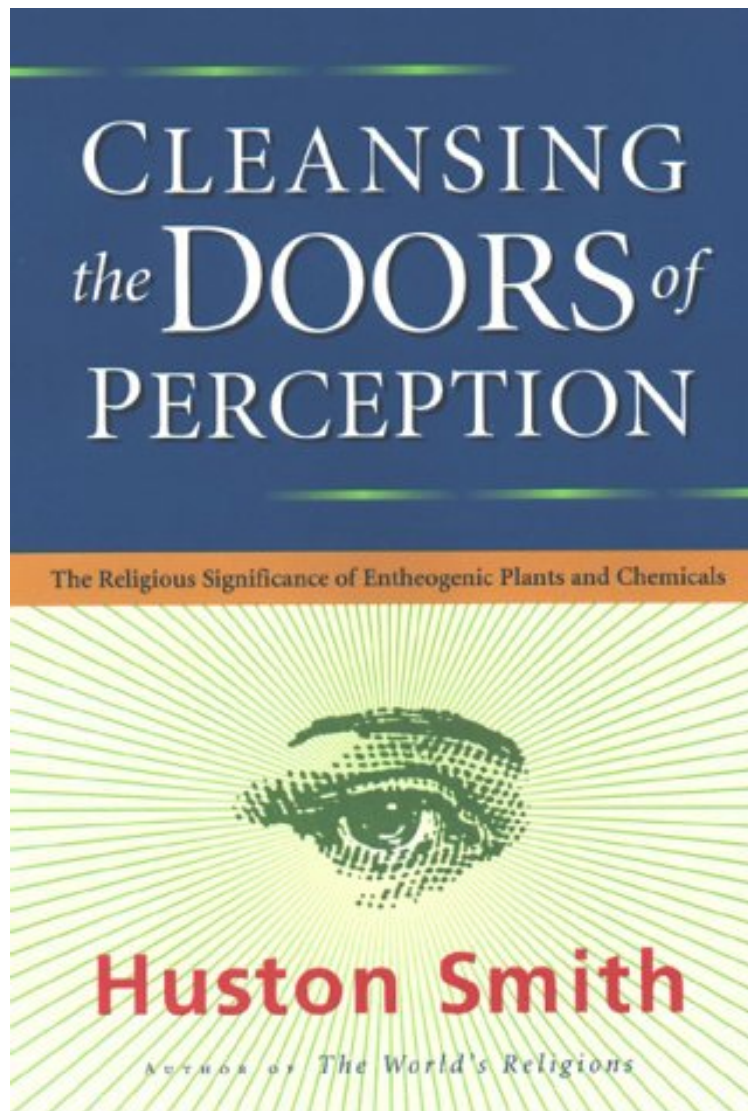


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# Cleansing the Doors of Perception: The Religious Significance of Entheogenic Plants and Chemicals

*Huston Smith*

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**Huston Smith : Cleansing the Doors of Perception: The Religious Significance of Entheogenic Plants and Chemicals** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cleansing the Doors of Perception: The Religious Significance of Entheogenic Plants and Chemicals:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well thought out. By A long standing Jung / Hesse fan It`s a well

placed afterthought to Huxley's work. We are beginning to understand the mind's logic and how it can be enhanced.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Valuable scholarship for a number of reasonsBy Gregory OlsenThis book collects essays from nearly 40 years of Smith's research into psychedelics. It addresses a number of issues: o The experiential dimension of the drugso The relationship of the drugs to religiono The history of psychedelics in the United StatesThe historical dimension is fascinating for children of the baby boomers, who are too young to have experienced the 1960s. He discusses the experiments conducted at various institutions in the 1960s. He talks about Aldous Huxley, Albert Hoffman, and Timothy Leary. Leary gets special attention in the essay on the viability of the drug culture as a new religious movement. I recommend reading this book after having read the classic *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* by Aldous Huxley. This volume gives a much more mature perspective, since it is a retrospective decades after the fact. I highly recommend this book to several audiences. The first obvious audience is the would-be psychonaut. The book recounts the author's experiences with psychedelics. (The author prefers the term entheogens.) Students of religion would also benefit from this book. The author is a professor of religious studies, and several of the essays collected in this volume deal directly with the mystical experience brought on by the drugs.28 of 28 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating BookBy Paul FucichI found this book to be very interesting. Most of the people that I have known who are part of the "drug culture" (and by drug culture I mean anyone who partakes of any drug on a regular basis) would have no idea of the value of the chemistry covered in this book. Why?, Because our culture primarily abuses drugs. Personally I have not yet met an individual who did not use chemistry in conjunction with their dysfunction. Unfortunately, this book will be appreciated mainly by the few folks who have no serious chemical addiction. I loved this book and found it fascinating. I was especially fascinated by the chapter on Stanislov Grof. I learned more about pure psychotherapy from this book than any book I have read on the subject. This book speaks about cultures within cultures such as The Native American Church. It illuminates the fact that there are societies who use nature's chemistry to fight drug addiction. Near the end of the book you hear the testimonials from the patrons of the Native American Church, and it is most enlightening. This book is about religion, philosophy, psychology, the science of mind, and the study of reality--all in one short and sweet text. I found it very eye-opening and inspiring.

Here is a fascinating inquiry into the religious significance of consciousness-magnifying substances by Huston Smith, author of *THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS* and a leading thinker of our time. In *CLEANSING THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION*, Smith's historical knowledge and personal experience combine with his literacy in the cognitive sciences to produce the only comprehensive book that has been written for the general public on the mysterious relation between the entheogens, consciousness, and faith. Psychoactive plants have long served as spiritual catalysts, from the Eleusinian Mysteries of ancient Greece to the Native American Church and from India's sacred soma to the religious practices emerging from the Amazonian rainforests. In this book, Smith takes us into the heart of modernity's struggle to align historical evidence with what we now know about brain chemistry. His friendships with Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary (while Leary was at Harvard), Gordon Wasson (who cracked the 2000-year-old secret of India's soma plant), and Albert Hofmann (the discoverer of LSD) have made him eye-witness to much of the twentieth century's work in this area. *Cleansing the Doors of Perception* (the title pays tribute to Huxley's *THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION* and to Blake's original use of the phrase) is a deeply serious and learned inquiry into a topic of enduring importance.

.com *Cleansing the Doors of Perception* is a fresh consideration of the age-old relationship between certain psychoactive plants and chemicals and mystical experience by one of the most trustworthy religious writers of our time. Author Huston Smith (most famous for his classic *The World's Religions*) is the Walter Cronkite of religion scholars. He has long believed that "drugs appear to be able to induce religious experiences" and that "it is less evident that they can produce religious lives." At the same time, he posits that "if ... religion cannot be equated with religious experiences, neither can it long survive their absence." Therefore, Smith's basic question about entheogens (a word he defines as "nonaddictive mind-altering substances that are approached seriously and reverently") is "whether chemical substances can be helpful adjuncts to faith." *Cleansing the Doors* does not offer one sustained argument in response to that question. Instead, the book collects Smith's many articles about this subject, and connects them with brief introductory essays. The writings gathered here range from personal testimony about Smith's own experience with entheogens to ethnographic work on the use of entheogens in India. Throughout, Smith's style conveys the wisdom and wonder that has guided his explorations of this strange, fascinating aspect of religious experience. --Michael Joseph GrossFrom *Publishers Weekly*Religion scholar and "missionary kid" Smith discovered psychedelic drugs in good company, alongside Timothy Leary and the crowd at Harvard that experimented with LSD, mescaline and psilocybin in the 1960s. In *Cleansing the Doors of Perception* (the title a play on Aldous Huxley's cult classic *The Doors of Perception*), Smith argues that while psychedelics can illuminate the religious life, these drugs can not induce religious lives. Therefore, Smith concludes, religion must be more than "a string of experiences." If drugs cannot replace religion, however, they can aid the religious life, when psychedelics are used in the context of a larger

religious commitment as with the Native American use of peyote. But this provocative inquiry into the relationship between drugs and religion is overshadowed by Smith's unreflective stroll down memory lane such as his description of the Good Friday experiment of 1962, when a group of Harvardites popped psychedelics and attended Good Friday services. Smith says it was one of the most spiritually meaningful days of his life. Partly because of such reflections, his book, which includes many previously published essays and interviews, does not hang together. The reader skips from Smith's musings about John Humphrey Noyes to a case study of Hindu drug use to a bizarre comparison of Leary and the church historian Tertullian. In the acknowledgements, Smith thanks the Council on Spiritual Practices for encouraging him to gather all his essays on drugs into one volume. Readers may wish the Council had held its counsel. (June) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Smith (The World's Religions) is a well-known historian of world religions. What is not well known is his lifelong fascination with the use of entheogenic plants and chemicals such as psilocybin mushrooms and LSD in attaining religious visions and whether such visions are "true." This book is a collection of personal essays spanning 40 years of his investigations. Taking an anecdotal approach, he makes no attempt to be authoritative or objective, yet he uses the viewpoint of a historian as he surveys the history of 20th-century, mostly American experiences in using psychoactive drugs to reach the divine. He writes about his relationships with Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary, both firm believers in mind-altering substances. But while Smith does not discount the use of such drugs in obtaining supernatural visions, he does not play the role of advocate, either. Little is proven, but much is offered to readers who want a general overview. Recommended for public libraries. D Glenn Masuchika, Chaminade Univ. Libs., Honolulu Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.