the prefixes, and the “ins”—“in” for mescaline — irresistible, of course.

(After all, Mescaline, in its own way was expressing itself. Expressing me. In these words, launched haphazardly, spasmodically, one recognized “obliquely” the unhappy situation.)

Cessation ! At last!

★ ★ ★

Pause. Long pause.

A final volley.

Another pause....

Could it be finished?*

caricature of composition and of creation.

And now, at this idea of finished, here he is, the bad composer I have become, because of my weakened condition (?), because of the speed of the brain waves I have to conform to, because of the unwonted pace I am

* At about this moment, in the semi-darkness I am about to get up when one of my companions who, I thought, wanted a glass of water, says, “Don’t leave.” “Leave where?” I rejoin laughingly in order, among other things, to dispel the idea that I am attempting more than they are, exposing myself to certain mishaps. They laugh. But the *word* coming back to me begins to function, combining with *finish* in an overlapping series. To *finish* and to *leave* becoming inexhaustible.

forced to keep up, here he is — here I am — beginning to employ the tritest topics for amplification and, in the silliest, most systematic way to draw up the easiest antitheses, even easier enumerations, everything that is finish, final, exit (and not only the images but, as final idiocy, even the words “saying themselves” headlong in me) : signs with the directions “exit,” ship moored “at the end of the quay,” panorama, viewpoint at the end of the path ! all this — stupid school-boy stuff — begins filing past me to my utter bewilderment.

Ridiculous, outrageous, and unavoidable, and which I could never possibly have imagined.

Yet what counts, what is prodigious, is this mad, indefatigable urgency, this ever recurring urgency which is such that even at the very end, when it is all over, one is still in a hurry, in a hurry to go on to the finish, a finish which is never final enough.*

At the top of the acute angle of a mad triangle, the final point will become the starting point for the base of another triangle whose final point will beget still another triangle which in turn . . . and so on indefinitely. The urgency is in no way abated by a third final point, or by a fourth, or by a tenth, or by a branch, simultaneously developing collateral images, or by the image of an ocean liner leaving the dock, or by an airplane taking off, or by a sudden rocket, or by an intercontinental rocket passing through the stratosphere, or by an interplanetary rocket passing beyond the bounds of terrestrial gravitation. No matter how far away it is, it has to launch another rocket, which in turn, pausing, launches another rocket, which in turn, pausing, launches another rocket, perpetual forward spurts to give free scope to the craving for departure, craving for going beyond, false rockets in fact, all of them, abstract, diagrammatic, but no less eager to reach, by successive stages, an ever receding infinity.

Into my inner visions I try to introduce an image from

Against a given background, at a new speed, certain ideas alone can circulate.

Others are not attached to anything, do not correspond to the spasmodic jerkings and consequently will not show any images on the film, though they may well count for more than others which instantly open up optical treats

Impetus in jerks impetus indefinitely renewed.

Everything becoming arrows shooting desperately toward the final point.

intermittent progressions

Speed in measured rhythm.

* Gasoline, ether, the carbon tetrachloride used by Rene Daumal — who from it derived an . . . astonishing belief — all products which violently eliminate fat and sugar from the brain, induce this same phenomenon.

*the experiment of
introducing images
into mescaline
visions.*

outside. With this intention, I begin turning over the pages of a lavishly illustrated book of zoology open beside me, looking at the pictures of different animals. Nothing happens. When I close my eyes they are not there. They are frankly excluded. No sign of any after-image. As soon as they are out of my sight they seem to have been cut out by a knife. For all that, I once more look at the giraffes and ostriches, elongated animals which ought to tempt mescaline's elongating propensity. But even while I am looking at them I know very well that I am not "detaining" them. I close my eyes — not the slightest image. I pick up the book again, but tired of pictures (more than tired, I have no contact with them at all), I begin to glance at the text and in the flickering light of the wood fire with difficulty making out a few words : "the giraffe ... a ruminant, between the antelope and the ... by its shape . . ." Wait! At these words something seems to stir. I close my eyes and, already responding to the mention of their name, two dozen giraffes are galloping in the distance, rhythmically raising their slender legs and their interminable necks. True, they have nothing in common with the muscular, beautifully colored animals of the photographs I have just been looking at, and which were unable to create any "inner" giraffe. These are moving diagrams of the idea "giraffe," drawings formed by reflection, not reproduction.

But tall they certainly were. High as houses of seven stories but with bases not proportionately larger. In order to enter into the mescalinian world they had been forced to become these slender giants, these ridiculous, vertiginous manikins that a mild mistral could have toppled over with their legs broken.

Cessation.

★ ★ ★

By means of zigzag strokes, by means of transversal flights, by means of flashing furrows, by means of I don't know what all, always beginning again, asserting itself, recovering itself, steadying itself, by means of punctuations, of repetitions, of hesitant jerks, by slow cantings, by fissurations, by indiscernable slidings, I see, being formed, unformed, re-formed, a jerking building, a building in

*To enter into the
visions of mescaline
the giraffes must
grow even taller.*

*ruins
ruins
perpetually*

abeyance, in perpetual metamorphosis and transubstantiation, sometimes appearing to be the rough draft of an immense and almost orogenic tapir, or the still quivering pagne of a negro dancer who has collapsed and is about to fall asleep. But out of the sleep, and even before it occurs, the building magically rises.

And here it is again just as it was before, with more stories* than you can count, with a thousand rows of spasmodic bricks, a trembling, oscillating ruin, crammed, stuttering *Bourouboudour*....

Like the sensitive tip of the tongue at the height of its enjoyment, if this tip of the tongue became instantaneously a big, fat pink hippopotamus replete with that enjoyment, and not only one, but a hundred big-bellied hippos, and ten thousand sows, suckling already biggish little pigs snuggling against their swollen *flanks*, and all this huddled together one against the other, and if the height of the enjoyment thus spread out and multiplied were solely the fact of being pink, pink, pink, stupidly, deliriously, paradisiacally pink, pink enough to make you howl,— unless you had the soul of a whore and took a flabby pleasure in yielding to it,— that was the way I was seeing pink. I was up to my eyes in pink, pink besieged me, licked me, wanted to confound me with itself. But I refused to fall for it. I'd have been ashamed.

From island to island, greater and greater slackening of speed. Calmer too. For the first time a face appears, if it is a face. Two or three hundred alternate rows of eyes and lips, blubber lips that is — blubber lips, blubber lips, blubber lips — and eyes slightly mongoloid — eyes, eyes, eyes, eyes — composed this face which kept gliding ceaselessly downward, each lower row disappearing, replaced by other rows appearing, of slanting eyes, of slanting eyes, of slanting eyes, or of great blubber lips, blubber lips with fleshy ridges like a rooster's comb, but not nearly so red.

*in ruins
(without ever
falling)*

*consolidations
dislocations
consolidations
dislocations*

*"Mescaline
avoids form"
Havelock Ellis.*

*Once more
besieged by pink
licked by pink.*

*A sort of perversion
applied to a color*

*Last signs of
speed.*

*the immense
endless-belt
of faces.*

* Endless, but never vertiginous. That would require a sense of distance and depth I don't have, of which I am totally lacking.

And they were undecipherable, the eyes, very narrow under immense heavy lids, slightly tremulous. And all this enormously rectangular, in fact like a moving carpet with the thickness and volume totally imperceptible, or rather seeming to be of the same thickness all over, the thickness of a comfortable carpet in which the eyes and lips were not so much in relief as excrescences, wasps' bellies, innumerable bellies, pinned there and still quivering. And the endless-belt kept rolling with its enigmatic eyes, and you couldn't decide which one to watch more than another. There was a slight incline and the width of the face that kept sliding by was that of a moderately wide street, its height in proportion. A curious thing about it was that you had no more difficulty seeing the top than the bottom or the middle. And this great intent face, so exaggerated and devoid of any other part, visibly incapable of detaching itself from the others, I was able to watch without fear and even without repugnance. I felt hardly any curiosity either. Like the other spectacles, it didn't seem to be there for me. Mescaline soon to be spent, had now become more subdued. Though the faces when I try to describe them, seem monstrous, they really were not, having no expression at all. The colors showed hundreds of different tints and the subtle tones of autumn woods and forests. Instead of a carpet it might also have been a landscape or a mountain of faces. It was simply that they were juxtaposed, and their parallelism more mechanical than deliberate. Obviously mescaline did not know how to compose. The superabundance of colors that covered the entire space and refused to be suppressed disturbed both of us, mescaline and me. What was lacking in this huge spectacle was a gravity in proportion to its apparent extent. Immense without grandeur. Everything was growing indistinct. The storm of white lights was over and would not return.

The anopodokotolotopadnodrome was about to close.

J. P. in five words expressed what each of us was thinking. "It's nothing to brag about." Not one of the three of us who were present had taken it seriously, regarded it rather as a sort of prestidigitators act. And we rose with the joyous sensation of having come from the destruction of

a glassworks for which no one would hold us responsible.*

★ ★ ★

However, it was not all over as I had thought. Late in the evening, my head once more wrapped in a scarf, protected from the light, I began seeing visions again, certainly more colorful than any I am normally capable of, more blurred than they had been earlier, fainter yet characteristic — *mescaline's* not *mine*.

All evening I followed with delight the delicacy of this progressive decline. In slow imperceptible degradations, the images now passing so slowly as to become pictures, but still enormous (notably a rug, and a beautiful one, as large as the *Place de la Concorde*), underwent an attenuation of coloring, in the end becoming lovely and “human,” an attenuation of such delicacy I felt I should like to share it with some one . . . This attenuated tone, a marvel of extreme tenuousness, at the very limit of perceptibility, seen half an hour later had undergone a new infinitesimal softening, final caress of the stranger who was departing. And thus, through diminishing stages that were subtly moving, the visions became memory-images. There was a moment when they were no longer ordinary apparitions, when everything was memory. You couldn't tell. You were always making mistakes, or you saw that previously you had been mistaken, so exact the superposition always became. Images and memory-images always eventually coinciding, something which never happens except at this stage. Time passed in the contemplation of these minute details. Now and then magnificent greens returned. I was never altogether asleep.

Thus the night wore on, shot through from time to time by wonderful images.

★ ★ ★

Should a person become addicted to mescaline — though

Delicacy of the degradations.

Miraculous attenuations.

*THIRD
EXPERIMENT*

* Several colors had been entirely absent for hours, as for example red, although red is a color I use often. On the other hand, green, which I never use was, with white, violently present and in superabundance. Theory of Ewald Herling (*Theorie der Vorgänge*, 1890) according to which, if I am not mistaken, in drunkenness one sees only colors fitting one's mood, to the exclusion of all others. But I was against most of mescaline's colors. They made me either ashamed or furious.

The very "little deaths" of mescaline from which one is being constantly resuscitated.

to the mad motions of the disappearing images, the body periodically responds with a slow solemn rhythm, the four minute rhythm. (Approximate time not sufficiently verified.)

open to it this time, willing to be open.

it is more apt to be too frightening ("Grant that we do not go mad," was the prayer of Mexicans who, after fasting and continence, sought the god of the *Peyotl*) — it would certainly be for the periodic and ineffable shipwrecks one experiences. The exhaustion that follows the act of love is sometimes called the "little death." Compared to it, the extremely little death of mescaline is like the little death compared to the Great Death, so discreet and gentle but one suffers hundreds of them in the course of the day.

You go from little death to little death for hours on end, from shipwreck to rescue, succumbing every three or four minutes without the least apprehension, only to be gently, marvelously resuscitated once more. A deep sigh, which speaks volumes to those who know, is the only intimation of new rescues, but the voyage continues, a new death is preparing from which you will emerge in the same way. It is as though you had another heart whose systole and diastole occurred fifteen or twenty times an hour. Meanwhile, real or not, the indefatigable organ renews its strength and its drama; and though already weary, you are forced to take part and at the fourth minute of the cycle you give a sigh of relief which marks the end of the abstract coition.

And so it was with me the last time I delivered my *body* to it; and the instrument that is called my *mind*. It was also the time of the gaping fracture, and gaping for a long time just as it may happen with a woman you have possessed but from whom you have nevertheless remained detached, until one day, through a wave of tenderness, graver by far than love, you surrender yourself, and she enters you with the swiftness of a torrent, never to leave again.

And so that day was the day of the great opening. Forgetting the taudry images which as a matter of fact had disappeared, I gave up struggling and let myself be traversed by the fluid which, entering me through the furrow, seemed to be coming from the ends of the earth. I myself was torrent, I was drowned man, I was navigation. My Hall of the Constitution, my Hall of the Ambassadors, my hall of gifts and of the interchange of gifts, where the stranger is introduced for a first inspection.

— I had lost all my halls and my retainers. I was alone, tumultuously shaken like a dirty thread in an energetic wash. I shone, I was shattered, I shouted to the ends of the earth. I shivered, my shivering was a barking. I pressed forward, I rushed down, I plunged into transparency, I lived crystallinely.

Sometimes a glass stairway, a stairway like a Jacob's ladder, a stairway with more steps than I could climb in three entire lifetimes, a stairway with ten million steps, a stairway without landings, a stairway up to the sky, the maddest, most monstrous feat since the tower of Babel, rose into the absolute. Suddenly, I could not see it any longer. The stairway had vanished like the bubbles of champagne, and I continued my navigation, struggling not to roll, struggling against suction and pullings, against infinitely small jumping things, against stretched webs, and arching claws.

*at the right, the
celestial
stairway.*

At times thousands of little *ambulacral* tentacles of a gigantic starfish fastened to me so compactly that I could not tell if I was becoming the starfish or if the starfish had become me. I shrank into myself, I made myself watertight and contracted, but everything here that contracts must promptly relax again, even the enemy dissolves like salt in water, and once more I was navigation, navigation first of all, shining with a pure white flame, responding to a thousand cascades, to foaming trenches and to gyratory gougings. What flows cannot inhabit.

a gigantic starfish.

The streaming torrents that on this extraordinary day rushed through me were so tremendous, so unforgettable, unique, that I thought — (I never stopped thinking) “A mountain, in spite of its lack of intelligence, a mountain with its cascades, its ravines, its streaming slopes would be in the same state I am in now, and better able to understand me than a man . . .”

*Streaming down
streaming down*

Many peyotleros, probably but little accustomed to dreaming, have no visions, or at least not visions strong enough to be interesting, and prefer to keep their eyes open and to observe the altogether novel, the iridescent and, as it were, vibrant beauty of familiar objects, especially

*What you see when
you keep your eyes
open.*

*the colors of the
very weak inner*

*vision combine
with those of
perception to
produce exquisite
tones.*

*Distances
uncertain.*

the dullest ones, for they are the ones that are most transformed, becoming quite marvelous (in tone).

As for me, in the very dim light, curtains drawn, blinds half closed, I noticed very little difference in the things around me, except that I could not fix their position exactly. The distance from me to the walls, especially to the one opposite me no longer remained fixed. It wavered from being three meters away to three meters[^] fifty centimeters. It could not seem to make up its mind. I had, however paid little attention to this, either because it seemed hardly different from what I had experienced during a strong bout of fever, or because, as the sensation was rather disagreeable, I kept my eyes closed, interested only in the visions.

Meanwhile I had to get up to put a log on the fire. The noise seemed so formidable that I apologized to my companions for the earthquake I had provoked. They laughed in such a spontaneous and wholehearted manner that I realized their ears too, made supersensitive by mescaline, had heard the same unprecedented din as mine. I went into the next room where the light hurt my eyes. Finally I opened the bathroom door and turned on the switch. I stood aghast at what I saw in the washbasin : A foetus! I was utterly flabbergasted. It is true that a woman had been there a short time before, a woman I hardly knew, but who seemed so correct. It was unbelievable! I couldn't get over it! She had stayed there for a considerable length of time — I remembered it now — but still, a woman as modest as she seemed to be! An accident evidently. The effect of the emotional shock, the traumatism of the drug. Fascinated, I stood stock-still looking at it. I am not very active by nature, but now I felt I really had to find out if the foetus was whole or not, otherwise, poor woman, her suffering was not over. She would come back. That is why she had been suddenly so perturbed. Something had to be done. So, disgusted though I was, I touched the soft bluish head of the sticky bloodstained little thing. What a mess! Whole or not whole ? Finally, with a stick I found in one corner, I began energetically shoving the little body back and forth . . . it opened and fell apart. "Ah!" and I stood there overwhelmed as by another anomaly. The foetus no longer

existed, yet it was still there, livid, bluish, blood-stained, with really delicate tones, almost iridescent, but which I failed to appreciate . . . On the contrary, I was appalled. And what of the proof furnished by tearing it apart? Proof enough certainly, yet the existence of the foetus, perfectly evident and unquestionable a few seconds ago, refused to be suppressed by the appearance of this rag or wet paper, providential though it was. I was still aghast. True, the case of the foetus seemed settled, but I felt obscurely that if I were to discover another foetus or worse, in a basin, in a sink, or in an empty flower pot, it might not be explained away so happily and unexpectedly as at present. My behavior was not as childish as it appears. Feeling that I was in no state to resist the hallucination and preferring not to remain exposed to it, I quickly returned to the dim living room. There, in my inner visions, appeared and would keep on appearing, queer colored images, but no foetus, nothing resembling a foetus, nothing really dangerous. I was not worried on that score. Why? It would be hard to say. Perhaps because in the real world, where women, domestic animals, even turtles, are concerned I am always afraid of the consequences. Not very practical, I am afraid of anything that might become "material" and demand quick, rational decisions, I am afraid of being caught unprepared. All this is in fact evident, if not materialized, in this incident, which is not really a true hallucination since it did not happen without some support. But it has taught me more than dozens of pages on the subject, for it has made me realize how one might remain spellbound by an hallucination, unable to tear oneself away. As for a supporting agent, one can always be found. What surface is so smooth as not to show enough variations for the imagination to seize upon? What atmosphere so free from particles of dust that there is not one to catch and hold a chimerical object?

*fleeing from the
hallucination.*

I used to have a kind of respect for people who saw apparitions. No longer! I have no doubt they really see them, but in what a state! (Certainly not a normal one, for then they would really be extraordinary.)

To the eye and the mind of someone who is, or has been, in another state, everything moves, everything is

vibrant and teeming with reality.

In bed one evening about three weeks after my last dose of mescaline, I decided to read Quercy on Hallucination. Later, I tossed the book toward the couch and missed my aim. It fell to the floor and opening, revealed a wonderful colored reproduction inserted in the volume. I immediately picked up the book again, eager to examine those marvelous colors and to find out who had painted the original of the reproduction which I had barely glimpsed, but which I should recognize among all others. I turn the pages: Nothing. I shake the volume trying to make the loose page fall out. Impossible. I go over the book once more, page by page, and again the next morning, even getting a friend to examine it too : Nothing.

At the word "Hallucination" I had had one.

Seeing the word on the cover I had functioned. Quick as thought it appeared. And, failing to understand I had kept on searching in vain for the admirable colored reproduction, more real than a real one, among the colorless pages of the book whose title had provoked it.

III CHARACTERISTICS OF MESCALINE

A blow in the face makes you see a thousand candles or a thousand stars but not a cart-load of soot or an act of one of Shakespeare's plays, even abridged.

When the action of mescaline is at its height, it produces blinding images, or images ringed with lightning, trenches of fire, as well as, in the distance, lilliputian* men whose motions are more like those of the pistons of an engine than human gestures.

Any amount of crystals, and sooner or later everything turns into crystals.

Growing weaker, but still very turbulent, mescaline spreads out great sheets of colors with millions of distinct points and assembles crowds with the agitation of crowds. Later it is capable only of the agitation of marching caterpillars. The forms almost always innumerable, incredibly elongated, exaggeratedly frail and slender, hollowed out in the middle, disclosing hair-thin minarets, columns like needles, little pinnacles that are altogether too dainty, lozenges, and all the things that are thinnest and most elongated, elongated and frail. Often instead of being hollowed out they are broken† in the middle or in several places. For any one who has taken mescaline, even once, the arts of Mexico (Zapotec and Toltec statues; Aztec temples), with their multiple broken lines, become eloquent, take on new significance.

Still weaker, mescaline makes everything tremble with constant little tremblings, oscillations, junctions — disjunctions. There is a permanent miniature seism which makes one think of a ruiniform process, yet in spite of all the fissures nothing ever collapses.

Visions.

*What Mescaline
makes you see.*

*What Mescaline
produces above all is
a prodigious
vibration, multiple,
delicate,
polymorphous,
appalling, and which
apparently will never
stop.*

* Would the lilliputian image, common to most toximaniacs, be due to the fact that the normal enlargement of the prodigiously small image does not occur, the enlarging mechanism (or that seems to enlarge) no longer functioning.

† If you tried to draw a straight line the vibration would keep breaking it.

*as if you were
seeing the cities and
the signs of a
civilization in
myriads.*

Still later mescaline makes everything undulate* with an almost imperceptible microscopic swell. On this sort of conveyer belt that unrolls from one extreme of the field of vision to the other, one can recognize, according to individual temperament, one's own preoccupations, one's last impressions (importance of *last*) resulting from occurrences of the moment (fortuitous noises, words heard, or even thoughts transmitted, for one has become extremely receptive) *one can*, as I say, *recognize anything*, provided only that it is in myriads, as for instance crowds of people, flowerbeds, cities, herds, unploughed fields, gods or, for those who have no imagination or refuse to use it, simply innumerable points of color.

A certain thickness, but nothing actually in relief, and surfaces which would be slightly disagreeable to the touch.

Just as mescaline has a style of its own, there are colors that belong to it. Show them to any one who has taken mescaline and he will recognize them. (Not always the very same but with a strong family resemblance.)

*Stage 1.
Rape through
movement*

First of all the gaudy ones†. Strident reds pass next to emphatic greens. It is an optical melodrama. The repulsive ones next. Precious stones in quantities, patently false, are an inexhaustible offering.

*Stage 2. Cajolement
through movement*

Growing still weaker, mescaline will distribute, to the point of surfeit, watered silks, dubious satins, nickled objects with the nickle chipped, and linings in flashy tones. At moments, very intense pure colors, but sooner or later the bazar returns, nullifying the effect of the former beauty. Whatever the color, the sweetish tone, a regular cajoling through the eyes, is the most common.

It will enrage any one who detests easy seductions.

Why then go looking for the titillation of the nerves?

Mescaline provokes a vibratory state. Multiple vibrations, almost overwhelming at first, of abnormal amplitude and with a great many points. This should be tested

* The impression of undulation. Dr. Ajuriaguerra suggests, might be due to the irregular appearance of points on a surface.

† Is it owing to the frequent proximity of primary colors perhaps? See Rouhier, *Le Peyotl. La Plante qui fait les yeux émerveillés*. (The Plant that fills the eyes with wonder.)

experimentally. It is curious that in the case of mescaline one is conscious of this state but not in epilepsy when a person simply falls. The electrical discharge of the neurons is probably less massive and the waves different. The state of schizophrenics should also be examined from this point of view.

The fantastic elongations of the images in mescalinian vision might be related to the points. At the beginning of the intoxication the points are very high and, several following one after the other, very close together. The visual image is (or is accompanied by a phenomenon that is) in the same size-category as these enlarged vibrations. This would also explain the wave-image interference as well as the wave-thought interference (though disturbed to the point of madness) phenomena noted in several places in this book (see page 64, Chapt. V).

★ ★ ★

It is curious that in the Yoga technique (and a few others), keeping the eyes in an excessively convergent position while contemplating, without moving, the tip of one's nose, is sufficient by this abuse of the eyeballs, to give rise to visions and hallucinations and to provoke the second state, a sort of autohypnosis. The reverse of the path taken by the drug. Mescaline goes from the optical cortex toward the eye, the other from the eye to the optical cortex.

*Visions,
doorway of the
second state.*

"Come back." said the gourou to whom I had been entrusted, "when, after meditating in this position, you see a light *there*." "There" being my forehead. I am reminded of this now. For, once more, through excessive pride I probably missed something essential. It was distasteful to me to employ a method so entirely corporeal. Stupidity of the noble attitude! One must, without aim or shame, traverse the mediocre human condition from beginning to end. Freeing oneself from it *afterwards*, not before ... if that is really what one should do.

★ ★ ★

Mescaline diminishes the imagination. It castrates, desensualizes the image. It makes images that are a hundred percent pure. Laboratory experiments.

Normally mine, like those of a great many people, like those of non-scientists, invariably live in odors, sounds, contacts, warmth, flesh, and mingle with everything.

But Mescaline makes images so completely stripped of the pleasant fur of sensation, and so wholly visual that they are the vehicles of the purely mental, of the abstract, of demonstration.

It is also the enemy of poetry, of meditation, and above all of mystery. Perhaps it does differ a little. Thus a cavalcade though not conducive to meditation might seem for anyone who seized the meaning of it, as slow as the interminable death of an old man. But, oh the speed! An opium addict questioned me about mescaline. Does it, he wanted to know, excite you or does it make you calm (that is, capable of grandeur)? At my reply, he scornfully changed the subject.

★ ★ ★

*Mescaline repeats,
enumerates*

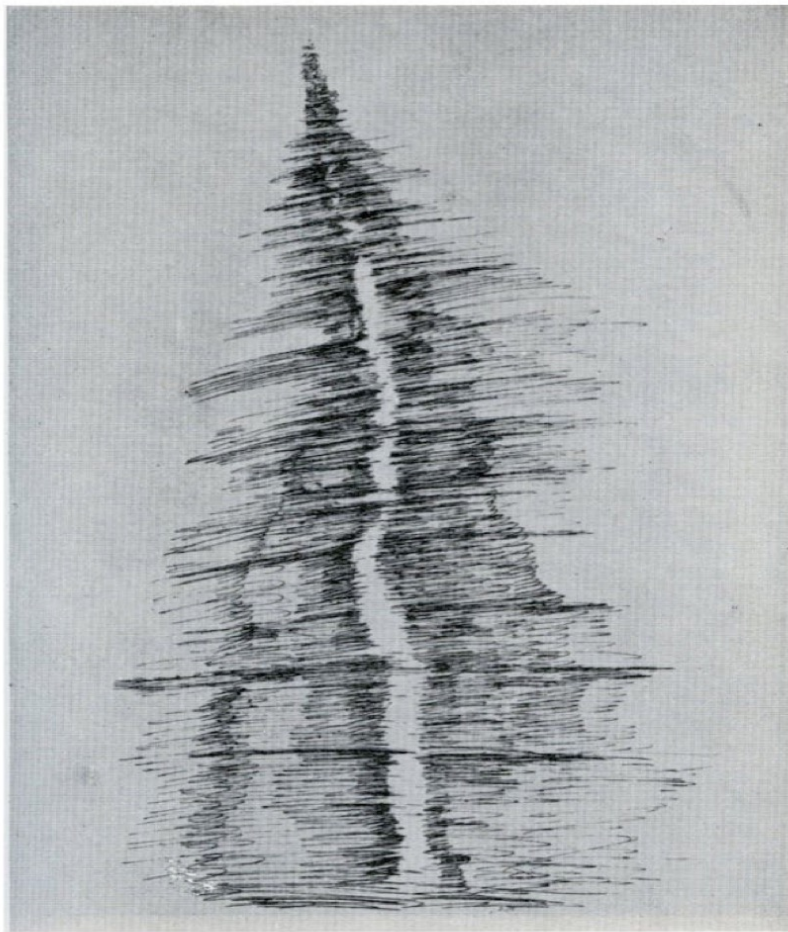
Mescaline is a disorder of composition. It elaborates stupidly. Elementary, mentally deficient, senile.

Associated with words, it proceeds by enumeration. Associated with space and representation, it draws by means of repetition. And by means of symmetry (symmetry and more symmetry!)

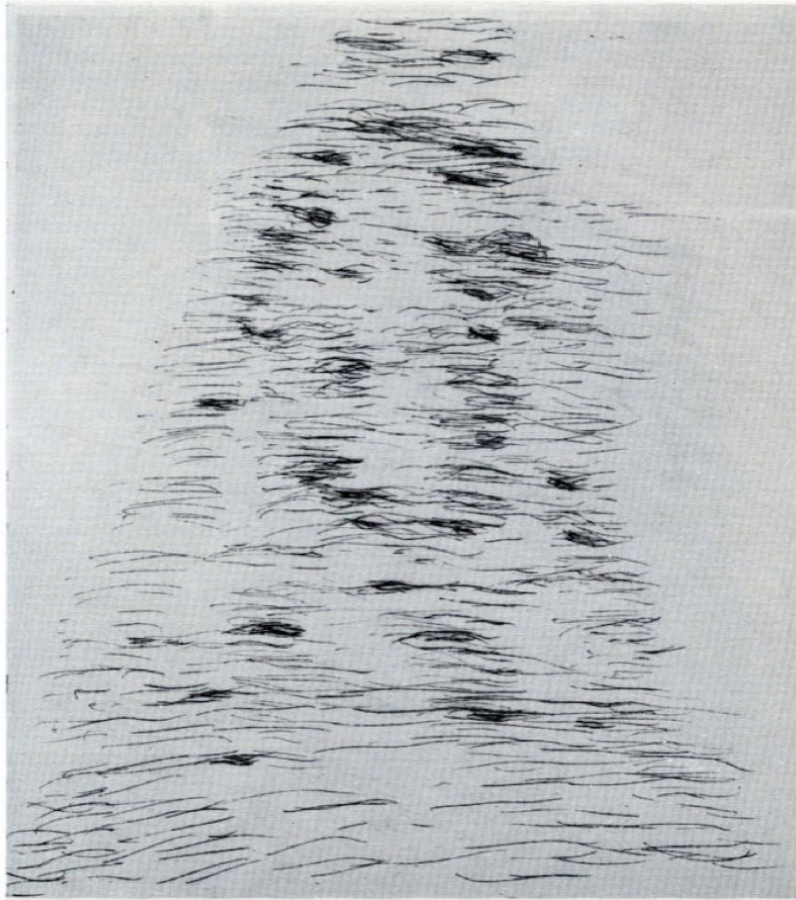
The seism which at first attacked the visual cortex, now sends out its vibrations all over. You can situate certain ones. Where the others go you can't tell. You suspect that many workshops are no longer intact. Word workshops suffer and many useful barriers fall. Words you dislike keep coming, colors and tints you have always shunned.

Two weeks after the last experiment, I still could not write without constant repetitions and in the most banal fashion, due largely to a lack of images, natural ones, images I would have needed as examples of laws I thought I had discovered. Or else I would revert to images imposed on me by the drug, but without being able to take any liberties with them, no possible variations — imagination completely paralyzed.

Even in conversation, though more talkative, less reserved, I had become destitute of images. "The chaste









plant*” (Rouhier) is the terrain and the triumph of the abstract.

In spite of appearances, one is in the abstract, in the swift abstract. (Especially swift if there are no words being dragged along.) One cannot “settle” anywhere. These beings are diagrams; these forms, rough drafts. Here, image does not summon image. An image appears, only if evoked by a thought, a word, an abstraction.!

The image : fixation of the idea. The abstract is a way of remaining in motion. The image is a means of getting anchored, the return to solid ground. Without images abstraction would not prove its point. You couldn’t tell whether it were really an idea or an ignis fatuus. The image is the proof of its successful arrival, its landing, its well-earned rest. One advances only by means of abstractions, but one finds rest only in the image.

In mescaline, the images are epiphenomina (abundant and encumbering), but it is the abstract that counts.

One is inundated with light. The most commonplace thought, for one is very matter-of-fact, after a few rebounds becomes metaphysical. Bounding and rebounding on other ideas which serve as springboards, grasping connections instantaneously, it never stops advancing at a dizzy pace, never stops illuminating, discovering, flying along with an all devouring appetite for detection, so that the optical carnival accompanying it, or the idiotic stammerings of language it has superseded, are promptly forgotten.

The additions to the principal idea develop with pheno-

* Chaste, anti-erotic, and though it leaves a man’s virility intact, even coition does not succeed in de-abstracting it.

f Contrary to what has long been believed, clairvoyance (see Dr. Jarricot’s observations) is not visual. The clairvoyant suddenly (by intuition) knows, let us say, that a certain person whose name is mentioned, is pregnant. Afterwards, badly and gropingly, and erroneously he manufactures images at random: congestion of the ovaries, various anatomic details based on an insufficient stock of scientific knowledge and faultily described.

First man knows, then he understands, last he sees, or thinks he sees, and embroiders.

In the same way the true poet creates, then understands . . . sometimes.

minal speed, the emendations still more quickly, and sudden backward flashes like lightning, fall on all the things that had remained in shadow, making them glaringly evident. In this abstract, unlike the visions which vainly try to keep up with it, there is no stammering, no circus parade. The prodigious speed of the visions is laughable, a snail, compared to that of the abstract idea which, constantly in the lead, ignores them as it pursues its headlong flight.

Through mescaline, the intelligence, instead of being constructive, is above all interested in covering ground. It excels in covering ground. Never resting, non-contemplative. It is without the power of being panoramic, of having an all-embracing view, of working synoptically. This traverser of space lacks a critical sense (but is critical of the other intelligence), pursues its course and plunges ahead without ever looking at anything around it. I myself, misled by the light it threw on everything, on every problem (and everything became a problem presented for my solution), I yielded to the temptation (which I know so well, but against which I am usually on my guard) of believing in each new enlightenment which is really an illusion, or at best the forerunner of new obscurities and to be avoided like the pest. What irony! It was mescaline, through its own mescaline defect, which gave me the illusion of understanding mescaline, and plunged me into explanations in the first place, and led me to make a hundred reflections . . . and this book.

Difficult to introduce an image into mescaline so that it will stay, but when it is a question of ideas, even fleeting ones, mescaline will realize them, will "image" them, on the spot. Those at least that can circulate on mescaline's vibratory ground, where they will be shaken in ludicrous idiotic crowds, but more idiotic still, any one who allows himself to be distracted by them.

*Phenomenon of
conjuring up
apparitions*

The Huichols, the Tahahumaras, and many other Mexican tribes were formerly in the habit of coming together for the same mental pabulum. Or was it the same? They sought a god seeking the Peyotl, and the other gods, incited by the solemnity of the sacramental act.

were never far off. The gods of volcanos, of fire, of harvests, of rain, the god of the stars and of the Universe. It was enough for an Indian to pronounce the *name* of the god he worshipped, for the god, *by order* of the word, to *appear*.

What we learn in demonology seems now quite clear : *that the name is everything*. Here verified.

The demon, once called, even if he does not exist, will appear to any one who, being in the second state, has had the imprudence or the audacity of pronouncing his name, No matter whether the trance comes from religious exaltations, through the dance, or as practiced in all parts of the world according to ritual, simply from having first chewed a few datura leaves, or the flowering tips of Indian hemp.

As for the Westerner today, so long an unbeliever in the gods and now incapable of imagining a form in which they might appear to him, what his mind grasps, the only god he can still conceive, a god it would be vain to worship, is infinite relativity, the unending cascade, the cascade of causes and effects, or rather of what goes before and of what comes after, where everything is driving wheel and *follower wheel*. Besides this constant passage of wheel into wheel, erroneously called dispersion, is disturbing to many people, for their minds are bent on assembling. Not enjoying this speed, incapable of flying, they simply go to sleep as they would in a train.

In place of gods : Pullulation and Time.

In mescaline time is immense. The fantastic acceleration of the images and ideas has created it. Now it is supreme. The rocket heads of the ideas shoot through it at a prodigious speed without affecting it. This is the kind of time God would inhabit if he existed . . .

The other time does not touch him.

On that sensational Sunday when I was able to change times, I lived in security.

A new time, a time which does not seem in the least inconceivable but, on the contrary, seems like true time rediscovered. The incommensurable is natural. It alone is natural. Strange as it may be, you have come home. Of this you are sure.

Space! Space too has changed. Why couldn't mescaline

be satisfied with space and, like ether, let you plunge into it and live like a prince in complete and lordly isolation?

Why can't mescaline stop bothering us with all these images? Absurd desire, for this space is determined by these omnipresent images. I am a continent of points. I am walled in by cliffs of points. An endless wall of points is my frontier.

Pullulation! Pullulation everywhere. Pullulation and no possibility of escape.*

Space that is teeming, a space of gestation, of transformation, of multiplication, whose swarming, even if only an illusion, would give a better idea than our ordinary vision of what the Cosmos is like. A quick, a unique means (though people who are homesick for infinity find it more or less in all drugs) of entering into communication with corporeal infinity. This stellar interior is so amazing, its motions so accelerated, that it is not recognized as such. Cellular autoscropy, or beyond the cellular where energies are discerned better than particles, and where the images released by an overactive mind are instantly superposed as on a screen.

In this crumblejumble, directed more by the waves than by spherules, there reigns at moments a no less unbearable and infinite rectilinearity.

The symmetry (more mechanical than mental, arranged for the most part without rhyme or reason and wildly repetitive) might well be derived from the waves, the attention following their interminable chain, and jumping to the right and to the left of an imaginary line. Undulation is a model of symmetry, but, since there are a hundred others in the body and in the mind, this explanation may be discarded.

The repetition (also creating symmetries) is far more curious. No question, naturally, of figures being repeated only three or four times. In mescaline there is no repetition under a hundred, and what is more, the last one is only

* See at the end the remarks by Be. S. on space, determined, according to him, not by the swarming images, but chiefly by a durable system tending to return, which he calls "Privileged image." This he believes has its analogy in the image of the "furrow" in my visions, which is both variable and permanent.

provisional, only until one is conscious of it, then immediately it goes on repeating itself two, three, four hundred times.

Strange multiplication (this entire universe is born by means of spasmodic gestation).

The successive generations of a body, the successive multiplications of a figure (geometric or natural) are accomplished by means of successive discharges, with a complete halt between each one, or after each series, then starting up again almost immediately, and the whole thing at so incredible a speed as to be at times almost instantaneous. Generally each phase is clearly visible, clean cut, startling : speed and increment by *quanta of energy*.

No matter what happens in this space, you have plenty of time to view the spectacle. With your new time, with your minutes made up of three million instants, you will never be in a hurry, with your attention superdivided you will never be outdistanced.

And yet, little by little, a strange slow rhythm, evidence of the complex harmonies that install themselves in ones being in the most extraordinary situations (in fact the body takes more than three hours to find this rhythm), establishes itself in you and forms the cycle of four minutes, which seems much longer. No matter what the spectacle you were watching in your vision, after that length of time it will suffer a general overthrow. Another composition will at once take its place, will be developed, will be repeated until a new upheaval occurs and your attention will turn to the next sight. It is then that you give a low sigh, a sigh of extreme relief which is very moving to anyone who hears it and understands. But the new presentation will follow without delay. Here it comes: it emerges, grows distinct, is developed, is manipulated, changes, multiplies, then in turn, when its time has run out, it collapses and is not seen again.

These spectacles thus oddly embedded in their four or three minute nest, come only when mescaline has already grown somewhat calmer. Very different its beginning, its full force, the height of its tempest. Then the whole theater of action, dislocated by the other jolts, by the other "seizures" suffered in every part of one's being,

*discontinuous
growth*

*progressions
corresponding
probably to quanta.*

*Everything, even the
biggest cities, must
be constructed and
finished in four
minutes*

breaks up and becomes meaningless. Multiplicity and overlapping are at work in you.

At the same minute, that is, in the twenty minutes which equal one ordinary minute, in a third of a second perhaps, I feel a *frisson* (a shiver), I see the word shiver (*frissoner*), I see little “friss’s” written to infinity, and “s’s” whistling, but making no sound. At the same time I am being raked, I am being jerked, I fall on the rocks, I want to shout aloud, and everything that is happening has been happening since the beginning of the world, it is suffix and confectioner at the same time, and innumerable scumblings are produced, and superlatively is what is, and it is certain, absolutely certain, superlatively in the uninterrupted jolts . . .

Thus the overstimulating drug strikes a great many keys of my head, but does not know how to play, does not know how to make me play.

Endlessly broken up, our attempts at composition admit only this one constant . . . *Very* ... It is very . . . Everything is very . .

*an infinity
machine*

What is a person saying when he says “infinite being?”

I should be boasting if I spoke more presumptuously about the infinite than about the finite. I never touched anything. I was in an *infinity mechanism*. Everything that appeared was caught in this mechanism. And I am also boasting when I say “everything.” Always what was paltry appeared in it rather than what was important.

But contrary to what happens with the finite, it made no difference. In any case the size would not have been greater or any less in need of being stretched out and stretched out and stretched out and forever, forever, forever.

Nor was it because my mind was more receptive, more comprehensive that I had arrived there, but — how shall I put it ? — through greater division, and not at all from having desired to touch “infinite being” (?) either, but rather because, against my natural instinct, I had accepted infinite fragmentation, the teeming state composed of what is smallest, which divides and overruns everything.

I was witnessing a “series* in infinity” but it had nothing to do with the magnitude of the pressures, but with, for example, an error, from which, as soon as I was aware of it, I extricated myself only to fall into another, from which, as soon as I was aware of it, I extricated myself, only to become the victim of another, from which, as soon as I was aware of it, I extricated myself, only to be overtaken by another error, from which, as soon as I was aware of it, I extricated myself only to be caught by a new error, from which, as soon as I was aware of it, I extricated myself only to fall into a new error . . . just as I might have gone on indefinitely from one room to another in a palace that had innumerable rooms, but built and visited in such rapid succession that fifty seconds would probably have sufficed. The phenomenon resides precisely in the fact that counting is out of the question. It occurred to me that the madman who, thanks to his madness, knows a similar lightning course, must certainly view with pity the miserable simplification of the reasoning of the normal men around him, who want to have him locked up. And he even allows himself to be committed as just another mistake like the hundreds of mistakes he sees stretching to the horizon in an interminable suite that discourages all speech. Because of his sense of infinity he offers no resistance.

*model of the
infinite*

Toward the fifth hour after taking mescaline, and after the first tremendous shocks and the extensive developments that follow, in your fatigue (and possibly due to fatigue) the phenomenon of ideas gravitating like planets is striking and easy to follow (except when they launch their dance in earnest). An idea arrives, quickly ceases to exist. When it returns a few minutes later it seems absolutely new. Just before it disappears again you have a fugitive notion, if not of recognizing it, at least of having passed close to it before. But when? Three minutes ago? An hour ago?

*gravitation
of ideas*

* Series says clearly enough that there will be an end. But having, by the speed of its components, got beyond the possibility of measurement and precluded the very idea of counting and appraising, it became a “model” of the infinite.

*Inner dotage
revealed by
Mescaline*

Peace through a kind of dotage.

It is probably in the same way an old man repeats a phrase a hundred times, an idea that ninety-nine different zones of darkness have successively hidden from him, so that it comes back to him as many times, fresh and spontaneous. All men know this uncontrollable rambling, but are able to keep it to themselves. The old, no longer having the same control, betray themselves. As for a child, why should he hide this. For him it is his circus.

Any one who takes mescaline will learn all about his own inner dotage, much exaggerated because of the speed, or because the system of brakes controlling this speed has stopped functioning.

But what of the inventor who is said to make a discovery by continually thinking about it?

The difference from ordinary dotage, which does not improve the idea no matter how often it returns, is that the inventor or the creator makes a new connection each time the idea passes, accumulating here, taking away there, until, after a number of tentative modifications he has created a work corresponding to his secret desire.

Notwithstanding these ramblings, the apparently planetary revolutions of an accelerated universe are one of the wonders of mescaline. Also, experimentally, mescaline creates the world of relativity. Makes a display of relativity. Suddenly, forty minutes after mescaline has been taken, the speed of the images is fantastically increased and time turned topsyturvy. Everything is modified. Ideas are balls rather than ideas. The improbable unreality of reality is obvious, violent. The swift, shining thoughts revolve like astral bodies.

Coming out of mescaline you know better than any Buddhist that everything is nothing but appearance. What came before was only the illusion of health. What has just been was only the illusion of the drug. You are converted.

It is the next day and the following days that you are better able to call to mind the train of thought during the constant acceleration. At the time the speed of appearance and disappearance is too great.

Thoughts go by at a tremendous rate, each element perceptible for only an instant. One must catch enough

on the fly to make a mental connection, to join together properly or to disjoin. It was in this way I spent the first days of my return to “mental health,” for I almost forgot to say that mescaline is an experiment in madness. Its use in the study of mental disease is still uncommon, but will not remain so much longer. It is “experimental schizophrenia.”

I found this out later, otherwise certain of its tricks, for which I was unprepared, would have surprised me less, and would perhaps have seemed less worth noticing.

It told me more about the madness of others than about my own, and more about symptoms than fundamentals. Above all it threw light on mental automatism and on the constitution of different mentalities. For the first time I understood from within that animal, till now so strange and false, that is called an orator. I seemed to feel how irresistible must be the propensity for eloquence in certain people. Mescaline acted in such a way that it gave me the desire to make proclamations. On what? On anything at all. It was always coming back to that, insisting upon my being a ranter, but about what I did not know or care. Particularly, as everything was to be proclaimed as fact, positively, absolutely . . . J. P. speaks of the absolute and universal certainty he had felt. But I didn't. My notes, written on the instant, are full of superlatives (which tormented me), but up in the air, related to nothing, to none of my thoughts, and couldn't be used in my book : attached to nothing.

I wonder by what means mescaline provoked superlatives in me? Was it through the intensity of its pressure and through the proportional and twin intensity of my resistance? Quite likely. Most orators have high blood pressure.

If I had yielded to it, I should have been well on the road to megalomania.

The strings that set the megalomaniac in motion were being jerked, and violently. Violently and mechanically. But I did not respond. One good reason would have influenced me more easily.

The great demolisher also put me into certain normal states, which for me were not normal.

Taking mescaline or some other well chosen drug will

one day perhaps be required in university stadiums and by the future “manipulators” of men.

More than anything else mescaline demolished some of my effectual barriers, the ones that make me myself and not one of the others among my possible “me’s.” It took me weeks and weeks to reconstruct them and to shut myself inside them again.

the next day

★ ★ ★

Just as some modern painter whom you begin by detesting, find incongruous and reject, later on spoils for you the painters who formerly satisfied you, makes them seem dull and too facile by comparison, so the day following my experiment with mescaline no painting seemed interesting (except to a mild degree, mediumistic pictures). They all appeared to me stupidly (and wilfully!) directed away from the innumerable, if not from the infinite.

Those that two days before were the most beautiful, because the most sober, were now the ones that seemed the most foreign to me, the most miserably in accord with man’s superficial appearances, his chest, his hands, his feet, ... or with his house. In the same way the most beautiful pages of literature seemed devoid of interest, blind, beggarly and cramped.

The swarming, even though unconscious, was still in me, preventing any communication with simplicity, while greatness too closely linked to measurement had no longer any meaning. It was lost to me.

★ ★ ★

ten days after

I was still writing in snatches. It was impossible for me to compose continuously and freely. Everything came in snatches, very small snatches, isolated words, bits of sentences, comparisons, sometimes only the correction of a word that had arrived half an hour before, never several whole sentences one after the other. Nevertheless, at the end of three weeks, these little scraps “held” a subject, having been guided secretly but deliberately by the compass of an unforgettable North.

In short, I had no longer any authority over words, I no longer knew how to manage them. Fairwell to writing!

After other barriers, my barrier against approximation,

against “almost” was no longer working.

Like my unknown brothers of Zacatecas, mentioned in 1737 by P. de Arlegui in the *Chronica de la Provincia de Zacatecas*, as being “incapable when drunk on their horrible Peyotl, of keeping a secret,” I too, for the first time in my life, preferred telling a secret to keeping it. Even worse. I could hardly wait to divulge secrets which, though personal it is true, I had promised myself never to reveal.

Releasing them was like a sort of ejaculation.

My barrier of hesitations and tergiversations no longer existed either. I would answer letters by a “yes” or a “no,” according to circumstances, without looking for complexities. I approached people wide open, enjoying laying myself open, of seeing them open, deplorable state that I hope soon to change.

★ ★ ★

Most of mescaline’s images had disappeared. Certain ones would still come and go, but I hardly noticed, being neither proud nor ashamed of them. If I began to draw, a compelling symmetry, foreign to me before, warned me that I was still living in the memory of those images.

*Three weeks
later*

Fully conscious, only the furrow still remained, the furrow of the fracture, distinct as on the first day. The pullulations after an apparent eclipse, had returned, pullulation of the infinitely small, that of the infinitely possible, that of the infinitely farther on.

But the furrow remained the central problem.

Could this trench, which had been so dominant, and so constant for hours on end, and whose existence I would have sworn was more evident than my own, could it have been a sign made to me by the baboon Mescaline through its silly images?

Or was it perhaps only a simple comparison? A word-reflection such as, “I am more open” that had occurred to me and out of which *It* had made images without end, and a *film*.

But why, although my reflections varied, did mescaline always come back to this same, or an equivalent, image ?

And now after more than twenty days; whether I am lying down, sitting, or walking, the furrow is there, passing

straight through my head without paying any attention to the brain or to the diencophalon or to the gray matter which must certainly be there, splitting me from one end to the other, joining me to infinity, by an infinite path, a magnetic field strangely linked to . . . linked to what?

★ ★ ★

*After more
than three
months*

Little by little I am finding myself again. Though not yet fully recuperated, I am getting farther from this drug which is not the drug for me. My drug is myself, which mescaine banishes*. I am getting away from that which mescaline banishes.* I am getting away from that change of character which mescaline created in me. I am returning to my slowness, to my filters, to the bridges I build between things, and which I prefer to the things themselves, and above all I am farther from the aseptic images of mescaline, I am returning to my own great mixer that intoxicates me as mescaline never can.

The incessant mingling of little rivulets converging from all over, is what keeps the "health" reservoirs sweet, true infinity, and it is only their great variety that prevents them from seeming infinite.

*And all my
strength has
returned.
Who would have
believed it
possible !
My strength !
With what
adolescent joy I
feel it coming
back.*

Joy — for the first time in my life the joy of discovering that I have a will, of recovering my will, about which I had always been unjust (no matter) and not very astute either. My great discovery after the drug: will power. At present I am conscious of it everywhere, I feel myself full of it, finding it where I least suspected its existence.

Should I perhaps add this? I keep seeing cats on the high branches of the trees in my garden even when there are none there. Sometimes pigeons. More than once I have had to pick up my binoculars — these pseudo cats are such perfect imitations!

* There must be temperaments that are more mescalinian than others, who, due perhaps to adrenochrome, a hormone whose composition is very similar to mescaline, form a word immediately from a picture. I know several. Races too, perhaps.

IV INDIAN HEMP

Notes to serve as a comparison between two hallucinogens

Anyone who takes hashish as an experiment-witness* after taking mescaline leaves a racing automobile or a long distance electric locomotive for a pony†.

He is back in the human state. First of all he is pervaded by a feeling of benevolence. He is filled with an agreeable optimism that warms his heart. He even feels the urge to go out, and he goes out. (He is no longer a kind of invalid shivering in his room between two fires and wrapped in a blanket to boot, curtains tightly drawn, the tiniest ray of light cutting like a razor.) He walks, and he wants to see people. A face opposite him in the bus — he settles down, is happy, would stay for hours if the bus route were long enough . . . Getting home, he feels a bit restless. Then suddenly, though nothing has struck him as any different — he laughs.

At what? Why? No visible reason for laughing. What he wanted was visions, but for that — he doesn't know it yet — he will have to wait for hours. Again he laughs. Again for no reason.

I (to get back to the only witness I have to go by) I,

* There were psychologists and psychiatrists who attributed to Aldous Huxley's subconscious the ruins that appeared to him under mescaline. Actually, they appear to almost everyone who takes the drug. The result — probably — of the tremulous motion of the images of real (or imagined) objects, making them seem to be in ruins or about to collapse. In response to this attitude (for in the name of the psychology of the depths, which has become a veritable catchall, I met with similar contentions) I decided to take another hallucinogen in order to understand more fully the different incitements to seeing and feeling. As it was simply for the sake of comparison and to make sure I was not misjudging mescaline's "originality," my experiment with the second drug was superficial, and what follows does not pretend to be a study of that drug, namely hashish. Besides, hashish does not give itself so quickly. It is very secretive.

† A pony, however, is capable of surprises not to be looked for from a locomotive.

*jerky vibrations
like a stairway, the
last "step" sloping
backward*

"in ambush" kept watch inside myself because of this laugh, this laugh without a cause.

Vague whirlwinds passed, slowly creating the second state. Whirlwinds and something else. It was as though uniform motions ended abruptly in short jerky vibrations, very short, successively shorter. I should have represented it graphically by a regularly inclined plane ending suddenly in very narrow steps, each step narrower than the one above, narrower than expected . . . making you fall. The unexpected, or the successively unexpected, provoking your laugh. A mechanical, or rather vibratory basis for laughter. Also a kind of comic metaphysics, but only after a certain length of time, the subject having been gently shaken, prepared for it.

Thus half an hour later, with an overpowering sense of its absurdity, I found myself contemplating a map of Argentina in a dictionary which in falling had chanced to open at that page.

Prodigiously amused, I sat there enjoying the exorbitantly comical shape of that country, whose humorousness had escaped me till that moment and again completely escaped me a couple of days later.

Even while savoring its humorousness, I was only vaguely aware of what put this country in a class by itself. Yet I was not thinking of anything specifically Argentinian. I simply, in an ecstasy of absurdity, silently plunged into its ineffably funny shape, an undeserved misfortune it seemed to me, from which this country would never recover.

For a great many people Indian Hemp manifests itself in these outbursts of laughter, although, especially at first, they have not yet noticed anything funny. Then, having been *massaged* by laughter, *by laughter-waves*, by a vibratory tickling that is so characteristic, little by little they begin to find things funny, particularly when there is nothing funny about them. The absurdity lies precisely in the contrast between what is non-comical and the person's own overwhelming sense of absurdity, and in the object's perfect seriousness which their own state of hilarity is about to get the best of. A certain kind of seriousness becomes fairly irresistible. It will not, however, be laughter of the back-slapping sort but, true to its origin, it will be a laugh that is delicate, though intense, born of tenuous

vibrations, a laugh that is “in the know,” that grasps the infinite subtleties of an infinitely absurd world.

Waiting for the visions that still fail to appear, (should I give up hope? Some people who take hashish never have visions and get along very well without them) I begin to kill time.

Looking at photographs, I notice that I have a marked preference for certain zones, much more marked than usual. Naturally, like everybody else, I have preferences, but now they are different. For example, instead of looking at the camel and the head of the camel driver which, as I know myself, I would normally have looked at first, ignoring them. I pause for a long time in contemplation of the jagged peak behind them and farther off the rocky crags of Hoggar. They delight me. I observe with marvelous “optical dexterity,” so to speak, all the infractuosities of the rocky mass. I follow them with my eyes. I can see in depth. I feel once more the pleasure *sui generis* that one experiences in the mountains where the simple fact of seeing is so alluring because of the irregular crests, so agreeably multiple to discern, to touch with the eye, a pleasure photographs have never given me before. Contrary to the general belief (and this might almost be a reason for considering it one of the sources of abstract art) photography is that representation by means of light which is perfect as a spectacle to be looked at, but which you cannot enter, *even though people, places, and things are its concern. You pass by. You let your eyes skim over them.* Unlike paintings of the past Western, Chinese, Persian . . . photography tells you nothing about distances and interdistances, which would have to be felt in order for you to be able to mingle with the people and places represented. It is opaque. *You are thrust back from the very place you admire by the meticulousness of light and shade, unfortunate glaze endowed with insulating power. No admittance!*

Hashish, dephotographing as it does the places photographed, *you can at last get in. The ice has thawed.* And so I devoured this colored landscape with a new eagerness. How wonderful just *looking* is! How feline! A new youth came back to me, one of the subtlest, the youth of the eye.

Zones of preference

marvelous optical dexterity

The eye rejuvenated

Today I quickly get bored travelling. The feeling of having seen it all before, and perhaps a certain aging even of the eye! Whatever the reason, enjoyment had returned, the enjoyment of the eye, alone and sufficient. With my tentacles of sight, alert and enchanted, I “fingered” the rocks and the palms.

Stereo-vision

What disturbance of the ocular apparatus, what subtle movements forward and backward, backward and forward, what vibrations, what infinitesimal variations in the visual adjustment had succeeded in producing this delicate (and discriminating) vision, this stereovision, which mescaline never gives? For the overlapping and the dislocating motions of mescaline do nothing to improve one’s vision, they merely heighten the colors.

Was it for the same reason that a little while ago I plunged into faces? For it was more like plunging into them than falling in love with them, or becoming indulgent toward them. I saw too clearly — now that I think of it — their tiny wrinkles . . . and appraised them.

Psychological space

But hashish does even more. It makes things stand out in relief, intimately, humanly, giving a sense of presences, *psychological space*, such as one feels on entering a room full of people who are sitting, getting up, preparing to leave, where some come toward you, some glance at you and others don’t, and still others, whom you would like to touch, do not even raise their eyes to look at you.

Together, all these movements, actual or potential, occupy psychic space. Into this space you can enter. This is what makes photographic images, rehabilitated by hashish, so wonderfully real.

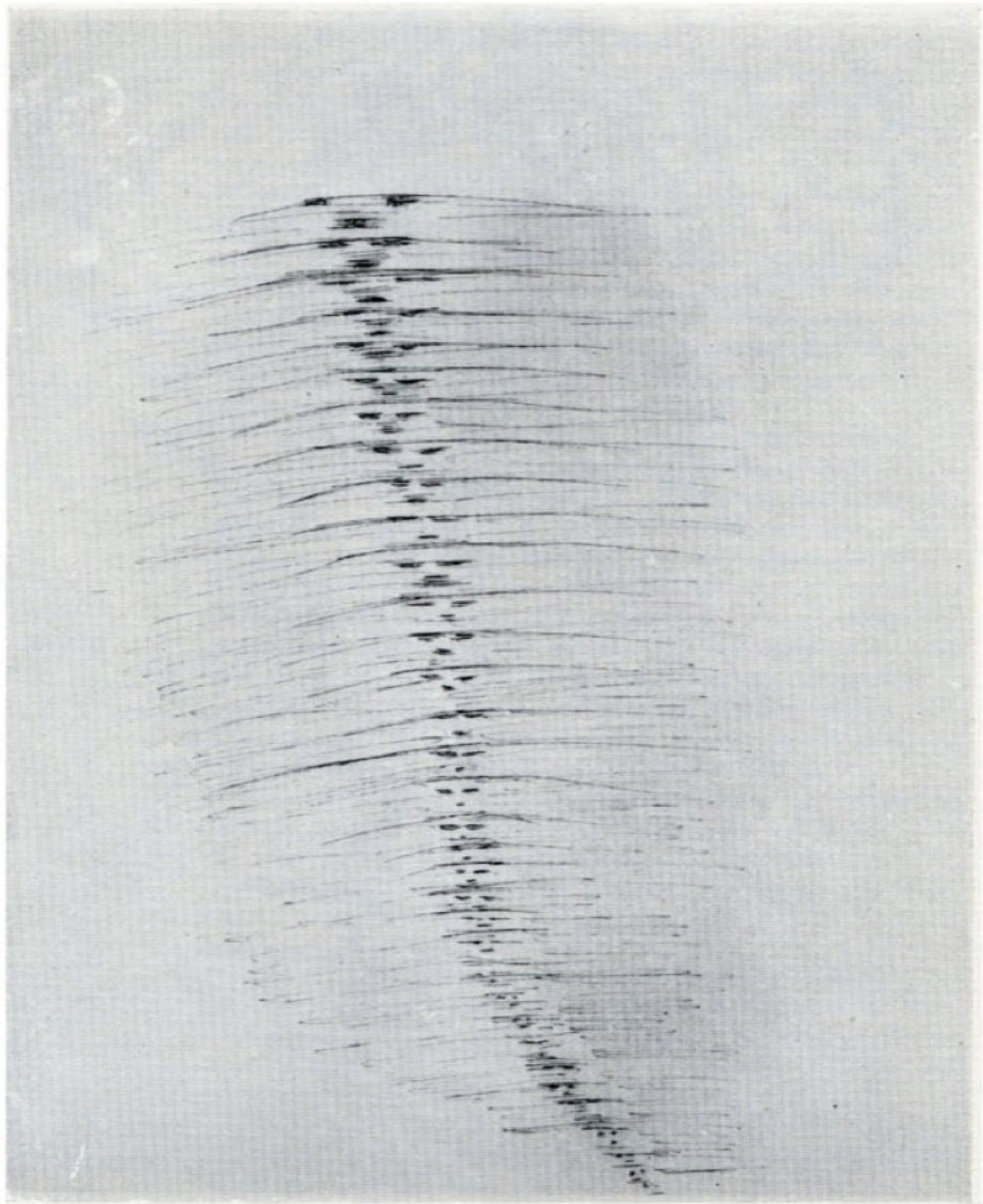
★ ★ ★

Sensation of heights, sensation of lightness of being suspended in air

... I was looking through a magazine at some photographs of those amazing divers of the New Hebrides who, held back (more or less) by long lianas, leap head-first from a rustic tower fifty feet or so high, landing on the ground slowed-down, but not always enough !

I was conscious of the distances, I estimated them as though I were up there on top of the tower, myself the man, or with the man who was about to jump, even having the sensation of dizziness, and even after turning the page, still feeling myself on top of the tower, still at that





[Faint handwritten text, possibly a signature or name]

[Faint handwritten text]

[Faint handwritten text]

[Faint handwritten text]

[Faint handwritten text]

terrifying height. At the time I did not know that the sensation of floating in the air, of being weightless, was one of the characteristics of hashish. The flying carpet is not just a legend, but an old reality in Persia and Arabia where for centuries Indian hemp made people float on air and travel through the skies.

★ ★ ★

The third day I took hashish, it was no longer faces that arrested my attention (already blasé, they left me indifferent), but the voice of a girl I passed on the street. I did not even turn around to look at her, but, as she vanished in the opposite direction her voice, as if arrested and hesitating, remained, and I continued to dwell in it amorously — a voice, hardly mature, and genuinely shy, that made you forget everything else, a voice that implored protection, so wary of the phenomenon of speech, advancing so cautiously like a foot at the edge of a precipice, or fingers held out toward the fire. How was it that everyone did not with justifiable emotion retrace their steps in order to follow this exquisite presence? With me decisions are always arrived at too late. I really should have turned back, caught up with her, faced her again, got to know this girl, so elegant in her apprehensions, so touching and distinguished in her tiny boldness, which must have seemed enormous to her, so delicately adventurous in her loss of reserve as she took her first tentative step.

Stereophony

Later on at home I begin vaguely going over in my mind a scene of a motion picture seen a few days before, when suddenly the noises and the voices from the episode “burst out” and violently throw themselves at me. A memory revived, but stronger than the original impression.

I also seem to be hearing in an unusual way. A sound so faint that I would not ordinarily have heard it at all, is perceptible through three closed doors. I can even follow all its shiftings though very slight, follow them as I would a flying swarm of bees. I am experiencing stereoaudition. I hear as the stags in the underwood hear when they raise, point, and lower the great hairy auricles of their independent pink ears.

★ ★ ★

How endless the waiting seems! I begin to doubt, I leave the house, I walk. I am restless, I exhaust myself walking, I walk and walk, I come back, I go to bed, I fall asleep . . . and suddenly I am awakened by noisy bursts of laughter : children throwing snowballs at each other in my dream. But what laughter! Apparently right in my room, and the little boys so distinct, the distance between the different groups so appreciable . . . How different from my usual *dreams*, so vague . . . when I have any.

Quickly I draw the sheet up over my eyes. The visions must be coming ! At last!

Oh, these were no longer the cataracts of Mescaline, the typhoon in the world of images, the oscillations and the ruiniform constructions and the constant disintegration and transformation.

The images were distinct, stayed quietly in place. I had enough time (just enough) to see them clearly.*

It was like a series of very short scenes in color, very well composed, on the sober side, the last one very like a stage tableau, ending abruptly, a tableau like a final word.

As if the whole thing had been composed by an excellent director, by an eccentric gentleman. Preposterous, sometimes witty, a dead-pan comedian. Abruptness causing laughter. (Again!) But they didn't make me laugh at all. First, "prestadigitator" tricks — a bearded knee and things of that sort. But always coming as a surprise. I was surprised every time. They were ambiguous rather than funny, as for instance, a wonderfully white corolla with just a delicious touch of Indian yellow here and there, with one of its delicate petals, as blooming as health itself, attached as if by a tiny chain, by a very very long watch spring. Sometimes they seemed like an apologue, a demonstration, as if someone were trying to signal, and after some preliminary tentatives (gradually adjusting the aim) directing the signal at me — a satanic signal.

At times they were frankly farcical. A rope I was

* After a certain number of extremely fleeting ones about which I could have told nothing at all!

watching, coiling here, uncoiling there, suddenly ended in the red muzzle of a little feline, (a sort of ocelot, it looked to me, not too frightening, its neck being made of rope, although its muzzle was very life-like and menacing). And I had involuntarily recoiled. Another time a complicated assemblage of metal pieces I am examining suddenly turns into a machine gun pointing at me.

Often the creatures seen were tiny, the men too, twenty centimeters being tall, but there was never mescaline's enormous crowd of microbemen. Not manikins devoid of expression either, but on the contrary, very animated. And curiously, often *incomplete* — a characteristic of hashish. For example half an arm would be missing, the middle part at that, and completely, no connection at all, yet the arm, not in the least inconvenienced, would do what it had to do; and in a room a table would have only three quarters of its top, the rest of the table in perfect condition and entirely new. In the same way that the too short film I mentioned seemed incomplete, broken off too soon.*

It seemed as if someone, quite the artist and very well informed about me, by means of freakish spectacles (more tricky than laughable) and which one did well to take into account, were introducing himself to me, or rather, before introducing himself, were bent on showing me how knowing he was, knowing in general and about me, in particular. He was really ingenious. He intrigued me, proved to be crafty and treacherous.

He read me like a book, spied on me, would show me the same pictures I had just been looking at after having reinterpreted, refashioned them and turned them into composite monsters — monsters no more terrifying than a newly invented word. But one didn't have to be a great scholar to recognize the allusions in them and the mocking intention.

I begin to be aware of his specialties. He likes things that have an unpleasant consistency, not just to make me uncomfortable — that is incidental — but he really prefers interesting relief, granular, and with multiple irregularities,

hashish omits

Holes. Parts missing

Surfaces in interesting relieve

* Like the last step of the laugh-producing stairway which receded, unexpectedly cut off.

bark like that of chestnut and cork trees, and the harsh surface of files. He has no use for what is smooth, he wants many little accidents. On a smooth arm he puts chapped spots, or an excrescence like a cockscomb, or he creases it like a knee. To a cheek he will give a disconcerting scrotal texture, the cicatricial surface of an injured tree, or the embarrassing skin of a turtle's neck. At first I took these for jokes. Not at all. He can make better jokes with other means.*

The tendency to elongate objects and men, characteristic of mescaline, which makes everything very long and attenuated, was not very apparent with Hashish, but not entirely absent. It was, however, very much stranger, and, as befits Ha, which is secretive, it was there as if hidden, known only to one's own obscure interior. One has the feeling of prolongation, certainly, but of what? Of time rather than space, and of non-interruption rather than time, of distance above all, of a distance that never reaches its limit.

Lying down, I looked at my leg and was struck by the distance from my head to my leg, a distance that made the idea of going from one to the other seem to me so exorbitant that I wondered who could ever succeed in doing it or even think of attempting it. And I settled myself in that length, comfortably, I settled I don't know what there (time? space?), I settled it more and more all the time.

In one of my visions, there was a hoopoe on a perch about to swallow a worm. The distance from the end of its beak, where it held its prey, to its gullet, through which the worm would have to pass, threw me into a prodigious brown study, constantly reinforced by that of the motionless bird, and he too meditating in a time that seemed immense, but not immense enough for the resolution of

* Mescaline always started off at breakneck speed without (apparently) taking any interest in me. Ha, on the contrary, seems to keep an eye on me. My Mesc. might work itself into a state, outdo itself, I never believed in anything it showed me. But now, whatever Hashish displays interests me. I follow it all the way. I want to know the end. I want to know where it is taking me.

this problem that kept us both motionless, and both of us, the bird and me, incredibly poised and watchful.

The beak was certainly long, as hoopoes' beaks are, but no longer. Yet the hoopoe, like me, had understood that in a sort of imaginary distortion of its beak the distance to be covered from its point to its base had become practically infinite.

And one can set Hashish to work, too, ask it questions, give it problems to solve. It will find an answer and, what is perhaps most extraordinary, it accepts the given data of the problem. But beware of its solution. It will make you ridiculous, you and your data! But it never shuns work. It is energetic. A good bone to give it is a photograph. Better still, two, even three. You look at them without thinking of anything — but you have thought of something just the same and Hashish won't fail to show you what it was. Then close your eyes. Now Hashish is bound to get to work.

With mescaline in you, if certain words were spoken, corresponding images would appear instantaneously, stupidly, irresistibly, without intelligence, without the least finesse. With Hashish, it is entirely different. You must give it time enough for preparation, and for destruction (like the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly), time enough for scheming, for reconstruction, phases during which more often than not you see nothing. It prefers to present you with the problem solved, that is with the finished picture which is often stupefying, a kind of dream made to order, a dream made "while you wait," in which the given data has been transformed into a monstrous and startling couple (though invariably sober and with a certain elegance in the solution).

Thus it will create a hybrid being to perfection, just as a new word is composed of two others, or as the representations of the gods Ganescha and Anubis were composed, that is a man with the head of an elephant, or a fox's head on a man's shoulders, a unit with contradictory attributes never molded or fused together, but clearly differentiated.

To make women-crocodiles is a simple matter for Hashish because, contrary to frigid mescaline, it takes an interest in women and it is also interested in skins

*Hashish is
strategist, stage-
director, devil.
You have to meet
it on its own
ground.*

*Synthesised
images*

*"Dreams while
you wait"*

*Composite
forms*

*the woman-
crocodile*

that are rough, wrinkled and tough.

Don't worry about disparities. Hashish will always manage.

With photographs spread out in front of me, I begin by looking at a road for a long time and afterward at a nude woman for an equally long time. Then I close my eyes. Hashish can now make an interesting synthesis. If this is one of its good days it may make me a very curious monster in which I shall find the woman as well as the road, each with its particular style and its genus intact, and the feminine expression will not be lacking. Nothing mechanical about Hashish. Its first moves are always unexpected, but rarely visible. This time is an exception. It is beginning in a surprising manner by making the road longer and longer and still longer, as if afraid that a road were not long enough for a woman! Finally when the road is very long, when it is lost in the distance, you notice that it is also a woman's leg which goes on and on (how right Hashish was to make the road long), and is lost in infinity. I should never have expected such a synthesis, but now it seems obvious and "says just what it means."

In a way, too, men's habit of looking at a woman's legs first and going on from there, is intimated and perhaps made fun of.

If, with the woman, I gave Hashish something else instead of a road, the "joining together" response was always appropriate and totally unpredictable. It was as if I saw only the objects and Hashish alone their points of resemblance.

Hashish does not only make pictures. It commits acts. *Its* pictures themselves are not made up so much of the images suggested to it as of the *desires* with which you have unconsciously filled them, and by which, unknown to you, they are *affected*. At this point you *feel*, you become conscious that you are not alone within yourself. You are lodging someone else, inhabitant no. 2. From that moment everything changes. Everything is a snare. Even in the pictures he was more than just sly or mocking, a cynic seeing too clearly.

He is going to substitute *himself* for *you* and will become inhabitant no. 1.

For, unlike you, he dares, he commits acts and *what*

acts! Acts that are not yours but which you cannot altogether disown either. They come from you, as their elements prove. They are just beyond the point where you *halted* through fear, not knowing it was through fear, not knowing that you had halted. Now you understand. His act is an invention. To imagine is to offer a new solution. He shows me that I had drawn back. But *he* did not draw back, and he makes me commit the *act*. The devil has succeeded. Devil; so the devil really exists? In any case, if you are a person suitably split and oriented (and a “visionary” — for it would never happen otherwise) whoever it is who exists in you, it is someone who discovers your demoniac possibilities.

The devil. Why never an angel? Is there no drug for angels? Apparently not.

However, in these inavowable acts which I commit through him a certain carnality is lacking. The act is there — sight and sound and the sensation of being present make a circumstantial vision — but the succulent contacts, the odors, ignoble accompaniments of real life, are not.

Sometimes in the quiet hours of the great final immobility (*Keff* in Arabic means *rest*), when one wouldn't lift an arm even to ward off an imminent disaster, images would appear as in a dream, but never known before even in a dream, images so natural, having the very impact of nature, that I said to myself, it isn't possible that they do not exist somewhere. Sights, furniture, and especially places, common ordinary places where I had no reason to be yet where I was not surprised to find myself — the short flight of steps of a rather cheap suburban villa, a lane, a tiny yard, all of which I not only saw but where I felt perfectly at home and walked around contentedly without thinking, without hesitating, without questioning, opening a door never seen before, which I would someday see perhaps and would then, I hope, recognize.

I, who admit only what is extraordinary and shut out all the things around me, the things right before my eyes, banishing them from my memory as mediocre and beneath my notice, refusing to let myself sink to their

level (consequently I know nothing and remain empty and without memories) there I was looking at them with the most simple and whole-hearted accord and familiarity.

There are days when, in a book I am reading, I mistake one word for another. Not once but twenty, fifty times, so many times indeed, a regular barrage, that soon I have no idea of what I am reading and ... I give up.

After I have smoked hashish and even a very long time afterward, when its effect is apparently over (but with hashish, always so whimsical, one never knows) and I begin reading again after an interval, interruptions, errors still occur, not more numerous but more incongruous, more censorious, more aggressive. That is how I recognize them as belonging to Hashish and not to me. Words I now read in place of the right ones do not come as they did formerly. They (those of hashish) come to me headlong, as if prompted at the last moment. The wrong one is thrown, hurled over the right one, but only for a second, the right one reappearing almost immediately, somewhat dazed, I go on with my reading.

★ ★ ★

When I go out after taking hashish I am a different man. With different eyes. Hashish points out, chooses, observes and penetrates like a rigid sword. Without it I look at things the way oxen do, having like them a slow digestion, an endless digestion of I don't know what. Such being the case, never quite free of this occupation, I can only let my eyes wander circularly, unless occasionally a spectacle more clamorous than usual draws them its way. But never for long, soon hesitant and staring, my eyes begin their circular contemplation again.

With Hashish in me I am a falcon. If I give a circular glance it will be only once, as one makes a general survey, not to be repeated. I am against dispersion. I look for an object in order to follow a trail. If it is a face, then through that face I will follow the trail to the ends of the earth. Nothing can distract me. With a look that thinks, thinks and goes through the other person's head. Without being in the least excited. Perhaps it is that inside of the head, that place of metaphysics, of calculation, which alone makes me regret hashish. For, though known so

*Ha reconstructs
me differently*

slightly, I am definitely giving it up. That place which I can only point to on my skull, saying, "it is there, five or six centimeters inside, which existed then and which had never existed before, and which if not a faculty is at least a function, and through which, even weakened by the drug, I know that I am at a center, that this center which exists in me gives me the right (and the facility) to look anyone straight into the eye, for I go beyond the features. As soon as hashish is extinct in me, it disappears, and I am obliged to return to the periphery, to the crust, that other center having gone to sleep for good.

The drawings I made after taking mescaline, either on the following day or one or two weeks later, consisted of an enormous number of very fine parallel lines, very close together with an axis of symmetry and endless repetitions.

The quick vibrating lines I drew endlessly, without thinking, without hesitating, without pausing, by their very appearance gave promise of a "visionary" drawing.

Very different my drawings after taking hashish. They were clumsy, involved, cut up, prematurely discontinued, always showing unfinished portions. The surfaces were composed of squares and polygons. A great deal was always missing.

In the same way the webs of the Zilla spider that has been drugged with atropine, and benzedrine, nembital and marihuana (experiment made by Dr. Peter Witt of Berne University) are always incomplete, the incompleteness the same for all spiders of the same family, different for each drug used.

Similarly incomplete, as could be expected, are the webs of spiders that have been induced to take the urine of schizophrenics, another proof that the disease is first of all physical, first of all a toxicosis.*

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to try the experiment on the psychiatrists, rather than on the spiders ?

*Ha is a great
omitter*

*Spiders drugged
with marihuana or
the urine of
schizophrenics*

*. . . which would be of an amino nature. Imperfect proof, it is true, since the mental disease might cause, be followed by, the physical disorder, the physical in turn causing the mental.

V

EXPERIMENTAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

*Mescaline again.
Six months later I
take six ampules,
that is, 0.6 gr. the
miserable becomes
the appalling
miracle*

The images

*Suddenly
everything
vanishes*

*While my descent
into hell, unknown
to me, is being
prepared*

. . . but there was a fourth time. Through an error of calculation I swallowed six times what is for me a sufficient dose. I was not aware of it immediately. Eyes closed, I watched in myself, as on a screen or a ship's log, mescaline's colors, and its lines, enormous this time, appearing in my inner vision, and the constant and always amazing shaking of the images. Then suddenly — nothing. I saw nothing any longer. I had slipped down to the bottom of something. A door, open until now, had suddenly closed in absolute silence.

What is it? What is happening? Taken by surprise the general staff loses sight of its troops. More defenseless than a cork dancing on rough waters, more vulnerable than a little boy advancing against a column of tanks debouching onto the road.

The waves of the mescalinian ocean had suddenly broken over me, buffeting me, tumbling and tossing me like grains of sand. The movements, which till now had been in my vision, were now *on top* of me. It had not lasted more than ten seconds and it was done. I was lost.

But just a moment. We mustn't be in such a hurry. The torture is going to last for hours. It has not even begun. It is half-past one. I am not yet aware that I am about to come to grips with the mind's severest test.

Innocent, like a tourist, I watch the first changes. Calmly, I observe the queer internal tremblings which I know already, which I recognize. I become conscious of the beginnings of the shreadings that I am probably soon going to see, of the horses' mouth sensation, and that, over by the window, with curtains only partly drawn, great dazzling white sheets appear to be fluttering.

In my chest there is a deeper respiration, prelude to a different kind of "attention." Lines, more and more lines, which I am not sure I really see, though already distinct and fine (which I feel?) which I begin to see (how tenuous they are this time!) and how ample their curves, so very ample! I notice that at moments they

disappear and again their amplitude, really extraordinary compared with their thinness, and I know that the color white, which I am soon going to see, will be slightly violet, though I can still see nothing but the very light, light gray of the spidery threads which boldly, rhythmically, incessantly stride over empty space.

Really enormous the amplitude of the sinuosities, and so very fine the lines, which could nevertheless step over houses. Something never seen before! I feel like telephoning B. to tell him about this formidable sight. I give up the idea for fear of interrupting for too long this extraordinary hour. Then this thought of telephoning, this thought of hardly more than a dozen seconds ago, begins to recede, quickly and gravely, taking on at the same time an extreme importance, like the last traveler on the station platform in your native city as you are leaving, whom you see from the train which is imperturbably, irrevocably starting to move. Such is this progressive moving away. It is still there, the thought, like an echo, as though it were at the other end of the nave of a great silent church (that of time?) and had sent back to me not the sound but the “wave of a presence.” Thus it “echoed,” so to speak, in the silence, this idea which had gone, but which is now inside the great church. Strangely enough I was delighted to be the only one to know that I had had this thought, so ordinary in other respects, but rendered peculiarly majestic, imperial, by its resonance.*

*distancing of
a thought*

echo

Enormous Z's are passing through me (stripes-vibrations-zig-zags?). Then, either broken S's, or what may be their halves, incomplete O's, a little like giant eggshells a child has tried to draw without ever succeeding.

These shapes, like an egg or an S, begin to disturb my thoughts as if they partook of the same nature.

I have once more become a passage, a passage in time. This then was the furrow with the fluid in it, absolutely devoid of viscosity, and that is how I pass from second 51 to second 52, to second 53; then to second 54 and so on. It is my passage forward.

Anesthetized to the world that is in possession of my body, and to everything that only an hour ago was con-

* *Vanity* of being alone in the presence of such majesty?

tinually filling it, I feel nothing now but the going forward. I am all prow.

*Stretching of
faces*

From time to time I encounter a crossroads of irritations, a terrace filled with the insufferable winds of the mind, and I begin to write, almost without knowing, without thinking, intent on the transmission, these words, whose significance, great as it is, I fail to recognize: “Too much! Too much! You are giving me too much!”

*faces in
the cliffs*

The lines follow each other almost without stopping. Faces slide over them, outlines of faces (usually in profile) are caught in the moving line, are stretched and contorted like the heads of aviators subjected to too much pressure that kneads their cheeks and foreheads like rubber. Much more linear these faces, less terrible, simply grotesque. What becomes disturbing is their size, the size of cliffs, which, with the sinusoidal lines that carry them, keeps on increasing.

Except for these grotesque faces senselessly laughing (or was it a sign of my situation, which I failed to understand?), nothing.

They are the only ships carried, not *on*, but *inside* these enormous waves.

How huge a thing can be! There is something prodigiously exaggerated about it without in the least modifying the grotesque character of the heads, which are even ornamented with silver gray pearls, some with a bluish tinge, and, I must say, delicate, in startling contrast to such hyperbolic lines.

For an instant they leave me. A something. I don't know what, descends into a vertiginous gutter. But it doesn't last, and they return, the lines, the lines, the diabolical lines of dismemberment.

My head, meanwhile, more and more insensible, like cardboard, I rub — under my shawl — rub it mechanically, furiously, the only living zone of my being, all that I have left, my homeland that keeps shrinking more and more.

And the lines, the dismembering lines seem to me more gigantic than ever. I have to force myself not to have recourse to sugar, which is supposed to be an antidote. Nevertheless, almost mechanically, I begin to eat a few sections of an orange. For there is something suspect about

these lines that are growing, these lines that are becoming cliffs, that keep stretching the faces interminably, but the act of trying to jot it down keeps the consciousness of the fact still at a distance.

And they are still growing, the lines. I wouldn't know how to draw them even vaguely, the paper is no longer on the same scale. I pause, put down my pencil, push aside the paper, and decide to try something else.

People had told me about visions in crystal balls. (But I must have misunderstood them, thinking that I could transfer the visions in my head to the crystal.) So I picked up the crystal ball, ready beside me. I turned it round and round in my hands, puzzled, as I recall, like a child with a new object, not knowing what to do with it, or whether it is worth bothering about at all, and ready to put it down. That is what I was about to do, having already held it in three or four different positions and seen nothing but my own fingers enlarged by the refraction, when ... I WENT DOWN.

The submergence was instantaneous. I closed my eyes to recover my visions but, as I realized, it was no use, it was over. I had cut off that circuit. Lost at an amazing depth, I was no longer moving. Still in this stupor, several seconds elapsed. Then suddenly, the innumerable waves of the mescalinian ocean came pouring over me and knocked me down. Kept knocking me down, knocking me down, knocking me down, knocking me down, knocking me down. It was never going to end, never. I was alone in the vibration of this wreckage, without periphery, without connection, a man-target without hope of return.

The plunge.

What had I done? Plunging, I had, I believe, rejoined myself in my depths and I now coincided* with myself.

*In the vibration
of the wreckage*

* To coincide, what does it mean? In life I try to approach as near to myself as possible (since I want to observe), without letting myself go, without *giving* myself.

I want to keep a certain margin, which is also like a margin of security.

It may seem excessive that, in order to be myself, a gift on my part should be necessary. It is nevertheless true. A false Narcissus, not walking with myself, not submitting to myself. And I am not the only one. There are any number of others like me. The *gift* — they refuse to make the gift.

To have a religion does not mean to believe in a divinity, as opposed to those who do not believe. It is a *gift* one longs, with an irresistible longing, to give to someone infinitely above oneself. In the same way, love does not postulate a perfect woman. It is a gift of oneself, it is a need to make this gift, and any man, even a eunuch, may have this intolerable desire. Narcissim itself is not possible without making this *gift* of oneself to

no longer observer -*voyeur*, but myself reunited with myself — and with that, instantly the typhoon is upon us.

The crystal ball perhaps only hastened my destruction. I was going to be knocked down anyway. Or was I? I shall never know.

Meanwhile outside objects had to a considerable extent returned to their natural colors. As for the visual exhalation, it seemed to have disappeared.* Everything had been restored to order except myself.

How agonizing, agonizing in essence, it was I cannot find words to express, and even trying makes me feel like an imposter.

*That which rakes
the soul*

It was where one is nothing but oneself, it was there that, with mad speed, hundreds of lines of force combed my being which could never reintegrate itself quickly enough for, before it could come together again, another line of rakes began raking it, and then again, and then again. (Will it go on all my life now that it has started, now that I am in the path over which *it* passes?)

In a flash I recalled that strangely dishevelled look peculiar to mad women, dishevelled, not by the wind alone or by their grabbling hands, or by their slovenly habits, but by the imperative inner need of translating, if only in this way, the swift diabolical combing-disheveling

oneself. And curiously enough, for this too one must *believe* (believe in oneself).

So then, giving up my “casual liaisons, my liaisons of propinquity, of necessity,” what I had just done, thanks to the magic of the crystal ball, was to give myself up, to give myself to myself, and, in the very worst moment of my whole life, to return to my own true truth-homeland-unity, to my first name. The terrible cyclone caught us, me and myself, united so idiotically, so indissolubly, and from that moment, instead of watching them, I received all the blows.

* In spite of the very pronounced mydriasis which was to last for hours.

of their whole being, indefinitely martyriized, criss-crossed, wire-drawn.

In the same way, and always at this incessant, inhuman speed, I was beset, pierced by the electric mole boring its way through the essence of the most personal part of myself.

Caught, not by anything human, but in a frenzied mechanical agitator, a kneeder-crusher-crumbler, treated like metal in a steelmill, like water in a turbine, like wind in a blower, like a root in an automatic fibre-shredder, like iron in the tireless motion of a milling machine cutting gear teeth. But in my case I was also forced to look on !

Like a bird in the eddy of the propeller of a four- engine plane, like an ant pinned under the crushing waters of a flood gate, like nothing I can think of, like nobody.

Intense beyond intensity, the struggle, and I, active as never before in my life, miraculously surpassing myself, but surpassed out of all proportion by the dislocating phenomenon.

The horror of it was that I was nothing but a line. In normal life one is a sphere, a sphere that surveys panoramas. One is in a castle, one is constantly going from one castle to another, such is the life of even the poorest man who is mentally sound.

*When you are
only a line*

Now only a line. A line that breaks up into a thousand aberrations. The whiplash of an infuriated carter would have been a relief to me. And no pity either. I, the accelerated line I had become, did not retreat, withstood each new slashing, was ready to form again, was on the point of forming again when the force, swifter than a meteor, falling upon me. ... It was agonizing because I resisted.

What of emotion ? I could not even retreat into emotion. The natural diffusion of the emotions that go straight to the heart, making it beat more rapidly or more slowly, as well as to the lungs, changing their respiration, did not take place. This was brought home to me ten days later when at a moving picture theatre, watching a typical movie drama, I felt an emotion "pierce my heart". In my days of horror I had forgotten this path, this comfort.

Terrible beyond all that is terrible! Yet I felt no terror. The soldier under fire has something else to think about. I never stopped struggling. I could not indulge in terror. I didn't have time.

I knew very well that I should not resist as I was doing, first with my whole Self, then with my most cherished ideas. I saw that the diabolical motion was jeering at me, disintegrating me, finding me each time more stricken, dispossessed, done for. I should have changed my tactics, let my troops shift for themselves.

The madman is a brave fellow who tries to cope with the destructive phenomenon himself, instead of letting his subaltern functions take over.

But in so critical an hour it is difficult to take in sail. You don't have the five seconds of calm necessary, in which to "collect yourself".

Stupid ideas of no importance, would have served just as well, doomed as they were to become the thoughts of a mechanical force and, after being diabolically misused, to disappear. Instead, especially at the beginning, I presented my most trustworthy ideas, the ones on which I could absolutely rely, and in less than no time they were torn apart, severed from their axis and rendered worse than ridiculous, unthinkable rejected, destroyed, null and void. But although I had seen the workings of the mechanism, I persisted in offering the best I had, the most intimate, the most Henri Michaux, so to speak, (and in spite of the advice I was beginning to give myself) like a man whose arm has been caught in a revolving belt and who in spite of himself is drawn toward the center of the machine which in no time will tear him to pieces.

Everything you offer to the mescaline schizo will be ground to pieces. So never offer yourself. And never offer any vital idea, for what mescaline does to it is frightful.

Offer what is of little importance, mental images, little everyday ideas.

Otherwise you will be wholly uninhabitable, horrifying to yourself, your house in the torrent, an object of ridicule in your own eyes.

★ ★ ★

I began eating all the sugar I could swallow. Tablets

of sugar plain, or great desertspoonsfull in hot drinks. But I only vomited. And *It* continued to make headway against me.

Yet something had to be done. In the midst of the devastation that was driving me mad, and the undulations, in which my ideas were going insane — those, that is, which passed along the line of my Self, but not those from me to other people (the social circuit of speech was different), I telephoned A. and told him calmly, too calmly: “An overdose. I must have made a mistake. It is hard to stick it any longer. *I should have an antidote.*” My calmness was deceptive. It will be all right, he thinks, the worst is over. Over! It was still to come.

This calm of mine had a different origin. To look up the doctor’s number, I had turned on more light in the dimly lit room. The lamp next to a mirror, showed me a face I had never seen before, the face of a raving madman. It would have frightened a murderer. It would have made him retreat. Frantic, completely extroverted, terrifyingly photogenic and determined (whereas I am the opposite) it was the face of one possessed, though neither the face nor I had stirred. It was the mask of a person who no longer listens, the face of a raving madman, a man, that is, mad with fear. A wild animal at bay, the face had become vicious. Yet my voice (later verified by those who heard it) was composed, almost gentle, and I felt not the slightest anger or hostility. “He” must have killed already, I thought, for I could not consider this face on the brink of murder as belonging to me. “It must be only a question of minutes now, a very few minutes.” That is why I was calm,* the grave calmness of someone who is responsible for a dangerous maniac, since this

*I see the face
of a raving
madman*

* Telephoning later when S. was with me, again I spoke calmly as if fearing to alarm the doctor unduly, or myself. I mean the “self” in charge of conduct and organization who, I knew, must not at any cost be affected, become excited. There had to be bulkheads and fortunately they happened automatically, it was my only salvation, one or more parts remaining cool, off the circuit, and practically strangers.

S., surprised at what I was saying, seized the telephone and quickly rectified: “No, no, it’s urgent”. But it was too late, the receiver had already been replaced.

changed the situation. As to horror, I could still be affected gravely in another way. How vast a man is.

When, at the moment of the intolerable inner trepidations and destructions, the madman will have to express them in corresponding actions, destroying, breaking, burning, wounding, killing someone or killing himself, when, in short, he starts "his work," will I be able to control him until he is taken away or, ridiculous as an inadequate sphincter, will I be unable to control him? In the latter case, I ought to call for a straight-jacket at once.

That was my problem which had to be solved calmly and sensibly in a moment of rupture and disintegration.

I was so anxious not to attract attention to myself, if possible, not to forfeit by a premature surrender, a cowardly, cautious appeal for help, all that I had left of independence(!) and of life. Drink the cup to the dregs in silence. Drink, I kept saying to give myself courage.

There were, however, new developments, and they were bad. What had been separated was separated no longer. Two bulkheads had just been inundated. I now had to struggle with all my might against the preposterous acts which were rushing into my mind, and which I had known, at the sight of that face in the mirror, were bound to come. But I could never have imagined anything like this. At a mad, an unbelievable speed, they would arrive, seize me, shake me to make me carry out the acts in question, keep shaking me like a rag in the draft of a windmill, then they would disappear. Others would come, would goad me, goad me, all abnormal, avid for realization, not one kind but ten different kinds, not against such and such a person, but against anyone, anything, impartial, insatiable and which ten murders and as many fires would not have satisfied, which could not be satisfied. As soon as they appeared I had to try, not to struggle — out of the question — but to put another inoffensive idea in their place. But this idea, after a few quick triturations, would in turn become dangerous (for is there anything in a word which cannot be turned into a dagger? And after that how can one keep from seizing the dagger, how stop it?) Resist them? Absurd. I am they. They are identical with me, and I am more than acquiescent, I am inseparable from them the moment they appear. In mad-

impulses

ness everything happens because *nothing can be seen in perspective*. An idea passes with you along the one and only path. No panorama. No diversion. No third person. No comparison. No pause (so necessary to judgement).

The idea and you, at breakneck speed. Essential phenomenon of insanity, of which the other face is undoubtedly fascination.

Deranged behavior: any chain of thoughts and imagined actions, mechanically, automatically pursuing a course that is the opposite of the usual course.

The perverse impulses had not taken over the motion entirely. I was still being just as terribly mauled by the prodigious vibratory motion. The effects were numerous. M.S. had come to me at my request and had gone into the next room where there was more light so that he could read until I needed him, yet such was the power of the zigzags that not more than five minutes after he had left me I could not be sure whether he was really there, whether he had come or not, or even whether I had asked him to come. For, in the five minutes after he left me, the ample evidence I had had of his presence had been so often shaken, broken, above all interrupted, interruptions of consciousness, that it was no longer either true or false, past or future, but only a jumble out of which I was unable to extract a single definite fact. Nothing could be *halted*.

impermanence

Certainty, shaken like a tangible thing, lacerated like flesh, disaffirmed as soon as affirmed, after taking dozens of different and soon contradictory positions (such as : He might have come if I had called him. I can try calling him. After all why might I not have called him? Or, I might have sent him away already. Why didn't he want to stay? Or, did I tell him not to stay because I didn't want to bother him? Or, perhaps he couldn't stay any longer? Or was he too busy to come, and tomorrow it will be too late etc. . . . etc. . . .) certainty, varying indefinitely, became negative and inoperative.

Tentatively, just in case he might possibly be near me, I said S. out loud, and, hearing his name, he came into the room, looking worried. I made some sort of remark to hide the humiliating, not the dangerous truth.

He left me again without protest and was hardly out

of my sight when the revived certainty, a prey to the same assaults, crumbled and, tobogganing constantly, ceased to be certainty to become subject, theme — a theme with endless constructions-destructions — and nugatory.

No certainty without stability. Certainty comes from permanence. Certainty of a single second means nothing.

With S. . . , and later with the doctor, I kept close watch on my words, or rather having said certain words which I thought I should not have spoken — words too liable to rouse their suspicion — I would prepare others, either to avert any possible suspicion on their part, or to test them, trying to discover what they really thought of my extraordinary condition. For they certainly could not have found it ordinary, though they pretended to be calm. The calm, the mass of calm, that calm in great lumps of calm of people mentally sound, is something altogether fantastic and beyond belief. Fluttering with a thousand different motions, you cannot believe that others are without motion and without ideas swarming at the back of their heads. You watch them surreptitiously as you watch your words, in which they could find, if they paid attention, a whole world of things to be used against you. Aren't they really paying attention then? To put them off the track, you are careful to say nothing that will reveal the exact state you are in, but a different, though similar state, less serious, or in another category. (For, to pretend that you are normal would be impossible and silly.) You use certain ambiguous expressions to make your listener wonder if you are really mad or simply trying to pull his leg.

*ruses of a
madman*

Such behavior, so new to me, I observed with surprise as I talked, or rather after I stopped talking. I had learned to dissemble.

Talking to others was creating problems, revealing the full extent of the havoc. Later on, after the doctor, to whom I could explain certain things, had come and had pronounced me out of danger (was he telling the truth?), and was beginning to feel reassured about my condition, several times I ceased to take part in the conversation (as I realized afterwards), being imperiously summoned from within, where what was happening was far too serious to let it go bounding on alone. This terrible race within me forced me to close in a hurry the parenthesis of my ex-

*Significance of
fits of absence.*

*Incessant gusts
of wind a
thousand to the
second a
thousand a
thousand a
thousand*

*It is intolerable
to be in the midst
of the
superlative of
everything.*

*and you — you
go racing on
alone*

planations which, in any case, seemed to me like polite small talk) the kind of thing you say to a society woman who wants you to explain India in three words. The doctor, though extremely intelligent, not being in the same state as myself could not understand all that my words implied. I had to make abridgements. Invent them for him. Veer off from the complex truth. These bridges, which I was forced to build, tired me. I would abandon them before they were finished.

After he had gone, I talked for a while with S . . . * So I must be recuperating. But I was still not convinced. I was still in the front line and the rumors of imminent peace could not cop'; as "real presence" with the reality of the furious battles† to which I was being ceaselessly brought back Besides, one can succumb just before an armistice. It is well known.

My words, still in snatches, were tending, perhaps through naivety rather than successful ruse, and certainly incompletely, to convince him that I was returning to a semi-normal condition, just when I myself was beginning to perceive the possibility of permanent damage. Wondering if he guessed it too, I tried, not speaking too haltingly I believe, to distract him, to divert his thoughts. It is possible that the doctor had warned him to watch for this and, if necessary, to call a hospital, although as I told myself, this would be contrary to their characters, unlike their usual attitude. However, if they had been aware of the vortex in which I was struggling, such a step would have been only natural, and still more natural to have had me interned on the spot.

During our conversation I again noticed my fits of inattention. When my disorder had been at its height, when I was harboring the lightning, all my attention had been fixed on one thing, on my dangerous interior.

*Fits of absence.
I have fits of
absence with
thousands of gray
pearls being
shaken in me.*

* Afterwards, as S . . . told me, remaining silent for half an hour. Probably due to the fatigue of my first efforts. Then talking with great volubility.

† Not so much battles any longer. Going back into myself was more like returning to listen to an invisible orchestra which, without interruption, was giving a prodigious, strange, and disturbing concert whose waves were entirely non-acoustical.

Now, for moments at a time I would come back to the exterior, to intercourse with the exterior. More periods of absence also meant more periods of presence.

I divided myself between inside and outside. What was taken from one went to the other. Neither now contained everything. This passage back and forth this shuttling, gave me a disagreeable sensation of fogginess and tedium, which has left me only a vague recollection. My attention being diverted by the conversation from the diabolic furrow in my center, the hurricane, as though following the direction of my attention was spreading itself, scattering, taking several different paths, was outside as much as inside (less maniacal inside, less stupendous than before) and was in more than one respect like a hurricane you might watch on shipboard without going out on deck, following it from various signs, bottles rolling around or the flapping of a carelessly fastened tarpaulin lashed by the wind, which augments in fury or which finally diminishes, while the ship is still painfully tossed about.

The doctor returned in the evening and, after questioning me with the most friendly interest, left without further examination and apparently reassured. I still felt doubtful, but my doubts seemed absurd.

I went to bed, the first night began, the first of the nights unlike the others. What I had mistaken for calm was, I found as soon as I got to bed, a very slight agitation, so slight as to make me ask myself if I really felt it, though I could not suppress it. And it was right in my center, only there, a nasty little disturbance, hardly anything, not at all unruly, but which could upset everything, and which had been masked by the spectacular violence of the day's storms. The mescalinian excitation was gone. What next?

Now I had plenty of cause to be desperate. I was still mad, and for no reason.

As I had felt a slight palpitation, I thought to reassure myself by blaming it on my heart, and tried to take my pulse. It was now one-thirty in the morning. I don't know how many times I tried. Ten times? Fifteen times? Twenty times?

I would begin to count the pulsations. After counting a certain number, I could no longer remember at what division on the face of my watch I had begun, and would

The mescalinian hurricane (from the very beginning in fact) seemed to be concentrated on the same point on which my attention was concentrated.— The images first. — The ideas — the Self. And when I am dispersed it is dispersed with me.

begin all over again. A few seconds would elapse when again I would ask myself how long I had been counting, or else how long since I had stopped counting, for I would also often stop counting. To gain time I began counting from the fifteenth second or the thirtieth, then I would forget, would get mixed up, would begin again at the tenth second and, long before the thirtieth, would wonder where I was, lost in doubts more numerous than the seconds, more numerous than the pulsations of my heart, finally deciding, rather than verifying, that there were not more than a hundred to the minute, and perhaps not more than ninety.

Mad ideas

Quantities of mad ideas, or rather a *procession* of mad ideas, for they always came one by one, occurred to me and I began to think — without knowing that it was what Jaspers had said on the subject — that “for the madman to have only one mania is already a sort of relief.” He knows what to expect. I would have been hard put to know what to expect. I was at the swarming, the polyvalent stage. I might do a thousand insane things, cut my finger, break the window, set fire to the chairs, open my veins with a razor, smash the mirrors. The contrary of normal action* was what seemed tempting. Any object, when an idea for dramatizing life gets hold of it, is capable of anything. I was afraid to go to sleep. I was afraid to let myself go. I was afraid to turn out the light, knowing that in the dark my thoughts would be without opposition.

Toward three o’clock in the morning there were a few visions again. Forms like needles, like the branches of compasses, very close together, at very acute angles, and, as I remember, moving at a moderate speed. Their color : pale violet. The visions would now be coming back perhaps. Leaving my dangerous center I would return to what is called the visual cortex. False hope. I had to con-

* In the insane the fascination of the aberrant idea, the fascination of the thing that should not be done, operates by virtue of the same laws that govern expression and works of art in general. An oppressive uneasiness whose cause they cannot perceive, at crosspurposes, parasitic, a state of constant suspense, will reappear through a sort of affinity with the devious ideas and acts that violate normal behavior.

tinue to keep a close watch on myself without any distraction.

I tried in vain to attract my body. It certainly needed to be sensualized. But it had become a stranger, took no interest in anything.

Trying to rouse it, I began reading passages from new books and from others whose effect on me I knew, books of every sort, poetic, epic, mystic, sentimental, heroic, erotic, Chinese, Hindu, Hebrew. Nothing. I might just as well have picked up bricks as books. Vainly I tried to make a muff for myself. Agreeable sensations, that was what I needed, or emotions. The only real shield against madness — the soft shield of *pleasure*.

Sleep! I implored, “Today, this night of all nights, sleep, come to me if you can. Come and assuage the exhaustion of a wretch who has been buffeted by all the winds of heaven. Sleep, will you never again find your plains in me? Sleep, after this terrible day . . .” and I kept imploring. But sleep did not come. Besides, in spite of all my solicitations, all my coaxing, I was really on my guard against it. Yet I had not altogether wasted my time by talking to it so absurdly, absurdly but in a way that was, I am sure, for me necessary. Indeed, in this long detour my whole being relaxed. Suddenly the touch of my steamer rug seemed soft and warm to the palm of my hand which sent the news all through my body, soothing it a little.

Saved? Was I saved? It was probably only a beginning. But it was marvelous : my body was coming back to me. I was going to stop being mad. It was my body that would be the stabilizer. It knows all the pleasures, all the antagonistic sensations.

Morning came at last, the dawn. I must have dozed off. The various landmarks which were reappearing with the nascent light were signs of the renascence of reality. They still had very little density, but that little I appreciated as a connoisseur with grateful recognition.

They indicated that my body, taking pleasure in its senses, was going to get back its voice. I would no longer be so quickly overthrown.

“You see, the fallen leaves are returning to the tree . . .” I said to myself. For, having become a stranger, alienated

*to feel, to have an
impression is to
settle down
Mescaline forbids
settling anywhere*

from myself, I could talk to myself as if I were some one else.

★ ★ ★

To complete this amelioration I decided to go to the country to visit F . . . who had been a faithful friend for countless years, and whose tact was almost Chinese.

I arrive at the *Gare Montparnasse* without any untoward incident. An idea of throwing myself under the train that is just pulling into the station. The impulse is not very strong. Without any trouble I climb into the last car. A slight headache. The succession of reflexes — buses to catch, buses to get off, tickets here, others there, looking for the right track — I feel the usual fatigue.

Dry tongue. (Yesterday my liver must have been involved in the struggle as well as my head.) The thought occurs to me that it is like rabies. There was nothing mad in this observation. But immediately the mechanism of dramatization was set in motion. And what if it really were rabies? Of course not, ridiculous, it's simply because of all that mescaline I swallowed yesterday. Probably, but what if I had been bitten by a dog three weeks ago? Absurd, no dog has bitten me. But this cut on my hand? But it's nothing but a scratch, entirely superficial. Superficial now, but before? And what if I were to bite people? What if from now on I couldn't control myself . . . And that was that! Impossible to reach any definite conclusion because my arguments were shifting all the time, continually changing. Was fear at the bottom of it? Fear that has attached itself to rabies, a rabies which I have to keep trying in vain to prove doesn't exist, fear that gives me not one moment of respite. But this is not only fear, since, without seeming to, at this very moment it is inciting me to bite people who are nothing to me, in order to relieve this hydrophobia which in all probability I don't have.

Mechanism of perversity, that is, of revolt a priori against peace, against tranquility, against acquiescence in the habitual *order*, against reflex actions.

Active perversion which automatically rejects the truth. There is still a slight ground-swell, an uneasy agitation, inducing antagonistic outbursts.

The evening did me good. I came back quieted . . .
apparently.

★ ★ ★

A few days passed.

I could now believe myself cured. I was entering upon my fourth night. What I was really entering upon, without knowing it was pure horror — I was entering into intimate relations with horror. In my sleep I felt myself going down. I came to a landing. I continued down, and down, and down, to the level probably of a second subterranean vault, then a third, then still lower, to the depth of an eighth, a ninth subterranean vault, still lower, still lower. I pushed open a door into a cell. The door closed. The key fell through a crack in the stone floor into an abyss. I was lost: At this point one might have thought the program completed, fear being at the origin of this dramatic action. That would be to discount its insatiable motion. And so it happened that successively I was being held in a room, that I was caught between the bulkheads of a lost cabin on a transatlantic liner, that the fallen key became a swallowed key, then the key of an enemy (?), picked up, pocketed, then lost, then that some one came for me and took me to a room higher up, some one else, again slamming the door shut behind me, to a still more subterranean cabin, then to another, then to an oubliette, etc. . . . when I woke up. No, I was not in a cold sweat. I was just thinking it over.

*Four nights
later.
The effect of
malice in the
false
nightmare*

It was hard to resist panic for, even with two electric lamps turned on again, I still felt imprisoned. The episodes I had just experienced, sometimes contradictory, should have cancelled out one another, on the well-known principle of the necessity of choice. But not at all. It was very cunningly devised. Having forgotten all the details, a few of which I have just been patiently trying to recall (cells, cabins, rooms, oubliettes etc.), I retained only the general line. I was unable to fix a single lasting image which, when awake, I could have repudiated. All I knew was that I was *imprisoned*.

*I am imprisoned
imprisoned !*

This knowing was what no episode had contradicted, and what had driven everything home. This fear had been *intimatized*. And in intimacy it had become unbridled.

It would snatch at me and, as soon as I struggled to interpose obstacles of logic, would recapture me, each time recapturing me more quickly. What created the drama was that neither of us was ever appeased. To all my efforts to prove that none of it was true, since I was here in my own room which I recognized with all its familiar objects, it would reply by manufacturing new episodes, insane and contradictory, but so instantaneous that I had hardly a second to parry them before the next one, which had to be answered victoriously, was hectoring me, seizing me so that, with the key already lost countless times, and in the face of actual proofs, even my room, my books right before my eyes were lost in their turn, were immaterialized, and, even when I looked at them again, they could no longer *command my attention*, could not emerge (any more than I could) out of the abyss of the successive engulfments and burying.

★ ★ ★

This malevolence having once become related to infinity you are lost. It is fascination. When a sound is indefinitely reverberated, who thinks of doubting his ears? Out of the question. A kind of wonder is the response to such multiplicity.

At a certain moment, in a flash of recognition, and also in order to use the discovery as a support, a mystery- breaker, I said to myself that the source of all this was simply the fear I had had of being interned. But this idea, from which one might have expected more, failed to offer resistance for long and in the end only served to make me feel more imprisoned than ever. So strong an idea-feeling as that of being imprisoned, countered by ideas which it promptly devours, assimilates or denies, becomes a certainty of the second degree, which countered with new arguments, rises up again, destroys them, “sows” them to the four winds, and becomes a certainty of the third degree, and, once more attacked by your desperate efforts to escape, is victorious and becomes, thanks to your very attempts to free yourself, a certainty of the fourth degree, and so on until it is a certainty that approaches the absolute about which it is vain to argue, and everything else then becomes definitively uncertain.

This vertiginous game doesn't take many minutes. That *you are imprisoned*, has become entirely *abstract*.

The prison in which you are confined is now the essence of prison. It is no longer a nightmare. All the terror is now interiorized. Stones, doors, keys are superfluous.

Become essence, your prison is now invulnerable. You can no longer hope to escape.

Essenciation ... is there any one who can endure it? The trend toward essence is a vertiginous pleasure, a secret frenzy.

The madman essenciates, is fascinated by essenciating, and it is dangerous. When the accumulation of the facts of experience was small, in ages when people liked to essenciate, they naturally and almost exclusively essenciated on God.

Even on God it is dangerous to essenciate. For the scrupulous, religion is hell. To that infinite being, whom they cannot conceive, and who is constantly impelling them toward infinity and inciting their infinitizing propensities, they respond with the consciousness of their infinite inadequacy, of their sins. They live infinitely in guilt. The scrupulous person will go to confession five hundred times to lay bare the same old trivial sin for which a general absolution has already been given four hundred and ninety-nine times but which still breaks out because nothing can be severed, nothing can be saved from prolongations without end, not excepting infinitization.

One would have to go to India and see people terrorized by defilement, those whom neither rites, nor separation of castes, nor asceticism can relieve of their insane fear of defilement, to understand what an infernal machine the idea of total purification can be. And that is not the only Danaides seive they have to keep filling. All the terrors of essence are contained in the great books of India.

There is a certain temperament which longs to adore God, cannot adore God and is frightened to death by God. How many men have become atheists* (above all theophobes) in order to get back their peace of mind.

* The insane fear of microbes, of contagion and of dirt certainly also exists, but how much more tolerable, more moderate. . . .

Following these hours, crowded with perverse thoughts so close to action that it was torture to restrain myself, there was no sign of anger in me, not even lurking in the shadows, not even when faced with things that would normally have irritated me.

When some imperative action occurred to me as for instance, if I happened to be walking along the Seine, that of pushing a man into the water, I noticed that it was without the least aggressiveness, without the least antipathy. On the contrary, a displeasing face would probably have stopped me. The man I would be most tempted to push into the river was always one who had his back turned — emotionally neutral. It reached such a point that for several days I preferred to avoid the Seine. The action to be performed, entirely separated from a feeling of resentment, appeared, not so much gratuitous as like a reflex, like kicking a ball you see on the street. A *reversed reflex*. Being by nature a man of decided likes and dislikes, I was particularly struck by the complete emotional indifference that characterised this anger.

insane anger

But not long after that, X . . . having telephoned me, argumentative as usual and moreover, in spite of his friendly intentions, being one of those obstinate verbose bores who had irritated me for a long time, I was seized with a sudden fury, such a blind fury that I didn't know how to give vent to it, how to rid myself of it, a domoniac fury, a completely novel kind of fury.

My loud vocal outburst — altogether unlike me — was nothing compared to the continual frenetic outbursts of anger within me, that kept spreading with incredible speed.

I was not particularly incensed by his proposition and his ridiculous conclusions. Against them my anger would have been silly, disproportionate. What I aimed at was himself, was his quintessence, all that it contained contrary to my own, and which I should have liked not only to injure but to annihilate, to abolish for good and all, the essence of essence against which I could never be virulent enough, hostile enough, antagonistic enough. I essenciated our fundamental opposition in order to make

it something fixed and irreversible forever. Whirlwinds of anger swept through me. But it was entirely incorporeal. I should not have been satisfied to hit him, to knock him down. Meeting him on the street I doubt if I should have recognized him as the object of my fury. I was far beyond that, uplifted to prodigious heights.

All day long I had to make an effort to keep my mind from the intolerable thought of our co-existence on the earth.

★ ★ ★

It was the evening of a tiring day. The journey in the early morning, then the walk on a pebble beach, the change of air, all this had exhausted me.

Before going down to dinner, as I was slipping into my jacket, I glanced at myself in the glass. (No, this is not yet the “sign of the mirror.” But it is true that the normal state had taught me the utility of observing externals). I had the face of a man being tracked. It was again, I might say, an expression I had never seen on my face before. But it may have been only the shadow of the great sequoia across my window that was deforming my features.

I dined — soon left to myself. The deserted hotel had a park. I went out. What calm! All around me were tall beautiful trees that grew gradually blacker with the progressive withdrawal of the light.

Suddenly, I was being persecuted! What was the connection? And by whom? If I left the park, perhaps it would pass. But I stayed. I had to find out. Not a leaf stirred. With evening the sea breeze had died down. Rather suddenly, as often happens.

It was as if this calm had been intentionally contrived “against” me. Immobility in the dark, like a revolver pointed at me. Yet at the moment I had no thought of any revolver. This sudden immobilization, taken out of context, so to speak, I must have felt as one of the natural categories of the mind. *Sudden immobility-threat*, and now the threat was felt as essential, needing no inquiry into what constituted it, where it could well have come from. The stern aspect of the trees surrounding me (so like a stage setting) offered it sufficient support. Did these surroundings recall the sensation of internment which I

*The absence of
limits to our
opposition
intoxicated me.*

a new fanaticism

*How, without
having a frenzy of
persecution, it was
the way leading to
it, the beginning
which, lacking fuel,
came to nothing.*

had dreaded? And the dusk, did it make me think of the state which was possibly mine(!) the crepuscular state that also calls for internment? Who knows? My sensation- notion was *Immobility plus darkness equals threat*, which is a sensation known to innumerable children and, even, to not a few gangsters. That is when children often have “night terrors.” They are crazed by metaphysical terrors which they cannot describe, in which there is nothing they have imagined, though adults keep tormenting them trying to force them to “tell” what it was that has frightened them, or that frightens them. Fear of danger. That is, fear that cannot be diverted into anything concrete. Reality always falls short of essence. Every child knows that. I felt that if I really examined myself I should find that what kept me deep in the pit of this sensation of persecution (by whom, by what?) was the fascination of being threatened, which one feels not without a certain relish, a certain acquiescence in the terrible sensation.

Personally, I had always been impervious to this idea of persecution. What a lack of pride, I had always thought — in spite of the example of great writers, those persecuted madmen — to admit that other people were enemies, and powerful enemies! Now I believed I understood. The staging, for the man who feels persecuted, is not what counts. He begins by *feeling* the threat, by feeling himself threatened. Afterwards he finds the people who are threatening him (people who fit the role more or less).

The impression produced by the tall presences surrounding me was final. I had, to an abnormal degree, given in to it. Instead of considering it as an indication or a comparison, I had succumbed to it as to an hypnotic. I had yielded to the dramatizing suggestion of the park. It was sensation in its pure state. No, it was sensation apprehended as abyss. I was plunging into it. Once more I was lost, for I could see no way of getting out. I was hypnotized by persecution, but without ever bothering to find out by whom. I am rather lazy.

But all the same, this was going too far. Something had to be done. It was high time. I left the park, I concentrated on taking long strides, making a noise, and going toward the sea.

I had undoubtedly applied a known mechanism at an

unknown point. Even a certain coquetry toward this persecution which had so intrigued me, and which, when it appeared, I could not let go without trying to understand. But this abyss* into which I slip the moment I am tired, is it really going to keep returning forever ?

* The expression of my face in the glass, which may also have influenced me, was more like that of a man who senses the abyss rather than the enemy.

REFLECTIONS

On the Probable Importance of Interruptions

The interruption of thought makes certain mental patients believe that someone has stolen their ideas (a very natural conclusion), that they are bewitched, that they are being persecuted, that someone has been able to gain a hold upon them, a phenomenon that thousands upon thousands of patients in the most diverse psychiatric categories have always complained of.

The interruption of attention makes them uncertain whether or not someone has entered the room. Becoming suddenly aware that there is someone present they think people have been coming and going as in a windmill. This too is a phenomenon complained of by innumerable psychotics.

It is natural for them to feel that something disagreeable has happened in their absence, that they have been robbed or ill-treated.

The interruption of the consciousness of occupying their own body makes paranoiacs say that their body has been used for strange purposes, that it has been used by others, for others, that it has been violated.

The interruption of observation also produces mentally retarded individual those for example who can never learn geometry because the demonstration of the problem requires a constant image and for them the figures are not permanent enough.

The interruption of will-power makes a patient say, "They have gained control of me, they are going to gain control of me." The mere presence of someone is the first encroachment, the beginning of persecution. The rest will follow.

These interruptions of will-power give them a sensation of weakness. Before reasoning on the consequences of this weakness they sense the effect. They no longer feel enough inner strength to defend themselves. They are not sufficiently in possession of their bodies, of their beings. They are being entered. They are being attacked. A mere glance pierces them dangerously.

It takes a very very great deal of strength to guard one's body. A king who has lost his throne discovers that he has innumerable enemies. Children throw stones at the timorous, dogs snap at their heels, sensing their inadequacy.

What saves one in the case of mescaline

poisoning is the lack of duration. If the second state lasted longer, those who take the drug would suffer the permanent ills of the interruption of consciousness and many others. But they do not have enough time to become bound up with the drug.

On Rhythms as Antidotes

Weeks after taking an ordinary dose of Mescaline, if I begin to draw I go on endlessly making parallel lines, precipitate, innumerable, and almost maniacal. Repetitive jitters, as I have called it. But the evening after I had taken six ampules, the evening after the attack that was so severe I was unable to hold a pen (it would not in any case have had any relation to me or set me free) my head was so tired I did not know where to turn for relief. I was experiencing in my head the same useless repetitions which on other days my pen had made visible.

What gave me the greatest relief, even more than recovering bodily sensations, which I had almost entirely failed to do, was to make my hand beat out a rhythm on the woodwork beside my bed.

Its slow unaccustomed rhythm seemed really to raise me from my bed of pain, my drunkard's misery. In a few moments, unbelievably relaxed, I was already feeling the benefit of this happy experiment. In my weakened condition, however, the effort had been too great to be repeated immediately, but I hoped that once reoriented everything would be all right.

The following evening, afraid of the return of that metaphysical fear of the night before, I began again, though it cost me an enormous effort (a wrenching of myself out of my present state), to beat out a few rhythms. The beneficial effect was instantaneous.

Thanks to this expedient I, in turn, dislocated, counterbalanced the infinitely small oscillations that were shaking my thoughts and intoxicating my brain.

I recalled that Chinese saying which had in the past surprised me. "Music is made to moderate." — But I had remembered it wrong. It says — the idea originating with Yo-Ki: "Music is made to moderate joy." Joy! Is joy then so exorbitant? Certainly not at that moment. It was my whole being, grown excessive through those monstrous hours, which had to be moderated. With surprising ease, rhythm was soon successful. The man torn to bits and scattered over all the roads of himself was reassembled in an instant and calm restored to him through those ordered sounds.

Till now I had been able by means of drawings to accompany my state of disjunction, never to save myself from it.

The Mountains as antidrug

Next to music (my own rhythm, not that of anyone else) the only thing that was able to steer me away from mescaline, was altitude. Not very high, about 1,500 metres at the *Col de la S.*, where I stayed for a few days. It was a month since the last time I had taken mescaline, but it was still with me. Already on the very first evening in that different air I felt “diverted.” The third day mescaline had lost all meaning for me, I no longer understood it.

The mountains! Of course. Why had I never thought of them before?

As in the past (but more deeply now with a new attentiveness) I felt the same calm returning and with it the same exhilarating uplift for no reason, punctuated by a respiration, sure and slow like a faithful steward. In my new-found strength, I felt a surge toward a great wellbeing, toward a great *better*, an ineffable better, a better that nothing could ever satisfy but a great ideal. Indeed, in the long run it could very well prove embarrassing.

It is in the mountains that most apparitions of angels and saints occur, and that God talks to his own. Even in the closed cell of a monastery, and even in a hotel room one’s “virtue” is tonified, one feels de-perverted. Untitillated. Sound. The natural intensifier of the positive and of energy was at work. I wonder what the effect of a drug would have been in the mountains ?

I once more found the qualities I love in the mountains, and they helped me withstand my state of mescalinian nerves. The mountains reject what is feverish, exclude the obese. They reject titillation, compromise, flabbiness, the silly “five-and-dime” sentimentality of the world’s capitals; capitals are always situated in flat country. The mountains do not like turmoil and prevent one from becoming degraded by it. They are against pleasures won too easily, as if stolen, not paid for in effort. Real antidrug. They suited me . . . anti-complaisant. The mountains stir in one a sort of elementary courage. They make you stand up straight. One cannot live in the mountains without a certain amount of effort. The mountains form, not the belly-man, but the couple, “lungs-heart,” the man of courage and of enthusiasm and idealism. One is called to action, victorious

action. Here, walking, which everywhere else seems very much like a loss of time, is noble, is like a conquest. They correct at once any tendency to give up. They point the other way. One is ordered to climb, and to climb higher. It is almost a moral necessity.

One is called upon to become once more the pilot of oneself.

I watched the first effects and enjoyed all the oxygenizing obstacles that the virilizing mountains set up against the last mescaline residues in me. I saw only traces of them, and without understanding them, and generally just when they were disappearing, as though warned by an increased stability in me and a new strengthening which I so desperately needed and which, without realizing it, I had so longed for.

The privileged image. Observations by Be. S.

Observed in the visions in the dark :

- a) quantities of fugitive glass beads, enough to make you ashamed of having all that stowed away.
- b) a privileged image of very much greater interest.

First on the black ground appear shining beaches, with streaks, extremely close together, cutting across them. The ground growing gradually more animated, the streaks become evolutes of immaterial surfaces, the evolutes alone revealing the surfaces, which grow more and more distinct, and attain the perfection of mathematical models. (For example, the asymptotic figures are of an extraordinary sharpness.) Their number* and the complexity of their configuration increase. There seems to be a continual circulation running through the evolutes, producing a whirling system in perpetual evolution, certain surfaces spreading in sheets, reappearing in profile and becoming the limit of a new whirling system, and all this with the most serene regularity. When the image is in danger of becoming too complicated to be made out, a slight iridescence, the coloring almost imperceptible, makes one system distinguishable from another, or else an immaterial dot appears

* There may sometimes be a transition from *a* to *b* by means of rose-windows becoming gradually brighter.

insane anger

** Once I was able to follow the phenomenon for almost twenty minutes.

*** If I might comment on these notes of Be. S. I should say that just as mescaline makes images with, or on, ideas one is not aware of and which one does not detect until later, in the same way it makes images on music one does not know and on rhythms one does not hear.

like a sort of convention, “marking” an evolute and allows one to follow the interlacing of the figures. Toward the end of the intoxication, the circulatory movement was weaker and the configurations less ornate.

The permanence and the persistent reappearance of this system (in evolution) is diametrically opposed to the lability of the other images, which come and go.

It is the visualisation of a rhythm}. As soon as I became familiar with this phenomenon, in its basic idea, it seemed to me that the vision was just a way of making a rhythmic evolution tangible, in the same way that the little conventional dot served to make the different whirling systems more distinct. The entire vision was nothing but a visual metaphor.

I had the impression (without placing any faith in it, the experience being, moreover, monotonous in the end and really boring) that this was in a way primordial space and that objective space, and even that of the other visions, were only epiphenomenon.

The affective neutrality, almost indifference, with which I followed the unfolding of the phenomenon was like a sort of pre-personal state, a “before existence” state, infinitely archaic.

Remaining master of one’s mental speed

To judge by mescaline and from what I have learned from other sources, all drugs are modifiers — usually accelerators — of the mind’s speed (of images, thoughts, impulses). Mental health on the contrary, would consist in remaining the master of its speed, of their speed.

Without continually putting on the brakes, or “limiters,” to use the cybernetic term for retro-active circuits, the mind would soon begin to circulate too fast as it does in dreams when it is out of our control. Its speed must be safeguarded.

Of all animals man is the one that controls the greatest number of road-blocks and of open roads, of Yes’s and of No’s, of what is permitted and of what is forbidden. A mammal with brakes. The animal that can manage the most complicated instrument-panel.

The chains of reflexes, not really so very reflex at that, take care of things pretty well, but do not take care of everything. What is it in life that is most exhausting and that leads most surely to madness? It is to stay awake. It is to remain too long at one’s instrument-panel.

A night’s sleep is not too much to allow us to recover from

all the continual, the innumerable operations of control, and to submerge (or neutralize) the multitude of impressions, of points of view, of response to stimuli and of the beginnings of thoughts we don't know what to do with and which dreams agitate and more or less stabilize for a little while.

For the supervisor anything that lasts is intolerable. He has to leave. He has to have his rest, or suffer the disease of the controller, that is to say, madness. For he will not just give up. He will get excited, go on some wild escape, talk without stopping or write endlessly, rave, hear voices, plan and undertake all sorts of things, imagine others, as if all the mind asked was to function much, much faster than usual, to function at perhaps its "free" speed, that of nightmares (estimated at fifty times faster than normal) the speed that is born in seconds in the mind of the drowning, the speed that occurs sometimes in the dying and causes delirium, or at moments of great stress and even of sudden joy — the joy that has more than once in an instant and in the most spectacular fashion driven mad those persons who have been unable to "counter" it and all its too marvelous cortege of thoughts.

Certain sentiments, in this case rightly called evil, manufacture certain nervous poisons capable of damaging the controls, like that of the diencephalon, the great regulator and master of sleep, and others besides, and, through the non-resistance of the controls start a new acceleration of ideas over and above the first, thus breaking through all restraint, all self-control.

Not to let themselves be carried away, to remain master of their speed seems to be the underlying, the constant and secret preoccupation of all men, no matter how metaphysical or how worldly their occupation may be.

Below the man who thinks, and much deeper down, there is the man who controls, who controls himself.

POSTSCRIPT

This book follows a chronological order. What I learn, I learn little by little like a beginner. The reader will do the same. However, without a preliminary and partial synthesis, he would probably not have known what he was getting into. Hence the foreword.

The experiment with Indian hemp comes next. Later the fourth, the crucial experiment with mescaline, which as it was a surprise to me, should come as a surprise to any one who reads me. That is why the preface does not complete what every one will learn in the final chapter.

Nor do I wish to boast of a perfect experimental schizophrenia either. I see how one might be achieved.

That mescaline madness does not become permanent is demonstrated by the remarkable experiment that Dr. Morelli made on himself (*Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, 1936) when, after taking 0.75 gr. of mescaline he experienced such a furious onslaught of perverse impulses that he had to take refuge in a sanatorium, as well as by the experiments, among others, made by Drs. Delay and Gerard with different patients and students. Patients on the road to recovery, after a short interruption due to shock, continue on their way to complete recovery. This, however, would not be true for anyone who had suffered a serious psychic experience either just before or just after taking mescaline.

One last word : To the amateurs of one-way perspectives who might be tempted to judge all my writings as the work of a drug addict, let me say that I regret, but I am more the water-drinking type. Never alcohol. No excitants, and for years no coffee, tobacco, or tea. From time to time wine, a little. All my life, in the matter of food or drink, moderate. I can take or abstain. Particularly, abstain. As a matter of fact, fatigue is my drug.

I forgot. Twenty five years ago, or more, I tried ether seven or eight times, once laudanum, and twice the most unspeakable of all, alcohol.