

The Influence of Psychedelics on my Personal Development

Aaron Long

WHILE AT FIRST BLUSH it seems obvious to me that psychedelics have been important to my personal development, the firm believer in the scientific method that I am hesitates. Can I really ascribe changes to certain aspects of my personality to the influence of psychedelics? Experiences, aging, family, friends, lovers, books, music, and pure chance also all seem like strong causal candidates. Had I never had a psychedelic experience would I be very different? Would I be more conservative, more narrow-minded? Would I be less kind? Would I have a different job? Would I be married and have children? Would I find long, meandering guitar solos disagreeable?

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Like many people, I first took psychedelics in college when my life was already very much in flux and exposed to myriad influences. I began (and finished) college as a writing major, so it wasn't as if I was majoring in warmongering, took LSD, saw the light, and switched to the humanities. And this is the thing: I have never had one of those watershed moments where a major life shift was spurred by psychedelics. Yet I would put the psychedelic experience right near the top of the list of the most important things ever to happen to me. I pondered on this and decided that it would be instructive to focus on the commonalities of my psychedelic experiences:

1) Pleasure. I find psychedelics intensely pleasurable and fun. This aspect of psychedelics often seems to be the elephant in the corner in this publication, understandable given that MAPS wants to be taken seriously in its quest for the legalization of psychedelics for medical use, though perhaps this circumspection is taken too far. I posit that fun is an underrated medicant.

2) Everything is connected. Psychedelics reveal to me, like applying heat to invisible ink, the strands that connect all the matter and ideas in the universe. The patterns of connection are beautiful and fascinating. I believe there is valuable carryover in terms of lateral thinking ability in my normal life.

3) Music is fantastic. Related to both pleasure and connectedness, psychedelics highlight patterns in music, impart to me new appreciation of and openness to a variety of musical types, which has made me a better musician.

4) Nothing matters. The whole ball of wax - the societal facades that try to keep us behaved, the structures our own egos have made to make ourselves important - none of it matters, none of it means anything, there is no god, everything is ridiculous.

5) Opposites are often both true. Yes, everything is connected, but we are also all alone, just a solitary consciousness here in the command center trying to make sense of chunks of sensory input that have been hurled over the wall. Yes, nothing