

MARGARET MEAD ANSWERS

Should we have laws banning the use of LSD?

Are women basically unco-operative?



Users of LSD claim that with it they have valid mystical experiences, comparable to those previously known by holy men and saints. Is there any clear difference between the two experiences? And if not, what right has society to deny anyone this new access to age-old spiritual experience?

The question of validity has troubled every religious group that has accepted the possibility of mystical experience. As in the case of miracles, visions are subjected to the most intense and severe scrutiny. Those who claim, or have claimed for them, a unique relationship to God may be admitted to sainthood only a very long time after the event. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake as a witch in 1431 and was not canonized until 1920. In the Western Christian tradition, validity turns essentially on the relationship between an individual's mystical experience and the religious beliefs of others. That is, it is the miracles, the stigmata and the visions that come to have relevance to the community of the faithful that are judged, in the end, to be valid. In this sense the question of whether or not LSD users have *valid* mystical experiences is beside the point.

The central issue is that LSD changes the state of consciousness of the user for a shorter or longer time. Puritanical Americans disapprove of all drugs of this type, even mild ones like nicotine and alcohol. Moreover, they take the stand that individuals' private lives are within the jurisdiction of public legislation. At present their zeal for total abstinence is concentrated on drugs. It is expressed also in the refusal to regard addiction as an illness instead of a crime or a sin.

The problem of LSD is further complicated by the claim that it pro-

duces a state comparable to psychosis and that controlled experimental use of this drug can give psychiatrists new access to an understanding of their patients. For many persons it is only a short step from this claim to the belief that young people, students, are being allowed to take a drug that may make them insane. Instances of disturbed individuals who have committed crimes or who have suffered irremediable injury while under the influence of LSD have strengthened this fear.

At the same time there are others who claim that certain drugs such as marijuana, mescal and now LSD open the doorways of perception and give the user an extraordinarily vivid sense of himself and his relationship to the universe. This was the viewpoint of Aldous Huxley in his book *The Doors of Perception*. In his utopian novel *The Island*, he pictures the use of psychedelic drugs in a regular form of initiation of young people to a more sensitive realization of themselves and their place in society. That is, in *The Island* Huxley attempted to construct a new religion in which these drugs play a carefully controlled part.

In his interpretation, psychedelic drugs become adjuncts to religious experience comparable to but more effective than fasting, isolation, prayer, meditation and highly controlled exercises in breathing or in taking special physical postures. The means are new, but the quest for religious experience is part of an ancient tradition in which the individual who feels a vocation makes a long, disciplined effort to attain a closer relationship to the supernatural. Even when the vision comes to an unbeliever like Saul of Tarsus, who neither sought it nor prepared for it, the experience is within a living tradition.

Certain cultures—for example, Balinese culture and the peasant version of Haitian culture—have encouraged religious-trance experience for many individuals. In these societies people take a great many precautions in selecting and ritually training those who will engage regularly in trance and in controlling where and under what circumstances trance may be induced. Individuals who go into trance at the wrong time and in the wrong place are exhorted to stop these activities or stay away from the community.

It is quite possible that the use of psychedelic drugs, whether in an



Zip Along...

Relieved of Menstrual Distress

As a modern woman, you really zip along. Activity on a full-time basis. At home, on the job or out having fun. It's a tight schedule but you meet it. No time to slow down...and you don't have to. Not even during your menstrual period. How? With MIDOL!

Because MIDOL contains:

- An exclusive anti-spasmodic that helps STOP CRAMPING...
- Medically-approved ingredients that RELIEVE HEADACHE, LOW BACKACHE... CALM JUMPY NERVES...
- Plus a special mood-brightener that gives you a real lift...helps you through the trying pre-menstrual period feeling calm and comfortable.

You zip along. Any day. With MIDOL!

"WHAT WOMEN WANT TO KNOW"

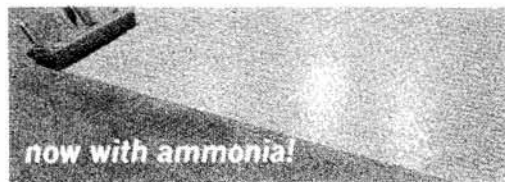
FREE! Frank, revealing 32-page book explains menstruation. Send 10¢ to cover cost of mailing and handling to Dept. E-18, Box 146, New York, N.Y. 10016. (Sent in plain wrapper)





For women with more exciting things to do than scrub floors: **ONE-STEP FLOOR CARE**

It cleans and waxes at the same time.



New-formula One-Step combines ammonia and detergents for extra cleaning power . . . plus tough wax for a bright, long-lasting shine. Cuts your work in half, saves you time!



By the maker of **Armstrong FLOORS**

old or a new religious context, may be able to facilitate mystical experience. But all that we know about religious mysticism suggests that very careful disciplines and rigorous forms of training would have to be developed on which those who used the psychedelic drugs as an adjunct to religious experience could draw. It also seems clear that in our own American tradition, one test of whether such a development was in fact a religion would be its social relevance. For unlike those Eastern religions in which mystical experience is a purely individual spiritual belief, Western religions contain the expectation that religious experience benefits not only the visionary but also others who share his faith. With this expectation the solipsistic aim of the LSD user, whose interest is wholly introspective, is out of key.

The panic roused by the widespread and uncontrolled individual experimentation with LSD is precipitating a flood of poorly conceived legislation. One unexpected by-product of these laws may be a new kind of interference with the regular religious exercises of the American Indian Church, in which peyote is used. In this situation the prohibitions become an unjustified interference with religious freedom.

It must also be recognized, however, that there is no necessary relationship between the use of drugs and religious experience. The ordinary LSD "trip" has no more necessary relationship to mystical experience than the drinking of ten cocktails has, after which many people experience various alterations of consciousness.

From one point of view the battle between those who wish to enlarge their experience through the use of LSD and other drugs and those who are exercising all their powers to prohibit this use is a very old one in Western cultures. On the one side are those who believe that control over consciousness is crucial to human living and that loss of control inevitably leads to the emergence of dangerous, bestial impulses. On the other side are those who believe that control of consciousness is itself inimical to true spirituality.

These two views, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, represent an ancient conflict within our cultural tradition. But now, as in the past in our own society, puritanism, which is not a necessary aspect of the Apollonian conception of life, embitters many on both sides who are trying to come to grips with the deeper issues of the handling of human potentialities.

Many people think that women are basically unco-operative. They say that each woman wants to live in her own home, alone with her husband and children, as the mistress of her household; that women accept co-operative arrangements only when they appear to be unavoidable. Is this true?

It is true, on the whole, in our own society. But this does not mean that women are incapable of co-operation.

Women's willingness to co-operate with one another is based primarily on the kind of experience they have growing up in the family. Among the Arapesh of New Guinea many men have two wives, but each wife acts as if she were the only one. The first wife will not welcome the second wife or co-operate with her to get work done. Elsewhere, in some African societies, for example, wives form a close-knit co-operative group; there, an only wife may shame her husband into marrying another woman to share the work load with her. These are extreme examples, perhaps, but girls growing up under such different circumstances will have very different conceptions of women's relations with one another.

Another type of household is that in which the husband goes to live with his wife and the household consists of two, sometimes three, generations of women, each with her husband and children. This was the accepted arrangement among the Zuni Indians and in some African tribes. Characteristically here, the women form a solid mass of kin, quarreling as only relatives do, but essentially are accustomed to sharing every household task. In such a home there is always someone to hold a baby, to prepare the next meal and to carry out the ritual tasks that are part of women's responsibilities.

A somewhat similar situation is sometimes found in extended families in which fathers and sons live together and