

Article

John Allegro and the Psychedelic Mysteries Hypothesis

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Abstract

John Allegro's *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* posits that early Christianity derived from fertility cults involving psychedelic mushroom use. Though widely discredited by scholars when it was first published, the theory persists in popular culture and entheogenic discourse. This article evaluates the scholarly reception, methodological flaws, and enduring cultural impact of Allegro's thesis, particularly its role in the broader psychedelic mysteries hypothesis. Although Allegro's linguistic methodology has been rejected by most experts, his work has contributed to renewed interest in the role of entheogens in religious traditions, with some scholars attempting to salvage Allegro's intuitive insights while distancing themselves from his linguistic excesses. Due to its foundational methodological flaws, however, Allegro's work is best viewed as a historical curiosity rather than a reliable source for contemporary entheogenic scholarship.

Keywords: altered states of consciousness; early Christianity; entheogens; linguistic methodology; mushrooms; psychedelic mysteries hypothesis; religious experience; shamanism

1. Introduction

Despite widespread academic criticism and disdain, John Allegro's thesis in *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* (first published in 1970) continues to find traction in popular arguments for the presence of psychedelics in the ancient western religious traditions. Carl Ruck, in writing an addendum for the fortieth anniversary republication of the book, cites new supporting evidence while slamming the mainstream academy for ignoring or twisting Allegro's (2009) arguments. All this to maintain that, despite admitted methodological flaws, Allegro's work is still useful in support of the psychedelic mysteries hypothesis. We can see a trend toward this way of holding the ancient religious psychedelic hypothesis even as more humanities scholars continue to engage with entheogenicist claims, such as in public events like Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions hosting a conversation between scholar of early Christianity, Charles Stang, and Brian Muraresku, author of *The Immortality Key*. This event was sponsored by, among other institutions, Esalen, which regularly convenes scholars to work on the deep questions of human spiritual experience, practice, and potential, and Chacruna Institute for Psychedelic Plant Medicines founded by anthropologist Bia Labate. Existing work on Allegro has given fair due to the question of whether Ruck is correct that Allegro is a maligned and misunderstood scholar, or was he in fact a scoundrel, deliberately seeking to be sensationalistic in order to draw attention to himself (Hanegraaff 2012; cf. Jacobsen 1971, p. 246)? Re-examining the arguments on both sides shows that Allegro's approach fails to take seriously the available evidence for the role of psychoactive substances in religious experiences in antiquity and thus cannot be treated as a reliable source for contemporary entheogenic scholarship.



Academic Editor: Dyrón B. Daugherty

Received: 21 July 2025

Revised: 5 August 2025

Accepted: 7 August 2025

Published: 9 August 2025

Citation: Ascough, Richard S. 2025. John Allegro and the Psychedelic Mysteries Hypothesis. *Religions* 16: 1029. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16081029>

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2. Early Academic Reactions to Allegro

Allegro's *Sacred Mushroom* is highly controversial, and its linguistic and historical claims have been widely dismissed by experts. While Allegro was a trained Semitic philologist and one of the original scholars working on the Dead Sea Scrolls, his theories in the book stray far from accepted scholarship. When it was first published, the book was subjected to intense critique, primarily due to its central thesis that early Christianity originated from fertility cults that used hallucinogenic mushrooms like *Amanita muscaria* (the fly agaric mushroom) in their rituals. The book posits that Jesus was not a historical figure but a symbolic representation of these psychoactive substances. Allegro argues that many religious texts, including the Bible, arose from secret fertility cults that used psychoactive mushrooms. He suggests that key words in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic (and others) can be traced back to the Sumerian language. Indo-European and Semitic languages originate in hidden sexual and fertility references encoded in ancient ideograms or pictographs, albeit filtered through a secret cultic language.

Allegro claims to have discovered a link between these ancient languages hitherto undetected; in doing so, his primary argument is linguistic. Sumerian thus acts as the key to unlocking the hidden meanings behind names and words in later texts. Religious texts, particularly the Bible, encode secret mushroom cult teachings through deliberately obscured language. He suggests that early translators and religious authorities masked the “true” meanings through puns, wordplay, and euphemisms rooted in misunderstood Sumerian terms. He sees mythological and biblical narratives (e.g., the story of Jesus) as metaphorical expressions of psycho-religious experiences induced by hallucinogenic substances. Language, in his view, is the key to decoding this hidden tradition.

Allegro's arguments were given extensive academic critique, starting with the fundamental problem that historical linguistics has determined that Sumerian is a language isolate (Jacobsen 1971, p. 236); it is not linked to Semitic or Indo-European languages, which find their origins in proto-Sinaitic, developed around 1800–1500 BCE, the script for which evolved from Egyptian hieroglyphs into Phoenician, which then influenced Greek, Latin, and others. Allegro disregards this history by using a speculative etymological method that ignores phonological rules, sound changes, and historical language development. He often equates words from unrelated languages based on superficial similarity rather than shared linguistic ancestry. His method involves drawing connections between words in different languages (like Sumerian and Hebrew) without demonstrating the phonological or morphological changes needed to establish genuine etymological relationships (Hoffman 2006).

More thorough condemnation, with plenty of contrarian evidence and illustration, is found in reviews published in academic journals. For example, after demonstrating how Allegro erroneously relates words from many languages to create a system where they “inevitably ad up to the *Amanita muscaria*” (Richardson 1971, p. 348) Cyril Richardson concludes that

were Allegro to apply this type of scholarship to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *New York Telephone Directory* he would undoubtedly be able to unmask both works as extensive cryptograms of his fictitious cult. For he observes no rules of language or evidence, save those of his own imagination. (Richardson 1971, p. 251)

Nor is the critique limited to linguistics. Richardson points out that Allegro incorrectly assumes that this mushroom always has a red cap whereas it can come in other colors as well, such as white, yellow or purple (Richardson 1971, p. 252), an error that has persisted as some entheogenicists have continued to misidentify mushrooms and other flora in ancient

and especially medieval visuals (see [Huggins 2024](#)). This is minor, however, compared to the errors in etymology.

In a companion review in the same journal, Thorkild Jacobsen observes that given the fundamental flaw in the method—namely, assuming that Sumerian is related to Indo-European languages—the conclusions cannot be taken seriously ([Jacobsen 1971](#), p. 237). He then goes on to demonstrate, in great detail, examples of places where Allegro has misunderstood or misconstrued linguist connections, concluding that his etymologizing is based largely on “his somewhat vivid imagination” ([Jacobsen 1971](#), p. 241) and that many of the sexual and/or erotic features Allegro describes are unknown within Sumerian religious rites (cf. [Jacobsen 1971](#), p. 246).

An article published in *Time* magazine shortly after the publication of *Sacred Mushroom* summarizes the tenor of the response at the time:

Besides rejecting such word games, critics have pointed out that there is more historical evidence that Jesus actually lived in Judea than that the mushroom ever did. Last week 15 distinguished theologians and philologists—including Sir Godfrey Driver, one of the chief translators of the Old Testament in the New English Bible—took to the letters columns of the Times of London to denounce Allegro’s book as “an essay in fantasy rather than philology,” which is “not based on any philological or other evidence” of merit. ([Religion: Jesus as Mushroom 1970](#))

Indeed, if there is any merit at all in the argument in the book, it is lost in the myriad of linguist fallacies that are perpetuated throughout; “By so grossly overstating his case, he has thrown away the few points he might have scored, and thus contributed more confusion to an already confused field of inquiry” ([Pherigo 1971](#), p. 203).

In a 2012 blog post Wouter Hanegraaff reflects on Allegro’s transition from respected scholar to controversial figure, suggesting that Allegro’s desire to challenge established norms led him to make increasingly speculative claims, ultimately undermining his credibility in the academic community. He points out that some of Allegro’s more speculative claims are not unique to him, having precedent in earlier Enlightenment writings, although Allegro seems not to recognize this. What Allegro adds is his erudition, documenting claims by heavy footnoting, yet he eventually succumbs to an overly ambitious desire for sensationalism.

In short, Allegro’s claim of linguistic linkage is based more on speculative reinterpretation and esoteric theory than on rigorous linguistic or historical analysis. In a somewhat unrestrainedly damning review, Edgar Krentz proposes (tongue-in-cheek) that the book is written pseudonymously, and that both the title and the name “John Allegro” are really coded puns that alert the reader that the book is a “learned joke” that betrays the real author’s fear of mushrooms and his attempt to write his way out of his sexual fixations. The author’s first name itself, John, is derived from Hebrew and means “God has been gracious to me” and his surname is a musical notation that adds “quickly” to the clue. Of course, Krentz is not serious, but neither, he says, is the book: “the method used on the dust jacket will alert you to the kind of nonsense that folk etymology based on similarity of sound (a method strongly rejected by responsible linguistics) leads to” ([Krentz 1971](#), p. 404). Thus, while *Sacred Mushroom* presents an unconventional thesis linking early Christianity to psychedelic mushroom use, the academic consensus largely rejects Allegro’s arguments due to methodological flaws and lack of credible evidence.

3. Entry into the Popular Imagination

While mainstream academia continues to dismiss Allegro’s hypotheses due to methodological criticisms, his work endures in various subcultures that challenge conventional narratives and seek deeper, often esoteric, understandings of religious history. His central

thesis, namely, that Christianity originated from a fertility cult involving the consumption of psychoactive mushrooms like *Amanita muscaria*, has resonated particularly with countercultural and alternative spirituality groups. For example, [Terence McKenna \(1992\)](#) references Allegro's ideas, integrating them into broader discussions about the role of psychoactive plants in religious experiences. This perspective contributed to the entheogen movement, which examines the use of psychoactive substances in spiritual and religious contexts (see [Greer 2025](#)).

More broadly, Allegro's proposition that early Christian narratives were coded accounts of mushroom-induced visions has appealed to conspiracy theorists and those skeptical of organized religion. They view his work as evidence of suppressed truths about the origins of religious traditions, aligning with broader narratives that question established historical accounts. We see this particularly in the popularization of his work recently in the podcast of Joe Rogan ([Hancock and Muraresku 2020](#)). In fact, in recent years, Allegro's theories have permeated internet culture and popular media. Podcasts and online forums have discussed his ideas, often in the context of exploring unconventional interpretations of religious history. For instance, discussions on platforms like Reddit have revisited his claims, reflecting a sustained interest in alternative religious narratives. Allegro's work has also influenced artists and writers exploring themes of mysticism and altered consciousness. His theories have inspired creative interpretations that reimagine religious symbolism through the lens of psychoactive experiences, contributing to a niche but persistent cultural motif that intertwines spirituality with psychedelic imagery.

Since Allegro's publication, there more work has been done on the role of psychoactive substances in ancient religious practices, an area of study that is separate from Allegro's linguistic claims. In *The Road to Eleusis* Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl Ruck argue for the use of ergot-derived substances in the Eleusinian Mysteries. Their work is more limited in scope than Allegro's, using historical, botanical, and archeological evidence without radical linguistic claims (for a critique of their arguments see [Mosurinjohn and Ascough 2025](#)). Ruck, in particular, has continued to explore how entheogenic substances might have influenced some aspects of Greco-Roman and early Christian ritual life, again relying more on contextual and archeological evidence than linguistic speculation ([Wasson et al. 1986](#); [Ruck 2006](#); [Ruck and Hoffman 2013](#); more on Ruck below).

Even some who are sympathetic to Allegro's overall thesis about the predominance of psychedelic use in antique religions are skeptical of his methodology. For example, Michael Hoffman critiques Allegro's approach for relying on speculative etymologies and overreaching linguistic claims and indeed blames Allegro's failure to apply rigorous comparative linguistic and historical standards for his rejection by mainstream scholarship (2006). Ultimately, Hoffman concludes that although the idea of mushrooms as sacraments in ancient religions is plausible and worth further investigation, Allegro's specific arguments about Christianity's mushroom origins do not hold up under scholarly scrutiny.

Gordon Wasson, a pioneering ethnomycologist who co-authored *The Road to Eleusis*, acknowledges the general interest in the role of psychoactive fungi in religion. However, he is generally dismissive of Allegro's linguistic methodology as speculative and lacking rigor, noting (mostly in passing; see, e.g., [Wasson et al. 1978](#)) that Allegro's sweeping conclusions about language were not supported by historical linguistics, making them unreliable. Terence McKenna, a noted advocate for the historical role of psychoactive mushrooms, appreciated Allegro's broader suggestion that entheogens were important in ancient religious practices (1992). Nonetheless, he expresses reservations about Allegro's linguistic theories. McKenna recognizes Allegro's work as provocative but not convincingly argued in terms of actual linguistic derivations, noting that Allegro's claims about hidden mushroom cults encoded in Christian texts were based on linguistic leaps that lacked

verifiable historical or linguistic foundations. McKenna himself popularized the idea that psychoactive mushrooms might have played a role in early religious experiences across cultures, but he is generally more cautious about linking these ideas directly to specific biblical or early Christian texts in the way Allegro does.

Despite their shared interest in the entheogenic hypothesis, both Wasson and McKenna reject Allegro's specific linguistic arguments as overly speculative, lacking in methodological rigor, and not grounded in the accepted comparative linguistics of Semitic and Indo-European languages. Their skepticism centers on Allegro's failure to adhere to the standard practices of historical linguistics, which require rigorous comparative evidence and sound phonological correspondences.

More recently, in *The Immorality Key* Brian Muraresku does not adopt Allegro's specific claims about the centrality of mushrooms to Christianity but instead situates Allegro's work in the broader conversation about entheogens in ancient religious practices (Muraresku 2020). Allegro was one of the first to propose that Christianity (or at least early Christian practices) might have entheogenic roots. His willingness to question mainstream narratives, even if based on speculative linguistics, is seen by Muraresku as part of a lineage of inquiry into the hidden history of psychedelics. Thus, Muraresku uses Allegro's hypothesis to highlight the larger point: that there is a persistent theme of sacred intoxication in the ancient Mediterranean world. Muraresku's own argument, which focuses more on the use of wine infused with psychoactive substances (entheogenic kykeon in Eleusinian and Dionysian mysteries), is presented as a more archeologically and chemically grounded continuation of the broad idea Allegro explored. Muraresku suggests that while Allegro's thesis about a mushroom-based Christianity cannot be sustained, Allegro was onto something important: that the experiential, visionary, and ecstatic dimensions of ancient religion have often been ignored by conventional scholarship. Muraresku argues that Allegro's work is part of the impetus for contemporary scholars to rethink these dimensions using better evidence (such as archaeochemistry and analysis of ancient residues). One key distinction Muraresku makes is that Allegro focused on *Amanita muscaria* as the entheogenic substance, while Muraresku's investigation revolves around evidence for spiked wines and ergot-based brews (like the kykeon at Eleusis). Muraresku uses new archaeobotanical and chemical evidence to support the idea that ancient people imbibed psychedelic drinks in religious contexts, but he avoids Allegro's leap to mushroom-centered Christianity (for a consideration of Muraresku's arguments see Mosurinjohn and Ascough 2025 and the bibliography therein).

As we can see, Allegro's work remains an outlier, rejected for its poor linguistic methodology and its sensational conclusions. Yet, the broader conversation about entheogens in religious contexts continues to gain cautious interest, especially with broader archeological, pharmacological, and anthropological evidence. Scholars today are far more likely to look for cultural, ritual, and archeological evidence than to rely on Allegro-style linguistic theories. Nevertheless, Allegro does have a few supporters beyond the conspiracy theorists such as Rogan, most notably in Carl Ruck, who continues to tout Allegro's academic bona fides.

4. Ruck's Revisitation of Allegro

In the fortieth anniversary edition of *Sacred Mushroom*, Carl Ruck contributes a lengthy addendum with the title "*Fungus Redivivus*" (Ruck 2009). Ruck, a classicist and a leading figure in the study of entheogens in ancient religions, takes a nuanced approach: he does not fully endorse Allegro's radical thesis that Christianity was a covert mushroom cult, but he seeks to resituate Allegro's work within a broader historical and intellectual context that takes the role of psychoactive substances in religious experience seriously.

Ruck begins by acknowledging Allegro's work as a provocative and pioneering text, albeit one that has long been marginalized and often ridiculed in mainstream scholarship. He suggests that Allegro's audacious linking of Christianity's origins to fertility cults and mushroom symbolism was too radical for his time and thus has been unfairly dismissed. Ruck argues that Allegro's linguistic speculations, while methodologically unorthodox, should not overshadow the larger issue Allegro was grappling with the potential importance of entheogens in shaping ancient religious consciousness.

Ruck contextualizes Allegro's work within the growing body of entheogenic research that has emerged since the 1960s. He highlights that the so-called "psychedelic revolution" of that era coincided with a revival of interest in how psychoactive substances, particularly mushrooms like *Amanita muscaria* and *Psilocybe* species, may have played a role in religious rituals across cultures. Wasson's work on the Vedic Soma and the Eleusinian Mysteries (Wasson 1968), for example, suggested a serious basis for entheogenic influences in ancient rites. Ruck suggests that Allegro's real contribution lay not in his linguistic argument, but in his intuition that entheogens might be part of the hidden history of religion. Allegro, according to Ruck, was not a lone eccentric but part of a broader intellectual movement challenging the materialist reductionism of modern scholarship and the tendency to ignore or suppress the role of altered states of consciousness in religious life.

Ruck is careful not to endorse Allegro's specific linguistic claims, all the while claiming that Allegro was a master of many languages and fully competent to make such arguments (Ruck 2009, p. 364). He acknowledges that mainstream linguistics has rightly criticized Allegro for methodological overreach: Allegro's leaps from Sumerian to Semitic and Indo-European languages do not follow the comparative method and are not supported by robust phonological or morphological evidence. However, Ruck sees value in Allegro's willingness to think across linguistic and cultural boundaries in search of religious archetypes. In Ruck's view, Allegro's core intuition that language itself may carry the residue of ancient sacramental practices deserves a more sensitive reading. Ruck argues that language is a dynamic and symbolic system that can encode mythic and ritual elements in ways that resist strict historical analysis. Thus, while Allegro's linguistic claims are unsustainable as historical etymologies, Ruck suggests they may have a kind of "mythopoetic" truth: they point to the persistence of entheogenic motifs in the symbols and stories of religious traditions.

Indeed, despite his caution, Ruck proceeds to make the same methodological moves as Allegro does in trying to bolster the latter's argument. For example, Ruck is correct that the English words "carnage", "carnation", and "carnal" are related to one another (Ruck 2009, p. 365), but not *simply* because they sound alike. They all share the root "carn-" which means "flesh" or "meat". While the meanings have diverged over time, the shared root reflects their common origin. But this is within the same language. What this does not prove is what Ruck seeks to demonstrate, namely, that Allegro is correct in linking words across completely unrelated linguist groups (i.e., Sumerian and Indo-European) based on sound. Such words are, at best, homophones, although given the how little we know of actual pronunciation (esp. of Sumerian) even this is shaky.

Or again on the word "mushroom" (Ruck 2009, p. 370), where Ruck argues (again correctly at first) that it probably entered English from Old French *mousseron*, which in turn may have roots in Latin *mucor* (mold) or possibly a connection to the Greek word *mukēs* (μύκης), meaning fungus or mushroom. This is also the root of modern words like "mycology." The word has evolved phonetically over centuries, with forms like "mushrom," "muscheron," and "mushrump" appearing in Middle and Early Modern English. However, Ruck pushes further, now linking the Greek *mukēs* to another Greek word, *μυστήριον* (*mustērion*) from which we get the English word "mystery." In Greek the word can refer to

secret religious rites or ceremonies, particularly in mystery religions such as the Eleusinian or Orphic Mysteries. Unfortunately for Ruck's argument, the Greek words *μυστήριον* (*mustērion*) and *μύκης* (*mukēs*) are not linguistically related. They come from entirely different roots and have distinct meanings and derivations: *μυστήριον* is derived from *μύειν* (*muein*), meaning to close (the eyes or lips), often in the context of keeping something secret, hence the connection to secret religious rites (the "mysteries"). This word family is about secrecy, initiation, and hidden knowledge. The word *μύκης* (*mukēs*), on the other hand, is a word of uncertain origin that may predate its Indo-European ancestry (albeit not Sumerian); *mukēs* does not show parallels in other branches of the language. What can be demonstrated, however, is that its word family is about biological growths, particularly fungi. Though they sound somewhat similar, *μυστήριον* and *μύκης* are not etymologically connected; they are not, as Ruck claims, "cognates" (Ruck 2009, p. 370). The resemblance is coincidental, and they derive from different Greek roots with different semantic fields: one from the domain of religion and secrecy, the other from nature and biology.

Ruck makes a slippage in arguing that "the truth of the matter is simply that the world's language tree is a hybrid formed by intermixing different language families; and the criticism of Allegro's linguistics is based upon outmoded and simplistic assumptions about a still evolving discipline" (Ruck 2009, p. 366). Here, he assumes that (a) *all* languages are related and (b) if linguists do not agree with this then they are simply not "evolved" enough in their methods. But linguistics is a solid discipline with a strong pedigree, where there is agreement that not all languages belong to the same tree (as is the case with Sumerian). Despite his best efforts to defend Allegro's thesis, Ruck admits at the end that the linguistic evidence may not hold up to scrutiny. Yet this, to his mind, does not nullify Allegro's work, since other evidence has come to light that is based on archeology and paleobiology.

Moving beyond linguistics, Ruck delves deeper into the symbolic and mythic roles of mushrooms in the ancient Mediterranean world by building on Allegro's non-linguistic arguments (as does Irvin 2009). He draws connections between mushroom imagery and the mysteries of fertility and regeneration, core themes in many ancient cults. Mushrooms, with their sudden appearance and potent effects, were natural symbols of divine intervention and rebirth. He traces the iconography of mushrooms in various cultural contexts: the Eleusinian Mysteries, Dionysian rites, and the Roman festival of Saturnalia, among others. While Ruck does not argue that mushrooms were central to Christian ritual, he suggests that early Christianity emerged in a world saturated with mystery cults, many of which used intoxicants or entheogens as sacraments. In this sense, Allegro's focus on mushrooms as a hidden key to understanding religious ecstasy reflects a broader truth about the experiential roots of ancient spirituality.

Yet, as biblical scholar Rick DeMaris points out, "John Allegro's *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* and other texts like it . . . miss the actual correspondences between Christianity and shamanism" (DeMaris 2015, p. 30). He draws the comparison that, for instance:

Denizens of both the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon and the ancient biblical world reside in cultures that value alternate states of consciousness and sanction entry into the spirit world. They have a vivid sense of that world, considering it as real as the mundane world—perhaps even more real.

What is different is how one enters that other world. The means of entry vary across cultures. In the Amazon, ritually induced sensory overload or deprivation—drumming, chanting, hyperventilation, fasting, meditation, isolation—along with ingesting psychotropic plants like ayahuasca mediate entry into, or interaction with, the spirit world (Luna, "Indigenous and Mestizo" (Luna 2011)). As for the biblical world, the Hebrew Bible book of Ezekiel narrates the eating of an

inscribed scroll (2.8–3:3), as does the New Testament book of Revelation (10.9), which in both cases triggers revelation. But both books are rich in symbols; the inscribed scrolls could simply be the very words that are revealed, placed in the prophet's or seer's mouth. The common means for entering an ASC in the biblical world were fasting and solitude or isolation (DeMaris 2000, p. 17). In Acts chapter 10, Peter's hunger was enough to trigger his trance (10.10). Jesus' encounter with the spirit world—his temptation by the Devil—occurred when he had fasted in the wilderness for forty days and nights (Luke 4.1–13). Ingestion of a psychotropic drug appears absent from the repertoire of ways to induce an ASC in the biblical world. In other words, Jesus did not pop mescal buttons. (DeMaris 2015, p. 30)

Or mushrooms. The point is that the ritual tools of biblical and other shamanic contexts are different, and not many of them anywhere seem to involve mushrooms (the one possible exception can be found in 4 Ezra 9; see Dobroruka 2006). The anthropologist Manvir Singh recently collected evidence on this topic in his book *Shamanism: The Timeless Religion* (Singh 2025). He summarizes the most current work, including Martin Fortier's survey of drug use across human societies, finding evidence of psychedelic use among 1% or less of the world's Pre-Columbian cultures, Andy Letcher's investigation of mushroom usage, confirming only a traditional use of psilocybe in pre-Columbian Mexico and *Amanita muscaria* in northern Eurasia, and the introduction of unconfirmed anecdotal knowledge of the traditional spiritual use of psilocybe mushrooms in Lesotho (see van der Merwe et al. 2024). Thus, it is not just the linguistic evidence that is against Allegro (cf. Mosurinjohn and Ascough 2025).

5. Conclusions

Ruck positions Allegro's work as part of a larger project to recover the centrality of mystical experience in religion, a position endorsed by Irvin (2009) and more recently by Muraresku (2020), and a central concern at many a modern conference on psychedelic medicine. Indeed, Allegro's book seemingly continues to enjoy widespread popularity, if the review statistics on the Amazon are anything to go by; of the nearly 2000 global reviews about 80% give it a 5-star rating and another 10% give it 4 stars (this includes the paperback and audio versions). He argues that entheogens have always played a role in facilitating the direct encounter with the sacred, an encounter that institutional religion has often sought to regulate or suppress. Ruck draws parallels between ancient mystery cults and modern psychedelic research, suggesting that entheogenic experiences continue to reveal themselves as potent means of accessing transcendence. He sees in Allegro's work an early, if flawed, attempt to reconnect modern readers with this ancient, experiential core of religion.

Ruck concludes by framing Allegro as “an academic with impeccable credentials” (Ruck 2009, p. 358) whose work, though often dismissed, anticipated a growing scholarly and cultural interest in entheogenic spirituality. What Ruck fails to see, both in Allegro and his own reiteration, is how flawed the linguistic basis on which Allegro built his edifice upon which all else rests. And while this does not impact the arguments for the “psychedelic mysteries hypothesis” of religion put forth by later authors, Ruck's claim that Allegro's work has been systematically ignored by academic scholars, Classicists and Biblical Studies alike, because of their fear of his radical conclusions (2009, pp. 358, 364), is unfounded. Like any good science, Allegro's evidence was examined, and his hypothesis was found wanting. Whatever else may be argued for or against the psychedelic mysteries hypothesis, it is time to relegate Allegro to, at best, a descriptive footnote of a failed experiment. The linguistic and historical flaws inherent in his approach undermine any

use of Allegro's work in advancing the modern arguments around the role of psychoactive substances in religious experiences. If we are to move forward with a convincing case based on scientific and historical evidence, it is time to relegate Allegro's work to a curiosity of the past that may have inspired further work but upon whose foundation we cannot continue to build.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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