

Ayahuasca: Effects on the Ego and Considerations of Use¹

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I will begin with some reflections on aspects of ayahuasca and identity, a subject I have explored in the past, and then talk about the more practical aspects of ayahuasca use in relationship to the psychological experience of using it. Ayahuasca is a medicine that has the power, in some people, to heal trauma, to inspire insight, and to change habits. The mechanism for these powers is unknown, but some fundamental observations can be made.

Though there are many kinds of ayahuasca, a popular idea currently is to emphasize the safety of the mix of just two ingredients: the vine and the admixture leaf, either chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*) or chaliponga (*Diplopterys cabrerana*, used more frequently in Colombian ayahuasca, which is also known there as “yage”). First, it should be remembered that its action is different for each drinker, and though many may praise its effects on their lives, for some, the experience is just a kinesthetic event, with no visual component, but leaving a lasting feeling of satisfaction; for other people a full-blown visionary state is experienced, with spirit creatures giving advice and even performing energetic operations on the bodies of the drinker. Some will not have a rewarding experience at all. The visions and understandings are influenced by the setting and expectations (the set) of the drinker, but can often seem unexpected and even unwelcome, as in the case of “examining the conscience” and recognizing the harms one

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may have done, or time wasted in selfish or vain pursuits. Setting an intention before the ritual can help guide interpretations of the visions, but may reveal unsettling information that the drinker did not expect.

Ayahuasca may give a gentle introduction, with the first time having little effect, followed by intensified sessions as the experience becomes more familiar. People who have drunk for years are better able to navigate in the force of the medicine, but still may purge and have strong reactions. Some people require smaller doses, others larger, even when the body weight and health is the same, and some people prefer to work with lighter doses that are less physically challenging, while others test their boundaries with heroic doses that may obscure more than they reveal as the ego and the body struggle to contain the experience. The Santo Daime church titrates the doses according to the intent of the ceremony, with celebrations calling for more frequent, smaller doses to provide energy for dancing all night, and healing works calling for larger doses to be consumed while seated. Negative effects, too, may be experienced early in a drinkers' career, but tend to wash out as the territory becomes familiar.

The ability of ayahuasca to treat depression and drug addiction is a topic that has been explored in research studies that point to a high rate of success compared to standard treatment for these disorders (Liestner & Prickett, 2012; Palhano-Fontes et al., 2014; Loizaga & Loizaga, 2014; Thomas, Lucas, Capler, Tupper, & Martin, 2013; Winkelman, 2014). What special power does ayahuasca have that contributes to these successes? One theory is that these conditions are a result of a malfunction of the ego; anger is famously the flipside of depression, and anger is typically a protective response

of the ego to fear of assault. Defenses rise and the person is cut off from the experience of the world, from social engagement, and from their own pleasure.

What, then, is being assaulted, when we speak of the ego? It is the perceived identity, in whatever stage of therapeutic or spiritual evolution it has acquired in its journey. The ego is the actor, and shifts in its role during an ayahuasca session can be seismic. Ayahuasca has the power to re-orient identity, helping people “remember” their mission in life and showing them the power they have to overcome obstacles to create the lives they imagine could be possible. In my research on gay ayahuasca users (Cavnar, 2011), where I asked questions directly about identities, several said they had discovered their calling as healers or that they had a mission on Earth, often connected to ayahuasca. I have observed this phenomenon also in other circumstances since then. In fact, I am also a person for whom this is true, and I devote a considerable amount of my free time promoting the responsible use of ayahuasca, as I feel indebted to the drink for all it has shown me in my own life, and protective of its reputation. Besides the commitment to the drink itself, new understanding of nature and interdependency arise as the boundaries of the ego shift to include more elements of the ecosystem on which it depends.

Ayahuasca’s effect on interpersonal relationships is also notable. Poor interpersonal relationships often characterize drug addicts and depressed people; in particular, a tendency to isolate and withdraw into a cushion of endorphins or the darkness of despair, respectively. Working again on the boundaries of the ego, feelings of gratitude for others in one’s life, feelings of love and connection, and experiences of compassion for the human race and increasing solidarity with them, are often reported in

ayahuasca accounts. The patterns of interdependency become apparent in various ways to the ayahuasca drinker, and connections of all kinds are observable.

In many cases, these insights have the power to affect the real-life relationships of drinkers, having the positive effect of enhancing interpersonal connection and honesty, resulting in greater feelings of support and care. In my research, participants noted they also tended to allow toxic relationships to wither, creating a safe environment for healthy personal relationships based on trust and compassion, to flourish. Shifts in identity are powerful agents of change. The shift in self-conception from “victim” to “victor” can be a decisive factor in the journey of life. Ayahuasca shows drinkers deeper levels of awareness and, using that knowledge, people can alter their perceptions of themselves, resulting in a change in their identity. Who we are before we drink is never who we are after: this is something more or less believed by many ayahuasca aficionados.

Psychotherapy and psychedelics both assist in helping redefine identity. Psychotherapy focuses on ego defenses and issues stemming from identification with the ego and its journey to wholeness, while ayahuasca can loosen the strict boundaries of self-perception and allow other information and perspectives in, introducing a new dimension of healing. The teachings of ayahuasca are exquisitely tailored to the life and understanding of each drinker, which can result in the common report of experiencing years of therapy in a single night of drinking ayahuasca. The sides of the personality that are not acknowledged are represented in images and presented in a way that the observing ego can appreciate. Such realizations can unleash torrents of emotion that wash away blockages and limits. Physical purging by vomiting or defecating also plays a part in opening up the body and mind so the limitations can be eroded and expelled.

In indigenous communities that use it, ayahuasca can have the role of defining a group of people, and can be found in origin myths. Anthropologists have sought follow the way ayahuasca spread and was adopted by various indigenous groups, noting its dispersion through meetings of tribes and in the exchange of songs, stories, and medicines at gatherings and along river routes used by indigenous people as well as missionaries. Where it spreads, it often becomes central to the identities of the groups who use it, even when it is more recently incorporated into use (Labate & Cavnar, 2014). Modern ayahuasca use in the North is defined by ayahuasca church groups' identities as well as "lineages" descending from indigenous shamans who have initiated Westerners into their ayahuasca practice, similar to Buddhist teacher lineages. Westerners who assume the identity of ayahuasca shamans in an indigenous format are also influenced by the drink to expand their personal identities, becoming healers or spiritual leaders in their North American or European environments and singing icaros in the language of their teachers.

Additionally, ayahuasca's relationship to identity can also be observed in the phenomenon reported by both shamans and ayahuasca explorers: that of being in two places at once, or being two different beings at once. For example, a shaman may be sitting in front of her client and also traveling in the Milky Way as a jaguar at the same time. A daimista may be dancing and having an experience of speaking with celestial beings at the same time, and so forth. The boundaries of the body and space cease to apply, and drinkers may also go back in time to early trauma or teenage events to view them from another perspective, and even travel to previous lives or report experiences from the future.

Ayahuasca's use in treating trauma, explored recently by Gabor Maté (2017), is one valuable use of this medicine, but beyond that, this medicine provides even well-adjusted individuals with enhanced peacefulness, satisfaction with life, and spiritual nourishment. The field of Positive Psychology provides some reference for the experience of people who find their non-pathological lives enriched by the practice of drinking ayahuasca. Positive Psychology is the study of ways life can be made more rewarding and enjoyable without offering a cure for pathologies. Qualities that have been reported as effects of ayahuasca, as seen in the literature, include assertiveness, joy of life and liveliness; less signs of anxiety, with drinkers being more optimistic, self-confident, and emotionally mature. Effects of enhanced mindfulness, personal empowerment, hopefulness, improvements in quality of life, increased subjective feelings of connection with spirit, nature, self, and others; increased insight, the ability to reframe cognitive structures, enhancement of trust and social feelings; and a richer, more joyous life. Drinkers reported "letting go of negativity," being less cynical, feeling more genuine, feeling more acceptance of themselves, increasing confidence and calmness; feelings of compassion, generosity, humility; recognizing the importance of love, feeling a responsibility to others, an emphasis on simplicity, not harboring bad thoughts about others, and gratitude. Some said ayahuasca helped them make sense out of their lives. Many people report spiritual experiences where they become aware of their true selves or witness their personal power in its limitless form.

Combining Western psychology with Eastern religious concepts, we can conceive of the action of ayahuasca on the ego as malleable, able to contract it and expand it. Contractions can consist of feelings of remorse, darker journeys where one confronts

one's failings and regrets. These are not uncommon in ayahuasca reports, but they are often recognized afterward to have been healing or illuminating.

The expansion of the ego can result in mystical states of all-inclusive awareness, love and humility, or in the unfortunate side effect that is sometimes seen in enthusiasts: the ego reinforced by witnessing its own glory, believing it has a dominant role to play in the unfolding drama, that can become full of certainty to the point of arrogance. The hungry ego, once fed, becomes ravenous and marvels at itself. The mix of ego with psychedelic experience can have this negative outcome. Further, those with psychiatric problems resulting in a fragile connection to the ego, as in psychoses, may find the results of ayahuasca to further disintegrate their ego strength, causing increased disorganization and confused boundaries. Changes to the ego can also result in changes to identity, giving glimpses of a real self that is a beautiful light full of compassion. That light may be interpreted in a number of ways, but its underlying power is to heal the body and mind. Is that light ayahuasca, or does ayahuasca simply have the power to shine through the obscurations of the ego structures so that the ever-present inner light can do its work on the conscious mind, which is usually so bound in day-to-day discursive thought that this force is completely hidden?

Because ayahuasca is an outside agent and these mystical experiences are not the result of years of mind-calming meditation, mindfulness training, and yoga, the inner world that is illuminated can be full of unresolved trauma and difficult experience imprints that are usually kept repressed by the ego in its efforts to feel safe and in control. During the short period of the ayahuasca experience, these revelations can feel shocking, or can elicit waves of sorrow or horror. In the end, however, integrating these parts back

into the awareness of the ego is healing, even if the integration may be difficult. This is why integration therapies after ayahuasca sessions can be valuable following some experiences.

Ego death, or as Jung called it, “psychic death,” is also called “ego loss.” It signifies the complete loss of subjective identity. In Jungian theory, this precedes a rebirth into a new identity. Timothy Leary coined the term “ego loss” in regard to LSD experiences. Ego death is the second stage in Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey. Ego death in Buddhism is related to understanding one’s true nature, (not mistaking the rope for the snake), which leads to a permanent awakening from ego fixation (one will never mistake the rope for the snake once it is seen to be a rope). With psychedelics, and particularly with ayahuasca, the experience of seeing one’s true self can be fleeting, and if someone is not prepared for it, shocking, with the participant, if unprepared, panicking and grasping at illusory ideas of self that offer no certainty. Stanislav Grof (1994, para. 60) describes ego death in the context of psychedelic use, “The main objective of psychedelic therapy is to create optimal conditions for the subject to experience the ego death and the subsequent transcendence into the so-called psychedelic peak experience. It is an ecstatic state, characterized by the loss of boundaries between the subject and the objective world, with ensuing feelings of unity with other people, nature, the entire universe and God...”

Similar to the theories of Positive Psychology and Naranjo’s (2017) conclusions about the essential good nature of humanity that underlies all our flaws, it appears ayahuasca only reveals what is already in place; indicating a path through the structures

built unconsciously to protect the ego that eventually come to block out most of the inner-generated light.

I would like to move now to some more practical considerations and observations that might be useful to people using ayahuasca themselves. There are three stages to the experience: preparation, the ritual or experience of drinking the ayahuasca, and the aftermath, which includes integration. Each stage is of importance to the experience, and each can create problems if not approached carefully.

First, the preparation requires some form of screening. This preliminary practice is dispensed with often in places in South America by unscrupulous practitioners who are motivated to increase sales, but it is known that people with psychotic tendencies or with severe mental illness are bad candidates; the insecurity of their egos can make ayahuasca problematic, and unmoor more fragile senses of self. Being well rested and in good health can help in the endurance of the stronger effects, although ayahuasca is often drunk by sick people seeking healing.

In addition, certain medications may be problematical. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs and other antidepressants that may interfere with the metabolism of ayahuasca, have not proven fatal or to lead to “serotonin syndrome,” as far as any reports in the literature are concerned, and have been monitored in conjunction with ayahuasca in UDV ceremonies for some years with no harmful effects (Labate & Feeney, 2012). But it can be understood that these medicines may have the effect of dulling the experience or possibly accentuating it: practitioners have reported both outcomes. In indigenous practices, the dietas are more severe, and any foreign elements consumed are considered to have the possibility of interfering with the effects of the

ayahuasca. Other medicines that have stimulating effects are contraindicated, but it is rare for the contraindications to be life threatening for the classic two-ingredient brew of *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis*. Street drugs are another issue, the use of which in conjunction with ayahuasca makes little sense except to the extreme psychonaut.

It should be noted that the international branches of Santo Daime have a tradition of using marijuana with ayahuasca, a practice that is controversial. Marijuana, called “Santa Maria” in this context, is considered a sacred plant that augments the experience, accentuating visual effects and quelling nausea. Its ability to quell nausea is considered by some to be working in opposition to the purging nature of ayahuasca, but it is interesting to consider that Santo Daime rituals are very active affairs, with singing, sitting and standing on cue, dancing and playing instruments, activities that must pause for vomiting or toilet use, while the indigenous rituals offered by curanderos involve only sitting or lying on a mat in darkness listening to icaros.

As regards diets and preparation, it is important to follow the direction of the one providing the medicine; if they are trustworthy and you believe them to have your best interests at heart, and if they are experienced; you are putting yourself in their hands and should follow their recommendations. If you do not trust or respect them, then you should not be drinking with them. The church of Santo Daime has a 7-day period, 3 days before and 3 days after, in which sex, alcohol and drugs (except marijuana) are proscribed. Indigenous shamans may engage in diets that last for years, and may prescribe diets free from such dietary items as salt, sugar, spices, pork, and caffeine in addition to social contact and sexual activity, allowing only a limited diet of oil-free root vegetables, rice,

and fish. This diet has been altered as more Northerners come to drink, so that the social isolation has been eliminated and we see the invention of “social diets,” in which only the sexual and food prohibitions are kept, and the person continues their normal daily activities. Briefly, there are few indications that not following a diet, or even taking many of the medicines that are warned against, will have physically harmful consequences for ayahuasca drinkers; however, resistance to these dietary and other restrictions puts one at odds with the instructions of the purveyors, creating an oppositional start to an experience that already has the potential to destabilize one’s worldview. If the opposition is strong, it is best that you not drink with that group or shaman; it reveals a lack of respect that could snowball during the ceremony and result in a negative outcome without any real chemical harm, but negatively altering the experience simply by manifesting disrespect and resistance.

Not only are participants in need of screening, but so also are those who are providing the drink, who must have known reputations for ethical behavior and be trustworthy providers who work within a known protocol. Agreeing to drink with strangers about whom little is known is a condition that may lead to tragedy. Reports of sexual molestation and inappropriate behavior have increased as the culture of Northern spiritual seekers meets mestizo and indigenous culture, each group with their own cultural presuppositions. Regarding the shaman or curandero as a doctor or psychiatrist in the Western model, or even as a priest or pastor in a religious model, does not offer a useful template for the role of the shaman in his community, and can blind participants to the breadth of behaviors that may transpire. It is best to wait to drink until mutual trust is established. In the United States, purveyors tend to be more cautious because of the risk

of exposure and possible legal action due to the illegal nature of most ayahuasca activity in the States. It is good to know what is in the brew one is consuming, and to avoid mixtures that contain Brugmansia (toé) or tobacco—which can, in excess, be toxic or even fatal—unless one has worked with the provider and has a trusting relationship after several experiences with them.

Several attempts have been made to categorize ayahuasca experiences, the most extensive of which is Benny Shanon's *The Antipodes of the Mind* (2002), a phenomenological examination of the themes present in ayahuasca visions and understandings. Shanon believes ayahuasca visions can't be forced into archetypal scenarios. Other writers emphasize the appearance of archetypes and other elements of the classical subconscious.

Michael Harner (1973) came up with five common themes in South American ayahuasca shamanism, comprising 1. the soul separating from the physical body, 2., visions of jaguars and snakes, 3., visions of demons and deities, 4., visions of distant persons, cities, and landscapes, and 5., the sensation of seeing the detailed enactment of recent unsolved crimes. For Northerners, messages and symbols can appear with very personal content relating to experiences in the past that are unresolved, or visions that contain symbolic messages that may be understood immediately or that may take time and consultation to understand.

One element of the ayahuasca experience that is often most feared, and may then transform into something most desired, is the purge. This can be either through vomiting or defecating, and often both. Bad ideas, difficult patterns, evil spirits, and other entities are believed by some to be released in the purge. In some indigenous communities, the

purge is the main effect sought after, while Northerners seek more after visual effects. The purge is theorized to be mostly instigated by the vine, while the visions are intensified when more DMT-containing *Psychotria viridis* or *Diplopterys cabrerana* is added. Purging is, in essence, cleaning, and it is said that the more dirt (addictions, compulsions, envy, negative judgments, etc.) one has, the more purging will be necessary. Shamans may purge the bad elements of their patients on occasion. Purging soon after drinking will lessen the effect of the ayahuasca, but purging later can accentuate the effects, often in a positive way. There are many people who fear the purge and refuse to drink for this reason, but those who have purged in a ritual come to value the process as transformative and purifying. Nausea is ordinarily short-lived and disappears once the purge is complete. Likewise with diarrhea and bowel movements; though less convenient than vomiting, they have the purpose to clean deep inside the body, and cooperation is mandatory. Rituals of symbolic purification abound in many cultures, but ayahuasca provides an actual cleaning of the alimentary system, the main way by which humans ingest and excrete. Vomiting in a prone position can result in aspiration of the vomit and possible suffocation. This is one danger that is rare but real, and a safe practice is to keep all participants in view during the ritual, so that none is left unattended, especially if they are powerfully affected.

The experience is very different for everyone, from mild alterations to experiences of dying, changing into animals, entering multi-dimensional worlds, exploring past trauma, speaking with invisible beings, having deep and joyous, or dark and troubling, insights, adoption of new identities and understandings about one's role in life and love for humanity, seeing the dead, and a variety of other non-ordinary

experiences that often have a teaching quality. The content of the experience will, to some extent, be affected by the environment, the strength and quality of the ayahuasca, and the people who are present; not only the shaman or leader, but other participants as well, especially in regard to their appropriateness for the experience and the sincerity with which they seek.

Many perceive ayahuasca as a woman, “Madre,” or mother, who holds her children in her force to teach them; others conceive of ayahuasca as “the teacher of all teachers,” the one who taught Solomon his wisdom. Some drinkers relate it to the blood of Jesus, a sacrificial sacrament. It often inspires reverence and ritual to contain and moderate its effects. During the ceremony, resistance is futile, and will result in a more difficult experience. Surrender is recommended, and focus on the breath and relaxing the body can help the difficult experience pass more easily. Remembering that the effects are transient, and that the medicine is not lethal can also help. The more one turns toward that which one previously avoided, the quicker the transformation from resistance to acknowledgment and the ability to move on. Music guides most ayahuasca ceremonies, and this can also be useful in helping to move out of uncomfortable places. Icaros are designed to manipulate energy, and other music used in rituals is credited with having the power to alter one’s state or infuse the listener with spiritual understanding. Ayahuasca also seems to inspire musical talent, as well as other artistic expression.

Unusual effects are sometimes seen. For example, sometimes a person feels nothing; that person may feel something if they drink again, or they may be a person who, for whatever reason, does not ever feel the effects. Sometimes, instead of mood elevation, a person will experience sadness or symptoms of depression. In this case, some

advise ingesting more ayahuasca to work past the block, and some will advise avoiding the substance. In indigenous traditions, this is when a shaman or curandero will be called to evaluate the situation and make a recommendation. The view of the Santo Daime group is usually to drink more daime until the sadness passes. It is important that symptoms do not increase, and assessments for suicidality should be made in anyone who is having an especially hard time after drinking ayahuasca. Sometimes facing one's dark side can be depressing, but it is a transitory state; sometimes, a deep depression can set in that needs clinical attention. Non-fanatical estimation should also be made of the condition of the suffering person, as no blanket rule is true for all people, and it may be that ayahuasca is inappropriate for certain people who have no psychosis or mental disorder, but in whom it inspires depression.

Finally, there is a phenomenon referred to as "incorporation" that can cause a person to move in idiosyncratic ways, believe they are sharing their body with another spirit, or begin to "speak in tongues." This phenomenon has been encouraged in some of the international branches of Santo Daime, which interpret this behavior to be spirits entering the person's body, usually to experience purification, or to teach. Santo Daime has borrowed from Umbanda, Brazilian Afro-religion, of spirit possession, and has a format and music to structure and facilitate these experiences. Other branches of Santo Daime do not make room for incorporation, and thus it rarely occurs. Indigenous ceremonies also do not value such expressions, though they may occur and be interpreted in various ways by those who witness them and those who experience them.

After the experience, there is the recognition that, though the visions have faded, the ayahuasca continues to work. In some traditions, the diet continues for several weeks

after the last ayahuasca has been consumed, and in others, such as the Santo Daime, a three-day period, similar to the one that preceded the ritual, with no sex, drugs or alcohol, is recommended. After the experience, people can feel very open and sensitive, and will feel better if they can plan to rest and have minimal activity in the hours and days immediately after the ayahuasca ritual has ended.

Insights can be integrated, treasured, or ignored. Epistemologies that do not include or represent ideas acquired in ayahuasca sessions may devalue the experience and discount the meanings uncovered, so that skepticism and doubt can undo some of the benefits. Others may try adopting indigenous belief systems to find ways to make sense of their experiences in this light. Ayahuasca may reveal many things, but putting that knowledge to use is up to each participant, and even mild doses can incite dramatic change in someone who is ready to put into practice the lessons they are taught.

Currently, integration groups and services have been gaining popularity as people return from the jungle or from a local workshop with questions about how to implement and understand the things they have learned in ayahuasca sessions. A growing need has created a market for experienced facilitators and therapists to help guide practitioners who do not have an understanding community to rely on for support outside of their ayahuasca-using circles, which may meet rarely or only when a shaman is in town, and whose members may only have this activity in common and may travel from distances for the ceremony. Other groups may consist of people from various places around the world who have met in South or Central America for an intense retreat, then dispersed home.

The creation of community based on interest is a phenomenon that has been helped by the use of the Internet, and at least one center is providing Skype counseling and check-ins with therapists associated with the center to participants after they leave so they can maintain connections with people who understand what they might be going through. Integration services are being offered in a variety of contexts, from circles of peers who meet to discuss their various psychedelic experiences, to groups attached to a center or leader, to groups led by licensed therapists, and one-on-one consultations with people whose experience ranges from participation in Alcoholics Anonymous to licensed medical doctors, psychologists, and nurses. This specialty arises from the growing desire of clients to see non-pathologizing interpretations of their substance use in a self-exploratory or healing context. The Bay Area is rich in people with this orientation, but such therapists are more rare in other parts of the country and the world, so the benefits of Skype consultation becomes apparent; people who meet at retreats from all over the world maintain contact with each other through Facebook groups and with the center through social media, local experienced contacts, and long-distance Skype counseling. The Temple of the Way of Light, near Iquitos, Peru, is at the vanguard in this respect.

Outside of groups or counseling, activities after a ceremony should be low-key and gentle. Some kind of diet will most likely still be in effect and the medicine will remain in the system for an estimated 2 weeks, after which the effects will decline. Of course, insights and visions can be remembered, but the anti-depressant effect and expanded state will diminish. One way of augmenting the processing is to write, paint, or make other creative expressions. Musical expression is another hallmark of ayahuasca use, and many discover the ability to sing or play an instrument after drinking. An overall

appreciation for art and beauty stand out for many people in the days following a ceremony.

In conclusion, I would like to point out the stimulation of feelings of gratitude that ayahuasca can produce. This gratitude can manifest, among many ways, as a commitment to saving the natural environment in which ayahuasca grows; to helping heal the sick or guiding the lost, with a new recognition of the brotherhood of all people; or to helping spread the news of ayahuasca to people and places it remains unknown to, with the hope that others may benefit from its powers. Although ayahuasca has existed for centuries, it is only now that Northerners are aware of it and thirsting for its personally transformative effects. I would like to express my own gratitude for its effect on my life, and hope I can repay the gift I have received.

Ayahuasca, perhaps more than other psychedelics, has a persona, a teaching presence that is able to root out and display the most intimate secrets, desires, and wounds that have been hidden from the ego. This inspires reverence. This incredible intimacy and vast knowledge—in which a full grasp of our unlimited selves existing outside our normal perception becomes magically apparent, flooding us with sensations and emotions, clearing the way for peace and silence—inspires gratitude and indebtedness. Humility is a byproduct of gratitude and together they may be the greatest reward, the antidote to the bloated ego that consumes to reinforce its identity; how remarkable that this is the result of drinking a beverage!

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