

Source Weaknesses

Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* is a vivid account of the author's first time taking mescaline, a hallucinogen that comes from button shaped seeds found in the peyote cactus.¹ Published in 1954, the work still holds a seat at the table in discussions surrounding psychedelics, to such an extent that it has been suggested even in modern work that he was the 'inventor' of the 'modern psychedelic experience'.² But is the source infallible?

Firstly, there's the fact that the text was published sixty-six years ago. It could be argued that the potency of the account has worn off, considering how much research has been done into psychedelic substances since then. In fact, at the time of publication, the word 'psychedelic' didn't even exist in this context³ which further shows how far back his work goes.

Another important factor to consider is that Huxley was by no means a pioneer in the consumption of mescaline. The earliest recorded usage was in 4000 BCE according to Mike Jay, a medical history writer.⁴

The objectivity of the piece is also worth looking at. Ronald Fisher, a statistician, famously said of the book that it was '99 percent Huxley and only one and a half grams of mescaline'.⁵ If this is true, then the validity of the text from a scientific point of view must surely be called into question. Additional to a potential lack of objectivity is the nature of Huxley's eyesight. An illness called [keratitis](#) rendered him blind in 1911 and despite regaining eyesight, it remained impaired. Perhaps it could be argued that the visions he saw while on mescaline were hyperbolically 'amped up' in the text, therefore making the account less factually accurate.⁶

(bibliography on page 2)

¹ definition provided by talktofrank.com

² Pollan, M. *How to Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics* (2018) USA, Penguin Press - pp.144

³ context provided by <https://www.etymonline.com/word/psychedelic>

⁴ Daly, M. *The Fascinating History of Mescaline, the OG Psychedelic* (2019) London, Vice U.K

⁵ Ronald Fisher quoted in Louis Cholden, ed. *Lysergic Acid Diethylamide and Mescaline in Experimental Psychiatry*, p. 67, Grune and Stratton, 1956

⁶ Jordison, Sam *The Doors of Perception: What did Huxley see in mescaline?* (2012) UK, The Guardian

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