

thanatos to eros by myron stolaroff

REVIEWED BY
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THE SEARCH for a relationship with the universal reality about us is one of the most important goals in human life. It has to be conducted by

two entirely distinct processes which, while concurrent, are totally different. The passage through your lifetime of eighty to a hundred years (give or take a few decades) involves learning relationships — giving and taking — with those who share your journey on this planet. And, at the same time, you play a role at this moment of human history. Living your own personal life in the immediate present, you are also, to an often unknowable extent, a contributor to the structure of the world about you.

Myron Stolaroff has given us an autobiography, a tale of psychological and spiritual evolution that subtly brings together these two threads, these two roles; he is both the struggling seeker for wholeness in himself, and a discoverer of new paths to wholeness for others.



Photo by Marc Franklin

"Sasha" & Ann Shulgin

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THE story of THANATOS TO EROS takes us through two marriages, over the course of the author's growth from a successful engineer to an independent businessman, and eventually, we see his first steps and subsequent strides as a researcher and explorer of human consciousness. We move with him through the often intense and difficult changes that take place as he learns to use his chosen tools, the psychedelic drugs, beginning with LSD in 1956, and progressing to other powerful visionary plants and drugs over the subsequent years. He is trying to, in the words of Carl Jung, "make the unconscious conscious," as the way to attain realization of his ultimate self. We discover, along with him, that this is a hard goal to attain, and that it must be sought with complete inner integrity and fearless self-examination.

Spun into the narrative are reports of some extraordinary experiences, brought about by the use of appropriate psychedelic drugs. As Stolaroff learns himself, he gains in understanding of others who are suffering pain and self-rejection, and begins to guide friends who come to him in trouble, through carefully controlled and monitored psychedelic sessions. Needless to say, since the imposition of draconian laws in recent years, this kind of deep spiritual work, done with the aid of psychedelic materials, is no longer possible, and will remain forbidden until the public is better informed and directs its lawmakers to change such restrictions on these kinds of drugs.

THANATOS TO EROS, in the meantime, will serve the general reader and would-be researcher by defining the guidelines for the proper and safe use of psychedelic drugs in

therapy and in spiritual growth. It gives us not only many beautifully presented glimpses of psychedelic experiences as they are undergone by family members and friends, but also allows us to follow the further development of many of these people in the months and years following their life-changing sessions.

Psychedelic experiences are not uniformly positive, as serious researchers know only too well. The psyche has its own agenda, and it includes exposure to places in the soul where sorrow and hopelessness reign supreme, where death stares implacably into the inner eyes, and only immense courage will bring the person through the dark tunnel and return him to light and livingness. Myron Stolaroff describes several of these difficult sessions, helping us understand that they can be of immense value in someone's spiritual progress, especially if they are shared with a guide who "knows the territory," and can help in the emotional working through of the fear and sadness that have come to the surface.

BUT THE TRUE treasure of this writing is the subtle message it offers the reader, as to the process of becoming a man of wisdom. All cultures through human history have respected the teacher, the shaman, the priest, and the curendero who has been available to his community, his extended family. Every society has its elders, its mavens, the wise, experienced and intuitive men and women who can offer answers to problems, counsel to the troubled, and medicine to the sick. They have lived long enough to have achieved certain levels of comprehension, to have seen connections between cause and effect, to have perceived the changes wrought by time. They have a form of knowing called wisdom.

However, it's a simple fact that the wise man, in his heart, doesn't know that he is a wise man; he is aware only of what he does not understand, cannot do, and does not yet know. He will often

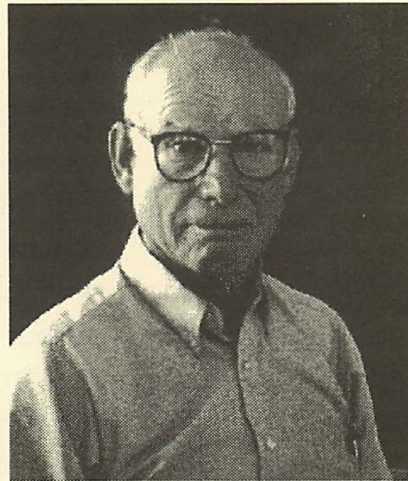
acknowledge having come to be more and more at peace with his immediate world, and perhaps having caught a glimpse of another world, an extended reality. His answers to anxious questions

have become increasingly direct and to the point. He no longer wastes time — his own or others' — as he used to in the past, and his life is increasingly involved with a continuing process of integrating information, both consciously and subconsciously.

In Myron Stolaroff, we have a gentle, giving person who has become a helper, and guide and rescuer to many about him, but who does not see himself as an elder of the tribe, a shaman, a wise man. This is the metaphor which is the second message of this remarkable book. Enjoy the day to day narratives, and the drug experiences (mostly joyful, some difficult) that contribute to the developing relationship between participants. But also follow the gradual evolution of an imaginative and intelligent person into a wise man who begins coming to peace with himself. It is a beautiful story.

This process of personal growth and understanding could just as well have involved Buddhist practices of meditation, or training in shamanic plant medicines, or any one of innumerable other methods of achieving wholeness. It so happens that, for this good man, psychedelic drugs have been the vehicle, and it is clear that they have served him well.

It was said by Lao Tse some 25 centuries ago: "*Understanding others is wisdom. Understanding yourself is enlightenment.*" This book is a unique illustration of what was meant by that great sage, and will enrich the inner world of the reader. •



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