

## Paean to a Champion:

A Review of

### *Phenethylamines I Have Known And Loved: A Chemical Love Story.*

by Alexander Shulgin and Ann Shulgin

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**P***aeon to a Champion*, is an appropriate title for a review of a remarkable new book: *Phenethylamines I Have Known And Loved* (hereafter abbreviated as PIHKAL), co-authored by Alexander Shulgin (or "Sasha," as he is known to his friends), and Ann Shulgin. Our English word, *paean*, is a loan word from Latin and is derived from the ancient Greek, *paion*, ultimately derived from a cultic hymn of praise for the god of healing, Apollo, in his title as physician of the gods: *Paion*. In PIHKAL, the Shulgins demonstrate that they are indeed, in service to the physicians' god of healing.

The spirit of the book and the reason that the Shulgins undertook the labor of its writing is characterized by the following comments offered by Sasha: "have stated some of my reasons for holding the view that psychedelic drugs are treasures. There are others, and many of them are spun into the texture of this story. There is, for instance, the effect they have on my perception of colors, which is completely remarkable. Also, there is the deepening of my emotional rapport with another person, which can become an exquisitely beautiful experience, with eroticism of sublime intensity. I enjoy the enhancement of the senses of touch, smell, and taste, and the fascinating changes in my perception of the flow of time. I deem myself blessed in that I have experienced, however briefly, the existence of God. I have felt a sacred oneness with creation and its Creator, and—most precious of all—I have touched the core of my own soul. It is for these reasons that I have dedicated my life to this area of inquiry. Someday I may understand how these simple catalysts do what they do. In the meantime, I am forever in their debt. And I will forever be their champion."

Sasha calls himself a champion, and a champion he is. And along side Sasha stands his consort, Ann Shulgin, herself a heroine in this adventure for in this period of American history, a book such as this takes bravery to write. Truly, in authors such as these, the human community once again finds champions of the spirit willing to risk all for the benefit of their fellow human beings. Sasha and Ann Shulgin merit praise for their work, and praise hereby is offered.

Looking for antecedents to the brave explorations of the Shulgins chronicled in PIHKAL, we remember ancient tales of Ulysses, Aeneas, and Jason, heroes who risked their mortal lives through voyages into realms of the unknown. The ancient story of *Jason and the Argonauts* was first told by the famous Greek scholar, Apollonius of Rhodes, Chief Librarian of the Great Library, in Alexandria, Egypt; and the tale was later retold, and had things added, by ancient Greek mystical groups who had an interest in psychoactive substances. There is a striking similarity between the tale of Jason told by Apollonius, and the plot of PIHKAL.

In the ancient tale, Jason and his crew of fellow "argonauts," sailed to the far off land of Colchis in search of a Golden Fleece that had the power to heal any and all who came into contact with it. Colchis was a land that lay on the "other" side of the world from the familiar land of Greece. In ancient Greek, a way to describe this "other" side of the world where the rules of everyday life no longer hold true is to call it a place of the *antipodes* (literally, "feet opposite"). Aldous Huxley used the word "antipodes" when he was composing his *Doors of Perception*, and *Heaven and Hell*, to describe the states of consciousness engendered by the administration of psychedelic substances [I prefer to spell "psychedelic" correctly as "psychodelic", just because Aldous Huxley

*(continued next page)*

*Phenethylamines I Have Known And Loved: A Chemical Love Story, by Alexander Shulgin and Ann Shulgin; provided by MAPS to all new Supporters and Patrons and for sale from MAPS or from: Transform Press, P. O. Box 13675, Berkeley, CA 94701; (c. 1991) xviii + 978 pages; price: \$18.95 (+ \$4.00 p/h), California residents add \$1.38 tax; ISBN 0-9630096-0-5.*

... acquisition  
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misspelled the word 40 years ago is no reason to perpetuate the error except in the colloquial context of its use in the 60s-70s]. In PIHKAL, we find our modern "Jason" under the *nom de plume*, "Shura," but the adventure is the same whether the tale is set in the past, in the far off land of Colchis, ca. 200 B.C.; or in modern California, ca. 2,000 A.D.. Sasha Shulgin is, in fact, a modern Jason (*Jason* means, literally, "man of drugs"), and the story told by the Shulgins is nothing less than a modern tale of an Argonautic voyage — quite real, and still, quite magical.

Reading PIHKAL is a journey to the antipodes of the mind; the land of Colchis come to life again. The Golden Fleece of Jason, and the phenethylamines of Sasha Shulgin, are one and the same. Both have the power to heal and each is guarded by a dangerous dragon of power. The two tales are further entwined by a common feminine element. The goddess Hera whispered directions in the ear of the ancient Jason that guided his voyage to Colchis. Doubtless, Ann Shulgin whispers feminine wisdom in the ear of our modern Jason that leads him onward in his quest. PIHKAL makes this journey of discovery public and allows each of us to take our seats as fellow Argonauts alongside the Shulgins who pilot us on a new voyage into the unknown. PIHKAL is an astonishing guidebook that reveals a way past the dragon to the

Fleece hidden in Colchis. Any reader who wishes to explore what Aldous Huxley called, "the antipodes of the mind," would do well to read PIHKAL before setting sail on the voyage.

The adventure awaiting the reader in PIHKAL, is divided into two parts. The first part of the book is devoted to the human dimension of the phenethylamine story—what happens to people immediately after they ingest these substances. It is an engaging tale, sometimes tinged with eroticism, of human exploration into worlds of the unknown. The second part is a magnificent storehouse of information (it is, in fact, the most comprehensive compendium on the creation of psychoactive phenethylamine substances ever published, and includes the popular substance, MDMA). This storehouse contains a collection of nearly two hundred chemical formulae that presents in a clear and straightforward manner the molecular structure of each phenethylamine, instructions on the process whereby each is made, and short descriptions of the effects on human subjects. This section will be of great interest to readers with a knowledge of phenethylamine chemistry. Whether readers are attracted more to the first or the second half of PIHKAL, however, the acquisition of the book is a *must* for anyone wishing to follow the adventure of the human spirit as it unfolds through contact with the science of chemistry. ■

MAPS strongly recommends that members consider attending the  
Twelfth International Transpersonal Conference  
to be held in Prague, Czechoslovakia on June 20-25, 1992.

The conference is entitled  
"Science, Spirituality, and the Global Crises:  
Toward a World with a Future."

*Invited presenters include: Stanislav and Christina Grof, Ram Dass, Ralph Metzner, Ivan Havel, Charles Tart, Roger Walsh, Frances Vaughan, David Bohm, John Mack, Rupert Sheldrake, Karl Pribram, Brother David Steindl-Rast, Kenneth Ring, Thomas Roberts, June Singer, Jack Kornfield, Chung Liang Al Huang and others.*

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