



The Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Psychoactive Drug Use

Edited by
Rob Lovering

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Contents

Introduction	1
Rob Lovering	
Part I Metaphysics	13
The Bergsonian Metaphysics Behind Huxley’s <i>Doors</i>	15
Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes	
Know Thy Non-Self: Meditation, Psychedelics, and Personal Identity ...	37
Leigh Duffy	
A Theurgical Interpretation of Drug Use	57
Eric Steinhart	
Does God Know What It’s Like to Get High?	75
Rob Lovering	
Drug Addiction and Free Will: Theoretical and Practical Considerations	91
Stephen G. Morris	
My Drug Buddy: Expectations and Company as Drug-Effect Modulators	111
Manuel de Pinedo García	
How to End the Mysticism Wars in Psychedelic Science	127
Chris Letheby, Jaipreet Mattu, and Eric Hochstein	
What Is Medical Cannabis?	155
Jussi Jylkkä and Aleksi Hupli	
Part II Epistemology	179
The Epistemology of Psychedelic Experience	181
Jack Lyons	

Can Psychedelic Experience Lead to Knowledge?	205
Haggeo Cadenas	
On Acid Empiricism	225
Sascha Benjamin Fink	
Epistemic Character Change: Psychedelic Experiences as a Case Study	245
Noam Tiran	
Whippet Good? William James, Nitrous Oxide, and the Ignition of the Yes Function	265
Peg O'Connor	
The Paradoxes of Psychedelic Humanities	281
Nicolas Langlitz	
From <i>Zerrissenheit</i> to Distributed Intelligence: On Recovery and Philosophy	299
Chris Fleming	
Part III Value	319
Higher And Lower Highs: Drug Pleasures and Mill's Qualitative Hedonism	321
Chris Meyers	
Meaning-of-Life Externalism: A Defense of Old-Fashioned Reality	337
Barbara Montero and Sam Coleman	
Might Stoners Live Better Lives? Drug Use and Human Welfare	361
Chris Meyers	
The Psychedelic Experience as an Ethical Experience	383
Virginia Ballesteros	
Epiphanies and Aspirations: How Psychedelic Experiences Affect Values.	403
Juuso Kähönen	
Part IV Morality	447
A Kantian Argument for Recreational Drug Use.	449
Sarah Hoffman	
Putting Oneself at Risk for the Fun of It: On Drugs, Extreme Sports, and the Rational and Moral Permissibility of Engaging in Risky Behavior	467
Anthony P. Smith	

Responsibility for Addiction: Risk, Value, and Reasonable Foreseeability 491
 Federico Burdman

Therapist, Trip Sitter Or Guide? A Second-Person Perspective on Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy 513
 Chiara Caporuscio and Adrian Kind

Part V Law and Politics 531

Why Harm Reduction Programs Should Be Extended to Include Psychedelic Drugs 533
 Timothy Kirschenheiter

Why Should Drugs Be Decriminalized? 543
 Peter de Marneffe

A Case for Legalizing Recreational Drug Use 561
 Rob Lovering

A Politics of Ecstasy: A Foucauldian Approach to Psychoactive Substances 587
 Christopher Partridge

“Mixing the Barricade and the Dance Floor”: Recovering Acid Communism at Zabriskie Point 609
 Todd Landon Barnes

Part VI Aesthetics 629

The Aesthetics of Drugs 631
 C. Thi Nguyen

High Off the Sound: An Examination of the “Druggy Aesthetic” in Music 653
 Stephen Cedars

Psychedelic Transformation and Kantian Aesthetics 675
 Sarah Hoffman

Index 695

The Bergsonian Metaphysics Behind Huxley's *Doors*

Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

HUXLEY'S BERGSONISM

REDUCING VALVE

- Abstraction
- Pure Perception
 - Process Philosophy
 - Images
- Pure Memory

MIND-AT-LARGE

- Spatial Aspect of the Mind-at-Large
- Temporal Aspect of the Mind-at-Large
- Creative-Divine Aspect of the Mind-at-Large

SUMMA

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ABSTRACT

Aldous Huxley employed, in his 1954 book on the mescaline experience, *The Doors of Perception*, both explicitly and implicitly the metaphysics of French philosopher Henri Bergson, notably through two concepts that Huxley named the 'reducing valve' and 'Mind-at-Large'. The former concept claims that our perception of the external world and of our past is significantly filtered for the purpose of practicality. The latter idea is that the wider world, the cosmos, and the total past, exist as consciousness. It is this 'Mind-at-Large' that we as humans reduce into a useful fragment that comprises our finite minds. In other words, Huxley offers via Bergson a view somewhat (but not quite) in line with pantheism and extended-mind theories, one that sees the brain and body as *receiving rather than generating consciousness* – a top-down and exogenous approach to the mind. Huxley severely simplifies (and slightly misunderstands) Bergson's metaphysics, so the aim of this text is to rectify and fortify Bergson's thought in the relevant aspects, thereby offering a more coherent, correct, and comprehensive framework into which we may understand psychedelic experience through a Bergsonian, or Bergsonesque, lens.

[This is *not* a page in the *Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Psychoactive Drug Use*]

Part I
Metaphysics

The Bergsonian Metaphysics Behind Huxley's *Doors*



Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes

Introduction

Seventy years ago, at the time of writing, British writer Aldous Huxley's 1954 book *The Doors of Perception*¹ was published—a book on Huxley's experiences and reflections on the psychedelic drug mescaline. The little book garnered various responses, positive, puzzled, critical and cold.² Regardless, the book has become a classic in psychedelic circles and beyond,³ providing a loose metaphysical framework in which psychonauts⁴ can interpret their experiences. Despite it being the case that, at this period, Huxley was steeped in the views of Vedanta and mysticism in general—due in large part to the influence of his good friend, philosopher and mystic Gerald Heard, and both of their later presence in the Vedanta Society of Southern California in Hollywood⁵ from the late 1930s⁶—the interpretations of the psychedelic experience in *The Doors* were more explicitly based on the metaphysics of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Huxley did not note any disharmony between Bergsonism and Vedanta, fusing them into a common core frame. This fusion is philosophically contentious, at least prima facie, considering that the Vedanta Huxley was studying was presented as 'non-dualism',⁷ whereas Bergson was a dualist of sorts, though not of the standard substance, or Cartesian variety. Part of what gives *The Doors* a wide appeal, however, is that very fusion of views, incorporating a wide range of perspectives that included Zen, Daoism, Tibetan Buddhism, Wordsworth's nature mysticism, Rudolf Otto's numinous experience, Christian mysticism, including that of Blake, Boehme, Eckhart, Swedenborg, then Aquinas, Amerindian metaphysics, and pagan perspectives Greek, Celtic and Nordic, with allusions respectively to Dionysus, Sucellus and the world-tree Yggdrasil.

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With regard to philosophers except Bergson, Huxley made only a few other references, indeed complaining: ‘How many philosophers ... have had the curiosity to open this Door in the Wall? The answer, for all practical purposes, is, None.’⁸ Huxley did, however, at the very start of the book, refer to his acquaintance, neurophilosopher John R. Smythies and his 1953 article, ‘The Mescaline Phenomenon’,⁹ stating in relation that ‘at least one professional philosopher has taken mescaline for the light it may throw on such unresolved riddles as the place of mind in nature and the relationship between brain and consciousness’.¹⁰ Smythies worked as a psychiatrist with Humphrey Osmond, the latter of whom coined the words ‘psychedelic’ (in 1956/7) and ‘hallucinogen’ (in 1954).¹¹ Smythies, however, developed a rather unusual theory of mind and nature, arguing for the existence of far more than three spatial dimensions to account for mind and nature’s interconnection¹²—rather distinct from Huxley’s (and Bergson’s) view. In addition to Smythies, Huxley also mentions the philosophers Locke (positively) and Plato (negatively—because of Plato’s ‘grotesque mistake of separating Being from becoming’).¹³ It is, in fact, *the primacy of becoming over being* that characterizes Bergson’s metaphysics, as we shall see. Following the criticism of Plato’s view, Huxley begins to provide reports of his mescaline experience with obvious Bergsonian allusions before he explicitly provides a quotation from the eminent Cambridge philosopher C. D. Broad on Bergsonism, expounding his understanding of it over a few subsequent (and preceding) pages. After this theoretical section, he returns to reporting the experience, though with thoughts to aesthetics, religion, politics—yet always interspersed with references back to the Bergsonian metaphysics he presents at the start. This Bergsonism is continued in the sequel, *Heaven and Hell* (1956).

Huxley’s understanding of Bergson’s metaphysics, however, is both excessively (though necessarily) simplified and yet still not wholly correct. The aim of my text here, therefore, is to correct and elaborate Bergson’s metaphysics in relation to *The Doors*, and thereby offer a more coherent, correct and comprehensive framework into which we can understand psychedelic experience through a Bergsonian lens.¹⁴ Bergson’s philosophy is profound, yet, despite its popularity a century ago, its importance has been lost to posterity due more to fashions in philosophy than to fair critique. In developing Bergson’s metaphysics here, to fathom psychedelic experience, the aim is to open the doors wider still.

There are two separate yet interwoven threads that Huxley uses to express Bergson’s thought: the ‘reducing valve’ and ‘Mind-at-Large’—these are the terms Huxley uses, *they are not those that Bergson uses*, though we shall see that they are useful figurative expressions. These therefore comprise the two principal subsections of this text. The terms illustrate a theory of mind which puts forward the idea, to put it simply in advance, that *the brain does not generate but receives consciousness*. Moreover, the brain and body, for evolutionary reasons, receives but a fraction of reality because the brain and body act as a ‘reducing valve’, or filter, that eliminates, or reduces, the perception and recollection of what is unnecessary for practical action. Were this reducing valve fully opened, we would perceive the fullness of reality, both the external environment and the totality of memories. Such an unfiltered consciousness does exist, Huxley contends, a consciousness he calls

'Mind-at-Large', an infinite mind of which each individual is a part, is a finite mind—just as our spatial finite bodies are mere parts of an, as it were, extended Space at Large. Thus, we understand that Huxley's 'Mind-at-Large' is essentially indicative of a partial type of *Pantheism*: that God is the Universe.¹⁵ With this general theory of consciousness, the next obvious step is to argue that psychedelic drugs open the reducing valve, letting in more of Mind-at-Large, more of reality. Thus, far from inducing hallucinations, psychedelic drugs *can* on the contrary yield a more veridical grasping of the universe. These drugs, Huxley states, using William Blake's phrase,¹⁶ open the doors of perception.

The reducing valve and Mind-at-Large notions each have *spatial and temporal* aspects, when we examine them in more detail in Bergson's work. Spatially, the reducing valve filters away many sensible properties in the 'external world'; temporally, the valve filters away much of the past. As we shall see, Bergson argues that *memory is never lost* as the *past persists into and comprises the present* as a continuous movement—only *access* to memory can be lost. The term 'external world' is placed in scare quotes here because another aspect of Bergson's theory of perception, which Huxley alludes to in his trip report, is that the perceived external world *becomes part of the perceiver*, and vice versa. So the concepts 'internal' and 'external' can be misleading (to the extent that such language can push one into a false metaphysics). Bergson often emphasizes the fact that *time is not space*,¹⁷ and it is the confusion of this that has led to fundamental errors in philosophy and science. But before we focus on these spatial and temporal subdivisions, let us first examine Huxley's own thoughts relating to this general theory in *The Doors*, before we look at Bergson's more specific theory.

Huxley's Bergsonism

Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) was descended from a literary and scientific family, having the poet and cultural critic, friend of Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold as his mother's father's uncle; and, on the other side, having 'Darwin's bulldog', renowned epiphenomenalist and biologist Thomas Henry Huxley as his grandfather. Epiphenomenalism is the view that the brain generates the mind, but that the mind has *no* power in turn to move the brain, body, and thus the environment—that is, epiphenomenalism rejects mental causation. Thomas Huxley famously illustrated this theory of consciousness by the steam emanating from the steam whistle of a locomotive train: consciousness as a vaporous after-effect without itself having power to move thought or body.¹⁸ Though this view seemed to accord with the science of the time, it did not, ironically, seem to accord with the theory of evolution, as William James, F. H. Bradley and later Karl Popper sought to show.¹⁹ Darwin himself, a friend of Thomas Huxley, even disowned the view.²⁰ Consciousness must have evolved and maintained itself in multiple species to serve a function, it was argued. Aldous naturally rejected the epiphenomenalism of his grand scientific forefather, but Aldous' respect for scientific, methodological enquiry was part of his

character and stopped him from becoming too enamoured, too dogmatically attached to any single view.

Aldous Huxley's view on the French philosopher Henri Bergson was at first negative. Bergson was a hugely popular philosopher at the start of the twentieth century. His influence and celebrity waned thereafter, with intensifying accusations—based on misunderstandings in my view—from Bertrand Russell²¹ (1912) and others of his anti-intellectualism and of his purported anti-scientific stance. Bergson's book *Creative Evolution* (1907),²² which argued for an alternative theory of evolution, though his most popular book, alienated him from biologists in the neo-Darwinian lineage from Thomas Huxley. Furthermore, the public argument with Einstein on the nature of time in 1922²³ was a *cause célèbre* that further alienated him from many physicists. Bergson was born a generation before Aldous, and so his ideas will have been ever-so-present to Huxley in his intellectual milieu. As Mark Taylor points out in his essay on Huxley's novel *Island* in relation to Bergson, Huxley already derogatorily mentions Bergson in a letter to his brother Julian in 1915, and refers to him by name in three of his novels: *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), and *Time Must Have a Stop* (1944).²⁴ Huxley seems to consider the craze in Bergsonism to be a fad, but then, as Bergsonism falls out of fashion, Huxley suddenly endorses it—'the late change in stance is dramatic'.²⁵ This shift must have occurred in 1953, the year Huxley first took mescaline. In an essay published in 1952, 'Some Reflections on Time'—a chapter in the edited volume *Vedanta for Modern Man*—Huxley critiques the view that he explicitly ascribes to Bergson 'that "duration" is the primary and ultimate reality'.²⁶ Huxley allies this Bergsonian view to those of Hegel and Marx, seeing ethical and political concerns emanating from such views that fundamentalize flux and progress, in contradistinction to eternity, as metaphysical bases underlying his concurrent culture. Of course, this concern reflects worries over the communist advance of the time and connects his eternalist 'perennial philosophy' to political hopes. Huxley is still rather known for his 1945 tome, *The Perennial Philosophy*, wherein there is no mention of Bergson, and yet his 1950s' shift from eternalism to the inclusion of temporalism, from Being to Becoming, marks his mature work—with Bergsonian themes even mentioned positively in his late 1962 novel, *Island*.

In a letter to Humphrey Osmond, dated April the 10th, 1953, Huxley's Bergsonian turn is evident:

It looks as though the most satisfactory working hypothesis about the human mind must follow, to some extent, the Bergsonian model, in which the brain with its associated normal self, acts as a utilitarian device for limiting, and making selections from, the enormous possible world of consciousness, and for canalizing experience into biologically profitable channels. Disease, mescaline, emotional shock, aesthetic experience and mystical enlightenment have the power, each in its different way and in varying degrees, to inhibit the functions of the normal self and its ordinary brain activity, thus permitting the "other world" to rise into consciousness.²⁷

Though there was a sudden shift from Being to Becoming, it was not total: *both* were endorsed by Huxley. The surprise is the incorporation or assimilation of Bergsonian Becoming into his metaphysical viewpoint—there was no outright

rejection of Being in the sense of a timeless, eternal, infinite, reality behind a veil of temporal appearance. The very titles of the books, *The Doors of Perception* and its sequel, after all, come from eternalist William Blake's poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.
For man has closed himself up till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.²⁸

These two lines in many ways encapsulate Huxley's later thought: the Mind-at-Large that is the opened infinite vision; the reducing valve that is the narrow chinks of the near-closed vision. Nonetheless, we see Huxley's Bergsonian turn that integrates the eternal (timeless) Being with Becoming (temporal flux) manifest itself at the start of *The Doors* in the first few pages as the mescaline trip report begins. On May the 4th, 1953,²⁹ Huxley takes his mescaline, facilitated by Humphrey Osmond, at 11 am in his study. In *The Doors*, he reports, with regard to his gaze at a bunch of flowers, that he saw 'a *transience that was yet eternal life*, a perpetual perishing that was at the same time pure Being',³⁰ complaining, as we saw, that 'Plato seems to have made the enormous, the grotesque, mistake of separating Being from becoming'. This line echoes many lines of grievance Bergson had with Platonism. The Bergsonian thought flows through further when Huxley then writes that his 'actual experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse'.³¹ The implicit Bergsonism continues further when Huxley writes, 'I was looking at my furniture, not as the utilitarian who has to sit on chairs, to write at desks and tables ... but as the pure aesthete'.³² Thereafter, another Bergsonian tenet, as we shall later explore, of the subject-object relation expresses itself by his approach to chair legs: 'I spent several minutes – or was it several centuries? – not merely gazing at those bamboo legs, but actually being them – or rather being myself in them; or, to be still more accurate (for "I" was not involved in the case, nor in a certain sense were "they") being my Not-self in the Not-self which was the chair.'³³ Finally, the submerged Bergsonian splashes open to the surface by way of the following (problematic) passage:

Reflecting on my experience, I find myself agreeing with the eminent Cambridge philosopher, Dr C. D. Broad, "that we should do well to consider much more seriously than we have hitherto been inclined to do the type of theory which Bergson put forward in connection with [normal] memory and sense perception. The suggestion is that the function of the brain and nervous system and sense organs is in the main *eliminative* and not productive. Each person is at each moment [potentially] capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening *everywhere* [anywhere] in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful." According to such a theory, each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But in so far as we are animals, our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet.³⁴

It is a pity that Huxley did not place his words on Bergsonism from the letter to Osmond, quoted above, in his book, rather than quoting Broad. As Adrian Webb has discovered,³⁵ Huxley's Broad quotation excludes an adjective and an adverb (both are added in square brackets in the above quotation), and replaces Broad's original 'anywhere' with 'everywhere'. Webb notes moreover that Broad's lines come from his 1948 paper³⁶ on psychical research rather than on psychedelic research. More pertinent to our concern, however, is Broad's erroneous claim, quoted here and thus propagated by Huxley, that '[e]ach person is at each moment [potentially] capable of ... perceiving everything that is happening everywhere [anywhere] in the universe'. Regardless of the misquotation lies the general mistake: Bergson does *not* claim that people are capable of perceiving everything that is happening anywhere in the universe—in fact, Bergson explicitly rejects this: 'a truly intuitive metaphysics ... would not embrace in a single sweep the totality of things'.³⁷ This is simply an error on Broad's part that Huxley unfortunately revives. The preceding clause—that 'each person is at each moment [potentially] capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him'—*is correct* though, as will be explained below, and can be considered *one* aspect of the understanding of 'Mind-at-Large'.

The motifs of reducing valve and Mind-at-Large are continued in *Heaven and Hell*, and beyond,³⁸ though there is more focus therein on other beings, other worlds and aesthetics. Aesthetics interestingly makes a stronger connection to Mind-at-Large in this later book: 'visionary experiences enter our consciousness from somewhere "out there" in the infinity of Mind-at-Large'.³⁹ Huxley seeds, but does not cultivate, a fascinating idea in this respect: that pantheism can be experienced not only as some 'oceanic feeling'⁴⁰ but also via closed-eye (introverted) aesthetic *visions* which originate exogenously in an infinite mind, rather than from one's own finite mind. In *Heaven and Hell*, Huxley quotes Irish poet A. E. (George Russell)'s *Candle of Vision*: 'there are also windows in the soul, through which can be seen images created not by human but by the divine imagination'.⁴¹ Then later, it is suggested that eyes-open (extroverted) vision can also reveal this pantheism through Huxley's interpretation of the meaning of the painting *Méditation du Philosophe* attributed to Rembrandt:

[The painting's] symbolical subject-matter is nothing more or less than the human mind, with its teeming darkneses, its moments of intellectual and visionary illumination, its mysterious stairways winding downwards and upwards into the unknown. The meditating philosopher sits there in his island of inner illumination; and at the opposite end of this symbolic chamber, in another, rosier island, an old woman crouches before the hearth. The firelight touches and transfigures her face, and we see, concretely illustrated, the impossible paradox and supreme truth – that perception is (or at least can be, ought to be) the same as Revelation, that reality shines out of every appearance, that the One is totally, infinitely present in all particulars.⁴²

'The One' harks to ideas pertaining to Parmenides and Plotinus, and the relation of these ideas to those of Bergson, Vedanta and Mind-at-Large generally is complex. Huxley had a habit of throwing ideas from myriad sources together to express his views. This made his writings enjoyable to the reader but ambiguous to the philosopher. As we shall see, however, Bergson does consider artistic inspiration to be a

partial intuition of the divine impetus that creatively drives the universe. Let us pin down these two core concepts of reducing valve and Mind-at-Large as we find them in Bergson with the hope that a more detailed understanding thereof may be of use in fathoming further the psychedelic experience, thereby continuing to advance Huxley's project.

Reducing Valve

A reducing valve, in its literal sense, is essentially a screw that adjusts the flowrate of water in a pipe, thereby adjusting the water pressure, as noticed via tap usage. Reducing valves are thus also known as 'water pressure regulators'. Huxley's figurative use of the device therefore calls to mind the idea that consciousness in its unregulated state (Mind-at-Large) would gush our channel were it not for a device, the brain (the reducing valve), that regulates its immense pressure. Psychedelics, in this metaphor, have the capability of unscrewing to various degrees this regulator, thereby allowing more of that high-pressure consciousness to flood our being. The metaphor moreover alludes to the notion that it is not the reducing valve, the water pressure regulator device, itself that generates consciousness, the flow of water—rather, this device merely adjusts the stream of consciousness, for practical reasons.

Henri Bergson himself, as was known to Huxley,⁴³ wrote about the distortive effects of drugs,⁴⁴ and using the metaphor of a filter rather than a reducing valve—but also coincidentally, using the metaphor of a door—wrote that '[t]he body ... [is] a *filter*.... If these [bodily] mechanisms got out of order [e.g. with psychoactive drugs] *the door* which they kept shut opens a little way: there enters something of a "without" which may be a "beyond"'.⁴⁵ So let us now look at Bergson's filter theory in further detail so as to understand how this metaphysics may help us conceive psychedelic experiences in a brighter light.

As mentioned, there are spatial and temporal aspects to Bergson's filter theory, though we shall see that they are deeply intertwined. Both involve abstraction, so we shall begin there.

Abstraction

Alfred North Whitehead wrote: 'to be an abstraction does not mean that an entity is nothing. It merely means that its existence is only one factor of a more concrete element of nature.'⁴⁶ Bergson—who admired and inspired Whitehead's thought—was in agreement with such an understanding. An abstraction is a *partial* grasp of something, it is not a complete fathoming. A *yellow triangle* is an abstraction of which the *Great Pyramid of Giza*, a mass of limestone, granite, mortar, passageways and so on, is a concrete example. Its side view as a yellow triangle is part of its reality, but that is not the complete, concrete reality of course. Bergson laments the fact that

philosophers, originating with the Platonic tradition, had rightfully realized that our perception and conception of things were not faithful representations of how things actually were—but instead of viewing such representations as *partially correct*, they viewed them as *completely incorrect*, and thus parsed our reality into the illusory world of sense, and a transcendent realm.⁴⁷ In other words, there *is a mistaken tradition that the relation between appearance and reality is one of kind rather than one of degree*. We see this in Plato with the distinction between the sensed particulars of our world and the transcendent realm of Forms, in Descartes' presumption that the world we perceive may be purely the deception of an evil genius, and we see it in Kant's transcendental idealism with the distinction between phenomena and noumena, and the legacy continues into contemporary neuroscientific hypotheses that claim that the world we perceive is an illusion generated by the brain—an endogenous view of mind, in contradistinction to Bergson's exogenous view.

For Bergson, an abstraction is an incomplete aspect of an 'external object', or the 'internal object' that is 'pure memory', as we shall see. (I place these terms in scare quotes for reasons given below.) The faculty of perceiving reality beyond abstractions, a rare art for humans, Bergson calls 'intuition', in contrast to 'intellect'. Intuition as such is not opposed to intellect, but complementary thereto. One can differentiate *perceptual abstractions* from *conceptual abstractions*: the objects of perception and of conception. In discussing perceptual abstractions, Bergson makes use of an impossible but helpful notion: 'pure perception'. It is impossible because the notion excludes memory, and in concrete reality, perception must involve memory.

Pure Perception

It is hardly disputed that what we humans perceive is but a fragment of reality. We do not see ultraviolet, infrared, or in fact most electromagnetic frequencies. As Bergson argues, these aspects of Nature have not been of use in our evolutionary past, and thus we have not evolved to perceive them. Other creatures have. What we humans perceive, for the most, is that which we can *act upon*, that which is *useful for practical living*: 'we have selected ... everything which concerns our action upon things; we have neglected the rest.'⁴⁸ There are exceptions, Bergson makes clear, such as certain artists and mystics who may see reality beyond our general practical bent (our 'attention to life'). Where Bergson radically breaks from the Western tradition, however, as intimated, is related to the Platonic legacy of parsing appearance and reality. Bergson's profound idea is that—and this relates to Huxley's experience of the bamboo chair—'the relation between the "phenomenon" and the "thing" is not that of appearance to reality, but merely that of the part to the whole'.⁴⁹ In other words, *what we perceive is a real part (an abstraction) of the object which flows into the subject that we are*. The object fuses into the subject, thereby effecting an effacement of the traditional subject-object dichotomy. We do not represent, we absorb. There are two important background elements that make this fusion intelligible: process philosophy and the notion of material objects as 'images'.

Process Philosophy

Process philosophy—indebted perhaps to Heraclitus, but in more contemporary thought to Bergson and Whitehead—is essentially the idea that reality at the fundamental level is composed of events rather than things, processes rather than objects, movement rather than static substance. A fundamental tenet of Bergson's thought is: 'There are changes, but there are underneath the change no things which change: change has no need of support.'⁵⁰ Let us apply this to pure perception. When one sees an 'object', a flowing event is abstracted into this static 'object', and one is seeing of the entire event only that aspect which is practically useful. For instance, when I look at a star, I see it as a dot, and I may conceptualize it as a vast blazing sphere. But in reality, the star is a process and the starlight is part of that process. It is not as if there is a physical spherical object that fundamentally differs from the light it emits—it is all part and parcel of a grander process. Furthermore, when part of that starlight hits my retina, part of the process that is the star becomes part of the process that is me. The process continues through my brain and body as I exclaim vocally that I can see Sirius. The star becomes part of me; and, in the vast interstellar process of perception, I become part of that process, I become part of that star: 'we are really present in everything we perceive.'⁵¹ To divide the star, starlight, perceiver and vocalization is a mistake, albeit a useful mistake, that is human, all to human. There are no such cuts in reality, but thinking makes it seem so. Whitehead calls the division of processual reality into isolated 'things' 'the fallacy of simple location', crediting the idea to Bergson.⁵² Psychedelics may halt such prosaic human misconceptualizations of reality, thereby amplifying our sensed connection to Nature:⁵³ the flux of the environment that flows into us, becoming us, both physically and mentally.

Images

The second element in understanding the subject–object fusion in pure perception is the notion of material stuff as 'images'. In the starlight example I gave, one may protest that though the process from star to speech may be continuous and singular, the *colour* of the star cannot be part of that physical process. The colour, it might be suggested, must be generated in the brain, and thus be an emergent phenomenon—a distinct, orthogonal, emergent causal route, of that otherwise singular process. Such an objection of discontinuity, Bergson would argue, is one based on another old philosophical mistake: that of differentiating *primary qualities* (such as spatiality and mass) from *secondary qualities* (such as sounds, scents and shades).⁵⁴ Bergson says he is returning to the everyday 'common sense' view of things in asserting that matter itself contains secondary qualities, qualia, such as colours, rather than colour being purely a projection of our minds upon the material environment.⁵⁵ It is common sense insofar as it is the belief that the *grass itself is actually green* (as opposed to the belief that its greenness exists in our minds alone). Qualia are also external. An 'object' (or, really, event) therefore is a 'self-existing image';⁵⁶ its colour is not

dependent on our minds. In this regard, Bergson veers close to idealism, but veers away when we realize that matter, or material process, actually exists mind-independently yet with qualia. It is not materialism either, nor a neutral monism, nor a dualism in the Platonic or Cartesian senses. It might be compared to contemporary extended mind theories, though even then it differs from any particular variety.

We begin to see then that mind and matter here at least become integrated to a certain extent: ‘there is in matter something more than, but not something different from, that which is actually given [and] ... between this perception of matter and matter itself there is but a difference of degree and not of kind.’⁵⁷ We also begin to see here how another legacy of philosophic and scientific thought begins to break down in terms of unravelling assumptions: *the belief that the brain is a necessary and sufficient condition for consciousness*, or ‘neuroessentialism’. Is the green *in* the grass or *in* the skull, in both, or in neither? For Bergson, the brain is neither necessary nor sufficient for consciousness, the green can be part of the entire subject–object loop, part of the subject as memory, or self-extant within Nature. Extant external colours are perceived by the body, though the body may taint them.

The function of the brain, for Bergson, is to *funnel* and *channel*, ‘canalize’, external images, or qualial processes, into potential actions: ‘that which the brain explains in our perception is action begun, prepared or suggested, it is not perception itself’.⁵⁸ The more complex our brains, the more options, the more channels, we have in acting. So the *brain is necessary but not sufficient for functioning; but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for consciousness*. With this theory, we would of course expect to observe neural correlates of consciousness, as we do, yet we should not consider the relations one of emergence (of mind from matter), but of continued movement from external events (or from memory). There is therefore more in mind than in its neural correlates, in the respective figurative relation of an object to its shadow. It is impossible, Bergson claims, to derive consciousness from non-conscious (*panhylal*)⁵⁹ cerebral activity. Neural correlates of consciousness merely indicate the continuity of external action into *potential bodily behaviour started – not mentality generated*. Yet of more importance to the comprehension of consciousness is the role of memory.

Pure Memory

An emergentist objector may pose the following question: If perceptions do not emerge internally from neurological activity, how can it be that we perceive things with senses closed in dreams, imagination, and so on? An answer is that consciousness concretely in its very essence always involves *memory*, and pure recollected memory is perception without external sensation.

Bergson employs the notion of pure perception as a pedagogical tool. It is itself an abstraction, a part of the truth, a step on the stairway to comprehension. *In concreto*, conscious perception, in addition to the ‘images’ external (and in continuing the process, internal) to it, essentially involves memory. Thus, we move from spatial to temporal considerations.

Akin to 'self-existing images', memory (qualial rather than motor) also, for Bergson, has its own ontological existence, separate from its recollection, and separate from the brain. Bergson is very adamant in stating that the brain does not store memories, it merely facilitates their use. The brain, in other words, receives both: (1) external-to-internal 'images', filters away the impractical, and channels what is left on lines of virtual action; and (2) receives from memory what is practically useful, again filtering away what is not of practical utility. Everything that a person has ever experienced is never lost, only access to it can be lost. Everything that has ever happened to a person is an infused part of one process, one movement—that is *one's entire experienced life*. Much psychedelic-assisted therapy as well as related practices such as holotropic breathwork rely on the notion that seemingly lost, suppressed, often traumatic, memories can return to consciousness via altering one's prosaic state thereof. Let us therefore look into this idea in more detail.

The argument that memory exists in itself, beyond our present recollections—just as Sirius exists regardless of our perception or recollection of it—is dependent again upon our realization that we humans all too often reify abstractions into what we believe to be concrete realities—'the fallacy of misplaced concreteness',⁶⁰ as Whitehead calls it. Bergson applies such an understanding to the concept of the *present moment*. Just as a mathematical point in space is not spatial, so an 'instant' in time is not temporal. If an instant has no duration, it has no temporality, and thus many such instants cannot line up, as it were, to constitute the flow of time. An instant is not part of actual reality (except as a concept (like the aether) used by physicists and mathematicians). The present therefore cannot be an instant. One's present has a duration, and it is always a lived, experiential duration. Time is not a spatial line of instants ($t_1 \dots t_n$) but an experienced flow of change. This is Bergson's general contention with physics, and the basis of his disagreement with Einstein: *we wrongly privilege space over time*.

Abstracting time into instant parts on a spatial line may be useful for creating technology and predicting the future, but it is only a limited *model* of reality, not reality itself—the map is not the journey. The present cannot be an instant but rather has a duration which means it has a past. Now, importantly, *there is no absolute cut-off point between the present and the past*. If one were to impose such a cut, it would only be a conceptual abstraction, it would not be a real cut in reality. In reality, *one's past and one's present is one, undivided, flow of constant change*. 'The past' as differentiated from 'the present' is mere abstraction of this fundamental, singular flux. In Bergson's own words: 'You cannot draw a line between the past and the present, nor consequently between memory and consciousness.'⁶¹ Memory *is* the movement that *is* the past/present. *Words* distinguish elements within this flux, but in reality these elements are not discretely distinguished. There is change, flow, flux, of course. Our 'attention to life', our practical focus, collates the required aspects of sensory perception and memory *so to act*. This attentive duration we consider as the present. But a change in focus does not eliminate perceived objects or perceived past, their reality as processes continues to exist. Regardless, this present may span from a fraction of a second, to numerous seconds, and theoretically to over millions of years—there can be no objective 'present',⁶² and thus also no mind-independent

present: 'An attention to life, sufficiently powerful ... would thus include in an undivided present the entire past history of the conscious person.'⁶³ Bergson notes that such an extended present does actually occur as reported by those threatened with sudden death, experiencing what is today called panoramic memory: He writes:

[A] sharp conversion of the attention can take place – something like a change of orientation of the consciousness which, up until then, turned toward the future and absorbed by the necessities of action, suddenly loses all interest in them. That is enough to call to mind a thousand different “forgotten” details and to unroll the whole history of the person before him in a moving panorama.⁶⁴

Interestingly, in addition to near-death experiences, it seems that psychoactive drugs can also elicit such panoramic experiences, perhaps via a similar mechanism: *abrogating the practical will, the attention to life*. An eloquent example comes from Thomas de Quincey's celebrated 1821 memoir, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*:

The minutest incidents of childhood, or forgotten scenes of later years, were often revived ... I recognised them instantaneously. ... I feel assured, that there is no such thing as ultimate *forgetting*, traces once impressed upon the memory are indestructible; a thousand accidents may, and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind. Accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains for ever; just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day.⁶⁵

The past preserves itself: 'The past, like present objects, does not cease to exist when unperceived.'⁶⁶ There is therefore no requirement to posit a 'special faculty whose role is to retain quantities of past in order to pour it into the present. The past preserves itself automatically'.⁶⁷ That is to say that *it is a mistake to assume that the brain stores memory; memory stores itself*. This mistaken belief is in part a consequence of believing that the present is fundamentally distinct from the past, and so its recollection must be an emergent product of a *present object* (distinct from the past), namely the brain. A 'present object' as we saw, is an abstraction, and one cannot derive rich, concrete, lived experience ('duration') from such a supposed abstract entity. The mistake is also a product of the metaphysical theory of Emergentism: that experience somehow emerges from brain activity, and a mistake of neuroessentialism in general. For Bergson, *the past is as extant as the present brain* that is believed to store and recall it, so there is no need to call upon the latter to explain the former, as they are both extant. The brain, therefore, does not produce memory—the brain's role with regard to the past is to filter those aspects that are of practical utility, in line with its role in filtering external sensation.⁶⁸ The brain and nervous system is the reducing valve of the water flowing in from past and perceptual pipes; it does not produce water—just as one's computer does not produce the websites it peruses, despite correlations between the hardware and the presented screen content.

In summary: Just as there are no isolated things, so there are no isolated moments. The fallacy of simple location is the spatial equivalent of what one may call, a fallacy of simple temporality (fallacies of space and time, respectively). A material object extends beyond its visible lines; an experiential moment extends beyond its

conceptualized limits. Thus, as there is no real separation between, what we call the past and present, the entirety of one's experienced life—pure memory—exists because current experience exists, there is no ultimate division: 'reality is change, that change is indivisible, and that in an indivisible change the past is one with the present.'⁶⁹ Becoming, not Being, is reality. Our consciousness extends beyond the brain into things themselves and into the past, that is, our consciousness extends spatially and temporally. Yet further, there is an additional impulse in our consciousness that drives us creatively forward, as the next section will show.

For now, we see more clearly what Huxley was referring to in *The Doors* when he wrote, 'I was looking at my furniture, not as the utilitarian who has to sit on chairs, to write at desks and tables ... but as the pure aesthete';⁷⁰ or 'experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse';⁷¹ or further, 'I spent several minutes ... not merely gazing at those bamboo legs, but actually being them – or rather being myself in them; or, to be still more accurate (for "I" was not involved in the case, nor in a certain sense were "they") being my Not-self in the Not-self which was the chair'.⁷² For spatial perception, more of an object may flow into one, beyond what is practically necessary (as intuited in junctures of nature connectedness, empathy, aesthetics, etc.). For temporal perception, memories once filtered off for practical insignificance may flood back, to the panoramic extent. It seems, through this metaphysical outlook that strives to go beyond the human condition of practical thinking, that the psychedelic state can amplify the actual process of perceiving reality by ridding us of such a practical bent—via the disruption of the ordinary neurological canalization of events from the environment and the past—that reduces our perception of a greater reality, of a Mind-at-Large.

Mind-at-Large

What is it that is being filtered by our brain? Mind-at-Large. One can differentiate three aspects of the Mind-at-Large as it relates to Bergsonian thought, though in reality they are all interfused.⁷³ These aspects are the spatial, the temporal and the creative-divine. But before we consider the more specific Bergsonian interpretation of Mind-at-Large, let us first consider Huxley's general idea.

Huxley's General Concept of Mind-at-Large

It is certainly fair to say that Huxley's concept of Mind-at-Large is ambiguous, a reason for which is that he incorporated a vast array of positions into this single concept. Already in 1935, Huxley gave a paper (hitherto unpublished) at Dartington Hall in Devon, Britain—a utopian intellectual centre that served as inspiration to his last novel *Island*⁷⁴—where he used the term 'universe at large', saying that despite

attempts to find an ethical principle within it, ‘the universe seems to be perfectly unethical’.⁷⁵ In 1945, Huxley’s *The Perennial Philosophy* is published, wherein a plethora of global perspectives on what we would call mysticism are fused, arguing for a common core, transcultural experience—yet with a prioritizing of Eastern, particularly Vedantic perspectives. Near the start of the book, he quotes the eighth-/ninth-century Advaita Vedanta scholar, Shankara: ‘The nature of the one Reality must be known by one’s own clear spiritual perception ... the essence of Brahman [this one Reality] ... is Pure Consciousness.... Brahman is beyond time, space and the objects of sense-experience.’⁷⁶ This Pure Consciousness is also named, in the book, the Ground of all existence, the One, the Absolute and the Universal Mind. As we see with regard to the expressed existence ‘beyond time’, there is at this phase in Huxley’s thought, a precedence of Being over Becoming. In a later chapter, there is an explicit vehemence of the opposing view, with Bergsonism as an implicit target: ‘the enemies of the Perennial Philosophy [posit that] time and change are fundamental’.⁷⁷ As we have seen, in the subsequent decade, Huxley warms to, and incorporates into his own thought, Bergson’s philosophy that prioritizes time and change—as presented in *The Doors* of 1954. But by accepting now both Being and Becoming as fundamental, and thus both as essential to the fundamental reality, Mind-at-Large becomes an ambiguous, somewhat paradoxical concept: is Mind-at-Large eternal (timeless) or is it fundamentally temporal—or is there a way of harmonizing the two? Huxley never expressly registered this problem, let alone did he ever intellectually solve it.

But *experientially*, Huxley’s view of fundamental reality did enlarge due to further psychedelic experiences. We see in his letter to Humphrey Osmond, dated October the 24th, 1955—*after* both the publication of *The Doors*, and after the manuscript submission of *Heaven and Hell*—a letter that imparted Huxley’s third mescaline experience: ‘what came through the closed door was the realization ... the direct, total awareness ... of Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact.’⁷⁸ This same realization of Love, as the cosmic ultimate, recurred in Huxley’s first LSD experience, recounted to Osmond in a letter dated December the 23rd 1955. He writes that the ‘psychological effects, in my case, were identical with those of mescaline.... Love is the One, and that is why Atman⁷⁹ is identical with Brahman, and ... in spite of everything, the universe is all right’.⁸⁰ Huxley had intellectually posited, through quoting the thirteenth-century Sufi poet Rumi, that God was love in *The Perennial Philosophy*,⁸¹ but it had not been an experiential intuition till 1955, and so did not feature in his two openly psychedelic books. In that first LSD experiment, Huxley—joined by Gerald Heard and Al Hubbard—had listened to Bach’s B-minor suite. In describing its effect, one can perhaps glean a Bergsonian element of creativity seeping in to fuse with the Vedantic interpretation: ‘Bach was a revelation. [The symphonic pieces] were a manifestation, on the plane of art, of perpetual creation.’⁸²

Perpetual creation is a Bergsonian motif found throughout his work, and is the essential facet of Bergson’s notion of the divine. Moreover, the view that God is Love is also Bergsonian. In his last book, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson writes: ‘God is love, and the object of love: herein lies the whole

contribution of mysticism. ... [D]ivine love is not a thing of God: it is God Himself.'⁸³ Moreover, this God that is Love is manifest as 'creative energy'.⁸⁴ Let us explore this essential divine aspect of Mind-at-Large after we briefly elucidate what the spatial and temporal aspects of Mind-at-Large will mean from a Bergsonian perspective.

Spatial Aspect of the Mind-at-Large

When we looked at the idea of Pure Perception, we saw how Bergson, firstly, attributed to external physical objects so-called secondary qualities so to form the concept of 'image'. What we generally consider to be subjective qualities, such as colour, for Bergson are both subjective and objective. In this sense, what is generally considered mental qualities exist 'out there'—we thereby extend, enlarge, the concept of mind to include the external world. This is one factor that one may call Mind-at-Large. Indeed, Bergson himself writes, in *Matter and Memory*, that 'the material universe itself, defined as the totality of images is a kind of consciousness'.⁸⁵ Secondly, we saw how the subject-object dichotomy broke down further with the idea that they fused insofar as the relation between subject and object was one of part to whole, rather than representation to reality. Huxley became the bamboo legs, they became him—their separation was an abstraction that mescaline seemed to dissolve. In this respect as well, the mind penetrates into the world—*mind is at large*. One might picture consciousness as a layered sphere of smoke surrounded by other such spheres, all of which interpenetrate one another and thereby constitute, to greater or lesser extents, one another. The self, as such, is a matter of degree rather than kind—and the mind is thus *out there*.

Temporal Aspect of the Mind-at-Large

For Bergson, one's mind not only extends into space but also into time, into the past. One's experienced life, one's duration, as we saw, is one continuous movement. Separating that lived movement into instants, including the instant that could be called the present, may be practical for science and society but it is fundamentally an error. Time cannot be spatialized; the past has ontological existence; memory cannot be eliminated. As this past is an experienced, a mental, past, and as it has existence, the mind therefore extends into that past. We thus see, from a Bergsonian lens, *the mind at large in this past*. We could picture this as the aforementioned layered smoke sphere extending additional layers into the past—with the proviso that the word 'extend' here is a spatial metaphor that merely models rather than matches reality, as time is not space. Here we can realize the human condition of thinking naturally of time as, contra Minkowski and Einstein, a dimension of space—this is where Bergson's philosophy demands we think beyond this human condition.

Creative-Divine Aspect of the Mind-at-Large

Bergson argues that there is a creative vital impulse, an *élan vital*, that drives through the universe and as such drives evolution, and drives individual minds. In Bergson's 1907 book, *Creative Evolution*—where he makes the case for this impetus as necessary for understanding evolution more comprehensively—he states that this impulse is not that of vitalism, it is not mechanistic causation, and it is not teleological.⁸⁶ There is no cosmic designed ideal, *telos*—the future (unlike the past) does not exist. Yet the future cannot be determined as mechanistic laws of nature are only parochial tendencies, and mechanistic causation cannot account for mentality. There is, however, a general drive, impetus, which is the creative energy that Bergson calls God, which is Love: 'God's love ... is exactly that of the vital impetus; it is this impetus itself, communicated in its entirety to exceptional men.'⁸⁷ These men, these people, are the mystics (and to a lesser extent the artists, and to an extent still less to *all people who intuit* their creative impulses). Bergson mentions certain Christian mystics such as St Teresa, St Catherine of Sienna, Joan of Arc, yet also those of the East, with special regard to Hinduism. Bergson alludes to two core methods of the Indian mystics: yoga and the drug *soma*,⁸⁸ the term used in Huxley's *Island*. To gauge further Bergsonian inspiration to Huxley, we can see that in Bergson's final book of 1932, *The Two Sources*, Bergson writes that in William James' 'eyes, the [nitrous oxide] intoxication was presumably the occasion rather than the cause' of the mystical experience, continuing to write that the mechanism of action here was 'by an inhibition of what inhibited it, by the removing of an obstacle'.⁸⁹ Here we can trace the reducing valve–Mind-at-Large idea from Huxley to William James, via Bergson (however, as James and Bergson had corresponded and read each other's work, the influence is not linear).

In any case, using Huxley's term 'Mind-at-Large', we can equate Bergson's notion of it equally with Love, Creative Energy, *Élan Vital*/Vital Impetus, Mystical unitive experience (*unio mystica*), the drive of evolution, God. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson writes:

There are no things, there are only actions [i.e. process philosophy]... [But there is] a centre from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a fire-works display – provided, however, that I do not present this centre as a thing, but as a continuity of shooting out. God thus defined, has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom. Creation, so conceived, is not a mystery; we experience it in ourselves.⁹⁰

Bergson elsewhere identifies all active life with consciousness⁹¹ and identifies the vital impetus per se with a variety of consciousness: '[The] vital impetus of a creative evolution ... [that is] the energy precipitated through matter [is] of the same order as consciousness.'⁹² More directly, Bergson writes that 'human consciousness ... [is] related to a higher and vaster consciousness'.⁹³ Of course, for Bergson (and Huxley) God is Love, and Love can hardly be Love if it is not conscious, regardless of whether it is a human type of love.

So Bergson's Mind-at-Large is the conscious creative loving impetus that drives through the cosmos, and through our being—manifesting itself as inspiration to art,

to evolution, to mysticism. This cosmology is close to Pantheism, that God is the universe, but there are caveats that render such an epithet at the very least complicated, if not wrong. Though Bergson was accused of pantheism, and had his books banned by the monotheistic Church, Bergson himself explicitly refuted the charge.⁹⁴ We might begin to understand why when we consider the fact that Bergson maintained a dualism, as we have seen, between matter and spirit. But this dualism is, in my view, inherently incoherent within Bergson's thought.

The deific vital impetus pushes against matter, and it is this very adaptation to such material resistance that results in the various species of the cosmos, as he argues throughout *Creative Evolution*. In *Matter and Memory*, a dualism is explicitly stated as its title, and argued through its pages. However, to further complicate the issue, Bergson also inserts qualia into matter, saying, as we saw, that between the 'perception of matter and matter itself there is but a difference of degree and not of kind',⁹⁵ and thus that, as we saw, 'the material universe itself, defined as the totality of images is a kind of consciousness',⁹⁶ bringing him closer to Pantheism again. In my view, there is an inconsistent triad in Bergson's philosophy which accounts for this confusion. The points of the triad are perception, matter and memory. From these three points, two incompatible dualisms can be drawn. Dualism 1 divides perception-matter from Pure Memory. Dualism 2 divides perception-memory from matter. We cannot explore this inconsistency here, but I note that Whitehead's view of matter as itself organic, alive, in his 'philosophy of organism' would resolve this Bergsonian inconsistent triad from a double dualism into a parsimonious monism. In any case, one can begin to understand why Bergson was accused of pantheism, and why he denied it.⁹⁷ Huxley's version of Mind-at-Large, with its Brahmanic admixture, is more easily classed as Pantheism than Bergson's version of a divine consciousness driving through and creating, becoming, the world.⁹⁸

Summa

Huxley employs, via Broad, two Bergsonian tenets to understand his psychedelic experience, namely those that Huxley names the reducing valve and the Mind-at-Large. We saw that Broad's description of Bergsonism exaggerated in one clause the potentialities of the human mind in these respects. Yet we also explored how a fuller understanding of Bergson's thought can put us in securer stead to analyse psychedelic experience from a philosophy of mind radically distinct from contemporary assumptions. We can concisely contrast the Bergsonian view of mind to those of contemporary common Emergentism thus:

Bergsonian—Emergentist
 Exogenous—Endogenous
 Extended Mind—Neuroessentialist
 Eliminative—Productive
 Top-down—Bottom-up

Processual—Substantive
Creative—Nomological

We saw how the reducing valve aspect of this Bergsonian metaphysics of mind pertained to filtering away, eliminating, spatially from the environment and temporally from the past, that which is not of practical concern—an evolved valve that keeps us focused on living. We then saw how this reducing valve also stops us from being aware that the ‘object’ and the ‘subject’ are in reality interfused as an event: the object is in truth a process that continues into the subject, thereby constituting one single looped movement. Moreover, the ‘external’ elements of this process (‘external objects’ as ‘images’) are qualial rather than panhylal. This qualial externality that is absorbed-by-thus-constitutive-of a perceiver is moreover also interfused by the extant past, as the perceived present is really an abstraction that in concrete reality is part of the perceiver’s past. So the mind extends outwards and backwards, as it were. Upwards we find in Bergson a creative divinity that infuses its Love down into inspiration, aesthetics, evolution, consciousness, into life itself. In this exogenous philosophy of mind, mind is at large yet reduced away—unless psychedelics stop such reduction to open up those narrow chinks. Huxley invited us to think of the psychedelic experience in this way, and in fact Bergson himself wanted the continuation of the exploration of altered states. As he wrote to William James, having conveyed his own psychedelic-like dream trip,⁹⁹ such experiential metaphysics ‘opens up great perspectives for us’.¹⁰⁰

Notes

1. Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (London: Vintage, (2004 [1954, 1956]).
2. See especially the work of Oxford religion scholar R. C. Zaehner for critique.
3. Consider Huxley’s face on The Beatles’ Sgt. Pepper’s album, or Jim Morrison’s band The Doors, named after the book. See Dana Sawyer, *Aldous Huxley: A Biography* (Maine: Trillium Press, (2014 [2002]), pp. 174f.
4. ‘Psychonaut’ was coined in by German writer, friend of Albert Hofmann, Ernst Jünger in 1949, and used again in 1970 (Ernst Jünger, *Approaches: Drugs and Altered States*, trans. Thomas Friese (Candor NY: Telos Press, 2022 [1970]) to denote those who explored their mind as astronauts explore the cosmos.
5. A movement creating what is sometimes, contestably, referred to as ‘Neo-Vedanta’. See Jeffrey A. Breau & Paul Gillis-Smith, “Psychometric *brahman*, psychedelic science: Walter Stace, transnational Vedanta, and the Mystical Experience Questionnaire,” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 48, No. 5 (2023), 788–806. 10.1080/03080188.2023.2266322.
6. Sawyer, op. cit., pp. 88ff. Huxley moved from the UK to the US in 1937 and stayed there till his death in 1963.
7. The word ‘Advaita’ in Advaita Vedanta is often translated as ‘non-dualism’.
8. Huxley, op. cit., p. 48.
9. John R. Smythies, “The Mescaline Phenomenon,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 3, no. 12, pp. 339–347.

10. Huxley, op. cit., p. 2.
11. It was Osmond who gave Huxley the mescaline.
12. John R. Smythies, *Analysis Of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2013 [1956]). See also Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, *Modes of Sentience: Psychedelics, Metaphysics, Panpsychism* (London: Psychedelic Press, 2021), pp. 155–186.
13. Huxley, op. cit., p. 7. Note, however, that in the sequel to *The Doors*, in *Heaven and Hell* (1956), Huxley is more sympathetic to Plato quoting the visionary experience from the *Phaedo*.
14. For a briefer Bergsonian interpretation of psychedelic experience in general, see Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, *Noumenautics: Metaphysics – Meta-ethics – Psychedelics* (Falmouth: Psychedelic Press, 2015), pp. 23–32.
15. Not only does this cohere with his Vedantic sympathies to the notion of Brahman but also to the Spinozist and German idealist tendencies (especially Kant and Hegel's) that had infused into the English-speaking world and the augmentations of 'mysticism' via William James and the Absolute Idealists (notably F. H. Bradley) and their notion of 'The Absolute'.
16. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (New York: Dover, 1994 [c. 1794]), p. 36.
17. In a letter dated May the 9th, 1908, to William James, Bergson writes: 'It was the analysis of the notion of time ... which revolutionized all my ideas. I realized, to my great amazement, that scientific time has no duration' (Keith Ansell-Pearson & John Mullarkey, eds. *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 362).
18. Thomas H. Huxley, "On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History," *The Fortnightly Review* 16 (1874), pp. 555–580.
19. Respectively: William James, "Are We Automata?," *Mind* 4, no. 13 (1879), 1–22; F. H. Bradley, (1895) "On the Supposed Uselessness of the Soul," *Mind* 4, no. 14 (1895), 176–179; Karl Popper, "Natural Selection and the Emergence of Mind," *Dialectica* 32, no. 3/4 (1978), pp. 339–355.
20. Popper, op. cit., p. 350.
21. Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Bergson," *The Monist* 22, No. 3 (1912), 321–347.
22. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012 [1907]).
23. See Jimena Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the Debate That Changed Our Understanding of Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
24. Mark Taylor, "Aldous Huxley's Late Turn to Bergson and *Island* as Bergsonian Utopia," *Utopian Studies* 29, no. 3 (2018), 362–379. (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press), p. 364.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
26. Aldous Huxley, "Some Reflection on Time" In: Christopher Isherwood (ed.) *Vedanta for Modern Man* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1952), pp. 118–120. p. 120.
27. Aldous Huxley, Letter to Dr. Humphry Osmond, April the 10th 1953. In: Michael Horowitz & Cynthia Palmer (eds.) *Moksha: Aldous Huxley's Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1977), pp. 29–30.

28. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (New York: Dover, 1994 [c. 1794]), p. 36. Note that this poem itself is inspired as a response to Swedenborg's book, commonly known as *Heaven and Hell*, wherein the metaphor of the door and cavern are already used: 'The gates and doors of the heavenly societies are visible only to those who are prepared.... The gates and doors of hell [are] ... gloomy and seemingly sooty caverns are seen' (Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1989 [1758]), p. 315 (§429).
29. Note that Huxley's endorsement of Bergsonism occurred *before* his first meso-line experience, to which the previously referenced letter to Osmond, dated April the 10th, 1953, attests.
30. Huxley, 2004 [1954, 1956]). Op. cit., p. 6. My italics.
31. Ibid. p. 9.
32. Ibid., p. 10.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Adrian Webb, "Nested hermeneutics: Mind at Large as a curated trope of psychedelic experience," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 48, no. 5 (2023). 10.1080/03080188.2023.2249208.
36. Charles Dunbar Broad, "The relevance of psychical research to philosophy," *The journal of the Royal Institute of philosophy* 24, no. 91 (1949), pp. 291–309.
37. Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Dover, 2007 [1934]), p. 19.
38. Huxley's second wife, Laura Huxley, wrote in 1962 that 'Aldous often mentioned the Bergson theory – that our brain and nervous system are not the source of our ideas, but rather a reducing valve through which Mind-at -Large trickles only the kind of information that is necessary for us to survive on this planet'. Horowitz & Palmer, op. cit., p. 223.
39. Huxley, 2004 [1954, 1956]). Op. cit., p. 95 (Appendix I).
40. A term coined by Romain Roland referring to an intuitive flash of Spinozism, borrowed and made popular by Freud. See Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, "The White Sun of Substance: Spinozism and the Psychedelic amor Dei intellectualis." In: Christine Hauskeller, and Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, (eds.) *Philosophy and Psychedelics: Frameworks for Exceptional Experience* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 211–235.
41. Huxley, 2004 [1954, 1956]). Op. cit., p. 59.
42. Ibid., p. 77.
43. In a letter to Margaret Isherwood dated August the 12th, 1959, Huxley writes: 'This matter of drugs and mystical experience was discussed years ago by Bergson in *The Two Sources* ... apropos of Wm James and laughing gas.' (Grover Smith (ed.) *Letters of Aldous Huxley* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 874.
44. Bergson, Henri, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991 [1896]), pp. 174f: '[With] toxic drugs ... [a] disturbance [of sensori-motor relations may] cause memory and attention to lose contact with reality. ... [T]hey often feel a sensation of strangeness, or, as they say, of 'unreality', as if the things they perceived had for them lost solidity and relief ... the sense of the real grows weaker, or disappears.' Bergson also corresponded with William James about mystical experiences occasioned by drugs (see Pearson & Mullarkey, op. cit. pp. 357–365).

45. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra & Cloudsley Brereton. (London: Macmillan, 1935 [1932]), pp. 272f. My italics.
46. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (New York: Prometheus Books, (2004 [1920]), p. 171.
47. Bergson, (2007 [1911]), op. cit., pp. 114ff.
48. Ibid. p. 114.
49. Bergson (1991 [1896]), op. cit., p. 230.
50. Bergson (2007 [1911]), op. cit., p. 122.
51. Bergson (1935 [1932]), op. cit. p. 222.
52. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, (1935 [1925]), p. 74 (ch. III).
53. Sam Gandy, Matthias Forstmann, Robin Lester Carhart-Harris, Christopher Timmerman, David Luke and Rosalind Watts, "The potential synergistic effects between psychedelic administration and nature contact for the improvement of mental health," *Health Psychology Open* 7, no. 2 (2020), pp. 1–20.
54. A term coined by Robert Boyle in 1666, but more associated with the later thought of John Locke.
55. Whitehead, it can be noted, goes even further when attributing *emotion* into our material milieu.
56. Bergson, (1991 [1896]), op. cit., p. 10.
57. Ibid., p. 71.
58. Ibid., p. 225.
59. 'Panhylism' is the pure physicalist view that there is no mentality in matter at all. It is a useful term, despite it appearing to be a synonym for physicalism, because certain philosophers, such as Galen Strawson, argue that panpsychism is a type of physicalism—whereas panpsychism could not be a type of panhylism.
60. Whitehead (1935 [1925]), op. cit., p. 75. Note that the Fallacy of Simple Location is *a type of* Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.
61. Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1920 [1912]), p. 69.
62. There is also no objective, mind-independent time rate, or what Bergson calls 'rhythm of duration'. A second for me may be experienced as an hour for another entity—there is no fact of the matter.
63. Bergson (2007 [1911]), op. cit., p. 127.
64. Ibid.
65. Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1994 [1821]), pp. 236ff).
66. Bergson (1991 [1896]), op. cit., p. 142.
67. Bergson (2007 [1911]), op. cit., p. 128.
68. "The brain ... does not serve to preserve the past, but primarily to mask it, then to allow only what is practically useful to emerge" (Bergson (1920 [1912]), op. cit., p. 71).
69. Bergson (2007 [1911]), op. cit., p. 130.
70. Huxley, 2004 [1954, 1956]), op. cit., p. 10.
71. Ibid. p. 9.
72. Ibid., p. 10. Compare Bergson (1935 [1932], op. cit.): 'we are really present in everything we perceive' (p. 222).

73. Language relies on separating the interfused into abstractions so that we can communicate.
74. Anna Neima, *Practical Utopia: The Many Lives of Dartington Hall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), p. 76.
75. Aldous Huxley, Talk (untitled) given at Dartington Hall, introduced by Leonard Knight Elmhirst (unpublished, February the 10th, 1935), p. 5.
76. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper, (2009 [1945]), p. 6.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
78. Smith, op. cit., p. 769.
79. *Atman*, n. “The self or soul; the supreme principle of life in the universe.”—*Oxford English Dictionary*.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 779.
81. Huxley (2009 [1945]), op. cit., p. viii.
82. Smith, op. cit. p. 779. Compare Bergson’s speaking of Beethoven’s divine creative inspiration (in Bergson (1935 [1932]), op. cit., pp. 216f.
83. Bergson (1935 [1932]), op. cit., p. 216.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 218, 220.
85. Bergson (1991 [1896]), op. cit. p. 235.
86. Bergson (1935 [1932]), op. cit, pp. 42ff.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 200f.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
90. Bergson (2012 [1907]), op. cit., p. 248.
91. All life that has not been automated is conscious. Thus, for Bergson, animals have consciousness, but not plants, except in rare occasions.
92. Bergson (1935 [1932]), op. cit., p. 213.
93. Bergson (2007 [1934]), op. cit., pp. 102f. (From an essay of 1911 in the 2007 [1934] volume.)
94. King-Ho Leung, “Bergson, Pan(en)theism, and ‘Being-in-Life,” *Sophia* 62 (2023), pp. 293–307.
95. Bergson (1991 [1896]), op. cit., p. 71.
96. Bergson (1991 [1896]), op. cit. p. 235.
97. Nils Bjorn Kvastad defines Bergson as a ‘Partial Pantheist’, with reference to the *élan vital*: Nils Bjorn Kvastad, “Pantheism and Mysticism,” *Sophia* 14 (1970), pp. 19–30 (p. 5).
98. If the essence of the cosmos is a creative drive, one may ask, To Where? Though it does not concern us directly in this text, the answer is to the continual empowerment of organisms to the status of overmen and gods. ‘It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call ... *man* or *superman*, had sought to realize himself...’ (Bergson (2012 [1907]), op. cit., p. 266, italics inverted). Ultimately, as the last lines of Bergson’s last book tell us, there exists an ‘essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods.’ (Bergson (1935 [1932]), op. cit., p. 275)
99. ‘I believed myself to be present before a superb spectacle – generally the site of a landscape of intense colours, through which I was travelling at high speed and which gave me such a profound impression of reality that I could not believe, during the first moments of waking up, that it was a simple dream.’ (Pearson & Mullarkey, op. cit. p. 365. Letter to William James dated April the 30th 1909.)
100. *Ibid.*