

#19

ESSAY ON DRUGS

by

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The proliferation and diffusion of drugs may well pose a threat to the survival of American society. Aside from the addictive "hard" drugs such as heroin and the barbiturates, the pathological effects of which are widely known, the basically non-physiological "mind" drugs whose popular acronyms LSD, DMT, STP, etc. have become quasi-sacrosanct trade names of the psychedelic counterculture are increasing in number to well over a hundred different chemical compounds. Most of these new hallucinogens (vision producing) can be manufactured in makeshift laboratories with limited equipment or even in the average household kitchen. The long-term and even short-term biological and psychological effects of most psychedelics (mind manifesting) have begun to be monitored under controlled observation and testing.

LSD, first produced by a Swiss laboratory in 1943, was increasingly used in the 1950's in experimental (chemotherapeutic) research in Psychiatry dealing with alcoholism and schizophrenia. By 1960, thousands of patients and volunteer subjects had been exposed to LSD, mescaline, and psilocybin. Some, like Ken Kesey, the folk hero of the "electric kool-aid acid test" which rocked the west coast in the mid-sixties, and Timothy Leary, east coast acid guru, began proselytizing a quasi-religious movement among young drop-outs and college students. The Haight-Asbury district of San Francisco by 1965 became the Mecca of a diffuse subculture which involved as one of its major traits the black marketing of psychedelic drugs. If the "mind" drugs led to a number of "bad trips" which most authorities ascribe to only a very small percentage of total drug use (.1%), then the amphetamines, "speed" and barbiturates such as used more frequently by pre-college adolescents have proved far more deleterious to health and on a significant number

of occasions—fatal.

The mass craze of hallucinogenic drugs appears to have subsided from its peak in the late sixties. No longer does one encounter the proselytizing hippie "freak" who is obsessed with "turning on" the uninitiated. Although one may find comfort in the waning religious fervor of counterculture drug advocates including, by the way, such internationally renowned intelligentsia as scientist-author Aldous Huxley and psychologist-orientalist Alan Watts, there remains the so far unacclaimed fact of a far more pervasive infiltration of hallucinogenic drug use into the stolid, non-rebellious American middle class. In essence the mind drug revolution is becoming co-opted by the middle class "establishment". Even more disturbing perhaps, is the shift to addictive physiological "hard" drugs by the hippies and working class white youths when in the past "smack" (heroin) was disdained by counterculture advocates. Heroin addiction, once primarily the domain of ghetto blacks and to a lesser degree lower middle class urban whites, is rapidly becoming the dominant mystique of the white counterculture generally composed of youths originating in the upper middle class.

Basically this phenomena can be seen as a drugshift among negative elites. In other words, the dynamics of American society have changed from the emulation of positive elites, i.e., those enjoying maximum material and social rewards through ordained channels, to the emulation of negative elites whose ranking depends on its capacity for justified revulsion and anti-social behavior. Sociopathic behavior in negative elites demands continuous escalation in order to maintain what might be called a pecking-order of despair. No other drug has the mystique of despair as heroin. In sum, the need for socio-pathic escalation among negative elites promotes a shift to hard drugs. The recent moves by black youths in urban ghettos to halt drug addiction is

by no means contrary to this thesis since the black man no longer represents a negative elite to the white counterculture. Aside from the inflammatory rhetoric used by the Black Panther Party, the aspirations of the black "revolution" in America, are basically old-style middle class materialism. Ideologically, this has militated against the widespread use of "mind" drugs by blacks and is permitting the co-opting of the mysticism-of-despair syndrome from the black ghetto subculture.

At this point the reader may well have decided that the shift to hard addictive drugs is the greatest threat to American society. This is hardly the case and although heroin addiction presently constitutes an acute social problem, it may well be in historical terms, a mere flash in the pan. Mind manifesting drugs are here to stay which is not necessarily the case for heroin and other euphoric narcotics. The opium poppy, processed for the illicit trade in heroin, is grown in Turkey, Burma and Laos. These sources will eventually be denied to American addicts and the resultant decreasing availability of heroin combined with the greater efficiency of methadone treatment and other therapeutic procedures, will most likely lead to an eventual stabilization of the addiction problem.

The problem of psychedelic drugs is not at all similar. Many drugs can be manufactured in one's basement at minimum cost. In fact the black market price for a "hit" of LSD is generally one dollar or the cost of a martini or two beers. Knowledge of hallucinogenic compounds is becoming as sophisticated and widespread as to permit their extraction from easily available natural sources. For instance, the psilocybin mushroom found growing wild in many states provides a powerful hallucinogenic compound. Although the process of extraction is somewhat intricate, it can be carried out in any household kitchen. Another hallucinogen, myristicin, can be extracted from common nutmeg. Of even greater significance is the potential impact of the hallucinogen of adrenochrome which is naturally produced in the human body.

Advances in psychopharmacology may soon provide the means for individuals to produce hallucinogens within the natural processes of the body. One can well imagine the exasperation of legislators attempting to outlaw drugs manufactured in this manner.

This brings us to the basic problem of the extreme difficulty of an ostensibly democratic political system to deal with the ever-increasing plethora of easily manufactured drug compounds. On the other hand the fear of the potential effect of "mind" drugs which is closely associated in the public mind with counterculture values, e.g., lack of national allegiance, anti-militarism, lack of materialist incentives, is increasingly likely to foster authoritarian measures such as the present "no knock" law. It is of no mean significance that the totalitarian measures of the Soviet Bloc and Mainland China have no reported drug problem of any kind.

As experimentation in mind drugs becomes increasingly imbedded in the productive core of American society and the explosion of new compounds negates effective timely testing and legal legislation, we can expect the pressure to build on both sides of the question. The first being the protection of society and its cultural values from the potential onslaught of ontological addiction, i.e., the desire for an unreal existence. On this side will be all of the vested interests of national power and corporate capitalism.

In juxtaposition will be the philosophy of individual freedom existing above and beyond social responsibility, in being able to dispose and transform emotions, attitudes and physiological processes according to the unique esthetic potential of the individual. In this conflict the state will find it is increasingly working at odds with itself in persecuting members of its creative elite. The only real solution to this impasse aside from the institution of a static totalitarian system will have to be the accommodation and protection of the individual's control over the destiny of his mind and body.