

P5: Critically engage with one scholarly viewpoint relevant to your essay

Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (1954) is an essay which documents the author's first-hand experience of being under the influence of mescaline, which is a drug obtained from peyote that causes its users to hallucinate¹. Through his carefully crafted prose, Huxley attempts to distill an inherently subjective experience into something that a reader can comprehend. For Huxley, mescaline highlighted a hidden truth that sober minds aren't able to perceive. 'This is how one ought to see, how things really are', he remarked².

The Doors of Perception may be sixty-six years old, but according to Michael Pollan, its potency hasn't yet worn off. In *How To Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics* (2018), he asserts that Huxley's essay influenced the 'Eastern flavouring [that] would come to characterise the LSD experience from 1954 on'³. If this is true, then *The Doors of Perception* must surely be the foundation of the Psychedelic community.

However, that doesn't make Huxley's account an infallible truth. Pollan proposes that 'the psychedelic experience is highly "constructed"' and that 'if you're told you will have a spiritual experience, chances are pretty good that you will'⁴. What this illustrates is that from Pollan's point of view, the effects of psychedelics on an individual are heavily informed by the expectations they will have going in. For Huxley, Eastern spirituality had always been of interest and so when under the influence of a mind-expanding substance, it can only be expected that his biased worldview would make an appearance.

Bibliography

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¹ Definition provided by <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

² Huxley, A. *The Doors of Perception* (1954) UK, Chatto & Windus - pp.19

³ Pollan, M. *How To Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics* (2018) US, Penguin Press - pp.143

⁴ Pollan, M. pp. 143