

TO YOU, THE READER:

THIS PREFACE BEGINS WITH THE IDEA THAT PERCEPTION IS NOT FIXED, BUT CONSTRUCTED, AND WITHIN CERTAIN CONDITIONS IT CAN BE LOOSENEED.

THE ENTROPIC BRAIN HYPOTHESIS SUGGESTS THAT UNDER PSYCHEDELICS, THE BRAIN ENTERS A STATE OF INCREASED ENTROPY—LESS CONSTRAINED, LESS GOVERNED BY HABITUAL PATTERNS, AND MORE OPEN TO VARIATION. IN THIS STATE, DISTINCTIONS BLUR, HIERARCHIES FLATTEN, AND NEW ASSOCIATIONS BECOME POSSIBLE. WHAT EMERGES IS NOT DISORDER FOR ITS OWN SAKE, BUT A DIFFERENT MODE OF ORGANIZATION—ONE THAT IS FLUID, EXCESSIVE, AND DIFFICULT TO FIX INTO A SINGLE MEANING. THE SELF, OPPORTUNITY, CREATIVITY, AND MEANING BLOOM IN THIS STATE.

THE ENTROPIC PAGE IS STRUCTURED AROUND THAT CONDITION.

ITS STRUCTURE FOLLOWS THE FIVE STAGES OF A PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE—SET AND SETTING, THE COME UP, PEAK, PLATEAU, AND INTEGRATION—SERVING AS BOTH A NARRATIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL DEVICE FOR YOU, THE READER. AS YOU MOVE THROUGH THE CHAPTERS, THE MATERIAL WILL SHIFT IN DENSITY, CLARITY, AND FORM. CONTEXTS BLUR—SCIENCE INTO MUSIC, HISTORY INTO SENSATION, THEORY INTO IMAGE—MIRRORING THE WAY PSYCHEDELICS DISSOLVE THE BOUNDARIES WE RELY ON TO MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD.

THE RESEARCH THAT GROUNDS THIS WORK SPANS PHENOMENOLOGY, NEUROSCIENCE, AND COUNTER-CULTURAL THEORY. IT POSITIONS PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE AS SIMULTANEOUSLY PERCEPTUAL, POLITICAL, CREATIVE, AND CULTURAL. BUT THIS BOOK DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THOSE DOMAINS INTO A SINGLE, STABLE MEANING. INSTEAD, IT HOLDS THEM IN TENSION—ALLOWING CONTRADICTIONS, OVERLAPS, AND EXCESS TO COEXIST.

BECAUSE THIS PROJECT CANNOT STAND ALONE AS PURELY ANALYTICAL.

WHILE THE BOOK IS GROUNDED IN RESEARCH, MUCH OF ITS VISUAL LANGUAGE WAS PRODUCED THROUGH AN INTUITIVE PROCESS INFORMED BY PSYCHEDELIC STATES. THE ACT OF MAKING BECAME IMMERSIVE, NONLINEAR, AND AT TIMES DISORIENTING. CONTROL GAVE WAY TO INTUITION. STRUCTURE DISSOLVED INTO SENSATION. WHAT BEGAN AS INVESTIGATION BECAME PARTICIPATION.

THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF THIS BOOK IS A DIRECT RESULT OF THAT SHIFT.

EVERY IMAGE, TEXTURE, AND COMPOSITION YOU ENCOUNTER WAS CREATED THROUGH AN INTUITIVE PROCESS. WORKING WITH PSILOCYBIN AND SOUND, I ALLOWED SYNESTHETIC PERCEPTION—WHERE COLOUR, FORM, AND RHYTHM COLLAPSE INTO ONE ANOTHER—TO DICTATE THE OUTCOME. THESE WORKS WERE NOT DESIGNED WITH ANY INTENT OF A FIXED OUTCOME. THE RESULTING WORKS ARE NOT ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TEXT. THEY ARE PARALLEL TRANSLATIONS OF EXPERIENCE, DEVELOPED THROUGH A DIFFERENT MODE OF ATTENTION.

FOR THIS REASON, THE BOOK RESISTS CLARITY IN PLACES. IT RESISTS RESOLUTION. IT ASKS YOU TO SIT WITHIN AMBIGUITY, TO NAVIGATE WITHOUT FULL ORIENTATION, TO NOTICE WHAT EMERGES WHEN MEANING IS NOT IMMEDIATELY GIVEN.

LIKE ANY PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE, WHAT YOU TAKE FROM THIS WILL DEPEND ON HOW YOU ENTER IT—YOUR EXPECTATIONS, YOUR ATTENTION, YOUR WILLINGNESS TO LET GO. THE REST UNFOLDS FROM THERE.

**SO MOVE THROUGH IT SLOWLY. OR NOT.
FOLLOW WHAT PULLS YOU.
LET PAGES INTERRUPT YOU.
LET MEANING ARRIVE LATE, OR NOT AT ALL.**

FOR THERE IS NO CORRECT WAY TO MOVE THROUGH IT.





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THE COURS OF PERCEPTION

Aldous Huxley's personal account of his experience taking mescaline influences popular understandings of the effects of psychedelics. Huxley advocates for the use of psychedelics to spiritually enlighten the intellectual elite.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

We live together, we act on, and react to, one another; but always and in all circumstances we are by ourselves. The martyrs go hand in hand into the arena; they are crucified alone. Embraced, the lovers desperately try to fuse their insulated ecstasies into a single self-transcendence; in vain. By its very nature every embodied spirit is doomed to suffer and enjoy in solitude. Sensations, feelings, insights, fancies - all these are private and, except through symbols and at second hand, incommunicable. We can pool information about experiences, but never the experiences themselves. From family to nation, every human group is a society of island universes. Most island universes are sufficiently like one another to permit of inferential understanding or even of mutual empathy or "feeling into." Thus, remembering our own bereavements and humiliations, we can condole with others in analogous circumstances, can put ourselves in their places. But in certain cases communication between universes is incomplete or even nonexistent.

The mind is its own place, and the Places inhabited by the insane and the exceptionally gifted are so different from the places where ordinary men and women live, that there is little or no common ground of memory to serve as a basis for understanding or fellow feeling. Words are uttered, but fail to enlighten. The things and events to which the symbols refer belong to mutually exclusive realms of experience.

I am and, for as long as I can remember, I have always been a poor visualizer. Words, even the pregnant words of poets, do not evoke pictures in my mind. No hypnagogic visions greet me on the verge of sleep. When I recall something, the memory does not present itself to me as a vividly seen event or object.

By an effort of the will, I can evoke a not very vivid image of what happened yesterday afternoon, of how the Lungamo used to look before the bridges were destroyed, of the Bayswater Road when the only buses were green and tiny and drawn by aged horses at three and a half miles an hour. But such images have little substance and absolutely no autonomous life of their own. They stand to real, perceived objects in the same relation as Homer's ghosts stood to the men of flesh and blood, who came to visit them in the shades. Only when I have a high temperature do my mental images come to independent life.

To those in whom the faculty of visualization is strong my inner world must seem curiously drab, limited and uninteresting. This was the world - a poor thing but my own - which I expected to see transformed into something

completely unlike itself.

The change which actually took place in that world was in no sense revolutionary. Half an hour after swallowing the drug I became aware of a slow dance of golden lights. A little later there were sumptuous red surfaces swelling and expanding from bright nodes of energy that vibrated with a continuously changing, patterned life. At another time the closing of my eyes revealed a complex of gray structures, within which pale bluish spheres kept emerging into intense solidity and, having emerged, would slide noiselessly upwards, out of sight.

But at no time were there faces or forms of men or animals. I saw no landscapes, no enormous spaces, no magical growth and metamorphosis of buildings, nothing remotely like a drama or a parable. The other world to which mescalin admitted me was not the world of visions; it existed out there, in what I could see with my eyes open.

The great change was in the realm of objective fact.

What had happened to my subjective universe was relatively unimportant.

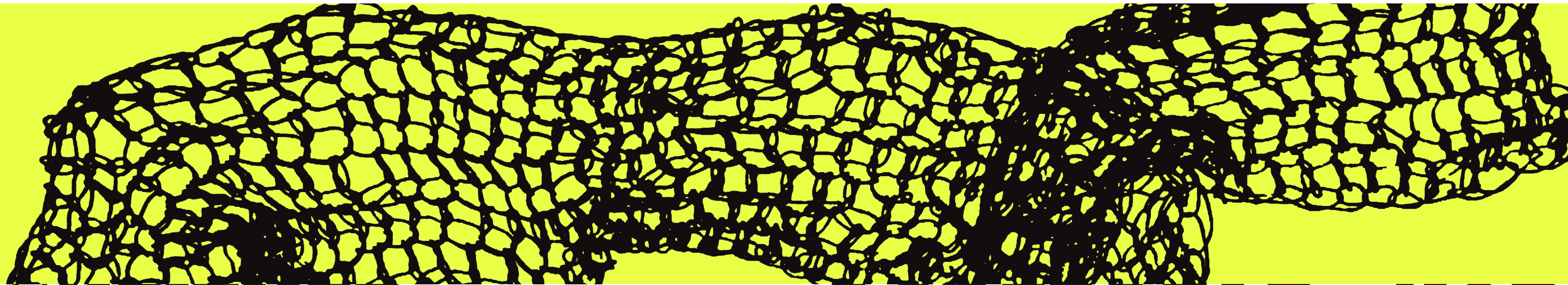
I took my pill at eleven. An hour and a half later, I was sitting in my study, looking intently at a small glass vase. The vase contained only three flowers - a full-blown Belie of Portugal rose, shell pink with a hint at every petal's base of a hotter, flamer hue; a large magenta and cream-colored carnation; and, pale purple at the end of its broken stalk, the bold heraldic blossom of an iris. Fortuitous and provisional, the little nosegay broke all the rules of traditional good taste.

At breakfast that morning I had been struck by the lively dissonance of its colors.

But that was no longer the point.

I was not looking now at an unusual flower arrangement. I was seeing what Adam had seen on the morning of his creation - the miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence.

“ IS IT AGREEABLE? “ SOMEBODY ASKED.



**“NEITHER
DISAGREEABLE,”
“ IT**

**AGREEABLE NOR
I ANSWERED,
JUST IS.”**

Research shows that psilocybin leads people away from materialism and toward transcendentalism. Apparently, mushrooms teach metaphysics.

SCOTTY HENDRICKS

METAPHYSICS

MUSHROOMS

&

MUSIC



After decades of being shunned, psychedelics are enjoying a biomedical renaissance because many of them show great promise in treating a variety of mental health conditions when used in tightly controlled environments. Now, a new study, recently published in *Scientific Reports*, claims that psychedelics can change a person's beliefs about metaphysics.

OF METAPHYSICS AND MUSHROOMS

Everyone has metaphysical beliefs, even if they are unaware of them. For example, many people have an intuitive belief in mind-body duality (that is, the mind and body are separable) even if they have never heard of the term. These beliefs are often associated with certain behaviors as well, with dualists taking less care of their bodies than physicalists, who argue that the mind is part of the body. Similar relationships between metaphysical beliefs and human behavior can be found elsewhere. Those who believe in free will are less likely to lie, cheat, and be aggressive.

Sharpening one's understanding of metaphysics can be accomplished with various methods, such as meditation. Near death experiences often do the same. One commonly discussed but less investigated method is psychedelic drug use. While many anecdotes suggest that psychedelics cause people to adopt a non-materialist view of the cosmos, hard data was lacking. After all, it could just be that those already predisposed to idealism — the notion that fundamental reality is mental rather than physical — are also more likely to try these drugs.

PHILOSOPHY, DRUGS, AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

The study came in two parts. In the first, nearly 900 volunteers who signed up to attend a psychedelic ceremony were recruited to answer a series of questions — for instance, on realms of existence — aimed at determining their baseline metaphysical beliefs. After the ceremony (in which psilocybin was used), the volunteers were asked to complete the survey again four weeks and six months later.

In general, users reported moving away from belief in materialism or physicalism — that is, the idea that the universe is primarily physical rather than mental or spiritual — and toward other views such as transcendentalism, non-naturalism, or idealism. Effects were seen at both four weeks and six months, and the effects were largest for those who were taking the drug for the first time. Another important change was the drift from hardline stances of any kind toward more mixed or moderate views. Participants also reported improved mental health.

The clinical trial was similar but involved only 60 participants. Half were given escitalopram (an antidepressant) and the other half psilocybin. The results were largely the same, with the psilocybin group experiencing a shift away from hard materialism toward more transcendental, idealistic, and supernatural conceptions of the universe.

Overall, the psychedelic experience moved people away from a “hard materialist” view. However, regardless of belief (in materialism or dualism), people tended to moderate their views after taking the drug — as if psychedelics made people more tolerant of uncertainty.

**IN AN EMAIL TO BIGTHINK,
DR. TIMMERMANN SUMMARIZED THE
FINDINGS BY EXPLAINING:**

“That we provide evidence for the first time that psychedelics shift beliefs concerning the nature of reality. These beliefs are central to the way human beings organize society and may correspond to deeply rooted worldviews. Specifically, we found that people rejected the notion of physicalism (the idea that the world is made up of material, as opposed to mental or spiritual things) after a single psychedelic experience, endorsed the notion of fate more, and also the idea that all things in the universe are conscious, what we call panpsychism. Importantly, we found that these changes were related to improvements in mental health.”

AWE, AESTHETICS & PSILOCYBIN

Effects of psilocybin microdosing on awe and aesthetic experiences: a preregistered field and lab-based study

MICHIEL VAN ELK

There is an increased societal trend to engage in microdosing, in which small sub-hallucinogenic amounts of psychedelics are consumed on a regular basis. Following subjective reports that microdosing enhances the experience of nature and art, in the present study we set out to study the effects of psilocybin microdosing on feelings of awe and art perception. In this preregistered combined field- and lab-based study, participants took part in a microdosing workshop after which they volunteered to self-administer a psilocybin microdose or a placebo for three consecutive weeks, while the condition was kept blind to the participants and researchers.

Following a 2-week break, the condition assignment was reversed. During each block, participants visited the lab twice to measure the effects of psilocybin microdosing vs. placebo. We used standardized measures of awe, in which participants reported their experiences in response to short videos or when viewing abstract artworks from different painters. Our confirmatory analyses showed that participants felt more awe in response to videos representing funny animals and moving objects in the microdosing compared to the placebo condition. However, about two-third of our participants were breaking blind to their experimental condition. Our exploratory findings suggest that expectancy-effects may be a driving factor underlying the subjective benefits of microdosing.

Serotonergic hallucinogens—include mind-altering substances, such as LSD and psilocybin. In our society there is an increasing trend for the recreational use of hallucinogens, as evidenced by the National and European Drug Monitor and the Global Drug Survey, indicating for instance that 40% of the people who ever used LSD started using it in the past year. More than 70 centers in the Netherlands currently offer recreational ayahuasca or psilocybin retreats, which typically last several days and are organized in a ritual setting. We are currently also witnessing an increased interest in scientific research on hallucinogens: psychedelics are increasingly used for clinical purposes and in neurocognitive studies. Psychedelics are claimed to have a strong therapeutic potential for the treatment of biomedical disorders, including severe depression, substance abuse, and cancer-related anxiety disorders.

The few existing studies on microdosing provide mixed evidence regarding its efficacy. By using self-report measures it has been found that microdosing positively affected mood, creativity, and cognition, while reducing anxiety and depression. People who microdosed experienced more wisdom, open-mindedness, and creativity. In a large-scale study it was found that microdosing enhanced mood and overall well-being. The self-reported effectiveness of microdosing for mental problems was higher than other conventional methods to treat attention- and anxiety-related disorder, although the effects were smaller than those experienced following a full psychedelic dose.

Next to its positive effects on reducing depression and stress, microdosing increased the tendency to become absorbed in external stimuli and also induced an increase in the personality trait of neuroticism. However, most of these studies rely entirely on retrospective self-report measures, there was a strong selection bias in the sample, and there was no control condition. It is thus unclear to what extent the observed outcomes are driven by expectancy-effects, demand characteristics, and socially desirable responding.

Experimental research on microdosing has shown that psilocybin and ketamine microdosing in rats did not induce clear anxiolytic effects. In another study chronic microdosing with DMT did have antidepressant-like effects in rats, as evidenced by their performance on a forced swim test. In humans an acute (non-blinded) dose of psilocybin increased convergent and divergent thinking.

However, this study was not placebo-controlled, which might have increased expectancy-effects, the dosage used was rather low, and next to the effects on creativity other measures were included for which microdosing did not appear to have an effect. In placebo-controlled studies it has been found that LSD microdosing dilates time-perception as measured using a temporal reproduction task. LSD microdosing,

A recent fMRI study found that a microdose of LSD compared to a placebo condition increased functional connectivity between the amygdala and the middle-frontal gyrus, which were in turn related to changes in positive mood. Another study found no impairments of different microdoses of LSD on different measures of cognitive performance, such as spatial and working memory, visual attention, balance, and proprioception. Finally, a recent study found that LSD microdosing differentially affected a wide range of variables, including sustained attention, speed of information processing, mood states, anxiety, and confusion. Thus, experimental studies indicate that microdoses can indeed affect implicit cognitive processing—albeit sometimes in an unexpected direction.

Awe is a complex emotion that is typically elicited by perceptually vast stimuli such as landscapes, vistas, and mountains. It is characterized by perceived vastness and a need for accommodation, resulting in the need to revise one's existing mental models. Recently it has been suggested that the alleged therapeutic potential of psychedelics relies on its awe-inducing properties: during a psychedelic experience the user is confronted with profound insights, visionary experiences, the experience of ego-loss, and personal transgression. These transformative experiences in turn have a positive effect on subsequent well-being, feelings of self-compassion, and connectedness to others.

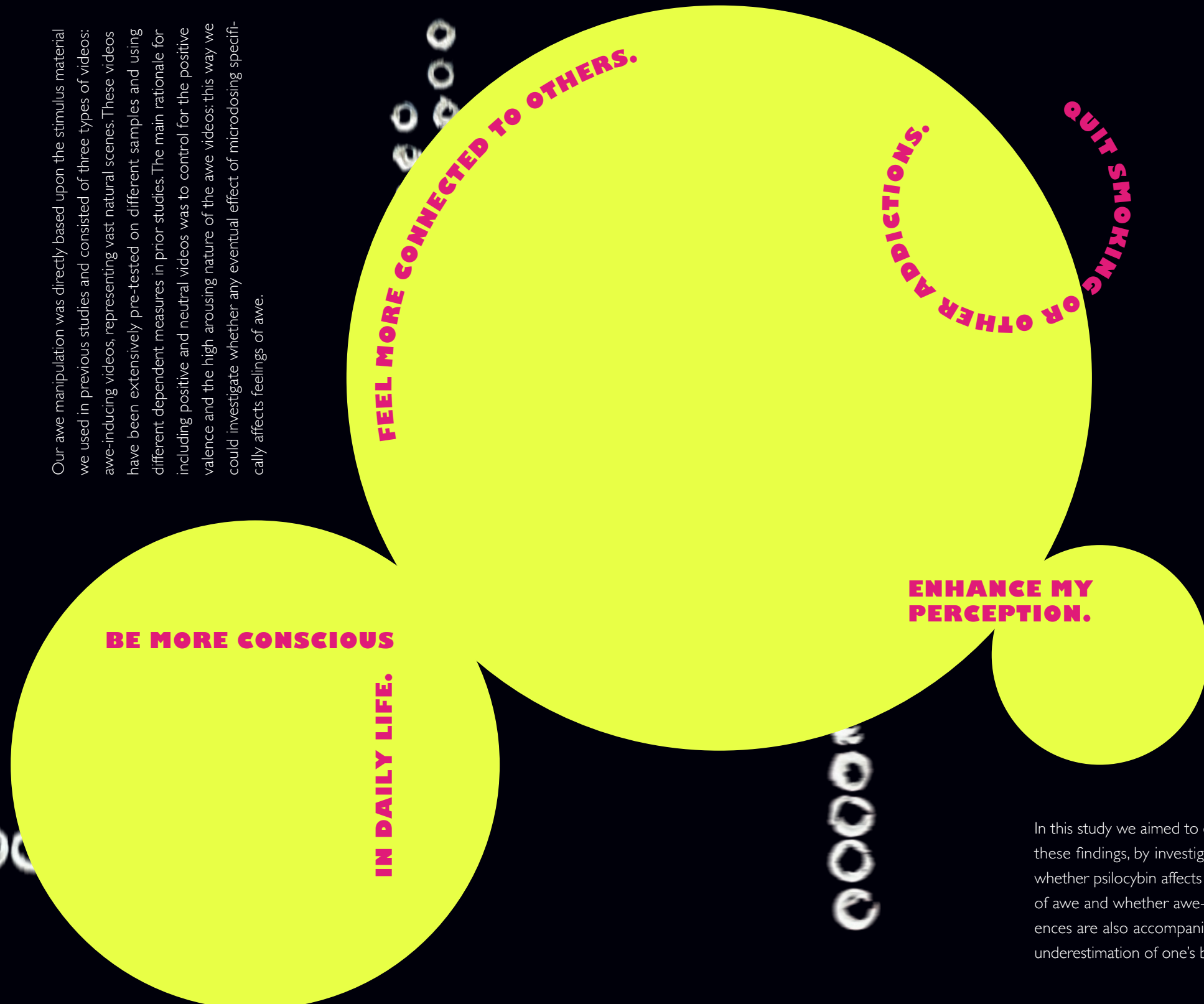
Preliminary evidence for the hypothesized relationship between psychedelics and awe can be found in research on the personality trait of absorption. The Tellegen absorption scale was originally developed to measure hypnosis-proneness but in subsequent research turned out to be an interesting personality factor that captures a proclivity for vivid mental imagery, openness to immersive sensory experiences and to get absorbed in one's inner mental life.

Previous studies have shown that the personality trait of absorption predicts responsiveness to psychedelics, as well as feelings of awe in response to natural scenes. At a neural level, it has been found that awe-experiences in response to vast natural scenes are characterized by a decreased activity of the default mode network—a network of brain regions involved in mind-wandering and self-referential processing.

More specifically, when healthy participants were immersed in awe-inducing videos of nature, the DMN was less active compared to when the participants were observing funny videos or neutral videos. Interestingly, a similar decrease in DMN activity has been found in association with the acute effects of LSD and psilocybin on resting state network activity.

Both feelings of awe and psychedelic experiences could thus share a similar underlying neurocognitive mechanism, related to a reduced focus on the self and an immersion in the sensory nature of the experience. We note that as-of-yet we do not know whether psilocybin microdosing results in a similar change of DMN activity as has been observed for a full psychedelic experience. Still, based on these convergent lines of evidence, in the present study we hypothesized that psilocybin microdosing would increase feelings of awe in response to the same videos that we used in previous research.

Our awe manipulation was directly based upon the stimulus material we used in previous studies and consisted of three types of videos: awe-inducing videos, representing vast natural scenes. These videos have been extensively pre-tested on different samples and using different dependent measures in prior studies. The main rationale for including positive and neutral videos was to control for the positive valence and the high arousing nature of the awe videos; this way we could investigate whether any eventual effect of microdosing specifically affects feelings of awe.



Next to measuring the effects of psilocybin microdosing on awe we also assessed participants' implicit perception of their body. In previous studies it has been found that feelings of awe are characterized by the experience of a small self. For instance, when prompted with a pictorial representation of their body, after watching an awe video participants indicated that the size of their body was smaller, compared to watching a control video.

In this study we aimed to extend these findings, by investigating whether psilocybin affects feelings of awe and whether awe-experiences are also accompanied by an underestimation of one's body size.

Participant testimonials;

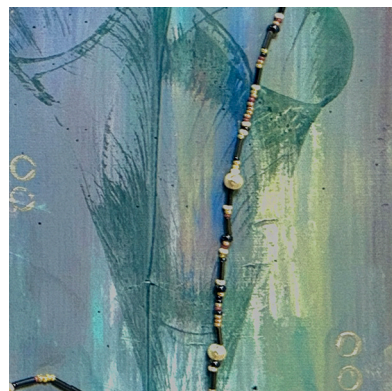
BY MICRODOSING I HOPE TO....

- BECOME MORE CREATIVE.
- IMPROVE MY MEMORY.
- IMPROVE MY SLEEP.
- FEEL MORE ENERGIZED.
- BECOME MORE OPEN.
- FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO THE UNIVERSE.

**THE COME-UP IS
PHYSICALLY &
SENSITIVE
SITIONING INTO
CONTROL, AS
TAKES THE
BEGIN TO FEEL**

**OFTEN THE MOST
PSYCHOLOGICALLY
PHASES: TRAN-
LETTING GO OF
THE SUBSTANCE
LEAD. EMOTIONS
ANTICIPATORY.**

Artistic & Musical Creativity



I'd hate to advocate drugs, alcohol or insanity to anyone, but they've always worked for me
Hunter S. Thompson

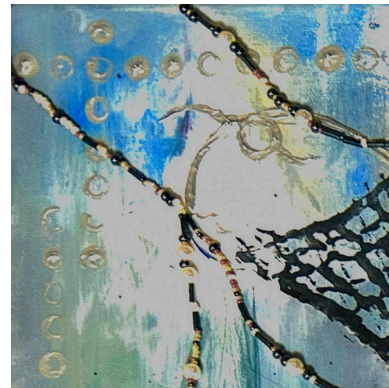
Hunter S. Thompson

This chapter explores links between psychostimulants and creativity in the arts. These links are set in the context of an overview of the association between mind-altering drugs in general and specific branches of the arts, particularly literature. The economic impact of the psychostimulants both historically and in today's world has been substantial and this is mirrored in the culture of the countries involved with the trade in these special commodities. As with other families of addictive drugs, the psychostimulants are sought out more frequently than is the norm by creative individuals who then may represent the drugs in their art or associate the drugs with their creativity.



IAIN SMITH

The creative process is outlined, and it is noted that if a drug helps at all with creativity, then the specific properties of the drug may link it to a particular stage of the creative process. Stimulants are particularly associated with the evaluation and elaboration stage of the creative process, and in particular, nicotine and caffeine have been used in this way by writers when putting words on paper. The ability of psychostimulants to boost convergent thinking is the main mechanism at work, but this is at a cost, as divergent thinking is diminished.



The other findings of note in this review are that particular venues based around the consumption of psychostimulants can act as a creative hub-café culture in Paris and Vienna and early modern Europe, and that particular drugs can come to define an artistic grouping, as with the Beats and the group around Warhol, who had a preference for amphetamine.

If we take as our starting point the broad classification of mind-acting drugs into sedatives, psychostimulants, opiates, hallucinogens, and drugs with mixed actions, then the two main groups of drugs that one would logically turn to first to examine the claim that drugs enhance creativity are undoubtedly the psychostimulants and the hallucinogens. Drugs with sedative properties, such as alcohol and benzodiazepines, and the opiates, such as morphine, which also sedate and slow cognition, are at first sight less likely candidates for enhancing creativity. Perhaps, an easier way to think of mind-altering drugs is as "Uppers, Downers and All Rounders".

All mind-altering drugs have been examined to some degree in relation to creativity in controlled settings, and all, in addition, have their links to artistic endeavour through visual, musical, and literary forms. In looking at psychostimulants in relation to creativity, we need to first consider some aspects of the psychology of creativity before looking at specific research on drugs in general in relation to creativity. We can then focus on the main psychostimulants in relation to cultural history and creativity. We will look, therefore, at caffeine, nicotine, cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine, MDMA/Ecstasy, and other psychostimulants, including methylphenidate, in turn.

CREATIVITY RESEARCH

A simple definition of creativity is that it is the process of producing something new and worthwhile and that it involves an act of imagination. Creativity is not confined to the Arts, but it is in the relationship with the Arts that the claimed association between creativity and drug use and psychostimulants in particular comes to the fore. There are many theories of creativity and it is an academic area that has brought together many disciplines from archeology through to zoology.

THE FIVE STAGES OF CREATIVITY

- Preparation
- Incubation
- Insight
- Evaluation
- Elaboration

This idea of stages of creativity opens up the possibility that different types of drugs are more likely to be useful and, therefore, used at different stages of the creative process. This also relates to the concepts of Convergent Thinking

DRUGS, CREATIVITY & CULTURAL HISTORY

The history of Western colonialism and empire-building is inextricably linked with the "discovery" and marketing of valued commodities. This trade produced great wealth and had major cultural and artistic resonance. Tea, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, sugar, opium, cannabis (Hemp), and Coca commerce, and the contemporaneous discovery of alcohol distillation were major forces in European and world history from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth century.



DRUG DISCOVERY AND SYNTHESIS

Mike Jay, who has written extensively on issues of drugs, culture, and creativity, makes an interesting observation in his Emperors of Dreams. This is the history of mind-altering drugs, which often follows the Frankenstein narrative:
Act one: the drug is discovered and its novelties and benefits are celebrated.
Act two: the drug escapes from the laboratory and makes its journey in the world.
Act three: the powers that be unite in their attempt to

PSYCHOSTIMULANTS AND CREATIVITY

Two recent popular films—Limitless and Lucy—illustrate an interest in the possibility that drugs might be used for cognitive enhancement and to increase creativity and "brainpower." Both use fictional drugs but these appear to be stimulant as well as nootropic in nature. Generally, psychostimulants increase convergent thinking and attention—at optimal doses—and decrease divergent thinking; however, in the worlds of Psychostimulants, Literature, and Literary Scenes

There are now a large number of anthologies of drug "literature" with both historical and original, sometimes specially commissioned, pieces, many of which are stimulant-related. The psychostimulants are referenced in around 20% of the stories and...

THE VISUAL ARTS

Less has been written about the relationship between the visual arts and artists and the use of drugs, and in particular the psychostimulants as compared to the relationship with writing and with popular music. Certainly, many depictions exist of smokers and coffee and tea drinkers over the centuries of modern Europe in paintings and drawings providing a social history of the progress of tobacco and coffee and tea and the café culture in Europe, the latter mirrors the concentration of artists.



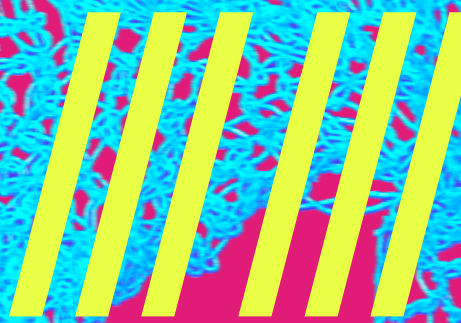
**I CONTINUED TO LOOK
AT THE FLOWERS,**

**AND IN THEIR
LIVING LIGHT
I SEEMED TO
DETECT THE
QUALITATIVE
EQUIVALENT
OF**

BREATHING.

**BUT OF A
BREATHING
WITHOUT
RETURNS TO A
STARTING POINT,**

**WITH NO
RECURRENT
EBBS BUT ONLY A
REPEATED FLOW.**





KATARINA JEROTIC

Music and psychedelics have a long history of use across cultures. We explore varied perspectives on the interplay between psychedelics and music, their potential neurological and neurocomputational overlaps, their use in ancient rituals and modern clinical settings, as well as the capacity for music to lead to altered states of consciousness in the absence of psychedelics and the growth of psychedelic music.

The Interplay between Music & Psychedelics

**MUSIC PERCEPTION
IN THE BRAIN**

Predictive coding of music. Music perception is guided by predictions set by the brain's real-time predictive model through a process of Bayesian inference. The musical excerpt shows a syncopated rhythm, which can be followed using a 4/4 meter. The syncopated note results in an error between the perceived rhythm and the predicted meter, urging the listener to act by reinforcing the meter through, for example, tapping.

This process repeats every time the rhythm does, and long term, this allows for learning and music evoked emotion. Outline of the brain networks involved in music perception, action, and emotion processes. Learning is depicted as the ongoing update of predictive brain models through Bayesian inference represents the ongoing update of musical predictions in the Bayesian inference. As music perception is based on pre-existing models of the world, it relies on the hierarchical processing framework, whereby regions at the bottom of the hierarchy are responsible for novel input (the rhythm), and regions at the top of the hierarchy hold the individual's model of the music (the meter) which guides their predictions.

The PCM model suggests that music perception, action, emotion, and learning are in fact all Bayesian processes within which the brain's key goal is minimizing prediction error. For example, music-related emotion can be thought to modulate predictions, affecting our response to new music. Therefore, a strong argument can be made for the integrative process of music perception, and response being dependent on the state of the brain's functional hierarchy—a hierarchy manipulated by psychedelic ingestion.

**PSYCHEDELIC ACTION ON
THE BRAIN**

The hierarchical framework of brain function is thought to be impacted in altered states of consciousness, for example, when psychedelics are consumed. The Relaxed Beliefs Under Psychedelics (REBUS) model is a theory of psychedelic action on the brain's dynamic functional landscape that has gained a great deal of support in modern neuroimaging studies. The model is inspired by two frameworks: the free-energy principle and the entropic brain hypothesis. The free-energy principle argues that the development and survival of living things relies on the need to minimize uncertainty and avoid chaos. This argument sits well with the hierarchical predictive coding theory of brain activity discussed above.

The entropic brain hypothesis stipulates that, within a critical zone under the influence of psychedelics, there is a general increase in entropy in the brain, with greater and more diverse information flow across the brain. This increase in entropy of brain activity is then reflected in a richer conscious experience. The REBUS model suggests that upon ingestion of a psychedelic, the individual experiences a flattening of the brain's functional hierarchy, in other words, the dynamic functional landscape within the mind is flattened, allowing for greater free-flow of information, a reduced effect of pre-existing models, and, therefore, an openness to new information coming into the system.

The consumption of classic serotonergic psychedelics leads to significant decoupling among brain regions higher in the functional hierarchy, alongside simultaneous increases in communication between areas lower in the functional hierarchy. Lord and colleagues used functional magnetic resonance imaging to show that ingestion of psilocybin led to increased global BOLD-phase coherence and movement toward a globally synchronized functional connectivity state alongside simultaneous disruption of a phase-locking pattern resembling the frontoparietal network—a network previously associated with attention-based cognitive control through top-down mechanisms.

The harmonics framework allows for an understanding of brain activity as dynamic transitions across time from one frequency-specific brain state to another. This framework has been applied to several psychedelic states, providing consistent findings. Both psilocybin- and LSD-induced brain changes show a suppression of low-frequency harmonic energy, an increase in high-frequency harmonic energy, and an expansion of the connectome harmonic repertoire. These findings suggest a movement toward more complex dynamics while in these altered states.

Additionally, recent work examining turbulence-based changes in hierarchical dynamics among individuals ingesting psilocybin or LSD resulted in further support for the REBUS model, showing an increase in turbulence and, therefore, a movement toward greater information transfer following psychedelic ingestion.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE

We have shown how music and psychedelics have been intertwined across time and space. The two have been used in tandem both within modern clinical settings and within ancient rituals. This is exemplified by the use of ayahuasca in the Santo Daime, a modern religion rooted in ancient beliefs whose regular ceremonies are characterized by the ingestion of ayahuasca and participation in ritual-relevant singing and dancing.

Music and psychedelics, respectively, utilize and manipulate the same underlying functional hierarchy, and both seem to affect serotonin pathways in the brain. These overlaps may hint toward neurocomputational and neurological explanations for their consistent interaction across societies. Through the examination of a diverse array of evidence, as presented, it has become clear that any one of these perspectives alone would be insufficient for reaching a complete understanding of this interaction.

CONCLUSION

We outlined key ideas regarding the evolution of music and psychedelics, positioning them not simply as outcomes of our brain development but rather as integral features of our social bonding. Furthermore, we explored the potential of music to elicit altered states of consciousness in the absence of psychedelics and the creation and development of psychedelic music. Overall, our discussion showcases strong evidence for an ongoing association between music and psychedelics, whereby not only is the ingestion of psychedelics thought to impact our perception of music, but also the presence of music is thought to guide the psychedelic experience and its outcomes.

Therefore, future research needs to focus on examining how music and psychedelics interact and affect one another within an interdisciplinary outlook, incorporating a variety of perspectives, including the neurological, neurocomputational, cognitive, phenomenological, social, and cultural.

From LSD to Legendary: Jimi Hendrix's First Psychedelic Journey

HENDRIX
JIMI
LUCY TESSIER

The drug-influenced lyrics and aggressive sexuality of *Are You Experienced?* were accompanied by pounding rhythms and heavy guitar feedback, slashing power chords, and screaming guitar leads. Hendrix's manager, Chas Chandler, took advantage in his production of recent advances in recording-studio technology to create stereo effects that complemented the otherworldly textures Hendrix summoned from his guitar. On the instrumental "Third Stone from the Sun," Hendrix created science-fiction paintings in sound over Mitch Mitchell's jazzy drums; on the album's title track, Hendrix played a howling guitar lead that sounded as if it were being played backward. It was a distinctive sound that some have labeled "psychedelic blues."

1967

The 1960s were a transformative time for music, marked by the emergence of the psychedelic era. This period saw a seismic shift in how people experienced and interacted with music, with a newfound focus on experimentation, creativity, and pushing the boundaries of conventional sound. At the forefront of this movement was Jimi Hendrix, whose unique fusion of rock, blues, and psychedelia set him apart as a trailblazer. Hendrix's innovative approach to the electric guitar and his ability to blend different genres made him one of the most influential musicians of all time. His music not only defined the psychedelic era but also left an indelible mark on the landscape of classic rock.

1966

It wasn't until May 1966 that the future guitar-playing prodigy began to cause ripples on the surface of rock music, as he met with Linda Keith, the girlfriend of Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards. Each of them a blues enthusiast, the couple had travelled to New York to scour the city's vast blues scene ahead of The Stones' fifth US tour. Brian Jones, a key figure in the London music scene, was also part of this influential circle, highlighting the interconnected relationships among rock and roll artists of that era.

Hendrix's introduction to LSD in 1966 was a pivotal moment that profoundly impacted his life and career. Hendrix appeared to embody a coolness linked to his electric guitar talent and a carefree partying lifestyle during the drug-fueled music scene of the 1960s and 1970s. The psychedelic drug opened new doors to his creative subconscious, allowing him to explore uncharted territories in his music. With LSD, Hendrix began to experiment with new sounds and techniques, pushing the boundaries of what was possible on the guitar. His music took on a more experimental and psychedelic quality, characterized by innovative guitar effects and surreal lyrical themes. This newfound creativity was evident in his groundbreaking work, which continues to inspire musicians to this day.

Just as the Liverpoolian quartet was led down the mind-bending pathways of various acid trips, Hendrix, too, became absorbed by the drug's effects on his creativity. Upon taking the drug for the first time, he recalls looking in the mirror to see Marilyn Monroe smiling back at him. The red velvet velour decor of Keith's New York apartment was also highlighted to Hendrix during this experience, and it became the focal point for his later song 'Red House' taken from *Are You Experienced*, released in 1967.

In the song, Hendrix sings, "There's a red house over yonder / That's where my baby stays". In response to 'Red House', Keith played the guitar virtuoso Bob Dylan's seventh studio album, *Blonde On Blonde*, which became a sonic reminder to Hendrix of his first visceral drug experience. A month later, Hendrix paid homage to his unforgettable first trip with Keith by covering Dylan's 'Like A Rolling Stone' live.

Jimi Hendrix's music was a kaleidoscope of sound, and LSD was the lens through which he viewed it. The psychedelic rock sound that he pioneered was a direct reflection of his mind-expanding experiences with the drug. With his electric guitar, Hendrix created a symphony of distortion, feedback, and experimental techniques that pushed the boundaries of what rock music could be.

1967

Take 'Purple Haze,' for instance. The song's iconic opening riff and surreal lyrics—"Scuse me while I kiss the sky"—are a testament to the altered states of consciousness that LSD induced in Hendrix. His music became a canvas for exploring the depths of the human mind, with each note and lyric painting a vivid picture of his psychedelic journeys.

Hendrix's songwriting also took on a dreamlike quality, with tracks like "1983... (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)" weaving intricate tales of otherworldly experiences. These songs were not just reflections of his own trips but invitations for listeners to embark on their own voyages of the mind. Through his music, Hendrix opened up new realms of possibility for the electric guitar, transforming it into an instrument of infinite potential.

THE BEATLES

The Transcendent Creativity of The Beatles

STEVE TAYLOR

Creativity isn't simply due to talent. On an individual level, it depends on psychological factors such as relaxation and concentration. It emerges most readily from the state of "flow," when an artist becomes so focused that they lose awareness of themselves, of their surroundings, and of time.

On a group level, creativity depends on cohesion and harmony. Ideally, this leads to a state of "group flow" in which the group becomes an entity greater than the sum of individuals. In this state, a group can access what I call "transmissive creativity."

The Beatles attained an intense state of group flow due to their shared background in Liverpool and the hundreds of hours they spent playing in the dingy clubs of Hamburg before their success. Far from a collection of four individuals, they became an extremely cohesive unit, greater than the sum of their parts.

This was reflected musically—for example, they had three singers rather than one—and in their democratic, egalitarian approach. All their decisions were based on unanimous agreement. If any of them disagreed with a plan or suggestion, it would be vetoed.

**"It was as if they had
combined
minds"**

When Roger McGuinn of the Byrds asked Harrison if he believed in God, he replied, "We don't know about that yet," implying that they had to decide unanimously about this too. McGuinn commented...

This "group mind" enabled The Beatles to be powerfully transmissive on a transcendent level. Initially, they transmitted on an energetic and cultural level. They transmitted the "zeitgeist" of early 1960s Britain, expressing new freedom, autonomy, and optimism. This transcendent creativity is exemplified by understanding the writing and recording process of...

"Tomorrow Never Knows", written primarily by John Lennon and credited to Lennon–McCartney. Released in August 1966 as the final track on their album Revolver. The song marked a radical departure for the Beatles, as the band fully embraced the potential of the recording studio without consideration for reproducing the results in concert.

When writing the song, Lennon drew inspiration from his experiences with the hallucinogenic drug LSD and from the 1964 book *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* by Timothy Leary. The Beatles' recording employed musical elements foreign to pop music, including musique concrète, avant-garde composition and electro-acoustic sound manipulation. It features an Indian-inspired modal backing of tambura and sitar drone and bass guitar, with minimal harmonic deviation from a single chord, underpinned by a constant but non-standard drum pattern; added to this, tape loops prepared by the band were overdubbed "live" onto the rhythm track. Part of Lennon's vocal was fed through a Leslie speaker cabinet, normally used for a Hammond organ. The song's reverse guitar parts and effects marked the first use of reversed sounds in a pop recording, although the Beatles' 1966 B-side "Rain", which they recorded soon afterwards using the same technique, was issued over two months before the release of Revolver.

"Tomorrow Never Knows" was an early and highly influential recording in the psychedelic and electronic music genres, particularly for its pioneering use of sampling, tape manipulation and other production techniques. It also introduced lyrical themes that espoused mind expansion, anti-materialism and Eastern spirituality into popular music. On release, the song was the source of confusion and ridicule by many fans and journalists; it has since received praise as an effective representation of a psychedelic experience.

He knew he was onto something

John Lennon wrote "Tomorrow Never Knows" in January 1966, with lyrics adapted from the 1964 book *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* by Timothy Leary, which was in turn adapted from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Although Beatles aide Peter Brown believed that Lennon's source for the lyrics was the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* itself, which, he said, Lennon had read while under the influence of LSD, George Harrison later stated that the idea for the lyrics came from Leary, Alpert and Metzner's book.

Paul McCartney recalled that when he and Lennon visited the newly opened Indica bookshop, Lennon had been looking for a copy of *The Portable Nietzsche* and found a copy of *The Psychedelic Experience* that contained the lines: "Whenever in doubt, turn off your mind, relax, float downstream." In 1980, Lennon said he wrote the song during his "Tibetan Book of the Dead period."

Lennon said he bought the book, went home, took LSD, and followed the instructions exactly as stated in the text. The book held that the "ego death" experienced under the influence of LSD and other psychedelic drugs is essentially similar to the dying process and requires similar guidance. This is a state of being known by eastern mystics and masters as *samādhi* (a state of being totally aware of the present moment; a one-pointedness of mind). Harrison questioned whether Lennon fully understood the meaning of the song's lyrics:

**when he saw those words
and turned them into a song.**

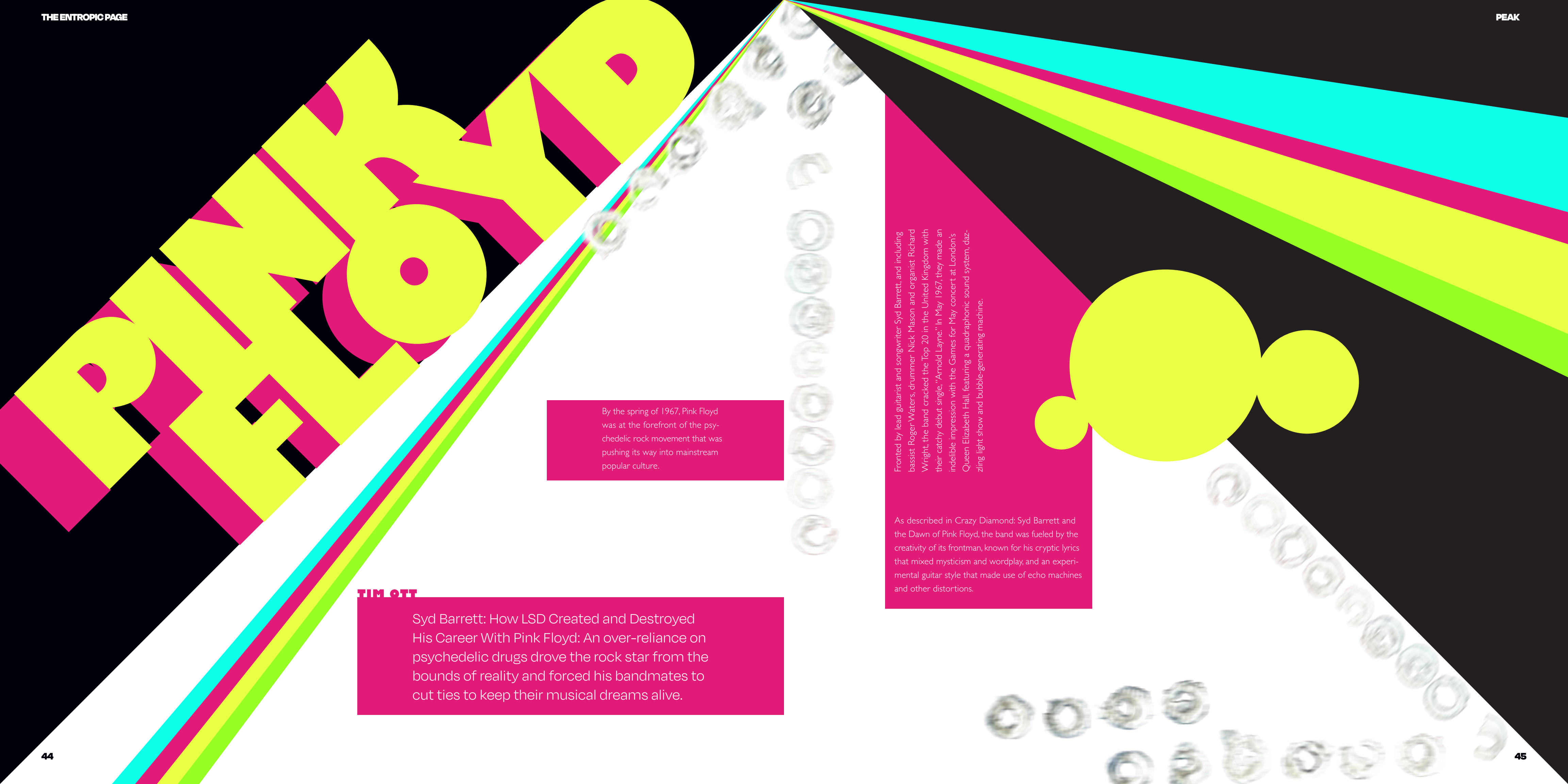
Basically [the song] is saying what meditation is all about. The goal of meditation is to go beyond (that is, transcend) waking, sleeping and dreaming... I am not too sure if John actually fully understood what he was saying..

Nicholas Schaffner said that listeners who had been confused by the song's lyrics were most likely unfamiliar with hallucinogenic drugs and Timothy Leary's message, but that the transcendental quality became clear during the build-up to the 1967 *Summer of Love*. According to Colin Larkin, writing in the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, "Tomorrow Never Knows" has been recognised as "the most effective evocation of a LSD experience ever recorded".

Ian MacDonald says that the song's message represented a revolutionary concept in mainstream society in 1966, and by introducing LSD and Leary's "psychedelic revolution" to Western youth, it is "one of the most socially influential records The Beatles ever made". He adds: "Tomorrow Never Knows" launched the till-then elite-preserved concept of mind-expansion into pop, simultaneously drawing attention to consciousness-enhancing drugs and the ancient religious philosophies of the Orient, utterly alien to Western thought in their anti-materialism, rapt passivity, and world-sceptical focus on visionary consciousness."

According to Simon Philo, "Tomorrow Never Knows" was the most groundbreaking track on an album that announced the arrival of the "underground London" sound. Barry Miles also sees it as the experimental highpoint of *Revolver*, which he recalls as an "advertisement for the underground" and a work that resounded on the level of experimental jazz among members of the movement, including those who soon founded the UFO Club.

**But to have experienced
what the lyrics in that
song are actually about?
I don't know if he fully
understood it.**



By the spring of 1967, Pink Floyd was at the forefront of the psychedelic rock movement that was pushing its way into mainstream popular culture.

TIM OTT
 Syd Barrett: How LSD Created and Destroyed His Career With Pink Floyd: An over-reliance on psychedelic drugs drove the rock star from the bounds of reality and forced his bandmates to cut ties to keep their musical dreams alive.

Fronted by lead guitarist and songwriter Syd Barrett, and including bassist Roger Waters, drummer Nick Mason and organist Richard Wright, the band cracked the Top 20 in the United Kingdom with their catchy debut single, "Arnold Layne." In May 1967, they made an indelible impression with the "Games for May" concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, featuring a quadrasonic sound system, dazzling light show and bubble-generating machine.

As described in *Crazy Diamond*: Syd Barrett and the Dawn of Pink Floyd, the band was fueled by the creativity of its frontman, known for his cryptic lyrics that mixed mysticism and wordplay, and an experimental guitar style that made use of echo machines and other distortions.

Sadly, the same forces that drove Barrett to artistic breakthroughs also led him down the path of self-destruction, leaving him exiled from the group shortly after they arrived on the charts and rendering him a cautionary tale as Pink Floyd became one of the biggest bands in the world.

ROCK

In 1965, as the foursome that became Pink Floyd were finding their musical footing between classes at London's Regent Street Polytechnic and Camberwell College of Arts, Barrett had discovered the mind-altering effects of LSD.

The turn to psychedelics had a massive impact on the group's direction. Taking their cues from their frontman, Pink Floyd began doing away with the R&B covers that were being imitated by countless other bands from the era and embracing original sounds. And the highly intelligent Barrett, already known for marching to his own peculiar beat, began heavily ingesting LSD and producing song lyrics that were seemingly pulled from unknown realms of the cosmos.

It was that combination of original music, stage presentation and lyrical prowess that captured the attention of record companies in the first place, but by the time Pink Floyd was being presented as the next big thing in British rock, Barrett was already losing his tenuous grasp on reality through his incessant drug use.

1967

His old friend and eventual replacement David Gilmour noticed as much when he dropped by the Chelsea Studios in May 1967 for the recording of the band's second single, "See Emily Play."



"Syd didn't seem to recognize me and just stared back," Gilmour recalled in *Crazy Diamond*. "I got to know that look pretty well and I'll go on record as saying that was when he changed. It was a shock."



He was a different person.

Despite the mounting worries about their friend's mental health, Pink Floyd was thriving. "See Emily Play" became a bigger hit than "Arnold Layne," reaching No. 6 on the British charts.

Furthermore, Barrett had delivered a string of brilliant songs for the group's debut album, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*. "Chapter 24" was inspired by *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese text, "Astronomy Domine" and "Interstellar Overdrive" became emblematic of the group's atmospheric sound and "Bike" showcased its writer's willingness to embrace the absurd.

However, it wasn't long after Piper landed in record stores in early August 1967 that Barrett's deteriorating state began causing headaches for his bandmates. Later that month, it was reported that the drug-addled frontman was suffering from "nervous exhaustion," forcing the group to cancel its planned appearance at the National Jazz and Blues Festival.

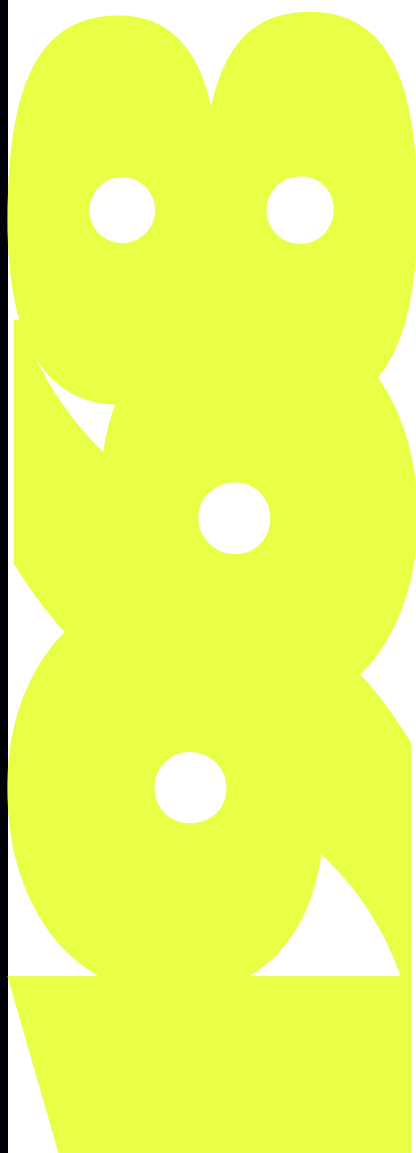
By the time the band departed for a U.S. tour in the fall, it was clear that Barrett's public presence was becoming a major problem. He stood on stage, detuning his guitar, during a gig at the Fillmore West in San Francisco, and stared catatonically at the hosts during appearances on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* and *The Pat Boone Show*. Alarmed, the band's managers aborted the tour to avoid additional embarrassing incidents.

Meanwhile, Barrett was under pressure to produce a successful follow-up single to "See Emily Play." "Scream Thy Last Scream" and "Vegetable Man" were deemed too dark for release, and while "Apples and Oranges" finally got the go-ahead in mid-November, it lacked the catchiness of its predecessors and flopped.

The group headed out for a U.K. tour around this time, with Barrett causing more tension by either refusing to exit the tour bus at gigs or walking off before the start of a show. Following a disastrous appearance at a Christmas concert, the band reached out to Gilmour, then fronting another struggling group called *Jokers Wild*.

'painter, piper, prisoner,'

Shine on You Crazy Diamond ; the melancholic eulogy to Barrett's lost genius and disillusionment



Entering 1968 with intentions of continuing as a five-piece band, Pink Floyd tried an arrangement in which Barrett would remain on board as a behind-the-scenes songwriter; before abandoning the idea of dealing with him altogether. By March 1968, Barrett was no longer with the band he co-founded and pushed to prominence.

Within a few years, the remaining members of Pink Floyd were being celebrated as arena rock gods while Barrett's own musical career was finished, and he spent the rest of his life away from the public eye. His presence on the group's quirky early records serving as a reminder for what could have been a long and successful career for a unique, gifted artist.

Even though he was no longer a member, Barrett still had an impact on Pink Floyd, and the band's ninth studio album, Wish You Were Here, was recorded as a tribute to their co-founder.



NICOLETTE ROHR

When police in Washington, D.C., sought to control the crowds gathered at Union Station awaiting the Beatles, one girl shouted as police seized another fan, "You can't throw her out, she's president of the Beatles fan club."

**WHERE
THE FANS
ARE**

It was called the British Invasion, but fans were the occupying force. Those screaming young girls were the boots on the ground that made the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, the Animals, the Kinks, so significant to the sixties. Fans made popular music important, not only by the meanings they claimed in music, but because of the public ways they lived their fandom. In an age of national media, one did not need to be a Beatles fan to live through Beatlemania, and while for fans Beatlemania was about the Beatles, to many observers it seemed to be about crazed young women.

Although music fandom was not the exclusive purview of girls, it was their public displays of fandom, often unruly and charged with sexuality, that showed the force of fans and underscored its political implications. In their screams, their physical occupation of space, and the crossing of police barricades, they often made way for other kinds of boundaries to be crossed at the height of the storied sixties. "What is happening here is significant," David Dempsey wrote in the New York Times in 1964. "Although idolatry in popular music is nothing new, the method of expressing this idolatry seems to be changing....an audience that once swooned in the presence of its favorite singer, or at best squealed, has given way to a mob that flips."

nium it created, was grounded in interior experiences and feelings of connection. Postwar consumer culture encouraged teenage consumption, especially among young women, and large-scale marketing campaigns generated excitement and revenues by selling Beatle wigs, socks, posters, pins, and records, but most fans' connection to the music went far beyond the purchasable. Women at the time and in retrospect discussed how "alive" the Beatles made them feel. One fan described an "out-of-body experience, almost—taken to a whole different place." The whole experience—the band, the music, the other fans—were full of fun with a taste of freedom that was often inspiring, and the acts of fandom—such as screaming at the top of your lungs or running away from policemen—offered similar liberating potential and, sometimes, power.

Concerned parents and perplexed journalists had already connected rock and roll and young women's fandom to unruliness and the threat of other rebellions, but it was the sixties that made their case more clearly. In the wide music world of the sixties, young women also found refuge and inspiration in the sounds and spaces of the folk revival, not to mention the example of different kinds of women who challenged postwar femininity in their dress and display—how they wore their hair, how they sat, the clothes they chose—and, in many cases, the political affiliations they represented at the height of the civil rights, student, and peace movements.

Girl groups sang songs that sounded like "girl talk," inviting girls to join in from their bedrooms or wherever they listened, topping the charts with a confident femininity. In 1963 Lesley Gore recorded "You Don't Own Me," one of the few songs to rival the Beatles' chart positions, which should tell us something about what was going through the minds of the record-buying public.

As the sixties went on, the serious act of listening to records was a central force in the counterculture, representing personal connection and meaning as well as community. The innovative music of the high sixties gave many young people ways of imagining new possibilities for their lives, and devotion to it often led them to travel from suburbs to cities to see concerts, to trek to festivals and form communities of listeners, and to embrace alternative ways of dressing, thinking, and living. In a range of ways, women-as-fans invested personal, sometimes political, meaning in the music they listened to and trespassed gendered codes of public behavior by displaying their fandom in a highly visible, audible, and public way.


Music and music fandom, from Beatlemania to rock festivals to the very serious act of listening to records, held great significance in the lives of individuals, the communities they formed around music, and the national culture in which they participated in the 1960s. Fandom lived in bedrooms and living rooms, in front of televisions and radios, at music festivals and concerts, in school, on the subway, and in the street, illustrating the ways in which music and fandom shaped women's participation in a vibrant music culture and in political culture as well.

Although there was certainly a difference between what was tolerated in leisure culture versus political culture, and although this distinction was marked by race, these claims to space were significant affronts to gendered codes of public behavior, especially in their proximity to the embattled politics of the sixties and the women's liberation movement in particular. Girls didn't just want to have fun, their transgressions, even when temporary, were not only part of generational, cultural, sexual, social, and political rebellions that transcended popular music, fandom, and leisure culture, but were also shaped by them in important ways.

Audiences are essential to the stories of popular music—no one becomes popular without an audience—but fans are often relegated to numbers—one million sold, an audience of 20,000—or, at best, simplified aggregates—they screamed, they cheered, they booed, the crowd went wild. The popularity of music during the sixties remains widely recognized but told through the stories of big names and personalities—Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin—rather than the people who listened to their music and embedded it with their own meanings.

Leaving fans out of the story echoes longstanding gaps in academic histories and an elitist tradition of seeing fans as "other," non-intellectuals drawn to mindless entertainment. In many cases, ignoring fandom has also excluded women, young people, and people of color, especially from cultural histories and histories of leisure culture. In the 1970s, scholars at the School for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England, including Simon Firth and Angela McRobbie, devoted scholarly attention to popular music and what it meant to the people who listened to it, recognizing music and music fandom as complex and worthy of far more study than it had previously been granted.

Building on this foundation, more scholars have come to view fans with greater agency, ascribing political connotations to fandom, and illustrating that fans are, of course, historical, by tracing the ways in which fandoms—music, movies, sports—have been shaped by modern technology, media, and other developments and considering fans as generative rather than merely responsive.



PSYCHEDELIC SOCIALISM

The aspiration for a society in which human life is not dictated by the demands of toil is surely one shared by socialists, artists, bohemians, and mystics.

JEREMY GILBERT

Acid communism? Psychedelic Corbynism? Freak left? Call it what you will – but re-infuse endeavours with a spirit of radical collectivism and unselfing to revivify co-opted countercultures for a world that would be free.

ACID COMMUNISM: ON THE ORIGINS OF AN IDEA

When my friend Mark Fisher died in January, he had been working on a book with the provisional title *Acid Communism: On Post-Capitalist Desire*. He had discussed the book with me, but I only saw the draft introduction when a mutual friend sent it to me after he died. A few days later, some of his students at Goldsmiths College sent me a copy of the curriculum for his MA course on 'Post-Capitalist Desire', asking me if I, along with a number of other invitees, could contribute a session to allow the course to complete.

I make these points only in order to explain, as honestly as I can, that any account by me of what Mark meant by 'Acid Communism' can't avoid the fact that I always already had my own interpretation of what such a phrase could mean, from the moment Mark first uttered it. 'Acid Communism' was Mark's term for a political and analytical position that he'd derived more than a little from my work and interests, as well as from his engagements with the radical affinity group Plan C, and with the historiography of the 70s in the work of John Medhurst and Andy Beckett. But it would be totally against the spirit of those shared ideas and priorities to attribute ownership or authorship of any of these ideas to anybody.

'Acid Communism' became Mark's term for a political sensibility shared by both the psychedelic experimentalists of the counterculture and by the political radicals of the 60s and 70s.

This utopian orientation rejected both the conformism and authoritarianism which characterised much of post-war society, and the crass individualism of consumer culture. It sought to change and raise the consciousness of singular people and the whole society, be that through the creative use of psychedelic chemicals, aesthetic experiments in music and other arts, social and political revolution, or all of the above.



Mark himself had never had any personal interest in psychedelics or psychedelic culture (like mine, his interest was aesthetic, political, historical and theoretical), but he liked the idea of 'Acid' as an adjective, describing an attitude of improvisatory creativity and belief in the possibility of seeing the world differently, in order to improve it, deliberately 'expanding' consciousness through resolutely materialist means. In fact, when we first got to know each other, he still considered himself a hippy-hating post-punk, utterly dismissive of the legacy of both the summer of love and the radicalism of '1968'.

HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

For the women's movement of the early 70s, the most important 'technology of the self' was probably the 'consciousness-raising group': small groups of women who would meet to discuss all kinds of personal and social issues from a feminist perspective, seeking to liberate themselves from sexist and patriarchal assumptions. This was also the moment when Black Power and the Gay Liberation movement reached their most intense levels of politicisation, and when the politics of the 'New Left' was at its most influential. What linked together all of their political positions was a rejection both of traditional hierarchies and of any simple individualism. These movements were libertarian, promoting an ideal of freedom, but they understood...

freedom as something that could only be experienced.

Mark was interested in reviving the idea of 'consciousness raising', and in theorising the effects of capitalist ideology in terms of a 'depletion of consciousness'. This is a particular way of thinking about the effects of ideology on groups and individuals. 'Ideology' is sometimes understood simply as a form of propaganda, giving us a false impression of the world in order to prove the interests of the powerful elite.

Certainly, when we look at how the kind of flagrant misrepresentation of the world engaged in by the right-wing press it can seem that this is exactly what happens. But many thinkers have also explored the idea that ideology, and various apparatuses of power (from the state to the church) function not just by feeding us lies, but by affecting us negatively in order to make us feel less able to act in the world, less able to think creatively or dynamically. From this perspective, 'raising' consciousness isn't just a matter of giving people information about the sources of their oppression, but of enabling them to feel personally and collectively powerful enough to challenge it.

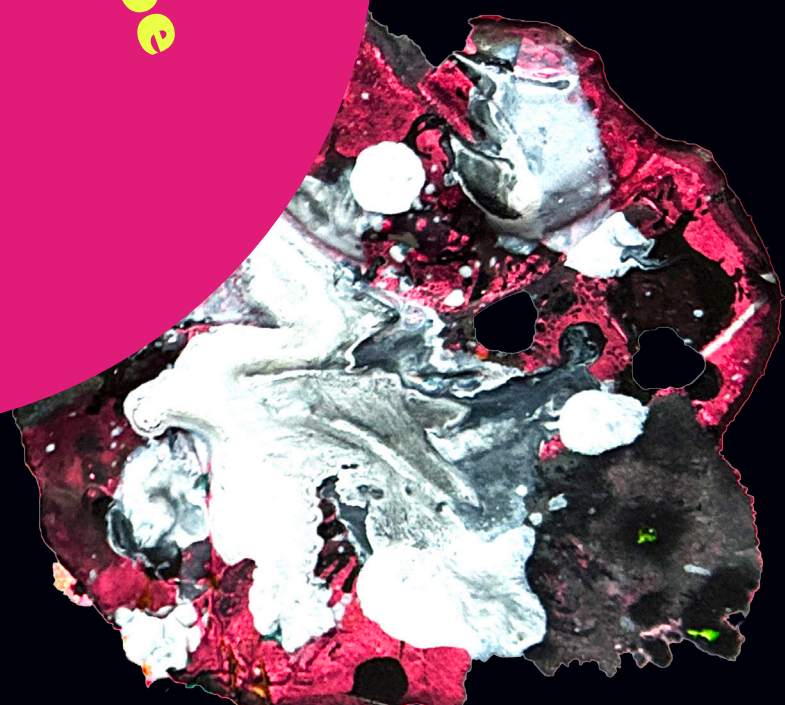
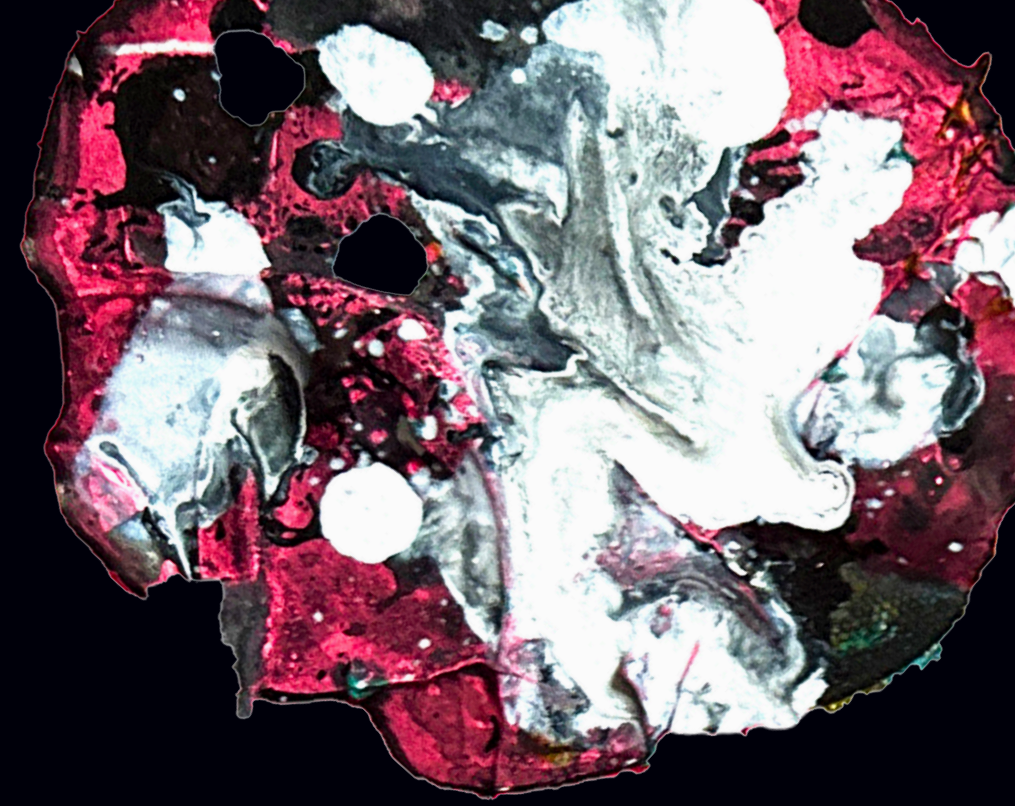
There's a fascinating confluence between the idea of 'higher' consciousness which emerges in some of the mystical, yogic and philosophical literature of the twentieth century, and the idea of politically 'raised' consciousness which became so central to 1970s radicalism. Both of these ideas had older antecedents.

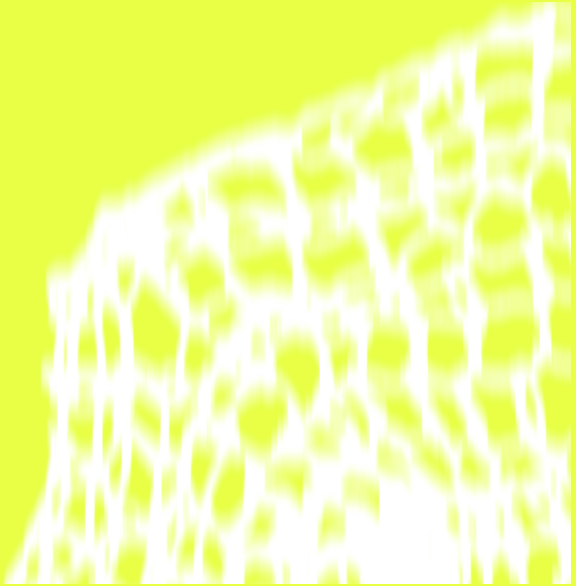
The idea of raised political consciousness had its roots in the Marxist idea of 'class consciousness', whereby workers come to realise that their shared interests as workers are more significant than their private interests as individuals, or the cultural differences they may have with other workers. The mystical idea of 'higher' consciousness has its roots in Hindu and Buddhist ideas that the individual self is an illusion. Escape from that illusion – realisation that the self is only an incidental element of a wider cosmos – is sometimes referred to as 'enlightenment', but the original Sanskrit and Pali terms might be better translated as 'awoken'. Maybe it's not an accident that 'woke' has become a popular radical slang term for raised political consciousness.

A key feature of the counterculture, psychedelic culture and the New Left was always the attempt to find new forms of...

non-hierarchical, experimental, creative collectivity.

There's no reason why such principles can't be applied to the design and implementation of public services. In fact some very mainstream ideas in social policy have developed around the idea of recognising social service outcomes as 'co-produced' by services users and professionals, rather than seeing them as simply retail services sold to customers by 'providers'.

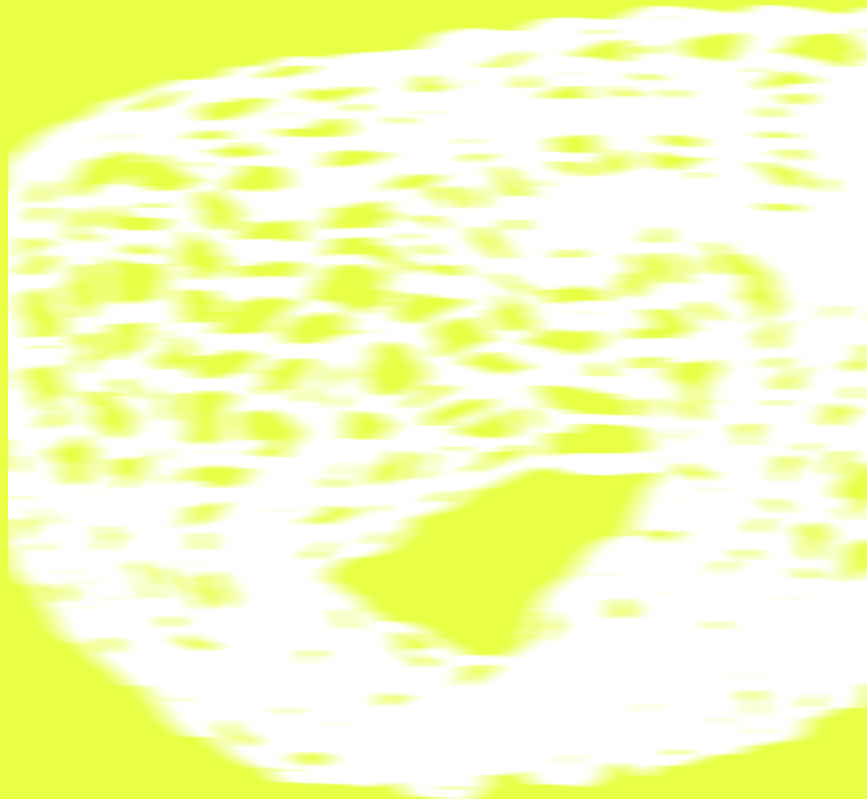
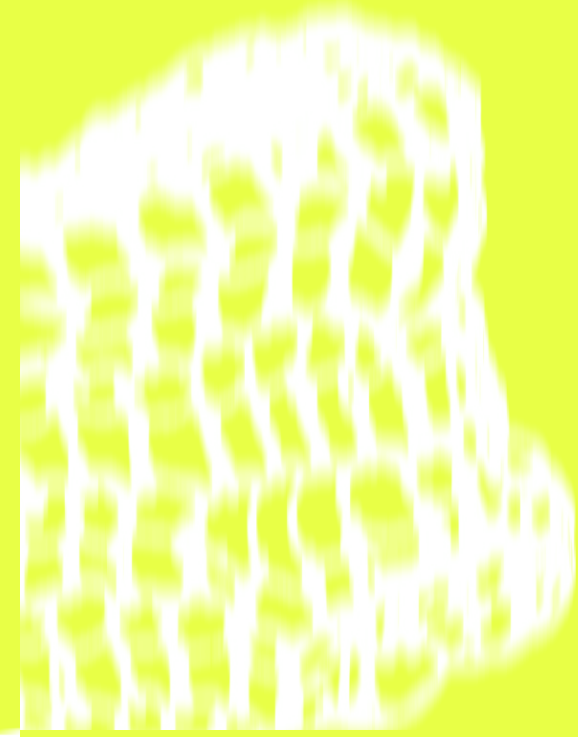




In the 1960s, the psychedelic music scene exploded, with bands like The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and Jefferson Airplane, bringing psychedelics like LSD into the public discourse. Their music, infused with experimental sounds and mind-altering lyrics, was inspired by their well-documented use of psychedelics like acid and psilocybin mushrooms.

As the music scene embraced psychedelics, they also attracted negative attention from authorities. The entanglement of psychedelics with the volatile 1960s counterculture not only led to their ban but also stifled a potentially groundbreaking era of mental health research treatment, which would have shaped music and culture in profound and lasting ways.

In the 1950s, ethnomycologist Gordon Wasson brought psilocybin mushrooms to Western attention after participating in indigenous rituals in Mexico. His widely publicized accounts introduced these sacred fungi to a global audience, but the resulting tourism — including famous musicians like John Lennon and Bob Dylan — had devastating consequences for the Mazatec tribe, leading to exploitation and cultural erosion.

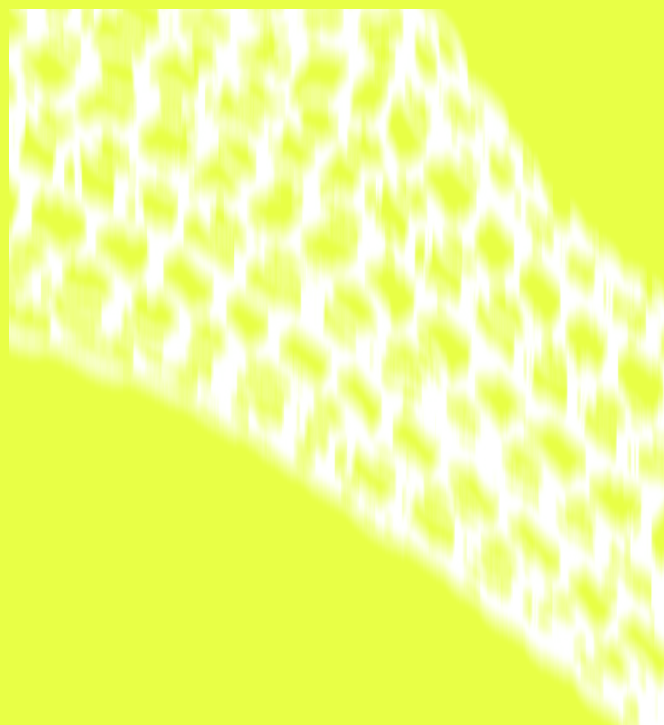


This is psychedelics' frustrating story of artistic and spiritual excess at the expense of scientific progress.

THE ORIGINS OF SCIENTIFIC

RESEARCH ON PSYCHEDELICS

Psychedelic research began in the early 20th century, with substances like psilocybin and LSD capturing the interest of scientists for their profound effects on consciousness. Albert Hofmann's 1938 synthesis of LSD-25 led to the first documented acid trip in which he inadvertently absorbed a small amount through his skin. This discovery was cataclysmic, prompting further investigation into LSD's psychological effects, with Hofmann recognizing its potential for various profound therapeutic applications.



By the mid-1960s, researchers were investigating psychedelics for their ability to treat mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and addiction. Influential figures like Dr. Timothy Leary and Dr. Stanislav Grof emerged, advocating for the transformative potential of these substances, with initial results suggesting deep psychological breakthroughs and lasting behavioral changes. Richard Alpert, originally a prominent Harvard psychologist, transitioned from academia to spiritual guru after profound experiences with psychedelics alongside Leary.

THE RISE OF JOOOS
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HOW PSYCHEDELICS CONNECTED SCIENTISTS AND MUSICIANS, FUELING 1960S COUNTERCULTURE

These pioneering scientists and researchers bridged the gap with musicians, who embraced psychedelics not for research but for recreation and artistic inspiration. Researchers like Leary weren't just publishing papers — they were hosting counterculture gatherings, rubbing elbows with musicians like The Grateful Dead, and fueling the perception of psychedelics as a recreational free-for-all.

Music festivals like Woodstock became epicenters of psychedelic culture, drawing hundreds of thousands of young people seeking to experience freedom, music and mind-expanding substances. Woodstock, held in 1969, was a concert, a collective cathartic moment and a demonstration of the counterculture ethos, where LSD and other psychedelics were ubiquitous. Iconic performances by artists like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and The Who encapsulated the spirit of the era, blending music with the transformative power of psychedelics.

The Beatles, for instance, famously used LSD, which profoundly impacted their creativity and music, resulting in groundbreaking albums like Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Pioneering artists like Pink Floyd and Jimi Hendrix mirrored the mind-altering effects of LSD in their music, creating sounds that encapsulated the psychedelic experience and solidified the drug's place in the counterculture movement.

Psychedelics played a significant role in the anti-war movement and civil rights activism of the 1960s, acting as catalysts for radical thinking and social change. Influential figures like Allen Ginsberg and Abbie Hoffman used these substances to challenge the status quo, advocating for peace and equality. Psychedelics fueled a sense of interconnectedness and empathy, which were pivotal in rallying people against the Vietnam War and supporting the fight for civil rights.

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY'S ROLE IN THE SCAPEGOATING OF PSYCHEDELICS

Despite the profound impact, psychedelics had on the anti-war movement, civil rights activism and the counterculture ethos epitomized by festivals like Woodstock, their growing popularity also attracted significant scrutiny. As more people began using these substances to reject mainstream values and explore new realms of consciousness, the media increasingly portrayed psychedelics as dangerous and destabilizing.

The resulting research shutdown prevented the advancement of our scientific understanding of psychedelics for several decades. A generation of scientists lost the chance to gather long-term data on the therapeutic impact of psychedelics. This knowledge gap — a direct consequence of prohibition brought on, in part, by the music industry — continues to hinder our understanding of how these substances can be harnessed to address today's pressing mental health challenges.

President Nixon, dogged by the increasing unpopularity of the Vietnam War, was all too happy to find a zeitgeist culprit. The psychedelic party came to a screeching halt in the early '70s. The Controlled Substances Act of 1970 lumped LSD and psilocybin with heroin and cocaine, effectively shutting down legitimate research. With counterculture movements scapegoated and psychedelics seen as a societal menace, the scientific community's promising exploration of these substances became an afterthought.

The intertwining of psychedelics with 1960s counterculture and music had profound and unfortunate consequences. While psychedelic substances catalyzed significant social movements and artistic innovation, their irresponsible promotion by the music industry contributed to a climate of mistrust and misinformation.

Despite this, the cultural legacy of the 1960s endures. Psychedelic music and its ideals of peace, love and expanded consciousness continue to inspire new generations. Reflecting on this era, we learn valuable lessons about the delicate balance between innovation and responsibility, the dangers of sensationalism and the importance of preserving scientific inquiry from cultural and political turbulence.

THE PSYCHEDELIC

ADRIAN PREDÁ

The ebb and flow of societal beliefs often resemble a pendulum's swing, oscillating between acceptance and rejection. This phenomenon is not confined to the annals of history but is evident in contemporary debates, such as the one surrounding psychedelics.

Historically, what was once deemed abhorrent, a vice, gradually became acceptable, desirable, and, eventually, a virtue. "Virtuous" peaks are commonly followed by declines and, eventually, flat-out rejection as moral failings. Consider the changing attitudes toward individualism versus collectivism or the dominance of reason versus emotion in different cultures and epochs.

This "pendulum effect" isn't just a historical pattern. In medicine, the nature-nurture debate has swung between biological and environmental models of disease. Psychiatry's pendulum has traveled back and forth between the psychological and biological determinants of mental illness. These dichotomies, while oversimplified, often guide public perception as if they were mutually exclusive truths.

RENHSSANG

Science faces the constant challenge of dispelling the illusion that pendulum swings result from a cumulative body of empirically validated data. This is a dangerous illusion, as in reality, pendulum trajectories are driven by acceptance and rejection, the right and the wrong, as opposed to a data-driven valid/invalid perspective. Belief-based pendulum trajectories of beliefs commonly reflect a majority-view, socioculturally filtered interpretation of evidence.

While it is difficult to take off our socio-culturally colored glasses, the awareness of such filters should be reason enough, when it comes to rapidly swinging belief-driven pendulums, to take a step back; aim to slow down a pendulum moving at high speed; and critically examine not the beliefs, but the evidence.

Would such a perspective help better understand the contemporary, rapidly "swinging up" movement of psychedelics' benefits?



HOW

One good way to understand a complex system is to disturb it and then see what happens. By smashing atoms, a particle accelerator forces them to yield their secrets. By administering psychedelics in carefully calibrated doses, neuroscientists can profoundly disturb the normal waking consciousness of volunteers, dissolving the structures of the self and occasioning what can be described as a mystical experience. While this is happening, imaging tools can observe the changes in the brain's activity and patterns of connection.

Already this work is yielding surprising insights into the "neural correlates" of the sense of self and spiritual experience. The hoary 1960s platitude that psychedelics offered a key to understanding—and "expanding"—consciousness no longer looks quite so preposterous. How to Change Your Mind is the story of this renaissance.

Something unexpected and telling happened. Beginning in the 1990s, well out of view of most of us, a small group of scientists, psychotherapists, and so-called psychonauts, believing that something precious had been lost from both science and culture, resolved to recover it. Today, after several decades of suppression and neglect, psychedelics are having a renaissance. A new generation of scientists, many of them inspired by their own personal experience of the compounds, are testing their potential to heal mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, trauma, and addiction. Other scientists are using psychedelics in conjunction with new brain-imaging tools to explore the links between brain and mind, hoping to unravel some of the mysteries of consciousness.

CHANGE

YOUR MIND

MIND

MICHAEL POLLAN

A New Door.

“Individuals transcend their primary identification with their bodies and experience ego-free states. They return with a new perspective and profound acceptance.”

Carl Jung once wrote that it is not the young but people in middle age who need to have an “experience of the numinous” to help them negotiate the second half of their lives. By the time I arrived safely in my fifties, life seemed to be running along a few deep but comfortable grooves: a long and happy marriage alongside an equally long and gratifying career. As we do, I had developed a set of fairly dependable mental algorithms for navigating whatever life threw at me, whether at home or at work.

What was missing from my life? Nothing I could think of—until, that is, word of the new research into psychedelics began to find its way to me, making me wonder if perhaps I had failed to recognize the potential of these molecules as a tool for both understanding the mind and, potentially, changing it. Here are the three data points that persuaded me this was the case.

In the spring of 2010, a front-page story appeared in the New York Times headlined “Hallucinogens Have Doctors Tuning In Again.” It reported that researchers had been giving large doses of psilocybin—the active compound in magic mushrooms—to terminal cancer patients as a way to help them deal with their “existential distress” at the approach of death. These experiments, which were taking place simultaneously at Johns Hopkins, UCLA, and New York University, seemed not just improbable but crazy.

Faced with a terminal diagnosis, the very last thing I would want to do is take a psychedelic drug—that is, surrender control of my mind and then in that psychologically vulnerable state stare straight into the abyss. But many of the volunteers reported that over the course of a single guided psychedelic “journey” they reconceived how they viewed their cancer and the prospect of dying. Several of them said they had lost their fear of death completely. The reasons offered for this transformation were intriguing but also somewhat elusive...

As someone not at all sure he has ever had a single “spiritually significant” experience, much less enough of them to make a ranking, I found that the 2006 paper piqued my curiosity but also my skepticism. Many of the volunteers described being given access to an alternative reality, a “beyond” where the usual physical laws don’t apply and various manifestations of cosmic consciousness or divinity present themselves as unmistakably real. All this I found both a little hard to take (couldn’t this be just a drug-induced hallucination?) and yet at the same time intriguing; part of me wanted it to be true, whatever exactly “it” was.

This surprised me, because I have never thought of myself as a particularly spiritual, much less mystical, person. This is partly a function of worldview, I suppose, and partly of neglect: I’ve never devoted much time to exploring spiritual paths and did not have a religious upbringing. My default perspective is that of the philosophical materialist, who believes that matter is the fundamental substance of the world and the physical laws it obeys should be able to explain everything that happens. I start from the assumption that nature is all that there is and gravitate toward scientific explanations of phenomena. That said, I’m also sensitive to the limitations of the scientific materialist perspective and believe that nature (including the human mind) still holds deep mysteries toward which science can sometimes seem arrogant and unjustifiably dismissive.

Was it possible that a single psychedelic experience, something that turned on nothing more than the ingestion of a pill or square of blotter paper, could put a big dent in such a worldview? Shift how one thought about mortality? Actually change one’s mind in enduring ways?

The idea took hold of me. It was a little like being shown a door in a familiar room—the room of your own mind—that you had somehow never noticed before and being told by people you trusted (scientists!) that a whole other way of thinking—of being!—lay waiting on the other side...

All you had to do was turn the knob and enter.

Who wouldn’t be curious? I might not have been looking to change my life, but the idea of learning something new about it, and of shining a fresh light on this old world, began to occupy my thoughts. Maybe there was something missing from my life, something I just hadn’t named.

Now, I already knew something about such doors, having written about psychoactive plants earlier in my career. In *The Botany of Desire*, I explored at some length what I had been surprised to discover is a universal human desire to change consciousness. There is not a culture on earth (well, one*) that doesn't make use of certain plants to change the contents of the mind, whether as a matter of healing, habit, or spiritual practice.

That such a curious and seemingly maladaptive desire should exist alongside our desires for nourishment and beauty and sex—all of which make much more obvious evolutionary sense—cried out for an explanation. The simplest was that these substances help relieve pain and boredom. Yet the powerful feelings and elaborate taboos and rituals that surround many of these psychoactive species suggest there must be something more to it.

For our species, I learned, plants and fungi with the power to radically alter consciousness have long and widely been used as tools for healing the mind, for facilitating rites of passage, and for serving as a medium for communicating with supernatural realms, or spirit worlds. These uses were ancient and venerable in a great many cultures, but I ventured one other application: to enrich the collective imagination—the culture—with the novel ideas and visions that a select few people bring back from wherever it is they go.

Now that I had developed an intellectual appreciation for the potential value of these psychoactive substances, you might think I would have been more eager to try them. I'm not sure what I was waiting for: courage, maybe, or the right opportunity, which a busy life lived mainly on the right side of the law never quite seemed to afford. But when I began to weigh the potential benefits I was hearing about against the risks, I was surprised to learn that psychedelics are far more frightening to people than they are dangerous.

ENTHEOGENS; THE DIVINE WITHIN.

The term "psychedelics," which I will mainly use here, does have its downside. Embraced in the 1960s, the term carries a lot of countercultural baggage. Hoping to escape those associations and underscore the spiritual dimensions of these drugs, some researchers have proposed they instead be called "entheogens"—from the Greek for "the divine within." This strikes me as too emphatic. Despite the 1960s trappings, the term "psychedelic," coined in 1956, is etymologically accurate. Drawn from the Greek, it means simply "mind manifesting," which is precisely what these extraordinary molecules hold the power to do.

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