

ECSTATIC [X]REALITY

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Science

with a

Major in Integrated Architecture and Design

in the

College of Graduate Studies

University of Idaho

by

Zeth duBois

Major Professor: Roger Lew, Ph.D.

Committee Members: John William Anderson; Alistair Smith, Ph.D.

Department Administrator: John William Anderson

May, 2020

## AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT THESIS

This thesis of Zeth duBois, submitted for the degree of Master of Science with a Major in Integrated Architecture and Design and titled “Ecstatic [X]Reality,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below is now granted to submit final copies for the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

Advisor:	_____	_____
	Roger Lew, Ph.D.	Date

Committee	Mem-	_____	_____
bers:		John William Anderson	Date

_____	_____
Alistair Smith, Ph.D.	Date

Department Chair:	_____	_____
	John William Anderson	Date

## ABSTRACT

For tens of thousands of years, cultures have practiced ecstatic rituals. With the rise of organized religion and the rational scientific revolutions, knowledge of practices and techniques faded into myth. Ecstasy can be described as a highly charged emotional state, that is both volatile and short-lived, presenting the conscious mind with inexplicable mental visions. Contemporary western culture eschews the value of ecstatic ritual, in favor of rational problem-solving. The ecstatic experience is personal, unfathomable, and the only outward signs of its features are in the accounts of subjects relating their experiences. The ephemeral subjectivity of ecstasy presents numerous barriers for the formal investigation of the transformation of ecstasy, in both scientific credo and societal acceptance.

A person may use non-invasive mental techniques of meditation, prayer, trance, and the like, to achieve an ecstatic state of mind. Ingesting psychoactive compounds can also lead to ecstasy. Until the 20th century, these processes have been primarily held to be the domain of spiritual exploration. With parallel advances of both inorganic and organic chemistry, scientists discovered psychoactive chemicals inherent in plants reacted in the brain in unforeseen ways. Further exploration of natural compounds and fully human-made laboratory chemicals revealed the existence of neurotransmitters, demonstrating that the experience of consciousness can be directed by temporarily altering brain neurochemistry.

The ecstatic experience relates to a state of perception of self in a world of sensation. It is conceivable that that deviation from ordinary frames of reference, as shown by the recordings in the stories of shamans, religious practitioners, yogis, and scientific experimentation, is central to the benefits inherited from an altered state of mind. Evidence has shown that ecstatic ritual well-conceived can have lasting therapeutic effects for mood disorders, assist in overcoming chemical addictions, and enhance overall peace of mind.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Your acknowledgments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT THESIS . . . . . ii

ABSTRACT . . . . . iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . . iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . . v

LIST OF ACRONYMS . . . . . vi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION . . . . . 1

    A CASE FOR ECSTASY . . . . . 3

    EXAMPLES OF ACRONYMS . . . . . 3

CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . . 4

REFERENCES . . . . . 5

APPENDIX A: YOUR FIST APPENDIX . . . . . 6

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

**CoGS** College of Graduate Studies

**VM** Virtual Machine

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout human social development, people have cultivated techniques for achieving ecstatic states of mind. For tens of thousands of years, cultures have practiced ecstatic rituals by temporarily altering the state of perception. Methods range between physically limiting/shaping access to external stimulation to internally altering neurochemical activity. Characteristics of the first pole resolve to practices of prayer, trance, or meditation, utilizing disciplines or techniques to achieve hard to reach brainwave states that minimize occlusion of extra-sensory perception. In the case of neurochemical alterations, states can be achieved via direct regulations in biochemistry. The most effective of these techniques, in terms of accessibility, intensity, and duration, are those induced by the use of powerful exogenous chemicals that radically alter sensory and cognitive processing in the mind. The effects of the methods across this spectrum have been measured in clinical studies, supporting the claim that neurochemistry, brainwave states, and the resulting neurological data visible in cognitive processing can be temporarily altered [1][5].

While the entire range of technique is functional to achieving altered states of consciousness, the use of chemicals, characterized as *psychoactive*, or mind-altering drugs, provide the most dramatic and sudden state changes. As we well know, a drug toxicity profile can range from extremely lethal to entirely benign, and a thorough understanding of the risks should precede any use of drugs. It has been well demonstrated that long before the advent of laboratory science, the Controlled Substances Act, and the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances, that many naturally-occurring psychoactive chemicals have toxicities so low, that lethal human doses have yet to be discovered. Tryptamines are biologically safer than Tylenol by several orders of magnitude, and yet they are scheduled as the most restricted substances on Earth. However, despite the inconvenient fact that some sources for these banned chemicals spring up unbidden from the daily landscape, as open-source technology for casual harvesting, the legal status

makes not only their collection and use prohibited, but also impedes the opportunity to advance scientific research.

Although psychoactive drugs can be used recreationally, the profound changes to mental state experienced are reputed to induce a type of spiritual voyage not easily dismissed as whimsy. Drugs effective at triggering conscious expansion are termed *entheogen*, Greek for “becoming divine within,” when used with this intention. Simultaneously, the same drug used in recreational applications might be colloquially termed *psychedelic*.

Entheogens are useful for establishing *altered states of consciousness*. A mind altered may gain access to unique inspirations and emotional insights, by temporarily disrupting ordinary sensations and perceptions and suspending preconceived notions. This results in radical *disassociation* and *ego-dissolution*. The experience can be so profound that some scientists have suggested that ritualistic ecstasy may have been integral to the development of human consciousness in proto man. The abductive “Stoned Ape Hypothesis,” advanced by Terence and Dennis McKenna, points out that mutagenic mushrooms discovered in the migrations of early savanna hominids would have had a range of effects on the intrepid ingester, from temporary improvements in visual acuity to full-blown conscious epiphany [4].

Supporting evidence that something extraordinary was occurring with early human brains during this portion of the human timeline, is present in the sudden and inexplicable doubling of *Homo sapiens*’ cranial capacity in an unprecedentedly short time. Furthermore, it is well-supported that the development of language, broad advances in tool use, and the clear development of societal hierarchical structures occur at this juncture [3].

As the term entheogen is commonly restricted to describing a class of chemicals, let us reflect on the claim that ecstatic states of mind can be captured through self-induced techniques of meditation or trance. Many veterans of ecstasy claim that it is the state of mind and the intention of the undertaking that establishes the efficacy of the entheogen, not the method used to trigger the effect. Expressed more succinctly, it is the entire



journey that evokes divinity within.

Departing from the default world—then returning. This journey is called ecstasy.

## 1.1 A CASE FOR ECSTASY

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ecstasy as, “An emotional or religious frenzy or trance-like state, originally one involving an experience of mystic self-transcendence.” For colloquial uses, especially hyperbolic ones, ecstasy is likely employed to mean “extremely happy” or “thrilled.” Etymologically, ecstasy draws from Latin meaning “to be or stand outside oneself,” and shares similar lineage with the word existence, “to cause to stand.”

Albert Einstein referred to ecstasy as the “mystical emotion” and spoke of it as “. . . the finest emotion of which we are capable. . .”. He credits the inspiration of the mysterious as the source of art and science , and that “anyone to whom this feeling [ecstasy] is alien, who is no longer capable of wonderment and lives in a state of fear, is a dead man.” [2]

Einstein’s existential sentiment for the contact with ecstasy recalls the autobiographical writings of Edward Abey detailing his nearly monastic assignment as a park ranger in the American desert southwest in the 1960s. In his book *Desert Solitaire*, he emphasizes the role of joy goes beyond individual utility, suggesting that it is a requisite strategy for evolving life.

### 1.1.1 EXAMPLE SUBSECTION

Subsection text.

## 1.2 EXAMPLES OF ACRONYMS

Example of acronym: College of Graduate Studies (CoGS) Using it again: CoGS  
Plural one: Virtual Machines (VMs)

## CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Example summary and conclusions. You can refer to chapters and sections using their label, e.g Chapter 1.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Robin L. Carhart-Harris, David Erritzoe, Tim Williams, James M. Stone, Laurence J. Reed, Alessandro Colasanti, Robin J. Tyacke, Robert Leech, Andrea L. Malizia, Kevin Murphy, Peter Hobden, John Evans, Amanda Feilding, Richard G. Wise, and David J. Nutt. Neural correlates of the psychedelic state as determined by fMRI studies with psilocybin. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(6):2138, February 2012.
- [2] Albert Einstein. Science and god. In *Forum and Century*, volume 83, pages 373–79, 1930.
- [3] Terence K. McKenna. *Food of the gods: the search for the original tree of knowledge: a radical history of plants, drugs, and human evolution*. Bantam Books, New York, 1992.
- [4] Terence K. McKenna. *The Invisible Landscape: Mind, Hallucinogens, and the I Ching*. Harpersanfrancisco, 1993.
- [5] Michael R. Hagerty, Julian Isaacs, Leigh Brasington, Larry Shupe, Eberhard E. Fetz, and Steven C. Cramer. Case Study of Ecstatic Meditation: fMRI and EEG Evidence of Self-Stimulating a Reward System. *Neural Plasticity*, 2013(2013), 2013.

## APPENDIX A: YOUR FIRST APPENDIX

First appendix content