

Review of *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics*

By Myron J. Stolaroff

In my paper (Stolaroff 1999), I reported that psychedelic agents, properly understood and applied, are one of the most valuable, useful, and powerful learning tools available to humanity. The Buddhist Magazine Tricycle devoted an issue to psychedelics, wherein contributors varied in their opinion of psychedelics all the way from recognizing important benefits to finding them objectionable and even harmful. I devoted a good part of the above paper to point out how these differences arose because of lack of knowledge of the true potential of psychedelics and their proper employment. Successful outcomes, which can be dramatic and profound, require deep intention and a willingness to encounter and resolve repressed material, which can often be painful. However, resolving such unconscious material results in substantial liberation, permitting greater clarity and understanding, freeing intuition, substantially enhanced well-being, and improving the ability to reach deeply into the core of the Real Self, providing the most fulfilling realization of which people are capable.

In the recent book *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics*, a number of the contributors have recognized the value of psychedelics and have pointed out ways in which they can be helpful and of value. While many of the presentations provide deeper understanding of the value and benefits of employing psychedelics, my own experience indicates that there remains room for further understanding and clarification that can provide more effective results. In fact, in some instances it is reported that states are reached when psychedelics are no longer indicated. While in my paper cited above I point out that such a stage can and should be reached, in some of the situations reported the full potential of psychedelics has not been recognized. Very often the desire to abandon further psychedelic exploration is the result of reaching heavily defended areas in the psyche which are quite painful, yet which when resolved result in enormous gains in profound understanding and well being. In other situations, important attributes and methods of enhanced achievement have not been recognized.

Consequently, it is my hope that a more careful examination can result in greater understanding and facilitate the deepening of one's meditation practice.

In his forward to the book *Zig Zag Zen*, Stephen Batchelor points out that many have been drawn to Buddhism through their psychedelic experiences; in fact "few would deny the role of these substances in opening their eyes to a life of spiritual and religious meaning" (p. 9). Yet traditional schools of Buddhism for the most part fail to acknowledge a useful role for psychedelic substances, and advise abstinence. Batchelor concludes with the statement "...I very much hope that their collective wisdom will not only illuminate the relation between the use of psychedelics and the Buddhist path, but more importantly, help our society as a whole see its way more clearly through the deep confusion that surrounds its attitude toward drugs" (p. 11).

Huston Smith in his Preface closes with the statement "...the book lays before the reader the major issues that must be taken into account in any serious reflection on this problem. Entheogens have entered Buddhism to stay; there can be no turning back

from the point that has been reached. Nor can the issue any longer be swept under the rug. The facts that bear on the matter are contained in these pages, as are the leading theories that try to make sense of the facts. Compelling visionary art and vivid accounts of personal encounters lace the facts and theories together in ways that make for a gripping experience. This book will be a landmark for years to come” (p. 14).

The Editor, Allan Hunt Badiner, presents in the Introduction the issues that require resolution. For example, “Drug use has always been with us; perhaps the key question is how quickly we can develop into a mature society that is able to help people who use drugs and at the same time allow responsible users access to the insights provided by psychedelics.” He concludes with “In the tradition of inquiry set in motion by the Buddha, we let a thousand flowers blossom—even if some of them are psychedelic. Only in the open-minded and courageous effort to see the truth in every voice do we recognize the deepest reflection of what is relatively real” (p. 18).

Roger Walsh presents a comprehensive analysis of consciousness and valuable information to be taken into account in assessing psychedelic and natural mystical experiences. While recognizing that in some characteristics mystical and psychedelic experiences are the same, the important consideration is how the experiences are employed to affect one’s life. “In summary, these ideas suggest a qualified equivalence between contemplative and chemical mysticism; that some drugs can indeed induce genuine mystical experiences in some people on some occasions. However, they seem more likely to do so and more likely to produced enduring benefits in prepared minds . . . The general principle seems to be that different contemplative techniques are more likely to induce certain types of mystical experiences than others. For example, some shamans may feel a sense of unity with the universe, with all of creation . . . whereas Buddhist vipassana meditators aim for an experience of nirvana, in which all objects and phenomena of any kind disappear” (p. 30-31).

He finds it likely that different substances can produce different kinds of experiences. The crucial question is what to do with the experience: “For beyond personal realization lies the stage of sharing that realization with the world, of using one’s wisdom and illumination to teach, serve, help, and heal. . . Thus the task is first to open to the experience of illumination, then to bring that light back to the world for the benefit of all” (p. 31).

Rick Fields provides excellent coverage of both Buddhism and psychedelics, with lots of history and descriptions of different positions taken. He points out important contributions and shortcomings both of Buddhist practice and use of psychedelics. Frequent discussions involve the reluctance of Buddhists and other theistic organizations to accept psychedelic substances as a path to spiritual realization. This is despite the fact that psychedelic “plants have coexisted for millennia with human beings, who have developed intricate rituals and beautiful ceremonies to use sacred planets safely and wisely (p.48) . . . Both the Native American Church and the Brazilian ayahuasca churches have successfully grafted an ancient entheogenic practice onto Christianity. There is nothing to prevent this from happening with Buddhism as well” (p. 49).

The interview with Jack Kornfield provides very knowledgeable coverage of the techniques of Buddhist practices, and how these practices can achieve Realization. Robert Forte, the interviewer, continues to inquire how the use of psychedelics can relate to the practice of Buddhism. Kornfield sees that there can be lots of benefits from psychedelics

lies in what Carl Jung calls the Shadow – the painful material that we repress to keep out of awareness, C. G. Jung (1965). Eckhart Tolle (2004) in his book *The Power of Now* describes how we form a pain body, and we cannot become free of the influence of this pain body until we sit down and be with it until it surfaces. Only then can we recognize it's source and have the choice to free ourselves from it.

But this requires experiencing the pain, which we are very reluctant to do. As Jacob remarks in the book Stolaroff (1997), once we are willing to experience the pain, the pain lessens and we can work our way through it. I hope that I am wrong, but my own experience is that pain is a great teacher, and we cannot become completely enlightened until we can experience the depths of Hell as well as the bliss of Heaven. Many will not care to confront Shadow material, and they are free to choose. But we certainly should not denigrate the incredible wonder and learning power of psychedelic substances because we are not willing to face our true inner self.

Those who have had the good fortune to break through to the very high levels of realization can fully understand the wonder, the beauty, and the glorious amazement of the creation that we live in, and the vast potential that lies open to us. Certainly every individual has the freedom to choose her/his own path, but I think we need to be very careful in denouncing the endeavors of others when we have no real understanding of what can transpire. In the chapter *Do We Still Need Psychedelics?*, I have attempted to point out the key issues that need to be taken into account to get the benefits that psychedelics can offer.

References

- [1] Jung, C. G., (1965). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, New York: Vintage Books, 398-399.
- [2] Sherwood, J., Stolaroff, M., & Harman, W., (1962). *The psychedelic experience—a new concept in psychotherapy*. *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*, 4(2), 69-80.
- [3] Stolaroff, M. (1997). *The secret chief: Conversations with a pioneer of the underground psychedelic therapy movement*, Charlotte, NC: Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS).
- [4] Stolaroff, M. (1999). *Are Psychedelics useful in the practice of Buddhism?* *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 39(1), 60-80.
- [5] Tolle, Eckhart. (2004). *The Power of Now*. Novato, California: New World Library, 33-46.

when they are properly used. He is concerned that many who are not committed to a path of growth or do not sufficiently understand the appropriate stages of learning can end up misusing psychedelics and even fall into abuse. Kornfield feels that psychedelics can be great for initial openings, which can inspire subjects to a more dedicated practice. In closing, Kornfield states “I see psychedelics as one of the most promising areas of modern consciousness research. I would not be surprised if at some point there comes to be a useful marriage between some of these materials and a systematic training or practice that I have described. That marriage will have to be based on an understanding and respect for the ancient laws of karma, grounded in compassion, virtue, an open heart and a trained mind, and the laws of liberation. Given those, there might be some very fruitful combination” (p.60).

Dokusho Villalba Sensei provides an excellent introduction to Buddhist teaching. He recognizes the value of psychedelics. He states that it is important to accept their usefulness by professionals in psychotherapy, where great good is accomplished. He also acknowledges the use of entheogens to explore repressed areas (regressive) and the transpersonal level. The answer to the question of the appropriateness of a practicing Buddhist occasionally or systematically using entheogenic substances depends on “why, how, when, with what, with whom, what for, how much” (p. 63). Also on set and setting, but “above all it depends, according to my own experience, on the capacity of the explorer to focus/defocus her or his attention” (p. 63). This writer is very knowledgeable of entheogens, and gives excellent suggestions for proper use. At the same time, he admits and describes his own practice with entheogens, which has brought rich rewards. He feels that it is inappropriate to forbid the use of entheogens, but each person must choose for him/herself.

A Buddhist–Psychedelic History of Esalen Institute: An Interview with Founder Michael Murphy and President George Leonard. The Esalen Institute, founded by Michael Murphy and Dick Price in 1961, has become one of the outstanding learning centers on the planet. It was based on the vision that there could be a cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary place for exploration of integral transformation. They have been most successful in their endeavors, and large numbers of persons have gained great benefits from their participation in conferences held at Esalen.

It is clear in their remarks that neither Michael Murphy nor George Leonard are supporters of the employment of psychedelic substances. No doubt those who dedicate themselves to following the procedures of meditation and development which are taught by Murphy and Leonard can accomplish fulfillment without the use of psychedelics. Murphy thinks there may be a proper place for psychedelics in initiating with proper set and setting. Many of the criticisms of Murphy and Leonard are well founded, and for those who can carry on committed practice, there is no need for psychedelics. However, what seems to me to be overlooked is that if psychedelics are treated as powerful learning tools, and efforts are made to learn of their capabilities and the best way to use them, continual openings and learning will take place. I heartily agree that ultimately if one's intention is deep enough, and one's practice appropriately focused, the same levels of clarity, understanding, and realization can be reached through meditation alone.

Leonard expressed his concern about brain damage with many psychedelics. There has been no trace of evidence for this, other than the controversy over MDMA. Dr. George Reaume, who has claimed that a single dose of MDMA can result in Parkinson's

disease, based his claim on an experiment with animals purportedly given MDMA but which actually turned out to be a large dose of methamphetamine. This work was reported in the prestigious journal *Science*, and was retracted by the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine where Dr. Recourte and his associates worked.

I can readily understand why some users of psychedelics may feel their brains were damaged, as an enormous array of possibilities exist for the unprepared and improperly advised user. It is most unfortunate that our government has outlawed psychedelic substances, thereby cutting off research and the dissemination of appropriate information. While these are outstanding learning tools, they are also powerful and without proper guidance and preparation, there can be very undesirable outcomes.

Peter Matthiessen's chapter provides a number of opportunities to further understand appropriate use of psychedelic substances. While there were aspects of his psychedelic experiences that drew him on, in general he had many uncomfortable experiences and did not achieve understanding of their true potential. I will elaborate by commenting on some of his statements:

Peter Matthiessen: Started experimenting in 1957. "I never saw drugs as a path, far less as a way of life, but for the next 10 years, I used them regularly—mostly LSD but also mescaline and psilocybin. The journeys were all scarring, often beautiful, often grotesque, and here and there a blissful passage was attained that in my ignorance I took for religious experience" (p. 85).

It is important to know that everything we experience comes from our inner being—the release of inner dynamics resulting from the action of the chemical as it dissolves the barriers containing repressed unconscious material. As long as there are feelings of discomfort, as long as there is a flow of imagery, it is the result of inner dynamics coming to the surface. Typical stages that a candidate may pass through are described in the paper Sherwood, Stolaroff & Harman (1962). Three stages are common and are described in detail in this paper. Here they will be much abbreviated: The first or Evasive Stage incorporates coming to terms with new, unexpected material, possibly uncomfortable and even frightening as the subject tries to avoid the unknown inner experience which is feared. As the subject becomes accustomed to the new, strange experiences and begins to accept what is happening, one moves into the Symbolic Stage. "The unconscious mind employs visual and other symbolic representations with seemingly endless variety to convey insights to the conscious mind" (p. 71). Finally, in The Stage of Immediate Perception, psychosomatic symptoms and hallucinatory images disappear, and the client "comes to experience himself in a totally new way and finds that the age old question 'who am I?' does have a significant answer. He experiences himself as a far greater being than he had ever imagined, with his conscious self a far smaller fraction of the whole than he had realized" (p. 71).

Peter introduced his girl friend D to mescaline, and she "freaked out." She was willing to keep trying, "and sometimes things were better" (p. 87). One experience was of unusual bonding between the two of them, where speech was unnecessary and they flowed together. "Mostly D went on gray journeys, plagued by fear of death. I had bad trips too, but mostly they were rare: most were magic shows, mysterious, enthralling. After each—even the bad ones—I seemed to go more lightly on my way, leaving behind old residues of rage and pain" (p. 87). In time he abandoned using psychedelics, finding they grew boring. "Lacking the temper of ascetic discipline, the drug vision remains a

thropology, and religious studies at the University of California at Irvine. Following is an Interview with Houston Smith, the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, Syracuse University. In addition to being one of the most highly recognized authorities on the world's religions, he had a number of experiences with psychedelics. On the question, what role would you like to see psychedelics have in our society, his response was "Minimally, I would like to begin with a touch of rationality in our absurd drug laws, which make no sense from any possible angle and do so much damage. . . Beyond that, I would like to see entheogens legally available to serious spiritual seekers. Of course, there are other aspects like the recreational use of these substances. I don't take a puritanical view towards that. After all, I enjoy wine, which is a pleasurable aspect of life. So I wouldn't draw any sharp lines, there, but recreational use is not the area of my first concern" (p. 139).

Since our government made these substances illegal, the bulk of users had very little knowledge of appropriate procedures. Here is an illustration of the vast difference in results from self-administering searchers and those who chose an appropriate guide. In my book Stolaroff, M. (1997) *The Secret Chief* (recently republished in a new and expanded version by MAPS, see www.maps.org for more information), I interviewed Jacob who had administered LSD and other psychedelic compounds to several thousand subjects. In the course of his work, he told me he had administered LSD to a number of persons, many having had trips of 300 to 500 times. "Invariably these people said, 'I've never had an acid trip before in my life! This is the first time I've really had an acid trip.'" (p.55).

In my chapter on page 206, I report the necessity of honoring the experience by acknowledging the graces received and determinedly putting into effect in one's life the changes that have been revealed. It is very easy to abuse psychedelics, as if one gets lazy and permits old habits to return, it is a simple matter to have another experience. It is easy to depend on the drug to raise one's abilities, to the extent that one neglects the important process of training oneself to carry out intention. On the other hand, when one has learned to put into effect in life what has been learned, then in due time it may be appropriate to engage in another exploration that can take one to a higher, more profound level. The higher levels can be maintained by a good meditation practice. In fact, this careful kind of training can eventually make it unnecessary to continue to use psychedelics. My own experience is that appropriately employed, the level of realization with subsequent experiences can reach levels profoundly beyond what is uncovered in meditation if one is active in life and has a limited time to meditate. I very much disagree with Baker's statement that psychedelic experiences tend to have such a strong and exciting quality that it can block the more subtle internal language. I find the levels of the more profound experiences are powerful openers of understanding and revelations of remarkable levels of awareness, far beyond what we are ordinarily used to.

I also quite disagree with Halifax's statement that psychedelics produce a state of mind different from that cultivated in meditation. She states that psychedelics do not necessarily cultivate the qualities of stability, loving-kindness, clarity, and humbleness developed with meditation. I am confident that the reverse is true: the openings of psychedelics when properly employed make all of these characteristics more available in meditation. The real problem in properly pursuing the full potential of psychedelics

inside you. LSD does not create a psychosis, but can reveal it if it is present.

There is a lot of valuable information in this chapter. I heartily agree with his 10 commandments.

Buddhism and the Psychedelic Society: An Interview with Terence McKenna. Terence McKenna is one of the world experts in the field of psychedelics, and is thoroughly familiar with practically all aspects of their application, and the enormous potential they hold for profound learning in a great variety of aspects. In this interview, Terence discusses how the combined knowledgeable employment of psychedelics and the practice of Buddhism can lead to fulfilling results.

An Interview with Michele McDonald-Smith. If Michele McDonald-Smith's observations are accurate, then she has had the misfortune of observing the most depraved psychedelic users. Her strongly expressed opinions appear to me to be based on a serious absence of facts. I have dealt with her erroneous observations in some detail in my paper Stolaroff (1999).

Do We Still Need Psychedelics? By Myron Stolaroff. My purpose in writing this review is to express my view that psychedelics are remarkably powerful learning tools, and can be very helpful in supporting a good meditation practice. This help is especially valuable for those committed to making a living or raising families, and consequently have limited time available for a good meditation practice. I hope this chapter illustrates that the value of psychedelics goes far beyond what is generally accepted, even by those who are somewhat knowledgeable.

The following Roundtable discussion below includes a variety of positions concerning psychedelics, which can certainly create a good deal of confusion. I therefore follow it with a discussion which I hope will clarify important issues and bring closure.

A Roundtable with Ram Dass, Robert Aitken Roshi, Richard Baker Roshi, and Joan Halifax Roshi by Allan Hunt Badiner. This chapter presents an interesting collection of views and opinions regarding the use of psychedelics. Ram Dass has been a careful and knowledgeable use of these substances, and his remarks deserve careful considering. Robert Aitken takes the conventional Buddhist position that serious Buddhist practice requires the dropping of psychedelics. Richard Baker reports that people who used LSD got into practice faster than other people, but they leveled off after a couple of years and didn't advance much in Zen practice, particularly if they used it a lot.

Most of the adverse comments on the usefulness of psychedelics arise because there is so little understanding of the full potential of psychedelics and the appropriate methods which support optimum results. In the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 44 No. 2, Spring 2004, 120-140, a 40 year Retrospective examines DO DRUGS HAVE RELIGIOUS IMPORT? Several of the outstanding knowledgeable psychedelic investigators are introduced, – Charles Grob, M.D., director of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Harbor-UCLA and a professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine; Robert Jesse, president of the Council on Spiritual Practices; Gary Bravo, graduated from Harvard University with a degree in biology and did his medical and psychiatric training at the University of California, Irvine, College of Medicine; Alise Agar who launched and coordinated numerous conferences on new scientific paradigms, psychedelics, the near-death experience, and non-ordinary states of consciousness for Esalen Institute, the Fetzer Institute, Arupa, and the Institute for the Study of Human Consciousness; and Roger Walsh, M.D., Ph.D., professor of psychiatry, philosophy, an-

sort of dream that cannot be brought over into daily life. Old mists may be banished, this is true, but the alien chemical agent forms another mist, maintaining the separation of the ' I ' from the true experience of the One" (p. 88).

Peter's description of his and his girl friend's experiences illustrate the results of inadequate guidance and the lack of in-depth understanding of the potential of psychedelic substances. There were some meaningful experiences, but his statement of the formation of mists and the separation of the I from the true experience of One indicates falling substantially short of the true possibilities. The help of a wise experienced guide, and greater in-depth study of some of the excellent books covering a more complete understanding of our true spiritual nature and how to achieve it, could have contributed greatly to more profound realizations. Used with integrity and intention, psychedelic substances can open the doors to the most profound realizations.

Robert Jesse submits an excellent review of the more outstanding psychedelics, preferably referred to by the term entheogens, "from the Greek, entheos, god within." He provides interesting, important information on substances such as Peyote, Psilocybin Mushrooms, Ayahuasca, Soma, Kykeon, Iboga, Cannabis, LSD, and MDMA. He concludes with sound recommendations of how we can employ these substances for the religious practice guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. "Well-crafted policies and practices would support the anti-drug-abuse objectives of the current drug laws, mitigate the psychological risks inherent in profound religious experience, and limit the potential for abuses by individuals and organizations that offer such experience. If this can be accomplished, spiritual communities and individuals will be free to work out for themselves the proper role of entheogens to evolve beneficial contexts for their use" (p. 94).

David Chadwick gives exceptional coverage of practically all aspects of psychedelic substances—their potential, their value, his personal experience, and the drastic consequences created by a misinformed government. "After thirty-five years of being around a diffuse subculture of Buddhist, Hindu, shamanist, New Age, Sufi, Christian, and what-not enlightenment seekers, I am familiar with the formative role psychedelics has often played in their lives (p. 115). . . Regardless of whether we view these psychoactives as helpful in the short or long haul, it's clear they have been and continue to be pivotal catalysts in the spiritual journey of a multitude of seekers. They sure were for me" (p. 116). Chadwick describes in considerable detail an outstanding LSD experience carefully planned and monitored. Like some others, including myself, Chadwick realized the enormous openings he had been privileged to reach would be better maintained through meditation practice. "But I remember these substances fondly because they gave me what I felt was empirical evidence of the perennial goal of religion and philosophy and helped me to get on the path" (p. 120). Chadwick gives a clear description of how the war on drugs creates enormous harm, throws huge numbers of persons in jail for non-violent crimes, completely breaks the trust of young persons by being fed false information, and violates our constitution which supposedly guarantees us freedom of religion.

Trudy Walter has reported on her addiction and abuse of psychedelic agents. Unfortunately, there are many who fall into this trap. We are all different in our life experiences, our beliefs, our intentions (including the degree in which we are willing to pursue them), and many other factors. There is no question that there is a power-

ful seductive quality to many of the psychedelic agents. For many, the new vistas of consciousness are valuable experiences, and can be educational and life changing. But ultimately, there can be little change without the commitment to apply what we learn. Unfortunately, when we discover that the wonders we have experienced fade away it is very easy to simply repeat the experience to revisit those places. But it is only by making the commitment to put into effect in our lives what we have learned can we develop the strength of our true inner self, and thereby continue to climb up the ladder to fulfillment.

Trudy's explanation of her childhood and relationship to her parents give adequate cause for the difficulties she faced in life. Through the help of her teacher and the practices she employed, she was able to break her addiction, but still found much discomfort in her life. If it were not for our government's disapproval of such agents, which prevents the distribution of adequate knowledge, as well as standing in the way of developing skilled experts in the field of psychedelics, I believe that situations like Trudy reports could be successfully resolved. A trained guide and proper preparation would assist a client to encounter the deeply repressed material which is the cause of his/her discomfort. The resulting opening would free the psyche of enormous burdens and open up fresh new areas of energy, awareness, and well-being. Another approach that might prove helpful is to examine the building of one's Pain Body, as described in Eckhart Tolle's (2004) outstanding book *The Power of Now*. He also gives the best description of which I am aware of how to resolve and become free of the Pain Body.

Brigid Meier. I find the chapter by Brigid Meier a wealthy source of vital information for anyone interested in psychedelics. Practically all the major points important for the most educational and fulfilling outcomes of psychedelic use are covered in this chapter. The author is fully aware of the extraordinary potential these substances have for the earnest seeker. She states:

“... it remains my belief that sacred plants, as a frequency of planetary intelligence, have offered themselves as emissaries from the increasingly ravaged natural world. Their intention seems to be to get inside and convert as many mobile humans as possible—a critical mass—in order to do their subversive work of infiltrating then dismantling the cancerous human ego that is destroying the planet and their ecosystem... As one whose heart and soul are aligned with this evolutionary vision, I feel that having had the opportunity to scrape some accumulated barnacles of mass consciousness off my psychic boat was a profound blessing” (p. 129) “... The real work, with both meditation practice and the use of plants substances, is to transmute the grace and insight received into compassionate, skillful action in one's ordinary life... But like anything else, taking plant medicines indiscriminately and carelessly can become a frivolous trip—fertile ground for ego to form. It can be a fairly dangerous trip... It is crucial to have a qualified guide, one who is experienced and who is also impeccable... These guides have unfathomable trust in the medicines, in the sincere seeker, and in the spirits to create a sacred healing alchemy for the highest good” (p. 130).

Allan Hunt Badiner gives an outstanding account of taking ayahuasca and the remarkable experiences he had under its influence. I heartily recommend those interested in the possibilities offered by ayahuasca when properly administered, read his chapter in full. The supreme highlight was that profoundly confronting death, in a manner and with a scope and intensity far beyond most person's most active imagination, resulted

in dramatically diminishing his fear of death. After this experience, his meditation practice jumped to a new level. “Whereas Buddhism used to seem more like a vehicle with which I was seeking a destination, it now seems like a clever way to enjoy life in the present moment and not ask for more” (p 142). His shaman who conducted the experience commented “You had a good journey... Why?” Badiner replied, “that which does not kill you makes you stronger... ‘No’ the shaman replied with the most lively grin I had seen on his face thus far, ‘that which kills you makes you stronger’” (p. 142).

John Perry Barlow presents a critical, and in my opinion accurate, observation of the growth of totalitarianism in our nation. “Americans have largely suspended habeas corpus, have allowed government to permanently confiscate our goods without indictment or trial, have flat-out discarded the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, and are voluntarily crippling the First, at least insofar as an expression might relate to drugs” (p. 175).

“I consider LSD to be a serious medicine, strong enough to make some people see God or the Dharma... by diminishing the hazards inherent in our cultural drugs of choice and demonizing psychedelics, we head our children straight down the most dangerous path their youthful adventurism can take... By dressing (LSD) up in a Halloween costume of fictitious dangers, we encourage our kids to think we were also lying about the real ones. And LSD is dangerous... because it promotes the idea that reality is something to be manipulated rather than accepted. This notion can seriously cripple one's coping abilities, although I would still argue that both alcohol and TV advertising do that more persuasively than LSD” (p. 176).

“But LSD is illegal because it endangers Control. Worse, it makes authority seem funny... LSD is illegal primarily because it threatens the dominant American culture, the culture of Control... There are probably twenty-five million Americans who have taken LSD, and who would if hard pressed in private, also tell that it profoundly changed their lives, and not necessarily for the worse... some of these are hopeless crystal worshipers or psychedelic derelicts creeping around in the Oregon woods. But far more of them are successful members of society, CEO's, politicians, Buddhist meditation teachers, ministers, and community leaders” (p. 177).

The Zen Commandments By Lama Sura Das. Lama Sura Das's article is an interesting combination of reporting the dire outcomes of misuse of psychedelic substances, as well as descriptions of profound learnings and openings that are available and which he personally found very valuable. I personally feel that he has overdone the severe warnings, but it is no doubt true that he has encountered many more lost souls than I have observed. First, I believe that we must consider that there are all kinds of people in the world with very widespread characteristics. The characteristic bell shaped curve, for example, illustrates the spread of intelligence, from ignoramus at the lower left end of the curve, to the peak which is the common average, to the slim margin of geniuses on the extreme right. Those at the lowest end of the scale no doubt comprise the majority of abusers or those who have unfortunate experiences. Certainly we should not condemn valuable substances because ignorant persons mistreat them.

At one point Lama Sura Das states LSD “can also precipitate psychosis.” Early psychiatric researchers were quick to label psychedelics as “psychotomimetic,” or psychosis mimicking. However, LSD and similar substances can only reveal what is already