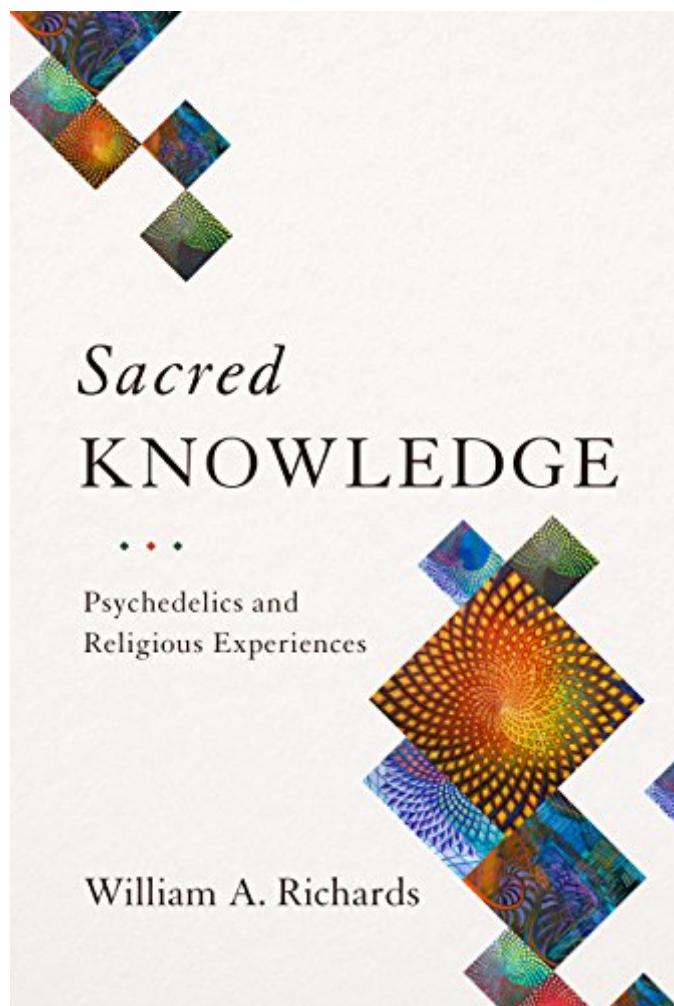


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# Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics And Religious Experiences



## Synopsis

In the early 1960s, scientists openly advocated for experimentation with psychedelics. This effort, however, quickly turned into a discredited enterprise involving recreational drug use. But what if a study of psychedelics was undertaken with trusted scientific rigor? William A. Richards does just that in *Sacred Knowledge*, 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. His work is based on nearly three decades of legal research with volunteers aged twenty-four to eighty-one. *Sacred Knowledge* enriches humanities and scientific scholarship, expanding work in philosophy, anthropology, theology, and religious studies, as well as in mental health, psychotherapy, and psychopharmacology. Richards' analysis also contributes to social and political debates over the responsible integration of psychedelic substances into modern society. His book is 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 concepts of reality and advances new frontiers in the study of belief, spiritual awakening, psychiatric treatment, and social well-being.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

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.

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 its important "midterm dormant years" is 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 Richard 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.

Instead of Tuning In and Dropping Out, SacredKnowledge by Williams takes a good long look at Tuning In and Staying In by riding the wave of a serious mushroom trip. Decades ago, when such study was possible, he began to study of the healing aspects of psychedelics, mostly the active ingredient in 'shrooms, but also other similar drugs. He advocates further study in how these chemicals can aid in mental illness, addiction and spiritual growth and exploration. He isn't suggesting a weekend high, but a guided trip through the conscious with the goal of working with and through the images and sensations presented in the presence of a trainer guide. The intersection of faith and the sacred, psychedelics, science and psychology is fascinating. I really enjoyed the book and have already recommended it to several people. It is well annotated and there is a fine endnotes sections. Publish date 12/8/15 An honest review in exchange for an ARC via netgalley.com

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Based upon decades of rigorous scientific research and careful consideration of how to safely approach the use of entheogens in the study of consciousness, William Richards summarizes a path forward that is at once intensely bold and deeply responsible. Richards refuses to use hyperbole when discussing the promises of this research or devaluation when discussing the policies that currently stand in the way of these promises. This capacity for deep respect is, in itself, a testament to the learning he describes through his own journey of the past five decades. This is the book I've been waiting for - a concise summary of research and new options that I hope will become required reading in the field of psychology and the study of religion. His even-handed approach is precisely what is needed to diffuse the hysteria currently surrounding the consideration of entheogens. Richards clearly believes a door is available for yet another significant paradigm shift akin to the dawning recognition that the earth isn't flat. His contention, throughout the book, is that ways now exist for the responsible study of that doorway and safe protocols are fully available for our entering and returning through it. As he makes clear, the danger considering this journey isn't that we would risk taking it, but rather that - as a culture - we might refuse to adequately consider it. With huge respect and gratitude for this author and his colleagues. I can only hope this book will find the wide readership it deserves.

Richards, a now retired professor, has written his vade mecum on psychedelics, chemical

stimulants and the history of a variety of psychological-social experiments, some of which hold hope for curative sessions with the psychically wounded. The field is not without its doubters and government intervention (for government's purposes) is not particularly laudatory. He writes from the background of psychotherapy, theology and comparative religion à la broad range indeed. To those who are caregivers this is a good book to keep on your reference shelf. He writes clearly, dispassionately (some may dispute this) and appears to have no hidden agenda. I received an electronic copy in return for an honest review.

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