

LETTERS TO MAPS...

To MAPS,

GHB an entheogen? Surely you jest! I think you could use a little more reading. The literature is extensive, and GHB is not present. True, it can induce euphoria, but it is addictive, therefore disqualified as a true psychedelic. Plus, why take a substance whose main characteristic is so similar to alcohol? Is alcohol an entheogen? Why not just kill yourself with alcohol? Go back to drug school before you do someone a great disservice.

MAPS and GHB. Who would have guessed? Are you trying to lose credibility? An unrousable coma sounds good to me. It'll really get the creative juices flowing.

Let me know what you think.

— KT

Dear KT,

Thank you for calling this to our attention and granting permission to publish your letter. You are not the only MAPS member to reproach me about reporting on a GHB conference in the *MAPS Bulletin*. I agree with you that GHB is not usually regarded as an entheogen or a psychedelic. It does not produce the classic psychoptic effects or the unveiling of the subconscious. Nevertheless, many GHB users find it valuable for the other traditionally "mind-manifesting" effects they experience from it—increased empathy, sensuality, tactile sensitivity, and appreciation of the senses (hence its nickname "liquid Ecstasy").

GHB's GABA action in the brain does make it similar to alcohol in effect, as you point out. And yet when considering whether or not one might call it an "entheogen" or a "psychedelic," it is interesting to note what William James had to say about alcohol:

The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to Earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth... The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness, and our total opinion of it must find its place in our opinion of that larger whole.

James certainly appears to be describing something that could be considered an entheogen or a psychedelic.

Perhaps because of its similarity to alcohol, anecdotal evidence indicates that GHB may have potential as a treatment for alcoholism. Some find it to be a healthy substitute for alcohol, allowing the user to stimulate his/her GABA receptors without a hangover and without getting drunk. I've seen the same person who becomes violent, self-centered, and destructive on alcohol become happy, loving, and caring on GHB. Some users of psychedelics report that GHB can relieve physical tension when used with LSD or MDMA, and some find it helpful in breaking through emotional barriers in conjunction with these drugs. Others find it helpful as a sleep aid, following the use of a longer-lasting psychedelic. Even if GHB is not itself considered by most to be a psychedelic, its usefulness as an adjunct to psychedelics makes it worth discussing.

With every drug there are unique risks. GHB can be deadly when taken in combination with alcohol. In its undyed liquid form, GHB appears similar to water, which may create the potential for someone to unwittingly dose him- or herself. But the most common concern related to GHB use is probably overdose, as there is a fine line between a nice high and passing out.

GHB can indeed be addictive, as you state. Ketamine can be addictive too, and a few people find their Ecstasy use hard to manage. GHB is capable of inducing an unrousable state of consciousness (although this is *not* technically a "coma"). However, ketamine can also produce an unrousable state of consciousness. Neither the potential for addiction, nor the potential to produce an unrousable state, disqualify a drug from being termed an entheogen or a psychedelic, or from being reported on in the pages of the *Bulletin*.

Labeling a substance as addictive and/or dangerous, and therefore unsuitable for discussion, leaves out part of the story. It's important to remember that misuse, abuse, and addiction are not possible without the user. It is necessary to take personal responsibility and make informed decisions about substance use. Arguing that GHB's risks justify denying its benefits is no different than drug warriors claiming potential risk as reason to criminalize substances like LSD or marijuana.

Hopefully, by presenting information about GHB in the *MAPS Bulletin*, other curious consciousness explorers will be inspired to discover its potentials, debate its psychedelic and therapeutic merit, and expand this ever-growing body of knowledge.

Sincerely,

— Valerie Mojeiko, MAPS

P.S. I would love to go to drug school. Let me know when you find one!

LETTERS TO MAPS...

Dear Rick,

Thank you for your most welcome letter stating your upcoming profile on the ABC evening news, as well as a special later that night. I shall be watching, and I'm sure I'll be enjoying myself.

Since I'm in prison and have no way to earn money, nor will I anytime soon, I'm not able to send you any money. I'm sending you ten U.S. postage stamps to help how I can. I'm sorry that I can send no more.

Your research is yet another positive action that society is often kept in the dark about due to the "taboo" mind-set surrounding drugs that, in reality, can be a very positive addition to aid people in the world. Hopefully, there will be an opening of minds, lifting the veil of fear that all drugs seem to have, unless they are from Eli Lilly, etc. Keep up the good work.

Respectfully,
— Harry Eldridge
a prisoner in the California state penal system

✚

Dear Harry,

Your letter was very moving and your donation of ten stamps was touching, since you have so little and yet are still willing to donate something.

Gratefully,
— Rick Doblin

✚

Hey MAPS,

Great news about the MDMA/PTSD study! Congratulations. What a long battle for something that should be so easy. You are doing an important job. Keep your focus on legalization of marijuana in addition to the other tasks you have assigned yourself. Hope to see you in Mexico at the Mind States conference in September.

— Jerry Dincin, PhD

✚

Dear Rick,

Congratulations! I've been particularly impressed with the reports in the mainstream media about this research and, despite my familiarity with the subject, I've been deeply moved by the reports of MDMA's potential to help treat PTSD. I am very critical and concerned about MDMA's recreational use. However I have the highest regard for your attempts to get past the unreasonable restrictions regarding research and development of MDMA's therapeutic potential. You are performing an important public service and you have my utmost respect and appreciation for your efforts.

Thank you.
— Jon Gettman

✚

Dear MAPS,

I just wanted to write to say thanks for all of your excellent work. I became a MAPS donor when I bought a used copy of Julie Holland's book on MDMA and read in her forward that proceeds of the book were to go to MAPS. I have been tremendously impressed by the depth and breadth of your work on behalf of honesty, scientific integrity, and public health. Please do send me a reminder to donate again in 2004, as I will most certainly do so to the best of my ability. Many thanks.

Best,
— Steven Klein

P.S. Excellent appearance on the Jennings' special as well!

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MAPS: THE ANTI-DRUG? (from a note sent by a new MAPS member)

Another week rolls by, and my financial situation takes a turn for the better (paycheck). I have decided to forego personal exploration, and instead join MAPS. The money I am donating to MAPS, was going to fund a purchase of San Pedro cactus (I am sure you know of this cactus). Instead of buying San Pedro, I will get back into meditation this week.

— Anonymous