

# Changes after altered state of consciousness



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Discuss ways in which people can be transformed after experiencing an altered state of consciousness.

Within this essay the subject matter of a personal transformation after experiencing what is classed or deemed as an Altered State of Consciousness or A. S. C. this term is commonly known in philosophy and certain medial fields will be discussed further in the body of the essay.

After experiencing an altered state of consciousness individual lives have changed either in a positive or negative direction. However their personalities and characteristics radically altered afterwards and the resultant new lifestyle has shaped them to date. To achieve these objectives, various research cases, historical records; and eyewitness accounts will be explored and deliberated upon to complete the parameters of this essay.

With the experimentation in the use of psychotropic drugs for example Ecstasy, Benzodiazepines, Methadone, Amphetamines and Cocaine such usage can bring about various altered states of consciousness. As well as the known euphoria other transformational effect can be those of mental health issues and of addiction.

During the 1960s or psychedelic era many musicians and bands took to using LSD to cope with not only the long hours of touring but to be inspired by the visions and effects LSD had on them. Their imagery, and style of music radically changed over the period of this decade and it was mostly down to the influence of these substances use.

Founding member of the band Fleetwood Mac Peter Green had been a user of the drug called Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, which is better known as LSD or Acid. On January the 26<sup>th</sup> 1977 Green was sent to prison, for threatening his accountant with a shotgun which he had smuggled from Canada but due to failing the psychiatrist test he was institutionalised rather than incarcerated. (Swanson, January 26th 2016)

Fleetwood Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer spoke about an Incident just before Peter Green was about to leave the band. While in Munich Peter Green hung out with what the band members called the " German Jet Set" Spencer described the setup as a kind of " hippie commune" he went on to describe. *" We arrived there, and [road manager] Dennis Keane comes up to me shaking and says, 'It's so weird, don't go down there. Pete is weirding out big time and the vibes are just horrible.'"* (Swanson, January 26th 2016)

When Peter Green left the band in 1970 he still continued to take LSD, his use of the mind altering substance made his behaviour more and more erratic. Wanting no part in his former success and selling all his guitars he began to hear voices *" telling him to do nasty things he."* He began, according to his brother Len Green, taking odd jobs like becoming a gravedigger.

It was during this period of his life he was committed to various psychiatric hospitals receiving electroconvulsive therapy or shock therapy. Due to the royalty cheques Peter Green was continually receiving and him not wanting them; this brought about him going to his accountant.

After his imprisonment and commitment to a mental institution he was put under heavy sedation he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and in time he was released to the care of his brother's family where he convalesced.

(Swanson, 2016)

The most noted of the bands and composers that had a transformation through LSD was the late John Lennon from the Beatles. In her book " John" by Cynthia Lennon she writes about his and her usage of the drug.

She reflects that initially John's use of LSD did not have a massive impact on his musical career, as his drug-taking took place outside of concerts and recording sessions. However Cynthia explains that over time his song writing to became influenced and not just Johns but Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr (Lennon, 2006 p243)

During a party that they attended Cynthia was given LSD unaware of the effect was terrifying the second time under pressure by John since his usage was putting a strain on his and Cynthia's marriage (Lennon, 2006 p 245). She talks about seeing her face turning into a skull and her Terry Doran who was a friend of Brian Epstein transform into a snake then alligator (Lennon, 2006 p245). These altered states resolved Cynthia to never try the drug again.

John was not the only member to partake of the drug, in the biography " John Lennon. The Life by Philip Norman" Paul McCartney had never shared an experience or trip as it is known within the drug culture, with John and on the first occasion Paul saw John " *as a king, the absolute Emperor of Eternity in control of it all.*" (Norman, 2009 p492).

Throughout history there has been countless of people that through having a spiritual emergence have had their lives radically transformed. Regardless of religious context, there are certain similarities to those experiencing these transformations. Two of which will be discussed.

Firstly around 1412, 1413 Joan of Arc was born to a peasant family in Domremy, France. At the age of thirteen she first started hearing voices in the fields near her hometown in Domremy; and within a few years she was hearing them at least seven times a day. She came to recognize them as Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and Saint Michael; it was these voices that told her to aid the Dauphin, Charles VII in the battle against the English and Burgundy and see him crowned as the King which she obeyed although against her parents desire to see her married.

At first she was met with mockery and mistrust but out of desperation the Dauphin gave her a contingent of troops, under the command of the voices she came across the French battling the English and after rallying the troops she broke the siege of Orleans where upon she was known as the Maid of Orleans.

Joan continued to obey the voices and she saw Charles VII crowned. However during the Battle of Compiègne, Joan was captured by John of Luxembourg. Joan was capture and subsequent trail in which she was deliberately discredited because of fears of turning her into a martyr.

The trail itself was more political than lawful; she was sentenced to death on May 30, 1431. She was to be burned at the stake as a sorceress and heretic

after she renounced the voices but her in her last act she called on the name of Jesus and that she never had meant renouncing the voices.

Irregardless of her fate Joan travelled far, but she might have gone nowhere but for the voices. Her voices changed her life forever and her story is known by many by many to this day. (Wilson-smith, 2006. p3)

A further example of in spiritual transformation can be found within the New Testament the first recorded mention of Saul from Tarsus or as it is known now by today as Turkey is in the book of Acts 7: 58. He is a witness to the stoning of Saint Stephen.

Saul was a zealot persecutor of the new Christian movement; he sought and obtained permission from the Jewish High Priests to capture and imprison more Christians.

After receiving the documentation and permission he travelled to Damascus and it was along the Damascus road that Saul encountered a bright light and heard the voice of Christ which spoke to him. He fell to his knees blinded and was led to Damascus and there was baptised, once he was baptised Paul as then he became known as from the thirteenth chapter of the book of Acts travelled to Arabia to reflect his new calling by God.

He returned to Damascus where he witnessed to the holiness Jesus Christ, having no instruction other than the words of God within his heart he spoke openly about Christ as the Saviour, to a point where his own life came under threat. He continued to do so until his beheading in Rome circa AD64.

In his life time Paul wrote letters to the various churches which became the Epistles of the New Testament and changed the very landscape of the Christian faith, welcoming in non Jews into the Christian faith where before the ideology of becoming first Jewish and to follow the Mosaic Laws was considered the only way to become Christian. Paul became known as the Apostle of the Gentiles due to his persuasion and passion for this not to be so. (Emmons, 2017)

Although spiritual transformation can be seen like the next subject matter that of NDE's can have similar characteristics but obviously the difference being that majority of spiritual transformations are not necessarily based on life ending traumas.

It has been researched in quite some depth that there are various transformations that can take place in the lives of those who experience a 'Near Death Experience' or NDE. The various effects of these range from a lack of fear of death, to becoming more loving and compassionate and the change of spirituality. In Dr Penny Sartori's book (2014) " The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences." This transformation effect after experiencing a life changing crisis is explained in the interviews and documentation.

In one case that Dr Sartori researched she interviewed a lady called Marie-Claire who had developed meningitis prior to her NDE and was admitted to hospital where she stayed for a month. As her condition worsened i. e. becoming sensitive to bright lights and that her head was under intense pressure. She felt herself falling through a dark tunnel at incredible speeds she reached a place of golden light where her family friends her former

patients from her time nursing and even her family pets were waiting for her. *" A voice, which came into my head, asked me if I wanted to remain with them or return back to where I'd come from."* Marie-Claire replied that she had to return upon when she was pulled back by what she described as a silver cord.

As Marie-Claire was woken by the doctors and nurses that were attending to her she found herself in immense pain. Asking why they didn't leave her alone she was shocked by their response that she had died. *" Since I died I became a spiritualist and I'm not afraid to die; I know for certain, this life is one of many."* (Sartori, 2014 p. 32)

A further example taken from Dr Sartori's book, Pam Williams who lives in Swansea shared her experience of her NDE after Haemorrhaging from giving birth to her daughter. She saw the doctor who had come in his car, run up the garden path throwing his jacket and rolling up his sleeves. He proceeded to examine her, on reflection Pam realised that this would have been impossible due to the severity of her condition. *" He appeared to be trying to pull something out. He then banged on the chest and inserted a needle into my heart. He breathed into my mouth"*

While the doctor saw to her medical needs to save Pam's life, Pam described herself feeling fine *" warm, happy, full of joy, peaceful, gently floating towards a brilliant light."* It wasn't until her eldest daughter called to her that she returned to her body. When she went for her postnatal appointment some six weeks later she described in great detail all that had transpired



during the birth of her daughter much to the astonishment of her doctor.

(Sartori, 2014 p. 32)

Since her NDE Pam William's life changed. She described herself as an uneducated miner's wife of four young children but in the next six years that followed since her NDE she returned to education where she qualified to become a nursery nurse, a RNMS and Staff Nurse RGN. Within four years following became a Sister on the Coronary-Care Unit in Sheffield; because of lack of fear of dying she continued to explore aspects of near death to where she became a Lecturer in Nursing and Palliative Care.

" I truly believe that had I not experienced near death, I would not of striven to explore death issues and would probably have remained content not to return to education." (Sartori, 2014 p. 30)

There are vast accounts of personal life changes after experiencing an altered state these are just a few recorded cases. Not all altered states have been positive and consequently have been detrimental to the individual Peter Green as it has been discussed was diagnosed with schizophrenia and John Lennon suffered with depression which in both cases may have been contributed to substance abuse.

However on a more positive note those who lives have been altered either by an altered state derived from trauma or a spiritual encounter has in turn altered the lives of countless others from religious teachings to community volunteer work, the majority of NDE transformations are summed up perfectly by Marie-Claire " *I know for certain, this life is one of many.*"

(Sartori, 2014 p. 32)

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