Hang On to your Ego

by mundane

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<th>Dose: T+ 0:00</th>
<th>9 g</th>
<th>oral</th>
<th>Cacti - columnar</th>
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<tr>
<td>T+ 0:00</td>
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Body weight: 110 lbs

This is the sort of thing one needs to process. So I type this, in an attempt to share and to perhaps give myself some answers, should I be able to find them. Psychedelics might show a few things, but I haven’t yet found them to offer truth with a capital T (which rhymes with ‘P’, which stands for ‘Pedro, San’ [okay, it’s a stretch, but show me someone else who works a ‘Music Man’ reference into a trip report]).

San Pedro, San Pedro. We’d met before, oh yes. San Pedro was my first doorway into the psychedelic world, those ten months ago. It was beautiful, it was inspiring, and it was immediately something I wanted to access frequently. But I didn’t want to drink cactus tea frequently, or rather ever again. In the meantime, I decided to try mushrooms, and so grew and consumed my own batch, ultimately tripping twenty to thirty times since the fruits first popped up in January (it’s August now).

Towards the end of the mushroom supply I had, I decided that I wanted to make taking psychedelics a weekly sacrament, a day to spend with God (which I define at the process by which everything is; thus everything is a part of God). But I was lazy and short-sighted (and probably stoned much of the time) and didn’t get the next cultivation going in time.

I’m not aware of being able to buy fruit bodies online, but you can buy cactus. I was feeling ready (and even a bit anxious) to enter cactus world again, but I was not ready to attempt tea a second time. So I bought some powder from some wonderful place on the intranets you’ve probably all heard of, doused it in isopropyl alcohol, evaporated off the alcohol, and stuffed the left-over tar into capsules.

I did this with a whole half-pound of Peruvian Torch (since I’d had Pedro the first time and wanted to see if they differed). Well, half of a half pound. I just stuffed the powder as-was into capsules with the first half and swallowed forty or so before finding out it would have to be more like sixty to work. And I wasn’t going to swallow sixty capsules in a short period of time.

So I did the tar thing with the second half of the batch, took it in dosages varying from three grams to six, had very little happen, and wondered if I was doomed to tea.

Before abandoning the plan fully, I figured on trying again with San Pedro powder. I acquired that, iso-ed it, stuffed it into capsules. I was looking for a strong trip this time, as trying to conserve the dwindling mushroom supply had resulted in lots of low-level trips. I hadn’t had a really strong...
one since April, and I felt I was ready to see what else psychedelics could have in store for me.

To contextualize all of this in terms of me as a person: I’m 28, female, and suspect I could be defined as having Asperger’s, but I haven’t had it psychiatrically confirmed yet. I was in a depression (another in a fifteen-year cycle) before I started doing psychedelics, and didn’t realize the problem was as big as it was until I was able to alter my mind and realize that it’s possible for me to feel happiness, empathy, and connectedness with the people and things around me. Like, oh my God, I could do it. Just not all the time, unfortunately. Needing a more permanent, life-applicable solution, I sought out hypnotherapy, and with the help of guided meditation, was able to change my thought process and come out of the depression.

All along, psychedelics have been there to help me adjust to what changing one’s very mind and thought process is like. I think being open to them and receptive to their lessons, particularly when it comes to the meaningless, limiting concept of self, has made it easier for me to let go of negative, long-standing associations that I’ve held on to for a long time.

Point being, I feel psychedelics have saved my life and are continuing to help me become a better person.

On to what happened yesterday!

I woke up at work at 6:00 AM, as I do every Monday morning. Went into the break room, got my bottle of orange juice out of the fridge, popped open the pill bottle and slid the eleven size 0 capsules into my palm. They weighed in at a little under nine grams. Six grams of Peruvian had done nothing for me the week before, and I wanted to do what I could to ensure this went differently.

The orange juice made the capsules very easy to swallow, masking every bit of capsule/residual cactus tar taste. They were down in about thirty seconds.

I cleaned the place up and was relieved by the day crew at 7:00. I’d been housesitting for my aunt and uncle, who live in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains in eastern Los Angeles. They’d be coming home that day in the late afternoon, and I wanted to make sure the place was clean for them (besides me and my dog, there were also their two dogs, cat, and baby turkey and duck, so it was a dirty house by the end of four days).

My previous experiences with mescaline and mushrooms had told me that it would be two hours until I noticed any effects.

So why was it, that at 7:18, just a little over an hour after I’d swallowed the capsules, I was salivating like mad and looking for something that I could puke into? My options were a donut box with my breakfast in it, or the 3/4 consumed bottle of orange juice I was clutching between my thighs.

Back to the vessel from which it came. Puking while you merge from the 5 to the 2 (these are freeways) is something I suggest you never ever do, but it was so sudden and the vomits were so easy (more like drinking in reverse) that I never felt my driving was impaired. Still, if you’re going
to throw up, you should probably pull over.
The orange juice made it easier to throw up, but it did nothing to mask the bitter cactus alkaloid taste now in the back of my throat. I just wanted to get to my destination so I could rinse my mouth out and brush my teeth.

‘Oh well’, I thought, ‘I guess that’s this week’s trip adventure. Puking up the dose before you could process it. I can’t wait til those jars are colonized.’

Finally I exited the freeway and began to navigate the twisting, curving streets to their house on the hill. Can you see where this is going yet? I don’t normally get motion sick, but I was taking those turns at probably five-miles-an-hour (empty roads at this time of day), hoping I could convince my body that the car was indeed just going straight, and that there was no side-to-side motion.

I eventually got up to the gate at the top of the sloped driveway, pressed the gate remote’s button, opened my door, put the car in gear and the parking break on, stalled out the engine, and puked and puked and puked. More orange juice and bitter sludge, and eventually just air. Enormous gastral issues and cold sweats. Terrible, terrible.

After much expectoration, I was able to start the car, ease down the driveway, park, and drag myself into the house. I wasn’t sure if I’d experienced the purge or not (I hadn’t thrown up at all from mescaline before), and anyway, I was under the impression that one is supposed to feel better after purging. I felt just about as bad as I ever had from the worst flu (no temperature, thank goodness) or case of food poisoning I’d ever had.

I was too nauseous to ingest anything. I forced myself to rinse my mouth out, but I couldn’t swallow water. Or anything else. I suspected that there was more throwing up to do, and I knew that I’d already gotten rid of all of the OJ, and that it would be much, much easier if I had something else in my stomach. I couldn’t bare the thought. Couldn’t even bare the thought of smoking some marijuana to help with the nausea, as even ingesting smoke or vapor seemed beyond my power.

I wanted to stop moving, but then I’d have nothing to focus on but the stomach gurgling, so I opened the door for the dogs and let the duck and turkey out. I was walking in teensy steps, like a nineteenth-century Geisha in a binding dress. Immediately after sitting, I was up again and out the door.

At some point while I was sprawled on the cold cobblestone walkway, heaving up bitter alkaloid spit, I apologized to the cactus that had been sacrificed for my sake. I was sorry that I had treated it so disrespectfully, dousing it in alcohol and stuffing it into capsules as I had. This had been a living being, and this is not how it had wanted to end up, vomited in the grass.

I sat back on the stone walkway, cold sweat pouring out of me. I questioned what it is I’m doing with psychedelics and what they’re doing to my body. I had poisoned myself, and this was a punishment to my fragile physical self. I might be entertaining the mind, but that’s only half of it. I have to treat my body better, can’t expect that it will be able to handle everything I throw
at it with ease.

I wanted to be lying down inside, so I shuffled in, stuck a DVD in the player, and eased myself onto the couch. The credits hadn’t even ended by the time I realized I couldn’t be doing that, so I went back outside and slouched in a chair.

Thirty seconds later, I’m again on my knees, paying my contrition to the cactus by returning it to the earth. I feel like this is the worst-possible scenario. My first mescaline trip had been a revelation to me, and I wanted to have that communion once more, but I never again wanted to endure this sort of bitter-alkaloid ordeal. I supposed that showing a little respect and just drinking the damn tea was the only way to go about it.

And then shortly thereafter, I suspected that I might trip, after all.

I went inside yet again, laid back down on the couch. My stomach was gurgling like mad and still feeling very weak, but I intuited that the vomiting was at last over. Well enough even to take a hit of cannabis from my pipe, which I found distasteful (on account of the resin), but I hoped would further help my stomach calm down. I opened up my computer and put on ‘Pet Sounds,’ an album I’ve been listening to often lately for its themes and wonderfully psychedelic music. I looked at the computer’s clock: 8:17. Just two hours after I drank down the capsules and an hour since I’d puked up most of it. How were my visuals already revving up so strongly?

This house has many wonderful views of the mountains beyond, and so has many windows to show off the views (while still managing to be a very private piece of property). Through a window, I had a spectacular outlook of their garden and the mountains in the distance. In front of the window was a houseplant with great, green leaves. The sun had made it over the hills and was pouring light into the house; it was shining on these leaves at the perfect angle, making them a gorgeous transparently-opaque green. Even at my distance away from it, I could see the plant’s individual cells moving in the leaves, gathering sunlight and processing chlorophyll.

The sun was rising high, and it was time to delight in its glory. The mescaline was finally coming to life.

I began to think of the sun. I’ve found that mescaline loves it. So do mushrooms, but in a different way. But the sun is everything to the cactus. It understands that without it, there would be nothing but forever darkness, coldness, and lifelessness. Because of the sun, there was life; because there was life, there was consciousness. My consciousness was born from the sun, starlight pondering starlight. So many humans try so hard to deny this amazing fact of nature, and it has lead to the conquering attitude which has driven much human interaction with the natural world for the past few hundred years. But it’s all right there every day in our faces, bringing light and life to this world and making everything possible. The cactus understands this and has helped me understand it more fully.

After half an hour or so of the worlds outside-and-in becoming more lively, I decided that I was well enough to take in some calories, which I was beginning to feel in need of. Something simple. I went out to the car and grabbed the donut and a few other items I’d left in my earlier haste to
get inside. Thankfully it was just a sugar donut, carbs and sugar, simple things for my body to process. I wanted a soda to help settle my stomach, but there was nothing like that. OK, except for the club soda. I poured a glass of that and took both outside.

A psychedelic wonderland was out there, waiting for me. My first mescaline trip was very visual, but this might have been moreso. It might have been even more than I’d experienced on any of my mushroom trips, but it’s difficult to gauge. Everything was alive, dancing, glowing, shifting and grooving. I grabbed my iPod, put it on random, and went to sit in a chair in the sun.

One of the first songs to come up was ‘Space Beebop’ by Yo La Tengo, a swirling instrumental piece. I closed my eyes and saw the most beautiful spiraling ribbons of fractalized rainbow light. Initially, it was kaleidescoping, but as the song became more repetitive, I latched onto one of the main ‘ribbons’ (which was itself comprised of thousands of shining filaments) and spun with it. I felt like I was twirling through the darkness on this light, riding an exhausting and never-ending rollercoaster. As the song went round-and-round, I began to feel dizzier and dizzier, uncertain of what I’d attached myself to and how to break free. The sun was shining hotly and I was sweating, feeling very caught up in the heat, the music, the spinning. It became too much, and I had to open my eyes and retreat back into the house.

The main room of this house is built like a mini Great Hall, with a fireplace on one end and a diagonal ceiling of naked wood and some big beams slanting up every few feet. The wood was particularly gorgeous, moving and shifting with a reflecting layer of light shuffling along; a transparent, shining shadow moving just out of sync.

It’s at this point that the dissociation really kicked in. Maybe I’m not using the term correctly. But from about this time until much later in the day, I had no self to anchor to. I was aware of who I was and what was happening to me and why, but I couldn’t accept that it was something that I was experiencing. I told myself again and again, ‘You’re tripping. This is something you want to be doing. This is your day off, and you have nothing else to be worrying about right now. Enjoy it.’ But it was always as if someone outside of myself was telling me these things. Because ‘I’ honestly had no idea what was going on. Too much was happening for me to process, so I hid for a while and went on a sort of auto-pilot.

I’ve since come to think of it as truly living ‘in the moment’. What that means is that I lacked any ability to place myself in the context of action and reaction. Self is constructed through memory; I don’t mean of what your dad smelled like when you sat on his lap Christmas Eve when you were six, but simply from knowing where you are and what you are doing, and what you had just been doing prior. It’s the sort of consciousness that elevates us Homo Sapiens: remembering things allows us to write the story of our lives and who we are. Truly living in the present is living without a history or anything to base your sense of self upon, which is the depersonalizing sensation that I had for much of the experience. I still managed to be aware and was obviously taking in details and forming memories, but this is what I mean by needing to process the experience. I need to be able to integrate my personal history with this day.

A problem with this auto-pilot is that the mind does not always know what’s best for the self,
so I would unintentionally do things that gave me anxiety. For example, ‘Here Comes the Sun’ popped up. ‘Great,’ I thought, ‘I can bond with the plants in the sun, like the cactus wants to do.’ So I sat in the grass among the flowers. The song was so cheery and the plants seemed to be very happy. Naturally, I decided to share the plant spirit for a while. I sat absolutely still and closed my eyes. And it initially felt good to be a plant for a while, not having a care in the world, but the sun became too hot, and the song’s cheeriness was almost cloying, so I had to turn off the iPod and dash off for a while, sitting in the shade until I could recover.

I ate some tortilla chips because I felt I should eat more simple food. They tasted terrible and I couldn’t understand why I was eating them. I had to remind myself that it was for my own good. I ate some more and again wondered why I was doing it. Again, I told myself it was because I should. I looked at the mountains in the distance and reminded myself that I was here, that this was happening, that I needed to live in this moment and be aware of my place within it. I would slip into these long moments of observation with no processing. There was so much to look at that I couldn’t figure out what I should be paying attention to or focusing on or thinking about. I’d passed the reflective trip zone and ended up in the ‘along for the ride’ lane.

I admit that I often get lost in my own thought, many times to the point of not noticing external stimuli. Since finding out that was a major perpetuator of my depression, I’ve been trying to be more aware of sensations. Another thing that this trip (and all psychedelic trips I’ve taken so far) reasserted for me was the amazing nature of the present and living awareness, appreciating the now. The present is all we have, and if I want something to get done, then I need to do it now. I feel that I’m calmer, more productive, and more appreciative (as well as generally happier) when I’m able to be with the actual rather than just the imagined, and few things reiterate this point like psychedelics do.

I wanted quiet reflection. The sloped backyard is also enormous and has lots of interesting features (vegetable garden, vineyard, pond). Plus, it’s shady. Now that the day was getting quite warm, I decided to go into this other part of the yard.

The first spider web scared me a bit more than they usually do (arachnophobic, of course), but the second one really terrified me. I could see the spider that had built it scurrying off. Then I could see that there were spiders everywhere. And the fractalized light had me seeing silvery, shining, transparent cobwebs everywhere. I got into a bit of a panic, just five feet down this path. What was I to do? Where was I? What was the layout of this place? Is this the realm of the spiders where people can’t come?

Oh yeah, I was going to the pond. And that’s where I wanted to be. I’ll defeat the spiders, like some valiant knight, or so I thought. I swung my water bottle up and down in front of me as I walked down the path, finally arriving at the bench next to the pond.

The neighbor’s dog was apparently quite unhappy that I was there, so while I was trying to get some quiet reflection in this nice shady spot that I’d fought to get to, this little beast was yapping and yapping, a shrill, upset, anxious bark. I tried to ignore it, to breathe in a meditative fashion (in an attempt to connect myself to the moment), but the emotion behind his barking was making
me anxious. In a bit of mild panic, I left the pond’s side, slashing my way back through the kingdom of the spiders.

I was almost too overstimulated to breathe. Moving as fast as I could (I was getting better at it), I went to a quiet corner of the house and flung myself on a bed. So much light, so much movement, so much color: the things I were seeing were too intensely beautiful and delightful in their movements to be described. Everything was jeweled; everything was giving off its own light. Beautiful and terrible. I couldn’t find myself within it. The lyrics to the songs that played randomly were my thoughts, and what I was listening to at the time was defining my sense of self. I drifted from being aware of the outer psychedelic world to the one inside and back again. They were equally confusing places to be, places without anything of certainty to grasp on to.

Physically, I was still feeling very uncomfortable. I was claustrophobic within my own skin, and when I did pay attention to physical sensations, I noticed I was still very nauseous. I would stretch and contort my legs, unable to work the cramped feelings out of my muscles. When lying down, I flipped from side to side, back to front constantly. I moved from one spot to another frequently, not staying in one place for more than fifteen minutes for the first two hours.

And I was very, very tired. I’d slept okay and could think of no reason to be this tired, aside from whatever the mescaline was doing. But when I’d close my eyes and be on the edge of zoning out, I would hear this terrible BZZT frequency inside my head, like I was being zapped with sound internally. It felt like getting a shock within my brain, one I could hear, and one that jarred me and caused some pain each time. At the time, I equated it to having my brain scanned by a laser scanner, or hearing the sound of passing through a magnetic field. I’d never come across this before, but there were times when it was just so difficult to keep my eyes open, to stay with the overwhelming nature of what was happening to me. So I’d zone and get a painful zap to bring me back to what was going on. I wondered if it was the mescaline spirit telling me that I couldn’t turn away, now that I’d invited it inside.

The early part of the morning passed in much this way. I would go outside, become overstimulated, come inside to lie down, relax to the point of getting a few head zaps. Thankfully there were times when the right song came on or I found the right thing to look at, and I could just calmly enjoy the visuals.

Time went on (I wasn’t aware of it passing, but I have not yet been made unaware of its existence by drugs and know to check a clock from time-to-time) and the day got hotter. The early morning was swiftly becoming the early afternoon, and I had to face the reality of my situation: I had to manage to pull myself together long enough to pack up all of my stuff, clean the place up, and deal with the rest of the day. Which would mean either I could stay there until late in the evening (and have to explain to the returning family what was going on), or I would have to get behind the wheel to make the cross-city (and it’s a bit city) drive home.

Luckily, that could wait. First I had to attend to packing. My movements were robotic and I didn’t particularly feel like being active, but I was able to get through it. Then the cleaning. I find mescaline is offended by filth. It is a lover of all things beautiful, not of debris and detritus.
Mopping the floor was interesting, particularly in that there was a second floor, comprised entirely of light, hovering just above the other floor (the one that wouldn’t stop shimmying and slithering about). But I got through that, too. Even cleaned out corners that hadn’t been cleaned in a long time. I was motivated to get it right (and to stall my departure).

It was about 2:30 in the afternoon when I decided to leave. The foothills were becoming hellishly oven-hot, which was making me very uncomfortable. It was the best time of day for getting through the freeways, with the lightest traffic. If I waited any longer, I would be driving with even more people for an even longer amount of time. I didn’t want to do this, but I knew that I could. Had no doubts at all. Focus, focus, focus. Sometimes you hate other people for doing things you do yourself. This is one of those times. Just don’t do it.

(I guess I haven’t mentioned it yet, but I’m a solitary person and all of my trips [minus those done with strangers in large crowds] have been done alone. I’m most comfortable alone, and it’s important to be comfortable when tripping. I’ve never put myself in a situation that I felt I couldn’t handle, but I know it would be very nice to have someone to drive me around when I get into these situations. Alas, I don’t.)

Honestly, I’m a more dangerous driver when I’m sober. Sober, I’m pissed off, aggressive, road raging, screaming and cursing, etc. I hate driving in this city. Altered, I’m very, very careful. Hands are at ten and two, full focus is on driving the speed limit and getting to my destination safety. I got through it with no problems by paying close attention, focusing, not worrying about getting home as fast as I could. That doesn’t mean I should have attempted it, but I managed.

##EROWID
NOTE:DO
NOT
DRIVE##

Getting home was a relief. The temperature was about ten degrees cooler, for one. For another, my room is my sanctuary, and I hadn’t seen it for four days. It felt good to return, to be in a place of familiarity, comfort and safety. I unpacked the car and threw myself onto my bed. My room is a very familiar tripping locale, and I took solace in recognized sights.

The focus I’d used when driving had toned down the trip a bit. Or maybe it was the fact that it was over seven hours since it had started. Things were still going stronger than they had during most other trips of mine, and I was still having difficulty finding myself outside of the moment (true ‘living in the moment’ without the self as contextualized through past experience and future plan is quite zombiefying), but a bit of the edge was gone. Maybe it was just the anxiety of tripping away from home that had been lifted.

I smoked a bit more pot, put on some music, and finally settled into a comfortable, fun trip. Previous to this, no moment would have been describable as ‘recreational.’ I could not have imagined dealing with that in a group setting, or an unfamiliar environment. I love tripping at live music performances, but an experience that strong would have been disastrous in that context.

I started to feel good about things. I still had some nausea and general body discomfort, was still having trouble integrating my self. I lit a candle and stared at the flame for about half an hour as I began to piece myself together again. The fractalized, lively flame was astonishing, and I meditated on the moment, trying to find myself again, wondering if I’d be different when I finally
returned. Because this is the sort of thing that changes a person.

I figured food would be in order and threw some frozen bean and cheese taquitos in the oven (simple, caloric food, because I wasn’t up for much yet). I sat down at the computer and wrote a bit about how vague and strange the day had been, and how I was using a candle and music to anchor my self, to give me something to hold on to.

The food sat around a while, uneaten. I thought that it was still food, even if it wasn’t being consumed. It didn’t have to fulfill its destiny to have its status affirmed. Things are what they are and don’t have to be labeled to be.

I smoked more weed and watched the visuals strengthen again. Listened to my favorite songs and had a grand time. Took out a CD, turned it label-side down, and lost myself in the shifting rainbow colors on the silvery underside. The colors were astoundingly beautiful, shifting and flowing into each other, fractalizing and swirling. I’d been tripping for ten hours with no sign of it slowing down.

I apologized to my body for what I’d put it through and promised I’d treat it better. But the trip has eased into something so wonderful that I was no longer adamantly sure that I would never be swallowing cactus tar again, no matter how gut-wrenchingly horrible the early part of the day had been. An hour of terror for eleven hours (and counting) of psychedelic wonderland – that could be a trade-off I accept. And perhaps the large dose had something to do with the intensity of the sickness. Besides, now I know to drink a bit more with the capsules. When I wasn’t just dry-heaving bitter cactus-flavored spit, the throwing up wasn’t too bad.

I wanted to stay with the trip for as long as I could, maybe even stay up until it died out. But it was now after 9:00, and I’d been up since 6:00, and tripping for thirteen hours. It had been a bit of an exhausting ordeal, and I was very tired. And now that my mind was in a more empathetic state, I wanted to put on some of my therapeutic meditation to see if I couldn’t work through more of the issues I’d felt the desire to deal with.

I turned out the lights, got comfortable in bed, put the meditation on, relaxed my breathing, and had fallen asleep by the time it was half-way through, about twenty minutes later.

I woke up this morning feeling refreshed and physically well. But there was still a sense of vagueness within me. I didn’t know how to deal with the previous day’s occurrences. I still felt like I hadn’t been able to process what had happened, hadn’t been able to filter it through my feelings of self and determine what happened within me. Writing this has helped me make more sense of it all, but now I question why I have to give all things an explanation, even an experience like this which is largely inexplicable.

What do I take away? One thing I got is a strengthened opinion of me as an individual. I have many problems with self-hate and have done a lot of psychological damage to myself, and I think that spending the day feeling rather soulless has made me more appreciative of the strengths and qualities I have within. Feeling depersonalized was like being in the doldrums.

Another thing I take away from psychedelic experiences (this one being no exception) is that
you can’t force anything; you have to just accept the nature of things and place yourself in the appropriate position. The strength of the trip reiterated to me that I don’t have control over everything, even when it comes to my own life and mind. I can fight it or try to hide from it, but it will ultimately be best when I just go with it. I am not the boss of everything. There were difficult moments during the day, but I think that being able to accept what was happening prevented me from falling into a bad trip (something I have yet to experience).

But at the same time, I exist in a present, and I have choices. I can’t determine the nature of anything else, but I do have the ability to take care of those things that are within my power. I also can’t wait for the things that I want to just happen to me; I have some responsibilities proactively. This is the only moment when it’s possible to get anything done. It’s up to me to either do something with it, or to let it pass by forever.