

non-pharmacological alternative encouraging holotropic states. What emerged was a powerful method of therapy that utilizes accelerated breath, powerful music, and bodywork to induce non-ordinary states of consciousness.

[6] This method, termed Holotropic Breathwork, has since offered thousands access to the healing potential of these profound states of experiences.

Aside from co-developing Holotropic Breathwork and its certificate training program, Christina has advanced her own experiences and theoretical understanding of psychospiritual development, in particular explaining and developing the concept of “spiritual emergency.” She notes that personal transformation can occasionally take the form of a crisis, wherein effective therapy requires attention to the transpersonal aspects of human experience. She founded the Spiritual Emergency Network (SEN), a worldwide organization that supports individuals encountering these challenging experiences. [7]

Stan and Christina Grof have helped create a more integrated psychology and enhanced our vision of human potential. Their work with non-ordinary states of consciousness has expanded the field of scientific study and revealed the incredible healing potential of psychedelic and holotropic experiences. The worldwide renewal of interest in psychedelic research is the legacy of their own half century of commitment to charting a new cartography of the psyche. •

NOTES

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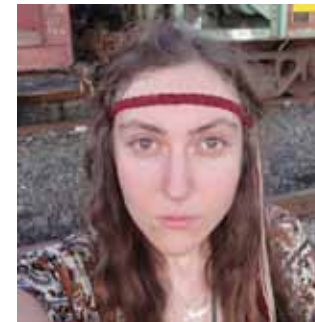
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A Declaration of Psychedelic Studies:

Psychedelic Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences

By Neşe Lisa Şenol



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AT THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY, the social sciences and humanities need to work in concert with recent medical advances to address a subject that defies standard disciplinary boundaries. I propose the inauguration of Psychedelic Studies as an interdisciplinary academic field, and I would like to do this by building on lessons learned from the earlier academic revolution known as “queer studies.”

Due to pervasive cultural and legal taboos against psychedelics, I thought my intellectual interests had to remain unspoken. It was only after I found out about the scientific psychedelic renaissance that I realized there was a community of scholars working openly on these subjects. I decided to plug in, and to come out of the closet. This is a common experience among those who for the first time find a community where they can speak openly about their interests.

Scholar David M. Halperin defines queer as “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant.” Psychedelic culture is, properly speaking, queer. Some may take issue with this connection, arguing that while queer or alternative sexuality is an essential or natural state the use of psychedelics for personal or therapeutic purposes is a choice. Some may also claim that queer culture is more demonized by society and the state than psychedelic culture, and that therefore queerness and psychedelics require distinct scholarly approaches.

But these common reactions reveal a slippery slope: To claim that queer identity or culture are somehow deeper or more essential to our humanity than psychedelic identity or culture undermines the very rights that queer theorists and activists want to promote. It is counterproductive to argue that some forms of oppression are more egregious than others. Is there not strong state and social repression against the use of or interest in psychedelics? Many view their psychedelic identities, interests, or religious views as inherent to who they are. Queer studies is largely about the

“queering” of identity and consciousness relative to the norm, suggesting the importance of working collectively to support the validity of all forms of identification.

The time is ripe for a genuinely interdisciplinary field of investigation into psychedelics and their correlative cultural roles to come to fruition. Scientific discourse, while serving a distinct and timely purpose, is by nature unable to exhaust the psychedelic question. The findings of multiple fields and methodologies can be mutually informative, enriching the overall possibilities for the production of knowledge. At a premier screening of *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*, pioneering psychedelic researcher Dr. Rick Strassman remarked: “How to explicate the full meaning...of the psychedelic experience...? I think it has to be as multidisciplinary a pursuit as possible, because the full psychedelic experience impacts on everything—it impacts on art, anthropology, music, religion, cosmology, physics, psychology, cognitive sciences, chemistry, everything...We don’t want to overextend one discipline at the expense of the other[s].”

As visionary artist Alex Grey expressed during the same event, “Now, with the gifts of science and scientific research, serious interest is again making it legally possible to discuss these matters.” But this fortuitous resurgence of activity and attention demands a chorus of new voices, new models, and new approaches.

There is a growing community of younger scholars who are actively focusing their academic work on this field. In January 2011, MAPS announced to attendees of their April 2010 conference “Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century” that they would be sponsoring a new listserv for graduate students actively working or writing on some aspect of psychedelic culture, use, practice, or theory. This announcement was significant both for psychedelic studies in particular and for academia at large, which aspires to but frequently falls short of realizing genuinely interdisciplinary work.

My personal contribution to this movement lies at the intersection of literature, philosophy, comparative religion, and art history, and I cite psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna as my immediate forebear.

In April 2011, I presented a paper on the concept of “hyperspace” in the context of the dimethyltryptamine (DMT) experience. Since the DMT experience is notoriously difficult to integrate into the terms of mainstream “consensus reality,” the emergent concept of hyperspace has enabled participants in the field to articulate and co-create an alternative worldview. In addition to its sociological function, I discovered in researching the term that its etymology has a rich and interdisciplinary history. The term “hyperspace” emerged out of the specialized context of mid-19th-century analytic geometry, and would subsequently circulate extensively amongst avant-garde artistic and spiritualist circles.

In the humanities and social sciences, establishing a historical canon of artists who define their work as hyperspatial or interdimensional creates a concrete context for further investigations. It establishes and defines an aesthetic tradition within which one can include artists ranging from William Blake to the cubists to the visionary painters of the modern day. It also provides a venue for discussing experiences that are related but external to the current reaches of direct scientific inquiry. The concept of hyperspatial art and experience is just one example of the manifold ways that psychedelic

discourse pertains and responds to questions of philosophy, creativity, imagination, religion, culture, and language. The crucial step now is to bring these conversations into the open.

One necessary component of this opening-up process involves developing critical rationales and precedents for investigating issues like multidimensionality within a mainstream academic conversation. Thought experiments, acknowledged as such, could be encouraged rather than taboo. Dr. Strassman himself has recognized how such experiments can be deeply intellectually valuable: “The only explanatory model that held itself out as the most intuitively satisfying, yet the most theoretically treacherous, involved assigning a parallel level of reality to these [DMT] experiences. In other words, I engaged in a thought experiment.”

If we are able to remain unattached to the particularities (and eccentricities) of such thought experiments, they can help us to overcome the anachronistic privileging of what we can see over what we cannot see. In the words of Terence McKenna, “I would prefer a kind of intellectual anarchy where whatever was pragmatically applicable was brought to bear on any situation; where belief was understood as a self-limiting function.” Alien intelligence and vine spirits are ideas that can be played with in ways that don’t need to be universally agreed upon as “true” or “real” to have intellectual significance.

Anthropology may be the key to opening up a space for psychedelic studies in the university, and may even be partly responsible for the resurgence of scientific interest in these substances. Strassman has pointed this out with exceptional clarity: “Within traditional Western academic settings, anthropology is the field that has focused attention on psychedelic plant use and the role of these plants in the societies that use them. More than any other field, it has maintained the flame of interest in these plants and drugs over several hundred years of Western suppression of all information about them.”

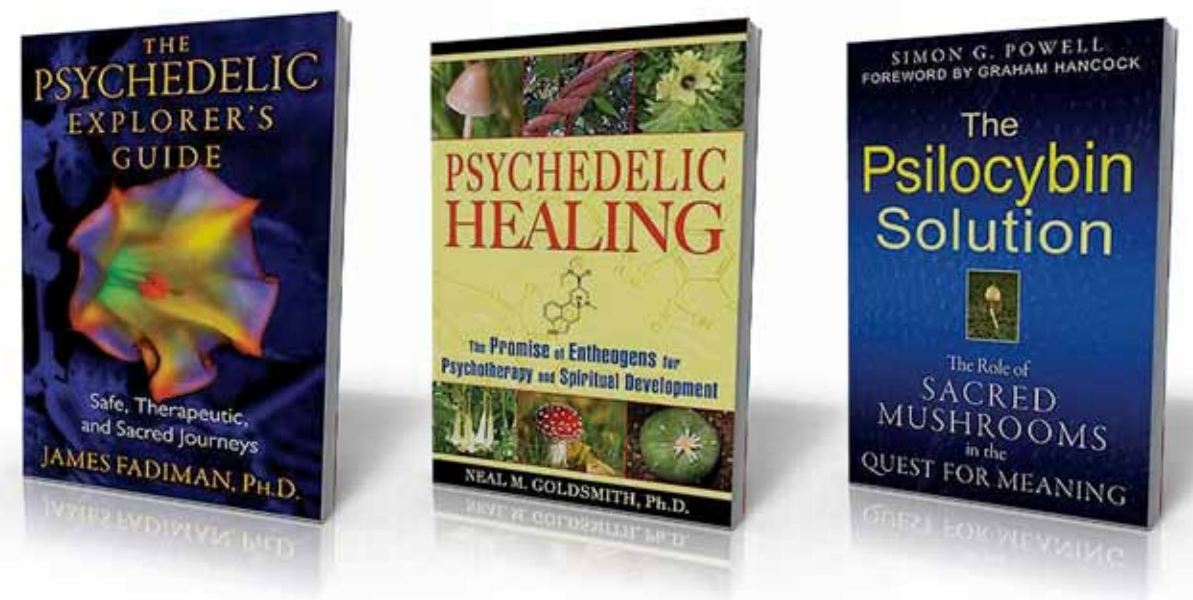
The fields of psychiatry, clinical psychology, and the neurosciences are bringing psychedelics back into the modern Western imagination, and the social sciences can play a powerful role in this ongoing evolution. It is time for the academic iron curtain to fall. I hereby inaugurate Psychedelic Studies as a post-disciplinary field. Let the games begin. •

NOTES

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Exploring Psychedelic Healing:

Three New Book Reviews by David Jay Brown

The Psychedelic Explorer’s Guide: Safe, Therapeutic, and Sacred Journeys
James Fadiman, Ph.D.
Park Street Press, 2011, paperback, 338 pages,
\$18.95

I’ve been waiting years for someone with the proper qualifications to come along and write this book. Hands down, this is the very best guide that exists on how to prepare for a safe and therapeutic psychedelic journey, with positive psychological transformation as one’s goal. It is the most important book written on the subject since *The Psychedelic Experience*—Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, and Ralph Metzner’s classic adaptation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which was published in 1964.

Before psychologist James Fadiman’s book, this was a subject that desperately needed attention by someone who really understands what psychedelics can do to (and for) the human mind. Fadiman reviews the necessary precautions and proper techniques for a beneficial journey in a straightforward manner. Drawing from his own personal experience as a psychedelic researcher, he presents the fascinating results from his clinical studies into how psychedelics can enhance creativity and improve problem-solving abilities, in the context of a clearly-explained guidebook.

The Psychedelic Explorer’s Guide can be used as a training and reference manual by professionals

in the blossoming field of psychedelic psychotherapy research, as well as by outlaw shamans who defy government regulations to engage in illegal forms of self-exploration. Anyone interested in the subject for educational purposes will find this book hard to put down. This comprehensive volume is simply overflowing with rare, valuable, and well-organized information about how to get the most from a psychedelic experience.

Invaluable for dispelling the many myths and misconceptions associated with this controversial subject, this jam-packed volume provides essential guidelines for the conduct of psychedelic sessions, and presents little-known techniques for using sub-perceptual doses to improve mental functioning, along with new information from surveys, clinical studies, group sessions, and personal anecdotes. This book is absolutely essential reading for anyone interested in the subject.

Psychedelic Healing: The Promise of Entheogens for Psychotherapy and Spiritual Development
Neal M. Goldsmith, Ph.D.
Healing Arts Press, 2011, paperback,
236 pages, \$16.95

Psychedelic Healing is a wonderful summary of what we have learned from psychedelic psychotherapy research, and of where the explosive renaissance with all these fascinating