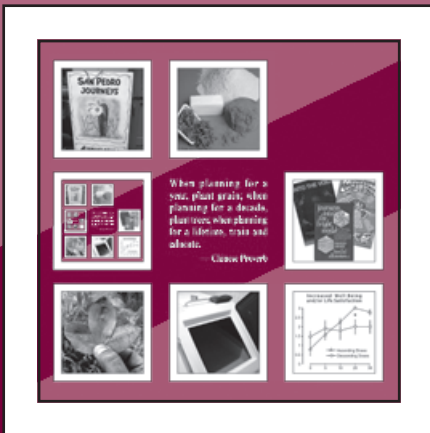
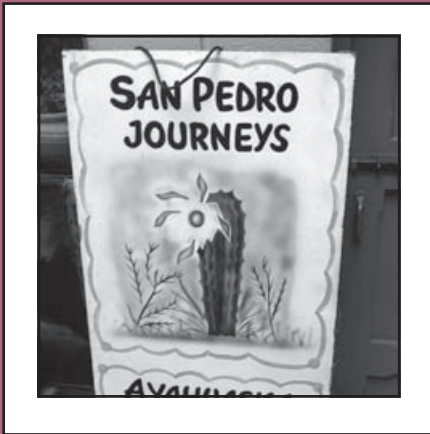


Erowid Extracts

DOCUMENTING THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND PSYCHOACTIVES

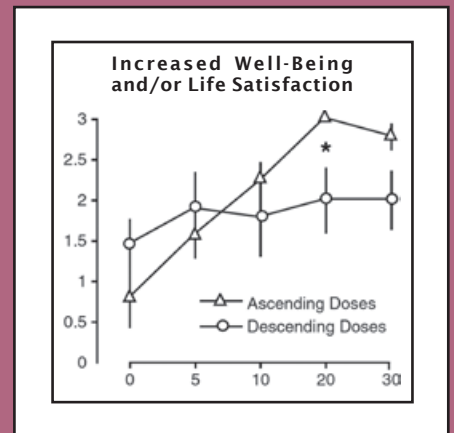
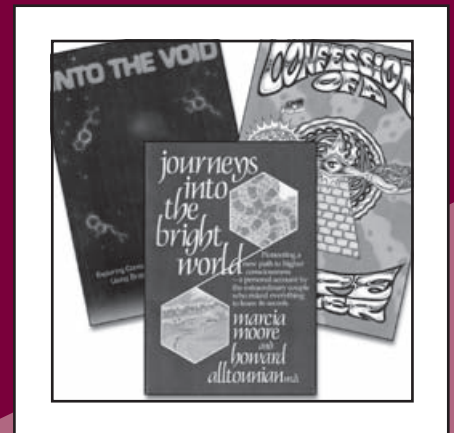
November 2011

Number 21



When planning for a year, plant grain; when planning for a decade, plant trees; when planning for a lifetime, train and educate.

— Chinese Proverb



"I support this site 100%. I have been using it for years and at first, I'll admit, I was skeptical about the validity of the info provided. I would usually start there and cross-reference everything I would learn with other resources. It took me a bit, but after awhile, I realized these guys work super hard to make sure they're putting out good information and helping educate people properly rather than what I see on a lot of 'new-agey' type sites regarding various drugs/chemicals. To me, they are now a trusted source...and believe me, I am a very skeptical person when reading scientific/medical information from the internet."

— PIGGYBANKCOWBOY
Comment on Reddit.com

"Keep up the good work. You do a good service for the community. I am a pharmacist and am always referring patients to your website for reliable information. I know you will not let me down."

— SD
Erowid Member

"You guys are doing this world a great service and I hope things just keep getting better! By the way I really enjoy the *Extracts* magazine, I think it's a great idea."

— AT
Erowid Member

"Thank you for being Erowid! I have been visiting FOR OVER A DECADE and have found numerous occasions that it has offered knowledge that has positively affected my life and others around me, so donating was the least I could do. Again, from the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU!"

— LF
Erowid Supporter

"Honest/unbiased education on spirituality, drugs, and the relationship between the two is hard to come across in most corners of society nowadays."

— MR
Erowid Member

"I am a HUGE fan of Erowid in all of its manifestations. I have spent literally days worth of time searching through the vast information residing on the servers. All of this info has, no joke, saved the lives of many of my friends, if not myself as well. I would just like to take this opportunity to express my sincere reverence and honor towards all those involved with Erowid in any aspect be it small or large. I know for a fact that Erowid has saved countless lives from the jaws of ignorance-driven ODs, hospitalizations, etc. This alone makes this website grand in its own respect, but there is more to it than just protecting the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of individuals... In the international, media-driven world we live in, Erowid reduces the stories and statistics of drug-induced deaths and hospitalizations that are used by media sharks to further make substance use illicit and socially taboo. My words are inadequate to express the significance of Erowid, as this passage only hints at the vast applicability of this website to our daily lives and freedoms."

— RW
Erowid Member

"Websites such as the Vaults of Erowid (www.erowid.org), where individuals post reports on their experience of using certain substances, can also provide a valuable source of anecdotal information on the effects of legal highs."

— RO MCLEOD & PD COOPER
*in Practice in Mental Health—
Substance Use. Radcliffe Pub. 2011.*

"It is estimated that more than 1.9 billion individuals worldwide are connected to the Internet. Illicit drug portals are common and easy to find and range from informative websites such as erowid.com to mass-delivered emails with purchase offers."

— CA KLEIN & S KANDEL
"www.mydrugdealer.com: Ethics and Legal Implications of Internet-Based Access to Substances of Abuse". J Am Acad Psychiatry Law. 2011;39(3):407-11.

"One of the most respected online drug information sources, particularly among psychedelic drug users, is Erowid: this site is the first port of call for most psychonauts before they embark on an adventure with a new substance (<http://www.erowid.org>). Erowid's stated mission is to provide access to "reliable, non-judgmental information about psychoactive plants, chemicals, and related issues." Erowid is famous for its "trip reports": information imparted horizontally from fellow travelers with direct experience is accorded far greater weight than the (often moralistic) dry pronouncements on drug effects handed down vertically from on-high."

— C WALSH
*"Drugs, the Internet and Change".
J Psych Drugs. 2011;43(1):55-63.*

"As a physician and seeker of wisdom by way of information, I continue to benefit from and respect Erowid's work."

— MF
Erowid Member

Send correspondence to:
extracts@erowid.org

Please include your name, title,
and city/state/country of origin to be
published with your letter. Letters
may be edited for length and clarity.

ERRATA

The article "Is THC Neuroprotective Against MDMA Toxicity?" in *Erowid Extracts* issue #19 incorrectly identified 5HIAA as 5-hydroxyacetic acid. It should have stated, "rats given MDMA and THC had less of a reduction in brain serotonin and its metabolite 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid (5HIAA)." Thanks to the Erowid member who read closely enough to catch this error and let us know.

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Erowid Center's mission is to provide and facilitate access to objective, accurate, and non-judgmental information about plants, chemicals, technologies, and related issues that affect the mind, body, and culture. Erowid Center supports and trains libraries, publishers, and other information distributors on issues related to these fields.

It is also Erowid Center's goal to support medical, legal, scientific, academic, and independent experts in developing and publishing related resources.

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Erowid Extracts

Number 21, November 2011

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**Know Your Body
Know Your Mind
Know Your Substance
Know Your Source**

Coffee as Antidepressant

A newly published epidemiological study from the Harvard School of Public Health tracked coffee consumption among 50,739 older women (mean age 63) for ten years (1996–2006).¹ The women were all depression-free at the beginning of the study.

Every two years, participants completed surveys asking how much regular and decaf coffee they drank, as well as how much caffeinated tea, soda, and chocolate they consumed. They were also asked if they had been diagnosed with depression or had used an antidepressant in that time. Researchers found that those who drank coffee were less likely to have experienced depression.

During the decade-long study, 2,607 women developed depression. Those who drank two to three cups of coffee per day were 15% less likely to develop depression than those who drank one or less cups per week. Women who drank four cups per day were 20% less likely to become depressed. The study found evidence of similar results after intake of caffeine from other sources such as tea and soft drinks, but did not have enough data to confirm the effect for this subgroup. Non-coffee sources were included in the analysis, which showed a clear trend towards lower risk of depression as caffeine intake increased.

Although many media reports added warnings about the health risks that daily high doses of caffeine could cause, such as anxiety or insomnia, Alberto Ascherio, one of the paper's authors, was quoted in *The New York Times* voicing refreshingly practical wisdom: "Some people may think 'a bit is good, so more is better,' but that's not true. We self-medicate ourselves with caffeine, and each person usually knows their optimal level."² ●

1) Lucas M, Mirzai F, et al. "Coffee, Caffeine, and Risk of Depression Among Women". *Arch Intern Med*. 2011;171(17):1571–8.

2) O'Connor A. "Coffee Drinking Linked to Less Depression in Women". *The New York Times*. Sep 26, 2011.

Steve Jobs & LSD

Steve Jobs' death on October 5th generated the predictable flood of eulogies declaring his importance to the computer age. Along with noting that he had led Apple to become the most valuable company in the world (exceeding oil giant Exxon Mobil in 2011), many people also pointed out Jobs' use of psychedelics. As of October 19th, a Google news search of "Steve Jobs' + LSD" yielded 290 articles mentioning the topic.

According to *The New York Times*' obituary, "taking LSD was one of the two or three most important things [Jobs] had done in his life. He said there were things about him that people who had not tried psychedelics—even people who knew him well, including his wife—could never understand."

It is striking that Jobs' statement, originally described in the 2005 book *What the Dormouse Said*, mirrors language from the 2006 results of research conducted at Johns Hopkins University (see page 4), in which two-thirds of volunteers given a high dose of psilocybin "rated the experience [...] to be either the single most meaningful experience of his or her life or among the top five most meaningful experiences of his or her life."

Awarded the National Medal of Technology, among a number of other major honors, Jobs has been lauded to a level of public sainthood that few others have achieved; he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine seven times. The repeated mention of his use of LSD and its positive influence on his life stands as both an implicit and explicit negation of the mainstream anti-drug narrative.

Media response to Jobs' attitude on psychedelics is a bellwether of a shift in the public discourse. As the youth of the 1960s age, fears of damaging one's future career are likely to evolve into post-retirement honesty. ●

CMA Doctors Say "Legalize It."

In mid-October, the California Medical Association (CMA) became the first statewide organization of its kind to recommend federal legalization and regulation of cannabis for adults, regardless of whether it is used medicinally or recreationally. The new position is based on findings from the Legalization and Taxation of Marijuana Technical Advisory Committee, formed in 2010 to study the issue by order of the CMA's House of Delegates.

Noting that "current data have shown that the medical indications for cannabis are very limited", the CMA believes that in order to better assess the benefits and risks, physicians need access to a scope of research that is not possible under cannabis prohibition. In their position paper "Cannabis and the Regulatory Void",¹ the CMA also points out six reasons why the criminalization of cannabis is "a failed public health policy".

Americans appear to increasingly be in agreement with the CMA's position, according to Gallup's annual Crime survey.² Questions about cannabis legality were included in this telephone-based interview of 1,005 randomly sampled adults in the United States.

The results? For the first time, supporters of legalization outnumber opponents. While 46% are against the idea, 50% of the Americans polled favor legalization. This number is up from 46% last year, about 30% in 2000, around 25% during the late 1970s through the mid-1990s, and a mere 12% when Gallup first solicited opinions on the topic in 1969. It seems that support for nationwide legalization has never been more popular. ●

1) California Medical Association. "Cannabis and the Regulatory Void: Background Paper and Recommendations". Oct 14, 2011.

2) Newport F. "Record-High 50% of Americans Favor Legalizing Marijuana Use". Gallup.com. Oct 17, 2011.

Erowid Extracts 10-Year Anniversary



This issue (#21) marks the ten-year anniversary of *Erowid Extracts*. Erowid was founded in 1995, but it wasn't until six years later that we had enough members to warrant a newsletter. Looking back over the past decade, we're reminded of where we started.

Published in May 2001, the first issue of *Erowid Extracts* was a slim 12 pages, with only 500 copies printed. At the time, Erowid.org got around 18,000 unique daily visitors and we had received 4,000 reports submitted about people's experiences with psychoactive plants and chemicals. Ten years later, the newsletter is 28 pages long (issues 2–9 were 24 pages), and we print 2,500 copies of each issue. Erowid.org has now received 94,000 experience report submissions and is getting around 100,000 visitors a day. We've come a long way!

While working on "Those That Went Before: A lineage of psychedelic print

periodicals" for *Extracts* #20 earlier this year, we were struck by how few publications related to psychoactives have maintained a consistent publishing schedule over multiple years. We know all too well how the complicated pressures of managing a small organization can lead to missed deadlines, as project emergencies, funding challenges, and printing disasters divert the staff's attention.

When it came time for us to publish issue #3 in May 2002, we decided to experiment with shipping unbound Erowid materials along with a sample copy of that season's issue of *The Entheogen Review*. We got the mailing out on time, but also became determined that from then on we would publish *Erowid Extracts* on a regular schedule. We have successfully mailed it to members twice a year (June and November) ever since.

For the first eleven issues, the front cover of *Extracts* displayed a letter from Fire and Earth to members. We changed to our current design in 2007. Not only is this design more visually interesting, but it also acts as a means to communicate (and remember) the contents of the issue at a glance.

Thanks to our stellar editorial crew, we are able to publish high-quality articles exploring all aspects of psychoactive substances. Most content is reviewed by both internal and external experts and edited by at least four editors (if not five or six) prior to publication. We extend our sincere thanks to the authors and experts we've worked with over the last ten years who have put up with our crew's numerous rewrites and editing.

In celebration of *Erowid Extracts*' ten-year anniversary, issue #21 marks the first time we have included full color in the newsletter. We hope you enjoy it! ●

Erowid Center Receives Education Award

In late September, Earth and Fire were notified that they had received the 2011 Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) "Dr. Andrew Weil Award for Achievement in the Field of Drug Education". Though Earth and Fire were named as individuals, Erowid is a group effort of staff and volunteers and we consider the award an achievement for the entire crew. The DPA currently gives eight different achievement awards, presented biennially, that "recognize the accomplishments and commitment of people and organizations that have done outstanding drug policy reform work." The drug education award is "given to those involved in drug education who have promoted honest, science-based drug education in place of ineffective scare tactics based on myths and deceit."

This is the first professional award that Erowid Center has received. We are grateful to the Drug Policy Alliance for recognizing the work Erowid has done over the past 16 years to increase the availability of accurate, non-judgmental information about psychoactive plants and chemicals. The awards reception took place at the International Drug Policy Reform Conference in Los Angeles on November 5, 2011. ●

Practical Data from Psilocybin Research

by Fire & Earth Erowid

on Dose, Mystical Experience, and Personality

Innovative work with psilocybin by the Griffiths research group continues to flourish at Johns Hopkins University. Two new papers published in 2011 follow in the footsteps of a groundbreaking 2006 article, in which the same researchers showed that the primary active chemical in psychedelic mushrooms can induce “mystical-type” experiences in participants given the right preparation and setting.

The first of the new papers, “Psilocybin Occasioned Mystical-Type Experiences: Immediate and Persisting Dose-Related Effects”, was published in June.¹ It presented practical data regarding what doses of psilocybin are most likely to lead to these mystical experiences.

Volunteers were an average of 46 years old, well educated, and reported a relatively active spiritual life, with at least weekly participation in spiritual activities. Four different active doses of psilocybin and an active placebo (methylphenidate, aka Ritalin) were compared during the double-blind study. Each volunteer participated in five eight-hour single-dose sessions spaced roughly one month apart. Half received doses that ascended sequentially and half received a descending sequence. Both monitors and volunteers were unaware of the sequential nature of the dosage, having been told that they would be in mixed order. Furthermore, none of the monitors detected the ascending/descending nature of the study, even after all sessions had been completed.

Volunteers spent the bulk of each session lying on a couch focusing on their inner experience. Monitors completed questionnaires designed to rate participant behavior and mood during each session, while participants completed five questionnaires immediately following each session.

This design allowed the researchers to explore two primary issues: first, if a specific dosage (0, 5, 10, 20, or 30 mg per 70 kg of body weight) was more likely to engender a mystical-type experience; and second, if an ascending or descending dosage schedule affected subject experience of the sessions.

Results

Questionnaire responses showed that higher doses were associated with stronger effects, more anxiety and fear, more stimulation, more distance from reality, and less responsiveness to the monitors. High doses also led to more intense joy/happiness and—with the exception of the highest dose—more peace/harmony.

The researchers nailed down some interesting and practical results that, although known by many informedentheogens users, had not been established in peer-reviewed scientific literature.

Timing: At the two highest doses (20 and 30 mg/70 kg), onset of primary effects was identified at the 30- or 60-minute assessment, and these effects reached a peak somewhere between 90 and 180 minutes.

Blood Pressure: Following the highest dose, 4 out of 18 subjects experienced increases in blood pressure sufficient to warrant additional monitoring but not pharmacological intervention.

Dosage: Measures designed to identify mystical experiences showed that results were dose-dependent. Participants were more likely to have mystical experiences at higher doses. Respectively, 0%, 5.6%, 11.1%, 44.4%, and 55.6% met the criteria for a “complete” mystical experience following 0, 5, 10, 20, and 30 mg/70 kg sessions. A whopping 72.2% of

the volunteers had a “complete mystical experience” during one of the two highest dose sessions (20 or 30 mg/70 kg). This narrows down the question of what dose of psilocybin is most likely to produce a mystical experience. Although mushrooms vary substantially in potency, these doses are roughly the equivalent of 2.5–4 g and 4–6 g of dry *Psilocybe cubensis* for someone weighing 70 kg (154 lbs).²

Well-being: Around 90% of participants reported an increase in their sense of well-being and life satisfaction after either the 20 or 30 mg/70 kg session. And, perhaps most surprisingly, “Of the 90 total sessions, none were rated as having decreased well-being or life satisfaction.”

Extreme Fear: Though it did not dramatically affect likelihood of a mystical experience, 39% of

These results suggest that a dose closer to 20 mg/70 kg maintains a solid potential for a meaningful and/or mystical-type experience...

the carefully screened and prepared volunteers experienced “extreme ratings of fear, fear of insanity, or feeling trapped” at some point during a session (one at 20 mg/70 kg and six at the highest dose of 30 mg/70 kg). Similar numbers reported delusions or paranoid thinking (one at 20 mg/70 kg and seven at 30 mg/70 kg). A total of 10 out of 18 participants experienced extreme fear or paranoia at the highest dose. Equal numbers (44% each) rated the 20 and 30 mg/70 kg doses as the most personally meaningful.

These results suggest that a dose closer to 20 mg/70 kg maintains a

solid potential for a meaningful and/or mystical-type experience while limiting anxiety, paranoia, and physical stress. Indeed the authors warn that “administration of doses higher than about 20 mg/70 kg would be inadvisable” in therapeutic or research settings where there is less screening, psychological preparation, and supervision.

[...] it appears that having experience with lower doses facilitates the likelihood of having sustained positive effects after a high dose of psilocybin.”

Dosage Order

The study also documented the impact of dosage order on outcome. Volunteers from both the ascending and descending regimens reported positive increases in mood, altruism, behavior, spirituality, and attitudes about life and self, as well as their sense of well-being/life satisfaction. However, those in the ascending-dose group scored higher in these measures than the descending-dose group, both one month after the highest dose session (30 mg/70 kg) and at the 14-month follow-up.

While the experimental design—using pharmaceutical-grade psilocybin in sessions curated by some of the world’s top psychedelic guides—is not directly parallel to real-life situations of individuals ingesting psilocybin-containing mushrooms at home, the study findings *do* appear to support the idea that positive outcomes are more likely to occur if inexperienced users start with lower doses rather than leaping directly into taking a high dose for their first experience. As the authors put it, “Thus, it appears that having experience with lower doses facilitates the likelihood of having sustained positive effects after a high dose of psilocybin.”

The Griffiths group at Johns Hopkins has not only shown that psilocybin can occasion mystical experiences in a majority of volunteers; it has now produced useful data about specific dosage ranges and protocols for minimizing risks and maximizing benefits—practical information that could be valuable even to those outside research contexts.

Openness

In September, the same group published another paper, in which they described long-term positive personality effects measured with questionnaires following 30 mg/70 kg psilocybin sessions.³ According to the paper, no previous study has ever shown that a discrete experimental event can cause “personality change” in a healthy adult.

Four measures were considered: the Mysticism Scale, the Neuroticism Extroversion Openness Personality Inventory (NEO-PI), the States of Consciousness Questionnaire (SOCQ), and the Aussergewöhnliche Psychische Zustände (APZ). The authors hypothesized that mystical experiences, as measured with the SOCQ, would increase “Openness”, one of the factors in the NEO-PI. The “facets” of the Openness (or “Openness to Experience”) personality trait are Fantasy (active imagination), Aesthetics (appreciation of art and nature), Feelings (attentiveness to emotional states), Ideas (intellectual curiosity), Values (broad-mindedness), and Actions (inclination to try new things).

Volunteers were screened for levels of Openness prior to the psilocybin sessions. Initial Openness did *not* predict how likely they were to have a mystical experience during the sessions. However, the researchers found that having a “complete” mystical experience during a high-dose psilocybin session was correlated with positive changes in all facets of Openness except Actions. Increases in Openness persisted through follow-up surveys conducted more than a year after the psilocybin sessions. Those who experienced a “complete” mystical experience maintained

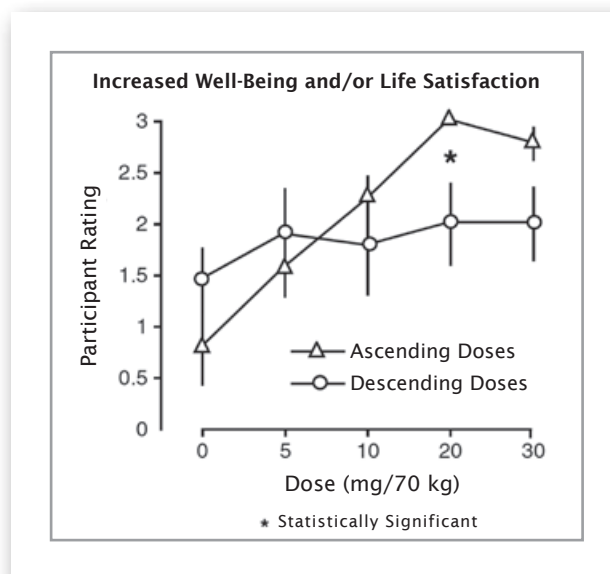
higher levels of Openness during the year, while those who did not have a mystical experience maintained Openness levels similar to their initial screening.

The authors note that as people age, they become less “Open” according to these measures (with Openness generally decreasing by one point per decade out of scores of around 65 on the NEO-PI scale). Those who had a mystical experience during this study increased their Openness scores (by more than four points). Assuming that Openness is a desirable trait, this potentially mitigates decades of aging-related decline.

As research with psychedelics and empathogens increases around the world, we look forward to seeing these same measures used to evaluate whether other substances, such as MDMA, might also have long-term effects on Openness and other personality traits. ●

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- 2) Erowid. “What is the Equivalent of 30 mg Pure Psilocybin in Dry Weight of *Psilocybe cubensis* Mushrooms?” *Erowid Extracts*. Nov 2006;(11):7.
- 3) MacLean KA, Johnson MW, Griffiths RR. “Mystical Experiences Occasioned by the Hallucinogen Psilocybin Lead to Increases in the Personality Domain of Openness”. *J Psychopharmacol*. Published online Sep 28, 2011.



A Measured Approach to Oral Cannabis

by Earth & Fire Erowid

The L.E.S.S. Method

Start
Low. *Potency*
Establish. *Go*
Slow. *As Needed*
Supplement.

More than half of all U.S. adults under the age of 60 have used cannabis at least once. While cannabis is usually smoked, oral consumption is not uncommon. When eaten, the effects take substantially more time to come on, are described as being more intense, and last hours longer than when smoked. The high potency of THC and other cannabinoids means that a large dose can fit into a tiny portion of food. These factors, combined with a wide variation in potency from one batch of edibles to another, present a considerable risk of unpleasant, long-lasting, accidental overdoses.

Cannabis edibles have become more available in recent years as the medical marijuana market has matured. They are popular enough that a page with two recipes for cannabis cookies was the third most visited article on Erowid.org in August and September 2011. Many medical dispensaries sell an assortment of edible products: from classic brownies and cookies, to fudges, lollipops, pizzas, bagel bites, tinctures, and “cannabutter” (for use in home cooking).

But even commercially available products are made from plants that naturally vary in cannabinoid concentrations.

Whether bought or baked at home, the dosage of the same type of edible can differ from one batch to the next. As a result of this natural variation, as well as some common usage errors, over the past 40 years oral cannabis has developed a reputation for being unpleasant and too strong. An overdose can be overwhelming, including extreme disorientation, confusion, hallucinations, depersonalization, nausea, vomiting, pounding heart, anxiety, and paranoia.

It’s a familiar story. A student unaccustomed to oral cannabis is offered a pot brownie at a dorm party or festival, and ends up getting radically more than he or she bargained for.

“I started doubting I would ever be normal again, I thought I was gonna stay insane, trapped in this world of anxiety.”

— by Insane Sleep, Exp ID 75339

Many people swear off ingesting cannabis after such an experience. Achieving just the right degree of effect from a proffered edible is difficult, even for those with extensive experience.

Yet, careful oral consumption can provide benefits over smoking, including reduced throat and lung irritation, and longer duration, which results in less frequent need to redose and greater consistency in intensity over time.

Some regular users of oral cannabis, such as medical marijuana patients, have developed personal protocols for achieving consistent results with various preparations. As vendors selling edible cannabis products multiply and reports of classic consumption errors continue to prevail, it’s important to document the various techniques for successfully working with oral cannabis.

Several easily avoidable mistakes are the primary causes of most oral cannabis overdoses. As long as a few guidelines are kept in mind, cannabis edibles can be used safely, providing an effective—and in some ways preferable—alternative to smoking.



Oral Cannabis is Different

With key differences in dose, onset, duration, and methodology, it may be useful to think of oral cannabis as a different drug than smoked cannabis. Even frequent smokers can easily overdose when consuming orally. The slow onset and extended duration often surprise those who are only familiar with smoking or vaporizing.

“I smoked a gram every day for 7 months, a gram of some damn potent shit too. But nothing prepared me for what I was about to face.”

— by Insane Sleep, Exp ID 75339

Start Low & Establish Potency

THC is orally active in the range of a few milligrams, while a cookie or brownie typically weighs more than 10 *grams*. That means it’s easy for nearly any cannabis-infused edible to range in potency from inactive to strong enough to induce a radical overdose. Unless one has personally established the strength of a particular batch of edibles, there’s no immediate way to determine how strong it is. Without checking it first, an edible cannabis preparation should be considered potentially highly potent.

“I got conflicting advice about how to go about eating the cookies. A guy in my building, Curly, told us we should eat them really slowly, take a few bites and then sit for a while, then take another few bites and wait again. But Coaster told us something like, ‘No way! Then you won’t get high! You want to eat them really fast!’ I didn’t realize that Coaster thought our goal was to get as incredibly high as possible, when in actuality our goal was just to see what it was like to be high...not necessarily extremely, extremely high. I trusted Coaster’s advice because I figured he knew a lot about drugs. [...] Being high was pretty much the worst feeling ever to me.”

— by Captain, Exp ID 56706

Because expectations, tolerance, and reactions can vary dramatically from one person to the next, relying on someone else’s description of potency is a recipe for disaster. Those who make oral cannabis products are more likely to be regular users who have built up a tolerance, and therefore they often underestimate potency for first-time or casual consumers. The size of a cookie or brownie provides no reliable clues: a powerful oral dose can fit into the size of a small tablet and it’s unfortunately common for a reasonable dose to be a quarter or less of a cookie, brownie, or crispy treat.

Establishing the strength of the material for yourself, by starting very low, before you ingest a full dose is the fundamental key to the L.E.S.S. method. If one is faced with an edible of unknown potency, and yet is determined to try it, the best way to avoid an overdose is to intentionally underdose. Begin with a small piece (less than a quarter of a suggested portion). Measure or weigh the piece you try and make note of it. Then wait a *minimum* of 90 minutes on an empty stomach, or 120–150 minutes otherwise, before evaluating whether or not to consume another small piece.

“I’m afraid to ever ingest ganja orally again, and if I do it will be a much lower dose.”

— by Something Awful, Exp ID 70409

Be Patient

Depending on amount consumed, metabolism, and how recently a person has eaten, oral cannabis can take 30–120 minutes to initially be felt, and can last from three hours to more than 24 hours at high doses. Duration increases with dose, so it’s critical to wait after trying a piece of an edible before adding more. Countless stories document people redosing shortly before the full-blown effects of their first dose kicked in.

Experimenters should consider whether they have enough time and patience to establish the potency of an untested edible: with 90–120 minutes for the first check-in, it could be three to four hours before the desired level is reached, and then another three to six hours back to baseline. If there are time constraints, the more responsible choice is to *not* redose with edibles and just enjoy whatever effects occur. If you don’t have the time to be patient, perhaps it’s not the right time to eat cannabis.

“When taken to the extreme, cannabis can become extremely dissociative and frightening to the inexperienced user. If you take anything from this story, it is that you must underdose when experimenting with any new form of usage that produces different effects. If I had eaten half a brownie and waited an hour, this all could have been avoided.”

— by Kaze no Koyo, Exp ID 58734

Start Sober & Supplement as Needed

When experimenting with new edibles, start sober. The likelihood of overdosing on oral cannabis is significantly increased if one is already high from smoked/vaporized cannabis or drunk on alcohol.

A low oral dose makes a good base. Once the effects are felt and have evened out, smoked or vaporized cannabis can be added to increase effects as desired. This method

reduces negative impact on lungs and breathing while still allowing the dose to be titrated closely. It makes it practical to “underdose” with oral cannabis without having the experience be disappointing.

If supplementing with smoked or vaporized cannabis, wait a few minutes between tokes. The underlying oral cannabis can cause an unexpected acceleration of intensity.

“I packed a bowl with the pot, because I thought it would be better to smoke first in case we didn’t feel anything from the brownies. Big mistake. [...] All of a sudden my stomach started to hurt so I took some Tums and tried to find something to eat, thinking that would make me feel better. As I stood at the cupboard, I literally vomited into my mouth. [...] I bolted into the bathroom and proceeded to puke my guts out.”

— by Mobiusant, Exp ID 49226

Drug, Not Food

Cannabis edibles are not food—they’re drug delivery devices. Because of problems of accidental ingestion and overdosing, ideal edibles for recreational use are not ultra yummy, nor do they look enticingly delicious. It’s better if a user doesn’t eat too much of the edible simply because they’re tasty. When the munchies kick in, the cannabis-laden food shouldn’t be anywhere on the list of available snacks. The target is palatable medicine, not food.

If making your own edibles, don’t cut them into regular cookie- or brownie-sized pieces, and, whenever possible, clearly label them to avoid accidental ingestion. Very small and/or irregularly shaped pieces will both reduce the chance of overdose *and* make it more likely that a friend will realize they’re not for snacking. The risk of overdose is especially high for an unsuspecting visitor. Guests shouldn’t be tempted to unknowingly consume several cookies in the middle of the night, mistaking them for dessert.

“So we broke out the brownies and ate one each. [...] I did say that I was only going to eat half of it, but by the time I was high I got even more hungry and just didn’t care. [...] In retrospect, I would do it again, but at a much, MUCH smaller dose [...].”

— by Mobiusant, Exp ID 49226

“[...] there is always that temptation to use the leftovers, if there are any, for munchies (NO! NO! BAD STONER!).”

— by Alex, Exp ID 90786

Larger Batches Provide Consistency

When working with edibles, making (or buying) larger batches allows for more consistent dosing over time. Starting low and carefully measuring is less useful if there are only one or two doses per batch. But if a batch contains 20 or more doses, once the appropriate level has been determined, weighing a piece from the same batch can provide a similar level of effects each time.

“I had only tried [cannabis-infused] brownies a few times before anything went wrong. Both times had been fairly good experiences from a batch that a friend had made, however I was unaware of how much cannabis was used. [...] A few weeks after trying the brownies I took it upon myself to make my own batch and asked for the recipe. [...] it was as if the drug turned on me. I was suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling of fear and confusion. I was paranoid about everything and everyone [...].”

— by Bunny Biscuits, Exp ID 7304

Put simply, oral cannabis can be used safely and effectively by consuming just enough to reach a low level of effects, redosing with small amounts as necessary (no more often than every 90 minutes), treating it as a drug and not a food, working with larger batches of confirmed potency, and supplementing with small amounts of smoked or vaporized cannabis to reach the desired level.

LOW, ESTABLISHED, SLOW, SUPPLEMENTED

L.E.S.S. In The Kitchen

Equipment Required

Mixing bowl, baking sheet, small metal sieve, small sauté pan.

Proportions

6 g cannabis (fresh bud, shake, leaves, or post-vaporized*)
¼ lb (113 g) butter
3 cups (710 ml) flour
1 cup (235 ml) sugar

Choose a recipe that suits your tastes, remembering that it should not be for a common food that a stoned person might eat. Ginger snaps or other strongly flavored items work well, both to avoid over-snacking and to mask the flavor of cannabis in the final product. Using a boxed mix, while convenient, is especially likely to result in a product that is too easy to mistake for a snack.

Replace the butter in the chosen recipe with the cannabis butter as prepared below. The recipe should use approximately ¼ lb (1 stick) of butter per 3 cups of flour and 1 cup of sugar

(or per 4 cups of total dry material) to match this template. If the recipe varies from those proportions, the dose needs to be adjusted accordingly.

Cannabis Butter Preparation

Cannabis is ground or minced thoroughly. Butter is cut into thirds. The cannabis is browned at medium heat in $\frac{1}{3}$ of the butter and thoroughly saturated in liquid butter for several minutes. Stir frequently. Do not walk away or use too much heat, as the cannabis can burn quickly.

The liquidy mixture of butter and cannabis is poured into the sieve and pressed with a spoon, draining the liquid butter into a mixing bowl and retaining the cannabis in the sieve. Repeat this extraction process two more times, re-browning the same cannabis in $\frac{1}{3}$ of the butter each time.

After three extractions, nearly all of the cannabinoids are now in the butter, and the plant material can be discarded. If the recipe is strongly flavored, the remaining cannabis plant material could be added back into the product; however, don't try this the first time you make the recipe, as it may produce unpleasant-tasting results.

Use the resulting cannabis butter in your selected recipe, label the final product with a clear warning, and store out of the reach of children.

L.E.S.S. Out of The Kitchen

Equipment Required

Scale accurate to 0.1 gram, clock, notepad.

Establishing Potency

After a batch is first created, it is critical to try it at a dose well below what you have used before with other batches. If you have never previously tried this approach, start with about 1 gram of final baked product (assuming use of the L.E.S.S. recipe template). If you have used the procedure before, start with half the mass that you predict would be a low dose. This creates a safety margin in case the cannabis is unexpectedly strong. Keep in mind that the goal is to hit a low level of effects: underdosing is not an error, it's the target. Record the weight of the sample dose, the time, and—once the effects manifest fully—the approximate strength. Variants of “strong”, “medium”, and “weak” are sufficient for this purpose.

Consumption Tips

Using the L.E.S.S. recipe template, 1–5 grams of the resulting baked goods will contain a moderate dose for an experienced, non-tolerated cannabis user.

Forgetfulness is normal and expected with cannabis consumption. During a test, *always* write down how much was consumed and when, so you can double-check before redosing. Keep a clock and notepad next to your scale. Once you're in the habit of glancing at the clock and taking quick notes, it becomes easy and natural.



Cooking Materials
Photo © 2011 Erowid.

Vocalizing is a powerful mnemonic aid. If you're intending to take multiple doses over the course of an evening, consider saying the time out loud whenever a dose is weighed and consumed. This can help remind you to note the time and amount. It's especially useful when working with others who might then remind the weigher to make the record. If you discover that you forgot to write down a previous dose, enter a guess with a question mark and wait a little longer before redosing. Maybe you're higher than you think.

On an empty stomach, the effects come on fully between 60 and 150 minutes; on a full stomach they can take up to four hours to manifest. To maintain a given level, another dose of cannabis edible can be taken around 120 minutes after the previous dose (plus or minus 20 minutes depending on whether the previous dose was stronger or weaker than intended). Remember, redosing too early is likely to result in overly strong effects.

If experimenting with eating cannabis, be conservative. The common overdose errors associated with oral cannabis consumption can leave a lasting sense of trauma that nobody wants to experience. ●

* Edibles Can Utilize Weak Material

One benefit of oral preparations is that they can make use of weak cannabis material such as leaves, or buds that have already been run through a vaporizer. There are still active cannabinoids left in depleted plant material after vaporization. Some people are tempted to increase the temperature on their vaporizer to minimize the waste, but this defeats some of the health benefits of using these devices. While ash from pipes or bongs is not useful in making cannabis edibles (even small amounts will ruin the flavor), weak or depleted cannabis is excellent for use in oral preparations.

Erowid Crew Adventure Photography

by Sylvia Thyssen & Jon Hanna

In 2011, several of the Erowid crew, including Sylvia Thyssen and Jon Hanna, independently traveled within South America, visiting Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru. They captured over 2,000 photos and videos during their trips, featuring glimpses into the culture and business of psychoactives in South America. Ayahuasca, coca, virility-boosting concoctions, local flora, entheotourism, the curiously foreign, and the beautiful attracted the crew's attention.



Why a llama fetus accompanies a skull and crossbones and "no smoking" sign remains a mystery. (Altiplano, Bolivia)



Bundles of fresh herbs for *tereré* are sold in the market.

A tradition of the Guaraní, the indigenous people of Paraguay, *tereré* is a cold infusion of herbs such as yerba mate, yerba luisa (lemon grass), and mint. The popular beverage is repeatedly imbibed throughout the day. (Asunción, Paraguay)

Aside from the bustling Andean city of Cuzco, Peru, where many shopkeepers cater to gringos' entheogenic curiosity, the prevailing theme for the commercial sale of psychoactives seen during these travels was the quotidian pursuit of health, vitality, and the good life. Experientially dense, traveling in South America affords opportunities to touch on or dive into the culturally rich and politically complex mash-up of the traditional and modern use of psychoactives. ●



One of the many *tereré* vendors on the main square mashes herbs for a fresh infusion with a mortar and pestle. (Asunción, Paraguay)



Chicha is a common fermented drink made from corn or other grains, varying by region. To advertise fresh *chicha* in a semi-public drinking house or restaurant, hosts tie a red plastic bag to a pole—a modern replacement for the more traditional hanging of red geraniums. (Chincho, Peru)



In the lush Yungas region of Bolivia, small parcels of land are allotted to families for coca cultivation, which is highly regulated. The soil of this terraced coca plantation is packed and rocky. (near Coroico, Bolivia)



Coca tea is ubiquitous in Bolivia and Peru. Although coca is mixed with lime (calcium oxide) or sodium bicarbonate prior to buccal administration, tea is brewed with coca leaves alone, and has a pleasant, earthy taste. (La Paz, Bolivia)



Offerings of coca leaves, placed on a "mesa" or altar, are traditionally arranged in threes. (overlooking Machu Picchu, Peru)

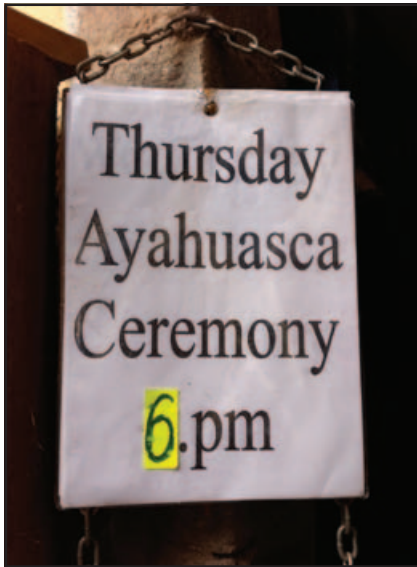


A shopkeeper displays his coca in a large cloth sack, dispensing leaves in 500-gram bags. (Tupiza, Bolivia)



Coca leaves and sodium bicarbonate labeled "El Recreo" ("recreation" or "relaxation") are sold together at city markets and sidewalk stalls.

As a base, sodium bicarbonate aids in releasing alkaloids from the plant when it is combined with leaves and chewed and held in the mouth. Shown here with no-nonsense "potable alcohol". (La Paz, Bolivia)



Some Cuzco shops and backpacker hotels openly advertise their daily ayahuasca ceremonies outside of their premises, to attract passersby. (Cuzco, Peru)



In the central market, San Pedro tea and ayahuasca are displayed in dusty soda bottles alongside altar items and dried cuttings of *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine and *Trichocereus pachanoi*. (Cuzco, Peru)



Ripening berries hang from this chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*) shrub, a major DMT source plant used in ayahuasca brews. (Vila Camboinha, Brazil)



Some areas of Brazil are particularly well suited for growing ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi*), the jungle vine known for its legal spiritual use by Brazilian religious groups such as the União do Vegetal and the Santo Daime. (Vila Camboinha, Brazil)



This bottle of ayahuasca (also shown on page 10) was brewed by a Santo Daime branch for TheVine Center. The ayahuasca is carefully portioned out using a measuring cup. Commonly served doses range from 50 to 100 ml. Two to three hours later, ceremony participants are offered the option of taking a second dose. (Vila Cambinha, Brazil)



Some hotels and New Age centers offer a choice between ayahuasca and San Pedro (*Trichocereus pachanoi*) journeys. For the DIY approach, tourists can buy dried or fresh cactus in shops or the central market. Signs in front of other establishments advertise sessions with kampo, the psychoactive secretion from a frog (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*) that is introduced through burns, cuts, or abrasions in the skin. (Cuzco, Peru)





Casually planted in many yards, *Theobroma cacao* (chocolate) trees produce a large fruit that is made into a juice and assorted liquors. Eaten fresh, it has a sweet-sour flavor somewhat reminiscent of moist bread.

After the fruit is consumed (or discarded), the *T. cacao* seeds are dried on a screen. Once dry, they can be consumed raw as a mildly stimulating snack. However, many people toast them to make them crunchier before eating them, blending them in milk, or making their own chocolate confections. (Vila Camboinha, Brazil)





Sporting an “I know what you’re interested in” smile, this wizened character offered herbal libido enhancers, such as the Brazilian plant marapuama (*Ptychopetalum olacoides*). (Itacaré, Brazil)



Claimed to be a central nervous system stimulant, as well as an aphrodisiac and impotence cure, the bark from several plant species are sold in Brazil using the same name: “catuaba”. Two of the commonly available species are *Erythroxylum vacciniifolium* (often sold as “*E. catuba*”) and *Trichilia catigua*. (Ilhéus, Brazil)



The Brazilian native plant pau de resposta (*Anemopaegma arvense*) is sold as an aphrodisiac, while marapuama (“muira puama”, “potency wood”) is not only reported to boost libido, but is also said to induce relaxation and cure sexual impotence. (Itacaré, Brazil).



Herbal products aren’t the only available option in South America, of course.

Multiple doses and brands of blue and red sildenafil (generic Viagra) and yellow tadalafil (generic Cialis) are offered in small local “farmacias”. Note the heart-shaped pills! (tablets pictured were obtained in Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia)

CAUGHT PACKING WOOD

by Jon Hanna

While in Brazil, I visited friends who run TheVine Center, a transdenominational ayahuasca church. Their beautiful property features a trellis wrapped with thick *Banisteriopsis caapi*, and these vines inspired an idea the day before I flew home. Ayahuasca centers commonly serve their brew in cups made of Styrofoam (feels cheap), plastic (seems not quite respectful), or glass (can dangerously shatter). So I asked my friends for some vine to take home, where I would lathe pieces of it into *wooden* cups for use in their ceremonies. The two sections of freshly cut vine that they gave me were packed into my suitcase, and I was off.

After I landed in the United States, a Customs agent opened my bag and scolded me for not declaring my “plants”. He asked what they were and why I had them. I replied honestly: It was *Banisteriopsis caapi*, I planned to carve it into cups, and I hadn’t declared any “plants” because—in my mind—I was transporting two pieces of wood. Another agent explained that to be considered “wood”, it had to be dried and processed: cutting it into logs wasn’t enough. After looking up my “plant” on the web, the first agent angrily exclaimed, “You aren’t going to make cups out of that! I know what *that* is!” (Ironically, his information source might well have been an Erowid page.) He didn’t directly call me a drug smuggler, but he was clearly thinking it. Customs confiscated the material, threatening that they *could* have made things much more difficult for me. ●

The Void, the Bright, and the Confessions

Recommendations for Autobiographies from Hyperspace

by Fork

I love autobiographies. Budding writers are told, “write what you know”, and few things fit that advice better than writing one’s own story. Inject a healthy dose of psychedelic use, and I’m hooked. Within the genre of psychoactive drug literature, there are several first-person tales from explorers of hyperspace that I’ve repeatedly reread. These are three of my favorites.



Into the Void

by Zoe Seven

(Zon Worldwide Media, 2001)

Much of Zoe Seven’s *Into the Void* ought to be taken with a grain of salt. Beyond the misguided, unbelievable, and hilarious disclaimer and the author’s consistent misuse of words, one still has to deal with his proclivity for sweeping generalizations and New Age beliefs. Seven claims to be a “multi-dimensional synergy-personality cluster” comprised of himself and the consciousnesses of five other people who exist in alternate dimensions. (I know, it doesn’t add up. But he has special math to explain it!) Yet if one can overlook such warts, and stomach Seven’s melodramatic delivery and penchant for conspiracy theories, this book contains a great deal of novel,

thought-provoking material. Although Seven is forthright about his lack of formal education, his experiments mapping and targeting particular brain states evidence a curious and intelligent individual.

Seven is obsessed with altered states, their spiritual/philosophical implications, and the importance of first-hand experience. His fascination leads him to investigate paranormal realms (out-of-body experiences, remote viewing, telepathy), lucid dreaming, electronic “mind machines”, and — eventually — psychedelics. Although Seven was 31 when he began experimenting with drugs, many of his trips feature over-the-counter medications that are more popular among teens: dextromethorphan (cough medicine), dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), cyclizine (Marezine), and diphenhydramine (Benadryl). He goes on to make up for lost time, intrepidly logging countless voyages in only a few years, and carefully recording his experiences.

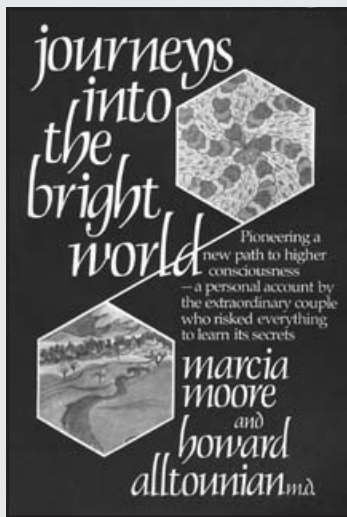
Since the 1960s, it has been fashionable to characterize the effects of psychedelics within the context of Eastern spirituality. More recently, the lil’ darlin’ of entheo-explanation has been theoretical quantum physics, which Seven uses to make sense of his visions. Although I am suspicious of autodidacts’ explanations

of ultra-technical ideas, Seven weaves an intriguing tale filled with fun-to-consider possibilities. When I first read this book a decade ago, I’d never had the sort of “true hallucinations” that he describes. However, since then, my experiments with ketamine and nitrous oxide *have* yielded these sorts of visions, as well as serial trips, similar to Seven’s, that appear to be an “other-dimensional me” attempting to communicate with the “this-dimensional me”. As a result, Seven’s ideas about parallel Earths and “psychoporting” into the physical bodies of individuals in alternate realities are now even more intriguing to me.

Seven’s descriptions of the effects of using mind machines while on assorted psychoactives are unique to the psychedelic literature. These alone make the book worth reading. Over the course of his tale, Seven reveals himself to be a likeable character—flawed, as

Seven is obsessed with altered states, their spiritual/philosophical implications, and the importance of first-hand experience.

we all are, but inspiring in his honest exuberance. *Into The Void* presents flavors along the lines of many reports posted in Erowid’s Experience Vaults: raw, foolhardy, insightful, and motivated by a desire to better know one’s self and the universe.



Journeys Into the Bright World

by Marcia Moore and Howard Alltounian
(Para Research Inc, 1978)

Long before the Shulgins' alphabetamine love stories appeared on bookstore shelves, Marcia Moore and Howard Alltounian gave us *Journeys Into the Bright World*, a drug travelogue focused on the transpersonal effects of ketamine. As with *Into the Void*, there's a strong woo-woo vibe: Moore was a New Age author-lecturer. I initially wondered how Alltounian, a doctor trained in Western medicine, so comfortably embraced his wife's paranormal views. Yet as I continued to read, Moore's interpretation of ketamine's effects within her belief structure—embracing past lives, archetypes, the Tarot, and assorted psychic phenomena—never seemed to bother me. Without proselytizing, she simply describes the ketamine experience from the perspective of her own ideological framework.

Moore presents sincere, detailed accounts of the wide range of ketamine's psychological effects. She points out the important role that music can have in directing a K session, she waxes poetic on its effect on language, and she eventually comes to feel that ketamine allows users to access internal dualistic sub-personalities that unconsciously affect one's daily choices.

Moore is clearly the main author of the text and the primary champion of ketamine. Alltounian's contributions

take the form of transcriptions from tape recordings that he made during his K voyages with Moore. Writing a book about their "bright world" forced the pair to face the possible negative consequences that advocating drug-inspired spiritual insights might have on their established careers. Yet the benefits they believed the world-at-large might gain ultimately compelled them to publish their findings. Unfortunately, as the tale unfolds, hints are dropped that Moore's ketamine use is becoming problematic. Near the book's conclusion, Moore is told to stay away from ketamine by John Lilly, the infamous scientist who researched floatation tanks and dolphins. Lilly had acquired his own ketamine monkey; his advice should have been heeded. However, Moore seems to have succumbed to addiction.

In a tragic end to this story, a year after publication, Moore became one of the few ketamine-related fatalities on record. Apparently, in an attempt to hide her ketamine use from her increasingly concerned husband, she went outside on a freezing-cold night, climbed into a tree, and after a number of injections, ended up dying from exposure. Her skeleton was found over two years later. After that, Alltounian's view of ketamine became darker, and Moore's children have demanded that Erowid take down a PDF of the book. *Journeys Into the Bright World* may be viewed as the cautionary tale from a more naïve time in the history of this fascinating yet problematic psychoactive drug.

Confessions of a Dope Dealer

by Sheldon Norberg
(North Mountain Publishing, 1999/2000)

Confessions of a Dope Dealer is the coming-of-age story of Sheldon Norberg. As a bright young suburban kid, Norberg held a typical anti-drug attitude until his early teenage years, when his eldest brother Dave admitted to smoking pot and dropping acid. Initially shocked, Sheldon soon starts experimenting. He discovers a whole new world when visiting Dave at UC Berkeley's Barrington Hall, an



infamous student housing co-op steeped in hippie culture.

At age 13, Norberg moves to Roseville, California, a painfully unhip city near Sacramento, where he befriends the local stoners and realizes the potential of his dope connections in the San Francisco Bay Area. Regular trips to Berkeley keep him and his new buddies in the green: high-quality bud and fat stacks.

Recalling my own childhood while reading this book, I could often relate to Norberg's struggles as he grew into a young man: grappling with sexual desire and female relationships, rebelling against parents ("Mom found my stash!"), and developing patterns of problematic drug use. Although he goes to college, he's more interested in partying and dealing drugs than attending classes, and he sees himself as a kind of psychedelic guru for those around him. Norberg recounts his life in thorough and sometimes unflattering detail; multitudes of people are introduced throughout the book as he describes what seems like every individual he ever met. He eventually drops out of school, becomes an outdoor pot grower, and spends his free time following the Grateful Dead.

Norberg's humor kept me turning pages, eager to see what would happen to him next. My sole criticism of *Confessions* is that it features an overabundance of characters, making it hard to remember who is who at times. But maybe I was just too stoned. ●

Time in the Tank

An Experience with Floatation

by Mink Snopes

I became aware of floatation tanks through an interest in John Lilly. After a few years messing around with psilocybin-containing mushrooms, cannabis, and *Salvia divinorum*, I expanded my techniques for altered learning by including meditation, yoga, and using the I Ching. When I discovered that float tanks were offered by a nearby massage center, it seemed like a perfect extension of my interests.

The first experience was two hours; I went into it sober and well-rested, having primed myself the night before through detoxification tea and light eating. Naturally, I was unsure of what to expect: on the one hand, I was sort of hoping for extreme, alien encounters; on the other hand, I was healthily skeptical and just as interested in simple physical relaxation.

For those who are curious about the logistics of visiting a place where a tank is offered, it's quite simple: you shower beforehand (and afterward), insert ear plugs, settle into the tank, and spend

your allotted time in a fully relaxed horizontal position. It's important to avoid getting the highly salty water in your eyes, and it requires some care when crouching down to close the door, but for the most part I experienced it as an entirely passive affair—that is, until the alterations in awareness began.

For the first half hour, I was jostling all over the tank and often bumping up gently against the sides. It took me a while to learn how to surrender entirely to the fact that I would not sink. Once I learned to properly relax, situate myself in the center of the tank, and settle down mentally, I began to feel like my body was being tilted into a vertical position: a sense of ceaseless momentum forward and upward. This subsided and I then felt as though I were being rotated horizontally 360 degrees. There came a point at which I lost all sense of direction and physical bearing.

This was mildly unsettling but did not provoke vertigo or nausea.

Slowly, I began to realize that my left eye felt like its muscles were focused more tightly and pushing harder into the darkness than my right eye. I began trying to “attune” my eyes, and there was an accompanying sense of centering and calm as I tuned in to the more minute ocular muscles. Perhaps it was a way of fidgeting with the “third

I began to sense that I was participating in a special narrative within my psyche. It felt psychedelic...

eye”, or sixth chakra, located in the region between and behind the eyes. I then began to have a clear sense of gathering up and clarifying all my thoughts and experiences from the past few days. Even mundane details took on a distinct sense of importance. I reflected back to childhood, when there was no such thing as the “mundane” and all experience was intense and a portal to insight. I recalled a few vivid childhood experiences, but I wouldn't say there was anything dramatic about the recall; rather, I was thinking very coherently by synchronizing my own imagery, memories, and day-to-day experiences in a relaxed but deeply engaged manner. As a writer, this was extremely useful for me, and it allowed me to reach a state of mind that is hard to achieve outside of the tank.

I know all these effects can be attained without a floatation tank, but as I deepened into this aspect of the experience, I began to sense that I was participating in a special story within my psyche. It felt psychedelic; that is, it seemed like a trip, with its own shape



Restingwell Floatation Tank, Photo by Stefan Gerleman

and narrative arc. The process of getting into the tank became clear to me as a sort of weird, modern ritual, and I was glad I had chosen to seek this out for myself. I felt empowered and gentle. At this point, the activity of my mind dulled a bit and I began to feel as though I'd "peaked", and I wanted to get out and celebrate and shout or something. I felt euphoric and was filled to the brim with benevolence, clarity, and insight. However, a substantial annoyance then set in: salty condensation from the tank's lid dripped into my eye and burned like mad. I had to emerge from the tank for a towel. It turns out that wiping off the inner roof of the tank before going in can prevent the dripping. When I got back in, the water jostled me around some, but I more readily found my center; nonetheless, I couldn't maintain it for long.

Up to the point of the eye-stinging drip, I would estimate that approximately an hour had passed. It is my understanding that the emergence of theta brainwaves is largely responsible for the cognitive effects in the tank. I assume I achieved a plateau of theta waves, but because of my inexperience, I was unable to maintain it. Usually, theta waves are but a prelude to sleep, and the mind isn't used to functioning within their frequency for very long before they initiate deeper levels of unconsciousness. Much like sleep cycles, it seems brainwaves in the tank run in 15-minute cycles, with a slow build-up and an extended 30–45 minutes in the theta

I think that, as I gain experience, I'll be able to more effectively delve into submerged areas of my psyche in the tank.

realm occurring before a leveling-off occurs. The salt stinging my eyes was just the final straw in my attempt to maintain the somewhat trance-like state.

After recovering from the drip, the remainder of my time in the tank was disrupted by an ache in my neck that I simply could not relieve. Much like in meditation, such pain can be a major

setback if one simply can't do anything about it. Surprisingly, my neck was more limber for a few days afterward. This seemed to be the result of fascia stretching into its right place, much like with a massage. All I can assume is that one should be willing to give in to some discomfort for purely therapeutic purposes in the tank and trust in the fact that it is doing one good in the long run. Perhaps if a body in full relaxation experiences pain, it's because it needs to learn to adjust to a completely relaxed state. It felt like a kind of learning on a somatic level.

Curiously, there was quite a bit of visual activity going on for me while in the tank. However, none of it was representational or really all that interesting. It seemed like phosphene activity, much like pressing on my eyeballs, with mutating smears of formless color and light. At one point, a very distinct image of a lamp from my childhood home emerged, and it was so vivid, and clearly seen—not imagined—that it seems worth noting as a cognitive effect.

I think that, as I gain experience, I'll be able to more effectively delve into submerged areas of my psyche while in the tank. As a tool for mental exploration, this has immense promise; however, if one is used to the overwhelming visual spectacle of psychedelics, the tank experience might seem a bit tame.

Nonetheless, the potential physical rewards shouldn't be overlooked; it was as relaxing as a massage or light yoga. I suggest that anyone interested in floating find a local float center and check out Michael Hutchison's *The Book of Floating: Exploring the Private Sea*; it is an amazingly comprehensive and exciting book on the subject. ●



About Floatation Tanks

The first floatation tank was designed by John C. Lilly in 1954, to explore sensory deprivation. Although primarily used as an aid to deep relaxation, some proponents describe more esoteric and medical purposes for floating. The 1980 film *Altered States*, which featured frightening scenes of metamorphosis resulting from time in a tank combined with a psychedelic brew, left many people with creepy impressions. Despite this negative portrayal, experimentation with tank design and research into the therapeutic effects of floating has persisted, and enthusiasts can sound as positive about it as psychedelic enthusiasts are about psychedelics.

Floatation tanks are filled with body-temperature water that is heavily saturated with Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate), which creates a microbe-resistant environment and increases the body's buoyancy. Tanks are usually designed for supine position (lying on the back), but some allow for floating in the prone, upright, or fetal positions. Some people buy commercially available set-ups for home use, others build custom tanks, but many users just go to floatation centers.

The Distillation

The Distillation includes updates, statistics, and information that we hope will offer insight into the ongoing site additions, traffic, and projects currently underway at Erowid.

Summary

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| General Content Pages | 16,202 |
| Archived Site Pages | 4,666 |
| Experience Reports | 21,766 |
| References | 7,989 |
| Ask Erowid | 594 |
| The Erowid Review | 274 |
| Content Images | 5,504 |
| Visionary Art | 2,021 |
| Total | 59,016 |

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Erowid Files on Server | 171,697 |
| Erowid Disk Footprint | 54.4 GB |

| | |
|-----------------|--------|
| Current Members | 1,391 |
| Daily Visitors | 93,248 |

Content Details

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| General Content Pages | 16,202 |
|-----------------------|--------|

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Number of Substances Vaults | 328 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

| | |
|---|--|
| Most Popular Substance Vaults (with Change) | |
| MDMA (↑); Mushrooms (↑); LSD (↓); Cannabis (↔); DMT (↔); Cocaine (↓); Salvia divinorum (↑); Methamphetamine (↔); Morning Glory (↑); Oxycodone (↓); Ketamine (↓); 2C-B (↑); Amanitas (↑); DXM (↓); Heroin (↔); Datura (↔); Ayahuasca (↑); Peyote (↑); 5-MeO-DMT (↑); Kratom (↑); Opiates (↓); Amphetamine (↓); Cacti (↔) | |

| | |
|---|--|
| Most Accessed Documents | |
| Famous People and Their Drug Use; How to Grow Medical Marijuana; Cannabis Cookie Recipes; Cannabis Smoking Etiquette; Essential Psychedelic Guide—LSD; Mushroom Effects; How to Piss and Pass | |

Visionary Art

Many thanks to the artists who have submitted their work to the Erowid Visionary Art Vaults. These are some of the crew's most recent favorites.



Blue War Zone, by Dadara



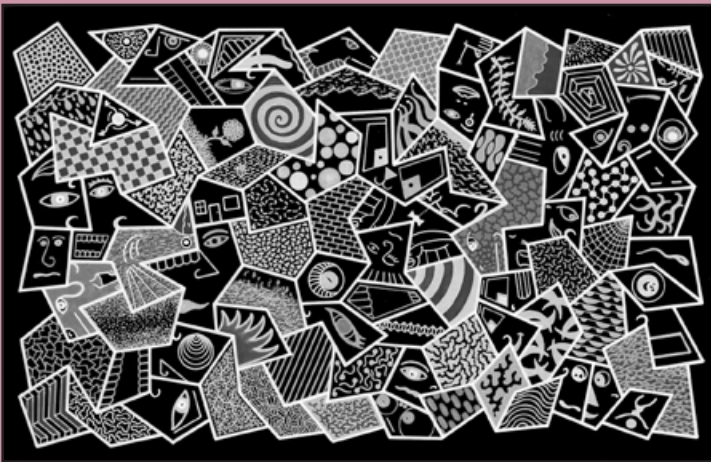
Food of Gods, by J. Slattum



Revelation, by Vesa Peltonen



Divine Transcendence, by Michelle Oravitz



Negative Color, by KelinsmART



Ophelia Emergent Psyche, by Sunny Strasburg

Experience Reports

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Published Reports | 21,766 |
| Published in Last 6 Mo. | 468 |
| Fully Triaged Reports | 34,493 |
| Partially Triaged Reports | 1,067 |
| Un-triaged Reports | 13,170 |
| Viewed Each Day | 142,029 |
| Submitted Each Day | 15 |
| Substances Included | 538 |
| Active Triagers/Reviewers | 26 |

Visitors Stumble Upon Erowid

Over the past few months, we have noticed a change in how people arrive at Erowid.org. It came to our attention because, after climbing steadily at 4–9% per year for the past few years, the number of daily visitors to the site jumped 25% between 2010 and 2011, to nearly 100,000 unique visitors per day.

The new traffic appears to be coming from users of web applications designed for short-attention span browsing such as Reddit, Twitter, and especially, StumbleUpon. For almost a decade, our largest referrer by far has been Google. Around 40% of our 2010 visitors arrived at Erowid via a Google search. But recently, StumbleUpon.com has been delivering an equally large number.

People coming through these new referrers view different types of content on Erowid than those entering through search engines or browsing the site for a specific piece of information. StumbleUpon's system of "user voting" influences which Erowid pages folks are directed to.

User voting and links shared through social networking systems preference some obvious categories of content, such as humorous pages that entertain bored cubicle workers. However, other less predictably popular documents have also captured the interest of a large number of viewers. The "Most Accessed Documents" section of the Content Details chart (see facing page) shows some articles that have attracted attention. For example, a pair of cannabis cookie recipes has recently seen more than a thousand visitors per day, a sharp increase over a year ago. Similarly, an article on saying no to police searches received a lot of hits after a gaggle of tweets.

These new paths into Erowid's pages now account for more visitors than Google searches nearly every day. We hope that they expose a different group of people to our collection of resources about psychoactives.

Image Vaults

| | | | |
|------------------|--------|---------------------|--------|
| Published Images | 7,525 | New in Last 6 Mo. | 25 |
| Image Vaults | 295 | Submitted Each Day | 2.2 |
| Viewed Per Day | 31,491 | Awaiting Processing | 11,562 |

“Fish Scale” Cocaine, Anonymous Photographer



DMT Crystals, Anonymous Photographer

777 in September a Success!

Patterned after a similar drive in 2010, the goal of this year’s September fundraiser was to reach 777 donations of \$7 or more. The impetus for this annual drive is to raise much-needed funds to support Erowid Center while reminding people that Erowid.org serves information to nearly 2.5 million visitors per month, and yet, only about 130 people contribute financially each month.

Participation in the 777 drive started out strong, with 46 donations in the first 24 hours, and the number of daily donations well above average. However, near the middle of the month, contributions tapered off.

We were still 250 donations short of our goal on September 28th. With Earth certain we wouldn’t achieve the goal (Fire said he was wrong!), and the deadline rapidly approaching, we put out a call for help and received an outpouring of support. On the 29th, we received 223 individual donations, and we reached a goal-busting monthly total of 817 by midnight on the 30th!

This effort generated not only the largest number of donations we’ve ever received in a month (at a median of \$10), but also the highest dollar total, with over \$30,000 contributed. We are grateful to everyone who helped make 2011’s September drive a success.

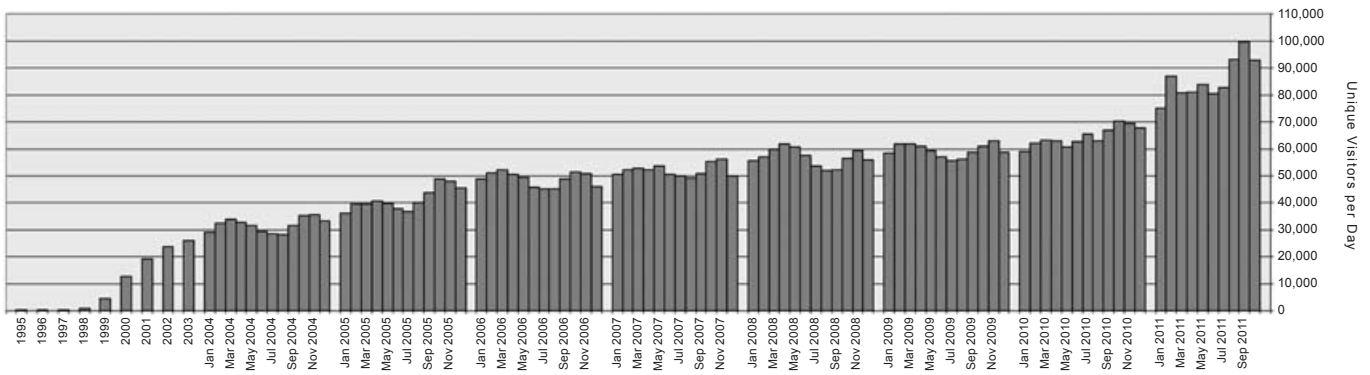
The Erowid Review

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Published Reviews | 274 |
| Published in Last 6 Mo. | 9 |
| Viewed Each Day | 1,546 |



Phalaris brachystachys, Photo by Adimeshort

Daily Erowid Visitors (1995–2011)



Ashawna (Shawn) Hailey Will Be Missed

While finalizing this issue of *Extracts*, we received news that Ashawna Hailey, a friend for the past 15 years and a major sponsor of Erowid Center, had died at the age of 62. The cause of death is not yet known.

Retired from an extremely successful career developing software used to design computer chips, Ashawna was active in promoting research and education related to psychoactives. She was on the board of directors of MAPS, a huge supporter of Team Shulgin, an ally of the Council on Spiritual Practices, a consultant to many projects in the field, and one of Erowid Center’s largest contributors since 2001.

Independent, flamboyant, inspired, complicated, quirky, curious, playful, energetic, cunning, insightful, sometimes obscure, but always generous, Ashawna was an engaging trickster and a unique explorer of the outer edges of what it means to be human. Her absence is not only sad on a personal level, it will also pose challenges to Erowid Center and other organizations that benefited from her advice and financial support.

Erowid Statistics

| DAILY | Visitors | 93,248 | File Hits | 4,246,886 |
|----------|----------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | Transfer | 29.05 GB | Page Hits | 405,673 |
| BY MONTH | | Avg Daily File Hits | Avg Daily Page Hits | Avg Daily Visitors |
| | Sep 2011 | 4,345,923 | 401,444 | 99,641 |
| | Aug 2011 | 4,154,849 | 393,674 | 93,065 |
| | Jul 2011 | 3,809,274 | 389,266 | 82,862 |
| | Jun 2011 | 3,709,684 | 373,236 | 80,559 |
| | May 2011 | 3,841,730 | 376,481 | 81,155 |
| BY YEAR | 2010 | 3,682,793 | 384,788 | 59,483 |
| | 2008 | 3,812,410 | 418,918 | 57,012 |
| | 2006 | 3,025,185 | 409,796 | 48,755 |
| | 2004 | 1,799,694 | 405,528 | 31,241 |
| | 2002 | 1,206,855 | 283,541 | 23,042 |
| | 2000 | 462,000 | 126,000 | 12,000 |
| | 1998 | 31,200 | 8,500 | 1,000 |

Membership

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Current Members | 1,391 |
| Recently Expired Members (0–6 mo.) | 487 |
| Older Expired Members (>6 mo.) | 5589 |
| Members in the United States | 962 (69%) |
| Members in Other Countries | 429 (31%) |
| Countries with Members | 41 |
| Top Contributor Countries | |
| USA (992); Australia (80); Canada (78); UK (77); Germany (27); Netherlands (27); Norway (13); France (13); Finland (12); Switzerland (11); Belgium (10); New Zealand (10); Sweden (9); Austria (6); Brazil (6); Israel (5); Spain (5); Italy (5); South Africa (4) | |

EcstasyData Statistics

| 2011 | Daily Visitors | 3,434 | Daily Page Hits | 11,731 |
|---------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | Results Posted | 207 | Daily File Hits | 423,355 |
| BY YEAR | Results Posted In | | Testing Results (1996–2011) | |
| | 2010 | 183 | Total Results Posted | 2,201 |
| | 2009 | 161 | MDMA Only | (31%) 693 |
| | 2008 | 78 | MDMA + Something | (21%) 451 |
| | 2004–2007 | 349 | No MDMA | (48%) 1057 |
| | 2000–2003 | 1114 | – Nothing | 109 |
| | 1996–1999 | 102 | – Unidentified | 98 |



VERBATIM

“All progress is experimental.”

— John Jay Chapman (1862–1933)

“What we should be doing instead of fighting experimentation is making sure experimentation doesn’t have serious consequences.”

— Malcolm Gladwell (b. 1963)

“When you’re experimenting you have to try so many things before you choose what you want, and you may go days getting nothing but exhaustion.”

— Fred Astaire (1899–1987)

“Isn’t it the moment of most profound doubt that gives birth to new certainties? Perhaps hopelessness is the very soil that nourishes human hope; perhaps one could never find sense in life without first experiencing its absurdity.”

— Václav Havel (b. 1936)

“There are very few certainties that touch us all in this mortal experience, but one of the absolutes is that we will experience hardship and stress at some point.”

— James C. Dobson (b. 1936)

“In times of great stress or adversity, it’s always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive.”

— Lee Iacocca (b. 1924)

“Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment.”

— Rita Mae Brown (b. 1944)

“Everybody’s a mad scientist, and life is their lab. We’re all trying to experiment to find a way to live, to solve problems, to fend off madness and chaos.”

— David Cronenberg (b. 1943)

“Knowledge is an unending adventure at the edge of uncertainty.”

— Jacob Bronowski (1908–1974)

“In these matters the only certainty is that there is nothing certain.”

— Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE)

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

— Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)

**Denk aler gij
doende zijt en
doende denk
dan nog**

**[Think before acting
and while acting
still think]**

— Dutch Proverb

“Don’t be afraid to go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is.”

— H. Jackson Brown Jr. (b. 1940)

“Doubt is an incentive to truth, and patient inquiry leadeth the way.”

— Hosea Ballou (1771–1852)

“Just as there is no loss of basic energy in the universe, so no thought or action is without its effects, present or ultimate, seen or unseen, felt or unfelt. Reality is consequence.”

— Norman Cousins (1915–1990)

“My life is my message.”

— Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)

“Reality is a puzzle revealing itself one portion at a time, always where the deepest shroud falls. Wanting to piece the clues together, you are only losing yourself in the maze.”

— Mariana Fulger (b. 1960)

“The mystery of life isn’t a problem to solve, but a reality to experience.”

— Frank Herbert (1920–1986)

“Generally speaking, men are influenced by books which clarify their own thought, which express their own notions well, or which suggest to them ideas which their minds are already predisposed to accept.”

— Carl L. Becker (1873–1945)

“It’s not a bad idea to get in the habit of writing down one’s thoughts. It saves one having to bother anyone else with them.”

— Isabel Colegate (b. 1931)

“The wine urges me on, the bewitching wine, which sets even a wise man to singing and to laughing gently and rouses him up to dance and brings forth words which were better unspoken.”

— Homer (c. 800 BCE)

“All clever ideas have already been thought; But one must try to think them again.”

— J. W. von Goethe (1749–1832)

“Man’s speech shall long outlast his deeds [...]”

— Pindar (c. 500 BCE)

“I am reminded of the professor who, in his declining hours, was asked by his devoted pupils for his final counsel. He replied, ‘Verify your quotations’.”

— Winston Churchill (1874–1965)