# Healing states, psychedelics, and society

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### Abstract

A common view of healing with psychedelics is that their primary 'mechanism of action' is to allow conscious and embodied processing of repressed or dissociated traumatic events, i.e., reliving them in a safe environment. These states may be seen as similar to various types of trance states. Typically, a reliving of resurfaced traumatic events would include processing of autobiographical memories but may also include undecipherable visions. Some psychedelics such as 5-MeO-DMT, however, do not seem to adhere to this paradigm. Instead, they appear to surpass the autobiographical or entity level and directly target a lower level of the brain, which could be called 'instinctual'. These states might be interpreted as significantly deeper states of trance, or a connection to fundamental life forces. Both of these types of states are, in practice, unknown and unutilized by current biomedical science. To ensure full benefit from the possibilities of these states, settings other than the biomedical paradigm might be more appropriate to adopt in society.

### Introduction

States of consciousness have been conceptualized in various ways. 'Dual' psychedelic experience, based on subject-object distinction, is predominantly conceptual, while 'nondual' psychedelic experience, lacking the subject-object structure, is predominantly nonconceptual. Nonconceptual experience could be considered to be outside the scope of conventional science. Currently, science is the dominant paradigm in understanding the world. Nondual experience could be considered to question this paradigm. Typically, concepts are utilized to solve problems. If problems can be solved nonconceptually, concepts and science become redundant. Huge effort is spent on refining concepts, yet many issues may be unresolvable on the conceptual level.

The crown jewel of all entheogens is 5-methoxy-dimethyltryptamine, which can reasonably be called 'the God molecule'. Infinitely more powerful than DMT, 5-MeO-DMT gives rise to probably the fullest possible energetic expansion that the human body can process. In terms of infinity spectrums, 5-MeO-DMT opens one to the pure infinite nature of all possible energetic permutations. It also fairly effectively dissolves the ego within a few moments if the subject is willing to let go and trust the experience unconditionally ... 5-MeO-DMT is a natural neurotransmitter that is already present in each and every human being on this planet (as is DMT) ... Unlike the other entheogens discussed here, 5-MeO-DMT is largely non-visual in quality. Though it can give rise to perceptions of pure, crystalline fractal rainbow light, visuals are not a defining feature of the 5-MeO-DMT experience (and are a major distinction between 5-MeO and the hyper-visual nature of DMT). Rather, 5-MeO-DMT is more of an experience of pure energy beyond any form or representation. (Ball, 2009)

These features of 5-MeO-DMT imply a 'minimalistic' perspective that differed from, for example, the culture around ayahuasca.

I have taken pains to distinguish between what I call the 'shamanic model' of psychedelic experience and what I've articulated as the 'nondual model' of psychedelic experience. The shamanic model is all about spirits, realms, and otherness, whereas the nondual model is about recognizing that all appearances are manifestations of one universal self, consciousness, or being. (Ball, 2022) The concept of nonduality has been described as follows:

Genuine understanding of nondualism proceeds from experience, not rationality. Thinking itself is largely a dualistic enterprise. Dividing experience into categories, objects, systems, etc., is thoroughly dualistic. There is always an apparent divide between the subject who is thinking and that which the subject is thinking about. Every object of the mind is precisely that: an object that stands in contradistinction to the subject. Nondual experience, then, is not about thought. This also implies that nondual experience is not the result of any form of sustained study. You cannot learn nondualism. It is not a matter of sorting out your thoughts or beliefs. It is not about studying enough esoteric systems, learning new meditation techniques, or engaging in clarifying philosophical debates. Nondual realization is something that happens to you; it is not an accumulation of beliefs, thoughts, or ideas. In fact, it is the stripping away and relinquishing of all thoughts, beliefs, and ideas. In many respects, it is the complete opposite of sustained intellectual endeavor. Nondualism is the genuine discovery of how things actually are. It is a discovery that can only be made by individuals, for themselves, and by themselves. It cannot be learned. It cannot be taught. It cannot be transmitted from one person to the next in the way that concepts, ideas, and beliefs can. It can only be directly experienced. (Ball, 2012)

Thus, the nondual does not handle with 'spirits' or 'entities'; as those imply the subject–object distinction, they belong to the dual.

# Induction of nondual states

Nondual states may be induced by 5-MeO-DMT, which is a less-known psychedelic with a short duration of action and intensive dose-dependent effects. It is an endogenous substance for humans as well as many animals and plants. It can be either synthesized or sourced from the venom of a toad belonging to the Bufo genus, the Colorado River toad, also known as the Sonoran Desert toad. Its taxonomic name is *Incilius alvarius*, formerly known as *Bufo alvarius*. Naturally sourced 5-MeO-DMT is therefore often colloquially called *bufo*.

Apart from being a component in some psychedelic snuffs in the Amazonian area (Davis et al., 2018), 5-MeO-DMT has not been part of any tradition. Smoking 5-MeO-DMT appears to be a very recent practice, likely initiated in the early 1980s in the United States. A booklet self-published in 1984 by Most featured 'the psychedelic toad of the Sonoran Desert' (Most, 1984). It briefly introduced the substance and described a method for the synthesis of 5-MeO-DMT, in order to 'protect the natural toad populations and accommodate the growing international demand for this extraordinary psychedelic'. In 1997, 5-MeO-DMT was reviewed in a book by Ann and Alexander Schulgin (Shulgin and Shulgin, 1997).

In 2009, a book by James Oroc, an extreme sports enthusiast who died in 2020 due to paragliding equipment failure, described in detail his history and experiences with the substance (Oroc, 2009, 2018). In 2014, a book by Palmer described his extensive experience with psychedelics, a lot of which was about 5-MeO-DMT (Palmer, 2014).

In the latter half of the 2010s, a few eccentric 5-MeO-DMT facilitators who described their backgrounds and methods became public figures (Ball, 2009; Rettig Hinojosa, 2016; Sandoval Isaac, 2017), later involved in controversies (de Greef, 2022). The existing formal research has been mostly conducted during and after the 2010s. In the last few years, 5-MeO-DMT use in the US appears to have increased significantly (F.I.V.E., 2023; Kuczynski, 2022).

# Somatic opening

5-MeO-DMT may induce a gradual process of 'somatic opening' that continues long after a session, with some of the effects becoming permanent. In the process, chronic, asymmetric muscle tensions may be released, which allows for symmetry and alignment in the body related to a centerline (the spine). Additional opening may later happen spontaneously as 'reactivations'. The release of chronic tension may be related to the resolution of psychiatric disorders, as well as the dissolution of behavioral patterns such as addictions.

Unlike processes with classical psychedelics, the process is not chronological nor easily verbalizable. The experience is not fully non-conceptual, and depends on the dose. Typically, with small doses or at the end of a large-dose experience, there may be visions related to sensory perceptions during the experience.

Dual psychedelic experience typically consists of visions that give rise to thoughts. These are thus all conceptual. The validity of such visions is often difficult to determine, and it is easy to get lost in interpretations.

Nondual experience appears to transcend all this: there are no or few concepts and visions that would need interpretation. Changes happen purely on a sub-limbic and somatic level.

A central part of this process was the confrontation of all fears. The process 'opened one's fears, or opened everything': structures of thinking and belief, layers of one's identity, hopes, fears, and

'wounds of the heart'. It revealed the person's 'stories' about who he was and what he thought he was doing. It was not a 'therapeutic process' but a 'life-affirming process'. It was not a method for bypassing one's issues; instead, one needed to face all of them in everyday life. Although the peak of a session was 'kind of dissociative', as in the person not being conscious of his environment and perhaps not remembering who he was, the process was nonetheless 'not misleading' or capable of diverting one from reality.

As a person 'stayed in full consciousness' at the peak, one 'experienced oneself in a pure form'. The possibility for this depended on both the dose and the person's or 'the system's readiness for surrender'. Surrendering was not something one could force or decide to do. It was something that happened when one was ready for it. One's 'ego' could not surrender, nor could it decide to surrender.

The bufo experience was about 'remembering one's essence'. Going through life, a person typically identified himself with the defensive state of somatic contraction. Most of his memories, beliefs, thoughts, and stories were related to this contraction. As the contraction was released, one could de-identify oneself with these patterns and remember one's 'original state' of relaxedness. In this state of 'authentic remembering', one's 'consciousness' could access 'deeper meridians', or perceive and regain the function of deeper layers of, say, lymphatic circulation. One's body became more functional in a broad-spectrum manner.

Tension was replaced by an opening. In practice, it could mean that tense muscles contracting joints opened; more space was allowed for joints. The spine could lengthen. The whole system 'gained more space', in a measurable, physical sense. This process functioned 'from inside out', in contrast to, say, stretching, which could be seen as working 'from outside in'.

Healing-oriented altered states appear consistently related to relaxation, and may dissolve through contraction. The state described below was induced with a small dose of LSD combined with inhaled nitrous oxide  $(N_2O)$ .

I knew that if I just stayed in this state, that would have been the answer to all the questions. Yet, simultaneously, as I was mentally and psychologically wholly unprepared for such an experience, feelings and thoughts began to arise that raised a fear. I had no frame of reference for the experience. Although in a way I understood and knew it all, some part of my 'ego', my identity, could not receive or accept it, could not integrate it. As I lingered in that state for maybe half an hour or an hour, my fears gradually increased. I began to feel as if I had no interior at all. Whereas before inside me there had been a private space for me to reside, there was now a whole universe. In fact, the inside-outside distinction became a Möbius strip, a loop. There was no boundary in any direction. There was no dark corner for me to hide as a separate object, an individual.

I began to feel that if I stayed there, I was going to die, not physically but as the individual person I had been. It began to feel quite scary. The state and its boundlessness became scary. The more this fear arose in me, the more the infinity space began to resonate with it. Very soon, it all became very scary, as if there would be nothing to hold on to. There was no longer the reality that I had known or who I had been; there was nothing to support the ego-based existence. The more I looked for support, the clearer I could see that all the things that I tried to rely on were just illusions.

So I quickly drifted away from the state of trust and clarity into ego-driven distress and agony. I concluded that I needed to escape this state, get rid of it, and return to being a human. I thought that I wanted to tell my friends about this, but I didn't want this experience right now. I thought that in a few weeks I would repeat the process and return to this state, but right now I can't accept it.

Purely on intuition, I began to contract my body. Intuitively, I began to understand that by doing that, I was drawing my energy away from the center channel. This withdrawal corresponded to so-matic tension related to the ego. I chose the tension. I began contracting the energy into the somatic system. At first, nothing happened, but suddenly something snapped, the state dissolved in an instant, and everything was completely normal.

The embodied manifestations of a healing process could include various kinds of bouncing, shaking, and vibration. Harmonic vibration may represent the tension between control and release. In vibration, a part of the somatic system tries to retain control, whereas another part tries to give it up. Vibration may thus be a manifestation of simultaneous control and release.

If we roughly divide the brain into three layers: neocortical 'conscious thinking' layer, 'subconscious emotional' layer, and 'unconscious reflexive/instinctual' layer, 'dual' experience involves mostly the first two, whereas 'non-dual' involves the third, the 'lowest' or 'reptilian' one. On this layer, there does not appear to be linear time, clear causality, or autobiographical memory.

Instead, this layer concerns with survival reflexes that do not subjectively form a continuum, due to the lack of autobiographical memory. Subsequently, experiences on this level appear random and 'flashback-like'. They may

be triggered by external events, and interrupt the processing on upper layers. From the perspective of the upper layers, these reenactions may appear unexplainable or incomprehensible, as well as uncontrollable.

Severe trauma involving life-threatening situations concerns the lowest layer, which is responsible for maintaining low-level somatic homeostasis and fight-flight-freeze reactions, possibly involved also the in the 'fawn' reaction (attempting to please the aggressor) (Walker, 2013).

Cases of severe trauma may be treatment-resistant to classical psychedelics. In such cases, 5-MeO-DMT has anecdotally transcended the treatment-resistance. For example, a severely traumatized person is often able to block the effects of high doses of LSD or ayahuasca. 5-MeO-DMT may be effective in overcome these blocks, and subsequently allow further treatment with classical psychedelics.

#### Self-organization, synchronicity, and society

The universal energy manifesting through us was self-organizing and self-nourishing. The LSD and  $N_2O$  experience revealed the layers of complexity of this unfolding. Human experience was one layer of complexity. Humanity was approaching a certain edge of universal consciousness. The energy had passed through the biosphere to the 'human sphere'. It represented a certain kind of vibration and a level of consciousness. On the other hand, humanity simultaneously resided in a self-destructive cycle in an 'egosphere'. The laws of the biosphere were embodied both as light and as a certain kind of darkness. The difference between these two was consciousness. When the energy manifested as unconscious, fear-based, and control-oriented, it was often violent and destructive. In the animal world, for example, the same energies were not 'toxic' in the same manner because the animal world often did not possess the capacity for 'morality', i.e., the capacity for choice; its functions were predominantly instinctual or operated from a less differentiated energy.

In contrast, although the boundary to the animal world was very blurred, the neocortex gave humans, at least in theory, the capability for additional deliberation of the consequences of actions. When these capabilities were unutilized, the resulting actions were typically less than optimal, resulting in wars and destruction. The humans were also a very heterogeneous group, with some functioning at low levels of consciousness and others at higher levels.

The mechanisms of 'dark entities taking over' a collective space versus pure consciousness taking over could be 'practiced' in ceremonies:

He was not trying to differentiate where or from whom these energies or issues originated, not even whether they were 'his' or from 'others'. In previous ceremonies, he had tried to 'sort himself out' of such energies, which had only resulted in him becoming entangled with them. Regardless, the ceremony had been challenging, reminding him of the first ceremony, in which all kinds of 'dark energies' had dominated. This time, he realized that if one's conscious presence was not strong enough, these entities would capture the collective space. The entities possessed their own agendas and energies and moved in the space. In the space opened by entheogens, the entities aimed to spread themselves among new hosts. The lower the vibrations in the space, the stronger the entities became, and the space grew more chaotic, leading the participants astray in strange forests and worlds of illusion.

Conversely, the more the participants resided in pure consciousness, the more the vibration of oneness ruled the space, and the less power the entities could gain. Because all entities existed at a level of initial differentiation, they could not exist in the presence of undifferentiated, pure energy. Entities did not exist independently of their hosts; they could only exist when their hosts remained unconscious of them. Their method of existence depended on acquiring parasitic energy; they contained no source of energy of their own. Yet if the host could not recognize its own nature and did not know who he was, he could perceive these entities as independent.

The light of pure consciousness infiltrated and dissolved these entities because they could be seen as the energies they consisted of. These constituents could be traumatic events in the past and the resulting wounds and patterns of behavior. Eventually, the energy in the entities originated from ourselves and was stored as somatic contractions, i.e., muscle tensions. Fundamentally, the energy in these entities wanted to 'become whole', i.e., dissolve in the totality of the host. Somatically, this was represented by the release of tension.

Due to the nature of pure consciousness, to raise the consciousness of everyone, only one person needed to raise his own consciousness. As the level of consciousness rose in someone, it began to synchronize with its surroundings. This was because eventually, in oneness, there was no subject; instead, it was a shared state. Collectively, the higher the level of consciousness, the more synchronicity emerged in a collective. The presence of synchronicity clarified the energy contained in the entities that ruled a chaotic space, turning the space into an organized one. Subsequently, facilitated by pure consciousness, the energy began moving, turning all participants into parts of a single, coherent system. Due to the self-organizing tendency of nature manifesting itself on an interpersonal level, the system became more than the sum of its parts.

The self-organizing principle directed each participant or member of society to their own authentic place and process. Each one had a different role; for one, it could be feeling a suppressed sorrow from the past; for another, it could be gaining insight into an aspect of self-consciousness; for someone else, it could be an expansion to cosmic bliss; for yet another, facing a previously intolerable fear.

Contraction was separating us from the outside world, keeping us behind the protective armor. As we opened into the sea and the flow, we became one with everything, and the energies of life began flowing towards us, both the painful and the pleasurable. In this opening, the spirit began opening to us. The spirit was something that we needed to achieve or obtain. Instead, it was the return of our system to its authentic state that was in synchrony with life-sustaining forces—to our own authentic place, to oneness.

The collapse of Maya civilization has been attributed a combination of drought and dogmatic beliefs (Arnauld et al., 2021; Helmke et al., 2021; Kaldor, 2022). In that case, the dogmatic beliefs were about gods providing rain if enough human sacrifices were made. Unfortunately, no amount of human sacrifices proved sufficient, the drought led to a civil war, and the civilization disappeared.

It could be claimed that not much has changed. The world may be facing a period of droughts again, and is being led by similar kind of dogmatic thinking, in this case an obsession to simplistic quantitative measuring.

# On the validity of the information acquired through psychedelic visions

In the 1960s, Huxley held that psychedelics opened a 'reducing valve' in the brain and nervous system that ordinarily inhibited access not only to the subconscious but to 'everything that is happening everywhere in the universe' (Huxley, 2004). Filtering was helpful in preventing overwhelm in some ways but also counterproductive in others. The field could be accessed by psychotic people, people under the influence of psychedelics, and children who had not yet become habituated to such filtering. Osmond noted that not only did the brain filter out the information, but it also provided no means of describing it (Huxley and Osmond, 2018). Therefore, such experiences could not be properly put into words.

In 2006, Grof presented a collection of examples of psychedelic visions that had later been verified to be true (Grof, 2006).

In 2009, Oroc discussed the zero-point field (ZPF), a quantum physics concept (Oroc, 2009). Oroc described how, before having ever read about such issues, the information began flowing into his mind during a train ride in India. Years later, he came to realize that the ideas 'corresponded to the cutting-edge of modern science to an uncanny degree'. According to the ZPF theory, matter was considered illusory: an 'effect' caused by the slowing down of light due to the resistance of the zero-point field. Similarly, light propagation could actually create space and time (Haisch, 2006). Oroc's experience appeared similar to the interviewed facilitator's initial visionary experience at the age of 22. Oroc noted that Eastern attitudes towards such experiences were accepting:

In the East, where all forms of G/d are considered both possible and inadequate, everything that 5-MeO-DMT has taught me is known and assumed, while in the West, thanks to our rigid interpretation of dogma, we deny it and classify the experience as a 'hallucination', or, even more frighteningly, 'psychotic'.

Oroc also presented a comparison between 5-MeO-DMT experiences and *bardo* states, described in the book by Sogyal Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying (Sogyal et al., 2002), a commentary on the Bardo Thodol (*Liberation through hearing during the intermediate state*, or the Tibetan Book of the Dead) (Padmasambhava, 2022), intended to guide a person through the actual process of dying.

In 2012, Carhart-Harris et al. suggested that psychedelics decrease activity and connectivity in the brain's key connector hubs, enabling a state of unconstrained cognition (Carhart-Harris et al., 2012). Psilocybin 'appeared to inhibit brain regions that are responsible for constraining consciousness within the narrow boundaries of the normal waking state, an interpretation that is remarkably similar to what Huxley proposed over half a century ago' (Halberstadt and Geyer, 2012).

In 2015, Raami noted that many inventors acquired their ideas by unexplainable, 'intuitive' methods (Raami, 2015, 2019a,b).

In 2020, Keppler elaborated on the concept of the zero-point field (Keppler, 2020, 2021). He defined it as 'a vibrant ocean of energy' assumed to exist in the vacuum state of quantum electrodynamics, contrary to the classical notion of an empty vacuum. The ubiquitous ZPF would then be the fundamental substrate mediating the electromagnetic force. This conceptualization by Keppler could align with the 5-MeO-DMT experience of an undifferentiated 'force field', and with the facilitator's description of a unitary, underlying energy that could differentiate to create all existing phenomena, for example by cumulative subtraction. While other psychedelics might partially disable the filtering, 5-MeO-DMT might disable it fully, allowing for a direct experience of the energy in the ZPF.

In 2023, Bouso et al. discussed the nature of information acquired in the psychedelic experience (Bouso et al., 2023). They described that hallucinations were currently associated almost exclusively with psychopathological states. However, it was possible that this information might actually be largely factual. The authors stated that 'this radical shift in the cultural interpretation of hallucinations could have several implications for fields such as drug policy, civil law, and psychiatry, as well as for the stigma associated with mental disorders'.

# Retrospective case studies on psychedelic therapy

What kinds of symptoms, conditions, or unease, lead people to experiment with these healing practices? How are these therapeutic processes integrated with other therapeutic practices (biomedical, psychological, etc.)?

#### Psychosis and bipolar disorder

Self-treatment of psychosis and complex post-traumatic stress disorder with LSD and DMT.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psycr.2022.100029

Portuguese translation: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362339563

- Psychosis is usually an exclusion criteria; this study presents a case that was labeled 'hopeless' but resolved quite easily with LSD and DMT

Ayahuasca in the treatment of bipolar disorder with psychotic features.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21294.18243

Portuguese translation: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371587878

- Bipolar disorder is usually an exclusion criteria; this study shows that instead of exclusion, these people might benefit the most

#### Self-treatment with psilocybin

Self-treatment of depression and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) with psilocybin. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.20075.41764

- Partial resolution of racism and bullying induced severe trauma
- Full resolution was prevented due to constant retraumatization
- The environment limits the outcomes

Self-treatment of parental neglect-induced mixed anxiety and depressive disorder with psilocybin.

# https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21687.39848

- Resolution of childhood trauma with unguided psilocybin sessions in the course of two years
- Conventional therapy utilized afterwards as 'integration'

# Facilitated treatment with psilocybin

Underground small-group therapy of treatment-resistant depression and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) with psilocybin.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24250.06089

- Resolution of decades-long treatment-resistant depression as a result of six psilocybin sessions in 1.5 years

- Causes: childhood domestic violence and sexual abuse

Healing early neonatal death related family trauma with psilocybin.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.17919.69284

- Restoration of intergenerational family relationships as a result of a single psilocybin session
- One MDMA session utilized later for work-related stress resolution

# MDMA, LSD, and Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy

The treatment of abandonment anxiety with MDMA and LSD.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24766.77124

- Resolution of childhood trauma as a result of guided MDMA and LSD sessions combined with IFS in 1.5 years

MDMA, Internal Family Systems therapy, and the Minnesota model in the resolution of C-PTSD-induced alcohol and diazepam addiction.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31521.48480

– Resolution of decades-long alcoholism as a result of one guided MDMA session combined with Minnesota treatment and  $\mathit{IFS}$ 

- Causes: childhood trauma caused by domestic violence

# Epistemological and advanced issues

Touch and play—'spiritual attacks' in ayahuasca ceremonies.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.11914.34247/2

- Epistemological considerations: what is 'real'? Facilitators don't have an objective criteria either

- Implications of residual traumatization of ceremony facilitators: taking revenge?

- Relationships between ceremony facilitators: a complex network of interpersonal and familial relationships

– Self-regulation of the ceremony context: other facilitators tend to correct the mistakes of others; the context progresses on its own

- Observed ceremony contexts have appeared to be less problematic than the 'regulated' psychiatric context, and the results have appeared a magnitude or several magnitudes better

- Attempts to 'control' or 'regulate' have appeared to backfire, producing harm

# For comparison

Malpractice in psychodynamic psychotherapy – a retrospective case study.

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18960.07681

- The risks of conventional treatments are ignored while the risks of psychedelic therapies are exaggerated

Abbreviations:	The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:
5-MeO-DMT	5-methoxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine
C-PTSD	complex post-traumatic stress disorder
DMT	N,N-dimethyltryptamine
LSD	lysergic acid diethylamide
MDMA	3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine
$N_2O$	nitrous oxide or 'laughing gas'
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
$\operatorname{ZPF}$	zero-point field

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