

Mind States: Current Perspectives on Visionary Plants & Drugs

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IN NOVEMBER 1997, the Berkeley International House hosted an intensive two-day event where very little mention of research was made, but where audience members were regaled with facts and musings on the interplay of psychoactive plants and drugs with society, the law, art, the Internet, therapy, spirituality, personal growth and chemistry.

Mind States commenced with an introduction by author and philosopher Peter Lamborn Wilson, a.k.a. Hakim Bey. Elizabeth Gips, psychedelic elder and activist (see www.changes.org) joined him on the stage and lead the audience in an exuberant short guided meditation on the relevance of such a gathering.

The first speaker was Andrew Edmond, founder and director of The Lycaeum (www.lycaeum.org), "the world's largest online database for information about entheogens." In a talk entitled "Entheogens and the Internet: A New Dimension in Alternate Realities," Edmond discussed the forums where knowledge about entheogens is shared online, and about the impact the Internet has had on the evolution of entheogenic information.

The second speaker was Richard Glen Boire, Esq., editor of *The Entheogen Law Reporter* and author of *Marijuana Law* and *Sacred Mushrooms and the Law*. (see <http://home.cwnet.com/specmind/page2.html>) In "Mind States in Police States," Boire took the audience on a guided tour of the legal landscape underlying entheogen use.

During the lunch break, conference attendees visited the crowded vendor's hall where plants, artwork, t-shirts and books were on sale.

In the afternoon, Myron Stolaroff spoke on "The Trained User: Deepening Meditation Practice and Forestalling Aging." Stolaroff's book, *The Secret Chief*, was available for the first time at Mind States, and was the best-selling book on the speakers' table.

After an interim slide show by Lordnose!, Ann Shulgin talked about psychedelic psychotherapy, sharing insights gathered from the brief time that she did lay-therapy with MDMA before 1985. A version of her talk is the chapter in *TIHKAL* entitled "The Intensive."

Dale Pendell waxed poetic on "Plant Teachers and Spiritual Practice," and Jim DeKorne followed the next day, getting a bit more personal about his own explorations in "Shamanism—Psychedelic and Otherwise: Using Entheogens for Inner Work."

A highlight of Mind States for many conference attendees was "How Psychedelic Mysticism has Transformed my Life and Art," the talk and slide show presentation by Alex Grey, psychedelic artist extraordinaire. Grey presented a retrospective of his visionary art and the impact of psychedelics on it, all the way back to his first dose of LSD 23 years ago. The richness of his imagery and anecdotes kept the audience rapt for several hours. Keep an eye out for the upcoming www.alexgrey.com.

On Sunday, Dan Joy, author of *The Healing Magic of Cannabis* and editor of *PIHKAL* and *TIHKAL*, spoke on the future of marijuana therapeutics. He examined the advantages and disadvantages of the medical paradigm for cannabis and presented details on the therapeutic properties of individual cannabinoids. Joy also spoke about the rarely mentioned yet important therapeutic value of the psychoactivity of cannabis.

One of the more surprising presentations of Mind States was James Kent's "Ketamine: Metaprogramming and Karmic Cleansing from within the Eye of the Storm." Kent, editor of *The Resonance Project* (TRP), a quarterly dedicated to psychedelics, technology and the science of perception, gave an intensive tour of the ketamine mindspace and what can be derived from it. Portions of this talk appear in an article by the same name in the current TRP. (to contact TRP: Resonant Media, 323 Broadway Ave. East, #318, Seattle, WA 98102, trp@resproject.com, www.resproject.com).

The last two speakers of the conference were Alexander Shulgin and Terence McKenna. McKenna was not in Berkeley for Mind States but he had prepared a short video presentation exclusively for the conference. After it was shown, he was brought online real-time in an excellent audio/low-res video Question and Answer session. Shulgin's current research with psychoactive cactii was a point of departure for his talk "The Process of Discovery."

Congratulations to the conference organizers, Will Beifuss (author, *Psychedelic Sourcebook*), Richard Glen Boire (editor, *The Entheogen Law Reporter*) and Jon Hanna (author, *Psychedelic Resource List*). This was an extremely smooth-running and topical conference, and the care that went into picking not only psychedelic elders as speakers but also younger generation representatives of the "third wave" of psychedelic leaders is to be commended. •