

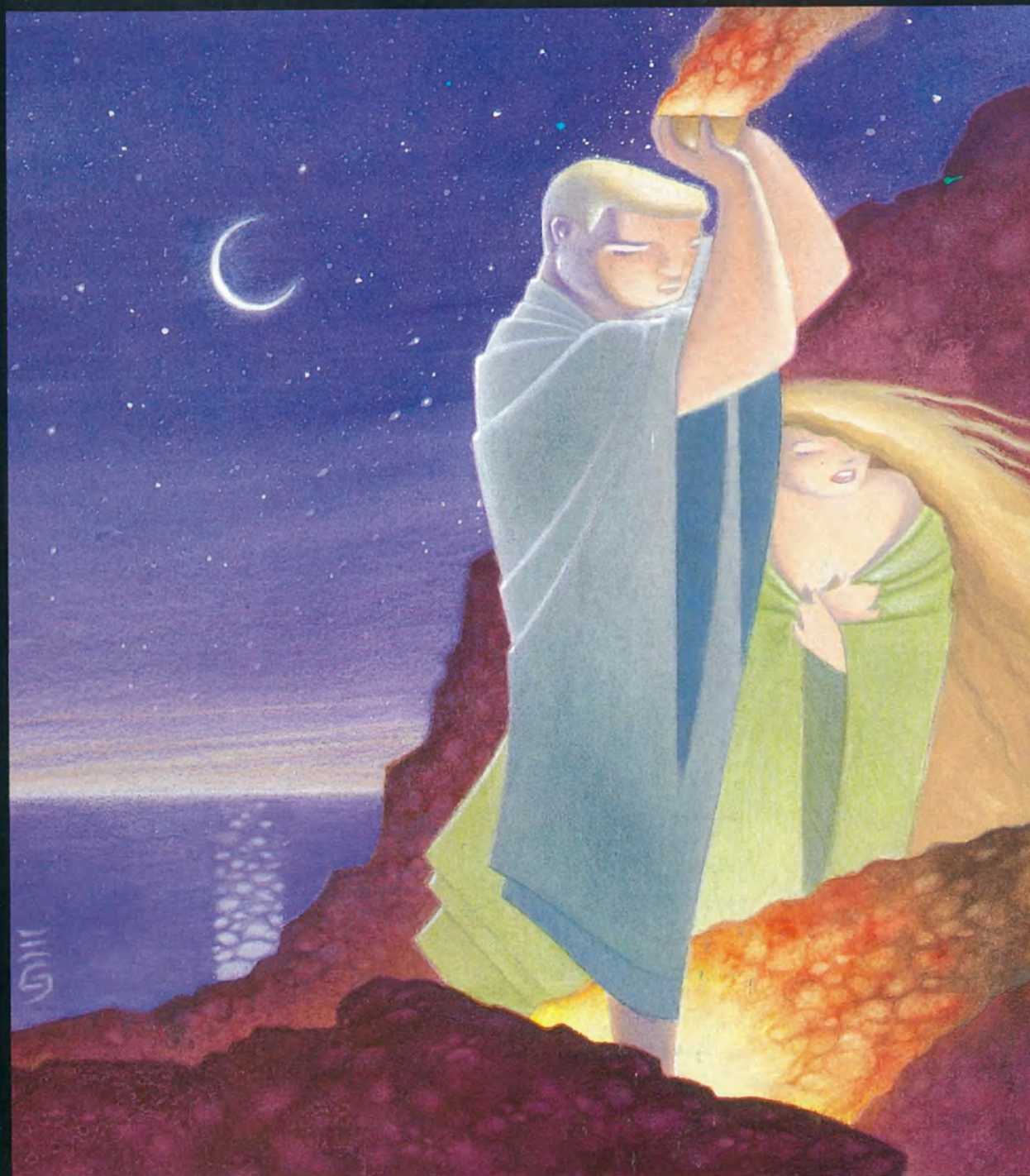
# MEZLIM

PRACTICAL MAGICK FOR TODAY

Volume V, Issue No. 2

Beltane 1994

\$5.95



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SACRAMENT  
USE AND ABUSE  
IN THE MAGICKAL COMMUNITY

# MEZLIM

*Practical Magick for Today!*

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Bookpeople, Booktech, Armadillo, Ubiquity, New Leaf, Fine Print, Small Changes, IPD, Zed, Desert Moon & Tower Magazine.

"Just what does the word "Mezlim" mean, anyway?"

I've been asked that question a lot, and I'm sure there are many others who just wonder in silence. It comes from the Aramaic version of the Hebrew word *Mazel* (as in *Mazel tofi!*). It means, literally, "the influence of the divine", or "the sparks emanating from Kether", the Crown of the Tree of Life. It references the fact that the divine lives in many paths, with each path as unique as the individuals who walk it.

Here at **MEZLIM**, we subscribe to the premise that we are entering a new aeon - a new age - which is bringing and will continue to bring many changes in the way we see ourselves and the world around us. We are dedicated to presenting information, views, images and ideas concerned with our transition into this new world which we are creating. Our editorial policy is androgynous, egalitarian and eclectic, supporting all growth oriented, magickal movements; celebrating the spirituality of the Living Earth!

So, in our own way, we are attempting to bring a few "sparks of the divine" into the world through our magickal labor of love: Mezlim.

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**Editor's Note:** Magickal spellings, QBL equations and all other specifics of the manuscripts in **MEZLIM** have been maintained exactly as presented in the original text submitted for publication so as to ensure the accuracy of the transmission as detailed herein.



Printed on recyclable paper.

# MEZLIM

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**Volume V:2**

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# DRINKING FROM THE CUP OF THE DIVINE

Sacrament is loosely defined as anything thought to possess the quality of the divine. In modern Paganism, Ceremonial Magick and alternative Earth Spirituality, sacrament has come to mean something more precise: Anything which allows us to awaken our connection to or our identity as the divine.

Christianity has defined many sacraments. Our own community has relatively few. These seem to fall into three general categories. 1) Ritually consecrated edibles (e.g., cakes of light) consumed by participants, deities or both; 2) Intoxicating, hallucinogenic and/or psychoactive substances; and 3) Sex.

All of these, when properly used, may fulfill the criteria of something which brings us closer to a realization and/or gnostic experience of the divine. Each sacrament offers its own unique "flavor". Some are relatively gentle, slowly opening our inner doors to greater awareness, while others tend to blast the doors off

their hinges, leaving us a mess to clean up afterwards.

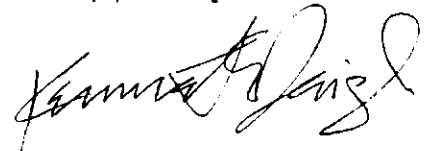
One quality that these sacraments all have in common is their ability to alter - to one degree or another - the consciousness of the user. In general, this alteration distances the person from the "mundane" world, and opens doorways to other magickal and mysterious realms of the divine.

Some of my own favorite sacraments don't fit into the categories described above. Rather than turning me inward, they enhance my awareness of this world we live in.

My favorite sacraments: Lying on my back in an open field, far from the city lights, staring up at the brilliant array of stars that fills the night sky; dancing all night long around a leaping fire to the voices of my ancestors singing through the drums; walking through a forest in the early morning to stand at the shore of a mountain lake; watching the ocean rolling the tides in and out across the sand...

When I sometimes forget the Mystery of us all, these sacraments work well to bring me close to god/dess.

May your cup be ever full,



This publication is a Member of  
the Wiccan/Pagan Press  
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# HALLUCINOGENS: SACRAMENT OR SACRIFICE

by Bekki Shining Bearheart

graphic by Jasmine

In 1988, after some years of involvement in 12 Step programs\*, I initiated a new Pagan publication called *Pagans in Recovery Quarterly*. It grew from my concern that most 12 Step groups operate from a Christian bias.

Non-Christians (especially of the Pagan persuasion)

are often turned off by this approach. Many who could benefit from them leave the programs or avoid them. I felt that Pagans

(myself included) could be helped by a publication that would offer networking and support for recovering Pagans, regardless of whether

they were involved in 12 Step programs.

The *Quarterly* includes a "Contacts" listing, listings of events, and reviews, articles and columns discussing the metaphysical tools of Earth-centered spirituality as they may aid recovery and emotional healing. Rituals designed to assist healing are also included. While I am responsible for generating much of the material for *PIR Quarterly*, it is authored primarily by subscribers.

The ideas I wish to share here come primarily from my private cogitations contrasting the use of substances, especially hallucinogenics, in our society and in tribal/shamanic societies. They reflect dialogue I have had with others such as Kenn Deigh and Crow, but come mostly from my orientation as a Pagan in recovery. I feel that I stand between two different viewpoints as I speak—that of ecstatic spirituality and that of healing-out-of-numbness. They are not meant to be definitive, scholarly or linear. Hopefully, they will stimulate dialogue.

Substances are not my primary problem. I utilize recovery concepts to deal with relational issues stemming from various forms of childhood abuse. I have had plenty of relationships with people with substance addictions. I see little difference in our behaviors at core aside from the way we have chosen to "medicate" our pain. I do not want to dwell on this: I simply want to explain that I empathize with those who struggle with substance addiction. I have my own struggles. However, it is easy when new to sobriety to make alcohol/drugs the demon (as it is easy to make another person a demon when one is struggling with an addiction to someone who will not be "good"!). I am concerned here with the way in which we have, in this culture, polarized our relationship with intoxicants. We make them all good or all bad, depending on our bias.

I have been exploring shamanism for quite a few years. I have read a fair amount

of ethnography which discusses the ways of people who do and people who do not use substances in their shamanic practice. I see no evil per se in substances used to facilitate trance and vision.

I also see people around me who use sacred substances in a non-sacred way. And they aren't just addicts. That is, many of them see themselves as spiritual people using substances for spiritual enlightenment. It's my opinion that it is extremely tricky to use sacred substances in an evenhanded way in this culture, where few of us have the opportunity to be trained in the proper use of them. I do not mean the proper techniques; we have not been inculcated with the proper reverence for these substances.

For instance: With the exception of hallucinogenic mushrooms, we in the U.S. take few drugs in their original form. In South America, where indigenous plants are widely used in native healing, each plant is itself revered and its spirit is honored in ritual much as deities are honored in Pagan and Christian ritual in our culture. Its spirit is called upon for help for the patient, and the plant spirit's aid is considered indispensable. The idea of taking a plant extract in pill form or of synthesizing its constituents would be alien to many indigenous people. The plant in its whole form has a numinous power of its own!

Likewise, the idea of using drugs for recreation, for a high, would be incomprehensible to tribal shamanic people. Among other things, many plants if used in their natural state induce side effects that prohibit habitual use—nausea and stomach cramps being some of the most usual. My instincts say that in this way the plant spirit protects itself from indiscriminate use by non-initiates. However, people alienated from their spiritual roots are thirsty for ecstasy, and will seek it out wherever they can. They are extremely resourceful in doing so.

With modern technology it is easy to strip the plant of its true nature and use it in adulterated forms. But how does this alter it, and our experience, energetically? Do we know what we are messing around with here? If we are practicing Earth spirituality, is there not a sacredness to the plants, Earth's children?

The Western, patriarchal mode of action is one we have indulged in to our detriment for far too long. Traditional people know a great deal more about all of this than we. Perhaps it would be useful to learn from them rather than stealing yet more of their ways and fitting them to our sometimes faulty ways of living.

In indigenous populations where hallucinogenic plants play a part in shamanic practice (and, yes, occasionally form the basis of the practice), their role is very specific. Aid is reverently requested of the plant spirit prior to use; the plant is ingested, smoked, etc. in a ritual context; and shamanic journeys are undertaken with the help of the plant. The journeys' purpose is primarily to obtain healing for members of the community who are ill in body, mind or spirit. Occasionally, journeys are undertaken for the purpose of increasing the shaman's (healing) power via contact with additional animal, plant or elemental helping spirits, or learning new information or techniques from the spirits.

Much has been made of the use of sorcery (injurious shamanism) in shamanic societies, especially those societies utilizing hallucinogens—witness the popularity of

Casteneda's "shamanic soap-operas"—however, healing has always been the primary focus of shamanism.

Practitioners who work with hallucinogens speak of the plants as gifts from their deities given for the healing and enlightenment of

humankind.

I have talked with many people who consume hallucinogens for enlightenment—yet in shamanic societies, it is the healing aspect which is most emphasized. I am concerned that the gift of the plants is being taken out of context, that their real purpose is being lost. I attribute this in part to alienation and isolation.

The art of community is largely lost to contemporary Western society. Our extreme mobility, our difficulty with bonding even to significant others (let alone extended family or "tribe"), our determination to be self-sufficient have interfered with our capacity to generate meaningful intimacy, and made it difficult for us to focus on caring for one another in a communal setting. So how can we effectively work with healing spirits, plant or otherwise? We have let egocentricity enter into our creative and spiritual realms.

## **Practitioners who work with hallucinogens speak of the plants as gifts from their deities given for the healing and enlightenment of humankind.**

To be a shaman is to be a superstar, to be a musician or artist is to be a superstar, so that there is always competition to be at the top of the heap. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, however, and a shaman is only a shaman if he/she can facilitate healing. Yet to heal others in a shamanic context one must live with them, work with them, be bonded to them, care about their well-being. (To further explore living a shamanic life, see the reading list which follows this article.)

Many people who use hallucinogens regularly in our society have deified them as the source of their spirituality, rather than a tool. They put themselves in direct conflict with those who see all mind-altering substances as evil, or at best dangerous. I think there is a middle position (possibly several!). Perhaps it is that hallucinogens, used with reverence and respect for their very real power, are a source of healing and enlightenment when reserved for the work of healing, in particular shamanic healing, or celebration of sacred ritual to honor the spirits. And perhaps they are best used under the guidance of those trained to their healing uses, who also understand their use as a path to enlightenment.

### Reading List

- Fools Crow* by Thomas Mails, University of Nebraska Press, 1979.  
*I Send A Voice* by Evelyn Eaton, Quest Books (Theosophical Publishing House), 1978.  
*The Shaman and the Medicine Wheel* by Evelyn Eaton, Quest Books, 1982.  
*Native Healer* by Medicine Grizzlybear Lake, Quest Books, 1991.

\*12 Step programs include A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous), N.A. (Narcotics Anonymous), O.A. (Overeaters Anonymous), ACoA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), and other groups based on the 12 Steps of A.A. They conceive of addiction as a disease process which is physical, emotional and spiritual, and that healing can be assisted by relying on the support of others in recovery and on one's Higher Power. (Often, though not always, this is imaged in a Christian context—the Lord's Prayer is used in most meetings, for example—even though the founders' intention was to leave the concept of Higher Power very open to interpretation.)



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# On the Sacramental Use of Psychotropic Entheogens

## a letter from Fra Lobo D'Albus to Soror Keter Elán

by Sam Webster

Greetings Dear Sister in the Great Work,

May all the Stars Shower Thee with Blessings & May Thy Will ever be Done.

I was most delighted to hear that you have chosen to engage the Eighth Path, that of the sacramental use of psychotropic entheogens and deeply honored when you asked for my reflections upon it. It is well that we have chosen to call such substances by this name in that they both turn the soul and make one feel as a god. I pray you remember this in all your workings with them.

To begin with practicalities, quality is the principal consideration when working with psychotropic entheogens. Make as certain as possible that the materials are as pure and of as high a quality as available. The purity in question is both the obvious physical purity and of the psychic sort as well. The spirit with which the matter is grown or manufactured leaves its impress upon the substance and effects the experience of the substance when ingested

to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, know your sources! How you feel about them will effect your trip. If you do not have sufficient knowledge about your source, read, that is, psychometrize the materials before use or purchase. This may indicate that purifications are in order or simply forgoing the acquisition.

The first major division we encounter in this exploration is between the short term highs and the long term trips. Marijuana and Alcohol are examples of the first while LSD and Mescaline are fine examples of the latter. The first two, except in extremely high doses, mostly color the atmosphere of the space in which one is operating. Wines and beers create a jovial and playful environment and so are appropriate in rituals and celebrations of like or similar nature. Marijuana creates a species of reverie that is conducive to certain kinds of intellectual probings or for visions and feelings-through in meditation. Geometrical formulations are particularly pronounced and made easier with Ganja. These kinds of substances and their use is flavored and characterized by the fact that one can continually ingest them and achieve progressively higher or longer states of exalted consciousness. This is significantly different from many of the hallucinogens.

Here the mood is significantly different. With hallucinogens the sacrament is usually consumed all at once and then the entire subsequent journey is experienced as a continuous trajectory. Directing this trajectory is particularly what this letter is about. Now some have argued that it is best to let the sacrament take you where it will and you should just flow along with the experience. In this view, we should not impose our preconceptions upon the experience. However, this is impossible. One has preconceptions, conscious or unconscious, about what is to happen and so it behooves one to take care as to how those expectations will come into play. Most of the difficult times I have seen people face were due to not clearing their spaces of





discordant elements on which they later obsessed to their detriment. This need not be. Since one is a willful being, it is helpful to be clear about what one wills and act in accord with this. This is responsibility. Further it is necessary to note that no experience one has with a drug is any different from what one may have without, only stronger. The content of the psychotropic experience is what was already present in the mind of the beholder, but perhaps one had not looked at these contents in quite this way before.

This leads me to a theoretical statement about the psychotropic experience. When viewed in the light of the optimization of search procedures to accomplish problem solving, one notes that the challenge is to keep the search pattern from grooving into a too small search domain. To prevent the missing of successful problem solutions on the basis of them being too large or too small a scale respecting the aforementioned search domain, eccentricity must be added to the search pattern. This eccentricity is a determinant influence that adds appropriate chaos to the search system so as to keep it from stabilizing into a non-optimal search pattern. Psychotropic entheogens do this for the human psyche. They keep us from getting boring.

Now, dear sister, we may press on to the core of the work. As the Blessed Doctor Timothy Leary proclaimed in the Psychedelic Age, 'Set, Setting and Dosage' are the keys to a good trip. Being a magick user, you have a profound ability to create at will both the set and the setting by the use of ritual.

The first principle act is clearing your space. Besides unplugging the phone, locking the door and putting away any unneeded business, it is necessary to clear the psychic atmosphere of your working space. You may be as perfunctory or as elaborate as you wish. You may simply sprinkle the space with salt water or perform full scale banishings. This will be determined by where you would like to go with your journey. Simple play requires simple precautions. Soul diving or the conjuration of deific presence or transformative experiences require commensurate preparations. The point is to make the space clear and clean so that you may bring into it what you wish to be present.

After the purification comes the consecration. This may be as simple as a prayer or statement of intention or full

scale deity invocations, burning of incense, invocatory ritual, etc. Here the purpose is to fill the cleared and emptied space with the fullness of Being, of open potential which, as the trip progresses, will take on definitive form.

What may be included here or done next is the consecration of the sacrament. If one is intending to be in tripspace during the actual doing of ritual, then the earlier the ingestion the better. If the ritual is to set the tone for less structured space to follow, then the sacrament may be best consecrate with the peak of the ritual. Often, after a brief purification, words of consecration and intention are said over the sacrament and it is consumed. Then the ritual is begun in full. This takes advantage of the time spent 'coming on' focusing it and fulling it with the symbols, meanings and values that are intended to characterize the journey. Also, if vigorous physical activity is engaged shortly after ingestion, it speeds and deepens the impact of the sacrament.

It is also very important to ask for what you need and what you want out of the experience when addressing the sacrament itself. It is best handled as though you are addressing a person, establishing and acting in what has been

## **The sacramental use of psychotropic entheogens is a profoundly intimate experience.**

called an I-Thou relationship. This is particularly important with psychotropic entheogens that humans have been working with for a long time such as mescaline/peyote or mushroom. These substances have their own spirit that is best treated as being an

honored guest welcomed into one's own body. They are often called by the names they are known by, Mescalito and 'Shroom, respectively. This evokes a co-operative and co-creative mood between you and the sacrament which makes the entire experience more pleasurable and satisfying. LSD and some of the newer psychotropic entheogens have their own spirits too and would well be addressed as such, but they do not seem to be as old nor as developed of personality as the others.

Ritual is but one tool to condition a journey. Its application is principally in real-time and is very effective for coordinating a group of people to get to the same or similar space. Similar can be said about meditative practices, solo or in group settings. Energetically based meditations such as Kundalini, Chakra or Tree of Life/Middle Pillar meditations are particularly potent in the early phases of the trip. They provide a means for coordinatedly accelerating and

expanding consciousness, increasing the level of order in the psyche even at the higher energy levels that the sacrament brings to bear.

There are also things you can do before starting your journey that will both add to the fun and direct it. Steeping one's self in a particular problem or situation of interest will manifest in tripspace as an issue of concern. This can be delightful for problem solving especially if the issue is not one of unpleasant emotional tone. One method to engage with this is to build an altar, a graphic image (i.e., a mandala) or a simple sigil upon which to focus when in space. The image can then become a fixture in the imaginal environment which then in turn can be engaged for exploration. Another method, one I find personally very pleasurable, is to read a graphic novel such as those published by Paper Tiger. These works, filled with stunning images and connected with fantastic narrative, then become the guiding motifs when in tripspace. The stories and graphic style bleed over into interpersonal or intrapsychic interactions. The myths become embodied in action and the images emerge in the visions experienced. Great fun!

A similar though tricky technique is to go to a movie, or watch a video. The difficulty comes in the social spaces of being around people in the theater or on the street as well as transportation home. Driving here is contraindicated. Also, if one is not familiar with the content of the film, it may lay one open to feelings and experiences one does not wish to have with the intensity added by sacrament. However, what advantage may be had is in seeing the deep myth-strata embodied in the picture and feeling that with profound intensity. This can be a delight when shared with a friend or two.

When getting to know an entheogen, it is very worthwhile to begin with relatively small doses and progress to very large ones. Here Leary's 'Dosage' key becomes prominent. At first the task is to get used to tripspace and to be able to hold a focus and navigate in it. The feeling has been described as awakening to lucidity in the midst of a dream. Once you can recognize where you are in the trajectory of the trip; coming on, peaking, coming down, etc., and are not rattled by the peculiar phenomenon that happen there, then it is time to go on to the large doses. Knowing the dosage and the effect of that dosage with accuracy prevents unexpectedly powerful experiences that, due to their unpredicted quality, become unpleasant.

Here it is very important to be well informed as to the nature of the substance you are working with, such as, is there a lethal or dangerous dose? Take care not to exceed this. Here the task is to learn about the depths of yourself and

of the sacrament. Push the limits of your comfort. You may find it difficult to keep focused or to remember what is happening in the depths of the trip. With practice, this will pass.

One technique to handle this is to sit in a comfortable manner with a note pad, writing reflections on your experience. What will happen is at points you will be immersed in the maelstrom of the psychotropism. Next you will be back again at your writing surface. Scribble down as best you can what happened. Sketching, telegraph sentences, short notes or poetry all work. What will happen is that eventually you will be able to bridge the memory gap between tripspace and ordinary consciousness, and be able to recall everything that happened for later review and processing.

One serious concern is Who do you trip with? Choose only people you trust. Feelings of distrust can be strongly magnified in tripspace and may lead to a permanent disliking of a person you might otherwise get along with. Crowds and parties are not recommended as they can be too unpredictable and uncontrollable. The sacramental use of psychotropic entheogens is a profoundly intimate experience; thus it is often exquisite for sharing with lovers. Sometimes it is also useful to share tripspace with nontripping people. This is particularly helpful when using large quantities of sacrament or when working with a large group. In these cases, it is useful to have a designated 'anchor', a person who can cash reality checks for the psychonauts, helping them get a fix on phenomenon that they are having trouble interpreting such as "is the drapery on fire or am I just seeing things?" This can prevent an accident from becoming a disaster.

The principle benefit to my mind of using psychotropic entheogens sacramentally is through their transformative and empowering influence. Due to the imprint vulnerability of the psychonaut in tripspace, there is an opportunity to give the aspirant a deeply held and appreciated experience of a particular aspect of existence. Brought into presence by the invocations, this part of existence takes on a deeply numerized quality in the life of the psychonaut. Such experiences and interactions with that aspect occurring in tripspace form a microcosm of how those interactions would occur outside of tripspace. This is similar to any other ritual, but with the added energy and intensity that only psychotropic entheogens can bring to bear.

May all of your journeys be enlightening and joyous,  
Under the Stars,  
Fra Lobo D'Albus, S.L.

# THE HOLY DOOR

---

by Magenta

A sacrament is that deliberate act which opens a person to and brings them in touch with the sacred, holy, divine, in one's self, in other people, and in Nature. A sacrament is a gateway which allows us to enter the sacred, and also allows the sacred to enter into us. We perform the sacraments because we need this joining with that which is ultimately beyond us, and because it feels good and right and joyful.

I believe that consciously sharing the sacraments on a regular basis can lead to higher states of awareness, and the ability to live in balance with Nature. Lack of spiritual practice can lead to spiritual imbalance, which can in turn contribute to actions that are unbalanced. Our culture is currently suffering from a lack of spiritual practice of epidemic proportions. The evidence is all around us.

Etymologically, "sacrament" is related to sacrifice, in the sense of "to make sacred". The idea of a sacrament can only be valid if we, as a culture, have a clear concept of the sacred, which I don't think we have any more. We live in a secular world, like it or not. All the preaching in the world damning "secular humanism" won't change that. Our world has become steadily more secular for 200 years. As a society, we have very little concept of what is truly sacred. Our culture pays lip service to a few ideas of the spiritual, but we concentrate our real devotion on the material world alone.

In the mid-sixties, we had the beginnings of a spiritual revival involving practices that were ignored by most churches and reviled by the media. This led to outlawing these practices, perhaps most appropriate ones for our modern society, which in turn ushered in a time of repression and despair. I'm talking, of course, about psychedelics.

Visionary vegetables, as they have been called, have been used by tribal groups for millennia. They are often part of a shaman's repertoire of magical and spiritual tools. There are precautions and taboos surrounding them, of course, as surrounds any vehicle of great power. What happened in the sixties was an attempt to bring these valuable tools into our culture.

There were three waves of interest in psychedelics. First, starting in the fifties, was the use of LSD and related drugs for psychotherapy, and for philosophical exploration. This was done by serious, scholarly people with suitable precautions. The best example of this mode was Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*, published in 1954. Next, Timothy Leary took psychedelics to a further extreme, eventually promoting use of LSD by more people and with greater frequency than the original users found appropriate. He also generated much wider publicity than earlier proponents of psychedelics. Even Leary felt there should be some structure to LSD use.

However, while Leary was working on the East Coast, a young man named Ken Kesey had taken LSD on the West Coast, and thought it was the greatest thing in the 20th century. He staged a series of events called "acid tests" in the mid-sixties, quasi-rituals at which people were introduced to the drug with little preparation or guidance. People started taking acid without reason or context; Leary had at least emphasized the importance of "set and setting". This third mode of LSD use became the most widespread, and led to the banning of psychedelics, despite their medical usefulness.



graphic by Anne Marie Garrison

(Doctors who had used LSD personally or in their practice were not allowed to testify at the hearings leading to the banning of LSD.)

For me, and many, many other people, especially those of us who lived through the sixties, psychedelics are a major spiritual tool. The laws that punish possession and use of these substances are in violation of our Constitutional rights. Psychedelics, and related substances, have been used in religious ceremonies since the dawn of time. Because psychedelics are not sacraments of Christianity, our First Amendment right to use these substances was refused recognition by legislators, prosecutors, judges, and cops.

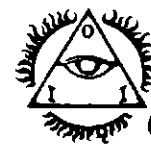
Psychedelics are dangerous, but then again, so is magick—and so are automobiles. A major problem is that we have lost our Western European psychedelic traditions. For example, there is evidence that the Rites of Eleusis involved psychedelics (see *The Road to Eleusis*, G. Wasson, et. al.). Many tribal people have traditions of using psychedelics. However, if we borrow their rituals, we get into the sticky problem of stealing native culture. We were beginning to evolve our own psychedelic tradition, and we could continue that. All traditions started somewhere, sometime.

Psychedelics are not sacraments alone, but can be used to produce powerful sacramental experiences when used in a ritual context. Wine is not the essence of the Christian communion; rather, it is the priest's ability to transform wine and bread into the Body and Blood that is the heart of the Mass. Similarly, the sacraments of LSD can involve chanting, movement, the invocation of certain deities, and other ritual actions. We need to resacramentalize psychedelics—and wine, and many other physical elements of our lives.

I was taught psychedelic lore many years ago. Much of it was rule of thumb: Don't take acid alone, have two people with you the first time you use it. Use it only in a ritual context, focus on a purpose or intent. Be prepared to lose your ego, go with the flow. Time will be completely distorted, perhaps meaningless. Don't drive or operate anything that requires precise perception and movement. Use 1 to 2 grams of niacinamide to take the edge off or come down from a trip that is more than you can deal with at that time. There are discreet "stages" in an acid trip but no one agrees what they are. Read what other people have written, but no one writer is entirely correct—the experience is different for each person.

Under the influence of psychedelics, it is common to see the whole world as holy, and whole, to see oneself as part of an interconnected universe, a web of all being. Mythological and archetypal images surface and interact with the conscious mind. Lucid dreams unfold in front of one's eyes, giving insight into one's own unconscious. Ordinary perceptions will change, becoming intense and significant. Psychedelics can give great insights, and enable a person to change their life considerably. Ideas flow, even gush, and creativity is greatly increased (although executing ideas will have to wait until later, as coordination is often profoundly affected). Beauty is heightened, meaning is deepened, joy is multiplied. One can encompass Infinity.

In some ways, psychedelics are a Mystery, in the religious sense of the word. Just like the ancient Mysteries of the ancient world, the greatest ones cannot be told, only experienced. If you have experienced the Mystery, you Know. If you have not, no one can truly reveal it to you. You must find out for yourself. Psychedelics could be the heart of religion of the 21st century, the center of the spirituality of the technical age.



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graphic by James Jeske

# THE RADICAL SACRAMENTS OF MAGICK

by Donald Michael Kraig

When those who are not involved with the occult talk about "sacraments," they are usually talking about performing certain rituals or the ingestion of certain items as spiritual actuality or symbol (i.e., transubstantiation in Roman Catholicism or consubstantiation in Protestantism, respectively). So many books and articles have been written on these subjects that I will not repeat them here.

There are also two of what I call the "radical sacraments." The first of these consists of certain mind-altering substances. These have been used for thousands of years in shamanic rituals and other early religiomagical traditions. (Curiously, one of the most radical interpretations of Christianity was put forth by a scholar of ancient Semitic languages, John Allegro, who claimed in his book, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, that the name "Christ" was a code for *Amanita Muscaria* ["Soma," or "Fly Agaric," a psychedelic mushroom] and "Christianity" was a code name for a mushroom cult.)

Some people will use a drug and claim it is a sacrament. Their drunkenness is the worship of Bacchus. They smoke cigarettes not because they are addicted to tobacco, but because they are "worshipping Mars." While tobacco use and the drinking of wine to the point of intoxication (or beyond) can be

religious and spiritual, simply smoking another ciggie or getting drunk is neither a spiritual nor magical act.

Even so, tobacco and wine are not what I am referring to. The true components of this sacrament are those which either induce visions (hallucinogens) or alter the mind's interpretation of reality (psychedelics). I am not alone in this contention, either. Dion Fortune, in an article entitled "The Occult Field Today" which was eventually published in *Applied Magic* (London: The Aquarian Press, 1962.), wrote:

"The part played by drug addiction in the seamy side of occultism has been greatly over-rated. The drugs used [by occultists] are of the vision-producing type...and these are not the drugs of addiction in the West. In the quantities in which they are used for occult experiments they are unlikely to do permanent harm.

"The drugs to which people become addicts are [stimulants and depressants and]...under neither of these headings are to be found any of the vision-producing drugs...

"The risk to which these [vision-producing] drugs expose those who use them is psychic, not physical; they may, if the experimenter is not an expert occultist, thoroughly competent in sealings and banishings, lay their user open to psychic invasion, and even obsession, because they open the doors of the astral to the unprepared consciousness...I am not prepared to deny that they have a place in occult research, but such research should only be undertaken by those who are properly equipped, both as to their occult and their scientific attainments, and is in every way undesirable when done by those who are merely seeking a new thrill." [Emphasis mine.]

In short, a person who merely uses drugs is not partaking of a sacrament, he or she is just getting high. If you want to get high, that is your decision, but there are many who use this sacrament for spiritual and/or

magical purposes who do not consider just getting high to be spiritual or magical.

On several occasions, I have had people come up to me and say, "Let's do some magick." I love ritual and am always happy to participate.

But the first thing I ask such a person is, "For what purpose?" This frequently bothers the person who asked to do magick with me because they do not have a particular purpose in mind. Magick, of course, is causing change in conformity to WILL. If you just want to cause changes and are not functioning according to Will, you are not, by definition, doing magick.

Similarly, the difference between getting high and using a sacrament is Will. Why are you taking a particular drug? If it is for a spiritual or magical purpose, then it is the sacrament. If it is for recreation, it is just getting high.

A similar situation occurs in the Roman Catholic Mass. Before the mass, the substances are wine and wafer. After transubstantiation, they are the blood and flesh of Christ.

To go into the full details of how to use psychoactive substances as a sacrament would, of necessity, be too involved to completely cover in a short article and I feel it would be irresponsible to do so. Not only would I have to include

rituals, I would also have to include dosages, cautions, methods of preparation, toxicity levels and what to do in case of problems. Luckily, a book exists which covers this information. It is *The Magical and Ritual Use of Herbs* by Richard Alan Miller. For those who wish to follow this path, I recommend it highly.

However, in the first, undated edition which I am reading from, the author lists atropine as the "standard antidote" for overdosing on *Amanita Muscaria*. According to *Poisonous and Hallucinogenic Mushrooms* by Richard and Karen Haard, atropine should not be given as it will exacerbate the effect. Instead, use gastric lavage and emetics. To stop the hallucinations, use chlorpromazine followed by coffee and/or tea. I would add that the Haard book is dated 1977 and there may be changes in the materia medica. (If the mushroom, however, is actually the similar *Amanita Pantherina* and not *Amanita Muscaria*, atropine is the correct antidote.)

The second of the radical sacraments is far more powerful and, concomitantly, far more dangerous. It is the sacrament of sex. It is powerful because the energies used in magick are psychosexual in nature. Frequently, we use intermediaries in dealing with this energy. We use visualizations of the energy (for example, the ritual known as the Circulation of the Body of Light) or symbolic representations (as in the ritual consecrations of the elements found in some Wiccan traditions when the High Priest and High Priestess are not performing an actual Great Rite).



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*Vama Marg* Tantra holds that sexual activity under the guidance of a teacher can quickly have the same results as years of various non-sexual practices. But, just as taking a drug does not mean you are taking a sacrament, neither does having sex mean that you are taking a sacrament.

“...take your fill and will of love as ye will, when, where and with whom ye will! **But always unto me.**” [Emphasis mine.]

Liber A1; 1:51

Once again, the purpose of the ritual act determines what sacralizes it. To what is the act dedicated? What is the purpose of the ritual? These questions will determine how the ritual should be developed and how you should prepare for it.

There are numerous books available on the subject, but surprisingly few have anything of value to present. Besides the chapter in my *Modern Magick* on the subject, there is also *Ecstasy Through Tantra* by Mumford, *Amrita* by Crowley and *Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.* by King. Surprisingly, some of the most popular books on the subject, such as *Sexual Secrets*, say relatively little (although it does have some excellent illustrations even if the source for many of the illustrations, the photography of Raffaelli, are uncredited).

Still, with research into the above named titles, you should be able to develop your own rituals.

Sex magick, as I stated earlier, is also quite dangerous. Many people are not emotionally ready for using genitals and sexuality as magical tools instead of

expressions of “romantic love.” The result can be disastrous for relationships and for individuals with poor self-images. So much has been written about the perils of sex magick that it need not be repeated here. If you are unaware of what those perils are, you should stick with LBRPs and Drawing Down the Moon.

The radical sacraments can be helpful to those with magical experience or to those who are working with experienced magicians whom they trust. Every spiritual and/or magical goal can be achieved without using either of the radical sacraments. Nobody should be forced or coerced into using a sacrament that they do not wish to use. The radical sacraments achieve their power when they are used by choice and for a purpose.



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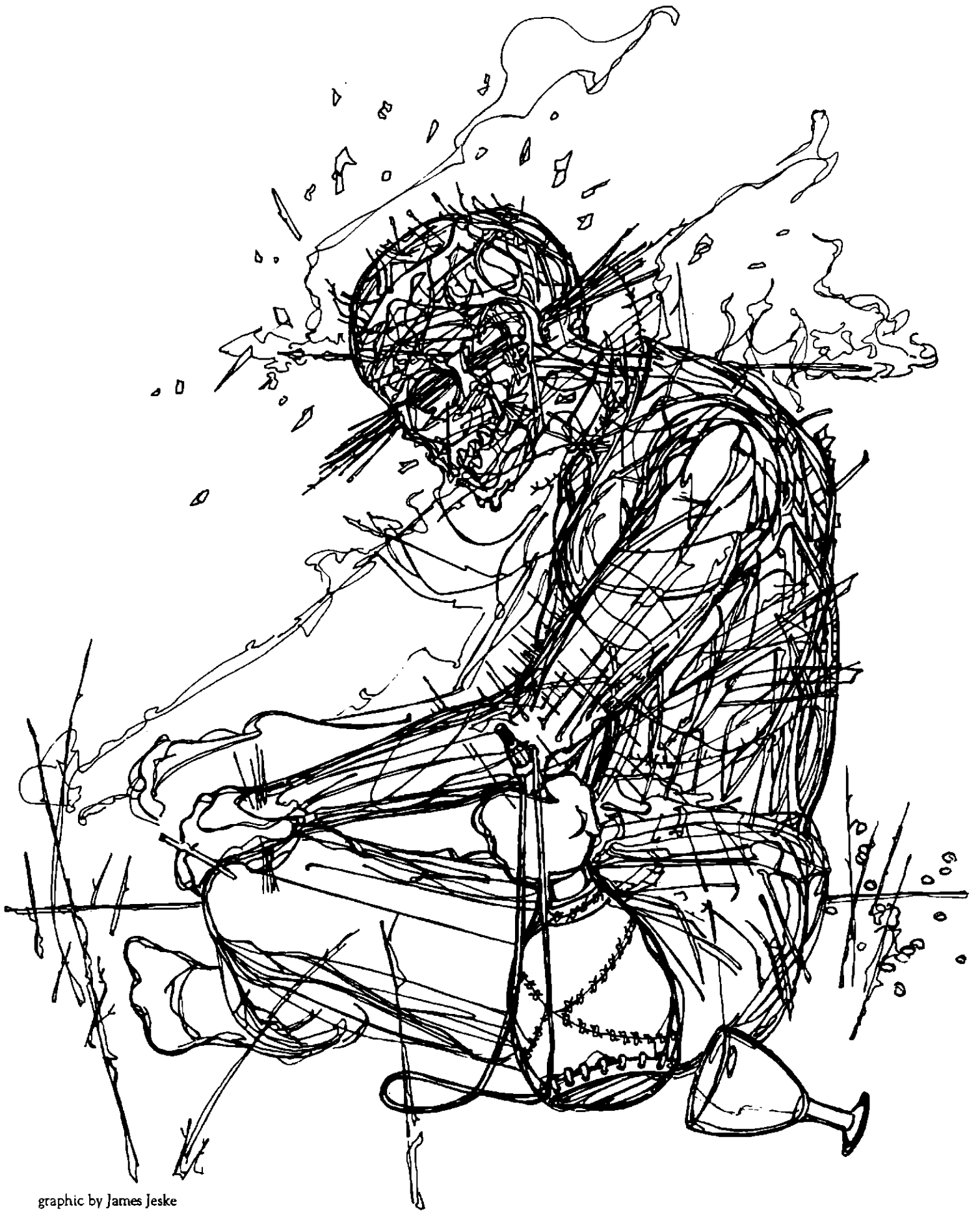


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graphic by James Jeske

# WALKING IN SPACE

by Jaq D. Hawkins

To write about the use of psychoactive drugs within magical communities is a very loaded subject. It is a subject where people tend to fall into opposing camps. On the one side is the "we have to keep our image clean and/or our bodies clear of unnatural substances" set, and on the opposite side is the "we have the natural right to do as we will," crowd, who will also quote historical precedent for psychoactive drug use in shamanistic societies. Both viewpoints have valid arguments.

There are other points to consider, as well. For example, not all psychoactive drugs are unnatural; these substances, used in meditation or ritual, have the potential to contribute to the experience in useful ways; there are negative legal implications; and, so on.

First of all, let's point out that there are many magical people who will not use drugs at all, period. The reasons vary from keeping their systems clean, to fears of legal entanglements, to simple disinterest. Drug use is far from being a requirement for any area of magic. While I have met with groups where some form of drug use, whether it was just smoking grass or MDMA parties, was quite common among its members, I have

never met anyone, group or individual, among the magical people who have crossed my path who would force or coerce a person to use any substance against their own will.

The percentage of people with some form of new age interests who use any form of mind-altering substance probably compares evenly with the rest of the population in any given area. The only difference is that people who practice magic MAY justify use of these substances for ritual or meditative purposes, as opposed to outright recreational use.

Let's have an honest look at some drug use practices among shamanic peoples of the past as compared to those of people in magical communities today.

Historically, there have been many shamanistic societies where some form of natural psychoactive drug use occurs. Peyote use among American and Mexican Indian tribes is well known. Extreme mind-altering substances have been used by Carribean peoples. There are many examples to draw from, but the important thing to keep in mind when looking to historical precedent is that, invariably, these societies included a member of the community who is trained in the application of these substances. S/He may be known as a medicine man, a wise woman, shaman, or whatever term is equivalent in the language of the people, but this person will have learned through an apprenticeship to the previous holder of this office, much about the application and proper uses of whatever substances are in use.

In some societies, it is only the shaman and the apprentice who ever actually partake of the substance, in order to elicit visions for religious purposes. In others, they are used for specific purposes by a tribe of people who have some familiarity with the substances as part of their cultural heritage, still with the medicine man among them who can advise proper use and perhaps guide the participants through vision quests or whatever the purpose may be.

The 1960's brought to our modern civilization, among other things, a widespread interest in the effects of hallucinogenic drugs. People have reported all sorts of experiences from the use of these drugs, including some which they interpreted as religious experiences. The LSD trippers of the 60's came from diverse walks of life, and have gone in a wide spectrum of directions since then, ranging from junkies to corporate executives. A small percentage of those who had the hallucinogenic experience back then may have taken an interest in some area of magic before, during or after that period of their lives. How those experiences or experiences with other hallucinogenic substances may have effected subsequent magical experience would be an interesting thing to survey.

There are people today who seek magical visions through use of a mind-altering substance of some sort. However, not all drug experiences are quite so spiritual in intent. Let's get real about this. There is a difference between using a drug in meditation or ritual, or a group of magically inclined people having a drug party. A party is a party, regardless of whatever common interests the participants may share, and an addict isn't glamorous just because s/he practices magic on occasion. If a person chooses to use any sort of mind-altering substance, it is worth seriously considering the reasons why, even if the answer is simply, "because I'm going to have a good time". One may also wish to examine the possible physical effects of the chosen substance, keeping in mind that one's companions or sources more often than not lack any sort of medical qualifications. The recent death of actor River Phoenix serves to remind us that we, and our friends, can misjudge our limits.

There is an issue of responsibility to consider as well. It was pointed out to me once, by one of my more level-headed friends who is very active in pagan networking, that if people who become voices in our magical communities, through writing or whatever, were to be publicly arrested for something more serious than the odd smoke, it could have far reaching consequences for all of us. We all know that there are religious fanatics who would just love a chance to point fingers and accuse pagans of being drug-crazed devil worshippers. Yet the rights to do what we will with our own bodies cannot be dictated by fanatics. It is something worth thinking about.

The one thing that I would like to ask is: Where is the dividing line between a recreational drug party and a legitimate ritual which happens to include a substance induced experience? If a group of people spend twelve hours tripping, and half an hour of it in ritual, is it an extended ritual experience or just a drug party that happened to include a short ritual? I'm not going to try to answer that question for anyone else. For me, it would depend on how the other eleven and a half hours were spent.

I bring up these questions because I feel that we must be honest with ourselves. If you are going to attend a drug party, call it a drug party. If you want to take some odd combination of substances from someone who claims to be a

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**If you want to take some odd combination of substances from someone who claims to be a modern day medicine man, you may want to examine his qualifications.**

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modern day medicine man, you may want to examine his qualifications. If you are getting high all the time and telling yourself that it is for ritual purposes, even though, most of the time, it seems to be more of a social occasion, you may have only mastered the art...of fooling yourself.

I will admit to having experienced a variety of psychoactive substances in my time, but I will also be honest with myself and confess that the majority of occasions were recreational experiences. I do believe in the potential value of substance induced ritual experience, but I will not use it as an excuse for habitual drug use. Anyone who qualifies a 'habit' by saying s/he is in a magical trance all the time is failing to accept the truth of and resulting responsibility for their own actions.

Magical trance is an experience like nothing else. It is something that most religious systems encourage in some manner or another, whether it is substance induced, achieved through a form of meditation or prayer, through deprivation or other physical practice such as spinning or a sweat lodge. The choice of a path to vacuity, trance, or whatever, is one for each magic user to decide for themselves, but once one has achieved that state of mind, I would recommend to each person that s/he periodically examine what is being accomplished through it, and what purpose truly lies behind the chosen method. Do you have the courage to face the mirror of truth?

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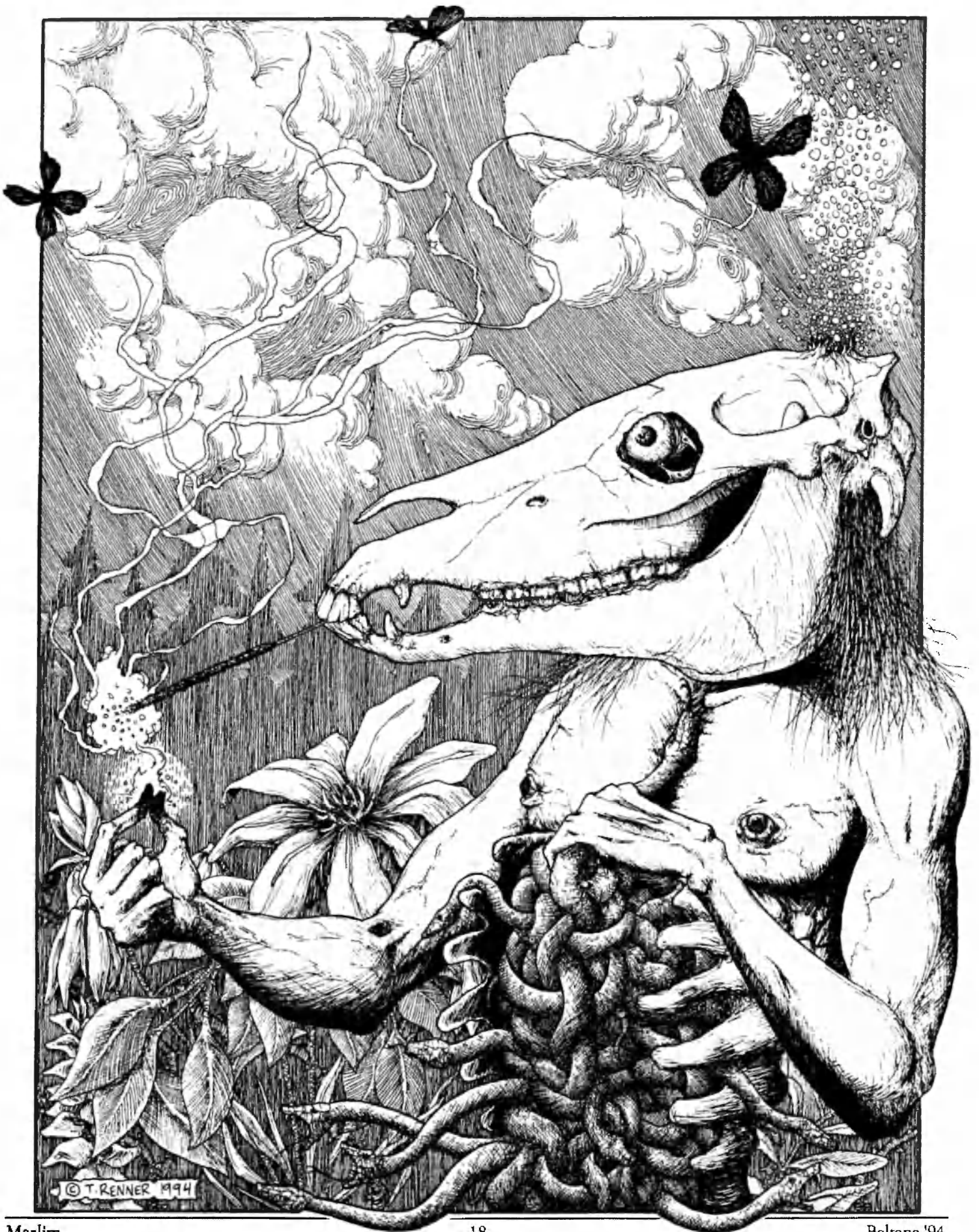
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# The Opener of the Ways

by Oujemka

A succinct history and moral: 99% of my use of mind-altering substances has been in circle — formal or informal. That 1% outside circle, I've been bored! So you can see that I'm a great advocate of magickal use of Sacrament, and none other. My first trip was in a circle of 100,000 people, at a U2 concert. It was just at the beginning of my magickal career, I had an experienced guide with me, and I had been looking forward to the experience for years. I was physically healthy. My life was not in crisis. The dosage was reasonable for a person of my weight. I didn't get a lot of work done, but my eyes were opened to the possibilities of combining Sacrament with a high-energy space.

By mind-altering substances I mean the colloquial definition, and include alcohol and tobacco. To me, these have always been Sacrament, and they will always be so. They have become a valuable tool in my self-improvement project. Holy substances, like so many shamans in the past have used them, and continue to do so. Why are they sacred and why must they remain so? These substances are sacred because of their intrinsic power to change. We do not question our deities' holiness (ever!) once we come in direct contact with their power. And, as seen in the Imbolc 1994 issue, what becomes mundane becomes lost. We lose awareness of it. We have lost much of the power of our Sacraments because of our own

neglect, on an individual and community basis.

Almost ten years ago, the concept of substances being sacred was not common in my circles. I was happy to get around and find that certain powerful pagans were labeling it that, and strongly associating the ideas of holiness and specialness with it. Some thought it as unique, normal and valuable as another friend, and obviously had a healthy relationship with it. I used these people as role models, because I too wanted a healthy relationship with Sacrament. One working lasted a summer, every weekend, in the temple, invoking deities and dropping. My path led me to apprentice with a Master in the Temple of Xochipili, where I tested my limits with the sacred mushroom. I learned to see as Don Juan has spoken of, and I learned Navigation with the Master.

Oh! Yet my experience is really so limited. I have seen and I have seen. Understand that there are some things I have not seen. So far I have seen the sacred be sacred and the decrepit be that. I have seen the divine masquerade as the profane, and the profane fail in its guise of the sacred. You can find each in the other (such is the Tao) and if and when you attend a shaman circle, you will have the opportunity to see through the veils. This is powerful medicine. We all hear that magick should not be attempted by the unstable — and here is magick that can quickly destroy a life, or at the least give a major detour.

If you undertake this technique, realize that it is WORK on yourself (construction ahead) like any other system. It takes a dedication to yourself, although in some places along my path I realized that even if I wanted to give up, I couldn't, because with what I had seen I wouldn't be able to live with myself — I just had to slog it through. It requires painful honesty with yourself. I believe that those already grounded in a tradition come away with the best results: they already speak a magickal language and the Sacraments help them continue in their paths, even forcing them to

fill in the holes they had glossed over. They gain new realizations of who they are, they take up new ordeals. The experience uncovers lots of new material to process and reintegrate. Like any other tradition, if you have no guide you can map the territory yourself, but it will take longer to get to know the mindscape.

## Setting Out

Your first priority is your body. Set, setting, and dosage, this should be your mantra for your prep. Be grounded before you attempt your work. Be knowledgeable about the Sacrament — what kind of effects should it produce? Gather information from a LIBRARY, not from the street, not from your inexperienced friends. Be safe, comfortable, and have good things to eat: veggies, fruit, WATER, perhaps some special treat like ice cream, if you can handle it. You will become hypersensitive to your body processes and whatever you put into your body will affect your psyche and your flying ability. I prefer to fast from 4-8 hours before the working, but I eat lots of complex carbohydrates the night before, like a runner for a race. During your voyage listen carefully to what your body is telling you, and act upon it! If you feel like you need to throw up, do it! Your body stays grounded to the linear time flow and you will return to it.

Second priority is your psyche. This is more difficult to take care of, given its ever-flowing nature and considerable variances of stability/flexibility from person to person. Realize that while you will be conscious of one thread, other portions of your psyche may be unravelling. The adventure (!) is to save the good parts while throwing out the bad. This is in-your-face psychoanalysis; it doesn't get any closer than this. Hence the need for courage and unflinching self-honesty. You will become hypersensitive to energy flow; in tearing away the veils, some of the dense protection of your personality layers also go. This can be either enjoyable or scary, depending on the amount of denial you commonly use. Personal issues manifest as knots in your body, and these may now become uncomfortable. The only way to get them to loosen is to look at them and resolve them. Trust also that your Spirit will guide you. Call upon your deities, "think of someone you admire" as they say in the Bardos. This is where the limits of the conscious mind are shown; your Spirit will speak to your body and that Speech resonates as You, the

Ego. You may see how Ego is the go-between for Heaven and Earth; you may see how you are not "really" Ego, but not "really" Body or Spirit: You may see the Three in One, and One in Three, divine, eternal Unity.

Third priority is your Spirit. Personally, I often invoke my own Higher Self, but have found more discrete deities to be wonderful teachers. Whatever you invoke will flavor your entire trip. I suggest a libation to your deity invoked, since you may be too occupied with other issues to remember that you have guests. If you run into trouble, call upon your guardian/guide and ask for help. These guidelines are intended for the individual traveller, but working with trusted friends can both up the ante and provide support when needed. Working with others, Sacrament can easily be used to bring people together, to create a common mind.

## Drawing Lines in the Sand

There is a matter of indulgence that needs to be addressed. Where do we draw the lines? The War on Drugs is conceived exactly for that purpose: someone else is drawing the lines, because somewhere along the way too many people were irresponsible. Too many people died, too many innocents suffered from crime. I am of the mind that anything can be sacred if the Mage deems it so; a certain

consciousness of the act indulged in must be retained. The experience must be realized symbolically. Even if your ass gets thrown in jail, was it an experiment in your life-management skills? Simply, indulgence can be useful, even if it brings you nothing but pain and suffering.

Question is, as usual, what is your intent? If you get sloppy and deny what possible consequences there are, then you are walking a dangerous path. Some of the Sacraments can lead to physical addiction and the explorer MUST BE AWARE of this possibility. The experienced traveller might use those particulars to strengthen his Will against the powers of the substance.

I realize that my idea of "sacred" is not the same as my neighbor's. Damn. If we come to a point where the colloquial meaning of "sacrament" means "Party on, Dude!" we will all be responsible for that. We the people speak the language and connect actions to labels. Perhaps our idea of "Sacrament" needs to be more closely related to "Respect." Respect of space and of magical tools, a common agreement

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**Don't fool yourself into thinking that because you take drugs and flog a drum all night you're A Powerful Shaman.**

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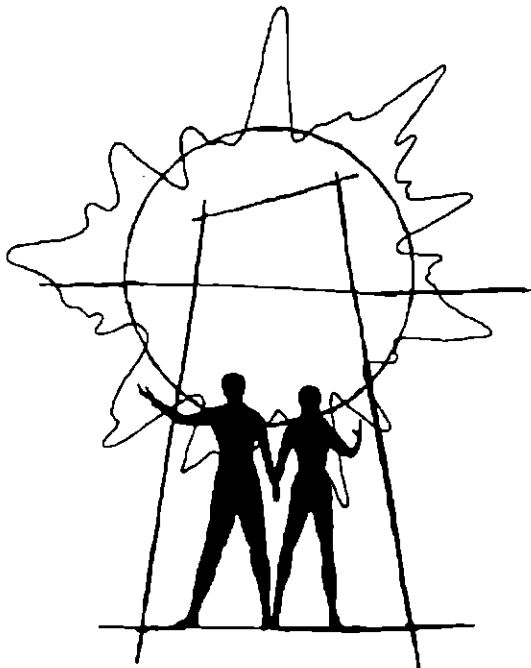


that "we act this way in circle" is fundamental to magickal awareness. Respect the substance, the entity within it, and yourself. (Gee, another Trinity.) Bring it outside the circle if you like: all I ask is that you Be Aware. Our ancestor shamans communed with the Sacraments with necessary respect. We need not recreate the past, but why reinvent the wheel? Our ancestors have given us a priceless gift in the work they have done with sacred plants, and some sincerely continue that work today. Would we throw this away through disrespect, and our love of a good party? Furthermore, only centeredness and communion with the entity lead to the higher planes. Dropping and riding the waves is merely that. Don't fool yourself into thinking that because you take drugs and flog a drum all night you're A Powerful Shaman.

I have unfortunately seen pagans without much strength of Will using the label of "Sacrament" as an excuse to go overboard, with all the attendant neuroses. Welcome to the New Aeon, we are experimenting with and redefining everything! We have seized on the freedom of our magick and we are growing into the responsibility of it. As individuals, most of us do not yet take responsibility for ourselves — to what extent shall we take responsibility for each other? To the extent that we care, and to the extent that we can. Day in, day out, I deal with the ego trips and

emotional addictions of myself and my community. We grow every day. Since we are not particularly hot on the idea of a formally educated and paid pagan clergy, we must treat each other with what meager tools we have. Does it suffice? In my present circles it does, but the going is slow. Physical addiction is a serious problem that probably should be treated by a professional — which usually means a non-pagan. Yes, I've seen communities disintegrate through indulgent use of, ahem, "Sacrament." Am I any the worse for it? No. Are they? Who am I to say?

My concern is with the young ones, misled by irresponsible idiots who call themselves shamans and have not done the work. Please take note: the measure of a shaman's skill is in the extent of his ability to manipulate the physical realm. The proof is in the pudding, so to speak. Shamans haven't gone extinct, yet there are fewer than one might think. Explorers are not shamans and have no business running a shaman circle until they have certain navigational skills, which come through respect for, and communion with, the entity. Think of your relationship with Sacrament as one with a highly evolved, demanding teacher. It's not all peaches, but it's the results of the work that you're really shooting for: a stronger and clearer Self, more ability to manifest the Higher, humility, power, and the honor of passing on knowledge to those who come after.



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**REUNITING THE HUMAN AND THE DIVINE**

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# NOTES ON TANTRIC ALCHEMY AND THE PURIFICATION OF MERCURY

by Vajranatha

Mercury, or parada in Sanskrit, has a long and detailed history of use. To the practitioner of the Tantras (and the medieval alchemists), it was the key to the ultimate sacrament. The purpose of this article is to share some of my own discoveries on this fascinating and forgotten subject.

Parada traditionally has many different names, most of which are obscure synonyms in the Sandhya Bhasya (Skt.), or Twilight Language. The Twilight Language is an intentional language, intentionally designed to thwart the misuse of certain formulae. The use of these formulae were only intended for those who had experiential access to twilight states of consciousness, and were familiar with the unique symbolism of such dimensions. In the Natha lineage where the Alchemical teachings are preserved, these states were obtained through a thorough training in yoga or union, and its main method, *samadhi*, or mystical union.

Some of the common words used to symbolize parada are: *rasa* (essence), *rasendra* (because it is the most important of metals), *suta* (because of its ability to transmute gold), *capala* (on account of its volatility), *rasa raja* (ruler of metals)—and many others. Most of these words are synonymous with Shiva, indeed one of the most common synonyms

refers to parada as the “semen of Shiva”. This is, in and of itself, very revealing.

Shiva, in the Tantric literature, symbolizes **infinite time** (Skt.: Mahakala). This explains the esoteric symbolism embedded in Shiva's traditional iconography: a yogin crowned by the eclipsing moon: the sun and the moon conjoined. Karmic prana is withdrawn from the solar and lunar channels to become *jnanic* (transcendental) life-force. There, Shiva and Shakti lie, beyond time, in the central channel (sushumna). In order for creation to come into being, Shiva enters into “play” with his opposite, Shakti. Thus, the concept of time, and limited experience becomes possible. In the process of making parada consumable, parada is mixed with this opposite; the only substance which can control Shiva's incredible potential, purified sulfur: the ‘menses’ or blood of Parvati (Shakti).

Technically speaking, Shakti is *Ahamkara* (Skt.) or literally ‘the I-maker’, the power behind ‘I-ness’, the kundalini shakti herself. A human only exists based on the fact that Ahamkara deceives herself into believing that she is mated to the limited physical body and its resident personality. When the kundalini shakti is completely ‘uncoiled’, she recognizes that she is Shiva's ‘power’. Unfortunately, for the uninitiated or inexperienced person, once this shakti is ‘awake to itself,’ it forgets the limited body-mind, and remembers Shiva. She sacrifices her limited individuality to him and obtains instant enlightenment.

The problem for the uninitiated is quite simple; those who have not trained in meditation and the total transcendence of limitations, both of time and of body-mind, will at worst lose the ability to identify with the body, i.e., physical death. At best, the huge influx of kundalini will overwhelm the limited energy/immune functions of the body like millions of volts of electricity running through low voltage wire.

There is a misguided conception among new age-magical circles that the “fastest” way to enlightenment is to simply

awaken the kundalini shakti. What they won't tell you is what to do with the incredible amounts of energy released. Most of the people I have talked to have no idea what to do with it! Remember always, that Shiva is also the Lord of death.

Ahamkara, as the energy behind our essential egos, is the basis of all addiction. It is Ahamkara that addicts us even to the food we need to sustain life. The only real way to relieve this problem is to transmute Ahamkara's binding limitation by wedding her to her opposite: Shiva. The limitations of the 'I-maker' are then transformed by expansion into a balanced cosmic personality. Addiction to the God/Goddess, to a higher power, is the only permanent cure. It is interesting that even the twelve step groups seem to understand this important idea.

Mercury, as the semen of Lord Shiva, is the physical embodiment of the fire of transformation (tejas). It can provide incredible amounts of tejas to an organism, and can make them capable of digesting almost anything. This means digestion of physical substances as well as 'digestion' of the sense objects of the five senses, the digestion of experience itself. Parada can also provide unlimited amounts of prana. Thus, with prana and tejas, fire and water, parada can provide unlimited ojas, the Quintessence. Because it controls these three, it can also control the three doshas, or bodily humors. Yet, by itself, mercury forms an insoluble salt which lodges in the brain and causes insanity or death. Ingesting mercury by itself is like raising kundalini through an imbalanced path. What mercury needs is something to balance it, to control its energy. That something is the element sulfur.

Sulfur is the elemental embodiment of blood, that which the body uses to create everything else (from an Ayurvedic perspective), and the only thing capable of controlling mercury. Sulfur is the womb which creates the child Kajjali, the black sulfide of mercury.

Kajjali is the alchemical child from which most of the other alchemical substances are created. The most famous of the mercury-based compounds is the rasayana (rejuvenative) Makaradwaja. Makaradwaja consists (primarily) of mercury, sulfur, and gold. This compound is capable of providing endurance, energy, increased immune function and longevity to its taker.

Makaradwaja seems to work by allowing prana, tejas and ojas to flow into parts of the subtle physiology where it would not normally be able to flow, clearing many of the blockages which may be present. If taken prior to meditation or even sleep, it can even be seen to permeate the nadis (subtle channels).

Mercury allows the body to digest the otherwise only partly digestible element of gold. This allows the concentrated "solidified sunlight," gold, to gild the bodies immune system and aura. On a subtle level, it actually has the appearance of a volatile mercury, streaming through the bodies channels. It is excellent for diseases such as A.I.D.S. and different forms of cancer. The average treatment routine, repeated on a yearly basis, should last for about a month, depending on the individual, usually in the coldest months of the year.

Members of the Bhairavi cult, worshippers of a particularly wrathful form of Lord Shiva, have been known to live hundreds of years through the alchemical use of such mercury-based compounds. Indeed, some are said to have obtained immortality (by overcoming their innate addiction to time). Statues of the Bhairavi cult display some of the characteristics of this incredible life extension; beings so mutated from alchemical sadhana as to resemble other dimensional Bhairavis more than humans. This is their actual appearance, yet they may appear as any age to the observer, and do not usually display their true appearance to the uninitiated.

In Rasa Shastra, the Art of Tantric alchemy, Mercury is considered as a living substance—a living being. In the process of preparation, it goes through all of the same processes as the sadhaka who seeks liberation, and the child or soul who seeks incarnation. First, the mercury is 'awakened', made 'hungry', it is 'fed', made to 'swoon', and lastly 'killed'. 'Killing' refers to incineration in the symbolism of the Twilight Language. More than mere symbolism, the preparation of Mercury is the preparation for enlightenment itself, the true Gold of the Wise.

Nothing summarizes the goal of Tantric alchemy better than the following quote from the *Rasahridaya Tantra* (9th cent. A.D.) by the great sage Govinda Bhagavatpada, the Guru of Shankaracharya:

"It is only in the virtuous ones, the flame full of consciousness appears between the two eye brows which has the appearance of fire, lightening, or a sun. It is difficult to describe the nature of this excellent flame. It endows the person with eternal bliss and makes him free of all miseries. It is observable. It is peaceful and its attributes can be appreciated by the individual. The individual should concentrate his mind on this flame and the entire universe will appear before them like eternally vibrating consciousness... Those individuals who have attained this state of unity which is like amrita are the truly blessed ones." (*Rasahridaya Tantra* 1:21-26)

# A PATH OF MANY STONES

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by Joy Cummings

## Part I: The Trip

I caressed the oily, soft surface of the wine bottle, admiring the sparkling blood garnet liquid within that glowed in the hot afternoon sunlight. The view from the balcony of my apartment was definitely starting to improve, the mushrooms were kicking in, and the world was a brighter place.

My friend had promised that these “cybes were something special”, and I was becoming a believer, fast! In the few times I had tried mushrooms at parties, all I had gotten was the giggles and light shows. This time I felt like I was really going for a trip, and I was certainly glad I had the apartment to myself for the weekend.

When I went back into the dim, smoky looking apartment, I had to stop and admire the rippling carpet. When did it get so green? Minutes passed by, tinkling through my hair, and the walls were very slowly breathing. When I settled down a little, I realized that I should get to the pool while I could still walk, if I wanted to try swimming today. Swimming would be easy compared to walking in this state.

I was halfway across the smoldering concrete parking lot when I realized I was barefoot. A towel had conveniently appeared around my neck, and the pool was

approaching rapidly, so I kept on, even as a tiny spark in my mind was telling me how badly my feet would burn. Cool water would solve any problems I had, wash away the debris of the work week, clear the mind and heal the soul. Suddenly I was in the water, towel and all, and laughing at the astonished children gaping from the sides, staring at the lady who had fallen into the pool with her towel around her neck.

## Part II: Journey

Otter popped up in the water, twitching her whiskers and squinting at the dappled sunlight filtering through the canopy of oak trees that hung over the mountain creek. Squirrels chattered in the branches, scolding, arguing, chasing each other from branch to branch, and Otter was lost between annoyance and laughter. Laughter won, and she started doing flips and twirls herself, an echo of their airborne antics, and dove to the bottom of the creek to swirl among the rocks and reeds that made purplish tunnels in the dim and wavering water light.

She swam downstream towards her favorite sunning rock, where the creek turned east and exposed a small granite outcrop to the afternoon sun. The cool water streamed across her slippery fur without penetrating, and her strong propeller tail was only used for steering and an occasional twirl for fun. The current carried her along as fast as she wanted to go, and she rode the whorls and eddies with a light heart. In a deeper pool by the rocks, a light gray caught her eye, and she deftly flipped her direction to investigate.

Otter circled above the creek bottom warily, tasting the water and wondering why this pool had changed. Only yesterday she had caught a fat young trout behind that tree root on the north, and, at the time, the bottom was rippled sand, broken by rocks and roots and reeds. Now it was a uniform, flat gray, hard as rock but much lighter in color,

and the only interruption in its surface was a round hole about the width of her body covered by a shiny perforated barrier. She tasted the water and spat it back, the harsh sour taste lingering on her tongue.

*"Chlorine? Concrete?"*

Otter swam away confused, but by the time she reached the sunning rock, the strange concepts had dissipated from her mind like a scent on the wind, and her heart was light again.

Oh, there was her daughter of last spring! Standing at the edge of the rock, balanced on her tail, Daughter twitched her whiskers in the light breeze. She dove from the rock and pierced the water gracefully, rising before Otter to touch noses respectfully. After a sniff, they began to twirl together in the frothing stream, lifting, leaping, chase and tag, across a log, and then a leap, a dive from the edge, a slide down the rock, a chase around the old pine stump.

The afternoon sun began to wane and the breeze picked up speed, sending leaves twirling through the air around them. The water went from sparkling blue to shimmering green, and Otter stopped to rest in the last patch of sun on the big rock that marked the edge of her territory.

She watched as Daughter wafted downstream, and thought of going back to her den under the lightning broken tree for the night.

*"Apartment?"*

Otter shook a little dizzy feeling from behind her eyes, and concentrated on the light of the orange sun sinking behind the forest. Soon she would have to eat, another nice trout would do, or some reed tubers.

*"Not from that poisoned pool!"*

Otter shivered and dove into the rippling stream. The journey upstream took effort, it seemed she had to work

harder and harder to push against the current. She was on the lookout for some dinner, but it seemed as if the creek was dying, cold and grey and sterile, and that harsh sour taste was back. She was so tired that she cared less and less if she ate, and as she passed her favorite trout pool, she turned away her eyes and kept pushing upstream.

*"My arms are worn out!"*

She climbed up on the bank and lay there shivering, a wet towel draped around her tiny shoulders, and a homing instinct kicked in. She rose and started walking, the chill air cutting through her fur, the dark beginning to obscure the edges of the buildings. She turned a corner and a monster appeared, glowing fiercer than the sun and roaring with the sound of a hundred thunderstorms. She screamed and flattened herself against the building as it bore down on her.

*"Truck! Toyota?  
Where the hell am I?"*

As the thought slid through her mind, she was transformed. Her fur fell away, her stature grew, and she shivered in fear and cold. She staggered all the long way home.

## Part III: Coming Home

The two stories you have read here are both true, flip sides of a day that changed me irrevocably. I set out to trip, just a weekend romp away from the cares and pressures of my almost unbearable life. I was cynical, burnt out, and on the mental edge of suicide, a different kind of trip that I had nearly succeeded in taking about five years before this journey. I discovered another side of myself that had been strangling inside of me all of my life.

When I awoke the next day, back in my body, back in my apartment, I was in very bad shape. I had black and purple bruises on my hips, my legs, my arms. I had a swollen gash down one cheek, crusted with dried blood. I was dehydrated, famished, weak and disoriented. I was also elated, terrified, and insatiably curious about what had

actually taken place, because I knew without a doubt that I had left my body. I also knew that I had been lucky, because I wasn't locked away some place "safe" (like the "safe" place they put me after my attempted suicide), and I felt, for the first time in years, that I was lucky to be still alive.

I had big gaps in my memory, but the clearest memory I brought back with me from my journey was to stay with me forever. It was the memory of being free, wild, living and happy. It was the memory of not being just a human stuck in a clumsy body that I never had liked, a memory of being, and being connected to, another level of life that I was now somehow tapped into. It was a terrifying experience, but I wouldn't send it back for any reason.

Did I then go back to psychedelics, over and over, for the thrill, the trip? No, I did not. Instead, I stopped dead, gave away what I had left, gradually weaned myself away from marijuana and alcohol, and started living again. Ten years later, I had begun to assimilate this experience into my everyday, every moment life. Now I have learned from my studies that what happened to me would be considered the lowest form of sacramental abuse by many people. From my studies, I have also learned that there are times when the Goddess reaches out and gives us a lift, a jolt, a turning,

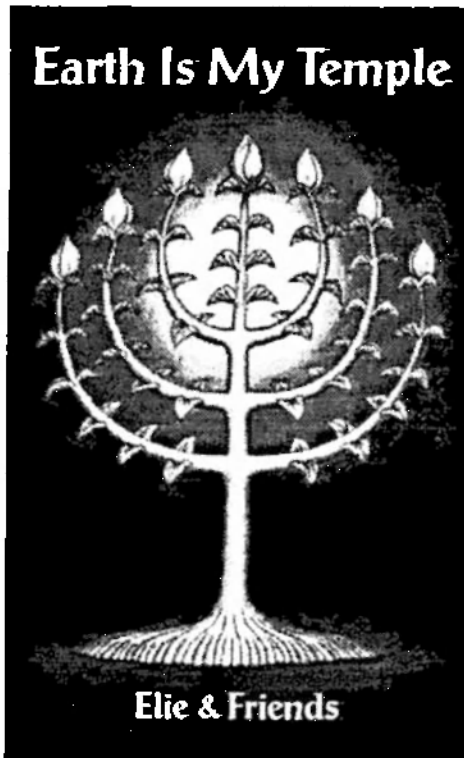
sometimes a spanking (O, did I hurt for weeks!) to turn back onto the path we need to find for our lives.

Do I recommend a psychedelic trip for anyone who has lost the way? O, no, please don't do it. For the few of us who survived and were lifted up by such an experience, there were many, far too many, who fell into a pit of pain because of the abuse of substances that should be reserved for special circumstances. Over the years, I watched many friends lost on this path, and didn't know how to help them. Now that I have a little more knowledge of the fire I played with that day, I know the fine line I walked between enlightenment and madness, and I thank the Goddess for her help.

Are you seeking? Find friends, find teachers, find books and networks, study groups and circles. Then, if you feel that the sacramental use of some substance may enhance your life, or help you in your journey in some way, please, **DON'T GO ALONE!** The value of friends and mentors cannot be put aside, because a journey of this kind may do you irrevocable damage.

**DON'T GO ALONE!**

The Goddess may not reach you in time.



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# Suck, Baby, Suck

by Massimo Mantovani

*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.*

When we start talking about sacraments, especially from a Thelemic point of view, we run the risk of being misunderstood.

After all, sacrament in a Thelemic tradition is nearly always a sexual sacrament, and the Abyss of misunderstanding and lies stands wide open before those who don't want to acknowledge the plain truth: That this kind of sacrament involves the recognition of sex as something holy which must be honoured, and which a Thelemite worth this name should always respect and never blaspheme.

Maybe we all are a little guilty of this situation. Maybe we haven't been clear enough in explaining what we mean when we talk about "sexual sacrament", so leaving enough room for petty exploiters to ritually work their way to otherwise unobtainable sex partners.

Or maybe this situation is unavoidable, as sex (and Magic[k], if we think a bit about it) has *always* been considered suspect when not limited to the (nuptial) bedroom. I mean, when we think about Kaula Tantrics and say: "It's all OK if tantrics do it, but when Crowley did it, it was **filthy**", we seem to forget that IN INDIA also Kaula Adepts are considered something strange and dangerous, something barely short of black magicians. Should this be the bitter reality, explaining our positions and ideas would be pointless.

After all, as DuQuette and Hyatt put it (in their ALEISTER CROWLEY'S ILLUSTRATED GOETIA):

"Individuals who use Sex Magick, Goetic evocation or indeed any 'magical' lures as 'pick up' techniques are all but shouting to the world they are unable to get a sex partner any other way."

Give 'em enough rope and they'll hang themselves. All we can do now is stick to our ideals, honouring them in our daily Magick, and warn other people about these dangerous pimps. Please get a copy of Frater U:D.:s SECRETS OF THE GERMAN SEX MAGICIANS, run to page 205 and read "The Error of Spiritualization."

## A FUCKING WELL-KNOWN CLICHE, ISN'T IT?

Please read now about my nearly personal experience.

It was around 1985 and, owing to the lack of a Thelemic tradition in Italy (it was already probably there, but I didn't know), I was introduced by a friend into a group of people belonging to a Martinist Order: The ones who follow the teachings of Louis Claude de Saint Martin and Martinez de Pasqually. This "Hill" (as Martinists call their groups) was led by an old man (whose name I don't want to reveal, as he is probably still living) who earned in the past a great reputation as Pope of a Gnostic Church of French origin (probably through Papus, as he showed me friendly letters from Papus' son, Philippe Encausse).

As it soon was clear, the old man used the Martinist group to avoid spending his evenings alone, and as a recruiting field for his Gnostic Church group.

And this was the worst thing: He repeatedly celebrated a masturbatory version of the Gnostic Mass where he clearly showed his homosexual inclinations, and during which he convinced young members of the group that it was mandatory, sooner or later, to get the **consolamentum** (the cathar sacrament) directly from his "fountain" into **their** mouths.

This was the same man who, in a personal conversation, labelled Crowley's attainments as "dubious" because of his sexual obsession!!!

It was clear instead that he was using his position in the Gnostic Church to satisfy his otherwise perfectly respectable homosexual tastes.

We (me and my friend) decided to leave the group, but not before going through a dangerous experience.

This friend of mine had got very close to the old man,

living in his house as a personal secretary (he attended University in the same town where the old man lived) and receiving his "sacrament" at least once. A "magical link" (sorry!) had already been established, as the old man was after all, as we were to discover, a powerful magician-vampire. Moreover, my friend once saw him put "something" in the food he was preparing for the both of them.

We prepared for something (we still didn't know what to expect), then one night my friend "dreamed" of a strange octopoid being who tried to suck his life-energy. We prepared again, and the following night, as the dream re-occurred, my friend invoked the Archangel Michael (seen as a manifestation of the Horus-like force and fire energy), took the sword from the Angel's hands and stabbed the creature's head, thus making it run away.

The morning after, when we met the old man, we couldn't avoid noticing a wound on his forehead. He said he had fallen on the floor, but we knew the truth was different.

I never saw him again.

Don't suck everything they offer. Please don't.

*Love is the law, love under will.*

# A Pilgrim's Process

by Dr. Know

*Pilgrim, you ask me about sacrament?*

When asked about such an emotionally charged topic, full of contradictions and peril, that generally lies beyond the realm of language, my first response is to keep silent. However, remembering the profound help I have obtained from wise people cautiously and humbly trying to explain as best they could, I feel I must attempt to share a few of those ideas which I have gathered on this subject.

You should respect and honor sacrament. It can be very powerful. By respecting this power, you can harmonize your intent with the mind changing effect of the sacrament.

*Exactly how does sacrament work?*

I'm not sure; and many things I've heard and even seen defy my understanding. However, I believe every moment is full of awe, beauty, wonder and revelation. To keep us from being continuously thunderstruck and "ga-ga," we develop mental filters. This allows us to walk down the street and not be overwhelmed by all the wonder. Instead, we can define everything as just "normal stuff" and consciously notice the one or two "new things". When sacrament is taken, we can experience "normal stuff" without the filters and perceive them anew. This applies to abstract stuff like thought patterns as well as concrete stuff like a piece of cloth.

*Does use of sacrament result in spiritual development?*

Not always. Some individuals have taken massive amounts of sacrament with no apparent development, spiritual or otherwise. Spiritual development requires preparation and work. In a well prepared person, sacrament may induce a great spiritual break through. But, now as ever, a worthy vessel is hard to find.

None of the veteran sacrament users that I have known have disputed the importance of set and setting. That is the mental set of the celebrant and the physical setting at the time the sacrament is used. If you desire spiritual progress, manipulate your set and setting to maximize that end when you consume sacrament. However, you may learn to manipulate set and setting to conform to your goals with or without sacrament.

I've said enough—hopefully not too much.

*Please, one final question: Do you think it is natural to take sacrament?*

Yes and no. As far back as we can trace human society, various sacred plants have been used as sacrament by some. Yet the majority have not used sacrament and many used sacrament only once. Study recent works by Terence McKenna (especially *The Archaic Revival*) to gain a deeper understanding of this extremely complicated question.



# COCAINE APOLOGIA

*by Paul Joseph Rovelli*

For me, a magickal ceremony is usually a cathartic experience where some portion of my consciousness is inflamed. I search for an excitement in tune with my goal and treat it as an energy or current. This current is then anthropomorphized into some sacred and mysterious rite that flings me about the temple under the yoke of my willed control. Hopefully, that has awakened and/or strengthened that area of my consciousness that needs to act in a more functional manner to achieve the desired end.

In my childhood, I was a bit more unconscious about it, but I instinctively acted with the same methodology. I remember that I wanted to be more adult and even 'hip'. Therefore, I experimented with the use of tobacco and alcohol. While it may seem as inane a thing as any pre-teen might do in these years of one's life, it did in my recollection, for a moment, produce the desired result. It was my self-styled rite-of-passage; one that I look back upon as an unique milestone in my life.

By the time I became a teenager, I encountered a few leftover hippies along with a sixties-styled culture of psychedelic-mysticism, marijuana and crystalline-THC. I was in search of mystical experience and fantastic journeys through consciousness. My aesthetic response to this inspired me to start writing music and poetry as a sort of diary documenting these journeys into these regions of my psyche.

As a young adult, I had then added Mescaline and LSD to my psychedelic experiments into mystical states of mind. You might say that I became quite the psychedelic voyeur. However, with the exception of marijuana, I can honestly say that these more potent drugs were used quite sparingly and that I can still count the number of times that I used them, and can clearly remember the laboratory conditions that I created for their use.

By the end of my college years, I was introduced to the mental stimulation of cocaine. It was entirely libidinal

and self-indulgent. The popularity of the drug was the only force that brought it my way as I had no desire to seek it out. And only curiosity convinced me to imbibe. I basically wrote the drug off as a waste of time and money. However, there was a certain mystique about it that lit up people's faces when it was present and this intrigued me.

In recent years, cocaine has become incredibly cheap and easy to obtain. In this way, some of the mystique has been removed and social problems have arisen because of this. Still, I have spent some time experimenting with it. And with the exception of very few psychedelic-like experiences, I maintained no significant respect for the drug.

Its use remained in the social sphere of my life. I used it with friends; hanging out to the wee hours of the morning. We were wide-awake and talked, planned, schemed and dreamed. Under its influence, I noted that I truly believed that marvelous things could be accomplished which seemed out of the reach of my confidence when sober; I was so convinced that these schemes were so easy to act on.

This began to fascinate me; that these cocaine fantasies were like lucid dreams. I speculated upon my idea of cathartic experience in ritual in my temple. I began to treat the drug as an energy not unlike the other energies that I have experimented with in my magickal forum. I believe that the success of any ceremony is achieved through the production of this excited state of mind. It convinces us of the possibility of achieving that which doesn't seem possible in normal everyday consciousness.

And using cocaine in a small dosage in a sacramental capacity has proven a most unique experience. I can't honestly say that I have had amazing results. I only say that the results of these experiments have been at least as successful as other sacramental experiences that I have pursued. This tells me that there is some benefit to its use when used wisely in a sacred manner that gives respect to its danger and potency.

The sacred life is sacred. All methods by which we attain have their nobility and danger; even those endorsed by the more orthodox and mundane religions of our Judeo-Christian culture. Cocaine may or may not be one way to achieve a clearer perception of the mystical life. The experience that I have noted is mine alone. What I have done has proved interesting and has intensified my desire to do the Great Work. It remains a fond memory that belongs to a certain place and time.

# RECOGNIZING "SUBSTANCE ABUSE" SUPPORTS RESTRICTION

by Gemini7

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

Recognizing that some people may "abuse" certain psychoactive substances plays into the hands of the prohibitionists who would restrict freedom to choose. Rather than asking whether the use of certain psychoactive substances as sacraments can constitute "abuse," the magickal community should be focusing its energies (magickal and political)<sup>1</sup> toward the repeal of the current restrictive, prohibitionist laws, which themselves cause far more evil than the so-called "abuse" such laws are purportedly designed to prevent.

For the past twenty years, the federal and state governments in the United States have waged a "war of drugs," which is really a war against drug users.<sup>2</sup> Two legislative (or bureaucratic) judgments support all of the prohibitionist laws against certain psychoactive substances: (1) there is no generally accepted medical use for these substances; and (2) these substances have potential for "abuse." These criteria are wholly insufficient to justify the current prohibitionist laws against the manufacture, distribution, and possession of certain psychoactive substances, some of which are used as sacraments.

Just because a psychoactive substance has no "generally accepted medical use" does not necessarily mean that it is valueless or dangerous. Even if a psychoactive substance gives pleasure or religious insight, the medical community—at least in the United States and other Western nations—will never accept these uses because they are not viewed as being necessary for the treatment of disease.

The term "abuse" merely condemns repeated use of certain psychoactive substances—as evidenced by law enforcement officials' invariable characterization of "recreational" use of prohibited psychoactive substances as "abuse." Aiwass, the prater-human intelligence experienced by Aleister Crowley in April 1904, dictated the following:

"I [Hadit] am the Snake that giveth Knowledge & Delight and bright glory, and stir the hearts of men with drunkenness. To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet & be drunk thereof! They

shall not harm ye at all. It is a lie, this folly against self. The exposure of innocence is a lie. Be strong, o man! lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this."<sup>3</sup>

This strongly suggests that there is no such thing as "abuse" of psychoactive substances.<sup>4</sup>

Future historians will undoubtedly view the decades-long prohibitionist ban on certain psychoactive substances as another Spanish Inquisition—a wholesale attack on the populace to eliminate "witches," "heretics," "deviants," and "misfits." It is hardly the legacy the nation's founding fathers intended when they wrote the Ninth Amendment, which guarantees that "[t]he enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."<sup>5</sup>

We should leave behind the morass caused by the futile and irrational attempt to create a "drug-free society," something the world has never seen. The heavy-handed criminal sanctions on at least some psychoactive substances should be eliminated and replaced with regulations (like those governing alcohol) so that the magickal community can use them legally as sacraments.<sup>6</sup>

Love is the law, love under will.

Fraternally,  
Gemini7 (93!)

1 Of course, political actions are magickal actions to the extent that they cause change in conformity with the exertion of will.

2 Lester Grinspoon & James B. Bakalar, "The War of Drugs—A Peace Proposal," 330 N. Eng. J. Med. 357, 357 (1994). As Grinspoon and Bakalar have recognized, there is now "the unfortunate imagery of a patriotic war in which drugs and drug users are the enemy." *Id.* at 359. Ironically, users of prohibited psychoactive substances are the purported beneficiaries of these paternalistic laws.

3 *LIBER AL vel LEGIS CCXX*, p. 31, para. 22 (reprinted 1976) (also known as *The Book of the Law*).

4 But see *LIBER ALEPH vel CXI 93* (reprinted 1992) (also known as Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Wisdom or Folly*) ("Concerning the use of Chymical Agents, and be mindful that thou abuse them not, learn that the Sacrament itself relateth to Spirit, and the Four Elements balanced thereunder, in its Perfection.").

5 U.S. Constitution, amend. 9; see also Thomas Szasz, *Our Right to Drugs: The Case for A Free Market* (1992); Robert W. Sweet & Edward A. Harris, *Just and Unjust Wars: The War on the War on Drugs—Some Moral and Constitutional Dimensions of the War on Drugs*, 87 N.W. Univ. L. Rev. 1302, 1346-72 (1993).

6 Generally, the courts have rejected claims that the use of prohibited psychoactive substances is protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom.

# NAVIGATING THE LABYRINTH

by *Ariadne*

When I first decided to take the plunge and write an article on sacrament use and abuse for Mezzim, I convinced myself that it had to be written from an objective “journalistic” point of view. A calm, scholarly discussion which would highlight the effects of hallucinogenic substances on a magickal life. Ha! When discussing this topic, one enters the Dionysian realm of pleasure and the greater mysteries. There ain’t nothin’ calm or objective about it—it’s all personal, intimate and as far in and out (simultaneously) as a human can go. That’s what it’s all about—ecstatic life experience.

LSD, mushrooms and marijuana have been interwoven into my life for the past 15 years, with varying degrees of involvement and intensity. It is these sacraments with which I have personal experience. As a woman learning and practicing the metaphysical arts, I have primarily been exposed to hallucinogenics via the men I’ve been partnered with. As I’ve found with many male practitioners, drugs have a priority placement in their lives. The drug of choice in my longest relationship was LSD, so that is the substance with which I am most familiar—although my preferred sacrament is hallucinogenic mushrooms, because I enjoy the holistic experience they provide and the “organic” treatment of the physical body. Tripping has had a cathartic effect on my personal development and my “normal” existence with both positive and negative results.

I would like to state that I have never used drugs in a ritual. I was taught the Craft by a witch who kept the two practices separate, but equal in importance. Ritual practice was preceded by fasting, and circle was entered with a clear head; any partying was done after the circle was closed. Then again, when I recall those years, I realize that although the rituals were without drugs, the act of drug taking was literally steeped in specific ritualized behavior, and the approaches had many similarities. That concept (the use of drugs in ritual vs. the ritualized use of drugs) is a key point I wish to address with this article and, in my opinion, the point where use can become abuse of the sacraments.

A good example of the ritualized drug mindset can be seen in Gus van Sant’s movie, “Drugstore Cowboy”. Although the film is specifically about heroin addicts, their behavior is universal throughout the drug environment. Superstition rules this world. What part of the country are the doses coming from? Who is scoring? What symbol is printed on the tabs? All of these factors have an effect (real or imagined) on the trip itself.

Days or weeks would be spent gathering the money, the right set of people and circumstances to achieve new levels of ecstasy. My ex-partner would gather a group of friends together, have everyone visualize tabs of acid in their cupped palms and “call” it to them. You know what? It worked. Inevitably we would soon score some LSD. Once we scored, the set-up began for a two or three day tripping experience—music, lights, laser shows, vitamin C, feathers, scarves and masks—whatever was required to create a previously unreachable state of ecstasy.

What are some of the key elements in this scenario? Lots of hard work put into constructing a safe and fertile environment to serve as a receptive medium for phenomena to occur; and gathering the right set of participants, stimulation and triggers to

reach a certain goal. This is the same level of energy expended and the same loving attention to detail that I was taught to give to setting up a circle. I was taught to take my time and do it right; to follow the correct phase of the moon or planetary hour; to decorate with appropriate seasonal symbolism; to evoke the proper god or goddess aspect—all appropriate to the work I was doing. You know what? It works! The more factors present and correct—the easier the goal will be reached\*.

I have spent most of this article up to this point discussing the similarities found in ritual preparation and tripping. LSD has influenced my mindset and approach to life in many ways. This is, mind you, neither a positive nor a negative statement—just a statement of fact. It is one of many influences upon my path; just like Wicca, feminism and tarot happen to be some of the areas I've worked with in the conscious formation of my magickal self. If it sounds like I'm justifying my drug use, perhaps I am. I like to think of it as one small thread in the fabric that is Ariadne, but only a thread.

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**We work so hard to awaken our deepest selves, but then have to hurry up and cover the vulnerable spots ... so we don't feel the inevitable pain that comes with enlightenment.**

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I've heard it said that LSD does the same thing to your consciousness that extensive meditation, fasting or magickal practice will do—only faster and on a more direct route. I basically agree with this, as much as anyone can know what state of mind one reaches on a trip. Think about it—the tripper gets very high, very fast, most often without the guidance or preparation needed to process the great truths and insights that will pop into h/ir head in an altered state of consciousness. Why bother? Without a sane, logical framework to weave the knowledge into, the tripper becomes a burnout—lost in a perpetual haze of ungrounded confusion. Tripping often serves as a catalyst into magickal working, because one begins to search for knowledge that explains or enhances the insights attained when the boundaries of ego and personality are more diffuse.

I have had the experience of receiving information about myself and my world view on a trip that I certainly was not ready for. With all my careful preparation, convinced that I had seen it all, I had the doors of my perception literally blown away. This happened just over a year ago and I nearly had a nervous breakdown as a result. I have since

begun work on a magickal path that has given me the groundwork I was lacking to handle that level of knowledge. I'm glad it happened, but it wasn't pleasant. I look back at that incident now and realize that I could have attained that same level of insight with a bump in my life instead of a mountain, if my mental and spiritual states had been more disciplined.

So, I believe that the use of hallucinogenic substances brings new levels of awareness and knowledge to the tripper. It can help you to train your mind to think in new ways, to approach problems from multiple perspectives, and to explore alternative belief systems. It can also make you into a paranoid space cadet who cannot even function at the most primary level of modern society. LSD and other hallucinogens “open” avenues that need to be properly

maintained and disciplined with effective magickal practice or the user will become burned out. In my opinion: The user of hallucinogenic substances needs spiritual discipline, a spiritual context, to make the knowledge gained while tripping useful.

Acid broke up my magickal partnership about two years ago. My “ex” discovered he was in love with his 18-year-old male trip buddy and hit the road, embarking on a new life of rave culture and neo-shamanistic eschatology. He was so miserable in the pseudo-heterosexual Wiccan relationship that we had, that he began to trip once or twice every week. The more acid he took, the further apart we became.

Acid brought him to his true will. But, his behavior those last few months we were together showed me how the pattern of abusing hallucinogenics gets established. He was using the drug in ever larger doses, and the level of intensity in his tripping was increasing at a rate I had never seen before. He was escaping so hard, so often and so effectively that there remained no shell to return to after the trip was over. I'm not sure, but I think the person is still gone. For him, acid has become the central focus of life and everything else revolves around it.

But, it was at the end of an acid trip that same

summer that I had my wake-up call to my own addictions. I was watching the movie "Naked Lunch", William Burroughs' tribute to hallucinogenic bug spray, when I realized how much I admired the female protagonist, who was an addict. She was thin and sultry, with half-opened eyes and a French cigarette drooping from her mouth. She was an anti-heroine, like all the "bad girls" I'd admired. I finally saw the tragic beauty of my own self-destruction, so I stubbed out my butt and began the long, horrendous process of kicking nicotine addiction. Something in me had awakened, and I used this new awareness to dismantle the wall of denial that had kept me addicted to something that was surely killing me.

In the past few years, I have witnessed so many pagan friends struggle with their addictions—marijuana for one, pain killers for another, crack for yet another. We work so hard to awaken our deepest selves, but then have to hurry up and cover the vulnerable spots with alcohol or drugs or relationships or whatever, so we don't feel the inevitable pain that comes with enlightenment. This is obviously an important component to priestcraft today, but I don't have the answers. It's an individual struggle for each of us that can be helped along by supportive friends and shared experiences, but it's a lonely process.

It may sound like I have a love/hate relationship with hallucinogenics, but I don't. I have been able to experience beautiful, natural highs in the past two years that make some of my drug experiences pale in comparison. However, acid helped to guide me to the path I'm on now. I still like to trip, on occasion, but find that I have grown away from the need for "quickie" revelations. I have found healthier and more stable ways to "cut away the dross" and progress ever closer to my true will. But, you know what—tripping is still one hell of a good time! Hail Dionysus!

\*I have taken into consideration, of course, that drugs are illegal. That explains the difficulty in obtaining them and part of the mystique that has built up around the purchase and use of them. This is very different from shamanic cultures, where the drug itself develops a natural mystique and a wealth of lore surrounding it. Although magickal practice is legal in this country, it has its risks. Magick also has a different mystique in western culture than it would have if it had been consciously accepted and encouraged by our society.

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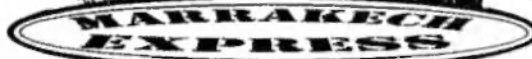


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# THE BODY AS TEMPLE

by Mishlen

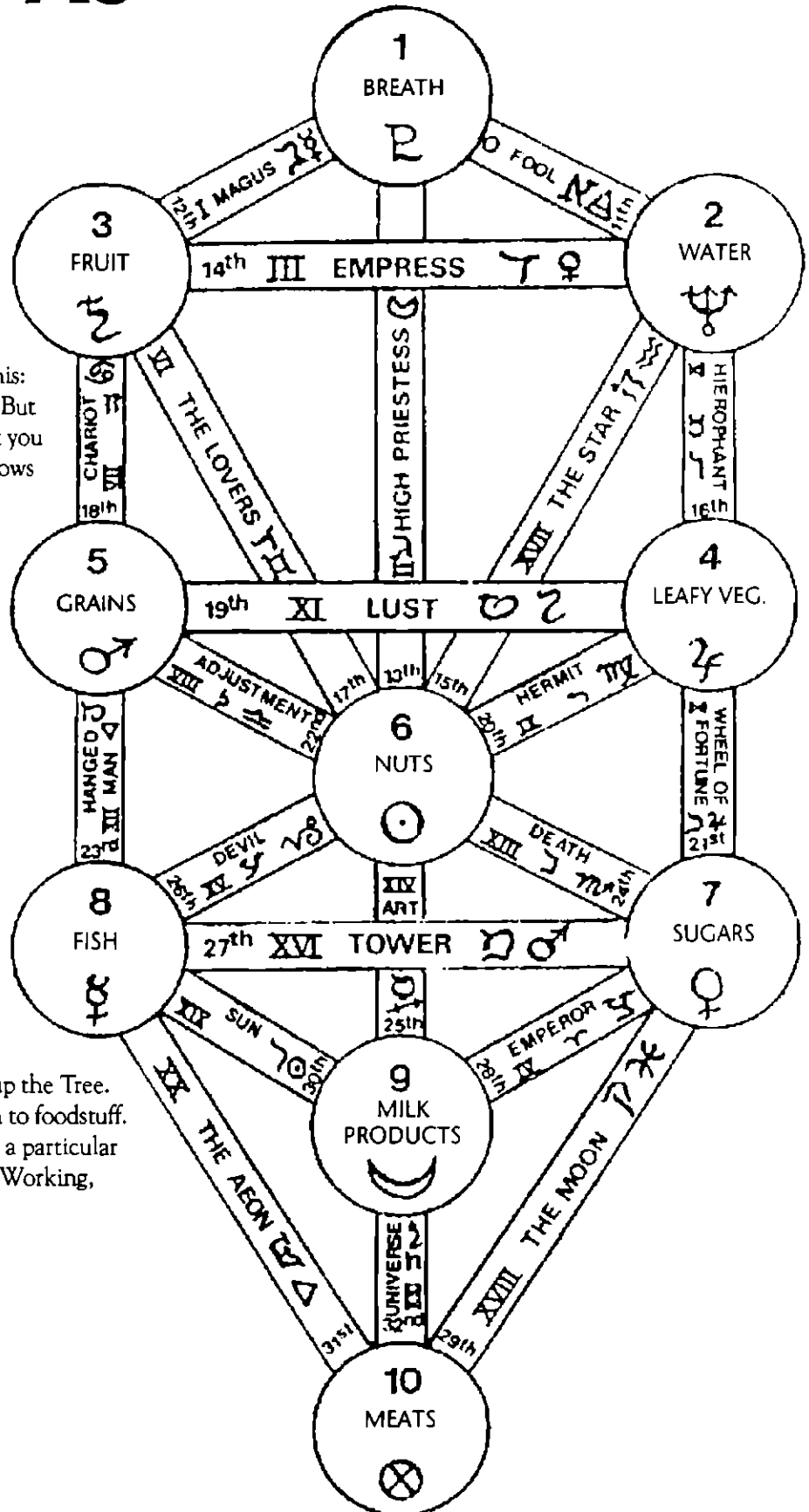
One objective viewpoint is that everything which goes into the body can be considered a drug. Because everything you eat effects it. We are familiar with some of this: Chocolate for lovers, coffee in the morning. But most of us rarely use the axiom "you are what you eat". (Considering this, and the amount of cows and pigs this country consumes, is it any wonder...?)

One day of reading the labels should be enough to frighten the hardest fast-food fiend. We DO do this: But we usually look only at the calorie section, as we proceed on our never ending diets.

When we give offerings to our altar God/desses, we give incense, water, fruits and flowers.

We do NOT give them Stouffer's microwaveable suppers. Should we do any less for the inner temple?

Here is a map sans T.V. Dinners. Observe the increase in prana as one moves up the Tree. I relate here the correspondence of Sephiroth to foodstuff. It can be considered when wanting to invoke a particular sephira or path. If this is used in a long-term Working, remember that we need ALL of the sephiroth to survive.



# Neophyte's Niche

## Magickal Tools

by Donna Stanford-Blake

Practicing magick - or any spiritual system - is often referred to as "working a path". And work it is! Self-transformation is the hardest job we have to face in our lives. But, as in any other work, you need the right tools to get the job done. I discovered this as I began my own career of life change. The other people in my small sphere of acquaintance have altars bedecked with all kinds of seemingly unrelated knick-knacks. I soon discovered, from my personal research and their input, that these items are not merely decorative. Their use and power hold importance for their owners. The reasons for tools escaped me, at first. Why use a tool? Isn't one's will enough? But, just as it isn't the carpenter's head that drives the nail, a magician's will sometimes needs something to work through. These are not crutches but real objects which aid some aspect of transformative work.

I use my own tools now and I understand why I use them. I think I know the "what?, why? and how?" of magickal tools. But I want to share two other unique perspectives, before I tell you what I have learned in my own explorations.

The first person I asked is Keter, a friend and magician that has been consciously transforming for several years. I specifically asked her, "What is your favorite tool? What purpose do you use it for? And how do you know it works?"

"My favorite tool? I really don't

have any one single tool that is my 'favorite'. Instead, I have several 'favored' tools that I use for different purposes. Each one is very special to me.

"For warding and for 'cutting', I use a heavy dagger with a wavy blade called a kris. This is a very powerful tool with a specific personality all its own. I value the relationship that I have established with this particular tool. Its aggressive energy, combined with my own and directed appropriately, make for very effective wards!

"For casting a circle, I use a four-color wand with special sigils which was magically created for me by a very good friend of mine. The colors and the sigils combine for a very intense and complete casting that leaves no doubt as to the boundaries of my magickal working space. This is particularly helpful when I'm casting circles in other than my normal temple space, where boundaries which are clear to both myself and others are essential.

"For a meditative tool, I prefer a small malachite egg which I acquired at a festival several years ago. The swirling patterns of green and black are soothing and mildly hypnotic. However, the real power of this egg is in the 'opening' of this pattern. On one side of the egg, the swirls are parted to reveal a black space with extremely tiny white flecks embedded in it. It appears to be a window to the universe. But am I on the inside looking out? Or the outside looking in? Either way, as a doorway to an alternative reality, it is a highly effective tool.

"I have many other tools and toys: My tarot deck, special incenses, specific sculptures, particularly powerful mineral formations, etc. However, I think that the ones I have discussed are the more important ones to me at this time in my life. I believe that tools help focus the power of each individual's magick and are, by their very nature, meant to be so used. Some can

stay with you for a long time; others serve a limited purpose and then should be appropriately passed on or disposed of. In all cases, proper honor and respect, both for the tool and for your magickal Self, should be maintained."

Magickal tools vary to fit the unique individuality of the owner. The longer one practices magick and related systems, the more tools pass through your life. Some reflect the owner but some seem to possess a power and personality all their own. The favorites, the most powerful, not only help direct energy but seem to store or generate their own. Imagination? New Age, airy-fairy drivel? You might jump to that conclusion - after all we are modern seekers are we not?! Well...I must admit to my own scepticism as a novice practitioner. The truth is - not everything can be easily or scientifically explained. Trust the results, the feelings experienced, the change witnessed or reported. If it works for you, if you get the results you sought - the tool works.

I asked Jaq D. Hawkins, a regular MEZLIM contributor, the same "what?" and "how?" questions I asked Keter. She responds with an excellent example of what is possible when using a magickal tool.

"Skipping over the usual lecture about how magick comes from the magician and ritual tools are essentially only for putting on a show for ourselves - my most often used magical tool is a ten and a half carat sapphire stone. It has been with me for many years and plays a part in any physical ritual I do.

"How I use it varies. Sometimes it plays a passive role, simply existing as a part of the ritual set-up. Sometimes I 'project' into it or get impressions out of it. At the risk of sounding like a new age junkie, I feel that its presence in magical working has a 'battery' effect and can be used for an extra power boost when I need it.

"My most recent occasion for using this stone was when a close friend was undergoing a vasectomy operation. He was understandably worried about the pain after the procedure, and asked me for any support and assistance I might be able to give. I thought of the stone five days before the operation. I realized that small packets usually take seven days to reach England, where the operation was to take place, from California, where I was at the time. With a bit of a

'push', I sent it anyway. Only four days later it arrived. Just in time to be elastoplasted to his arm, where it remained during and after his operation.

"At the time the operation was to take place, I did a ritual in my garden, which serves as an outdoor altar. The stone is attuned to my athame, so I used the athame, a basic white votive candle, some water and salt, and a few bits and pieces of personal samples from him (a risky business for me). I also entreated his own patron god and goddess (he's a Wiccan) to look after him. Fortunately, lacking the necessary body parts, I felt nothing physical. Neither did he. He awoke the next morning with no pain whatsoever, and suffered none during the entire healing process.

"The stone is now back among my other ritual tools, possibly the better off for having participated in a good deed. It has quite a history of refusing to get lost. Even when a ring containing the stone was left sitting on a car fender that subsequently drove off sending it flying off somewhere along a five mile stretch of road. I found it by visualizing its whereabouts. Then I walked along the road until I found a place where the road curved just right, looked down into a nearby ravine and saw it glistening up at me.

"One nice thing about such a tool is that it doesn't ring airport alarms as an athame may. It travels easily and does not attract undo attention. The attunement to the athame makes it a good substitute in situations where carrying knives might upset bystanders. It is also easy to keep in a pocket and grasp for that instant feeling of connection to my ritual persona."

Tools also work as extensions of our magickal selves. The ability to aid in long distance workings is an obvious advantage. As subtle reminders of our true magickal nature, residing in a pocket or on a home altar, their influence is less obvious but just as useful. The uses of a tool are limited only by your imagination and desire.

The one question I didn't ask but want to answer is "how do you chose a magickal tool?" There are several different methods. If you feel a need to do some particular work - such as healing - a visualization might reveal the necessary object. A ritual making of an object - charging with intent as you create - can be very effective. Be more

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**There is a magickal tool that doesn't need to be found or made or received. We all are born with one or, actually, in one. The body.**

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aware as you go about your normal errands. It's surprising where the right tool appears! Local bookstores, antique shops, thrift stores, garage sales and, of course, any Pagan gathering, are some more obvious places to search. But a look around your own home or yard may yield unexpected results, too.

Most people have at least one significant tool given to them. It may be a deliberate passing on of a magickal tool or a gift that is just inherently magickal. My first tool was given to me by my mother two years before I started practicing my path. This beautiful crystal turtle decorated the top of my bookcase before I "discovered" it. Now it is charged with Dhyanna, the mother aspect of Sheya.

How did I know it would be an appropriate tool? It felt right. The symbolism of a turtle for the mother aspect ties with both Native American beliefs and goddess traditions. It also physically feels right. Fitting well in my hand, so I can use it in ritual with little or no awkwardness. The quartz crystal holds and transmits energy and the natural occlusions work well for visual meditation. It is the perfect tool for me and the purpose I use it for.

Sometimes a tool seems to choose you, much like a cat. It comes into your life without being asked and takes up residence. These are often those powerful, personality laden objects that tell you how they need to be used and what their purpose is. Always keep in mind, this is a tool, you are the magician. Learn from these powerful objects, then let them move on to the next student.

Yes, tools are objects that we invest with symbolic meaning. But they also are capable of storing and transmitting energy. They can be "charged" with a particular aspect or intent. Often the logical side of our brain discounts the reality of this energy. But isn't this, after all, the basis of magick? Objects can hold energy and reflect the energetic will of their owners. Experiment on your own or with a group. Be open to feeling the energy. It may feel like tingling or warmth, visual images or colors. Set the skeptic aside and be open to a different way of perceiving. Remember these are magickal tools - tools of transformation.

Can you practice a magickal path without a magickal tool? NO. Before anyone starts sputtering angry rebuttals consider: There is a magickal tool that doesn't need to be found or made or received. We all are born with one or, actually, in one. The body. This is the perfect magickal tool. It can be taken wherever you go. It is inconspicuous. It adapts well to many different rituals and workings. Energy

can be generated, directed, and stored. It produces visual stimulation for meditation and provides the perfect housing for the magickal self. This is one of those powerful tools, but don't give it away - yet. Honor it. Treat it with respect. Practice using it in magickal transformation everyday. Move, dance, charge your sacred space. Invoke, evoke, practice stillness. The rewards will be a depth of personal transformation that will not be transcended until the time comes to pass this tool along, also.



QUEEN OF DISKS

graphic by Hezra

# ON STARTING A RITUAL GROUP

## Part One: The Social and the Asocial Intention

by Antero Alli

In Part One of this essay I wish to address the concerns, motivations and commitments of those individuals and groups who are either contemplating the notion of starting a ritual circle, in addition to those who have already begun and have, perhaps, encountered difficulties along the way. No particular ritual technology or doctrine will be addressed. Instead, an attempt will be made to articulate certain psychological conditions I think are most conducive for entering any group ritualization of archetypal energies, regardless of the gender of those involved and/or the gender of the respective deities. In bypassing ritual dogma, I hope to appeal to the sensibilities of traditionalists and iconoclasts alike. What I'm after is a greater awareness of how rituals work and what their primary functions might be for people, regardless of spiritual or philosophical orientation.

Before attempting the arduous task of instigating a ritual group—and it is a task—several important questions must be asked to begin a process of disclosing intention. Why do rituals together? How do they work? Why do rituals at all? Perhaps preliminary to these questions is: Where did the idea to begin a group ritual come from in the first place? Through which person or persons did the intention begin? Sometimes—not always—the idea for a ritual group emerges within the heart and mind of one person. No

matter how reluctant, camouflaged or cloaked, if there is an individual at the center of the process—a leader—it's probably a good idea to know who it is. The word "leader" (as used here) relates to the context expressed in the I CHING, translated roughly as "the one(s) closest to the center." As the center of any action shifts, so does the personage of the leader; the leader, then, can be seen more as a roving "spirit" than as a fixed ego per se. What does this mean? In the midst of an active and living ritual, nobody knows when and where the leader appears next or what form its spirit takes. This is not meant to just sound mysterious; it is mysterious.

Before organizing a time and place to meet, after carefully overlapping everybody's available schedules, the question of intent must be, if not answered, than addressed. Sometimes it's just not possible to know why people need to meet and do rituals beyond the very need to *just do it*; it may be enough at first to simply meet. Several meetings may pass before an intention reveals itself. *But the issue of intent must be addressed.* To address an, as of yet, unknown intent means to openly interact with a question and without trying to answer it. Interact with a question long enough and its own kind of answer tends to emerge, not necessarily the one you wanted or hoped for but somehow genuine to the situation.

When there is a group catalyst or leader, that person is responsible for initiating the intention or, at the very least, addressing the question. Without a leader, the group grapples with the question, i.e., sitting in a circle and speaking forth about why they are there or, given their lack of a clue, why they *think* they are there. Once again, answering the question may not be as important as addressing it. Why are we here? People usually only get out of the house and disrupt their daily routines when there's some chance of meeting specific needs. In much earlier days, it was called hunting, gathering and/or roaming the elysian fields for exotic fungi. The initial task of disclosing intention opens a quest. What are the needs of the people

gathering here and what kind of rituals might meet these needs? In a ritual context, there's always an individual and collective intention afoot regardless of whether or not it's recognized, identified or immediately expressed. As intention clarifies, so does the purpose of the ritual circle.

Among the countless reasons people meet and do ritual together, I've noticed two important levels of motivation that have helped me determine the kind of work possible and impossible—given the limitations of that specific group, time and place—for a given group, despite what that group wants or fantasizes about or expects to happen. What I'm saying is that regardless of prewritten script or choreography and/or the material paraphernalia brought into any given ritual, what makes that ritual effective or ineffective are the living elements of the specific people involved and the real-time state(s) they are in. Careful observation of these areas constitute a worthy ritual endeavor.

As I see it, the two primary reasons people tend to meet and do ritual belong to the realms of the (1) Social and the (2) Asocial. When implemented as ritual intentions, both produce different results: Social intentions create social rituals; asocial intentions, asocial rituals. Both represent different ends of a human spectrum of experience. Both do mingle and reproduce various hybrids of themselves. Both sides can also be isolated for the purpose of exploring and experimenting with their purer expressions.

The Social (as defined hereafter) refers to any activities serving the satisfaction and expression of personal needs. It includes interacting with others at the level of personality and the fulfillment of personal security, self-importance or status, flirtation and courtship, emotional bonding and support, a sense of community and belonging, and all motivations generally centered in the social self. Social rituals are important to the development of ego. They also make up the exoteric mass of a culture's institutions for indoctrinating local language, morals and customs into its people. Without participation in local social rituals, an individual soon feels cut off from the larger fabric of community and suffers symptoms of alienation. Please also know that the term "social" begs for the reader's own redefinition for this to work, i.e., two or three good friends

can form the basis for community or, a rock 'n' roll band. What looks social to one person can turn anti-social to another.

Asocial—being neither social nor anti-social—refers to those activities that somehow catalyze in the person an open-ended intimacy with the "infinite abyss of the unknown" and encourage the expression of an "internal landscape of archetypal material" sometimes identified by terms like Masculine and Feminine, the Four Elements, Death and Rebirth, Chaos and Order, Angels and Demons...ad infinitum. Asocial intention seems to serve the fulfillment of human religio-mystical impulses and needs for invoking, communing and interacting with the gods...the living forces of natural existence (often beyond the control and comprehension of the social personality or, ego). In effect, Asocial ritual bypasses the association and merging of personalities for a chance at participating in an interaction of archetypal forces working *through* those who have chosen to serve them.

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## **Social intentions create social rituals; asocial intentions, asocial rituals. Both represent different ends of a human spectrum of experience.**

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Asocial rituals permeate society's esoteric minority of fringe dwellers and artists, urban shamans, secret Masonic orders, and underground (and online virtual) communities sometimes defined by ideologies in direct conflict with the dominator culture. Why do asocial rituals? What's the purpose? Good questions. Many asocial rituals hold questionable worth and even subversive intentions when seen from the vantage of mainstream society and for good reasons. Anything genuinely asocial usually is of questionable worth to mainstream values and usually acts on mainstream ethics like so much anarchy. When seen from its own context, however, the asocial realm provides a temporary refuge and sanctuary from a way of life that may not suit all people all the time yet may make some of the people very happy, some of the time. And, like political revolutions, asocial rituals and the autonomous subcultures they encourage are always *temporary*. No one person, group or society can burn that brightly forever without becoming canonized and dogmatized by those who wish to benefit from the sacrifice (please refer to the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth).

In brief, social rituals culminate in the discovery, satisfaction and celebration of oneself while asocial rituals

subject this same personality to archetypal forces until one willingly surrenders and transforms oneself into an active medium for their expression. It may be important to note how not all archetypal forces act on the personality in benevolent, wonderfully sweet ways. There are forces nobody has any business conjuring up, no matter who they are, if they are not sufficiently prepared; a warning that ritual adepts have been sounding for aeons. The question of right preparation for the transpersonal realms remains a pivotal ritual in itself and a healthy intention for proceeding across the greater unknowns of what W.B. Yeats called, "the Animamundi..." or soul of the world. Before that journey, much soulwork needs attending.

*Soulwork* is another word to address the overall intent of social rituals. Soulwork means growing up to your needs, your fears and your dreams. Running the embarrassing risk of sounding too systematic, I suggest four basic areas necessary to soulwork. They are: **Security needs** (food, shelter and a job), **emotional needs** (status, support, bonding), **intellectual needs** (problem solving, map-making, images of intelligence/sanity), and **community needs** (friendship, courtship, belonging). Logic suggests that when the personality has become more stable, connected and supple, it grows more willing to endure change; if there's anything transpersonal forces are famous for, it's transformation. (For more specific and detailed information into these four areas, please refer to my first book, ANGEL TECH; the section entitled "Karma Mechanics.")

The functions of life's social rituals are or should be, in part, the nurturance and development of a healthy and strong (not big) ego. Not an ego defined by itself but established through its significant connections with others, the community and the world at large. Without these important needs being met, the soul suffers and the person walks about in a more or less constant state of numbing neediness. Any ego hypnotized or convinced of an existence independent of these essential connections has already lapsed into a martyrdom of self-delusion.

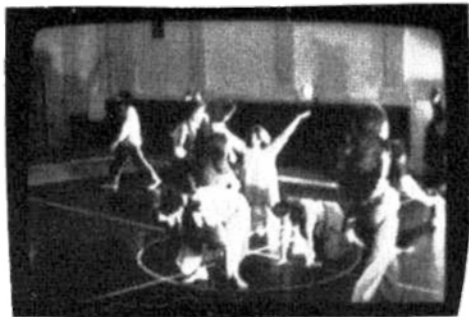
As the personality develops through its vital connections with others, the community and the world at large, there comes a time when the need to know and realize something greater than itself emerges. In such a time, the spirit of "a quest" introduces a readiness for meeting truths greater than one's ego and the accumulated wellspring of its self-limiting knowledge. Such a time may be as close as it gets to an "ideal" time for entering transpersonal ritual process, yet, as life goes, it does not always work that way. The transpersonal realm has its own ways of finding you.

In the next issue of *Mezlim*:

ON STARTING A RITUAL GROUP, Part II:  
When the Transpersonal Finds You.


Antero Alli is a free-lance ritualist; author of ALL RITES REVERSED: Ritual Technology for Self-Initiation (Falcon, 1987); director of "ARCHAIC COMMUNITY": an 85-minute documentary video on group ritual process; editor of TALKING RAVEN: Journal of Imaginative Trouble; and a practicing astrologer. For a free catalog of his other books, tapes and services call his 24-hr. INFO-line at (206) 781-5691 or write him directly at PO Box 45758 Seattle WA 98145.

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# MESHIKAN

## Part I THE CAVE

by Norman Jope

We move down corridors of bone with stones upon our wings. The wind inside our heads is stony with the clotted blood of landed meteors—our skins are gravel tracks across dismantled moorlands. It is so hard to start this future, when this light is mineral and stones are knotted fists of darkness; so hard to see this bone made stone made dream. The morning feeds on morning. The bonescape narrows. I touch her face and clouds accede to soft brown filaments that crawl away on spiders' legs. She is mummified and rancid. Her brother is a bloodied stump with crimson sections gleaming under neon vapour. The water totters on beside us, living in its membranes—ghost of its simplicities, slurred with cobwebs, smashed to poisonous amalgams.

Stones of Nuremburg, of Evin Prison

We move with you. Stone hauled up the slopes of steep Mauthausen

With the blood-sweat layered on it, of the execution-blocks

Washed clean of rhetorics, of Tenochtitlan's vulpine geometries

We dance around your dance. As if pulled forward

On the strings of an immense and

decomposing muscle...

we continue.

It is easy to do so when our path is this narrow, when the friezes on each side of us are crimson with the underscapes of death.

It could be any time that pins us to those walls...

It was I and you who had our eyes gouged out in Rio, prelude to the death-squad's bullet in the brain.

It was I and you who collapsed and died, aged 25, today! upon the football field at York. And it was I and you who burnt to death beneath that burning roof at Bradford... who were crushed by human weight at Hillsborough.

It was I and you who died upon the cross like Spartacus.

We, too, were consigned to bonfires in Treblinka—buried under rubble as the skies of Spitak warped to violet.

It was I and you who crashed upon the motorway,

Who waited, two years old, for single grains as flies crept under our already-shrouds, in vain—

Who drowned in April 1912, the ballroom filling up with fish,

Who were burnt away  
From all our juices  
all our futures

Found out to be weak  
and mortal and forgettable

Who are under earth and rotted  
and denied our tombstones.

It was I and you and all the space between  
Who filled with cancer,  
with the pain of knowing

Continued on page 46.

# FORESTS OF THE DEAD:

## A Primer of Death Rituals for Pagans, Part II

by MadDog

### WHAT NOW?

So what, if anything, does all this have to do with today's neo-Pagans and death? By understanding the functions of death rituals, reviewing elements that can go into them, and surveying some practices of traditions that we want to draw from, we can

begin to visualize the kinds of death rituals that we, as contemporary neo-Pagans, may want to create for ourselves.

There are restrictions, however. We need to know what the law allows, because although there are no legal restrictions on what memorial services can include, every state has laws regulating how dead bodies can be cared for; and even where there are no laws, custom and the pressure from the funeral business are hard to overcome.

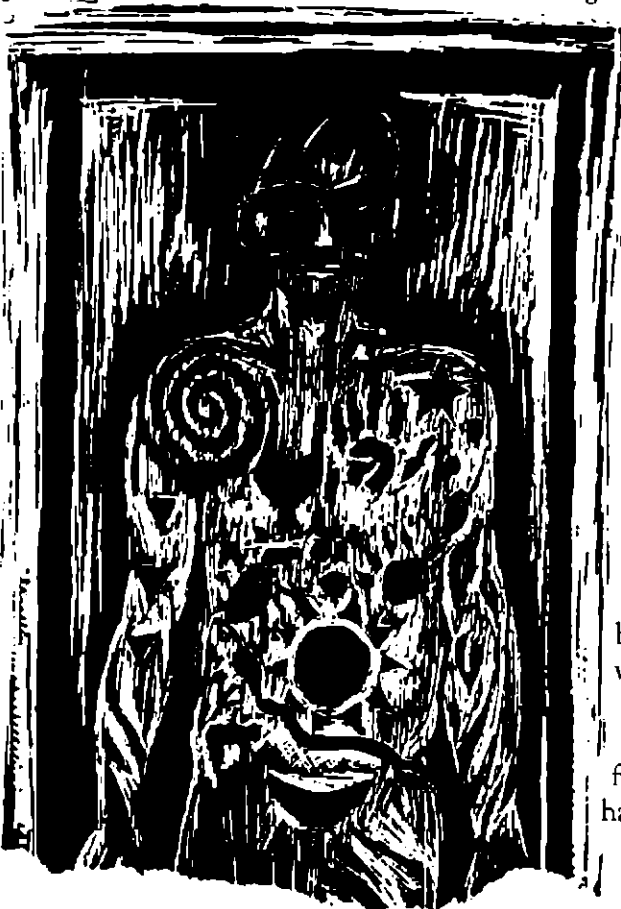
### THE LAWS AND THE PROFITS:

#### Certificates, Permits & Authorizations

No matter what kind of burial, cremation, or funeral you want, a death certificate has to be filled out, typed or written in black ink and properly signed. This usually has to be done by a physician or a county medical examiner or coroner, and filed promptly with the state division of vital statistics. Only if death occurs from a contagious disease, suicide, or mysterious circumstances, is an autopsy usually required. However, a transportation permit is required for each body that is taken from the place of death to be buried or cremated elsewhere, and this form can be issued by the clerk of a county or city court. Sometimes another permit is required for burial outside the county or township where death occurred. Cremation also usually requires a special permit as well as authorization from next of kin.

Several states—Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, and New Jersey—either require that all dead bodies be handled only by funeral directors, or their laws are so ambiguous that it's not clear that anyone else would be allowed to do it. Moreover, even in states where the law allows us to care for our own dead, state, county and local officials as well as employees of crematories and cemeteries are so used to dealing only with funeral directors that they may well balk at issuing permits or certificates or receiving bodies from the family or friends of the dead person. If you want to care for your own dead, you may have to be persistent. To learn what the laws of your own state say about it, look in Part II of Lisa Carlson's excellent, *Caring for Your Own Dead*.

graphic by Ann Marie Garrison



## CEMETERIES

First, let's consider burial in cemeteries. If you doubt that the funeral business is big, consider these facts: Service Corporation International (do you see the words "burial" or "funeral" in this name?) owns 33 funeral homes, 50 flower shops, 75 cemeteries, and one of the nation's largest makers of coffins. Their 1991 net profits were \$178,508,000 on revenues of \$643,248,000! If your body is prepared for burial by one of their funeral homes, you can be sure that they'll use one of their own coffins and recommend one of their cemeteries; and just guess who they'll suggest to supply the flowers!

## COFFINS

Are coffins really necessary? Most state laws don't require them. Cemeteries do, however; and funeral homes will try to sell you the most expensive coffins they carry, and expensive they are. However, they also carry rather simple coffins (sometimes called "alternative containers"), which they will sell you if you persist in demanding one. If you intend to bury someone yourself in a private cemetery (of which more later) you can also build your own coffin; and, in his book *Dealing Creatively with Death*, Ernest Morgan gives directions, with measurements and lists of materials, for building a simple coffin, or what he calls a "burial box." The law in most states doesn't require a coffin for cremation, although crematories may require rigid containers made of corrugated board.

Most, if not all, commercial cemeteries also require concrete grave liners or coffin vaults in the graves. Funeral directors will hint darkly about rising water tables, tree roots, burrowing rodents, and your desire to protect the body of your dearly departed. But the real reason is their cost controls. Cemeteries are businesses, and part of their cost is grounds maintenance. If graves aren't lined by vaults, eventually the weight of the earth will collapse the coffins, the soil over them will sink, it will be difficult to drive riding movers over them to keep the grass trimmed, and more dirt will have to be brought in to level the ground.

## EMBALMING

Most, perhaps all, funeral directors and morticians will strongly suggest embalming all dead bodies. This

procedure must be a high-profit item for them. However, it is not required by law, except in certain circumstances: If someone has died of a communicable disease, if the body will be transported somewhere else and it will take over 18 hours to arrive there, if it will be transported by public transportation, or if it will not be buried or cremated within 72 hours of death, then the law requires embalming, and this procedure can be done only by a licensed mortician.

Embalming was used as early as 4,000 BCE by the Egyptians, but it was largely abandoned for 1,500 years, re-emerging in the U.S. during the Civil War with the need to transport the bodies of dead soldiers long distances. What were then called undertakers convinced the public in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries that embalming was necessary to prevent the spread of disease and prevent the decomposition of bodies, but there is no medical evidence that it does either. The kind of embalming that medical schools perform will do both, but not the kind that funeral homes perform. At best, it slows decomposition down by a few days. Bodies rot, so why shouldn't we just let ours fertilize the soil and maybe plant a tree over each one until there are forests of the dead?

## YOUR OWN CEMETERY

After considering all the requirements of commercial cemeteries, starting your own cemetery may seem like an attractive idea, and I like to imagine what a Pagan cemetery would look like! In most states, any group of people can incorporate for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a public cemetery. However, the laws regulating public cemeteries are long, complicated, and detailed, and it looks like a lot of work and expense to keep one going.

Simpler would be to have a private cemetery; in many states, county or township laws allow burial on one's own property, what is called "home burial." However, the location of the burial has to be recorded with the county or township; and once bodies are buried, the land over them can't be used for planting or building. Should you ever want to sell the land, potential buyers might balk at having a burial ground on it. In addition, many counties are now passing laws forbidding new burial grounds, because if they become abandoned, the counties have to assume their maintenance.

## CREMATION

What about cremation? I've already explained one belief supporting the burning of bodies—that the smoke from the pyre will carry the soul to Heaven. It's hard to imagine how this would work with all the filters and stack scrubbers that commercial crematories use. However, when I asked the head of the mortuary science unit of my state government what would happen if a group of my friends just took my body to some land that one of them owns, built a pyre of dried oak, birch, and maple, put me on it, and lit it off, he only laughed.

For many Pagans, cremation has one big advantage over burial: In most states, it's considered final disposition of dead bodies, which means that you can do nearly anything that you want with the ashes—scatter them to the wind or on a lake or river, bury them, cherish them in an urn on your altar, even sprinkle them on your cornflakes for breakfast! Only California places restrictions on the disposal of cremains: It requires that they be scattered at sea, buried in a cemetery, or kept at home. Burning bodies always has to be done by crematories licensed by the state department of health.

However, I still like my idea—friends huddled around the pyre all night long, wrapped in blankets and ponchos, passing around bottles of aquavit or Old Bushmills, singing songs, chanting, drumming, catching occasional naps, and once in awhile tossing a few more logs on the pyre. At dawn, they'd join hands, sing one last song, make sure the fire was out, then scatter my ashes to the wind.

## SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

After all is said, what's to be done? Are we going to begin establishing our cemeteries? Are we going to start up our own burial societies, like Orthodox Jews do? Who among us is going to create death rituals that reflect beauty, hope, strength, and inspiration? I don't expect that I've written the final words on the topic of death rituals for Pagans. I do hope that I've begun what will be an ongoing exchange of ideas on this topic in the pages of *Mezlim*. Blessed Be.

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# LETTERS

Editors,

I am not a subscriber, but my sweetheart is; so I get to see your work without having to pay for it.

She has always loved the articles, but as a graphic designer, I tend to look at a magazine rather than read it. So I want to commend the new format. You have made an already good looking magazine look even better.

Cliff Questel

---

Dear Kenn,

I am delighted to respond to your editorial about *Mezlim* being seen as a magazine for ceremonial magicians rather than a forum for all “those who practice positive forms of growth oriented magic, earth based religion, or related endeavors.” Perhaps the question of inclusiveness might offer us some insight.

In Paul Joseph Rovelli’s article “The Folk Remembered” (Samhain ‘93) he voices his concern that there may be little power in such folk magic as drumming, dancing, and sex. He states that “eroticism can evoke a certain divine presence. But does it?” (p. 25) He makes a clear distinction between the common pagan and the magician.

My ritual practice is laced with such common magic: the laying-on of hands in healing, the transformation of one’s being in wild orgasm, the shaman’s journey to the drum, and the ecstasy of trance dancing. These simple actions allow me to accept the divine within myself and my ritual partners. This sacredness expands to other “simple” devotions from cleansing and purifying the physical spaces about me to being fully present in the world, in a word—whole.

Wholeness is real power—the power to console, to liberate, to see and to act. Life can be upheld, death can be welcomed and love can be radiated by reverent daily actions.

Reconnecting myself and those I touch with the Universal Energies empowers our entire Be-ing. I am, I love, I create, I die, I am.

Each step I take is supported by the Mother’s flesh. Each breath I exhale may offer peace or despair. We are all Her children. As we re-member ourselves into the whole body of *Tierra Madre* let us live lightly and compassionately as diverse and sometimes challenging siblings. I thank Paul Joseph Rovelli for his offering. It has added focus and clarity to my path.

Patty Disbrow

---

To the Editor:

I had to write some sort of response to the humorous, yet highly inaccurate and distorted article entitled: “Tools of Tibetan Tantra” by Taradas ‘Rinpoche’ (a name which is half Sanskrit and half Tibetan?). Eclecticism is one thing, but articles of this sort are especially annoying since they just seem to prey on the sort of magical *chic* that arises due to human preoccupation with spiritual materialism. This aside from the fact that they propagate much misinformation. Among articles of this type, “Tools of Tibetan Tantra” certainly would take the cake.

I found it interesting that a Rinpoche, an honorific term for a reincarnated master in Tibetan Buddhism, would be so unaware that the word “Bon” was not, in fact, Sanskrit (as indicated by Taradas ‘Rinpoche’) but actually Tibetan. Its actual meaning is not “left” as the ‘Rinpoche’ indicates, but “to chant mantras or to invoke”. It was a name originally given to all priests who recited or chanted mantras. The Tibetan Vajra (Skt.: Thunderbolt or Diamond) or Dorje (Tib.) is not used in Bon at all, the Bon-Pos use the Swastika Sceptre, remarkably different than the usual five-pronged Dorje.

As if this wasn’t enough, Taradas goes on to tell us that the Buddhist yidam (mind-protector) and devata Tara or Dolma (Tib.) is the supreme deity of Bon. In fact, she is known as Satrig Ersangs in the ancient language of Zhang Zhung (in her active aspect) and as Chucham Gyalmo, “the Queen born from the living waters” in pre-Buddhist Tibetan.

As an initiate of both Tibetan Buddhism and Bon, I see little or no resemblance hereto the ‘real thing’. Far from being a system that favors patriarchal, left-brain, mental

alteration such as this, the current of Tibetan Buddhism is one continuously refreshed with new revelation from the intrinsic androgyny of the human condition. These revelations are called 'termas' or 'treasures' in Tibetan, and are meant to prevent intellectual degradation of the tradition. Indeed this process continues in America today.

It appears that the alleged Bon-Po who taught the author in Dharamsala (the temporal seat of the Dalai Lama in exile and a Gelug/Vajrayana dominated village) must have been pulling the wool over his eyes. Or, as is more likely the case, the author of this article is pulling the wool over the eyes of your readers.

Sincerely,

Vajranatha

---

## MESHIKAN

continued from page 41.

There is only so much time, and that destroyed  
By the body's rotting whilst alive—  
It was I and you and all the Guardian Angels  
Who learnt that only time itself is Treasure,  
That each untrammelled moment is Eternal Life...

But we are moving, still, emerging into an imaginary light, as cave-walls turn to polished bone to glass to neural tapestry. Ahead of us, the city is a graveyard on a hill... enormous marble mausoleums, Leeds and Munich, Edinburgh and Boston, any place where stony V-sings snook a cock-shaped obelisk or two at Angel Death, where lovers feast between the slabs, where sprayed heroic couplets eat away posterity... the cave's roof rises. The bones are tools around our heels. We kick them backwards into reptile territories. The strength of what we are is in those brave sepulchres, in those innocent

mirages—names worn slowly infinite by weather systems and by strangelove strategies.

The city we imagine is a stone of timeless blood, erection of infinity, a tower from which to topple God and tweezer our philosophies. It is free of rain and love. It is elixir—source of all that freezes, Vishnu's crown, the mark upon the forehead of the skies. It pierces time, subsists through space. And is not Meshikan; is dryness and the Taj Mahal of our estrangement.

Meshikan will be continued in future issues of Mezlim.



QUEEN OF CUPS graphic by Hezra

### Writer's Guidelines

Are you interested in writing for Mezlim? We are seeking submissions of articles, artwork, rituals and photography in a Magickal vein. See page 54 for upcoming issue themes.

Articles may range in length from 1,000 to 5,500 words, or more. All submissions should be typed, black ink on white paper. Please enclose S.A.S.E, a cover letter with your contact information and the name under which you wish to be published. We request that we be informed if your submission has been printed previously in another magazine, or if it is being simultaneously submitted to any other publisher.

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# REVIEWS

## PLANTS AND FOOD OF THE GODS

A REVIEW OF

### **Food of the Gods, the Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge**

by Terence McKenna

Bantam Books, 1992, \$13.95.

### **Plants of the Gods, Their Sacred, Healing and Hallucinogenic Powers**

by Richard Evans Shultes

and Albert Hofmann

Healing Arts Press, 1992, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Crow, The Church of Earth Healing, 22 Palmer Street, Athens OH 45701. (614) 592-6193. 12 - 6 pm, Tues. - Sat.

1992 saw the publication of two impressive books which are highly significant and useful for most pagans, anyone doing shamanic work and, indeed, just about any thinking human being involved and active in the world today. I review them here in the hope that it will excite you to read them if you have not yet done so, and to stimulate more open discussion of this material and the questions it raises than I have so far heard.

[Note: Crow is facilitating discussions on this material from a shamanic and general Pagan spiritual approach; please contact him if interested!]

The sub-sub-title of *Food of the Gods* is "A Radical History of Plants, Drugs, and Human Evolution." This is the latest offering by Terence McKenna, current Gadfly for the Psychedelic Revolution, and it is calculated to push quite a few conservative buttons. The sad thing is, one wonders if anyone conservative will read it!

McKenna's book is a curious blend of social criticism, evolutionary and spiritual speculation and psychedelically

inspired devotional to his favorite plant, the psilocybin mushroom (*Stropharia cubensis*). One wonders if it is two manuscripts cobbled together to make a book length offering, and one is tempted to evaluate each manuscript separately while accepting that each is driven by the force which constantly motivates McKenna: The concept that general, legal access to psychedelics will bring about major and much needed socio/cultural reforms. (His *Archaic Revival* is of great interest to Pagans and all readers of Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade*.)

Let's start with the social criticism. Chapters 9, 11, 12 and 13 deal with Alcohol, Sugar, Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, Tobacco, Opium, Heroin, Cocaine and Television; all addictive, all manipulated by controlling, power-over organizations, for economic and/or political gain, and none available/effective in a 'natural' or unprocessed form. If you are not familiar with the social and economic horrors worked upon humankind in obtaining, selling and using these substances, your own understanding of how our society came to be the way it is deserves exposure to these chapters. They quite adequately and passionately review the relationship of addictive substances to slavery, war, economic manipulation, "Intelligence" and "Counter-Intelligence". "Not a pretty picture," nor is a gentle New Age Guy coffee addict, such as myself, happy to have his face rubbed in the fact that coffee is the dominator drug, *par excellence*.

There is also, throughout the book, continuous criticism of how contemporary dominator society treats the more gentle psychedelics. This is a major aspect of McKenna's primary, certainly not hidden, agenda. In addition to this constant under-tow, Chapters 10 and 14 go into greater and more explicit detail on the virtues of Cannabis, the New World Hallucinogens, and LSD. His treatment of these is similar to his treatment of the 'harder' substances: A sprinkling of history and ethnography; an examination of the negative and positive facets of using the substance; examples of social attitudes about them; and his own approbation or disapproval of the whole picture. Not surprisingly, these drugs receive McKenna's approval, e.g.:

"No other drug can compete with cannabis for its ability to satisfy the innate yearnings for Archaic boundary dissolution and yet leave intact the structures of ordinary society. If every alcoholic were a pothead, if every crack user were a pothead, if every smoker smoked only cannabis, the social consequences of the 'drug problem' would be transformed." p. 166

While this criticism is serious and well informed, and should be required reading, the evolutionary and spiritual

speculation, the "Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge" is more stimulating for me, because an understanding and acceptance of shamanism is crucial to his thesis. This material is "speculation" not because the conclusions McKenna draws are inspired, but because even the evidence he bases his conclusions on is of a rather uncertain nature. Even so, it is very exciting to consider that our evolution may have been stimulated by, may have taken place in intimate conjunction - symbiosis - with, certain plants:

"My contention is that mutation-causing, psychoactive chemical compounds in the early human diet directly influenced the rapid reorganization of the brain's information processing capacities. Alkaloids in plants...catalyzed the emergence of human self-reflection, ...enhanced our information-processing activity, ...contributed to the sudden expansion of the human brain size, ...acted as catalysts in the development of imagination...that may well have synergized the emergence of language and religion." p. 24

A good deal of the remainder of the book is devoted to exploring this contention which might be best summed up as, "Being stoned seems to have been our unique [human] characteristic." (p. 45) He explores the bio-social processes by which such a human/plant symbiosis could have occurred and been effective. He also examines many possible psychoactive plants in an attempt to pin down the most likely one(s) to have been involved. Not surprisingly, his favorite candidate is the psilocybin mushroom and he tends to treat others as second best, later substitutes, which leads him into some fairly tortuous speculations.

I find his approach new and powerful in its appreciation of the interaction of human spiritual activities and our biological development. While others have dealt with our bio-evolutionary interactions with nature, he is the first author I have seen who draws a connection between the human capacity for ecstasy and our biological and social evolution. He is, of course, highly aware of shamanism as perhaps the earliest and longest lasting form of spirituality and of its essentially ecstatic nature. He clearly has experienced, knows and understands some shamanic paths of ecstasy.

Unfortunately, McKenna's devotion to psychedelics interferes with his more scholarly pretensions and encourages him to ignore the many (some say the majority of) shamanic peoples who practice very effective ecstatic trance entirely without drugs. Rather than take the time to examine the evidence of how the ancient and widely spread shamanic trance techniques of drumming, rattling, dancing, etc., alter

brain chemistry for entry into parallel dimensions, he hides behind the controversy between Wasson and Eliade over "narcotic shamanism". Then he moves on to accept the use of hallucinogens as the only mark of "shamanism that is authentic and alive". As a shamanic practitioner, I must say that one can easily journey without tripping. Indeed, the intensity of discipline required to make powerful journeys while under drug influence severely limits the ability of many people to do "drug journeys". (Please see the numerous articles in *Shaman's Drum* about attempted *ayahuasca* use by Anglos for examples of this problem.) "...trance, dance and intoxication" may "make up the Archaic formula for both religious celebration and a guaranteed good time." (p. 63) However, it takes more than that to know, see and feel the "spirit ancestors and their other world...in the nonordinary reality." (p. 112-113)

I do not take issue with McKenna's stance for "decriminalization of drugs, mass [drug] education and shamanism as an interdisciplinary and professional approach to these realities [the realities of drug use and abuse by people and by the dominator controllers of society]." (p. 244-245) Further, his basic theory that, "An interrupted psychophysical symbiosis between ourselves and the visionary plants is the unrecognized cause of the alienation of modernity and the cultural mindset of planetary civilization." is certainly supportable and, at the very least, thought provoking. It is false, however, to deny other, equally innate, equally human and probably equally ancient modes for contacting the spirit realms! He often repeats that, in this day and time, there is a great yearning for intoxication. Intoxication is easily achieved while contact with Spirit is more elusive. I strongly feel that it is Spirit we need! Some may prefer, some may need the other modes to reach Spirit. McKenna loses credibility and may lose supporters for his general thesis by denying the validity of other paths.

Shultes and Hofmann's *Plants of the Gods* is an easy book to review. It is straight forward and scholarly and, unless you are simply upset by hallucinogens, not really all that controversial. Shultes and Hofmann have devoted their lives to research on hallucinogens but, unlike Timothy Leary (who is of their generation and who came up against the rock of LSD which Hofmann "discovered") and Terence McKenna, they have avoided most of the controversy about drugs swirling through our society for the last 30 years. If one had to criticize the book, it could be for its seeming blandness of approach: "It is in this spirit [making technical knowledge available for a better informed public] that we offer the present volume, *Plants of the Gods*, hoping that it may, in one way or another, further the practical interests of mankind." (p. 9)

The ho-hum approach is an illusion or a cover, however, because the beauty and intensity of the book, the depth and passion of its ethnographic reporting (Shultes), and the cleverness of its presentation of hallucinogen chemistry (Hofmann) make clear the intensity of belief both men have in these plants really being "the plants of the gods".

I strongly recommend reading this book before McKenna's so that one has some facts and some background data about the worldwide use of plant hallucinogens before becoming embroiled with McKenna's theories and propositions. The book begins and ends with excellent introductory material which outlines current knowledge about the plant kingdom, plant hallucinogens, phytochemical research on sacred plants, chemical structures of hallucinogens and the uses of hallucinogens in medicine. These sections are very well illustrated and supported by a good Index and an extensive Bibliography.

The true heart of the book is in two sections. First, the Plant Lexicon consisting of color illustrations and botanical descriptions of 91 plants with known or presumed psychoactive properties. The illustrations are either very clear color photographs or excellent paintings of the plants. Together with the descriptions, if you know the technical terminology well enough to use it, the Lexicon is adequate to identify most of the plants shown. There is also some information concerning the range of the plants, by whom they have been used, the parts used, the pharmacologically active chemical content and some indication of manner of preparation. This is by no means a psychedelic cookbook, but it does give an indication of what is involved and some of the potential dangers of the plants too.

An interesting remark is made in the introduction when discussing the word "toxic": "The difference between a poison, a medicine, and a narcotic is only one of dosage." (p. 10) *Wow!, that kind of makes it a case of consumer of these plants be aware!* Ergot, for instance, is identified as a source of poison in the Lexicon; Amanita Muscaria (generally identified as DEADLY in mushroom books) is "beautiful" and "perhaps man's oldest hallucinogen". (p. 34) So, this is not a book which recommends or instructs in the use of these plants even when, for some, it seems to give you enough information so that you might be able to try it. Think about it and learn more before trying any plant described here!

Following the Lexicon is an Overview of Plant Use. I am uncertain as to why this "tabular summary of material set forth in greater detail in other sections of the book" has been included. Although graphically designed, it is not easy to use

and, in its brevity, may be more confusing than not. Furthermore, it is arranged alphabetically by "common name" of the plant or the substance made from the plant and I, personally, was unfamiliar with many of the names, thus making it quite hit or miss to look things up in it.

The better half of the book is detailed ethnographic, ethnobotanical coverage of Fourteen Major Hallucinogenic Plants. Selection of the fourteen was not easy but, as they say, "Most of these plants are or have been so culturally and materially important in aboriginal societies that they cannot be overlooked." (p. 81) For your curiosity, included are: *Amanita muscaria*, Peyote, Toeonanactal mushrooms, Ergot, Morning Glories, Deadly Nightshade, Henbane, Mandrake, *Datura*, *Trichocereus pachanoi* (San Pedro) cactus, Iboga, *Banisteriopsis (Ayahuasca)*, *Viola* and *Anadenanthera*, and *Cannabis*.

For each plant there are many pages of text and photographs showing the plant in its natural setting; preparation and consumption of hallucinogenic substances from the plant; the people who grow, harvest and use the plant; people under the influence of the substances; art and other examples of visions produced by the plants; and often, a map of the distribution and use of the plant. Every one of these studies is stunning in its visual impact (I cannot emphasize too much the extraordinary quality of the illustrations of this book) and completeness within a relatively small scope. Note, again, that even when it looks like there is enough information for you to follow to try out one of these substances, this is not a cook book and these are not instructions for use: THINK ABOUT IT!

If you are studying the shamanic path, you will quickly see that shamans have been the primary users of these substances and you will also see why and how they have done so. You will quickly come to appreciate the complexity of preparation which is required to use plant adjuncts to journeying. This preparation includes working with the plant material, working with the plant spirit, and working with your own body and spirit. It often requires years of preparation before one can begin to benefit shamanically from the spiritual power of these sacred hallucinogens.

If you are of a relatively open and relaxed Pagan morality, these sections may inspire you to seek something more than the recreational use of these *Plants of the Gods*. Such a search is not an easy one. Recreational substances are still available. But where are the teachers who hold the traditional knowledge which may allow us to access their *Sacred, Healing and Hallucinogenic Powers* in ways which will

lift and open us, will not damage or enslave us, will not throw us once more into the patterns of addiction which allow others power-over us? *Plants of the Gods* makes us ask these questions. It does not answer them.

## Dark of Moon

by Sarah Stockwell  
PO Box 380531  
Cambridge, MA 02238  
\$15 CD, \$11 Tape

Reviewed by Jodie Linver

If you are looking for the one CD that you will never get tired of, Sarah Stockwell's *Dark of Moon* is the one. The music is colorful, enchanting and very entertaining. Every song on the recording is a joy to listen to—beautiful music which is complimented by Sarah's deep, rich voice.

There are so many excellent songs on this CD that it is very difficult to pick out favorites. Some outstanding pieces include "Crazy Mary", "I But a Little Girl", and "Language of Stones". The impressive "Ain't No Grave" is a striking piece that highlights the power of Sarah's voice.

Another incredible song is "Breaths" done *a cappella* with Deirdre Pulgram Arthen of EarthSpirit Community. The mixture of voices in this song gives a hauntingly peaceful feeling to the listener.

In contrast, "Dead Egyptian Blues" is a lighthearted 'romp' which provides a nice counterpoint to the intensity of the previous pieces. The humor-filled lyrics mixed with an almost 20's sound are guaranteed to bring at least a smile to your face if not a good laugh to your day.

The final recording "Vampire" strikes a chord in anyone who has ever gone through any internal struggle. There is almost no way to listen to this song and remain unaffected by it.

Throughout the entire recording, Sarah's voice seems to get richer and deeper with each succeeding song. This recording goes beyond the label of "pagan music" and into pure pleasure—wonderful music for all. Anyone, pagan or not, with an appreciation for life and music will enjoy this superior musical offering. *Dark of Moon* is truly what music should be. Congratulations to Sarah for giving us a "pagan" recording with mass market appeal. I, for one, am grateful.

## Drumming for the Beginning - Tone and Time World of Dumbek Vol. 1&2

**Seeds of Time**  
**invitation to drum**  
David Korup & Billy Woods  
Lights-On Productions  
P. O. Box 17714  
Boulder CO 80308  
\$14 CD, \$10 Tape

Reviewed by Kenneth Deigh

I remember the first time I tried to drum around a bonfire. It was a borrowed dumbek with a rough metal rim that insisted on bruising my fingers. I kept trying to figure out what the person next to me was doing and follow that, but I stumbled awkwardly until I finally gave up and decided to stick to dancing.

Since that night I've gotten my own drums, gone to some drumming workshops, picked up a few rhythms and drummed around a lot of fires, but I still wish that there had been something like these tapes around when I was first struggling to drum.

*Drumming for the Beginning* and *World of Dumbek* both offer a comfortable, clear and concise introduction to basic rhythms. The exercises are easy to work through and leave you with a real sense of how to begin playing your drum. They are repetitive enough to set the rhythms in your mind and in your hands, but not so much as to become boring.

*Seeds of Time - invitation to drum* picks up where the others leave off. It provides a guided drum jam, allowing you to play with the rhythms you've just learned, building your confidence and skill. Beyond that, it's great to just listen to. Both Billy (Sylvanius) Woods and David Korup are quite accomplished drummers, and they are a joy to listen to. I understand that they will both be at Starwood this summer, and I look forward to hearing them perform there.

Now, if they'd just come out with a series of instructional tapes on video....

# IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF **MEZLIM**

## *The Magickal Arts Of Healing*

The fields of Magick and Healing have long been connected. Deep in the unconscious realms of the human imagination, the Healer is still a worker of wonders, a Shaman, a Witchdoctor or a Wise Woman. Many members of our community earn their daily bread as counselors, bodyworkers, herbalists and accupuncturists. For the most part, these healers use techniques considered "alternative" to the mainstream medical community. We invite you to share with us your own experiences, rituals, realizations and alternatives in the realm of healing.

We are currently seeking submissions of articles, artwork, rituals, photography, poetry and prose on this topic. For more information, see Writer's Guidelines on page 46.

Deadline for submissions: **June 1, 1994.**

The theme for the Samhain 1994 issue will be:

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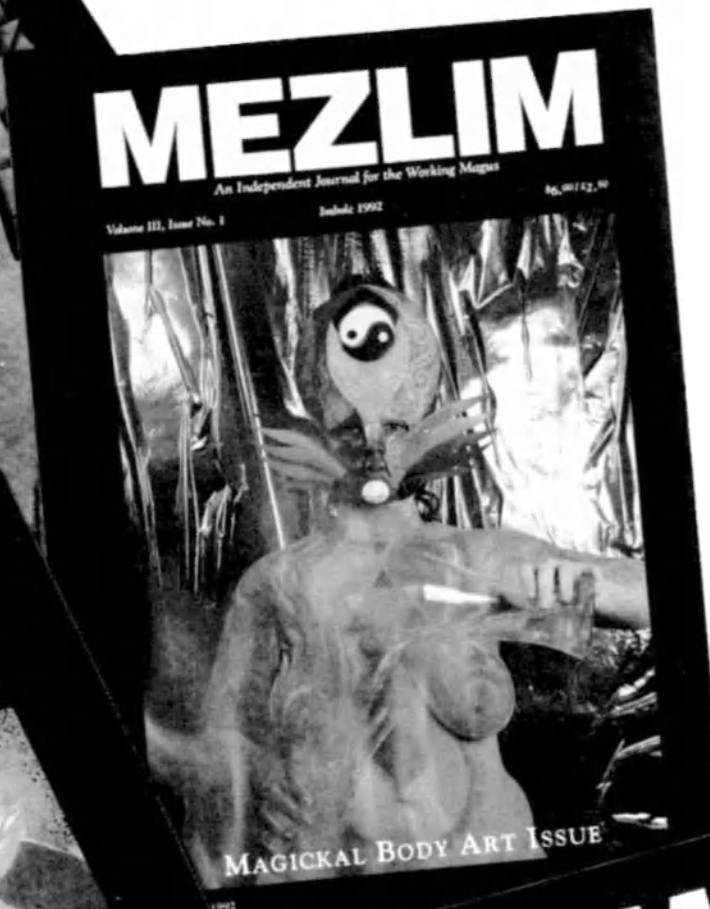
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