



## Research paper

# Psychedelic pleasures: An affective understanding of the joys of tripping



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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This paper considers the *pleasures* of psychedelic drugs and proposes a Deleuzian understanding of drugged pleasures as affects. In spite of a large body of work on psychedelics, not least on their therapeutic potentials, the literature is almost completely devoid of discussions of the recreational practices and pleasures of entheogenic drugs. Yet, most people do not use psychedelics because of their curative powers, but because they are fun and enjoyable ways to alter the experience of reality.

**Methods:** In the analytical part of the paper, I examine 100 trip reports from an internet forum in order to explore the pleasures of tripping.

**Results:** The analyses map out how drugs such as LSD and mushrooms – in combination with contextual factors such as other people, music and nature – give rise to a set of affective modifications of the drug user's capacities to *feel, sense* and *act*.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion it is argued that taking seriously the large group of recreational users of hallucinogens is important not only because it broadens our understanding of how entheogenic drugs work in different bodies and settings, but also because it may enable a more productive and harm reductive transmission of knowledge between the scientific and recreational psychedelic communities.

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## Introduction

We are currently in the midst of a psychedelic renaissance. Researchers are once again exploring the medical potentials of LSD, psilocybin (mushrooms), ayahuasca and other hallucinogens, more people than ever before are consuming such drugs recreationally, and even mainstream media outlets have turned serious attention to the different uses of psychedelics (Langlitz, 2013; Sessa, 2012). Yet, while the renewed scientific interest in entheogenic drugs is quite broad, certain aspects of the controversial substances are systematically overlooked. Most notably, there is almost no research examining the *recreational* use of psychedelics and as a consequence there is little scientific documentation of the practices and *pleasures* of hallucinogenic drugs as they are enacted in 'real', non-clinical settings. The overall intention of this article is to begin filling out these gaps in the literature by examining the practices and pleasures of psychedelic drugs as they are articulated in trip reports shared in online communities. More specifically, the article makes a contribution to the literature on psychedelics at three interrelated levels.

Firstly, I argue that a scientific engagement with recreational users of entheogens will allow us to gain a more detailed understanding of the multiformity of psychedelic experiences and a better idea of why hallucinogens are so popular recreationally and so promising therapeutically. Secondly, by conceptualizing psychedelic pleasures as *affects* (Deleuze, 1988), that is, as transformations of the drug using subjects' capacities to think, feel, act and be in the world, the paper develops a more impressionable and ethnographically open understanding of the psychedelic experience and of drugged pleasures in general. And thirdly, taking the recreational practices and pleasures of drugs such as LSD and mushrooms seriously, I claim, will not only broaden our comprehension of how these drugs work in different bodies and settings, but also open up a space of transmission of knowledge that will enrich both the recreational and scientific psychedelic communities.

*Psychedelics as medicine*

Broadly speaking, contemporary research into psychedelics is dominated by three overall approaches. The first body of research builds on and extends some of the pioneering work in the field by investigating the *therapeutic* potentials of drugs such as LSD,

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psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca and MDMA (see Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1979; Grof, 2008; Krebs & Johansen, 2012 for overviews of the first wave of psychedelic therapy research). Recently, a number of clinical studies have thus once again examined the safety and medical efficacy of using psychedelics to treat a number of psychological problems and disorders, including end-of-life anxiety (LSD and psilocybin) (Gasser et al., 2014; Griffiths et al., 2016; Grob et al., 2011; Ross et al., 2016), PTSD (MDMA) (Mithoefer, Wagner, Mithoefer, Jerome, & Doblin, 2011), treatment resistant depression (psilocybin) (Carhart-Harris, Bolstridge, Day et al., 2016 b; Carhart-Harris, Bolstridge, Rucker et al., 2016a), and addiction to alcohol and tobacco (psilocybin) (Bogenschutz et al., 2015; Johnson, Garcia-Romeu, Cosimano, & Griffiths, 2014). While most of these experiments are based on relatively small sample sizes, the studies indicate that entheogens possess significant yet undeveloped medical potentials. The (latent) curative benefits of psychedelics seem to lie not least in the capacities of drugs such as LSD and psilocybin to generate a range of psychologically significant *feelings and experiences* – for example of unity, connection, meaning, ego-loss and spirituality, that may have lasting positive effects on the conduct and mind-set of the participants. In contrast to conventional antidepressant medicines, entheogenic drugs thus allow patients to ‘address rather than suppress or side-step aversive memories and emotions’ (Carhart-Harris & Goodwin, 2017: 3). Importantly then, psychedelics do not work medicinally by creating a specific physiological effect, but by opening up a number of usually inaccessible *immaterial, ambivalent* and *affective* experiential dimensions of the subject for therapeutic intervention (Grof, 2008).

Psychedelic drugs are also being interrogated in a more *neurophysiological* manner, with the aim either of documenting the basic psychopharmacological properties of the substances (e.g. Glennon, Titeler, & McKenney, 1984; Nichols, 2004) or, through techniques such as neuro-imaging and functional MRI scanning, gaining a better understanding of the neurological substrates and dynamics of (altered states of) consciousness. In a number of recent clinical experiments, researchers have used imaging and scanning methods to explore how the functions and dynamics of the brain are altered under the influence of drugs such as ayahuasca (DMT) (Palhano-Fontes et al., 2015; Riba et al., 2004, 2006), DMT and ketamine (Daumann et al., 2010), psilocybin (Carhart-Harris et al., 2012; Vollenweider et al., 1997), LSD (Carhart-Harris, Kaelen et al., 2016) and psychedelics in general (Muthukumaraswamy et al., 2013). A key finding is that psychedelic drugs seem to ‘reduce the stability and integrity of well-established brain networks . . . and simultaneously reduce the degree of separateness or segregation between them’ (Carhart-Harris, Muthukumaraswamy et al., 2016: 4857). Along these lines, scholars have suggested a physiological explanation of the therapeutic value of psychedelics by pointing to the ways in which drugs such as LSD and psilocybin work by ‘dismantling reinforced patterns of negative thought and behavior by breaking down the stable spatiotemporal patterns of brain activity on which they rest’ (Carhart-Harris et al., 2014: 14).

Thirdly, there is a large body of work exploring the *subjective and psychological effects* of psychedelic drugs. In a number of studies with healthy subjects, standardized scales of altered states of consciousness such as Dietrich’s (revised) (ASC) questionnaire (Studerus, Gamma, & Vollenweider, 2010) have been employed in order to map and quantify the experiences of drugs such as psilocybin (Griffiths et al., 2006, 2011; Hasler, Grimberg, Benz, Huber, & Vollenweider, 2004), LSD (Carhart-Harris, Kaelen et al., 2016; Schmid et al., 2014) and DMT (Gouzoulis-Mayfrank et al., 2005). The widely used (ASC) questionnaire (Studerus et al., 2010) operates with 11 ‘psychometric’ parameters of the psychedelic experience: *Experience of unity, Spiritual experience, Blissful state, Insightfulness, Disembodiment, Impaired control and cognition,*

*Anxiety, Complex imagery, Elementary imagery, Audio-visual synaesthesia and Changed meaning of percepts.* Several of these studies reveal that participants’ overall psychological well being is increased both acutely and in the mid- and longterm (Carhart-Harris, Kaelen et al., 2016; Griffiths et al., 2006; MacLean, Johnson, & Griffiths, 2011). The phenomenology of psychedelic drugs has also been mapped through interviews with consumers of *Salvia divinorum* (Hutton, Kivell, & Boyle, 2016; Kelly, 2011), DMT and ayahuasca (Shanon, 2002; Strassman, 2001), psilocybin (Turton, Nutt, & Carhart-Harris, 2014), LSD (Gasser, Kirchner, & Passie, 2015; Prepeliczay, 2002), and a mix of classic hallucinogenic substances (Móro, Simon, Bárd, & Rácz, 2011).

These three overall bodies of work have generated a number of extremely valuable insights into the therapeutic, physiological and subjective effects of entheogenic drugs and have helped reestablish psychedelic research as a burgeoning and promising programme (Sessa, 2014). Yet, the medicinal and phenomenological approaches outlined above paint a specific – clinical, disembodied and de-contextualized – picture of the psychedelic experience, which obscures some central aspects of how the drugs work and why people take them.

### *Psychedelics as drugs*

Firstly and most generally, the dominating medical perspective on psychedelics considers mainly how these drugs may be of value to people who suffer from psychopathological disorders or to psychiatry and medicine in general. Yet, most users of entheogens are not ill, but people who consume drugs such as LSD and mushrooms because they are fun and pleasurable ways of altering the experience of reality. In spite of a growing interest in the recreational use of new and old hallucinogens (e.g. Kjellgren & Soussan, 2011; Móro et al., 2011), and in spite of a small body of research on psychedelics in settings such as trance music festivals (e.g. Saldanha, 2007; St John, 2012), (and as we will return to below on the self reports users post in online fora), there is still remarkably little research on the practices and experiences of psychedelics as they unfold outside of clinical contexts, and we thus, paradoxically, have the least amount of knowledge about the largest group of users.

This missing focus on recreational practices and experiences of hallucinogens is part of the explanation for why *pleasure* is also a largely disregarded topic in the study of psychedelic drugs. Yet, there are also a couple of other important explanations. As the editors of this special issue point out in the introduction, the field of alcohol and drug studies is (still) characterized by a general lack of attention to pleasure (see also Coveney & Bunton, 2003; Holt & Treolar, 2008; Hunt & Barker, 2001; Moore, 2008). Furthermore, considering the cultural history of psychedelic drugs in the West,<sup>1</sup> it is not surprising that recreational practices in general and the notion of pleasure in particular are understudied areas (Lee & Shlain, 1992; Shortall, 2014). As Ben Sessa puts it, in order to get funding and publication, researchers into psychedelics have taken a ‘polarized swing to the extreme of the hippies’ standpoint’ and

<sup>1</sup> As is well known, the criminalisation of LSD in 1966 abruptly ended twenty years of promising research into the therapeutic potentials of psychedelic drugs. In a short period during the 1960s, the meanings and uses of psychedelics shifted from medical tools to countercultural agents of pleasure (Shortall, 2014). This symbolic change was personified by psychology professor Timothy Leary who underwent a similar transformation when he got fired from Harvard (in 1963) only to become an outspoken, and later imprisoned (for the possession of cannabis) advocate for LSD, promoting the drug as a miraculous deliverer of social, spiritual and political liberation (Leary et al., 1964; Wolfe, 2008). Ironically, Leary’s politicization of LSD – his visions of a chemically aided revolution – has probably not just halted the development of the first wave of psychedelic research but also made the current renaissance remarkably straightlaced (Brown, 2013).

have had to ‘downplay the more “cosmic” components of their work’ and develop ‘a language of conservative banality’ (2014: 61). Yet, the lack of a focus on pleasure in the existing literature on psychedelics is also a consequence of the ways in which scientific results – and the effects of drugs – are generated in specific socio-material networks. As scholars drawing on post-structural ideas such as Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblage (1998) and the actor-network theory of Latour (2005) have argued, the effects of drugs cannot be fixed to neither their chemical capacities nor the pharmacological workings of the brain. Rather, the experiences, sensations and impacts of psychoactive substances are contingent upon the specific assemblages, or event-networks, in which the drugs are consumed (e.g. Böhling, 2015; Demant, 2009; Dilkes-Frayne & Duff, 2017; Duff, 2016; Dennis, 2016; Fraser & Moore, 2011; Fraser, Moore, & Keane, 2014; Gomart & Hennion, 1999; Houborg, 2012; Keane, 2008; Kolind, Holm, Duff, & Frank, 2016; Race, 2014; Seear, 2013). The underrepresentation of pleasure in clinical research on psychedelics may thus be explained as a consequence of the specific socio-material arrangements (hospitals and clinics) and (scientific and medical) discourses through which, arguably, the effects of drugs such as LSD and mushrooms emerge differently and less pleasurably than in recreational settings such as a music festival or a beautiful garden.

Following this line of thought, what the dominating scientific construction of psychedelics as medicines glosses over is not just the large group of recreational users, but also the inherently *ambivalent* nature of the effects of entheogenic substances. While medical scientists do acknowledge the paradoxical and amorphous nature of psychedelic drugs (e.g. Carhart-Harris et al., 2014; Grof, 2008), the natural-scientific paradigms undergirding these studies make it difficult of properly handling this insight. Instead of attempting to pin down and universalize the psychedelic experience, we need an approach, which is sensitive to the diversity of relations, practices, discourses and forces that produce and enact psychedelic drugs in a variety of (pleasurable, medicinal, spiritual and scientific) ways in different settings and bodies (Duff, 2016). I argue that Deleuze’s notion of affect provides a suiting theoretical starting point from where to conduct such a more ethnographically open mapping of how hallucinogens work.

#### *Drug discourses and literature in the age of the Internet*

While it is beyond the scope of the article to provide an in-depth review of the field of ‘psychedelic writing’, Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (Huxley, 1954) being one of the earliest and most well known examples<sup>2</sup> (see Lundborg, 2012 for a detailed review), it is critical to stress the key role trip literature, trip reports and drug discourses play for the way we use, understand and experience hallucinogenic drugs. As scholars have argued in relation to alcohol, formulating and sharing stories about drinking establishes social bonds and generates a sense of community and belonging (e.g. Fjær, 2012; Griffin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, Mistral, & Szmigin, 2009; Tutenges & Rod, 2005). In addition, because actors often use narrative scripts as templates for behavior and because of a desire to produce interesting tales of intoxication, it may also be argued that stories of alcohol and other drugs structure and motivate *future* events of substance use (Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013). Furthermore, intoxicated stories, trip reports and drug discourses do not just shape the practices of consumption, but also

the effects and experiences of AOD. For example, as Letcher (2007) points out, before the emergence of a psychedelic discourse within which the strange effects of psilocybin could be interpreted as favourable and desirable, accidental ingestions of liberty caps (in the West) were considered as incidents of toxic poisoning and the idea that people would eat mushrooms for pleasure was unthinkable. The discourses and narratives about drugs, in other words, are key aspects of the assemblages of consumption, which shape the practices, experiences and spaces of opportunity of psychoactive substances, and during the last decades, the Internet has become one of the most important socio-technological mediums through which the meanings, uses and effects of (psychedelic) drugs can be discussed and disseminated (Walsh, 2011).

The majority of the online communities in which trip reports are shared and discussed are founded upon a harm reduction ethos and the aim of sites such as [www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org), [www.lycaeum.org](http://www.lycaeum.org), [www.entheogen.com](http://www.entheogen.com), is primarily to provide reliable information about (new and well known) drugs in terms of how to dose, use and reduce the damaging effects of psychoactive substances (Murguía, Tackett-Gibson, & Lessem, 2007). Especially for the constantly expanding number of designer drugs, online fora provide critical information about dosage, effects and potential harms (Berning & Hardon, 2016; Davey et al., 2012; Kjellgren & Jonsson, 2013; Soussan & Kjellgren, 2014). Yet, online communities are also platforms where the meanings, norms and *pleasures* of AOD can be negotiated (Kjellgren & Soussan, 2011; Van Schipstal, Mishra, Berning, & Murray, 2016). Drug websites thus function as peer-based, bottom-up technologies which facilitate the construction and diffusion of alternatives to the hegemonic narrative of prohibition (Walsh, 2011), for example that seeking pleasure through drug use is normal and can be compatible with concerns about safety and harm reduction (Barratt, Allen, & Lenton, 2014). Finally, as we will see in the analysis, trip reports offer an important (discursive) supplement to the dominating medical perspective on psychedelics because they throw light both on the pleasurable aspects of drugs such as LSD and mushrooms and on the ways in which the (pleasurable) experiences of entheogens are shaped by the contexts of use and the activities of the users.

#### **Pleasure as affect**

Considering the pleasures of (psychedelic) drugs is important because pleasure is one of the key motivations for the use of AOD and because it is an essential aspect of the experience of psychoactive substances. In other words, if we ignore the notion of pleasure, we severely limit our understanding both of why people engage in drug use and of what happens when they do so (Coveney & Bunton, 2003; Jay, 1999). Furthermore, a focus on pleasure can open up new ways of thinking about and recording otherwise neglected practices of safety and care, and can thus be employed for harm reduction purposes (Race, 2009). This, however, is not necessarily the case just because we use the term pleasure (Race, 2009). For example, in the majority of epidemiological and public health research, and in most harm reduction policies and practices, if pleasure is considered, it is conceived of as a sort of abstract factor in a cost-benefit analysis assumedly performed by users when deliberating whether or not to consume AOD (Moore, 2008; O’Malley & Valverde, 2004). Moreover, there is also a risk that studies of drugged pleasures, instead of being used to craft better practices and policies of safety and care, become entangled in the public health regimes’ stigmatising processes of classification of normal and deviant practices of AOD use (Race, 2008). As Race (2008) argues in his discussion of the value of Michel Foucault’s work on sex(uality) and pleasure for drug

<sup>2</sup> While Huxley’s book in which he describes his experiences of a mescaline trip is probably the most well known example of ‘trip literature’, the tradition of self experimentation and self reportage of experiences with psychoactive substances extends back to and include the writings of Thomas De Quincey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin and Humphry Davy.

researchers interested in harm reduction, the solution to this problem is to position one's research on epistemological and ethical grounds that dispense with universal truths and fixed moral codes concerning the nature of human desires or what drugged pleasures are. This move implies a crucial shift in perspective from *whether* AOD users abide to established norms to *how* the effects of psychoactive substances are produced in specific situations (Race, 2008). In the following I will argue that the concept of affect provides us with the ontological, epistemological and ethical openness required of a notion of drugged pleasures that wishes to at the same time be valuable to harm reduction praxis and sensitive to the multiformity of psychedelic experiences and the ways drugs such as LSD and mushrooms are shaped by the contexts of use and the activities of the users.

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze elaborates the concept of *affect* in his book on the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1988). The notion refers to the modes and transformations of human and non-human 'bodies' in terms of their capacities to affect and be affected (bodies are understood in a broad sense as referring to ideas, discourses, substances, spaces, humans, animals and more). An affect is a body's potential to feel, act and be in specific situations, a power which is contingent upon the connections and compositions the body is capable of forming with other bodies. A body's power of acting is thus constantly being either enhanced or diminished by the things and forces it encounters and forms relations with. In this sense, affects arise 'in the midst of *in-betweenness*' and 'is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body and otherwise)' (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010: 1). In other words, affects are generated in what Deleuze and Guattari call *assemblages*, that is, socio-material arrangements that are simultaneously ordering and changing the social field in patterned processes of becoming-other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1998), or more simply put, our dynamic cultural and physical contexts. The concept thus highlights that the effects – and affects – of AOD are the outcome not solely of the chemical qualities of psychoactive substances or the nature of the individual users, but of more or less unforeseeable interactions between the variety of bodies that make up particular events of consumption (Duff, 2014).

Deleuze's reading of Spinoza also offers a valuable discussion of ethics and morality. In contrast to a moral principle of judgement which assesses phenomenon and behaviour according to a set of transcendental values, Deleuze (through Spinoza) proposes an *ethics of immanence*. From this perspective, actions such as the use of AOD are not measured by reference to the sedimented laws and norms of society but by looking at the concrete transformations chemical substances give rise to when they interact with other human and non-human entities. An ethical evaluation thus supplants the fixed yardsticks of morality with a more impressionable and situational examination of the effects and affects that are generated in concrete episodes of AOD use. As Deleuze (1988: 50) puts it, when a body or a mode of being 'encounters another mode, it can happen that this other mode is "good" for it, that is, enters into composition with it, or on the contrary decomposes it and is "bad" for it', but we cannot know in advance and as a consequence 'there is no *evil* (in itself), but there is that which is *bad* (for me).' (Deleuze, 1988: 33). So in lieu of a moral and universal categorisation of good and evil (illegal drugs are bad, for example), the Deleuzo-Spinozist principle of ethics is inherently situational and cares only about the specific ways bodies interact and combine either to strengthen or weaken the individual in terms of his or hers capacities to act.

For some time now, alcohol and other drugs scholars have utilized these Deleuzian and related affect theoretical and post-structuralist ideas in a bid to paint a more nuanced, dynamic and

critical picture of how psychoactive substances work and why people take them. The notion of affect (and assemblage), and the body of work which has developed these concepts in studies of AOD, contribute with two overall insights that are important for the present paper's analysis of psychedelic pleasures as affects.

Firstly, by broadening the scope (from drug and user), to the *assemblages* of use, it becomes possible to get a better understanding of the 'extra-pharmacological' factors that shape the experiences of entheogenic drugs, and which in spite of a long standing recognition of the importance of 'set and setting' (Leary, Metzner, & Alpert, 1964), are still not properly accounted for in psychedelic research (Grof, 2008). As a number of scholars have demonstrated, the notion of assemblage enables us to consider both how the motivations, inclinations and desires to use drugs (e.g. Duff, 2012; Fitzgerald, 1998; Malins, 2004), and the – pleasurable, harmful and unpredictable – effects of psychoactive substances are contingent upon contextual factors such as atmosphere (Shaw, 2014; Wilkinson, 2016), space (Duff, 2012; Jayne, Valentine, & Holloway, 2010; Malins, Fitzgerald, & Threadgold, 2006), sniffer dogs (Demant & Dilkes-Frayne, 2015; Race, 2014), and wider political and social forces (Fraser, Valentine, & Seear, 2016; Hart, 2015; McLeod, 2014). By pointing to the distribution of agency to a variety of human and nonhuman actors, this approach questions the tendency of a lot of medical research into psychedelics to attribute 'to drugs a series of linear and predictable effects linked exclusively to their bio-chemical properties' (Race, 2011a: 410). In contrast hereto, the Deleuzian framework accommodates a *nonlinear logic of causality* which requires that we are more sensitive and ethnographically open to the particular circumstances in which the consumption of psychedelics take place. Kane Race expresses the argument for an emergent principle of causality in relation to drugged pleasures well:

'For pleasure is not fully known or determined in advance, it so often relies on an encounter or event that takes you unawares, defies expectations and introduces a disturbance (small or large) into what you thought you knew about yourself and what you wanted. Whatever the identity of pleasure, it is emergent . . . pleasure bids that we open ourselves to what is novel, unfamiliar, curious or strange; some thing that moves us in unexpected ways, ways which couldn't have been anticipated in advance, and that would indeed diminish in the presence of too self-assured an anticipation.' (Race, 2017)

Rather than zeroing in on a set of essential, agentic properties of the drugs or the users, drugged pleasures, and perhaps especially the pleasures of psychedelic drugs, could thus fruitfully be analysed by considering the *assemblages* of actors and forces which mediate events of consumption and in which a range of emergent, erratic and sometimes pleasurable affective modifications of the users' action potentials are generated (Duff, 2014).

Secondly, the notion of *affect* opens up a more productive space from where to consider the distinctively bodily, performative and dynamic nature of psychedelic pleasures. As a result of the prevailing phenomenological understanding of the subjective experiences of entheogenic drugs, the visceral, sensual, performative and more properly bodily aspects of the drugs (and how these are shaped in ongoing processes of socio-material interaction), are not well accounted for in psychedelic research. Yet, as we will see, hallucinogenic drugs, like other recreational substances such as ecstasy (Jackson, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Pini, 2001) and alcohol (Brown & Gregg, 2012; Tan, 2014; Tutenges, 2013), have a number of (pleasurable) effects related both to the carnal sensations, rushes and feelings they produce and to the performative possibilities and becomings they facilitate, for example the increased inclinations and potentials to engage in a different range of practices such as dancing, social interaction and sex (Duff,

2008). The Deleuzo-Spinozist understanding of drugged pleasures as open-ended transformations of the users' capacities to act (as affects) throws light on both the psychological, physical and performative effects and pleasures of psychedelic drugs, while highlighting the ways in which these affective modulations of the drug users' bodies constantly mutate in concert with the dynamic context of use and the different things the users encounter and do while tripping. Before moving on to the analysis, the following section clarifies the methodological aspects of the study and how the concept of affects has been operationalized in the reading of the trip reports.

### Analyzing trip reports

The analysis presented in the sections below examines 100 trip reports in which (pleasurable) experiences with LSD and mushrooms are described. I have chosen to zero in on LSD and mushrooms for pragmatic reasons and because these are some of the most widely used psychedelic drugs.

#### Data collection and analysis

The stories analysed in the article are from Erowid's 'vaults' of trip reports ([www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org)). Erowid was chosen as the empirical source because the trip reports are reviewed in order to secure the validity and readability of the reports and because the reports from this website include detailed descriptions of dosage, set and setting. I selected 50 LSD and 50 mushroom reports with an equal gender distribution, printed them and read them twice, the first time to get a general overview, and the second time with a more specific focus on the three themes structuring the analysis. The reports are between 1 and 11 pages long, and in order to reflect the many different styles of writing I have not amended or commented on spelling and grammar errors in the selected quotations.

#### Mapping affects

The 'affective turn' is in fact many turns (e.g. Clough & Halley, 2007; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Thrift, 2007), and needless to say perhaps, the methodological hurdles of doing affective research thus depend on the aims and theoretical underpinnings of one's research. In this paper, I am interested in how psychedelic drugs in specific contexts produce a number of (pleasurable) changes in the action potentials of the users. On the basis of the Deleuzian concepts of affect and assemblage outlined above, the analysis thus constructs psychedelic pleasures as a number of interrelated transformations of the users' abilities to affect and be affected. In this sense, I am drawing on what has been called a geo-philosophical (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013), cartographical (Hickey-Moody, 2012) or ethiological (Duff, 2014) methodology, which's main interest lies in mapping the transformations and becomings of bodily capacities as they unfold in particular assemblages (Fox & Alldred, 2014). While an analysis of the pre-cognitive and non-representational dimensions of the psychedelic experience could be interesting (for example by looking at communicative breakdowns and ruptures (Knudsen & Stage, 2015)), I choose to follow the advice of affect theorists who argue that affective alterations, flows and sensations can be communicated in language, and that discourse (narratives, texts, language, media) is a key part of affective assemblages and vital channels for the transmission of affect (e.g. Blackman, 2012; Gibbs, 2011; Leys, 2011; Wetherell, 2012).

More specifically, I map how LSD and mushrooms modify the users' capacities to *feel*, *sense* and *act* in particular situations with specific attention to the on-going relational composition and re-

composition of these action potentials. The three analytical categories are made for practical reasons, and as we will see, in many cases the pleasurable transformations generated by hallucinogens are inextricably intertwined. For example, as we can read in one of the reports, the act of petting a cat on LSD can be pleasurable both because of the altered sensation of the fur against the skin of the hand and because of how touching, feeling and looking at the animal give rise to a stream of profoundly meaningful and enjoyable thoughts about the universe and life.

#### Ethics

Conducting online studies of illegal activities such as the use of psychedelics require ethical considerations both of how to secure the anonymity of the studied participants and of what the wider ramifications are of transferring the knowledge and cultural practices of stigmatised and hidden populations into the logics and norms of science and mainstream society (Barratt & Maddox, 2016). Despite the fact that the trip reports are written by author-synonyms, I have chosen to further anonymize the accounts which will be referred to only with reference to the participants' gender and the specifics they reveal about the dosaging of the psychedelic drugs they describe. Regarding the latter point, as hinted at above and as will be elaborated further in the conclusion, contrary to many of the established figures' view on psychedelic drugs (e.g. Fadiman, 2011; Hoffmann, 1983), I do not wish to deflate the experiences and practices of *recreational* users on account of their non-therapeutic intentions of use. Rather, the goal is to perform a non-normative reading (Hansen, 2016) of the trip reports in order to learn more about why people use drugs such as LSD and mushrooms, what happens when they do so, and what could be done in order to maximise the good encounters with psychedelics, while minimising their harmful effects.

### Psychedelic pleasures

In the analysis I examine trip reports in which recreational users describe their experiences with LSD and mushrooms. As mentioned, I will explore how these drugs generate pleasurable transformations of the users' potentials to *feel*, *sense* and *act* – in relation to the dynamic contexts of use.

#### Refigured feelings

Similar to what has been shown in studies of drugs such as alcohol (e.g. Böhling, 2015; Jayne et al., 2010; Peralta, 2008; Tan, 2013; Tutenges, 2013) and ecstasy (e.g. Duff, 2008; Farrugia, 2015; Fox, 2002), psychedelic drugs expand the users' affective capacities to feel, experience and express emotions, yet in different ways, and in ways that are obscured by the standardized surveys used in clinical trials.

One important dimension of the psychedelic experience that the scientific literature does not tell us much about, for example, is that tripping can be extremely *fun*. In many of the reports, the trippers described an uncontrollable urge to *laugh* either for no reason other than being high or of things such as TV shows, pets or non-tripping people. The fits of laughing and giddiness were typically experienced in the early phases of the trip, and were described as highly enjoyable. As is noted in one of the reports of a mushroom trip, for instance:

We had turned into little children. . . .

I felt my legs, my arms, my stomach, rediscovering my whole body, the way things feel and how they move. I was laughing like a fool. It wasn't shallow laughter, either; it was whole body laughter, guttural laughter, orgasmic universal laughter. I was

babbling to Chunder [friend] about everything, laughing and babbling and playing in true innocent childlike perspective.

(Woman, 2.5 g of dried mushrooms)

Others described similar experiences of ‘laughing at stupid things like the air and how our hats looked funny or whatever’ (Man, 3.0g of mushrooms), or of ‘giggling and walking around aimlessly, marvelling at the wonders of trees, water and sunlight’ (Man, 1.7g of mushrooms). Psychedelic drugs thus seem to facilitate a pleasurable increase in the users’ inclinations and potentials to *play* around, aimlessly and childlike.

Another and more well documented (e.g. Griffiths et al., 2011) aspect of hallucinogenic experiences, is the *spiritual* or *mystical* feelings induced by drugs such as LSD and mushrooms. Spiritual pleasures and experiences were described in most of the reports, and often, as the quotes below illustrate, they were tied in with and traversed by feelings of *ecstasy*, *euphoria* or *bliss*.

The awe that C [friend] and I experienced, coupled with that penultimate sensation of throbbing bone-deep euphoria to the point of bitter frustration, this was comparable not only to a shocking experience that induces spiritual growth. It was also comparable to being in the direct presence of a higher power. Imagine the feeling of waiting your entire life to ask God a few important questions. Then one day he appears before you, and he is so strange, so powerful and so beautiful, that you can’t even dare to open your mouth. You can only stare in awe, knowing that the answers do not matter. That is a lot like the feeling I got from the energy of lysergic acid coursing through my flesh and blood into my soul.

(Man, 200 µg of LSD)

Importantly, in many of the reports such pleasurable experiences of spirituality, universal love, bliss and ecstasy, were mediated and maximised by contextual elements such as nature and especially the sun:

The sun had begun to set and we oriented ourselves toward it. The intense, vertical lightwaves found and glimmered off of each every individual needle on the numerous pines that surrounded us. There were infinite points of light made clear to us, and we laughed at the ridiculous beauty of it all. “Whatever have we done to deserve this?”

The sun continued its journey behind the fourteen-thousand foot peak and became overwhelming in its intensity. The world about us was blanketed in white light, and the omnipotence of the live-giving Sun was made clear to our subtle minds. Over the next few minutes, M [friend] and myself had enlightenment violently thrust upon us; we had no say in the matter. There were concepts and epiphanies that we needed to be exposed to, and they forced themselves into our minds. That single Moment, justified all the pain and suffering that pervades this Earth. . . . I had just witnessed the most beautiful and eternal moment.

(Man, 3.75 g of dried mushrooms + 2.0 g of Syrian Rue)

This quote highlights not just some of the key spiritual and euphoric pleasures of psychedelics, and the ways these are modulated by the context of use (in this case the sun), but also point to what could be termed the ‘*philosophical pleasures*’ of the drugs. In Deleuzian terms, these pleasures are related to an extended capacity to perceive the meaning and essence of life, oneself and the universe. Such ‘lessons’ or ‘insights’ were mentioned in almost all of the reports, and while not always characterised as pleasurable, they were typically described as some of the most important and positive dimensions of the trips:

I instantly felt a divine love so powerful it blew my ego to pieces and scattered them across the cosmos. For a second I was frightened by this, and then I realized that trying to resist

wouldn’t work, so I relaxed and abandoned any shred of tension. I saw that this was the way I should always live – that I should always do what was absolutely natural . . . I was so unbelievably thankful that I could spend eternity in this game of bliss.

. . . my journeys have taught me many things, but most importantly: this is it. This is not a movie, this is my life, NOW. . . . if I approach the world with love, I will receive love in return.

(Man, 3.3 g of dried mushrooms)

The trip reports also revealed that a key part and pleasure of psychedelics lie in the way they alter the users’ capacities to *connect* to, feel and affectively resonate with other human and non-human entities. The pleasurable feeling of an expanded sense of connection and oneness was directed toward, among other things, fellow trippers, friends, family, lovers, humankind, nature and the universe. But also, as the following quotes show, toward animals and online friends:

I sat down next to Sabrina [dog] and started to run my fingers through her fur and scratch her belly. I’d given her a bath yesterday and her coat felt so clean, and my fingers through it felt so good, so I just kept doing it. I sat there, looking at her and appreciating her as my companion. . . . I felt that we have this amazing bond which many other relationships, based on money, or sex, or physical attraction, or prestige, likely lack. . . .

And I realized that I’d been petting her for half an hour and thought that I’d normally consider that a waste of time. . . . But what could possibly be more important than having a deep and meaningful connection with another living being, of sharing an empathetic moment.

(Woman, 5 caps of dried mushrooms)

You may not realize it but I’m telling you, you truly helped me set me in a good place. I have much love for you and I feel a much deeper connection with this forum than I previously had. Sitting with my face close to the monitor I felt like I had a connection with each and everyone of them. It was absolutely beautiful. I could honestly feel their good intentions and felt like I was making a connection with their spirits through their words and avatars.

(Man, 6 tabs of LSD)

Like all of the quotations in this section, these extracts highlight that a crucial aspect of the pleasures of psychedelics is that they increase the users’ capacities to feel, explore and express emotions that either lie beyond normal states of being, or are significantly intensified when tripping, such as fun, laughter, euphoria, spirituality, love and connectivity. Yet, as we have seen, the pleasurable shifts in the capacity to affect and be affected emotionally do not emerge in a socio-material vacuum, but stem from an affective transmission between the various (human and nonhuman) components of the specific assemblages of consumption. Furthermore, and this is perhaps not entirely clear because the quotes only reveal bits of the full stories, many of these pleasures are unexpected; a result of the unfolding of the circumstances, a dog suddenly being there, a computer that was left online, the sun setting and so on.

### Changed sensations

As mentioned above, due to the psychological and therapeutical orientation of much psychedelic research, there is usually a lack of attention to the *bodily* aspects of hallucinogenic drugs in clinical studies. The missing focus on the corporeal aspects and pleasures of entheogenic drugs is arguably also linked to the historical development of the notion of pleasure. As some scholars have argued, since the enlightenment, a ‘high’ discourse of pleasure

which privileges the rational and disciplined delights of the mind has dominated the 'low' discourse associated with the undisciplined, fleshy, erotic and carnivalesque desires of the body (Coveney & Bunton, 2003; Moore, 2008). Broadly and simplistically speaking, this distinction can be said to be reflected in the relationship between on the one hand, the scientific perspective on psychedelics that focuses mainly on the disciplined, instrumental, psychological, and self-developing effects of the drugs, and on the other hand, the recreational users' practices and descriptions of drugs such as LSD and mushrooms which include also their bodily, ecstatic and pleasurable aspects (Lundborg, 2014). While a few trippers reported some changes in olfactory and gustatory abilities, the bodily pleasures of psychedelics are related mainly to the ways in which the visual, auditory and tactile senses of the users are altered, and, as was illustrated in some of the quotes above, to the difficultly articulated rushes of ecstatic 'energy' and bliss flowing through the body (Duff, 2008).

One of the most well known effects of psychedelics is the way they change how we see the world (e.g. Carhart-Harris, Bolstridge, Day et al., 2016). The *visual* effects and hallucinations appear both in the form of what has been described as 'open eye' and 'closed eye' visual distortions, and as synaesthesia, a sort of cross-stimulation of different senses. In a lot of the reports, the trippers describe seeing 'fractals', 'kaleidoscopic swirls', 'abstract patterns' and 'flowing textures' when they close their eyes, and also that things and colours appear sharper, (more significant), and that movements are distorted:

I have never seen anything so beautiful as I did that first hour or so. Snow is detailed naturally, and I have always enjoyed examining snowflakes, but on acid it was infinitely more beautiful, and I mean infinitely in its' purest definition.

(Woman, 2 blotters of LSD)

That's when the tracers began to appear. I was ecstatic! Tracers were something I always read about in trip stories yet never managed to achieve. His hand would move and I could see a smearing in the air of the hand colors. It was amazing and I was glad S [friend] could see the beginning of it too. We played around watching each other move and observing the crazy visuals of tracers. The whole scene was a euphoric melting pot of happiness to me and I began giggling my asshole off.

(Woman, 190 µg of LSD)

These quotes illustrate not just that entheogenic drugs produce visual distortions, but also that an altered visual sensibility can be highly pleasurable. Furthermore, as we see in the last quote, the phenomenon of 'tracers' is something which the participant has read about in other people's trip reports. In this way, the quote points both to the importance of the discursive dimension of the (recreational) assemblages which produce (pleasurable) psychedelic effects, and to the difference between the medical discourse, which describe such phenomena in more or less neutral terms, and the recreational discourse in which tracers are attributed a positive value, something to seek out and enjoy.

An aspect of entheogens which has been less studied, is how drugs such as LSD and mushrooms intensify the pleasure of *touch*. We have already seen how petting an animal can be a different and more pleasurable experience on mushrooms and in a lot of the reports, trippers describe how their skin, flesh and bodies were pleasurable sensitised to their surroundings:

I felt like a womb, only so much colder. I felt like I was protected completely and exclusively down here, only the sound of the rushing river around me. I was perfectly isolated. . . . I reached a nexus. . . . but I was too happy to analyze it; I was home once again. I think it's something with me about the wetness, the texture of the water, the muffled sounds of a crowd or the underwater world, the warmth of the sun, and maybe the touch

of human flesh that brings feelings of absolute comfort and content because of the tactile similarities to the womb. And everytime I came up for air, it felt like I was being reborn.

I swam around in an intense state of euphoria, shrieking with audible pleasure every time I came up for air, screaming underwater from a core of contentedness that was so much better than the forced happiness of MDMA. . . .

(Man, 3.5 g of dried mushrooms)

We sat next to a chap that my friend knew and I told him that I had done acid and that it was my first time, he told me to enjoy it but I said that feeling a bit panicky and wasn't sure if I liked it. He took my hand and told me to relax and just go with it, no to fight it. Almost before he had finished speaking I felt better, 100 million times better. He gave me an arm and hand massage that was one of the most amazing experiences. He told me to keep my eyes closed and it felt like he was moving all my energy up through my arm toward the tips of my fingers. Finally he wrapped his hand around each of my fingers in turn and pulled away sharply letting go of each finger as he did so. The effect was amazing. I saw sparks and fireworks going off on the inside of my eyelids, intensifying in colour and activity with each finger he pulled.

(Man, 3 drops of LSD)

Several other trippers noted similar pleasures, for example of taking a shower which was like 'sex, love, life, being, consciousness, total orgiastic bliss' (Woman, 2.5 g of dried mushrooms) or of touching, kissing and making love. The last quote also demonstrates the synaesthetic transformation of the sensorium in that the joy of getting an arm and hand massage is intensified and materialised as a visual firework in the mind's eye. The corporeal pleasures of psychedelics, thus, stem both from the aforementioned ecstatic rushes of energy, and from the affective modification of the tripping bodies' capacities to see, feel, and as we will explore now, *hear*.

The notion that psychedelics enhance the experiences and pleasures of music is well established (e.g. Kaelen et al., 2015). In resonance with this, in several of the reports, people describe both the importance of music for the trip and the increased pleasure of listening to live bands or 'good tripping music' (Pink Floyd was by far the most mentioned band). The pleasures of listening to music while tripping, however, can be significantly modulated and enhanced by the contextual setting such as a nightclub and by the activity of dancing:

just then, one of my favourite old school acid tracks 'Jesus loves the acid' by Ecstasy Club came on and I started to work it. I remembered a recent experience on acid when I learned that physical exercise promotes the intensity of the visual and bodily high when I was running through the forest. I began to jack very hard and whip my hair about. Kaleidoscopic ribbons flowed by my face and seemed to cascade through my body as well and it was very pleasurable. . . .

For the next two and a half hours I danced like I was having sex, like the pleasure of movement was giving me life and the music was fuelling my power.

(Woman, 3 blotters of LSD)

As we see here, this woman highlights how the joy of an increased capacity to experience music and to dance, is generated not just by the drug (LSD), but by the particular assemblage of the nightclub and, as we will explore further in the final analytical section of the paper, by the practice of dancing itself.

#### *Altered activities*

We have already touched upon the significance of conceptualising the pleasures of psychedelics in a way that takes the *practices* of the users into account. Obviously, because most studies

of psychedelics are clinical experiments, the participants of such studies do not really do anything, other than think, reflect on issues of the self or perhaps listen to a piece of classical music. Yet, in recreational settings, (unless as was sometimes the case when people had taken high doses), people usually *do* stuff, and as Duff (2008: 387) argues, it is exactly *'the things one does whilst using illicit drugs that are the key to understanding most drug related pleasures'*. Yet, in contrast to party drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy which were the focus of Duff's study, the performative pleasures of psychedelics are less about the social interactions they afford (while the importance of talking with friends was mentioned, it was also underlined in many of the reports, that talking to strangers and 'non-trippers' was seen as unpleasurable and difficult) and more about the ways in which LSD and mushrooms allow people to engage in and draw pleasure from activities such as dancing, doing yoga, running and exploring oneself or the nature. Furthermore, as the last quote illustrates, the performative pleasures of psychedelics are not just generated by an increased capacity to dance, but also by the ways in which the activity of dancing itself enhances the pleasurable aspects of the drug, and the music.

In the reports, besides the aforementioned practices, the users also mentioned an increased capacity to and joy of doing such things as drawing, writing, playing music, masturbating, and as we will see in the this final quote, having sex:

'he entered me and we fucked on acid for a few hundred centuries . . . which is always extremely good for me, in and of itself. . . . i saw images of great power and control which is a common thing for me, a theme that frequently repeats . . . as i found these things to be very sexy and arousing . . . and i was really getting off on my hallucinations of machines and missiles and phallogocentric tools of doom.

(Woman, 3 blotters of LSD)

What this tripper also underlines in the report, is that an important part of the particular sexual assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2013) described in the quote, is the 'chaos-inducing' industrial music of Throbbing Gristle, and that this specific soundtrack in the dark-lit ambience of the seance contributed significantly to generating the pleasurable hallucinations of sexual machinery and destructive erotic power.

As a final point, I want to stress that in a lot of the trip reports, as some of the quotes above also demonstrates, the trippers underscore a different kind of performative pleasure related to the affective transformations of their capacities to explore, reconsider and understand their selves, identities and relations to other people. The connections between AOD and performances of sexuality, gender and subjectivity is a well known theme in the literature (e.g. Brown & Gregg, 2012; Farrugia, 2015; Jackson, 2003; Malbon, 1999; Measham, 2002; Peralta, 2008; Poulsen, 2015; Race, 2011b; Slavin, 2004; Tan, 2013). One significant difference is that whereas some of the alcohol and ecstasy induced affective transformations of the users' capacities to explore and enact different sides of their identities are (sometimes but not always (e.g. Duff, 2008)) bounded to the particular state of intoxication, the trippers often highlighted that the pleasurable modifications of their potentials to understand, perceive and perform their selves were long-lasting: 'The insight that I gained on that trip has been with me ever since.' (Man, 3.5 g of dried mushrooms); 'I will forever be grateful for this beautiful gift I was presented with.' (Man, 2.5 g of dried mushrooms), and finally, 'I have nothing to explain now, except that I know now what is truly worth doing. . . . It took a few days to get thing straight, but now I can say, without a doubt, that I know what has to be done, with my situation here in Seattle and my relationships with other people and my whole life.' (Woman, 3.5 g of dried mushrooms). As a

suiting end to the analysis, these quotes illustrate that psychedelic drugs also have therapeutic effects in recreational settings, and that the increased capacity to understand, be and act in the world, are both pleasurable and key aspects of the reason people use drugs such as LSD and mushrooms.

### Conclusions: purposeless pleasures?

In this paper, I have argued that pleasure is an important and understudied aspect of psychedelic experiences and practices and I have proposed a Deleuzian understanding of psychedelic pleasures as affects. Reading and analyzing the trip reports made it clear that pleasure is a key reason why people use drugs such as LSD and mushrooms and a central part of psychedelic experiences. Yet, while the pleasures of drugs such as LSD and mushrooms, as we have seen, pivot around a number of more or less stable alterations of the users' action potentials (to feel, sense and act), they are also contingent on the particular and unforeseeable encounters between the variety of bodies making up the specific events of consumption, for example, music, the sun, animals and other people.

In general terms, the paper can be seen as an attempt to provide an alternative to the dominating scientific discourse surrounding psychedelics. From this therapeutic point of view, recreational use of entheogens is considered 'purposeless' because it does not serve any function in terms of curing medical or psychological problems. But are (studies of) recreational and pleasurable uses of psychedelic drugs really purposeless? Yes and no.

First of all, yes, recreational and pleasure-seeking practices of psychedelics are purposeless in the sense that they are not necessarily guided by any rationalized and predefined aims. Yet, and somewhat paradoxically, the detachment of psychedelics from the instrumental logic of science and medicine, may be seen as a goal in itself. Or, put differently, and as psychedelic writers and practitioners such as Watts (1962) and Ken Kesey have argued, the main goal with the use of psychedelic drugs is to facilitate events of 'purposeless play' in which the rules, meanings and boundaries of the normalised everyday are transgressed. Considering the analysis above, we might add that the psychedelic experience is also about an aimless giving in to the present moment and what a medical perspective might construct as the 'meaningless' joys of sensual stimulation, unconditioned experience and bodily rushes of euphoria. The purposelessness of the experience, in other words, is a key part of the pleasures afforded by psychedelics. The difference between the therapeutic and recreational discourse can thus be explained as the difference between a moral and an ethical understanding of the meanings and uses of drugs such as LSD and mushrooms. The medical discourse draws and rests upon a set of essential moral assumptions about 'health' and 'productivity' (Duff, 2014) which do not concede any value to pleasure-seeking activities and experiences such as playing around, dancing and feeling ecstatically connected to other human and non-human bodies. However, considering the pleasurable experiences of psychedelics from the Deleuzo-Spinozist perspective on ethics, we can move beyond the binary either-or distinction undergirding the medical discourse by looking not so much at the *intentions* of use (and whether they cohere with the established norms of science and society) but primarily at the *effects* and *affects* of the drugs as they are generated in specific events of consumption. From this moral-ethical standpoint psychedelics can be both pleasurable and therapeutic, purposeless and beneficial, good and bad, depending on the specific circumstances of use. This either-or dichotomy can also be said to divide the scientists and (recreational) users of psychedelics. I agree with Sessa (2014) that the medical sciences and their evidence based trials and experiments are needed in the process of re-establishing



psychedelic research as a serious and valuable programme, and that we need to avoid foddering the sensation-seeking press-writers with unnecessary material by wedding psychedelics to a certain revolutionary or political goal, as happened in the 1960s. However, I do not agree with Sessa when he argues that entheogenic ‘substances are not recreational drugs’ (Sessa, 2014: 61). Rather, I think that what is needed, is for researchers not just to broaden the investigational scope to include the mystical aspects of the experience (Sessa, 2014: 61), but also to begin taking seriously the large group of people who uses psychedelic substances in a variety of non-clinical settings and for various reasons.

Because, secondly, no, (studies of) recreational and pleasurable uses of psychedelics are not purposeless. Most generally, as the analysis above illustrates, by studying the recreational practices and pleasures of psychedelic drug use, we expand our understanding of how these drugs work in different bodies and settings and of why people use them, knowledge that would have gone unnoticed had we only focused on the scientifically and politically sanctioned therapeutic uses of the substances (Race, 2008). An important and related point is that, by taking the experiences of recreational users seriously (and by mobilising Deleuze’s concept of ethics), it becomes possible to circumscribe the pathologising and normalising imperatives inherent in the dominating medical discourse, and we thus avoid further stigmatising an already marginalised group (Race, 2008). Along these lines, another purpose of the present study is to start opening up a space of interaction, learning and knowledge transmission between the two usually compartmentalised – scientific and recreational – psychedelic communities. For this mission to succeed, it is important to think of pleasure not as an irrational desire that needs to be disciplined, but as a ‘medium of a process of learning in which new techniques and procedures . . . of safety and care take shape’ (Race, 2008: 420–421). A non-normative dialogue between researchers and users of psychedelics could not just provide users with an expanded discursive framework with which to make sense of the drugs, but also facilitate the construction of harm reduction policies and informational material that, perhaps, will be met with less scepticism by the users and thus have a greater impact (Farrugia & Fraser, 2016; Race, 2008). Finally, and to return to the first point, yes, using psychedelic drugs for pleasure is purposeless, if we look at it from the prevailing instrumental, neo-liberal and medicinal paradigms of contemporary society, but, as has recently been argued, so are all the things that make life worth living (Brinkmann, 2016).

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