

Talk: Philosophy of Psychedelics

Hosted by the *Aesthetics & Ethics of Attention*
SNSF Research Project

March 3rd 2022, 11:00-12:30 CET
University of Fribourg, MIS03 3113 and online

Philosophy of Psychedelics Dr. Chris Letheby (University of Western Australia)

In this talk I give an overview of the arguments in my recent book Philosophy of Psychedelics. The book is motivated by recent evidence that "classic" (serotonergic) psychedelics such as LSD and psilocybin can be administered safely in controlled environments, and can cause lasting psychotherapeutic benefits with just one to three administrations. These benefits seem to be predicted by the occurrence of a specific type of experience during the drug action: a "mystical-type" experience of oneness, self-transcendence, or cosmic consciousness. This fact gives rise to what I call the Comforting Delusion Objection to psychedelic therapy: the concern that this novel and promising treatment modality works by the induction of implausible metaphysical beliefs. In response to the Objection, I assume the truth of a naturalistic worldview and show, within this constraint, that the overall epistemic profile of psychedelic therapy is better than it initially appears.

Dr Chris Letheby is a philosopher working on issues related to the therapeutic and transformative potential of classic psychedelic drugs. In his work Letheby argues that a traditional conception of psychedelics as agents of insight and spirituality can be reconciled with naturalism, the philosophical position that the natural world is all there is. He is currently Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Western Australia and Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Adelaide on the Australian government-funded project 'Philosophical Perspectives on Psychedelic Psychiatry'. His monograph *Philosophy of Psychedelics* was published in 2021 by Oxford University Press.

Response: Does Psychedelic Experience Support a Naturalistic Worldview? Jason K. Day (University of Fribourg)

Jason K. Day is a PhD researcher in philosophy and member of the research project *Aesthetics and Ethics of Attention* at the University of Fribourg. In his PhD thesis he is developing a phenomenological account of the nature and role of attention in psychedelic experience. Furthermore, he works to explain how the unusual functioning of attention in psychedelic experience is correlated to its aesthetic qualities.

If you wish to participate in person or online, please
send an email to jason.day@unifr.ch