Debunking Psychedelic Beliefs

Abstract | INPP 2026

One prominent theory says that psychedelics can improve our mental well-being by changing what we believe. But if this theory is correct, psychedelic therapy is in trouble. It is epistemically suspect. This is not because some beliefs promoted by psychedelic therapy are false, as some have argued. The problem, rather, is that none of the beliefs psychedelic therapy would promote could be held rationally. In virtue of their detrimental influence on our cognitive processes, psychedelics, I argue, put us in a bad epistemic position to begin with. More exactly, psychedelics impair our reasoning capacities, thereby precluding us from appropriately evaluating the trustworthiness of the judgements that we make while under psychedelic influence. This gives us good reason to think that all psychedelic beliefs – regardless of what they are about – are probably mistaken. So, we are rationally required to suspend them. Little can be said in response to this worry that does not beg the question against the evidence of our epistemic malfunction while on psychedelics. We can bite the bullet and accept that inevitably, psychedelic therapy requires a trade-off between rationality and practical benefit. Alternatively, we can reject the view that belief revision is behind the therapeutic effects of psychedelics.