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CHEMICALS ketamine

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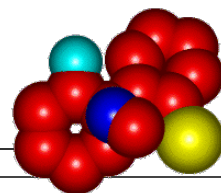
The Ketamine Konundrum

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James Kent's Lux

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As always, we'll start with the obvious, and go crazy from there...

What is Ketamine?

Ketamine's primary "official" usage is as an injectable anesthetic for light surgery on small mammals -- including dogs, cats, sheep, etc. In the U.S., it is currently most commonly used in veterinary medicine. However, because of its high margin of safety, it's ease of use (one shot and they're *out*) and its track record as a tried-and-true safe surgical anesthetic, Ketamine is still often used as a human anesthetic in hospitals all over the world

In sub-anesthetic doses, however, Ketamine produces a profound "dissociative" effect, also known as an "emergent" state. This state is often described in terms of ego-loss, and is closely related to accounts of out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, astral travel, etc.

How is Ketamine taken?

Ketamine is usually injected intramuscularly or intravenously. The standard entheogenic dose is 65 mg to 100 mg injected for a person weighing between 120 and 180 pounds. You can snort Ketamine, but having tried both ways I am inclined to say that snorting is it is a waste of time and materials (but I have a sensitive nose which doesn't take well to burning chemicals).

Snorting in sub-emergent doses usually produces only a drunken kind of intoxication - stumbling, unfocused, scattered, oblivious, etc. The high is not unpleasant - okay to veg or listen to music to - but if you want to experience a fully emergent state, 100 mg intramuscular injection is the best way.

SIDENOTE: I know there will be protests here. Some people can snort and "get off" in a full-blown way, but it generally takes far more crystal up the nose than one may consider worthwhile. I personally can't handle the stinging, burning, watering eyes, and awful, metallic-anesthetic taste in the back of my throat when settling into a nice trip, and it can take a full 250 mg of snorted crystal Ketamine to get the full effect of a mere 80 mg i.m.

Having tried the i.m. method a number of times, I have found it very easy to administer while in a warm bath. [Erowid Note: Anaesthesia in bathtubs can lead to drowning. There is at least one case of death attributed to this choice ([DM Turner](#)).] I prefer taking the injection in the soft part between my shoulder and chest; just below the collarbone and above the armpit. Sometimes I'll shoot half (50 mg) in the left shoulder, then half in the right. For some reason, this produces smoother "K waves" than a shot in just one side.

After taking the shot in, I sit back in the bath and massage the injected area with my fingers. This keeps the muscle from knotting and allows the Ketamine to work into the system faster. Also, though I did suffer a few "sore spots" from injection the first few times I tried it (right into the deltoid - ouch!) the method I described above does not seem to cause any lasting muscle soreness.

If you do not like needles, do not have access to clean needles, or cannot "get over" the stigma of an injectable entheogen, then **Ketamine is probably not the entheogen for you**. Experimenting with snorting, however, may be beneficial before trying an injection.

How long does it take to come on? How long does it last?

Ketamine begins to make itself known about 4 to 5 minutes after intramuscular injection (shorter for i.v., of course, but I have not experimented with this). The first signs are a warmish all-over body tingle, much like Nitrous Oxide inhalation. This initial effect grows in noticable "waves" of penetration into the mind, and by the 10 minute mark, you will be in a very distant state from where you started.

The Ketamine experience peaks at the 17 to 25 minute mark, hangs steady for about another 20 minutes, and then begins to drop you back down by the 45 minute to one hour mark. Residuals can be felt for a good hour afterward.

How is Ketamine different from other anesthetics like ether and N₂O?

Although Ketamine shares some qualities with both ether and N₂O - such as an anesthetic "tingle," ego suspension, suspension of pain and tactile feedback,

perceptual reverberation (or *phlanging*), and loss of motor skills, it is quite unique in its overall sub-anesthetic effects. In addition to all of the above effects on the body, there is also a profound "emergence" phenomenon which accompanies Ketamine inebriation.

What are some characteristics of the emergence state?

The most profound impact of Ketamine is its effect on time. When becoming "emergent," time begins to slow to a shuddering, thugging crawl - each moment stretches out into a sea of infinity and rolls sluggishly into the next. Seconds become minutes, minutes become hours, and eventually, in the peak, time ceases to have any meaning whatsoever. One enters a state of "eternity" (referred to as "alternity" by [John Lilly](#) in *The Scientist*). This is not an eternity in the classic sense - meaning "now" stretched on until the end of time - but "eternity" in the singular sense, when all branches of linear time bend in on themselves and collapse into a timeless and eternal state of simultaneous existence.

In "eternity" all events, actions, and interactions of the past, present, and future coexist simultaneously in one solid state. Not only can you see the "domino" cause and effect relationships between events which exist in close temporal and spacial proximity, you can also witness any event reverberating and iterating throughout the entirety of space and time. In "eternity" it becomes apparant that all events are simply shadows and echos of one massive primordial event or "proto event" which occured or occurs somewhere outside of linear time and 3-D space. It is not an event which occurs and ends - as we perceive events in linear time to do - but it is an "eternal" event, one which is constantly happening everywhere all the time which we are all a part of. Every action, event, sound, energy tranference, etc., are all just ripples of this singular event unfolding in a timeless, fractiline structure.

What can one accomplish in the "emergent" state

Ketamine is good for personal analysis because in "eternity," one can see all of the events and actions which shape and mold individual behavior. One can see the ego as a billiard-ball interacting, bouncing, and reacting in very methodical ways to events in temporal and spacial proximity. This is the "gem" of the Ketamine experience - the objective viewpoint one gets of their own ego and actions. It is as if one's "eternal" self - that self which exists outside of linear time and 3-D space - is brought to the forefront of consciousness so it can look objectively down on the "solid" or "flesh" self. Facets of ego and personality begin to unravel into intricate cause and effect chains which shape who we are, how society functions, and how human beings interact within that society.

This process of objectively observing and intentionally altering personal behavior is called Metaprogramming - a term coined by John Lilly. Ketamine enables metaprogramming in individuals to a point where it seems like synaptic pathways are almost consciously being rerouted to acheive a desired reality shift. In the emergent state, one can literally "try on" new facets of personality, perception, and reality. For instance, you can invoke a new attitude for yourself, fit it into your old reality paradigm, judge possible outcomes and effects, then keep it or scrap it. You can project yourself into the future, into a new relationship, into a new career, or into a new life. This is not an abstract projection, it is as if it is actually happening! When you find a new reality, resolution, or answer that suits you, you can live it out and measure it against the reality you just came from. If you want to keep it, it's yours upon reentry into the physical. How long it lasts is up to you.

Can you function in the physical world while in the "emergence" state

On lower doses of Ketamine, you can walk around and function pretty much normally, but at higher doses (emergence doses), there is a marked loss of dexterity. Simple things like dialling a phone are out of the question while in the peak, partially due to dexterity loss, partially due to the inability to remember phone numbers, and partially due to how "mind-blowingly huge" the thought of something as simple as a phone can be when you are in that state.

Gravity also becomes a whole new experience on Ketamine. Balance is difficult, and walking requires intense concentration and an almost mechanical determinism. Vision is also drastically altered. Ketamine is not hallucinogenic in the classical sense, but while under the influence, vision becomes blurred and distorted as if anything you attempt to focus on is softly pushing your attention elsewhere. You can move around, grab things, etc., but is kind of like you are operating your body remotely while looking through a fishbowl. Light is oddly refracted and does not hit the retina clearly - or, light hitting the retina is normal, but the translation to the brain is somewhat softened and distorted.

Needless to say, **hazardous activities that require acute attention, like driving in traffic, riding a bike, performing surgery, etc. should not be attempted while under the influence of Ketamine.**

Speech also becomes difficult while in the peak. Coming up with the simplest sentences, like "I am experiencing something very phenomenal right now" can take an immense amount of concentration and deliberate intention - partially because there is no tactile feedback on the lips, and partially because thoughts you might wish to express on Ketamine don't always translate quickly or easily into English.

Another problem is that while experiencing the phenomenon of "eternity," each thought, action, and word takes on a new and complex weight. Because you are so aware of the cause and effect relational web that transcends time and space, each word you speak seems to carry an immense weight and power. For instance, uttering a simple word like "slurp" can conjure images of the first creature who pulled itself from the primordial sea onto land, and the sound it made as it struggled through the thick mud on its evolutionary journey towards self-awareness. You not only get images, but an actual physical reliving of this event!

The same word can also conjure images and feelings of sex, internal bodily functions, birth, the collapse of a universe, etc. While trying to string a complete sentence together, one can become completely overwhelmed by the power, history, and depth of meaning packed so deeply and densely into every grunt, inflection, and phoneme of human speech.

Often, in the middle of what one thinks is going to be a coherent utterance, one will find oneself repeating a single word or phrase over and over like an incantation - savoring each sound, each delicate curvature of the tongue and lips, the emotional impact of the tone and meaning, the linguistic origin of the words, etc. From a single Ketamine session, one may only come back with a single word, like "slurp," or a single song-like phrase such as "I seem to be condensing me." Other

phrases I have pulled out of Ketamine session include "It's a cinch for David Lynch," and the equally cryptic, "Use these words... just put them together differently to make people feel good..."

Sometimes when sentences are uttered, it is almost as if someone else is saying them - an automatic speech response. This can lead to all sorts of fun automatic babbling, giggling, and childlike gibberish speak - similar to glossolalia on mushrooms but generally slower, with a bounce, and more closely resembling your own language. This babble is less a gibberish in the true sense and more like a pile of actual words strung together - often combined with "sort-of" words, like "giggy" "minkle" "boopular", etc. Onomatopoeias, like "crash," "pop," or the aforementioned "slurp" seem to take on a much deeper significance than usual - possibly because they are closer to an *ursprach*, or "true universal speech" than abstract or compound words of Latin and Greek origin.

Some Parting Comments

I have had much experience with Ketamine. I personally find it to be one of the most "enabling" and interesting compounds I've ever tried. It is far more potent and intriguing than any phenethylamine, and it allows you to access many of the same spaces as various tryptamines do, but it does not have the mystery, overpowering ego, or distinct personality that other psychedelics do.

Ketamine has a very cold, unemotional vibe to it. It does not play tricks and riddles like the tryptamines do. It can be "withholding" at times, but it is never malicious, taunting, or baiting like mushrooms can be. It is all business, and in this vein, set and setting don't seem to be as much of a factor with Ketamine as dosage. If the dosage is right, the trip is a sure thing - no bummers, no maybes, no question. When you take the poison in at the right dosage, it does its job.

Because of this, Ketamine is a very "process oriented" entheogen. I would describe it as a "transdimensional information navigation device." To take this metaphor a step further, consider this: If mushrooms were an ornately carved chariot pulled by untamed horses, and LSD was a fancy, suped-up sportscar, DMT would be an elfin-crafted hypersonic anti-grav device, and Ketamine would be a VR headset and bodysuit with a T-1 line into the universal database. It gives you TOTAL immersion, and navigation is accomplished purely by thought and body movement. It can be very overwhelming to a newcomer, but once you learn how to navigate on Ketamine, it is (in more pedestrian terms) the wildest ride there is.

If you have any lack of personal restraint when it comes to substance use, and you have fairly easy Ketamine access, then Ketamine is a big no-no. Tolerance builds up only very slowly, sometimes taking weeks. There is an extremely high potential for abuse. It can be a very "escapist" drug.

I recently had a full bottle of pharmaceutical Ketamine - about 15-20 injections worth. At my worst, I shot about once a week for 4 or 5 weeks. Sometimes when I got angry or depressed, I felt like I just "had to" shoot to work out whatever it was that was troubling me. Because Ketamine is so process oriented, it ALWAYS worked. This is both comforting and frightening at the same time.

I managed to stretch the bottle out for about 9 months. When I tell this to anyone who is familiar with the substance, they usually drop their jaw. Many people can go through a bottle in under a week - easily! The trip only lasts 45 to 75 minutes, and that's one of the main reasons I enjoy it - in and out quick with no cryptic baggage. As I said before, it is all business. However, I've seen people take three, four, five shots in one night - booster after booster - just trying to get higher and higher and higher, sure that there was another "breakthrough" right around the next K wave. This is, in my opinion, bad news.

There are many tricky issues to consider with Ketamine. Admittedly, the needle is a tough hump to make it over. You should think carefully before deciding that you want to experiment. As long as you don't have a "pusher," or somebody anxious to "hook you up whenever you want," (which is unlikely, because they would probably do it all themselves before you could get to it) there is really no substantial physical danger with injectable Ketamine. Lethal limits have been established at around 20 to 30 times standard dosage (2000 mg! try and inject that all at once), and people have taken Ketamine chronically for a long time without suffering any substantial physical side effects (effects on relationships, however, can be quite substantial). John Lilly is the primordial and most prominent of the chronic K club. His health has deteriorated rapidly in the past decade, as has his cognitive functionality. Weather this is due to years of chronic Ketamine usage is up for debate. Regardless, he is still alive at 80+ years - an achievement for anyone, junky or not.

James Kent - June, 1996

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- v1.0 - June 1996 - Original by James Kent.
- v1.1 - Oct 1999 - Published on Erowid.org, small edits and warning about taking ketamine in bath added.

[\[back to chemicals \]](#) [\[back to ketamine \]](#)

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