

The Wizardry of **Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century**

By Kynthia Brunette, M.A.



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Editor's note: Kynthia applied to be an intern through our website in the fall of 2009. She served several essential roles organizing and coordinating Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century, and she continues to be an extraordinary volunteer. Beyond what she reports below, Kynthia assisted with our conference marketing efforts, document management, writing and editing, scholarship selection and distribution, supply gathering, and a plethora of other important tasks. In the final weeks leading up to the conference, we paid her for her time. Kynthia played a key role in the conference's success and fluid operations. MAPS is incredibly grateful for Kynthia's assistance.

THREE YEARS AGO, the idea that psychedelics might come to be a part of my career path felt about as likely as the idea that I might someday become a wizard.

Anything's possible, but some things don't really seem worth planning around, you know? You either get the owl from Hogwarts, or you don't. Everything else is vanity.

Six months ago, after following MAPS closely for a couple of years, I coordinated the volunteers for the Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century conference in San Jose. Over the course of this work, I met hundreds of people who were actively involved in psychedelic research, and hundreds more who were curious about the option. The community was no longer invisible, but figuring out where to start still felt like magic, and the conference performed the handy trick of gathering most of the major players in one place.

Today, when I talk to people about what they gained from the conference, the sense of community is usually the first topic of discussion. After years of working in isolation, unable to discuss ideas and experiences without risking judgment, or at least puzzled looks, the ability to discuss psychedelics openly was like the first breath of spring after a long and lonely winter. During his talk on the importance of entheogenic guides, James Fadiman paused at one point to smile and say, "It's so nice to talk to people who know what I'm talking about!" This sentiment was echoed by almost everyone at some point.

It was incredibly exciting to be in such close proximity to so many living legends and to have the chance to hear them speak. Stan Grof,

Ralph Metzner, Ram Dass, Andrew Weil, John Perry Barlow, Mountain Girl, Earth and Fire Erwid—the list was long and dazzling, even before the tribute dinner to Sasha and Ann Shulgin, where Alex Grey unveiled his newest painting, and special guests included legendary chemist Nick Sand.

The energy level was intense, and the audience was more diverse and colorful than the average scientific conference, which was a strength. In addition to the Continuing Medical Education track, which spotlighted cutting-edge research and allowed MAPS to reach out to a large slice of the professional medical community, two other cultural tracks included social scientists, political activists, and artists. The well-rounded programming reminded every-

one of the importance of remaining connected to the larger whole, which is perhaps the most valuable lesson that the psychedelic worldview has to offer.

During his talk on the implications of psychedelic research, Stan Grof compared the shift that is currently underway in psychology to the shift from Newtonian to relativistic physics. Psychologists are not merely absorbing a new class of drugs that fits neatly within the existing system; psychedelics require us to reconceptualize the system itself.

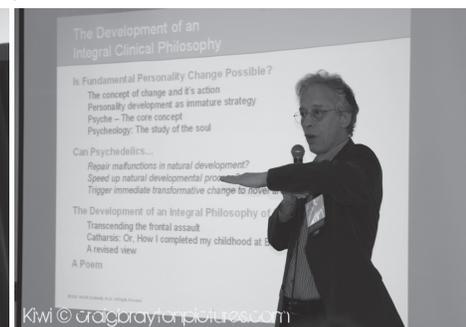
Science and wizardry are cousins, after all, and only ego resists the association. •

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Photos from Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century. Left to right, Rick Doblin, Ph.D., gives his opening talk; Michael Mithoefer, M.D., presents findings from his MDMA/PTSD research; Neil Goldsmith, Ph.D.,



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