

UNIQUECORN

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When I was younger I made my living for many years doing astrological readings. I would sit down with clients for an hour or two and read their charts. Over time a specialty that I became known for was doing the charts of acid-heads, those who had taken LSD and wiggled out, but never quite made it all the way back. I like to tell myself that meeting me was a natural astringent for these folks. I helped them get back into their bodies.

One of the common earmarks of a strong dose of LSD is that the user ends up wandering into little cubbyholes and crevices in the mind that the average bear knows nothing about. This only becomes a problem when the tripper becomes attached to their own trip and begins to identify with what separates themselves from society, what makes them different, and in most cases they would claim "unique." They cease to some degree to identify with others, and revert to a kind of solipsism.

In other words, acid-heads sometimes manage to flip their trip and what starts out as a voyage to discover the mind (and their internal universe) ends up as an ego trip that, like all ego-trips, is itself a prison. So into my office would waltz one of these acid children (wild eyed and bushy haired back then) that had convinced themselves that because of their unusual experiences on LSD they were the only one in the universe. There would be nothing wrong with that if they had not also fallen into the trap of becoming attached to that thought to the exclusion of allowing anyone else into their world. On top of that they were lonely! Go figure.

So here they were, wanting me to acknowledge their singular enlightenment while their subtext was crying in the background like the original motherless child. To rephrase it, the way that they told it asked a lot. Their inner cry for help was louder than their "enlightened" pronouncements.

Since I was very well experienced in the world of LSD, it became my job to point out to them that in fact they were not alone in their universe of one, which had the dual effect of popping their balloon (which they fought tooth and nail) and at the same time allowed them to come in from the dark and rejoin society. The last thing they expected was to run into another being in their exclusionary universe, but suddenly there I was. Actually, in this function I was carrying out the work of a shaman.

Every society of any kind has shamans, because the definition of a shaman is one who has gone too far, gone beyond the conventions of society (over the edge) and either goes mad (is considered crazy) or eventually stabilizes and returns to the society, becoming a guardian on the threshold of "sanity" to guide others who slip through society's cracks and manage to get lost. Shamans recognize others who have wandered too far from the consensus. They can point

out the way back to mental stability and to becoming once-again a useful member of the group.

Through the counseling process I would dialog with my acid clients, gradually getting their attention that they were in fact not the Lone Ranger, and that there were others in the world that shared the same "unique" experiences they coveted. As mentioned earlier, they had a love/hate reaction to the news that they were not unique in the ways they had come to believe. They had to make room for me and eventually everyone else.

One of the arguments I liked to point out to them is that if they had a particular genius that no one else had, a singular talent or gift, why on earth did they expect anyone else to see it? "If you lack the faculty, you can't see the phenomenon" is an old chestnut. On the one hand they insist that they alone had their particular experience, yet they want others to recognize their uniqueness and take their hats off to them. There is a disconnect there.

And this same principle applies to those who meditate and reach states that others may not have reached. Do you imagine that an actual bodhisattva expects to be recognized by a society that lacks the awareness to even pick them out in a crowd? I don't think so. As beginning bodhisattvas, perhaps we start out hoping that someone will see us, but the only one who could see us is a bodhisattva at a higher level and we could not see them! Do you get the idea?

So in that sense we each are alone, perhaps recognizing those who are coming along behind us, but walking point as far as picking out those who have already gone beyond. In fact, a traditional description of a bodhisattva is one who has gone beyond. I like to say that we are all alone together and a sense of humor is a required asset to spiritual development.

Years ago I was intrigued by the graphic work of M.C. Escher, intrigued enough to read his journals (I am a great reader of journals). In the journals Escher complains over and over again about being so lonely, and having no one to talk to about his genius. This goes on and on. Toward the end of the journals there is this single comment. "I am alone... but it's so refreshing!"

That is my kind of humor.

