

**Goodbye the religious paradigm:  
Address to the Heidelberg Conference by Daniel Waterman © 2008 Ed. Casey  
William Hardison.**

**Preamble:**

‘Minds are like parachutes, they only function when they are open’<sup>1</sup>

Customarily, we attempt to maintain some consistency in our explanations of why we do what we do, or why things happen. Frequently we are so identified with our explanations that any challenge to them is taken as a personal affront and is consequently met with denial, fear, or even outright hostility. Consequently, terms such as reality or truth cannot be understood without accounting for their subjectivity. In this sense it is appropriate to think of reality as a creation of the mind. It is no coincidence that this conclusion is echoed in many spiritual traditions. It is found in the concept of ‘mundo d’illusão’ (meaning ‘world of illusion’ —Santo Daime<sup>2</sup>) and the Hindu concept of Maya. In Buddhism, perceived reality is considered by some as illusory, not in the sense that reality is a fantasy but in the sense that our perceptions are preconditioned by expectations. This notion resonates with the most advanced theoretical physics of our day. The behaviour of tiny quantum particles appears to be influenced by observation, so that their behaviour is unpredictable and can only be expressed in probabilities. The notion of the mind as a co-creator of reality is more than an interesting theory. It is a powerful and relevant concept in contemporary sciences, especially those concerned with the study of consciousness and human behaviour. It is also analogous to many social and political theories. (Change you head and the rest will come after) The reason why I mention it here is because it is a notion that is promoted in New Age thought, and therefore one that has been popularised to the point of becoming meaningless. At the same time however, it is an extremely relevant notion when we encounter apparently insurmountable obstacles, such as moral condemnation. I therefore embrace this concept as a powerful way to examine the problem of procuring legal sanction for the use of entheogens.<sup>3</sup>

The central theme of this paper is power: what is it and where does it come from? The French philosopher Michel Foucault described power as a property of language, or (more specifically) as a property of discourses. As a correlate of the individual’s internal dialogue,

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Robert Dewar (1864 – 1930)

<sup>2</sup> Hino: 20. Santo Daime, Cura: ‘Sou filho da verdade, Mas não querem me escutar, O mundo de ilusão, Como é que vai ficar.’

<sup>3</sup> The definition transformation refers to the ‘creation of an entirely new realm of possibilities’. It was borrowed from the Landmark Education course, where it is used to distinguish transformation from ‘change’. A necessary prerequisite of transformation is the abandonment of ‘rackets’, unproductive way of being or acting that include a complaint that something shouldn’t be the way it is. Often, we don’t notice that while our complaints may seem justified, even legitimate, there is a certain payoff – some advantage or benefit we are receiving that reinforces a cycle of behavior. By recognizing this pattern, its costs, and how we have been keeping the pattern in place, we have the choice to interrupt the cycle and discover new ways of being, and new possibilities.

[http://www.landmarkededucation.com/landmark\\_forum\\_course\\_syllabus.jsp](http://www.landmarkededucation.com/landmark_forum_course_syllabus.jsp)

which creates and maintains a subjective reality, 'social realities' reflect the power of discourses at work in society.<sup>4</sup>

While the view that we are somehow authors of 'our own reality' lends itself to all kinds of unpleasant moralising, (i.e. that you deserve what you get) it can conversely be considered as an empowering affirmation of the individual's power to initiate transformation. When we add Foucault's theory of the power of discourses to this equation, it becomes apparent that entire societies can be transformed by discourses. Foucault sees power as emanating from every participant in discourses, from the humblest cabôclo in the Amazonian rainforest to the highest ranks of academia and political power. In this vision, nobody owns or controls power. Instead, power is leased by the continued renewal of dominant discourses such as those relating to what we believe to be true, worthy or moral, etc.

A point I would like to explore in this paper is that discourses concerning entheogenic experiences, healing and spirituality touch on issues that are fundamental to the exercise of authority. The globalisation of such discourses therefore provides an excellent opportunity to question certain policies, such as the 'War on Drugs', which is at present the primary justification for attitudes concerning entheogens. With this in mind, I will 'deconstruct' the paradigm of 'religious thinking' currently dominating the legal debate of entheogens and psychedelics. This is not an attempt to deny the importance of personal experiences of the sacred, (or for that matter the liberty implicit in the notion of 'religious freedom') but to define a common currency, a 'neutral' language that is free of the value statements, covert meanings and moral distinctions that presently characterise the debate of these subjects and distract from the underlying existential questions. In doing so, I believe it is possible to effect a re-balancing of the power inherent in social attitudes concerning the use of entheogens. I propose that this is actually possible and that it is high time we did so. I also believe wholeheartedly that the convergence of scientific studies, philosophical and ethical themes in this subject is evidence of the emergence of a new and powerful 'realm of possibilities' with regards to spirituality.

Transformation is imminent in Foucault's notion of discourse; in fact, transformations can be set in motion by a very small number of people, sometimes even a single person like

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault's concept of Power in the History of Sexuality (pp. 92-93) 'Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization: as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.' '[An understanding of power] must not be sought in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the later are always local and unstable... Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "Power," insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement ...power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.' (accessed online 1-6-'08 wikipedia.org)

Nelson Mandela,<sup>5</sup> or the Dalai Lama<sup>6</sup> whose ideas have a strong appeal, transforming the dominant discourses and forcing powerful political leaders to adopt language and ideas they would rather avoid. More importantly, some discourses can set in motion peaceful transformations, simply by their transcendence of diametrically opposite views. I will now try to connect these concepts of power and transformation to the topic of religious freedom.

In many respects, we might say the debate of religion has been grounded within a Newtonian paradigm, a way of thinking about the physical foundations of reality that is more or less consistent with the way we experience the world on a day-to-day basis. In the Newtonian universe religion has been consigned to the realm of metaphysics. We no longer base political decisions on religious preferences, (or so we think). But, as some of you may know, we no longer live in a Newtonian universe; we live in a quantum universe in which physical matter is no longer confined in terms of locality, where particles can move freely and instantaneously from one state to another or exist in several locations at the same time. In this new paradigm, events are expressed in terms of probability and relativity rather than as certainties.

Many people see this change in the way scientists view the world as a vindication of esoteric theories. A whole range of New Age literature is dedicated to drawing parallels between string theory and phenomena such as ESP.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not quantum theory will ever prove a sound basis for understanding the concept of the 'soul' or the healing power of prayer, it certainly appears to present new ways of thinking about a lot of problems that cannot be resolved by conventional 'Newtonian' science. Thus the 'uncertainty' of quantum phenomena is in some respects analogous to a new way of thinking in which terms such as 'truth' or 'reality' are considered relative and ambiguous. The quantum paradigm invites us to engage in a new type of dialogue, no longer based on *is-ness*<sup>8</sup>, on fact statements, universal truths or moral distinctions. In my opinion this opens up a new realm of possibilities with regards to the legal debate of the 'religious' use of entheogens. The definition religion as it is used in this context is mired in ideological problems, making serious dialogue on the subject

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<sup>5</sup> Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. Nelson Mandela in his inauguration speech, originally written by Marianne Williamson.

<sup>6</sup> With the ever-growing impact of science on our lives, religion and spirituality have a greater role to play reminding us of our humanity. There is no contradiction between the two. Each gives us valuable insights into the other. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, University Aula, Oslo, 10 December 1989

<sup>7</sup> Lynne McTaggart, 'The Field: The Quest For The Secret Force Of The Universe' The Field creates a picture of an interconnected universe and a new scientific theory which makes sense of supernatural phenomena. It offers a scientific explanation for many of the most profound human mysteries, from alternative medicine and spiritual healing to extra sensory perception and the collective unconscious. It could even answer some of the big questions: what is human consciousness and what happens when we die.

<sup>8</sup> Quantum Psychology: How Brain Software Programs You and Your World (Paperback) by Robert Anton Wilson New Falcon Publications; 2Rev Ed edition (June 1990)

very difficult, and hence problematic for legislators. By ridding ourselves of the ambiguity and morality of religious language, we can avoid polemic and actively seek agreement on issues that are perhaps fundamental to understanding the function of religion. A more immediate benefit however, is the understanding that modern concepts of spirituality, altered states of mind and intoxication are inherently moralistic. The distinctions we use to discuss these themes are fundamentally flawed, both in terms of their pragmatic functionality (e.g. in harm reduction), and from a theological standpoint, since they are extremely superficial. If legal and political authorities bear a responsibility for understanding and implementing ethical principles and humanitarian values, so do individuals. We can easily transform the discourse concerning entheogens by refusing to use the divisive and misleading language of moral distinctions, and emphasising the primacy of principles and values instead.

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The recent outcome of several legal hearings<sup>9</sup> into the religious use of psychoactive substances has transformed the paradigm against which the debate of entheogens and psychedelics is unfolding.<sup>10</sup> However, the success of the religious freedom argument is deceptive, easily reversible and it is a concession to outdated and eroded principles: i.e. religious 'faith', and personal privacy<sup>11</sup>. Defining entheogenic practices as religious reveals an underlying conflict within modern definitions of spirituality that serious examinations cannot afford to ignore.

Religious freedom is simply one out of a long list of rights currently encroached on by the forces of global free marketeering, including freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of conscience, freedom of self-determination, and cognitive freedom. The religious freedom argument forces those referring to it to define themselves according to the conflicted moral standards of the dominant majority, standards that are seriously flawed. I question the wisdom of using them, before we are able to define (for the benefit of a broader public) what makes our 'religious beliefs' so worthy of protection.

Research of entheogenic experiences suggests that religious/mystical experiences can be understood in terms of their biographical, psychological, biological and neurological origins. This emergent consensus on the relevance of these experiences to concepts of what it means to be human is informed by a growing variety of empirical studies. This means that for the first time in our history, an understanding of spirituality can be included in a comprehensive understanding of human development. Such an understanding has important legal, ethical, philosophical, social and political ramifications. One of these is that entheogenic practices

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<sup>9</sup> Santo Daime versus the Netherlands in 2001, and Gonzales versus União do Vegetal in the US in 2006. These transformations are mirrored by recent Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) approval for scientific studies of MDMA in the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Swiss research into the use of LSD in palliative care, and a well-publicised Johns Hopkins study of Psilocybin and mystical experiences, to name but a few.

<sup>10</sup> It has done so, by extending the concept of religious freedom encapsulated in the US Constitution and ECHR to include the use of entheogenic (psychoactive) sacraments. In effects, some authorities have been forced to either acknowledge the limits of their authority in private matters, or to concede that there are legitimate uses for 'hallucinogens' and that there exists a relationship between spirituality and altered states of mind.

<sup>11</sup> The right to 'bear arms' is one example of a conflict between personal liberty and the common interest of security. Exactly where to draw the line between liberty and the common good is a complex question, and authorities clearly have difficulty determining the boundary.

are fundamentally *different* from the religious traditions of the past, (or at least contemporary and ‘popular’ understandings of those traditions) whose fundamental ‘truths’ could not be questioned but were instead to be accepted on authority.

It is appropriate that we consider how a religious interpretation of entheogenic practices affects their legal status as well as their socio-political relevance. The purpose of this examination is to reveal the arbitrariness of religious distinctions, such as the moral distinctions that currently dominate the discussion of psychedelics, drugs and intoxication. These distinctions have no foundation in physical reality.

*The distinction between legal and illegal substances is not unequivocally based on pharmacology, economic or risk benefit analysis. It is also based in large part on historical and cultural precedents.*<sup>12</sup>

A classification system that applied to all psychoactive substances would have to include alcohol and tobacco and would be unacceptable to the majority of people who use these substances responsibly. To drive home this point, I give you a quote from Richard Rorty, in which the author attacks the notion that such arbitrary distinctions exist anywhere else than the human mind:

*We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own unaided by the describing activities of human beings cannot. The suggestion that truth, as well as the world, is out there is a legacy of an age in which the world was seen as the creation of a being who had a language of his own. [...] If one clings to the notion of self-subsistent facts, it is easy to start capitalizing the word "truth" and treating it as something identical either with God or with the world as God's project.*<sup>13</sup>

To avoid using these distinctions (which frequently lead to intractable differences), recent legal hearings into the use of entheogens have relied on the principle of religious freedom. In the US for instance, the Sherbert test requires authorities to demonstrate a ‘compelling interest’ in burdening religious freedom. While the outcome of this approach has led to the affirmation of religious freedom, the enquiry is highly unsatisfactory in its failure to address the beliefs and insights underpinning the ‘religious’ use of entheogens. The law is strangely silent on the issue of what ‘religion’ is supposed to be or accomplish; just what the definition ‘religious freedom’ means is therefore open to interpretation. As we shall see, this is because religious beliefs are relegated to the realm of private matters in the hope of preventing their unwanted interference in the social/political sphere.

An important motive for abandoning the religious freedom argument is that it deprives us of an opportunity to contribute anything meaningful on exactly this issue. By defining the

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<sup>12</sup> Command Paper, Cm 6941, The Government Reply to the Fifth Report from the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee Session 2005-06 HC 1031 Drug classification: making a hash of it? (accessed online 2-06-2008: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm69/6941/6941.pdf>)

<sup>13</sup> Richard Rorty: ‘Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.’ Cambridge University Press, 1989.

use of entheogens as 'religious', our insights are reduced to the status of beliefs, without any psychological, social or political relevance, and without any empirical foundations.

The various theoretical frameworks which fit entheogenic and psychedelic experiences suggest that they are inherently healing practices, which operate at a fundamental level where experience, memory, awareness and health intersect, producing profound moral and ethical insights. On the basis of general physiological effects<sup>14</sup> we may assume that all entheogenic traditions have recognized entheogens as tools for healing, reconciliation and above all as instruments offering profound insights into the meaning of life. However, in the West entheogens have been heralded by some as tools of 'metanoia',<sup>15</sup> interpreted in theological discussion as repentance, but in a more positive sense as referring to the healing of a cultural division separating man from nature, the sacred and God.

It follows that these traditions cannot be understood outside of an understanding of their relevance to the whole community. The marginal significance of spirituality in modern politics —that is to say the lack of a spiritual perspective in the way we organize society-, is a direct consequence of the lack of a meaningful and unifying vision of this type. The voice of spirituality has effectively been silenced through its association with the truth statements of religion. The apparently irreconcilable differences between the scientific/rational worldview and spiritual perspectives arise from the assumption, —even insistence-, that the latter belong *entirely* to the private realm.

Secularism allows different world-views to coexist, but it also seeks to limit their sphere of influence to the private domain thus preventing their interference with politics. Yet secularism is not without its own 'religious' assumptions. The arbitrariness of the distinctions that currently apply to psychoactive drugs is a case in point, revealing that the secular ideal is not impartial and objective, but deeply committed to an ideological agenda of its own. The 'War on Drugs' is *'a direct descendant of the dogmatism that the Renaissance Catholic Church evolved over the centuries, and then used as a tool to legitimate its political goals during the Age of Exploration.'*<sup>16</sup> Entheogenic practices offer a comprehensive understanding of the global crisis in terms of a hopeful, positive and liberating paradigm of what it means to be a human being. It is therefore an understanding with great relevance for all mankind, not limited to those of us who use entheogens.

### Conclusion;

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<sup>14</sup> One 'general physiological effect' common to almost all entheogenic experiences is an experience of ego-dissolution. This 'effect' is recognized across cultures, it is a core principle in shamanic traditions incorporating the use of entheogenic sacraments, and is also recognized by traditions that do not use such means. The 'healing' aspect of the confrontation with death and spiritual re-birth is therefore general as well. It is not surprising that profound moral significance is attached to the experience in all cultures. Therefore it is possible to understand the healing produced by the resolution of feelings about death as more than a personal matter; in cultures where initiation of death and re-birth is actively promoted the practices are seen as a valuable means of instilling a sense of the sacred and a sense of social responsibility.

<sup>15</sup> In the psychological theory of Carl Jung, metanoia denotes a process of reforming the psyche as a form of self-healing, a proposed explanation for the phenomenon of psychotic breakdown. Here, metanoia is viewed as a potentially productive process, and therefore patients' psychotic episodes are not necessarily always to be thwarted, which may restabilize the patients but without resolving the underlying issues causing their psychopathology.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Webster: Prohibition: Its Roots and Bitter Fruit' a lecture presented at ENCOD's Drug Peace Conference a counter-event to the annual meeting of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs Vienna, 7-9 March 2008

The philosopher Govert Derix<sup>17</sup> has suggested an interpretation of the term ‘religion’ based on the Latin prefix re- combined with ligare, to bind or connect.<sup>18</sup> To explain what this means I draw on indigenous tradition as well as psychology;

Theologian Paul Tillich and the psychologist Sigmund Freud both characterized anxiety as a response to the realization that there is a point at which the individual will die. They both concluded that religion is a coping mechanism to deal with the anxiety of death. In the face of this anxiety Viktor Frankl suggested that the most basic of all human wishes is to find a meaning of life. Existential angst prevents those conditioned by trauma from discovering this meaning within. Such individuals are constantly in need of reassurance and forever seek it outside themselves. Clearly various institutions actually benefit from the resulting insecurity. I quote from Alice Miller:

*It is the tragedy of well-raised people that they are unaware as adults of what was done to them and what they do themselves if they were not allowed to be aware as children. Countless institutions in our society profit from this fact, and not least among them are totalitarian regimes. [...] Conditioning and manipulation of others are always weapons and instruments in the hands of those in power even if these weapons are disguised with the terms education and therapeutic treatment. Since one's use and abuse of power over others usually have the function of holding one's own feelings of helplessness in check, which means the exercise of power is often unconsciously motivated, rational arguments can do nothing to impede this process.<sup>19</sup>*

According to this theory, a neglected function of religion is the restoration of the individual's confidence in himself, for it is this confidence that is the *de facto* basis of self-knowledge, and therefore, of social con-science. This is not only a private matter:

*'Achieving con-sciousness, from the Latin con (with) and scire (to know), is the central activity of human knowledge. At the heart of the word is a concept of mutuality, knowing with others.'<sup>20</sup>*

This implies that the restoration of the autonomy of the individual is a necessary step towards restoring the integrity of communities. In other words: reconnecting to the ‘divine within’ (as suggested by the term ‘entheogen’) is a preliminary to repairing the bonds of trust and mutual respect in the broader community. This understanding is consistent with psychological theories, with Buddhist views, and with humanist ethics. However, it is a conclusion that contrasts sharply with the views promoted by monotheism and other authoritarian systems expounding the virtues of one ‘truth’, one ‘reality’, one leader, or one ‘God’. Such views deny the autonomy and inherent wisdom (God-likeness) of the individual.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Govert H. M. Derix: ‘Ayahuasca: Een kritiek van de psychedelische rede’, Amsterdam, de Arbeiderspers (2004)

<sup>18</sup> Govert H. M. Derix: ‘De god in jezelf: De openbaring van het entheogene’ lecture given at: De drie ringen, 11 may 2006

<sup>19</sup> Alice Miller, ‘For your own good: The roots of violence in Child-rearing’ (London: Virago Press) 1987

<sup>20</sup> ‘Music And Altered States: Consciousness, Transcendence, Therapy And Addictions,’ David Aldridge & Jorg Fachner editors (Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2005)

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 1:26 ‘And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’

Many people are unable or unwilling to make the distinction of 'reality' and 'truth' as relative and subjective states. With non-ordinary states of consciousness however, the question is paramount. The most reliable way to resolve this problem is to consider it a question of priorities. It is here that I believe that one agreement is vastly more useful than any number of moral distinctions: liberty, self-determination, privacy, freedom of thought and conscience engender respect and peaceful cooperation. They do so, not because they represent a law of nature, but because they are agreements that respect the individuals autonomy within a community. I quote Hillel:

*That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn.*<sup>22</sup>

The principle of liberty (in all its many forms) is an interest we share with the rest of society. Moreover it is both a condition and goal of the spiritual inquiry per se. It follows that a commitment to the principle of liberty will greatly benefit those seeking recognition from a broader community. Many new religious groups appear to be grappling with the 'problem' of individuality, which they falsely interpret as a problem of ego. This subject is too complex to introduce here at the end of this reading, save to mention briefly that the question of individuality is falsely represented as incompatible with spirituality. On the contrary, I believe that individuality is the foundation of autonomy in the spiritual quest. It is this individuality that is denied by the imposition of conformity and by the denial of creative and personal aspects of spirituality, whether it is through the imposition of religious dogma or consumer values. This question of authority is therefore central to the spiritual quest, as well as the political quest for a way to govern society that leaves the individual the maximum freedom to live according to the dictates of his conscience. The one cannot exist without the other.

These issues unite the cause of spirituality with that of human rights groups committed to seeing international laws implemented rationally, and with full respect for human dignity. Any 'right' to use entheogens and psychedelics for the development of consciousness and self-awareness, to heal the divisions and wounds caused by poisonous pedagogy,<sup>23</sup> and authoritarianism as well as those that arise from biological or existential conditions, is a human rights issue, to which freedom of religion is subservient.

### **Recommendations:**

The religious freedom argument is one amongst several technical arguments or legal loopholes in existing drug law. (Freedom of conscience or religious belief was never

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<sup>22</sup> Babylonian Talmud

<sup>23</sup> In the 18th century common (superstitious) notions of the evil nature of children led to the notion of training human beings like animals. Poisonous pedagogy, in Katharina Rutschky's definition, aims to inculcate a social superego in the child, to construct a basic defense against drives in the child's psyche, to toughen the child for later life, and to instrumentalise the body parts and senses in favor of socially defined functions. Although not explicitly, poisonous pedagogy serves as a rationalization of sadism and a defense against the guilt feelings of the parent. See: Miller, Alice: 'For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence 3rd edition, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (1990). (accessed online: <http://www.nospank.net/fyog.htm>) & Rutschky, Katharina (1997). 'Schwarze Pädagogik. Quellen zur Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Erziehung.' Ullstein Buchverlage GmbH.

intended to protect the use of entheogenic plants, in fact when the US Constitution and Bill of Rights were drafted, this protection was not even granted Native American religions.) Considering the contradictions inherent in drug policy, the existence of such loopholes is inevitable. But exploiting inconsistencies in the law does not help us reach a permanent settlement of the issue at hand. Although courts are excellent, if not the only places where we can hope for a fair debate, we must not overestimate the power of the sentiments underpinning prohibition. The condemnation of psychedelics is fed by an instinctive but unconscious fear of insanity, loss of control and annihilation (ego-death). Thus, the attempt to debate these issues needs to address this fear. Unfortunately, much of the literature of the psychedelic era failed to produce a constructive dialogue addressing legitimate concerns.

Historically the psychedelic debate is only now coming of age, almost 60 years after Albert Hofmann discovered LSD. It has taken time for this debate to mature, and much of what is currently said remains speculative. Psychedelics announced themselves at a time when two World Wars had dispelled any illusions we still held about the sacred design of life. Thus, Westerners were left without a relevant framework to interpret psychedelic experiences. Although Stanislav Grof proposed a comprehensive model of transpersonal experiences as far back as the early 1960's, his work has largely been ignored by psychiatrists, and there is considerable reluctance towards accepting its implications elsewhere. Hence the problem of establishing a real dialogue on the relevance of psychedelic experiences remains predominantly one of communication, and with all due respect, the responsibility falls squarely with proponents of this debate.

One of the major insights to come out of recent judicial hearings is that they can play a significant role in requiring us to define the relevance of entheogenic practices. It is important that we approach such hearings with due awareness of their potential not only to promote tolerance for the diversity of religious beliefs, but particularly, agreement on their underlying principles and values. Fortunately, there are many within the broader community who recognise this potential.<sup>24</sup> Whether ethical principles are inherent to religious and entheogenic practices or not, it is up to us to ensure they are on the agenda.

It is important we recognise the limitations of professional contexts. In a courtroom, Judges are unlikely to question the law. Conferences and forums provide a more likely arena for sincere debate on such hefty subjects. I therefore recommend that more emphasis be given to creating the possibility of dialogue with authorities and people in key positions. The academic community can play a decisive role in mediating such exchanges, as long as it is understood that academics do not possess any specific authority to speak on behalf of the whole of society, let alone in the name of indigenous people, or their traditions. Academic research can play an important role in authenticating certain observations, but we should keep in mind that the study of ritual, altered states of consciousness and psychoactive substances has been underway for many thousands of years. To many of those who are involved in this venture it is not 'an interesting field of study' or intellectual engagement, but one with profound implications for our collective future.

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<sup>24</sup> In support of *Gonzales vs. O Centro Espirita Beneficente União do Vegetal* before the US Supreme Court, nine different amicus curiae (*friend of the court*) legal briefs were submitted by individuals and organizations, each addressing different aspects of this important legal case. These briefs can be downloaded at: <http://www.udvusa.com/amicus.php>

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