

Dear MAPS,

I am a 76 year old woman who was recently introduced to MDMA by a psychologist and dear friend. There are a number of us who are doing innovative and responsible work here in uptight, rigid Orange County. We are starting a "Gentle Revolution" - one in which we fight, not each other but the forces which keep us from expressing all of our truly wonderful human qualities. We greatly appreciate and admire your work!

Emily Coleman

Dear MAPS,

One article I differ with fundamentally is the one written by Jose Stevens on "The Macho Ingestion Syndrome".

It has been my experience that larger doses can produce significantly different experiences than smaller doses. What may be an heroic dose for someone may be an "aesthetic" dose for another. But that is not exactly all of the point he makes or the point I am making. It seems to me there is a quantitative difference between low dose and high dose, and different states can be achieved with different dosages. This doesn't have to be a "macho" thing.

Stevens makes several good points. Essentially more is not necessarily better. However, he leaves out some things, which in my experience seem important. Sometimes a higher dose is necessary to "break thru". Sometimes the "ego death" experience is necessary for growth. Sometimes we have to face all the biographical/psychodynamic stuff to go further. In fact, I'm beginning to realize it is a prerequisite to move into the transpersonal experiences. Not an absolute prerequisite, but it seems to help.

Stevens also says the psyche was never meant to question its own integrity or viability. That is pretty far from my own paradigm. I agree, however, when he says that when the person becomes suicidal, fears instant annihilation, or travels to hell and can't get out, that this isn't the time to push the dose.

My thoughts on this are a little vague, and a little defensive. I'm a big proponent of the all or none, 'the heroes journey', providing there is good set and setting, and a stable individual. Certainly there is risk.

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Dear MAPS,

I have read all the MAPS' issues from 1989 to the present. I wholeheartedly congratulate you on your persistence over the past few years in developing a high quality newsletter. The reason I enjoy this publication is due to its rational and scientific approach to a fascinating topic—psychedelics. You are doing a great favor to many people.

Some aspects of an article in the Spring 1994 issue disturbed me; the one about Dr. Kungurtsev discussing spirituality. I agreed with many of his points, but there were some that shocked me. What is "spirituality"? I have yet to hear a satisfactory definition for this word. Some people define it as "Praise the Lord", others define it as "human love and connection", still others define it as "The nonphysical world is the ultimate reality". Dr. Kungurtsev's implied explanation seems to largely include the third definition. "You are not your body", he claims. If we are not the body, what are we? Has he ever had sex with a non-body? It's a ludicrous statement.

He continues, "Psychedelics... in significant doses, can give a direct experience of conscious existence without the body". What?! Did I read that right? Has Dr. Kungurtsev studied any neuroanatomy and neurochemistry? Doesn't he realize that all of our mental states, thoughts and feelings, no matter how "bizarre", "spiritual", "pure consciousness", "out of this world", "near death", etc. are due to the interplay of neurotransmitters and electrical signals within the brain? Consciousness does not exist without the physical brain; it is born with it, develops and enhances as the brain forms more intricate neural connections, and disappears when the physical brain dies. I thought that most scientists had given up archaic Cartesian thinking. The new paradigm is: I am, therefore I think.

Let's not underestimate the human brain. It has had millions of years to develop to the fascinating state it is at this time. It is still evolving rapidly. I have taken high doses of Ketamine and other psychedelics and experienced the "out of body" perceptual states he discusses in his articles. However, I do not believe these states were "nonphysical". They were due to neurochemical alterations. A chemical was introduced into the brain that changed a state of consciousness. How can it be "nonphysical"? Let's be real.

In the Spring 1992 issue, Dr. Kungurtsev discussed his use of Ketamine in neuroses. I learned from reading about his research and hope he continues contributing this type of useful scientific information. In the meantime, let's leave unsubstantiated "old faith" claims to the myriad other publications by the checkout counter at the supermarket.

Realistically,
A body from Los Angeles, CA