

Chronicles of American Culture
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The Right Stuff (Drugs and Democracy)

by Tomislav Sunic

Morphine is said to be good for people subject to severe depressions, or even pessimism. Although the drug first surfaced in a laboratory at the end of the last century, its basis, opium, had been used earlier by many aristocratic and reactionary thinkers. A young and secretive German romantic, Novalis, enjoyed eating and smoking opium juice, probably because he had always yearned to alleviate his nostalgia for death. Probably in order to write his poem *Sehnsucht nach dem Tode*. Early poets of Romanticism rejected the philosophy of rationalism and historical optimism. They turned inward to their irrational feelings, shrouding themselves in the pensive loneliness which opiates endlessly offer.

Once upon a distant time we met Homer's Odysseus, who was frequently nagged by the childish behavior of his pesky sailors. Somewhere along the shores of northern Africa, Odysseus and his sailors had strayed away into the mythical land of the lotus flower. As soon as his sailors began to eat the lotus plant, they sank into forgetfulness, and immediately forgot their history and their homeland. It was with great pain that Odysseus succeeded in extracting them from artificial paradises. What can be worse for a nation than to erase its past and lose its collective memory?

Unlike many modern wannabe conservatives and televangelists, Greeks and Romans were not hypocrites. They frankly acknowledged the pleasures of wine and women. *Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus* - without food and wine sexual life withers away, too.

The escape from industrial reality and the maddening crowd was one of the main motives for drug use among some reactionary poets and thinkers, who could not face the onset of mass society. The advent of early liberalism and socialism was accompanied not only by factory chimneys, but also by loneliness, decay, and decadence. If one could, therefore, not escape to the sunny Mediterranean, then one had to craft one's own artificial paradise in rainy and foggy London. The young English Tory Thomas De Quincey, in his essay *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, relates his Soho escapades with a poor prostitute Anna, as well as his spiritual journeys in the aftertaste of opium. De Quincey has a feeling that one life-minute lasts a century, finally putting an end to the reckless flow of time.

The mystique of opium was also grasped by the mid-19th century French symbolist and poet Charles Baudelaire. He continued the aristo-nihilistic-revolutionary-conservative tradition of dope indulgence via the water pipe, i.e., the Pakistan huka. Similar to the lonely albatross, Baudelaire observes the

decaying France in which the steamroller of coming liberalism and democratism mercilessly crushes all esthetics and all poetics.

When studying the escapism of postmodernity, it is impossible to circumvent the leftist subculture and its pseudo-intellectual sycophants of 1968. The so-called sixty-eighters hollered out not only for liberty from all political authority, but also for free sex and drugs. Are these leftist claims not part of the modern religion of human rights? At the beginning of the 60's, the musical alter egos of the Western left, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, called out to millions of young people throughout America and Europe, telling intruders to "get off of my cloud" and concluding that "everybody must get stoned."

Predictably, the right-wing answer to the decadence of liberal democracy was nihilistic counterdecadence. The main difference, however, between these two is that reactionary and rightist addicts do drugs for elitist and esoteric purposes. By their temperament and literary style they reject all democracy—whether it is of a socialist or liberal brand. When in the 20th century the flow of history switched from first gear into fifth gear, many rightist poets and thinkers posed a question: What to do after the orgy? The French right-leaning author Jean Cocteau answered the question this way: "Everything that we do in our life, even when we love, we perform in a rapid train running to its death. Smoking opium means getting off the train."

Hashish and marijuana change the body language and enhance social philanthropy. Smoking joints triggers abnormal laughter. Therefore hashish may be described as a collectivistic drug custom-designed for individuals who by their lifestyle loathe solitude and who, like Dickens' proverbial Ms. Jellyby, indulge in vicarious humanism and unrepentant globalism. In today's age of promiscuous democracy, small wonder that marijuana is inhaled by countless young people all over liberalized Europe and America. In the permissive society of today, one is allowed to do everything—provided one does not rock the boat, i.e., "bogart" political correctness. Just as wine, over the last 2,000 years, has completely changed the political profile of the West, so has marijuana, over the last 30 years, completely ruined the future of Western youth. If Stalin had been a bit more intelligent he would have solemnly opened marijuana fields in his native Transcaucasia. Instead, communist tyrants resorted to the killing fields of the Gulag. The advantage of liberalism and social democracy is that via sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, by means of consumerism and hedonism, they function perfectly well; what communism was not able to achieve by means of the solid truncheon, liberalism has achieved by means of the solid joint. Indisputably, Western youth can be politically and correctly controlled when herded in techno-rap concerts and when welcomed in cafes in Holland, where one can freely buy marijuana as well as under-the-table "crack," "speedball," and "horse." Are these items not logical ingredients of the liberal theology of human rights?

Cocaine reportedly induces eroticism and enhances the sex act. The late French fascist dandy and novelist Pierre Drieu La Rochelle liked coke, desiring all possible drugs and all impossible women. The problem, however, is that the coke intaker often feels invisible bugs creeping from his ankles up to his knees, so that he may imagine himself sleeping not with a beautiful woman but with scary reptiles. In his autobiographical novels *Le feu follet* and *L'homme couvert de femmes*, La Rochelle's hero is constantly covered by women and veiled by opium and heroin sit-ins. In his long intellectual

monologues, La Rochelle's hero says: "A Frenchwoman, be she a whore or not, likes to be held and taken care of; an American woman, unless she hunts for a husband, prefers a passing relationship... Drug users are mystics in a materialistic age. Given that they can no longer animate and embellish this world, they do it in a reverse manner on themselves." Indeed, La Rochelle's hero ends up in suicide-with heroin and revolver. In 1945, with the approaching victory of the Allies, and in the capacity of the intellectual leader of the defunct Eurofascist international, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle also opted for suicide.

The English conservative and aristocrat Aldous Huxley is unavoidable in studying communist pathology (*Brave New World Revisited*) and Marxist subintellectual schizophrenia (*Grey Eminence*). As a novelist and essayist his lifelong wish had been to break loose from the flow of time. Mexican mescaline and the artificial drug LSD enabled him new intellectual horizons for observing the end of his world and the beginning of a new, decadent one. Apparently mescaline is ideal for sensing the colors of late impressionist and pointillist painters. Every drop on Seurat's silent water, every touch on Dufy's leaf, or every stone on the still nature of old Vermeer, pours away into thousands of billions of new colors. In the essay *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley notes that "mescaline raises all colors to a higher power and makes the percipient aware of innumerable fine shades of difference, to which, at ordinary times, he is completely blind." His intellectual experiments with hallucinogenic drugs continued for years, and even on his deathbed in California in 1963, he asked for and was given LSD. Probably to depart more picturesquely into timeless infinity.

And what to say about the German centenarian, enigmatic essayist and novelist Ernst Jünger, whom the young Adolf Hitler in Weimar Germany also liked to read, and whom Dr. Joseph Goebbels wanted to lure into pro-Nazi collaboration? Yet Jünger, the aristocratic loner, refused all deals with the Nazis, preferring instead his martial travelogues. In his essay *Annäherungen: Drogen and Rausch*, Jünger describes his close encounters with drugs. He was also able to cut through the merciless wall of time and sneak into floating eternity. "Time slows down. . . . The river of life flows more gently... The banks are disappearing." While both the French president François Mitterrand and the German chancellor Helmut Kohl, in the interest of Franco-German reconciliation, liked meeting and reading the old Jünger, they shied away from his contacts with drugs.

Ernst Jünger's compatriot, the essayist, early expressionist, and medical doctor Gottfried Benn, also took drugs. His medical observations, which found their transfigurations in his poems "Kokain" and "Das Verlorene Ich," were collected by Benn as a doctor-mortician in Berlin of the liberal-Weimarian Germany in decay. He records in his poetry nameless human destinies stretched out dead on the tables of his mortuary. He describes the dead meat of prostitutes out of whose bellies crawl squeaking mice. A connoisseur of French culture and genetics, Benn was subsequently offered awards and political baits by the Nazis, which he refused to swallow. After the end of the war, like thousands of European artists, Benn sank into oblivion. Probably also because he once remarked that "mighty brains are strengthened not on milk but on alkaloids."

Modern psychiatrists, doctors, and sociologists are wrong in their diagnosis of drug addiction among large segments of Western youth. They fail to realize

that to combat drug abuse one must prevent its social and political causes before attempting to cure its deadly consequences. Given that the crux of the modern liberal system is the dictatorship of well-being and the dogma of boundless economic growth, many disabused young people are led to believe that everybody is entitled to eternal fun. In a make-believe world of media signals, many take for granted instant gratification by projecting their faces on the characters of the prime-time soaps. Before they turn into drug addicts, they become dependent on the videospheric surreality of television, which in a refined manner tells them that everybody must be handsome, rich, and popular. In an age of TV-mimicry, headless young masses become, so to speak, the impresarios of their own narcissism. Such delusions can lead to severe depressions, which in turn can lead to drugs and suicide. Small wonder that in the most liberal countries of the West, notably California, Holland, and Denmark, there is also the highest correlation between drug addiction and suicide.

If drug abuse among some reactionary and conservative thinkers has always been an isolated and Promethean death wish to escape time, the same joint in leftist hands does more than burn the fingers of the individual: it poisons the entire society.

*Tomislav Sunic is the author of *Against Democracy and Equality; The European New Right* (1990).*