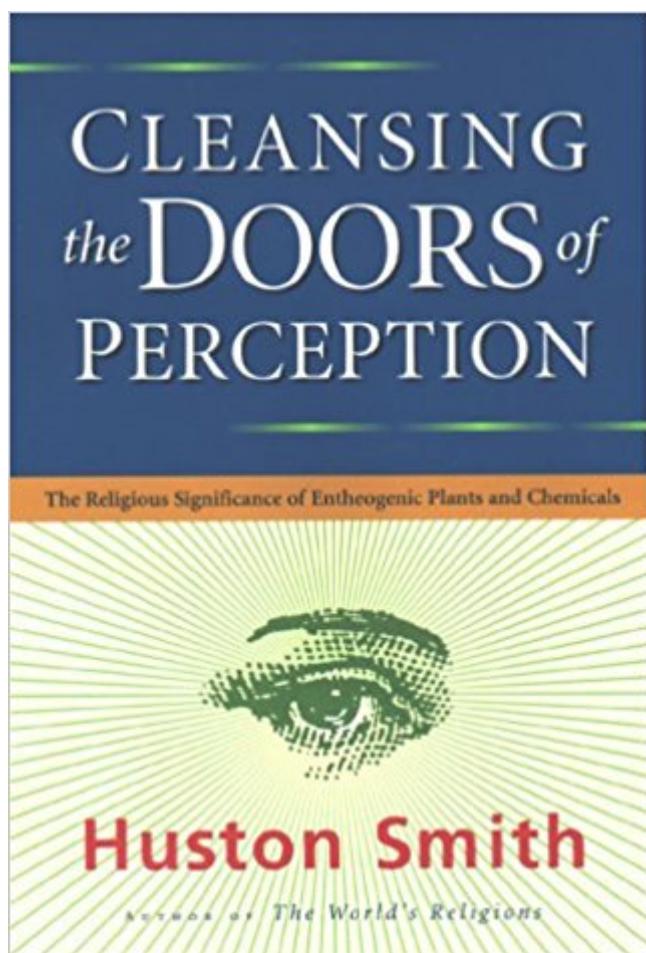


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Cleansing The Doors Of Perception: The Religious Significance Of Entheogenic Plants And Chemicals



Synopsis

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 ian 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As an advocate of the use of entheogens (psychedelics) as a means of expanding consciousness, I have to praise this book for several reasons. One, due to Dr. Huston's reputation, many people who

would not have considered psychedelics as a spiritual path will now have to take the spiritual use of these substances seriously. Two for those of us who do use entheogens, Dr. Smith offers an interesting critique of the psychedelic movement of the 60s. He asks himself if the corrolary of "tune in" and "turn on" has to be "drop out". He also underscores the importance of paying attention to "set" and "setting" (the attitude of the user and the physical environment in which the user takes the psychedelic). He rightly notes that a lot of people pay lip service to this idea without being rigorous in it's application. There seems to be a kind of libertarianism, even philistinism, in the contemporary psychedelic scene. We're going to explore alone without paying attention to the lessons from other cultures who have used these substances for thousands of years. Understandably we do so under the banner of authenticity, but I think we lose out. We should not ape or follow the lessons of those cultures dogmatically, but we should investigate them and heed what is good...especially about set and setting. Third, he assigns psychedelics their proper place. They are tools. And like any tool, psychedelics work for some and not for others. Or they work for a time for us and then we need to leave them behind. Any way it goes, we are left with integrating the lessons learned from our psychedelic explorations into our everyday life. This is a sober treatment of the role of psychedelics, not an absolute glorification.

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