

Psychedelic Technology

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THE ENTHEOGENIC EXPERIENCE has swum through our collective consciousness for tens of thousands of years. It may well have made us who we are, guided our hands as we painted onto the moist walls of underground caverns. However, this essential experience was all but forgotten in the Western world until the twentieth century when it made an explosive return that shook the ground beneath our feet once again. The growth of psychedelic thinking in the Western consciousness has been problematic and difficult; its most promising seeds often held by a small group of passionate academics while thousands try to wrestle with the experience in a distinctly un-shamanic world.

To understand the relationship between psychedelics and technology, it is necessary to understand the chasm that exists between this Western world and the psychedelic realm. One is staunchly material, one immaterial. One promotes peace and unity, the other aggression and division. It is no surprise, therefore, that contemporary governments rally so fervently against psychedelics. It is equally unsurprising that we have been unable to create a paradigm shift that will enable anyone who wants to take entheogens in a safe and productive environment. This is a fundamental spiritual right, one being blocked by fear and imposed ignorance.

Ironically, some of the best tools we have at our disposal to create the aforementioned paradigm shift are psychedelics. While meditation and other spiritual practices are also hugely important and, in my opinion, bring one to a similar awareness, there doesn't seem to be a substitute for the barrier-busting, consciousness-expanding explosion of energy that defines a trip. It is this energy that leads thousands of people who approach entheogens as recreational drugs to eventually understand them as spiritual sacraments or psychiatric tools.

So where does technology come into it? Coincidence or not, psychedelics were rediscovered in the West at a time when technology was expanding at an unprecedented level. Much has been made of this connection; psychedelics have been juxtaposed with virtual reality and 3-D imaging software and there is a sense of something technological in the almost machinelike characteristics of some LSD and DMT experiences. However, while these connections may be valid and ultimately useful, there is a far broader union between what we term 'technology' and psychedelics.

In my opinion the question of how psychedelics relate to technology is problematic in itself. This is not because I see no connection, or that the shamanic realms we explore

are simply too different from the neon glow we return to. It is problematic because psychedelics are a technology. Much as an automobile brings you from A to Q, so too does an entheogenic sacrament bring you from one state of awareness to another. This transition allows you access to gnosis that seems to exist within everyone and crucially, bring it back and integrate it into your life.

Technology facilitates our interaction with the material world. Dams create electricity, a toothbrush allows you to clean your teeth more efficiently than a fingernail would. Entheogens, I would suggest, connect us with an immaterial reality so that we have the choice to lose our anxiety and live free from imposed barriers in the material world, thereby facilitating our interaction with it. Not only this, but they aid in problem solving and enhance creativity with often phenomenal results. Francis Crick unlocked the double-helix during an LSD trip. Later, the same substance helped to shift consciousness and stop the Vietnam War. One only has to listen to the mesmerizing voice of the late great Terence McKenna speak of the myriad of ideas and imagery inherent in the psychedelic experience to understand the sheer amount of information that lies within those realms.

Whether the entities we encounter there, and the truths we feel lie coded in our DNA, are the essence of our souls, or exist completely independently of our consciousness, is uncertain. What I do believe is that there are few avenues of research on this planet that are more important than psychedelic research. I feel we're on the brink of something, perhaps a breakthrough that will enable us to utilize entheogens to their full potential. Safely, responsibly, courageously. Rick Strassman's DMT study was a huge step on this path. The words of one volunteer on coming out of the DMT realm ring in my head as I think about this subject:

"Suddenly, beings appeared... They were glad to see me... They seemed pleased that we had discovered this technology... They told me humans exist on many levels..."¹

The message of this technology isn't straightforward, nor is it absolute. However, even the most rudimentary glance into trip reports, internet psychedelic forums and the dance ground of a rave suggests some common themes. Love, understanding, tolerance, freedom. This is what many psychonauts are seeking; it's what we seek to be. The question then becomes how to convince everyone else that what we've found with our technology is real. •

1. Strassman, Rick. DMT: The Spirit Molecule. (Vermont: Park Street Press, 2001) page 214



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