

Main Argument

The basis of my argument is that Aldous Huxley's experience of tripping on mescaline as documented in *The Doors of Perception* (1954) provides an explanation for Cartesian Dualism, which is a philosophical viewpoint asserting that physical properties and mental properties are entirely separate¹. I will set out to prove that through altering one's consciousness, the separation of mind and body can be observed clearly in a way that a sober mind cannot.

Looking at boundaries through the lens of psychedelic drugs and how they alter consciousness, I have elected to use *The Doors of Perception* as a primary source due mainly to its cultural endurance. It has stayed relevant through the sixty-six years since its initial publication and still holds a seat at the table (or is, in fact, the basis) of modern discussions around the topic of psychedelic drugs. The seminal status of the essay can even be attributed to the Eastern connotations of tripping that are still held in contemporary Western culture (Pollan 2018)².

Huxley wasn't a dualist, however. His book *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945) alludes to an opinion that an overarching mystical truth can be derived from amalgamating principles of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, among others (Evans 2020)³. In *The Doors of Perception*, overwhelmed by a sense of being at one with the inanimate objects around him, he described finally understanding Zen Buddhist philosophy which previously he had viewed as 'only a vaguely pregnant piece of nonsense'⁴.

My aim is to circumvent Huxley's personal philosophical outlook and propose that under mescaline's influence, the way in which his 'body seemed to have dissociated itself almost completely from [his] mind'⁵ can provide an inadvertent explanation for Cartesian Dualism. However, I will attempt to include counter arguments (physicalism, monism) throughout to maintain balance in the piece.

Bibliography

Huxley, A. *The Doors of Perception* (1954) UK, Chatto & Windus
Huxley, A. *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945) UK, Harper & Brothers
Pollan, M. *How To Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics* (2018) US, Penguin Press
Evans, J. *Perennial Philosophy* (2020) aeon.com
lexicon.com

¹ Definition paraphrased from lexico.com

² Pollan, M. *How To Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics* (2018) US, Penguin Press

³ Evans, J. *Perennial Philosophy* (2020) aeon.com

⁴ Huxley, A. *The Doors of Perception* (1954) UK, Chatto & Windus, pp. 8

⁵ Huxley, A. *The Doors of Perception* pp. 31