

The Promise *of* Life

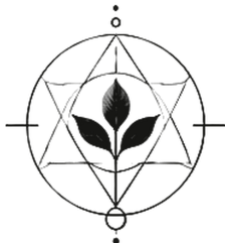
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Plant Medicines and Beyond



Z.A. Ispharazi

THE PROMISE OF LIFE

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PLANT MEDICINES AND BEYOND

A Walked Path



Insight alone is not transformation.

Recognizing that the house is burning is not the same as stepping outside into fresh air. And while clarity is a vital beginning, it's only the first threshold.

Because what I've come to understand—through experience, not theory—is that real integration happens when ideas meet the body. When belief systems meet silence. When conceptual awakenings meet the raw, unfiltered truth of direct perception.

It's here that plant medicines enter—not as magic pills, not as spiritual entertainment—but as tools. Ancient allies. Mirrors held to the deepest layers of self.

The dissolution of the ego is not a philosophical idea. It's a cellular, soul-level deconstruction. And it is often uncomfortable, nonlinear, even terrifying. But it is also liberating.

Because beyond the ego—the persona built to survive in a broken system—there is something else. Something still.

Something intelligent. Something capable of navigating this world with integrity, clarity, and love.

Plant medicines, when approached with humility, reverence, and discipline, offer a path to that place. They do not give answers. They show us where we're lying to ourselves. Where we've abandoned truth for safety. Where we've traded freedom for familiarity.

In the coming pages, I won't offer a roadmap. I will share a journey. One that unfolded not in textbooks or laboratories, but in rainforests, in solitude, in ceremony—and in the quiet spaces where the mind no longer had the answers, and the heart finally listened.

Not down into despair, but into depth. Into the terrain beneath the terrain.

This part of the book is for those who feel the call to remember something ancient within themselves. It is not instructional. It is not prescriptive. It is an offering—a window into how certain medicines, when held in the hands of tradition and met with sincere intention, can reveal the invisible threads between spirit, body, nature, and truth.



Ceremony: Dissolutions



What slowly began as a night of very gentle sensations and quiet introspection turned into one of the most emotionally disorienting experiences I'd ever faced.

Under a thatched hut, with only the pulse of the jungle surrounding us and a pit toilet a few steps away, I felt stripped bare—not just physically, but spiritually. Ayahuasca worked subtly at first, as it often does. But then it turned inward, deeply inward, and pulled back a curtain I didn't know was there. Suddenly, the narratives I had clung to—about myself, the world, even my spiritual path—felt hollow, paper-thin, echoing with a kind of existential absurdity.

The *curandero* (medicine man) who had guided the ceremony, sat quietly nearby, his presence grounded but not interfering. I remember looking into the darkness, unsure if my eyes were open or shut. And in that moment, I understood what it meant to face disillusionment—not as some tragic loss of faith, but as a necessary death of false certainty.

That night, there were no answers. Only the uncomfortable truth that much of what I had believed was

scaffolding built on inherited assumptions. And yet, through the silence and the vulnerability, something deeper emerged—not a new belief, but a clearer awareness. The experience didn't give me closure. It gave me capacity.

That's what I mean when I say I was being prepared. Not for clarity in the form of comforting answers, but for the strength to hold uncertainty without crumbling. To see clearly, even when what I saw was difficult to accept.

It was shown that the unraveling of belief is not the end, but the beginning.

That night in the rainforest, under the weight of the medicine and the vastness of the jungle, I was shown that disillusionment isn't a collapse—it's a clearing. A sacred demolition. What falls apart is not truth, but illusion. And once the scaffolding gives way, what remains is something quieter, more intimate. A deeper kind of knowing.

It was shown that every structure I clung to—scientific, spiritual, societal—was a story. Some stories useful, others inherited, but all filtered through layers of fear, hope, identity. It was shown that the body is not just a biological machine, but an instrument of perception. That the mind, for all its brilliance, often spins elaborate defenses against the rawness of being.

And most importantly, it was shown that I didn't need to rebuild the tower right away. That it was okay to dwell in

the rubble for a while. To feel the wind move through the open spaces. To sit in the dark and let my eyes adjust before naming what I saw.

I came to see that it had been to my benefit—though it never felt easy at the time—that I had resisted falling into any one career, any fixed title, any clear role in society. This resistance wasn't laziness or indecision, as it had often been labeled by others. It was a quiet, stubborn intuition that something wasn't quite right with the game I was being asked to play.

The pressure had always been there—coming from well-meaning parents, from family, from loved ones who only wanted what they believed was best for me. A job, stability, a respectable path. But even as I peeled back that societal layer, I discovered something deeper: a web of identities I had constructed myself. These weren't just roles assigned by the world—they were defense mechanisms, created to protect a younger version of me who didn't always feel safe or seen.

I saw clearly how, even as a child and into adolescence, I had built stories about myself—stories about what I was good at, what I wasn't, what I deserved, what I feared. These narratives became survival strategies. I could charm, I could deflect, I could mold myself to what others expected—but underneath, I was still searching for something real, something unshaped by performance.

What became apparent in that ceremony, and in many that followed, was that these inner identities—these subtle manipulations—weren't shameful. They were brilliant adaptations. But they were no longer needed. The terrain had changed. And in order to grow, I had to let them go.

What unfolded in the ceremonies that followed went far beyond emotional cleansing or symbolic insight. It became existential. Another ceremony in this vein stands out, a moment carved into memory like a scar and a blessing at once. I was sitting in ceremony, the space held in quiet reverence by the facilitators and guardians, when suddenly a tunnel of fire—blazing, writhing, alive—seemed to open before me. Not metaphorical. Not imagined. This was something else.

I reached out to one of the helpers. My voice was shaking, my body overwhelmed, and all I could say was that something was happening and I didn't think I could take it. They calmly said, "You won't die. It's okay." And I remember thinking—*that's not what I'm afraid of*. Death wasn't the fear. What terrified me was that I had crossed into something beyond the grip of language, beyond anything I could name or hold on to.

It felt as though I was being burned alive from the inside—not in the flesh, but in the soul. That I would emerge from that night unable to speak, unable to be understood,

hollowed out by a kind of sacred madness. The fear wasn't that I'd die. The fear was that I'd live—*but never come back*. That I'd dissolve permanently into that space of infinite unraveling where nothing could be explained, where even identity becomes dust. That I'd be left wandering in a world that would still expect me to show up, but where I no longer had the tools to perform even the most basic expressions of self.

And yet, somehow, I stayed. I let go—or perhaps I was let go of. The tunnel didn't close, but my grip did. And somewhere in that terror was the faintest whisper: *this is the purification*. Not punishment. Not insanity. Not a breaking, but a returning.

What I came to understand in subsequent ceremonies in the jungle was a continuation—not a repetition, but an evolution—of the previous disintegrations. After leaving the earlier experience, fragments of identity slowly reintegrated. Not because they were forced back in, but because life gently calls you to function again—to find coherence in the day-to-day. And with that, there's a kind of healing, a soothing of the raw edges. But then I returned to the ceremonial process, and the medicine picked up where it had left off.

Months later, the layers peeled even further. I had committed to going deep into fasted states, and during ceremonies I was plunged into a space of such profound

silence that even my thoughts felt too loud. One night, what emerged was an awareness of those who have taken vows of silence—saints, mystics, those who have walked the path not as an escape, but as a witnessing. And for the first time, I saw them not as beings of detached serenity or otherworldly peace, but as those who had seen so deeply into the chaos and the truth of this life that there was simply nothing more to say.

The silence wasn't an aesthetic decision. It wasn't spiritual posturing. It was the end of language as a container. These beings had seen the darkness so fully—not as evil, but as an integral part of the sacred cycle. They had witnessed death feed life, life collapse into death, and pain ripen into beauty over and over again until the voice broke—not out of fear, but out of reverence.

I realized that even my most heartfelt prayers, at times, had been subtly transactional—attempts to control or bargain with the divine, to shield myself. But in that moment, every bypass was stripped away. And I understood that real surrender meant praying without agenda, offering my voice without expectation of outcome.

That silence, that vow, isn't absence. It's fullness. It's the understanding that sometimes the truest prayer is a bowed head and breath passing through lips that no longer need to speak.

When people suggest that using a substance like Ayahuasca is a shortcut, or that the same insights can be reached through meditation or breathwork, it often misses the point entirely. It assumes that there's a "place" to get to, a spiritual destination to reach if you just follow the right steps. But what's being missed is that this isn't about arrival—it's about surrender. It's not about enlightenment as a goal, but about dissolution as an act of grace.

Ayahuasca, and medicines like it, are not hallucinogens or psychological tools—they are interfaces with a deeper intelligence. An intelligence that doesn't operate on the human level, though it knows us intimately. It knows how to find the roots of our beliefs, how to expose what we didn't even know we were clinging to, and how to gently—but with terrifying precision—break open the structures that no longer serve.

This is not a casual encounter. It is not a psychedelic escape. It is a mutual vow. When you drink, you are declaring—sometimes without fully realizing it—that you are willing to be transformed. That you are willing to see. And when you trek into the jungle, far from the glass and steel of modern life, far from the mental projections that have hardened into institutions and self-definitions, you enter the realm where the body remembers its place in the web. Where you feel your skin crawl not from paranoia, but from awareness—of insects, of microbes, of life so intricately

interconnected that you cannot pretend to be separate anymore.

And even in that terrifying awareness, you are not powerless. You find that you *can* speak to life. You can state your intention to live, to serve, to create beauty and contribute to the evolution of consciousness. And in that moment, something shifts. The forces that once seemed poised to consume you—disease, decay, death—now recognize you as part of the process, not an outsider. You are re-woven into the living tapestry.

This is not a shortcut. This is the longest path there is—the path back to the truth you’ve always known, but had forgotten how to bear.

So far, we’ve spoken of the high-profile events that Ayahuasca can provide—the ones that often come with a sense of revelation, dismantling, and profound transformation. These are the aspects of the tradition that people speak of in headlines and documentaries, the “big waves” that crash into the psyche and shake it loose from its moorings. But just as the tip of the iceberg hides the immense structure below, these ceremonial encounters are only one part of the deeper path.



PLANT MEDICINES AND BEYOND

Introducing the Tradition of Discipline



What comes next is the nuanced work. The quiet discipline of forming relationships with the lesser-known, yet deeply powerful, plant allies—what are often referred to as *plant masters*. These are not medicines taken for an experience. These are beings entered into *dictas* with—a structured, sacred commitment where one abstains from many of life's normal pleasures and distractions in order to receive direct teachings from the plant.

The *dicta* is, at its core, a purification. Physically, yes—but also mentally, emotionally, energetically. You fast, you avoid salt, sugar, sex, stimulation. You quiet your system so completely that the whispers of the plant can be heard clearly. And in that silence, the teachings begin. Sometimes as dreams, sometimes as sensations, sometimes through realizations that arrive wordlessly yet strike with clarity.

Imagine again that you are a sailor. The big medicines may take you out onto the sea, show you storms and stars, teach you awe. But the *dicta*—that is where you learn to sail. That is where you gain the feel of the wind, the currents, the

tension in the sail that tells you which way to turn. These plants become allies, navigators, and in some mysterious way, they train you to carry the medicine long after the ceremonies have ended.

So now, this next section will unfold what the dieta process entails—not just in the physical sense, but in its purpose as a path of learning, remembrance, and refinement of perception.



Dieta: Tethering Spiritual Process to the Physical Body



When you enter the dieta, especially in the isolation of the rainforest, you're no longer just ingesting a plant for its effects. You're stepping into a living relationship. You're saying: I'm ready to listen. I'm ready to learn. And most importantly, I'm willing to be still with whatever arises.

By removing stimulating foods, sex, salt, sugar, oils, media, and even the comfort of social conversation, you begin to see how much of life is spent in clever avoidance. Sugar isn't just sweet—it's a balm for fear. Music isn't just entertainment—it's often a shield from silence. Even books, beautiful as they are, can be a distraction from the raw presence of your own thoughts and sensations.

The dieta strips this away. Gently, but firmly. And in that space, there's nowhere to run. Your cravings, your fears, your longings—they all rise to the surface, asking to be witnessed. This is the unrelenting gaze. Not a harsh one, but one of honesty. Of curiosity. Of humility.

The plant, in turn, doesn't shout. It whispers. It teaches in dreams, in the texture of your emotions, in the way your

body reacts to the wind or the rain or the sound of the forest. Over time, you begin to sense its presence—not as something external, but as a current running through your awareness. The line between you and the plant begins to blur; you become aware of the periphery, so to speak. And in that union, something ancient and sacred unfolds.

One of the earliest and most defining experiences I had during a true isolation dieta was, at its core, rooted in something so basic, so seemingly mundane, that it revealed just how deep the layers of fear go.

All the way through teenagerhood I was terrified of the dark. Raised amidst superstitions, whispered ghost stories, and the occasional horror film that left its residue in my psyche, nighttime was never entirely safe. So when I committed to an isolated dieta in the jungle, far from modern comforts, that childhood fear emerged with sharp clarity.

The jungle does not mute its life at night—it magnifies it. Every mosquito that buzzed by, every rustle of wings, every movement just beyond the *mosquitero* (mosquito net) felt like an invasion. I was constantly recoiling, my senses overstimulated by a thousand tiny presences.

I slept in a small thatched hut, open on all sides, barely protected from the wildness that surrounded me. Each night, as I lay under the mosquito net, the candle by my

bedside burned low, and I found myself gripped with dread. The flickering flame had become my final thread to control and safety. But I couldn't let it burn all night—it would either attract more insects, burn a hole in my bed, or worse, set the hut ablaze.

So each night came with a moment of reckoning. I'd sit up, take a deep breath, and offer a quiet prayer of release—something between surrender and defiance—and then blow out the candle.

That small act, repeated nightly, became its own ritual. It was a physical surrender, a letting go that taught me the first lesson of the dieta: trust. Not just trust in the process, the plants, or in myself, but trust in God. That I could sit with fear, that I could rest even as the jungle buzzed and pulsed and whispered all around me. And that the darkness, in time, might become an ally too.

This is the level of intervention that most modern humans now require. The medicines—these master plants—aren't here by coincidence. They are, in the truest sense, a response. A response to the overwhelming sickness of our time: physical ailments, mental fragmentation, spiritual amnesia. These medicines are here because we are drowning in abstraction, buried beneath layers of artificial light, overstimulation, and disconnection.

But, as I've been describing, they do not do the work alone. They do not offer salvation. It is the personal intention, the willingness to face the unknown, the relentless returning to the path that allows the transformation to unfold. Even then, we are always liable to turn back. To run. To retreat from the edge.

And yet, when you find yourself in that moment—when the night descends, and the path through the jungle is cloaked in shadow, and you carry no distractions, no screens, no comforts, no conversations—you are confronted fully. There is nowhere to go but within. And in that stark silence, Mother Nature meets you not with a gentle whisper, but with a heavy hand. A hand that demands your presence. A hand that tears away the veils you didn't even know you wore.

This is where healing begins—not in ease, but in surrender.

This is where the deeper philosophical implication begins to unfold.



PLANT MEDICINES AND BEYOND

Not a Replacement, but a Reconnection



The dieta process, and the experiences invoked through the master plant medicines, are not meant to replace anyone's religion or spiritual path. *They do not arrive to dismantle the sacred.* In truth, they serve as a return—a re-alignment, a rekindling of what was once alive but has perhaps become dormant. They offer a piercing clarity that can expose the ways in which rituals, religious practices, and spiritual language have been hollowed out by time, cultural routine, and social posturing.

Over time, as sacred words are recited day after day, as divine names are conjured in prayer, and yet life continues to present its trials—relationship turmoil, grief, disillusionment—a quiet cynicism can creep in. Some will reach a breaking point, renouncing their faith entirely, devastated by sorrow or by some final event that shatters their trust. Others, perhaps more quietly, remain. They continue the path outwardly—practicing the motions, speaking the language—but within, they are brittle with disillusionment.

Still, they stay. They stay because the community offers identity, belonging, rhythm. And more subtly, perhaps more painfully, they stay out of fear. Fear that stepping away from the prescribed practices will result in abandonment, divine punishment, or the wrath of a God they no longer truly understand but still dare not defy.

The dieta, then, does not argue with any of this. It does not ask for allegiance or create an ideology. Instead, it invites. It asks: What if you stripped it all away—every belief, every title, every sacred word—and simply listened? What might you hear then?



Integration



When I returned to New York after months of living in Peru, I found myself at an event—one of those gatherings where familiar faces from earlier chapters of your life tend to resurface. Someone I had known for years came up to greet me. “Hello,” they said casually, and after a brief moment, the real comment emerged, laced with sarcasm: “So . . . you went to the jungle. Are you enlightened?”

They said it with a scoff, in that half-joking, half-mocking tone that makes it clear they’ve already made up their mind about your experience. But something in me was steady. There was no urge to defend, to explain, or to argue.

Instead, the response rose effortlessly. I looked at them and said, “Yes.” I let it sit for a moment.

Then I added, “Every day.”

It was the plain truth. I can’t claim to speak for the definition of enlightenment as it’s understood in the Buddhist tradition—particularly in the sense of ultimate liberation from the karmic cycle and entry into nirvana. But in the spirit of returning to the world, of re-immersing oneself in the illusion of form and duality, enlightenment is

not some final mountaintop upon which one plants a flag. It isn't a static endpoint, but rather a continuous unfolding. A choice to see clearly, even when it's uncomfortable. A willingness to re-enter the dream with eyes open, heart steady, and feet grounded in humility.

One of life's quietest graces is the process of reintegration—the slow, steady return to living. Not as you once did, but as someone who has tasted the depths and now sees with clearer eyes. You return to re-explore the very life you were given, but with a heart that has been restored.

Because the society we live in is built around certain structures—religious, cultural, institutional—we've been oriented toward looking for platforms to stand on, hierarchies to climb. We're taught to measure ourselves against others, to seek recognition through titles, systems, and roles. And even within something as inherently sacred and humbling as the path of psychedelic plant medicine, the mind's tendency to create hierarchy can creep back in.

Suddenly, people begin comparing experiences, measuring depth, implying spiritual advancement through how many ceremonies they've done, or which plant they've dieted. But the truth is, these experiences are not steps on a ladder. They are not certificates or status symbols. They are highly personal, deeply individualized encounters—tailored to the

unique resonance of each person's path, their karmic imprint, their soul's unfolding.

There is no comparison. No one is ahead or behind. Each vision, each lesson, each unraveling meets you exactly where you are, and leads you exactly where you need to go.

So in my case, one of the ways this showed up was woven deeply into my early life, long before I ever sat in ceremony.



Integration Through Memories



From as early as fifth grade, I was struggling in school—really struggling. I was often pulled into parent-teacher conferences where the same concerns were repeated: I couldn't focus, I seemed distracted. I remember even earlier, in elementary school, being labeled “the man of a thousand excuses,” because I was always asking to go home, always saying I felt sick, always trying to escape the classroom.

By the time high school came around, things didn't improve—they intensified. I began skipping school entirely. Truancy officers were called. But instead of showing up to class, I'd ride the train back and forth across one of New York City's boroughs, sitting with books of my own choosing, immersed in stories and ideas that made more sense to me than anything I was being taught.

Then in college, I walked away just one semester shy of graduating. I couldn't go through the motions anymore. I couldn't pretend that what was being offered was nourishing me. And looking back now, especially through the lens of ceremony and the insights that emerged there, I see how all of this—the apparent failure, the rebellion, the wandering—was working in my favor. But only because I

followed through. Only because I stayed on the path and kept seeking answers in the deepest places within myself. It could have gone differently. I was close—dangerously close—to drifting into a life with no anchor, caught up in the wrong crowds, on the verge of becoming a ghost in the system.

It's only in retrospect, with humility, that I can say: the unraveling was part of the preparation.

And yet, what I came to learn—through the disciplines of dieta, through the trials of ceremony, and through the ordeals of working with powerful plant allies like Kambo and its purgative venom—was that all of it had been preparing me to return.

Not just return in a physical sense, but to re-enter the world with new eyes. To face the responsibilities of society—the same ones I once resisted—with clarity and peace. I used to push back because I didn't understand why I was being asked to commit to roles and expectations that felt hollow or disconnected. But through these initiations, I was brought full circle. That is how I was ultimately drawn to the medical field and why I now find myself in naturopathic medical school. From this new vantage point, I came to understand education in its truest sense—not as the passive absorption of information, but as a process of drawing out something innate from within, a cultivation of inner

wisdom brought forth through disciplined inquiry and lived experience.

Now, I no longer feel the need to extract my worth from fulfilling these roles. It's not about proving anything. It's not even about the ceremonies or the visions themselves. It's deeper than that.

It's the realization that I have something to offer simply because I exist. That who I am—just as I am—is a part of the great unfolding. And that every individual, every being, is also an essential thread in this intricate weave. The system, however flawed, remains a ground upon which new seeds can be planted. And we—those who have returned from encounters with Presence, arrived at through as many paths as there are individuals—carry within us seeds worth planting.

At first, the teachings of dieta, of fasting, of abstinence, seem to point toward renunciation. You may feel called to become an ascetic—to walk away from it all, to shed the layers of material life in pursuit of purity. And for a time this may be necessary. But soon, another facet of the process begins to emerge. The plant medicines, these ancient allies, don't ask us to reject life—they want us to fall in love with it.

They illuminate the beauty in everything. Even seemingly insignificant human inventions—the endless entertainments, the sprawling storylines, the quirky

intellectual properties and mythologies we've crafted—they're not distractions, they're art. They're expressions of the same divine impulse that births flowers and mountains. These creations are, in their own right, sacred. They exist once, here, now, in this strange blink of time we call a lifetime.

And so you come to enjoy it again. To crave the joy of it. And yet, you do so with awareness, knowing that the ego reforms—but now on a more spacious foundation. You're not trapped by it anymore. You've been shown that it can dissolve, that you can realign, again and again. That's the true gift: not to escape life, but to love it fiercely, and still be willing to let it go. To commit fully to the hand you've been dealt, with curiosity and resolve, devoted to seeing how it all unfolds this time around.



PLANT MEDICINES AND BEYOND

Show me Life!



My very first ceremony—before I knew what a dieta was, before I understood the deeper traditions—began with a prayer. A sincere plea: “Please, please show me life. I can’t go on doubting the love I feel. I can’t keep holding back from falling into life, into connection.” That night, the response didn’t come in otherworldly visions of light or cosmic revelations. It came in the most grounded, visceral way imaginable.

In a state of powerful visceral sensation, a blend of colorful inner and augmented external perception, I found myself needing to use the outhouses—peeing, vomiting, defecating—periodically I would return to standing barefoot in the wiry grass, under the starry sky, surrounded by the sounds and scents of the rainforest. As that night of revelation progressed, it unfolded inside me: this is life. These bodily processes, the ones we often hide away or feel embarrassed by, are the very rituals that tie us to this existence. We call it “the call of nature” for a reason. It’s sacred. Not metaphorically—literally. These are the moments that affirm we are here, in these bodies, in this reality.

And suddenly, the body I had once treated as a vehicle or even a burden revealed itself as the blessing. This so-called limitation—this three-dimensional, aging, imperfect flesh—is not the obstacle to enlightenment. It is the access point. Every feeling, every breath, every function is part of the language of life itself.

This is truly what I mean when I speak of the terrain. Not just in the biological sense, but the inner terrain as well—the psychological, emotional, and spiritual ground upon which we build our beliefs and assumptions. When I began to notice how others were also arriving at similar revelations—breaking down inherited paradigms—I realized just how much it demands of a person. For some, a series of life experiences prepared them to see through the veil. For others, the breakdown feels too immense, too threatening to their sense of self or safety.

But the deeper truth, the one that often gets overlooked, is actually one of immense beauty. What's crumbling is not the essence of life or connection—it's the illusion. The collapse of false structures is actually what clears the path for genuine love, healing, and interconnectedness. What we lose is the abstraction; what we regain is clarity and presence.

This is why we return to the idea of microbes, the terrain, and our relationship to the living world. Not as enemies to be feared, but as allies in the symphony of life. Even the

concept of viruses—as fragments of genetic material—may only reflect the limitations of our naming and framing, our attempts to categorize what is fundamentally part of our own system. What some insist on calling “viruses” may be nothing more than misunderstood biological messages—*Zoëgrammata*—taken out of context and woven into narratives of fear.

And perhaps that’s the greatest illusion to shed: that life is out to get us.

When in truth, life is always trying to guide us back into balance.

And so we must consider the very idea of infection—not as the intrusion of an invisible enemy, but as a misunderstood signal. What if what we’ve labeled as “contagion” is actually resonance? What if, instead of pathogens attacking from the outside, we are perceiving shifts in coherent fields—electromagnetic communication, structured water memory, or even pheromonal signaling—that pass between organisms as cues for detoxification or healing?

This opens doors to research that have been long ignored: the biofield, the frequency of water communicating with itself, the subtle energetic exchange between beings that could very well explain synchronized healing events, collective emotional states, and what we interpret as “illness”

spreading. In this view, a “flu” is no longer an invading entity—it may be a communal release, a purge, a necessary reset. A natural, even intelligent response.

And just as importantly, we must remember that every time life takes something back—when the energy we borrowed returns to the earth—it is not loss, but renewal. The cycle continues, spiraling back toward vitality. Our fear of death, drilled into us through media, doctrine, and institutions, is perhaps the most potent weapon used to control us. But when we turn toward that fear, when we lean in, we find it contains our greatest strength: the understanding that death is not the end—it is an invitation to begin again.



Looking to the Ever Expanding Horizon



Where do we go from here?

This meditation on psychedelic plant medicines and the sacred traditions surrounding them is not a recruitment effort. I am not here to convince or convert. This path is not for everyone. It is for those who feel the call deep within—the unmistakable resonance that draws them to the flame. Others may arrive at the same awakening through different avenues. Some have the grace of a loving upbringing, anchored in emotional safety and sovereignty. Others were born into ancestries that preserved ancient yogic sciences or meditative disciplines without dogmatism. Regardless of the path, a critical mass shall follow all tributaries that lead toward the expansion of consciousness. A common foundation is shared: humility, reverence, and awe.

True awareness is not marked by superiority, but by surrender. It is the realization that the more one knows, the more one is drawn into the vastness of mystery, as the borders of certainty retreat like a mirage on the horizon.

What I offer here is not a prescription, but a gesture of protection—for the medicines, the traditions, and the people who have guarded these lineages for generations. Just as we require alimentation on the physical plane, the plant teachers are nourishment for the psychic and spiritual body. In the Western world, through prohibition and fear-based legislation, we have severed ourselves from the sacred. We have exiled rites of passage, ceremonial spaces, and the structured integration of altered states. As a result, we are toddlers in the realm of the soul.

Without education, without a wise narrative during formative years—replacing simplistic slogans like “just say no”—we leave our population vulnerable, not only to harm but to misinterpretation. Altered states are a part of life: coffee sharpens the mind, a chili pepper fires the senses, alcohol dulls inhibition, and every herb enters the body with its own spirit, its own rhythm. Each changes us in subtle or profound ways. Learning their temperaments is the scarce pedagogy of our species.

We must also be cautious of the modern compulsion to categorize all things “plant-based” as pure and holy. There is no simplicity here. Plants have spirits. Some uplift. Some challenge. Some destroy. Civilizations have risen and fallen around sugarcane and rice. A single leaf can inspire poetry—or poison. The 1960s offer a cautionary tale: with no cultural buoys, an entire generation leapt into altered states

with childlike innocence, only to find themselves alienated. While it was a time of immense creativity and new linguistic paradigms, it also brought backlash and cultural trauma that slowed our collective spiritual evolution.

Love, light, and open-heartedness are not incompatible with discipline and boundaries. The ancient traditions remind us that the journey back from formlessness must be grounded in process, in integration, in the sober joy of effort and commitment. This current reality we occupy is dense, but not immovable. It is a realm of sensation, of trial and error, of resistance and overcoming.

Plants are masters of living. They are architects of collaboration, building vast underground networks, transmuting decay into nourishment. They draw sustenance from the soil, which itself is composed of once-living things. Plants are not bound by ideology—they are not themselves vegetarian or vegan. They are beyond our moral binaries. They teach us what it means to be in nature, not above or apart from it.

All that we create—even our plastics, our "forever" chemicals, our synthetic disasters—are still part of the material of the universe. They may be incompatible with our current biology and ecosystems, but they are, nonetheless, of the same source. Creation continues, and life will persist, folding novelty into itself in ways we cannot yet conceive.

This is why we must be wary of grand narratives that masquerade as salvation. Whether framed as "saving the planet" or apocalyptic warning, these often stimulate a strange, subconscious titillation. Even in our secular world, we remain susceptible to religious fervor—only now it is cloaked in policy and science.

To meditate in the rainforest is to tune into a community far older than ours. The symphonic buzz of insects, the phosphorescent glow of unnamed organisms, the kaleidoscope of pharmacopeia hidden in vines and bark—it is all the memory of life unbroken. These are the teachers. Their medicine can crack you open, peel away your illusions, and bring you face to face with the raw elegance of existence. As Terence McKenna once said, "There is such a thing as death by astonishment." And the qualities these plant masters imbue—courage, discipline, intelligence, compassion, reverence—are what affirm our part in the impetus of Life.

We are, and are encountering, high technology in this realm. That is not to reduce the sacred to circuitry, but to honor the complexity and intelligence embedded in the natural world. The word "technology" here simply names the miracle of creation.

So, though this book is about a revolution, my focus is less on the question of "how to change the world," and more on

how the world transforms when individual men and women undergo their own inner revolutions of awakening. That transformation requires a deep reckoning with every assumption once held as gospel. In light of that, our societal challenges begin to feel like child's play—mere training ground—when we become aware of the deeper layers of mystery that shimmer just beyond the veil.

The cultural cravings for extraterrestrials, for angels, for demons throughout different epochs of history, is not inherently misguided. But until we change the posture of our consciousness, we will only consume these concepts through the lens of entertainment.

A real encounter with the mystery would not delight us—*it would unmake us if we are not ready*. It would be a reckoning so complete that the word “awe” would tremble beneath its weight. Like the tunnel of fire I once witnessed in ceremony, such a moment would not affirm who we are—it would dissolve everything we think we are.

This book emerged from a recognition that the scrutiny of frameworks we take for granted has a psychedelic quality: it is a mind-manifesting process. And until we understand what a belief *does*—how it shapes perception, emotion, and biology—we will remain entranced by illusions we mistake for reality. The critical mass we await will never arrive until enough individuals begin to allow themselves to *feel* the

inner resistance that surfaces when a cherished belief is challenged. That tension is the beginning of awakening.

I have avoided the easy path of conspiracy, not because there aren't conspiracies, but because that story is too small. Instead, I invite you to put yourself in the psyche of someone with immense power—billions of dollars to use at your disposal for example. Can you see how a god-complex might arise from a lack of initiation attuning your inner compass? Can you see how harm could be justified in the name of the "greater good"? Before we judge others, let us look at ourselves. Would we always act with wisdom?

The truth is that the system we critique is one we participate in. Its power comes not just from the top, but from our fear of what lies beyond its collapse. This is what I mean by asking too much, too fast—by sharing something that challenges the very foundation of someone's worldview in a passing conversation. The mind can quickly spiral into panic: thoughts of deception, chaos, and the unsettling realization that perhaps civilization isn't as civilized as it seems. The added weight of challenging a belief system—on top of health concerns, bills, and the everyday pressures of life—becomes too much to bear.

But if we begin to understand that we ourselves are the ones holding this dead system together—through our tense participation and our fear of what lies beyond—it becomes

clear that the mounting stress we feel is no more solid than a fleeting daydream. What if we loosened our grip, even just a little? What would unravel?

Some of us in vigil, others in secular longing—are we praying, or wishing for, what is true? Or are we merely pleading for a dreamlike state that feels just tolerable enough, shaped by what we think we’re capable of—or what we think we deserve?

Replacing petitions with gratitude we find that every breath, every nourishing morsel, every detoxifying visit to the toilet, every moment of silence, every loving gaze and synchronistic whisper along your path are sublime acts. These are how the world is saved. Not in grand revolutions, but in a million quiet awakenings.

If you felt wonder at the sight of a tree. If your heart has cracked open at the death of a loved one. If you have held an infant to your chest and felt the trembling mystery of life pulse through you—that was the Promise of Life.

That was Life, choosing you.

