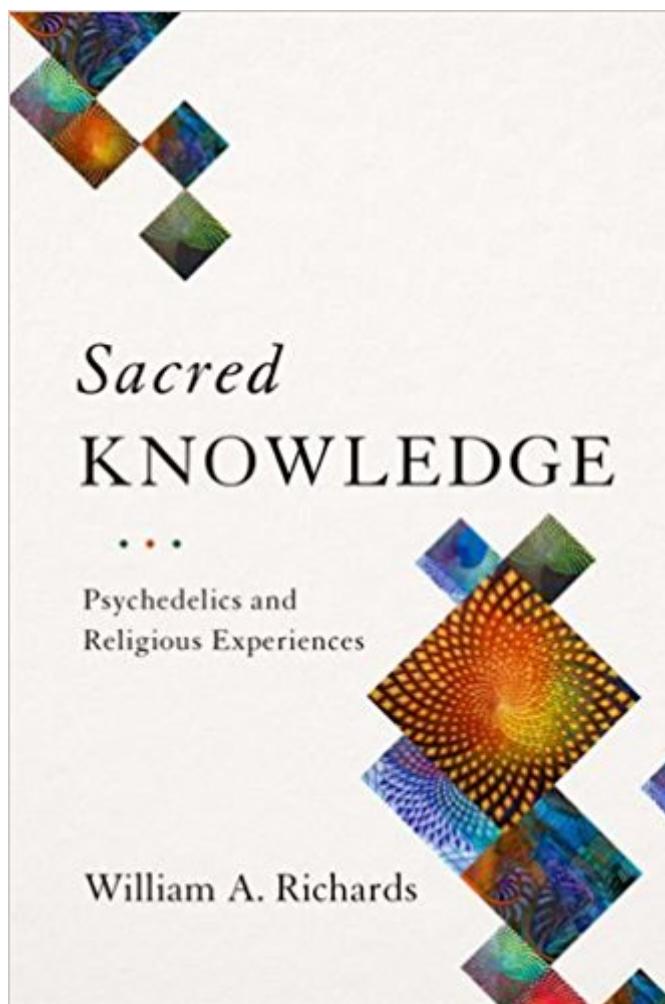


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Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics And Religious Experiences



Synopsis

Sacred Knowledge is the first well-documented, sophisticated account of the effect of psychedelics on biological processes, human consciousness, and revelatory religious experiences. Based on nearly three decades of legal research with volunteers, William A. Richards argues that, if used responsibly and legally, psychedelics have the potential to assuage suffering and constructively affect the quality of human life. Richards's analysis contributes to social and political debates over the responsible integration of psychedelic substances into modern society. His book serves as an invaluable resource for readers who, whether spontaneously or with the facilitation of psychedelics, have encountered meaningful, inspiring, or even disturbing states of consciousness and seek clarity about their experiences. Testing the limits of language and conceptual frameworks, Richards makes the most of experiential phenomena that stretch our conception of reality, advancing new frontiers in the study of belief, spiritual awakening, psychiatric treatment, and social well-being. His findings enrich humanities and scientific scholarship, expanding work in philosophy, anthropology, theology, and religious studies and bringing depth to research in mental health, psychotherapy, and psychopharmacology.

Book Information

Hardcover: 280 pages

Publisher: Columbia University Press (December 8, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0231174063

ISBN-13: 978-0231174060

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #149,682 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Psychopharmacology #52 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Psychopharmacology #64 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Experimental Psychology

Customer Reviews

Sacred Knowledge is not only timely and relevant to a whole host of current social/legal issues but also addresses, with seemingly effortless ease, many of the deeper/subtler metaphysical implications of psychedelics—their therapeutic and spiritual potential. Richards's clear prose makes

articulating such difficult topics look easy. (G. William Barnard, Southern Methodist University) Richards' Sacred Knowledge is not a tome but rather a concise work rich with personal stories, observations, and insights into a compelling topic long ignored and now garnering the attention it has long deserved. (Charles S. Grob, University of California, Los Angeles, School of Medicine) A seminal work that will become required reading for anyone seriously interested in either religious experience or psychedelic research. There has not been a book in this area as valuable since William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, more than a century ago. (James Fadiman, author of *The Psychedelic Explorer's Guide: Safe, Therapeutic, and Sacred Journeys*) In this wonderfully sensitive, critical, and confessional history one of the foremost clinicians and scholars of presents his own experience with psychedelics and with guiding others in studies to occasion mystical experiences using entheogens. Neither addictive nor toxic, these drugs whatever called surely can under the right set and setting reveal the God within us all. This book is the best accessible overview by someone who knows by experience, and can guide others whether they choose to be involved with entheogens personally or seek to simply to understand others who do. Regardless of choice, this loving man should be your guide. (Ralph W. Hood Jr. , University of Tennessee) An inspiring testament to half a century of scientific research and personal exploration into the responsible, beneficial use of psychedelic substances. William A. Richards's work is visionary, personal, and transpersonal, instilled with kindness, deep humanity, and quiet wisdom. (Don Lattin, author of *The Harvard Psychedelic Club*) This is a great book which I highly recommend. It is an immersive experience, which provides an opportunity for those unfamiliar with nonordinary states of consciousness to catch a glimpse of their beauty and power. William A. Richards seamlessly weaves together his extensive understanding of spirituality on the one hand and academic and clinical science on the other â “ a rare combination. His humour, insights, and empathy shine through on every page. The topic is timely and a manifestation of the fact that the intellectual battle regarding the potential of nonordinary states of consciousness (as, in this case, facilitated by psychedelics) has been won. (Amanda Feilding, director, Beckley Foundation) Sacred Knowledge provides the most comprehensive overview of the actual use of psychedelics in psychotherapy and of the transformative power of mystical experiences. (Torsten Passie, Hannover Medical School) This is a wonderful book and couldn't have been launched at a more auspicious time. As William A. Richards has portrayed so beautifully, psychedelics provide an experience of total sanity and give a glimpse of a deeper, more heart-centred, and universal spiritual reality. In my opinion everyone should read this book, not just researchers, theologians, and philosophers but also the ordinary person in society. As society becomes more and more degraded, the planet more

and more polluted, and the natural world destroyed, the truth of what the great mystic Krishnamurthy said, 'It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society,' will become ever more apparent. Increasingly I find more and more people are asking at a deeper level 'why am I here? 'What is this life about? What is it all for'? The sane answer to many of these questions is to be found in this book. (Ivor Browne, University College Dublin)A practitioner and professor, Richards writes as a guide into the depths of psychedelic spirituality in an attempt to bring entheogensâ •substances that 'generate the divine within'â •back into the mainstream. (Publishers Weekly)Richards is a generous and gregarious writer, who avoids platitudes for a mix of hard evidence, anecdotal stories, and memoir-like ruminations... Timely. (Baltimore City Paper)A valuable work and a real treat to read.... Few people could have written Sacred Knowledge and even fewer people could have done it so eloquently. (OPEN Foundation)

Sacred Knowledge is the first well-documented, sophisticated account of the effect of psychedelics on biological processes, human consciousness, and revelatory religious experiences. Richards argues that, if used responsibly and legally, psychedelics have incredible potential to assuage human suffering and constructively contribute to the quality of life on our planet. Richards makes the most of experiential phenomena that stretch our concepts of reality and advances new frontiers in the study of belief, spiritual awakening, psychiatric treatment, and social well-being.

This is an incredible book. It describes how a variety of mind-influencing substances, many used by indigenous peoples or in sacred activities, can inspire awe about the universe and transform a person's life. Dr. Richards is extremely knowledgeable about both the sacred and the profane effects. The book is based on extensive, legitimate clinical research in a variety of settings. He discusses a variety of therapeutic and educational uses at great length. I was particularly moved by use of these substances in hospice care at the end of life, and to help individuals with cancer and other major conditions better deal with existential issues.

Having read and re-read Sacred Knowledge, I feel a deep appreciation for the author's passionate career-long pursuit, and for bringing the reader into positive and profoundly deeper understandings of consciousness and unity. His unique perspectives of historical context, juxtaposed with his scholarly background in theology, the psychology of religion, comparative religion and clinical work gives both a wonderful introduction to these topics, and points us toward the deeper resources within all of us. His experiences demonstrate, and confirmed by powerful new research results, that

relief of various forms of human suffering with the therapeutic assistance of psychedelics and entheogens are close at hand. You will enjoy and revisit this book many times. David Bullard, Ph.D. Clinical Professor of Medicine and of Medical Psychology (Psychiatry) UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital

45 years of life. 30 years of substance abuse - 10 years of therapy — 6 years of SSRIs which made it worse. Still using. Then I read this book. Followed by one carefully planned dose of psilocybin, in accordance with Richards' protocol of Set and Setting and with the support of an experienced friend. Desire to use evaporated. How strange? From card-carrying Athiest to intrepid Agnostic in about 4 hours (and 30 years). And I say "agnostic" because I can't put my finger on it. Nor do I feel I need to, any more. But it's something to do with this quote: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience." — Jim Joyce

Portrait of the artist

Thank you, Bill Richards. Thank you.

Books about sacredness (enlightenment) and psychedelics have been and will continue to be published. Very interesting net site discussions will continue to emerge regarding the same subject matter. At the present time, this book is among the most significant. Among other things, it contains the latest information about an historic research with the terminally ill started in Maryland by Stanislav Grof and if the important "midterm dormant years" are included, it covers about 50 years of the most interesting research done within the field of consciousness. Richards keeps theory aptly simple but tight and real. A paradigm shift, writes Richards and he brings another way into clinical research that takes the field of consciousness to its proper home-base. Richard incorporates Pahnke's 1963 characters of mystical experiences using classical Jungian ideas and the concept of affirmative experiential intuitive knowledge within a world view (Weltanschauung) comprehensive of equal intelligent spiritual sacredness at the core of all religions, among other thoughts. It is a way (theory) about transpersonal unity and love, yes, but also about human compassion and other important indescribable states of consciousness. It is about something increasingly ignored today by our modern DSM mental health way. That it is a way; is, and if ignored by any traditional field of study because it creates too much emotional controversy, then it may just be that the study of the ineffable doesn't belong to that field. Richard opens the narrow professional window by suggesting a formal experientially based training available to a wider range of fields: religious professionals, interested informed researchers and those within the mental health field.

This is a really well done book. Thoroughly researched, described articulately, and presents a very compelling argument for using psychedelics for medicinal/therapeutic purposes. I have read many books on the topic of psychedelic research and this book is in my top 3, at least for the moment. A must buy.

Infinite in it's light, respectful in it's nature, and beautiful in it's indescribable descriptions. William - I may never know why we are here, but I am glad you are.

I loved this book; written in a deeply compassionate and knowledgeable way, Richard shares his vast knowledge of psychedelics and how they can be helpful not only for a long list of mental issues, but for spiritual and creative work as well. I highly recommend this book.

Best book I have had the pleasure of reading on the subject of Psychedelics. Author shares knowledge that's very helpful to anyone interested in entheogens and the potential they have to help the world. Very important book written by a very knowledgeable man.

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