

# MAAPS



SPECIAL EDITION:

## **Psychedelics & the Mind/Body Connection**

Edited by David Jay Brown, M.A.

VOLUME XXI NUMBER 1



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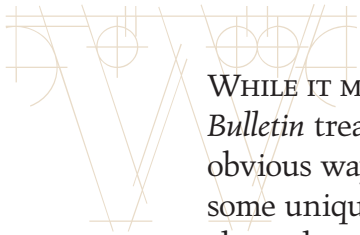
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WHILE IT MAY SEEM like an obvious topic, this special edition of the *MAPS Bulletin* treats the theme of psychedelics and the body in some less-than-obvious ways. In this issue, guest editor David Jay Brown shares with us some unique perspectives about how psychedelics challenge how we think about the connection between the mind and the body.

Special issues of the *Bulletin* are intended to shed light on and generate discussion about the many ways that psychedelics can make a positive contribution to people's lives beyond the specific therapeutic context. While past articles have focused on the use of psychedelics for spiritual, emotional, and creative practices, this issue discusses the use of psychedelics to enhance physical activities (such as yoga, sports, dance, bodywork, and fire-spinning) as well as to catalyze mind/body healing. This special issue is longer than past ones thanks to David Jay Brown himself, who made a generous donation to cover the extra printing costs associated with finding more outstanding articles than he or MAPS originally anticipated.

## From the desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D.



Rick Doblin, Ph.D.  
MAPS Executive Director

In accordance with our mission, MAPS devotes our precious resources to research exploring the psychotherapeutic applications of psychedelics and marijuana with the goal of developing them into legal prescription medicines. While this is our most important goal, it is by no means the only way that psychedelics have been used for millennia, nor is it the only way that millions of people are currently using them. The criminalization of psychedelics and marijuana, has led to their non-scientific and non-medical uses often being seen as examples of drug abuse. This special issue is meant to directly contradict that overly simplistic perspective. Indeed, even Dr. Nora Volkow, current Director of the US National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) recently said, "Most people [who] take drugs are not addicted to drugs, [just] like most people who eat chocolate, even if they eat more than they should, are not addicted to chocolate."

While the reports in this issue are not in our view examples of drug abuse, neither are they practices we recommend that everyone try. Neither recommending nor condemning the uses of psychedelics described in this *Bulletin*, we simply intend to report as objectively and accurately as we can how they are being used. This is part of our overall mission to help our society to honestly acknowledge both the full range of potentials and the full range of risks associated with their use. It's only after an honest and balanced assessment that our society will find the most appropriate

ways to integrate these powerful substances into our culture, and this requires us to be mature enough to move beyond the blunt, misguided perspectives of prohibition. In a post-prohibition world (which may perhaps even come within our own lifetimes) stories like those in this special issue will become increasingly common. For now, they are rare—or at least rarely discussed in public settings—and MAPS is proud to contribute to increasing the breadth and depth of our cultural discussion surrounding psychedelics.

If not for David Jay Brown's generous personal donation, we'd be presenting a narrower and less comprehensive perspective. By the same token, if not for the generous personal donations from MAPS members, our research agenda would be significantly more limited. Psychedelics can enrich our lives in a wide range of ways. Yet because of the relatively few people with the motivation, courage, and resources to support our efforts and the lack of government, industry, and major foundation support for psychedelic research, your help is needed. Please consider donating to MAPS as generously as you can, regardless of whether that's a lot or a little.

Together, we can inspire, astonish, and heal our world.



Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS Founder and Executive Director



**A legendary day** in baseball history—for sports fans and psychedelic enthusiasts alike—occurred on June 12, 1970, when the late Pittsburgh Pirates’ pitcher Dock Ellis hurled a no-hitter against the San Diego Padres while under the influence of LSD. For those who don’t know, a no-hitter is a baseball game in which one team doesn’t get any hits. In the world of professional baseball, this is an extremely rare accomplishment for a pitcher, as only 269 no-hitters have been thrown in Major League Baseball history since 1875.

## Letter from the Editor — David Jay Brown



David Jay Brown, M.A.  
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Jackson says that an LSD-induced vision that he had in Malibu in May of 1973 helped him to see basketball in a new way that boosted his coaching performance.

Comedian Robin Williams does a hilarious standup comedy routine about this historical baseball game, where he follows the above-stated revelation about Dock Ellis’ altered neurochemistry with a plea to his audience, “For those of you who have done LSD, please tell the person sitting next to you how difficult this might be.” Amplifying one’s senses, and dissolving one’s conceptual mind, may seem like the last thing that one needs when under such stressful pressure to concentrate, focus, and discipline one’s body, but maybe, for someone who is already well-trained as a professional athlete, this wasn’t as hard as it first appears. In fact, some evidence suggests that perhaps Ellis pitched so well that day partially because he was under the influence of a psychedelic that sharpened his perception, dilated his sense of time, and strengthened the connection between his mind and his body.

Head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers, Phil Jackson (a.k.a. “Zen Master”)—one of the most well-known coaches in all of sports—has the highest winning percentage of any coach in the history of the NBA (both in the regular season and in the playoffs). In his book *Maverick: More Than a Game* (Playboy Press, 1975), Jackson says that an LSD-induced vision that he had in Malibu in May of 1973 helped him to see basketball in a new way that boosted his coaching performance. He said that the experience—which he called one of the peak experiences of his life—gave him a new love for the sport and a deeper appreciation of team play.

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disciplines.

In the recently produced *National Geographic Explorer* series documentary “Inside LSD,” two performance artists demonstrate the truly remarkable neurosomatic skills that they developed while under the influence of psychedelics. Together they practiced a hybrid of dance, juggling, and meditation called “flow,” and they credit psychedelics with improving their flow skills. In the documentary they put on a dazzling flow performance while under the influence of LSD. “I use LSD as a tool. It allows me to do things that I couldn’t normally do,” said one of the performers (Flow Master Dan) in the documentary.

A number of people who are well-trained in the control of their body, and in unifying their mind and body, have drawn inspiration from their psychedelic experiences, and, in some cases, like the flow artists who performed in the *National Geographic* documentary, they actually integrate the occasional use of psychedelics into their mind/body practice as a way of enhancing their connection to it.

It would be interesting to know if Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps—who caused such a huge controversy when photos of him surfaced smoking from a bong—ever used cannabis when he was swimming, but, unfortunately, he didn’t respond to my queries and remains quiet on the subject. Nonetheless, a whole underground subculture has evolved, where extreme sport enthusiasts—into skiing, snowboarding, skydiving, surfing, etc.—integrate low doses of psychedelics into their athletic disciplines. MTV sports correspondent and author of *Tryptamine Palace*, James Oroc, joins us in this special issue to cover this daredevil world of psychedelically-accelerated extreme sport enthusiasts.

This special *MAPS Bulletin* is dedicated to exploring how psychedelics affect the mind/body connection. Besides competitive sports and extreme athletics, some of the other mind/body practices that people have combined with psychedelics include Yoga, dance, martial arts, Tantra, tai chi, and massage therapy. In addition to these mind/body practices, some of the other areas that we’ll be covering in this special theme *Bulletin* include how psychedelics relate to psychosomatic medicine, psychic phenomena, genetic awareness, and quantum consciousness. We’ll also be looking at the fascinating relationship between the powerful psychedelic DMT and the brain, where it naturally occurs as a mysterious ligand, and how it might help to mediate the mind/body connection.

#### **Yoga and Tantra**

One of the oldest links between the practice of a physical discipline and psychedelic mind states can be found in the history of Yoga. Yoga

is an ancient practice that developed in India during 3300–1700 B.C., and there are numerous types, but they all hold certain principles in common, which are designed to help unify the body, mind, and spirit of the practitioner through meditation. The connection between psychedelics and Yoga can be found in the earliest texts on the subject, where it is described as a mysterious plant called “soma,” and the connection remains quite strong to this day. On the internet, for example, inserting the words “yoga” and “psychedelics” into Google currently yields around 5,790,000 results. Yoga teacher and author of *Yoga Beyond Belief*, Ganga White, joins us in this special issue to discuss this long and fascinating relationship.

Tantra, another mind/body practice that developed long ago in India, also aims to help its practitioners transcend the rewards and pains associated with life, but it takes the opposite approach from Yoga. Unlike Yoga, which seeks to constrict external outputs to achieve this inner state of independence, Tantra seeks to transform one’s relationship to them, so that whether or not to disengage becomes more of a choice than a compulsion. The aspect of Tantra that most Westerners are familiar with are the exercises that relate to sexuality, and this is where a lot of experimentation with psychedelics has occurred. Sexological bodyworker Margaret Wade joins us in this special issue to explore how psychedelics have influenced some Tantric sexual practice. (Also, see my article “Forbidden Knowledge...and Ancient Secrets” on the this subject in the Spring 2002 issue of the *MAPS Bulletin*.)

One of the best books that I know of that explores the different mind/body techniques that have been used by people throughout history is Esalen Institute cofounder Michael Murphy’s book *The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Further Evolution of Human Nature*, which provides an encyclopedic overview of techniques employed over the centuries to improve the mind/body connection.

#### **Massage Therapy and Bodywork**

Massage therapy is another ancient mind/body practice, which involves the manipulation of muscle and connective tissue to enhance the body’s function, as well as to promote relaxation and well-being. It arose independently in a number of different cultures around the world, and early writings on the subject have been found in many ancient civilizations, including those of India, Rome, China, Greece, Egypt, Japan, and Mesopotamia. Health benefits have long been reported from massage therapy, and recent scientific studies have confirmed many of these reported benefits.

As a California-certified massage therapist



(trained in Swedish massage therapy at Twin Lakes College in Santa Cruz) who has spent many hours giving and receiving hundreds of massages, I can tell you with complete assurance that a good massage—in the proper setting, with dim lighting, soothing music and herbal scents—can be pretty consciousness-altering all by itself, and is very similar to a cannabis high. So when massage therapy is mixed with the sensory-enhancing, boundary-dissolving qualities of a potent psychedelic, the results can be profoundly cathartic and unusually relaxing. In some cases, people have reported that they released deeply blocked emotions, which had long-lasting health benefits.

Esalen massage therapist and teacher Ellen Watson, who created the video *The Art of Essential Touch*, joins us in this special issue to share what she has learned about the combination of massage therapy and psychedelics. Also joining us is massage therapist Trevor Getsla, who will be discussing how psychedelics have influenced his bodywork practice.

#### **Dance Ritual and Dance Performance**

One of the very first things that a newly conceived embryo does when it enters the world is establish a sense of rhythm with its beating heart, and all human cultures share a passion for singing and dancing. Not surprisingly, there is a long and close association between psychedelics, music, and rhythmic movement, stretching all the way from the present day to prehistoric times. People have been dancing all night on psychedelics, at both primitive and modern festivals, since the dawn of human history.

From shamanic dances in ayahuasca ceremonies and peyote rituals, to boogying at Acid Tests and Grateful Dead concerts, acid house parties and techno raves, psychedelics seem to inspire, and to provide tremendous fuel, for all-night dancing. As would be expected, some skillful and imaginative people have masterfully developed this passion into dazzling art forms.

For this *Bulletin* I interviewed dance performer Phaedrana Jones and visual artist Andrew “Android” Jones about how their mesmerizing, collaborative dance performance has been influenced by their use of psychedelics. Also joining us is fire dancer Hana Theobald and an anonymous flow artist who discuss how psychedelics have affected their performance.

#### **Mind/Body Medicine**

Only in recent years has Western medicine acknowledged the important role that the mind plays in the health of the body. Thanks to the pioneering work of neuroscientist

Candace Pert, Ph.D., and others, we now know that our intentions and emotions can have a measurable effect on the functioning of our immune systems and other physiological processes in our bodies. This revelation opened up the door to what has become known as mind/body medicine—a branch of health science which recognizes that both the mind and the body can causally influence one another—and it marks a giant leap forward in our medical understanding because, ultimately, mind and body are parts of a single, unified system.

When I was discussing ideas for this bulletin with MAPS President Rick Doblin, Ph.D., he told me that he thought that MDMA “really opens up the mind-body connection.” He said, “I’m specifically thinking of a guy that I was sitting for, maybe twenty years ago. During the process his arm became completely paralyzed, but we knew not to worry about it. As it turned out, he was a doctor, and he started telling us this whole long story about how his father had been on life support when he was dying, and his mother had asked him to pull the plug. So he actually was the one who pulled the plug. But he hated his father, and he wasn’t sure: Is he killing his dad? Is he doing it out of hatred, or is it out of love? Is it for his family? And as he worked through all those issues, he started to get feeling back in his arm—and then, all of a sudden, he was no longer paralyzed. But it took hours and hours to work through it.”

This type of psychosomatic processing is not uncommon during psychedelic therapy sessions. Joining us in this special issue to explore these ideas further is integrative medicine expert Andrew Weil, M.D., author of *Spontaneous Healing*, who I interviewed about mind/body medicine and psychedelics, and Spanish clinical psychologist Ana Maqueda, who discusses the relationship between psychosomatic medicine, psychoneuroimmunology, and psychedelics. Ralph Metzner, Ph.D., author of *The Unfolding Self*, and Vietnam vet Ed Ellis, are also here to discuss how MDMA can affect psychosomatic processing with PTSD, and Steve Rooke, shares his story about how MDMA helped to cure him of rheumatoid arthritis.

Also joining us is anthropologist Stephen Beyer, Ph.D., author of *Singing to the Plants*, who shares some of his experiences with ayahuasca-based Amazonian shamans. Ayahuasca-based shamanism has been widely reported to help heal people from a variety of difficult-to-treat illnesses. The body’s innate ability to heal itself from illness is often brushed aside in medical research trials as “merely” the placebo effect; however, with ayahuasca-based shamanism the body’s innate healing ability

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takes center stage, where it seems to become magnified, and there are numerous, well-documented stories of people who have had long-standing medical illnesses suddenly and miraculously vanish, or vastly improve, after an ayahuasca healing ceremony.

### **ESP & Psychic Phenomena**

Few people are aware that there have been numerous, carefully-controlled scientific experiments with telepathy, psychokinesis, remote viewing, and other types of psychic phenomena, which have consistently produced compelling, statistically significant results that conventional science is at a loss to explain. It's also interesting to note that many people have reported experiencing meaningful telepathic communications, as well as verified remote viewing abilities, with ayahuasca and other psychedelics—not to mention a wide range of paranormal events and synchronicities, which seem extremely difficult to explain by means of conventional reasoning.

A questionnaire study conducted by psychologist Charles Tart, Ph.D., of 150 experienced marijuana users found that 76% believed in extrasensory perception (ESP), with frequent reports of experiences while intoxicated that were interpreted as psychic. Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, M.D., and psychologist Stanley Krippner, Ph.D., have collected numerous anecdotes about psychic phenomena that were reported by people under the influence of psychedelics, and several small scientific studies have looked at how LSD, psilocybin, and mescaline might affect telepathy and remote viewing.

For example, according to psychologist Jean Millay, Ph.D., in 1997, students at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands did research to establish whether or not the use of psilocybin could influence remote viewing. This was a small experiment, with only 12 test-subjects, but the results of the study indicated that those subjects who were under the influence of psilocybin achieved a success rate of 58.3 percent, which was statistically significant.

Dr. Krippner, and psychologist David Luke, Ph.D., join us in this special issue to summarize these fascinating studies and explore these possibilities further. Also joining us is investigative journalist Peter Gorman, author of *Ayahuasca in My Blood*, who describes some his personal healing experiences with remote viewing on ayahuasca.

### **DMT and the Brain**

One of the most mysterious puzzles in all of nature—in the same league as questions like “What existed before the Big Bang?” and “How did life begin?”—revolves around the fact that the extremely powerful psychedelic substance

known as dimethyltryptamine (DMT) is naturally found in the human body, as well as in many species of animals and plants, and nobody knows what it does, or what function it might serve, in any of these places. Because natural DMT levels tend to rise while we're asleep at night, a role in dreaming has been suggested. But this is pure speculation, and even if true, it may do much more. DMT is also one of the primary ingredients in ayahuasca, the potent hallucinogenic jungle juice from the Amazon, and, because of its endogenous status and unusually potent effects, many people have considered it to be the quintessential psychedelic.

Psychiatric researcher Rick Strassman, Ph.D., who conducted a five year study with DMT at the University of New Mexico, has suggested that naturally elevated DMT levels in the brain may be responsible for such unexplained mental phenomena as spontaneous mystical experiences, near-death experiences, non-human entity contact, and schizophrenia. Strassman and others have even gone so far as to speculate about the possibility that elevated DMT levels in the brain might be responsible for ushering the soul into the body before birth, and out of the body after death. Neuroscientist Adam Halberstadt, Ph.D., from the University of California, San Diego, joins us in this special issue to summarize what we know about endogenous DMT, and helps us to unravel the strange mystery of what it is doing our bodies.

Perhaps endogenous DMT fluctuations in the brain naturally help to modulate certain types of mind/body experiences, and this may be why a low dose of a psychedelic can sometimes be helpful in facilitating a better mind/body connection. Whether through dance, yoga, meditation, or massage, harmonizing the mind with the body has been a goal shared by many people, across time and cultures. Psychedelics—when wisely used in the proper set and setting—may be helpful toward achieving these ends, and there's certainly plenty of evidence to suggest that synchronizing the mind and the body more effectively and more harmoniously may help to improve personal health and enhance spiritual growth, i.e. make us better people. In a world that's so obviously in need of balance, restoring and improving the order within ourselves first always seems like a good idea. •



## Honor Thy Daughter

Marilyn Howell, Ph.D.



Marilyn Howell is an educator who specializes in mind-body medicine. She was trained as a biologist, earned a doctorate in education from Harvard, and created the first mind-body course in public education at Brookline High School, where she taught and developed the curriculum for three decades. To follow is an excerpt from her memoir, *Honor Thy Daughter*, which will soon be published by MAPS. The book chronicles her experience of doing MDMA therapy with her daughter, while her daughter was dying of cancer.

### Prologue, 1988

"Mom, did you ever do drugs when you were in high school?" Mara asked.

She was 15, a junior at Brookline High, well past the peak of adolescent angst. Her chopped hair and bitten fingernails had grown back, she no longer avoided me in the corridors at school, and she had even decided to sign up for the senior science course I taught on the connection between body and mind.

"I don't think any kids at my high school did drugs back then," I said. "I heard stories of kids getting drunk, but the most I ever drank was a sip of my parent's wine. I didn't like the taste."

Mara fixed her eyes on mine. "What about later?"

This was a question I'd anticipated, wondering when she would ask, and I was glad it came when she was mature enough to hear the truth.

"It's a long story." I paused, suddenly a bit unsure of myself, how much to say, where to start. "Let me give you a little backstory first."

Mara raised an eyebrow, but it was clear that she was listening. I went on.

"When I was your age, my chest was actually concave. Lying in a bathtub I could hold a half cup of water right in there." I pointed to the base of my sternum. "And my ribs were jacked up like this." I held my hands above my lower ribs to show her how they used to be. "I was born that way, with a structural deformity."

Mara looked away and folded her arms as if to protect herself. She seemed to know that she was going to learn more than she bargained for.

"Back in the mid-70s, when I was getting interested in mind-body connections, I went to a workshop taught by a psychotherapist who did 'character analysis,' Ron Kurtz. By looking at people – their posture, the way they moved, the tension in their muscles – he could make some very canny deductions about their personalities and emotional histories, even how old they were when they had traumatic experiences. I asked him what he thought of the dent in my chest and my flared ribs. He claimed unequivocally that when I was still a fetus in the womb, my mother didn't want me, and as a response my chest folded in on itself. Later on as an infant I sensed my mother's disapproval whenever I started to cry and I puffed up my

little ribcage to hold back my sobs."

Mara looked at me for a long moment as though she might be about to cry herself. "Did you believe him?" she asked.

"I didn't know what to think. I never heard anything like this in my training to be a biologist. But he shook me up, and he got me to the next step when he suggested some mind-body methods to open up my chest and heal the hurt. I knew I had to find out more. That's when I started Alexander lessons, took Feldenkrais classes, got Rolfed, and went to all kinds of workshops. It was the first time in my life that I felt like a bad student. My teachers kept telling me I had to relax, to stop trying so hard, but I didn't know how. I was like an Energizer bunny running around looking for the off switch. After two years of trying, the pit in my chest was still there and my ribs hadn't budged. At workshops I heard some stories about experiences of people who had used psychedelics. In particular, I heard that LSD psychotherapy might lead to a breakthrough."

"LSD psychotherapy? Now that's a combination I never heard," Mara said. At first I thought she was being sarcastic, but she didn't move an inch from where she was sitting curled up with her legs tucked under her. She was waiting for more.

"Let me give you some context. In the 50s

and 60s a certain group of psychiatrists and psychologists used LSD to help their patients uncover the hidden roots of their problems. I did some research and learned that LSD psychotherapy could be a way to get to the truth when your conscious memory is shut down, and that's usually because of trauma."

"Were you scared?"

"Yes, I was. It wasn't that I thought I'd go crazy or jump out a window. It was more like the fear I got the first time I jumped off a high diving board. I got very reasonable before I jumped. I looked down and checked it out, and there was water in the pool and a lifeguard on duty, and I had seen other people go ahead of me, so I let go and made the leap. Since then I've read much more, and the data is clear. LSD is quite safe in a therapeutic setting."

There was a quiet moment. Mara seemed to be taking in the information. I decided to stay quiet and let her ask a question when she was ready.

"So," she said finally, "how did you find your psychedelic lifeguard, and what was it like to jump?"

"Good questions," I said. She was helping me frame my thoughts, like a good partner on a research project.

"I tracked down a person who was familiar with the procedures for LSD psychotherapy and asked him to act as a therapist in my home. He gave me a therapeutic dose of LSD, and he played music tapes he brought with him. I stretched out on the floor with blankets and pillows and put on a blindfold to keep my attention internal. After that his job was to stay by my side, kept me safe, and do what I asked." I stopped for a minute and took a sip of water. I didn't want to hurry ahead; I wanted to stay aligned with Mara.

"Are you ready for what happened?" I asked.

"Yes, I think so," she said.

"Keep going."

"About half an hour after I took the drug, I began to wail. It was a sound that had never come out of my mouth before, a chilling sound like a ghost, a banshee. Later on I learned to call it a primal scream, but at the time it was not something I knew about, not at all. I guided my therapist's hand to apply pressure to my rib cage, and I knew exactly what place, what angle, and what pressure I needed. My conscious mind split into two parts, one half of me an observer and the other



a suffering infant. I cried more deeply than I ever had before. The pain went into my heart and my chest, and crying was the only way to release it."

Mara could hear the quaver in my voice. She reached out and touched my hand. "It's OK, Mom. Keep talking."

"The sound changed from a wail to a long, resonating tone, and for four hours I repeated the sound *Aaaaaah* over and over. My identity dissolved, and there were no boundaries between me and my surroundings. I was the sound. I was love. I was peace. Every emotion I had ever felt seemed insignificant by comparison. That's when I really knew what a mystical experience was. It might sound strange to you, but I understood what it meant to be one with God. It had nothing to do with faith or religion or belief. I had *experienced* God."

I stopped and looked at Mara. "Is this okay? Does this make any sense to you?"

She touched my hand again for just a second. "What happened next?"

"I was so tired after the therapy session that I slept for 12 hours. It wasn't until the next day that I realized what had happened to my body. During the hours I was vocalizing, my ribs had flattened and the pit in my chest had become only half as deep. It was as though the sound of God had come through me to release the infant's grief."

After a long pause Mara asked, "Was Grandma still alive?"

"Yes."

"Did you tell her what happened?"

"I did. It wasn't easy. I said that my life was a search for truth. I told her that I knew she loved me, but I just had to know what she felt about me before I was born. She broke down and admitted that she was angry when she found out she was pregnant, and that she'd hoped for a miscarriage." The silence was as if the air had been sucked out of the room. I had no idea what Mara was thinking. The late afternoon light that had been spilling through the window was nearly gone. I got up and turned on a lamp, waiting for Mara to say something. Minutes went by before she spoke.

"Thanks for being honest with me, Mom. Can we not talk about this anymore?"

And we didn't – not for a long, long time. •



Marilyn Howell's book, *Honor Thy Daughter*, will be published by MAPS in Spring 2011.

## From **Traumatized Vet** to Peacemaker Activist

Ed Ellis and Ralph Metzner, Ph.D.

We decided  
to use MDMA,  
which was  
at that time  
still legal,  
because of its  
well-known effect  
in mitigating  
anxiety.

Ed Ellis: When my tour in Vietnam ended in 1970, I returned to my home town in northern Oregon. This was a difficult period of suffering, introspection, and hedonism. I was bothered by guilt from serving in Vietnam, and an incomplete feeling from several bad acid trips, as well as repeated panic attacks. My new enemy was an unease that subtracted from social interactions, and I continued to use various medicines daily.

In March of 1973, I moved to Los Angeles and attended some sessions of primal therapy, which helped me come to an understanding of my history. The tears evoked during the therapy humanized me and I opened more to my wife, children, and my work as a gardener. The years passed, as did my parents, and during this time I would often remember the profound acid trips I had in Vietnam, and those experiences that opened up new levels in my consciousness. These states would stay with me for several weeks and I'd feel as if I had crossed the threshold of Heaven.

Ralph Metzner: When Ed contacted me, in the mid-1980s, he had been out of Vietnam for several years. He told me he had experimented with LSD before going to 'Nam and had several very profound experiences while there, but also several bummers. He said, "I had these incredible euphoric trips where I felt I loved everyone and was at complete peace with myself." When he went on a bummer, he couldn't get talked out of it, and felt abandoned by his friend. He suffered a nervous breakdown and was "fucked up," as he put it.

He wrote, in a letter, "what I can't get out of my head is: I'm still off from my last LSD experience. I still feel somewhat unclear and slightly depressed. I miss the feeling of complete well being and connection to everyone and everything I had during my LSD trips – when my mind went out to the ends of the universe and I felt so connected to everything. I could feel a bird flying by me. The most profound feeling I ever had." After the bummers, he said he felt like a sailor without a ship. He believed he couldn't get clear without taking acid again,



Ed Ellis is a Vietnam war veteran and former president of the LA chapter of **Veterans for Peace**. He is featured in the films *Arlington West* and *Ground Truth*. He has a gardening business in Los Angeles and is married with two grown children. He can be contacted at: [ehe@msn.com](mailto:ehe@msn.com).



Ralph Metzner is a psychotherapist and consciousness researcher, whose work with MDMA therapy is featured in the book *Through the Gateway of the Heart* and in *Ecstasy: The Complete Guide*, edited by Julie Holland, MD. He can be contacted at: [ralph@greeneearthfound.org](mailto:ralph@greeneearthfound.org).



but was afraid to take it again.

When I asked him to describe his general experience in Vietnam, he said that he was not physically wounded, but their base was often attacked, day or night, so there was a constant high level of anxiety. When I asked him why he took LSD there at all, in the worst possible setting I could imagine, he and his buddies knew they could be killed at any time, so why not experience these profound and ecstatic states? He described being high on acid at night, standing in the rain with arms upstretched. If there was a sudden attack, they would have to get ready.

Ed had gone to Vietnam an idealistic patriot, expecting to help his country defeat communism. Within a short time of being there, he and his buddies realized the whole mission there was a sham, and they were invading and occupying another country. "I had been carrying a lot of fear and blame. Blame towards my government for bringing horror to the people of Vietnam and blame towards myself for participating in it."

As I started working with him, we both realized that probing the meaning of his bad acid trips wasn't getting us anywhere. We decided to use MDMA, which was at that time still legal, because of its well-known effect in mitigating anxiety. During the session, I asked him to describe his mental and emotional state while there. It was constant terror and uncertainty about being attacked, day and night. He started to weep. He had felt unjustified, almost not entitled, to express or even have the fear, because nothing physically traumatic happened to him, and the whole toughness ethos of the Army. For the first time since returning, he could acknowledge the terror of just being there, in a place and time of war.

EE (from a letter written after the MDMA session): That session with you was a turning point for me. I have been aware of a deep sadness ever since and have been having a lot of emotional release. These tears have been such a friend to me. I have periods of such deep sadness, and it frees me up, and I stand in the middle of my life and look around with such thankfulness to be here – to be alive and to sense the process of my life. I had been afraid to see any films about the war, and afraid to talk to anyone, even my wife, about the fear and sadness

around it. I saw the movie *Platoon* and was so shocked by it – it was days before I could feel anything. Then the tears flowed and it's been about ten days since I saw the movie and I'm still affected by it. That feels fine to me – I can keep talking, like there is a process going on, a process of feeling the fear and pain and also of achieving more awareness of what happened to me – and to this country. I don't think this country is over what it did in Vietnam at all.

RM: My distinct impression was that

I was given a gift  
and the gift keeps  
rewarding me,  
every day of my life.

the real trauma he experienced was not the bad acid trip he had, but just the fact of being in Vietnam. The PTSD had been covered over in his mind, because he thought he didn't have a right to the feelings of terror and grief. In my view the MDMA was much better suited to at healing the painful terror-trauma and associated denial than probing with LSD would have been.

EE: The process of opening to these feelings was accelerated by the Gulf War of 1991 which broke open what I had been carrying around, and directed me toward more therapy and rap sessions with other vets. It also motivated me to join the group Veterans for Peace in Los Angeles and become a peace maker. In 1994 I became president and organized a veterans speakers group with twelve other vets. We visited high school classrooms throughout Los Angeles and shared our war stories and encouraged the students to think of non-violent solutions to conflict. We talked of the war propaganda in the media and the brainwashing going on of our own American history that whitewashes many dark events. We knew this wasn't about war stories but

the telling of honest painful experiences with accompanying tears of pain and grief. The students were receptive as were the teachers, because the truth we spoke relaxed our guts and we finally felt that things made sense. We encouraged each other to speak what had not been said publicly, to friends or family.

We were asked back year after year and our talks were particularly powerful at the schools of east Los Angeles, like Garfield and Manuel Arts, where college recruiters are not seen and military recruiters are seen constantly. In some schools we saw recruiters teaching gym class and being a permanent fixture in the lunch room. We realized what a scam the recruiters were pulling, promising a college education if the student would risk their lives. We debated recruiters, and in one session the recruiter was so ill-informed that she brought critical responses from the students, and later broke down in tears with us saying she didn't want to be doing this.

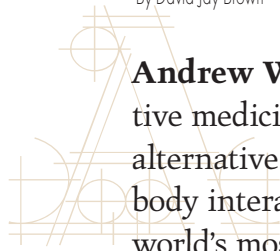
These speaking events in schools went on until the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003. We then included younger Gulf War vets in our talks to the students, and from a Veterans Day parade on November 11, 2003, we began organizing the Arlington West Memorial with white crosses, pictures and names, on a beach in Santa Monica, California. I don't remember ever in my life having such passion for a project.

I would be called on to speak, and I was hardly nervous. I was interviewed by many different media and would joke with the reporters and look into their faces and tell the truth. It has been rewarding to speak with the power of a peace maker – guided by the ancients. I was given a gift and the gift keeps rewarding me, every day of my life. I notice that my life goes into an imbalance unless I am working towards the vision of peace. I continue in the path of a peace advocate and although I am no longer president of Veterans for Peace Los Angeles, I am still active and sought out by members to stay involved, and I believe they feel more calmness when I am around. I continue to try and provide a perspective of peace, good will, humor and avoid that old family habit of talking ill of others. •

## Psychedelics and Psychosomatic Medicine:

### An Interview with Andrew Weil, M.D.

By David Jay Brown



**Andrew Weil, M.D.**, is an internationally recognized expert on integrative medicine, which combines the best therapies of conventional and alternative medicine. Dr. Weil's lifelong study of medicinal herbs, mind-body interactions, and alternative medicine has made him one of the world's most trusted authorities on unconventional medical treatments. Dr. Weil's sensible, interdisciplinary medical perspective strikes a strong chord in many people. His recent books are all *New York Times* bestsellers and he has appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* twice, in 1997 and again in 2005. *USA Today* said, "Clearly, Dr. Weil has hit a medical nerve," and *The New York Times Magazine* said, "Dr Weil has arguably become America's best-known doctor."

Dr. Weil delivered a talk entitled "The Future of Psychedelic and Medical Marijuana Research," at the April 2010 MAPS Conference in San Jose, California, and he has long been interested in the medical potential of psychedelics. This talk is available for viewing on the MAPS web site.

To follow are excerpts from an interview that I did with Dr. Weil about mind-body medicine and psychedelics. The complete interview appears in my book *Mavericks of Medicine* (Smart Publications, 2007).



Andrew Weil, M.D.

I make  
a very sharp distinction  
between spirituality  
and religion.

**David:** What role do you see the mind and consciousness playing in the health of the body?

Dr. Weil: I think it's huge. This is an area that I've been interested in, I think, since I was a teenager—long before I went to medical school—and a lot of my early work was with altered states of consciousness and psychoactive drugs. I reported a lot of things that I saw about how physiology changed drastically with changes in consciousness. I just reviewed a paper from Japan; one of the authors is a doctor I know. This is a group of people looking at how emotional states affect the genome. They have shown, for example, that laughter can actually affect gene expression in patients with Type 2 diabetes. Now that's really interesting stuff, and I think that this is the type of research that is generally not looked at here. I think that our mental states—our states of consciousness—have a profound influence on our bodies, and even our genes. And I think they have a lot to do with how we age.

**David:** What role do you think that spirituality plays in health?

Dr. Weil: Again, I think, large, but it's hard to define spirituality. For me, I make a very sharp distinction between spirituality and religion. Religion is really about institutions, and for me spirituality is about the nonphysical, and how to access that and incorporate it into life. In *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health* I gave a lot of suggestions in each week about things that people can do to improve or raise spiritual energy, and they are things that at first many people might not associate with spirituality. But they were recommendations like having fresh flowers in your living space and listening to pieces of music that elevate your mood. Some of the other suggestions included spending more time with people in whose company you feel more optimistic and better, and spending time in nature. I think that I would put all of these in the realm of spiritual health.

**David:** When I interviewed Larry Dossey he told me about research that showed evidence for the health benefits of remote healing. What do you think of the studies done with remote healing that show health benefits from prayer?

Dr. Weil: I don't know what to make of them. I think that's really frontier stuff, fringy stuff, and I'm certainly open to those possibilities. I'm willing to believe anything, but then I really want to see evidence for it. And I think that the evidence that has been collected so far for these effects, at least in the experiments where people don't know that these interventions are being done, that that's such a challenge to the conventional model, that there really has to be very solid evidence for it. I'm open-minded, but unconvinced at the moment.

**David: How have psychedelics effected your perspective on medicine, and what sort of therapeutic potential do you think that they have?**

...if... [psychedelics] were legally available

I think that I would use them as teaching tools

to show people that you can change chronic patterns of illness,

because even if you aren't cured of an illness

the psychedelic may show you that it's possible.

Dr. Weil: I think they've been a very profound influence. I used them a lot when I was younger. I think that they made me very much aware, first of all, of the profound influence of consciousness on health. I have published and described one of the experiences that I had that was very dramatic, and this was seized upon by some networks that put it all out there. This was that I had become cured of a lifelong cat allergy. If a cat touched me I would get hives. If a cat licked me I would get hives and my eyes would swell. So I always avoided them.

Then, one day when I was twenty-eight, I took LSD with some friends. It was a perfect day. I was in a wonderful state of mind, feeling totally relaxed and at one with everything, and a cat jumped into my lap. My immediate reaction was to be defensive, and then I instantly

thought, well, here I'm in this state, why don't I try to pet the cat. So I petted the cat and I had no allergic reaction. I spent a lot of time with it, and I've never had an allergic reaction to a cat since.

So, to me, that's an example of a potential of those drugs, and if they were legally available I think that I would use them as teaching tools to show people that you can change chronic patterns of illness, because even if you aren't cured of an illness the psychedelic may show you that it's possible. Another experience that I've written about with psychedelics is when I was learning yoga, and had a lot of difficulty with some positions. The one I had the most trouble with was "the plow," where you lie on your back and try to touch your toes behind your head. I could get to about a foot of the floor and I had horrible pain in my neck. I had worked at this for weeks and made no progress. I was on the point of giving up, just thinking I was too old. I was twenty-eight then. I thought I was too old, that my body was too stiff.

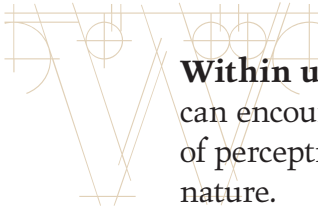
Again, an experience with a psychedelic, where I felt completely happy and elastic, showed me otherwise. I noticed that my body felt very free. So I tried that posture, and I thought I had around a foot left to go when my feet touched the floor and there was no pain. I kept raising and lowering them, and it was just delightful. The next day when I tried to do it I could get to a foot within the floor and I had horrible pain in my neck—but there was difference. I now knew that it was possible, and I think that's a model for how these drugs can work.

Psychedelics can show you possibilities. They don't give you information about how to maintain the experiences, and if you try to rely on the drug for the experience the drug stops working after a time. But, in this case, just having seen that it was possible, I was motivated to keep working at it, and in a few weeks I was able to do it. I don't think I would have pursued that if I hadn't seen the possibility. So I think they're potentially tremendous teaching tools about mind-body interactions and states of consciousness. •



## A Healer's Perspective on Psychedelics and **the Body to Mind Connection**

By Trevor Getsla



**Within us all** there are numerous levels of perceptual experiences we can encounter. All of us already possess within ourselves a powerful field of perception that is simultaneously physiological as well as conscious in nature.

We shall look at the body to mind relationship through the lens of touch therapies, and in reference to the psychedelic experience. Additionally, we'll see one perspective of the psychedelic experience and what it can reveal for a healer's work with their own and other human systems.

The human "Being" can be thought of as the meeting of mind, body, and spirit – all three of which are intrinsically linked and interrelated. When we move into the world of healing the human system, we can access from any of these vantages.

Our mind is a perceptual hub and intellectual realm filled with the "I"– things like identity, beliefs, and ideas. The body is animal in nature, and is the "functioning unit" of the human system complete with its own rich nonverbal intelligence. The spirit is ethereal and permeates all. Consciousness and spirit itself is difficult to quantify and explain.

The mind is notorious for its misperceptions of itself and for being resistant to change. The mind excels at concealing, protecting, and adapting to its own traumas. When attempting to unravel deep psychological wounds or functional issues in the body, the mind alone is frequently not sufficient. Often the mind is attempting to manage and quantify everything about the human experience. Therefore, if we can find a back door around these challenges by approaching through the body, that could be extremely helpful.

So we come to the body. The body tells the truth plainly and simply. It is an excellent arena to gain clear information about the entire Being, as well an arena to create and evaluate changes. As mind, body, and spirit are all linked, if there is a change in one we should be able to observe something occur within the others. Of the three, the body is easiest to observe. Likewise inducing change in the body can result in changes in the mind and spirit. Through the body we also open to the experiential and functional elements of the human system. When true change occurs in a human we can identify this by observing/experiencing change in function. Without functional change it is difficult to judge if our mind is simply wanting to "believe" that change has occurred.

For those readers who have done psychedelics, have you ever noticed how you seem to "straighten up" your posture under the influence of a low-to-mid range dose of MDMA, psilocybin, LSD, or 2C-B? Or how easy and smooth your motion may become? Or how your perception of the "space" around you seems to expand, as though you're "touching" the entire room and all the objects in it? Or perhaps the quality of your breath and energetic expansion of your system moving fully throughout the whole of your Being? Maybe experiencing your body in a profound and novel manner? Or perhaps the subtle movement of emotions, energy, or memories/experiences related to the tensions and perceptions of the functional body? There are many more possible similar experiences which you may



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[D]uring the  
psychedelic  
experience...having  
traumas of the body  
accessed may reveal  
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within the...mind  
and allow  
a completion to  
their processing.

have observed. Pay attention to them in your future experiences.

There is also the profound experience of feeling release of the nervous system and structural components that is produced as the body becomes freer and moves towards greater integration. These changes toward integration seem to extend beyond the psychedelic experience, and can even become permanent – especially so when effective therapies are applied that allow the tissue structures of the body to become more adaptable to expressing the fullness of the changes in the system. It also works the other way around. If one has experienced changes in structure induced by any variety of therapies, then the psychedelic experience can become a realm for the mind to actively connect to the now-freer physical body. This reconnecting of the perceptual system within the body to the functional components of the body can be quite a powerful experience.

These are actually quite potent experiences, and much more than just incidental occurrences. They have to do with how the shape of the body organizes itself in space in relation to our perception of the world. With a greater sense of “space” our system begins to reorganize, self-adjust, release old patterns of all sorts, allow more energy to flow, and many other amazing gifts. Once one is aware of expanded “space” it is an internal experience that can be found again without psychedelics. It is not always so easily done, as the “I” has a bad habit of getting in the way of allowing the fullness of the system to express and function. Various internal practices and healing methods cultivate awareness of these states of Being both with and without the use of psychedelics.

A more biomechanical explanation could be that the experience of the nervous system taking in more information prompts an improvement in the structure of the body in relation to the perceived world. This is an often-talked-about subject and observed phenomenon of psychedelics. The conscious mind becomes aware of the activity that is occurring within it already, and is able to observe more of the nervous system at work than is usually possible. It may allow access to held patterns, and go through an ex-

perience that finally allows the nervous system to release itself from that pattern/trauma. Through such an experience all the various structural components intertwined with it are released. Likewise, during the psychedelic experience touch and having traumas of the body accessed may reveal patterns deeply guarded within the nervous system/mind and allow a completion of their processing. Psychedelic chemistry affects the brain, allowing the mind to consciously “turn up the volume” on some very quiet processes which are occurring far in the background of the nervous system all of the time.

Any particular “issue” in the human system is always a complex meeting ground of many different elements coming together. The proper tools have to be employed with each of those systems for an “issue” to truly change. Imagine it as if there are many different languages being spoken within a human being. Each system has its own family of techniques for dialoguing with that particular system. Liken the human being to a pizza, with each slice representing some aspect of the human system. Each “slice” or particular system is always present in creating the whole, though the size of each component and the needed therapy to assist each in rebalancing and integrating will vary from situation to situation. Hands-on touch therapies can facilitate access and affect many of these.

All manners of touch therapy communicate with the various levels of the human system. Imagine touch as dialogue, with information being communicated both ways. As a person receives touch their entire system is paying attention to everything about the area of the body being accessed. As a therapist touches a person, they are both receiving information about the human under their hands, as well as placing input into that system. Literally, touch brings the receiver's system to pay full attention to the place in the Self that is being accessed, and all the innate intelligence and information stored within the whole of the system regarding that place. Touch can also bring a system to eventually reconnect with areas that have become blocked to the nervous system due to trauma or other factors.

Expanded perception from psychedelic experiences allows a richer and more available realm of information to be accessed. Practitioners making use of psychedelics have access to greater perceptual space, and can receive more of the intelligence of their own system to innately know “how” to assist a person they are working with. The expression of this will be in context with the healer's skill set and belief structures. The “I” has been quieted down and is more open to receiving information from the perceptual network. The practitioner's healing skills set seems to come to life and know exactly what to do to deeply affect the receiver. This is the realm of the shamans and mystics. This place is rich with many gifts, including potent healing. As the practitioner becomes more accustomed to expanding their own system consciously, it becomes easier to do it without the aid of substances.

Beyond any technical training or particular skill set there is a critical truth to walking the path of the healer: it is not just what you do, it is about where you stand inside yourself as you do it.

Terrence McKenna challenged us with the task of reaching into the psychedelic experience and bringing back medium-sized ideas and experiences that we can actually translate into a tangible effect in our daily reality. By opening our consciousness, our perception, and our nervous system through the psychedelic experience, we may be able to move beyond the barriers which make access to the information inside ourselves difficult to touch in our day to day experience of ourselves. Once understood, the skill of doing this can be a great boon to oneself and those who seek our healing services.

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Trevor Getsla instructs advanced level bodywork, and he runs a structural integration practice in Santa Cruz, California. He is also a lifelong martial arts student, and all-around body geek. Trevor can be contacted directly through Facebook, or reached for a bodywork session through [midlinemassage.com](http://midlinemassage.com).

## Psychosomatic Medicine, Psychoneuroimmunology and Psychedelics

By Ana Maqueda

*"The Ancients said that the animals are taught through their organs; let me add to this, so are men, but they have the advantage of teaching their organs in return." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Nowadays, most psychotherapists who follow the cognitive-behavior paradigm treat the mind as something separated from the body. Inversely, most physicians treat the body as if it were detached from mind and emotions. However, the need to take down these barriers and to integrate body and mind therapies is becoming increasingly clear to both psychotherapists and physicians.

The first references to the mind-body connection are found in Hippocrates and Galen, whose teachings about the imbalances in emotions and passions, and their translations as physical illnesses, survived well into the eighteenth century. Descartes' mind-body dualism marked the start of a breakdown of the relationship between mind and body.

In the nineteenth century, physicians believed that all diseases were the result of some sort of anatomical abnormality. Freud developed psychoanalysis trying to explain the cause of illness which could not be traced to anatomical sources.

In the early twentieth century, Walter Cannon and his homeostatic theory stimulated new interest in the relationship between affect, physiology and health, fostering the emergence of two schools. One of these schools, called "psychosomatic medicine," approached discrete emotions from the psychoanalytic paradigm. Franz Alexander, in the 1920's and 1930's, was its main theoretician, who along with Helen Flanders Dunbar, sought to explain many somatic diseases—such as asthma, psoriasis, hypertension and gastric ulcers—as arising from mental disorders.

The second school focuses on biological processes—rather than on discrete emotions—and is represented by Hans Selye, who introduced the concept of stress as a general adaptation syndrome that organisms develop in order to survive. He also noted the negative consequences of sustained stress: fatigue, exhaustion and depression of the organism. Selye discovered the mechanism by which normal psychological stressors and biogenic stressors increase the action of the neuroendocrine hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, increasing the levels of hormones such as glucocorticoids (like cortisol), which in turn lower the proliferation of immune cells.

### The complex relationships between the brain, the neuroendocrine and immune systems, and emotions

Empirical evidence available nowadays shows bi-directional communication between the central nervous system, the immune system and neuroendocrine mechanisms, via neurotransmitters (dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline, noradrenaline) which can directly mediate the immune response, given that immune cells T and B lymphocytes have receptors for hormones and neurotransmitters on the surface of their membranes. Some neuropeptides secreted by neurons, which are involved in pain transmission, have also been identified as immunomodulators, and cytokines, a type of activating chemical signaling cells of the immune system, also occur in the nervous system. Under disease conditions, when the organism needs to recover homeostasis, the immune system can reset brain-integrated neuroendocrine mechanisms to promote immune processes at the expenses of other physiologic systems [1].

Neurotransmitters are considered the most direct functional link between the central nervous system and immune processes. Elevated levels of catecholamines (epinephrine, norepinephrine and dopamine) were associated with an increased incidence of infectious diseases in the upper respiratory tract. Several longitudinal, prospective studies showed that rheumatoid arthritis, pain and depression tend to be predictive of each other [2].

Currently, neuroscientists like Antonio Damasio associate basic emotions with distinct patterns of cardiorespiratory activity [3]. Eysenck and Grossarth-Maticek (1995) have provided robust results from longitudinal studies, showing that some patterns of personality are good predictors of certain diseases such as cardiopathies (behavior pattern type 2, where raw anger and hyper excitement) or cancer (type 1, emotional repression and helplessness). On the other hand, neuroscientist Richard Davidson also found that meditation (mindfulness) may change brain and immune function in positive ways [4].



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Freud developed psychoanalysis trying to explain the cause of illness which could not be traced to anatomical sources.



### The need for the multidisciplinary of the human being science

The empirical evidence in the field of psychoneuroimmunology (Ader, R., 1981) has shown that immune activity, as well as some psychological parameters, can be modified by classical conditioning processes. This young discipline is providing scientific facts of the interrelations between emotions, stress, anxiety, depression, chronic pain and the immune system. Pro-inflammatory cytokines play a key role in cardiovascular disease, arthritis, Type II diabetes, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, periodontal disease and some cancers [5]. Negative emotions like depression and anxiety enhance the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, leukocytosis and increased natural killer cell cytotoxicity, as do psychological stressors [6]. Some of the current scientific research in cancer shows that the boost of the immune cells neutrophils could be a promising treatment against solid tumors [7].

All of the above shows that new paradigms of a multidisciplinary, holistic, non-dual and integrative science of the human being are emerging, which conceive the human being as a delicate, intricate and interconnected universe and away from old dualistic conceptions. Let's see how psychedelics could be invaluable tools to foster this evolution.

*"We are not primarily biological, with mind emerging as a kind of iridescence, a kind of epiphenomenon at the higher levels of organization of biology. We are hyperspatial objects of some sort that cast a shadow into matter. The shadow in matter is our physical organism." - Terence McKenna*

Having noted only minimally the bidirectional and complex relations and interactions between body, mind and emotions, and how hormones, neurotransmitters, leukocytes and neurons share a common language, we can see the multiple potentials of psychedelics -both in psychotherapy (powerful emotional insights, treatment of traumas and psychological conflicts, coping with stress, positive experiences and expressing emotions) and medicine (immunoregulatory-antidepressants drugs, addictions, pain and anxiety), all of which are complex universes whose mysteries are yet to be unveiled.

As Michael Komater and Dr Franz Vollenweider recently published [8], the downregulation of prefrontal 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> serotonin receptors (that are targets for hallucinogenic compounds) might underlie some of the therapeutic effects of hallucinogens in the treatment of depression, chronic pain and anxiety. (Anxiety and depression are interrelated with stress, which also affects the serotonin system.)

MDMA's ability to facilitate better emotional management, and retrieval of traumatic memories without fear, could be a powerful catalyst of healing for disorders such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As mentioned above, hormones chronically disturbed by stress may contribute to brain changes, immune deficits, depression, emotional and behavior symptoms and somatic disorders. The first authorized clinical research on

PTSD using MDMA was carried out in Madrid, Spain by clinical psychologist José Carlos Bouso [9], which established the psychological and physiological safety of this chemical. Although further research is necessary, some studies are starting to reveal the hormonal effects of this substance [10].

Also in Spain, Dr. Jordi Riba conducted the first controlled pharmacological study of ayahuasca in humans [11]; in recent research, Dr. Riba and his team found, using the neuroimaging technique SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography), that ayahuasca administration led to increased blood perfusion in brain areas implicated in somatic awareness, subjective feeling states, and emotional arousal [12]. The implications of this research, and prospective ones, are promising for depression and anxiety disorders, and behind the intricated pharmacology of ayahuasca may lead to breakthrough solutions for neurodegenerative disorders like Parkinson, and the future development of new antibiotic agents.

In the seventies, Dr. Khorramzadeh administered ketamine to 100 psychiatric patients with various psychosomatic diseases, like tension headaches, depression, anxiety, phobias, obsessive-compulsive neurosis, hypochondriasis and ulcerative colitis. Dr. Khorramzadeh reported that 91 of his patients were doing well after six months, and 88 of the subjects remained well after one year [13].

Some publications in the 1970's detailed healing properties of LSD in disorders such as allergies, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammation of the joints. LSD and drugs related to it could have potent anti-inflammatory effects, and could play an important role in the immune system, since it affects hormones. Charles Nichols, associate professor of pharmacology at the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, has began to investigate them using tissue cells and cultured animal cells.

It is interesting to note that many of the drugs currently used to treat various disorders keep a close molecular relationship with some psychedelics: Sumatriptan, the currently most effective drug to treat migraines, is chemically very similar to DMT, and Methysergide, also prescribed for migraines, is based on the LSD molecule.

Cannabinoids, among other properties, act on the immune system by decreasing inflammation when brain damage occurs. Since neuro-inflammation and neuroimmune activation have been shown to play a role in the etiology of a variety of neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease (autopsy reveals less expression of CB<sub>1</sub> receptors in the hippocampus and frontal cortex), the implications for further neuroprotection applications of cannabinoids are promising.

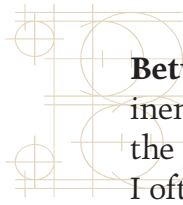
The advance of psychedelic science is still slow, and encumbered by lingering bans and legal hurdles to research, but it seems increasingly unstoppable. •

References for this article are on page 69.

...ayahuasca  
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## Psychedelics and **Bodywork**

Ellen Watson



**Between 1938 and 1958**, my maternal grandmother, the wife of a prominent pharmacist and co-owner of O'hanlon Watson Drug Company, was the president of the North Carolina Apothecary Society. As a child, I often heard her and my Mother referring to this group as "the Drug Club." Much of what was available to consumers during these years were compounded through alchemy by the pharmacist.

As I entered my teenage years, the three women who represented the maternal in my life were beset with different varieties of spiritual emergencies. My mother, diagnosed first as bipolar, then as chronic undifferentiated schizophrenic, became a guinea pig for the new antipsychotic procedures and pharmaceuticals as they were developed. Her sister, diagnosed first with clinical depression, then bipolar disorder, also began a sixty year dependence on antidepressant, antianxiety, and finally antipsychotic medications. Granny was simply diagnosed as addicted to both alcohol and the cocaine in the small bottles of the original Coca-Cola.

From my mid-teens onward, I vowed never to touch a pharmaceutical preparation intended to "balance my brain chemistry." Over a twenty year period, my mother was hospitalized against her will over eighty times, received over sixty electroshock treatments, and either through self-abuse or neglect was near death numerous times. She repeatedly threw all of her medications into the trash, toilet, or out the window. During the 1970s, I personally interviewed over fifty psychiatrists in the Carolinas and Georgia, looking for answers to these women's dramatic and traumatic lives. The paradigm, at that time, didn't include an understanding of the importance of honoring ones' spiritual heritage/beliefs as part of the problem or solution. The attempts by well-meaning, helping professionals were for psychological and sociological adjustments/therapies, looking only to biological history for insight or answers.

Exhausted from my first thirty-six years of life and the choices I'd made in marriage, and needing healing for mind, body, spirit, and emotions, I arrived at the Esalen Institute, in Big Sur, California, during July of 1984. My very soul was raw. Stanislav Grof, M.D., was the scholar-in-residence, this being his eleventh of fifteen years at Esalen. Stan's focus as a research psychiatrist had been schizophrenia and manic depressive illness. Immediately, upon feeling his hand on my shoulder, I knew that he knew something that I wanted and needed to know. My studies with Stan and

Christina (eight Esalen Holotropic Breathwork monthlongs provided the foundation for my certification in Holotropic Breathwork in 1988), with Terence McKenna, and meeting Rick Doblin all contributed to the remarkable path that included healing through the use of entheogens, empathogens, and psychedelics.

David, the editor of this *Bulletin*, asked me to write specifically regarding my experience combining MDMA with massage and bodywork. For this *Bulletin*, I've chosen to write about my own experience receiving, over a period of four years, periodic two to three hour



Ellen Watson

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The openness  
supported by MDMA  
allowed her to move  
her fingers around  
my organs, and locate  
the specific vertebrae in  
need of twisting  
and turning.

I firmly believe that  
my ability to walk  
upright today,  
with a long and tall spine,  
is due to the combination  
of the body/mind/spirit  
practices...

sessions from a chiropractor and bodyworker, who calls her practice "Chirossage." I inherited a challenging spine from my mother, including lordosis, kyphosis, and scoliosis. X-rays of my spine showed what an M.D. called "arthritis of the spine." Calcified spurs had formed on the anterior surface of my thoracic vertebrae. After seeing these X-rays, I had a visual image of what needed to be corrected. My eighty-five year old mother's spine is so twisted that she can neither walk nor stand without help. Due to the challenges of schizophrenia, she has been unwilling to accept any help or do any physical exercises.

Whether in yoga classes, on the dance floor, in clinical hypnosis trainings, or in giving and receiving massage, I focused on moving my spine. During my immersion in the work of Continuum Movement, I focused on embryonic and amniotic movements, inviting my spine and the paraspinal muscles to adjust to new ways of moving. Knowing that bone follows

energy, and that soft tissue will shorten or lengthen to support the shifts in bone, I studied and practiced energy work, engaged visualization, and affirmation. Vibrational healing through sound and singing have also proved to be valuable tools in support of creating an opening along my spine's path.

I approached Nikki to begin working with me, beginning one hour after ingesting a hundred milligrams of MDMA. Our sessions began with soft tissue massage, extending my limbs, opening my joints, from toes to fingers. As Nikki worked to create space where there was density, I remained present in my body, aware of sensations, and affirming the agreed-upon desired outcome. After about an hour into the session, Nikki began working on my anterior spine by working deeply into my viscera. The openness supported by MDMA allowed her to move her fingers around my organs and locate the specific vertebrae in need of twisting and turning. She was able to work with ligaments and tendons, as well as bones.

Using breathwork, visualization, and affirmation, as well as sound and movement during these sessions, allowed remarkable physiological shifts to take place. We completed the sessions with full body attention, again extending energy from my torso outward to my arms, hands and fingers, legs, feet and toes, neck and head. After completing the chirossage session, I spent an hour at the Esalen baths immersing myself in the spring waters, engaging in the movements that we now call Watsu, Water-Dance, or AquaCranial. I firmly believe that my ability to walk upright today, with a long and tall spine, is due to the combination of the body/mind/spirit practices I've spoken of, and these remarkable sessions. In follow-up X-Rays, the calcifications have been reduced by over eighty-five percent, and with continued spinal awareness and attention, I foresee my spine continuing to grow younger each year.

I founded MovingVentures School, a 501(c)(3), in order to share my appreciation of the somatic arts with anyone interested. Our specific mission is to educate women in developing countries, or in developing parts of the U.S. While still on the Healing Arts staff and faculty at Esalen, I am doing due diligence in the greater Charleston, South Carolina, area. •





## Sex Healing Bodywork as Shamanic Altered State

By Margaret L. Wade



Margaret L. Wade  
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Margaret L. Wade, M.S., C.S.B., is an educator and writer who has developed and taught courses for space shuttle flight designers, university students and professors, sexological bodyworkers and other adults. Her private practice supports others in their efforts to live conscious, joyful lives. More information is available at [margaretlwade.com](http://margaretlwade.com).

Some of the time  
I sort of thrashed around  
like a garden hose  
when it's first turned on.

**Tantra practice** creates a direct connection with the divine for those who are diligent. That's the stated purpose of Tantra in every place it is practiced. But that's one of the few things that remains the same about Tantra from place to place and tradition to tradition. The practices used differ, the amount of interaction with other people differs, even the understanding of the term differs. Sources translate the word variously as "weaving," "thread, string, or 'that which joins things together,'" "continuum or stream," and "'treatise' or 'dissertation' of a religious nature." While Westerners generally believe that Tantra at its core involves sexual practices, that is not true in most tantric traditions.

The characteristics that are consistent from one incarnation of Tantra to another are physical practices that involve the use of breath; sound, including mantras; and body positions and movements, sometimes limited to hand positions or mudras. These techniques are intended to strengthen and stabilize the practitioners' energetic connection with kundalini, and thereby, to the fundamental energy of creation. These practices can produce ecstatic or blissful states.

Psychedelic journey work can produce some of the same results. People using entheogens commonly experience strong spiritual connections and ecstatic states even when not taken for spiritual purposes. If you've learned to do either Tantric or psychedelic journeying well, you also know that neither is the easiest way to spend an evening. They both require knowledge, practice, and wisdom to be enjoyable and safe. Everything you know about set and setting are important in both, and selection of your partner(s) makes a huge difference in your experience.

The most dramatic differences between the experiences of the two are the source of the experience and the reliability of it. By "source," I'm referring to the fact that the psychedelic journey is triggered by ingestion of a chemical or plant substance. Therefore, it can more readily take on a life of its own and be less controllable by the journeyer. A tantrika usually doesn't enter an altered state as completely as a psychedelic journeyer; that is, the experi-

ence rarely includes the concern that a return to normal consciousness is unlikely. Their way out of the experience is clearer, too, as they have spent many hours learning their techniques.

However, as experienced entheogenic journeyers know, breath alone can help change an overwhelming, or "bad" trip into an ecstatic learning experience. In both cases, breathing and other techniques can help build, re-direct

and modulate the experience. Journeyers of either path can learn to increase or decrease the intensity of their experience using any of these methods: breathing techniques; drumming, music and rhythms; sounds produced and allowed; physical movement, exercise and dancing.

Even without a tantric practice, people can create an altered state by using their breath, especially when combined with appropriate sound and movement. In my practice as a sexological bodyworker, I've

and arms up. Kali was in me and I started doing this crazy sort of dance, lifting one leg and stamping, then lifting the other leg and stamping. I think I was wailing or screaming.

"Kundalini poured up from the ground, through my feet, up my body and out my head. As it did, goddesses jumped into my body one after the other. I went from being Kali to Venus to Demeter to Inanna and Sophia and Diana and on and on. I couldn't name most of them and

movements, both systems that move body energy intentionally, regardless of whether it's called chi, prana, seiki, kundalini, or something else.

In this situation, the woman's psychedelic and tantric experiences complemented one another. She had developed a level of competence in them separately, and the synergy between the two produced a powerfully ecstatic experience for her. It's doubtful if a strong kundalini release like hers would have happened to

Kundalini poured up from the ground, through my feet, up my body and out my head.

As it did, goddesses jumped into my body one after the other.

assisted women working with building and maintaining their erotic energy. Sexological bodywork is not Tantra, but it uses some similar breath, sound and movement techniques. After learning these techniques with coaching, the women develop comfort modulating their own experiences with ecstasy. Like the energy built and managed by shamans in plant medicine sessions, erotic energy can power the resolution or healing of many emotional and physical difficulties.

Having done such practices for a couple of years, one of the women found herself in a shamanic circle taking turns ingesting a fast-acting entheogen. Here is part of her description of her journey:

"My intention for this session was to appreciate being female and let go of all the crappy things I'd learned about myself from the culture and my family about it. Couldn't I just let go enough to enjoy some of the advantages of being a woman?...

"I sort of popped out of my body at first and when I came back, there was a digeridoo sounding in my ear. Then energy began in my tailbone and went up my spine pulsing, in this rhythmic flow. As it went, it undulated my body. I could feel it blast out all the kinks in my body and the negative emotions I held in my tissues. My body stretched and bent to make it easier. Some of the time I sort of thrashed around like a garden hose when it's first turned on. Then my body jumped up and took on the position that Kali holding the human skulls is always shown in, with legs apart, knees bent,

they came and went so fast I didn't have time to ask them who they were. They just took turns being in my body, flowing in and being there, then going up and out with the kundalini. Sometimes my body changed to a pose that they liked, and I felt like I was wearing different clothing: flowing togas, warrior shields, all kinds of stuff. I came back from this experience ecstatic, feeling whole. It was the first time in my life that I felt completely female and completely happy to be a woman."

Since this woman had been doing erotic energy techniques for months, she recognized what was happening as the flow of kundalini. She had been practicing allowing energy to flow through her body, so the entheogen allowed the last of the physical resistance to let go. If she had not been training for this, it probably would not have happened.

If this level of kundalini uprising had happened anyway, she might have freaked out just as some of the others in the circle did. One of the truisms of both these types of journey work is that "What you see from the outside has nothing to do with what is happening on the inside." She looked dangerously out of control from the outside – and she was out of control. But it wasn't dangerous. She kept breathing, moving with the energy, and letting sounds flow out of her mouth with the energy (and the goddesses).

One of the people who witnessed her journey recognized some of the poses she took on. The observer knew them as yoga positions and archetypal martial arts

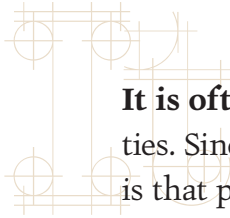
someone who was not as prepared, but if it had, it could have been dangerous. Unexpected emergent spirituality has created plenty of problems for the unprepared, even without psychedelics involved. (See Stanislav and Christina Grof's *Spiritual Emergency* for more information.)

Psychonauts who experiment with psychedelics for fun and curiosity have asked about combining them with tantric practices in the interests of achieving a higher level of what one referred to as "mind-blowingness." They tend to be referring to sexual activities rather than traditional Eastern Tantra. Since indigenous healers who use plants and mushrooms for journey work almost universally prohibit sex activities for those partaking, it's a good question. On the other hand, some tantric traditions in India use intoxicants (soma, bhang) as part of specific ceremonies that include tantric sex. They also have centuries' worth of wisdom to drawn upon, however.

The simple answer is that combining two strong technologies is best done by someone who has mastered each of them separately first. Doing intense tantric-style practices during a psychedelic journey can be risky, but when used at one's level of knowledge and comfort, these techniques can make a journey more pleasant and meaningful. In this woman's case, her ecstatic journey was a clear response to her stated intention for the session. And yes, it was mind-blowing. It changed her life – after she had spent several years preparing for it. •

## Psychedelic Regeneration: **Hallucinogens and Spontaneous Healing**

by James L. Kent



James Kent is the editor of DoseNation.com and author of *Psychedelic Information Theory: Shamanism in the Age of Reason* (CreateSpace, 2010).

**It is often reported** that hallucinogens have miraculous healing properties. Since psychedelics appear to act on the mind, the general assumption is that psychedelics heal the body by mending emotional and psychological trauma, and that healing of the mind trickles down into healing of the body. This mind/body duality is a common theme in fields of psychology and medicine, working its way into theories of stress-related illness, the paradoxical power of placebos, and holistic approaches to healing like psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). The general premise underlying the mind/body connection is that psychological resilience builds physical resilience, and that a healthy mind facilitates a healthy body. However, one point that is often overlooked in the mind/body discussion is that the mind is made of cells, the same thing our bodies are made of, and thus mental healing and physical healing both rely on the same process: Cellular regeneration in response to stress, inflammation, and trauma.

Let's assume that psychedelics heal by promoting cellular regeneration, and through this regeneration psychedelics can assist in building both mental and physical resilience. This would mean that in addition to producing hallucination, psychedelics also stimulate cellular repair, cellular proliferation, and potential apoptosis, or cell death, in response to damaged or infected cells. These claims all seem quite miraculous, except when you consider that these basic cellular housekeeping processes happen naturally when we sleep: dreaming, healing, cellular regeneration, and rebuilding of organism resilience. Cellular regeneration is a natural process that occurs every night. In neural cells this nightly regeneration presents itself as dreaming and learning, a process where synaptic pathways are tested, strengthened, and integrated into memory, also known as neuroplasticity. In other cellular tissues nightly regeneration is due to the release of trophins in deep sleep, which stimulate cellular repair in response to inflammation and stress, or daily wear and tear. Obviously, if there were a class of drugs which stimulated the body's innate powers of dreaming, plasticity, and cellular regeneration, their healing powers would seem miraculous indeed.

Although it is popular to claim that psychedelics have a direct positive influence on mental and spiritual health, the notion that psychedelics have a positive influence on physical health has always been an afterthought. In the 1950s psychedelics were quickly integrated

into psychiatric practice, but general medical practitioners saw no reason to integrate psychedelics into the treatment of chronic disease, even though this is how hallucinogens have been traditionally used in shamanic cultures. In fact, the pervasiveness of the notion that

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psychological  
trauma...



the mind and the body are somehow split has kept modern medicine from accepting that a drug which works on the mind can somehow also treat ailments of the body. Why, for instance, would someone give a hallucinogen to a patient with a physical ailment like arthritis? Why use a hallucinogen to treat common tissue inflammation? The very notion of using a psychedelic to treat a physical ailment flies in the face of Western medical practice, where doctors are told to treat the symptoms, not the patient. Psychedelics are classified as hallucinogens, not anti-inflammatory agents, so there is no reason to give a patient with arthritis a psychedelic; it just doesn't happen. However, in the light of current research, this course of treatment isn't as strange as it is sounds.

In addition to being hallucinogens, psychedelics also produce a wide range of dramatic cellular responses. An early and popular theory of psychedelic action stated that psychedelics are in fact neurotoxins, and that the physiological response to hallucinogens is an extreme auto-immune reaction intended purge and cleanse toxins from the entire organism. Parts of this theory are clearly true – the purging, the nausea, the intoxication – but other parts make no sense. Why don't all neurotoxins, or all toxins for that matter, produce hallucination and dramatic physiological response? And why would someone feel reborn and rejuvenated after taking a dose of neurotoxin? And, finally, why aren't psychedelics actually toxic? The obvious answer is that psychedelics are not neurotoxins, but perhaps they are the opposite of neurotoxins. What if instead of neurotoxins, psychedelics are actually neuro-tonics, and instead of destroying cells they actually impart vitality and energy to cellular signaling systems? This definition of a neuro-tonic not only meshes with the subjective experience of feeling a "healing energy" suffusing the body on psychedelics, it also proposes that instead of being toxins, hallucinogens actually promote cellular regeneration, rejuvenation, and holistic organism resilience.

The most potent hallucinogens – like LSD, psilocybin, and DMT – are agonists at the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor site (among others). The fact that hallucinogens are agonists means that they promote cel-

lular signaling, as opposed to blocking or dampening it. The 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor is a G-protein coupled receptor (GPCR), which means that agonistic action at this site promotes a cascade of signaling mechanisms within the cell membrane, in the cytoplasm and around the cellular nucleus. The intracellular pathways stimulated by 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> agonism includes the activation of protein kinases that mediate cellular regeneration, repair, and proliferation in response to stress and learning.

While the body  
repairs itself, the  
mind dreams;  
while the mind  
dreams, the  
body repairs  
itself.

By stimulating the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor, hallucinogens switch on a cascade of generative cellular activity that continues long after the molecule leaves the receptor site. This effect would be interesting enough if we were only talking about neural cells, but 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptors are ubiquitous in the body, particularly in the central nervous system, intestines, smooth muscles, cardiovascular system, and in blood platelets. 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> activation produces super-potent anti-inflammatory effects in cardiovascular tissues, as well as potent anti-inflammatory effects in non-cardiovascular tissues. 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> platelet activation causes platelet aggregation and the release of various cellular growth factors. These 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> mediated actions are all similar in that they are located in soft tissues directly related to auto-immune responses to stress and trauma: in other words, healing.

All of the information on the role of 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> activation promoting anti-inflammatory or generative cellular activity

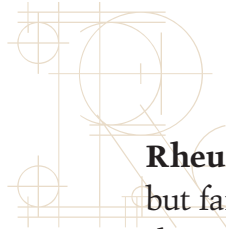
is due to recent research, most of it occurring within the last three years. However, taking this new data into account, it no longer seems unreasonable to treat a patient with arthritis (or similar chronic inflammation) with a 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> agonist, all of which are classified as hallucinogens. In the case of prescribing a hallucinogen for physical ailments, the visions should be considered a perfectly normal side effect of treating chronic inflammation, just as dreams are a perfectly normal side effect of cellular regeneration during deep sleep. The visions and the cellular regeneration are intimately linked. While the body repairs itself, the mind dreams; while the mind dreams, the body repairs itself. If we alter our thinking to view spontaneous internal visions (dreams, hallucinations) as a function of spontaneous internal healing, then it becomes obvious that in terms of psychedelic therapy, there is no mind/body split.

The regenerative power of psychedelics is something that is intuitively felt by people who use them, but this power has always been couched in metaphors of spiritual cleansing or metaphysical death and rebirth. Spiritual metaphors may serve shamans or entheogenic enthusiasts, but even the most glowing report of physical rejuvenation is not enough to sway the beliefs of a school of medicine still trapped in the paradigm of mind/body duality. Simply "feeling better" after a psychedelic session is easily dismissible as temporary delusion produced by being high, but these claims become harder to ignore as clinical research continues to demonstrate the long-term benefits of even a single psychedelic session. Trauma, stress, and inflammation – even emotional stress and inflammation – are physical issues that require physical therapy. Hallucination may be the most observable effect of 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> agonism, but that does not mean it is the only effect. Psychedelics promote cellular regeneration, and both the mind and the body are made of cells. By facilitating cellular regeneration, psychedelics stimulate a core function of the body's auto-immune system, making hallucination a waking dream the body experiences as it heals itself. •

References for this article on page 70.

## Thirty Years of **Rheumatoid Arthritis** Cured After Third MDMA Session

By Steven Rooke



**Rheumatoid arthritis** was diagnosed in 1964 when I was 13 years old, but family, friends and I concluded it must have begun by age six, when there is evidence I was having arthritis symptoms. My hand surgeon in the 1980s suggested it may have started when I was even younger, based on the appearance of my wrist bones. The worst flare-up came when I was 22, when I could barely walk with crutches for a month, but symptoms varied widely throughout my teens and twenties; sometimes I could hike and even run for a few months at a time.

Over the years I was on many medications, from cortisone and prednisone to chloroquine, gold injections, and many NSAIDs. Rheumatologists would always ask about stress, and sometimes I could see a strong correlation: getting dumped by a girlfriend and receiving my draft notice exacerbated the inflammation; falling in love made it recede. I had a vasectomy when I was 26, largely because I did not want to become a parent passing this condition on.

I took LSD and psilocybe mushrooms when I was 25, and consistently had the following experience: the arthritis pain would recede as the mental effects increased. Not only would the pain recede, but I could close my fists—otherwise impossible—and do a deep knee bend. However, both pain and decreased range of motion would return fully as the mental effects wore off. In 1980 Andrew Weil said to keep an eye out for MDMA (which was still legal at the time), as it might have similar effects.

In 1986 I acquired some MDMA, and observed the same reduction of pain and increased range of motion on the front end, but unlike LSD or mushrooms it took as much as 24 to 36 hours for full symptoms to return. I had recently started working at an observatory, and was putting together a Cosmos slide show to accompany my new interest in astronomy and cosmology.

As the slide show neared completion in 1986, circumstances resulted in friends coming over three Friday nights in a row to take MDMA with Cosmos. I was able to weave together the story of how stars are born and die,

seeding galaxies with ever heavier elements, illustrated by glorious images on my 8-foot screen, dramatically enhanced by MDMA. The first two times, arthritis symptoms were back to baseline by Sunday. The third time was different...

On Saturday I drove my pickup to help some geologist friends move, carrying lots of rocks, plants, books. Returning home, on automatic I drew a hot bath to relieve the extra pain, and didn't realize until I was in the tub that actually, nothing hurt. It didn't return on Sunday. As the days went by I began to realize that for the first time since childhood, I was



Steven Rooke

I took LSD and  
psilocybe mushrooms  
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free of arthritis.

I had a 3-day flare-up in 1991, which ended on MDMA in a walk in the forest, and a 6-week flare-up in 1993 which ended abruptly not with MDMA but with a particular mind exercise. I remain completely free of arthritis in 2010.

While clearly catalyzed or enabled by MDMA, surely the remission was not caused by the compound all by itself, or else many rheumatoid sufferers would have been cured, and everyone would know about it by now. My own guess is that I had unconscious internal conflicts—some part of my psyche fighting some other part, similar to the autoimmune condition, where my white blood cells were attacking my own connective tissue. On MDMA the Cosmos slide show strongly impressed on us the connection of life with the physical universe—life belongs, rather than being an improbable accident. Perhaps something in my psyche had felt it did not belong, was disconnected—and when that disconnection was dissolved, something resonated all the way down to the cellular level in my immune system.

Some seven million people in the United States apparently have rheumatoid arthritis. If one percent of them developed an interest in deep psychological work, and one percent of those succeeded in digging up relevant hidden conflicts in the unconscious, there would still be 700 candidates for full remission if ordinary psychological methods could work to unlock a mind/body link to the underlying autoimmune condition – a number you'd think would have been noticed. The MDMA has to have played an essential role in this mind/body process, though not a sufficient one by itself.

In any case, that's what appeared to work for me, but how would you translate set and setting for someone else with rheumatoid arthritis (and maybe other autoimmune conditions)? If my remission was one-of-a-kind, there might not be enough that could be learned from it. But what if there are ten people with full RA remissions on MDMA, willing to be studied? Then someone might be able to

factor out the important parts, to apply to others perhaps in some future clinical trial.

Has anyone else had a long-lasting remission from rheumatoid arthritis on MDMA?

"...and a 6-week flare-up in 1993 which ended abruptly not with MDMA but with a particular mind exercise" I decided to call it a "mind exercise" rather than go into enough detail to explain what happened, which is this: At noon on a Saturday, 2 years after the 3-day 1991 flare-up, and 7 years after the

As the days went by  
I began to realize that for the first time  
since childhood, I was free of arthritis.

remission, I had a sudden fierce RA flare-up out of the blue. At 3:00 pm I decided to take a full dose of San Pedro cactus to try to stop the flare-up, but all my joints remained fully stiff and painful right throughout. About 7:00 pm I also took a dose of MDMA, getting pretty worried by now. No effect on the RA. I finally dozed off after midnight.

I learned the next morning that my closest (and only) neighbor, 100 yards away, had committed suicide that evening at 12:30 am. He was a SWAT team cop whom I did not like at all, but whose face resembled my late father's—they could have looked like brothers. My flare-up had started 12 hours before he shot himself. The flare-up would not stop, even getting worse, and I had to start taking an NSAID (Voltaren). There were strange unexplained bangings and noises around the house, and finally at the two-week point I called Candace Lienhart, who had been trained rigorously as a Hawaiian Kahuna (she is mentioned in Fred Alan Wolf's book *The Eagle's Quest*). She "took a look" and said my neighbor's spirit was still hanging around, and yes, my

RA flare-up was somehow connected. She invited me to come to her "Kahuna Kindergarten" class the next morning, number 4 in a series of 7, held once a month on Sundays, saying she felt that I knew enough from an earlier interaction in 1992 to skip the prerequisites.

Candace gave us a homework assignment during this all-day class, but I kept putting it off until the night before the next class a month later—now six weeks into the flare-up with no signs of diminishing. The exercise was called "Ho'opono'ono," and the instructions were to sit quietly with your eyes closed and after the setup, "line up all the different selves you have been during this lifetime, stretching away into the past in a straight line in front of you." I had no idea how to do this, but it worked, taking about two hours. When I had the earliest memory/self lined up, I followed the instructions, which amounted to using my voice for each prior self to apologize to me (up here in the present) for harming myself "in any way, shape or form, in any thought, word, or deed, in any time, any place, past present or future," and then reciprocally apologizing and asking forgiveness from me up here in the present back to each of them in the past. You then "ignite with your will" this command to the parts of yourself that know how to do it, and immediately get up and occupy your mind with other things so as not to interfere.

The RA was even worse that night, possibly the worst night ever. I was constantly waking in extreme pain and having to move all my limbs to loosen up. At Candace's class the next morning I asked how long it took for this past-regression exercise to work, and she said oh, it can take several days. Exhausted, I fell asleep that Sunday night, and when I woke up Monday morning – all traces of RA were gone, 36 hours after the Ho'opono'ono. No pain. No reduced motion, just like I had been before my neighbor's suicide. That was Spring 1993, and I have had no further flare-ups to date, 2010. •





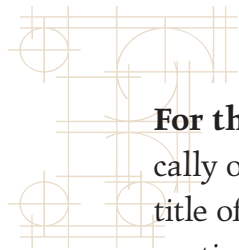
As an athlete and journalist James Oroc has been involved in a variety of aspects of extreme-sport culture since 1987. In 1993 he made the first flight by a paraglider from the top of the world's tallest active volcano, (Cotopaxi, Ecuador), for MTV Sports. The author of *Tryptamine Palace: 5-MeO-DMT and the Sonoran Desert Toad; From Burning Man to the Akashic Field*. (Park Street Press, 2009), Oroc also writes and lectures regularly about entheogens and is the curator of [www.DMTsite.com](http://www.DMTsite.com), a tryptamine information site launching January 11, 2011.

# Psychedelics and **Extreme** Sports

By James Oroc

LSD can increase your reflex time to lightning speed,  
improve your balance to the point of perfection,  
increase your concentration...and make you  
impervious to weakness or pain.





**For those unfamiliar** with the effects of psychedelics (or more specifically of LSD and psilocybin mushrooms) at a wide range of dosages, the title of this article may seem like an obvious contradiction – for what connection could there possibly be between these infamous “hallucinatory” compounds and the obviously highly-coordinated physical pursuit of the unfortunately named “extreme sports?”

According to  
the legends of this  
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Based on the tangled reputation that LSD has had since the mid-1960's it would seem impossible to believe that various experienced individuals have climbed some of the hardest big walls in Yosemite, heli-skied first descents off Alaskan peaks, competed in world-class snowboarding competitions, raced motocross bikes, surfed enormous Hawaiian waves, flown hang-gliders above 18,00 feet, or climbed remote peaks in the Rockies, the Alps, the Andes, and even above 8000 meters in the Himalayas—all while under the influence of LSD.

However, in the often-outlaw underground culture of extreme sports, the use of LSD or psilocybin mushrooms while skiing, snowboarding, mountain-biking, surfing, skateboarding, etc., is in fact common throughout North American ski-and-sports towns, where they enjoy an almost sacred reputation. According to the legends of this tight-knit underground, many incredible feats having been accomplished by modern extreme-athletes whilst under the influence of psychedelics—a fact which for obvious reasons generally never gets recorded in the record books.

The reason for this radical disparity between the popular perception about the disabling effects of psychedelics and their apparent common usage amongst the fringes of the extreme sports community is mostly a matter of dosage and historical familiarity. LSD is extraordinarily potent, effective on the human physiology in the millionths of grams (mcg) and very small differences in dosage can lead to dramatically different effects. In the first decade of LSD research it was commonly known and accepted that there was a wide-range of “LSD intoxication” that occurred across the range of (20mcg –1500mcg+) dosage, with only the mid- to-higher doses producing what became known as “psychedelic” effects. At the lower dosages, a state was known as “psycholeptic” was also recognized, where in many cases cognitive functioning, emotional balance, and physical stamina were actually found to be improved.

This recognition of the varying effects of

LSD was lost after the popular media demonized LSD with the help of the various myths and excesses of the “1960s Love Generation”. When LSD made the jump from the clinic to the underground, its early explorers were universally fascinated with the higher dosage entheogenic experience, while the more subtle effects at lower dosages were largely forgotten or ignored. The first “street” LSD in the 1960's was thus generally between 250mcg and 500mcg, a potency powerful enough that to guarantee the casual user a truly psychedelic experience.

LSD is somewhat unusual, however, in that a user can build a fast tolerance to the compound after regular (daily use) and while one's initial experiences on even a single dose can be dramatic, before long veteran “acid-heads” may be increasing their own dosage tenfold – thus requiring much stronger “hits” than the average user. It was the high dosage of this early street “Acid” that in combination with the complete ignorance of its early users that would be responsible for the high number of “acid-casualties” that gave LSD its fearsome reputation. However, by the 1980's both Deadheads and the Acid-House generation had realized to drop the dosage of street acid to between 100-125mcg, while these days a hit may be as low as 50mcg—or as little as ten percent as powerful as a hit of 1960's acid. Which is a dosage well below the true psychedelic threshold for most people, and for an experienced user suitably inclined, can certainly be calculated to fall within the forgotten

“psycholytic” category.

There was always a strong contingent of “experienced psychedelic users” amongst the extreme sports community due to the little-realized fact that the seeds of the extreme sports revolution were actually planted with the dismantling and dispersal of Psychedelic Culture in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. As countless numbers of counterculture refugees left the major cities and moved out to small towns in the country in the “Back-to-the-Land” movement, most were looking for new paths to fulfillment after the spectacular promises of the brief “Psychedelic Age” had failed and a new age of uppers and downers was emerging.

They were faced with an obviously dangerous downturn in what was now being universally called the “drug culture”. First heroin, and then, cocaine, dramatically increased in popularity, which marked the beginning of our urban society’s more than thirty-year-old epidemic of cocaine and amphetamine abuse. A few turned to the traditions of Christianity, Islam, Eastern, or New Age religions, while many others, perhaps less institutionally inclined, went to small coastal towns in California, Oregon, or even Hawaii to surf. Or they landed in the numerous small towns in the Rockies from Montana to New Mexico that were being developed as ski areas at that time.

These “hippies” bought with them a newly found cultural respect for the land, which had come directly from the use of psychedelics, since the use of psychedelics in nature inevitably increases the spiritual appreciation of one’s role in nature, and of Nature itself. (There are many commentators today who believe that the modern environmental movement was born out of the fact that 25 million people took LSD in the late 1960s). They also had an adventurous attitude toward the land, derived from a general fascination with the Plains Indians and the Wild West era, and from the naturalist vision of the American wilderness that Walt Whitman, Thoreau, and especially Jack Kerouac espoused: the perennial philosophy that one could somehow “find oneself” out amongst the wilds of America.

At the same time as this sudden influx of these “freaks” to the beaches, deserts, and mountains of the world, technological advances in what were considered minor cult-like sports were suddenly allowing ordinary individuals unprecedented access to the wildernesses of the world. In the mountains, the ocean, and even the air, a new kind of athlete took the concept of “finding oneself in the wilds” to a whole new definition. The

invention of these highly individualistic sports (surfing, skateboarding, snow-boarding, BASE jumping, tow-in surfing, etc.) that sought to use existing terrain in new and inventive ways generally raised the ire of the status quo, and so most “extreme-sports” begin life as “outlaw-sports” of some kind or another, with their participants regarded as rebels.

The attraction of these types of sports for the newly arrived psychedelic-era refugees is obvious, and most of the leading figures of surfing, rock-climbing, back-country skiing, hang-gliding, etc., of this era were clearly cultural rebels living well outside of the norms of society. For this particular branch of the psychedelic tree, the oceans, deserts, and great mountains of the world were now being recognized as the ultimate “set-and-setting” – a realization common to mystics and siddhus since the beginning of recorded time.

Thanks to the sudden exponential growth of the worldwide leisure industry towards the end of the 1970s, becoming a climbing, skiing, or surfing “bum” (the modern equivalent of Kerouac’s backpacking “Dharma Bums”) became the easiest way of dropping out of contemporary society, a socially healthier alternative to the free-love communes of the previous decade that still allowed one to smoke pot, take psychedelics, and mostly fly under the cultural radar. By the 1980s a good portion of any American ski-town (and especially the leather-booted telemark skiers) were Dead-heads—faithful followers of the Grateful Dead, and the most effective LSD network in the country—while many other less obvious skiers and climbers still kept the tradition of using pot (a remarkable natural analgesic), acid, and mushrooms in the mountains alive, where the mountains themselves acted as natural shields from prying eyes.

After the invention of snowboarding, mountain biking, and to a lesser extent paragliding, in the 1980s, virtually all of the newly named “extreme-sports” experienced a rapid growth of popularity in the mid 1990s. This resulted in a corresponding growth in the populations of these same small ski-and-sports towns. Between 1992 and 1997 *MTV Sports* was one of the most popular shows on cable television, as it glorified the emerging “extreme-sports” to its youthful audience and established the “grunge” and hip-hop music it was promoting as the “in” sound of the now-exploding snowboarder population.

The emerging electronic (rave) music of the same time period also appealed to the naturally rebellious nature of extreme athletes and in-

If you start asking  
about sporting feats  
accomplished on  
psychedelics in pretty  
much any bar  
in a ski town,  
you will here some  
fine tales.



I heard of  
a hang glider  
flown tandem  
off of a mountain top  
under a full moon  
with both the pilot  
and passenger  
on magic  
mushrooms...

roduced that culture to Burning Man from its very inception, further reinforcing the knowledge of modern psychedelic culture in what are often remote mountain towns. (“Black Rock City” got its name in 1995, the same summer as the first X Games.) Many Western ski-towns now have a resident “Burner” population, much in the same way they had “hippy” or “freak” population in the early 1970s, and these small towns generally remain more liberally-minded than other towns of similar size in America.

This entwined relationship between the cultures of psychedelics and extreme sports has in fact been there since the beginning, with what is perhaps the original extreme sport, the much-mythologized sport of surfing. After the fallout of 1967-68, when San Francisco and the Haight-Ashbury became overrun, and its original hipster founders abandoned it, the Southern-Californian surfing town of Laguna Beach became the de-facto center of the psychedelic world when a group of diehard surfers – known as the Brotherhood of Love – became the world’s first LSD cartel.

Along with the smuggling of tons of hashish from Afghanistan to fund their operation (often in hollowed-out surf boards), they would ultimately be responsible for the distribution of tens of millions of hits of Orange Sunshine LSD, for paying for the radical Weatherman group to help Timothy Leary escape jail, and some would say, for the creation of the DEA. In explaining the connection between LSD and surfing, early Brotherhood of Love member Eddie Padilla remarks on the practical side of a culture based on pot and psychedelics use, and not on our culturally acceptable drug, alcohol:

“The effect of the LSD we were taking was starting to demand a higher-quality lifestyle, food-wise and in every way. All these surfer people (that Padilla and Brotherhood of Love founder John Griggs knew) had that lifestyle already in place. To surf, you had to remain sober and be more in tune with nature. Don’t get too screwed up, because the surf may be good tomorrow.” (Nicholas Schou, *Orange Sunshine: The Brotherhood of Eternal Love and its Quest to Spread Peace, Love, and Acid to the World*, 2010)

In this explanation, Eddie Padilla hits on half of the real physical reason why psychedelics have always been a part of extreme sports culture, in that psychedelic use is not only more inspiring in the wilderness, but it is also eminently more practical. LSD can easily be a 10 to 14 hour experience, which is too long of a trip for most people, and especially if it is taken at night. If it is taken in the morning, however, and one has the voluminous expanses of the ocean, the deserts, or mountains

of the world to roam and contemplate, then the length of an acid trip is rarely a problem since it will also start to fade with the end of the light of the day.

If one keeps hydrated, and the acid-trip is kept within the regular biorhythms of the user to allow normal hours of sleep, then this “trip” can in truth be one of the least physically debilitating altered-states experiences available, with little or no discernible “hangover” – ridiculously so when compared to the debilitating effects of cocaine or alcohol and the extreme hangover they bring. The nonaddictive and nonphysically debilitating qualities of psychedelics are of course rarely touted by the popular media, but are well known amongst communities that are familiar with them, and the nontoxic qualities of psychedelics are half of the physical reason for their enduring appeal amongst extreme athletes.

The other half of this physical reason that “psychedelic drugs” are so popular with extreme athletes is due to their previously noted psycholytic effects at the correct dosages. Virtually all athletes who learn to use LSD at psycholytic dosages believe that the use of these compounds improves both their stamina and their abilities. According to the combined reports of 40 years of use by the extreme sports underground, LSD can increase your reflex time to lightning speed, improve your balance to the point of perfection, increase your concentration until you experience “tunnel vision,” and make you impervious to weakness or pain. LSD’s effects in these regards amongst the extreme-sport community are in fact legendary, universal, and without dispute.

It is interesting to note the similarities between the recollection of these athletic feats while in this psycholytic state, and descriptions that professional athletes give of “Being in the Zone,” a mythical heightened “state” of neo-perfection where athletes report very psychedelic effects such as time slowing down and extraordinary feats of instantaneous non-thinking coordination. Athletes and normal individuals also claim the same effects in moments of heightened adrenaline – the classic fight or flight response. As LSD research returns to the mainstream in the United States, further investigation into the claims of athletes, such as the extreme sports underground, could result in a radically different perception for the variety of uses of psychedelics.

As an extreme sports athlete, journalist, and advocate since the late 1980s, and a former resident of the Rockies for over a decade, I have witnessed tales of numerous incredible feats on psychedelics in the mountains – none of which, unfortunately, I have permission to tell of here. However, after MAPS asked me

to write this article earlier this year, I started asking around for other people's stories. If you start asking about sporting feats accomplished on psychedelics in pretty much any bar in a ski town, you will hear some fine tales. I heard of a hang glider flown tandem off of a mountain top under a full moon with both the pilot and passenger on magic mushrooms, of helicopter skiing in Alaska on acid when the guide got avalanched off a cliff right in front of the tripping skier, and of radical solo rock or ice climbs of the highest intensity performed on equally radically headfuls of psychedelics. I even heard of someone taking a hit of DMT before they jumped out of an airplane skydiving. (Now that's crazy!) I also have no doubt that someone rides Slickrock in Moab on mushrooms or acid probably every single day, and that you couldn't calculate the number of people who are tripping when it snows in the Rockies. Psychedelic use amongst extreme sports enthusiasts is simply that prevalent, and has been (or was probably higher!) since the start.

Psychedelics and sports, incredibly, can go together like cheese and bread. An enhanced spiritual appreciation of the natural environment, along with increased stamina and an almost unnatural improvement in balance, are too powerful of a combination not to become sacred amongst mountain-athletes. (And I suspect amongst our hunter-gatherer ancestors.) When I asked a well-known high-altitude climber in Colorado about climbing in the Himalayas on acid, he just laughed and stated that at high-altitude LSD was like "cheating" since it did such a good job of overcoming fatigue and altitude sickness. He also had no doubt that someone had summited Mount Everest while tripping. But I can see how this could all seem very circumstantial and uncorroborated to someone who is skeptical, so I can offer the single documented example of LSD being used in a truly remarkable sporting achievement. This is not one that comes from the outlaw fringes of the extreme-sports, but from baseball, from America's sport itself.

On June 12th, 1970, the Pittsburgh Pirates starting pitcher, Doc Ellis, threw a no-hitter against the San Diego Padres in a regular major league baseball game, which he admits occurred while he was on LSD. Ellis had thought he was off the pitching roster for that day and so had taken acid with friends in Los Angeles, only to find out, while high (from his friend's girlfriend), that he had to pitch a game against the Padres that night.

As Ellis recounted it:

*I can only remember bits and pieces of the game. I was psyched. I had a feeling of*

*euphoria. I was zeroed in on the [catcher's] glove, but I didn't hit the glove too much. I remember hitting a couple of batters and the bases were loaded two or three times. The ball was small sometimes, the ball was large sometimes, sometimes I saw the catcher, sometimes I didn't. Sometimes I tried to stare the hitter down and throw while I was looking at him. I chewed my gum until it turned to powder. I started having a crazy idea in the fourth inning that Richard Nixon was the home plate umpire, and once I thought I was pitching a baseball to Jimi Hendrix, who to me was holding a guitar and swinging it over the plate.*

So for those of you who find it hard to believe that someone can ski, mountain-bike, or even fly a hang-glider while on psychedelics, I submit to you the well-documented case of Doc Ellis, and the fact that a no-hitter in baseball is considered one of the hardest achievements in professional sport; while there have been over 175,000 professional baseball games played since 1900, only 269 no-hitters were pitched between 1879 and 2010. Doc Ellis would go on to be in the World Series with the winning Pirates, and was the starting pitcher for the National League in the All-Star Game, but this now-legendary acid-fueled day was his only no-hitter. •

...you couldn't calculate  
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who are tripping  
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in the Rockies.



## A Morning on the Beach

By Mark Plummer



**THE STREETS** are quiet at this hour. The only sounds are the scuffing of my zoris along the sandy sidewalk as I scooch toward the cove.

Behind me the Pacific Coast Highway emits the low roar of light early morning traffic while two blocks ahead of me I hear the rumble and hiss of surf. Someone has left their air conditioner run-



ning to cool an upstairs bedroom at one house in this block. At the end of the sidewalk I step out of my sandals onto the cool sand and cross a hundred yards of open space to the edge of the slope down to the surf wash. Kneeling beside my board I turn my attention toward the incoming waves. Not counting the large groups of gulls and pipers foraging along the sand and washed-up kelp, I'm the only person on the beach right now. The waves are all green glass...three to four feet and friendly today. I scrub an old chunk of wax on the blank spots on top of my board and consider whether or not to hang onto this little piece of wax or scrap it – I'll probably need it later so it goes back in the pocket of my shorts. I turn my eyes back to the incoming waves.

Soon I know  
I'll forget myself  
completely  
and become simply  
another sea creature,  
enjoying a  
brief moment  
of life....

There is a long sandy ridge running out into the water just to my left that sets up both left and right breaks where the incoming wave meets its underwater slope. I like the left because they hold up longer before closing out. Still no one else on the beach so I guess I'll have this little break all to myself for awhile, at least until the other sleepy heads wake up and have their Fruit Loops. Leaning back on my heels I pull a small piece of folded foil from my pocket and unfold it slowly and ceremoniously. There cradled in crinkly aluminum folds lays a small piece of perforated blotter paper with a colorful design printed on its surface. Four chunks. These four squares are the last of a whole page of blotter a close friend brought me last winter when she came to visit. I raise the small square paper to my forehead and hold it there a few seconds in an offering before placing it on my tongue. Expectantly anticipating I contemplate for a few seconds: what secrets and wonders will this magical object unlock in my mind today...what lessons, what mysteries, what revelations? I put the paper on my tongue and

recognize a familiar bitter taste. I chew it slowly until the paper has dissolved and released every molecule of its contents into my saliva. I swallow it, strap the leash to my ankle and picking up my board walk slowly into the incoming water. This early in the day the water and the air almost feel the same temperature. When the water is knee deep I drop my board on the water and when it becomes waist deep I slide my body onto the surface and push off paddling toward the white incoming foam... "It's going to be a wonderful day," I say aloud to myself, "I can just feel it." Then I sing out "Om namah shivaya" several times to both calm my heart and say a prayer to the Creator/Protector/Destroyer for giving me this day and these beautiful waves.

Just beyond the break I wait in the sweet spot and scan the horizon for an incoming set. Waiting patiently I let several large swells pass until finally a darkening on the face of an incoming swell seems to indicate a wave with special promise. Turning, I scratch a few strokes and the incoming wave picks me up and I slide down the face of a smooth green wall of glass.



I kick left and drop... just as I kneel into a bottom turn the sun peeks over the coastal hills and lights up the water like a spotlight has been pointed in my direction. Almost at that moment too I notice the familiar and unmistakable tingling in my nervous system that says the unique molecules in that blotter have crossed the blood-brain barrier and snuggled up with millions of receptor sites. Synchronicity or coincidence? I ask myself before deciding it's probably both and still terribly inconsequential and move on to the next fleeting thought. I kick over the top of the closing face and start paddling back toward the line up. The exertion has accelerated my heart rate and I can feel the effects of these elusive molecules in my system now. Soon I know I'll forget myself completely and become simply another sea creature enjoying a brief moment of life under this blazing star as we spin through the blackness of an infinite abyss.

### **Meanwhile something...**

Back in the zone I resume my waiting for another friendly wall and find myself diving down into some deep thinking about the many special gifts these small pieces of blotter paper bring: Oh sheesh! Great! Just what the world needs! Another stoner raving poetic about his trip? Who cares really, man? Are you going to regale us with an unending string of new age sounding pseudoscientific language all decorative and sophisticated sounding but ultimately meaning next to nothing when it comes to actually describing anything? Let's just get that out of the way right now and be done with it. Let's take all the buzz words borrowed or translated from quantum physics and ethnobotany and get them out of the way now so we can be done with that and get down to some real business. We've already got one (did you see that go by?). Quantum, hologram, multidimensional, transdimensional, extraterrestrial, tunneling, trans temporal, kaleidoscopic, non-local, state-specific, and the ubiquitous "I learned so much" (except I cannot articulate word one about the lesson).

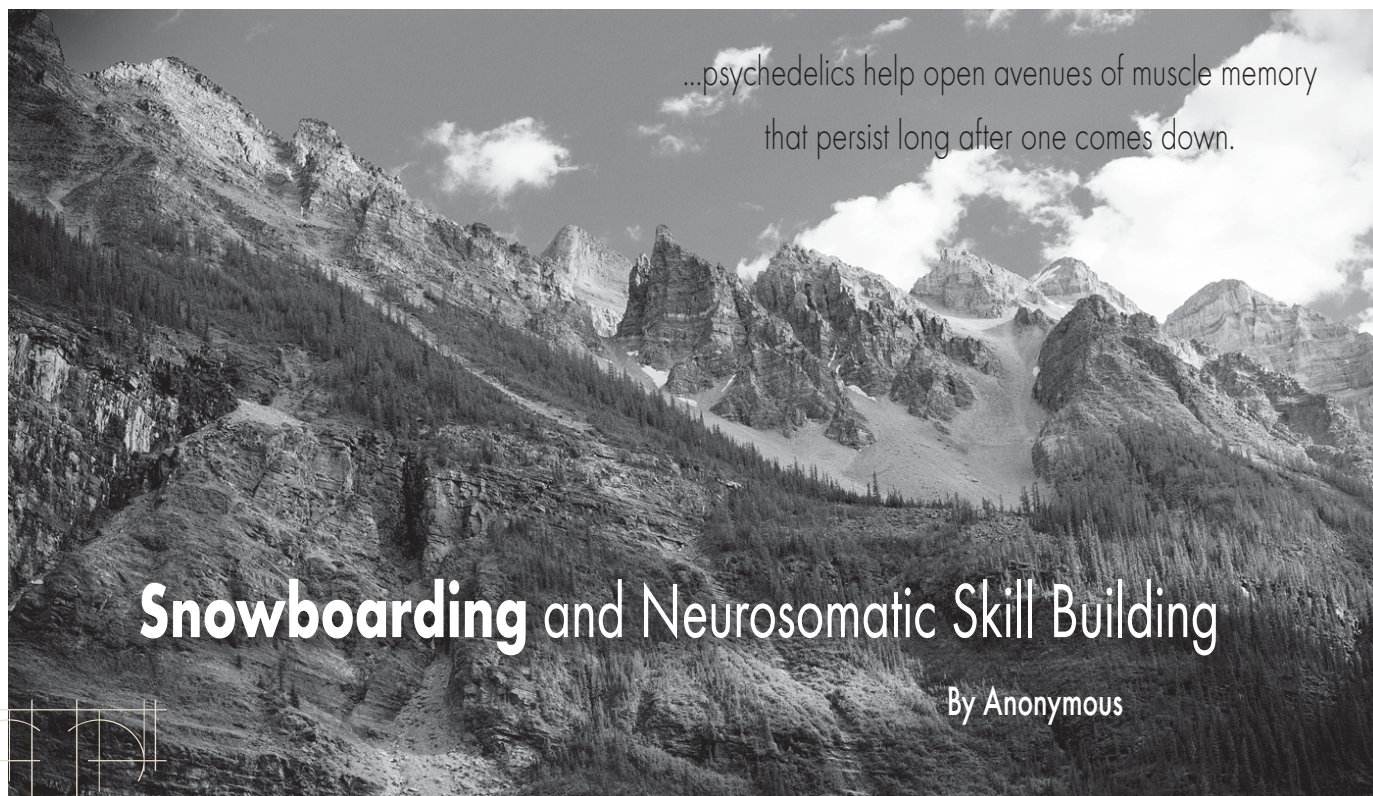
Culture is a trance. We are all deeply embedded in it. We literally cannot see that proverbial forest for the proverbial trees because we cannot awaken from the trance enough to grok the proverbial existence of it. Our so-called "civilization" is but one in a series of civilizations and world views which have developed and thrived for a time (sometimes thousands of years) and successfully held large numbers of us in a complete transfixed (trance-fixed) stupor.

Most of what we think we know boils down to rumor, opinion, innuendo, propaganda and outright lies. Very little of what we think and believe has much basis in actual verifiable fact. Don't get me wrong: the development of the scientific method been a wonderful tool which has provided us some important knowledge from time to time. Is is generally accepted that the Earth is a small being in orbit around a minor star on the edge of a spiral galaxy in a cluster of similar galaxies we call "the Local Group." Here we are. Most of us have a vague understanding that

gravitational forces exerted by the proximity of our own moon drags the oceans around the planet causing the tides and surf! And we're beginning to understand how similar tides on the sun ebb and flow causing changes in our weather patterns here on the earth and civilizations have prospered and perished because of these immense forces happening on a ball of hot gas 93million miles away. We're beginning to understand how electromagnetic radiation affects the weather patterns here on our home planet and these weather patterns (hot/dry, hot/wet, cold/dry, cold/wet) have determined the growing seasons which led to the rise and demise of entire civilizations throughout recorded history and before. We think we know that some diseases may be caused by micro-organisms. We think we understand...

*Shaaaaaark! Shark!* Someone is screaming in a panicky voice. I look up from my ruminations. Where have I been? There are several other surfers in the line up with me now and a gremmie about thirty meters to my right is screeching "shark" and pointing toward the horizon. My eyes follow the direction indicated by his outstretched arm. Sure enough several dark dorsal fins break the surface of the water there about 120 meters away. But in less than a second I find I know these are not fish but mammals. "Chill out, junior." I call back. "Those aren't sharks." He shouts, "Then you stay here!" as he does a quick turn and scratches out a lift on the first little wave passing us. I duck my head and paddle hard toward the incoming fins. I pull myself toward a spot where I think I'll be able to intercept these passing shapes and a little out of breath I arrive at a spot where I find myself surrounded by a small pod of dolphins. There must be several dozen in this group. Some of them seem as curious about me as I am about them and as they pass me several come to the surface to look me over with their large dark, curious eyes. I can't resist the temptation to touch one, while from somewhere in the back of my mind comes a questioning admonition would touching one constitute "molesting a marine mammal?" I reach out as one passes close to the nose of my board and let my fingertips caress the smooth gray side of this graceful swimming being as it passes me. It's over in a flashing moment. First there was a large smiling face and a large dark eye looking into mine. Then a smooth gray side sliding past my fingertips. Then without even a flick of the tail a dive. The power and strength contained in this body are humbling. They've gone and I watch their fins as they move past toward the open water. I spin my board toward shore and look for an incoming wall to hitch a ride.

Once back at the line-up a girl on a short board asks me: "Did you get close to any of those dolphins out there?" "Yeah" I answer, "I made some new friends." She turns her board with one quick kick and scrapes past me on the face of an incoming. "Cool!" she says as she slides past. I think: "It is going to be a lovely day. I'm alive on this planet. I'm alive in this ocean and this ocean is alive in me..." •



...psychedelics help open avenues of muscle memory  
that persist long after one comes down.

## Snowboarding and Neurosomatic Skill Building

By Anonymous

**There is great feeling** in moments of hyperawareness. For me, these moments occur at the peak of physical exertion, on the line between fear and clear calm, in a background of nature's raw beauty. It is the moment when I am 100 feet up a cliff, and my fearful grip that is about to give turns into resolve, as I make the next move to climb to the anchor. It is the moment when the violent turmoil and confusion of being upside down in white water rapids gives way to the perfect hip snap that will turn me right side up—and allow me air. It is the motion of my snowboard seamlessly floating from side to side, while mounting speed through fresh snow. It is the grace and strength of moving through vinyasas of a physical yoga practice with the mind only on the breath. Stillness through motion; these are the times where I am drawn absolutely into the present.

But sometimes I need a jump start, a change in perception, and an entirely new way of experiencing. Experiments with psychedelics in a safe and purposeful way have allowed me to solve problems, and have helped me to overcome barriers, by disconnecting the fear in my mind that says "I can't" from the body that intuitively knows that it can. Psychedelics can augment the feeling of movement and allow one to experience that movement—the exertion, the breathing, the stretching, the power—in entirely

new and exciting ways. Mind-enhancing drugs can open doors and even instruct.

The greatest gift of psychedelics is the power of lasting positive change. Alcohol may give a false sense of confidence that leaves one regretting the next morning, but psychedelics help open avenues of muscle memory that persist long after one comes down. Realizations while high become seminal ideas that materialize when applied with the rules and logic from the sober world.

Snowboarding for me was at first a frustrating sport. I knew how to balance and how to turn, and I knew that if I just pointed my board down the mountain that I would be fine, and yet I couldn't make myself. I was stuck snow plowing and using disjunctive turns to make wide lateral and slow vertical gains down the mountain. Throwing my weight back in caution caused me to fall, and I was starting to get pretty sore.

And so I tried getting high. My irrational fear loosened its grip, and I began to let myself go—literally. I pointed down the mountain, and I felt what it was to be snowboarding—really snowboarding. The movement is intoxicating. Hips moving methodically from side to side, shoulders and calves pushing and pulling this side, then the next ... toe, heel, toe, heel ... carving and floating at the same time. Knees bent, tail tucked, heart open. Crisp wind on the face, warm glow from

a working body. It's mostly too quiet to hear, but you can feel the sound, a rhythmic swish, swish, a soft glide over powder and a satisfying crunch through the snow, just like stepping on dry leaves on a fall day. I did not hesitate, and I did not fall.

Night fell and I rode the lift one last time to the top. I passed over an unlit area of trees; their blackness and the nearly empty lift made me feel the cold. I twisted to look behind me and saw the mountain town glittering with lights, its cozy warmth dwarfed by the vastness of stars and the great mountains illuminated behind it. I took a deep breath and a stretch. My muscles and mind felt good.

I have not used this approach to snowboarding since; I haven't needed to. Each time I go down the mountain I feel high through the motion, the speed, the exhilaration. I would have, of course, eventually have come to speed with snowboarding without the use of mind-enhancing drugs, albeit not quite as rapidly. Drugs do not magically give us skills and qualifications that we do not already possess, but they do help to reveal a different pathway to what we do have. I will always look back at this memory in fondness, and I admit I wonder ... perhaps psychedelics do give us an added spark through the memory of the feeling.

I like to think so. •



## Yoga and Psychedelics

**Soma, Nectar of the Gods**

By Ganga White



To follow is an excerpt from Ganga White's book *Yoga Beyond Belief: Insights to Awaken and Deepen Your Practice* (North Atlantic Books, 2007), followed by a commentary that he wrote especially for this *Bulletin*. —DJB

**NO exploration** into yoga and meditation would be complete without a look at the ancient lineage of sacred plants and herbs that many assert are at the origins of religious experience and spirituality. We live in a time of drug hysteria that calls for a more intelligent understanding that doesn't lump every psychoactive substance, plant, or herb into the same category called dark and dangerous. The Soma was an ancient brew or drink prepared by sages and yogis that was said to bestow health, strength, insight, spiritual visionary experience, and communion with divinity. This sacred drink, also called "Amrita" or "nectar of the gods," opened the mind, heart, and inner landscape while purifying and healing the body. The word "Amrita" means nectar. It comes from the word "Mrita," which means death and "A-mrita" means non-death or immortality. Soma use dates back to the ancient time of the Vedas and origins of yoga.

Researchers have suggested that the Soma was made from psychoactive mushrooms or possibly from a combination of plants, like the middle eastern Haoma or Syrian Rue, and various herbs. The formula and exact nature of this "nectar of immortality" has been lost, possibly forever, in the mists of antiquity. The Amazon region holds what is probably a similar sacred brew, called Ayahuasca, which means vine of the soul or vine of the dead. For centuries, and probably thousands of years, this plant admixture has played a primary role in indigenous people's spirituality, healing, and discovery of a vast pharmacy of medicines and healing herbs. We owe much of our pharmacopeia to the legacy from indigenous peoples and the sacramental practices.



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I touch on the topic of plant sacraments because it is a timely subject and something I am repeatedly asked about. I was very fortunate early in my studies of yoga and mysticism to have had the opportunity to meet and practice with researchers and explorers of the Soma and other entheogens. It is important to realize that there is a right place and proper use for everything. Plant intelligence has informed human consciousness since the beginning of time. We are dependent on plants and live in symbiotic relationship with them. To make certain plants illegal is ignorance. Rather, we need to learn their language, receive their gifts, and learn the right and intelligent use of all things. As Paracelsus, an alchemist and a founder of modern medicine, stated, "The difference between a poison and a medicine is dosage."

There are neural pathways in the brain that are more ancient than our beliefs, philosophies, and religious proscriptions. There are keys to the doorways of the rich interior landscape that open dimensions of beauty, order, intelligence, immense complexity, and sacredness beyond measure. These realities can be so powerful, brilliant, and intense that, while visiting them, our world seems like a distant hallucination in the way that these dimensions can seem hallucinatory from this one. Seeing and being touched by these mystical experiences can change one and help one in positive ways with insights into self-healing, enlightened living, and the wholeness of life. Our bodies and brains operate on chemical messengers and information exchange systems within nature. Evidence shows that medicinal plants were probably at the origin of religious



and mystical experience. To say they are unnatural, and that practices, rituals and belief systems created by man are natural, is an absurdity. It is a shame that fear and conditioning can preclude the greatest journey...within.

*Soma, Soma, devamritam, parama jyoti, namo, namah.* "To Soma, nectar of the gods, who reveals the divine light, salutations, again salutations." I quietly offered the ancient chant as we floated down the jungle river hanging in hammocks. The

Amazon reflected the night as lightning bugs lit the sky opening up mysteries of the cosmos, revealing beatific sights in holographic worlds of light, intricacy, and geometric, oscillating wonder. We were drifting in and beholding the matrix of life. We floated into a void of darkness that took shape and form, turning into corridors of color, opening into the field of dreams. All my relations, the sweat lodge prayer of Native Americans, takes on new meaning as each relationship in

your life parades before you, viewed with the lens of insight from the sacred vine.

There are keys to the doorways of mind and consciousness that are guarded by phantom demons of fear and uncertainty. They bring dread to the brittle minded and self-righteous, preventing their entry. These demons may guard the entrance but the reward inside, ironically, is the gift of responsibility that is the wisdom of uncertainty. •

**THIS addendum** to the piece from my book, *Yoga Beyond Belief*, is not written to advocate nor to proscribe the use of psychedelics, which is a deeply personal choice, but rather to stress the importance of considering the validity of experiences received by these means. Even seasoned psychonauts and neuronauts have sometimes opined that while it may be possible to have a spiritual experience, philosophical insight, or religious experience with entheogens, it's important to be able to get to the same place "naturally." The implication is that such experiences are analogs of genuine religious experience. We need to ask what, or who, is the arbiter of true religious experience? Furthermore is spiritual experience measurable at all? The arguments leveled against the validity of entheogens can be aimed equally in the other direction. We could also ask whether the experiences obtained by prayer, rosary, mantra recitation, or years of trying to quiet the mind, are more valid and "natural" or if they are merely mechanical repetition and hypnotic self projection?

Who or what can dictate the authenticity of religious experience and is it measurable? If there is an acceptable measure, it is usually centered around how that experience later expresses itself in daily life with compassion, love, kindness and care. With that metric so many who have been touched by psychedelic awakening report, or have friends and family reporting, obvious and significant transformation and flowering of these essential, evolved human attributes.

Psychotropic substances are powerful tools, and like all tools, they can cut both ways—helping or harming. Paracelsus offered a great guiding principle when he pointed out that the difference between a medicine and a poison is dosage, or usage. There are many examples of great emotional opening, creativity, insight and positive transformation from entheogenic experiences. Unfortunately, we've also seen the opposite. We must acknowledge that the same is true in the arena of traditional religion. In these epochal times of religious fervor and extremism, East and West, sometimes it seems riskier to experiment with religion than with drugs. Religion can trap a person for a lifetime in the confines of a myth, or worse, and people live their whole lives for a promise of reward in what lies beyond the ultimate mystery, death, while seeking an afterlife and neglecting or devaluing what may be the only life there is—the here and now.

I mainly want to suggest that many of the arguments against psychedelics have as much validity, or lack thereof, when aimed back toward organized religion. I heard a Zen master once lecture that if psychedelics provided authentic awakening or spiritual experience, one would not ever have to approach them again. This is a common point of view. I would ask why the same isn't said of the Zen cushion or approaching the Zen master or guru? Is wisdom and realization a destination we arrive at, or a constant journey in ever unfolding possibility? If it is an ongoing process, a journey of constant vigi-

lance, awakening and reawakening, then tune-ups, from life, from teachers, or plant friends are welcome along the way.

Due to the current level of drug hysteria that tries to demonize and marginalize those who work with psychedelics, many yogis and yoga teachers are hesitant to speak publicly of their experiences. However, I've had the opportunity to talk in depth with many scholars, teachers, and leaders about the benefits they've received through their use of entheogens and sacred plants. Some point out there are two different ways to use these allies—using psychonautical tools for the experience they offer in and of themselves and also the use of these tools to open, enhance and deepen the dimensions of traditional practices. In other words when potentiating the practice of meditation, pranayama, asana, dance, massage, tai chi, or other modalities with psychotropics, whole new worlds, depths, and perspectives can become possible.

Once, on a pilgrimage deep in the Amazon, I was invited to a Tea ceremony with a few elder maestros. At the peak of the session, with galaxies swirling around me, I was asked why, after years of meditation, self study, and yoga would I be interested in, or bother with, this strange brew. I replied that if a hundred people spent many years in yoga, prayer, chanting, and meditation there may only be a few who have a profound mystical experience of oneness, the connection of all things, the immensity of life, the immeasurable. However, if the same people, with good guidance and attitude, participated in some Ayahuasca sessions there may only be a few who don't have such a visionary experience. I added that after observing hundreds of people partaking of this sacrament, I witnessed only positive effects. Ayahuasca seems to contain a beneficent, guiding and forgiving, wise presence.

Many modern yoga teachers look to the sutras of Patanjali as their most important foundational text for the practice of yoga. Patanjali's first sutra of the fourth and last chapter (4:1), though not often quoted, asserts: "These spiritual attainments may be congenital in some, or they may be gained by the use of certain medicinal plants, by incantations, by fervor, or by meditation." The sage Patanjali advocated plant medicine as an aid to awakening.

Anyone intent and serious about exploring life, consciousness, and his or her own mind would want to be open to all the avenues available. The disciplines of yoga and meditation offer powerful pathways. Entheogens contribute some of the most potent means we have and offer the possibility to open the deepest levels of human consciousness. Visionary realms, internal microcosms, external macrocosms, and other realities or dimensions can be accessible. Whether the plant potions are a medicine or poison depends on personal discernment, intelligent and careful use, set and setting, and wise counsel.

## Flowing with **Fire**

By Hana Theobald



Hana Theobald

In loving memory,  
I dedicate this article to  
Flow Master Dan, for being  
an amazing inspirational fire  
guru and for teaching me  
how to hone my flow.  
Your positive spirit will live on  
and burn brightly in all of  
the lives you touched.

...time becomes  
heavily dilated.  
This slow-motion effect,  
in combination with  
increased visual  
acuity, lets me analyze  
the slightest nuances in  
my movements.

**There have been numerous times** when psychedelics elevated my focus, meditation, and creative processing. These essential aspects of the psychedelic experience have been eternally helpful as an integrative tool into my practice as a performer of fire arts. As a fire dancer, I credit much of my inspiration, movement, creativity, and style to psychedelics and the significant insights they have given me.

Psychedelics allow for profound creative breakthroughs, be it through the visualization of complex geometric patterns, the new appreciation for nuances previously unseen, or, possibly the most significant, the facilitation of “flow.” In my own words, flow is a state of focused relaxation and meditative inspiration, completely immersing oneself in the expressive spontaneous energy of the Now. It is letting go of oneself entirely, allowing the mind, body and soul to collectively operate only by improvisational creative instinct. This organic art of the psyche becomes especially heightened and easily accessible on psychedelics.

One of the many ways I utilize flow is through fire dancing. There are many different forms of fire dancing with a plethora of props such as staff, poi, whip, and hoop. My preferred fire prop is poi, a pair of weighted balls on the end of two chains about the length of my arm. With one poi in each hand, they are spun in sync to generate circular patterns, leaving beautiful geometric tracers when used with fire or glowing light. Generally I practice poi flame-free, using a pair of weighted socks or glowing LED balls on strings. Spinning poi in an altered state has proven to be inspiring and stimulating for the mind-body connection, thanks to the perceptual shifts that occur on psychedelics.

Not unlike my pupils, time becomes heavily dilated. This slow-motion effect, in combination with increased visual acuity, lets me analyze the slightest nuances in my movements. I can easily recognize my faults or missteps, and figure out what must be changed to perfect that particular technique. By focusing on and repeating one specific movement, I find myself uncovering countless variations of it simply by altering the speed, direction, or timing.

The trailing of vision is an enormous advantage when practicing poi spinning. With glow poi especially, the tracers of colored light work like a paintbrush on a canvas. I can lucidly visualize a pattern in my head then effortlessly

recreate it in reality, drawing and manipulating perfect poi shapes trailing through fluid open space.

I find that I am much more in tune with my body, and more sensitive to kinesthesia, on a low to medium dose of LSD or psilocybin mushrooms. I experience increased coordination and balance, more flexibility, more dexterity, and more overall potential for free-flowing movement. It's easy to focus and center my breathing. I can move my body in ways I'd never considered before, and analyze the sensations of different movements with a fresh perspective. The weight of the poi becomes a part of me, perfectly united with my body as if the chains are extensions of my arms, creating a sense of oneness with the dance. On one mushroom trip, I recall having a powerful mind-body epiphany of the flow of my poi manifesting as a fractalized expansion of my soul.

As I mentioned earlier, the facilitation of flow is probably the most influential aspect of the psychedelic experience in terms of my fire dancing. In general, I believe the best way to practice and polish your skills - with any creative hobby - is to just free-flow and see what you come up with. On psychedelics especially, surrendering to the flow allows you to clear your mind and discover new and completely organic movements and ideas. Novel concepts

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become obvious and easy instead of requiring complex analytical thoughts. I've definitely had some of my greatest breakthroughs of personal expression and creativity while spinning poi on psychedelics.

I have only ever danced with fire under the influence of psychedelics once in my life, so far. However, I must insist upon the obvious danger of playing with fire in an altered state; you could potentially hurt or burn yourself and others around you. I recommend sticking to non-flammable forms of light for your trippy dancing enjoyment. Still, I do not regret it. Taking two potent hits of LSD one night at a tribal fire gathering turned out to induce the most memorable, transforming, revelatory poi sessions I have ever experienced.

As soon as I started spinning, I was locked into a powerful energy force, fueling the synchronized flow of my body and mind. I wasn't just seeing but feeling the patterns around and within me. Surrounding me was an infinite glowing grid holding the fabric of reality in place, upon which I drew perfectly symmetrical circles and exquisite figures, reminiscent of harmonic resonance patterns, with the echoing tracers of the flame. I was performing tricks I had never accomplished before, with a newfound sense of fearlessness and complete trust in my flow. I was overwhelmed with visual inspiration and could barely process the excess of sensations, emotions, and ideas surging through me.

The beat of the nearby drum circle was resonating with my own internal vibrations. I felt each muscle and bone in my body moving in sync with the music. My ego had been temporarily switched off; I could dance freely without thinking or criticizing myself. My world existed of nothing but me and my flow. My movement was meditative and my breathing was calm, strong and centered. My spirit was uplifted and energized; I felt rejuvenated and totally inspired, as if I could accomplish anything.

After what felt like hours but was merely a few minutes, the flames burned out and I sat back down in front of a roaring campfire. Ten or so other fire spinners were arranged

within the circle; I watched them dance from a distance in awe. I soon realized I had developed an extrasensory psychedelic ability to tap into peoples' mental frequencies. It's difficult to explain; I was vicariously experiencing their movements and physical sensations in my own body, visualizing the fire patterns from their perspective in my mind, and understanding exactly how and why they moved in the specific manner in which they did.

More than ever before, I had an overwhelming admiration and respect for everyone's unique sense of flow. I could look into a person's eyes and instantly comprehend their movements on a deep kinesthetic-cognitive level. I felt like I could pick up any fire prop and master it simply by feeding off other fire



Photo by  
Jacqui Whitlock

artists' positive creative energies. The LSD renewed me with a sense of confidence and curiosity for fire arts and body movement in general.

That psychedelic experience in particular has been the source of major inspiration for my regular practice sessions and performances. It left a powerful imprint in my memory, and I now aim to get into the same meditative creative mindset I was in that night every time I spin. Psychedelics have helped shape me into a more confident and more expressive fire dancer and performer, and have elucidated the significance and awesome potential of grasping the moment and honing my flow.

Whatever your creative forte may be, I encourage you to experiment, with or without psychedelics, to find your inner flow. There is infinite untapped potential waiting to be released from within. •



## **The Psychedelic Pyromancer:** *In Loving Memory of Flow Master Dan*

By Sara Huntley

Arcs and rings of fire,  
swirl like dervishes courting galaxies,  
their tendrils flicker hypnotic with combustion's dance  
as matter is churned into energy.

Theophany enducing melodies envelope the dancer,  
transmuting elemental forces into living mythos.

The flames carve illuminated sigils,  
composed of interlocking organic patterns.  
Thier flow woven into spells of acoustic algorithms  
driven by kinetic and temporal currents,  
simultaneously sound and form.  
Their alchemy rippling in multidimensional mandalas.

With body, mind and spirit aligned,  
Harmonically resonant frequencies coax  
filigree spirals of fire, ecstatic bliss  
tempered by a fierce grace.  
evoking the cymatics of spiderwebs, snowflakes and sitars  
As the dancer spells out their love song to the stars.



Sara Huntley  
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*The Birth of the Phoenix*, by Amanda Sage, 2010,  
acrylic on canvas. [www.amandasage.com](http://www.amandasage.com)

## Kinetic Synergy

by Anonymous



**WHEN I'm on psychedelic drugs**, I'm much worse at most of the things that I try to do. I'm worse at tying my shoes, for instance, and I'm worse at keeping track of time. I suck at operating electronics when I'm stoned, and at finding large objects in small pockets. I'm bad at remembering what I was just thinking or saying, I can scarcely read printed text, and making sense of subway maps is entirely out of the question. I'm fantastic at playing with my toys, though.

I'm active in the fire spinning and flow arts community, which means that I like to set things on fire and swing them around. Sometimes the thing is a hula hoop or a big staff, other times it's something more like a baton or a small ball on the end of a chain. I mostly don't practice with real fire, of course (for which sobriety is emphatically recommended), but I practice quite a bit. I do it every day. I know what I can do and I know what's just barely out of my reach, and I can state with complete confidence that I'm noticeably more awesome at twirling things around on, say, a touch of acid than I am when I'm stone cold sober.

Such, in any event, is my consistent perception. Importantly, sober observers tend to agree with me, and video records made at various altitudes confirm my suspicions. One great thing about the psychedelic flow experience is that it's totally possible to catch the genie in the bottle. Many have been the times that I seemed to automagically download a brand new move in a trance state only to find that by the next day I couldn't repeat the damn thing at gunpoint. I figured out how to beat that with a digital camera, though. Now I can reverse engineer these things by watching myself do them in slow motion until I figure it out. Then I can actually learn the new move and teach it to others. I love living in the future!

There's a point of diminishing returns, obviously. A good +1 on ye olde Shulgin Scale is enough to give me an appreciable edge. At +2 I'm a freaking Jedi if I can manage to work my way into the flow, which I can almost always do by performing the simple and expedient ritual of actually getting up off of my ass and spinning for a few minutes. I've tried to spin at +3 and when it works it's a spiritual experience, (as is picking some gum off of the sidewalk or whatever else I happen to be engaged in), but I tend to lose focus and I can't try to figure out new moves. Simple repetitive pat-

terns seem to be the thing at high doses. You can't spin at +4. I'd like to see you try, though...

I stumbled upon the magic of harmonized motion as a little raver kid swinging lightsticks around, and it became sort of a trip anchor for me. I honestly don't know how many times I would have fallen into the abyss if I hadn't had a convenient and reliable way to balance myself. I think it has something to do with the left brain and the right brain synching up when you force them to cooperate and pass things back and forth, but that's just speculation. All I know is that it works for me. When I need an endorphin boost, spinning is a quick chi-up. When I'm bubbling over with excess energy it can also be the perfect chill down. When I need to focus my mind, I can attempt the most challenging move I know, or I can simply concentrate on trying to do an easy move perfectly. On the other hand, if my brain needs a break I can just trance out and spin on automatic pilot, watching in wonder as my light tools trace beautiful sacred geometries in scintillating rainbow colors against the darkness.

I teach flow arts as a meditation and self transformation practice that improves patience, balance, confidence, dexterity, focus, coordination, and self-esteem. People didn't used

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to think of it that way, or at least very few people taught anything other than moves and tricks. When you ask all the serious badasses, though, and I asked a whole bunch of them, you find out that a lot of them privately see flow arts as a sort of spiritual path. And a surprising percentage will admit to having made huge breakthroughs along those lines whilst under the influence of mind-expanding substances. This is so common in the ecstatic dance world that it's almost taken for granted. Everybody has a story about the time they finally clicked into the trance, and nine times out of ten the experience involved some kind of psychedelic or empathogen. (Interestingly, the catalyst often isn't necessary to repeat the experience once the dancer finds her flow.)

This might also explain why some musicians find that psychoactives enhance their art. And indeed I hesitate to speculate about who would be left holding their statuettes if they started stripping folks of their Grammys and whatnot on the grounds that some of the past winners made use of performance-enhancing substances.

It's one of those things that everybody knows but nobody really talks about. In recent years this topic has been discussed more openly in the flow community as many of the top-tier spinners have connected up and spent time together at festivals like Burning Man, and I think it's had a real impact on the art. Nowadays more and more instructors are focusing on the energetic body as well as teaching technique and beginners are coming to the practice expecting something more like yoga than yo-yo. Yay better living!

Flow is obviously not unique to flow arts. In fact, the movement only started using that term relatively recently, as the practice has evolved in that direction. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the author of the book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, defines flow as a state in which "action and awareness are merged." Flow is the state of relaxed responsive focus that you feel when you're "in the zone" and ready for anything. Flow is what happens when your body, mind, and spirit are in dynamic balance and the Now is so compelling that everything else fades away. Ego and fear dissolve in the perfect moment, time slows down, and whatever you're doing becomes a meditation.

When you're really in the flow, the Universe seems to cooperate with you. Stories of psychedelic synchronicity are abundant enough to be cliché. And yeah, I know we're pattern-recognizing machines and all that. But almost everybody knows what it's like to really be "on" sometimes; it's that state when you seem to hit all the green lights, books fall open to the right page, and your comic timing is impeccable.

And somehow psychedelics seem to make that state easier to access. More importantly, they help us to learn the tools that we need to catalyze it on our own. These lessons can then be passed on to others who can totally make use of them without ever actually having had to go there themselves. Psychedelics aren't for everybody, but we could all use a little more flow in our lives. Remember, shamans take drugs so the straights don't have to. I never mention drugs in my classes at all, but my experience informs the way I practice and teach every day.

So what's really going on here? Why are so many people better at spinning and dancing and making music when they're high? Is it a Chi thing, like a surge in The Force that I grew up wanting to believe in? Or is it something more akin to having a faster processor speed and a better connection? Is it the result of some kind of perceptual shift, like time dilation, increased visual acuity, or super-sensitized kinesthetic awareness? Is it a concentration thing? Is it just the placebo effect? Is it immersion in the Tao or some more Jungian organizing principle? Is it magic? Is it an illusion? Is there a difference? The debate flows on.

It really is a thing though. If you've never had it happen to you, try dancing more. •

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for me.

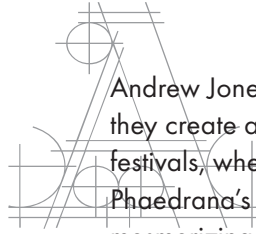


Anonymous Flow Artist



## An Interview with **Andrew "Android" Jones** and **Phaedrana Jones**

By David Jay Brown



Andrew Jones is a digital painter, and Phaedrana Jones is professional dancer. Together they create and perform "live digital paintings" at artistic events, conferences, and festivals, where Andrew's fluidly flowing, ever-changing digital art is projected on to Phaedrana's body while she dances. The effect is truly extraordinary and utterly mesmerizing. Together they perform under the name **Phadroid**, and Andrew's artwork also appears on the back cover of this *Bulletin*. To find out more about their work see: [www.androidjones.com](http://www.androidjones.com) and [www.dreamcatcher.net](http://www.dreamcatcher.net)

**David:** How did you both become interested in art, performance, and creative expression?

*Phaedrana:* In my experience, true creative expression is not a choice but an overpowering inner drive that arises like some invisible golden arrow, which then gradually takes over the course of your life. It's not that one, say, becomes interested in pursuing it; one day you find it and you literally, or over the course of some time, are "taken" by it. As if a code was playing itself out. The creative path is everyone's own; when, where, through whom you begin, what holds you back, what shifts the course of your learning, your soul-search, your breakthroughs and challenges. There is no way to compare or determine what the actual path of creative unfolding is or should be.

*There are numerous threads in the story of my life so far that together weave the umbilical cord of the spontaneous creative expression that fascinates me simply because it is beyond my comprehension. It aids my growth as an individual, because it teaches me humility in recognizing that the more I learn to surrender to not knowing (that is, the more faith I have in that which is more than what I know myself to be) the more I may learn about how everything is. I do some of the best work when I have no agenda of my own, when dance dances itself, and I moment by moment become its unfolding, like a 3-dimensional sheet. I would relate the image to standing over a cliff and jumping off into the abyss, knowing that the clouds will be there to cushion the steps underneath your feet.*

*Without a foundation or a grounding, however, we would have no, or only limited, tools to play with. I believe whatever anyone is drawn to from the heart, where one can recognize passion – that's your tool box. That's where your work begins. And it takes work. Any basics of any discipline take work. Once you have enough tools to play with though, you can then begin watching your game broadcasted on a screen of its own making.*

*My tools over the years have been widely multidisciplinary, including studies in classical ballet, modern dance, classical south-Indian dance, and anthropology. In some ways this is like speaking multiple languages, or having multiple nationalities, which actually is also the story of my life. By not being bound or locked into only one box, it somehow becomes easier to find the spaces/ourselves in-between the many, where it all happens.*

*I would add that though it immensely aids the creative process to have a number of different tool boxes to juggle, it is only ever possible to give ourselves fully to one arena at a time - or to the integration of them all, which is then its own arena. I am only a student of my process at this point. Though I do believe once we arrive we run out of questions, and have no more doubt clouding our vision.*

**Andrew:** Throughout the course of my entire life, art has been one of the only things that made any sense to me. The creative process has been a refuge for my mind and a meditation for my imagination. Experiences of drawing and painting are among my first memories as a child. I had little interest for anything else, and it became clear to me that the road to my happiness lay in factoring an equation of time/effort that kept me drawing and creating as much as possible.

For a large portion of my journey through life the creative process was executed within a container of solitude. Yet the act of creation, or the moment of the act of creation, is the most exhilarating part of the entire process. A finished painting is only a shadow born from the light of that experience.

I've somehow always had a natural inclination to explore the creative process. I would, time and again, gravitate toward expanding my means of expression - such as amplifying creative energies through the use of digital tools.

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When I made the realization that electricity and technology could amplify the power, impact, and exposure of my art, it became a whole new world to explore. Stepping into the realm of performing arts was another such chapter introduced over time.

I was drawn toward the realm of performance art, and that of live painting, because it allowed for a platform where I could share this moment of creation with a larger group of people. I've always liked the fact that the act of making art in front of an audience both demystifies the process at one level and it also earns a level of validation for it. My general intentions for performing in front of people are an attempt to entertain and inspire, and to step into that intangible realm together with them.

**David:** How did you start collaborating together, and what inspired you to combine dance, music, juggling, and motion painting with light?

*Phaedra:* We were inspired by the spirit of Maui (Hawaii), at the festival Source in February 2009. We found ourselves in a giant hall with only a handful of other people simply because everyone else went to sleep! Andrew, as he does, soon embarked on a live painting, projecting onto a large screen half-way through the hall.

Over the course of the night it so happened that I waltzed over to the side of his illuminated screen to say hi, dancing in and out of his field of vision focused on the projected visuals. Instead of putting his Wacom pen down though, he began to communicate to me through the screen - and I responded. Then something else responded, and the four people

*who were in the hall at the time stood rooted to the ground. Time stood still. It was as if something had exploded and shot out into a trillion new directions all at once and we were the moment as it all converged. Etched into our minds forever, it was like an invisible conception.*

*Two days later we were invited to perform at the "talent show" of the festival. That was the very first Phadroid performance. Conceived Friday night, rested on Saturday, in the world by Sunday.*

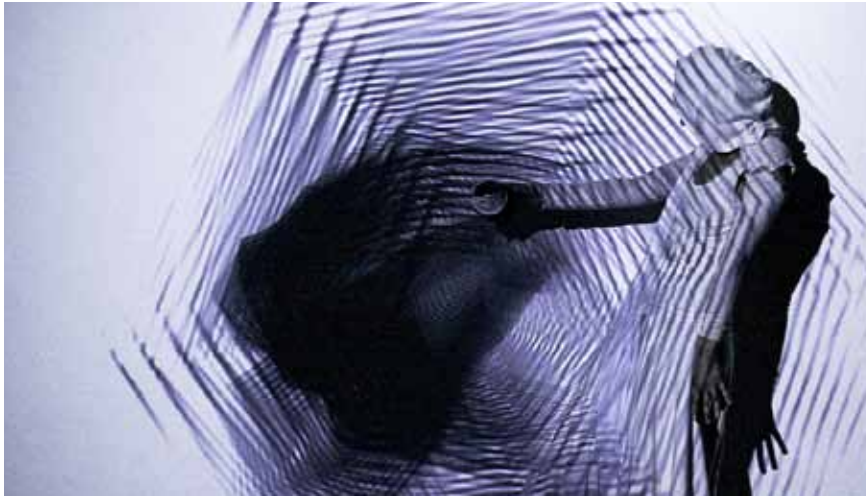
Andrew: Phadroid was born in paradise - in the early morning hours, on a tropical island in the Pacific ocean, perched on a cliff looking over the edge of the world, in a dimly lit gymnasium, to a handful of witnesses in a heightened state of consciousness received from the land. I was making art with my computer and projecting it across the room. As Phaedra crossed the screen and walked into the projector, that rare jewel of a night, I instantaneously knew that something had shifted and would never go back to the way it was before.

It was a timeless moment. And in that moment of frozen time, I could speculate into the quantum field as countless branches of possibilities were being born every millisecond that we connected. It was a moment of exponential branching, occurring spontaneously, the spark of a thousand possibilities converging into that one single segment of time. It was something to be truly grateful for.

**David:** What role have psychedelics played in inspiring your collaborative performance pieces?

Andrew: Psychedelics have been a tool of intentional creative exploration. They are used as a tool because they lend the ability to transport one's awareness into a heightened state of the mind. As the mundane world dissolves, all around one is instantly catapulted into a state of reverence and deep appreciation for all that surrounds one's being. It's a place where nothing merges with everything. When that state is invoked there's nothing any more that I could take for granted. My thought processes seem to organize around a higher order of complexity and understanding. It reminds me of how valuable time is, and it gives me an incredible sense of appreciation for the magic of all things. It takes away the contextualization of how my ego interprets this world as reality, and it strips me of all my conditioning. The more I succeed in shattering my awareness, the more I learn as I am forced to reassemble the pieces. They catalyze my imagination and pull me into a world that I'm accustomed to be pulling from.

Psychedelics open wide the aperture of perception, through which one may observe the beauty of the molecular density of reality. They awaken me into a world of timeless twilight that feels as equally familiar as it is perpetually unfathomable. Like you've been here a thousand times before, but it's unique to the stored memory of your programming. And, with Phaedra, we navigate this unified field of mystery together as a unit. As we synchronize our intentions, we weld our fate together. This core weaves together the fabric of our reality and we do what we can to guide the loom towards a beautiful tapestry.



*Phaedrana:* All we do is show up. Somehow, Phadroid appears and moves through us and we partake in the journey. Those witnessing it will naturally be invited to join in the conversation. This is just a different hall of consciousness that we share no matter what. Whatever that is, it is in each one of us, and if we focus in on experiencing that, and nothing else, we invisibly bond - like atoms; hence the collective experience induced that opens people up to themselves. Art at its best is a natural psychedelic.

What is Phadroid? What is art? My moves and Andrew's brushstrokes synchronized on the screen do not happen because we "plan" them. We make no plans, we do not "rehearse." They point past us. The living connection of our consciousness through multiple strands of our reality is being woven together - perhaps? Or...are we simply too similar in our sensitivities that we end up magnifying each other's potential, like some transformative-reflective device? In the realm of the medicine we ask no questions. It is all one big answer.

**David:** Phaedra, in general, what sort of relationship do you see between psychedelics and dance?

*Phaedrana:* Dance is medicine, and when we become the dance we become the medicine. This works without psychedelics, though it is similar to the way or the reason many people use psychedelics.

I perceive psychedelics as a doorway, like a peeking through so that once you reach there, as a natural state, for an extended moment or longer, you then say to yourself, "Ah, I know this. I recognize this. I've been here before." Your memory then serves as an affirmation. Like remembering a place you saw in a dream,

only more real. It is the thin line where the intangible becomes tangibly acknowledged.

And it puts one in a place of deep reverence for the overpowering presence of reality that surrounds us at all times. It is also a dialogue if one allows, once we realize that we can also listen. Or it can be a living, breathing prayer. Some refer to meeting points with their higher selves, or the divine realm, in which case it is akin to stepping into your own temple, that is, sacred space.

In the right setting, and with the right awareness, they can allow a witnessing of one's purest potential as unnecessary and stagnant boundaries of fear, doubt, insecurity, etc. dissolve away. One might say that which is merely an "illusion" is seen through. As if you could walk through the thick walls of negative experiences, or simply society's or your own expectations/projections, as if those seemingly impenetrable walls were not even there, as if this "potential" was already a living, breathing, tangible realm ever since you were born.

It's the trailer of our movie. A pointer reminding us of what is possible, or what is more real, so we begin looking at the ground beneath our feet, elevating it inch by inch, step by step, until one day we naturally arrive at the panorama, and then we can always see the panorama. It is important to never give our power up. Ultimately, we are at all times the masters of our reality.

Conscious medicine assists one in sweeping off particles of dust that obscure our sight, or our willingness to own up to what we are able or are called to do. Dusting the slate clean so that nothing but what is essence shines through - it is not in any way personal any more. It reaches out to people directly. Art of any form, that is in any way universal, comes

from this "place" and carries the potential to alter an audience's consciousness for a brief period of time or longer, to lift them above the regular ebb and flow of ordinary life, through a temporary suspension of disbelief of the mind.

It reminds them of other aspects of themselves that they may not, otherwise, connect with on a regular basis. It works according to its own logic, as any expression of original creativity does. And those involved in making this kind of art do not, ultimately, credit themselves for the products of their creative expression. Expression of this form is its own entity - though as soon as we begin to look for it, it disappears. It doesn't like to be documented either. It can only be experienced, and I am still challenged to believe it, except for when it is actually happening of course.

**David:** Andrew, how have psychedelics influenced the style and content of your paintings, as well as your creative involvement in films, video-games, fashion design, and body painting?

Andrew: Throughout human history psychedelics have served as a harbinger of new thoughts, forms and actions. That path led the way to a history of creative breakthroughs that have all had an effect on humanity's evolution. Psychedelics have broadened the aperture of my internal and external vision. They are an inter-dimensional art director that leads me forward from the heart of my humanity through the door to another world that I never knew existed, yet it always feels familiar.

The art of psychedelics and technology. As the individual gains a modest amount of perceived control over a particular





The creative process  
has been a refuge  
for my mind  
and a meditation  
for my imagination.



software routine or program, there is a memory stored within the muscles and the body of the user. The goal is to gain mastery over at least one particular routine, so the memory of your muscles upon the application becomes the vortex of your consciousness, and also your bread crumb of reality.

All technology is a symphony of code performed by an orchestra of machines, routing a conscious and intentional collective current. Original art is recognized by its tendencies toward unrecognizability – meaning it is a new code being introduced. Art is either fresh code introduced to a new mind, or a new mind introduced to old code.

In a deep journey there is a point of departure where the only things keeping you tethered to the physical world are the creative tools in your hands that you hang onto by your fingertips. The process then transforms into an elusion journey back through your own consciousness. The pen becomes my walking staff and a lightning rod that grounds and focuses on the most creative aspect of my imagination, dissociated from veils of distraction and repetition. It's as if there was an attempt of the tool and my consciousness to merge together. I can tangibly feel the cords interconnecting them as an energy exchange between the logic of the mathematics of the code and my sensitivity. As if I was sensitive to my software to the point of empathy. I can see where, no, I know exactly where it's at and I know exactly how far I can push it before it crashes or I crash. It's like a tightrope between crashing my program and crashing my consciousness.

The metaphorical relationships that I can create to describe the experience is like this. It feels like I'm hunting lions on the edge of a fractal. I'm on Safari in a landscape that's made of pixels, math, and imagination and I'm hunting for combinations of edges, shapes, and colors to carry new codes into the pantheon of art history. Pixel by pixel, bit by bit, from vector to vortex to viral.

Imagine editing along a timeline. If your consciousness exists on a linear timeline at the point of psychedelic departure, you slowly dissolve the connection point. It's like you split the playhead of reality and you become free of time. The road behind you disintegrates into the void, and you're so far out ahead of where you were, that there's nothing in front of you or behind you. You're free. For one moment you're free of all cultural rationality and expectation; you are the thread merging with the loom, weaving a new tapestry of consciousness, clearing a new path into the fractal wave of creative construction. As your comprehension of time deteriorates, the value and respect of the eternal equation that you have always experienced expands. Your perception is the tip of the record's needle spinning forward. Your decisions are derived from a source beyond intuition, and it exceeds my ability to describe it.

**David: Phaedra, what is going through your mind when you're involved in a dance performance, and Andrew, how do you stay in tune with Phaedra's spontaneous movement?**

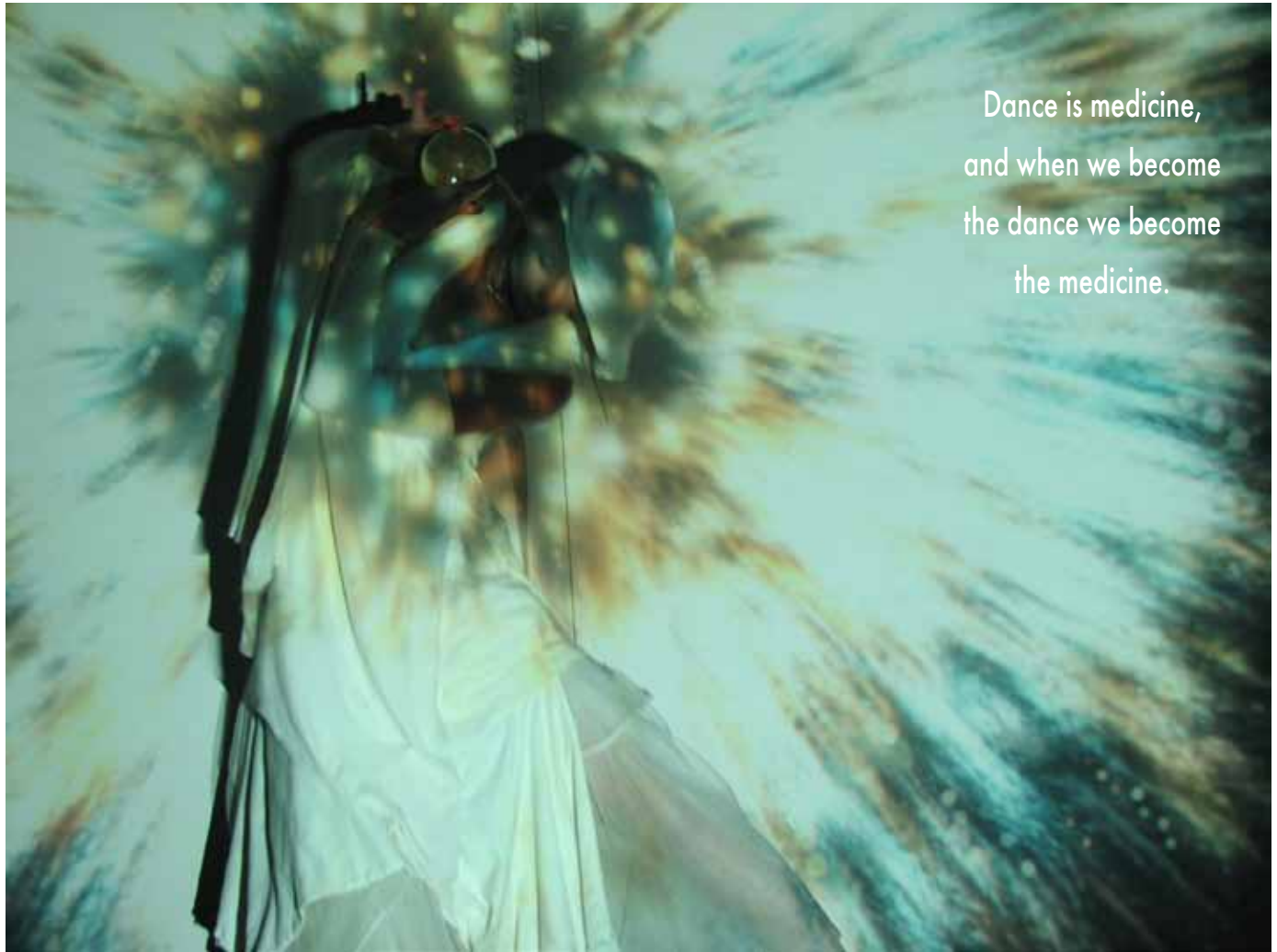
*Phaedra: If something is going through my mind while I am performing that means I've fallen out of it all and am probably figuring out how to switch the mind back off (which in*

*itself is paradoxical), so it can, and hopefully does, throw me off to the point that I just give up and then I'm back. It has happened that the external circumstances provided by a particular venue were so completely the opposite of what I had anticipated that my mind short-circuited and showed up as totally blank, to the point that I had no choice but to "just be" in the situation.*

*I could not remember any of what I had done on stage and felt absolutely terrible that I had let everyone down, did not deliver the post – only to find out that the audience was simply blown away, and it made no sense at all though that was exactly why. When sense is placed aside the lid is blown off what may transpire, and it's more than what we could imagine or plan for. It's in those moments that I begin to allow myself to believe that being out of control can be just as much if not more of a blessing than being in control. I, or the "I" that I know, does not "create" magic. It allows magic through. And for that there are no rules to make up prior; it is a state of being where we are of no importance.*

Andrew: I turn on, tune in, and drop into another frequency of love. In essence, I seek to arrive at a state out of mind where my total focus is on our deepest possible connection together. Then I must drop out and allow the environment to dissolve around me. I infuse my consciousness into the dynamic particles of electric light that I wield at will with the integration of a digital drawing tablet and blasting out of the projector onto Phaedra's body and consciousness. Together we are tuned to the same frequency of music, and my imagination cascades across traces of her movement. It is like a techno-digital Tai Chi. There are times when I can feel there is an





Dance is medicine,  
and when we become  
the dance we become  
the medicine.

energy between us, and the longer I can hold it the stronger it gets, until I can't take it any more or I lose it or the song changes. Perhaps if art is an expression of one's core being, then this form of artistic union, the ability to create harmoniously in the moment with another, delivers the chemistry between two beings.

**David: What sort of general connection do you both see between psychedelics and the integration of the mind and the body?**

*Phaedrana: In some ways you lose the connection between mind and body, in other words you find it. You are more your "inner" self and you are less the self you "know"- thus you have less control as you know it yet you feel you finally have a clear grasp of how it all just falls into place. At times it feels as if an infinite form of cellular memory got activated, something that's always been there, or as if new blood was flowing through the veins.*

*Psychedelics dissolve the borders of conventional reality generated by the integration of the mind and body at a certain frequency. Due to this shift, it becomes possible to step beyond what we normally perceive as reality, or to see ourselves as separate from events of the past, present, or future, which in turn may "allow" us to detach from them and find new perspectives. And, ultimately, how many bodies do we "have?" How many layers to our mind? What else is working through us that is higher than the mind? Where does the mind end and something else begin? Does the body recognize the soul more than the mind, given that it is more instinctual than intellectual by nature? Is the mind's carefully assembled creation or the body's raw spontaneous expression more real? What is real to begin with?*

**Andrew:** Sometimes I view the body as the technological intermediary molecular machine that is designed to facilitate the union of psychedelics and consciousness. At peak moments within the experience my consciousness extends beyond the

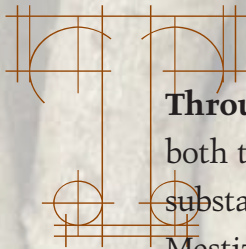
organic body into the energetic matrix of technology, that of circuits, and electricity - my mind's intention activates its inert potential. As I loosen the grasp on my consciousness, the body can begin to behave automatically, and if I let go at the right time the automation is harmonious.

The repetition programmed into my muscles' memory executes and commands effortlessly as long as I trust it enough to get out of its way - and I have to make sure that everything is plugged in! Its riding the line between a technical experiment and and mystical experience. I merge with the tools that I use to the extent that they feel like a physical extension of myself. The Tablet, the laptop, the software, the circuits, the code, the files, my bones, my blood, and my tears, are all factors within a larger equation. I'm integrated within them; we all make up this mind/body alchemical experiment together. •



## Ayahuasca and **the Grotesque Body**

Stephan V. Beyer, Ph.D.



**Throughout the Upper Amazon**, a shaman's power – the power both to heal and to harm – is conceptualized as a slimy or sticky substance, sometimes corrosive, which is kept in the shaman's chest. Mestizo shamans call this substance simply *la flema*, phlegm, or *llausa*, the ordinary Quechua term for phlegm, or *yachay*, the Quechua word for ritual knowledge. It is in this phlegm that the shaman, whether healer or sorcerer, stores the magic darts that are used for both attack and defense; in the phlegm of the sorcerer are also toads, scorpions, snakes, insects, monkey teeth, razor blades – the biting, the stinging, and the venomous.

What is striking about this is that shamanic power is a *physical object inside the body*, capable of storage, projection, and transmission. The virtually universal method of inflicting magical harm in the Upper Amazon is to project this substance into the body of the victim – either the substance itself or the pathogenic projectiles the shaman keeps embedded within it. And the virtually universal method of healing such an intrusion is for the healing shaman to suck out the projectile and dispose of it, protected from its contamination by a defense made of the same substance.

This phlegm is nurtured by ingesting ayahuasca and the sweet strong jungle tobacco called *mapacho*. The gateway of this power is the shaman's mouth, out of which the shaman's power passes in the form of singing, whistling, whispering, and blowing, especially of tobacco smoke, and into which the shaman sucks out the sickness, the sorcery, the magic darts that cause the patient's suffering. The *maestro ayahuasquero* transmits this power to a disciple in unabashedly physical form – a slippery globule passed from mouth to mouth.



In the same way, to learn the secrets of a plant – what sicknesses it can heal, what song will summon it, what medicines it enters into, how it should be prepared – the shaman undergoes *la dieta*, living in solitude in the jungle, without salt or sugar or sex, ingesting the plant, taking the plant into the body, learning its songs and secrets from within, creating an intimate relationship of love and trust. Solitude, abstinence, the ingestion of the teacher – Amazonian shamans conceptualize this process as *learning with the body*.

Traditionally, the ayahuasca healing ceremony is conducted by mestizo shamans on Tuesdays and Fridays, late at night, in pitch darkness. Here too the ceremony is a *performance of embodiment*. For the patient as for the shaman, to drink ayahuasca in ceremony is to be connected to the body in profoundly physical ways.

First, ayahuasca tastes *awful*. It has an oily, bitter taste and viscous consistency that clings to your mouth, with just enough hint of sweetness to make you gag. The taste has been described as being bitter and fetid, like forest rot and bile, like dirty socks and raw sewage, like a toad in a blender. Second, ayahuasca is a powerful purgative and emetic. It makes you vomit, and often induces diarrhea. The vomiting is considered to be cleansing and healing; indeed, ayahuasca is often called *la purga* and the shaman a *purguero*. Vomiting shows that the drinker is being cleansed. *La purga misma te ensena*, they say: vomiting itself teaches you.

Thus, from the first taste of ayahuasca in ceremony, our relationship with the body is brought into sharp focus. We deliberately ingest something vile; we forcefully eject the contents of our bodies. The body is turned inside out, its boundaries transgressed. We give up control of our bodies, hand ourselves over to the plant, and experience our embodiment in its most primal form. Our body becomes, in the word of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, *grotesque* – fully embodied, porous and protuberant, part of the earth, exuberant and fecund.

And then there is the ceremony itself. There are the smells of tobacco smoke and cologne, the one rich and deep, the other high and sweet, like musical tones. There

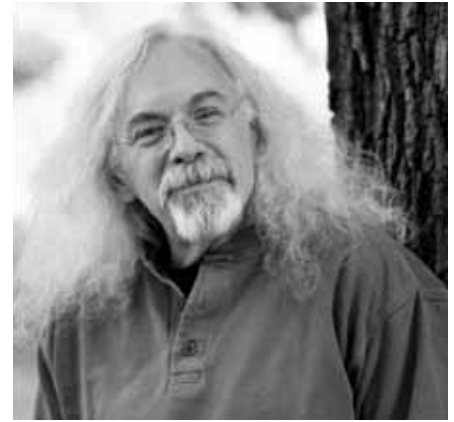
are the sounds of the jungle, the night singing of the frogs, the gagging and vomiting in the room, the whispering, whistling, and singing of the shaman, the susurrations of the shaman's leaf-bundle rattle. Many participants smoke mapacho. Every few seconds the darkness is pierced by the glowing end of a cigarette; as you smoke, the now visible breath enters and leaves your body.

At some point the shaman ceases singing and begins making extraordinary and dramatic sounds of belching, sucking, gagging, and spitting. He is drawing up his protective phlegm, to make sure that what he sucks from the body of his patient cannot harm him; then he loudly and vigorously sucks out the affliction, the magic dart, the putrid flesh or stinging insect, the magically projected scorpion or razor blade. He gags audibly at its vicious power and noisily spits it out on the ground.

This is the experience of the ceremony, the shaman at work – a synesthetic cacophony of perfumes, tobacco smoke, whispering, whistling, blowing, singing, sucking, gagging, the insistent shaking of the leaves, the internal turmoil of the purge.

Thus, ayahuasca shamanism is irreducibly physical. The body is the shaman's instrument of power and relationship – power stored in the chest as phlegm, relationship achieved through ingestion. The shaman learns the plants by taking them into the body, where they teach the songs that leave the body as sound and smoke. An ayahuasca healing session enacts the physical materiality of the human body – nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sucking, gagging, belching, blowing, coughing up, spitting out; sharp sweet smells, rattling, whispering, whistling, blowing, singing, the taste of tobacco and ayahuasca, the imagery and ritual of the body, conflict, mess.

Similarly, in the ayahuasca ceremony substances traverse body boundaries, reminding us of our penetrable and leaky borders. Excrement and vomit are ejected, magical darts are sucked out through the skin, internal substances are spit out through the mouth, magical phlegm is transferred from shaman to disciple, tobacco smoke is blown into the body through the crown of the head – the body exaggerated, vast excretions,



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ferocious corporeality. Reminders of the darker side of human existence constantly lurk in the margins of the shamanic performance – dangerous ambiguity, broken boundaries, ambivalence, transgression, disorder.

All of this makes us Westerners nervous. We distrust our bodies. We find vomiting wretched and miserable; we struggle to maintain our body boundaries; above all, we seek ways to evade the ferocious physicality of the ayahuasca experience. When we drink ayahuasca, we focus on visions, insight, transformative experiences. We seek, in the words of psychologist James Hillman, “an imageless white liberation,” a flight from the reality of human embodiment. We secretly believe in what Bakhtin called the bodily canon – the belief that human beings somehow exist outside the hierarchy of the cosmos.

I think this is a mistake. I think the healing power of ayahuasca lies precisely in its connection with the earth, the body, with suffering, passion, and mess.

The healing is not conceptual – an insight, a realization, an epiphany. Rather it is a visceral impact on the body. We should not think of ayahuasca shamans as spiritual gurus. What they do has more kinship with *eleos* and *phobos*, Aristotle's pity and terror. That this links to catharsis – cleansing or purging – should come as no surprise. Ayahuasca is, above all, and apart from our own cultural obsession with visions and insight, *la purga*. The shaman works through the moral themes of healing discourse not linearly but *in performance*. The grotesque body in fact celebrates the victory of life, its renewal and regeneration, true fearlessness in the face of our ineluctably human condition. •

## What is Ontological and What is Psychological in **Ayahuasca** Visions?

Hartmut Neven



**For a long time** I have thought a suitable explanation for psychedelic experiences argues that a psychoactive substance such as dimethyltryptamine is chemically similar to neurotransmitters. Once it reaches the synapses, sites of receptors for neurotransmitters, it will influence how synapses transmit signals between nerve cells. Therefore patterns of neural activity will be altered. Since conscious experience is believed to be correlated with the formation of neural activity patterns, a user's experiences will change as well.

A mathematical rendition of this model was able to successfully reproduce patterns frequently reported by users of psychedelics such as spirals or tunnels (Bressloff et al 2002). A closer look at the equations reveals that these structures appear due to symmetries in the organization of neurons in the primary visual cortex. Thus, what the user is really "seeing" is a reflection of the anatomy of his own brain. Yet anyone with experience with ayahuasca knows that the content of the visions during the peak of the experience is far more complex than spirals or tunnels.



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...what the user  
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Ayahuasca visions and ideations often convey well-formed insights that hold up to rational scrutiny applied after the session. Images seen during the visions are highly aesthetic, seemingly infused with deep meaning and not noisy. The visions are exceedingly complex and information-rich in the sense that if one were to attempt to write a computer graphics program to render such images it would have to be highly sophisticated and would consume enormous computational resources. For example, it appears to me that it would be insufficient to invoke a program that produces fractals to approximate the visions. The structures vary too much across scales and the content is a blend between abstract patterns and concrete objects such as beings or astronomical vistas.

I believe it is an important question whether the content of these more complex visions can still be explained entirely as reflecting the synaptic layout of neural networks. Most neurobiologists would probably argue for this. This view implies that a large part of the visions are driven by the users' memories as neurobiology currently believes that memories are stored as patterns of synaptic strengths and that the foundation of human cognition lies in

the pattern of dynamic interactions shaped by the connectome.

The motivation to even consider whether sometimes other sources of information or processing mechanisms are involved in giving rise to the structure seen in ayahuasca visions stems from the fact that most users are left with that very impression and that for many it constitutes the reason to drink ayahuasca in the first place. The psychologist Benny Shanon writes, "Those who consume the brew may feel that they are gaining access to new sources of knowledge and that the ultimate truths of the universe are being revealed to them." (Shanon 2002). Rick Strassman, who conducted extensive clinical studies with dimethyltryptamine, notes that the patient is left with the impression that she gained "first-hand knowledge of the basic 'facts' of creation and consciousness" (Strassman 2001, see also Griffith et al, 2006).

To pose the question in different terms, is it possible that the visions should partly be accounted for in ontological and not in psychological terms? Before outright dismissing this as impossible we should keep in mind that sensory organs can be exceedingly sensitive. For example a single photon is sufficient to trigger a nerve pulse in humans (Rieke and Baylor



1998). The scenario I have in mind is that the brain by virtue of being a physical substrate participates in information exchange with the environment by fundamental physical interactions. Information gained through these processes may not just travel via the “official” visual, auditory or other sensory pathways. Thus a psychedelic experience report is in part explained by assuming that such information is received, amplified, processed and recorded in memory traces.

In the remainder of the article I will suggest two experiments that could help gather evidence for the idea that the information obtained in a psychedelic session is partially due to alternative means of perception and information processing. Taking user reports not as mere fantasy but as being in part a description of physical reality is akin to the approach taken by the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann who took the stories of Homer not just as fiction but as historical report. Reading Homer in this way he was led to discover Troy and other sites that gave weight to the idea that Homer's *Iliad* in part reflects actual historical events.

As an example of applying this point of view, let us look at folkloric accounts of how indigenous medicine men, shamans, find recipes for plant mixtures or a cure for a patient. It is often reported that Amazonian Pajés claim to “see” which plants match or which ones will cure a patient (Schultes and Raffauf 1992). Now it is known since some time that living biological materials emanate a very weak stream of photons referred to as biophotons (Popp et al 1988, Kobayashi et al 2009). The frequency of the photons is in the visible range and the intensity of the photon stream could just be strong enough to elicit nerve pulses. Add the observation that there is hardly a darker place than the floor of the jungle in a new moon night one could imagine that shamans are literally able to pick up information about plants simply by looking at them. This could possibly be aided by ayahuasca in suppressing brain processes that impede the analysis of the weak stream of biophotons. Whether this indeed is a possibility could be tested by preselecting biological material exhibiting a strong stream of biophotons with

a photomultiplier and then asking dark adapted test persons whether they can discriminate this probe from others that do not emit biophotons. It may then come as a surprise that the “glowing forest” which was elevated to global meme by the movie *Avatar* has a biophysical correlate.

Another type of experiment I find fascinating serves to explore whether an explanation of psychedelic experiences requires references to quantum biological effects. Recently evidence accumulated that quantum processes are instrumental to biological function such as photosynthesis (Collini et al 2010). An intriguing role can also be attributed to quantum effects in solving difficult combinatorial optimization problems (Farhi et al 2000, Das et al 2005). Such problems frequently arise in learning or problem-solving tasks humans or animals have to master (Neven et al 2009). At this point there is no evidence yet that the nervous system employs quantum optimization. However I would like to propose that this propensity exists and that ayahuasca strengthens this ability. To the user this would appear as enhanced creativity which many scholars regard as the central effect of ayahuasca (Shanon 2002).

Moreover this notion offers a compelling duality. In computational terms solving a difficult optimization problem with quantum optimization corresponds to finding a low energetic minimum. In physiological terms this may mean that a cell or cellular substructure has reached a more stable homeostatic equilibrium, which could explain some of the medical benefits frequently reported for ayahuasca.

A first glimpse into whether quantum effects may indeed play such a role could be afforded by an experiment where one would show via animal-based substance discrimination that rats can tell the difference between the ordinary and deuterated version of a neuropharmacological compound (Nichols 2004). In this experiment one would prepare two versions of a psychedelic agent, say LSD-25, one in its naturally occurring form and a deuterated version in which some of the hydrogen atoms have been replaced by deuterium. This is hydrogen but with a neutron added to its nucleus.

Then we would study if rats can learn to tell them apart by rewarding them to signal whether they have received one or the other by pressing a corresponding lever. This is a central nervous system analogue of an experiment originally suggested by Luca Turin to show that our sense of smell is keen enough to discriminate between different isotopes of a molecule (Turin 1996). A positive outcome of the suggested experiment by itself would not yet be sufficient to show that the nervous system uses quantum optimization. Nevertheless it may trigger a paradigm shift in that it indicates that we can not safely ignore quantum mechanical effects when studying neural dynamics. This is because in order to understand how a small modification to a psychoactive molecule, normally considered as inconsequential by a neurochemist, can trigger behavioral changes one will need to integrate the Schrödinger equation.

I want to conclude by proposing a shift in vantage point that may prove useful in trying to discern what could be ontological and what is rather psychological in an ayahuasca *miraço* (Polari de Alverga 1999). In this model we make the assumption that the physical fabric of reality itself has mental properties. Thus we would postulate that all matter, already at its most fundamental level, is experiential, that it possesses free will and that it is capable of performing intelligent information processing (Strawson 2006, Conway and Kochen 2006). In this picture the nervous system only enters insofar as it becomes the recorder of conscious experience but it is not its generator. Such a model which is logically parsimonious and permissible under contemporary physics is closer to how the world looks like during a *miraço*.<sup>1</sup>

1. A more apt Brazilian term for ayahuasca vision, comprised of *mirar* (to see) and *ação* (action), since an experienced drinker is able to gently steer her visions.

References for this article on page 71.

## "Why do You Keep Drinking **Ayahuasca** Over and Over Again?"

By Adam Elenbaas



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**FIVE** years ago I traveled to the Amazon to drink ayahuasca. After my first three ceremonies drinking “the medicine,” my life was irreversibly changed. I would never be the same person again. In what was no more than eighteen hours spent in ceremonies during my first trip to Iquitos, Peru, I managed to purge a host of toxic energies from my body and mind. These crossed energies included: alcohol abuse, sexual addiction, opiate dependency, religious confusion, and panic attacks. Although my troubles were, in a sense, “instantly cured” by the medicine, I continued to drink ayahuasca in many more ceremonies. Five years and 80 some ayahuasca ceremonies later, having published my first book (a memoir that narrates my ayahuasca journeys), and feeling in the best shape of my life, I have learned how to answer the questions: “Why do you keep doing this? What more healing could you possibly need?”

The first answer I like to give to those questions, most of which come from incredibly smart and sensitive people, is this: “Those are really great questions. Those are questions I’ve thought about in and outside of ayahuasca ceremonies.” The reason it’s important to give this first response is that too often devotees of any religious lifestyle feel offended when people ask questions of their tradition. I’ve learned to appreciate people who question the authenticity of any spiritual tradition. After all, it was the same essential questioning that led me out of the Christian right and into an exploration of mystical religious experiences, and eventually ayahuasca, in the first place. Also, we all know that religious folks often marginalize or exclude other ideas or groups of people. But, by the same token, if skepticism is a regimented way of being or thinking or interacting with people, if cynicism toward religion itself becomes too constant, then it also becomes abstract, dogmatic, impersonal, and ultimately pathological. This leads me to how I answer these questions: *Ayahuasca is not just a medicine and shamans are not just healers. Therefore, you shouldn’t think of ayahuasca as a ‘cure all,’ something you only need to drink a few times and you are cured.*

It is true that shamans throughout history have been largely respected for their ability to diagnose and cure complex ailments in human beings, ecosystems, animals, and other dimensions of reality. In this sense shamans are often called things like “curanderos,” or “paleros” or “ayahuasqueros.” Plant doctors. Ayahuasca doctors. Healers. Shamans are like extra-dimensional practitioners of consciousness, and most usually people going to the Amazon to drink ayahuaca, for example, are seeking “healing” or “clarity” or “transformation,” (all things shamans are experts at providing). However, factors exist today that are radically challenging the traditional patient-doctor shamanic paradigm (how traditional is the patient-doctor relationship in the Amazon, despite the local use of the word “medicine,” anyway?)

The largest factor is the culture of the West: the globalized, internet-ready, urban or sub-urbanite. Only, I’m not talking about ayahuasca or ecotourism. I’ve never criticized anyone for wanting to make a trip to the Amazon to drink ayahuasca. That being said, I am noticing a very real way in which the dialogue between the culture of the West and the shamanic traditions of the jungle are rapidly evolving the entheogenic/ceremonial shamanic paradigm itself. The average ayahuasca pilgrim today comes packed with baggage that is perhaps more uniquely complex than people living in the jungle.

Despite the fact that ayahuasca pilgrims are dealing with issues that shamans might be used to (greed, power, fear, arrogance, etc.) shamans are not always aware of the myriad ways in which these issues weave themselves into modern religious confusion, generational and family karma, technology, economic enmeshing, relationships, and a more overt, daily recognition of a “global” drama that is streaming in the Western news every day. Although shamans have incredible visionary abilities, the remoteness of their location within space and time makes the interactions with modern ayahuasca pilgrims (who are living in a kind of hyper shamanic container every single day) more dynamic, where traditional experiences between natives and shamans had perhaps been more linear, hierarchical or static.

The best example of this from my own journey came from my third year of ayahuasca work. The lodge I had been

visiting was featured very favorably in a major American magazine. Rumor had it that one of the shamans at the lodge had been let go for drinking beer. He was let go by the American owner of the lodge (an alcoholic before “the medicine”) on the grounds that American guests struggling with alcohol addiction, people who had come to purge their addiction, would find this hypocrisy incredibly offensive. Guests could have a “bad” experience. The point here is simple. In the West, for many people, a lifestyle of moderation and substance use is not possible.

It is my opinion that this is because the lifestyle and culture of the West, particularly America, is not a moderate place to begin with. The demons of addiction are in many ways perhaps stronger and different beasts than the “addiction” spirits of the jungle. At this particular lodge it was explicitly stated that the master shamans of the lodge (one an Iquitos

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local, and the other the American owner who trained under the Iquitos local) were special specifically because they could address both the timeless maladies of the human spirit and the more complex issues of the modern psyche (a Peruvian/American one, two punch).

At first it was definitely a unique synthesis. During ceremonies I noticed two different styles. Mostly silence from the local, whose *icaros* and healing techniques were deeply archetypal and tended to cut to the core of whatever issue(s) were present. Be it greed or power-lust or arrogance or fear or pain or suffering, or the question “why?” the local shaman had a way of showing me the timelessness of a core “poison” behind all of the particulars. It was like Greek mythology. Simultaneously, the American

shaman did a lot of talking. Speaking more directly to the egos of the guests in the mesa, he would explain spiritual concepts, recommend lifestyle changes, and inspire individual growth and responsibility. “This is YOUR night. These are YOUR demons. UNDERSTANDING flows from the heart. If you connect to your heart, you can understand ALL LEVELS of complexity as the same. We are all ONE!” One shaman did the magic, while the other magically explained the magic, like verbal tai-chi. Both shamans were healing in their own ways.

However, as I watched the camp grow exponentially, and as things like the firing (and eventual rehiring) of the local Iquitos shaman for drinking beer took place, the shamanic one/two combo, at least to me, lost its luster. I would hear contradictory things during ceremony, like, “You people CAN’T do this on your OWN. You can’t become a shaman just because you take some psychedelics at home or have one good ceremony in the jungle. It takes YEARS of training to become an ayahuasca healer like us.” Then, maybe an hour later I would hear something like, “ALL OF US, every last one of us, are shamans. This is YOUR ayahuasca practice time.” Eventually I realized that the synthesis of these two shamans was not as clear as I had thought it was, and certainly not as clear as it was being advertised.

At this particular lodge something interesting was happening. An attempt to blend traditional, patient to practitioner ayahuasca shamanism with something like a personal religious practice (like daily meditation or yoga) was taking place. The only problem was that the shamans were not clearly articulating a vision of the synthesis. It was hard to tell when to think of the shamans as my healers and when to think of them like simple teachers inspiring my personal mastery of the ayahuasca experience. The fact that the popularity of the lodge was growing, its prices increasing, and a cult-like following of the shamans themselves becoming obvious (reminiscent of guru worship) was reason enough for me to leave the lodge during the middle of my fifth visit.

Growing up Protestant Christian, my frustration with this inconsistency invoked memories of having studied Martin Luther and his protestant complaints, the theses he nailed to the doors of the Catholic Church. The figure of the shep-



pard pastor emerged during the Reformation as a religious leader “of the people and for the people.” The question had naturally arisen within me, “Is this place about medicine and healing sickness, or is this a Universalist religious group? If it’s both, then how does it coexist without these contradictions from the shamans’ egos? What does a collective shamanic container end up looking like if there is no central master or healer?”

My feeling now is that it’s important that people drinking ayahuasca to become clear within themselves about how they answer these questions. The truth is that people use ayahuasca to heal and transform, and shamans help with that. Then, as people deepen their relationship to these ceremonies, the experience becomes a meditation practice, a series of yoga asanas, a prayer life, a ritual, and a lifelong study of conscious evolution. Along that path, should extreme difficulty arise, shamanic expertise can still be found from a shaman, and sometimes it can be found within yourself, or perhaps from another ceremonial group member.

My own involvement with ayahuasca recently shifted to a collective model with the Santo Daime. I feel that the Daime is a great example (of many great examples) that are beginning to practice ayahuasca medicine with clear intentions surrounding the religious and regular disciplined use of ayahuasca. The group itself, singing songs together in a circle, all facing inward toward the altar, acts as the shaman. Ritual procedures are put in place to ensure group and individual safety. Elder members of the church (or Godfathers and Godmothers) act as shamanic healers when necessary, and otherwise the focus of the group becomes the silent but mutual supporting of one another throughout a series of personal and collective psychic healings and passages that take place during the ceremony (called a “work”).

Although the Christian symbolism and some of the language of the songs may not resonate with everyone, and I’m certainly not prescribing the Santo Daime religion as the pinnacle of ayahuasca traditions, a few things about the Daime are relevant when trying to answer the questions, “Why do you keep doing this? Aren’t you healed already?”

The first answer that the Daime church provided me is that the world needs healing, and we can pray for and assist that healing by coming together

and doing this work as a team. The second answer the Daime church provided me with is that the personal faith journey is a daily walk. The old saying, “If you got the message, then hang up the phone,” does not apply to drinking ayahuasca. There is no ultimate message or ultimate “healing” at the core of the ayahuasca experience, like a holy grail of cosmic realization or awakening. Instead, there is a unique opportunity to open the mind and body to a powerful level of love and truth. Drinking ayahuasca on a semi-regular basis makes ayahuasca different than a tourist experience, different than a “cure-all medicine” or a vacation from our modern demons. It’s more than just recharging your battery while dipping into the jungles of the numinous. It becomes about simple things. How did I treat my dog and my wife and my family this past month? If I didn’t do so well, maybe tonight I will have some hard work to do, maybe even some purging. If I completed my homework, then maybe tonight I will learn something new or be given a new vision, a new inspiration, something to contribute. For these reasons I believe thousands of people are not just making one trip to the Amazon to drink and be cured, but many trips and an entire “movement” is happening.

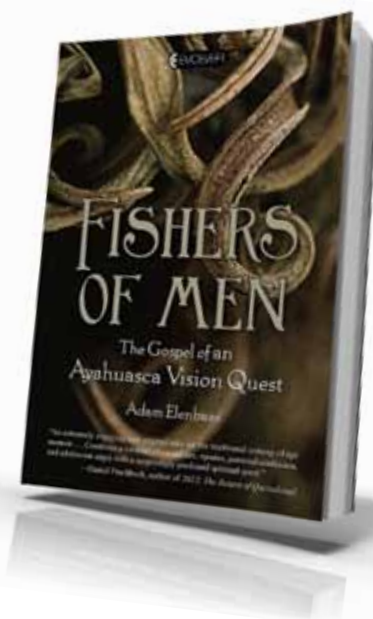
Again, I am not suggesting that ayahuasca religions like the Santo Daime or the UDV are the best traditions out there. A great deal of traditional shamanic

groups, like the Temple of the Way of Light, Infinite Light, The Sacred College, and others are beginning to function in exactly the way I’m describing, without using Christian or religious symbolism (like the Daime and UDV do). I spoke with Daniel Pinchbeck at JivaMukti yoga studio in Manhattan this past summer, and he mentioned that the Sequoia in Ecuador also practice communal ayahuasca ceremonies at certain times of the year.

At the end of the day, my point remains the same. Not everybody is an ayahuasca tourist. Not every shaman is a doctor, and ayahuasca is not simply a cure-all. Once this is realized the premise of the questions, “Why keep on doing this? Aren’t you healed?” are exposed. More and more ayahuasca is evolving to be a spiritual discipline, as common and effective as yoga or meditation. Dare I say that ayahuasca for many people these days is sort of like going to the spiritual gym to get an extreme existential workout? To me, that doesn’t cheapen or degrade anything (but I love a good workout!). There is always room to learn and grow, and I don’t think it hurts to face ourselves on a more regular (and less vocational or vacation) basis.

In my book, *Fishers of Men: The Gospel of an Ayahuasca Vision Quest*, I wrote a lot about my Christian upbringing and how it was unraveled so beautifully for me during ceremonies. One of the first truths I learned that changed my life was this: life is already eternal, and there is no prayer you can say or belief you can hold that will make or break that truth. That is the gospel. That is the “good news.” How you deal with the unchangeable, unavoidable good news of redemption, of the fact that you cannot truly die, ever, is what dictates whether your experiences will be heavenly or hellish.

Month by month, and year by year, I still have problems making my life and the lives of others unnecessarily hellish, and I see the same problem in the world I live in. I believe things can get better for all of us. Maybe it’s that I’m just 29 years old, and maybe I’m completely deluded and making no real contributions of positive change in our world yet. But after five years and 80 ceremonies, despite all the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of myself or any shaman or shamanic paradigm, of any lodge or ayahuasca religion in particular, this is why I keep drinking ayahuasca and asking for more love in my heart. •



# Ayahuasca Healing and Remote Viewing

By Peter Gorman



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**WHEN dealing with the medicine ayahuasca**, it's important to understand that we are not dealing with a medicine in the conventional sense, but with a spirit capable of opening doors for humans to other levels of reality. And as a spirit, or sentient being if you prefer, you also need to remember that she has a will, needs, likes, dislikes and a complete temperament.

The other levels of reality that I note can best be explained in terms of a dog whistle: you don't hear it but that doesn't mean it's not there. Because if you blow it near a dog the animal will howl. If, on the other hand, you could broaden the band of your hearing just a bit, you too would hear that whistle. And if you could change the speed at which a human vibrates, or the range of colors we normally see, you would see and experience all sorts of things we don't ordinarily see or experience. Ayahuasca is one of the Plant Teacher medicines that temporarily does those things in humans.

It's important to understand that ayahuasca—traditionally made by mixing *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and *Psychotria viridis* leaves cooked in water all day until they've been reduced from perhaps 20 gallons to an essence of perhaps a quart—is sentient because that's how the curandero, or healer, deals with it. His or her communication with the spirit of ayahuasca is how he or she heals. And the better the relationship the curandero/curandera has with the spirit of the medicine, the more tools for healing he or she will have at their disposal.

One more thing before I get to the specifics of healing with ayahuasca: in the northwest Amazon, where I've been working a few months a year for better than 25 years, illness, bad luck and anything wrong on a physical, emotional, mental or spiritual level in ordinary reality is perceived as the symptom of something out of balance on a higher/different level of reality. Those people suffering bad luck or a bad marriage or physical disease go to the curandero to have them access that other level of reality to see what is out of kilter. Fix that and the symptom—disease or bad luck or whatever—will disappear.

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Given that preamble, there are several ways in which ayahuasca is used in healing. Traditionally, participants in an ayahuasca ceremony do not drink ayahuasca. That is the job of the curandero. The participant comes to the curandero and presents the problem. The curandero then drinks ayahuasca to access a higher level of reality where he or she will search for the disturbance that is causing the problem for the client.

I first witnessed this most basic example of ayahuasca healing years ago at my late teacher Julio's home. A man canoed up the Aucayacu river to Julio's and explained that someone was jealous of him and giving him the evil eye, which was causing him to have accidents every time he sold his plantains. "My legs, my ankles, my back! You need to tell me who is doing this to me," he said.

Julio drank ayahuasca and when he came out of his dream he chuckles. No one was giving the man the evil eye, he said. Rather, he'd seen that every time the man sold his plantains and had money he went to a little cantina in a nearby town, a cantina that had two rickety wooden steps. Julio said he saw that every time the man had money he got drunk and then stumbled on the broken lower step as he left the place, fell and hurt himself. So, Julio said, the man had two choices: Either stop getting drunk at that cantina, or fix the broken step.

It's a simple and funny story, but illustrates a key element in ayahuasca healing: The ability of the curandero to remote view situations, including those in the past.

I saw and shared remote viewing a few years later with another curandero, Juan Tangoa Paima. In that case, a man came to Juan's house while I was there and said that he was certain that his wife was cheating on him and was going to leave him and wanted to know with whom she was cheating. In that case, Juan suggested that the man drink the ayahuasca with us. He did.

During the dream, I had a few moments when I found myself looking at the Plaza 28, a plaza not far from the center of town in Iquitos. The plaza is ringed by good restaurants and a couple of pool halls, so it's always busy at night but I found myself zeroing in on a woman walking with a man. She held his arm tightly. I took it to be the man's wife, but wasn't sure as I didn't know her in real life.

When the dream was over, the man was distraught. "I knew it! I saw her with him on Plaza 28!"

Juan asked the man to close his eyes and revisit the scene and take a closer look. The man did as told and when he opened his eyes a few minutes later he was even more distraught.

"A priest! She's cheating on me with a priest!" he nearly screamed.

Juan nearly started laughing, then told the man to revisit the scene one more time and listen to what his wife and the priest were saying. Again the man closed his eyes. When he opened them he was near tears.

"Yes," said Juan. "She is talking to the priest about a divorce. She says you get drunk and accuse her of cheating on you and then you beat her up."

The man tried to deny it but in a few minutes broke down and admitted it was true. He just thought her so beautiful that he was sure everyone else did as well. He thought everyone must want her the way he did and when he got drunk he just went crazy.

Juan told the man that it was obvious that his wife still loved him but that if he didn't want her to leave he'd have to stop drinking and then beating her.

It was extraordinary that the spirit of ayahuasca would allow all three of us to view the same scene, with none of us having any idea of even where to look for the wife.

But that wasn't the only time that happened. A friend of mine, Alan Shoemaker, moved to Peru in 1993 and within a year or two learned that his mother, who lived in Kentucky, was dying of liver cancer. She had been given just a few weeks to live. In desperation, Alan asked me to drink with him at Juan's and try to see his mother and see what she might need to get healed.

It was a crazy request: I wasn't a curandero; I didn't know his mother; I had no chance of finding anything that might help her. Nonetheless, because he asked, I agreed to try.

During that dream, I thought of Alan's mother and when I did found myself hurtling through space and winding up on a street in a small town in what felt like the United States. I imagined Alan's mother must live nearby and wondered in which house she lived. Instantly I was moving again, but surprisingly didn't come out into a kitchen or living room. Instead I sort of wound up in someone's insides. I guessed it was Alan's mother's insides. I'd never seen a human liver before but was looking at one the moment I thought of it. On top of the dark brown mass was a twisted clump of some sort of tubing. I thought it must be the cancer and lifted it to see what it was made of. I realized it didn't seem like cancer—whatever that would seem like—but rather that the tubes bringing things to the liver for cleaning were all tangled and nothing could get through them and so were sort of killing the liver. I thought that if those tubes could get untangled somehow then the junk in them could pass into the liver to be eliminated. I silently asked if there was



anything that could do that. In a moment I thought of uña de gato, cat's claw, now well known as a medicine but hardly known at all 15 years ago.

When I came out of the dream I wrote the words "cat's claw" down on a piece of paper.

In the morning Alan asked me what I'd seen. I was embarrassed to tell him for fear of misguiding him with the uña de gato. When I relented I showed him the paper. He laughed. "Yes. I saw uña de gato and I also saw sachajeron," another Amazonian medicine.

That day or the next he made up a good batch of the two medicines and sent it off to his mom. She drank it religiously and within a few weeks or months the cancer was in total remission. She wound up living several good cancer free years after that before it came raging back and took her.

I was and am still amazed that the spirit of ayahuasca was not just capable of something like that, but that she was so generous in sharing the plants needed to effect the remission.

For me, that was a fairly isolated event. For someone like Julio it was fairly ordinary. I once had someone get in touch who told me she had late stage incurable cancer and would be dying in a couple of weeks. She wanted to die in the Amazon jungle and wanted me to take her there for the big event. I was taking people out into the jungle occasionally at that time but not to die, so I told her I couldn't do it.

She insisted and insisted and I finally relented when she promised to drink ayahuasca with Julio and attempt to get healed rather than to simply die. I even set a target of having one more Christmas and birthday with her teenaged daughter before she died.

She came with a friend and I took them both out to Julio's. Julio said that ayahuasca would not directly cure cancer, but that he would talk with the plants and see if they suggested anything that might help my client.

The night the woman drank I did as well, and Julio drank a little as well. Julio spent nearly the entire night working on my client. Not physically. He never left his little stool. But he sang and chanted for her and shook his chacapa, a leaf-bundle rattle, in her direction all night. Ayahuasca invited me to see what he was doing: From the ends of the chacapa leaves white lights, like lasers, shot out and into the woman's middle. They moved things around, cleaned out areas of her body, forced her to vomit up the bile of her life over and over.

In the morning, Julio's chacapa was burned to a crisp, despite no fire having actually touched it. Julio laughed when I mentioned it, then called his son Jairo and told him to go collect a lot of medio renaco bark. He said his spirit helpers told him it

would help the woman.

The bark from an ancient tree was cut with a machete and then boiled down in Julio's ayahuasca pot for hours. When there was just about a quart of essence left, Julio mixed it with cane liquor so that the total nearly filled a two-liter bottle. He told her to drink a couple of ounces daily till it was finished.

The woman hated the jungle, the ayahuasca experience and most of all, me.

But she made it out of the jungle alive.

And six months later she called me to let me know she was in Italy, driving around the mountains on a moped but still hated me. And then she called six months later. And then six months after that.

At this time I haven't heard from her in about two or three years. I don't know if she's alive or not. But I know she got at least a few extra Christmases' and birthdays with her daughter.

What Julio had done that night—apart from having plant spirit helpers tell him what medicine my client needed—is a standard healing technique with ayahuasca. It involves looking at a person who is ill and seeing where the illness is and then eliminating it. Essentially the curandero looks for clusters of energy that don't fit in with the rest of the body. They're generally seen as dark spots or splotches, sometimes on the surface, sometimes inside the body. They are visible through clothes. Some curanderos work on the physical body with their hands to feel those spots, some use the ubiquitous black tobacco cigarette smoke of the region to help them see the spots. Others, like Julio, used to sing at the body to make them visible, and then use his chacapa like a scalpel to cut those negative energy clumps out. And once cut out, they need to be eliminated because they've got their own sentience and don't want to die anymore than anything else does. For that, each curandero has his or her own method: Some wrap them in invisible light and put them in ethereal fires or send them to cold distant planets. •

She drank it religiously  
and within  
a few weeks  
or months the cancer  
was in total remission.

## Dimethyltryptamine: Possible Endogenous Ligand of the Sigma-1 Receptor?

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How likely is it  
that ability of DMT  
to activate the sigma-1  
receptor actually  
contributes to its  
hallucinogenic  
effects?

N,N-dimethyltryptamine, commonly known as DMT, is a member of the serotonergic class of hallucinogens, which includes compounds such as LSD, mescaline, and psilocybin. DMT was first synthesized in 1931 [1], but was later shown to be a naturally occurring constituent of a wide variety of plant species. Several of those plants, such as *Psychotria viridis* and *Anadenanthera peregrina*, have traditionally been employed as hallucinogens by native populations of South America. The first human studies with synthetic DMT were conducted by Steven Szára in the mid-1950s, and those studies demonstrated that DMT produces effects resembling those induced by LSD and mescaline [2]. More recent laboratory studies with intravenous DMT have extensively characterized the psychological and physiological effects of DMT in human volunteers [3,4]. As with other serotonergic hallucinogens, it is currently accepted that the subjective effects of DMT are mediated primarily by activation of 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> serotonin receptors [5,6]. Interestingly, there has been some speculation that DMT may be a normal constituent of the human brain, and may be involved in dreaming [7], near-death experiences [8], and schizophrenia [9].

Although normally a relatively obscure hallucinogen, DMT has recently received an unusual amount of attention in the mainstream scientific press. The reason for the focus on DMT is the publication of a report in the journal *Science* proposing that DMT is the endogenous ligand for the sigma-1 receptor [10]. The three main findings of the *Science* article are that DMT binds to the sigma-1 receptor with moderate affinity (albeit with much lower affinity than for the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor and other 5-HT receptors), that binding of DMT to the sigma-1 receptor causes inactivation of a voltage-gated sodium channel, and that deletion of the gene coding for the sigma-1 receptor abolishes one aspect of the behavioral response to DMT in mice. These findings are very intriguing, and do suggest that the interaction of DMT with the sigma-1 receptor is worthy of further study. Nevertheless, the report raised two questions in my mind: (1) How convincing is the evidence that DMT is actually present endogenously in the brain; and (2) how likely is it that the ability of DMT to activate the sigma-1 receptor actually contributes to its hallucinogenic effects?

### Is DMT an endogenous signaling molecule in the brain?

Although it may seem surprising that a plant compound such as DMT could also serve as a transmitter in the brain, the finding is not without precedent. Indeed, morphine may itself be an endogenous brain chemical [11]. DMT has been proposed to be present endogenously in animals and humans based on two types of evidence: (1) the discovery of an enzyme (indoleethylamine N-methyltransferase, INMT) in several species of mammals that is capable of synthesizing DMT; and (2) analytical studies that have directly detected DMT in tissues, blood, and urine. In 1961, Julius Axelrod isolated an enzyme from rabbit lung that can convert tryptamine (a compound derived from the amino acid tryptophan that is normally present in the body) and N-methyltryptamine to DMT by transferring methyl groups from S-adenosylmethionine (SAM) [12]. It was subsequently shown that a similar enzyme exists in the brains of chicks, sheep, rats, and humans [13-16]. Two groups also demonstrated that injection of tryptamine directly into the brains of rats leads to the production of small amounts of DMT, suggesting that tryptamine can be biotransformed to DMT *in vivo* [15,17].

Despite those findings, other workers reported that although they could detect N-methyltransferase activity in peripheral tissues, they were unable to confirm that the enzyme was present in the brain [18,19]. A possible explanation for these discrepant findings soon emerged when it was shown that incubation of red blood cells or rat brain extracts with SAM and N-methyltryptamine produces tetrahydro-beta-carbolines (THBCs) almost exclusively, and very little DMT [20,21]. It turned out that many of the DMT biosynthesis studies had isolated DMT using a technique known as thin layer chromatography (TLC), and under certain conditions it is very difficult to distinguish THBCs from DMT using TLC. It was concluded that the brain actually contains very little INMT, but it does contain enzymes that are capable of converting SAM to formaldehyde, which can then react nonenzymatically with tryptamines to yield beta-carbolines. More recently, Thompson and colleagues were able to clone the genes that encode rabbit and human INMT [22,23], and these and other studies confirmed that INMT is expressed in lung and other peripheral tissues but is not expressed at appreciable levels in the brain.

There is evidence that DMT is present in the peripheral tissues of rats and humans [24], which is not surprising given that INMT is expressed peripherally. What is less clear is whether DMT occurs endogenously in the

central nervous system. Very low levels of DMT have been detected in the brains of rats [24]. I am not aware of any studies that have detected DMT in the human brain, but DMT has been shown to occur in the cerebrospinal fluid of human volunteers [25]. INMT is expressed in the spinal cord [23], and this is one possible source for DMT in cerebrospinal fluid. Additionally, there is evidence that DMT may accumulate in the brain by uptake from the circulatory system [26-28]. There is, however, some controversy regarding whether DMT occurs endogenously in human blood [29,30]. Importantly, a recent study using a highly sensitive and selective detection method failed to detect the presence of DMT in whole blood or plasma from human volunteers [24].

Traditionally, in order to be classified as a neurotransmitter or neuromodulator, a substance had to meet three criteria: it must be present within neurons, it must be released upon neuronal depolarization, and there must be receptors for the substance. Morphine, for example, appears to meet all three criteria. Morphine has been shown to be present within neurons in specific brain regions [31,32], and is released by neurons after depolarization [33]. Furthermore, there is evidence that morphine is synthesized in the brain [34]. By contrast, although DMT may be present in the brain in small amounts, it is probably not synthesized locally, and there is little evidence that it is localized within neurons or is released when they are depolarized. This observation calls into question whether DMT actually acts as a signaling molecule in the brain, as opposed to existing as an artifact of peripheral biosynthetic pathways. Clearly, there is currently little evidence to support the contention that DMT functions as a neurotransmitter or neuromodulator.

### Does the sigma-1 receptor contribute to the hallucinogenic effects of DMT?

DMT is unquestionably present in peripheral tissues, and it is possible that it may be an endogenous ligand of sigma-1 receptors in the periphery. However, in light of the evidence outlined above, it is unlikely that DMT is an endogenous ligand for sigma-1 receptors in the brain. This conclusion does not preclude the possibility that the action of DMT at sigma-1 receptors may contribute to the hallucinogenic effects of the drug.

The existence of the sigma-1 receptor was first proposed in 1976 to explain the hallucinogenic effects of a class of opioids known as the benzomorphans [35]. Certain benzomorphans, such as the analgesics pentazocine and cyclazocine, produce hallucinogenic effects

I am not aware of any studies that have detected DMT in the human brain, but DMT has been shown to occur in the cerebrospinal fluid of human volunteers.



Further studies are necessary to determine whether the interaction with sigma-1 receptors contributes to or modifies the psychoactive effects of DMT.

when administered to humans, and these compounds activate the sigma-1 receptor. It was later shown in clinical trials that the hallucinogenic effects of the benzomorphans are prevented by naloxone [36,37], which blocks opiate receptors but not sigma-1 receptors. Thus, it is currently accepted [38] that the hallucinogenic effects of the benzomorphans are mediated by the kappa-opioid receptor—the same receptor that is responsible for the effects of the hallucinogen salvinorin A from the plant *Salvia divinorum*. Thus, there is very little evidence linking the sigma-1 receptor to hallucinogenic effects. In fact, many drugs that activate the sigma-1 receptor, such as cocaine and certain steroid hormones, are not hallucinogenic.

One area that needs to be investigated is whether administration of DMT actually results in brain concentrations that are sufficient to activate the sigma-1 receptor. The reported disassociation constant of DMT for the sigma-1 receptor (14.75  $\mu$ M, see [10]) is several-fold higher than the plasma concentrations of DMT that occur after intravenous administration of a high dose of the drug to humans (0.17–1.08  $\mu$ M, see [3]). By contrast, the affinity of DMT for 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptors in the human cortex is reportedly 462 nM [39], which matches up very closely with the plasma concentrations of DMT reported by Strassman and Qualls [3]. It should be noted that there is some evidence that DMT may actively accumulate in the brain [26–28], making it possible that the concentration of DMT in the brain may be higher than the plasma concentration. Nevertheless, even if DMT brain levels are several-fold higher than plasma concentrations, it is still not clear that the concentration of DMT in the brain would be high enough to produce substantial activation of sigma-1 receptors. A photolabeling protection study of the sigma-1 receptor (a method

used to measure the degree of occupation of the receptor by DMT) demonstrated that less than 50% of sigma-1 receptors are occupied by 50  $\mu$ M DMT [10].

Based on the above evidence, it is likely that the concentration of DMT required to induce effects via the sigma-1 receptor would produce extremely high levels of 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor occupation. It is well-established that the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor is responsible for mediating the effects of psilocybin and other hallucinogens [6]; thus, in all probability the hallucinogenic effects of DMT are mediated by the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor and not by the sigma-1 receptor. There is, however, one possible linkage between 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptors and sigma-1 receptors. One effect of 5-HT<sub>2A</sub> receptor activation is the production of inositol-1,4,5-triphosphate within neurons, which leads to elevated intracellular levels of calcium. The sigma-1 receptor has been shown to associate with the receptor for inositol-1,4,5-triphosphate and regulate calcium signaling [40]. It is thus theoretically possible that the 5-HT<sub>2A</sub>-mediated effects of DMT could be modulated by the action of the drug at sigma-1 receptors. Further studies are necessary to determine whether the interaction with sigma-1 receptors contributes to or modifies the psychoactive effects of DMT. In conclusion, although it would be very interesting to find that a hallucinogen such as DMT acts as a neuromodulator, given the available evidence it seems unlikely that DMT is an endogenous signaling molecule in the human brain. Furthermore, there is little evidence to support the hypothesis that the sigma-1 receptor is responsible for mediating the hallucinogenic effects of DMT. •

References for this article on pages 72–73.

## Psi-chedelic Science:

### An Approach to Understanding Exceptional Human Experiences

David Luke, Ph.D., and Stanley Krippner, Ph.D.

Stanley Krippner, Ph.D.



David Luke, Ph.D.,

**One of the best known** ancient examples of psychedelics and exceptional human experiences concerns the Oracle of Delphi in Greece. The oracle, or seer, would sit atop a stool, where she would prophesize in a delirious altered state. Some researchers have identified the trigger of this state as psychoactive hydrocarbon gases issuing from the underlying rock fissure. Another group holds that the psychedelic plant henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) was used at Delphi, because the ancient Greeks once called the plant “pythonian” in honor of Python: the visionary serpent goddess venerated by the temple seers, who were themselves called the *pythia*. According to Greek mythology, an envious Apollo slew the goddess and took her place, after which henbane became sacred to Apollo and his followers.

Such prophecies, if they were accurate, are what parapsychologists call “precognition,” which, along with “telepathy” and “clairvoyance,” comprise “extrasensory perception” (ESP). Their accuracy determines whether they are “psychic events” or merely “psychic experiences.” An “event” is objective while an “experience” is subjective. The difference can be illustrated by an experience reported by the anthropologist William McGovern in his 1927 book *Jungle Paths and Incan Ruins*. McGovern ingested yage a psychoactive brew, along with tribal members in a Peruvian rain forest. Suddenly, several of the natives described what was transpiring in a tribal setting hundreds of miles distant. McGovern entered these details in his diary and, when he reached that tribe, discovered that the account had been completely accurate. It is not always possible to determine whether an experience described an event, but in this case, McGovern was able to do so because he had kept precise records.

Although they might not always qualify as events, ESP experiences are frequently reported today by people under the influence of psychedelics. A trawl through the pertinent literature reveals that occasional experiences of PK or “psychokinesis” (the purported direct influence of mind on matter) and, more frequently, ESP – both of which come under the umbrella term “psi” – are reported by between 18% to 83% of people surveyed. The wide range of percentages reflects group differences and the methodology of the study. For example, if someone is asked, “Did you experience telepathy during your LSD session?” the affirmative responses would probably be larger than if someone were simply asked, “Tell me what you experienced during your LSD session.” How-

ever, less than 2% of people describing their experiences with non-psychedelic psychoactive agents (such as alcohol, heroin, and cocaine) report any type of psi.

This dichotomy is also mirrored in the folklore surrounding these substances. There is virtually no tradition, ritual, or culture concerning the occurrence of presumptive psi phenomena with the use of alcohol, coca, or the opiates. However, psychedelics are very often accompanied by such expectations in both the traditional societies that have used them and in the contemporary psychedelic subculture.

Just as explorers of other cultures have returned with stories of the indigenous use of one or another psychedelic plant for some psi (or “psychic”) purpose, many psychedelic

...ESP experiences are frequently reported today by people under the influence of psychedelics.

explorers in recent times frequently took an interest in the use of psychedelics for inducing psi. Albert Hofmann, the inventor-cum-discoverer of LSD, had an out-of-body experience on his first (and accidental) LSD trip, and later helped parapsychologists search for psychedelics suitable for ESP and PK research.

The celebrated author Aldous Huxley believed that psychedelic substances led to a switching off of the brain's "reducing valve," thereby giving the participant access to both psychic and mystical states.

Having supervised Huxley's first mescaline trip, which led to his writing *The Doors of Perception*, the psychiatrist Humphry Osmond coined the term "psychedelic" ("mind-manifesting") in communication with Huxley. Osmond himself wrote articles on the use of psychedelics for the scientific study of psi, a field termed "parapsychology." He was joined in these speculations by his Saskatchewan colleagues Duncan Blewett and Abram Hoffer; the three of them reported instances of purported psi among their patients who were undergoing psychedelic psychotherapy.

The discoverer of the Mazatec psilocybin mushroom cult, R. Gordon Wasson, claimed to have witnessed psi phenomena during mushroom ceremonies in Mexico, and in one of them obtained valuable information about his son, which was verified on his return home. Timothy Leary and his Harvard colleague Richard Alpert (Ram Dass) visited Duke University to meet the founder of modern parapsychology, J. B. Rhine. They conducted informal ESP and psilocybin experiments with staff members of Rhine's laboratory. In their classic book *Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*, Robert Masters and Jean Houston included several examples of psi experiments they conducted, some successful and some off the mark.

It became apparent among psychotherapists at that time that the use of these substances in the therapy room led to an increased incidence of psychic experiences, which in some cases were verified by the therapists themselves. Stanslav Grof, even while acknowledging that there was a danger of data contamination and a difficulty of verification, contended that reports of ESP were relatively frequent in psychedelic psychotherapy, especially the recall of "past lives." Many other therapists, including Emilio Servadio and

Margaret Paul, commented on the capacity of these substances to induce psychic experiences.

Looking at the relationship between psychedelics and psi from the other perspective, parapsychologists have often commented on the large number of reports they receive concerning ESP and PK occurring in altered states of consciousness, especially dream and drug states. But what is the link between psychic experiences and psychedelics? Perhaps psychedelics evoke profound qualitative shifts rather than just quantitative changes in consciousness. Further, the reported transcendence of space and time may be conducive to atemporal, non-local information transfer. Long-term changes to a person's worldview following the use of psychedelics may also make psi experiences more prevalent; factors such as one's belief in the possibility of psi and one's openness to such experiences seem to be related to the number of ensuing reports. Just as seeing is believing, believing is also seeing; hence psychedelics may precipitate a more positive philosophical outlook towards psi, one that leads to its greater occurrence.

Personal accounts of psychic experiences, and first or second hand observations of these experiences, are of some value. However, they rarely offer much concrete evidence that a psychic event has taken place. What is required to validate a reported psychic experience is solid experimental data in which coincidence, faulty memory, and sensory clues have been controlled for and can be eliminated as counter-explanations. Such attempts have been made, of course, and prior to the termination of research into psychedelic substances in the 1960s, a number of experimental projects were conducted. This research was conducted by both parapsychologists and psychedelic researchers alike.

The success of these experiments varied, most likely in relation to the methodology involved. The most successful experiments tended to utilize participants experienced with the use of psychedelics, using what parapsychologists call "free response" testing procedures. In a free response test, participants describe their mental imagery while they are attempting to obtain information about a hidden picture or a distant location. In "fixed response" experiments, participants attempt to identify specific "targets" such as

numbers, letters, or geometric shapes. In retrospect, it is easy to see how the latter projects were unlikely to sensibly test for anything, let alone psi, once the inexperienced participants began succumbing to the more engrossing mystical rapture of their first trip. Nevertheless, some of the studies using psychedelically experienced participants provided promising results, albeit with an inadequate degree of rigor by today's scientific standards.

Currently, there is very little psychedelic parapsychology research being conducted, largely due to the doubly taboo nature of this line of scientific inquiry. The only study we are aware of is an ongoing experimental field research project being sponsored by the Beckley Foundation into the use of ayahuasca to predict future events, an investigation being conducted by the first author of this article.

While research in the field of what might be called para-psychopharmacology is still very much nascent, it may become important in helping science to discover the underlying neurochemical processes involved in mediating psi and other exceptional human experiences. Any discoveries about the neurochemistry of these experiences will be of value whether or not the psychic experience being studied turns out to be a psychic event. Moreover, there is a wealth of information to be learned from the indigenous shamans who have been using psychedelics for millennia and who are well practiced in navigating the altered states they produce.

The complexity of psychic experiences calls for a taxonomic approach so that scientists can determine which substances, under which environmental conditions, and for which people, best activate a particular sort of experience; that is, what experiences arise out of a combination of substance, setting, and set? Furthermore, such research can help map out the ontological terrain of the psychedelic experience; if experimental research can establish which experiences are also events, the data will have something valuable to contribute regarding the wealth of other extraordinary experiences induced by these substances. What we might call "psi-chedelic science" could well play an important role in describing, explaining, and understanding both psychic experiences and psychic events. •



## The Primary Journey: Being the Bodymind

by Allan Badiner



Allan Badiner

Bodymind has come to be a singular, interconnected expression of the irreducible and inseparable human being.

**Use of the term “bodymind”** began in the early 1980’s when it appeared in a doctoral thesis on Japanese Buddhism by David E. Shaner, Ph.D. Zen Master Dogen (1200-1253) spoke of the bodymind in his now classical work called *The Shobogenzo*, or “*The Dharma Eye*.” The term reflected this Zen view of a person as a unified, holistic being. Indeed, Buddhism has always maintained the thesis of the non-dual oneness of body and mind. “Bodymind” has come to be a singular, interconnected expression of the irreducible and inseparable human being.

In fact, modern scientific research has produced much evidence for the non-dual nature of the human bodymind. One example is the identification of brain functions that are distributed throughout the body. Pharmacologist Candace Pert, an early pioneer in the field of psychoneuroimmunology, became known for her theory of how the “bodymind” functions as a single psychosomatic network of information molecules, which control our health and physiology. “There is a mind in the body,” says Pert, “and a body in the mind.” The title of one of her books, “*Your Body Is Your Subconscious Mind*,” says about it all.

Patanjali laid out what could be considered the first exposition on the integration of body and mind in his yoga sutras almost 2,000 years ago. More recently, Integral Transformative Practice pioneers Michael Murphy and the late George Leonard have taken both an intellectually rigorous as well as a practical view. Also, of course, the integral philosopher Ken Wilber has written reams on the subject, including this (my favorite): “All of my books are lies. They are simply maps of a territory, shadows of a reality, gray symbols dragging their bellies across the dead page, suffocated signs full of muffled sound and faded glory, signifying absolutely nothing. And it is the nothing, the Mystery, the Emptiness alone that needs to be realized: not known but felt, not thought but breathed, not an object but an atmosphere, not a lesson but a life.”

Self-suffocation seems to be more a function of the “mind aspect” of the bodymind. We can spin our take on various situations, and we can, and often do, weave stories designed to make us feel comfortable or safe. Life in the mind seems like an endless loop of lining up the next thing on your to-do list, composing emails, stewing over an argument with loved ones, counting calories, or admonishing oneself for gaining weight.

What does it really mean to be “in your

body,” and why is it so hard to do? I have some experience with meditation practice that teaches us to be present, embodied and in the moment, and sometimes it’s still hard. Sometimes, being in the body doesn’t seem as interesting as being in the mind. It’s quieter, less noise, and without drama. The mind, however, seems much more seductive, cunning, clever and persuasive, and it can tell many a prodigious and fascinating tale.

For this reason, and from my own experi-

ences, I suspect that true integrated wisdom resides in the body aspect of the bodymind. The body aspect won't lie to you, and the "feeling" you have about something being true is deep, not subject to argument, and not particularly cerebral. It is that bodily felt knowingness akin to that pleasurable energy of being grounded, or a sense of "being in the body," which I consider to be the ultimate gift of life.

Two, among many, experiences that illustrate this idea are worth mentioning, and both have to do, at least partially, with the use of psychedelics.

Many years ago I was a frequent visitor to the Ojai Foundation, near Los Angeles where I was living at the time. Ojai was like a refuge from the urban madness, and a place to feel the often suppressed messages from deep within the body. Joan Halifax, an anthropologist who studied with Joseph Campbell, started the foundation as a place for the wisdom of American Indians to meet the ancient teachings of the East (ie, Buddhism and Yoga, etc).

I had a friend named Lola who lived on the land for many years, and while neither of us were particularly interested in marijuana, or yoga, it became a sunset ritual for us to get in full view of Topa Topa, the grand mountains overlooking the entire Happy Valley and take a few hits from a joint, following which our bodies seemed to almost reflexively

assume various yoga postures. I never failed to be astonished at how effortless and pleasurable the moves were in those conditions, and it was clear that these conditions included but were not limited to the muted golden rays of the sun, the beautiful face of the mountain, the freshest possible air, the sweetest company of my friend, the instinctual inclination to stretch, and the plant wisdom that we

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2CB was added  
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that would forever  
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had just ingested. There had been few experiences in my life to that point that allowed me such a powerful and pleasurable sense of being in the body.

Another favorite refuge from urbanity was the Esalen Institute. Through friends I was able to secure a dose of 2CB, the synthetic psychedelic that first gained

popularity as a legal ecstasy replacement in the mid 1980s, until it also became a scheduled substance. Substances aside, to take a hot sulphur bath overlooking the moonlit waves of the Pacific, is alone enough to deliver you to your sensual body and open your being to great enjoyment. This I know from many such moments in the tubs. But the night that 2CB was added to the mix catapulted the scene into a bodymind event that would forever change my life.

I experienced my body as an ancient vessel consisting of eternal matter—cells that were passed along an unbroken temporal continuum and that potentialized an extraordinary, unprecedented, and long lasting passion for life itself. I can only do it justice by describing it as a full blown experience of grace.

I have wondered many times how I knew that this was grace, or if grace actually exists. How can you argue for that rationally? Is it not something that you just know intuitively in the body?

My meditation practice has become a place to fully remember these experiences. After breaking through monkey-mind, persistent and discursive thought and other mental obstacles, I can finally relax into the awareness that the universe is one living organism, and that I am a part of that wholeness. This is my proof for grace, and the reality of the bodymind. For this, I am grateful for psychedelics. •

## Poem

By Danielle Bohmer



Danielle Bohmer

Our lovely scene undwindles and its players unwind,  
dispersing all throughout the crowd, clearing foggy skies

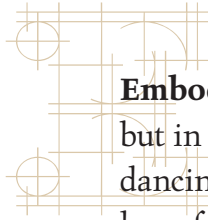
The psychologists' creation; one another's clientele  
Reaching for a practice where minds and souls excel!

While dulling minds is futile and acceptance won't be found,  
in this realm, surrendering, new perspective surrounds...

Extracting from the core we find that which is purely true...  
perchance an application, to show we're all in tune.

## Psychedelics and **the Embodied Feminine**

By Lily Ross



**Embodiment isn't always easy:** not simply in its difficulty to obtain, but in what lingers, waiting to be found. Shadows flicker amidst the light, dancing in the body's depth, awaiting a gaze deep enough to penetrate. I have felt the undying bliss of dying in my self only to encounter my greatest Self. And yet, as Alex Grey has suggested, to be connected to all beings is to be connected to the suffering of all beings. Shaken in the face of unfathomable sorrow, touched and caressed by the hand of grace, I have come to learn that within this body are held the wounds as well as the gifts of my ancestors, my people, across time and space, at a depth immeasurable; these treasures percolate to the surface, infuse every thought, feeling, and action. Sometimes it takes the hand of a trusted teacher. For me it's Ayahuasca medicine, which unearths the multitudes of wisdom enveloped within flesh.

Of Ayahuasca's two primary constituents, the brew derives its name from the MAOI-containing *Banisteriopsis caapi*, the vine of souls. Paired with the foliage of Chacruna or Chaliponga, it renders the DMT of *Psychotria viridis* in a bioavailable form. The brew's magic ascends us to the heavens, although it is the vine which actually has a physically grounding effect. It applies gravity to a brew which would otherwise leave its drinkers floating somewhere near the furthest galaxy. The effect of combining these two plants is a simultaneous expansion skyward and earthward, ascending and descending within and beyond.

As above so below. We pray, we drink, we ascend and descend and somewhere along the way we locate ourselves within the cosmos, and the cosmos within ourselves. Connecting to Earth Mother through this brew has illuminated the silencing and stifling of the feminine as it manifests within my own experience. To be clear, I speak not solely of women, but of the feminine in general. The shadowed mystery, the sensual Goddess who births and destroys, the Earth who turns in time with Father Sun and brings great bounty and great scarcity with the seasonal cycles.

We are the heirs to a long history of imbalance, as evidenced most vividly by wide-sweeping exploitation of the Earth, a being honored and worshipped by numerous wisdom traditions as feminine. The world's monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, as they are commonly practiced, focus strongly

on the masculine Sky Father while neglecting the Earth Mother. The resulting notion and ethic is one in which the Earth, our collective body, is no more than a resource, to be exploited in humanity's undying effort to know the divine – in this context that is understood as the Sky Father above.

Another way to understand this is through Western culture's obsession with the mind, and its assumed location within the brain. "I think therefore I am," wrote Rene Descartes in the 17th century. His philosophy was that the body was no more than a vehicle for carrying the mind, understood to be the rational intellect, carried within the head. His perspective denied the intelligence and wisdom of the body, the teachings of the senses and intuition. I question the notion that the mind is singularly located within the confines of the skull. Scientific advancement in neuroscience



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Lily Ross is earning her Master's degree in Divinity at Harvard University, focusing on Earth-based wisdom traditions. Her work with ayahuasca and other plant medicines have strongly influenced her personal life, her academic work, and they inspire her creative work of poetry and music, which she writes, records, and performs.



and systems theory supports the idea that the intelligence of this mighty creation is decentralized, permeating our individual bodies and the Body of the Earth. Experience with plant medicine, with Ayahuasca medicine, has led me to locate intelligence throughout the body. Ayahuasca instructs me in listening to the wisdom therein.

Our epoch is particularly exciting. The speed with which we obtain new knowledge and the exponentially accelerating rate of our society make the effects of many of our underlying assumptions about the world glaringly apparent. Viewing ourselves as separate from our bodies, the Earth, and one another has devastating outcomes, from environmental crisis to social injustice. Forced to reflect upon our collective history (or herstory) and acknowledge those blessings and wounds passed down through many ages, our tacit, often unquestioned presumptions of a separate mind and body are highlighted for examination. We recognize our assumption that the Sky is somehow superior to the Earth, that it is upward we must focus at the expense of the land beneath our feet.

As above so below. I have seen, I have felt, I know now, the urgency of reclaiming my body as divine. And there are countless others, many who have made this leap in understanding and perspective long before I have, paving the way with guidance and inspiration in slowly sinking into the luscious and sensual wonders and wisdom of the body. Healing blossoms. We nourish the soil as one.

In the darkening days of Autumn 2009 I dove into a bodily depth so deep it felt transported through and beyond my body. It was among the most frightening moments of my life. In the course of a few hours I experienced intense, embodied visions of birthing myself into this world. I felt the veils thin as I reached into the great unknown to grab the pre-

cious hand of a being waiting to be born. In birthing I felt my body closer to death than I had ever known, knew the power of my womanly body to bring life into this world, and touched the very real danger and power that such a process entails – a danger well known to midwives and mothers since time immemorial.

The medicine whispered to me as I labored that this is the

ongoing process of creation. Always birthing, always dying, always taking on a new form hitherto unknown, reaching into the mystery, risking all life to continue moving forward. The process is life: mystifying, frightening, and profoundly visceral. It never ceases. It balances precariously upon the edge of a knife. Yet it is life's hanging by a single, fraying thread that makes it sacred. As a creative, deeply sexual process it requires masculine and feminine, dancing in harmony to carry it forward. We have work ahead of us to reclaim this balance.

We are blessed to be alive at this time. Challenged and gifted, we carry the seeds, walk upon the blessed soil, are warmed by the sun. We have everything we need to bring about a change, to dance the dream into being. This sacred process is contingent on deeply inhabiting our bodies and

our Earth Body, by any and every means available. The vine which grows ever skyward is rooted in the Earth, ever reaching toward the within and beyond. As above so below. At last, let us continuously feel it as so. •



## Meeting the **Healing Heart** of the Great Spirit

By Stephen Gray



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Stephen Gray spent many years teaching Tibetan Buddhism, and for the past eight years his main practice has been with the Native American Church. Stephen's recently published book is called **Returning to Sacred World: A Spiritual Toolkit for the Emerging Reality** (O Books, 2010).

**FOR the past eight years** I've been a member and a frequent participant in the all-night peyote medicine ceremonies of the Native American Church (NAC.) These ceremonies are often referred to as prayer meetings and, in a broad sense, are always about healing. The work accomplished in that environment may offer some of the most remarkable examples we have of the power of mind. Elders of the NAC talk about the almost unlimited potential for healing that can happen when, as they say, all hearts are united in one intention.

Many readers of MAPS' bulletins will be familiar with the description of psychedelics as "non-specific amplifiers." My experience in the NAC, and the many stories I've heard from elders and other members, support this understanding. In optimal conditions the psychedelics can greatly amplify, clarify, and deepen intention and connection to healing energies—or you might say, as is common in traditional indigenous cultures, healing Spirits.

I've heard directly from several healers working in these environments, and read about others whose comments on the influence of the medicine have paralleled each other. When asked if they can commune with Spirit without having taken the medicine, the answer is yes, but that having the medicine in them makes the connection much clearer and stronger. Peyote, for example, opens the heart and sharpens the mind at the same time.

The NAC ceremonies create a highly effective container for this fortuitous meeting of mind and medicine. Though there are many who are more experienced than I am, I believe I can safely say that the purpose of everything associated with the ceremonies is to open, protect, and maintain the strongest and clearest possible connection throughout the night. All elements of a ceremony are executed with great care; from the placement of the tipi and the altar constructed for the night, to the maintenance of the sacred fire, to the respectful handling of the ritual objects and the medicine itself. The rules of conduct during ceremonies are few and exist so as not to interfere with the

movement of Spirit in the tipi.

Most meetings are called by someone for a particular purpose. That person is referred to as the sponsor for that meeting and early in the ceremony explains to the assembled what they are being requested to pray for. Until a certain point deep into the night, all are asked to focus their attention on that prayer as much as possible. The medicine then goes around the tipi, and the instruments—the water drum, gourd shaker, the roadman's staff, and a sage bundle—are passed around for each person who knows some songs to lead a set of four prayer songs. These chant-like songs are the wings that carry the heart's intention to its

...we may discover that,  
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once noted,  
Matter is plastic  
in the face of mind.

destination. One elder told me that at peak moments, when all or most have brought their minds into full presence, she sees that the songs begin to sing the singers.

This notion of full presence is central to the work. Participants are cautioned to watch out for “head traffic.” Each individual plays an important part in opening the channel for Spirit to enter and do its work. The one thing I’ve seen

Kanucas become upset about in meetings happens when he observes that too many people are in their heads and not fully there. He once told me that when he first began going to meetings forty-five years ago he wondered how all those very old people were able to remain upright and still throughout the long night. He said he eventually realized it was because they kept their minds focused on the prayer with that united heart.

This is where what we in the mainstream cultures might call “magic” comes in. With concentrated attention in a skillfully and reverently created environment and the powerful assistance of Grandfather peyote, it is said that almost any condition is amenable to healing. In one meeting I attended there was a woman who had been in very bad health for months and was so ill that night she had to be taken to hospital before the ceremony was over. In the morning, as the meeting drew near its end, Kanucas spoke to the group. “Relatives,” he said, “I don’t mean this judgmentally. I know it was not the purpose of this meeting. But I want you to know that if we had

wanted to and if everyone here could have brought full, open-hearted attention to it, we could have healed that woman. I have seen people with serious illnesses and injuries come into these meetings and walk out healed in the morning.” In my years with the NAC I’ve heard many stories that confirm this remarkable capability and been present for a number of powerful healings myself.

Perhaps the example of the work accomplished in the Native American Church can offer us in the modern societies a general model for conducting effective healing ceremonies as well as encouragement that we’re capable of far more than most of us have imagined. When all the pieces are well in place, when set and setting are optimal, when intention manifests with conviction, and with the compassionate and brilliantly intelligent participation of the medicine Spirits, we may discover that, as writer Philip K. Dick once noted, “Matter

is plastic in the face of mind.”

I believe this is central to the great shift underway: the insight that until now the dominant paradigm has utterly failed to understand this mind power, this power of intention. Humanity may be on the cusp of a revolutionary and rapidly spreading realization which, as I understand it is composed of two intertwined truths: First, that our thoughts determine and either limit or throw open the doors of our experience; and second, that the Great Spirit—by whatever name we call it and far beyond any conception we have of what “it” is—is real and always willing to assist us with our compassionate intentions. This realization hints at immense possibility for healing at every level from the personal to the planetary. •

One elder told me  
that at peak moments,  
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sing the singers.

## MAPS: WHO WE ARE

Our mission is 1) to treat conditions for which conventional medicines provide limited relief—such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), pain, drug dependence, anxiety and depression associated with end-of-life issues—by developing psychedelics and marijuana into prescription medicines; 2) to cure many thousands of people by building a network of clinics where treatments can be provided; and 3) to educate the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana.

If you can even faintly imagine a cultural reintegration of the use of psychedelics and the states of mind they engender, please join MAPS in supporting the expansion of scientific knowledge in this area. Progress is possible with the support of those who care enough to take individual and collective action.



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**Rick Doblin, MAPS founder and President**, earned his Ph.D. in Public Policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Doblin was also in Stan and Christina Grof's first training group to receive certification as a Holotropic Breathwork practitioner.



**Valerie Mojeiko, Deputy Director**, earned her B.A. from the California Institute of Integral Studies. In her work with MAPS' psychedelic harm reduction project, she has trained over 200 volunteers with skills for helping people who are undergoing psychedelic emergencies.



**Michael Mithoefer, M.D. Clinical Investigator/Medical Monitor** is a psychiatrist who practices in Charleston, SC, where he divides his time between clinical research and outpatient clinical practice specializing in treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with an emphasis on experiential methods of psychotherapy. He is a certified Grof Holotropic Breathwork Facilitator and is trained in EMDR and Internal Family Systems Therapy.



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**David Jay Brown, Guest Editor**, earned his M.A. in psychobiology from New York University, and has been interviewing accomplished thinkers about their creative process for over 20 years. He is the author of *Mavericks of the Mind*, and six other books about the frontiers of science and consciousness. [mavericksofthemind.com](http://mavericksofthemind.com)



**Amy Emerson, Clinical Program Manager**, earned her B.S. in genetics and cell biology from Washington State University. She has worked in clinical development and research for the last 15 years in the fields of immunology, oncology, and in vaccine development. Amy has worked with MAPS as a volunteer since 2003 facilitating the development of the MDMA clinical program.



**Brian Wallace, Director of Field Development**, studied neuroscience, philosophy, and medical sociology at Cabrillo College and UC Santa Cruz. Before coming to MAPS, Brian was a naturalist, outdoor educator, and certified Wilderness-EMT. From Asian therapeutics to Western clinical practices, he extensively studied medicinal and psychoactive plants and chemicals. Brian assists individual supporters in identifying and cultivating their own capacity to give. He also coordinates artist relations and artwork sales and manages MAPS online social media networks, the MAPS eBay Store, and the annual Holiday Auction.



**Ilsa Jerome, Research and Information Specialist**, earned a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Maryland. She helps MAPS and other researchers design studies, gathers information on study drugs by keeping abreast of the current literature and discussion with other researchers, creates and maintains documents related to MAPS-supported studies, and helps support the MAPS psychedelic literature bibliography.



**Linnae Ponté, Executive Assistant**, earned her BA in Biological Psychology from New College of Florida. She's assisted data collection and analysis at University of South Florida's Cardiovascular Psychophysiology Laboratory, MOTE Marine Mammal Aquarium Psychophysical Laboratory, East-West College of Natural Medicine, and the West Mamprusi Civic Union in Ghana, West Africa.



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**"Noah Juan Juneau"** is the *nom de artiste* of a graphic designer and long-time friend of MAPS, who has been designing the *MAPS Bulletin* and the books published by MAPS since 1990. He earned his B.A. in design from California State University at Los Angeles and has worked in advertising and publishing for nearly 40 years.



**Berra Yazar-Klosinski, Clinical Research Associate**, earned her Ph.D. in Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology from University of California Santa Cruz, where she also served as president of the Graduate Student Association. After attending Stanford University, she worked as a Research Associate with Geron Corporation and Millennium Pharmaceuticals.



**Gatisa Goodwin, Director of Membership**, graduated from NYC's Institute for Integrative Nutrition in 2001 as an AADP Certified Holistic Health Counselor. She earned her ISO Internal Auditor Certification in 2005, and now coordinates MAPS' daily operations.

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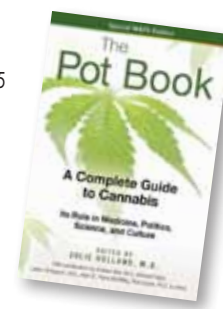
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Howell first shared her story in the May 15, 2006, ***Boston Globe*** article "A Good Death," but chose to remain anonymous. Now, with psychedelic medicine losing its stigma and reentering the mainstream vocabulary, Howell comes out of the closet and shares with us how psychedelic therapy helped heal the bonds ripped apart by illness. (See story in this issue of the *Bulletin*.)



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