GATHERING OF THE MINDS

It's been a long time since those pioneering drug days when drugs weren't so hard to find and psychedelic adventures were not only common but the happening thing, both hip young adults and medical researchers. Out of those wild times in the LSD days of the 1960's was born a "psychic meditation" movement which among other things has giving reality to the idea of controlled visions and other techniques. Psychonauts pondered the purpose of the endogenous substances in human evolution complete with such lofty formula as Leary's SMILE (Space Migration, Intelligence, Love, Extension). Since those seemingly ancient times the private and sometimes public research has continued, but each new answer is really only a new discovery, raising new and more questions. The 60's seem to be bringing about a new wave of interest in these tools, the realization that psychedelic interest has proved a pathway to a basically human condition, space migration is indeed underway into other dimensional places and tangible worlds. If this first psychedelic generation was LSD, then the enthusiasm towards a new generation is driven by the help of new and rediscovered plant derived chemical substances, a lysergic based fuel, in particular by Ayahuasca and its many analogs.

This spring a very important event occurred that firmly stamped the importance of the renewal of this "philosophic" esoteric interest...this was the "Gathering of Minds", a psychedelic symposium sponsored by Chapman University and Psychedelic Illuminations Magazine. You might expect something like this to be as pathetic as a Sex Mobile reunion, but no chance. In the years since the psychedelic movement had firmly underground many new discoveries have been made--not only in the substances themselves but with their interactions with the human nervous system as well as with the environment, the body and the alchemical effects of long established drugs. A lot of data has been collected since those early days, and its reduction is starting to make some sense. And a lot of researchers who eschatologically had its sometimes surprising directions.

I went to this symposium without really knowing what to expect. On one hand the schedule read like I could be in for a boring scientific school lecture devoid of the color I've come to expect in this field, on the other hand I didn't want to see an old hippie reunion. Fortunately, it was neither of these. In fact, the talks were so good I almost had to leave! The old and new researchers all got together with fun and enthusiasm to give us interesting talks and workshops full of new knowledge and understanding. The presentations, then, were truly the shining stars of the event.

This event started at 9:00 AM, and since I was at a different school, I missed the first few talks. That was a drag because I really wanted to hear the "Psychic Shamanism" panel. This panel was typical of how well the people were selected to represent groups for this topic. The one consisted of some of the older psychedelic icons like Peter Stafford and Bruce Eisner and the younger generation of prolific writers such as Jim DeKornean and Jonathan Ott. Naturally I heard this was a great discussion and I'd like to get the audio tape of it someday.

The first lecture I listened to was a very rousing talk by Ram Das. He packed the largest lecture hall with an audience of all types of people--a colorful, hip, talkative audience. The response to his invitation to "live awake" was fantastic and set me in a very positive and enthusiastic mood. I am very eager to see and hear everything everybody had to say.

After the talk we headed out to the courtyard for lunch. I met Jonathan Ott signing books on the front steps. Mr. Ott recently put out his fantastic "Pharmaceuticals", a very concise and exhaustive work on plant anthemoplasts. A definite milestone in this science. There is a need to be evidence to indicate this new movement in psychedelic interest, this book along with Shugart's "Phyto" published in 1975 would easily define a revolution that's not even getting into the importance of Psychedelic Illuminations magazine. Mr. Ott also has other books, both of McKenna's recent publications and others... Anyway, Jonathan was friendly and talkative and had his new Ayahuasca Analog book there for sale. I would have bought one and signed it if I had already bought it. I heard about it the minute I heard about it. This could be the book to take over the book to empower the people with actually legally obtainable psychedelic substances, and bring about changes in the status of trying to make some states of mind illegal. In this book, Jonathan describes his experiments not only with traditional Ayahuasca, but with analogs made from temperate zone plants--some commonly growing in the United States--in order to confirm their effectiveness. If you've ever experimented with psychedelic drugs, then I highly recommend this book as I feel this particular route to the psychedelic experience will be the method of the future. In this book, Jonathan describes his experiments not only with traditional Ayahuasca, but with analogs made from temperate zone plants--some commonly growing in the United States--in order to confirm their effectiveness. If you've ever experimented with psychedelic drugs, then I highly recommend this book as I feel this particular route to the psychedelic experience will be the method of the future. I was really interested in the newly discovered plants that these two men have taken since their days together at Harvard. Mr. Metzner has a very worthwhile holistic view of our environment and it's connection with psychedelics and religion. He believes that nature is a part of religion, and that the psychedelic religions like Naturism are the right way of thinking. He stressed how harmful psychedelic use is in South America where rare, endangered plants are being virtually cleared to extinction. The cultures of these regions are also being endangered.

Metzner's talk was very natural and ended in a panel discussion around ecology and radical ecology. The panel members were very sharp and went into some depth on the topics that Metzner brought up. After a visit to the smart drink bar and a nice cold turkey-sang at the ready for the next

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to wait for. Old did make another wonderful point when asked what he thought of "Church" people claiming that the psychedelic experience is not a real religious experience the way receiving Christ is. He responded that it is quite the opposite. The Catholic Church uses a placebo scenario that requires your faith whereas the mushroom experience is with a real sacrament and gives you faith. A very inter-

The sun had set by now and on the way back to the main building for a Dennis McKenna talk I ran into Alexander Shulgin himself. Wow, he was as friendly as ever and kind of goofy and quiet and although he was not officially speaking in any panels he said he was just down here "to hang out and see what's going on." He told me he was at the California Games another year, and that Pihkal itself has sold very well and has already gone into a re-printing. I sure wish he was taking my offer for him to give me to death for like six hours straight. Maybe someday, we can only hope. Apparently he doesn't do many public appearances anymore, but he seemed like a nice enough, charming old guy.

Well, Dennis McKenna was up with the introduction of Tim Leary's brother much to the delight of the audience. We went on and our "special" evening project was with the Hoffmann Research Institute, in particular the Huasca Project in the Peruvian Amazon. It was indeed very interesting, but quite lengthy for the talks to end with the start of the research panel discussing the shifting tides of American psychedelic research. Griffith said I was burning out by now, as much as I love was just saturated. The panelists spent like an hour introducing themselves. I mean, they have every right to be losing states of mind to talk about all this and I smiled a bit considering I'd been here all day and I already knew who these people were. But whatever: I did learn about new research with mescaline and some that is usually known by the FDOA. Yes, as amazing as that sounds. When they finally got to the questions, I think I hit that I'm a keeper. For some women asked why there was only one female on the panel and wasn't there some sexism in the psychedelic movement. The precise was much simpler and the panelist, who each took turns fumbling for their questions to her, I mean it's a very good question, but what the fuck know I wanted to hear the latest on chopping XTC with Prozac, ya know?

Well, as Moses offered me to Tim Leary the hall as he was leaving and he took the people his Retrospecta entourage. I said for Tim and shook his hand and he responded like he actually remembered. I'm real though. Then the office where only Leary and probably did something weird. Needless to say, I didn't stay for his set. I've seen his demo with Retrospecta and their video "Hilary," and his just wasn't the place for me to enjoy it. Following him was gonna be a Multi Media Techno Rave. Same with Leary's rather mediocre, but I was burnt and no amount of smart drugs could save me.

The whole event was like a mind boggling success; I think my head spin all the way home. We gotta hand it to the people who put this on, as well as the participants, because their continued dedication and undying spirit has kept the trend alive. I think that everyone there got the point that many seeds were planted that will carry this on in the future. Very inspiring, I never thought I'd be part of a church group before.

For more on Psychedelic Drugs and everything involved the best one stop source for information is Psychedelic Illuminations Magazine, POB 3168, Fullerton CA 92634