



An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics

Edited by Raymond Souland, Jr. & Kassandra Souland

*We Have Drunk
the Soma:
An Eighth Anthology of
Writings About Psychedelics*

edited by Raymond Soulard, Jr.
& Cassandra Soulard



Number Forty-seven

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*This book is for each person
who picks it up, recognizes it,
can't put it down . . . take it . . .
now find somewhere kind to read . . .*

We Have Drunk the Soma

I have tasted the sweet drink of life, knowing that it inspires good thoughts and joyous expansiveness to the extreme, that all the gods and mortals seek it together, calling it honey. When you penetrate inside, you will know no limits, and you will avert the wrath of the gods . . . We have drunk the Soma; we have become immortal; we have gone to the light; we have found the gods. What can hatred and the malice of a mortal do to us now, O immortal one? Weakness and diseases have gone; the forces of darkness have fled in terror. Soma has climbed up in us, expanding endlessly.

—*Rig Veda*, 8th mandala, 48th hymn.

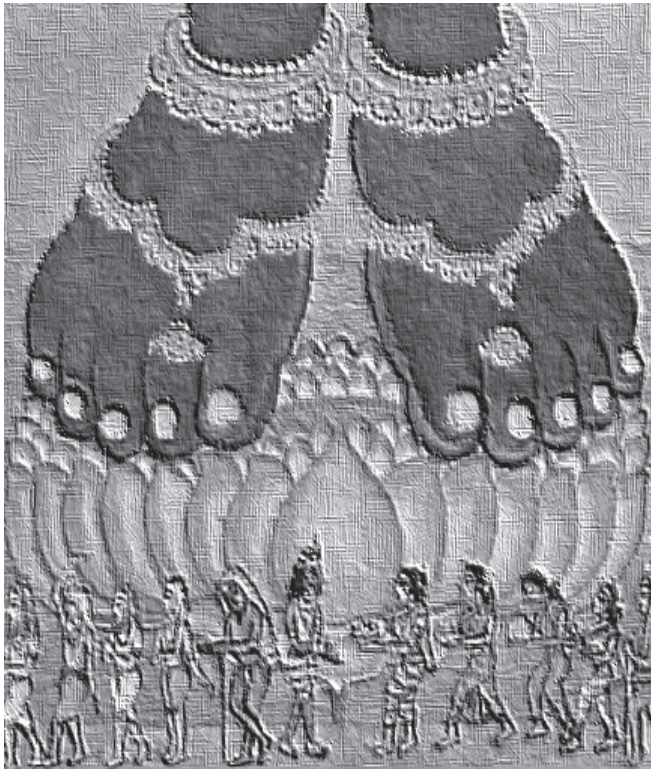
Annie Sprinkle

How Psychedelics Informed My Sex Life and Sex Work

Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, Vol. XII, Number 1.

“Few things feel better than getting high and getting laid.” —David Jay Brown,
author of *The ABCs of Erotic Alchemy*, *Hustler Magazine*, April 2000

“Just say KNOW.” —Timothy Leary



I was invited to speak at the AllChemical Arts Conference—a week-long event about entheogens and creativity, to be held in a resort hotel in Hawaii in 1999. I was surprised to be invited, because I had not been a particularly outspoken advocate for these substances. Being a sex worker (call girl/porn actress and director), who often did interviews with the media—especially as I evolved into a controversial performance artist and sex educator—I was routinely trying to debunk the myth that all sex workers were hopeless drug addicts. Fortunately, I have never been a drug addict, but indeed I have tried most every popular drug at least three times.

I was curious about what a conference dedicated to entheogens might be like, and curious about the people who would attend such a conference, so I accepted the invitation to speak. It was as I was preparing my presentation for the illuminati of the psychedelic world that I realized what a profound, and positive impact my psychedelic experiences had had on my life, and in particular, on my sex life. In an aha! moment, it became clear that psychedelics had been perhaps my greatest sex educator.

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LSD

When I was fourteen (a full three years before I was to lose my virginity), I had my first psychedelic drug experience. I went to high school in Panama City, Panama in the '60s. My father, and most of my friends' fathers, worked with the American Embassy. We were good, responsible teenagers, so on the weekends our parents let us go up the coast to Panama's beautiful tropical beaches and stay overnight in beach huts. Those spectacular beaches became the laboratories for our innocent drug experiments. All kinds of inebriants were available: opium, speed, Panama Red Cannabis, mescaline, cocaine, magic mushrooms, LSD, etc. One evening a friend, also fourteen years old, offered me a hit of blotter acid, to "expand my mind." There were no instructions, no warnings, and no rituals. I tripped my brains out all night long. Totally unprepared for lysergic acid diethylamide, my teenage fears became magnified a thousandfold; the beach crawled with snakes, people morphed into previously unknown life forms, my heart beat out of its chest, my eyes bulged out of my head. I did not surrender, but endured, and could not wait until it was over.

Rough as the night was, the next day I was a wiser person. I had experienced alternate realities, new dimensions, other ways of seeing and feeling. I discovered that life was not necessarily as it appeared. I learned that I had the power to radically change my consciousness, and hence the world around me. This was excellent information to have on my way to becoming an adult—a sexual adult. During subsequent beach weekends I took more LSD trips, usually with a sense of dread and imagined peer pressure, mixed with curiosity. I remember watching water boil for hours, seeing wallpaper patterns becoming kaleidoscopes, and finding God in the eyes of a cat. Mostly I felt paranoid and excruciatingly insecure, but there were moments where I experienced great bliss and yummy sensations. My perceptions were heightened, I felt electric, got all tingly, and was awed by life. My first experiences with altered states came not from having sex, but through psychedelics.

Mescaline

At sixteen, I finally had my first real sexual experience. On that same night, I also had my first mescaline experience. My boyfriend Van was twenty-six. He owned a hippie coffee shop. He was kind, adoring, and wise. We rode his motorcycle to his beach house for the weekend. He offered me a hit of mescaline. We each took one. I half expected him to turn into a three-headed monster at any moment like with LSD, but the mescaline was more gentle and more sensuous than acid. We walked on the beach, hand in hand, and it was a magical experience. I'd never seen so many stars in the sky; the ocean waves and sand were filled with phosphorescent algae. The world was covered in multi-colored glitter. Van kissed me and I couldn't tell where my body started or ended next to his. I felt big love.

After a romantic and transcendental evening on the beach, we went back to his place and he treated me to my first cunnilingus experience. Perhaps it was just timing, but the mescaline was definitely an aphrodisiac. I felt so open, aroused, and trusting. Each touch was amazing. It was the most ecstatic experience I had ever had. A few weeks later, when I turned seventeen, I happily got rid of my virginity with Van. I was expecting intercourse to feel as overwhelming and transcendental as a psychedelic experience. Nice as it was, it didn't feel that way, although later in life it would. At eighteen, I was living a hippie lifestyle in Tucson, Arizona. I did more mescaline, more LSD, and became wildly sexually adventurous. In a famous *Playboy* magazine interview in 1966, Timothy Leary exclaimed that LSD was the most powerful aphrodisiac ever discovered.¹ I don't remember having much, if any, sex while tripping on acid. I did not find LSD conducive to wanting to be intimate or to be touched, although I've talked with plenty of people who have had mind-blowing sex on LSD. However in retrospect, I see that my drug experiences did free me up from following convention. When most of my schoolmates went on to college, I ended up working in a "massage parlor." To everyone's surprise, especially my own, I found my calling! I was already breaking laws by smoking pot and taking psychedelics (which I felt should be legal), so to do illegal prostitution was not that much

of a stretch. I believed prostitution should be legal also, and became involved in the prostitutes' rights movement. I enjoyed my "work" and it fit my needs at the time.

Before LSD became illegal, Dr. Stanislav Grof practiced psychotherapy with his patients while they were on LSD, often with very successful results. Sexual issues would sometimes come up, often in surprising ways. In his book, *LSD Psychotherapy*, he wrote that: "Occasionally LSD subjects experienced themselves as participants in complex sexual rituals and ceremonies of different cultures, such as fertility festivals, rites of passage, ancient temple prostitution, or scenes of phallic worship. Experiences of this kind frequently convey very specific and detailed, historically or anthropologically correct information that was not previously available to the subject."² When I started working in prostitution, I felt a strong connection to a long lineage of whores and sexual healers before me. Perhaps this connection was inspired by my psychedelic journeys.

Peyote

Every time I was about to ingest a psychoactive substance, I was hesitant and scared, but something told me there was an important experience to be had, and some key information to be gained, so I pushed myself. It was an opportunity to peek behind "The Veil"—to go beyond everyday reality and connect with the Universe in deep and intimate ways. A psychedelic substance was never once something I desired to do, but something I felt I had to do for personal growth. In the Arizona desert I ate peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*) buttons, a plant source of mescaline. People warned me that it was poisonous for the body and would likely make me vomit—it did. I ate the buttons about half a dozen times. One night I had a remarkable erotic experience. I made love with the Earth and the Sky in an energetic and emotional way as I meditated and masturbated ("medibated") under the stars. I became acutely aware of the sensuality of the desert, of every grain of sand, of the wind, and the plants. It was super erotic, immensely satisfying, and oh so cosmic! After that experience, I expanded my concept of what sex was. It was not simply about bodies

coming together for physical sex, but about circulating sexual energy, which was everywhere and available just for the asking. I could tap into it just by tuning in and saying "yes." I realized that everything was sexual/ sensual—that even all my little cells were all having sex. Sex was both microscopic and enormous.

Other Drugs

At twenty-six I was living in Manhattan. I became interested in exploring my "shadow side," "Dark Eros," the worlds of S/M, extreme fetish, dominance/submission. By day I worked in an S/M house as a professional dominatrix/ submissive. By night I frequented the Hellfire Club, a veritable smorgasbord of kinky sex. I experimented with some of the non-psychedelic drugs: crack, angel dust, heroin, etc. I was never a lover of drugs, but I honestly felt it was my duty as a "sex researcher" and "pleasure artist" to try them. I had visited the Temple of Delphi and the brothels of Pompeii. Although I did have some wonderful orgasms on Ecstasy, the experience of Ecstasy was not so much about orgasm or sex, as it was about looking deeply into my Self—heart, soul, and psyche.

I read that throughout history prostitutes utilized various aphrodisiacs and opiates with their clients. In my experience, these drugs were in a different category than the psychedelics. Although I did have some very interesting sexual adventures with these substances, there was not a sense of deep exploration of my soul and psyche. I had a sense of getting high and tuning out, as opposed to going deeper and tuning in. I also saw firsthand how incredibly destructive particular drugs could be when some of my friends became heavily addicted to them. I never met anyone addicted to entheogens.

MDMA/Ecstasy

By the mid-'80s the Great Dying was well underway; AIDS had taken its huge toll on my community. I'd lost many friends and lovers, and was trying to cope. Being a very sexually active gal, I was desperately searching for new, satisfying forms of sexuality, which

could be enjoyed without exchanging bodily fluids. I signed up for a three-day Sacred Sex workshop led by a Tantra teacher named Jwala. At the workshop, my workshop partner gave me my first hit of Ecstasy, and that's exactly what I experienced—ecstasy. It's no wonder "E" is extremely popular in the "sex community." Before MDMA became illegal it had been used successfully during marriage/relationship counseling sessions. Therapists found that partners were better able to communicate with each other while on MDMA. It reduces performance anxiety to zero and creates a yummy, lovey-dovey feeling, and a nice shift in consciousness. Needless to say, I became a convert—to Tantra, and to Ecstasy.

I continued to take Ecstasy, once, twice, or three times a year. Jwala taught me about how to do ritual, about "preparing the space," and stating one's intention before making love. I used those same techniques when I would ingest a substance, which really helped make the experiences more satisfying. I mostly preferred taking Ecstasy alone. I used it as a tool for self-evaluation. Usually I would spend some time making love with myself and doing "sexual healing" on myself. The first time I did "E" alone, I fell deeply in love with myself for the first time, which was very good for me as I had a relatively low self-image. This helped me transition out of working in prostitution and appearing in mainstream porn films, and into doing more of the kind of work I wanted to do at that point. I also found myself desiring to connect with women, both sexually and in my work. I started making "feminist porn." The second time I did Ecstasy, I heard a voice tell me to quit smoking tobacco, which I then did permanently, after 25 years of a heavy smoking habit. Another time, I sat naked in front of my mirror and looked at my repressed anger, and let it surface. I hissed like a snake for several hours, and witnessed my inner Medusa in a remarkably non-judgmental and fearless way. I realized how sexual energy and anger are connected. I realized that in order to go to the next level of my sexuality I needed to learn to better express my anger. I practiced, and sure enough, I learned to have long, extended orgasms. When I then produced and directed my own video, *The Sluts and Goddesses Video Workshop* (1992), I captured myself having an extremely intense five-minute-long orgasm. In retrospect I realize that

I used a lot of psychedelic imagery in the video. The project was quite successful.

Although I did have some wonderful orgasms on Ecstasy, the experience of Ecstasy was not so much about orgasm or sex, as it was about looking deeply into my Self—heart, soul, and psyche. Each time I took Ecstasy I retained some key piece of information that I could utilize to grow as a person, and expand my (sexual) horizons. I found the lover I had been searching for so long—me! When I took it with lovers, I could feel a sense of empathy with my lover without doing anything. I experienced my body as a temple, and sex as prayer. Ecstasy took me into my heart the way that psychedelics took me into my mind and spirit. Also when on Ecstasy I would sometimes have wonderful, long "crygasms." Ecstasy showed me a deeper kind of love, which I was inspired to create more of in my life, without the drug. And I did. A lover of mine who had studied Tantra in India for several years, told me that with Ecstasy "a person could get to similar ecstatic and spiritual places that took Tantra yogis a lifetime of strict disciplines to get to—if they were lucky enough to ever get to those states." There is of course a down side to Ecstasy. I had some miserable hangovers. I slept with my best friend's husband when I shouldn't have. Oops. Some folks let down their guard and have risky, unsafe sex, and I'm told that a few people have had medical emergencies with extremely serious consequences.

In 1993, I was at my sexual peak. I was an orgasm on two legs. My sexual energy flowed like bubbly pink champagne throughout my body on a daily basis. I studied and practiced Tantra relatively seriously, and all my chakras were spinning like pinwheels in a strong wind. Around this time I started facilitating sexuality workshops for women. The main thing I taught was the Taoist Erotic Massage Rituals (created by Joseph Kramer of the Body Electric School in Oakland), consisting of intensive genital massage strokes combined with lots of rhythmic breathing. It was powerful and effective stuff! Because of my drug experiences I was prepared to handle the very high erotic vibratory states that these techniques propelled our groups into. Sometimes there were very intense emotions and moments of distress. I was comfortable and experienced enough to manage these

transcendental states because of my experiences with drugs. I learned how to take women (and sometimes men) on pseudo-psychedelic journeys—without drugs!

Ketamine

I first heard about ketamine when I went to Hawaii to visit friends, and to attend the 80th birthday party of Dr. John C. Lilly, the infamous psychobiologist, dolphin researcher, and psychedelic enthusiast (who recently passed away). If Dr. Lilly found ketamine so enlightening, I figured it must be worth trying. My friend injected my buttock with a carefully measured dose of “Special K.” I slipped right into the deepest trance I’d ever been in. I could not (or did not want to) walk, talk, sit up or do anything, but I was intensely aware of Self. I lay on the bed with my eyes closed. It was extremely visual. Projected on my eyelids were quickly moving three-dimensional fractal-like patterns, one after the other. I had multiple eyegasms! At the same time I experienced absolute, total, inner peace, which was something I was hankering for after years of living in bustling Manhattan and jet-setting around the world. It felt exquisite; like being in that delicious post-orgasm afterglow state, but for a couple of hours.

When I came out of the ketamine experience, I brought with me an overwhelming desire to create a more peaceful life for myself. I moved out of New York City where I had lived for twenty-four years, and I have lived by the sea ever since. I learned that one way to experience peace and bliss was to not do, but to be. My sexuality changed yet again. It became less performative, less active, less energetic. Sex became deeper, slower, and subtler—I call it “Zen sex.” With my newfound understanding of how “less could be more,” I did something totally wild and experimental: I committed to a serious, monogamous relationship!

Psilocybin Mushrooms

Mostly I have used psilocybian mushrooms with lovers that I was in a close relationship with. These trips have ranged from very mild to intense, depending on the freshness of the mushrooms and the dosage. Usually while on mushrooms I have not found myself wanting to make love in the traditional sense, especially when I’m peaking. Instead I usually prefer having physical space. However, I find it very bonding and very intimate to share such an intense and personal experience with a lover. I would sometimes get insights into our relationship, which we could talk about afterwards. I’ve found that mushrooms (as well as the other substances mentioned in this story) can definitely deepen a relationship, in a remarkably similar way that sex does. Coming off mushrooms is an ideal time to do some sensual massage or some serious cuddling. There is a delicious unification with my partner—an openness and vulnerability. My present girlfriend, Barbara, has done well over a thousand psychedelic journeys. She was even a “guinea pig” at Stanford University when they were studying the effects of heavy doses of LSD in the ’70s. One beautiful summer day, we were on a mountain lake in her rowboat, and we found ourselves tripping without having ingested a thing. Our psychedelic door flew open probably because we had ventured through it many times before. Our love was the drug, and it was strong! Our senses became heightened, time warped, colors were brighter. It felt exactly like we were on mushrooms. I wondered if people who have never done any psychedelics could ever feel the same way, or if our psychedelic experiences enabled us to enhance and intensify the magical feelings of love.

At one point I purposely didn’t ingest any drugs for about six years because I came to feel that drugs were the lazy person’s sex. Why do drugs when one could accomplish the same things from having several hours of sex, and not have any hangover the next day? (This does not work with quickies.) Many people are too lazy, or don’t have the sexual skills to get there. Or they have a limited capacity for sex and pleasure. With a substance there’s no escaping the intensity,

and the intoxication. With sex you have to work at it, but in the long run it's probably better for your health. Then again, variety is the spice of life.

Ayahuasca

Although I have had a number of opportunities, I have not yet tried the plant brew, ayahuasca. I did however try “pharmahuasca” (the synthetic version) with a group of about a dozen friends. We were led by an experienced guide and his excellent and caring assistants. We prepared for a couple of days with fasting and enemas, then took the pharmahuasca along with a fairly heavy dose of mushrooms. Our guide said the mushrooms helped make the pharmahuasca more visual.

When I took off it was like I had an entire New Age greeting card shop behind my eyelids. It was the longest, most intense, most hallucinatory, most physical of all journeys I'd ever been on. It lasted about ten hours, with several hours more coming down. I lay still the whole time with my eyes closed; except when I rolled over to purge into a bowl, something everyone in the group did repeatedly (a wonderfully kinky and intimate group experience). This substance affects the nervous system quite strongly, so I had lots of sweats and chills, and other very strange physical sensations, like a snake made of air whipping around my body.

At the time of this journey, my father was dying of cancer, so my journey was a lot about pain, fear, and death. I saw the “complexity of the Universe” as a huge, fast, megamachine. I saw clowns, gargoyles, Goddesses, and Virgin Marys. I saw bloodshed in Rwanda, Jon-Benet Ramsey being murdered, and I saw myself being stabbed to death by a serial killer. I saw my father in the hospital on a respirator struggling to stay alive. I saw all these things without any judgements. There was no good or bad. Everything worked together, like yin with yang. I became acutely aware of the “human condition.” I saw compassion as the best salvation for myself and all people and things. Lots of thoughts and feelings came up about my body, and about the aging process. Sometimes I felt strong, healthy, and light; other times I felt

old, fat, and polluted. I believed that the ayahuasca was helping to prepare me for my death.

In the months that followed, sex became more about soul merging, loving support, and nurturing and comforting each other before we die. It became more serious than before. It felt like I had achieved a level of sexual maturity, and at the same time I grieved for my youthful enthusiasm and naïveté. This journey inspired me to make a sex film called *Teenage Mermaid Fanta-sea*. I play an elder mermaid who initiates a young mermaid into the treasures of her sexuality. I teach the young mermaid how to seduce a diver, and then in the end I die an orgasmic death.

Sex and Psychedelics

Clearly my experiences with psychedelics have been educational and beneficial with regard to my own sexuality and my life's work. From my observations, these psychoactive drugs have not been harmful in any way for me, or for the people I know who have used them. Terence McKenna pointed out that: “The profundity of [hallucinogenic inebriation] and its potential for a positive feedback into the process of reorganizing the personality should have long ago made psychedelics an indispensable tool for psychotherapy.”³

And I might add, a tool for sex therapy. Oddly enough, I have not found a whole lot written about psychedelics in relation to sex, when to me they seem so totally interconnected.

From what I have gathered, psychedelics are generally not used much as aphrodisiacs for sexual arousal—although people do report having phantasmagorical sexual experiences on them. More often the user gains some key information, has a new experience, or sees her/himself from a new perspective, and any of this can greatly inform that person's sexual life. Just as each sexual experience can potentially teach us something about sex, each drug experience can potentially teach us something about sex. And for that matter, sexual experiences can potentially teach us something about how to take drug trips more effectively. As I became more sexually experienced, I became much better at handling my psychedelic journeys. I learned

how to not have expectations, and how to surrender.

The Drug Workshop (<http://www.drugworkshop.net>), a web site with sensible information regarding drug use, says: “Sex is a drug! The biological chemistry of sex is a lot like that of psychoactive drugs. So when you have sex on drugs, you are having sex with that drug.” Interesting concept, to have sex with the drug (or plant) itself. The site also stresses the importance of whom you decide to do your drugs with. I couldn’t agree more. Set and setting are so important. Journeying with one or more experienced guide(s) is generally the best way to go.

So if psychedelics have the potential to be so beneficial, why did they get such a bad rap? Perhaps for some of the same reasons that sex gets a bad rap. Terence McKenna offered an explanation for why drugs and sex get suppressed and why “just say no” doesn’t work:

“Sexuality is the glory of the living experience. Ecstasy is the contemplation of wholeness. That’s why when you experience ecstasy—when you contemplate wholeness—you come down remade in terms of the political and social arena because you have seen the larger picture.”⁴

People tend to link “sex and drugs” because both are condemned by society. Nevertheless, throughout the ages human beings have continually searched for more ecstasy, more sexual satisfaction, for solutions to their sexual problems, and for aphrodisiacs. Psychoactive substances have been used in most cultures because they can be keys to unlock the mysteries of life. Of course as each mystery is unraveled, a bunch of new ones appear. Both sex and psychedelics are ultimately about consciousness, about self discovery, and going beyond everyday reality to that magical place—somewhere over the rainbow, where we feel Divine and we experience some truth. Granted, both sex and psychedelic drugs are generally used unconsciously by most people.⁵ We need to work on that.

Needless to say, the AllChemical Arts Conference in Hawaii was absolutely wonderful, and so were all the people who attended it. I had a fantastic time and learned a whole lot. Since that conference

I decided to support more research into these drugs, support law reform, and come out as an advocate for the safe use of psychedelics—especially with regard to sex research and sex education. I’m hoping someone will soon have the courage to organize a conference on sex and psychedelics. I’ll be there with bells on!

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- ⁵ Pointed out over dinner by Christina Saint Laurent.

The Long, Strange Trip Continues

http://www.britannica.com/psychedelic/trip_main.html

Of rock ‘n’ roll’s myriad genres, psychedelia may well be the hardest to get a grip on. Like punk music, it is a sound based largely on knocking down doors—or breaking on through to the other side, to quote Jim Morrison of the Doors (who borrowed the sentiment from novelist Aldous Huxley, who, in turn, drew inspiration from transcendent Romantic poet William Blake). Punk could at least be defined by the things that it negated, but at its best, psychedelic rock remains an ever-changing genre that refuses to accept any rules.

Nevertheless, the significance of these swirling and sometimes disorienting “head sounds” can be found by examining their evolution from the 1960s to the ‘90s and by going back to the roots of the word itself. Contrary to nostalgic accounts, psychedelic rock did not begin and end in San Francisco during the 1967 Summer of Love.

The term “psychedelic” originated in correspondence during the early 1950s between two pioneers in the study of psychoactive drugs: Humphrey Osmond, a British psychiatrist who studied the effects of mescaline and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide; “acid”) on alcoholics in Canada, and Huxley, the English author of *Brave New World* (1932) and *The Doors of Perception* (1954). These men needed a word to describe the effects of the drugs they themselves were taking, and Osmond suggested “psychedelic” from the Greek words *psyche* (soul or mind) and *delein* (to make manifest) or *deloun* (to show or reveal). He illustrated its use in a rhyme: “To fathom hell or soar angelic, just take a pinch of psychedelic.”

From the beginning, scientists studying the effects of psychedelic drugs remarked on the way they enhanced the experience of listening to music, sometimes causing “synesthesia,” or the illusion of seeing sounds as colors. Albert Hofmann, the Swiss chemist who first synthesized LSD, noted that under its influence, “every sound

generated a vividly changing image with its own consistent form and color.”

Describing an LSD experience in *The Joyous Cosmology* (1962), English-born philosopher Alan Watts wrote, “I am listening to the music of an organ; as leaves seemed to gesture, the organ seems quite literally to speak.” And Harvard University professor-turned-acid-guru Timothy Leary claimed that while under the influence of psychedelic mushrooms, he “became every musical instrument.” Users of hallucinogens also reported that music had the unique ability to conjure the drug experience long after the effects of the chemicals had worn off.

By the late 1950s and early ‘60s, legal psychedelic drugs were turning up in select circles of authors, artists, and psychiatrists in Los Angeles, New York City, and London. It was inevitable that musicians would experiment with them as well. A studio surf band called the Gamblers was the first rock combo to mention LSD on record. Their instrumental “LSD 25” was the B-side of “Moon Dawg,” a 1960 single on the World Pacific label, but the twangy guitar and barrelhouse piano had nothing in common with what would later be considered psychedelic rock. Nor had “Hesitation Blues,” a 1963 song by New York folk musician Peter Stampfel, which may have been the first documented use of “psychedelic” in a lyric.

It wasn’t until 1966 that the collision of rock and psychedelic drugs began to result in an exciting new style of popular music. Sparked by the soul-searching that followed his first encounter with LSD, Beach Boy Brian Wilson created the breathtaking *Pet Sounds* (1966). His rivals in the Beatles responded with *Revolver* (1966), which included “Tomorrow Never Knows,” a song likewise inspired by John Lennon’s first profound acid trip.

In Austin, Texas, Roky Erickson and his band debuted with an album entitled *The Psychedelic Sounds of the 13th Floor Elevators* (1966); its liner notes openly encouraged hallucinogenic experimentation. That year the Rolling Stones scored a hit with the mysterious, Eastern-tinged “Paint It Black.” And though they maintained that it was about jet flight, the Los Angeles band the Byrds found their otherworldly single “Eight Miles High” blacklisted

by radio programmers across the United States because of its alleged druggy subtext.

Many of these musicians spoke openly about using psychedelic drugs. But by 1966, these substances had been written about enough (often in alarmist terms), so that even teenagers in Middle America who'd never consumed anything more potent than a beer thought that they understood the hallucinogenic experience. In noisy, chaotic singles that would represent rock's first golden age of one-hit wonders, a wave of garage bands imitated British Invasion groups such as the Beatles and the Yardbirds, singing about "bad trips" that often involved careening out of control or losing one's mind.

In 1972 a sampling of lysergic chart-toppers from the 1960s—such as the Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much to Dream (Last Night)," the Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction," the Seeds' "Pushin' Too Hard," and the Amboy Duke's "Journey to the Center of the Mind"—would be collected by rock critic Lenny Kaye on an album called *Nuggets: Original Artyfacts from the First Psychedelic Era, 1965-1968*. It would prove hugely influential to the punk movement, illustrating how imagination and attitude were more important in rock than technical expertise.

Even as it blossomed in 1966, it was clear that the hallmarks of acid rock were more important than whether or not the musicians themselves had taken psychedelic drugs. These trademark sounds included circular, mandala-like song structures; sustained or droning melodies; a tendency to incorporate the trance-inducing instruments of other countries (the Indian sitar, the Javanese gamelan, the drums of Joujouka, and the didgeridoo of the Australian Aborigines); heavily altered instrumental sounds; reverb, echoes, and tape delays that created a sensation of vastness or eeriness; and layered mixes that rewarded repeated listenings (especially via headphones).

Rock 'n' roll had always been aimed at prompting a visceral reaction from the body. Here was a new type of rock music aimed at the head. It was Apollonian as well as Dionysian, and it encouraged listeners to transcend their surroundings while shaking their booties.

Rockers were aided in creating these sounds by concurrent advents in recording technology. Bands began to utilize multitrack

recording, allowing them to overdub many instruments without having to perform everything live in one take. In addition, FM radio was coming of age in the United States as more stations adopted a free-form rock format, broadening their programming to allow the playing of longer album cuts.

As they grew more successful, artists were able to spend more time in the studio, and this gave birth to concept albums such as *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), released by the Beatles during the height of the Summer of Love. The year 1967 also saw the production of such timeless and ambitious rock records as *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* by Pink Floyd, *The Velvet Underground and Nico* by the Velvet Underground, *Are You Experienced?* by the Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Da Capo* by Love, *Surrealistic Pillow* by the Jefferson Airplane, and the self-titled debut by the Grateful Dead.

Meanwhile, the children of the Baby Boom were beginning to celebrate a new youth-oriented counterculture—dubbed "hippie" by some—at extremely visible mass "happenings" such as the 14-Hour Technicolour Dream in London and the much-ballyhooed ongoing scene on the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco. Leary issued his ill-considered call to "turn on, tune in, drop out," and LSD was officially outlawed in the United States. Inevitably, there was a backlash against the hype. The Haight produced as many tragic casualties as it opened minds, and cautionary tales—such as the drug-induced breakdowns of Pink Floyd co-founder Syd Barrett and the 13th Floor Elevators' Erickson—proliferated.

By the turn of the decade, many bands were returning to simpler, more stripped-down sounds (witness the 1968 offerings of *The Beatles* [the "White Album"] and the Stones' *Beggars Banquet*). But by no means did psychedelia come to an end. The genre continued to mutate and evolve, flourishing whenever musicians set out to create imaginative new worlds in the studio.

In the early 1970s, artists such as Brian Eno, the Barrett-less Pink Floyd, "space-rockers" Hawkwind, and German "Kraut-rock" groups such as Amon Düül II pioneered the use of analog synthesizers and expanded the notion of the recording studio as an instrument in and of itself on albums such as Eno's 1974 album *Taking Tiger*

Mountain (By Strategy), Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother* (1970), Hawkwind's *Space Ritual* (1973), and Amon Düül II's *Phallus Dei* (1969).

At the same time, progressive rock bands such as Yes, Genesis, and Emerson, Lake and Palmer took advantage of the freedoms won during the first psychedelic era to make ever more complex, virtuosic, and fanciful concept albums, including *Close to the Edge* (1972), *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (1974), and *Tarkus* (1971), respectively.

When the punk revolution ushered in a return to faster and louder rock in the late 1970s, echoes of psychedelia could be heard in artier groups such as Pere Ubu (*The Modern Dance*; 1978), Wire (*Chairs Missing*; 1978), and the Feelies (*Crazy Rhythms*; 1980).

In one of its handiest definitions, David Thomas of Pere Ubu called head rock “the cinematic music of the imagination.” Like many musicians, he maintained that it was more of an approach toward making and recording music than a style of rock rooted in drugs or in any one era.

Of course, there were also the psychedelic revival bands, and they approached the genre with a much more literal devotion. Listening to such admittedly beguiling albums as *Sixteen Tambourines* (1982) by the Three O'Clock and *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip* (1983) by the Rain Parade (both members of the “paisley underground” scene of mid-1980s Los Angeles), as well as *Wonder Wonderful Wonderland* (1985) by Plasticland of Milwaukee, Wis., U.S., *Auntie Winnie Album* (1989) by England's Bevis Frond, and the work of British cult heroes Porcupine Tree, you'd be hard-pressed to prove they weren't recorded during the Summer of Love.

In the early 1990s, the explosion of techno and electronic dance music ushered in a new psychedelic rock based on a new psychedelic drug: MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine), or “Ecstasy.” Young listeners consumed the substance (or acted as if they had) while grooving to the otherworldly throb of bass-heavy music at late-night warehouse parties called “raves”—’90s updates of ’60s happenings like the famed Acid Tests thrown by Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters.

Techno artists such as the Orb (*U.F.Orb*; 1992), Plastikman

(*Sheet One*; 1994), Orbital (*Snivilisation*; 1994), and the Aphex Twin (*Selected Ambient Works, Volume II*; 1994) further expanded the acid rock palette with inspired experimentation on the latest technology, including digital synthesizers and samplers.

These machines were also used by psychedelic rappers such as De La Soul (*3 Feet High and Rising*; 1989) and P.M. Dawn (*Of the Heart, of the Soul and of the Cross: The Utopian Experience*, 1991), who took hip-hop in directions far from the playgrounds of the Bronx where it was spawned. “To me, psychedelia is finding something tangible that you can hold on to in the unusual,” said P.M. Dawn's Prince Be. “That's what any innovator does.”

Some critics contended that by the 1990s everything that could be done with rock's familiar guitar, bass, and drums lineup had been done. They were proved wrong not only by grunge music but also by an acid rock underground that continued to produce evocative music. The British band My Bloody Valentine created a kaleidoscopic guitar sound on their hugely influential *Loveless* (1991) and Oklahoma City's Flaming Lips charted the landscape of whimsical new worlds on albums such as *Transmissions from the Satellite Heart* (1993) and *The Soft Bulletin* (1999).

A collective of independent bands from Ruston, La., known as the Elephant 6 Recording Company updated the spirit of *Pet Sounds* and *Revolver* for a new millennium. Among their notable works are *In the Aeroplane over the Sea* (1998) by Neutral Milk Hotel, *Music from the Unrealized Film Script, “Dusk at Cubist Castle”* (1996) by the Olivia Tremor Control, and *Tone Soul Evolution* (1997) by the Apples In Stereo. The British group Spiritualized, with *Ladies and Gentlemen We Are Floating in Space* (1997), explored the merger of Pink Floyd-style interstellar overdrives with free jazz and gospel music.

Gospel music, you ask? Yes, indeed. A final dimension of psychedelia, from the Greek etymology, is “soul-manifesting”—implying a spiritual dimension that is rarely voiced (though it is worth remembering that Brian Wilson spoke of writing “teenage symphonies to God”). By transcending the ordinary, psychedelic musicians and their listeners attempt to connect with something deeper, more profound, and more beautiful.

As Jerry Garcia, guru of the Grateful Dead, once said, “Rock ‘n’ roll provides what the church provided for in other generations.” And no form of rock music attempts to nourish more souls than psychedelia.

Albert Hofmann

The Mysteries of Eleusis

from *LSD My Problem Child*, Chapter 11, 1981.
<http://www.maps.org/books/mpc/chapter11.html>

The notion of reality as the self juxtaposed to the world, in confrontation with the outer world, began to form itself . . . in the southern portion of the European continent in Greek antiquity. No doubt people at that time knew the suffering that was connected with such a cleft reality consciousness. The Greek genius tried the cure by supplementing the multiformed and richly colored, sensual as well as deeply sorrowful Apollonian world view created by the subject/object cleavage, with the Dionysian world of experience, in which this cleavage is abolished in ecstatic inebriation. Nietzsche writes in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

It is either through the influence of narcotic potions, of which all primitive peoples and races speak in hymns, or through the powerful approach of spring, penetrating with joy all of nature, that those Dionysian stirrings arise, which in their intensification lead the individual to forget himself completely . . . Not only does the bond between man and man come to be forged once again by the magic of the Dionysian rite, but alienated, hostile, or subjugated nature again celebrates her reconciliation with her prodigal son, man.

The Mysteries of Eleusis, which were celebrated annually in the fall, over an interval of approximately 2,000 years, from about 1500 B.C. until the fourth century A.D., were intimately connected with the ceremonies and festivals in honor of the god Dionysus. These Mysteries were established by the goddess of agriculture, Demeter, as thanks for the recovery of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades, the god of the underworld, had abducted. A further thanks offering was the ear of grain, which was presented by the two goddesses to

Triptolemus, the first high priest of Eleusis. They taught him the cultivation of grain, which Triptolemus then disseminated over the whole globe. Persephone, however, was not always allowed to remain with her mother, because she had taken nourishment from Hades, contrary to the order of the highest gods. As punishment she had to return to the underworld for a part of the year. During this time, it was winter on the earth, the plants died and were withdrawn into the ground, to awaken to new life early in the year with Persephone's journey to earth.

The myth of Demeter, Persephone, Hades, and the other gods, which was enacted as a drama, formed, however, only the external framework of events. The climax of the yearly ceremonies, which began with a procession from Athens to Eleusis lasting several days, was the concluding ceremony with the initiation, which took place in the night. The initiates were forbidden by penalty of death to divulge what they had learned, beheld, in the innermost, holiest chamber of the temple, the telesterion (goal). Not one of the multitude that were initiated into the secret of Eleusis has ever done this. Pausanias, Plato, many Roman emperors like Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, and many other known personages of antiquity were party to this initiation. It must have been an illumination, a visionary glimpse of a deeper reality, an insight into the true basis of the universe. That can be concluded from the statements of initiates about the value, about the importance of the vision. Thus it is reported in a Homeric Hymn: "Blissful is he among men on Earth, who has beheld that! He who has not been initiated into the holy Mysteries, who has had no part therein, remains a corpse in gloomy darkness." Pindar speaks of the Eleusinian benediction with the following words: "Blissful is he, who after having beheld this enters on the way beneath the Earth. He knows the end of life as well as its divinely granted beginning." Cicero, also a famous initiate, likewise put in first position the splendor that fell upon his life from Eleusis, when he said: "Not only have we received the reason there, that we may live in joy, but also, besides, that we may die with better hope."

How could the mythological representation of such an obvious occurrence, which runs its course annually before our eyes—the seed

grain that is dropped into the earth, dies there, in order to allow a new plant, new life, to ascend into the light—prove to be such a deep, comforting experience as that attested by the cited reports? It is traditional knowledge that the initiates were furnished with a potion, the kykeon, for the final ceremony. It is also known that barley extract and mint were ingredients of the kykeon. Religious scholars and scholars of mythology, like Karl Kerényi, from whose book on the Eleusinian Mysteries (Rhein-Verlag, Zurich, 1962) the preceding statements were taken, and with whom I was associated in relation to the research on this mysterious potion [In the English publication of Kerényi's book *Eleusis* (Schocken Books, New York, 1977) a reference is made to this collaboration], are of the opinion that the kykeon was mixed with an hallucinogenic drug [In *The Road to Eleusis* by R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1978) the possibility is discussed that the kykeon could have acted through an LSD-like preparation of ergot]. That would make understandable the ecstatic-visionary experience of the Demeter-Persephone myth as a symbol of the cycle of life and death in both a comprehensive and timeless reality.

When the Gothic king Alarich, coming from the north, invaded Greece in 396 A.D. and destroyed the sanctuary of Eleusis, it was not only the end of a religious center, but it also signified the decisive downfall of the ancient world. With the monks that accompanied Alarich, Christianity penetrated into the country that must be regarded as the cradle of European culture.

The cultural-historical meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries, their influence on European intellectual history, can scarcely be overestimated. Here suffering humankind found a cure for its rational, objective, cleft intellect, in a mystical totality experience, that let it believe in immortality, in an everlasting existence.

This belief had survived in early Christianity, although with other symbols. It is found as a promise, even in particular passages of the Gospels, most clearly in the Gospel according to John, as in Chapter 14: 120. Jesus speaks to his disciples, as he takes leave of them:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

This promise constitutes the heart of my Christian beliefs and my call to natural-scientific research: we will attain to knowledge of the universe through the spirit of truth, and thereby to understanding of our being one with the deepest, most comprehensive reality, God.

Ecclesiastical Christianity, determined by the duality of creator and creation has, however, with its nature-alienated religiosity, largely obliterated the Eleusinian-Dionysian legacy of antiquity. In the Christian sphere of belief, only special blessed men have attested to a timeless, comforting reality, experienced in a spontaneous vision, an experience to which in antiquity the elite of innumerable generations had access through the initiation at Eleusis. The *unio mystica* of Catholic saints, and the visions that the representatives of Christian mysticism—Jakob Boehme, Meister Eckhart, Angelus Silesius, Thomas Traherne, William Blake, and others describe in their writings—are obviously essentially related to the enlightenment that the initiates to the Eleusinian Mysteries experienced.

The fundamental importance of a mystical experience, for the recovery of people in Western industrial societies who are sickened by a one-sided, rational, materialistic world view, is today given primary emphasis, not only by adherents to Eastern religious movements like Zen Buddhism, but also by leading representatives of academic psychiatry. Of the appropriate literature, we will here refer only to the books of Balthasar Staehelin, the Basel psychiatrist working in Zurich [*Haben und Sein* (1969), *Die Welt als Du* (1970), *Urvertrauen und zweite Wirklichkeit* (1973), and *Der finale Mensch*

(1976); all published by Theologischer Verlag, Zurich]. They make reference to numerous other authors who deal with the same problem. Today a type of “metamedicine,” “metapsychology,” and “metapsychiatry” is beginning to call upon the metaphysical element in people, which manifests itself as an experience of a deeper, duality-surmounting reality, and to make this element a basic healing principle in therapeutic practice.

In addition, it is most significant that not only medicine but also wider circles of our society consider the overcoming of the dualistic, cleft world view to be a prerequisite and basis for the recovery and spiritual renewal of occidental civilization and culture. This renewal could lead to the renunciation of the materialistic philosophy of life and the development of a new reality consciousness.

As a path to the perception of a deeper, comprehensive reality, in which the experiencing individual is also sheltered, meditation, in its different forms, occupies a prominent place today. The essential difference between meditation and prayer in the usual sense, which is based upon the duality of creator-creation, is that meditation aspires to the abolishment of the I-you barrier by a fusing of object and subject, of sender and receiver, of objective reality and self.

Objective reality, the world view produced by the spirit of scientific inquiry, is the myth of our time. It has replaced the ecclesiastical-Christian and mythical-Apollonian world view.

But this ever broadening factual knowledge, which constitutes objective reality, need not be a desecration. On the contrary, if it only advances deep enough, it inevitably leads to the inexplicable, primal ground of the universe: the wonder, the mystery of the divine—in the microcosm of the atom, in the macrocosm of the spiral nebula, in the seeds of plants, in the body and soul of people.

Meditation begins at the limits of objective reality, at the farthest point yet reached by rational knowledge and perception. Meditation thus does not mean rejection of objective reality; on the contrary, it consists of a penetration to deeper dimensions of reality. It is not escape into an imaginary dream world; rather it seeks after the comprehensive truth of objective reality, by simultaneous, stereoscopic contemplation of its surfaces and depths.

It could become of fundamental importance, and be not merely a transient fashion of the present, if more and more people today would make a daily habit of devoting an hour, or at least a few minutes, to meditation. As a result of the meditative penetration and broadening of the natural-scientific world view, a new, deepened reality consciousness would have to evolve, which would increasingly become the property of all humankind. This could become the basis of a new religiosity, which would not be based on belief in the dogmas of various religions, but rather on perception through the “spirit of truth.” What is meant here is a perception, a reading and understanding of the text at first hand, “out of the book that God’s finger has written” (Paracelsus), out of the creation.

The transformation of the objective world view into a deepened and thereby religious reality consciousness can be accomplished gradually, by continuing practice of meditation. It can also come about, however, as a sudden enlightenment; a visionary experience. It is then particularly profound, blessed, and meaningful. Such a mystical experience may nevertheless “not be induced even by decade-long meditation,” as Balthasar Staehelin writes. Also, it does not happen to everyone, although the capacity for mystical experience belongs to the essence of human spirituality.

Nevertheless, at Eleusis, the mystical vision, the healing, comforting experience, could be arranged in the prescribed place at the appointed time, for all of the multitudes who were initiated into the holy Mysteries. This could be accounted for by the fact that an hallucinogenic drug came into use; this, as already mentioned, is something that religious scholars believe.

The characteristic property of hallucinogens, to suspend the boundaries between the experiencing self and the outer world in an ecstatic, emotional experience, makes it possible with their help, and after suitable internal and external preparation, as it was accomplished in a perfect way at Eleusis, to evoke a mystical experience according to plan, so to speak.

Meditation is a preparation for the same goal that was aspired to and was attained in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Accordingly it seems feasible that in the future, with the help of LSD, the mystical vision,

crowning meditation, could be made accessible to an increasing number of practitioners of meditation.

I see the true importance of LSD in the possibility of providing material aid to meditation aimed at the mystical experience of a deeper, comprehensive reality. Such a use accords entirely with the essence and working character of LSD as a sacred drug.

The Electric Kool-Aid Medicine Test

Posted on May 24, 2006 at AlterNet.org
<http://www.alternet.org/story/36346/>

In 1954, when the national mood was one of suspicion and conformity, Aldous Huxley wrote, “All . . . the hallucinogens that ripen in berries or can be squeezed from roots—all, without exception, have been known and systematically used by human beings from time immemorial.”

Ten years later Timothy Leary was fired from Harvard for “systematically using” LSD (admittedly not from a berry or a root) with students. Leary’s sensational promotion of turning on and dropping out closed the door on serious dialogue or research into the potential benefits of psychedelic substances. Yet today, in the midst of the current revival of patriotic and moral paranoia, some are beginning once again to scientifically consider their value as visionary or psychological medicine.

Charles Grob, M.D., is director of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the UCLA School of Medicine. He conducted the first government-approved psychobiological research study of MDMA, was the principal investigator of an international project in the Brazilian Amazon of ayahuasca, and is now studying the use of psilocybin with advanced-stage cancer patients. He is editor of *Hallucinogens: A Reader* and recently co-edited, with Roger Walsh, *Higher Wisdom: Eminent Elders Explore the Continuing Impact of Psychedelics*.



Terrence McNally: How and when did you decide to work with psychedelics?

Charles Grob: Growing up in the ’60s, it was impossible to not be exposed to the controversies and the extraordinary powers of these compounds. In the early ’70s, I read much of the literature that was available at the time, and I was struck by the potential these compounds had to help us understand the mind and mental illness, and to help us develop new and novel treatments. I was aware that, in order to speak out on this issue, one needed credentials, so I went back to school and got all the degrees and training I needed. It was always my intention to conduct proactive approved research in this area, though in the late ’70s and early ’80s there was virtually nothing going on in this country or elsewhere.

McNally: In 1973 I interviewed Stanislov Grof, who was then doing government-funded research in Maryland on the use of LSD with terminal cancer patients. Six months later I tried to follow up, and the state of Maryland wrote back that Dr. Grof was no longer in its employ. He had been let go, and the government funding had ended.

Grob: Around the same time, I heard Grof speak at the annual meeting of the Humanistic Psychology Association in New York City, and I was impressed with the enormous potential of the work he was doing.

McNally: Tell us about your study on anxiety in cancer patients.

Grob: At the L.A. Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, we have full regulatory approval to conduct a study using psilocybin—the active alkaloid in hallucinogenic mushrooms—in the treatment of the anxiety associated with advanced-stage cancer.

McNally: What is the status of the study at this time? Do you have any preliminary results?

Grob: We’ve been treating individuals for the past year and a half who fit all our inclusion/exclusion criteria. To date, we’ve studied five subjects in entirety. We’re approved for a total of 12, so we hope to treat seven more. We’re finding recruitment very challenging because we have very tight inclusion/exclusion criteria. We’ve

interviewed a number of individuals who at first seemed to fit our criteria, but whose medical condition then drastically deteriorated so that they could no longer participate. We're very interested in talking with individuals who might fit.

McNally: Where would potential candidates learn about this, and how would they apply?

Grob: Our website—canceranxietystudy.org—details the inclusion/exclusion criteria and provides information about the methodology.

McNally: Can you verify Huxley's contention that all plant hallucinogens, without exception, have been known and systematically used by human beings from time immemorial?

Grob: Certainly the anthropological and historical evidence is very rich that even pre-civilization cultures highly valued hallucinogenic plants. Aboriginal cultures often used them as one of the core activities for reinforcing belief systems and tribal cohesion. This is quite apparent if you look at the indigenous peoples in the Amazon basin in South America, where the plant ayahuasca is used for religious, spiritual and healing purposes. As far back as human habitation of the Amazon basin has been established, there are indications that ayahuasca was an integral part of their lives and belief systems.

McNally: I've traveled a bit in the rainforest of Ecuador, and among the Achuar people it is an important and seldom-used ritual taken at key passages in life.

Grob: These are not by any stretch of the imagination recreational compounds. Indigenous peoples use them for very serious purposes, often having to do with healing.

McNally: Do you view the recent Supreme Court decision to allow ayahuasca to be taken in a religious context as an isolated instance based on specifics of the particular case or something more?

Grob: On February 21st, the court ruled unanimously that a branch of a Brazilian syncretic church, the União de Vegetal, or UDV, in Santa Fe, N.M., had legal sanction to continue to utilize ayahuasca as a psychoactive sacrament in their religious ceremonies. This is really an extraordinary decision and establishes a remarkable precedent,

although at this point I believe it only applies to the UDV.

I was an expert medical witness for the UDV, and so followed the case very closely. I had been the principal investigator of a series of research studies in Brazil, using members of the UDV as subjects. I did not expect the case to win in a conservative federal court in the throes of a vicious, decades-long drug war.

McNally: This was one of the first decisions of the Roberts-Alito court, wasn't it?

Grob: I believe it's the first decision that Chief Justice Roberts penned himself. Though Alito was not part of the decision because he had not heard the arguments, he subsequently stated that he would have gone along with the majority.

The Justice Department appealed, and the appeal was heard by a panel of the Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver. Again I was not overly optimistic and again I was surprised: the UDV's position prevailed. It was then appealed to the full Circuit Court of Appeals and won again. Then it went to the Supreme Court, where on February 21st they issued their unanimous decision.

McNally: There was the precedent of the peyote churches of the Native Americans, yes?

Grob: The Native American Church has for some time had permission to use peyote as part of their religious ceremonies. Whereas peyote use among native peoples is established by treaty between the sovereign Indian nations and the United States, the Santa Fe case does not involve indigenous people. This was the first time in almost 1,600 years that a nonindigenous people had gained permission from the government to use a plant hallucinogen for religious ceremonial purpose—not since Alaric the Hun sacked Eleusis in the year 396.

McNally: I guess you can't use that as precedent. What leads you to believe that psychedelic substances might have therapeutic use?

Grob: There's a very rich body of literature dating back to the mid-late 1950s that demonstrates it. Though methodologies at the time were not like methodologies today, they offer ample indication that we should at least study this further.

There were a number of studies which demonstrated therapeutic

response among patient populations that did not normally respond well to conventional psychiatric and medical treatments—first and foremost, chronic hardcore alcoholics and drug addicts. In the late '50s and early '60s, Humphrey Osmond in Western Canada demonstrated that some seriously ill alcoholics who had not responded to any conventional treatment did remarkably well after even a single-dose treatment.

McNally: So your mission is to reopen the pursuit of this knowledge for the benefit of society?

Grob: Absolutely. My goal has always been to get this research back on track. By the early 1970s, all of the exciting and promising studies were forced to terminate because of the cultural turmoil of the time. Thirty-plus years later, I think it's high time that we review the old data and initiate new research.

McNally: In addition to your cancer anxiety study, are there other studies ongoing?

Grob: Dr. Francisco Moreno at the University of Arizona just completed a pilot study using psilocybin to treat chronic refractory obsessive-compulsive disorder. A psychiatrist named Michael Mithoffer in Charleston, S.C., has permission to use MDMA in the treatment of chronic post-traumatic stress disorder.

Though there are no clinical application treatment studies in Europe, Franz Volenwieder (also affiliated with Heffter) at the Burholzi Clinic and the University of Zurich has done extraordinary work mapping the effects of MDMA and other hallucinogenic substances on the brain, using state-of-the art brain imaging technology.

McNally: What's your aim in the new book, *Higher Wisdom*, which includes Ram Dass, Hofmann, Sasha Shulgin, among others?

Grob: In the late 1980s, when I moved from Johns Hopkins to the University of California, I established a friendship with Roger Walsh, a psychiatrist at UC Irvine, who felt that it was important to preserve the stories and experiences of the leading early investigators and theorists on the issue of psychedelics. Along with Gary Bravo, another UC Irvine psychiatrist, we interviewed anyone we could find who had established a reputation in the field of psychedelic research

in the 1950s and 1960s.

McNally: What were a couple of the big lessons you drew from your conversations with them?

Grob: These individuals were profoundly influenced personally by their experiences. They shared the vision that, under optimal circumstances and with all the proper safeguards in place, these compounds had an extraordinary capacity to help heal, to help enlighten and to help us learn.

McNally: MDMA was originally used in therapy, wasn't it?

Grob: In the late '70s and early '80s a large number of psychotherapists, mostly in California, formed an underground where MDMA was used for a variety of clinical indications, though very little of their clinical work was published.

Unfortunately the secret got out to the greater society at large, and it became a very popular recreational drug, particularly among the youth culture in California and Texas. It then spread throughout the country, over to Europe and around the world, setting off the Ecstasy rave phenomenon.

McNally: What are the dangers, warnings and cautions with MDMA?

Grob: Oh, there are certainly dangers with MDMA, and individuals really need to be apprised and not to take foolish risks. There's a serious danger of malignant hyperthermia, or overheating, which is exacerbated by vigorous exercise in a hot, stuffy environment, and the failure to replace lost body fluids. This is just what happens in the rave setting, and there have unfortunately been some fatalities secondary to malignant hyperthermia.

The flipside risk is water intoxication. Several young people have actually drunk so much water that they have lowered their serum sodium and experienced seizures, and died as well. It can be a very tricky compound.

Perhaps the biggest danger, though, is drug substitution. A large percentage of what passes as Ecstasy actually does not contain MDMA, but other drugs. Some are relatively benign like caffeine or aspirin, but others are potentially dangerous or lethal, like paramethoxy amphetamine, PMA, the most potent and potentially lethal

amphetamine known. You have no idea what you're getting.

McNally: Because it's illegal, the greatest danger comes from buying something on the street with no oversight or regulation, correct?

Grob: There are absolutely no controls. In fact, I can't think of a drug which is more frequently misrepresented and substituted than the Ecstasy MDMA compound.

McNally: In other words, the fact that we have closed our eyes and pushed all of these psychedelic substances aside as illegal creates many of the problems associated with them.

Here's a big two-part question. Do you suspect that the roots of any cultural or scientific trends grew out of the use of psychedelics in the '60s and '70s? For instance, the rise of Buddhism or other Eastern spiritual and health practices, or the Internet or electronically networked organizations?

Grob: Yes, of the several million people who presumably took psychedelics back in the '60s in this country and in Europe, many were profoundly influenced. It influenced their attitude towards their own career choices, their relationships, their attitudes towards peace and conflict. During the '60s there was a tremendous sense that these compounds, if utilized optimally, could catalyze very salutary changes around the world.

Until his death in 1963, Huxley held the vision that if these compounds were introduced wisely, quietly and discreetly to the leaders of our culture, there would be a ripple-down effect with enormous positive changes. He believed it might be a mechanism through which the very likelihood of world survival would be enhanced.

The cultural turmoil, with youth culture radically split off from mainstream culture, led to a move not only to shut down research but also to distance mainstream culture, mainstream scholars and scientists from even exploring the potential benefits of the use to individuals, families and culture.

McNally: Final question. What do you know of the current cultural context? What's happening out there these days?

Grob: There's certainly a concern for widespread misuse and

abuse of compounds like ecstasy. Serious use of these compounds has had to go deeply underground. There's increased interest in ayahuasca, particularly in the Amazon basin. A big article in a recent *National Geographic Adventure* magazine highlighted ayahuasca shamanism, and has had a very strong, apparently positive response.

I think individuals are starting to wake up to the possibility that, when taken under optimal conditions, these plants might have profound potential to facilitate positive change. That being said, one also has to employ all the essential safeguards to minimize the likelihood of harm.

Interviewer Terrence McNally hosts Free Forum on KPFK 90.7FM, Los Angeles (streaming at kpfk.org).

Stephen Gaskin

Number Fifteen: Broderick Street

Haight Ashbury Flashbacks, Ronin Publishing Inc., 1990.

We were up in the loft above Broderick Street, a beautiful room. It was a loft where the walls were about four feet high, and slanted in to a flat roof in the middle. It had a single light bulb in the ceiling with a colorful Mandala poster draped under it. It has a rusty iron lamp with a piece of parchment for a shade casting a shaft of light straight down onto a big fat easy chair. In front of that easy chair was a six-foot round table, about two feet high, where we rolled joints, cleaned dope, broke kilos, whatnot. Out in the front was a great big picture window with a window seat, and in the back of the room—all one room, except for the kitchen and bathroom—in the back of the room was a mattress over on the floor with a closet, consisting of some clothes hanging on the wall by the bed.

I remember one of the first trips I had with Margaret there. I looked into her mind, and I had my eyes closed. Margaret came inside my mind, and we were together there, inside my mind. It was like a long, mirror or ice-sided corridors. Suddenly she manifested herself inside my mind with a cat face and smiled at me with a cat mouth. I knew I'd always be with her; we'd never really separate, because we were telepathic. It made me want to meet other members of her family. We got really high and really, really telepathic.

I got a flash that I was telepathic with my sister. To find out, I decide to go call her on the telephone. I got downstairs, and I got down to the porch in front. Then I started thinking,

Margaret, come over and look out the window, so I can tell we're still telepathic, even though I'm down here.

And she thought back to me,

Naw, I ain't gonna do it. You wouldn't do well on the affirmation, because you're kind of on a trip.

That was telepathic, clear as a bell.

I got into a telepathic
You come over to this window!

Answered by a telepathic
Uh, unh! No way! I ain't coming!

I couldn't get my sister, but while I was downstairs using the phone, I was called up by a friend of mine, Ken, from writing school. Ken called me up and I started telling him,

"I am stoned. I am telepathic."

"You know, I can feel you. Right now, over the telephone, I can feel you. We are telepathic. I wonder how telepathic we are. Well, if we're *really* telepathic, you can call me back."

And he hung up.

I didn't know his phone number.