



**Oseh Shalom Lifelong Learning Committee
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The Institute for Science & Judaism

Present:

The Mystical Experience: Insights from Psilocybin Research

Tuesday, February 21st, 7:30 pm

Join us at Oseh Shalom for a fascinating presentation by

Roland Griffiths, Ph.D.

Professor, Depts. of Psychiatry and Neuroscience, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Mystical-type experiences are profound events characterized by a sense of the interconnectedness of all people and things, often accompanied by a sense of sacredness, feelings of joy and peace, and of encountering ultimate reality. Although such experiences have been described by mystics and religious figures throughout the ages, there are few meaningful prospective experimental studies. Recent studies at Johns Hopkins showed that, under carefully controlled conditions, psilocybin can elicit profound personally and spiritually meaningful mystical-type experiences in the majority of healthy participants. Analysis showed that mystical-type experiences can cause sustained positive changes in behavior, attitudes, and personality. One ongoing study is exploring whether psilocybin-induced mystical-type experiences facilitate engagement in and enhance the positive persisting effects of meditation and other spiritual practices. Another exciting direction for research is the exploration of possible therapeutic benefits of incorporating such psilocybin-induced experiences in the context of treatment for challenging psychological and behavioral conditions. Other studies are investigating the use of psilocybin in treating anxiety and depression among cancer patients, and psilocybin-facilitated cigarette smoking cessation using a cognitive-behavioral approach. Further research with psilocybin can be expected to provide unique insights into the biology and psychology of mystical experience, and may hold promise as a paradigm-shifting treatment approach.

Dr. Griffiths' main research focus has been on the behavioral and subjective effects of mood-altering drugs, including studies of psilocybin-occasioned mystical-type experience in healthy volunteers and cancer patients, and a pilot study of psilocybin-facilitated smoking cessation. He has been a consultant to the National Institutes of Health, and to numerous pharmaceutical companies in the development of new psychotropic drugs. Dr. Griffiths is also currently a member of the Expert Advisory Panel on Drug Dependence for the World Health Organization.

The **Institute for Science and Judaism** seeks to foster dynamic dialogue between Science and Judaism. It sponsors lectures and workshops featuring distinguished scientists and religious scholars that address philosophical, ethical, spiritual and practical issues at the intersection of Science and Religion."

For more information, contact shburger@comcast.net or

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