MOVING FORWARD BY LOOKING BACK

Critiques of Commercialized Mindfulness and the Future of (Commercialized) Psychedelics

Patrick Elf, Amy Isham, and Dario Leoni

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Abstract: Much has been written in the academic and popular press on the positive consequences of psychedelic-induced mental states. Following the disappearance of psychedelic research from the public eye between the 1970s and early 2000s, a second wave of psychedelic research is gaining increasing interest from private sector actors looking to explore commercial opportunities. The commercialization of psychedelic substances will likely have consequences for how they are used, to what ends, and to what degree of efficacy. We reflect on the critiques of commercialized mindfulness and explore how they may apply to the future of commercialized psychedelics. Mindfulness and psychedelics share several qualities, including their often spiritual origins and self-transcendent nature. However, mindfulness has already undergone a period of commercialization and represents a precedent case for imagining the possible outcomes of the commercialization of psychedelics. By considering the problems associated with separating the practice from its spiritual roots, co-optation to reinforce neoliberal principles, and alterations to administration to cut costs, the article demonstrates the tensions that arise when trying to implement practices rooted in enhancing well-being in societies dominated by consumer capitalism.

Keywords: psychedelics, meditation, mindfulness, self-transcendent experiences, mystical experiences, commercialization, capitalism, neoliberalism, health, well-being, environment

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HISTORY OF PHARMACY AND PHARMACEUTICALS | 65:1
ISSN 2694-3034 | E-ISSN 2694-3042 | doi:10.3368/hopp.65.1.33
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Psychedelic substances have a rich history dating back thousands of years.[1] Following their absence from public eye and academic research between the 1970s and early 2000s, psychedelics have experienced a resurgence of interest in Western societies in the past two decades thanks to the growing evidence of their therapeutic efficacy. This heightened interest has not been limited to academic scholars and has spanned both public and private sectors as well as the general public. In line with this, we observe the emergence of a psychedelics industry that is attracting billions of dollars in funding. Although commercialization can arguably be seen as a positive development, providing more people with access to therapeutic benefits, caution is needed. The commercialization of psychedelic substances will likely have consequences for how they are used, to what ends, and to what degree of effectiveness.

In this article, we look forward and consider what consequences the commercialization of psychedelics could have on their therapeutic and broader potential. We do so by looking back. We review literature from the established field of mindfulness as a starting point for our analysis. We reflect on the common critiques of commercialized mindfulness and consider the extent to which they could apply to a future of commercialized psychedelics. Commercialized mindfulness is a precedent case and useful analytical lens for anticipating the implications of psychedelics being produced, marketed, and sold in market-based economies.

We chose to examine parallels between the commercialization of psychedelics and mindfulness for several reasons. Eminent meditation teachers such as Jack Kornfield advocate for the complementary nature of both.[2] First, mindfulness is a practice that, like psychedelics, has a strong evidence base suggesting benefits for mental health and prosocial and proecological outcomes. Second, mindfulness and psychedelic experiences are qualitatively similar, in the sense that they can be understood as forms of self-transcendent experiences.[3] Third, although its history spans back as far as the first millennium BCE in Eastern

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1. Michael Winkelman, "Introduction: Evidence for Entheogen Use in Prehistory and World Religions," *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2019): 43–62, https://doi.org/10.1556/2054.2019.024.
2. Allan Badiner, Allyson Grey, and Alex Grey, "At the Intersection: Psychedelics and the Buddhist Path," video, Spirit Rock, https://www.spiritrock.org/ZZ1V17-345987 (accessed September 8, 2022).
3. Patrick Elf, Amy Isham, and Tim Jackson, "Self-Transcendent Experiences and Sustainable Prosperity," CUSP Working Paper no. 32, Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, Guildford, UK, 2022, https://cusp.ac.uk/themes/s1/wp32/. Note that we follow David Bryce Yaden, Jonathan Haidt, Ralph W. Hood, David R. Vago, and Andrew B. Newberg, "The Varieties of Self-Transcendent Experience," *Review of General Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2017): 143–60, https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000102 in that they treat self-transcendent experiences as an umbrella phrase with "mystical experiences" as a subcategory. In this article, we use both terms, usually referring to "mystical experiences" when reported in the respective reference.

traditions, mindfulness has been increasing in popularity in Western societies since about the 1970s, and, in particular in the 2010s. A process of commercialization can be seen for this practice, with significant investment in apps, self-help books, and courses utilized by global corporations.

The rise of commercialized mindfulness has attracted criticism, with some arguing that attempts to maximize profit extraction has led to practices that reduce the therapeutic potential of mindfulness and ignore its initial purpose of reducing suffering as outlined in Buddhist writings.[4] Similar problems may arise for commercialized psychedelics. Whereas research has stressed the importance of set and setting as part of psychedelic-assisted therapy,[5] commercialization could result in a profitable yet watered-down version with implications for the therapeutic efficacy of the drugs.

The article progresses as follows. The remainder of this section will introduce psychedelic substances and mindfulness practices, briefly considering their history, proposed benefits, and signs of having undergone a process of commercialization. We focus primarily on the therapeutic benefits that have been shown for patients suffering from poor physical and mental health, as well as those that concern benefits for sustainable well-being, that is, social and ecological well-being. The second section is dedicated to exploring three specific critiques of the commercialization of mindfulness. We explore the problems associated with the separation of the practice from its spiritual roots, how mindfulness may be co-opted by and reinforce neoliberal principles (rather than bring about genuine positive change), and how the administration of the practice is (detrimentally) altered to deliver higher financial returns. For each critique, we reflect on how it may also be applicable (or not) to the recent developments in psychedelics research. The final section ends by considering the implications of highlighted problems for commercialized psychedelics for health, well-being, and societal progress.

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Psychedelics

Psychedelic substances are broadly divided into classic psychedelics and non-classic psychedelics. Classic psychedelics exercise their effects primarily through

4. João Simão, "Some Tensions between Capitalism and Buddhism: A Reflection from McMindfulness," *International Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Society* 9, no. 3 (2019): 75–88, https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v09i03/75-88.
5. Natalie Gukasyan and Sandeep M. Nayak, "Psychedelics, Placebo Effects, and Set and Setting: Insights from Common Factors Theory of Psychotherapy," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 59, no. 5 (2021): 652–64, https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461520983684; Brian A. Pace and Neṣe Devenot, "Right-Wing Psychedelia: Case Studies in Cultural Plasticity and Political Pluripotency," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 4915, https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2021.733185/XML/NLM.

agonist activity at the serotonin 2A receptor (5-HT2AR),[6] whereas nonclassic psychedelics have more varied pharmacological mechanisms.[7] We focus on research conducted on classic psychedelics, which include LSD, ayahuasca, psilocybin, and mescaline. They can induce changes in perception, thought, and/or mood.[8] Scholars have tried to capture the phenomenological features of psychedelic experiences using a variety of terms. For example, the phrase "ego dissolution" is used to describe a loss of the sense of self and a blurring of self–world boundaries.[9] Heightened feelings of connectedness are often described as feelings of "oneness" or "unity."[10] Terms such as "mystical experiences" have been used to describe experiences with characteristics of unity, the noetic quality, and sense of sacredness.[11]

The medical potential of classic psychedelics has been acknowledged historically, and they have played an important role in shaping the cultural and spiritual development of ancient and Indigenous societies. For instance, DMT, the main active ingredient in ayahuasca, has been used by Indigenous societies across South America for many centuries.[12] Psilocybin and mescaline have been consumed in many Mesoamerican societies for similar periods of time,[13] with ergot, the fungus from which LSD was synthesized, used by the ancient Greeks as part of their rituals.[14] In most of these societies, the healing properties of psychedelics

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6. Enzo Tagliazucchi, "Early and Contemporary Human Neuroimaging Studies of Serotonergic Psychedelics," *Preprints* (2020), https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202005.0510.v1.
7. Fúlvio Rieli Mendes, Cristiane dos Santos Costa, Victor Distefano Wiltenburg, Gabriela Morales-Lima, João Ariel Bonar Fernandes, and Renato Filev, "Classic and Non-Classic Psychedelics for Substance Use Disorder: A Review of Their Historic, Past and Current Research," *Addiction Neuroscience* 3 (2022): 100025, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addicn.2022.100025.
8. Roland R. Griffiths, William A. Richards, Una D. McCann, and Robert Jesse, "Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance," *Psychopharmacology* 187, no. 3 (2006): 268–83, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-006-0457-5.
9. Raphaël Millière, Robin L. Carhart-Harris, Leor Roseman, Fynn-Mat his Trautwein, and Aviva Berkovich-Ohana, "Psychedelics, Meditation, and Self-Consciousness," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 1475, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01475.
10. Chris Letheby and Philip Gerrans, "Self Unbound: Ego Dissolution in Psychedelic Experience," *Neuroscience of Consciousness* 3 (2017): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.1093/nc/nix016.
11. For example, Griffiths et al., "Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences"; Katherine A. MacLean, Matthew W. Johnson, and Roland R. Griffiths, "Mystical Experiences Occasioned by the Hallucinogen Psilocybin Lead to Increases in the Personality Domain of Openness," *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 25, no. 11 (2011): 1453–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881111420188.
12. Dennis J. McKenna, *Ayahuasca: An Ethnopharmacologic History* (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 1998), 40–62.
13. Mike Jay, *Mescaline: A Global History of the First Psychedelic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).
14. Brian C. Muraresku, *The Immortality Key: The Secret History of the Religion with No Name* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2019); R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofmann, and Carl A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2008).

were revered and the plants or fungi that contained these compounds considered sacred.[15] Since their introduction to Western societies after World War II, the fortune and reputation of psychedelics has been mixed. It could be argued that psychedelics have been introduced in two waves, the first one beginning in the early 1950s and the second one in the early 2000s.

During the first wave of research and use, psychedelics were initially hailed as potentially revolutionary medicines by modern psychiatry. Indeed, preliminary research conducted on the use of psychedelics to treat alcoholism and several mental health conditions obtained remarkably positive results.[16] In the mid-1950s, the growing popularity of these compounds in the medical and research profession attracted the broader intellectual establishment. Eventually, as artists and intellectuals started to openly talk about the effects of and their experiences with psychedelics, the topic spread among the general public. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, some countercultural movements began to use them as instruments for spiritual enlightenment and personal growth. However, at the end of the 1960s psychedelic use was prohibited and quickly became stigmatized.[17] In the midst of the War on Drugs,[18] that is, throughout the 1970s and beyond, psychedelics were widely banned from public discourse and academic research.

Only since the early 2000s has the interest in psychedelics, their chemical compounds, and inherent spiritual practices resurfaced among the scientific community. This is what we refer to as the second wave and will discuss further later. The recent interest has largely been fueled by research documenting their potential to treat mental ailments such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.[19] Providing a rationale for

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15. Jay, *Mescaline*.
16. Erika Dyck, "'Hitting Highs at Rock Bottom': LSD Treatment for Alcoholism, 1950–1970," *Social History of Medicine* 19, no. 2 (2006): 313–29; R. A. Sandison and J. D. A. Whitelaw, "Further Studies in the Therapeutic Value of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide in Mental Illness," *Journal of Mental Science* 103, no. 431 (1957): 332–43; Robert F. Ulrich and Bernard M. Patten, "The Rise, Decline, and Fall of LSD," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 34, no. 4 (1991): 561–78.
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18. "A History of the Drug War," Drug Policy Alliance, https://drugpolicy.org/issues/brief-history-drug-war (accessed July 3, 2022).
19. Bruno Romeo, Laurent Karila, Catherine Martelli, and Amine Benyamina, "Efficacy of Psychedelic Treatments on Depressive Symptoms: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 34, no. 10 (2020): 1079–85, https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881120919957; Kristoffer A. A. Andersen, Robin Carhart-Harris, David J. Nutt, and David Erritzoe, "Therapeutic Effects of Classic Serotonergic Psychedelics: A Systematic Review of Modern-Era Clinical Studies," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 143, no. 2 (2021): 101–18, https://doi.org/10.1111/ACPS.13249.

decriminalization and legalization,[20] these findings led more and more state governments and Canada,[21] among others, to contemplate a wider decriminalization of psychedelics.[22]

Moreover, the potential of psychedelics might extend beyond their medical benefits, as research has suggested that they could also help enhance social and ecological outcomes. Psychedelics can induce what has been called a "self-transcendent experience."[23] During such an experience, a person's sense of self is temporarily altered such that they experience a lessening of the boundaries between self and other alongside increased feelings of connection. These self-transcendent experiences can lead people to place more importance on the well-being of others and the environment. Isham, Elf, and Jackson outline evidence to suggest that classic psychedelics can support the achievement of "ecological well-being," whereby high levels of human well-being are achieved alongside increased care for the environment.[24] Indeed, preliminary evidence shows that psychedelic users report higher levels of connection with others and nature,[25] as well as greater engagement in pro-ecological behaviors.[26] In addition, Roseman et al. suggest that psychedelic sessions could be used to reduce social conflicts and increase empathy and understanding.[27] In support of this, several studies document increases in

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20. Claudia Schwarz-Plaschg, "Socio-Psychedelic Imaginaries: Envisioning and Building Legal Psychedelic Worlds in the United States," *European Journal of Futures Research* 10, no. 1 (2022): 10, https://doi.org/10.1186/S40309-022-00199-2/.
21. Schwarz-Plaschg, "Socio-Psychedelic Imaginaries"; Associated Press in Vancouver, "Canada to Decriminalize Some Drugs in British Columbia for Three Years," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/31/canada-decriminalize-drugs-british-columbia-overdoses.
22. It must also be noted that psychedelic use may be unsuitable for certain at-risk groups, such as those with a family history of mental illness or those facing significant health issues. David Nutt and Robin Carhart-Harris, "The Current Status of Psychedelics in Psychiatry," *JAMA Psychiatry* 78, no. 2 (2021): 121–22, https://doi.org/10.1001/JAMAPSYCHIATRY.2020.2171.
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24. Amy Isham, Patrick Elf, and Tim Jackson, "Self-Transcendent Experiences as Promoters of Ecological Wellbeing? Exploration of the Evidence and Hypotheses to Be Tested," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, (2022), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1051478.
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empathy after use of psilocybin and LSD.[28] Whereas the research is still in its infancy, the argument goes that psychedelics could be powerful tools for dealing with pressing issues such as the ecological crisis and societal ills.

As mental health issues are on the rise, so is the market for health and well-being solutions. Depression affects 3.8 percent of humanity according to the World Health Organization,[29] and the two most common mental health conditions, depression and anxiety, are responsible for $1 trillion in damage to the global economy due to time off work (absenteeism) and poorer performance and productivity in the workplace (presenteeism).[30] The market for antidepressants alone is $17.4 billion.[31] Given this, alongside the looming ecological crises,[32] public and private sector actors have started to explore ways to harness the supposed potential of psychedelics.

The psychedelic industry is projected to grow from $2 billion in 2020 to $10.75 billion by 2027.[33] As of today, more than eighty companies, including Atai Life Sciences, Eleusis, Innerwell, and Mimosa Therapeutics, are ardently developing psychedelic compounds. These are often co-developed with universities, which are showing a keen interest in collaborations to secure funding. For instance, University of California, Davis has finalized a $70 million financing round that aims to advance its drug development of psychedelic compounds through clinical trials toward market introduction.[34] It has been noted that since

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28. Natasha L. Mason, Elisabeth Mischler, Malin Uthaug, and Kim P. C. Kuypers, "Sub-Acute Effects of Psilocybin on Empathy, Creative Thinking, and Subjective Well-Being," *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 51, no. 2 (2019): 123–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2019.1580804; Patrick C. Dolder, Yasmin Schmid, Felix Müller, Stefan Borgwardt, and Matthias E. Liechti, "LSD Acutely Impairs Fear Recognition and Enhances Emotional Empathy and Sociality," *Neuropsychopharmacology* 41, no. 11 (2016): 2638–46, https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2016.82.
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the 1980s, industry has come to wield greater power over universities,[35] further fostered by the withdrawal of significant government funding and the marketization of the higher education sector in countries such as the United Kingdom, making researchers increasingly reliant on corporate funding.[36] In addition, psychedelic retreat centers are becoming an increasingly common sight in Latin American countries and even some Western countries, such as The Netherlands. These come with often hefty price tags that can easily exceed several thousand dollars. Psychedelics have even made it to the heart of capitalism in the form of a full week of themed talks at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2022.[37] Together, this suggests that the commercialization of psychedelics through a profit-driven approach for managing these substances is accelerating on several fronts.

Whereas psychedelics have gained more respectability through more rigorous research during the recent wave, the pendulum has been swinging the other way again: not back toward stigma or calls for prohibition as before, but away from uncritical hype and toward a desire for a more circumspect approach to research, its processes, and the claims that can be made about it.[38] Questioning the hype around psychedelics has brought some uncertainty for psychedelic businesses in their attempt to develop legal solutions in treating depression and various forms of addiction. Finance news site Benzinga reported that the thirty largest international public psychedelic companies are trending downward in stock prices and predicted that 2022 might be a year of consolidation for these companies, especially smaller ones that might need to either "be acquired or perish."[39] Yet with high-net-worth individuals such as Tim Ferris, Elon Musk, Peter Thiel, and other billionaires providing investment driving commercialization,[40] the hype seems far from over.

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35. Alex K. Gearin and Neşe Devenot, "Psychedelic Medicalization, Public Discourse, and the Morality of Ego Dissolution." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 24, no. 6 (2021): 917–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779211019424.
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Mindfulness

The history of mindfulness goes back as far as the first millennium BCE, where the practice can be found in Hindu texts. Today mindfulness practice is mostly associated with Buddhist writings,[41] where it is the English translation of the Pali word *sati*.[42] *Sati* has slightly ambivalent uses across Buddhist texts, and Bodhi emphasizes that it refers to an approach to one's present experience that aims to foster sustained attention on an object to bring it vividly before the mind.[43] More contemporary Buddhist scholars have equated mindfulness with "bare attention,"[44] which describes a direct and immediate experiencing of the present moment without any emotional reaction or judgment.[45] Accordingly, mindfulness refers to a state of focusing attention objectively on the present experience,[46] observing internal and external events as they happen but not reacting in any immediate or reactive way.[47] Mindfulness is cultivated through the practice of meditation.[48]

The current wave of popularity of Buddhism and mindfulness practices in Western societies began in the 1960s,[49] a time of spiritual experimentation when psychedelics were also attracting greater interest among the counterculture movement in the United States and elsewhere. As Asians emigrated to the United States, prominent Tibetan and Zen missionaries, including Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, were able to spread Buddhist teachings.[50] Academic studies on the

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July 15, 2021, https://www.businessinsider.com/list-top-vcs-venture-capital-investors-psychedelics-industry-2021.

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health benefits of mindfulness followed in the 1970s, with Jon Kabat-Zinn's now widely popular mindfulness-based stress reduction being devised in the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979.[51] This work gave rise to a more secular form and understanding of mindfulness, focused on its clinical and psychological benefits.[52] The study of mindfulness-based applications among scholars then gradually started to grow, with an exponential increase in the late 1990s.[53] Mindfulness is now commonly implemented in health care systems in the United Kingdom and United States,[54] among other countries, where it is considered to be a cost-effective means of treatment.[55]

Like psychedelic-induced experiences, mindfulness is considered a form of self-transcendent experience.[56] Mindfully attending to specific objects or objectively observing one's stream of thought can reduce self-referential thinking and identification with an existing, static sense of self.[57] Taking part in mindfulness training sessions has been shown to lead to the dissolution of body boundaries, such that people do not experience themselves as discrete and separate from the surrounding world.[58] In line with this, mindfulness promotes an allocentric (rather than egocentric) frame of reference, whereby individuals experience feelings of unity with the social and natural worlds.[59]

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53. Williams and Kabat-Zinn, *Mindfulness*.
54. Alice Tickell, Susan Ball, Paul Bernard, Willem Kuyken, Robert Marx, Stuart Pack, Clara Strauss, Tim Sweeney, and Catherine Crane, "The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) in Real-World Healthcare Services," *Mindfulness* 11 (2020): 279–90, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-1087-9.
55. M. M. P Demarzo, A. Cebolla, and J. Garcia-Campayo, "The Implementation of Mindfulness in Healthcare Systems: A Theoretical Analysis," *General Hospital Psychiatry* 37, no. 2 (2015): 166–71, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genhosppsych.2014.11.013.
56. Elf et al., "Self-Transcendent Experiences"; Yaden et al., "The Varieties of Self-Transcendent Experience."
57. Adam W. Hanley and Eric L. Garland, "Spatial Frame of Reference as a Phenomenological Feature of Self-Transcendence: Measurement and Manipulation through Mindfulness Meditation," *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory Research, and Practice* 6, no. 4 (2020): 329–45, https://doi.org/10.1037/CNS0000204; Britta K. Hölzel, Sara W. Lazar, Tim Gard, Zev Schuman-Olivier, David R. Vago, and Ulrich Ott, "How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work? Proposing Mechanisms of Action from a Conceptual and Neural Perspective," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 6 (2011): 537–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611419671.
58. Michaël Dambrun, "When the Dissolution of Perceived Body Boundaries Elicits Happiness: The Effect of Selflessness Induced by a Body Scan Meditation," *Consciousness and Cognition* 46 (2016): 89–98, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2016.09.013.
59. Hanley et al., "Spatial Frame of Reference"; Adam W. Hanley, Michaël Dambrun, and Eric L. Garland, "Effects of Mindfulness Meditation on Self-Transcendent States: Perceived Body Boundaries and Spatial Frames of Reference," *Mindfulness* 11, no. 5 (2020): 1194–203, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-020-01330-9.

Similar to psychedelics, mindfulness has been shown to have benefits not only for individual well-being but also for social and ecological outcomes. Taking part in mindfulness practices can improve outcomes for patients suffering from clinical conditions such as anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and chronic pain.[60] Practicing mindfulness is linked to reductions in stress and negative moods and increases in positive feelings and self-esteem in nonclinical populations.[61] Because mindfulness is a self-transcendent experience, scholars have argued that it is well equipped to increase prosocial and proecological tendencies.[62] Studies show that mindfulness can foster empathy and compassion, as well as increased feelings of connection with nature. When people feel more connected with nature and start to acknowledge how their actions can affect other people, species, and future generations, this can prompt them to engage in more ecologically sustainable behaviors.[63] Schneider suggests that mindfulness practices can help overcome the "polarized mind," whereby people fixate on a single point of view, which contributes to bullying and out-group abuse.[64] By disrupting habitual thought patterns and broadening awareness, mindfulness also allows for new, adaptive appraisals of the self and world.[65]

Although mindfulness and psychedelics have been suggested to have similar beneficial consequences, mindfulness practices are deemed less controversial

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60. Jenny Gu, Clara Strauss, Rod Bond, and Kate Cavanagh, "How Do Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Mediation Studies," *Clinical Psychology Review* 37 (2015): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2015.01.006.
61. Tegan McKay and Benjamin R. Walker, "Mindfulness, Self-Compassion and Wellbeing," *Personality and Individual Differences* 168 (2021): 110412, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110412; Dawn Querstret, Linda Morison, Sophie Dickinson, Mark Cropley, and Mary John, "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Psychological Health and Well-Being in Nonclinical Samples: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *International Journal of Stress Management* 27, no. 4 (2020): 394–411, https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000165.
62. David R. Vago and David A. Silbersweig, "Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, and Self-Transcendence (S-ART): A Framework for Understanding the Neurobiological Mechanisms of Mindfulness," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6 (2012): 296, https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2012.00296.
63. Margaret E. Kemeny, Carol Foltz, James F. Cavanagh, Margaret Cullen, Janine Giese-Davis, Patricia Jennings, Erika L. Rosenberg, et al., "Contemplative/Emotion Training Reduces Negative Emotional Behavior and Promotes Prosocial Responses," *Emotion* 12, no. 2 (2012): 338–50, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026118; Christine Wamsler and Ebba Brink, "Mindsets for Sustainability: Exploring the Link between Mindfulness and Sustainable Climate Adaptation," *Ecological Economics* 151 (2018): 55–61, https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ECOLECON.2018.04.029.
64. Kirk J. Schneider, *The Polarized Mind: Why It's Killing Us and What We Can Do about It* (Colorado Springs, CO: University Professors Press, 2013).
65. Eric L. Garland and Barbara L. Fredrickson, "Positive Psychological States in the Arc from Mindfulness to Self-Transcendence: Extensions of the Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory and Applications to Addiction and Chronic Pain Treatment," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 28 (2019): 184–91, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.01.004.

than psychedelic use and have largely had a positive reception across industries and by the public. They are the subject of uncountable self-help books and smartphone apps to help alleviate the stressors of modern lifestyles. It is estimated that the global mindfulness meditation apps market alone will be worth over $4 billion by 2027.[66] Institutions such as Google, Procter & Gamble, Goldman Sachs, and the U.S. Army are implementing mindfulness meditation practice in their workforce with mindfulness gurus offering luxury meditation retreats, sometimes costing thousands of dollars.[67] Accordingly, we see evidence of mindfulness being commercialized and implemented for financial gain.

Critiques of Commercialized Mindfulness: Do They Apply to Commercialized Psychedelics?

We have outlined the proposed benefits of psychedelics and mindfulness for individual, social, and ecological well-being, but we must be clear that these substances and practices are not a guaranteed route to what we would consider desirable outcomes. Scholars have questioned whether such practices are "intrinsically progressive"[68] and highlighted the importance of the environment in shaping each subjective experience and its consequences.[69] Rather than consistently prompting users' beliefs to be more prosocial and/or proecological, mindfulness can have the effect of making existing values and beliefs more salient.[70] Notably, the meaning-making potential of psychedelics can open up moments of change that can be exploited in different ways. Pace and Devenot highlight that such moments can be used for radicalization by right-wing groups.[71]

Accordingly, although popular media is inclined to present techniques such as mindfulness or the use of psychedelics as quick paths to greater mental well-being or panaceas for tackling multiple ills in societies,[72] the potential for these practices to improve individual, social, and ecological well-being is likely to depend on the

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66. "Mindfulness Meditation Apps Market Share, Forecast | Industry Report, 2027," *Polaris Market Research*, October 2020, https://www.polarismarketresearch.com/industry-analysis/mindfulness-meditation-apps-market.
67. "The 7 Most Luxurious Meditation Retreats in the World," *Savoir Flair*, accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.savoirflair.com/culture/231386/luxurious-meditation-retreats; Michael Stone, "Abusing the Buddha: How the U.S. Army and Google Co-opt Mindfulness," *Salon*, March 17, 2014, 3–6, https://www.salon.com/2014/03/17/abusing_the_buddha_how_the_u_s_army_and_google_co_opt_mindfulness/.
68. Michaele L. Ferguson, "Symposium: Mindfulness and Politics," *New Political Science* 38, no. 2 (2016): 201–5, https://doi.org/10.1080/07393148.2016.1153190.
69. António Carvalho, "Rethinking the Politics of Meditation: Practice, Affect and Ontology," *Sociological Review* 69, no. 6 (2021): 1260–76, https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261211029457.
70. Matthew J. Moore, "Buddhism, Mindfulness, and Transformative Politics," *New Political Science* 38, no. 2 (2016): 272–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/07393148.2016.1153195.
71. Pace and Devenot, "Right-Wing Psychedelia."

societal context in which they are implemented.[73] Commercialization under neoliberal logics is one way the social and economic context can affect the nature, use, and consequences of mindfulness and psychedelics. The commercialization of mindfulness has already gathered attention from scholars, with some arguing that the more secular and commercialized versions of mindfulness (what they refer to as "McMindfulness") can undermine its effectiveness.[74] Indeed, critics have outlined several ways the commercialization of mindfulness can be problematic.[75]

In this article, we focus on three themes that capture the broad range of criticisms of McMindfulness while also applying the commercialization of psychedelics. These are (a) the separation of the practice from its spiritual roots, (b) the use of the practice to reinforce neoliberal principles, and (c) alterations to the form of administration of the practice to deliver higher financial returns. We cover each theme in turn, outlining how the problem has been suggested to disrupt the effectiveness of mindfulness practices to deliver improvements in individual, social, and ecological well-being, and then exploring how such problems may also apply to the commercialization of psychedelics.

Critique 1: Separation of the Practice from Spiritual Roots

MINDFULNESS

One of the most prominent themes in the critiques of McMindfulness concerns how the practice has been stripped of its traditional Buddhist ethics and values.[76] This criticism is increasingly shared even by influential practitioners such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, who has expressed concern over how superficial McMindfulness ignores the ethical foundation of traditional meditation practices and thus may lose its transformative potential.[77] This critique emphasizes the importance of set (i.e., state of mind or mindset the person is in) to the outcomes of mindfulness practices.

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72. Brendan D. Kelly, "Mindful, Mindless, or Misunderstood? A Critical Perspective of the Mindfulness Concept," *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine* (2022): 1–3, https://doi.org/10.1017/ipm.2022.31.
73. Gearin and Devenot, "Psychedelic Medicalization."
74. Ron Purser and David Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness," *Huffington Post*, August 31, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ron-purser/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.html.
75. Terry Hyland, "McDonaldizing Spirituality: Mindfulness, Education, and Consumerism," *Journal of Transformative Education* 15, no. 4 (2017): 334–56, https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344617696972.
76. Freddie Lymeus, "The City Mindful: Commentary on 'Mindful engagement, Psychological Restoration, and Connection with Nature in Constrained Nature Experiences'," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 222 (2022): 104403, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2022.104403.
77. Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Mindfulness Has Huge Health Potential—But McMindfulness Is No Panacea," *The Guardian*, October 20, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/20/mindfulness-mental-health-potential-benefits-uk.

Buddhists use mindfulness as a means of fostering compassion, wise action, and social harmony. As highlighted by Thich Nhat Hanh, "we are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness."[78] By becoming aware of the present reality and habitual thought patterns, people can begin to understand the causes of suffering and develop ways to intervene to reduce it.[79] When meditation is undertaken with these positive intentions, it is considered as *samma sati*, or "right mindfulness."[80] However, given that several Buddhists views embed metaphysical assumptions (such as the belief in rebirth) that are at odds with Western traditions of philosophical materialism,[81] the pioneers who introduced mindfulness to the West clearly understood the difficulty in popularizing the practice if it remained anchored to these alternative cultural traditions.[82] It is thus not surprising that mindfulness was rapidly separated from its Buddhist culture to legitimize the practice in the eyes of the Western public.

This separation has led to two main issues. First, mindfulness can now be used in any context, even those that arguably contradict Buddhist ethical principles. For instance, Hyland highlights how the use of mindfulness in US army training regimes conflicts with Buddhist values of compassion and harmony.[83] Mindfulness was not originally intended to be a means of creating more efficient soldiers. The first ethical principle that the Buddha taught as part of living mindfully is "not killing."[84] Yet the separation of mindfulness from its more spiritual and ethical roots has allowed such practices to occur.[85] Indeed, Ferguson expresses concern over a process of "selective appropriation" whereby, when decoupled from Buddhist teachings of compassion, mindfulness may not generate an ethic of care for others or lead to prosocial and proecological action.[86] Purser argues

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78. Quoted in David Loy, "Awakening from the Illusion of Our Separateness," *Huffington Post*, December 11, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/awakening-from-the-illusion-of-our-separateness_b_988590.
79. Ron Purser and Edwin Ng, "Corporate Mindfulness Is Bullsh*t: Zen or No Zen, You're Working Harder and Being Paid Less," *Salon*, September 27, 2015, https://www.salon.com/2015/09/27/corporate_mindfulness_is_bullsht_zen_or_no_zen_youre_working_harder_and_being_paid_less/.
80. Purser and Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness."
81. Simão, "Some Tensions between Capitalism and Buddhism."
82. Jon Kabat-Zinn, "Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR, Skilful Means, and the Trouble with Maps," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12 (2011): 281–306, https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564844.
83. Terry Hyland, "McMindfulness in the Workplace: Vocational Learning and the Commodification of the Present Moment," *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 67, no. 2 (2015): 219–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2015.1022871.
84. Stone, "Abusing the Buddha."
85. David Forbes, "Modes of Mindfulness: Prophetic Critique and Integral Emergence," *Mindfulness* 7, no. 6 (2016): 1256–70, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-016-0552-6.
86. Ferguson, "Symposium: Mindfulness and Politics."

that marketing strategies exploit the exotic appeal of Buddhism to sell commercialized versions of mindfulness to the public.[87] Many Buddhists are thought to be concerned that their religion is being turned into a "designer drug for the elite."[88] Degrading a foreign culture to a mere marketing tool is thus seen as another form of colonialist appropriation.

However, mindfulness should not be considered a practice that can exist only in the Buddhist framework.[89] For example, there is an episode in ancient Buddhist texts where the Buddha himself teaches mindfulness for purely therapeutic purposes to a king. The critique here is not that Buddhist meditation is the only worthwhile form of meditation. Rather, the grandiose narrative around the therapeutic and social benefits of mindfulness might be delusional if the value of conscientious compassion (in which Buddhist mindfulness is rooted) is not included.[90] Purser and Loy argue that there is limited empirical evidence that McMindfulness actually delivers its proposed benefits for personal well-being and development.[91] Van Dam similarly voices concerns over definitional and methodological issues that raise questions about the reliability of evidence suggesting mindfulness to be a panacea for consumers or "consumerism."[92] Pursuing what Buddhists may call *miccha sati*, or "wrong mindfulness,"[93] and separating mindfulness from its spiritual roots, may limit its true potential to deliver positive societal changes while also having only minor individual benefits.

PSYCHEDELICS

Historically, classical psychedelics have been tightly intertwined with spirituality in human societies that ritualized their use.[94] The mystical experiences facilitated by psychedelics, in particular, are an important component of healing ceremonies and other rituals.[95] However, contemporary Western societies are dominated by an epistemology grounded in scientific materialism, limiting openness to the more spiritual side of psychedelics.

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87. Ron Purser, *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality* (London: Repeater, 2019).
88. Eaton, "Gentrifying the Dharma."
89. Bhikkhu Anālayo, "The Myth of McMindfulness," *Mindfulness* 11, no. 2 (2020): 472–79, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01264-x.
90. Purser and Ng, "Corporate Mindfulness Is Bullsh*t."
91. Purser and Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness."
92. Nicholas T. Van Dam, Marieke K. Van Vugt, David R. Vago, Laura Schmalzl, Clifford D. Saron, Andrew Olendzki, Ted Meissner, et al., "Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 13, no. 1 (2018): 36–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617709589.
93. Purser and Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness."
94. Winkelman, "Introduction."
95. Jay, *Mescaline*.

Looking back at the two waves when psychedelics were introduced to Western cultures provides evidence of how Western countries have separated psychedelics from their spiritual groundings. During the first wave, facilitated in the West through the synthesis of LSD, the scientific community studied the potential therapeutic use of these substances in a materialistic framework, thus paying little or no attention to the nature of psychedelic-induced mystical experiences. The few researchers that started investigating this side in more depth were relegated to the margin of academia.[96] When psychedelics first gained popularity in the countercultural movement in the United States, their mystical side received much more attention. Indeed, parts of the counterculture, especially those groups that first gathered around San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and those that had a beatnik background, were unified by their ritualized use of LSD and other psychedelics, as well as their fierce opposition to the Vietnam War and a desire for peace.[97] Here, the growing individualism and consumerism of American society were rejected in favor of practices which encouraged sharing, spirituality, and community life.[98] The psychedelic experience of unity, shared consciousness, and being part of the whole was crucial in driving the deep desire for connection with others and the natural environment.[99] These dynamics led to the (re)discovery of Eastern philosophies and religions, contributing to the development of what is now known as New Age culture.[100]

This mounting interest in spirituality rapidly ended because of a multitude of reasons.[101] For instance, the so-called 'hippie culture' became commercially attractive and commodified, leading to a generation whose psychedelic use was not fueled by a genuine search for spiritual enlightenment but by a longing for

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96. Stanislav Grof, "Brief History of Transpersonal Psychology," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 27, no. 1 (2008): 46–54, http://dx.doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2008.27.1.46.
97. Lee and Shlain, *Acid Dreams.*
98. Oliver James, *The Selfish Capitalist: Origins of Affluenza* (London: Vermillion, 2008).
99. James, *The Selfish Capitalist*; Andy Roberts, *Albion Dreaming: A Popular History of LSD in Britain* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International Asia, 2008).
100. Ido Hartogsohn, *American Trip: Set, Setting, and the Psychedelic Experience in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020).
101. Notably, the reasons for the abrupt end of the counterculture(s) are not clear-cut as demonstrated in the volume edited by Bhambra and Demir unearthing the complex dynamics during and in the aftermath of the 1960s in which "Others (i.e. the counterculture) failed to attain autonomy as a result of their own incompatibility with the universalism of liberalism" that eventually gave way to a strengthening of capitalism. Indeed, Botanski and Chiapello argue that the counterculture of the 1960s was co-opted by not rejecting its ideas and criticism of dominating working conditions in the form of "inhumane Taylorism," and instead using these to avoid future rebellions. Gurminder K. Bhambra and Ipek Demir (eds.), *1968 in Retrospect: History, Theory, Alterity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 164. See esp. Mihnea Panu's chapter for an analysis of subjectivization, state, and other during the 1960s; Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2005), 185.

community and a sense of curiosity.[102] Moreover, the War on Drugs generated an environment of fear and misinformation that disincentivized people from trying psychedelics.[103] Reports of so-called bad trips changed how and why people consumed psychedelics, inducing a shift from high to lower doses, which led to a reduction in the intensity and frequency of psychedelic-induced mystical experiences.[104]

The more recent wave shares a similar sentiment opposing psychedelics' spiritual roots. Controversy in the scientific community around the role of mystical experiences remains, with some preferring to refer to them with more neutral terms such as "peak experience."[105]

Given the above scenario, we further reflect on the risks of this separation. First, similarly to how McMindfulness is suggested to represent a form of colonial appropriation,[106] scholars have highlighted how the use of sacred plant medicines by those in Western societies also reflects a form of cultural appropriation.[107] Hauskeller et al. note how psychedelic treatments are often presented as the product of Western laboratory studies, failing to recognize that knowledge of psychedelic substances and their effects is also indebted to their rich history in Indigenous cultures.[108] Second, several scholars argue that the mystical experiences induced by psychedelics are a key component of their therapeutic potential. The work of Griffiths and colleagues has been crucial in showing that mystical experiences can play a role in reducing existential angst, anxiety, and depression.[109] Research

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102. Lee and Shlain, *Acid Dreams.*
103. Hartogsohn, *American Trip.*
104. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen S. Placidi, "A Social History and Analysis of the LSD Controversy," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 23, no. 4 (1983): 25–58, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167883234003.
105. Sam Gandy, "Predictors and Potentiators of Psychedelic-Occasioned Mystical Experiences," *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 31–47, https://doi.org/10.1556/2054.2022.00198.
106. Purser, *McMindfulness.*
107. David Dupuis and Samuel Veissière, "Culture, Context, and Ethics in the Therapeutic Use of Hallucinogens: Psychedelics as Active Super-Placebos?," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 59, no. 5 (2022): 13634615 221131465, https://doi.org/10.1177/13634615221131465.
108. Christine Hauskeller, Taline Artinian, Amelia Fiske, Ernesto Schwarz Marin, Osiris Sinuhé González Romero, Luis Eduardo Luna, Joseph Crickmore, and Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, "Decolonization Is a Metaphor towards a Different Ethic: The Case from Psychedelic Studies." *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* (2022), https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2022.2122788.
109. Roland R. Griffiths, Matthew W. Johnson, William A. Richards, Brian D. Richards, Robert Jesse, Katherine A. MacLean, Frederick S. Barrett, Mary P. Cosimano, and Maggie A. Klinedinst, "Psilocybin-Occasioned Mystical-Type Experience in Combination with Meditation and Other Spiritual Practices Produces Enduring Positive Changes in Psychological Functioning and in Trait Measures of Prosocial Attitudes and Behaviors," *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 32, no. 1 (2018): 49–69, https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881117731279; Roland R. Griffiths, William A. Richards, Matthew W. Johnson, Una D. McCann, and Robert Jesse, "Mystical-Type Experiences Occasioned by Psilocybin Mediate the

on psilocybin shows a strong correlation between the intensity of the mystical experience and the longevity of the positive clinical outcomes.[110] Undervaluing the mystical or spiritual side of psychedelic experiences might turn out to be counterproductive if the goal is to address the current mental health crisis. Similar to our discussion of McMindfulness, both the medical and (more broadly) societal revolutions promised by psychedelics could be frustrated by decoupling spirituality from psychedelics.

Critique 2: Reinforcement of Neoliberal Principles

MINDFULNESS

McMindfulness has been criticized for reinforcing neoliberal principles. Although neoliberalism is often used in political economy to define an ideology that favors free market and privatization over state intervention,[111] here we refer specifically to the cultural norms associated with it. These are a strong focus on personal responsibility, individualism, and competition. This critique therefore focuses on the importance of the wider setting in which mindfulness is implemented.

McMindfulness places the responsibility for managing the ill effects of structural problems on individuals.[112] Indeed, Dawson notes that whilst "secular mindfulness is based on a culture of individualism; Zen Buddhist mindfulness is based on a culture of community."[113] Symptoms of poor mental health and well-being in a workforce, for example, are often caused by company practices

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Attribution of Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance 14 Months Later," *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 22, no. 6 (2008): 621–32, https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881108094300.

110. Matthew W. Johnson, Peter S. Hendricks, Frederick S. Barrett, and Roland R. Griffiths, "Classic Psychedelics: An Integrative Review of Epidemiology, Therapeutics, Mystical Experience, and Brain Network Function," *Pharmacology & therapeutics* 197 (2019): 83–102, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pharmthera.2018.11.010; Leor Roseman, David J. Nutt, and Robin L. Carhart-Harris, "Quality of Acute Psychedelic Experience Predicts Therapeutic Efficacy of Psilocybin for Treatment-Resistant Depression," *Frontiers in Pharmacology* 8 (2018): 974, https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2017.00974; Stephen Ross, Anthony Bossis, Jeffrey Guss, Gabrielle Agin-Liebes, Tara Malone, Barry Cohen, Sarah E. Mennenga, et al., "Rapid and Sustained Symptom Reduction Following Psilocybin Treatment for Anxiety and Depression in Patients with Life-Threatening Cancer: A Randomized Controlled Trial," *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 30, no. 12 (2016): 1165–80, https://doi.org/10.1177/0269881116675512.

111. Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

112. Mira Karjalainen, Gazi Islam, and Marie Holm, "Scientization, Instrumentalization, and Commodification of Mindfulness in a Professional Services Firm," *Organization* 28, no. 3 (2021): 483–509, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419883388.

113. Geoff Dawson, "Zen and the Mindfulness Industry," *Humanistic Psychologist* 49, no. 1 (2021): 143, https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000171.

such as excessive job demands or job insecurity.[114] Rather than trying to improve company operations, it is seen as a more cost-effective option to send employees to a mindfulness seminar. In this way, employees are sold mindfulness as the way to comfort the self, boost resilience, and increase well-being in a neoliberal society,[115] as corporations argue that transformational change begins with one's self.[116] This resembles the Thatcherite notion of the individual employee as a way to dismiss any process toward solidarity among workgroups and frees the company, many of which are responsible for causing such stress, of responsibility for alleviating it.[117] Whereas the last decade has seen the emergence of chief happiness officers and other quirky-sounding corporate well-being positions, they often gloss over the need of actual structural change in and beyond businesses and their ways of working.[118] Indeed, it is paradoxical given that Buddhist teachings emphasize being mindful to understand the causes of collective suffering.[119]

A perhaps more contested criticism is that McMindfulness could reduce our capacity for critical thinking and thus stifle motivations to create positive change.[120] Leggett argues that an emphasis on the present moment can prevent reflection on the past to understand the origins of current problems, as well as imagination of more desirable futures.[121] Similarly, instructing workers to be nonreactive to their emotions and thoughts can be problematic if such (negative) emotions and thoughts are tied to one's objective circumstances. This means that when implemented as a form of care in the workplace, companies can use mindfulness to prevent employees from engaging in deeper reflections on how their work may be negatively contributing to their well-being.[122] The fact that mindfulness can be implemented to boost productivity while concurrently driving acceptance of the status quo creates what has been called a "corporate quietism."[123]

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114. Isham, Mair, and Jackson, "Worker Wellbeing and Productivity."
115. Forbes, "Modes of Mindfulness."
116. Purser and Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness."
117. Klaus Nielsen, "McMindfulness in the Era of Accelerated Life," *International Review of Theoretical Psychologies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 49–62, https://doi.org/10.7146/irtp.v1i1.127078; Hyland, "McDonaldizing Spirituality," 15.
118. William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (London: Verso Books, 2015).
119. Purser and Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness."
120. Ronald E. Purser, "Critical Perspectives on Corporate Mindfulness," *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 15, no. 2 (2018): 105–8.
121. Will Leggett, "Can Mindfulness Really Change the World? The Political Character of Meditative Practices," *Critical Policy Studies* 16, no. 3 (2022): 261–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2021.1932541.
122. Purser and Loy, "Beyond McMindfulness."
123. Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004); Purser and Ng, "Corporate Mindfulness Is Bullsh*t".

Workers may become (temporarily) able to participate in the frantic workplace while also withdrawing from critical thinking about objective working conditions. Leggett argues that this twin aspect of "participation and withdrawal" is prevalent in workplace mindfulness programs.[124]

It is worth mentioning that this point is disputed in the mindfulness literature. Anālayo, for instance, agrees with the general skepticism toward a commercialized use of mindfulness while rejecting the idea that this would reduce critical thinking as an unsubstantiated criticism.[125] He argues that mindfulness's stress on the importance of the present moment and nonjudgment does not involve rejecting thoughts and critical thinking, but helps individuals control their thought processes more effectively and avoid falling prey of obsessive and overwhelming thoughts. In a similar vein, he stresses that some of the points raised by the McMindfulness literature presuppose a specific political view and advocate for a critical understanding of contemporary society. However, even if it is clearly impossible to teach mindfulness outside social and political contexts, he argues that it is unacceptable to impose on or demand mindfulness teachers and practitioners to align with a specific worldview.[126]

PSYCHEDELICS

Besides influential online outlets, only a limited number of published articles have examined whether we can expect psychedelics to be exploited to foster neoliberal values. For instance, Plesa and Petranker argue that there are substantial reasons to think that marketization and commercialization of psychedelics, as well as market pressures more generally, could lead to the use of these compounds to reinforce neoliberal values and thus dub these practices McPsychedelics.[127] This is in line with recent work by Pace and Devenot.[128] While focusing first and foremost on psychedelics' impact on political ideology, they argue that "corporadelic actors are currently folding psychedelics into a corporate ethos predicated on novelty and cognitive labor: from microdosing coders to ayahuasca business coaches, psychedelics are seen as shortcuts to divergent market insight in a globalized, neoliberal marketplace."[129]

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124. Leggett, "Can Mindfulness Really Change the World?"
125. Anālayo, "The Myth of McMindfulness."
126. Anālayo, "The Myth of McMindfulness."
127. Patric Plesa and Rotem Petranker, "Manifest Your Desires: Psychedelics and the Self-Help Industry," *International Journal of Drug Policy* 105 (2022): 103704, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2022.103704.
128. Pace and Devenot, "Right-Wing Psychedelia."
129. Pace and Devenot, "Right-Wing Psychedelia."

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Mark Fisher poignantly illustrated this by arguing that "considering mental illness an individual chemico-biological problem has enormous benefits for capitalism" since it "reinforces Capital's drive towards atomistic individualization (you are sick because of your brain chemistry)" and "provides an enormously lucrative market in which multinational pharmaceutical companies can peddle their pharmaceuticals."[130] In a similar vein, Gearin and Devenot highlight that the focus on the therapeutic potential of psychedelic-induced ego dissolution works to locate the cause of poor well-being and mental illness inside the person's head.[131] This is similar to mindfulness in that people are taught that distress can be relieved by altering their mental processes, rather than through changes in their environment. In the case of psychedelics, people are taught that if they can only reach a subjective mental state whereby they experience reduced self-focus and enhanced feelings of connection, this can help resolve their problems. In this way, psychedelics have the potential to be employed to reinforce neoliberal values of individualism and personal responsibility.

Further evidence that psychedelics could be used to promote neoliberal values is the growing interest in microdosing.[132] When discussing commercialized mindfulness, we noted that it is suggested to promote a process of "participation and withdrawal," whereby employees become able to participate in the workplace through effects such as enhanced productivity while withdrawing from critical thought on the underlying workplace structures that may be causing negative effects on their well-being. Microdosing may promote a similar process. Following anecdotal reports on blogs and a recent growth in scientific research, new projects are exploring the alleged benefits of MDMA, psilocybin, and LSD microdosing. These include enhanced productivity and creativity.[133] In this way, whereas in the 1960s hippies consumed LSD to unify and revolt against the system, today mainstream consumers of psychedelics microdose to work better

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130. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2009), 37.
131. Gearin and Devenot, "Psychedelic Medicalization."
132. Vince Polito and Richard J. Stevenson, "A Systematic Study of Microdosing Psychedelics," *PLoS One* 14, no. 2 (2019): e0211023, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211023.; Jennifer M. Mitchell, "A Psychedelic May Soon Go to the FDA for Approval to Treat Trauma," *Scientific American*, February 1, 2022, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-psychedelic-may-soon-go-to-the-fda-for-approval-to-treat-trauma/.
133. Kim P. C. Kuypers, "The Therapeutic Potential of Microdosing Psychedelics in Depression," *Therapeutic Advances in Psychopharmacology* 10 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1177/2045125320950567; Jospeh M. Rootman, Pamela Kryskow, Kalin Harvey, Paul Stamets, Eesmyal Santos-Brault, Kim P. C. Kuypers, Vince Polito, Francoise Bourzat, and Zach Walsh, "Adults Who Microdose Psychedelics Report Health Related Motivations and Lower Levels of Anxiety and Depression Compared to Non-Microdosers," *Scientific Reports* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-01811-4.

for the system. Indeed, websites are already selling legal versions of LSD for microdosing using the promise of higher productivity as an advertising tool. Following the potential legalization of psychedelics, companies seem likely to try to exploit promising commercial opportunities.

There is preliminary but inconclusive evidence that high doses of psychedelics can have more profound and long-lasting effects.[134] Higher doses are related to more intense mystical experiences, which can foster feelings of unity, and enhance a spiritual understanding of the world. By focusing on microdosing, corporate organizations are able to limit opportunities for profound insights that could lead people to question the current status quo. In this way, companies can foster more productive and less stressed workers but avoid making them more critical of the structure and incentives of contemporary society.

Critique 3: Alterations to the Form of Administration to Deliver Higher Financial Returns

MINDFULNESS

As mindfulness became commercialized and used as a tool by businesses, its form has often been altered to deliver higher financial returns. Indeed, a primary driver of the implementation of mindfulness in workplaces is likely the fact that it is more cost-effective for managers to send their employees to brief seminars than it is for them to address the root causes of stress, such as inadequate resources and staffing. When mindfulness is used as a tool to drive business outcomes such as enhanced productivity at a low cost, practitioners and companies are inclined to take steps to ensure that the financial costs of such programs are limited.

For example, corporate mindfulness sessions may be quick and one-off, when it is suggested that broader, long-lasting training rooted in ethical and spiritual principles may provide larger beneficial effects for employees.[135] Dawson highlights how Zen practice involves a lifelong commitment to mindfulness.[136] This can require daily meditation, frequent attendance at intensive meditation retreats, and ongoing relationships with a Zen community or specific teachers. Providing only short periods of mindfulness training, with the suggestion that this can adequately improve learners well-being, also leads to the view that mindfulness is

134. Roland R. Griffiths, Matthew W. Johnson, Michael A. Carducci, Annie Umbricht, William A. Richards, Brian D. Richards, Mary P. Cosimano, and Margaret A. Klinedinst, "Psilocybin Produces Substantial and Sustained Decreases in Depression and Anxiety in Patients with Life-Threatening Cancer: A Randomized Double-Blind Trial," *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 30, no. 12 (2016): 1181–97.

135. Hyland, "McMindfulness in the Workplace."

136. Dawson, "Zen and the Mindfulness Industry."

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an easy, quick fix. In reality, mindfulness is not always something that is immediately enjoyable and rewarding. In fact, by increasing awareness of one's thoughts and feelings, mindfulness meditation can be uncomfortable and unpleasant.[137] For this reason, having positive relationships with a guide or teacher to help integrate and understand these new insights is important. Yet mindfulness sessions are increasingly being offered through websites or apps that exclude in-person, human interaction and guidance.[138] In attempts to reach broad audiences at low costs, mindfulness programs are often standardized.[139] But a one-size-fits-all approach fails to take into consideration the needs of each individual learner. Where tailoring does occur, this is often to fit company demands,[140] rather than through a consideration of individual learners.

The rapid growth in popularity of (commercialized) mindfulness has made room for a new cohort of mindfulness teachers. However, the heightened demand for these teachers has meant that the training process is sometimes short-circuited. Reflecting on his experience of becoming a Zen teacher, Dawson reports attending more than 60 week-long meditation retreats and more than 100 shorter retreats, undertaking daily practice, and receiving supervision for multiple years before becoming qualified.[141] In contrast, he notes that the training standards for secular mindfulness are far less rigorous than those required to be a spiritual teacher. People can become certified mindfulness practitioners, sometimes after training retreats that last only a matter of days or weeks. This is fast when compared with training to be a counselor or registered psychologist, which can take three years or longer. This can result in teachers being less equipped to understand and deal with the nuances of mindfulness practices, such as uncovering uncomfortable thoughts and feelings mentioned previously.

In addition, demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of mindfulness training means that organizations seek measurable outcomes of the training.[142] A requirement for demonstrating results is also partly the consequence of applying scientific principles to the study of secular mindfulness. Under this approach, methods

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137. Tim Lomas, Tina Cartwright, Trudi Edginton, and Damien Ridge, "A Qualitative Analysis of Experiential Challenges Associated with Meditation Practice," *Mindfulness* 6, no. 4 (2015): 848–60, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0329-8.
138. Dana Schultchen, Yannik Terhorst, Tanja Holderied, Michael Stach, Eva-Maria Messner, Harald Baumeister, and Lasse B. Sander, "Stay Present with Your Phone: A Systematic Review and Standardized Rating of Mindfulness Apps in European App Stores," *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 28, no. 5 (2021): 552–60, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12529-020-09944-y.
139. Hyland, "McDonaldizing Spirituality."
140. Karjalained et al., "Scientization, Instrumentalization, and Commodification."
141. Dawson, "Zen and the Mindfulness Industry."
142. Hyland, "McDonaldizing Spirituality."

must be evidence-based and outcomes of mindfulness training need to be objectively documented.[143] Karjalainen et al. explored the implementation of a mindfulness program at a Finnish company.[144] They noted that having to fill out surveys immediately before or after the meditation experience disrupted the flow of the practice and created an aura of surveillance that limited the extent to which employees could feel safe to share their true experiences.

PSYCHEDELICS

There are some initial signs that psychedelics are also being managed and administered in ways that could lead to detrimental side effects. One of the key characteristics of current psychedelic-assisted therapy is that it is labor intensive. Patients must be supervised by several trained practitioners during the psychedelic experience and the following integration, leading to high therapeutic costs. Examples for this are plentiful, with estimates of the costs of MDMA-assisted PTSD psychotherapy currently ranging from $4,000 to $20,000 per patient. Whereas analysts suggest that potential long-term benefits offset some of the costs, making the treatment more cost-effective than a life-long course of conventional drug therapy, it remains unclear and doubtful that health insurers pay the significant up-front costs.[145]

The incentive for a profit-driven company is to minimize the costs, which could lead to innovations and practices that try to reduce the labor required or the cost of training the therapists in similar ways that have occurred for McMindfulness. For example, scholars have suggested that the acute subjective effects of psychedelics will be necessary for full and enduring therapeutics effects.[146] However, in an attempt to provide a more reliable service to patients, researchers are trying to create new molecules that would provide therapeutic effects of psychedelics without the need for the therapy or even the psychedelic experience.[147] For instance, Cameron et al. and Olson suggest that the increase in neuroplasticity induced by psychedelics is the key element that produces the beneficial effects highlighted

143. Hyland, "McDonaldizing Spirituality."
144. Karjalained et al., "Scientization, Instrumentalization, and Commodification."
145. Elliot Marseille, James G. Kahn, Berra Yazar-Klosinski, and Rick Doblin, "The Cost-Effectiveness of MDMA-Assisted Psychotherapy for the Treatment of Chronic, Treatment-Resistant PTSD," *PLoS One* 15, no. 10 (2020): e0239997, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0239997.
146. Katherine M. Nautiyal and David B. Yade, "Does the Trip Matter? Investigating the Role of the Subjective Effects of Psychedelics in Persisting Therapeutic Effects," *Neuropsychopharmacology* 48 (2023): 215–16, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41386-022-01424-z.
147. Thomas Lewton, "The Trip Treatment," *NewScientist* 254, no. 3389 (2022): 46–49, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079(22)00985-X.

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above.[148] Thus, they argue that careful molecule engineering could generate compounds that remove the psychedelic effects while enhancing neuroplasticity. Rosalind Watts recently argued that "if we try to squeeze [the transformational potential] into a pill-popping industrial healthcare model, its vast promise may never be realized."[149] Indeed, if it holds true that mystical-type experiences mediate the positive outcomes of a psychedelic sessions and professional support is required for successful integration of the often substantial experiences, removing these aspects would likely lead to less effective outcomes. In line with this, Yaden et al., while supporting access to nonsubjective psychedelics where appropriate, stressed the importance of ensuring that the subjective effects of classic psychedelics remained the default treatment option given their reported meaningfulness to many participants.[150]

Plesa and Petranker highlight the risk that cost minimization will lead to a watering down of the standards for training new therapists.[151] Faster and more superficial trainings might reduce costs, but this could come at the expense of the quality of the service and make integration less effective. Although there is currently no evidence that this process is happening, the fact that mindfulness practitioner training already suffers from this can be considered a good indicator of the future direction of psychedelic-assisted therapy.

However, a profit-driven company is interested not only in minimizing costs but also in charging the highest possible mark-up on its services. This incentive is already evident in the psychedelics market. Indeed, psychedelic start-ups show signs of adopting business tactics and practices of Big Pharma.[152] For instance, psychedelic start-ups have eagerly paraded aggressive patents that can provide potentially lucrative opportunities while locking out competitors through legal fences around new compounds, their chemical formulations, and even their

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148. Lindsay P. Cameron, Robert J. Tombari, Ju Lu, Alexander J. Pell, Zefan Q. Hurley, Yann Ehinger, Maxemiliano V. Vargas, et al., "A Non-Hallucinogenic Psychedelic Analogue with Therapeutic Potential," *Nature* 589, no. 7842 (2021): 474–79, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-3008-z; David E. Olson, "The Subjective Effects of Psychedelics May Not Be Necessary for Their Enduring Therapeutic Effects," *ACS Pharmacology & Translational Science* 4, no. 2 (2020): 563–67, https://doi.org/10.1021/acsptsci.0c00192.

149. Quoted in Thomas Lewton, "Can You Take the Trip Out of Psychedelics and Still Treat Depression?," *NewScientist*, June 1, 2022, https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25433892-400-can-you-take-the-trip-out-of-psychedelics-and-still-treat-depression/.

150. David B. Yaden, Brian D. Earp, and Roland R. Griffiths, "Ethical Issues Regarding Nonsubjective Psychedelics as Standard of Care," *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 31, no. 4 (2022): 464–71, https://doi.org/10.1017/S096318012200007X.

151. Plesa and Petranker, "Manifest Your Desires."

152. John Abramson, *Sickening: How Big Pharma Broke American Health Care and How We Can Repair It* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2022).

application processes.[153] In theory, patents foster innovation, whereas in reality, they prevent changes to the status quo and ensure an exclusive access for those who are able to pay often significant amounts of money to potential solutions that could benefit many.[154] Because mindfulness does not require any material substances or material to enact, patents are less of a threat to this practice. This may imply that the commercialization process applied to psychedelics could have wider negative implications than those implicated for commercialized mindfulness.

Last, the commercialization of psychedelics might alter the form of administration outside the Western world. This can be evidenced by the increased popularity in traveling to South America for ayahuasca retreats with local shamans, which has become a lucrative business.[155] Indigenous healers and practitioners are attracted by the higher income offered in the tourist-oriented centers, creating a shortage of traditional health practitioners for locals.[156] Furthermore, research has shown that several shamans admit to performing bogus ceremonies for tourists to create a sense of cultural authenticity.[157] Accordingly, the lure of greater profits may be encouraging practices that are not equipped to support genuine improvements in human, social, and ecological well-being.[158]

Discussion and Conclusion

We set out to examine the critiques of commercialized mindfulness as a means of anticipating problems that may arise through the commercialization of psychedelics. Our goal was not to provide a cosmogram of predictive pathways for psychedelics but to facilitate an opportunity for reflection. We aimed to exploit the benefit of hindsight by contrasting the status quo of psychedelic research

153. Terran Biosciences, "Terran Biosciences and University of Maryland, Baltimore Announce Exclusive Licensing Deal for a Portfolio of Patents and Data Supporting Novel Innovation in the Psychedelic Therapeutic Space," *PR Newswire*, March 8, 2022, https://www.prnewswire.com/il/news-releases/terran-biosciences-and-university-of-maryland-baltimore-announce-exclusive-licensing-deal-for-a-portfolio-of-patents-and-data-supporting-novel-innovation-in-the-psychedelic-therapeutic-space-877770461.html.

154. Robin C. Feldman, David A. Hyman, W. Nicholson Price II, and Mark J. Ratain, "Negative Innovation: When Patents Are Bad for Patients," *Nature Biotechnology* 39, no. 8 (2021): 914–16, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41587-021-00999-0.

155. Daniela M. Peluso, "Global Ayahuasca: An Entrepreneurial Ecosystem," in *The World Ayahuasca Diaspora*, ed. Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Clancy Cavnar, and Alex K. Gearin (London: Routledge, 2017), 223–42.

156. Joshua Homan, "Charlatans, Seekers, and Shamans: The Ayahuasca Boom in Western Peruvian Amazonia," PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2011.

157. Girish Prayag, Paolo Mura, Colin Michael Hall, and Julien Fontaine, "Spirituality, Drugs, and Tourism: Tourists' and Shamans' Experiences of Ayahuasca in Iquitos, Peru," *Tourism Recreation Research* 41, no. 3 (2016): 314–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2016.1192237.

158. Abramson, *Sickening*.

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and its commercialization with the recent history of mindfulness commercialization. Ensuing findings aim to provide researchers and practitioners with insights to rewrite psychedelic-assisted therapy's history and use its therapeutic potential for the betterment of societal and environmental ills toward greater sustainable well-being.

The critiques of commercialized forms of mindfulness (McMindfulness) reflect three common themes. The first expresses concern over how the separation of mindfulness from its spiritual roots, while perhaps making the practice more palatable to a general or scientific audience, can allow mindfulness to be used for noncompassionate ends and reduce its therapeutic potential. The second highlights how McMindfulness is used to maintain the neoliberal status quo, rather than foster positive change. The third emphasizes how the form and administration of mindfulness is altered in commercialized forms, often in ways that can undermine its therapeutic effectiveness. Across all these critiques, we have noted the potential for similar problems to occur for commercialized psychedelics. Psychedelic experiences are increasingly discussed and examined without reference to their mystical component, which is suggested to be crucial for their therapeutic potential.[159] The use of psychedelic microdosing to boost creativity and productivity while limiting opportunities for profound insights to inspire change exemplifies how the substances can be used to reinforce neoliberal values.[160] In addition, the rise of microdosing or short retreats demonstrate how the administration of commercialized psychedelics is often in a form designed to provide a quick fix, rather than putting in the necessary preparation or integration to deliver transformative experiences and acknowledge the importance of the right set and setting.

These potential problems of commercialized psychedelics have implications for health and well-being. Whereas psychedelics are increasingly painted as the "future of healthcare,"[161] the reality is clearly more complex. Indeed, as stressed during an interview with Albert Garcia-Romeu, while "participants think that once they take the drug, their problems will go away … it doesn't work like that."[162] If

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159. Johnson et al., "Classic Psychedelics"; Roseman et al., "Quality of Acute Psychedelic Experience"; Ross et al., "Rapid and Sustained Symptom Reduction."

160. Polito and Stevenson, "A Systematic Study of Microdosing Psychedelics"; Kuypers, "The Therapeutic Potential of Microdosing Psychedelics in Depression"; Rootman, "Adults Who Microdose Psychedelics."

161. Adi Zuloff-Shani, "Why Psychedelics May Be the Future of Health Care," *Psychology Today*, August 31, 2022, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychedelics-the-rescue/202208/why-psychedelics-may-be-the-future-health-care.

162. Clinical Trials Arena, "Hope and hype: psychedelic drugs still to prove value in clinical trials," May 27, 2022, https://www.clinicaltrialsarena.com/features/psychedelic-clinical-trials/#:~:text=Some%20clinical%20trial%20participants%20expect,Albert%20Garcia%2DRomeu%2C%20PhD.

taken in isolation, without therapy and extensive guidance before, during, and after the experience, psychedelics do not automatically produce beneficial outcomes. Commercialization practices that turn psychedelics into a self-help industry to minimize costs and boost profits risk creating a shallow version of the practice, as in the case of McMindfulness, which could hinder their potential to deliver health and well-being benefits.

To ensure the safe, responsible, and effective administration of these potent compounds, guidelines laying out recommendations for ensuring equitable, high-quality standards will be required. BrainFutures have started developing a comprehensive overview that can inform pathways toward a safe and effective use of psychedelics.[163] These guides must be informed by independent evaluations and scientific rigor and must not be watered down through corporate interest. When reflecting on the possible future of psychedelics using sociopsychedelic imaginaries, Schwarz-Plaschg notes how there is an inherent "politics of responsibility" surrounding the establishment of accountability structures and who constitutes them.[164] Here, yet again, we find reasons to worry. Partnerships aiming to deliver guidelines for the effective use between companies such as MindMed or Cybin Inc. and mindfulness millionaire Deepak Chopra's the Chopra Foundation are likely to raise questions about the actual aim of commercialized psychedelic solutions.[165]

We have noted how psychedelics, like mindfulness, can benefit social and ecological well-being.[166] Although we agree that they cannot serve as "a tool of political reconciliation" alone,[167] there is evident potential for psychedelics to support processes toward ecological or sustainable well-being.[168] However, to do

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163. J. Davis and J. Lampert, "Expediting Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Adoption in Clinical Settings," BrainFutures report, 2022, https://www.brainfutures.org/mental-health-treatment/expeditingpat adoption.
164. Schwarz-Plaschg, "Socio-Psychedelic Imaginaries."
165. "The Chopra Foundation and MindMed Enter into Letter of Intent to Partner on the Future of Psychedelic Medicines & Mental Wellbeing," *Psychedelic Alpha*, May 18, 2021, https://psychedelicalpha.com/news/the-chopra-foundation-and-mindmed-enter-into-letter-of-intent-to-partner-on-the-future-of-psychedelic-medicines-mental-wellbeing; Chopra Foundation, "The Chopra Foundation Announces Partnership with Cybin Inc. to Increase Education and Awareness of the Potential Use of Psychedelics in Supporting Well-Being and Mental Health," *PR Newswire*, February 15, 2022, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-chopra-foundation-announces-partnership-with-cybin-inc-to-increase-education-and-awareness-of-the-potential-use-of-psychedelics-in-supporting-well-being-and-mental-health-301482059.html.
166. Elf et al., "Self-Transcendent Experiences and Sustainable Prosperity," propose the wider term "sustainable well-being" to describe both social and ecological well-being.
167. MAPS's Executive Director Rick Doblin, cited in Pace and Devenot, "Right-Wing Psychedelia."
168. Elf et al., "Self-Transcendent Experiences and Sustainable Prosperity."

this, psychedelic use must be grounded in deep-rooted ethical frameworks.[169] As stated by Rick Doblin, "it's not the drug—it's the therapy enhanced by the drug."[170] Indeed, psychedelics can be (mis)used in several ways, and thus positive use often requires active integration of the experience by offering an ecology of practices such as psychotherapy.[171]

In this regard, a rather bold argument could be suggested: If research on psychedelics will be able to prove that certain settings allow for enhancing proecological values and behaviors, then psychedelic-assisted therapy should be designed to reap these benefits (among others). Indeed, given the pressing ecological crisis that humanity is facing, potentially powerful tools that could help tackle environmental and social degradation should be welcomed. In this perspective, while potentially posing a political anathema for critics of state control, the role of regulation in determining an appropriate setting to foster those values and behaviors might be fundamental. This accords with the argument that if psychedelics are separated from ethical frameworks and used to support neoliberal principles, they may lose much of their potential to facilitate the questioning of capitalist culture and enable people to overcome individualistic and consumerist tendencies.

Research exploring the biomedical potential of psychedelics in rigorous ways is actively driving the legalization of psychedelics, as the growing evidence of therapeutic benefits lend a rationale. Interestingly, the decriminalization imaginary has emerged as a response to the acceleration of commercialized psychedelics in an attempt to "bring psychedelics to 'the people' before Big Pharma can make a monopoly out of them."[172] With Big Pharma rapidly catching up, co-opting its potential into yet another commercial opportunity, it seems misguided to expect that psychedelics will bring significant positive change to social and environmental well-being if they are implemented in a setting that devalues and undermines these outcomes.[173] In other words, psychedelics should not be seen

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169. Rotem Petranker, Thomas Anderson, and Norman Farb, "Psychedelic Research and the Need for Transparency: Polishing Alice's Looking Glass," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020): 1681, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01681.

170. Doblin was referring to MDMA-assisted PTSD therapy; see Rachel Nuwer, "A Psychedelic Drug Passes a Big Test for PTSD Treatment," *New York Times*, May 3, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/03/health/mdma-approval.html.

171. Pace and Devenot, "Right-Wing Psychedelia."

172. Schwarz-Plaschg, "Socio-Psychedelic Imaginaries."

173. As Mark Fisher mused on his popular K-Punk blog describing the capitalist system as the very basis of the attempts to improve the system itself: "Taking MDMA is like improving [Microsoft] Windows: no matter how much tinkering $ Bill [Gates] does, MS Windows will always be shit because it is built on top of the rickety structure of DOS. Mark Fisher, "Psychedlic Reason," *K-Punk*, August 19, 2004, ://k-punk.org/psychedelic-reason/.

as a magic pill (as McMindfulness is often promoted to be) that will solve all of society's ills but as a tool that should be explored to determine how best they can be implemented to address current pressing societal issues, such as the mental health and ecological crises.

Our analysis shows that mindfulness and psychedelics' recent history crosses at various occasions. In our exploration, we identified three major overlaps between mindfulness and psychedelics that lie in how they have been, or are currently being, appropriated by capitalist tendencies, turning them into McMindfulness and commercialized psychedelics, respectively. That is, the commercialization of psychedelics under capitalist tendencies appears likely to evoke an active watering-down of their potential for social and environmental betterment, as they become marketed as an easy, quick fix.

We conclude that the future of psychedelic research and its commercialization must be conducted in an ethical, systematic, and transparent manner. Importantly, this must be done without compromising on their therapeutic potential for the sake of profit under capitalist regimes and its escalatory tendencies grounded in an economic growth. Moreover, we must pay close attention to the set and setting and the intentions underlying psychedelic-assisted therapy and its general use. Only then can we introduce transformational change that will allow us to interpret our world differently and drive sustainable well-being at a large scale. Indeed, without holistic approaches grounded in thorough research and ethical foundations that aim for the advancement of sustainable well-being, psychedelic research might be doomed to remain a "problem child."

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