Response to *Psychedelics as Non-Specific Amplifiers*[1]

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Historians usually consider it their job to first describe and try to understand history, and then perhaps draw some lessons from it for the present. This is what I tried to do in my two *Return to the Real* articles, though not without hesitations about treading so far from home, being more comfortable discussing paintings. But it is the fields of psychology, psychopharmacology, and neuroscience that largely shape discourse about psychedelics, as Anastasia Ruban and Michiel van Elk acknowledge, being representatives of those fields themselves. Reading their comments, I am happy to learn that observations from the outside are not just accepted but welcomed with an immediate attempt to integrate them into the bigger picture of current research.

What struck me most, as an historian, is how future-oriented Ruban and van Elk are. Fellow humanities scholars might have criticized me for my selection of facts, my sketches of Prinzhorn's, Sartre's or Huxley's thought, or my specific reading of hard-to-define concepts like Modernism or "culture," but Ruban and van Elk keep their eyes on the ball and assess where my views fit in, which theories they seem to confirm and deny, and how to proceed. I am very grateful to be taken so seriously and happy to support their proposal for mixed-method strategies to better account for the role of culture in the acute and long-term effects of psychedelic drugs. Beyond that, however, I also like to champion the Humanities as more than just an ingredient to be added to the recipe. I think they are also in themselves a recipe for enjoyable as well as nutritious food.

Unfortunately, I do need to make two minor corrections to Ruban and van Elk's comments, one of a historical nature, the other more semantic. In their very first par-

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agraph, they write that I claim that the idea that drugs unveil hidden truths stems from a perennialist view on mystical experiences, but this is not correct. I think it fits into a millennia-old cultural dichotomy, for which I cite Homer, in interpreting altered states of consciousness as either revealing or deceptive. This may relate to mystical experience too, but it need not: it also applies to dreams, "trance," and being drunk, for example. The perennialist view on mystical experience is much younger (1799, it seems) and would be a special case of a special case of this dichotomy. Huxley was such a special case.

My second comment relates to Ruban and van Elk's characterization of my approach as "modern" and "humanistic". Though this is done in passing, possibly by way of shorthand, I fear that such labels might take on a life of their own. My approach is that of Cultural History, with a fair dose from the History of Ideas. Methodologically, my attempt at discourse analysis is closer to what came to be called "postmodern" practices of deconstruction. "Modern" or, better, "Modernist", is the label proposed for the specific discourse that is the subject of Part I of my article, for lack of a better word. In a future article, I will include a figure mapping a variety of such discourses along a timeline. "Humanistic", to conclude, must have been meant to describe the humanities approach, but actually means something else, at least as valuable.

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