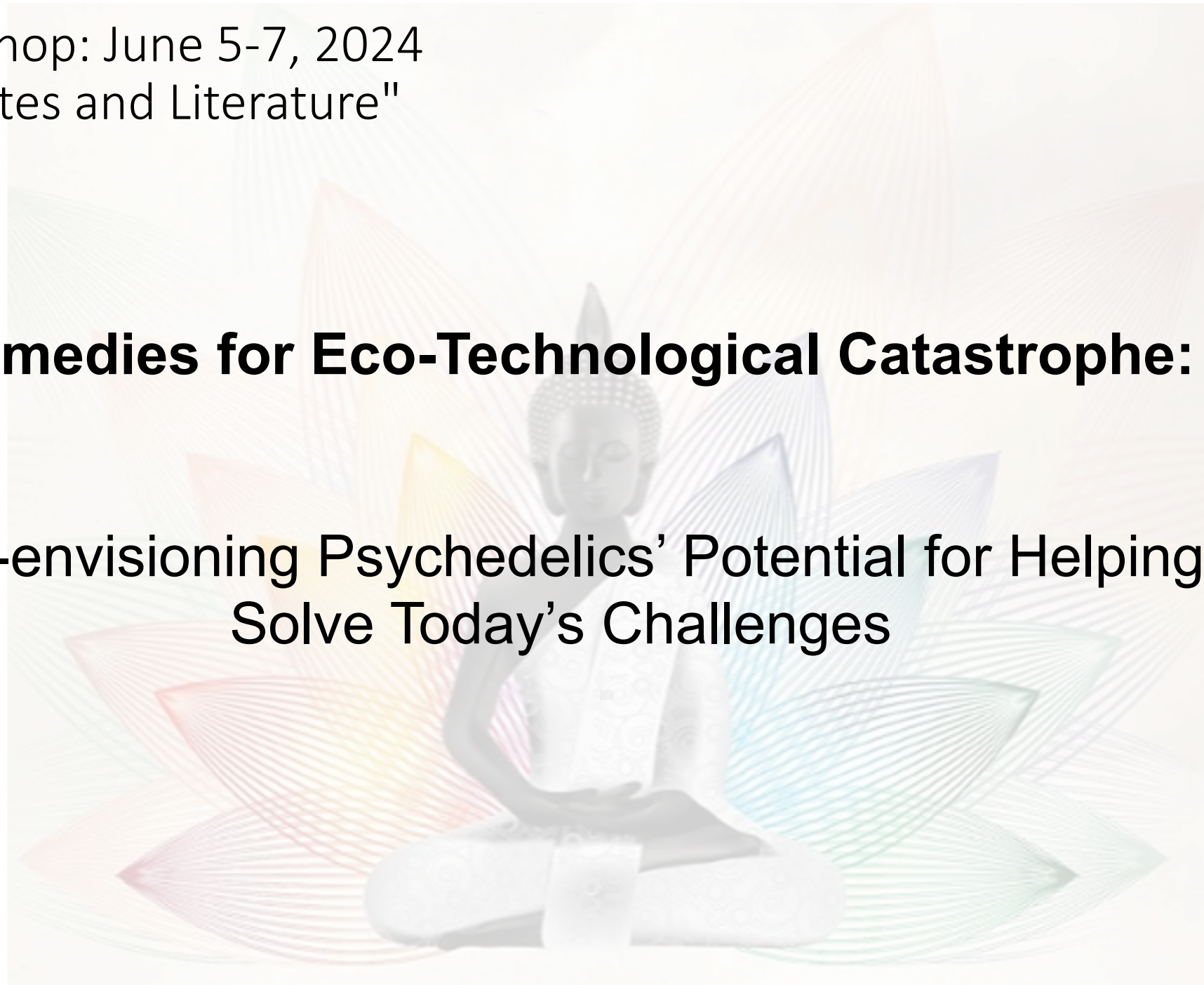


CUSO Workshop: June 5-7, 2024
"Altered States and Literature"

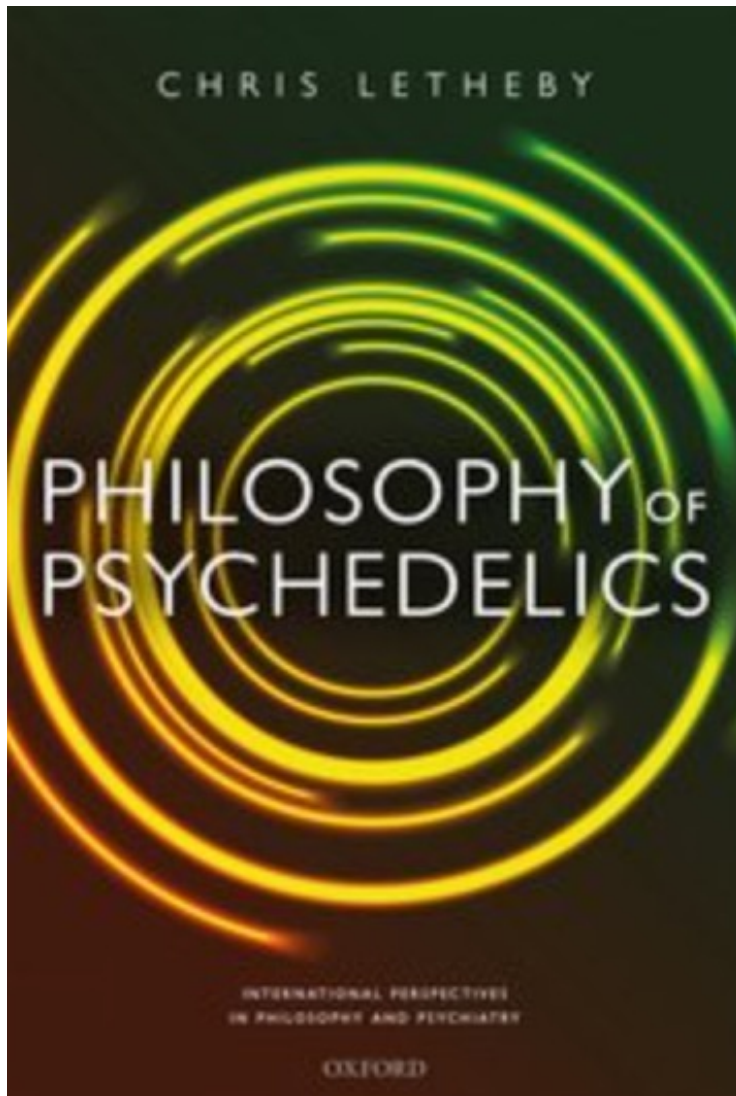
Remedies for Eco-Technological Catastrophe:

Re-envisioning Psychedelics' Potential for Helping
Solve Today's Challenges

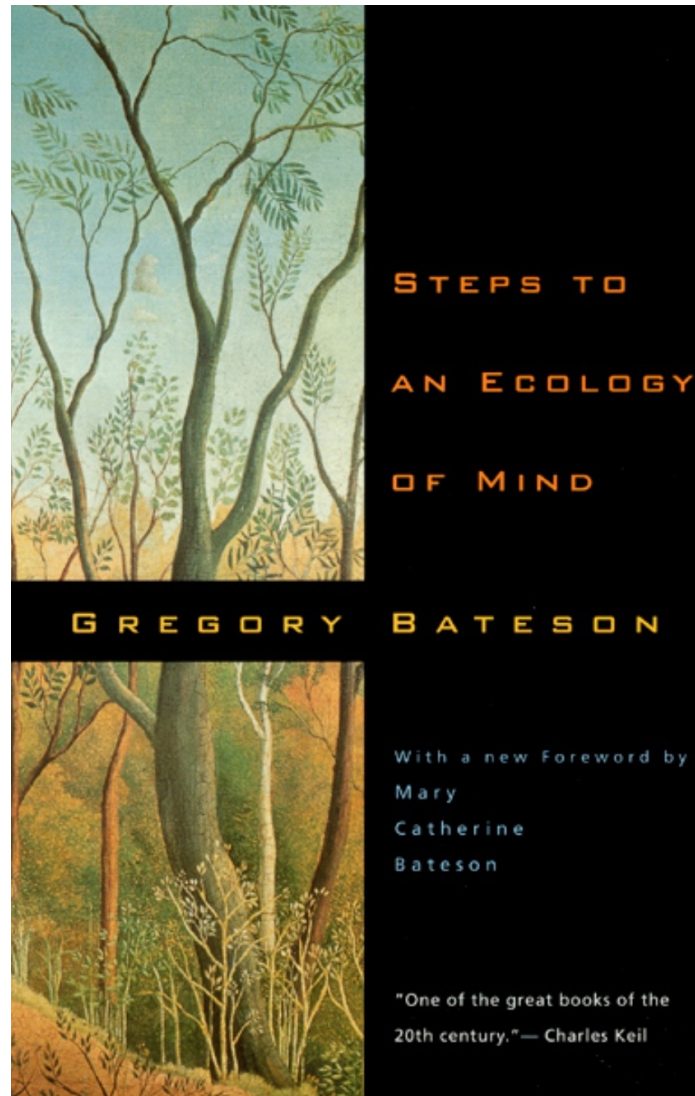


General Overview

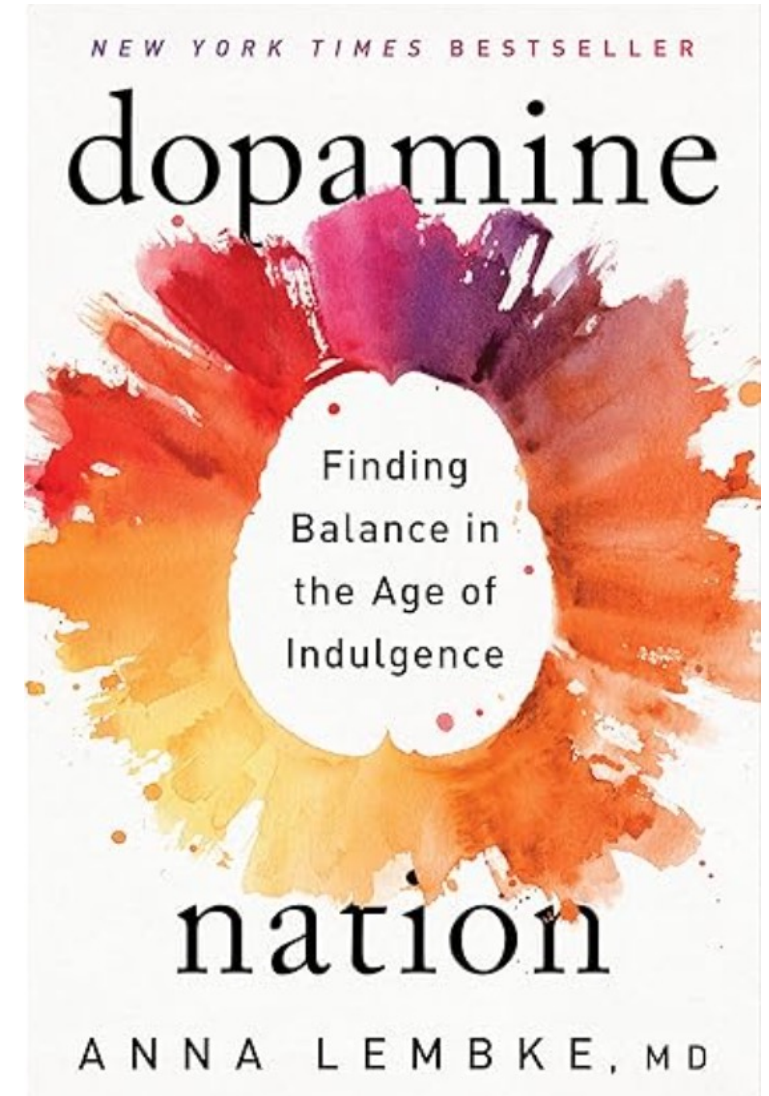
- Historical Contexts: Illegitimacy of Psychotomimetic Substances during the 1960s and 1970s,
- Re-emergence of Clinical Studies in Psychedelics: Generational Changes and Impacts on Perceptions of Psychedelics
- Technology as a Substantial Risk Factor
- Empathy and “Enjoyable Purpose”
- Final Thoughts



Chris Letheby (2021)
Philosophy of Psychedelics



Gregory Bateson (1972, 2000)
Steps To An Ecology of Mind



Anna Lembke (2021)
Dopamine Nation

Historical Contexts: Illegitimacy of Psychotomimetic Substances during the 1960s and 1970s

Collective Media Propaganda Ends “A Generation of Psychedelic Research” (Strassman, Rick, 2008; 19)

- 1960s-1970s- Illegalization of LSD and other Psychedelics in 1966, the Controlled Substances Act (1970), followed by former U.S. president Richard Nixon’s “War on Drugs” (1971) and the resulting classification of psychedelic drugs as Schedule I substances (e.g. no medical or beneficial use), (United States Drug Enforcement Administration, 2024).

Sidney Jourard “echoes” Ken Kesey (1966)

“The psychedelic experience carries with it political concerns relating to education, citizenship, and personal liberty in tension with government control”

(Green, Roger; 2019; 166, Jourard, Sidney, 1966; 313)

Re-emergence of clinical studies in psychedelics: Generational changes and impacts on perceptions of psychedelics

“Since the 1990s, [psychedelic] research has been slowly but steadily resuming, and the results to date are intriguing. Although it is still relatively early days, there is now sufficient evidence to take seriously the claims of earlier researchers” (Letheby, 2021; 2).

On Safety

“In a review of the literature, Rick Strassman (1984) found that adverse psychological reactions to psychedelics were relatively rare and, when they did occur, typically transient and manageable with interpersonal support” (ibid., 13).

Studies Carried Out With Native American Church and Santo Daimo Members

“There is now a large body of evidence that members of these communities have good mental and physical health relative to the broader population.”

(Letheby, 2021; 15- citing Halpern et al. 2005, 2008, Bouso et al., 2012, 2013, Barbosa et al., 2009, 2012, 2016, Ona et al. 2019; cf. Jiménez-Garrido et al. 2020)

Re-emergence of clinical studies in psychedelics: Generational changes and impacts on perceptions of psychedelics

“Religious contexts aside, population-level studies have found lifetime use of psychedelics to be either un-associated or *negatively* correlated with various mental health problems such as psychosis, psychological distress, and suicidality.”

(Letheby, 2021; 15- citing Hendricks et al., 2014, 2015a, 2015b, Krebs and Johansen 2013, Johansen and Krebs 2015, Rougemont-Bücking et al., 2019)

“Correlations have also been found with higher levels of pro-environmental behaviour (Frostmann and Sagioglou 2017) and higher levels of liberal political beliefs” (Nour et al. 2017).

(Letheby, 2021; 16)

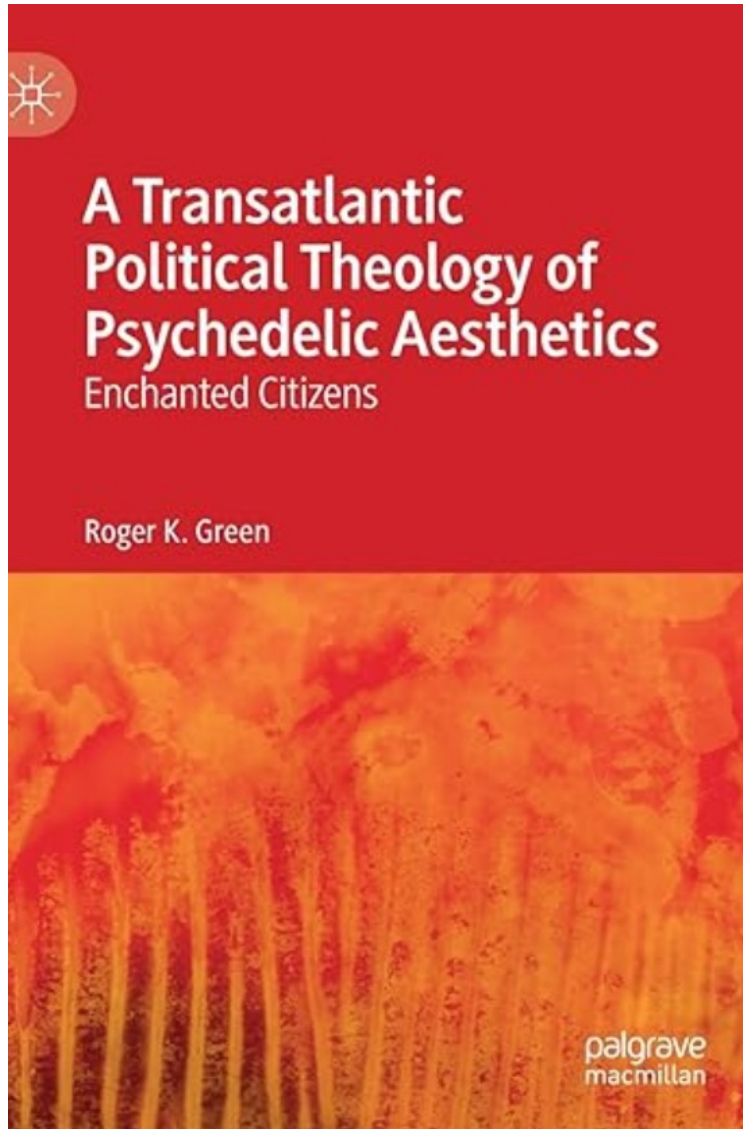
Bateson, Gregory, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972, 2000)

“What the unaided consciousness (unaided by art, dreams, and the like) can never appreciate is the *systemic* nature of the mind” (145).

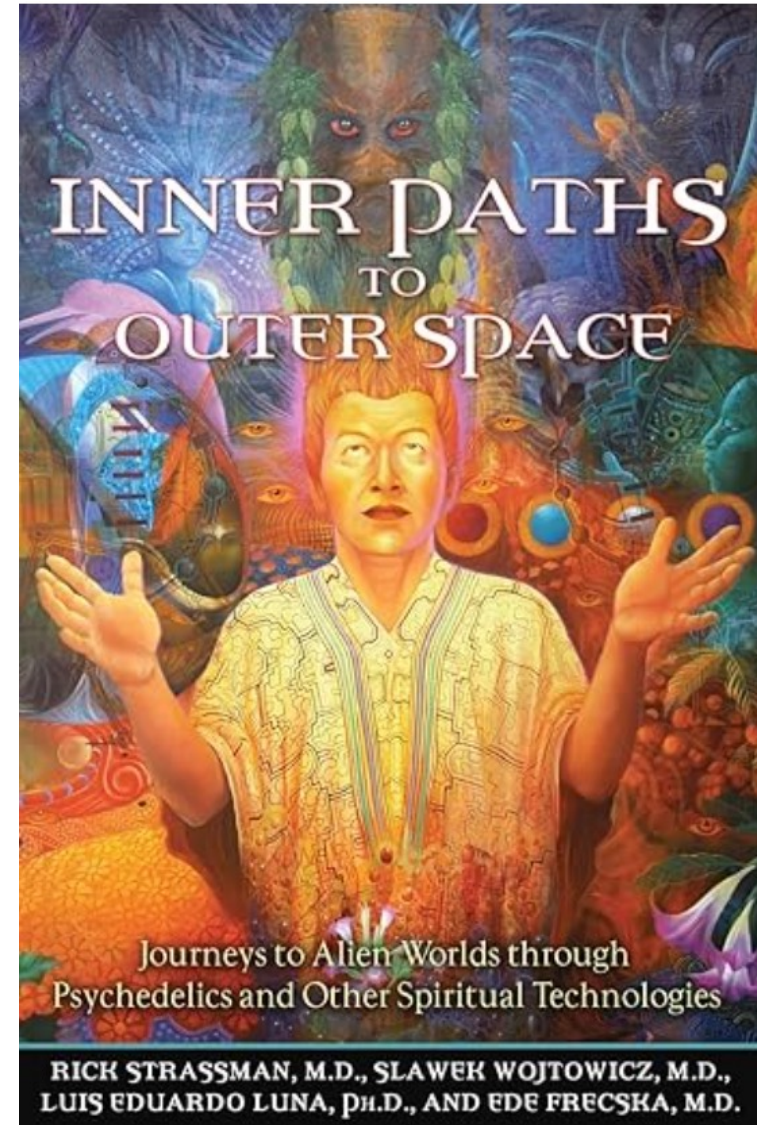
Degeneracy of Cures as Opposed to Root Causes

Bateson (on Doctors’ “Purposes”):

“... Research efforts [are]... Therefore focused (as attention focuses the consciousness) upon those short trains of causality which they could manipulate, by means of drugs or other intervention, to correct more or less specific and identifiable states or symptoms. Whenever they discover... an effective “cure” for something, research in that area ceas[es] and attention [is] directed elsewhere. We can now prevent polio, but nobody knows much more about the systemic aspects of that fascinating disease. Research on it has ceased or is, at best, confined to improving the vaccines... But a bag of tricks for curing or preventing a list of specified diseases provides no overall wisdom” (ibid).



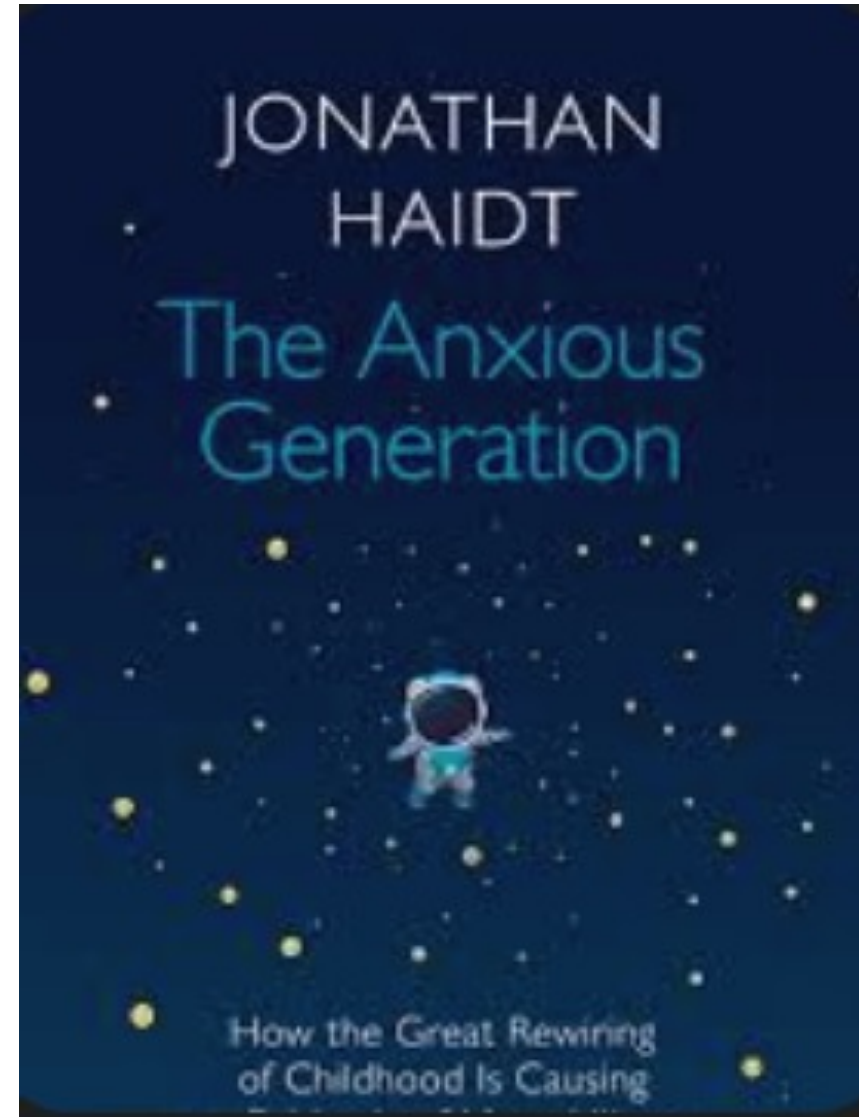
Roger K. Green (2019)
***A Transatlantic Political Theology
of Psychedelic Aesthetics***



Strassman, Rick et al. (2008)
Inner Paths to Outer Space,

Technology as a Substantial Risk Factor

- “Attention is a precious substance that companies extract and sell to their paying customers—the advertisers... Competing against each other for users’ attention, and... They’ll do anything to hold onto their users even if they harm them in the process” (Haidt, 2024; 238).
- To “encounter something beautiful, such as sunlight reflected on water, or cherry blossoms wafting on gentle spring breezes, [the] first instinct is to take a photograph or video, perhaps to post somewhere... Our phones drown us in quantity while reducing quality” (Ibid; 214-15).



Empathy and “Enjoyable Purpose”- Cultural Constructs

Increased Media and Technology on Wellness

- “...acts of kindness are framed as a strategy for personal happiness. Altruism no longer merely a good in itself has become a vehicle for our own “well-being”” (Lembke, 2021; 34).
- **Considering Media and Tech:** “Emergency is present or only just around the corner; and long-term wisdom must therefore be sacrificed to expediency, even though there is a dim awareness that expediency will never give a long-term solution” (Bateson, 1972, 2000; 442).

NOTE: Consider Bateson’s argument in the constant of instant gratification via technology and the AI race’s potential, detrimental effects by companies race to market for the sole “ purpose” of profitability and number one market share (see MIT technologist, Max Tegmark’s arguments here. Source in Bibliography)

- “Conscious purpose is now empowered to upset the balances of the body, of society, and of the biological world around us. A pathology—a loss of balance—is threatened” (Bateson, 1972, 2000; 440).

Empathy and “Enjoyable Purpose”

“It is characteristic of the 1960s that a large number of people are looking to the psychedelic drugs for some sort of wisdom or some sort of enlargement of consciousness, and I think this symptom of our epoch probably arises as an attempt to compensate for our excessive purposiveness. But I am not sure that wisdom can be got that way. What is required is not simply a relaxation of consciousness to let the unconscious material gush out. To do this is merely to exchange one partial view of the self for the other partial view. I suspect that what is needed is the synthesis of the two views and this is more difficult”

(Bateson, 1972, 2000; 444).

On the Importance of Aesthetics

“An aesthetically pleasant environment supports deep inner exploration”

(Strassman, 2008; 116)



**SLAVE COBALT MINES FOOTAGE
REVEALS WHERE YOUR
PHONE, LAPTOP & GADGETS COME FROM**

Final Thoughts...

Adapted Image Sources: (Left) Gross, Terry (NPR, 2023),
(Right) Gaddari, Ibrahim (Lovin Malta, 2023)

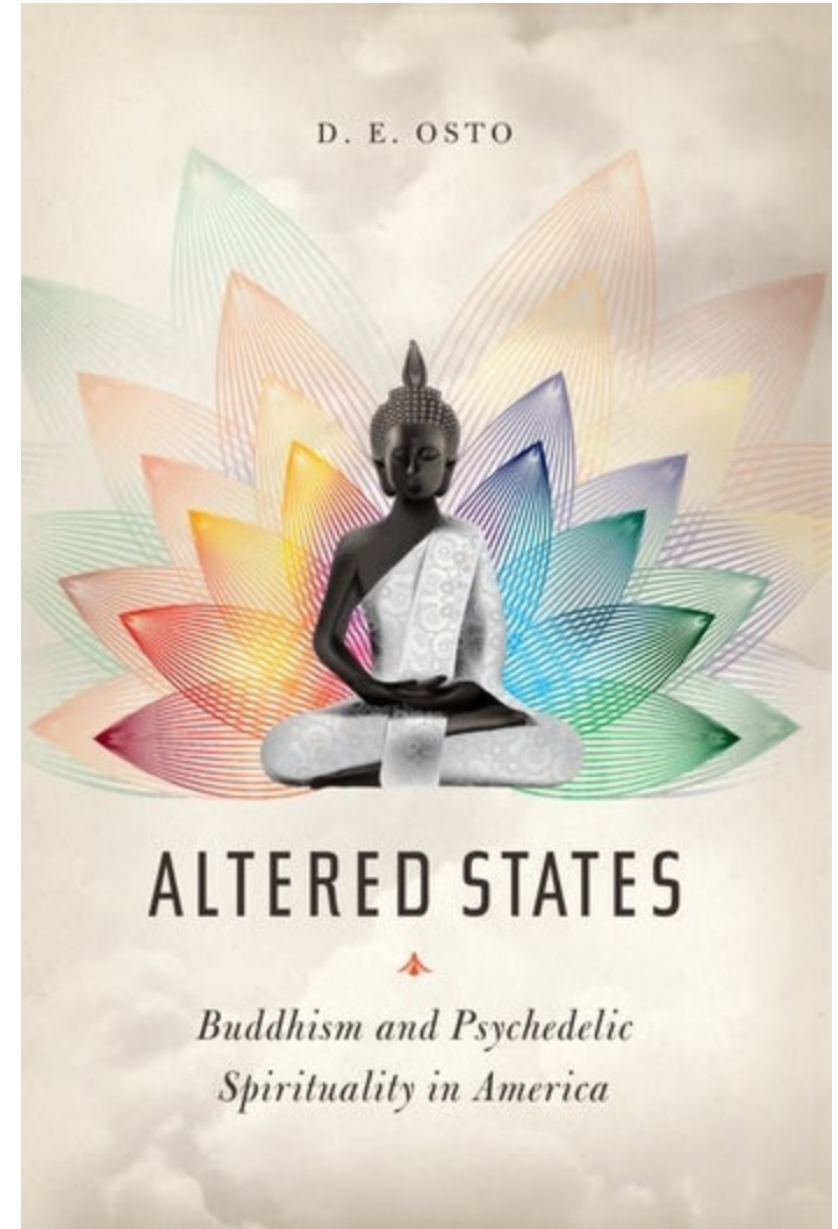
“But since our minds—and this includes our tools and actions—are only part of the larger mind, its computations can be confused by our contradictions and confusions. Since it contains our insanity, the immanent mind is inevitably subject to possible insanity. It is in our power, with our technology, to create insanity in the larger system of which we are parts”

(Bateson, 1972, 2000; 473).

Final Thoughts: Osto, Douglas (2016)

“If life transcends the bounds of human reason, then perhaps altered states are one of humanity’s means of reorienting ourselves when current rationality has reached its limit”

(Osto, 2016; 214).



Source References and Recommended Further Reading

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