

Two Cheers for Denver: Let's End the War on Unapproved States of Consciousness

On May 7, voters in Denver, Colorado narrowly approved a measure de-criminalizing “magic mushrooms” — mushrooms containing the consciousness-altering compound psilocybin. The measure, National Public Radio reports, “effectively bars the city from prosecuting or arresting adults 21 or older who possess them. In the ballot language, adults can even grow the fungus for personal use and be considered a low priority for Denver police.”

Those are both great things. A third great thing would have been an order to Denver's police to simply ignore “magic mushrooms” altogether, effectively legalizing sale of the fungi as well (assuming there would be much of a market for something that's easily found “in the wild,” growing on everything from rotting wood to cow patties) . But hey, two out of three ain't bad. Yay, Denver.

The political justification for this measure (and others like it pending in other polities) is the growing evidence that psilocybin can be useful in treating depression, anxiety, and migraines. How many have needlessly suffered due to the research delays caused by its illegalization?

The practical justification for complete legalization of psilocybin (and all other drugs) is that humans have sought altered states of consciousness for as long as we've been humans and are always going to, no matter how many are imprisoned or killed for it. Psilocybin use goes back at least 6,000 years (per prehistoric cave art depictions of its use) and some even plausibly theorize that it was the biblical “manna” consumed by the Hebrews as they wandered the desert for 40 years.

The moral justification for complete legalization (and all other drugs) is that what you put in your body, and for what purpose, is your business and no one else's.

Alcohol prohibition and the century-long “war on drugs” are proof that it's impossible to imprison enough people to change that fact of human nature. In fact, the world's drug warriors haven't even been able to keep drugs out of prison itself! How, then, do they hope to eliminate drugs from society at large? And why should we allow them to continue trying? The “war on drugs” is completely immoral, not to mention insanely expensive both financially and in terms of the effects it has on our communities.

This is not a complicated issue:

Don't want to eat magic mushrooms? Don't eat magic mushrooms then.

Don't want to smoke cannabis? Politely decline the joint when it's offered.

Don't want to drink a beer? Order a nice frosty mug of root beer instead.

Don't want OTHER people to eat magic mushrooms, smoke cannabis, or drink beer? Learn to mind your own business instead of asking politicians to bust heads because you won't. Problem solved.

Yes, it really is that simple. Thanks again, Denver.