Mind and Brain in the Psychedelics Renaissance: The case study of microdosing

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Introduction

Current *psychedelics renaissance:*

a) Growing scientific research, mainly in clinical psychiatry and neuroscience, on psychedelics’ uses in brain science and mental health therapy, b) move towards increased commodification of psychedelics, c) advocacy movement for the decriminalization of psychedelics.

*Microdosing* psychedelics is the regular use of sub-perceptible threshold doses of substances such as LSD and psilocybin magic mushrooms. Self-reported benefits include enhancements in cognitive performance and mood, increased self-awareness and emotional regulation, decrease in depressive and anxious symptomatology.

Methodology

To explore the place of ‘mind’ and ‘brain’ concepts in this new wave of psychedelics research and popular discourse, I approach microdosing as a case study and undertake discourse analysis of various sources (user interviews on microdosing, official platforms and public communications of psychedelic organisations, mainstream media coverage).

Results

*Brain* → public sphere of externalisable, measurable human functions – performance paradigm – work + productivity oriented - biohacking ethos – language of computers

*Mind* → internal sphere of experience, emotions and relations with other humans and nature – notions of balance and harmony – language of spirituality and wellness

Discussion

‘Mind’ and ‘brain’ concepts ► occupy a central place in the psychedelics renaissance.

They serve as a vehicle for representing middle class values of self-control and self-optimisation ► (microdosing as instrumental, responsible, measured Vs hedonistic, risky, chaotic).

‘Mind’ and ‘brain’ concepts align microdosing with dominant discourses ► cultural legitimacy, proper selfhood, distinction, and a shared communication code for a type of substance use that is both new and illegal.