



## Conscious Life presents

### How Ayahuasca Led to a Scientific Breakthrough

Guest: Dr Bruce Damer

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#### **[00:00:15] Alexander Beiner**

Hello, everyone. I'm delighted to be speaking with Dr Bruce Damer. Dr Damer is a multidisciplinary scientist, researcher, and public speaker. He's worked on developing and testing new spacecraft with NASA and developing a new model for the origins of life.

More recently, Dr Damer has launched a new psychedelic organization called MINDS, which focuses on creativity and problem solving. So Bruce, thank you so much for joining us.

#### **Dr Bruce Damer**

You're so welcome, Allie.

#### **Alexander Beiner**

I have a lot I want to ask you about. I want to get into your background because it's quite fascinating. The work you do scientifically beyond psychedelics is also really interesting.

But you are in the midst of launching a new project, which is something very close to my heart, looking at problem solving creativity called MINDS. I thought maybe you could tell us a bit about that to start off with.

#### **Dr Bruce Damer**

Yeah. Everyone in the audience knows about MAPS and its history. It's incredible history since the mid-1980s. And MAPS, which is Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, opened up the pathway for legalization very soon for therapeutic applications or healing applications for psychedelics.

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But there was another movement in the, I'm thinking, into the 1940s and the 1950s and 60s, where psychedelics were thought of as agents for creativity in a primary sense. There were even studies done with professionals doing problem solving. And all of that was shut down in the mid 60s with the criminalization that happened, that also shut down the therapeutic studies.

And so MINDS was established last year as, in a sense, a next step beyond MAPS to revivify and bring back this question of, can psychedelics be used as the high octane fuel for incredible downloads? In science, engineering, design, and even leadership in kind of the class of people who are solutionists.

So MINDS was established, and we decided to take off on the, you've got to have a nice four or five-letter acronym for these organizations. So MINDS is multidisciplinary, just like maps, investigation into novel discoveries, which is the flash of download, and solutions which is how do you land those flashes into the world and reify them and create new things for humanity.

### **Alexander Beiner**

You mentioned this legacy of the 40s, 50s, and 60s. What some viewers might be aware of, but others might not, is that there is an open secret in Silicon Valley and other places of innovation where psychedelics continued to play a role in creativity for many people through the 70s, 80s, 90s, and the 2000s.

And now we're very close to, like you said, that being a legal option for people. Maybe you could talk a little bit about what problems would you most like to see being addressed or solved or approached through MINDS?

### **Dr Bruce Damer**

Well, as you alluded to, under the table, many buttoned-down, nerd-like people have been doing various practices. So when I do a talk - a public talk - where there are people in the audience, I usually have a lineup of people wanting to tell me about their practices, and they're not your usual psychedelicist. They're not the Mary Prankster type. They're pretty quiet. You'd never pick them out of a lineup as being psychedelic users.

And yet what they have discovered is a pathway to their own healing, perhaps through MDMA, even through something like LSD, and that that has opened channels for their revealing, where their powers of visualization, say design and architecture, or they're working on a climate change issue, like imaging the planet from space to look at forest growth, and they establish a company.

There's a friend of mine who established a very successful company based upon medicine work, if you will, that gave him the vision and the meaning and the context for establishing his company. All of this is right now under the table and under documented.

But as we are putting out the message that there's an actual research nonprofit dedicated to this, people are showing up and they're filling in - we have an online survey - so they're telling their

stories there. I'm on podcasts and events like this one, and people are just showing up. A movement is articulating itself in a way.

**[00:05:35]**

And the problems that I think we can solve, we can do so much. Our entire world is delivered to us through this platform we're looking at with windows and icons on it, video, all this sort of thing, the genius of this class of people who created this reality.

And they can recreate this reality in creating the next generations of the reality with augmented reality or AIs that become our amanuensis, that become our creative partners. Those could be informed by highly elevated minds, in a sense. Instead of a narrow focus, it could be a broad and more beautiful focus.

As we saw what psychedelics did for culture in the 60s, creating the music and art and the writing that we see from that generation, it's pretty breathtaking. It probably wouldn't have happened without the intervention of psychedelic experience.

And so what about technology? What about design? What about solutions for climate change and things like that? Can that be informed by this healing to revealing modality of humans at their best, in a sense?

### **Alexander Beiner**

I love that phrase healing to revealing. I think that's a really nice...that's a great way to describe perhaps the way the whole psychedelic movement has gone: a real focus on clinical applications to get it over the line in a way, which is, of course, very important.

And now a lot of us are very interested in, okay, well, what is next? How do we actually generate, how do we create a better world? You mentioned those big picture problems you might be able to solve. I've also noticed people...we had a woman on one of our psilocybin retreats who got, let's say, a download for how to conserve a wetland near her.

She was an environmental scientist, so it was very personal, very localized, but a real sense of, "Oh, okay, I've cracked the complexity of this problem, and I think I have a solution for the conservation of this one wetland near me", or countless stories of people talking about getting creative insights.

I, personally, I'm right now writing a novella, which all of it came to me after a psychedelic experience, downloaded all in one big chunk about 10 years ago, and I've been sitting on it waiting for the right time. So these stories, when you scratch the surface, so many people have these stories. What's MINDS... What's the next step with MINDS? What's going to happen with it?

### **Dr Bruce Damer**

It's pretty exciting. We had no idea that this thing would take off like a rocket. So many people have showed up, people who can provide us donor resources. Our first scientific research team has sent in their proposal that's now in review. It'll be our first grant that's provided.

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The grant will support a large-scale survey of dedicated populations, the populations who are likely to use these tools, even if they're using what I would call endogenous tools. In my own practice, which I call endo tripping or tripping on the natch, as Terrence McKenna would describe it. What practices do they use? And so this incredible global survey would be carried out, followed a couple of years later by actual clinical subject human subject trials.

And to do human subject trials, you need what's called an IRB, and Internal Review Board approval at the universities here in the US. You need all this paperwork. You need licenses to store the materials you're going to use. You need all that. So that the beginning of psychedelic assistant innovation research could happen in 2-3 years as we build up to trying to find the others, what is going on out there.

And all of you out there can help us draw that map. What are your practices? How do you do your set, setting, and setup? You're set up being setting up the creative, juicy creative problem you're working on. Then how do you, when a download happens, does it happen during the acute phase of your psychedelic experience? Does it happen after? Does it happen later in your trip, or does it happen when you're integrating, even weeks later?

These were the questions asked by Willis Harman and Jim Fadiman in 1965 when they did their study here in San Francisco that was published. And so it's like, tell us your story so we can build a map, because what we want to do is to be able to publish some open protocols that are suggestive that they really work, some open source protocols for this work.

And again, what we're also emphasizing is it's always a combination of mindfulness practice and even without psychedelics. In my own story, I would suggest that 80% of my insights came without the use of psychedelics. They came through mindfulness practice, even just walking in the woods, riding a bicycle, or things like that.

Breathwork has been potent for me. But when I added psychedelics or later in life, in my 30s and 40s, I found that it improved the entire mechanism, the machinery of my creativity.

And then at the very pinnacle of working on the hardest problem that I ever took on, where it was so opaque and so complex, there was no breaking through it, tryptamine psychedelics were the key, the absolute key to have that insight. The majority, I think, of creativity doesn't need an exogenous or an exotrip, but exotrips are certainly potent additions to the cocktail.

### **Alexander Beiner**

Absolutely. I'd love to talk in a moment about endotripping because I'm fascinated by this and also I know a lot of viewers will have their own practices as well, but I wanted to talk directly about what you just mentioned, about this complex problem that you were trying to solve, that you were aided in by tryptamines.

And it's a nice segue into what you actually study as a scientist, because it's not psychedelics per se. Tell us about...What is your research and how did that experience help you crack something in it?

### **[00:12:43] Dr Bruce Damer**

Well, my research can be embodied looking at this funny little black sludge in this vial here. Strange thing is if I open the vial and I'm smelling it, I'm getting a snifter of the oldest material in the solar system.

This is from a meteorite that's known as a carbonaceous meteorite. It's called the Murchison meteorite. It fell on Australia in the 60s and it contains within it the building blocks for life, not actual cells, but the things that would be needed on the Earth four billion years ago to assemble the first living systems.

And so Dave Deamer and myself at UC Santa Cruz, we started working together 15 years ago. He had a fantastic chemistry background, 50 years in chemistry. He's the inventor of the nanopore sequencing technology that you hear about all over the world.

I had a computational and sort of big thinking complexity thinking background, and we put together a model of how life could begin on the Earth. And instead of it being in the oceans, it would start back in Darwin's warm little ponds, where Darwin thought 150 years ago that life started in a warm little pond with protein compounds forming, which are polymers, ever getting more complex.

And Dave had discovered that if you wet and dry little ponds, little dishes, or you sit next to a hot spring and you literally let the mineral surface that's exposed dry down, you can form little blobs called protocells that contain polymers that also self-assemble while drying.

And that little pool is full of these glowing spheres, if you will, that are protocells. They're the first step toward living cells. And he demonstrated this in the lab, and we went out to hot springs around the world, to the flanks of roaring volcanoes or steaming pools and we actually demonstrated it in the wild.

### **Alexander Beiner**

That's absolutely fascinating. I have this amazing image of you and your colleagues out in the most inhospitable places. Was that related to the insights you got on psychedelics? Was it a problem related to that field, or was it something else that had helped you crack?

### **Dr Bruce Damer**

What we had done is between 2009 and 2013, Dave had trained me. I had this wooly brain, mostly from software and virtual worlds work. I've been doing work for NASA, doing also spacecraft design, whole mission designs, like the first reference design to take humans to a surface of an asteroid. I did about 25 projects for NASA.

I was already doing very creative work, but I really wanted to work on origin of life. I had wanted to work on this problem since I was about 14 years old. Everything I had done in the previous 30 years had been to build up my knowledge base, but I didn't have the specific training.

**[00:16:10]**

So Dave gave me stacks of papers, introduced me to all the people in the field, including Nobel Prize winners, and I got the training through osmosis, through reading all this new science I'd never looked at, membrane biophysics, polymerization, combinatorial selection, and then the hot springs themselves and their potency, their pH, and their cycling times, and the rocks that they're sitting inside, and all those sorts of things.

So I learned that very deeply, and what we had reached was this stopping point where we could see how we could form the protocells, they would bud off and float into the pools, but we couldn't see any further than that. I put that problem, I set that problem up in my mind for three years.

And on an excursion to Peru with my regular group of ayahuasca drinkers in the fall of 2013, two things happened. The first thing that happened was a breakthrough in my own healing, in that I actually was given the experience of my own conception and birth and the feeling of being in my mother's womb and feeling the love of that, just as they decide to give me up because I was adopted straight out at birth.

Adoptees have this kind of rupture that happens. They're put into an adoption ward with 50 other babies, and they just don't get the attention. They never see or smell the mother. They have a higher proportion of various psychological traits, adoptees do.

So I saw that, I literally saw them giving me up in love for my benefit. Then I felt the mother's love for the last time as a developing baby, a post-embryo. And that's the feeling I needed to ground myself, to heal the hard knot of pain that was in my belly, and it dissolved. And that hard knot of pain was me, the unborn me.

So it was a profound experience. Then I come out of that and I turned to Mother Aya. We had established this relationship, this archetypal figure. I said, "How would you like to go back to the birth of us all?". I thanked her for her good works.

And so we merged and we plowed through going backwards through the sperm, the sperm emerging from my father's body and emerging from his father's body. Because if you just trace that, you can trace yourself all the way back through the animals and the fishes and then the worms and then the multicellular blobs, like plantaria or something, and then all the way through the microbial cloud of join points.

And I literally pulled the trigger on an endo trip, which was the visualization of traveling back in time 4 billion years, ended up floating, coming out of the cloud over a Hadean Island 4.1 billion years ago, diving into the warm little pool, seeing the protocells then became the protocell itself, where I woke up screaming because my body was now this gelatinous mass, this combination of polymers struggling to do the lifelike thing.

And noticed that a part of me was tearing off. And creating this black vacuole and realizing it was a failed division and that death had to happen to write the code of life because I could watch an undulating piano key action and polymers within myself.

**[00:20:17]**

And that was the clue. So that was the incredible peak of the acute peak. That was the clue that led to the insight that gave us the complete cycle of protocells, of polymers coupling between the wet phase and the dry and going back into the layers and wiggling around and competing.

I got the entire download about two months later, after the questions posed by the ayahuasca experience, the download came two months later in a breathwork session, an endo trip, and it was a 45 minute complete takeover. It was like Einstein's thought experiment.

I rushed upstairs, wrote pages of notes, drew it all out, sent it to Dave, and he said, "You found it. You found the kinetic trap", which is a chemist's way of saying you found a system in which things get more complex ahead of their degradation, so things build up. All of life still lives in a kinetic trap.

This is why we don't dissolve in the shower. Its water is just trying to break us up and life and enzymes are putting us back together faster. It was a huge... I'm still mining that experience, both the endo trip and the exotrip. I'm still mining it. There are new things today.

Those ended up in a publication in 2015 on the cover of Scientific American in 2017. Then at that time, we were going to Australia, and we were going with our geology colleagues and studying these rock, and that's a stromatolite. Those layers are the fingerprints of microbial mat communities. They had just discovered geysers, three and a half billion-year-old geysers with evidence for life in it, and that's made by splashing hot springs.

So we combined with them. That work was featured on the cover of Scientific American in 2017 because it was a co-discovery. It was like, life is present on the land as far back as we can look in hot springs. Then here's this other team saying, "Life starts in hot springs". That was used by NASA to target the landing site for the next Mars rover. I did presentations at meetings full of rover people, mission planners.

Then it rolled forward to 2020 when the full hypothesis was published in the Astrobiology Journal. That's created a paradigm shift in our science out of the oceans, from hydrothermal vents in the oceans onto land. There are maybe 20 teams working on this. There's every day a citation of these papers. It literally landed.

A psychedelically-assisted innovation was able to land as a major new hypothesis in science in the 2020s. It's one of the, say, half a dozen biggest questions in science. So I thought it's worth telling this story. And in 2022, for Dennis McKenna, I did a talk at his conference in the UK at St. Giles House, way out in the West country.

And that talk sort of went viral. I came out of the psychedelic scientist closet, and then this organization came together, Ford and Sylvia in Austin decided to help back it. And so we have a vibrant Texas-based nonprofit full of innovators, people who founded companies based on their visionary experience, wanting to tell their stories and wanting to have this validated and valorized.

**[00:24:28] Alexander Beiner**

I mean, it's an absolutely incredible story that you just shared. So thank you for that. And I'm glad that you're bringing it into the world because it's very important.

And what really strikes me about it is there's this beautiful connection between your very personal, very touching inner experience of healing that then opened the door to something that is beyond you, something that's about, something that we all share, the origins of life itself.

I know this is something that I've observed in my own psychedelic experiences, but also observed at other people's, is this intricate link between the very biographical, the very personal, and the very metaphysical. So are you seeing that echoed in what people are saying in surveys or conversations you're having, this link between the deeply personal and the collective.

**Dr Bruce Damer**

Absolutely. One of the things that you talk about that I really appreciate is how much do we bring subjectivity to things and get lost down the rabbit hole of our own belief systems, our theories of everything, or our beliefs about how the world works. We're losing contact with ground truth because of technology, because of the natural proclivity of humans to want to believe way out things. And dopamine responses, there's a chemical element to everything.

And so, yes. My journey was that I could have spun off into theory of everything making, like many, many of my colleagues. But I got grounded into objectivity because I met a mentor.

And a hazing exercise called peer review, and then testing, testing the ideas on the ground I mean, literally taking your your existence into your own hands, bending over a 100 Celsius pool that is blasting out carbon, basically, sulfur dioxide, just to get the numbers, to get whether the chemistry works.

And so what I realized is that what minds should do in this subjectivity-objectivity link to ground things is to provide all these new, in a sense, you could say new Jedi, the new Padawans. Use a Star Wars metaphor, the Padawans that have these capacities, whether it's the force or it's the force of vision, to come into a new organization, an academy that we'd like to establish, where they get mentorship.

They get also guardrails on their ideation, peer review, and they get due diligence on their ideas from mentors, and I would be one of those mentors. They don't spin out. They don't go off into all crazy directions, and they're able to land all that talent and skill into something that they can see working one day.

And then MINDS Academy would be connected to a venture fund, MINDS Ventures. This is just in the discussion phase. Investors would be there waiting to pick up some of these amazing ideas and turn them into real products and services, like building a living sea wall around Qatar, which is going to be flooded, and making it out of Tigris-Euphrates' reed belt ecosystems.

That was one of these downloads that came to a group of us a few years ago when we were visiting Qatar. It's those kinds of things. But where do those land? They land in a venture fund.



Then the Padawans can have a piece of it without having to build it because some of them aren't really the business building type, some of them could be.

**[00:28:40]**

And then they can go back and continue to generate, generate new. We can not only do the science to validate that this works, come up with the protocol, but then we can mentor a whole generation in the using of these healing and revealing protocols, and then turn that into economic levers that can help change the world, really accelerate that, so their ideas aren't lost or stolen.

They don't end up in poverty like Nikola Tesla. By the end of his life, all these great, tragic stories, we take care of them. My giving back from the great fortune I had of being taken care of by many mentors and good fortune, I want to give that back through MINDS Academy to that next generation. That will be a lever that shifts the world in a really positive direction.

### **Alexander Beiner**

Absolutely. It's brilliant. It's brilliant stuff. I'm very excited for its unfolding. There's another element to this, which you've mentioned a few times, which is endo tripping, because, of course, in your experience you described there was the ayahuasca experience, and then there was the breathwork, which also opened up a lot and it sounds like gave you that final click, final key.

And I've talked a lot about John Vervaeke's idea of an ecology of practices, that we need lots of different practices, not just psychedelics or mindfulness, even though they're both amazing. But you mentioned breathwork, dance as a practice, there's so many.

What are some of the endo practices that you've encountered that you feel are conducive to creativity, and that should be added in with this whole mix?

### **Dr Bruce Damer**

One of the practice I started when I was about nine years old, which was noticing that if I closed my eyes after a stimulating day, I saw these color washes going. That's described in general in psychology as hypnagogia. But I didn't know that there was even a word for it.

What I learned to do is to turn the knobs of my mind down, to tune them down and turn it off, like list processing, imagination gut, I shut that down. I was able to just be the looker, the observer. Later I learned that this is the key to meditation. I didn't know about meditation.

But when I was able to just become the neutral and somewhat humorous observer of all this. The point of view was, what is going on? It's just hilarious. These color washes slowed and then turned into color landscapes with the occasional brilliant object moving around. If I didn't wish for it and didn't look for it, it would show up.

It was a practice that I then started to tune over the next several years. Then I took up a pencil, started drawing these worlds, and then color pencils, and started drawing the color versions of the world, like thousands and thousands of drawings. I kept that system going so I could be sitting there bored at school, and I would be endo tripping the entire class. Scribbling a single large drawing.

I had to hide this from the teachers because they thought I was taking notes, but I was actually, I was doing a map, endo tripping and listening out of one ear. If I looked at that drawing, I knew the entire course. I could remember everything.

**[00:32:21]**

So all I had to do to study for the exam was to look at that drawing and then go back to it in my mind and would recall all the aspects of, say, the history of the British Empire or something was embodied in that one drawing.

That became my profession, if you will. I did code that way, I did virtual worlds that way, spacecraft designed that way, and it just became my profession. In terms of practice, it was really tuning down the mind, turning off even imagination. Imagination wants to grab it and embellish it.

So after an endo trip or an exo trip, your imagination - you've probably experienced this - grabs it and tries to interpret it. That's what happened and your ego attaches to one thing and your explainer attaches to another thing.

If you can get them all back on the bus sitting in their seats and you can keep driving the bus as the calm teacher that has no need to analyze the trip, then the trip lives on. The bus continues to roll and the beauty of what just happened doesn't get dumbed down.

All of us have been through this. We just went to the center of the cosmos and back. Let's just sit in that for a while. Let's just drive our bus. Don't try to read any explanatory framework around this. It just was. It was just the most extraordinary experience. Let's let it land in our tissues.

So that's a little bit of a triptych through some of the things that have happened to me. The idea of training to be just the passive observer, I think, is really key. Even on my first mushroom trip, which came through Terrence McKenna, and I didn't have a scale, so I just simply ate the whole bag of them.

Even in the terrifying throws of a total psilocybin takeover that I'd never experienced before, my observer was snapped into online and watching the humor of it all. Like, "Okay, if we scream for help and we're out in the wilderness, no one's going to come".

And it actually just creates this shaky kind of a graphical thing, "That's a bad trip. Oh, my God, that's a bad trip. Let's look at that. And now let's start singing". So that potent separate observer-witness, I think, is really the key. It's the key to the whole shebang.

### **Alexander Beiner**

I totally agree with that. That's been my experience with it as well. And after my first psychedelic experience when I was 18, I immediately got into daily meditation practice, really because of that. And ever since then, it's always been a combination of those two things.

And another thing I found very useful is something I call curiosity hacking, which is taking that same observer stance and just being deeply curious about everything that shows up. It's like,

"Wow, the walls are doing that. How interesting. Let's be curious about that". I find that incredibly useful.

**[00:35:38]**

Another thing you mentioned, which I think is worth highlighting, is the importance of coming out of these experiences and not immediately grasping for meaning or trying to make the story out of it.

That's something that, you know, I run retreats with my colleague, Natasja Pelgrom, that we do in the Netherlands with psilocybin truffles. The days after the truffle experiences, we focus a lot on embodiment, a lot on symbolic journeying.

We use, for example, imagery cards so that participants will flip over cards and just feel into, "Okay, well, that's interesting. What does this card represent? What does that represent?" But it's not about storytelling, it's just about playing with the representation, feeling it in your body.

I think that's absolutely so crucial to healthy psychedelic journeying, but also, I think, creativity, because that flow of the creativity is so important. But it very much sounds like perhaps you have that mindset already, perhaps even from when you were a child, an openness.

At the same time, I think, this is something I'm curious to hear from you. Can psychedelics play a role in opening up someone's creativity? A lot of people out there think, "I'm not creative". Maybe a teacher told them, "No, you're not good at drawing. You shouldn't be"... But what do you think about psychedelics as a tool for actually unlocking someone's creativity?

**Dr Bruce Damer**

I believe that every human is a scientist. When you're two years old and something is going on. Say you come down and you see a frog, and you reach toward the frog, and the frog jumps.

The next thing you're going to do, the next time you're going to see a frog like that, you're going to reach more slowly because you're going to test the hypothesis that "The frog detected my hand going quickly if I go slowly..." And gradually, you would learn how to actually pick up a frog.

Because we're all born scientists. This is how...It's fundamental to our survival, this testing of these hypotheses. And in fact, Karl Friston and many thinkers, Robin Carhartt-Harris writes about this a lot, that the brain is a prediction machine.

It's making predictions about what might happen next, and it's taking votes from its various network components about, "Well, is this actually happening? Did this prediction work out?".

I think the core of genius lies in every human being, and it manifests in different ways. For some persons, it might manifest in the most exquisitely beautiful and functional fabric you could ever imagine where individual lines of fabric contain data threads or temperature changes.

Somebody could come up with that if they're really into fabrics, then let your mind go in the most extraordinary and the look of it, the sheen of it, the color shifting that it does. What if that could be

real? That's genius. That's genius at work. It could be somebody who's doing the fabric arts. But that's a type of genius reimagining fabric as a living thing.

**[00:39:09]**

And so it's all over the place. I think that all of us have that capacity. If we entertain the idea that while we're using psychedelics or while we're in an elevated state, like an endo tripping state, however that manifests, that we push the button on curiosity and ask, "What if? What if?" and then turn our minds blank or turn our expectations blank and see what shows up.

Because in some sense, people, I think, believe they're not creative because, well, they think it all has to come from within themselves. But what if it's coming from an external source?

When I was about 11 or 12, I asked the question, "Is all this insight and the fact that I can be walked around my neighborhood by intuition, is that an internal thing? Am I generating that or is that coming from a world, like a virtual world or is some an intelligence that just is baked into the living world?"

I concluded that there is an external operating system, if you will. If then you believe it's not all on me, I can just ask this OS. Some people might call it God answering prayer or something, but for nerdy people, it's an OS that you can ping it, and send it server request, and it will come back, and it's not all on you, and you just have to be ready to receive. And it'll come at whatever time it comes and just have your tools ready.

I think that every single human on the planet has had multiple experiences of that, and they have different names for it. But we're pinging a bigger OS, a bigger intelligence that we're all inside. It's a proposal for as long as humans have been able to imagine anything.

I think that the caves of Lascaux, which are, what are they, 10 or 15,000 years old, a friend of mine was actually doing a recreation of the Lascaux paintings, in a restaurant, if you will, crazy. He would go out at night to smoke and come back in, and he would do this - a full-size reconstruction. And he gradually worked out that the antler points and the hook points, and all these critical things actually mapped to stars.

But slightly off, slightly off of where he could...he was studying the constellations, memorizing that, coming in, looking and mapping it, coming back and forth, he'd never thought of himself as creative or intelligent in that way.

But over hundreds of nights, he worked out that Lascaux was quite plausibly a star map made by endo tripping genius and exotripping geniuses over under generations who went outside the cave and then mapped and created a reality. They literally created a reality that people could interact with, that the whole community could hear the story of the cosmos. So it wasn't just...it was much more significant.

So in a sense, he found his own genius by just noticing and asking the question. He sent this off to various archeology journals. I'm not sure what the consequence of it was, but it showed the genius of our ancestors 15,000 years ago and his own emergent genius of being curious, as you point out so well.

**[00:43:00] Alexander Beiner**

What a wonderful story. I love that. I hope that goes...I know the cave paintings, and if people aren't familiar with them, they should look them up. They're really, really striking. What a lovely example.

Before we wrap up, is there anything else that feels important or relevant around this whole topic of psychedelics and creativity or anything else we've talked about that you want to express that we haven't talked about yet?

**Dr Bruce Damer**

I think that in some sense, perhaps this is a response to what you've also been writing a lot about. Where has truth gone or where is truth going? Because if AI texture video can make any reality that looks very convincing, not just pictures of people, our favorite people, being arrested, but the video of them being arrested, and it looks pretty high-def, and it looks extremely convincing, then what do people believe?

In some sense, if we look back at Neal Stephenson, the great science fiction writer Neal Stephenson's, I think it's called *Seveneves*, the book about what happens to a galactic civilization when everybody lives in media and everybody's reality is shaped super hyper locally personalized.

And what the civilization has to do in order to stay grounded, it makes one planet that's basically a monastery, where people don't get so tweaked by media. There's restrictions on how much TikTok, future TikTok, you can watch. They are grounded, and they provide the reality grounding for the entire rest of the civilization.

**Dr Bruce Damer**

So, in some sense, if you allow the lab rat maze experiment to go on, and for all of these millions of the young people coming up to enter into this kind of stand on Zanzibar, localized realities, you need to counterbalance it with something that is super grounded and that is, in a sense, the curious observer for all of humanity.

But it also does real work in the world. It solves problems of food safety or food security, if you will. It looks at the health of the planet. So I think we're going to need a monastic order, and I think it will attract wonderful beings. And we'll have a new Jedi academy for a while that will help counterbalance all the other...and help calm the flames of the other side with some humor and some pointing out in a way.

So perhaps MINDS is a first step toward that because the type of the individuals that would want to be in such an academy, they love their TikToks, too, but they're a little frustrated by what it does to their mind and what they think it's doing to the world. I know you are.

So where is the other place you can go where that's totally recognized and we're still doing good works? In the eighth century, the ninth and tenth century, as Europe had fallen into the so-called dark ages and there was the Norse invasions in Northern Europe and things like that, it was these little monastic communities that kept the light burning on a lot of things.

**[00:46:46]**

And we might need that again. I think it's going to involve medicine work, psychedelics, healing, then revealing. It's going to involve science. It's going to be a beautiful scene. I'd love to live there, and in a sense, I kind of do.

But once we get the community together, we'll be able to create something beautiful and strong and hopefully wise and guiding for our little species in our civilization.

**Alexander Beiner**

It's a beautiful, beautiful vision of the future to aspire to and definitely somewhere I want to live as well. So Bruce Damer, thank you so much. This has been really a big pleasure.

**Dr Bruce Damer**

Pleasure is mine, Allie.