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This is a pre-publication version of the following article:

Psychedelics and the Spiritual Path – Critical voices and Considerations

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‘I undertake the training to abstain from intoxicants which cloud the mind’ (the Fifth Precept of Buddhism)

This paper was originally presented as a presentation at of the British Psychological Society’s Transpersonal Psychology 19th annual conference - ‘Psychedelics, Psychology and Spirituality’.

It was my intention, in the best spirit of academic debate and inquiry, to offer some critical perspectives and considerations related to the use of psychedelics in relation to the origins and development of Transpersonal Psychology.

To this end I reflected on the work and lives of some influential counter culture figures including Albert Hofmann, Abraham Maslow, Ram Dass and others - each of whom raised particular concerns and doubts in relation to the potential risks associated with psychedelics, which I will argue still resonate today.

Where appropriate I have also included some of the varied positions one might encounter in relation to spiritual traditions and psychedelics (specifically Buddhism, Judaism, Daoism and Hinduism).

In his 2014 keynote address to the British Psychological Society’s Transpersonal Section, Professor Richard Tarnas proclaimed that were it not for LSD there wouldn’t have been any Transpersonal Psychology.

This statement surprised me, as I had always accepted that psychedelics may have played a catalytic role in the formation of Humanistic and Transpersonal movements, but I hadn’t previously considered that they may have had a role to play in their very conception. Perhaps part in response to this, the conference title for the 19th Annual Conference in 2015, concerned the relationship between ‘Psychedelics, Psychology and Spirituality’.

The current surge of research concerning the effects of the Ayahuasca vine and renewed efforts of organisations such as MAPS¹ (the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) for exploring the pharmacological and psychotherapeutic value of various psychoactive and psychedelic substances, suggests that we may indeed be entering (or have already entered) a renaissance period of psychedelic research (Friedman and Hartelius 2015), not seen since many of these substances became criminalised in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

¹ Examples of their current research projects may be viewed here <http://www.maps.org/research>

The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of some of the critical perspectives concerning the use of psychedelic substances, specifically to achieve spiritual states or awakenings, that were voiced during the birth of Transpersonal Psychology during the 1960s and 1970s by prominent and influential voices, both in Transpersonal and Counter Culture circles (which frequently and meaningfully overlapped). I also hope to include some insights and perspective from different wisdom traditions to further deepen, extend and inform the discussion.

Introductory Reflexive Statement

Students enrolled on the module ‘Psychonautics – Navigating the Mind’ at Leeds Beckett University, are often surprised, and perhaps a little disappointed, when I inform them that our main area of focus will be various wisdom traditions’ naturalistic methods for achieving non-ordinary and mystical states of consciousness, as opposed to substance-induced/supported states. This is arguably, largely due to my training in traditions that were suspicious of the use of any substances that might be considered ‘intoxicants’.

Buddhism in particular may be noted for its Fifth Precept, which has been included in the opening of this paper’s abstract. For the Buddhist (particularly the traditional Theravadin schools) we are already contending with the three poisons of ignorance, craving and hatred (Rahula 2007) - collectively sleepwalking through this Samsaric, illusory realm; the use of psychedelics may then be understood to only exacerbate our predicament and confusion; further disturbing our minds and distorting our perceptions.

There are also practical reasons for this more naturalistic focus, as the module actively encourages experiential engagement with a range of different methods including – contemplative/meditative, yogic, qigong, dreamwork and movement based activities. We would simply not be able to advocate or encourage any use of psychedelics without incurring severe penalties and (likely) criminal proceedings. As a result, our study of psychedelics remains confined to historical examples and a few current studies, with no experiential component.

The Father of LSD and his ‘Problem Child’

Albert Hofmann (1906-2008) is celebrated by many as the man who discovered LSD while working at Sandoz laboratories in Switzerland. His ingestion of the substance, in 1943, led to his now famous psychedelic bike ride home - now commemorated by admirers every April 19th as ‘Bicycle Day’ (see figure 1). Few pharmacists have ever achieved the status of counter culture icon and Guru²

His autobiographical account of his life and research has the revealing title ‘LSD My Problem Child: Reflections on Sacred Drugs, Mysticism and Science’ (Hofmann 1983). The first part of the title reveals shades of regret and the poignant recognition that much of the potential value held by this substance was lost due to uncontrolled recreational use and the media-fuelled mass hysteria and moral panic that followed in its wake. But it is the second part, the subtitle

² Here I am referring not only to the way he has been described and remembered by admirers, but also the memorable way he was depicted by New York artist Alex Gray, in a Psychedelic fashion with his third eye (Ajna Chakra) visibly open. The reader may view this painting at the artist’s homepage <http://alexgrey.com/hoffman.htm>

concerning the sacred and mystical, that I would like to focus on more for the purposes of this paper.

In a correspondence dated 1961 to his friend and fellow Psychonaut Ernst Jünger³, Hofmann reflects:

‘On the one hand, I would have the great desire, besides the natural- scientific, chemical-pharmacological investigation of hallucinogenic substances, also to research their use as magic drugs in other regions.... On the other hand, I must admit that the fundamental question very much occupies me, whether the use of these types of drugs, namely of substances that so deeply affect our minds, could not indeed represent a forbidden transgression of limits.’ (Hofmann 1983, p.156)

The choice of the word ‘transgression’ is particularly interesting as it has religious and moral connotations. One might consider the not uncommon report of people under the influence of LSD reporting that they ‘see God’ (Abramson 1976, p.229), or later, similar slogans graffitied onto walls or printed on T-shirts reading ‘Eat Acid – See God’. The theological consequences of such an experience would certainly appear to fall under the heading of transgression or prohibition. If one considers God’s warning to his prophet Moses, which occurs after Moses expresses his profound yearning to see God’s glory, he is explicitly told by God “You will not be able to see My face, for no human can see My face and live” (Exodus 33:20).

It is significant that this encounter occurs soon after the cardinal sin of the construction and veneration of the golden calf – the starkest example of idolatry in the Bible. The sin of idolatry emerges from the human need to see God, but Jewish theology constantly warns and reminds us that God is not a physical, reducible being that can be viewed as one views any simple object. The Jewish mystics may have used many different poetic descriptions and imaginatively anthropomorphised aspects of the Godhead in their Kabbalistic writings, but at all times they still maintained that God was not a ‘something’ that could be conceived of, contained or represented; whilst the Divine was beyond all limitations, human beings remained limited in their capacity to comprehend (Isaiah 55:8), let alone to see God.

It is also arguably Hofmann’s recognition of ‘limits’ that contrasts him with many of the more popular advocates of the recreational use of LSD; typified by the Hippy subculture. Hofmann’s recognition of the sheer potency of LSD led to his consistent emphasis that the substance needed to be controlled and restricted ideally within a medical/clinical or institutional context:

In his concluding assessment, the real value of LSD lies in its role as a ‘medicine for the soul’, its capacity to bring about spiritual insights and the possibility of it being allied with existing spiritual methods:

‘I see the true importance of LSD in the possibility of providing material aid to meditation aimed at the mystical experience of a deeper, comprehensive reality.

³ In fact, Jünger is credited with coining the term Psychonaut (Blom 2009, p.434)

Such a use accords entirely with the essence and working character of LSD as a sacred drug.’ (Hofmann 1983, p.209)

It is important to reflect on the way ‘drug’ has become a loaded, pejorative term initiating associated discourses of addiction, ‘getting high’, or even the memorable campaigns of the 1980’s and 1990s ‘Just Say No’ (to drugs). In this manner the very term ‘drug/s’, immediately primes us, negatively inclines and biases us against the subject matter.

Hofmann’s vision would seem better suited to the use of terms such as Psychedelic – whose etymological roots suggest making the soul manifest, or, better still, Entheogen/Entheogenic – meaning to generate an experience of the Divine/Spiritual. But this in itself raises a central question – can or should authentic spiritual experiences, or Divine encounters be the result of, or reduced ultimately to pharmacology and brain chemistry?

Counter Culture and Psychedelics

Counter Culture, specifically the Hippy subculture, is commonly associated with the recreational use and promotion of psychedelic substances; making their impact particularly felt within the various mediums of psychedelic art and music, and including various expressions of alternative spiritualities.

One of the foremost commentators on, and originator of the term ‘Counter Culture’ was Theodore Roszak (1995). His reflections on the ways psychedelics were both used and abused during the late 1960s is to be found within his recognised classic ‘The Making of a Counter Culture’ in the tellingly-titled chapter ‘The Counterfeit Infinity’.

For Roszak, psychedelics had a pseudo-spiritual quality and were symptomatic of a technocratic worldview that threatened the very freedom and sanity of society and individuals:

‘The gadget-happy American has always been a figure of fun because of his facile assumption that there exists a technological solution to every human problem. It took the great psychedelic crusade to perfect the absurdity by proclaiming that personal salvation and the social revolution can be packed in a capsule.’ (Roszak 1968, p.177)

Rozzak was also critical of the ‘cult’ (Ibid. p.165) of Timothy Leary - the former Harvard Psychology Professor who had become the controversial ‘High Priest of LSD’; encouraging American youth to “Turn on, Tune in, drop out!” (Leary 2009). While contrasting the respective roles of Leary and Ken Kesey (famous author of ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest’, leader of the Merry Pranksters and originator of the ‘acid test’ parties that further encouraged the recreational use of LSD), his portrayal of Leary appears to mock his apparent messianic aspirations and priest-like pretensions:

‘Leary, on the other hand, preferred to come on during his LSD camp meetings with all the solemnity of the risen Christ, replete with white cotton pajamas, incense, and the stigmata of his legal persecutions... But Leary appearing at just the ripe moment and gaining ready access to thousands of college students and

adolescents, has been the figure primarily responsible for inculcating upon vast numbers of young and needy minds (many of which do not easily hold more than one idea at a time) the primer-simple notion that LSD has “something” to do with religion. And it that notion-even if imperfectly grasped – which makes psychedelic experimentation much more than a naughty hijinx.’ (Roszak 1995, p.166)

Further to Roszak’s criticism of Leary and his apparent disdain for the uncritical, gullibility of the 1960’s youth culture, his primary concern in relation to psychedelics, is not simply that it appears to be an artificial simulation of spirituality (a ‘counterfeit infinity’), but that were we to accept the ‘religious’ dimension of LSD, this may lead us (perhaps inadvertently), to a very reductionist, deterministic and dehumanising view of religious experience itself:

Should we not have to admit that the behavioral technicians have been right from the start? That we are, indeed, the bundle of electrochemical circuitry they tell us we are – and not persons at all who have it in our nature to achieve enlightenment by native ingenuity and a deal of hard growing (Ibid. p.177)

LSD as a ‘Cheap Grace’

Roszak’s concerns appear to have been shared by one of the founding figures of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, Abraham Maslow.

Maslow was initially intrigued and open to the possible links and overlaps between psychedelic experiences and peak experiences; and it’s clear from his writings that he was aware of and followed the research. While discussing the notion of a ‘unitive consciousness’ Maslow writes:

Any reader of Zen, Taoistic, or mystical literatures knows what I’m talking about. Every mystic has tried to describe this vividness and particularity of the concrete object and, at the same time, its eternal, sacred, symbolic quality (like a Platonic essence). And now, in addition, we have many such descriptions from the experimenters (Huxley, for instance) with the psychedelic drugs. (Maslow 1993 p.111)

Maslow firmly shared Hofmann’s view that LSD needed to be used in a safe, controlled setting and not abused with reckless abandon. It therefore seems significant that in the above quote when referring to experimenters, Maslow refers to Huxley, but not to Leary (whom he had previously admired and worked with). As Leary gradually transformed from respectable psychedelic researcher into a media figure and sensationalist, Maslow appears to have grown increasingly distant, disillusioned and disappointed.

In an unpublished paper titled simply ‘Drugs-Critique’ Maslow stressed the need for one to work for one’s personal/psychological/spiritual growth, that ultimately there weren’t shortcuts to self-actualisation (Grogan 2013).

Grogan (2013) goes further to compare Maslow’s position concerning psychedelics to that of German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s writings on ‘cheap grace’. In

Bonhoeffer's 'The Cost of Discipleship' he had outlined what he saw as the lazy façade or an impoverished imitation of the spiritual life:

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.
(Bonhoeffer 2001, p.4)

For Bonhoeffer the true, authentic spiritual life and path is one that requires both self-discipline, commitment to one's path and involved no small amount of struggle – Bonhoeffer himself was to exemplify this faith and struggle as he preached against fascism at the height of Nazi power, and was subsequently murdered by the SS in 1945. One common theme throughout the lives of the prophets and saints is their consistent efforts and struggles, trails and tribulations, to reach their eventual salvation - by contrast the idea or claim that one can attain similar transcendent states through simply ingesting a psychedelic substance may appear to mock or belittle the efforts of previous religious seekers.

In a 1963 letter to Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (founding figure of the Jewish Renewal and Neo-Hasidic movement), Maslow writes:

'...should we build an escalator to the top of Mt. Everest or should we put more automobile roads through the wilderness or should we make life easier in general...' (Maslow 1963 quoted in Grogan 2013, p. 179)

Additionally, in another 1966 correspondence he writes:

'Even if the drugs were not harmful psychologically, I think they can be harmful spiritually, characterologically, etc. I think it's clearly better to work for your blessings, instead of to buy them. I think an unearned Paradise becomes worthless' (Maslow 1966 quoted in Grogan 2013, p. 179)

Despite these reservations he still expressed excitement that LSD might prove to be a 'brand new possibility for the validation of B-Knowledge' (Maslow 1993, p. 103) following Dr Abram Hoffer's use of LSD to generate 'peak experiences' in his patients for the effective treatment of their alcoholism.

Jung's Psychedelic Complex?

Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), noted in his 1961 correspondence to Carl Jung, the central role the analyst's writings and works had played in his own recovery from alcoholism, the founding of AA, and the subsequent development of the 12 step programme (McCabe 2015). It was primarily Jung's emphasis on the addicts need for a spiritual experience that has led to AA's continued emphasis on the need to recognise and accept a 'Higher Power', before one can effectively embark on the road to recovery and sobriety.

One particularly interesting insight of Jung's related to the role alcohol may play as an ineffective substitute for spiritual experience, in particular, in the conclusion of one letter to Bill Wilson, he noted the common term for alcohol being spirit:

‘You see, Alcohol in Latin is ‘spiritus’ and you use the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. The helpful formula therefore is: spiritus contra spiritum.’ (Jung, Adler and Jaffe 1984, p.198)

Towards the end of Jung’s life Wilson appeared particularly enthused about the therapeutic potential of LSD to help initiate a transformative, spiritual experience in the alcoholic that would likely cure their condition, and wrote to Jung concerning the matter (McCabe 2015). Although Jung was too ill to reply, there is plenty of evidence to suggest Jung’s position was quite dismissive, even hostile towards Psychedelics as constituting either a supplement to psychotherapy or as a method for Self-discovery.

In a letter to Victor White (dated 1954) Jung appears to simultaneously express both a lack of awareness/interest in Psychedelics and provide an impassioned critique. The correspondence begins with:

Is the LSD-drug mescaline? It has indeed very curious effects – vide Aldous Huxley! – of which I know far too little. I don’t know either what its psychotherapeutic value with neurotic or psychotic patients is. I only know there is no point in wishing to know more of the collective unconscious than one gets through dreams and intuition. (Jung 2015, p.172)

But by the letter’s conclusion the tone shifts and builds into cautionary climax:

I should indeed be obliged to you if you could let me see the material they get with LSD. It is quite awful that the alienists have caught hold of a new poison to play with, without the faintest knowledge or feeling of responsibility. (Ibid. p.173)

His disapproval appeared unabated in another particularly strongly-worded 1957 correspondence with the Psychologist Betty Eisner, who had previously commented upon the ‘religious’ quality of the LSD experience, Jung actually appears to reproach her:

To have so-called religious visions of this kind has more to do with physiology but nothing to do with religion. It is only that mutual phenomena are observed which one can compare to similar images in ecstatic conditions. Religion is a way of life and devotion and submission to certain superior facts – a state of mind which cannot be injected by a syringe or swallowed in the form of a pill. (McCabe 2015, p.19)

Some may be surprised by Jung’s apparent ‘resistance’ with regards to Psychedelics, but it appears entirely in-keeping with his mistrust of spiritual imposters and substitutes (spiritus contra spiritum) and also with his own practice of a more ‘inner’ alchemy via active imagination and dreamwork.

It is also important to remember that Jung’s passion for alchemy stemmed from his initial encounter with one particular Daoist tradition Inner Alchemy (内丹 *Neidan*) tradition through his close friendship Richard Wilhelm – translator of the classic Daoist alchemical manual ‘The Secret of the Golden Flower’ (Cohen 2011).

Throughout Daoist history and practice, particularly in regards to the quest for longevity and transcendence, one can observe see a clear shift from earlier external forms (*Waidan*) to internal forms (*Neidan*) of alchemical practice.

External forms of alchemy included the use of various substances (some of which may have possessed entheogenic qualities, leading to particular visionary experiences⁴), typically minerals and metals (some of these being toxic - in particular cinnabar/mercury and lead) in order to prepare potent elixirs that could transport one physically or spiritually to the realm of the immortals (Pregadio 2008, pp.1002-1005). External alchemy was a very risky endeavor and a great many Daoists devotees died in their quest to achieve immortality.

By contrast, later traditions of Daoist inner alchemy (Baldrian-Hussein 2008, pp. 762-766) and associated imaginal, inner charts of the BodyMind (Cohen 2013), appeared to pursue a path more in-keeping with Jung's practice of active imagination - visualising, summoning and encountering various deities within the body, and working with one's breath and vital energies, through a combination of yogic and meditative methods. The ultimate goal of inner alchemy was to give psychological/spiritual birth to a new authentic/immortal Self, which appears strikingly similar to Jung's path of individuation⁵. One no longer depended on external means or methods, and instead views the body and mind as a microcosm of the entire universe, containing everything - lacking nothing. But the path of inner alchemy, as with the path of individuation, could not be hurried, it required patience, time and commitment to authentic cultivation.

The 'Hard Growing' of Professor Richard Alpert – Baba Ram Dass

One of Professor Timothy Leary's colleagues at Harvard University's Psychology department, was Professor Richard Alpert, who would later become the noted and celebrated Western Guru Ram Dass (a name that translates, from the Sanskrit, as 'servant of God'). His journey and transformation from Dr Richard Alpert PhD into Baba Ram Dass is retold in his seminal text, first published in 1971 - 'Be Here Now'.

Alpert recounts his journey from psychedelics to *Bhakti* and *Karma* Yoga upon meeting the Indian Guru Neem Karoli Baba. In one notable episode the Guru requests Alpert hands him some of the LSD for him to sample the effects⁶:

‘And he swallows them! I see them go down. There's no doubt. And that little scientist in me says, “This is going to be very interesting!” All day long I'm there and every now and then he twinkles at me and nothing – nothing happens! That was his answer to my question. Now you have the data I have.’ (Dass 1978, npn.)

⁴ Interested readers might wish to consult Eskildsen's (2015) 'Daoism, Meditation and the Wonders of Serenity'

⁵ Jung relates this 圣胎 *Shengtai* - sacred embryo, to his own notion of 'pneumatic man' (Jung quoted in Wilhelm 1962, p.125).

⁶ From the text it appeared the Guru believed that the purpose of LSD was give someone access to *Siddhis* or yogic powers. According to the account he was administered a particularly large (or 'heroic' dose).

This rather mysterious conclusion to the autobiographical component of the book, suggests that the Guru had somehow transcended the common effects of LSD; that as an already, fully 'God-realised' being, no longer required any entheogenic assistance.

'Be Here Now' constitutes a rich mix of spiritual autobiography and spiritual guidance, including a noteworthy section on the use of psychedelics. This particular section is titled 'Psychedelics as an Upaya (Method)' (Dass 1978, p.92) and serves to both describe and provide a list of the pros and cons of such a path. It is revealing that Dass prefaces his discussion with a quote from Vivekananda (the preeminent populariser of Vedantic thought):

'A man who has attained certain powers through medicines, or through words, or through mortification, still has desires, but that man who attained to *Samadhi* through concentration is alone free from all desires' (Ibid. 92)

In Hindu thought and practice one may encounter a range of different opinions with regards to psychedelic substances. On the one hand anyone travelling through India is likely to meet Sadhus (Holy Men) who ingest *Bhang* or smoke Ganga (cannabis) as a sacred sacrament and aid to meditation. One may also reflect on the scriptural references to the mysterious, entheogenic substance *Soma* (Williams 2003), whose properties and praises are enumerated in the Vedas. Yet we should also recognise Hindu schools of thought (particularly within the Ayurvedic healing traditions) that may consider psychedelic substances to be *Tamasic* and counter-productive to one's spiritual development – *Tamasic* has its roots in the Sanskrit term तमस् *Tamas* connoting a polluting and dulling effect that would not be conducive to either physical or spiritual health (Frawley 2000).

It would appear that Dass' view on psychedelics leans more towards the *Tamasic* view, as I have summarised and paraphrased his seven 'cons' (Dass 1978 pp.94-95) below:

1. You will still inevitably 'come down'.
2. As the psychedelic substance is external to oneself this serves to reinforce idea that you are not enough.
3. One becomes attached to the experience of 'getting high' – which is a spiritual/psychological cul-de-sac.
4. Egoic astral planes – or losing contact with the ground of reality.
5. Psychedelics may be considered a 'violent method' – a rather forced approach that can lead to an 'unevenness' in individual's 'vibrations'.
6. The criminalisation of using psychedelics may fuel anxiety/paranoia
7. Negative psychological reactions due to pre-existing fears or anxieties.

Despite being open to psychedelics as a possible gateway into spiritual experience, Ram Dass' path significantly diverged from his former colleague Timothy Leary, and he is far more attuned to the potential problems and pitfalls represented by the psychedelic experience:

‘Psychedelics as an *upaya* at first seems to hold infinite promise. But as one works with them further, one comes to realise the possible finiteness of the method. At this point however, the individual may have become so attached to the experience of “getting high”, that he doesn’t want to continue on his way by finding other methods. At this point he is being dishonest with himself, conning himself. Such a tactic is a short-term strategy at best and usually produces negative emotions. (Dass 1978, p. 92).

Concluding Reflections

In the 1960s the Jewish Hasidic sect Chabad, found an innovative way to appeal to an unaffiliated, disillusioned (with organised religion) counter culture generation of Jewish youth. Rabbi Yossi Shemtov (now co-director of Chabad House in Tuscon Arizona), then a teenager, fondly reminisced to his community, on social media, about a mock demonstration the Hasidic sect staged:

It was most memorable. More than a Woodstock. The Rebbe spoke about the power of Jewish unity and the special role of children, there was music and we marched with signs supporting POT (spelling out: Put On Tefillin), LSD (Let's Start Davening-praying) and the like. (Shemtov 2013)

It should be explained that putting on tefillin refers to the Jewish tradition of donning phylacteries – small, sacred boxes containing verses from the Torah are worn upon the arm and head symbolising the binding of one’s soul and self (mind and body) to the Divine (Kadden & Kadden 2004). Davening refers to the forms and practices of Jewish prayer. In this way the statements ‘POT’ and ‘LSD’ appear to implicitly recognise and perhaps make light of the ‘religious’ experiences these substances were said to reputedly generate.

The common theme and concern raised throughout all the above accounts appears to be the pseudo-spiritual quality of psychedelics, partly arising from the perception that they allow the user access to spiritual states without any of the usual spiritual observances, or preliminary practices typically required within the world’s wisdom traditions.

In spite of this, I was personally, deeply moved and impressed by the conference presentations of Dr Torsten Passie and Dr Mathew Johnson related to Psychedelic substances potential, evidence-based role in helping patients cope with (and in some cases overcome) the anxieties associated with having a terminal illness. The testimonials provided by patients who had had profound transformative experiences due to the psychedelic therapies, are not to be so easily discounted or dismissed, and at least appear to have many of the hallmarks of a genuine spiritual awakening (Taylor 2010). We were also reminded of the original, dubious reasons for the criminalisation of psychedelics in Professor David Nutt’s keynote address concerning ‘Psychedelic psychotherapy: A renaissance from brain imaging studies’.

Following my own presentation, several members of the audience raised the possibility that the apparent divergence between the spiritual camps and the psychedelic camps was an issue of

‘territoriality’. At the heart of this debate rests the question of authenticity, and the assumption (on the part of some religious traditions and transpersonal psychologists) that the psychedelic experience is more of a simulation of transcendence or spiritual simulacrum; perhaps hearkening back to the idea of a ‘cheap grace’.

Due to the current political climate and criminalisation of psychedelic substances, coupled with some seemingly entrenched positions that would devalue all psychedelic experiences on account of being artificially induced as opposed to naturally achieved, it may be some time before we are able to explore the relationship between spirituality and psychedelics in an open, even-minded and constructive manner.

I would hope that the disciplines and approaches found within Transpersonal Psychology will prove to be a suitable and fruitful arena for the continuation of this dialogue.

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