

What Did These Elders Learn, and What Can We Learn from Them?

Roger Walsh and Charles S. Grob

This book contains the reflections of people who probably saw a wider array of powerful and profound human experiences than any other group in history. In the thousands of psychedelic sessions they supervised, the whole gamut of human experience unfolded before their eyes. Agony and ecstasy, pathology and health, the sensual and sublime, the satanic and the transcendent—all this and more exploded in their subjects with rare intensity and power.

What did these pioneering researchers learn? What did their explorations reveal about human nature and the human condition, about its potentials and pitfalls, depths and heights, good and evil? What did they learn of the mind and its many layers, of defenses and denial, of pleasure and pain, suffering and ecstasy? What did they conclude about the possibilities of therapy and transformation, help and healing, health and pathology, about the merits of Freud and Jung, Skinner and Sartre? And what did they decide about religion and spirituality, soul and spirit, Buddha nature and Christ consciousness?

These are among the most profound and important questions that we can ask. What answers do these researchers offer us? And how were these witnesses and midwives of transformation transformed themselves?

They describe five broad arenas of insight and transformation. The first was their understanding of the nature of psychedelics and how to use them, the second their understanding of the workings of the mind. The third concerned psychological transformation and therapy, and the fourth their relationship to religion and spirituality. A final effect was the impact psychedelics exerted on their professions.

THE NATURE OF PSYCHEDELICS

The exact nature of psychedelics—what they do, and how they do it—has been a topic for debates and battles almost since their discovery. The names given to these drugs reflect both these battles and the evolution of researchers' understanding. Though originally marketed as "psychotomimetics" and labeled "hallucinogens," their remarkably variable effects soon led Stanislav Grof and others to recognize them as "nonspecific amplifiers" of mental processes that brought previously subliminal experiences to conscious awareness. Hence the name "psychedelic," meaning "mind manifesting." This amplification was particularly true of psychodynamically charged issues and conflicts, and this was one observation that led to the recognition of their therapeutic potential. More recently, they have been described by the term "entheogen," in recognition of their capacity to elicit spiritual experiences.

Initially, they were employed for treatment of major psychopathology. However, they soon also proved effective for other uses, such as for catalyzing psychological growth in normal individuals, for confronting existential threats such as terminal illness, and for spiritual opening.

Two distinct approaches emerged: low-dose "psycholytic" and high-dose "psychedelic" therapies. The psycholytic method fostered the emergence and exploration of psychodynamic issues and levels of the unconscious. As such, it served to facilitate work with personal issues. However, over multiple sessions, deeper layers of the unconscious might emerge and unveil transpersonal or even mystical experiences.

The psychedelic approach, on the other hand, tended to quickly catapult subjects through the psychodynamic levels and on to transpersonal, spiritual, and mystical experiences. Psychodynamic issues might emerge and remain at the forefront of awareness, particularly if they were severe, but they might also be bypassed and transcended in a powerful spiritual awakening. Researchers using the high-dose psychedelic approach concluded that therapeutic and growth benefits occurred in large part as a result of these transpersonal experiences. As such, they rediscovered Carl Jung's conclusion that "the approach to the numinous is the real therapy, and inasmuch as you attain the numinous experience you are released from the curse of pathology."¹

THE NATURE OF MIND

Researchers of psychedelics found that their understanding of the mind deepened and transformed. They felt compelled to recognize the importance of altered states of consciousness, the multilayered aspects of the unconscious, spiritual depths of the psyche, and a positive view of human nature. All of these researchers concluded that we have hugely underestimated the variety, power, and potential of altered states, as well as their profound transformative abilities. So closely did their conclusions mirror those of William James of a century earlier that it is worth repeating his famously eloquent statement on this topic, written after he had himself experienced the impact of nitrous oxide:

One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question,—for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. Yet they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give a map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality.²

James, widely regarded as America's greatest psychologist, exquisitely captured the conclusions of psychedelic researchers who followed him a century later.

A second compelling recognition was the multilayered nature of the mind and the vastness of the unconscious. Layer after layer was often peeled away, to quote Berry Eisner, "like one can do with an onion. You

can sit there and watch the Freudian or Jungian principles manifest themselves. Then you can go deeper and deeper and deeper, until finally the ego cracks completely and you transcend it . . ."

No one theory or school proved adequate for all these layers. Rather, psychedelic sessions unveiled experiences consistent with psychodynamic theories as diverse as those of Freud, Rank, and Jung, and often in that order. From this perspective, most schools of psychology and psychotherapy seemed incomplete, and Stanislav Grof summarized this dilemma as follows:

the major problem in Western psychotherapy seems to be that, for various reasons, individual researchers have focused their attention primarily on a certain level of consciousness and generalized their findings for the human psyche as a whole. For this reason, they are essentially incorrect, although they may give a useful and reasonably accurate description of the level they are describing, or one of its major aspects.³

SPIRITUALITY

But even the several varieties of psychodynamic experiences did not exhaust the layers and depths of the psyche. For after these personal layers, there frequently emerged transpersonal ones. Here experiences were consistent, not with the theories of Western clinicians, but rather with those of contemplative traditions. The personal layers of the psyche rested, it seemed, on still deeper transpersonal layers.

These transpersonal depths opened realms of mind comparable to those discovered by the world's great spiritual teachers and mystics. Descriptions of ecstasy, mystical union, pure consciousness, the void, or satori were suddenly transformed from esoteric mumbo jumbo into potent, life-changing experiences. The result was a new and deeper appreciation of the world's religious traditions. Some researchers and their subjects alike had such experiences, and many reoriented their lives accordingly.

For example, James Fadiman "discovered that [his] disinterest in spiritual things was as valid as a ten-year-old's disinterest in sex: it came out of a complete lack of awareness . . ." Likewise, when asked about long-term changes in his subjects, Myron Stolaroff concluded:

I think that the most distinguishing mark is accepting spirituality in their lives, a conviction that life has a spiritual basis. They fashioned their lives to live in harmony with that idea as much as they could, and because of this, they really stand apart from most folks.

This interest in spirituality could emerge even in people who had previously been intensely hostile to it, as Stanislav Grof observed:

It would appear that everybody who experiences these levels develops convincing insights into the utmost relevance of the spiritual dimension in the universal scheme of things. Even positivistically oriented scientists, hard-core materialists, sceptics and cynics, uncompromising atheists and antireligious crusaders such as Marxist philosophers and politicians, suddenly become interested in the spiritual quest after they confront these levels in themselves.⁴

All the researchers therefore ended up at least sympathetic to, and in several cases deeply committed to, a spiritual world-view. A striking feature of this world-view was its nondenominational, or perhaps transdenominational, perspective. Even those originally committed to a specific tradition—such as Huston Smith to Christianity or Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shaloni to Judaism—clearly honored the value of all authentic traditions. As such, their views were consistent with the *sophia communalis*, the common ground of understanding and wisdom at the contemplative core of each of the world's great religious traditions.

A POSITIVE VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

Not surprisingly, the researchers' views of human potentials and possibilities expanded greatly. All of them concluded that we have seriously underestimated human nature, creativity, and consciousness.

Part of this appreciation of human potentials entailed coming to a more positive view of human nature. Several researchers, such as Stanislav Grof and Gary Fisher, had been trained in psychoanalysis and had adopted its painful view of human nature as largely id driven, conflict ridden, defensive and destructive. However, this view did not long survive the

repeated recognition of layers of the psyche far deeper and more benign. It was not that they found Freudian descriptions necessarily incorrect. Rather, the aspect of the psyche that Freud described seemed to be only one level among many, and a relatively superficial level at that. Certainly, researchers saw all too clearly the inner sources of incalculable human savagery and suffering. However, they also concluded that these were produced largely due to alienation from our deeper, more benign nature, and that this deeper nature, when recognized, tended to reframe and heal the sources of pathology.

LIMITS OF PSYCHEDELICALLY DERIVED THEORIES

Researchers struggled to create psychological theories capable of encompassing the expanded vision of the mind and human nature suggested by psychedelic experiences. The most comprehensive of the psychedelically derived theories was that of Stanislav Grof. His synthesis encompassed multiple psychological schools, philosophical traditions, and contemplative disciplines of both East and West, and applied them to his extensive clinical observations.⁴ The result is a system that is remarkable for its scope and vision.

Of course, all psychologies have their limits, and psychedelically derived ones are no exception. Among other things, the method used for obtaining information sets inherent limits on the types of information acquired, and this is obviously true of information obtained by observations of psychedelic experiences.

The idea that our perspective sets unavoidable limits on knowledge is an ancient one, which was perhaps articulated most precisely by Chinese Hua-yen Buddhism. Every perspective, says Hua-yen, yields both the "revealed" and the "concealed." In contemporary philosophical language, each epistemological method reveals/unveils/enacts corresponding and congruent observations, while leaving others latent and invisible.

The method used by these psychedelic researchers was primarily phenomenological. Phenomenology has obvious merits for this work and yields crucial "revealed" observations. However, it cannot detect those that remain "concealed." This raises an obvious crucial question: What types of experiences—of all those that are potentially available for phenomenological inspection—do psychedelics reveal, and what do they conceal?

Social and cultural contexts are one type of important "concealeds" that are not available to phenomenology. Cultural contexts—including world-views, ethical systems, language, and socioeconomic factors—all provide background contexts that frame, color, and control the experiences which arise in an individual. Yet these background contexts cannot be detected by phenomenology alone.⁵

Likewise, phenomenology is ill equipped to detect gradual, long-term development. Consequently, it cannot identify adult psychological developmental stages such as those of cognition or morality.

So the phenomenology of psychedelic experiences has inherent limitations, as does any epistemology. Consequently, any psychological or philosophical theory derived primarily from them will also be limited and partial. This is not to belittle such theories, because the same principle applies to other theories. All epistemologies and their resultant knowledge and theories are partial. What is vital is simply to recognize this.

Having noted their limits, we can now honor their contributions. And psychedelically derived theories, especially those of Grof, contribute a great deal. For example, they provide a wealth of clinical information, novel insights into psychological, psychodynamic, and spiritual issues, new understandings of psychopathology and therapy, and an exceptionally encompassing map of the mind.

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND TRANSFORMATION

All those researchers who employed psychedelics clinically had their views of psychotherapy and transformation significantly altered. All of them concluded that in selected clients treated under appropriate conditions, beneficial change could occur more quickly and deeply than with conventional therapies, and in many cases, more quickly and deeply than had previously been assumed possible. Clinical literature on psychedelics contains multiple accounts of dramatic alleviations of major and even seemingly intractable disorders.

The list of disorders that seemed amenable is long. It includes chronic alcoholism and drug addiction, depression and assorted neuroses, personality and psychosomatic disorders, and the emotional and physical suffering in people approaching death. It even included some of the most extreme and intractable forms of pain and disability. For example, those

with post-traumatic stress and concentration camp syndrome sometimes benefited, as did some with severe childhood disorders, even apparently including autism and schizophrenia.

Radical changes were not limited to the psychologically disturbed. Many normal subjects also reported positive transformations. Each of the researchers experienced these themselves, and these benefits played a major part in their enthusiastic support and research of psychedelic therapy.

Of course, all these claims need to be accepted cautiously. Many studies were not rigorously designed or controlled and most were only case histories. Nevertheless, the number, variety, and extent of transformations that these researchers describe are dramatic to say the least. Given the all too well known limitations of conventional therapy, and the amount of suffering that might be alleviated, further research seems more than warranted.

The researchers also reached intriguing conclusions about therapeutic approaches and exactly what is beneficial in therapy. As in practically all therapies, a trusting relationship proved crucial—"the basic element of LSD therapy is trust," concluded Betty Eisner. However, dialogue between client and therapist, which most therapies view as central and supreme, appeared less important. Indeed, in high-dose sessions it sometimes seemed more distracting than beneficial.

Rather, what seemed most healing and actualizing was a deep embracing of whatever experiences arose. Crucial above all else was the capacity of awareness to metabolize, transform, and heal the experiences brought to it.

Psychedelic researchers therefore independently discovered a crucial principle of healing and growth which lies at the core of diverse therapies. For Jungians, it is the principle that: "Therapeutic progress depends upon awareness; in fact the attempt to become more conscious is the therapy."⁶ Fritz Perls, the founder of gestalt therapy summarized it as: "Awareness—by and of itself—can be curative,"⁷ while the psychosynthesis writer Piero Ferrucci went further to claim that: "Awareness not only liberates, it also integrates."⁸ For humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers, fully experiencing is crucial for transformation and for what he called a "moment of movement."⁹

This recognition is not confined to psychotherapies. It is also central to most major contemplative traditions, which urge students to give careful awareness to each moment and each mental movement. For example, Judaism urges "attend to this moment here and now,"¹⁰ and in Islamic

Sufism, "The best act of worship is watchfulness of the moments."¹¹ Likewise, Christian contemplatives are urged, "Above all, guard the intellect and be watchful,"¹² while Buddhists are told that, "The best instruction is always to watch the mind."¹³ In fact, the central contemplative practice of Buddhism is called "mindfulness meditation."

Clinicians employing psychedelics came to a similar appreciation of the importance and power of awareness. They also came to appreciate the value of several adjunctive therapies. Music, particularly classical music, became an inherent part of most psychedelic therapy, and artistic expression and representation of important experiences proved helpful as well.

Somatic approaches also found a place. The ancient yogic art of modulating breathing was found to soothe or intensify the therapeutic process. Movement could help express emerging energies, while physical therapies such as massage relaxed muscle spasm and chronic holding patterns, thereby releasing the psychodynamic conflicts they expressed.

Psychedelic therapists therefore rediscovered psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich's concept of "character armor" and the muscular tension which expresses and maintains it. They also rediscovered the therapeutic power of relaxing this muscle armor. Reich wrote that:

It never ceases to be surprising how the loosening of a muscular spasm not only releases the negative energy, but, over and above this, reproduces a memory of that situation in infancy in which the repression of the instinct occurred.¹⁴

Combined with prolonged hyperventilation, these adjunctive therapies proved so effective that they would become, in the hands of Stanislav and Christina Grof, a novel and extremely potent therapeutic approach: holotropic breathwork. This in turn led to the founding of a new clinical area: the study and treatment of transpersonal crises or spiritual emergencies.

In the course of their work, the Grofs were approached by people experiencing significant psychological or spiritual difficulties related to practices such as meditation, yoga, or shamanism. In many cases, these crises seemed similar to classic difficulties described in spiritual traditions for centuries, and also to some of the experiences that emerged in psychedelic or holotropic therapy.

Drawing from both the classic resources and their own experiences in working with such experiences the Grofs were able to create a systematic

description of, and approach for working with, these transpersonal crises. When treated skillfully, many of these apparent pathologies turned out to be valuable developmental crises that opened new areas and stages of growth. This has been recognized in contemplative traditions by terms such as "purification" or "unstressing," and in psychology by terms such as "crises of renewal," "positive disintegration," "creative illness," and "spiritual emergence."¹⁵

A further common conclusion concerned a fundamental capacity and drive of mind. The mind increasingly came to be seen as a self-organizing, self-optimizing system. The researchers concluded that, given supportive conditions, the mind tends to be self-healing, self-integrating, self-individuating, self-actualizing, self-transcending, and self-awakening.

These innate tendencies for the mind to flower, unfold, and develop its potentials had been recognized before in both East and West, psychology and philosophy. Long ago, Plato spoke of Eros and Tibetan Buddhism of the self-liberating nature of mind. More recent recognitions include neuroanatomist Kurt Goldstein's "actualization," Carl Rogers' "formative tendency," Carl Jung's "individuation urge," Abraham Maslow's "self-transcendence," Erik Erikson's "self-perfectibility," philosopher Ken Wilber's "eros," and Aldous Huxley's "*moksha* drive." These tendencies of mind had been repeatedly recognized throughout history, but they became unavoidably evident with the catalytic power of psychedelics. Stanislav Grof later coined the related term "holotropism" to describe the mind's tendency to move towards holotropic or transcendent experiences and thereby heal and integrate. One practical result of this recognition of holotropism was that these researchers came to emphasize a relatively non-interfering approach in therapeutic sessions, based on a deep trust in the psyche's self-healing capacities.

PROFESSIONAL IMPACT

In some areas the impact of psychedelics, both positive and negative, on Western society are well known. Art and music, culture and counter-culture, meditation and yoga, Eastern religions and spirituality, and movements for peace and civil rights, are but a few of the arenas they influenced.

Not so well-known is the extent to which some other disciplines were also affected. Indeed, many of the researchers in this book had a signifi-

cant impact on their own professions. Psychology, psychotherapy, anthropology, religious studies, shamanism, Judaism, and pharmacology were all affected.

For example, James Fadiman and Stanislav Grof played a major role in founding transpersonal psychology. Concerned that the psychology of the time was dominated and limited by psychoanalytic and behavioral approaches, which focused almost exclusively on pathology, they shared the philosopher Jacob Needleman's concern that "Freudianism institutionalized the underestimation of human possibility."¹¹ Having seen possibilities and potentials of mind beyond those acknowledged by prior approaches, they urged psychology to expand to recognize and research these potentials.

Transpersonal psychology was not designed to dismiss or replace earlier schools. Rather, it aimed to complement them and set them in a larger context. This context was open to topics such as states of consciousness, exceptional health, well-being, and maturity, as well as to the practices that cultivate them, and to the contributions of Eastern psychologies and disciplines such as meditation and yoga. These topics were famously summarized by another cofounder, Abraham Maslow, as "the farther reaches of human nature."¹⁷ Maslow described the aims of this new psychology with the words:

This point of view in no way denies the usual Freudian picture, but it does add to it and supplement it. To oversimplify the matter somewhat, it is as if Freud supplied to us the sick half of the psychology, and we must now fill it out with the healthy half. Perhaps this health psychology will give us more possibility of controlling and improving our lives and for making ourselves better people.¹⁹

Maslow's shift to a transpersonal orientation was itself in part the result of his own psychedelic experience.

The term "transpersonal psychology" was chosen to reflect the therapeutic and actualizing power of transpersonal experiences—experiences in which the sense of self expands beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of psyche, humankind, life, and cosmos.¹⁹ Such experiences have been recognized and valued in most cultures throughout history—for example, as unitive experience, mystical experience, yogic *samadhi*, or union with the Tao. Western psychologists

periodically rediscover unitive experiences and their benefits, as exemplified by William James' and William Bucke's "cosmic consciousness," psychotherapist Erich Fromm's "at-onement," and Abraham Maslow's "peak experience."²⁰ "It is chiefly our ignorance of the psyche if these experiences appear-mystic," claimed Jung.²¹

Transpersonal psychology exerted an ongoing but modest influence on mainstream psychology. Its modest impact was probably because some of its topics, such as spirituality, ran counter to dominant mainstream assumptions, such as materialism and reductionism, which attempt to explain all experiences as neuronal fireworks, and in the case of spirituality, probably disordered fireworks at that. In addition, it did not develop a large base of supportive experimental data. However, it played other roles, such as validating meditation, feeding the popular human potential movement and the emerging cultural interest in spirituality, and lending impetus to the birth of the recent schools of positive psychology and integral psychology.

Psychotherapy was also impacted. Psychedelic researchers experimented to find the optimal conditions for fostering healing, actualization, and transcendence. They also explored nondrug alternatives for altering consciousness and fostering growth, from which new therapies emerged, the best known probably being Stanislav and Christina Grof's holotropic breathwork.

Anthropologists such as Michael Harner and Peter Furst added new dimensions to their disciplines. Their studies of psychedelic use among tribal cultures, plus their own personal experiences, helped to widen anthropology's understanding of consciousness and culture. The fields of transpersonal anthropology and the anthropology of consciousness emerged from questions and concerns such as these.

Altered states of consciousness were now recognized as central to many cultures and practices. Anthropologists began to study the methods (including psychedelics) for inducing them, healings and rituals for applying them, religions and myths derived from them, and beliefs and world-views for explaining them.

It became increasingly apparent that societies approve and institutionalize some states of consciousness, while disparaging and prohibiting others, and that societies differ in the number and variety of states they value. Western culture is relatively *monophasic*, meaning that we privilege the usual waking state, derive our world-view almost entirely from it, and marginalize other states, a bias that Michael Harner calls "cognicentri-

cism."²² By contrast, most societies are more *polyphasic*, drawing their knowledge and world-view from additional modalities of consciousness, such as trance, shamanic, meditative, or yogic states.²³ Likewise, their psychologies and philosophies tend to be multirate and multistage, drawing on and analyzing multiple states of consciousness and stages of development. Western disciplines, however, tend to almost exclusively draw from, and focus on, the normal waking state and conventional, personal stage of development, largely overlooking transpersonal states and stages.²⁴

These recognitions raised serious concerns about the extent to which Western researchers could adequately comprehend multistate cultures and disciplines. Limiting factors such as state-specific learning and state-specific communication suggested that researchers who had not themselves experienced these other states might be seriously handicapped in *cross-phasing*. The result? Much of the richness and meaning of these states might be missed. The psychologist Charles Tart therefore argued in the journal *Science* that we may need "state-specific scientists," "yogi-scientists," or "meditative philosophers," who are experts in both multiple states and conventional Western disciplines.²⁵

An amusing example and partial validation of Tart's viewpoint came from the psychiatrist Gordon Globus. On reading Tart's article, Globus found the argument unconvincing and wrote a critique. Shortly thereafter, when in an altered state himself, Globus reread Tart's article and this time found it compelling. He immediately wrote another response, this one favorable, while still in the altered state. But when the altered state ended, he yet again found Tart's argument lacking and wrote a response to his response.²⁶ The staid journal *Science* declined to publish any of them.

In subsequent years, shamanism became a vital spiritual practice for a surprising number of people throughout the Western world, and the spread of this ancient tribal discipline can largely be attributed to Michael Harner. After his initiation with ayahuasca in the Amazonian jungle, Harner's appreciation of shamanic cultures was so profoundly deepened that he undertook shamanic training himself, and subsequently taught thousands of others. In a curious cultural reversal, he and his students have even reintroduced shamanism to some societies where it had been lost or suppressed.

Other researchers impacted other spiritual traditions. Inspired by his psychedelic experiences, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi deepened his study of Jewish mysticism and then played a major role in inspiring the Jewish Renewal movement.

Searching for people and traditions to help make sense of his psychedelic experiences, Ram Dass traveled to India. There he found a guru, and he later returned to the West to become a major popularizer of Hinduism and Buddhism, meditation and yoga, and inspired a whole generation of spiritual seekers.

Psychedelics also led to new interest into the role of drug experiences in religions. It became clear that drugs have played a major part throughout history in multiple traditions, and continue to do so today in ones such as shamanism and the Native American Church. Some people even suggested that psychedelics may have been instrumental in the creation of certain religions.

Huston Smith's influence was key in this regard. His writings were among the first and most persuasive to question the initial tendency of religious scholars to dismiss psychedelic experiences as pseudo-spiritual and insignificant.²⁷ After Smith's writings, it was hard for any serious scholar to hold these positions.

Stanislav Grof's research also illuminated religious practices and studies. His multitude of contributions defy brief description. However, they include the rediscovery of Jung's principle that "the deeper 'layers' of the psyche . . . become increasingly collective until they are universalized,"²⁸ and that these deeper layers are associated with religious experiences that have been goals of spiritual practices the world over.

Drawing on the deepest experiences of his several thousand subjects, Grof synthesized their insights into a comprehensive ontocosmology.²⁹ This is a novel scheme of the cosmos and realms of beings, a map of what the ancient Greeks called the *Kosmos*—the totality of existence, both material and immaterial. This psychedelically derived map shows clear similarities to aspects of the Perennial Philosophy, especially to the variant found in Kashmir Shaivism (the mystical form of Hinduism). The scope of Grof's map and the "cosmic game" it describes is awesome, encompassing (among other things), consciousness, cosmogony, evolution, teleology, enlightenment, evil, and more. It offers numerous unique observations, especially into the dynamics of evil and *maya*, *maya* being the Hindu term for the encompassing illusion that clouds our awareness.

Of course, there are major epistemological challenges for such a map. Several of these have already been discussed in the analysis of the limits of psychedelically derived theories. An additional challenge for any metaphysical system is the leap from phenomenology to ontology (from experience to claims about the nature of reality). But whatever verdict history

may pass on its validity, this map certainly places Grof among the grand theorists attempting to present a "big picture."

The impact of these researchers on their professions was clearly impressive, but it was not limited to these professions alone. Their findings and ideas spread out across the culture, producing new disciplines, practices, and areas of interest.

Many of the researchers in this book took up practices such as meditation, contemplation, and yoga in their search for nondrug methods of transformation, and in order to stabilize and deepen the spiritual insights they had glimpsed. They then played a significant role in popularizing these practices. Professionals and the public eventually took up meditation practices to an extent that would have been unimaginable only a few decades earlier and initiated a quiet but potentially profound revolution in Western culture. These practices in turn led to still further and continuing cultural changes in areas as diverse as therapy, medicine, and technology. The ripple effects from the work of these early psychedelic pioneers continue to touch and transform us in ways we are still struggling to fully appreciate.

NOTES

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