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By **Myron Stolaroff, M.A.** (myron@qnet.com)

Albert Hofmann, inventor of LSD and other valuable compounds, has now reached his 96th birthday. While his body experiences some of the effects of aging, presenting a few aches and pains, this does not prevent his satisfying afternoon walks around the beautiful landscape that surrounds his Swiss home. His mind is clear and his voice is strong and articulate.

For some two years now, Dr. Hofmann has not been receiving interviewers or visitors, feeling that he has completely expressed his views in available published material. He did, however, consent to a final documentary, a history of LSD being prepared by the National Film Board of Canada. This documentary promises to be the best treatment of the subject filmed to date. At age 95, Dr. Hofmann gave a very inspirational interview, a portion of which will appear in the initial release.

For the balance of this Hofmann Report, we are pleased to introduce our advisor Ralph Metzner.

Ralph Metzner obtained a B.A. in Philosophy and Psychology at Oxford University, and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Harvard University, and also held a postdoctoral fellowship in Psychopharmacology at the Harvard Medical School. As reported in *Shaman's Drum*, (Number 51, 1999), Ralph Metzner is world renowned as a pioneer in the study of consciousness and transformative experience. He worked with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert on psychedelic research, edited the *Psychedelic Review*, co-authored *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964), and edited *The Ecstatic Adventure* (1968). He is also the author of *Maps of Consciousness* (1971), *Know Your Type* (1979), *Opening to Inner Light* (1986), and *The Well of Remembrance* (1994). He has pursued research in altered states of consciousness and cross-cultural methods of consciousness expansion, and published more than seventy-five articles on consciousness, shamanism, alchemy, transformation, and mythology. He is a professor of psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, and maintains a private practice of psychotherapy in the Bay Area. He is president and co-founder of the Green Earth Foundation (<http://www.rmetzner-greenearth.org/>), a non-profit educational organization devoted to healing and harmonizing the human relationship with the Earth. His most recently published book is *The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience* (Origin Press, 1998), and *Green Psychology, Transforming Our Relationship to Earth* (Inner Traditions International, 1999). Dr. Metzner can be contacted via e-mail at rmetzner@svn.net

Ralph Metzner has now been active in the field of Consciousness Studies, including altered states induced by drugs, plants, and other means, for over thirty-five years. Ralph has been one of the most dedicated explorers in investigating various means and methods of producing profoundly altered states. Starting in the 1960s with psychedelic drugs such as LSD and psilocybin, his searches led him to non-drug methods used throughout history and around the globe. His investigations cover an extremely wide range of practices that mankind has used to achieve high levels of awareness and the discovery of our true nature.

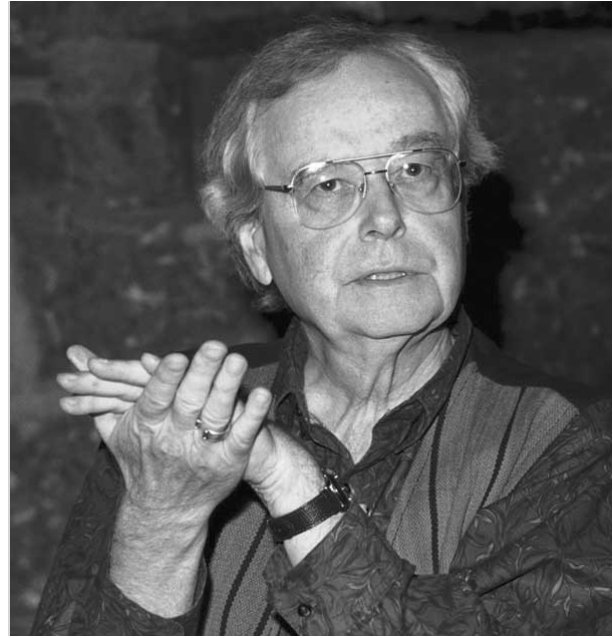
Our soul's yearning, whether we realize it or not, is to release our Self from our self-made bonds and unfold into the far reaches of the enormous potentials and exciting realizations that are our birthright. I don't know anyone who has searched

more diligently than Ralph Metzner to uncover the various devices and methods that mankind has developed through the ages, over extensive areas of our planet, to reach this most satisfying of all achievements — to find who we really are and the ultimate nature of Reality. The results of much of his dedicated work are presented in his outstanding book, *The Unfolding Self* (cited above). In this volume, Ralph has gathered an exhaustive number of methods of transformation, so that seekers of almost any persuasion or belief system can find a vehicle which will ignite the flame of desire for further development. He has studied the practices of Shamans and Wise Ones that have been applied throughout history and around the world. He has become thoroughly familiar with the various stages of progression and levels of achievement; he has recognized those obstacles which appear as hindrances to persons locked in various false belief systems or in various states of progress; and he has studied the procedures which can be helpful in freeing one from this spectrum of barriers. I believe that anyone who is seriously seeking self-understanding, achieving profound realization, and freedom from afflictions, will find a great amount of help in this book.

In the introduction, Metzner states: “there exists in human experience another kind of transformation, a radical restructuring of the entire psyche that has been variously referred to as mystical experience, ecstasy, cosmic consciousness, oceanic feeling, oneness, transcendence, union with God, nirvana, satori, liberation, peak experience, and by other names.” In this introduction, many metaphors are given to describe such transformation.

In the following chapters, various aspects of transformation are dealt with, such as waking up from dreaming to reality, discovering the veils of illusion which prevent us from experiencing our deeper Self, and methods of freeing ourselves to discover our true nature. The latter includes such practices as moving from captivity to liberation; purification by Inner Fire, reconciling with the Inner Enemy; dying and being reborn, integrating the inner Wild Animal, journey to the Place of Vision and Power; returning to the Source. I doubt if anyone can read this book without gaining fresh understanding of human possibilities and the enormous potential that lies in waiting when we commit ourselves to the journey of realization.

It is clear that in more recent times Ralph’s



interests have focused more directly on the use of native plant materials, and specifically Ayahuasca, the subject of his recent book *AYAHUASCA: Human Consciousness and the Spirit of Nature*, (Thunder’s Mouth Press, NY, 1999). He attributes his move in this direction to several factors (see the *Shaman’s Drum* interview noted above): an intentional move away from the newly created synthetic psychedelics; the native plants have been thoroughly proven and established over long periods of time by numbers of users in various places in the world, including Africa and South America; their extraordinarily powerful healing and transformative powers have been very well established; an analysis of the practices of many different groups reveal common procedures that effectively focus individual experiences and support the participants in having fruitful outcomes. For example, the bonding of a group and the interchange of energy is of great help to the individual who may be running into difficult or painful areas in his/her unconscious. The group support provides assurance which eases the intensity of the discomfort and permits the subject to more readily resolve the situation and rise to the surface. Also, the custom of dancing and singing together that some gatherings employ strengthens the bonds and eases the passageway to higher realization.

The final section of *Ayahuasca* deals with Conclusions, Reflections, and Speculations. Here are some excerpts from this chapter:

“...the drinking of ayahuasca is something like

a master cure for all illness...it is clear from the literature and stories recounted in this volume, that remarkable physical healings and resolutions of psychological difficulties can occur with this medicine. Early in the twentieth century an extract of the vine was used successfully in the treatment of Parkinson's disease, a possible application that has not to date been followed up. There have been anecdotal accounts of complete remission of some cancers after one or two sessions with ayahuasca."

"...The research by Grob, McKenna, Callaway and their associates with the Brazilian hoasca church known as UDV showed that there were significant differences on several personality trait measures between the long-term use of hoasca and a nonusing group. Psychiatric interviews also confirmed these differences in that the subjects reported making positive changes in their behavior (less drinking and drug use, more responsibility and confidence) as a result of their participation in the hoasca ceremonies...The hoasca users performed better than controls on short-term verbal learning tasks—capabilities that usually decline with age."

"From the stories related in this volume, one cannot help but be impressed by the remarkable health-enhancing effects attributed to the purging action of the vine. People describe the liberating, lightening, color-enhancing, strengthening after-effect of *la purga* in near-rapturous tones...Many first-time ayahuasca users have to overcome an initial inhibition to vomiting, because of its usual associations with sickness. Once this is done, they find that the purging is easy and effortless and not at all accompanied by nausea or queasiness."

"There is an interesting convergence that often happens between physical purging and psychic purging—what seems to be a kind of discharge of negatively toned psychic contents. People who do not have any appreciable physical toxicity in their system may yet find themselves throwing up and thereby releasing the toxic residues of past emotional entanglements, the guilt and shame loads of traumatic abuse, or the self-limiting, self-defeating thought-patterns of addictions, compulsions and other neurotic behaviors. Sometimes people might even find that what they are discharging through the vomiting is not so much their personal "stuff," but some portion of the collective consciousness-bands of humanity."

Metzner completes the *Ayahuasca* book by examining possible effects on the world situation.

"...the unprecedented industrial-technological assault on the biosphere we are witnessing in our time is rooted in the mechanistic scientism of the modern world, which deliberately divorced itself from spirituality, values, and consciousness. There exists a vast gulf in common understanding between what we regard as sacred and what we regard as natural. And yet, out of the experiences of millions of individuals in the Western world with hallucinogenic sacraments, as well as other shamanic practices, we are seeing the re-emergence of the ancient integrative worldview that sees all of life as an interdependent web of relationships, that needs to be carefully protected and preserved."

After a historical review of how entheogenic and native plant substances have come into use and the impacts they have made up to current times, Metzner associates these developments with an instinctive evolutionary or karmic development to counter the mounting crisis in world civilization. "Certainly, it is not difficult to see the parallels in several cultural movements that seek to correct the dangerous imbalance in humanity's relation to nature: in deep ecology and ecofeminism, which call for a respectful, egalitarian, ecocentric attitude towards the natural world; in the organic gardening and farming movements, which seek to return to traditional methods avoiding chemical fertilizers and pesticides; in the movement to increased use of herbal, nutritional and complementary healing modalities with less reliance on high-tech interventions; and in several other philosophical, scientific and religious movements..."

In these diverse movements and disciplines toward healthier recognition of interrelatedness, "the respectful use of entheogenic plant medicines in spiritual/therapeutic contexts may yet come to play a highly significant role...Instead of the usual attitude of arrogant and exploitative superiority, those who have experienced ayahuasca and other entheogens are more likely to find themselves humbled and awed by the mysterious powers of nature, and strive to live in a simpler way that minimizes environmental harm and celebrates the astonishing diversity and beauty of life."

Ralph Metzner is to be congratulated and honored for his dedicated efforts to preserve our planet and to help bring peace and fulfillment to its inhabitants. ■