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## George Smith Interviewed by Kate Farrington and María Patricia Tinajero

29 October 2023, Portland, Maine

This conversation, “From Wonder to Wisdom: the Artist-Philosopher and New Philosophy,” features Dr. George Smith, founder of the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts (IDSVA), and two of its alumnae, Dr. Kate Farrington and Dr. María Patricia Tinajero. Dr. Smith has played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of graduate education in North America. Kate and María Patricia have worked together on many creative and philosophical endeavors since meeting at IDSVA in 2011. For over a decade, PACT has opened its doors to the IDSVA community, providing a platform for them to share evolving ideas. This collaboration has welcomed practicing artists actively shaping a philosophical praxis that transcends traditional boundaries, bridging art, philosophy, and more. PACT is a hospitable space for IDSVA artist-philosophers, a dynamic arena for testing and refining new ideas.

In his book, *The Artist-Philosopher and New Philosophy*, Dr. Smith calls for a New Philosophy, conceptualized by the artist-philosopher who “makes” or “poeticizes.” In describing “New Philosophy,” Smith states, “I’m not referring to the new idea at all. I’m referring to the most primordial of human realities, New Philosophy, the advent of philosophical thinking as poetic thinking and not a thinking in the logic of the kind that we ascribe to Western metaphysics and presume that that’s the only philosophical thinking there can be.”

To this end, Smith proposes the establishment of schools and social networks that serve as education programs for the training and development of artist-philosophers, as well as global digital networks designed toward an “ever-becoming community.”



Fig.1 María Patricia Tinajero, *Another Fallen Angel of Death*. Mixed media drawing on paper. Dimensions 9 x 12 inches. 2023. Courtesy of the author.

## From Wonder to Wisdom: The Artist-Philosopher and New Wisdom

**KF:** IDSVA's vision is to change the way human beings think, to change the way we see the world and the way we see one another. One of the distinct features of the IDSVA curriculum is the education of the artist-philosopher. The unique perspectives of these trans-disciplinary studies recall Mary Shelley's fearless courage to stake out new grounds. In the Seattle 2023 PACT Conference "Home and Homelessness," six IDSVA members presented papers ranging from elemental fire, becoming soil, ocean thinking, geological time-space, intimacy & ecology, and women's rights. Each spun the conference topic in six distinct ways, evidencing the presentation of a new school of thought in our contemporary thinking landscape. In your view, how do you see IDSVA acting in the world over the last 10 years and into the future?

**GS:** Thank you for that introduction. I would begin by saying a word about the title of this conversation and how it pertains to the question you just asked me. The title is "From Wonder to Wisdom," and I love it, but like any card-carrying thinker, I will bend it to my perspective, if I may, or to the perspective that I think is the perspective of the artist-philosopher. And I say that because when Aristotle sets out to introduce his ideas on philosophical thinking in *Metaphysics*, he begins by saying "man is curious." And I use that gender deliberately. Man is curious. Man wants to know; man is full of wonder, and he's reiterating what Plato has already said to some degree. And he leaves us to think that maybe he, Aristotle, and Plato are wondrous.

Let me elaborate. Aristotle and Plato believe in wonder, but what they do is set out to take wonder and turn it into scientific knowledge. To take not-knowing and turn it into knowing. So, they are robbing the philosopher of the predicate of wonderment and diminishing its value by replacing it with something useful, factual, and scientifically verifiable. So, the debatable word here is not wonder. It is wisdom. What is wisdom? The wisdom of Western metaphysics has brought us to the brink of extinction precisely, and insofar as the mode of thought that I call scientific technological thinking. Thinking that led to the unrelenting extraction of resources that, as human beings, we cannot stop, even in the face of extinction. Wisdom is the love of a certain kind of thinking that precedes Western metaphysics, and that is the thinking of wonderment to what we might call scientific poetic thinking.

**MPT:** Are you proposing a blending of scientific technological thinking with wonderment?

**GS:** Yes, it combines scientific logical rationale and reason with poetic consciousness or what Martin Heidegger calls poetic thinking, a term he derives from the great artist-philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin.<sup>1</sup> So, in my view, the question is how IDSVA managed to move across our curriculum and, over time, closer to this notion of poetic thinking and away from the pure thinking of scientific technological consciousness. Western metaphysics is predicated on pure logic, pure thinking, and the replacement of wonderment. What Kant calls certainty, which is the opposite of wonderment. Our curriculum has moved from a strict critique of Western

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, Translated with an Introduction by Keith Hoeller. Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2000. See also Martin Heidegger, *The Beginning of Western Philosophy: Interpretation of Anaximander and Parmenides*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015.

metaphysics to include many other voices forgotten and replaced by Western metaphysics. Those are the voices of the artist-philosopher. Voices that precede the thinking of Western metaphysics, certainly, we can say.

For example, Parmenides and Heraclitus, two influential figures in early Greek philosophy, engaged in a profound dialogue and intertextual exchange with East Asian and Asian thought.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to the common Western characterization that tends to downplay the significance of mythology in early Greek thinking, these thinkers introduced a blended approach. Their contributions reflect a nuanced synthesis beyond merely diminishing mythology's importance. It was not so much a diminution of the importance of myth as it was an elevation of the importance of reason. It was not like reason replaced myth in the transition from Plato to Aristotle. And when we think about those early Greek thinkers, we think about their relationship with Taoism, shamanism, and Buddhism. All these other modes of consciousness, such as pre-Columbian Ecuadorean shamanism, existed back then, and those modes of thought were probably not that much different than what we see in early Greek thinking.

**KF:** Are you suggesting that those voices have found resonance in contemporary consciousness through the dialogue of the IDSVA's curriculum?

**GS:** Yes, we have begun to ask, how can we think?, or better yet, how can we listen to the thinking of other consciousnesses? Departing from the advent of Western metaphysics in ancient Athens, we think and listen to the pre-Columbian Ecuadorean shaman and the ancient wisemen of Iran. We have done a good job with that. We have turned that volume down to listen. This lower volume is also found in Hölderlin and certainly in Nietzsche and Heidegger. But also, in Virginia Woolf and feminist postmodern artists, and thinkers Barbara Krueger and Cindy Sherman. They are all bringing us back to that pre-Western dominant moment of consciousness. These artists-philosophers begin to open up to the "other." This new mode of thought allows us to step back from Western metaphysics as the sole way of thinking and enter this zone where Western metaphysics is interpreted by the artist-philosopher, not rejected or thrown away but translated and accompanied by these other modes of thought.

**MPT:** Can you give us more concrete examples of this new mode of thought?

**GS:** As an illustrative example and speaking in broad terms without delving into specific instances, we observe these diverse voices becoming integral to the discourse emerging from our curriculum. This inclusivity is evident not only in seminars and independent studies but is particularly pronounced in our topological studies program. Here, the discourse extends beyond a Eurocentric perspective, traditionally employed to critique Western metaphysics rooted in Eurocentric modes of consciousness throughout history. Instead, it transforms into a dynamic dialogue, engaging with regions such as North Africa, Mexico, and others on the horizon. This expanded conversation not only enlivens our present, but also holds the potential to shape a future not characterized by a rejection of Western metaphysics. Rather, it underscores the critical importance of Western metaphysics to our legacy, including technological advancements. It

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<sup>2</sup> Joe McCoy, ed. *Early Greek Philosophy: The Presocratics and the Emergence of Reason*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2013.

prompts us to consider how technology, often perceived as a potential source of enslavement, can be reimagined to empower and emancipate us.

It's crucial to clarify that the “new philosophy concept” doesn't imply a recent intellectual movement or a contemporary departure from established doctrines. Instead, “new philosophy” alludes to a timeless philosophy that predates our current era. It harkens back to the intellectual landscapes of pre-Columbian Ecuador and the ancient kingdoms in the Far East. These historical contexts witnessed the emergence of a profound shift in human consciousness, a found expression in poetic and pragmatic language, that is, the advent of what I term 'new philosophy.' It's not a novel idea but a return to the most primal human realities—the inception of philosophical thinking rooted in the poetic, distinct from the logical and technological framework attributed to Western metaphysics. 'New philosophy' thus encapsulates a timeless and foundational aspect of human intellectual history, challenging the transhistorical assumption that philosophical thinking is confined solely to the logic of Western metaphysics.

I want to emphasize, reserving this point for the conclusion of this question, that the evolution of the curriculum is one aspect of the New Philosophy, and, as such, it is not solely my endeavor. It has been a collaborative collective effort. IDSVA's commitment to a collaborative approach, devoid of a top-down directive, distinguishes it.

**MPT:** Your answer brings up a couple of important points: the importance of community and the ethos of care, on the one hand; and, on the other, the strength of collaboration. How do collaboration and community reflect on your teaching, research, and writing projects? In your book *The Artist-Philosopher and New Philosophy* (2018),<sup>3</sup> you assert that the concept of the artist-philosopher, or *Künstler-Philosoph*, as described by Friedrich Nietzsche, underscores a unique collaborative relationship between art and philosophy. Nietzsche posited that this higher concept of art is essentially a metaphysical activity. Your artist-philosopher seems to push beyond this metaphysical activity. Do you mean that the role of philosophy becomes a praxis in the community? Could you assess how the artist-philosopher “making” or “poeticizing” is nurturing the growth of these ever-evolving artistic and philosophical communities?

**GS:** This aspect is particularly crucial for our ongoing project. I also delve into this point in *The Artist-Philosopher and Poetic Hermeneutics* (2021).<sup>4</sup> The book explores how Nietzsche's ideas trace their origins to the East, specifically through the Dionysian figure. However, Nietzsche undergoes a transformation under the influence of Socratic thought in the *Symposium*. The Eastern figure, representing Dionysian influences, is effectively erased from Greek history within the text, highlighting his outsider status. This erasure signals the emergence of the concept of otherness. Previously, “barbarian” in ancient Greek simply denoted someone speaking a language other than Greek. However, within the *Symposium*, there is a notable shift where barbarianism takes on a different connotation—an element of the formulation of the other, the outsider, someone perceived as dangerous and needing to be kept at a distance. Dionysian is essentially exiled in the *Symposium*, mirroring Plato's argument in *The Republic* that poets

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<sup>3</sup> George Smith, *The Artist-Philosopher and New Philosophy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> George Smith, *Artist-Philosopher and Poetic Hermeneutics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021.

should be exiled as they are deemed dangerous. This portrayal underscores the growing perception of certain individuals or ideas as potentially threatening and needing exclusion.

**KF:** That is wonderful. It makes me think of Nietzsche bringing the Dionysian and recognizing what he left out, a missing opportunity we are recovering at IDSVA. We are working on the art of “becoming community.” Are you suggesting Dionysius is a poet? What kind of a poet?

**GS:** He is a shaman. He walks around on the face of the earth. He's a God being. To me, young Hölderlin begins to recuperate Dionysius from the burial ground he has been hidden in for centuries.

**KF:** This unburial you suggest makes me think about Heidegger's unconcealment as a connecting concept for the IDSVA curriculum.

**GS:** Certainly, that's why Heidegger holds such admiration for Hölderlin. Hölderlin's contribution lies in unveiling the grave of Dionysius and remarkably reviving the Eastern element of consciousness. This resurrection is a profound revelation. However, it's essential to avoid fixating solely on German thought. The aim is to emphasize that figures like Pythagoras drew heavily from the East, intertwining early Greek thinking with Eastern philosophies. Though not explicitly acknowledging these Eastern influences in his philosophy, even Plato dialogues with Pythagoras, who was known for such connections.

The underlying perspective is moving beyond the East and West dichotomy. This resonates with your point—it's not about adhering to binary terms. The objective is to transcend these conventional distinctions and recognize the intricate interplay and mutual influence between Eastern and Western philosophies throughout history. Early Greeks and pre-Colombian shamans didn't perceive the world through the lens of East or West; instead, their worldview was all-encompassing. Their thinking extended beyond geographical distinctions, embracing a broader perspective—world consciousness. In contrast, the prevailing global mindset today is predominantly shaped by Western metaphysics. This worldview has permeated every corner of the globe, leaving an indelible mark, evident even in phenomena like climate change. The consequences of Western metaphysics, transitioning from a mode of consciousness centered on production to one of extraction, are starkly evident. While some may seek proof of this assertion, demonstrating the link is a relatively straightforward task, though it won't be the focus of our discussion today.

**MPT:** In preparing for this conversation, we reflected on philosophy's profound impact on shaping human thought and perception and, thus, the importance of cultivating the artist-philosopher figure, an approach that mirrors Mary Shelley's bold exploration of new thinking-writing territories. Our opening question mentioned our involvement in the Seattle 2023 PACT Conference. During this event, Jessica Rodríguez-Colón, Keren Moscovitch, Angelalynn

Dunlop,<sup>5</sup> Kate Farrington,<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Reed, and I<sup>7</sup> presented papers on exploring the conference theme of “home and homelessness.” It was remarkable how each paper challenged conventional thinking and nurtured innovative perspectives, especially in the context of our planet’s current ecological crisis, unburying the voices of fire, becoming soil, ocean thinking, geological time, intimacy, ecology, and women’s rights, to provide a unique spin on the central theme and showcasing collectively a new school of thought.

**KF:** Indeed, reflecting on Shelley’s monster as a metaphor, I align it with the essence of IDSVA’s new-sprung spirit, introducing a novel proposition to infuse philosophy into a philosophical praxis. The IDSVA experience unfolds as a diverse collective of individuals exploring groundbreaking concepts, each proposing innovative and unprecedented grounds of thought. For instance, Patricia’s “Becoming Soil” exploration is a transformative journey through the rich intersection of ecological art, decolonial ecofeminism, and eco-materialism. In her exploration, Patricia unveils soil as more than a canvas but a living, breathing entity that shapes our past, present, and future. Her narrative goes beyond sustainability, offering a creative pedagogy that reimagines our connection with the more-than-human world.

In this context, the analogy of a Frankenstein monster arises, symbolizing the unleashing of ideas into a world that may or may not have a place for them yet. The question then emerges: how do these diverse ambitions craft philosophy on grounds shaped by the worldliness of worlds we are making and shaping by very different creative endeavors? This inquiry delves into the interconnectedness of these distinct fledgling ideas, each a unique manifestation, and contemplates how they collectively contribute to a new and transformative school of thought. How does that diversity unleash itself onto the world as a proposition for philosophical praxis?

**GS:** Certainly, the distinctiveness of IDSVA lies in its approach. In contrast to disciplines like physics, where individuals typically enter a Ph.D. program with a background in the field, IDSVA seeks to create a unique space. Here, the objective is to provide a platform where individuals from diverse backgrounds can converge and share their specific formulations of questions. This inclusive model fosters a rich tapestry of perspectives, contributing to dynamic intellectual environments where varied questions and viewpoints can coexist and intersect. In the IDSVA dissertation process, each candidate can freely explore and answer a question. For instance, if someone wishes to investigate the relationship between Taoist calligraphy from the sixth century BC and the modern artist’s philosophical consciousness in the works of Jackson Pollock, IDSVA will ensure they have the appropriate guidance for such a unique inquiry.

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<sup>5</sup> Panel: *Art and Home*. Jessica Rodríguez-Colón, “Aesthetic of Abortion: Our Uterus, not Your Home.” Keren Moscovitch, “Homeless Ecology: Intimate Revolt in Thirza Cuthand’s Reclamation.” Angelalynn Dunlop, “The Unhoming of Earth, Ontology and Art: A Geontoesthetic Interpretation of Raphael’s School of Athens.” Moderator: Chris Lauer.

<sup>6</sup> Panel: *Housed by Language*. Kate Farrington, “Searching for Home in the Song of the Whale.” Moderator: Eric R. Severson.

<sup>7</sup> Panel: *At Home with Fire, Stone, and Soil*. Gabriel Reed, “A World without Fire.” María Patricia Tinajero, “The Aesthetic of Soil Reclamation: Returning Home on New Values.” Moderator Jason M. Wirth.

Even though each dissertation may be vastly different, spanning diverse departments in a traditional university, IDSVA embraces this diversity. IDSVA candidates often embark on inquiries that may not fit neatly into conventional departmental categories. The result is a multitude of doctoral candidates who, upon completing their studies, carry a transformative experience into the world. This experience goes beyond intellectual training; it is an openness to a new mode of thought that wasn't present when they initially joined IDSVA.

**MPT:** How does IDSVA catalyze a transformative journey, leading candidates to depart with a changed perspective that challenges the presuppositions guiding their approach to problem-solving, especially considering that many may not initially recognize they were thinking within the framework of Western metaphysics—a dominant mode of thought in philosophy and beyond?

**GS:** Upon arrival, we all bring an unspoken presupposed mode of perception, largely shaped by the Western perspective. For approximately five years or a similar timeframe, this perspective undergoes a profound transformation at IDSVA. While we don't completely abandon Western metaphysics, reason, or logic, our thinking evolves, integrating with a new mode of consciousness fostered within the IDSVA space.

IDSVA becomes a departure point for individuals to cultivate a praxis that guides the purpose of their lives. Contrary to conventional measures of success or fame, the praxis emphasizes kindness, care, consideration, listening, and dialogical encounters. This way of thinking blends reason and poetic consciousness, which extends beyond the individual, influencing their interactions with family, community, friends, and colleagues. The unfolding dialogical relationship contributes to a striking way of being. IDSVA emerges as a transformative space in this light, and its graduates become torchbearers, shaping an envisioned future that has yet to be fully realized.

**MPT:** In the realm of philosophy, avoiding a tautological circle and embracing a hermeneutical one, as Heidegger suggests, allows for a nuanced exploration—time for interpretation. Returning to Aristotle's wonder. He notes that initially, individuals wonder about what is close to them, then progress to larger and more complex phenomena. This journey from the intimate to the expansive, as described in *Metaphysics*, transforms wonder into puzzlement. In the context of mounting environmental concerns, your reflection touches on the foundational role of scientific thinking within Western metaphysics. However, you propose that scientific thinking might need to include the crucial thread that connects the particular and the universal, and this connection has been lost. To address this, you advocate for the artist-philosopher. The central query is whether wonder, in its diverse stages, can contribute to ecological thinking, particularly addressing the perceived gap between the small and the large within scientific thought. Additionally, how does wonder play a role in addressing present-day challenges, such as climate change and fossil fuel dependence, especially considering your examination of addiction in your book? Can wonder serve as a crucial element in nurturing ecological consciousness, and if so, how might this newfound awareness facilitate our path toward a healthier planet?

**GS:** Yes. And so beautifully articulated. You leave me intimidated. I don't feel equipped to answer your question but let me answer your question in a general way if I can. Let me try to, at



least, and what you're touching on is the book I'm working on now: *The Artist's Philosopher in the Age of Addiction, Heidegger's Ecology* (forthcoming). The difference between wonder and science is the difference, in my view, between the survival of the biosphere not just humanity. We are just one entity among many that are now at risk. So, the difference between wonder and certainty, poetic thinking, and scientific technological thinking is very simple. Wonderment is grounded in not knowing. And when we hear someone say, I do not know, not like Socrates does, because that's rhetorical. But when we say no, I don't know. In wonderment, we're speaking from a place of poetic thinking, a place of becoming as opposed to a place of absolute certainty. Certainty buries humility and grace. And in exchange for humility and grace, we give birth to arrogance. In our self-certainty arrogance, we no longer know the art of listening. We only know the art of proclamation.

In that loss, we find a fundamental aspect of human existence overshadowed by Western metaphysics, which often champions the virtues of certainty. This overlooked essence is humility, a quality synonymous with grace. When we choose certainty over humility and grace, we unwittingly embrace arrogance as a defining characteristic. This shift in self-certainty has led us away from the art of listening, relegating us to mere proclamation. In Western metaphysics, the emphasis has often been on providing concrete solutions—step-by-step guides to address issues, construct cities, assemble armies, or build complex structures like nuclear plants. The confidence in knowing the answers and prescribing solutions leaves little room for wonderment. In its true essence, wonderment is not merely about problem-solving; it transcends awareness of problems altogether. The solution to our problem doesn't lie in providing specific steps or instructions. Instead, it involves acknowledging the broader perspective that goes beyond individual knowledge. True wonderment and humility come from recognizing that human existence encompasses more than I comprehend. It's not just about solving problems or being aware of them; it's about embracing the vast unknowns that exist beyond our human understanding.

**KF:** In contrast to scientific technological thinking's aim of ensuring comprehensive knowledge and eliminating unknowns in human existence, we have reached a point of self-certainty and efficient self-consciousness. How has this state of continuous achievement, exemplified by technological advancements like computers and artificial intelligence, contributed to the escalating cycle where increased productivity leads to greater demands on the Earth? Beyond the extraction of natural resources, it has a detrimental effect on the relationships between human and nonhuman.

**GS:** In our continuous cycle of turning things into production, our dependence on consumption grows, a pattern extending beyond capitalism. Successful production within scientific thinking becomes a source of pleasure, reinforcing the desire for more. Over time, adhering to this model, we find it challenging to break free from the perpetual pursuit of pleasure through achievement. My book draws a parallel with an individual, like an alcoholic, discovering health issues due to their habits. The prescription is clear: stop the detrimental behavior.

In a simplified scenario, an individual might dismiss a doctor's diagnosis, thinking it's for financial gain. However, the physician genuinely warns that one more drink could lead to catastrophic liver failure, and a transplant wouldn't be an option due to ethical considerations.

Similarly, in our relationship with the biosphere, many are aware that our behaviors push us toward the brink of extinction. Yet, just like the alcoholic unable to change their behavior, we find ourselves stuck in patterns resistant to change. Addiction, in this context, is viewed as a condition rather than a moral dilemma – a medical, physiological, and psychological issue. Those perpetuating harm to the earth with toxic waste aren't morally evil but are addicted to a mode of thought preventing behavior change.

To change behavior, the alcoholic or drug addict must change the way they think, according to Jung and current clinical science on addictions. It's not just about stopping; it's about starting to do something else. That traces back to William James, emphasizing that one missing element in medical treatment for addiction is the spiritual component necessary for a change of consciousness. Bill W., the founder of AA, was told by Jung about the need for a spiritual element in recovery.<sup>8</sup> Western metaphysics lacks the sacred, which is intrinsic to poetic expression. The term "poetic" denotes a connection to the sacred, harking back to the shamanistic era preceding Western metaphysics when sacredness played a vital role in human thought.

While scientists might dismiss this as unprovable, ineffective, or unnecessary, the promise for the future lies in the thinking of the artist-philosopher. A true poet, inherent in the term, engages with the sacred, not limited to the formalism celebrated by Plato but reaching beyond organized religious traditions. The sacred in this context resides in the poetic word, transcending the conflicts of organized religions.

Heidegger makes it very clear that human beings are addictive. We hanker after things. We love repetition, and we become so repetitious that the plasticity of our brain changes, demanding more and more of that same pleasure, that same reinforcement of pleasure. So, we're geared that way. And, what prevents us from falling trap of what Heidegger calls "fallenness." If I may use that Heideggerian term, essential to human consciousness is to remain within the poetic consciousness as it is ordinarily. The essence of being is to be poetic. But unfortunately, now, the essence of being is merely calculative.

**MPT:** I have several interconnected questions and may not have ample time for comprehensive answers. Can the historical utilization of substances in ancient shamanistic practices, including mushrooms and sacred plants, offer insights into relationships that transcend dependency? Alternatively, has the Western paradigm co-opted these substances, originally reserved for ceremonial rituals, perpetuating a continuous state of senseless euphoria? Additionally, do practices rooted in sacred traditions, such as the use of wine in Judaic and Christian ceremonies, which transitioned from sacred to potentially commonplace, share similarities with ancient rituals? Finally, how might understanding these historical practices contribute to shaping our contemporary ecological consciousness?

**GS:** In moderation. However, by the Roman period, the concept of sacred ritual had certainly extended to spectacle, reaching extremes.

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Kirkland, "The Influence of William James on the Spirituality of Alcoholics Anonymous," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 62: 3 (2018).

**KF:** Can the sacred be considered “that which cannot be defiled?”

**GS:** I'm curious about your perspective on defining the sacred as that which cannot be defiled. This notion brings us back to the concept of wonder. If wonder, the sacred, and the poetic are intertwined and represent a cluster of words, does it suggest that humans were once content with not knowing, embracing the mystery inherent in the sacred and the wondrous? How might this understanding influence our approach to the world and our ecological consciousness today?

**MPT:** Did you say defined or defiled?

**KF:** I said defiled. The sacred is that which cannot be defiled.

**GS:** Yes. Well, to defile the sacred is to define it in scientific terms. And, of course, to defile the sacred involves reifying the ritual with mushroom or wine, which is to use it for a purpose other than that sacred ritualist purpose. This is more than a statement; it is an open question.

**MPT:** We can wrap up our conversation on this note, leaving a question on the table. How does this tension between defining the sacred and preserving its ritualistic essence influence our contemporary relationship with substances, rituals, and ecological consciousness?

**GS:** Yes, of course. You've run me out ...



**Fig.2 Digital Image. Courtesy of Kate Farrington. 2023 (Left Kate Farrington, center George Smith, right María Patricia Tinajero)**