

Hail Witches! Welcome to another edition of the Wild Witches series, I am your co-host of the Science Witch Podcast Anjel. For this episode, I am sharing a re-recording of a presentation I gave at Columbia Willamette Pagan Pride this past weekend on the future frontiers of entheogens, where in I discuss the potential directions of the therapeutic use of psilocybin and the emerging legal psilocybin industry here in Oregon. I also venture a bit into the topic of epigenetics and ancestral healing in relation to the use of entheogens, which is a topic I plan on elaborating and developing an episode for the main Science Witch Podcast feed with my co-host Enku for our Samhain episode.

Before we get to the episode, I wanted to let our listeners know about an event being hosted by our sister podcast, That Witch Life. Registration is now open for So Mote That Con, That Witch Life Podcast's second virtual conference on living as a Witch in today's world. So Mote That Con is happening October 15 and 16 and it's going to be phenomenal. Join us from anywhere in the world for incredible workshops, a bunch of badass raffle prizes, rituals led by Kanai Soleil, Courtney Weber and Hilary Whitmore, and more! We will have a live Q&A with Ruth Connell aka Rowena from the show Supernatural! Other presenters include listener favorites Heather Agosta, Tahverlee Anglen, Phoenix Coffin-Williams, Rossa Crean, Storm Faerywolf, Lisa Jade, Chaweon Koo, Orlagh Minxie Costello, Tomas Prower, Papa Hector Salva, and even Hilary and Courtney! If you can't join us live, don't worry. EVERYTHING will be recorded and sent to all registrants after the event. Get your ticket for So Mote That Con, today at [thatwitchlife dot com](http://thatwitchlife.com)!

Enku and I will both be in attendance at this event, and we had a great time last year so we are excited to see what this year will bring.

Also, we have a Pateron that is a great way to support this podcast. We offer different levels and lots of different perks. We are always scheming for ways to expand our offerings from running online D&D games for our Paterons, to tarot reading and astrology chart readings, to bonus episodes of our Pateron exclusive series, Who's in Bloom. Enku and I are wrapping up this season with our final episodes for this year which will include Goldenrod and Sunflower.

Additionally if you would like to support the podcast you can buy our stickers over at our Etsy shop, or leave us a donation on Kofi. Please rate and review us on the platform you listen to us on and if you send us the review we will send you a sticker of your choice for free.

Finally if you have any thoughts, suggestions or questions for us you can email us at questions@sciencewitchpodcast.com

Now for today's episode: The Future Frontiers of Entheogens

I want to start out by telling y'all I self identify as a mycoavengalist who believes very admently mushrooms will save the world, in the parlance of the famous mycologist Paul Stamens. I hold a Master's of Science in Biology and Mycology, and I have been an advocate for psilocybin

mediated therapy since 2019, and have continued to help out with the emerging therapeutic psilocybin industry which will be accepting licenses starting in January 2023.

I wanted to talk about what I perceive as one of the most hopeful events to take place in this country, perhaps the world right now, and how the intentional and respectful use of this medicine can have profound and powerful healing effects for our society.

First I want to define the term entheogen, which translated from Greek means “the divine within” I like this term over “psychedelic” in this specific context (Because I love me some psychedelic art and music) because it emphasizes the action of connecting to divine consciousness and doesn’t have the counterculture baggage of the 1960s. It centers on the idea that these compounds are used with the intention of healing or having a spiritual experience, and not just a good time at a music festival. Like so many other people in the US, I was introduced to psilocybin and LSD in the party context and while I still had fun and do not discourage or judge people who still partake in psychedelics in this way, there is a power and reverence to these compounds that is not fully grasped without careful curation of set and setting. When these aspects are brought into the experience of partaking in entheogens and encourage an inward introspection while under the effects of the entheogen while still in a safe and supportive environment mediated by a professional guide, they can occasion profound and meaningful experiences that have the potential to help us heal some of our society’s most pressing mental health challenges including alcoholism, addiction, PTSD, eating disorders, depression and anxiety, etc. These powerful compounds have been exploited, blamed and demonized in our western society, and much of the instances of violent deaths attributed to these compounds happened when people under their influence did not adhere to the maxim “set and setting”. Further, in indigenous societies where these compounds were used, they were accompanied by a guide to help the person taking this medicine through the experience, another very important component to the use of entheogens that had been divorced from the experience once it had come into the western, capitalist consciousness. This is why I prefer the term entheogens to psychedelics in this specific context, but I may use the words interchangeably.

While there are several different classes of compounds that make up this category of entheogens including LSD, mescaline, DMT and Ayahuasca, for the purposes of this talk, I am going to be discussing psilocybin which is the psychoactive compound found in “Magic mushrooms” or shrooms (Paul Statmens hates this term).

Psilocybin is found in over 250 species of mushrooms from around the world and has a history of use in human societies as far back as 7000 years in the archeological record. The main species that is cultivated, *Psilocybe cubensis* is found all over the world in tropical areas with cattle, as the species grows well in ruminant dung. In his book “Food of the Gods” Terrence McKenna who has a special place of honor on my chosen ancestor altar, posits that the early development of religion and language in early hominids was helped along much faster than would have happened without ingesting psychotropic mushrooms they would find in the savannas of Africa. The Stoned Ape theory, as this is called, points to mushrooms as one of the compounds to accelerate our evolution into the modern human species, and we therefore owe it to mushrooms that we have religion, art, and abstract thinking. This theory is difficult to support with evidence since there would be no fossil record of mushrooms. However there are many different animals including other primates that do ingest these mushrooms for the explicit reasons of getting intoxicated, so it is very likely that our earliest hominid ancestors were

ingesting them as well. How much this changed our perception and ability to have complex thoughts is still something up for debate.

Magic Mushrooms were first introduced to the west by an article in the May 1957 edition of Time magazine by a vice president of JP Morgan, R. Gordon Wasson. Wasson and his wife were fascinated by mushrooms, and embarked on a journey to find out more about the flesh of the gods which they had learned about through anthropology records and herbarium collections at Harvard. Wasson traveled down to Oaxaca to take part in a sacred mushroom ceremony with Mazatec Curendera Maria Sabina, then wrote about his experience which was then read by millions of westerners, launching the beginning of the magic mushroom phenomena. Wasson had promised to anonymize Sabina in his story, but then released her real name and location, essentially doxxing her to the world, unleashing a capitalist co-opting of these sacred medicine by the counter culture including the Rolling Stones and the Beatles who showed up in the tiny mountain village of Huautala de Jimenez in search of the Food of the Gods. This had profoundly devastating impacts on the town and the people including Sabina herself who regretted being the dula of magic mushrooms to Western colonial culture. There is a fascinating podcast episode about her from Missing Witches which I recommend if you are interested in learning more.

I want to take this moment to talk about the importances of reparations and landback, and how those of us from colonizer backgrounds that have aspirations to take part in this emerging industry need to give back to the indigenous people from whom this medicine first was used. (Develop more on this)

Once Psilocybin was unleashed onto western society it began to make it's mark on our American culture, and soon came to embody much of the counter cultural movements. While it was favored for the recreational aspects among the flower children and hippies, behind the scenes in special research facilities throughout North America, it was also showing enormous potential to treat various mental health issues, along with LSD was found to be more effective than any other therapeutic treatment. All this promising research however was completely shut down and forced underground following the 1967 federal classification of psilocybin and LSD as controlled substances and to this day both of these compounds are considered federally illegal and have no medical value according to the Schedule I classification. The criminalization of these compounds was due in large part to the moral panic surrounding them, of which Dr. Timothy Leary was the poster boy for and became a martyr for bring their message to the masses. I am not going to delve much into this topic, as there are plenty of podcasts and books about the problematic character that was Timothy Leary, but suffice to say it was his defiant and loud resistance to the emerging political panic around psychedelics that many other researcher blame for the fact these compounds were forced into the world of illicit controlled substances. Fast forward to 2006, and the publication of a peer reviewed scientific paper "Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Person Meaning and Spiritual Significance" by a research group at John Hopkins, the first steps to bring entheogens out of the illicit underground and back into the research labs had finally started to shift. This study found that a high dose of psilocybin could be used to safely and reliably occasion a mystical experience typically described as the dissolution of one's ego followed by a sens of merging with nature or the universe. From this watershed publication, more and more

researchers began utilizing psilocybin in a variety of therapeutic settings, digging up some of the old research in the pre-prohibition period and picking up with the work left off. A lot of this history I reference from Micheal Pollan's book How to Change your Mind which I invite y'all to check out.

One of the ways the psilocybin has been explained to have such a profound impact on the mind is due to the fact it activates the novelty centers of our brains in ways that we often can not access other than through meditation, prayer, ecstatic experiences and psychedelics. It creates new neural pathways that can trigger profound new meaning and experiences. In the book, Pollan uses the metaphor of our brains being like a snowy hillside. Our default mode network is our normal consciousness in that our brain moves along these well worn paths of consciousness that we reaffirm and if these pathways are depressive, or traumatic, they become deeper and deeper. Psilocybin shakes up these paths, and essentially represents a fresh new fallen snow on the hillside so we can begin to make new pathways and connections. What this looks like in a person's mind during a psilocybin session is very subjective and specific to that person. It can be finally meeting and talking to a parent who has been dead for decades, or finally facing an eating disorder as a starved angry demon that is soothed, or witnessing some event and finally being able to heal from it. It has been shown to have increased wellbeing and acceptance toward death in terminal cancer patients and helped to ease the powerful debilitating symptoms of PTSD (In fact veterans were one of the main advocate groups to help pass this measure and vote it into Oregon law).

What makes this different from the cannabis industry is that this will be a therapeutic industry, you will need a license to administer psilocybin and there will be a process to make sure there are no comorbidities that may cause complications. You are given the psilocybin in a safe and pleasant environment and a guide is present to talk you through the experience, which facilitates a much more profound and therapeutic journey. After this you have an integration session where you go over and integrate the experience into your waking and normal consciousness.

Oregon will be the first state in the country to have a therapeutic industry of this nature. It has the potential to be a game changer in how we treat mental health in this country. It also has the potential to make a lot of money and be exploitative which is why those of use who are Oregon residents and proponents of this medicine need to help ensure parity, equity and accessibility. This needs to be accessible to anyone who needs it including people. There also needs to be reparations made for the indigenious people who brought this medicine to the west and an emphasis on inclusiveness for people of all walks of life to take part and not just only be open to rich white tech bros who have lots of money like what has happened in the cannabis industry. Something I did want to mention about my hopes for this industry ties into the topic of ancestral healing and epigenetics. I am going to be doing an entire episode on the Science Witch Podcast for Samhain on this topic, but as I am reading about ancestral healing and how the traumas experienced by our ancestors shape our own lives in very uncanny and profound ways, I feel psilocybin has a part to play in this work.

And so in closing I want to say thank you for coming to my presentation. I invite you to connect with me and if you are interested in this emerging industry, let's work together to manifest this vision of bringing this powerful medicine to the people who need it in the most intentional and ethical way we can, and to be the advocates for the Gaia consciousness , the witches who

Speak for the mushrooms and our own collective healing. I speak this into being and ask that this manifest our will, so mote it be.

Thank you for listening to this edition of the Wild Witches series on the Science Witch Podcast. Enku and I will be back soon with an episode on Astrology as well as a special interview with a guest we've been teasing about here for months. I am recently making some big life changes that will allow me to spend more time and effort on the podcast in the coming months, so stay tuned for more episodes. And it would be amazing to have more folks check us out over at Patreon since we have more incredible things planned including gifting goldenrod essential oil for our Patreon supporters at the science witch coven level.

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