

## Chapter 6

### MAKING YOUR SOUL VISIBLE

*Michael Halewood*

In this chapter, I will take the term *psychedelic* at face value. Rather than starting with the usual connotations of the word ‘psychedelic’, in terms of ‘altered states of consciousness’ or ‘hallucination’, I will use the work of A. N. Whitehead to investigate what is involved in ‘making one’s soul visible’, at the philosophical level at least. The recent coinage of this term is an advantage in this respect, in that the choice to meld two terms – *psyche* (‘soul’ or ‘mind’) and *delos* (‘make visible’ or ‘manifest’) was both deliberate and perhaps provocative. I want to argue that instead of regarding the psychedelic as some kind of rare or exceptional phenomenon, the seeds of psychedelic experience are located within the very possibility of human experience. That is to say, psychedelic experiences are not ‘add-ons’ to everyday experience but represent an intensification of that which is present or possible within the experience of being human. Focusing upon this intensification of possible experience is what I mean by both ‘making the soul visible’ and the psychedelic, as will hopefully become clearer as the chapter unfolds.

There are various reasons for the choice of Whitehead. First, although he does not have a theory of the soul, as such, throughout his writings he makes use of this term to outline the spontaneity involved in being a person. His choice of the term ‘soul’, as opposed to that of ‘mind’ enables him to avoid some of the pitfalls and strictures of traditional approaches to the philosophy of mind. Although he does not deny the existence of consciousness, Whitehead does not prioritise it or see it as foundational: ‘consciousness is the crown of experience, only occasionally attained, not its necessary base.’<sup>1</sup> Second, the choice of ‘soul’ is unexpected, perhaps it even carries a risk, in that it might suggest some unwanted theological legacy. At the very least, it is designed to make us stop and think. In this way, a further advantage of focusing on the soul, as opposed to consciousness, is that we may assume that we know what we mean by consciousness, but we are surely less certain when it comes to the soul. This trepidation is to be welcomed. (And as may become clear throughout this chapter, perhaps we should also be less confident

1. Whitehead, [1929] 1978, p. 267.

that we actually know what is involved in consciousness; this is especially pertinent if we are interested in something like ‘altered states of consciousness’). Third, and as indicated by the quotation given above, for Whitehead, what matters is *experience*. Philosophy, in its modern quest for knowledge and truth, has tended to ignore the breadth of experience which makes up human life. Whitehead gently mocks the narrowing of philosophy to questions of truth and falsehood as follows: ‘It is difficult to believe that all logicians as they read Hamlet’s speech, “To be, or not to be: . . .” commence by judging whether the initial proposition be true or false, and keep up the task of judgment throughout the whole thirtyfive lines.’<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest that Whitehead thought that logic was irrelevant or impossible; symbolic logic was Whitehead’s first and enduring academic interest after all. Whitehead aims to broaden the scope of philosophy so that it can accomplish its original remit and to encompass *more* not less. Clarifying how this applies to matters of the psychedelic is one aim of this chapter.

Whitehead is at pains, throughout his work, to refuse any divisions between a supposedly factual world and its epiphenomenal ‘perception’ by the human mind. He calls this unwarranted and problematic division the ‘bifurcation of nature’ (see, for example, Whitehead, 1964: 19–30) which ‘enfeebles [modern thought] by reason of the inconsistency lurking in the background’.<sup>3</sup> Whitehead’s approach can be likened to John Dewey’s refusal to make a strict division between the world and experience, in order not to explain away certain unlikely or unwanted experiences as ‘supernatural’. As Dewey puts it, if the facticity of the world is given priority and separated from the emotional, physical or cognitive reactions made to such facticity then ‘psycho-physical and mental functions became inexplicable anomalies, supernatural in the literal sense of the word.’<sup>4</sup> The literal sense of ‘supernatural’ is ‘above’ or ‘beyond’ of nature. The separation of a factual nature from the ‘psychic addition[s] furnished by the perceiving mind’<sup>5</sup> has led to a range of experiences, including those of the psychedelic, being dismissed by philosophy as lacking any grounding in reality and therefore as irrelevant. They are mere fictions, they are *super-natural*. This chapter will follow Whitehead’s lead, by attempting to place psychedelic experience *within* ‘nature’ rather than above or beyond it. Psychedelic experience does not grant access to some hidden realm but does express an intensification of an aspect of possible human experience. This refusal to set a hierarchy to experience is set out in Whitehead’s surprising assertion that ‘Philosophy may not neglect the multifariousness of the world the fairies dance, and Christ is nailed to the cross.’<sup>6</sup> Whitehead is not concerned, at this stage, with the truth or falsehood of either fairies or Christ (whether they exist or not); but to deny that belief in fairies or Christ is a possible element of human experience

2. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

3. Whitehead [1925] 1932, p. 94.

4. Dewey, [1925] 1958, p. 265.

5. Whitehead, [1920] 1964, pp. 29–30.

6. Whitehead, 1978, p. 338.

which philosophy should be able to encompass is to place overly strict limits on thought and life.

This chapter is divided into five sections. It will start by providing more detail on Whitehead's concept of the soul, it will then turn, briefly, to Whitehead's attempt to both narrow the scope and field of consciousness and to render it as a 'positive negation'. This leads to a discussion of 'propositions' which is then used to consider the philosophical status of the psychedelic through the notion of 'entertainment'. The chapter concludes with a word of caution regarding the question of making our souls visible.

### 1 Re-approaching the Soul

Although the first main chapter of Whitehead's book *Adventures of Ideas* is titled 'The Human Soul',<sup>7</sup> he does not provide an explicit definition of the soul. Instead, Whitehead sets out the ongoing problem of the status of the soul, since the time of Plato, remarking that in Plato's later works the 'Psyche is, of course, the Soul'.<sup>8</sup> This identification of *psyche* with the soul is important for the purposes of this chapter. In Ancient Greece, *psyche* was also the word used for butterfly and the connotation of flitting is apt. For, as Whitehead puts it: 'spontaneity is the essence of soul'.<sup>9</sup> The soul expresses novelty. It is not an enduring entity which inhabits the human mind or body; it is an aspect of our existence which enables us to go beyond the mere contemplation of fact, or judgements of truth and falsehood: 'the soul of a man [sic] is mainly concerned with the trivialities of existence [...] it catches the gleam of the sunlight as it falls on the foliage. It nurtures poetry'.<sup>10</sup> While Whitehead uses the word 'trivialities' here, this does not mean that these elements of existence are trivial, in any demeaning sense. Indeed, they are of the utmost importance, for the enjoyment of a gleam of sunlight, the very existence of poetry, are vital elements which constitute us as human. This is not some simplistic recourse to questions of beauty and art, however. If it were, Whitehead would be reiterating the traditional split between science and the humanities, between facts and values, indeed to the bifurcation of nature, which has dogged much of recent Western thought. The role that Whitehead assigns to the soul is beyond fact or value.

Both logic and aesthetics concentrate on the closed fact. Our lives are passed in the experience of disclosure. As we lose this sense of disclosure, we are shedding that mode of functioning which is the soul.<sup>11</sup>

7. Whitehead, 1933, pp. 11–31.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 354.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

10. Whitehead, 1938, pp. 42–43.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Rather than being an enduring entity, the soul is a 'mode of functioning'. It is exhibited in moments of 'disclosure', which could also be read as 'revelation'. These moments of sheer disclosure bypass the operations of rationality or reason. They are the immediate experience of something new. 'These functionings of the soul are diverse, variable, and discontinuous.'<sup>12</sup> As a result, it is not 'a mere question of having a soul or of not having a soul. The question is, How much, if any?'.<sup>13</sup> We do have souls but only on occasions. A better way of putting it might be that we are occasionally soulful.<sup>14</sup> Quite what it means to have an occasional soul, and how this links to the notion of the psychedelic will be taken up in the sections which follow. The key point to remember at this stage, is Whitehead's linking of the soul to *psyche*, and his opening up of a crucial arena of human experience which does not rely on the operations or priority of reason, rationality or consciousness. At the same time, some analysis of Whitehead's outline of consciousness is required.

## 2 Narrowing Consciousness

Consciousness flickers; and even at its brightest, there is a small focal region of clear illumination, and a large penumbral region of experience which tells of intense experience in dim apprehension. The simplicity of clear consciousness is no measure of the complexity of complete experience. Also this character of our experience suggests that consciousness is the crown of experience, only occasionally attained, not its necessary base.<sup>15</sup>

Consciousness is not the foundation or base of human experience. Rather, it is an occasional outcome of other experiences. Unlike those philosophers, especially some philosophers of mind, who seek to isolate and understand consciousness as either the guarantor of experience and knowledge, Whitehead has a different starting point, for, as he makes clear: 'Experience has been explained in a thoroughly topsyturvy fashion, the wrong end first'.<sup>16</sup> What interests Whitehead is the 'large penumbral region of experience', out of which consciousness intermittently arises and flickers. Importantly, although in partial shadow ('penumbral') that region of experience which is not clearly illuminated by consciousness is still an effectual and 'intense' experience, albeit dimly apprehended. I will return to the importance of intensity later on; what is worth noting at present is that Whitehead's decision not to start his investigation with the question or notion of consciousness enables his philosophy to take seriously phenomena such as hallucinations, without reducing them to 'mistakes'.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

13. Whitehead, 1933, p. 267.

14. See Halewood, 2016, for more on this.

15. Whitehead, 1929, p. 267.

16. Whitehead, 1978, p. 161.

The seed of consciousness, according to Whitehead, lies in the experience of a contrast between what is and what might be: 'the feeling of this contrast is consciousness'.<sup>17</sup> Consciousness is an experience, one which needs to be explained, not assumed. To reiterate: Whitehead describes the experience of consciousness as an experience of a *contrast* between what is and what might be. Crucially, this notion of 'what might be' involves both potentiality and a very specific form of negation. Having a (conscious) perception of the world in which things are perceived simply as they are ('I see a grey stone') does not exemplify the full operations of consciousness. Having a perception of the world which involves experiencing, or experimenting with, alternatives is the core of conscious activity: 'negative perception is the triumph of consciousness. It finally rises to the peak of free imagination, in which the conceptual novelties search through a universe in which they are not datively exemplified'.<sup>18</sup> This mention of 'negative perception' does not lead Whitehead down any neo-Hegelian dialectic, where consciousness has to move out of itself, to recognize an 'other' (consciousness) which it is not, in order to constitute itself as a self. Whitehead's version of negation is a 'positive' one. The recognition that the grey stone did not have to be grey (to take Whitehead's rather banal example) unleashes a wealth of alternatives, of other possibilities, of potentiality. This grey stone could have been white, or brown, or pink, or covered in red polka dots and images of dancing elephants. This is the triumph of consciousness, that it can narrow in on what something could *not* have been – and this leads to a host of other possibilities. In this way, Whitehead grants conscious experience and hallucinations the same ontological basis and justification. Rather than envisaging consciousness as the accurate capturing or depiction of the world, consciousness is the occasional recognition of the role and importance of potentiality, of things possibly being what they are not. This can be linked to the operations of the soul as an element which both enables and enhances the operations of consciousness; in that it invokes a spontaneity which can bring what might first appear trivial to the centre of attention.

Whitehead 'conceives the thought as a constituent operation in the creation of the occasional thinker'.<sup>19</sup> As with the soul, he does not see thinking or consciousness as a continuous or substantial entity; instead, it is an occasional experience, arising out of more basic modes of thinking, feeling and bodily functioning.

This has implications for a notion which, for many commentators, is a marker of the psychedelic, namely, the notion of 'altered states of consciousness'. Whitehead would not deny the possibility of psychedelic experiences involving altered states of consciousness but would to change the emphasis by asking us to approach the matter the other way around. It is not so much a matter of consciousness being altered, but altered experiences producing different moments of consciousness. In a sense, for Whitehead, consciousness is premised on alteration and is always

17. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

18. Whitehead, 1928, p. 161.

19. Whitehead, 1978, p. 151.

altered. It is the more fundamental experience of the potentiality, and the extension of this aspect, prior to any conscious judgement, which characterizes the psychedelic. Consciousness never remains the same; this is its strength, that it is the product of novel experiences and thoughts, it bears witness to the inescapable novelty which suffuses existence, the world, and life. It does so through the operations of an occasional soul which expresses and enables spontaneity.

The following section will revisit the role of spontaneity in terms of novelty and potentiality through a discussion of Whitehead's very specific rendering of the philosophical term 'propositions'.

### 3 *The World Pro-Poses Itself*

For Whitehead, the term 'proposition' is a technical one and his choice of this specific word is instructive. In early twentieth-century philosophy, when Whitehead was writing, the term 'proposition' was widely used but hotly disputed by the likes of Bertrand Russell, the early Wittgenstein and members of the Vienna Circle. As is often the case, Whitehead takes a word, one which we might think we are familiar with, and reorientates it. Within analytic philosophy, 'propositions' refer to the thought content of a statement or sentence.

Propositions are characterised as true or false and do not consist of words although they are expressed in words. The same proposition can be expressed in different sentences . . . while the same sentence can be used to express different propositions.<sup>20</sup>

Whitehead recognizes this shade of meaning of 'propositions' but argues that it points to only one aspect of their status and function. Whitehead insists that: 'in the realization of propositions, "judgement" is a very rare component, and so is "consciousness"'.<sup>21</sup> Once again, philosophy's focus on truth and falsehood misses out much that needs and should be included.

The key to this idea (and to Whitehead's choice of the word 'propositions') is that reality pro-poses itself to us. Existence is not mute or inert; it is replete with possibilities and these are evidenced in the propositions in which we find ourselves immersed. The world offers itself to us, in various ways (it *pro-poses* itself). It is a marker of the importance of the concept of propositions that Whitehead returns to them again and again in *Process and Reality*. The actualities of the world are not passive, not something we are given in a brute manner. They are not simple facts. There is more to knowledge than a simple judgement as to the truth or falsehood of a proposition. This 'is one of the reasons why the logicians' rigid alternative,

20. Mitchell, 1964, p. 13.

21. Whitehead, 1978, p. 184.

“true” or “false,” is so largely irrelevant for the pursuit of knowledge.<sup>22</sup> There is more to knowledge and experience than truth and falsehood.

A thought is a tremendous mode of excitement. Like a stone thrown into a pond it disturbs the whole surface of our being.<sup>23</sup> Whitehead challenges the commonplace understanding of such an instance, where we identify the stone as a simple object which causes certain disturbances or ripples in us subjects. Instead, we need to take these both together, as one ‘event’. So much so that ‘we should conceive the ripples as effective in the creation of the plunge of the stone into the water.’<sup>24</sup> Or, as Stengers puts it: ‘To ask for the meaning of a proposition is to confuse the creation of the stone-plus-ripples event with a deduction of the ripples from the stone’s impact.’<sup>25</sup> Propositions do not have a specific meaning. The whole point of the notion of ‘propositions’ is to clarify the possible contrasts between what ‘is’ and ‘what could be’. Such experiences, such thoughts, come all together, at once. The plunging of the stone cannot, on this occasion, be separated from the ripples which it elicited. They are part of the same event. In this sense, the ripples created the plunge of the stone as much as the stone created the ripples.

Whitehead shifts the emphasis from truth and falsehood to the quality of experience. In doing so, he democratizes and broadens the range of possible experiences. He also links thought to excitement and maintains that such excited thought can ‘disturb the whole surface of our being’. In doing so, as will be seen in a later section of this chapter, he paves the way for an inclusion of psychedelic experience within philosophy, one which deals not with stones, ponds, and ripples, but with more unusual versions of the world.

To return to propositions – they require to be felt, rather than simply thought or judged as true or false. We need to ‘substitute the broad notion of “feeling” for the narrower notions of “judgement” and “belief”’.<sup>26</sup> When we are faced with an actuality, a situation, an event, we do not just calmly and passively assess it. We feel it. ‘A proposition is entertained when it is admitted into feeling. Horror, relief, purpose, are primarily feelings involving the entertainment of propositions.’<sup>27</sup> I will return to the notion of entertainment below, after turning to the distinction between conformal and non-conformal propositions.

#### 4 Entertaining Propositions and the Psychedelic

The role of propositions is to account for the ‘flash of novelty among the appetitions of its [a living occasion’s] mental pole’<sup>28</sup> and this mention of novelty and spontaneity

22. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

23. Whitehead, 1938, p. 50.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Stengers, 2005, p. 53.

26. Whitehead, 1978, p. 187.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

28. *Ibid.*, 184.

should remind us of the role of the soul in Whitehead's work. For Whitehead, what he calls 'non-conformal' propositions are more important, and more interesting, than conformal propositions. An example might help explain Whitehead's point.

Someone is looking for a corkscrew in order to open a bottle of wine. They look around the kitchen and are unable to see one, they keep looking and keep looking. The person's friends are waiting in the other room. This person looks around again and sees a knife on the table, momentarily they mistake the knife for a corkscrew and pick it up. They then realize that it is not a corkscrew but realize that they could use it anyway to open the wine. This they manage to do. This situation or event is an example of a non-conformal proposition being realized. The knife is not a corkscrew; in this sense, an error or mistake has been made. This error, however, leads to the sheer disclosure or revelation that the knife could act as a corkscrew and could change the world which this person currently inhabits (the wine can be opened). This revelation, this novelty, is an example of the operation of Whitehead's version of the soul (as discussed previously). What was initially an error unleashes potentiality in the world and the occasion and produces a novel outcome. Again, this is one role of the soul. Whitehead is against the traditional (logical) view that 'non-conformal propositions are merely wrong, and therefore worse than useless.'<sup>29</sup> As such, a non-conformal proposition 'may be good or bad. But it is new, a new type of individual, and not merely a new intensity of individual feeling'.<sup>30</sup> The main point of non-conformal propositions is to 'pave the way along which the world advances into novelty'.<sup>31</sup>

Whitehead maintains that philosophy has, on the whole, ignored the role and importance of non-conformal propositions. Instead, it has focused upon what he calls 'conformal propositions'. These are the kind of propositions that philosophers have assessed in terms of their truth or falsehood; they are especially appealing to logicians:

The fact that propositions were first considered in connection with logic, and **the** moralistic preference for true propositions, have obscured the rôle of propositions in the actual world.<sup>32</sup>

A conformal proposition replicates the past. This is what makes it true. 'That is a grey stone' is a proposition in which both the stone conforms (it *is* grey) and so does the statement itself ('that stone is grey'). This may allow logicians to ply their trade but this is not, according to Whitehead, either very interesting or indeed a reflection of the complexities of experience and existence. Conformal propositions conform to the past and to the world as it is now. In doing so, they do not exhibit the novelty which Whitehead is at pains to insert into both his philosophy and the

29. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, p. 259.



world. Non-conformal propositions are therefore vital, in that they express a range of possibilities. They allow for a consideration of what might be but is not, as yet. For, when 'a non-conformal proposition is admitted into feeling, the reaction to the datum has resulted in the synthesis of fact with . . . alternative potentiality'.<sup>33</sup>

Another of Whitehead's examples is more telling of the role of non-conformal propositions than that of a corkscrew. He mentions the Battle of Waterloo: 'the possibilities of another course of history which would have followed upon his [Napoleon's] victory, [which] are relevant to the facts which actually happened'.<sup>34</sup> The Battle of Waterloo did not simply happen. It is not a dead fact of history, in the past, which has had its effect on European history and politics. It is still, in a sense, alive. That which did not happen constitutes a penumbra of possibilities which still surround and infect the modern states of Europe. What was not the case, what is not the case, is neither a negation nor negligible for current and future experience. The possible and the potential haunt our world and our lives. To risk repeating the point; this is something that has been neglected by much of philosophy, and this neglect makes it difficult to allow for or to take seriously the role and status of psychedelic experience. In order to allow for such experiences, we need to allow for our soulfulness, on occasions at least, in order to be able to account for the novelty and spontaneity which clearly inhabit the world but which philosophy has traditionally found so difficult to explain. This soul does not have to be taken in any religious or theological sense about as enabling philosophy to incorporate and take seriously *all* the possible experiences and perceptions which humans have the capacity to enjoy or endure. It is now time to turn to a more direct discussion of such matters.

## 5 Entertainment

Throughout his discussions of propositions, Whitehead makes extensive use of the word 'entertain'.<sup>35</sup> This is a slightly unusual usage of the term and refers to its root meaning, that is, to 'hold together' or to 'hold among'. The act or experience of being immersed in the world involves holding together elements which were previously diverse. More than that, it involves experimenting, playing even, with the interrelations of facts and possibilities or potentiality. 'Is this a knife or is it a corkscrew? Whitehead is not, unlike many philosophers, distracted by the simple and uninteresting distinction between appearance and reality. Such a distinction assumes a factual basis to existence which is divorced from its possible perception by humans. Such humans are, it is supposed, fallible creatures and are likely to misrecognize this factual reality; mistakenly taking an appearance to be what is really real. Not only does Whitehead insist that reality is process, as signalled in the

33. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

35. See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 43, 147, 188, 193, 195, 197, 258, 259.

title of his major metaphysical work – *Process and Reality*<sup>36</sup> – but he also holds that the narrow philosophical question of the correspondence of appearances to reality, their truth and falsehood, both limits philosophy and misses out on a crucial and widespread aspect of existence and experience which can be summed up in one word – ‘novelty’: propositions ‘pave the way along which the world advances into novelty. Error is the price which we pay for progress.’<sup>37</sup> And novelty and spontaneity express the operations of an occasional soul.

In this way, Whitehead allows for a philosophy of ‘error’, with error granted a possibly positive contribution. It also allows for the role and status of hallucination to be reconsidered. Hallucination is not an exception to the usual mode of experiencing the world. Clearly, it does not conform to the usual or everyday reception of the world, but it is certainly not exempted from the manner and demands of human experience. It is certainly not ‘supernatural’ (in the sense that Dewey sets out). Instead, hallucinations represent an intensification of the experience of potentiality; of the world being possibly otherwise. ‘Intensity is the reward of narrowness.’<sup>38</sup> Hallucinations focus on specific elements of experience and extend such experiences, prior to any judgement being made about the truth or falsehood of a proposition, in the Whiteheadian sense of the term; ‘that fly *is* (or could be) a fairy’. The psychedelic element involves an entertaining of potentiality, and extending this entertainment, so that the question of the truth or falsehood of the experience, and the perceptions involved, is irrelevant. ‘The primary mode of realization of a proposition [...] is not by judgment, but by entertainment.’<sup>39</sup> What the entertainment of a proposition highlights is possibility. Such experiences will be intense (this is a direct result of Whitehead’s emphasis on ‘intensity as the reward of narrowness’). Such experiences can be unnerving. We are used to the comfort of seemingly knowing what something is, what constitutes our surrounding.

An inhibition of familiar *sensa* is very apt to leave us a prey to vague terrors respecting a circumambient world of causal operations. In the dark there are vague presences, doubtfully feared; in the silence, the irresistible causal efficacy of nature presses itself upon us; in the vagueness of the low hum of insects in an August woodland, the inflow into ourselves of feelings from enveloping nature overwhelms us; in the dim consciousness of halfsleep, the presentations of sense fade away, and we are left with the vague feeling of influences from vague things around us.<sup>40</sup>

Remaining in and with possibility and potentiality offered by propositions is the hallmark of hallucinations, and allows for the psychedelic element to be understood,

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

philosophically speaking at least. As to whether such an experience is 'enjoyable' is a different question. As has been seen, Whitehead has a specific understanding of the notion of 'entertainment'. Although we often expect entertainment to be enjoyable, it does not necessarily follow that it is. For Whitehead, enjoyment refers to a different aspect of experience. It concerns the completion of an experience and is related to 'satisfaction' where 'all indeterminations respecting the potentialities of the universe are definitely solved so far as concerns the satisfaction of the subject in question'.<sup>41</sup> The hallucinatory element inhabits those experiences which are prior to any such satisfaction. Whitehead was no moralist, and although he did not talk of psychedelic experiences or focus on the role of hallucination, he would neither praise nor condemn them. 'Such feelings, divorced from immediate sensa, are pleasant, or unpleasant, according to mood'.<sup>42</sup> For him, psychedelic experiences would represent a segment of the possible panoply of (human) experience. The judgement of the worth, or not, of any experience is to be assessed in terms of the contribution it makes to both the individual and the world. This cannot be decided in advance. But it must take seriously that which is often dismissed by certain philosophers – namely, error, hesitation and even hallucination, for: 'whatever we do think of, thereby in some sense "exists"'.<sup>43</sup> That which humans (or other entities) entertain in thought, as a possibility, as an alternative to what is, is not to be dismissed as mere ephemera or imagining; our thoughts exist, and what is thought in such thoughts has a form of existence. It might be going too far to argue that we need to hallucinate in order to develop a genuinely novel idea. However, experimenting with possibilities in thought as real realities should not be seen as simply thinking a range of alternatives to the facts of the matter as they are now. Whitehead's point is stronger than that; positive errors involve novelty and can help create new worlds. If, as is suggested by the title of this chapter, the intensification of experience, through the entertainment of sheer potentiality, is a marker of the psychedelic, then, as has been argued throughout this piece, it also involves that mode of functioning which Whitehead calls 'the soul': the entertainment of experience and possibility do not come from nowhere; the capacity to entertain the possibilities involved in an experience; the very potentiality of the world, prior to any judgement being made regarding the truth or falsehood of such experiences; the experience of sheer disclosure and revelation beyond the narrow confines of matters of fact – all these express the mode of functioning which Whitehead calls the soul. It is in these terms that the psychedelic involves making one's soul visible. Whitehead's concept of the soul reminds us, or invites us, to linger upon those moments of spontaneity, hesitation, potentiality and even uncertainty which are vital elements of human experience, beyond the mere factual. This lingering could certainly be construed in terms of making your soul visible.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Yet, if the psychedelic really does involve making your soul visible, then this raises two important questions: to whom is the soul visible? And what risks are involved in making one's soul visible? Whitehead would urge caution; opening up our souls to the scrutiny of others, or the world, or even our own self, could be problematic if not dangerous. This is not the place to answer such questions; indeed, Whitehead would argue that it is not possible to provide once and for all answers to such questions in advance. But they need to be asked. The danger would be as much in providing a wholesale celebration of the psychedelic as it would be to dismiss or denigrate it. Philosophy's role is not neutral but nor is it that of an advocate. It is, rather, to allow for a width and depth of possible experience but also to help situate these within wider concerns.

### References

- Halewood, M. (2016) Do Those Diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease Lose their Souls? *The Sociological Review*, 64, pp. 786–804
- Mitchell, D. (1964) *An Introduction to Logic* (London: Hutchinson and Co.)
- Stengers, I. (2005) Whitehead's Account of the Sixth Day, *Configurations*, 13:1, pp. 35–55
- Whitehead, A. N. ([1920]1964) *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Whitehead, A. N. ([1925]1932) *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Whitehead, A. N. (1929) *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology* (Gifford Lectures of 1927–1928) (New York: Macmillan & Company)
- Whitehead, A. N. ([1929]1978) *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology* (Gifford Lectures of 1927–1928). Corrected edition, eds. D. Griffin and D. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press)
- Whitehead, A. N. (1933) *Adventures of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Whitehead, A. N. (1938) *Modes of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)