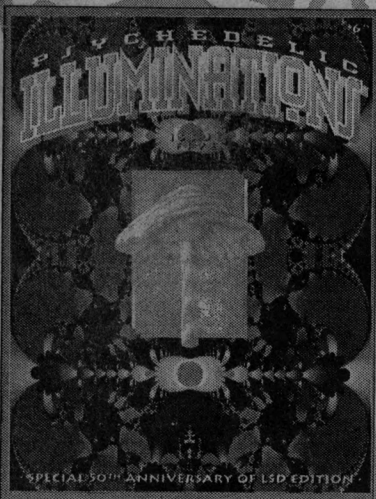


# GATHERING OF THE MINDS

It's been a long time since those pioneering drug days when kicks weren't so hard to find, and psychedelic adventures were not only uncommon but the happening thing to both hip young adults and medical researchers. Out of those wild times in the LSD spiked 60's was born a "psychedelic" movement which among such things as getting really fucked up and discovering religion and God, psychonauts pondered the purpose of entheogenic substances in human evolution coming up with such lofty formulas as Leary's SMILE (Space Migration, Intelligence Increase, Life Extension). Since those seemingly ancient times the private and sometimes published research has continued, but each new answer is really only a new discovery, creating that many more questions. The 90's seem to be bringing about a new wave of interest in these tools, the renaissance in psychedelic interest has proved Leary's prophecy partially true - space migration is indeed underway - into interdimensional places and tryptamine worlds! If the first psychedelic generations vehicle was LSD, then the enthusiasm towards a 90's entheogen movement is driven by the help of new and rediscovered plant derived chemical substances - a tryptamine based fuel, in particular by Ayahuasca and it's many analogs.

This spring a very important event occurred that firmly stamped the importance of this renewed interest in psychedelics into all participants minds - this was the "Gathering Of Minds", a psychedelic symposium sponsored by Chapman University and Psychedelic Illuminations Magazine. You might expect something like this to be as pathetic as a Sex Pistols reunion - but no chance. In the years since the psychedelic movement dug firmly underground, many new discoveries have been made - not only in the substances themselves but with their interactions with the human nervous system as well as new uses, therapies and treatments using long established drugs. A lot of data has been collected since those early days, and its reduction is starting to make some sense to a lot of researchers who enthusiastically head in its sometimes surprising directions.



underlying tone of dead seriousness.

The setting was at Chapman University in Orange California, a small private school nestled into a quiet Orange County neighborhood. Three different halls were used for the presentations, and a center courtyard area was full of booths for demonstrations and sales of books, shirts, music, jewelry and everything else. It was hard to catch all the talks since they went on in the different locations. Sometimes I just ended up in the courtyard bullshitting with the many friendly researchers I come to know so well from their books and publications - but never thought I'd meet! If success could be measured just by the amount of knowledge shared and contacts made OUTSIDE of the lectures, this was indeed an overwhelming success! The presentations, then, were truly the icing on the cake.

This event started at 9:00 AM, and since I was at a different school, I missed the first few talks. That was a drag because I really wanted to hear the "Psychedelic Shamanism" panel. This panel was typical of how well the people were selected to represent groups for these topics. This one consisted of some older psychedelic icons like Peter Stafford and Bruce Eisner and the younger generation of prolific writers with Jim DeKorne and Jonathan Ott. Naturally I heard this was a great discussion and I'd like to get the audio tape of it someday.

The first lecture I listened to was a very rousing talk by Ram Das. He packed the largest lecture hall with an array of all types of people - plenty of colorful hippie types with their tie dyes and long hair as well as older, establishment looking folks, and everything inbetween. The response to his invitation to "live awake" was fantastic and set me in a very positive enthusiastic mood, very eager to see and hear everything everybody had to say.

After the talk we headed out to the courtyard for some socializing and found Jonathan Ott signing books on the front steps. Mr. Ott recently put out his fantastic "Pharmacoetheon", a very concise and exhaustive work on plant entheogens. A definite milestone in this science. If there needed to be evidence to indicate this new movement in psychedelic interest, this book along with Shulgins' "PIHKAL" (published in '92) could easily define a revolution. And that's not even getting into the importance of Psychedelic Illuminations magazine, Ott's other books, DeKorne's publications, both of the McKenna's recent publications and efforts etc... Anyway, Jonathan was friendly and talkative and had his new "Ayahuasca Analogs" book there for sale. I would have bought one and got him to sign it but I had already mail ordered it the minute I heard about it. This could be the break through book to empower the people with actually legally obtainable psychedelic substances, and bring about changes in the sta-

tus of trying to make certain states of mind illegal. In this book, Jonathan describes his experiments not only with traditional Ayahuasca, but with analogs made from temperate zone plants - some commonly growing in the United States - and does indeed confirm their effectiveness. If you've ever experimented with psychedelic drugs, then I highly recommend this book as I feel this particular route to the psychedelic experience will be the method of the future. As drug laws become stiffer and stiffer and as the FDA and FBI crack down on clandestine laboratories and chemical precursors, there will be no choice but to go natural. They can't pave over the entire earth, so maybe someday they will realize how futile their efforts are. Besides, it's a damn fine experience that is there for you, if you are willing.



After some more talking and some food, I caught Ralph Metzner's talk on "Psychedelics and Ecological Consciousness". Since Ralph Metzner was one of Leary's old cronies, it was really interesting to see the vastly different paths these two men have taken since their days together at Harvard. Mr. Metzner has a very worthwhile holistic view of our environment and it's connection with psychedelics and religion. He believes that nature is a part of religion, and while orthodox religions like Catholicism try their best to kill it figuratively and metaphorically (like slaying the

dragon, and the beasts these people were always fighting), the new religion will actually synergize with nature. Again, Ayahuasca and the plant teachers are a perfect example. Just the simple act of getting out into nature, can have very profound healing properties for your body as well as for your soul - something the popular religions of days gone by were quick to write off as "witchcraft." He stressed how wasteful clear cutting is, especially in South America where rare, endemic plants are being virtually cleared to extinction. The cultures of these regions are also nearing extinction.

Metzner's talk kind of naturally ended in a panel discussion around ecopsychology and radical ecology. The panel members were very sharp and each went into some depth on the topics that Metzner brought up.

After a visit to the smart drink bar and a nice cold turbo-tang, I was ready for the next

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talk. Things were running a bit late and some of the talks were beginning to pile up upon one another. Never the less, no psychedelic seminar would be complete without the pot people and this was the "Hemp, the Law and You" panel. I have to admit, these people actually have their shit together and they've managed to intelligently argue the benefits of hemp for so many things, besides smoking it. The panel ran through its uses as a very strong, economical fiber for making paper, the many uses for its oils, its medicinal uses and all that. They stressed the fact that they make a point not to tell you this stuff in school and reiterated the whole conspiracy to keep pot illegal. The points were well made, but unfortunately it was like preaching to the converted and in a short time the panel and the whole room seemed to be pep rally for pot. Time for some air.

I guess my smart drink was kicking in and I found plenty of people to talk to. First stop was a visit to Jim DeKorne with his hot off the Loompanics press "Psychedelic Shamanism". We talked about growing *Salvia divinorum* and he told me about some recent experiments with smokable *Salvia* extracts that were supposed to be far more powerful than DMT. He was leery about printing the extraction recipe in the quarterly "Entheogen Review" because he felt the effects were so powerful and perhaps too dangerous. He wasn't the only person talking about the power of *Salvia* extracts at this symposium. It was rumored that one very famous, and well experienced DMT researcher completely flipped out after a small hit, and had to be restrained while screaming and yelling about "the white beings." Heavy shit. Jim also related a method for making a simple, smokable DMT like extract from Psilocybin mushrooms. Haven't tried that yet! Well, I got a subscription and went off to talk to the mushroom guy.

This guy was rather bold in that he had a booth set up with all kinds of mushroom growing paraphernalia, books and even live mycelium in jars (no Psilocybin, though) but he had nothing for sale. Just information for free. After visiting for a short time he was talking all about the "good stuff" he had growing at home. Two styrofoam ice chests going in the bathroom at all times. Nice guy, good knowledge!

After that I ran into none other than Peter Stafford who was selling and autographing the new edition of his infamous "Psychedelic Encyclopedia". Needless to say I got one and wound up talking to him for some time. Quite a character! He talked about some of his other publications (like "Magic Grams") and how they were selling for so much these days. He might republish them but for now just xeroxes them when needed. The second edition of his classic "Psychedelic Encyclopedia" is completely revised, covering many of the newer discoveries (like Shulgins amphetamines), with many more pages and updated information. He was quite happy with it but over all very modest. He hung out on the steps for like six hours straight just shooting the shit and peddling his books.

Out of the sun and into another building for the "Mycology, Mysticism, Mushrooms and Magic" lecture. This one featured a slide show of all kinds of mushrooms and actually got pretty boring after the hundredth slide of "this one is so rare, this is one of 3 pictures known". I got to see slides of tropical mushrooms growing naturally on mounds of pig shit in Germany! That spiced it up a little! The actual discussion questions were, by now, not all that engaging. "If magic mushrooms were suddenly legal tomorrow, how would that change the world?" to which Jonathan Ott responded that it wouldn't make any difference since the people that want magic mushrooms can get them anyway. The subject of decriminalization was stressed, but generally felt that it was nearly hopeless

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**PIHKAL**  
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ALEXANDER SHULGIN & ANN SHULGIN

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**PSYCHEDELIC ENCYCLOPEDIA**

PETER STAFFORD

**AYAHUASCA ANALOGUES**  
Rangean Entheogens

JONATHAN OTT

**MAPS**  
NEWSLETTER OF THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHEDELIC STUDIES

**THE ENTHEOGEN REVIEW**  
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**PSYCHEDELIC SHAMANISM**  
The Cultivation, Preparation and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants

Jim DeKorne

to wait for. Ott did make another wonderful point when asked what he thought of "Church" people claiming that "the psychedelic experience is not a real religious experience the way receiving Christ is." He responded that it is quite the opposite. The Catholic Church uses a placebo sacrament in their ceremonies, one that requires your faith whereas the mushroom experience is with a real sacrament and gives you faith. A very interesting man.

The sun had set by now, and on the way back to the main building for a Dennis McKenna talk I ran into Alexander Shulgin himself. Wow, he was so different in person, kinda of goofy and geeky and although he was not officially speaking in any panels he said he was just down here "to hang out and see what's going on." He told me the tryptamine "PIHKAL" book won't be out for another year, but that PIHKAL itself has sold very well and has already gone into a re-printing. I sure wish he was talking, I'd love for him to bore me to death for like six hours straight!!! Maybe someday, we can only hope. Apparently he doesn't do many public appearances anymore, but he seemed like a nice enough, charismatic guy.

Well, Dennis McKenna was up with the introduction of "I'm Terrance's brother" much to the delight of the audience. He went on and on with a slide show about his research projects with the Heffter Research Institute, in particular the Huasca Project in the Peruvian Amazon. It was indeed very interesting, but quite lengthy for this late in the day. Dennis' talk ended with the start of the research panel discussing the shifting tides of American psychedelic research. I gotta tell ya, I was burning out by now, as much as I love this stuff, my brain was just saturated. The panelists spent like an hour introducing themselves. I mean, they have every right to be long winded and certainly have a lot to talk about, but it dragged a bit considering I'd been here all day and I already knew who these people were. But whatever, I did learn about new research with MDMA and some that is actually approved of by the FDA. Yes, as amazing as that sounds. When they finally got to the questions, I think I hit that final energy reserve. Some womyn asked why there was only one female on the panel and wasn't there some sexism in the psychedelic movement. She pretty much stumped the panel, who each took turns fumbling for answers to her question. I mean, it's a good question, but who the fuck knows? I wanted to hear the latest about dropping XTC with Prozac, ya know?

Well, as I mosed off I ran into Tim Leary in the hall, as intense as ever, moving through the people with his Retinologic entourage. I said "Hi Tim!" and shook his hand and he responded like he actually remembered me! Kinda threw me for a loop. Then he sped off to some secret place where only Learys go and probably did something weird. Needless to say, I didn't stay for his set. I've seen his demo with Retinologic and their video "Haiku", and this just wasn't the place for me to enjoy it. Following him was gonna be a Multi Media Techno Rave. Same with Leary's mind fuck showcase, a college auditorium isn't the place for this. We should have all been in some abandoned building downtown, practicing what we preach. I'd have stayed anyway, but I was burnt and no amount of smart drugs could save me.

The whole event was like a mind bogging success. I think my head spun all the way home. I've gotta hand it to the people who put this on, as well as the participants, because their continued dedication and undying spirit has kept the force alive. I think that everyone there got a lot out of this and certainly many seeds were planted that will carry this on in the years to come. Very inspiring. I never thought I'd be part of a church group before... (For more information on Psychedelic Drugs and everything involved the best one stop source for information is Psychedelic Illuminations Magazine, POB 3186, Fullerton CA 92634)