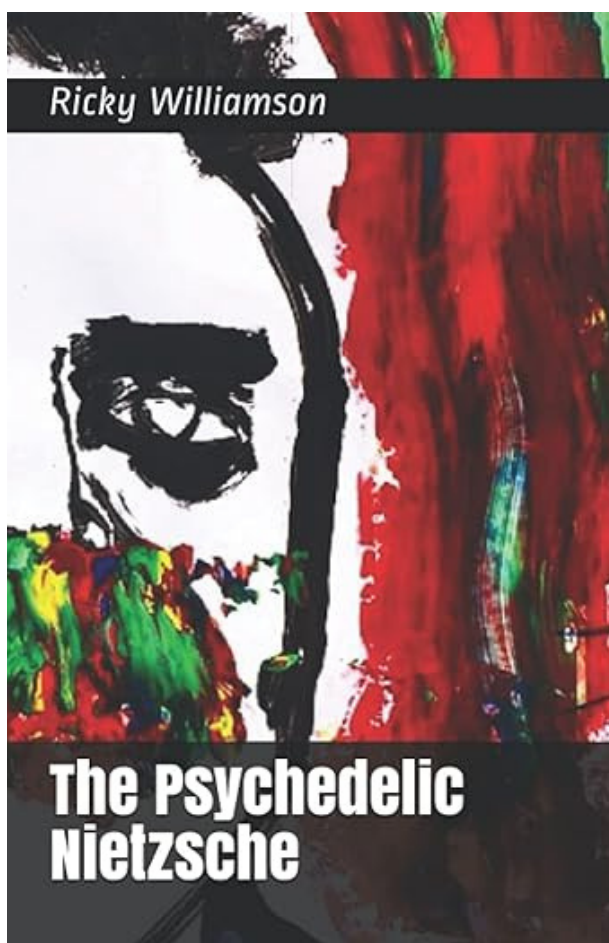


‘THE PSYCHEDELIC NIETZSCHE’

A BOOK REVIEW WITH AUTHOR RICKY WILLIAMSON
BY CASEY MORRIS



ANALYSIS

“That which does not kill me makes me stronger” and “God is dead” are clichés of the English lexicon. Often tagged in social media posts or quoted in films and pop songs, the phrases (and those who utter them) betray their roots:

their origin is much more interesting, more compelling than it seems. Friedrich Nietzsche, that mad and countercultural genius from Prussian Saxony, coined these as part of his philosophical rebellion near the end of the Romantic era in Europe. Nietzsche's writings are discursive, entertaining, and morally challenging in their scope and audacity. It's this last point that Ricky Williamson's debut book “The Psychedelic Nietzsche” explores. Alongside ideas like the *Übermensch* and eternal recurrence, what's less known is Nietzsche's relationship with psychedelic drugs. Williamson argues that Nietzsche's use of psychedelics, their concomitant mystical experiences, is central to the philosopher's epistemology: the 2,000 year history of Judeo-Christianity in Europe evolved to the triumph of reason and materialist scientism of the Enlightenment. The death of God is actually a lament: without the certainty and comforts of objective truth, chaos ensues. It's for this reason that so many condemned Nietzsche as a moral relativist and nihilist. But Williamson dismisses these claims. The pain and suffering of existence are not, as Schopenhauer or Christian morality contend, a cue to asceticism.

Traditional truth structures do not offer truth as such. In an analysis that also draws on Kant and contemporary research, Williamson brings the Dionysian to fruition: mystical experiences, as products of psychedelics, offer a path to truth.

What's interesting is how radical and bewildering this conception still is. Unpacking it requires a dive into Williamson's arguments in "The Psychedelic Nietzsche" He begins by naming the problem of contemporary philosophy and life: the meaninglessness of suffering. In the worst terms, life is "sickness unto death." This creates a kind of conditioning, leading to Schopenhauer's asceticism and the value-systems of organized religion. One particular idea, denial of the will, defines the inheritance of Christianity and much of Western philosophy prior to Nietzsche. Williamson deems this insufficient, even weak: an inability to "bear suffering as a necessary aspect of life and continue on living" undermines life itself. It perverts the intellect, resulting in religious or philosophic dogma. Most importantly, truth becomes less a final cause of philosophy than a stifling of reason and creativity for the sake of control. Truth as a metonym for systems of control is a point Williamson treats at length. He analyzes how external and internal truth structures influence the exercise of reason, whether on a collective or individual level. Overcoming such structures informs his Nietzschean solution to the problem of suffering:

mystical experiences by means of psychedelic drugs. But before going any further, Williamson addresses the elephant in the room: How do psychedelics factor into all of this? Are these substances a legitimate tool for aiding one's philosophical quest?

The question of legitimacy is crucial. To answer it, Williamson draws on Nietzsche's and, to a greater extent, Western civilization's debt to the ancient Greeks. Although classical philosophy is often cited to begin with Plato and Aristotle, the legacy of Greek religious culture continued forever two millennia into the Roman empire. A growing body of archaeological research suggests the Eleusinian Mysteries, a religious ceremony in ancient Greece, involved use of psychoactive drugs (i.e. beer laced with intoxicants). Even if these rites influenced rituals such as the Eucharist, Williamson acknowledges that psychedelics, and illicit drugs generally, aren't kosher vis-à-vis Western ethics: "in modern society, drug use is associated with criminal behaviour, jumping out of windows, stupidity, laziness, insanity, etc. " Williamson believes this reputation is largely based on ignorance and fear. It's undeserved, as psychedelics "are extremely well tolerated by the body and brain." He then shifts to a discussion on correlation and causality to strengthen the case for legitimacy. Williamson starts with a distinction: the ingestion of psychedelics, as a cause, leads to many possible effects. But the experience of psychedelics is something unique.

The experience of psychedelics is correlated with, not caused by, ingestion. One of these correlations is the mystical experience. He concludes: "by focusing on the experience rather than the drug taken, we can begin to focus on the actual effects of these substances, instead of the negative connotations."

Williamson continues with similar distinctions based on contemporary research. The first distinguishes physical brain structures from consciousness. He writes: "It seems to be the case though, that consciousness, although not caused by brain activity, is at least correlated with brain activity." Separating consciousness from brain activity prepares his next claim, which draws on work from Johns Hopkins and New York University. In this joint study, cancer patients suffering from depression and anxiety were given therapeutic doses of psilocybin along with psychotherapy. The results were promising, as 80% of patients reported reductions in symptoms and better quality of life. Putting it all together: physiological tolerance of psychedelics affirms their efficacy in therapeutic doses; and if the experience of psychedelics is considered independently of its physical effects, the evidence suggests positive outcomes. It's here that Williamson reintroduces the possibility of mystical experiences: "in both trials the intensity of the mystical experience correlated with the degree of the reduction in depression and anxiety."

Mystical experiences achieve this by helping people overcome "fixed habits of thought and the well-established brain structures they are correlated with." These "fixed habits of thought" are the patterns of thinking and behaviour associated with depression and anxiety. But how's that possible? Williamson cites another study done by Robin Carhart-Harris, in which brain scans of participants who ingested psychedelic drugs showed destabilization of neural networks. Destabilization also creates new neural pathways. This fundamentally changes the mental and emotional impasse so often described by those with mental disorders. Even better, mystical experiences reveal new avenues to truth and knowledge.

With legitimacy and precedence settled, Williamson returns to Nietzsche. He confirms the philosopher experimented with drugs, including "opium, potassium bromide, and chloral hydrate." Williamson argues that psychedelics held an important place in Nietzsche's philosophy, specifically in the concept of the Dionysian. The Greek god Dionysius was associated with "madness, religious ecstasy, intoxication, and the union of paradoxes." To these, the Nietzschean Dionysian adds dissolution of the ego. Together, they define psychedelically-induced mystical experiences. Nietzsche's comments on the mystical experience, the dreams where "nature discloses itself in pleasure and suffering and insight all at once," imply their epistemological value. Williamson refers to this as the "Noetic quality of the mystical experience."

He writes: “noetic’ refers to the feeling that mystical insight is gained.” In other words, the “noetic quality” produces revelatory truth. The resolution of paradox and “religious ecstasy” also sound familiar. If you’re thinking of Christianity, so is Williamson. Mystical experiences and Christian faith are incommensurate. “The Psychedelic Nietzsche” painstakingly traces each point of tension between the two. But Williamson’s core argument rests on the following: “psychedelic-induced mystical experiences allow one to overcome fixed truths,” especially “the fixed truths of Christian morality.” The value here is two-fold: firstly, overcoming fixed truths refers not just to Christianity but any truth structure, religious or otherwise. Secondly, this clarifies how Nietzsche’s vision of the radically liberated and empowered individual, the *Übermensch*, does not lead to nihilism. On the contrary, Williamson (à la Nietzsche) likens such an individual to an artist, one who creates and evaluates truth. Arriving at such an austere vision and self-understanding, becoming an artisan of truth, demands a catalyst: psychedelically-induced mystical experiences.

So, this all sounds great. But how does it actually work? Williamson’s argument culminates in three main points: the problem, the role of knowledge, and the solution. The first refines the problem of suffering, specifically through the lens of Schopenhauer.

Suffering is caused by “the will to life,” or desire. Like a wildfire, desire is self-destructive and never to be quenched. Williamson mentions the myth of Sisyphus, where the condemned king pushes a rock uphill only to have it fall back down. The cycle, like desire itself, is eternal and absurd. Naturally, Schopenhauer’s solution is complete denial of the will. But this isn’t as practical as it seems. Schopenhauer’s asceticism hinges on self-consciousness, on knowledge of desire: “it is man’s self-consciousness, his self-knowledge... which allows him to deny the will, deny himself.” Self-conscious asceticism is also prevalent in religion, especially Christianity and Buddhism: “in both of these religions sexual abstinence, fasting and meditation are core practices.” Asceticism by means of self-knowledge overcomes desire and, ultimately, suffering.

But what’s this knowledge? In “The Psychedelic Nietzsche,” the genesis and role of knowledge forms an extended discussion that begins immediately after Williamson’s diagnosis of the problem. This discussion is the premier part of his book. It begins with a definition: “what is seen to be true in this work is judged in line with the correspondence theory of truth.” Knowledge, what is “seen to be true,” is that which corresponds to reality. If I state “it’s raining outside,” and it’s actually raining, my statement is true. Williamson generalizes this theory to continental philosophy:

"For Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche the capacity for knowledge relies on the subject-object distinction." The subject is the human intellect, while the object is the world. Putting it all together: in the correspondence theory of truth, that which is true signifies correspondence between subject and object. And, before knowledge of the world, one must acquire self-knowledge. Williamson implies that self-consciousness precedes experience itself; it's an inherent cognition. Such a priori self-consciousness features in Kant's transcendental philosophy, and it serves as a first principle in Williamson's epistemological argument.

If you're wondering where the "psychedelically-induced mystical experiences" went off to, don't worry! They return shortly. After laying the foundation, Williamson defines the structure and purpose of knowledge. What's worth mentioning is that Williamson, like Nietzsche, argues for a Dionysian vision of truth that rejects established teleology. This vision is rooted in a simultaneous affirmation of nature, of suffering and chaos, and of creativity and willpower (i.e. "will to power") to strive for meaning, beauty, and truth despite it all. This is important to understand, as Williamson's argument trends away from mainstream into Nietzschean territory.

The structure of knowledge is twofold: negative and positive. Negative knowledge is "the knowledge we have of concepts and that knowledge that can be expressed in language." Positive knowledge is "the knowledge gained with direct experience with something." Williamson explores the relation of both in the context of Schopenhauer's asceticism, but what's more significant is how they factor into mystical experiences: "the subject and the object (one's self and the world) are unified in the mystical experience; thus, one can no longer decipher where one begins and ends." The dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy extends to knowledge, as without it "there can be no knowledge." Psychedelically-induced mystical experiences collapse all into an ineffable Unity. But what's the point of developing an epistemological theory if it's to be undermined? The answer lies in taking a broader view.

Generalizing the power of the mystical experience to dissolve established truth structures asserts its value. Doing so also implies the purpose Williamson envisions for knowledge, whether of the practical or theoretical. His argument again posits a distinction: throughout the Christian to post-Enlightenment history of Europe, internal and external truth structures have framed the lives of most people.

Religious or secular values, common law and social contracts, scientific discoveries, and even one's self-understanding are all traceable to systems of thought that make such knowledge possible. For example, a familiar external truth structure in the UK is the Church of England. One of its moral principles is the prohibition of premarital sex. Another example is the suspicion many conservative international politicians share on climate change. No matter their content, Williamson defines external truth structures as prescriptive and categorical. Those who impose such structures, the State or another authority, derive power and control over society. This process also influences individual thinking and behavior, leading to a phenomenon Williamson calls internalization: "truth's learned from one's past experience are internal truths, as experience itself is always the experience of an individual." Internal truths are descriptive and contingent; though one obtains knowledge from sexual experience, one's beliefs and behaviors shape these experiences. Individual experiences seem facilitated by free choice, but the mirage of agency stems from authoritarian truth. The argument here recalls the Hegelian master-slave dialectic: the struggle of one self-consciousness against a dominating consciousness. Subjectivity insinuating itself into objective reality is a point Williamson at times calls Darwinian. But, frankly, survival is not enough for the probing mind.

Williamson sees this, and it's exactly this drive for freedom, for extricating oneself from the bonds of systemic control and reason itself that articulates the solution.

Overcoming truth structures, especially those deeply ingrained into society or the minds of individuals, requires force. This is not physical or even philosophic force, *per se*. It's the jettisoning of tradition by psychedelic means. It's the crowning of a radical epistemology that dares to re-envision truth as an opportunity for creativity. A clearer understanding of Williamson's solution comes in two ways: the universal and the particular. By the universal, I mean epochal value-systems based on religion, such as Christianity. Psychedelically-induced mystical experiences break apart the subject-object dichotomy required for any kind of knowledge, whether prescriptive or empirical. Williamson describes this power of the mystical experience as coming from its ineffability and paradoxicality features, which render all truth-claims equally true or false. Without a distinction between subject and object, knowledge is impossible. Good and evil cease to oppose each other or even exist. The power-dynamics that Nietzsche claimed formulated Christian virtues (i.e. meekness, poverty, humility, etc.) lose their cultural and political force. Systems of control lose their legitimacy. Williamson believes this invalidates reason itself, refuting Kant's argument for the transcendental quality of reason and categories of subjective experience.

Truth becomes an unplumbed abyss. So, if inherited truth structures, notions of right or wrong, and even reason cease to mean anything, what's left? The second part of the solution, the particular, is the bedrock of Williamson's argument. It's perhaps the most wildly misunderstood and controversial of Nietzsche's conclusions, one that still rattles skeptics today.

Out of the void, rising from the ashes and "death of God" emerges the superhuman, omnipotent being. Sounds like God, right? Not exactly. This being is actually you and I. Williamson writes "the mystical experience, the Dionysian experience, can be periodically, chemically induced by vast portions of society, allowing for the revitalisation of culture [and] ... the production of new fixed truth structures." The creation of new values is an artistic endeavor. This doesn't mean ignore rationality and relent to your worst, most bestial impulses. Williamson clarifies: "use reason where it applies and is necessary; for everything else, be an artistic individual." For individuality to flourish, external truth systems must be rejected. What's good and true for you is not so for me. To make this happen, you seek the mystical experience by means of psychedelic drugs. The noetic, revelatory quality of the mystical experience guides, not informs, your will and vision of truth. But what if my individuality is maladaptive, a bit cruel? Can I kill and pillage and lord my will over someone else? Williamson, and likely Nietzsche, say no. Reason has a place, but its place coexists with a profound responsibility to live your life aligned to your truth.

Isn't that a bit relativistic, a bit chaotic? Possibly. But what I take from "The Psychedelic Nietzsche" is that risk, that a trial-and-error process refines the individual will. Williamson describes this as the abolition of the will to truth. By taking ownership of your consciousness, you abandon conformity and virtue-signalling behavior. You turn from systems of control to yourself. Like an artist, you pursue and evaluate your choices and inclinations. Your life is your canvas. Truth is your creation.

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INTERVIEW

WITH AUTHOR RICKY
WILLIAMSON

In the introductory pages, you discuss public opinion on psychedelics, particularly around their medicinal or therapeutic value. In the West, there still seems to be a lot of public bias against psychedelics and drugs in general. Why is that? Do you think public sentiment could change in the future?

It starts with government crackdowns, that's the historical reason. There's a very big history before that, of psychedelic use in ancient cultures, which I write about in the book. One thing that is often not spoken about is how the experience can be quite scary. They're quite frightening experiences. They're very psychedelic experiences, very world-dissolving. Your ideas about what the world is, your grasp of reality, all of that kind of goes away. The ego loses its grip. Some people call it ontological shock. So, in a way, people are right to fear them. If you see governments as a kind of super ego, as egoic structures in society, then it makes sense that those kinds of structures would fear psychedelics. A bit of fear around psychedelics is probably healthy. If you don't fear them, then you probably haven't taken them. You're probably not being overly sensible. Having a bit of fear is normal. But I'm also saying that some experiences that start with a bit of fear can turn into absolute bliss, like meeting God or being one of the top five meaningful experiences of your life. Fear sometimes guides the way, and the experiences we're afraid of are the ones we need to have and should be having. I think the reception of psychedelics is changing in society due to all kinds of scientific studies in mental health. A look into the history behind it is also changing that perception. I think it'll continue to change. We need to avoid another crackdown on them. If we can use them to help people's mental health, we can use them to explore philosophy and metaphysics, too.

You cite research suggesting therapeutic benefits of psychedelics on people who suffer from mental disorders, such as depression or anxiety. The benefits arise from the "neural network disturbances" you describe. Could you talk a bit about that? How do psychedelics disrupt and help ease the suffering of depression or anxiety?

I'm not a neuroscientist, but I say I don't need to be a neuroscientist to answer that question. A lot of philosophy of mind contains a problem of consciousness. I think these experiences can't be reduced to the neurochemistry of the brain. And so any psychedelic which changes that neurochemistry also can't be similarly reduced. I think it's not really about neurochemistry. There's an obvious correlation. And the brain offers us an image of a channel through which consciousness comes. Changes in the brain might correspond to changes in consciousness, but that doesn't mean they cause them. Increased neuroplasticity in the brain does correlate with the opening up of our experiences and changing our views on certain things, the connections we make, the revelations we have, etc. Something I write about in the book is that a lot of mental health issues are often centered around a kind of fixedness. It's the idea of having the same thought over and over again, like you're depressed and you just can't get out of that state. Or if you have an idea you think is true, like life is not worth living or my parents don't love me, that's merely OCD. So, we have to do something. Fixedness of ideas is a kind of pathology in mental health issues. I think psychedelics help to free all that up. It's been shown to do so in neural pathways with neuroplasticity, which I write about in the book.

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This also connects to truth, what we think is true. When we think “I’m depressed, my parents don’t love me, I need to turn the light switch on and off five times,” we think the universe is made of physical things bumping into each other. We think all this is true. Psychedelics help to loosen that notion of truth. They make us see that what we thought was true might not be true. The opposite might be true. They free up that thinking, which is why psychedelics are helping OCD, depression, PTSD, anorexia, etc. Psychedelics help to free up this fixedness.

You note how both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche agree that denying the will abolishes suffering. But you also contend that denial of the will paves the way for mystical experiences. Could you talk more about that? How does denial of the will create opportunities for mystical experiences?

Nietzsche doesn’t actually say that denying the will is a good thing. He argues that we should affirm the will. But Schopenhauer does. I think that’s one of the more contentious parts of the piece. But Schopenhauer has a kind of metaphysics where the will is central. You can think of it as desire. It’s like this metaphysical force, the desire to exist, the will to survive. That’s kind of what evolution is. You could see it as this will to survive. Schopenhauer kind of sees that will is really fundamental to reality. I again link this to meditation and psychedelics. Meditation is another way you can have mystical experiences. Meditation is a way to numb the will. In Buddhism, life is suffering with attachments, cravings, and aversion. If you fully reduce that desire, your world also disappears because it’s made of desire (for Schopenhauer). This explains why meditation leads to mystical experiences, and it’s also why psychedelics lead to mystical experiences. In that context though, it’s more difficult to say. You can say that psychedelics help you move beyond the mind’s survival mechanisms. Donald Hoffman, a cognitive scientist, argues that we’ve evolved not to see what reality is. We instead see whatever helps us to survive. So, we’re not always seeing the truth of reality. Alice Huxley argues this as well, that consciousness filters reality into what helps us survive. There’s a whole bunch of cosmic consciousness going on which we don’t see. Psychedelics can bypass all of that. When you’re on psychedelics, it can be hard to bite the hand of the tiger trying to eat you. It’s very hard to survive evolutionarily.

You’re instead kind of sidetracked. You’ve ingested something that changes your brain’s neurochemistry. You’re in a position to fully let go of that survival instinct, which is where reality gets weird.

In your discussion about meditation, you describe its dissociative effects on the will to knowledge. Because self-consciousness arouses the will, disrupting knowledge at the source alleviates suffering. But, in Western culture, meditation is often described as a tool for enlightenment. What’s your view on non-ascetic meditative practices? Can meditation have a more positive, more epistemological function?

I think meditation is good. I think more people should meditate. I personally do. I find that on days I meditate, I have a much better time. I hugely recommend it to people. I write in the book that meditation does help with letting go of desire, but it’s also letting go of the will to knowledge. When you’re meditating, it’s very much like observing. You’re not trying to do anything. You’re not desiring anything. You’re also not trying to discover anything. Schopenhauer links our desire for knowledge with our will to survive things. Letting go of that desire and the will to survive is a key part of meditation. But you’d have to meditate for a very long time to have a mystical experience. For example, Buddhist monks will be in mountains meditating from the age of five to twenty five. And they still might not have a mystical experience. Psychedelics have the ability to fast-track that experience, which is useful. One of the things I discuss in the book is the method you’re getting your mystical experiences from. People like Michael Pollan argue that the ancient Greeks used psychedelics in their Eleusinian and Dionysian mysteries. These rituals involved taking a psychedelic drink. But then the Romans came alongside the rise of Christianity, both of which disallowed psychedelics and their mystical experiences. Though they did allow them through ascetic practices. So, this is why meditating is very important. The method through which we get the mystical experience becomes a key part of Christian morality. And that’s what Nietzsche’s writing against. He’s writing against denial of the life instinct. Nietzsche did take drugs and have drug-induced mystical experiences. It’s unknown whether he took drugs which are classically-psychedelic. The distinction there though is quite blurry.

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But, overall, the method is crucial because mystical experiences feel like God, like the purpose of life and the accumulation of life's purposes. They feel like the truth. These are its features, which William James helped define. Anyone that's written about God in a proper way throughout history has based it on this experience. Nietzsche calls it "the value of all values." It's why in Christianity the key value in morality becomes ascetic practice. People then try to copy ascetic practices like priests do all day. But just doing a little bit won't lead to the mystical experience. It'll instead just lead to morality. That's what Nietzsche is writing about. But many things he writes about are wrong and problematic. He's not right about everything. But he is right about having mystical experiences through psychedelics instead of through practices that've had a lot of impact on our culture.

One of my favorite parts of your manuscript is on negative and positive knowledge. You explain the distinction well, but what I find fascinating is the "positive knowledge of the will." This knowledge, which sounds like self-consciousness, informs ascetic practices such as abstinence or meditation. Can you explain a bit about how empirical practices transform the will from positive to negative knowledge? Could you also comment on how this results in the Unity of mystical experiences?

Yeah, this is one of Schopenhauer's distinctions. Positive knowledge is any knowledge which you can write down or tell another person in language. For example, my shirt is red. Yours is blue. Positive knowledge we know to be true. We can talk about it, put it in language. Negative knowledge is knowledge by experience. We can't really put it in words. The mystical experience is obviously a key part of that. It's an experience, first off. But you do get some kind of knowledge, but it's ineffable. That's another key aspect of the mystical experience. You can't put words to it. You can't tell another person what you learnt or saw. You can try, but it's very messy. That's the difference between negative and positive knowledge. In meditation, positive knowledge stops because you're stopping linguistic thought. You're stopping this mental process of looking into your environment, trying to learn things in order to survive. It kind of quiets down that process and the will. That then leads to mystical experiences or negative knowledge.

That's the distinction. Schopenhauer ends "The World as Will and Representation" with this kind of discussion about the mystical experience and negative knowledge gained through it. Some people say that Schopenhauer is an atheist, but at the end of his book he's talking about a union with God. So, I'm not sure he's an atheist at all, really. But it's not knowledge that you can put into writing. That's why it's so hard to talk about. You asked earlier about why they're illegal. They're very hard to talk about. You can't really tell a person: this is what happens. After you've had the experience, you kind of forget it. When you're not in that state of consciousness, you forget what you learn. You forget what it's like. The subject-object distinction breaks down. There's no me in my head looking at the world. You could argue that the distinction never really exists. That's why the Unity turns into negative knowledge. Without a person to know something, there's nothing to really talk about.

For my last question, I'd like to explore the mystical experience's relation to religion. You write at length about this, about Nietzsche's criticisms of Kant and the slave-morality of Christianity. Could you clarify how Christian asceticism has historically led to claims of authoritative truth? Why has the mystical experience been so wrongly interpreted for claims to reason and power in lieu of its noetic qualities?

As I said before, the ancient Greeks took psychedelics and had mystical experiences on them. The Christians then outlawed the Eleusinian mysteries to stop that from happening. Nietzsche or perhaps Whitehead argues that Christianity was Platonism for the masses. By that he means Plato has this metaphysics where there's the world and then these ideal forms separate from everything else. You have the physical and then the metaphysical. This is separation into two different worlds. That's what Christianity has, as well. You have the world and then God in heaven. But this isn't a real world. It's a divine world. That explains the mystical experience because it feels like you've met God. It feels like you've been let in on the truth of the Universe. You've left space and time. All of these features do happen. But you can see how this leads some power structures to claim authority. People can say: "Well, I've met God, and he said I don't have to continue being a slave. I've seen the truth." This gives them (i.e. mystical experiences) semi-legitimate claims to authority.

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But linking to ineffability, they don't know the truth of what they saw. They don't have any memory or any words to describe what happened. So, in that sense, it's not legitimate. You then can see God as an ineffable mystery. But it's still semi-legitimate because you have met God. You've seen the truth. Applying that into earthly power structures is false; it's what organized Christianity did. Because they outlawed psychedelic mystical experiences, there were very few people having them. When you do have them, you recognize that all power structures are nonsense. But, if you haven't had that, when you meet a priest who claims to know God or the truth, you'll probably listen. A lot of religion is listening to reports of mystical experiences. But it's so easily corruptible. Nietzsche argues that we still live under these structures, such as Christian morality led by those who claim to know the truth or God. The power and bliss of the mystical experience is ineffable, which makes it easily co-opted. It makes it easy to claim to know truth or God. What you take as morality or authority is itself contingent, it's a big world out there.

ABOUT

Ricky Williamson is the Lead Editor of The Institute of Art and Ideas and the Lead Producer of the *HowTheLightGetsIn* festival. He has an MA in philosophy from the University of Amsterdam, where he focused on psychedelic philosophy pertaining to the Ancient Greeks Dionysian festivals and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

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