Studies of Amanita

by Jonathan Ott

Dose: T+ 0:00 30 g oral Amanitas - A. muscaria dried
T+ 0:00 0.5 cups oral Amanitas - A. pantherina fresh

Body weight: 0 lbs

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On two occasions in the fall of 1975, I ingested dried caps of A. muscaria from Washington. The mushroom caps were eaten as ‘Amanita chips,’ and were tasty. On the first occasion, I ingested the chips along with several grams of Psilocybe cyanescens Wakefield from Washington which had been estimated to contain at least 1 percent psilocin dry weight. The effect experienced therefore have no bearing on Amanita toxicity. On the second occasion, I ingested about 30 grams of the dried caps, and after an hour began to experience a very pleasant opium-like sedation with slight visual phenomena, similar to those described for A. pantherina intoxication, although of lesser intensity. I experienced distinct muscarinic effects, characterized by profuse salivation and mild perspiration. Three friends who ingested the mushrooms with me reported similar effects. The muscarinic symptoms were not at all unpleasant. Either these effect were due to muscarine in the carpophores (in which case A. muscaria from Washington must contain a much higher concentration of muscarine than is reported for European specimens), or they were produced by some yet-unidentified compound with muscarinic activity.

Again, I experienced no nausea or other adverse effects. The intoxication was experienced for about five hours, after which I went to sleep and awoke the next morning with no after-effects. During the experience I noticed a rather profound diminution of coordination and balance, effects similar to advanced stages of ethanol intoxication. There were, however, no effects of clouding of consciousness or slurring of speech. One of the friends who ingested the mushrooms with me experienced slight nausea, but no other adverse effects were reported.

In the spring of 1975, after completing the above survey, I collected some early specimens of A. pantherina near Tenino, Washington. I sliced and sauteed the mushrooms, and divided them into six portions, consisting of about one half cup of material each. The six portions were ingested by myself and five friends, one of whom ingested only half of a dose, the remaining half being ingested, along with a full portion, by another of my friends. All of us enjoyed the taste of the mushrooms.

After an hour had elapsed, I had concluded that the dosage level was too low, and had retired to my home to build a fire and study. About 90 minutes after ingestion, however, while hyperventilating into my wood stove in an attempt to start the fire, I noticed that I was experiencing changes in visual perception. These effects became stronger over the next hour or some, and were characterized by sensing an ‘alive quality’ in inanimate objects, wavy motion in the visual field like a Van
Gogh canvas (no color perception was associated with the motion, however, as is so commonly encountered following ingestion of LSD, psilocybin, or mescaline), and mild distortion of size, distance and depth perception. Auditory hallucination were also prominent – especially the effect, called ‘anahata sounds’ of yoga, of hearing fine high-pitched sounds like bells and violin strings. I experienced only slight impairment of motor coordination and balance, such as would be produced by a small amount of ethanol, equivalent to two or three bottles of beer. In contrast to the effect of ethanol, however, there was no slurring of speech or clouding of consciousness. While I felt as though my consciousness was somehow removed and distant from the surroundings, I experienced a sense of great clarity, as I often experience following ingestion of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. It seemed to me that the psychic effect were emanating from the ‘ajna chakra’, the so-called ‘third eye’ – a locus above and between the eyes. I experienced no muscular spasms, cramps, vomiting, or nausea of any kind. The experience was totally pleasurable, and lasted about seven hours. I was struck by the unique quality of the effect whereas I find the psychic effects of LSD, psilocybin-containing mushrooms, and peyote to be similar, to be, as it were, on a continuum of related experience, I felt the A. pantherina was distinctly different.

Of my five friends, two experienced slight nausea, and only one felt drowsy. This person slept for about an hour, and awoke feeling refreshed. Two of my friends alleged that they had never been so high on hallucinogenic drugs before. One of these friends, the person who ingested half again as much of the fried mushrooms as I, experienced a complete dissociative reaction, and was unable to communicate with the rest of the group for about five hours. While in this state, he was periodically attempting to articulate his thoughts, but was totally incapable of communication. During this phase of his intoxication, we were talking about this history of A. muscariar and urine ingestion in Siberia. The subject in the dissociated state later reported the experience of vivid waking dreams which were related, through bizarre imagery, to the topics of the conversations we had been conducting around him. After about five hours of dissociative experience, the subject began to reestablish contact with the rest of us and within 90 minutes was fully rational, though shaken and frightened. None of us experienced any after-effects.