

Aldous Huxley

The Doors of Perception-A Review

How does one write about the use of pharmaceutical agents, illegal drugs, drugs the likes of which conjure a media-driven stereo-type of anti-social behavior and left-thinking Bolshevik ideologies? How does one approach the use of such chemicals in an intellectual, objective and rational way when the immediate reaction to such confessionary texts is often met with its own stereotypical walls of pre-ordained resistance?

In Huxley's text, *The Doors of Perception*, we find an intelligent mind speaking openly, detailed and with an element of detachment from the drug-influenced experience which is at the root of the narrative.

Huxley seems to accomplish this by his use of vivid and detailed writing about what he saw, felt, and generally experienced (sensory) while under the influence of various chemicals. There is no mention of the legality, the ethics or morals behind his chosen actions or social implications of its use. The text foregrounds his experience in a poetic, flowing narrative similar to what his experience, we are lead to believe, must have been like.

The first key to his narrative tact is found in the title itself-*The Doors of Perception*. Huxley will discuss what "doors" in his mind were opened, we think; what he perceived that he had not been able to before the experience with the various agents. Right away he says, "I seemed to detect the qualitative equivalent of breathing—but of breathing without returns to a starting point." The reader is treated not only to his command of the language as a writer but his command of his knowledge of self, even while

under the affect of drugs. Interestingly, Huxley uses metaphorical references that are clear, accessible and relevant; much different that other drug-experience related texts where it is more difficult for the non-user to gather a sense of how it “feels” due to the rambling, incongruent diction.

Huxley points out, “The really important facts were that spatial relationships had ceased to matter very much and that my mind perceived the world in terms other than spatial categories.” Other authors have written about the spatial altercations within the drug-influenced time frame, among them, Carol, Leary and Old Elk. But Huxley relates the advantage of this psycho-paradigm when he says, “Space was still there; but it had lost its predominance. The mind was primarily concerned, not with measures and locations, but with being and meaning.”

Therein lay the potential advantage of drug use—the facilitation of search for meaning. This universal quest, while oft-sought, is rarely connected to chemical agent usage in a way that rouses the intellectual in a challenging way, a way that they cannot deny due to its universality and objective intellectual honesty.

ST