

Vaporize

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You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

~Mary Oliver, *Wild Geese*

At some point, I claimed to have some sort of idea of who I was or what I was talking about when I spoke of identity. I feel like now, I have both much more and much less of an idea of what all that means. I don't know if I still have an identity, I don't know if having an identity really serves a purpose to me anymore. I have all these different characters and roles, and they all just feel like a game, like playing with different forms and shapes. It's not exactly that they aren't me, they are me, but I'm many things, I am an eternity, I contain multitudes. It's as if I've worn off the edges to my sense of self, so the barriers between me and other are hopelessly blurred.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I should backtrack somewhat, to where? Probably to when I held some sort of overly complicated structuralist views masquerading as poststructuralist views on who I was and how my sense of self and identity was best arranged. With system members who had properties and preferences and the like, discrete characters who could be thought of as independent people, tulpas.

This was in some sense, the starting framework, the naive view. I had a very overly complicated meta-view of this that tried to add in some meta-narrative stuff for flavoring but I really wasn't actually grokking at a gut level what it would actually mean

to just play with frameworks. I was still taking myself too seriously, even when I tried to not. I was hopelessly fused with my identity in all sorts of maladaptive ways. I just could not get out of the car.

Who exactly should I credit with breaking me of this frame and changing my trajectory? I could blame Namespace for one, but I don't think he's solely responsible. I think part of it was simply getting older, chilling out, seeing the way younger people acted and realizing I had been like that, both missing my lost youth and being horrified by the youthful folly I was witness to. I heard stories of people fighting with system mates, of internal wars, the entire scenario that is Pasek's doom. At this point it all just seems silly to me, in the same way I find a lot of religion silly. Everyone taking themselves far too seriously and letting that steer them into weird corners of their decision trees where they end up in fights to the death with people over what headgear is appropriate to wear when offering deference to a fictional character.

I could also blame an encounter with Ziz's wrong but still potentially dangerous and somewhat useful ontology, which shook up my sense of morality rather badly for a long time. I've since chilled out about my interactions with it, and although overall I think it's wrong in important ways, it's also right in important ways. Parts of it certainly generate useful insights, and in coming to understand those bits of insight I've significantly overhauled my identity.

But mostly, I want to blame it on the acid.

I've always been someone who was easily seduced by promises of interesting mental technology and consciousness state changes. I had read Aella's blog on the subject. I'd read Valentine and Kaj's post's about insight meditation and enlightenment. I had just gotten out of a rather uncomfortable living situation and was trying to sort out my mental health. I had been hearing about the benefits of meditation from UncertainKitten. I was primed for this sort of thing, in all honesty.

So, sometime in the early spring of 2019, I decided to start using acid. That's not to say I have never taken acid before that, I had, quite a bit in fact, but this marked a phase transition in how I used and related to acid. It went from being a fun thing I did every once in a while at parties, to a rather serious and important thing I did on my own almost every week for quite a while.

The effect of all of this has been that my overall stances on a great many things have shifted over time in very weird ways, and even now after the acid is gone, the changes have continued. Acid forcefully fuses and unfuses everything in a sloshing nauseating back and forth, like a ship that's come unmoored from the dock and is drifting all around the harbor. Every time I took acid, that acid world state was merged down closer to the real world millimeter by millimeter.

Fuse everything. Unfuse everything. Everything is you. Nothing is you. Everything is okay. Nothing is okay. Faster. Faster! *Faster!* Signal and ground invert back and forth like someone is playing with a lightswitch. Can you hold both these things at once? Black is white. White is black. There are no contradictions. There is nothing *but* contradiction.

As this happens, layers of structure and chaff are peeled away, blasted off, and otherwise dissolved. Everything I introspected upon liquified upon observation, such that introspection has become most synonymous with destruction. This doesn't seem like a bad thing however.

I've let large portions of my belief structure evaporate via this process. The acid shakes the structure off the wall, defusing me enough to look at pieces as objects. I pick them up and turn them around and hold them in my hands and in so doing destroy them. In their place are all of these voids that don't contain structures at all anymore, and when I look at the world through those holes it's as if I'm getting a painfully raw unfiltered feed. Fused and yet unfused. Fused with nothing, there is nothing to fuse with. This is not a contradiction.

Whenever my conscious mind passes over one of these holes it's as if it momentarily shakes what's left of me apart and I feel a really strong emotional response, sometimes to the point of crying or laughing uncontrollably. Beauty and pain merge together, sadness and happiness and anger balance valances with each other, and I'll end up in very novel states where I'll be curled up in a ball on the floor sobbing uncontrollably and yet feeling very positive valance about the experience of doing this. These sorts of novel states have persisted.

Acid was the first time I was able to experience crying tears of happiness, coming home from an event and feeling so emotionally overloaded with love that I just started sobbing in my partner's arms because everything just felt like so much. One of the strangest feelings I've had as a result of all this is the sense of separation when you're crying and also defused from the part of you that is experiencing the emotions.

Everyone talks about ego death with acid, but I think a lot of people don't quite get what that entails. They get hung up on the identity death aspect. Identity is something most people are strongly fused with, but they're fused on deeper layers than even they realize a lot of the time. Acid fuses and unfuses everything. This includes identity. This is the death aspect.

Obviously acid isn't going to literally make anyone forget their entire self-model, but beneath the self-model is all this semi to unconscious stuff that we incorporate into our identities as what sort of person we are, typically gimping our abilities in the process. Protect the fictional character that is your self-model all you want, but all that has ever been was roleplay anyway and the acid is fully capable of getting up underneath that stuff. There were pieces of my worldview that needed to die in order to actually see through to reality; in order for the rest of me to live.

Once the things beneath the model give way, the model itself becomes unmoored, and sure, you can keep using it, but it's just a costume at that point, it's not *you* anymore. Or, it is because everything is you, but also because everything is you so too nothing is you.

Where would this end? The natural conclusion would seem to be to run the process until my entire structure had dissolved, but based on Aella's experience that seems like it does eventually reach a point where you have to turn back or actually die when you fully defuse from the fear of death. Is that what enlightenment relates to? That point where your entire structure is gone and there is nothing left but void? The state of defusion with that sense of the fact you are going to die?

We'll talk more about death soon.