

Smoking Fluff: the Source of Human Intelligence

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Scientists are unsure when intelligence, as we know it today, first appeared amongst the hominids. Archaeological finds suggest that a little over 40 000 years ago, the use of fire and tools was well established amongst all the subspecies of man which existed at the time, Cro-Magnon, Neanderthal and others. But the true spark of intelligence, which includes the ability to reason deductively, and more importantly, the ability to engage in creative thought and invent concepts which had never been in existence before, to synthesise thought deliberately, did not yet exist.

Some theorists claim that this step, from an intelligent animal able to use a limited palette of tools and techniques to sustain life, to a creative being able to plan for the future, use symbolic languages, conceive of spiritual things and engage in truly abstract thought, was achieved with outside help. Not that they believe such help was supplied by tall rectangular black monoliths or slitty-eyed grey skinned aliens. It was more likely a plant or mushroom which provided the necessary kick that lifted humans that last step up the evolutionary tree to consciousness.

Dr. John Lilly, language theorist, best known for his efforts to communicate with dolphins during the sixties and whose experiments with float tanks inspired the Paddy Chayevsky movie *Altered States*, has long believed that early humans relied on mind altering alkaloids found in various fungi to inspire those first creative thought processes. He believes that, especially in Northern Europe and Africa, where many species of hallucinogenic mushrooms can be found, proto-human tribes used these fungi to bring on trance states and that the earliest religions were inspired by these practices.

"Those people were living just on the cusp of language. They couldn't advance any further and create a truly symbolic language with writing, or at least pictographs, because they were entirely immersed in the material world. We find this hard to conceive, because so much of our experience comes to us in the form of written language, or art, or movies and TV. Showing one of these people modern writing would not elicit much response, because it would just be perceived as a random pattern, much like marks on tree bark or paw prints in sand. It took a huge deductive leap to create the fundamental idea of language, and quite frankly, those guys just didn't have the leisure time to do that."

Lilly believes that early man sampled mushrooms first while grazing for food. The experience would have been pleasurable, though disorientating, and perhaps even dangerous for people living in areas where carnivorous predators could be found. But a tribal people could "baby-sit" those "poisoned" by mushrooms until they returned to normal.

"We can only guess at their reactions, when they first started taking mushrooms. While under the influence a human might have thrashed about, fighting dream animals, behaved in bizarrely abnormal ways which the other humans would never have seen before. After the trip, I'm sure that the enlightened ones would have tried to find some way of conveying their experience to the others. With the enhanced cognitive and imaginative powers which are an inevitable by-product of the use of hallucinogens, this desire to communicate something which had

no parallel in the world around them can only have resulted in the first languages."

"The first word humans ever uttered would most likely translate as 'Wow!'"

Many shamanistic religions still practice the use of drugs. The early witch cults of Europe were based on the ritual taking of mild doses of Skullcap, the American Indians had their peyote dances, and in the Arctic Circle the shamans relied on Amanita Muscaria, the white spotted red-cap mushroom. It seems that, at least 40 000 years ago, everyone was stoned.

There was, however, a gaping hole in this theory, which scientists have only recently come close to filling.

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"The big problem with relying on a mushroom or cactus for your inspiration is, what do you do when the supply runs out? Mushrooms can be dried and concentrated preparations of most alkaloids can be preserved for a short time, but what then? Do you just slump back into ignorant stupidity when the dope runs out? If early humans needed their intellects enhanced to solve the problems which came with the changing climate just after the ice age, and that same changing climate killed off the mushies, they would have been in big trouble!"

It was while Lilly was at a party on campus at UCLA with some undergrads that he stumbled across a solution.

"There's always some new drug doing the rounds in American universities, and some of the newest are also the oldest. At this party I noticed that certain youngsters were smoking something that smelled awful, worse than burning shoes. They seemed to hate the smell as much as I did, but they persisted, lighting small pinches of fuzzy blue stuff in a brass pipe. I questioned them and they seemed surprised I had never heard of 'fluff'."

"Fluff", Lilly discovered, was simply the blue fluff which the students were harvesting from their own navels.

"It was the most intense flash of clarity and insight which I have ever experienced," he said. "That may have been enhanced by my inhaling a few lungfuls of slipstream smoke. I realised that 'fluff' would never suffer from a scarcity problem. Wherever there were people, there would be fluff. Enough for each person, because each person grew

their own exact dosage in their own navel."

Whether primitive humans grew psychedelic drugs in their navels has not been proven. Certainly, it is known from investigations subsequent to the discovery of the fluff-smoking co-eds that the blue fluff which grows in our navels does contain considerable amounts of psychotropic alkaloids.

Dr. Benway of the Miskatonic University's Mycology department has recently completed a monograph on the species of fungi which are responsible for the properties of fluff.

"The fluff from a normal humans belly button contains a complex interdependent ecosystem of fungi and bacteria. They are adapted to live only at human body temperature and in the uniquely moist, sheltered environment of the navel. The main species of bacteria produces the long threads which twine around and hold together the accumulation of body hair and fibres from clothing that accumulates naturally in our navels. The bacteria live inside the fungal cells and, together, they produce the alkaloid drugs their host needs."

So far the evidence suggests that this symbiosis has existed from very early in human evolution. Working on a hunch, Dr. Benway sampled blood from human umbilical cords and analysed it for bacteria. "There were spores of the exact bacteria found in navels, and fungal threads. Not much, but enough to start the culture again in the babies navel after birth. This method of passing on the bacteria must have taken thousands of years to evolve, but, if the practice of smoking or ingesting fluff is responsible for conscience, then it has an obvious evolutionary advantage, doesn't it?"

"So many religions are obsessed with the navel. The Hindus, with their legends, where the world exists inside a lotus blossom growing from Shiva's navel. Most forms of meditation involve concentrating on the bodies centre of gravity in the solar plexus, or more specifically, the navel. The main Chakra point is the navel. It goes on and on."

While it appears the students rediscovered the practice of smoking fluff by accident, the stage is set for a big comeback.

"Certainly we've seen it spreading," Dr Lilly said when questioned regarding rumours of a craze for fluff at UCLA. "I hardly think it's something to worry about. We all experience the effects of fluff from time to time, by natural absorption through the skin. Besides, it tastes horrible and smells worse. If it is integral to the evolution of human brains, I say, let them smoke more!"

But authorities are starting to worry. The discovery of a drug which grows naturally on the human body, where everybody carries around with them at least five full dosages, is the nightmare of any concerned police force. Campus police at the university are already preparing for the worst.

"It would be possible to control this menace if it gets out of hand, but only just. I would consider mandatory antifungal irrigating of the navels of students, and regular inspections to prevent anyone building up a deposit of salable quantity."